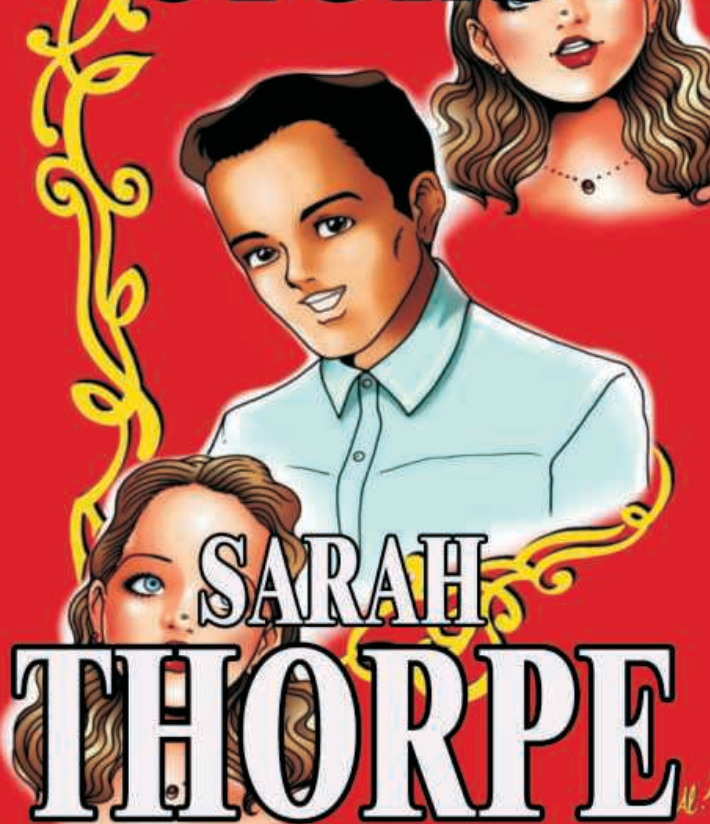


A GREAT GRANDMOTHER'S STORY



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A Great Grandmother's Story

by Sarah Thorpe

Chapter 1

It was busy times at Gladstone Retirement Home for elderly people. The institution was located in Phoenix, AZ. One of their residents, Edith Carmel would soon turn 100 years old. She was the oldest resident at Gladstone and was by far the most popular. Her brain was still functioning and she had lots of stories to tell the other residents. Her eyesight wasn't as good as it once was, but she could still watch TV and enjoy it. She

had to wear a hearing aid and was confined to a wheel chair.

The staff wanted to throw her a party and the preparations were well under way. But Edith only wanted one thing for her birthday, and that was to have all her great grandchildren present. She wanted to tell them something. The staff knew about it, of course, and wanted to make her happy on her great day.

But still the staff wanted to throw her a party. It wasn't that often that someone turned 100 at Gladstone. They also knew that all her family would arrive that same day. They would come from various parts of the country to celebrate the old lady. She had two children, James and Julie, four grandchildren, Caroline, Peter, Liza and Eva and finally, ten great grandchildren. With spouses that would mean 23 people including the old lady herself.

Edith didn't care about the party, all she cared about was her great grandchildren. She believed that they would be the last generation she would ever see, and wanted to tell them her secret. She never told any of her children or grandchildren about it, they might be too personally involved. So at noon on July 31st, 2009, every resident and staff were gathered in the main living room cheering and singing. Edith felt very uncomfortable. This was not the way she wanted it. She grumbled most of time, showing everybody that she was a grumpy old lady when she didn't get her will.

All the residents wanted to celebrate her so she got really bored in the end. At two o'clock the family arrived. All 22 of them. It was time for dinner. The dinner meant more celebrating. Nobody seemed to care that the old lady only wanted peace and quiet. She gave a damn about any celebration. She even received gifts.

What can a 100 year old woman do with gifts? Was this something they did in order to make sure they received something from her inheritance? They all knew that she had a large amount of money stacked away in a bank account, and they all wanted their share. But when it came to who should inherit her and how much, Edith didn't say a word. That was hers, and her lawyer's business only.

It was only greed that motivated them. They all had money enough and didn't actually need anything from her. But she had her plans; most of her assets would go to her great grandchildren so they could get through college without any money problems. Only one had started though. That was Josh. He had the necessary means from his parents, but could easily need more. The money that didn't go to her great grandchildren would be donated to Gladstone Retirement home.

Edith was born and raised in San Diego, CA, but hadn't lived there for almost 20 years. She had moved to Phoenix when her husband died in early 1985, just after their golden wedding anniversary. Her children had moved out and established a family on their own many years before that. Her husband had been an officer in the Navy and had been wounded at Pearl Harbor. He had lost his left leg during the Japanese attack, but he was allowed to stay in the Navy. His skills were needed in the ground based staff. The rest of her family was scattered all over the US.

