

Chapter Summaries

1

- One summer two boys and a girl go to a foster home to live together.
- One of the boys is Harvey. Both of his legs are broken because his father ran over him with a car.
- When Harvey wins third prize of two dollars for his essay, "Why I Am Proud to Be an American," his father promises to drive him to the meeting to see him get the award. The winners and their parents will have their pictures in the newspaper.
- On the night of the awards, Harvey sits waiting in the car for his father. He cannot believe it when the man tells him to get out of the car. He is late for his poker game at the Elks Club.
- Harvey reminds his father of his promise, but the man denies having promised Harvey anything. He leans over and pushes his son out of the car. When Harvey grabs for the car door, the red-faced man locks it.
- Harvey runs around the front of the car to try to open the other door. His father accidentally throws the car into drive instead of reverse and steps on the gas. The Trans Am runs over Harvey and breaks both his legs.
- The court takes Harvey away from his father and puts him in the foster home until his father can control his drinking and give the boy a safe home.
- The second boy is Thomas J. He doesn't know anything about his family. At the age of two, he had been dropped off in front of the Benson twins' farmhouse. They are eighty-two years old, and the oldest twins in the state. Thomas J stays with them for six years.
- The Bensons mean to take Thomas J to town to the authorities, but he is pleasant company. He is also good help in the garden. When the twins both fall and break their hips at the age of eighty-eight, the authorities discover Thomas J. He is sent to the foster home until his identity can be established or permanent adoptive parents can be found.
- The girl is Carlie. She never says anything polite. She throws things at people who block her view when she is watching television, which is her main fun.
- Carlie has had two stepfathers, but Russell is the worst. She has been sent to the foster home because she can't get along with him.
- Once Russell hit Carlie so hard, she got a concussion. Before she collapsed, she had managed to hit him back with a double boiler. She has to stay at the foster home until her own home situation stabilizes.
- The first thing Carlie does at the Masons' is pull the plastic footrest up close to the TV and warn Mrs. Mason not to talk to her when "Young and Restless" is on. Her foster mother can welcome her during the commercial.

2

- Carlie has been suspicious of people since the day she was born. She believes everyone is out to do her in. She dislikes Mrs. Mason, the foster mother, as soon as she sees her standing in the doorway. She tells the social worker that the woman is trying to copy Mrs. Walton (Note: *character from 1971-1981 TV series "The Waltons"*) by wearing an apron, but she is not fooled by such things.
- Carlie is especially disturbed by the Masons' living room, where there are seventeen pictures, probably of foster children. Carlie vows that her picture will not go up over the fireplace with the others.
- Mrs. Mason waits until "Young and Restless" is over to ask Carlie to come have some lunch. Afterwards, they will get the boys' room ready. Carlie is interested.
- The boys are eight and thirteen—too young for Carlie. Mrs. Mason says the boys will have to tell Carlie about their troubles. All she knows is that the thirteen-year-old has two broken legs.
- Carlie says that lets out dancing.

- Harvey's wheelchair is placed by Carlie's footstool, where she sits watching television. She asks Harvey what happened to his legs.
- Carlie does not accept Harvey's answer, "Nothing," and presses him to tell her. Harvey feels sick thinking about the Grand Am lunging over him, but he tells Carlie that he broke his legs playing football.
- Harvey wishes it had happened that way. Boys would have signed his casts and girls would have left lipstick prints on it, but his casts are not autographed. He wishes he had forged some names on them.
- Carlie doesn't believe Harvey when he says he was playing quarterback. She decides to give him another chance, and asks again what happened. Harvey sticks to his story.
- If Harvey is going to tell her a bunch of lies, Carlie is going to go back to watching television. Carlie's decision is all right with Harvey.

3

- Thomas J arrives after supper. He has been living with the hard-of-hearing Benson twins so long he yells everything.
- Mrs. Mason puts Thomas J in the room with Harvey so he can help Harvey.
- Carlie asks Thomas J to keep his voice down so she can hear the television.
- Thomas J watches "Tony Orlando and Dawn" with Carlie, although he would rather not. It is one of the Benson twins' favorites, and it brings back sad memories. He hopes there is a TV set at the hospital where the twins have been taken.
- The Benson twins had fallen coming in from the garden, and each one had broken a hip. At the hospital, Thomas J learns for the first time that their names are Thomas and Jefferson, after their father's favorite president. Thomas J had been named for both of them.
- The twins tell Thomas J not to worry. Everybody in their family lives to be at least ninety. Their ninety-six-year-old father had not lived longer because a tree limb fell and hit him. The only time the twins were angry at Thomas J was when he used the limb, which they had kept on the back porch, as firewood.
- Carlie complains when Andy Griffith comes on the television, and she insults Harvey when he says he wants to hear what Andy Griffith is saying.
- Harvey feels a twinge in his right leg where the break had gone through the skin. He wants to return Carlie's insult, but he knows she can out-insult anybody.
- Carlie says that Andy Griffith gives her a pain, and he isn't the only one.

4

- For the first time, Carlie has a bed and a room by herself. At one time she had slept with a cousin, her stepfather's two daughters, and a half sister in one bed. She smiles at herself in the mirror, testing the technique she has developed to hide her crooked lower teeth.
 - Carlie hears a noise behind her and turns to see Thomas J. He comes into the room smiling because he has found her earring in the bathroom. It has been missing since just after "Tony Orlando and Dawn." Carlie has accused everyone in the house of stealing it.
 - Thomas J is pleased to have found the earring. Once when he had found their father's gold watch, the Bensons had been so happy they had patted him and said, "Good boy." It was the only time they had touched him on purpose. He had wanted them to lose the watch over and over so he could keep finding it.
 - Thomas J wants Carlie to like him. He especially likes her long flowing hair. His own hair is scraggly, a result of the Benson twins' technique of standing on either side and cutting toward the middle. He is disappointed when Carlie suggests that he "found" her earring because he had stolen it.
 - Carlie says, "all right, all right," and asks Thomas J to keep his voice down when he starts yelling, "I found it," and backing out of the room.
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- Carlie is in bed staring at the ceiling when Mrs. Mason comes by to ask if everything is all right. She understands that things must seem very wrong for Carlie.

