



Margaret leaned forward for a better glimpse out the speeding train's window. Oswell City would soon appear on the horizon. She remembered the look of the outlying countryside from her last visit. The intersection of the roads she just now passed and the cluster of trees around a pond were familiar. Farmsteads with their trim, solid buildings guarded by protecting borders of trees alerted her that she was only minutes away from her destination.

As the train climbed a low rise, there in the distance she could make out the little town's brick buildings. Flat tops of the main street's stores and peaked roofs of houses became more distinct. A church spire rose above them into the afternoon sky.

Clasping her hands, Margaret leaned back. She'd arrived. Very soon she'd be in Karen's home getting acquainted with those new babies.

"Next stop, Oswell City." The conductor walked the aisle announcing the location.

In haste, Margaret arranged items in her satchel and closed the top. Like a child eager to open her Christmas gifts, she watched above the heads of the other travelers for the moment when the train would finally stop. Buildings whizzed past the

windows. The piercing whistle blew, and the train slowed. People stood along the tracks and inched by her window as the train came to a halt. Margaret studied them in search of her son-in-law.

Everyone around her crowded the aisle. Margaret stood, brushed her skirt, and checked her hat. The minutes dragged as she crept to the door, her eyes always on the people outside. She had yet to spot Logan. Surely he'd come. Maybe a visitor had detained him at the church or some other urgency had developed. Her stomach fluttered as she stepped off the train.

"Mrs. Millerson." A man rushed toward her. His face looked familiar. After a moment of mental consultation with the list of names of the people she knew in this town, she matched his appearance with Paul Ellenbroek, the mayor and a friend of Logan.

He shook her hand. "Welcome to Oswell City. Logan couldn't meet your train as he'd planned. The doctor is at the parsonage right now and needed Logan's assistance. I'll help you gather your luggage and drive you there."

Margaret nodded at this startling bit of news. She'd have to wait to see Logan. Of course he wouldn't have brought any babies with him to the noisy depot where soot contaminated the air. But a glimpse of him would have brought her closer to her grandchildren. Now the connection was delayed.

The discovery of the doctor's presence at Logan and Karen's home caused a flutter. She may meet him again after all these months of memories of the evening they'd spent together.

Mr. Ellenbroek assisted Margaret into the front seat of his car and motored down Main Street. Such a charming town. The jewelry store, the bakery, and the bank moved by her window. Customers walked along the street looking in windows and shopping. Two men lifted their arms and waved to her driver. A dress shop displayed a sign between two of the stores. That was new since her last visit to Oswell City. She must check into that business sometime and see what the seamstress kept in supply.

They traveled three more blocks and turned the corner. Mr. Ellenbroek parked his Model T Ford in front of a brick house and got out. He came around to Margaret's door and opened it. He then collected her luggage from the back seat and led her to the door.

Logan answered the knock. "Good afternoon, Mother. So glad to have you." His bright smile welcomed them.

The boy was adorable. She must remember that he served as the local minister. People older than him looked up to him and respected him. But that didn't change Margaret's perception of him. From the wave of his blond hair on his forehead to the tie that slanted across his dress shirt due to a baby squirming at his shoulder, Logan would always appear to her as a soul as honest and trusting as a child's. Her regard for him included a degree of motherly love independent of his age or status.

She patted his cheek. "I'm so glad to finally be here. Is this Simon or John?"

Logan adjusted the baby's position so Margaret could get a better look at him. "This is John. The doctor is with Karen and Simon. Come with me. Let's get you settled in your room."

Mr. Ellenbroek followed Margaret and Logan down the hall to the guest room. He set Margaret's suitcase on the bed, gave Logan a good-natured slap on his arm, and left the house.

Logan turned the baby in his arms to look at her while Margaret removed her hat and laid it on the bed next to the suitcase. "Hey, John. How would you like to meet your grandma?"

She was correct in her assessment of him. Totally adorable. The high soft voice he used with his infant son and his movement of John's hand in a wave to her confirmed Logan's permanent place in her mother's heart. She hardly knew which boy to hug and kiss first. Given the fact that hugging Logan would squish the baby, she started with John.