When everybody was seated she took a good look at her family. Her two children James and Julie were sitting next to her. The others were scattered around the table in no particular order. Her great grandchildren were seated close to their parents. Welcome drinks were served and Edith opened the conversation.

“As I have told you numerous times, I didn’t want any celebration on my birthday. I’m turning 100, OK, but this day just like the other 36524 in my life. I hate birthdays; it just reminds me that I’m getting one year older and I’ve been through 99 of them already. But since you’ve all have taken the time to be here on my big day, I might as well make the best of it.

“James, you’re my oldest and you are now 73 years old now. I understand that you have retired to Miami. I understand the insurance prices are horrendous down there. I bet you would like to have some of my assets to pay for the insurance.

“Julie, you will be 69 in two and half months. You live with your husband in Minneapolis where he is still working as a lawyer. I understand he’s very successful, so you wouldn’t need any of my money. I bet you want some though. Don’t deny it, you’ve been that way since childhood. Never satisfied, you have always craved for more. I am disappointed that you’ve turned out that way, I thought I raised you to be a modest and reliable citizen. I must have done something wrong in bringing you up. When I see you now I wish my husband had lived to see what the two of you have become.

“And now to my grandchildren. None of you is any better than your parents. You have inherited their greed for earthly goods. Caroline, you’re the oldest. You’re 45 now and you live in Detroit where your husband works in the auto industry. He has suffered a lot during these lean years so you’re not so well off as you used to be. You work as a teacher in Senior High, and you’re doing well. Just hang on to your husband and support him all the way.

“Peter, you’re 42 and live and work in New York. You work on Wall Street and have made it good.

You're probably best off of all my grandchildren. Stay focused and continue your good work.

"Liza, you're 41 and a dentist in Denver and have enough patients to make you happy way into retirement. Your husband is a physician, general practitioner and doing well. I understand you're both happy in your work. Keep it up, the people of Denver need you both.

"Eva, the youngest of my grandchildren. You're 37 and live in Seattle where you're husband works for the aircraft industry. You work in the office for that same company. I know these companies have very good retirement plans, so you will have a good retirement. Nothing to worry about.

"My great grandchildren are my focus in my old age. All but Josh still live with their parents. Josh is in College in Boston. I'm going to watch him closely in the years to come. It might not be many, but I will hang in as long as I can. I wish to see the forth generation being born, and Josh is my best option. Remember kids, I plan to live to see my first great-great grandchild. Now Josh, tell me now, do you have a girlfriend?"

Josh took the word and said: "Yes, I do. We plan to get married as soon as I graduate. My girlfriend is the same age as me. She's from Maine and we go very well together. In two years we both graduate and you, great grandma, will be the guest of honor at our wedding. Just hang in for three years and you will see me graduate, get married and become a father."

"You can bet I will be around. I'm stubborn enough to live that long, just for the heck of it. I will even fly to Portland, ME to be there. Is your girlfriend with you on this trip?"

"Yes, she is. While we are here in Phoenix, she's visiting relatives in Las Vegas. She will join me on Sunday and we will drive around in the southwest for about a week before we return to college."

"Please drop by and let me meet her. Deal?"

"Deal."

"Thanks Josh, I have faith in you. Don't disappoint me."

"I won't."

This was the first time Edith smiled during the party. Her smile was warm and comforting. Just by seeing her smile Josh knew he had to do his best to please her. And he loved to have his girlfriend meet his great grandmother.

Edith continued to talk. "When dinner is over," she said, "I want all my great grandchildren to stay. Leave two cars behind and Josh and Linda can take the other children to their hotels. The rest of you can make it back to the hotel with the four cars left. And don't worry about your kids, they will be well taken care of. I have very much to tell and it might take many hours before I'm finished. If needed they might even stay overnight. None of you is leaving tomorrow anyway. Just rest assured that they will be well taken care of. Is that understood?"

They all nodded. No one dared to say anything against the old lady. Her word was law in the family. There was no doubt about that. The rest of the dinner was rather quiet. The old lady wanted it that way. At 4:30 the party broke up and Edith took her great grandchildren to a room she had reserved for the occasion. On a table there were lots of soft drinks and cakes, just like kids wanted it. When everybody had settled in,

Edith started talking. "Kids," she opened, "you represent the best part of my family and I will soon tell you a story that will boggle your mind. Not a word of it must ever reach your parents or your grandparents. They are all too close to the events I will tell you about. You, however, are more distant to the events and can therefore deal with it more easily. My assets will be divided amongst you in equal shares. It will be more than enough to take you through college. It is already on a bank account in your name, and that will be available to you as soon as you graduate from High School. By the way Josh, your money will be available as soon as you leave this room. But there is one caveat. If any of you ever tell any of your parents, or grandparents about what I've said in this room, the account will be cancelled and the same amount of money I gave you will be withdrawn from it and shared amongst the other persons in this room. That is a legal contract you will have to sign. I know that only one of you, Josh, is of age, but I have means to make my threat become real anyway. So be good boys and girls and you will most likely become more than wealthy enough to get through college. Is this understood? And please don't waste them. At least as long as I am alive. OK?"