- All seventeen of her other foster kids have told her that the first night is the worst. Home sickness is a very real kind of illness.
- Carlie says it's too bad there's not a vaccine for home sickness, but people don't care about kids like her. She has come to the foster home only because her stepfather threatened to cut off her hair. She has been growing it since fourth grade. Now she wonders if it was worth it.
- Mrs. Mason says all of her kids have gone on into the world. Two of them are in college. One has his own service station. Some are back with their families. It all works out. Things will be better for Carlie tomorrow.
- After Mrs. Mason leaves the room, Carlie turns her face to the wall and reminds herself that she can always run away if things don't get better.

5

- Harvey and Thomas J share the room across the hall from Carlie. Harvey gets the bottom bunk because of his broken legs.
- Thomas J is used to saying his prayers every night, like the twins did, on his knees beside the bed, but he is shy about praying in front of Harvey. He climbs up the ladder to his bed and gets on his knees.
- Harvey tells Thomas J that his broken legs are a result of being tackled too hard playing football. He had been sent to the foster home before his friends could autograph his casts.
- Thomas J is sympathetic. He tells Harvey how the Benson twins broke their hips just walking down a path. He is in the foster home because the twins are in the hospital.
- Harvey confesses that there is no one at home to take care of him. His mom doesn't live with them anymore. He does not say that he hasn't seen his mother in three years.
- Harvey had sat on the stairs and listened to the last quarrel between his parents—his mother saying she doesn't know who she is anymore. She has to leave to find herself.
- Harvey's father reminds his mother that she is his wife and a mother. It was her idea, not his, to have a kid. The yoga lessons and the Maharishna are to blame for her desire to run away to the commune in Virginia.
- Harvey hoped that his mother would come back in a week or two, but she never returned. Once, he had seen a picture of her and some of the other people on their Virginia farm in the *New York Times Magazine*. When Harvey's father saw the picture, he threw the whole newspaper in the fireplace and drank martinis until he passed out on the sofa.
- Thomas J finishes his prayers on the upper bunk. The boys wish each other a good-night.

6

- The next morning Harvey's legs hurt and he doesn't feel like getting out of bed. Mrs. Mason sends Carlie in with a breakfast tray, but Harvey just looks at it.
- Carlie says it's going to take more than Harvey's breakfast of Little Crunchies to make him big and strong. She wonders if they make Big Crunchies. Harvey says nothing.
- Carlie wouldn't lie there like a rope if someone brought her a breakfast tray. She would drop over dead. Still Harvey doesn't speak.
- Carlie has given Harvey a perfect chance to insult her. When she said she would drop over dead, he should have said, "Is that a promise?" She gives up. Harvey is hopeless. When he gets through eating, he is to call. The slave of the world will come back for the tray.
- Carlie is all the way out the door when Harvey says, "Thank you, Carlie." There is no need, she says, to thank slaves.
- Harvey's thank you makes Carlie feel bad. She can take insults all day long, and she can insult people right back, but if someone says something polite or nice to her, she feels terrible.
- Carlie wants to call a TV star and talk about the rotten thing that has happened to her, but Mrs. Mason appears in the doorway. She says Harvey is having a rough time and they will need to be especially nice to him the next few weeks.

- Carlie asks if she has to break her legs or a wrist to get somebody to pay attention to and be especially nice to her.
 - Mrs. Mason puts her hand on Carlie's shoulder and explains that she has a feeling Carlie can help Harvey. She is a strong girl, whether she knows it or not.
 - Carlie disagrees. She and Harvey and Thomas J are like pinballs. Someone puts in a dime, pushes a button, and out they come, whether they are ready or not, to settle in the same groove. Pinballs can't help each other. They are just things, hitting this bumper, then another, then the light. When they get settled, somebody comes along and puts in another dime, and off they go again
 - Carlie can't help Harvey, and she can't help herself. Mrs. Mason should take a good look at a pinball machine sometimes. She might learn something about life.
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- Harvey hears every word of the conversation. He wishes his father had heard it. He was always raving about how easy Harvey had it.
 - Harvey's father had said he would find out the hard way that things weren't so easy. Harvey looks at his legs. His father had really meant "the hard way."
 - Slowly, Harvey begins to eat his cereal.

7

- After supper, the three children are in the living room. Thomas J is writing a letter to the Benson twins in the hospital.
- Harvey asks for paper too, but he is having a hard time getting started. He doesn't want to write to his father and he doesn't know his mother's address. He keeps asking things like, "How do you spell 'wonderful'?"
- Carlie, who is writing a letter to her mother, says she hopes Harvey is not describing himself. Harvey raises his eyebrows and refuses to say what he is describing. Carlie asks if he could be making a list of all the wonderful things she is. Harvey can't think of an answer.
- In her letter Carlie promises not to cause any trouble and to stay out of Russell's way if her mother will make everything all right and send for her. All she wants is to come home.
- Harvey is jealous watching Carlie write. He hasn't written a word. His father will not care if he writes about his itchy casts or about how his right leg hurts.
- In the hospital Harvey's father had seemed very sorry, and he had cried real tears. But Harvey had sensed that the tears were for the doctor, and the nurse, and especially for the police, who were charging him with drunken driving. Harvey had not cried at all.
- Wishing he could cry now, Harvey crumples his paper and says he doesn't feel like writing.
- So far, all Thomas J has written is, "How are your hips?"
- Carlie says Thomas J cannot send a letter with just one sentence. She has learned that in English class. He can always write about the wonderful girl named Carlie, who is just like a sister to him. She is disappointed to hear that Thomas J is writing to eighty-eight-year-old women instead of twin boys. She adds twelve *pleases* to her letter and seals the envelope.
- Harvey is finally writing, but not a letter. He is making a list of "Bad Things that Have Happened to Me," beginning with "Appendectomy." Carlie is interested and darts over to take a look.
- Harvey holds the list to his chest. It's none of Carlie's business, but she snatches the paper from his hand. She sees that Harvey has had an appendectomy.
- Carlie tells what she knows about appendectomy scars, and her information doesn't match Harvey's description of his scar. She hands the list back, and Harvey lets it fall to his lap.
- Carlie decides to make her own list of "Big Events and How I Got Cheated out of Them."
- Number one, Carlie has been cheated out of being a majorette in Junior High because she didn't have good grades. Then the week before she was to try out for Miss Teenaged Lancaster, she had been attacked by her stepfather and sent to the foster home.
- Thomas J and Harvey are both startled.