"Come to Grandma. Let me have a good look at you." She reached to take her tiny grandson from Logan's arms.

The murmur of voices from another room caught her attention. One voice lilted calm and peaceful. Karen. The other voice droned deep and fervent. It must belong to the doctor. Margaret glanced into the hall. The consultation couldn't be happening too far away for as well as she could hear their conversation. Maybe they visited in the nearby dining room or in the other bedroom.

Margaret gave a shrug. What did she care that Dr. Kaldenberg happened to conduct his examination at the same time she'd arrived in town? She barely knew a thing about him. Just because he'd spent one evening giving her a bit of his attention didn't mean she had a right to expect any more. He may not even remember her.

A part of her wilted. If the town's doctor didn't remember her as well as she did him, sadness would settle in, but she'd accept it.

"He likes you already." Logan stroked John's faint cast of dark hair.

Margaret tilted her head to smile at John. Large, dark eyes gazed up at her.

"Anything you'd like put away? I can help you unpack." Logan pointed at her suitcase.

"There are some dresses I would like to have hung up, but I'll take care of them later. Maybe you would rather hold John." She hated to give up the warm little bundle, but she couldn't blame Logan for preferring the baby to unpacking.

"He needs someone to help him get to sleep. Karen and I have been using the rocking chair in the parlor. It might be the quietest place in the house at the moment since the doctor is with Karen in our room."

"I would love it. Unpacking can wait." Margaret shifted the baby in her arms.

"Fine. If there is nothing you need me to do, then I'll slip over to the church for the rest of the afternoon." Logan

straightened his tie so that it properly hung in place covering the buttons on his shirt.

Margaret shook her head. “I can’t think of anything. Go ahead and return to work. I’ll take care of things here.”

Logan offered her a smile. “See you for supper.” He gave his small son a pat on the back and left the house.

Margaret drew in a deep breath. Sitting in the parlor put her in the doctor’s path. She couldn’t prevent a meeting if she sat out in the open like that. She should have asked Logan to move the rocking chair to her room. Then she could shut the door. Pacing the floor of her room with her new grandson in her arms, Margaret allowed her thoughts to turn to the doctor.

A meeting with him would not signal the end of the world, but it would open up in her life a compartment she’d kept sealed off. Ever since Simon died, Margaret had enjoyed pursuing her own life and growing in independence. She lived with her brother as a member of his family, but his provision for her didn’t come with a tight rein on how she spent her time, or on her relationships.

Margaret cultivated many interests, as her involvement in the variety of clubs and organizations confirmed. An expansive circle of relationships resulted offering her friends and groups of friends who hosted social engagements galore.

Life was a round of luncheons, parties, charity events, and quiet talks over cups of tea. Giving her affections to one man would change everything, throwing her off balance and narrowing her gregarious path. She’d spent nearly twenty years of her life revolving around Simon’s whims, Simon’s schedule, and Simon’s health. These years she’d spent living with Henry and Fran had been the time of her life. She was having fun, and she had no intention of it coming to an end.

John fussed, so Margaret patted his bottom. Maybe the movement would help him rest. Her efforts didn’t work. He stayed awake. She gave in to Logan’s suggestion and sought out the rocking chair in the parlor. The change immediately effected

the baby. He snuggled in the blanket she wrapped around him and relaxed.

They rocked for a long while until John fell asleep. She must lay him in a crib. Margaret scanned the room in search of one. Maybe Karen kept the crib in her room. Margaret would ask when the doctor finished the examination.

Voices from the bedroom grew louder. The doorknob clicked. Margaret held her breath. The moment arrived to once again welcome the presence of Matthew Kaldenberg.

He emerged first and stepped into the hall, focused on his conversation with Karen. Dressed in his suit, he looked as professional as she remembered. His dark hair was trimmed close to his head. His face appeared clean-shaven. He stood straight and confident.

Karen held a baby in her arms as she glanced Margaret's way. "Mother! I thought I heard you come." Her face lit up.

The doctor's speech died away at the interruption. He turned to look at the guest who had captured Karen's attention.