They all nodded. They knew that the old lady had means to let her threats become real. Now they were only anxious to hear her story. And with that Edith started talking.

Chapter 2

"OK children," she opened, "I will call you children, because to me that's just what you are. I'm a lot

older than you, you know. You are the first generation after me that I really trust. My own children are just two greedy bastards, waiting for me to die so they can get hold of my money. My grandchildren are little bite better, but they're not good enough. Some of them started very early to try to get hold of some of my money. But you have all shown respect for the old lady and that's why I want to speak with you, and only you. That's also the reason I want you to say nothing about what I tell you to any of your parents or grandparents. If you do, all my funds to you will be automatically withdrawn. Understood?"

They all nodded. They had deep respect for the old lady and didn't want to go against her will. She had always been kind to them and they wanted to be kind to her in return.

The old lady continued: "I am now going to tell you the story of my life. It's nothing like what you've heard before. My story is unique. First of all, as you know, I was born on July 31st, 1909. And that's why I'm a hundred years old today. And from what I see amongst you, I will do my best to live and see my first great-great-grandchild. And I think Josh is my best bet for that to happen. But now back to my story. On this day 100 years ago I wasn't the only baby born to my parents. There were two children born. One was a boy named Edward, the other was a girl named Edith. And one of them was me, of course. Our parents were Phillip and Kathryn Wilkins, and our father was in the US Navy, stationed in San Diego. He was of course very busy as a Navy officer, but every time he was home, he took very good care of us. He loved us very much and gave us almost everything we wanted. We were not spoiled or anything, we were just having great

parents. To help us in the house we also had a housekeeper.

“The two of us grew up in a very happy family. We attended the best schools and we both made good grades. When the US joined forces with Britain and other European nations in WW1, our father was away for almost two years. We were so happy to see him back, safe and sound. We were only nine years old when he returned. Just a few days later we a picture taken and I will show it to you. We were very proud of him, and Edward wanted to become a Navy Officer just like his dad. And Edith wanted to marry one. Our dad served with honor in the Navy and retired as an Admiral in 1941, just three months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He died in 1954, 73 years of age. Our mother died in 1964, 80 years of age.

“But it didn’t take long before life in the Wilkins family took a very strange turn. Three years after our father was back from the war, Edith started her way to womanhood. She started developing breasts and soon became a very lovely young woman. As a boy, Edward would normally start adolescence a little later, but just a few months after Edith, Edward started to develop breasts as well. His body soon turned into that of a young woman, not a young man. He simply became a girl with a penis. In most people’s eyes he was a freak and only belonged to a freak show. But our parents still loved him very much and wanted to make his life as good as possible. That wasn’t easy in those days. He couldn’t go from being a boy one day and become a girl the next. That would ruin the whole family. He would be considered a freak and nobody would have anything to do with our family anymore. My father could even be fired from the Navy on some phony grounds of misconduct. Ridiculous if you ask me, but I

was in the middle of it and could do nothing but to comply with my new life. In 1922 nobody had ever heard about something called a sex change.



But as you all know, today it is rather common. So what did our parents do, they hid Edward inside the house. He was never allowed to go anywhere on the outside except in certain cases. He had to dress as a girl and behave like a girl and live a secret life as a girl. To get rid of the problem to the public, he was announced dead and buried just two days after his 13th birthday. Fortunately he looked like his sister and seen beside her, it was almost impossible to tell who was who."

Edith needed a break. She wanted some refreshments before she could continue. Her great grandchildren had at this point already suspected that the person in front of them was Edward, not Edith. After a few minutes Edith continued. "As you all of you probably now understand, I am not your genetic great grandmother, but her twin brother. I soon adopted to my new life. I quickly learned how to be a girl. It became almost natural once the hormones started flowing through my body. I automatically assumed this was the right thing for me. My sister and I was never out together, in fact we couldn't since I was officially dead. The only person besides my parents that knew about me was our housekeeper, and she kept her mouth shut. Both she and my mother gave me the best schooling any girl could have. I had homework and did it along with my sister. We learned exactly the same and had the same grades all over. I was a good student and could get any job I wanted if I had been officially alive.

"So what was life to me then. My sister Edith and I shared the same name, same seat in school and the same boyfriends. Yes, I went to school as Edith while the real Edith stayed home. It was a fun situation and we did the most of it. The only thing I had to worry about, was that if some boy wanted to have a closer look into my panties. I was, however, never at school

the days the class had gymnastics or swimming or anything that required that I had to undress all the way down. I would show my breasts, that was OK. They were after all just like Edith's. But I had to keep people away from seeing my groin. There were no ways to have a penis removed through operation in those days."