- Carlie suggests that Harvey write “two broken legs” as number two and number three on his Bad Things list.
- Harvey is going to write them down, but he is planning to keep the events in the order they happened.

8

- Carlie is swinging herself so hard on one of the swings in the Mason’s backyard, the whole swing set is shaking. Harvey is sitting in his wheelchair on the back porch.
- Harvey has gotten so interested in making lists about himself, Mrs. Mason has bought him a spiral notebook. He thinks his mother might have been able to find her identity without leaving if she had made some lists about herself.
- Carlie leaves the swing and offers to show Harvey how to make a froggie house. He is not a little kid, and he is not interested. Carlie uses her foot and damp sand to build one anyway. Bored with her own game, she sits on the porch steps with Harvey.
- Carlie asks Harvey if he has ever thought about running away. She smiles when Harvey looks at his broken legs and says, “Hardly.” Carlie thinks about it all the time.
- It’s hard for Harvey to work on his lists when Carlie is around. He reminds her that “Young and Restless” is on television. He doesn’t want Carlie to see that she is number three on the list of people he is afraid of.
- Carlie is getting sick of “Young and Restless.” Besides, after eight days, there has been no letter or postcard from her mother. She asks about Harvey’s list, which he identifies as “Books I Have Enjoyed.”
- Carlie’s favorite book list has only one title—*Hong Kong Nurse*. She has read two more books about nurses, but they were not as good.
- Mrs. Mason calls Carlie, the slave of the world, to help her with lunch.
- Harvey has written two more titles without glancing up. “Promises My Mother Broke” had almost made him cry, but he is enjoying the book list. It doesn’t bring back bad memories.
- Harvey continues to write as Carlie announces that she has always wanted to read *Appalachian Nurse*, but she has never been able to find it in the library. Carlie asks if Harvey will miss her when she runs away. Harvey doesn’t know if he will.
- Carlie goes into the kitchen to give Harvey a sample of life without her. Harvey doesn’t look up when she calls out the window, “Pretty bad, isn’t it, Harvey?”

9

- Mr. Mason is driving Thomas into Maidsville to visit the Benson twins in the hospital. Both Carlie and Harvey want to go along. Carlie lies about a cousin who runs a boutique in Maidsville, and Harvey wants to stop at Kentucky Fried Chicken.
- Harvey had eaten Kentucky Fried Chicken every night his father didn’t get home, and he is addicted to it. Once he had eaten it thirty-two nights in a row.
- Mrs. Mason does not give Carlie or Harvey permission to ride into town, but Mr. Mason promises to stop for a bucket of chicken if he has time.
- Mrs. Mason asks Carlie if she is ready to learn to sew. Carlie had tried once in Home Ec but she had received a C-minus. She doesn’t have the kind of hands needed to sew.
- Mrs. Mason says the sisters who have been with her during the last year learned to make all kinds of nice clothes. The two girls had left to go home two days before Carlie and the boys arrived.
- It is true that sometimes people get to go home.
- Because she likes an audience, Carlie asks Harvey to come watch her in misery, trying to learn to make a halter top. As she follows Mrs. Mason down the hall she chatters about how much fun it would be to have a twin so they could go around fooling people.
- During the sewing lesson, Carlie asks Mrs. Mason why she doesn’t have children of her own instead of taking in strays.

- Mrs. Mason had wanted children of her own, but it had turned out that she couldn't have any. She and Mr. Mason were going to adopt a child, but while they were waiting they were asked to be foster parents.
- At first Mrs. Mason had not wanted to be a foster mother. She had thought she would not be able to stand it when a child she had come to love had to leave. She had wanted a child that would never leave, but now she realizes that nobody has that.
- It has not worked out for Mrs. Mason the way she had thought or the way she had planned, but it has worked out.

10

- Thomas J sits beside Mr. Mason in the front seat of the car. He has never visited anyone in a hospital and he dreads visiting the Benson twins.
- Carlie had suggested that Thomas J. take the twins some candy, but she is stunned when Thomas J says they don't believe in candy or soda pop or chewing gum.
- Thomas J wishes he had a box of candy like the one he'd seen in drugstores. It would make it easier. The twins would be overwhelmed when he presented it to them.
- Walking down the hospital's green halls, Thomas J remembers the twin's garden. Mr. Mason puts his hand on Thomas J.'s shoulder when he stumbles.
- Thomas J. stands between the twins' beds. They are thinner. They don't look like themselves.
- Thomas J is relieved that the twins know him. Sometimes at home, they had forgotten that he was there.
- The twins reach out their hands to Thomas J. He does not remember holding their hands before, and it makes him feel strange.
- The twins ask about the house and the garden. They tell Thomas J not to let things go down.
- Mr. Mason says they will stop by on the way home to check on the peas and to get their papa's gold watch and the gold coins.
- The doctors have operated and put pins in the twins' hips. Both of them close their eyes.
- Suddenly Thomas wants to ask for more details about the morning he had come tottering up the Benson twins' road. All he knows is that he had been wearing a diaper and a shirt with Snoopy's picture on it. Thomas thinks this might be his last chance to learn more.
- The twins' hands slip away from Thomas J's grasp. Mr. Mason says they might as well go.
- Though he knows they can't hear, Thomas J tells the twins he hopes their hips get better.

11

- Going in the Bensons' house makes Thomas J sad. He gets the watch and the three gold coins. The garden is ruined due to a lack of rain. He and Mr. Mason agree not to tell the Benson twins.
 - When they are almost to the main road, Thomas asks Mr. Mason to stop the car. He feels like it will be the last time he will see the house. He wants to imagine himself as a crying baby walking up the drive and the twins hurrying down the porch steps to hug him, but he can't get a picture of it. He and Mr. Mason drive away.
 - They are halfway home when they remember the Kentucky Fried Chicken.
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- Harvey is on the front porch waiting for them. He feels like crying when he sees them get out of the car without the red-striped boxes. He goes to his room to stare out the window.
 - Carlie ignores Harvey's orders to leave him alone. She gets curious about what's bugging people. She is going to be a nurse when she grows up. She is going to treat mentals.
 - Harvey insists that he is not a mental.

