

Chapter 2

Storms can mask tears when walking in the rain.

- Author

Margaret's father, Clarence, looked to her as a resourceful person and dubbed her the example for the rest of the girls in the family. And this is when her jealousy and malcontent began. Like Cinderella, how was she to gain any traction with all the negativities being hurled at her on a daily basis. With no life to call her own, she stole every opportunity that she could by running away in her head. Fantasy became her friend; the fantasies seemed like the real life that she deserved. The sadness of her lonely life left much to be desired. Especially around building a sense of safety for her emotional expressions and building close personal friendships with the other girls in the neighborhood. At home, she felt invisible.

In walks Dorothy, as Margaret remembers her. In her usual whirlwind. Always the consummate gatekeeper, the generation's future matriarch. Margaret remembers her grandmother as the controller, whom everyone respected, whether she deserved it or not. Physically beautiful and looking refined, Grandma Dorothy always acknowledged her and made her feel important. Margaret remanences that she always wanted to be just like her Grammy Dorothy.

Compared to Betty, little Margaret felt that her mother was too docile compared to the larger-than-life personality of her grandmother, Dorothy. Dorothy ruled her roost, and the church folks let her know it. An emotional bully of sorts, their church was filled with them. Each Sunday after church, Dorothy would insist that the pastor and his brood make their way over for some home cooking at her house. An autocratic pastor: what he says goes, at home and in the church. As a man, this is how things were expected to be, and everybody fell in line in that order. Women and children were merely prizes in the man's game of life and love.

In some way, the entire congregation believed that this was the right way. Born out of the church, these rules were meant to keep the subordinates in check. Ostracized when they stepped out of line and villainized when they seemed to develop a sense of self outside the more normal gait of soliloquy. Samuel Johnson was one of those, Dorothy's husband, was raised to be the strong silent type. Nevertheless, no matter how determined and strong, Dorothy understood her place.

In a narcissistic family system acceptance was conditional. Accept your place or lot in life, as it were, and you would receive periodic benefits of thoughtfulness. Everyone in this type of family was expected to submit. Everyone that is, from the golden child to the scapegoat. And these roles were adhered to in rote fashion and exemplified in each life that matriculated from its core.

If you did not know the family rules, you would learn your role sooner or later. This included rules that were established through quietly kept manipulative behaviors, and verbal and physical abuse, called the hand of discipline. Staunch, rigid, enforced by the men of the family and maintained and policed by the women of the family. Insular by nature, no one was getting out of this system unscathed. Many children leave these types of families with one or two personality disorders and host of attachment issues. Yes, tradition can be evil sometimes masking itself as love and devotion.

Thus, masking tears was all that Betty learned to do, even in her life with Clarence. Tears that she learned so easily to hide. But Margaret was determined to gain a sense of self, by any means necessary. Subsequently, in walks disdain, jealousy, fantasy and deceit. Every one of her siblings will feel the wrath of this monumental life decision. Especially, Blair. As she sighed to herself, she became more and more aware of how much she missed her grandparents and Tyler, Texas.

Why the Storm?

It had been three months since torrential rains ripped through the roof of the Johnson home. Now spring was setting in and filling the sky with a mix of sun covered by clouds and an occasional gentle sprinkling of rain. The Johnson children were at home from school now and up to their usual antics as Jason ran through the house tormenting his siblings with a game of tag...

- Come back for more excerpts from the Family Affair Series.