Edith took another short break before she continued. "Children," she said, "as you might understand by now, this will take a very long time. So if Josh, Layla, Linda and Samuel go and call your parents and tell them that you all will be late, I would appreciate that. How late I don't know, but it will take some hours still. And if any of your parents try to make you tell what I'm talking about, tell me afterwards. Tell me also if they try to put some pressure on you. Meanwhile I will order some refreshments for us all. We need something to drink and some cakes to eat. That will make it easier for all of us to continue. And Alan, you're the youngest one here, only nine years old. In addition you and your sisters are the only ones that carry my family name, and you're the only one to bring it on to the next generation. So please, make an old woman proud and carry on that tradition."

"I will great grandma. You're a great lady and I've always looked up to you. I will be proud to carry the Carmel name into the next generation."

The oldest kids went outside the room and called their parents on their cell phones and told them that they might be late. In the meantime the staff at the Retirement Home had brought in soft drinks and lots of cakes. That would take them through the hours to come. Not long thereafter the kids returned to the room. Samuel came in a few minutes after the other three and said straight out that his father had tried to

make him talk. He had refused, of course, and after a short argument just hung up. He had, as the others, switched off his cell as soon as he returned to the others. "I will remember that your father tried to put his pressure on you, Sam. And I'm happy that you stood your ground. I'm sure Josh can verify that."

"Yes I can," Josh replied, Sam did real well on the phone."

"That's what I thought. I love you guys. And now back to my story.

"As soon as I developed breasts I understood what was going on within me. I was not supposed to be a boy, but a girl just like my sister. So just after finishing school in summer of 1922, I started to grow my hair long and dressed like my sister 100%. I was declared dead on August 7th, and buried three days later in a family grave. I was not in the coffin, of course, I was home. What was in the coffin nobody knew. As far as I know it was a boy my age that had been found in the ruins of a fire. Nobody knew who he really was, but my family made up a story that everybody believed. So officially I was the victim of a fire.

"In the months to come I grew my hair long and I was given the same clothes as my sister. Around Christmas my hair was considered long enough, so I was taken out for some Christmas shopping. My sister stayed home that day, having her hair cut the same way I had it. After that it was impossible to tell us apart. During the semester I was given the same teaching as my sister. My mother took care of that. She was a school teacher by profession and had no problems giving me the same lectures as I was supposed to have. So one day in February I took the first big step in the open again. I went to school as Edith. I was very nervous,

but nothing happened. Everybody thought I was Edith. That was the first of many days we switched roles.

“The following year Edith got a boyfriend. In fact it was I that was picked. He was so cute. He took me on my first date. We went to see a movie together. It was only silent movies in those days, but we enjoyed it anyway. He held his arm around me and he even gave me a kiss. That was very romantic and I loved it all. He didn’t dare to touch my breasts, though, he was much too shy for that. I can still see him in front of my eyes. His name was Robert and we stayed as a couple all through Junior High as you call it now. After that our ways separated and I never saw him again. He moved with his family to Boston. But remember now, I was not only me that dated Robert, my sister did as well. He never knew that there were two of us, he was happy just the same. We didn’t get to say proper goodbye to him, he moved in such a rush. I think it had something to do with his father’s death. Boston was his mother’s home town.

“One thing Edith and I had to do on occasions like this, was to tell each other everything that had happened. If not, the people we met might get suspicious that something was going on, and that might have put our whole family in jeopardy. We didn’t want that. So in the end we were two persons living one life. We had lots of fun, and I wouldn’t have been without these years if you gave me all the money in the world.

Chapter 3

Let’s now leave Edith for a while and tell some of her stories in our own words. Then we can tell you

what really happened when the two Edith's really started to live a life on their own. Fortunately the family had a large house and could easily use two identical bedrooms for the sisters. Let's also for clarity use Edith for the natural born girl Edith, while her twin sister, born as Edward, is called Edna. That way the reader will always know who is who. It will be complicated anyway, it's just to help you along.

All through the winter of 1922-23 the family thought about how to solve the schooling problem for the two girls. Around Christmas it was clear that the two when dressed alike and with identical hairstyles looked like identical twins. But what about school? Clearly they couldn't go to school together, that would really raise the eyes of the teachers. Then what about alternating in school? That could solve the problem. But it also meant that whoever went to school one day, must tell everything she learned to the other to keep her up to date. But she had to tell her sister more. She had to tell her everything she experienced on that particular day. Who she talked to, what they were talking about etc. There were no recording devices in those days, at least not so small that you could carry it in your handbag. When time was ripe they even had to share boyfriends. That could be risky if Edna was out and the boy wanted to fumble under her skirt. That could in fact lead to a complete disaster. All this and more was discussed in the family during the Christmas break. During that time Edith also updated Edna on everything that had happened since Edward officially passed away. Since both girls had an excellent memory, all parties involved were sure this would work out fine.