- Carlie asks Harvey to tell her what is wrong, and she will decide whether he is mental or not. Through clenched teeth, Harvey gives in and tells Carlie about the Kentucky Fried Chicken.
 - Carlie is disappointed too. She likes bought food better than home cooked. She was really looking forward to the chicken. Now they would probably have hamburgers.
 - Carlie has an I-told-you moment when Mrs. Mason calls for her to come help grill hamburgers in the backyard. It will be like a picnic.
 - Before leaving the room, Carlie grins and tells Harvey she has judged his case. He isn't a mental.
 - Harvey thanks her.
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- After the picnic, Carlie tries to cheer Harvey up. There is a Sonny and Cher look-alike contest, and she wants somebody to take her picture so she can enter.
 - Thomas J sits without looking up. The watch and the gold coins in his pocket are a heavy burden. Harvey's hamburger had tasted like sawdust. He wants chicken more than ever.
 - Finally Harvey tells Carlie she doesn't look like Cher. Carlie knows that. She is going to be Sonny.
 - Carlie waits, but Harvey does not react. Disgusted, she asks what she has to do to cheer him up. Harvey says Carlie can go in the house.
 - Carlie looks at Harvey and grins. Maybe there is hope for him after all.

12

- Carlie complains that Harvey's latest list about disappointments is what all of his lists are about. The new one, "Gifts I Got That I Didn't Want," is about times he was expecting one thing and got something else.
- Carlie understands. She has been expecting a floating opal for three years. She wants to know what bad gifts Harvey has gotten.
- Harvey's mother had promised him a puppy for his tenth birthday. The two of them had read newspaper ads about puppies. It had been the happiest time of Harvey's life. He really wanted a puppy.
- Harvey's mother had left on the sixth. His birthday had been on the seventeenth.
- Carlie has thought that only fathers left home. She has lost two that way. She wishes it was three.
- Harvey's father had refused to get him a dog as a matter of principle. He had bought Harvey an electronic football game instead. That Christmas, Harvey still wanted a puppy but he decided to get a guinea pig, something else his mom had promised him.
- Harvey's father had agreed when Harvey wanted to buy his own Christmas present. He bought Snowball, and brought his new pet home with a cage, food, and everything. Harvey's father had taken one look at Snowball, grabbed the animal, and carried him off. It was a matter of principle. He never told Harvey what he did with Snowball.
- To make up for Snowball, Harvey's father had bought him a pool table, which he never played with.
- The Benson twins had never said much, so Thomas J had never learned the art of talking. To Carlie and Harvey's surprise he joins the conversation.
- The Benson twins had given Thomas J a present every Christmas. Once, he had received pencils with his name on them.
- Carlie says pencils are the kind of thing people get for good behavior. She smiles when Harvey asks her how she would know.
- One time the twins had given Thomas J a book, *Big Bible Stories for Little People*. He remembers one of the twins reading stories to him. His favorite had been about Baby Moses. He imagines his real mother wanting him to have a better home and waiting to see the twins take him in. He wishes he had thought to get the book when he had been at the house.

- Thomas J tells Carlie and Harvey that the twins also gave him three gold coins. Carlie suggests that he rub them against his skin to see if it turns green. If it does, they aren't real, like the earrings that had turned her ears green.
- Mrs. Mason calls them for lunch. Carlie is surprised her foster mother has been able to get lunch on the table without the slave of the world to help her.

13

- After lunch, Harvey persuades Carlie to push him to the library. Mrs. Mason warns that it is mostly uphill, but Carlie doesn't care. She is so bored, she will go anywhere and do anything.
- Carlie assures Mrs. Mason that she is always careful with valuable things. Harvey thanks her. Carlie pokes him. She means herself.
- On the way, Carlie toys with the idea of playing a joke on Mrs. Mason with a dummy and the wheelchair, but Harvey says that Mrs. Mason is all right. Carlie concedes that the woman hasn't done them in yet.
- Carlie is going to do a list about people who have done her in.
- Carlie doesn't know who her father is, but he would be on her list. Next would be her first stepfather—a real bum who stole her baby-sitting money. With her next stepfather, Carlie had been safer on the streets than she had been at home. He is the first person who wanted to do her real harm.
- Carlie stops pushing the wheelchair when Harvey tells her that his father ran over his legs and broke them. Carlie listens to the whole story.
- Carlie asks Harvey to imagine themselves as babies waiting to be born and choosing the type of father they want. She would never have thought to ask for a father who would stick around. Hers hadn't stuck around long enough to see if she was a boy or a girl.
- Harvey wouldn't have thought about asking for a father who knew the difference between forward and reverse in a car.
- Carlie thinks she and Harvey will have to admit that they are unwanted. Then, there are people who want children and don't have any. Life is really unfair.
- Harvey has suspected that for a long time.

14

- Harvey spends his library time at the back table looking through old *New York Times Magazines*. After flipping through *Seventeen* and *Cosmopolitan*, Carlie is ready to go when the librarian tells her they have no movie magazines or comics.
- Harvey tells Carlie he is staying until he finds the article about his mother. He wants to find out exactly where the Virginia farm is so he can write to her. His father won't even talk about his mother, and he won't tell Harvey if he knows where the farm is.
- Harvey believes that if his mother knew he was in a foster home and that he had broken legs, she would come get him and take him to the farm.
- Carlie is silent. Then she asks Harvey if his mom has ever written to him.
- Harvey says she has, but he never got the letters. Carlie is skeptical, but Harvey insists that his mother really wrote to him. His dad tore up the letters.
- Bored, Carlie goes to ask the librarian if they have *Appalachian Nurse*.
- Harvey comes upon the article about the farm. There is the picture of his mother making the hammock. There are four rings on her fingers, but none of them is a wedding ring.
- The people at the farm have changed their names to ones that are more suitable to their nature. Harvey's mother is now Bethenia.
- The article said there were evening discussions. One person would sit in the center and the others would say what they liked or didn't like about him. Harvey can't imagine his mother letting herself be criticized. At home the least thing had made her furious.
- Carlie returns with the good news that the library has *Appalachian Nurse*. She likes the way it starts.