"You remember Dr. Kaldenberg from our wedding reception, don't you?" Karen asked as she stepped closer.

Margaret's throat went dry. "Why yes, of course I do."

"Do you remember my mother?" Karen smiled and turned to the doctor.

"Certainly." A thoughtful look softened the doctor's eyes. He reached to shake her hand.

Margaret accepted his handshake and gave him a quick nod.

He held eye contact for an instant and then turned to Karen. "I'll check back with you tomorrow afternoon. Make sure to try the method I explained to you for feeding Simon. I'd like to see him gain half a pound by next week."

"I will."

He looked at Margaret again. "Good afternoon, ladies."

Karen flew to the sofa.

"Mother, it is so good of you to come early. Logan has been willing to get up in the night with the babies, and to come home

when I need him, but he's busy, and he needs his sleep. I'm glad to have you here now."

"I'm happy to be here. Couldn't wait to come. This must be Simon." Margaret pointed to the newborn in Karen's arms.

"He is. Meet your other grandson." She held him closer so Margaret could see him. "Looks like you got John to sleep."

"I did. Where do you want me to put him?"

"The crib is in the bedroom. You can lay him down in there."

Margaret left the parlor and laid John down gently so he would stay asleep. Then she returned to the parlor.

"Oh, that reminds me. We need another crib. Would you please go ask the doctor if he could help us locate one? Logan and I talked about it last night, but I forgot to mention it. Maybe he hasn't gone too far for you to catch him." Karen claimed the rocking chair and worked to put Simon to sleep.

"Uh." Margaret's mouth dropped open. Fulfilling Karen's request meant running down the street and yelling as she chased after a man. Her face heated. None of those behaviors belonged in her repertoire of proper manners. They certainly were not the way she wished to make her first impression on the doctor or on any neighbors along the street who might be watching. Surely Karen could come up with another way to snag Matthew Kaldenberg's attention.

"Please hurry, Mother. He might have reached downtown by now, or someone else may have called him to an emergency. He's a very busy man." Karen's brow furrowed as she glanced at Margaret.

She had no other choice. Karen needed Margaret's help. That was why Logan invited her here in the first place. If being of true assistance to this household meant a departure from dignity, then Margaret may have to swallow a bit of her pride.

"I'll try to find him." Margaret retrieved her hat and hastened out the door.

MARGARET FOLLOWED the sidewalk to the intersection Fifth Street made with Main Street. A straight, tall man carrying a black medical bag strode past the bank. A man wearing a white apron came out of the bakery and waved to him. He stopped to talk with the man from the bakery.

Now was her chance. If she hurried, she might catch up to him and avoid making a scene by calling his name and grabbing the attention of the entire business district. Margaret lifted her skirt and crossed the street. She kept her rushed pace as she passed the Koelman Law Firm and the Oswell City Savings Bank.

The doctor disappeared into the bakery.

Margaret sighed and slowed down. At least she knew where he went, but he might have a new crisis to attend to, making him unavailable. She entered the bakery and looked around.

Loaves of bread lined a shelf near the door. Pastries were on display in a glass counter. Cookies, doughnuts, and rolls filled another glass counter. The place smelled deliciously of sweet dough, inviting anyone with even the smallest appetite to believe they were famished and in desperate need of everything the bakery had to offer.

“Good morning. May I help you?” A clerk glanced at Margaret.

“Uh, yes. I’m Pastor Logan’s mother-in-law, and I’m looking for the doctor. Is he here?” Margaret checked her hat. It had loosened from its place on her head when she hastily donned it, and now needed secured.

A smile broke out on the clerk’s face. “Congratulations on the new twin grandsons. That’s the biggest news we’ve had around here in a long time.” The clerk moved from the counter. “The doctor is right back here. I’ll get him.” He disappeared to a back room.

Customers milled around in the store with their attention on the baked goods and not on her, so Margaret took advantage of the quiet moments to straighten her hat.



“Press that bandage to your hand until I return.” Dr. Kaldenberg called out over his shoulder as he followed the clerk. He turned and nodded at Margaret. “Good morning, Mrs. Millerson. Nice to see you again so soon. What can I do for you?”