So by mid February Edna was ready to go to school as Edith. She had memorized everything her sister had

told her and felt confident that she would make it. The two sisters were now a mirror image of each other in looks, their voices were the same and they had the same mind set. Nothing was left to chance when Edna, as Edith went to school that Tuesday in February. School weeks were six days in the twenties, and it was decided that Edna should go to school on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The other three says Edith would go. That was because on these days there were some physical activities that might lead to the girls have to see each other naked. On these occasions it was too risky to send Edna. To make up for Sundays it was decided that they should be active every other Sunday. One Sunday for Edith, the next for Edna.

Edna knew most of the students in the class from before. They were now in second grade in what now can be compared with Junior High, so she had been with those guys one year already. She came together with her friend and neighbor Judith and Judith didn't notice anything particular with Edith, or Edna. They had known each other for years. And since she didn't notice that it wasn't the real Edith that came to school with her, no one else would either. And so it was, Edna was accepted as Edith and nobody was the wiser.

Edna loved to be back in school. She had in fact missed it very much since last summer. She loved to talk with her old classmates, but was very aware not to overdo it. It must be done the way it was natural for Edith. Schooling wasn't too hard either. She had been kept updated by Edith all the way since school began in August and knew just as much as she did. So going to school wasn't too bad for the girls. They only had to spend some extra time at home updating each other on last day's events. This way they could do their homework at the same time.

Edith had over the past months set her eyes on a boy named Robert. They were in the same class and seemed to enjoy each other's company. In those days you had, as a 13-year old, to be a little more discreet than what they are today, but it was quite normal that boys and girls started to hang together at that age. Nothing serious, just showing that they liked each other's company. Both Edith and Edna kept strong contact with Robert, and you might say it that they fell in love. So one day in late March Robert managed to get enough courage to ask Edith out and go to a movie. They only had silent movies in black and white back then, but the movie theater was dark. Therefore it was easy to snug closer and give each other their hands. The invitation from Robert came on a Wednesday and was for the coming Saturday. That meant that it Edna that received the invitation and accepted it, but it Edith that went on the date. Poor Robert didn't know a thing. He had invited on girl to the cinema and was going with her twin sister. If he had known he would have been very confused.

The date went fine. Robert was a true young gentleman and did everything he could to keep Edith happy. He even managed to steal a kiss from her. That made them both turn beet red. Back home from the movie they walked hand in hand. It was clear to everyone who saw them that they were in love. Robert took Edith to her doorstep and gave her a short kiss on the mouth before he went back home.

Once inside the house Edith had to tell everything to Edna in order to keep her updated on the developments between the two of them. She had to know ev-

everything. It was after all Edna's turn to be out on Sunday.

Sunday was just the next day. Edith and Robert had agreed to meet in the park around noon that day. But it was Edna that went to see Robert that day. She told him just what he wanted to hear, that they had had a great time and that she felt warm after his goodbye kiss and all that kind of stuff. Remember this was 1923 and people were a little more discreet in the streets in those days. Robert would turn 14 in just a month, and as you all know, Edna would do the same in late July. It was not very much they could do except walking the park holding hands and look very much in love with each other. But they found a secluded spot somewhere, and sat down and started to hug and kiss as only young kids can. Robert started fumbling with Edna's breasts, but that was OK. Edna liked the feeling of having a boy fumbling with her. She only had to keep him away from her groin. If he happened to learn what was down there, she would be in serious trouble. And that was one thing she didn't want to be. That would ruin the whole scheme the two sisters were up to. Edna had to leave that part to Edith.

But everything went fine. They left their secret spot and came back onto the open. Robert bought Edna a soda and they continued talking for a while more before Edna had to go home for dinner. Robert gave her a goodbye kiss at the door and hurried home to his own folks. He was a very happy boy deeply in love.

Inside the house Edith was waiting for her sister, eager to hear what had happened. She was so excited. They both were in love with Robert, but knew that only one of them could marry him and they knew that that person had to be Edith. Edna had no chance of ever

getting a man. And after the marriage it would be impossible to switch places again. The chance that Edna's secret would be discovered would then be 100%. That might ruin their family and leave them stranded with no honor at all.

But both Edith and Edna continued to date Robert all the way to the summer holiday. Robert would go away for the summer, and that would leave the girls on their own. The girls' father Phillip was granted four week vacation and decided to take his family on a tour into the Rockies. He wanted to visit the place where he and his parents lived prospecting for gold. He had been born in 1881 outside Chicago, but times were lean and when his father Ben Wilkins heard about the gold that was found in Cripple Creek, Colorado, he decided to try his luck. He left his family back home and went west in the fall of 1895. He soon got work in one of the mines in the district. But he dreamt of having his own mine. He lived under crappy conditions in a boarding house and saved about every penny he could make. So by April of 1896 he had a lot of money in the bank. On April 25th that year a huge fire raged the city and destroyed many houses. Just as things slowly started to get back to normal, another fire struck the city, only four days after the first one. Now almost the whole city was destroyed and many people left town. But the most stubborn ones stayed. One of them was Ben Wilkins. The owner of the mine where he had worked left town to live in Colorado Springs, and offered Ben to lease the mine. He was able to do so under very favorable conditions. Soon the mine paid off very well and Ben became a very rich man. He decided to build himself a house, and did so on Carr Avenue. When the house was ready in the summer of 1897 he sent for his family and they joined him in the gold mining town.