- Harvey shows Carlie his mother's picture. Carlie had not imagined Harvey's mom looking like the woman in the picture. Harvey knows she didn't look like that when she lived with his father and him.
- Harvey pays ninety cents for a copy of the article.
- Carlie reads more from the beginning of *Appalachian Nurse* and then flips through the pages to read the ending. She slams the book shut and declares it to be a *real satisfying story*. She sets the book on the counter.
- As they are leaving, Harvey reminds Carlie that she has forgotten her book. She is astounded as Harvey has just watched her read it. It was almost as good as *Hong, Kong Nurse*.

15

- Harvey's father is coming for a visit. Mrs. Mason is having trouble keeping Carlie away from the front porch where Harvey sits waiting in his wheelchair.
- Carlie explains that she will come back in the house as soon as she gets a look at the kind of creep who would run over his own son's legs. She goes out onto the porch and sits on the railing in front of Harvey.
- Harvey is nervous. He sits with his hands tightly clenched and his teeth clamped together.
- Carlie swings her feet back and forth. She tells Harvey that neither of them has received any mail and that Mrs. Mason has ordered her to go back into the house as soon as Harvey's father comes.
- Carlie points out that Harvey's mother might not be at the farm anymore. Harvey says he will get his letter back then. The return address had been on it.
- Carlie knows her mother got her letters, but she just isn't answering. If Harvey weren't in a wheelchair, they could go looking for his mother.
- Harvey wants to know if Carlie is talking about running away again. Carlie says nobody is going to run away, they would just take off. Besides, she would be picked up right away if she went home, but the farm would be different.
- Harvey gives Carlie's idea a "No," and he doesn't want to talk about it.
- Carlie changes the subject and asks Harvey about his latest list. A nervous Harvey has to think to remember that it's about how one day everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes. Harvey is making a list of the ways he would want it to be if he gets the fifteen minutes.
- Carlie says she would want a fifteen-minute TV special. She would be so good, it would be just the beginning of a whole lot of fifteen minutes on her way to being a star.
- Harvey is distracted, still looking at the top of the hill for his father's car. He hopes that he hasn't already had his fifteen minutes of fame. Everybody in town had known when his dad ran over his legs.
- Carlie disagrees. Harvey will be famous, probably as a writer. He'll write best-sellers.
- Once Carlie had been in the newspaper, but they had called her a juvenile. Her fifteen minutes of fame had to be more than that. Harvey could write a movie for her and she could become a star that way.
- The conversation ends when Harvey sees his father's car, the same one that ran over him. Pain shoots through his legs when he moves as if he was trying to stand.
- Before Carlie goes inside, she tells Harvey she will be right inside if he needs her. He wouldn't believe what good help she can be in a fight.

16

- Everyone has always said that Harvey looks exactly like his dad. Watching the man come up the walk, Harvey realizes that it is true. Harvey has always *felt* more like his mother.
- Harvey's father asks how it's going for him. He says the Masons' place looks nice. He asks if there are any other kids in the foster home and what type of kids they are. He has not looked directly at Harvey.

- Then Harvey's father asks about his legs. When the man starts to explain himself, Harvey says he doesn't want to talk about it, but the man goes on. He had just lost a contract. He had just had a couple of drinks. The car was new. But that still didn't excuse it.
 - Harvey agrees.
 - Carlie has turned off the TV in the living room. It's quiet on the porch.
 - Harvey's father says he has never seen Harvey looking better. Harvey reminds his father about his broken legs.
 - Harvey's father has not forgotten that Friday is his son's birthday. He has a present in the car, but he doesn't want Harvey to see him carry it in and guess what it is. The man gets to his feet and suggests that they go get something to eat.
 - Carlie's face pops into view when Harvey's father goes to the door and calls Mrs. Mason. She runs to tell Mrs. Mason that Harvey's father want to know if he and Harvey can go get something to eat.
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- Harvey is relieved when his father leaves. He feels flat as an old tire, and he can barely wheel himself into his room.
 - Wearing one of the eleven halters she has made, Carlie leans against his doorway and asks how it went. Harvey shrugs and says it went all right.
 - It has not gone all right. The worst moment is in the restaurant when Harvey tells his father about the letter he has written to his mother.
 - Harvey's father swallows hard, but does not change expressions. Harvey says he hasn't heard from his mother. His father says he won't.
 - Harvey tells his father what he suspects—that his mother has written dozen of letters, but his father has not given him the letters.
 - Harvey's father says his mother has never written to him. Harvey does not believe it, and he says so.
 - In a strange, low voice Harvey's father commands his son to look at him. His mother has never written. Harvey's mother had known when he had the appendectomy and when he had the measles. Harvey's father had written to her both times, but she never answered.
 - Harvey tells his father he doesn't believe him, but the man says, "No" in a way that made Harvey know it is true.
 - Harvey feels old and tired. He can no longer hold his fork, and it drops to his plate.
 - He looks at his father and wonders if his mother hates him because he looks like his father.
 - Harvey's father encourages him to eat his supper. Harvey picks up his fork. He finds the strength to play with the food to make it look eaten, but he can't eat a bite.
 - Still standing in the doorway, Carlie wants to know where Harvey and his father ate. Harvey is trying to get the strength to lift himself onto his bed.
 - Carlie announces that one of the Benson twins, Jefferson, has died of heart failure. Carlie is fascinated with their names, Thomas and Jefferson.
 - Harvey sits in his wheelchair, hunched forward.
 - Thomas J is leaving in the morning to see the remaining twin and go to the funeral.
 - Finally Harvey tells Carlie, "I don't think I can make it." Carlie offers to help him lie down, but Harvey says, "No, I don't think I can make it—period."
 - Carlie says he *has* to make it. She and Harvey and Thomas J are a set. She has gotten used to Harvey. When she gets used to somebody, she doesn't want anything to happen to them.
 - Carlie makes Harvey look at her. His face is pale and his eyes are dull. Carlie promises Harvey that he can make it.
 - Harvey lowers his eyes. He really doesn't think he can.
 - Carlie declares that the first thing she will do when she gets her driver's license is to find Harvey's father and run over his legs.

- Carlie stamps out of the room and into the kitchen. She asks Mrs. Mason to give her something to do. She has to take her anger out on something.