His presence so near and his forthright gaze unsettled her. Karen’s request slipped her mind. Margaret forgot why she’d pursued him. When her brain started to work again, it prompted her to ask him a question. How she’d love for him to take her to an intimate dinner similar to the one they’d enjoyed together on the night of Karen’s wedding reception.

Margaret shook her head to clear it. Those were hardly the words her daughter had given her to speak to the professional doctor in public. A woman entered the store pushing a baby in a carriage. The image brought Karen’s words back to her.

“Karen would like your help locating another crib for them to use. Is that possible?” Margaret asked.

The doctor gave her a slow nod. “Yes, I believe I can find some sort of bed for them to use. I’m headed to the children’s home in Clear Brook tomorrow. They might have an extra crib we can borrow.”

Margaret smiled. “Thank you. Karen and Logan would appreciate it.”

“I’ll bring it by their house when I return to town.”

She nodded as she backed away from him and left the store.

At Karen’s house, Margaret removed her hat and sat on the sofa as Karen emerged from the bedroom. “Simon is asleep now. Did you find the doctor?”

“I did. He will check at the children’s home and bring a crib with him when he comes back.”

“I knew he could help us. Logan and I tried to be as prepared as possible for the new baby, but two babies have caught us a little off guard. Everyone has been so kind with their offers to help us.” Karen sat in the rocking chair. “So, tell me all about

Chicago. How is Julia? How did the charity ball go Tuesday night?"

"I'm told that the ball was a success. The library was pleased, anyway. I brought you one of the floral centerpieces and some leftover cake. We can eat it for supper if you like."

"Where are the flowers?" Karen stood.

"In my room. You may get them."

Karen left and soon returned with the glass vase and the flowers with their stems carefully wrapped in a damp towel. "They're beautiful. I'll put them in water right away." She went to the kitchen, put the full vase on the dining room table, and reclaimed the rocking chair.

"I want to be sure and tell you, dear, that your uncle Henry approved of your names for the babies. He thought the name Simon was a good choice for your little boy." Margaret clasped Karen's hand.

"I'm so glad. Uncle Henry's acceptance of Logan was slow at first, but it has been growing. Maybe he can look past Father's failures and accept baby Simon for who he is." Karen spoke in a low voice full of feeling.

Margaret nodded. "Your son will have a different surname from your father's, so that will help. Simon De Witt will grow to be a very different person from the man we knew as Simon Van Deursen."

They visited while John and Simon napped. The quiet lasted for an hour. Then the babies woke up, both of them hungry and in need of a change of clothes. Karen took John and fed him giving Margaret a chance to get acquainted with Simon. They traded so Simon could eat. By this time, the hour had arrived to prepare the evening meal. Margaret headed to the kitchen with a baby on her arm and looked around.

It had been a long time since she'd cooked a meal by herself. She looked in a few cupboards and glanced in the ice box.

"Use the ham, Mother," Karen called from the other room.

Margaret found the meat and started cooking it. At least ham

was a simple food to prepare. It would break her in easy on this first night of review on the subject of cooking. Karen soon arrived in the kitchen and set the table.

While they worked, the infants lay on a blanket on the parlor floor. They stayed content until Logan came home. He entered a house filled with baby cries while Mother and Grandma worked in the kitchen. Margaret watched him pick up a baby and rock it in the chair. She couldn't say if he held Simon or if he held John. She hadn't yet learned how to tell her grandsons apart. They looked identical to her inexperienced eye.

Logan's attention settled the baby down. Margaret drew in a breath. Three adults should be able to manage two babies.

But the evening proved challenging. John and Simon required constant attention. Logan, Karen, and Margaret needed to eat their evening meal. The kitchen needed cleaned, and she still had a suitcase to unpack.

Logan left the house again after he ate to call on a sick woman. Not until he had returned, the kitchen was clean, and the twins were asleep did Margaret finally get the chance to look after her suitcase. She worked in her room, enjoying the quiet. Living with Karen and Logan in the mild chaos of doctor visits, baby care, and housework without the help of any servants would be much different from the serene existence she took for granted in Chicago.