They came over in June 1897 and settled in the house that Ben had built in the middle of Carr Avenue. Phillip was at that time almost 16 years old. He had two younger sisters, Martha and Julie, 13 and 9 years old respectively. A few years later when the US was in war with Cuba, he joined the Naval forces to fight for his country. When the war was over he was dismissed, but was offered to join the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. He did and graduated with honors. He met his future wife there, and as soon as he had graduated they married and settled in San Diego where he was assigned to the Pacific Fleet. Edward and Edith was born just two months after they arrived.

Phillip had left Cripple Creek with quite a fortune in gold. In the few years that he stayed there he had worked along with his father while attending school at the same time. It was safely deposited in a bank, and provided he and his family with enough wealth so they could live happily ever after. None of his friends and colleagues actually knew how wealthy he really was. And now he wanted to go back and show his own family where he had lived and prospered in his younger days. He knew the town was in decline, but he wanted to see it again anyhow. He had so many fond memories from that place.

One day in early June Phillip Wilkins gathered his wife Kathryn and two children, Edith and Edna, in the living room. He wanted to tell them something. "I have been very fortunate this summer," he opened, "the Navy has given me four weeks vacation. It will start on July 9th, and I will have to report back on August 6th. Since July 9th is a Monday, I also have leave on the Sunday before that. So on Sunday 8th of July all four of us will leave for Colorado Springs and visit my sister Martha and her husband Howard who lives there. My

parents also live in that town, but since it's summer they have retreated to their house in Cripple Creek. We will pay them a visit as well. As you have heard many times before my father came to that town in early fall of 1895 looking for gold. Since was lucky and clever he managed to build up a small fortune rather quick and built a house where he and the rest of his family came in the spring of 1897.

"At that time I was 16 years old and still had some schooling to do. In my spare time I worked in the mine alongside my father and made some good money. From 1899 to 1901 I worked in the mine full time. That same year I joined the Navy and later was admitted to the Naval Academy. The rest is a story you all know very well. The problem is that I haven't been to Cripple Creek since I left in 1901, and that is 22 years ago. I want to see that place again and show it to my family and show them where I made my first money, and show you how my family became very rich. As you know I have a second sister as well, but she lives in Florida with her family and we won't be able to see them on this trip. And as you know, they all know about Edith and Edna and are looking forward to see you both. After all, they were all here last year when we officially buried Edward. I will assume that Martha by now has told her children about you. At least she will have made up a credible background story.

"To get to Colorado Springs we have to take the train. It will be a long train ride and we will have to change trains several times. Because of this it will take us two days to get there. The route is as follows: We leave from the train station here in town heading north. At a certain point we turn eastward direction Barstow through Cajon Pass. From Barstow we go east through Kingman, Flagstaff to Albuquerque. We will spend the

night in that city. The next day we go through Raton Pass to Trinidad, Pueblo and finally Colorado Springs. My sister will meet us at the station and take us to their home. We will stay there for a couple of days before we leave for Cripple Creek. How we get there I don't know. It could either be by train through Ute Pass to Divide and then down to Cripple Creek, or by motor car along the old railroad line called Short Line. It was the shortest route between Cripple Creek and Colorado Springs, but was abandoned only a few years ago and made into a highway for auto cars. How we get there I leave to my sister and her husband. How does this sound, my ladies?"

"I'd love to come back and meet your family again," Kathryn said, "it's been such a long time. It's a pity we don't travel more than we actually do. I remember very well when we passed through Cripple Creek on our way from Annapolis to San Diego. It was a little exhausting then, with two babies in my belly, just two months later they were born, just as we had settled in the house that the Navy provided for us. I haven't seen your sister or your parents since that visit. I understand that Martha has three children by now."

"That is correct. As you might remember she was pregnant when we saw her last, so her oldest daughter is just a few months younger than ours. She has another daughter five years younger and a little boy three years younger than the second girl. Her husband is one of the executives in Colorado Springs' largest bank. My parents are retired and live from the assets my father managed to get from the mine he was leasing. The original owner died in 1902 and since he had no close relatives, he left everything to my dad. And remember, our children have always been referred to them as the twins. In fact they don't even know their names. They

were not in Edward's funeral, remember. That's why this will work. I just urge Edna never to get naked in front of any of your cousins, that will blow your cover right away and cause a great scandal in the family. People like you just don't exist, you know."

"I know dad, and I will be very careful. I guess Edith will help me so I don't get out of character. It's hard to live a life where what you look like don't correspond with what you have between your legs. I wish there was some way I could cut it off and look just like Edith."