17

- Thomas J does not want to go back to the hospital and see only one of the Benson twins. They have been together all their lives.
- Mr. Mason knows how hard everything is for Thomas J. He tells the boy about the frightening experience of his first funeral.
- Thomas J confesses that he is not worried about the funeral. It's seeing only one twin, and not knowing what to say. He worries that he hadn't said much during his last visit, and now one of the twins is dead. He knows he won't be able to say anything again today.
- Mr. Mason has never told anybody before, but he talks to Thomas J about his own mother, who, like the twins, was never one to show affection. She had died when he was Thomas J's age. He does not remember his mother hugging or kissing him. Like Thomas J, Mr. Mason does not remember the word "love" ever being used in his house.
- When Mr. Mason had been in the hospital and standing by her bed, his dying mother had opened her eyes and asked her son to say he loved her, but he had just stood there. The word "love" had never been said to him. Thomas J admits that the same is true for him.
- Mr. Mason thinks his mother loved him and he must have loved her, but he had never said the word in his life, and so he just stood there when his mother asked him to say it. The nurse and Mr. Mason's father had poked at him and yanked his arm commanding that he say it, but he hadn't been able to say a word.
- Finally the nurse had stepped up to the bed and told Mr. Mason's mother that her son had said he loved her. His mother had smiled and closed her eyes. Mr. Mason is still grateful to the nurse for helping him out.
- Thomas J pauses and thinks and then says that *if mothers want you to tell them you love them, they should start real early, training you to do it.*
- Mr. Mason nods and agrees with Thomas J. His wife Ramona is always touching and hugging and telling people how she feels about them. It comes natural to her. It is one of the reasons he had wanted to marry her. It's hard to believe, but he had been married to Mrs. Mason for five years before he could tell her he loved her.
- Thomas J can believe it.

18

- Thomas J stands beside the remaining Benson twin waiting respectfully for her to open her eyes. He is glad to have Mr. Mason behind him. There is another woman in Jefferson's bed.
- Finally Thomas J says, "Aunt Benson?" Thomas Benson opens her eyes and focuses on Thomas J. In a wavering voice she tells Thomas J that her sister is gone. Mr. Mason explains that he has brought Thomas J for the funeral.
- Thomas says she and her sister have always planned to die together and have a double funeral. It's twelve-fifteen and Jefferson's funeral is at two o'clock. Unless she can manage to die before two o'clock, she will not make it. Thomas Benson closes her eyes.

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- After the funeral, Mr. Mason remembers to pick up some Kentucky Fried Chicken. He and Thomas J know Harvey will be pleased.
 - Thomas J moves closer to Mr. Mason on the car seat. He looks up at the man and suddenly feels like he has moved out of a fairy tale and into real life.
 - He asks Mr. Mason to tell him some more about the things that happened to him when he was little.
-

- Harvey's father makes Carlie mad. After supper, she takes her frustrations out on the dishes she is washing.
- Harvey had not eaten his Kentucky Fried Chicken. He simply sat at the table and stared at it. When Carlie offered to eat it for him, he handed her the drumstick.
- Carlie knows Harvey is not pouting or sulking. He just sits staring out his window and looking sad.
- Mrs. Mason, who is helping with the dishes, tells Carlie that she has helped Harvey, just as she had predicted the second day Carlie was in her home.
- Carlie is surprised. Harvey is worse. He hasn't been helped.
- Mrs. Mason knows that Harvey is worse at the moment, but still she insists that Carlie has helped him. When she had been Carlie's age, Mrs. Mason's sister Liz helped her by making her laugh. Carlie is helping Harvey, sometimes by just making him smile or feel better. She doesn't want Carlie to give up.
- Carlie doesn't give up on anybody she likes.

19

- The next morning Harvey does not get out of bed. Carlie tries several times to cheer him up, but nothing works. Finally she comes in and whispers to Harvey that there is a big package for him in the hall closet.
- Harvey's birthday is coming up on Friday. The package in the closet is his present, but he doesn't want to open it. He gives Carlie permission to slip off the paper and have a peek.
- Carlie slides the big box out of the closet and carefully opens one end. There is a portable color television set inside. She calls out to Harvey that he is really going to like it. She retapes the paper, reattaches the bow, and returns the box to the closet.
- Back in Harvey's room, Carlie challenges him to guess what is in the box. He answers that it is a TV. He has seen his father carrying it in. Carlie is disappointed. She loves to make people guess things. She had planned a long session with Harvey.
- Harvey looks so miserable, Carlie forgives him for ruining her guessing game. She offers to go to Virginia and get his mother. Carlie believes she would come get Harvey if she knew about his broken legs and what his father has done.
- Harvey answers "No" to all of Carlie's suggestions. He gives an agonized "No!" when Carlie says he can't stop her from going. She steps back from his bed and stands without speaking for a moment.
- Carlie calls Harvey's attention to the decals on her fingernails and offers to put some on his toenails just for fun. Harvey says "No."
- Then Carlie notices that Harvey's right toes are swollen and redder than his left ones. Harvey doesn't care, his leg does not hurt, and he is fine.
- Carlie runs from the room and calls for Mrs. Mason to come look at Harvey's toes. She is no nurse yet, but she knows bad-looking toes when she sees them.

20

- Thomas J and Carlie sit on the front steps waiting for Mrs. Mason and Harvey to get back from the hospital. Carlie hopes he just needs a shot or some pills. Friday is his birthday.
- Thomas J doesn't know when his birthday is.
- Carlie's birthday is August seventh, three and a half weeks away, and Thomas J is not to forget it. He is to send Carlie something even if she is gone. Thomas J will be glad to.
- Carlie says Thomas J can have the same birthday as hers if he wants. The boy agrees. He wants to be nine years old on August seventh.
- Thomas J wonders if Harvey will have to stay in the hospital like the Benson twins. Carlie says if he does, she hopes they take better care of him than they did the twins. One of them died.
- When Carlie becomes a nurse, she is going to make it clear that none of her patients are to die. *No dying!* will be her number one rule. She will be like a good-luck nurse.