"Unfortunately, my darling, nobody does things like that. I have found in the library stories about people like you, so you are not unique. If you like, I can get you some."

"Please dad, do. I would love to read about other girls in the same situation as I am in. I wish I could be normal and live a life fully in the open. But I bet that is not for me. I have to keep hiding for the rest of my life."

"At least you will spend three weeks in the open this July. Enjoy to its fullest extent. We will at least try to give you time like that every summer."

"Thank you dad. I can't ask for better parents than you and mom. And in addition I have the greatest sister on earth. I know we will make it in some way or another."

Chapter 4

So on Sunday, July 8th, 1923 Phillip Wilkins took his wife and two daughters to the railroad station in San Diego. It was very early in the morning, as the train should leave at 7:30AM. They took a taxi to the station. Phil could have had some Navy driver pick them up, but then Edna would have been exposed to someone at the base, and he couldn't risk that. To them he only had one daughter left.

The taxi took them all the way to the car where their compartment was made ready for them. Before they entered the train Phil looked closely around to see if someone he knew was in the vicinity. He couldn't see any and entered the train with his family. The luggage was taken care of by the taxi driver and the conductor. Inside the coach they found their compartment and settled in. It was enough space inside to accommodate for all their luggage. The compartment was well equipped and would provide them with a safe journey all the way to Albuquerque. The journey went very fine. It was hard to get the girls to sit still though, they wanted to have a look through the windows and see the landscape unfold before them. The climb up Cajon pass was especially impressive. The train slowly ascended up the curves to the top of the pass while the landscape behind them started to look more and more like a miniature world. Everywhere they stopped they could see the busy travelers go on and off the train. There were a constant change of people on board.

Edith and Edna enjoyed the ride. It was so good to see new places. All they had seen so far was San Diego and its vicinities. Now they really could enjoy the magnificent sceneries that unfolded before them almost every minute. They spent the night in Albuquerque, It was a short night so they didn't sleep much. But that

didn't stop them from enjoying the rest of the journey. They could sleep later,

They arrived almost on schedule in Colorado Springs. As promised Martha was there to greet them welcome. Two automobiles were standing there waiting for them, ready to take them to Martha's house. Her husband was at work and couldn't come to greet them. Each car had a driver and Martha and the kids would be in one car, while their parents were in the other with most of their luggage. It took them about 20 minutes before they reached Martha's house. There the parents was given one room and the girls another. They had a quick meal before the girls fell asleep on the bed. The journey had been long and tedious and they really needed some rest.

Martha and her husband Howard were the perfect hosts for the Wilkins family. Their own kids went very well along with Edith and Edna. The adults knew, of course, that one of them in reality was Edward and that she had a penis between her legs. It was small and insignificant, but it was there and would prevent her from ever having sex like a normal woman. That bothered her, but there was nothing she could do about it. To Martha's kids, however, Edith and Edna was just two normal girls.

The Wilkins family stayed in Colorado Springs for a week before it was time to go to Cripple Creek and visit Ben and his wife, the grandparents of Edith and Edna. They knew the secret of course, and had nothing against it. The Lord moves in mysterious ways, Ben always said. They had thought about driving up the scenic route where the Short Line used to run to Cripple Creek, but since they were nine persons in total, they decided against it. It was better to take the train.

The train left for Cripple Creek on a Sunday morning. The train took them through Ute Pass, passed Manitou Springs on its way to Divide. From Divide they turned south to Cripple Creek. It had been a great engineering feat to build that railroad. Since the mining camp was in decline, it was not very much traffic on the line. The company that ran the line was called Midland Terminal. At the station in Cripple Creek they were met by grandpa Ben and his wife. He was now a wealthy man, 68 years old and still going strong. His wife Rebecca was two years younger. They had arranged for three cars to pick them all up to his house on Carr Avenue. It wouldn't have been impossible to walk the distance, but due to all the luggage they had the cars bring them instead.

The house was large enough for them all. It had several rooms that could be used for sleeping and Rebecca had made sure that everybody would sleep in comfort and have a great time. The families settled in immediately. As soon as everybody had settled in, Rebecca served dinner to them all. It was the first family dinner Phillip had attended in years.

The visit to Cripple Creek was a great success. Ben showed the children where his mine was located and told the story about how rich it was, and how suddenly there were no more gold to be found. He was very emotional when he talked about his mine, especially when he was just outside of what was left. He took them to Victor, another important town in the glorious days of gold mining. Both towns were now only a shadow of their old self, but you still could feel the atmosphere that once was there. Phillip remembered well the years he had spent in this town, and he remembered them well. It was after all here he had laid the foundation to the wealth he could show today. The

fact that he had joined the Navy was just because he wanted to. He didn't like the thought of sitting in an office manipulating papers every day.

The visit to Cripple Creek lasted for 10 days. Then they had seen it all. Rebecca and Ben joined them on the train back to Colorado Springs. As they passed Manitou Springs he pointed at the peak nearby and said: "This my children, is Pike's Peak, 14,105 feet high and I will take you there the day after tomorrow. We will take the cog railroad to the summit and admire the view. If you have cameras, please bring them. You will see a sight you will never forget."

So two days later grandpa Ben took his five grandchildren to the summit of Pike's Peak. He took a car and drove up to where the railroad started. He parked the car, bought the tickets and all six of them boarded the train. Ben was the only adult in the group. He didn't want to see any of the other grown-ups. This was his show, and only his.

They arrived at the depot in Manitou Springs around 11 AM. The train would leave in just 15 minutes. The kids took a look at the train and thought it looked strange. It had a steam locomotive, but the locomotive looked not to be parallel with the tracks. The tracks were in an incline, but the locomotive was still horizontal. When Edna asked about that Ben said that it was important to keep the boiler system on the locomotive in a horizontal position, if not it wouldn't work. The steam and the water in the boiler would follow gravity and seek the lowest point in the locomotive and then it would be in one end only and the system would simply not work.

Edna started thinking. Her face was definitely in deep thought. After about one minute she got it. It had

to be that way. In normal tracks the inclines were never very steep and this was no problem, but here the incline was so steep that it would be a serious problem if the locomotive wasn't horizontal. Ingenious, she thought. Edith did not think about it this way, to her it was just something they had to do. This proved that there were still some boy's brain left in Edna. Hers and Edith's brains didn't work totally in unison.

The trip to the summit was a slow breathtaking journey. The landscape opened up underneath them and they could see more and more of Colorado as the train ascended. As they came nearer to the summit they could see the vast plains stretching beyond the horizon to the east, and the magnificent peaks of the Rockies in the three other directions. When they reached the summit and stepped out of the train, a chilly wind forced the girls to hold their skirts in order not to look indecent to other people. It felt very embarrassing, at least to Edna who had more to show inside her panties than any other girl. But it was so small and insignificant that nobody would notice anyway. Edna knew that, but she also knew she had it and was very aware that it was there.

The view from the summit was marvelous. They could see for miles in every direction, nothing was there to obscure the view. There was not a cloud in sky and the sun felt baking hot even if the wind was chilly. Down to the south they could see Cripple Creek, the place that made their family rich. The town meant so much to them. Without it, they would still have been relatively poor and lived in much more modest houses. Edna was happy that she would have a good life, despite the fact that she always had to remain hidden from the rest of the world. Many times she thought about what would happen if Edith one time got mar-

ried and had a family of her own. She then most probably would have to go and live somewhere else, maybe even go to Europe and live there.

But all good things come to an end, and soon they had to go back down again. The trip down was a little more scary than going up, after all they were looking directly down now, instead of up when they were ascending. Back down in Manitou Springs they left the train and drove back in their uncle's car, driven by their grandfather.

Edna and her family had one more important trip out before they went back home to San Diego. The trip was to a place called Garden of the Gods, a natural phenomena that laid just outside Colorado Springs in a northwesterly direction. It was a strange place with rocks scattered around, standing there as giants looking down on the people below. No wonder that the natives had held this place sacred.

The train ride back home was just like the trip going to Colorado. The only difference was that they were traveling in the in the opposite direction. They arrived in San Diego late one Sunday evening. Their father would go to work the next morning and would most probably be out at sea for some time to come. School was still one week away, so they had time enough to absorb what they had experienced these four weeks. The trip to Pike's Peak had been the best. It had taken place on the twins' 14th birthday, July 31st, 1923, and that made it a special treat to them. The trip to The Garden of the Gods had been two days later and the whole family had been there with them. They also remembered the trips to the mine that had made the family rich. It was sad to see it now, all covered with grass and trees. But Ben tried as best he could to keep it as

neat as possible around the place. But the task was too big for one man to handle, so it was slowly falling apart. That is the story of many mines in the area. The mines were mostly empty and only a few could still give a small outcome to people who were dedicated and worked hard.

Chapter 5

One week after returning from Colorado Springs Edith/Edna was back in school. This would be the last year in Junior High and the girls really wanted to continue their education. Senior High was next, but that was still one year in the future. At school they ran into Robert again. He was still in their class and once he saw whoever it was that was in school that day, he said straight out that he had missed her. He believed it was Edith, of course, and on this first day it was. The schedules were handed out that day, and that would determine which girl would attend school on what day. It turned out that Edith had to be there on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays this year. That meant that Edna would go on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. It didn't matter to them as long as they had three days each.

Robert wanted to start dating Edith again, and to Edith this was totally OK. She and Edna had prepared for that, and they had to admit it, they both were in love with Robert. They had even discussed how they could arrange that they could get married to him. If that would be the case, he had to be let in on their secret. There were no other ways. They knew they could trust him.