- Carlie runs to the driveway to meet Mrs. Mason. Harvey's leg is infected, and he is in the hospital. It's pretty bad, and Harvey doesn't seem to care.
- Carlie blames Harvey's father. Harvey has stopped caring since his father came to visit. She and Thomas J will go see Harvey right after supper and cheer him up.
- Thomas J says he is not very good at that sort of thing, but Carlie instructs that he had better get good at it pretty quick. She is not going to have Harvey lying in misery in the hospital with his birthday on Friday. She is planning to bake him a cake.
- Mrs. Mason suggests that Carlie can still bake the cake and take it to the hospital, but Carlie will have none of it. A birthday away from home is bad enough, but a birthday in the hospital is even worse.
- Carlie wants to be home for her birthday in three and a half weeks and she had better get a floating opal.
- Then Carlie announces that Thomas J's birthday is the same as hers and he is going to be nine. Thomas J confirms Carlie's words.

21

- Harvey is in a room by himself. He is staring at the ceiling when Carlie and Thomas J walk in. Harvey turns his head to them, but there is no expression on his face.
- Carlie offers to roll up Harvey's bed, but he declines. Then she asks if he wants a drink of water. Harvey declines again. Carlie decides she will have a drink.
- Carlie talks about the surprise she will have for Harvey on his birthday. She is making it herself. Harvey is not interested in guessing what it is, but Carlie encourages him to ask what color it is. Then he looks at the ceiling again.
- Carlie says Harvey's present will just have to be a surprise. Then she chatters to Harvey about a phone call that turned out to be a wrong number, but Harvey doesn't respond.
- Thomas J tells Harvey that Mr. Mason is going to take him fishing. Carlie adds that Harvey will be going along too as soon as his legs get well. If it was her, she would just stay in the hospital if she knew she would have to go fishing when she got cured. Then she tells Harvey about accidentally melting one of her fingernail decals by getting mayonnaise on it.
- Carlie is still trying to think of something to say when the nurse puts her head in the door. Visiting hours are over. Carlie can't bear to leave without cheering Harvey. She wants to make him laugh out loud. Thomas J cannot help. Carlie's mind is blank.
- Carlie leans over Harvey's bed and promised that everything will be all right. She and Thomas J leave.
- They are failures at being cheer-uppers. Thomas J admits that he always has been, but Carlie has expected better of herself. She and Thomas J are going to spend all night thinking of funny things to say and talk about so they can be funny tomorrow.
- Thomas J wavers, but Carlie says he is going to say funny things and she means it. Thomas J agrees.

22

- On Thursday night, Harvey is worse. He refused to speak to anyone. He is being fed through a tube in his arm.
 - Harvey's father has visited on Wednesday. He loudly informs the doctors they are to do whatever they have to for his son. Money is no object. He has gotten a contract to build an eight-unit town house.
 - Carlie is furious when she hears about it.
-
- That night when everyone is in bed, Carlie slips into Thomas J's room and shines a flashlight in his face. He is awake, unable to sleep without Harvey shifting around in the bottom bunk.

- Carlie has an idea. She asks Thomas J if he wants to go in cahoots with her. Thomas J will be glad to, though he isn't sure what it is.
- Carlie shines the flashlight on a newspaper ad and reads *Puppies free to good homes*. She and Thomas J are going the next morning to get Harvey a puppy. Carlie is sure it will cure him.
- Thomas J is concerned that Mrs. Mason might get mad, but Carlie promises to take all the responsibility. She is used to people being mad at her. She will say she forced Thomas J to go along with her.
- Thomas J *wants* to go with Carlie to get the puppy. Mrs. Mason can get mad at him too.
- After breakfast, the two of them will go get the puppy. They will hide him in a shopping bag and sneak him into the hospital, where they will pull him out and sing "Happy Birthday to You" to Harvey.
- The plan sounds good to Thomas J.
- Carlie is certain Harvey can't lie there staring at the ceiling when a puppy is licking him in the face. She will make certain that the puppy they pick is a licker.
- Thomas J promises not to tell Mrs. Mason or Mr. Mason about their plan.

23

- Walking down the hospital hall with Thomas J, Carlie wishes the puppy in the shopping bag wasn't such a wiggler. She has picked the liveliest puppy from the litter.
- Carlie cautions Thomas J to get in front of the bag when he sees a nurse. They are known for their sharp eyes, unlike Doctors who wouldn't see an elephant if they brought it in.
- Thomas J and Carlie go straight to Harvey's room and shut the door. Harvey is staring at the ceiling. He turns to look at Carlie when she lies about not wearing one of her halters.
- Carlie takes the wiggling puppy from the bag. She and Thomas J sing "Happy Birthday." Then there is silence.
- Carlie puts the puppy on the bed beside Harvey and nudges it forward. The puppy rushes to lick Harvey's face and neck, but Harvey does not move.
- Thomas J, wanting the first present he had ever been in on to be a success, asks if Harvey likes the puppy. When Harvey still does not move, Thomas J asks if they should sing the birthday song again.
- Suddenly, Harvey lifts his hand, lays it on the puppy, and asks, "Is this for me?" They are his first words in two days.
- Carlie and Thomas J assure Harvey that the puppy is for him. They have picked it out special, and it is his permanently. The puppy is unreturnable.
- With the puppy wiggling against his neck, Harvey starts to cry for the first time since the accident. The puppy licks at the tears rolling in streams down his cheeks.
- Carlie tells Harvey to go ahead and cry all he wants. He has his own personal crying towel.
- Carlie turns to Thomas J and declares that when she becomes a nurse she is going to bring a basket of puppies to the hospital with her every morning. They're better than pills.
- A passing nurse hears the commotion and sticks her head in the room. Carlie puts the puppy under the sheet. The nurse asks Harvey if he is laughing or crying.
- He is doing both, he says.
- The nurse notices the bulge under the sheet but ignores it. It's the first time Harvey has shown any sign of life in two days. She asks if he wants anything.
- At first he declines, but when Carlie hisses "Cokes," he orders Cokes for his friends to celebrate his birthday. Then he pulls the puppy out from under the sheet so the nurse can see the present they have brought.
- The nurse says he can't have a puppy in his room. If she had seen it, she would have to send Harvey's puppy out right away. As she leaves for the Cokes she wishes Harvey many happy returns of the day.
- Harvey holds up the puppy to get a good look. It is the nicest puppy he has ever seen.

- Thomas J and Carlie only give the best. They had known it was the puppy for Harvey when it came running over and started licking them.
- The puppy isn't all Harvey is getting. Carlie is making her famous mayonnaise cake and bringing it over later.
- Harvey asks if she will bring the puppy back too but Carlie says it's hard to lug around. He will have to get out of the hospital if he wants to do any real playing with it.
- Harvey agrees, but he still wants Carlie to bring the puppy back tonight. Carlie will if Mrs. Mason will let her borrow her tote bag.

24

- Walking home from the hospital, Carlie declares the puppy to be a successful gift. She thinks the good feeling she and Thomas J have is probably what it feels like to be famous. Fifteen minutes every now and then of the good feeling she has now will keep her going until she gets famous for real.
- When they can see the Masons' house in the distance, Thomas J asks how they are going to tell Mrs. Mason what they have done.
- Carlie says they are just going to walk in and show her Harvey's birthday present. Mrs. Mason took them in and she won't turn away a puppy. Besides, she has heard the Masons talking about Harvey like he was their real child, and they were so worried about him.
- Mrs. Mason is in the kitchen when Carlie and Thomas J walk in with the puppy. Carlie introduces the puppy as planned.
- Mrs. Mason asks who thought of the puppy. Carlie says she did. Thomas J says he helped.
- Mrs. Mason hugs Thomas J and Carlie, one in each arm. She thinks the puppy is a lovely thing for them to do.
- In the curve of Mrs. Mason's arm, Thomas J feels like a stick. He wishes he had some training on how to talk about love. He imagines himself sitting on an imaginary mother's lap. He thinks that, with a little training from Mrs. Mason, he can learn to say something nice, even if it isn't about love.
- Mrs. Mason says they will have to tell Harvey about the puppy, but Carlie explains that they have already taken the puppy to the hospital. She also tells Mrs. Mason about the nice nurse, about Harvey's crying, and about how he sat up in bed and they all had Cokes. It had been a happy occasion.
- Mrs. Mason says Harvey needs a few of those.
- Carlie reveals her plans to make a mayonnaise cake with candles for Harvey. Mrs. Mason thinks they should go to the grocery store and get a collar, a leash, and a toy bone for the dog. They will wrap them as gifts and take them to Harvey with the cake.
- Carlie thinks it will be funny if they also get worm pills.
- As they are leaving, Carlie declares that Harvey is going to have a really nice birthday. She reminds Mrs. Mason that she and Thomas J have one coming up on August seventh.

25

- On Monday the remaining Benson twin dies.
- In the barber shop getting a haircut before going to the funeral, Thomas J feels his first sadness about her death when the barber asks who has been hacking at his hair. He remembers the Benson farm and the twins clipping away at his hair.
- When he looks at his neatly trimmed hair, Thomas J feels the sorrow draining from him.
- Later, seated beside Mr. Mason in the car, Thomas J wants to bring up a problem so Mr. Mason will tell him about how the same thing happened to him when he was Thomas J's age, but he is happy and can't think of a problem.
- Then, to Thomas J's delight, Mr. Mason asks if he has ever told him about the time his daddy took him to Bear Rocks and he got lost.
- Thomas J, his face bright, turns to Mr. Mason to hear the story.

- Thomas J and Mr. Mason stand looking at the Benson twin in her coffin. Thomas J is glad to see she is wearing the same outfit her sister had worn.
 - With his hand on the boy's shoulder, Mr. Mason says Thomas J should always remember the twins thought they were doing him a kindness when they took him in. Thomas J answers that they *were* doing him a kindness, and he will remember.
-

- While Thomas J is at the Benson twin's funeral, Carlie visits Harvey in the hospital. He is lying with the head of his bed rolled up. He asks about his dog.
- Every time he mentions his dog, Harvey feels good. He had even told his father about the puppy when he came for a visit. His father had said, "That's all right."
- Carlie reports that Harvey's dog is fine and that Harvey is starting to look like himself again.
- Harvey says it's too bad he can't look like somebody else. Carlie likes the way he looks, but she encourages him to comb his hair down in bangs and put his glasses on top of his head, Hollywood style. She will tell him how he looks.
- Harvey does as Carlie asks. She looks at him and then tells him to put his glasses back on his face and his hair back on his head.
- One other thing Carlie wants Harvey to do is promise he won't ever try to look like anybody but himself.
- Harvey smiles and promises.

26

- Carlie and Thomas J sit on the steps of the elementary school building. The puppy is lying at their feet and resting from the walk.
- Carlie informs Thomas J that they are sitting on the steps of the school that he will attend at the end of the month. Harvey and Carlie will attend the school on Oak Street. The people who had gone to Carlie's last school were snobs who refused to speak to people unless they wore a certain kind of clothes. Thomas J looks at his school in admiration.
- Carlie thinks it would be nice if people could get to their brains with an eraser. She would get rid of the things she didn't like to remember, like being snubbed at school. She would be a lot happier if she could just erase such things.
- Thomas J doesn't have enough to remember, including his mother. Sometimes when he sees the kind of woman who looks like she would have a very comfortable lap or when he sees a woman wearing a flowered dress, he wants to go stand beside her.
- Carlie thinks Thomas J's mother had a comfortable lap and she wore a flowered dress. Thomas J sighs and agrees.
- Carlie offers to make up a mother for Thomas J like she had made up his birthday, but he turns down the offer. He has a real mother somewhere.
- Thomas J is surprised to hear that Carlie has a real mother, who couldn't care less about her daughter. He can imagine somebody not wanting him, but he can't imagine anybody not wanting Carlie. He smiles when Carlie says that was a real nice thing for him to say.
- When Thomas J gets older, Carlie says, he can find his mother. Being pinballs is just a stage they're going through.
- Thomas J doesn't know what pinballs are. Carlie will take him to a place in town and they will play. But she takes it back about them *being pinballs*. She has been wrong about that.
- Pinballs can't help what happens to them. She and Thomas J can.
- When she had come to live with the Masons, Carlie had wanted to run away, but she didn't. She had decided something about her life. And now, when she goes to the new school, she is really going to try.
- Thomas J. nods that he is going to try as well.
- As long as they are trying, Carlie says, they are not pinballs.
- Thomas J unhooks the puppy's teeth from his sock, gets to his feet, and says, "Let's go home."