

**A Woman Who  
Loved Lindbergh**

A NOVEL BY

**Ruth Doan MacDougall**  
AUTHOR OF *The Cheerleader*



## Ruth Doan MacDougall **A Woman Who Loved Lindbergh**

Ruth Doan MacDougall's tenth novel shifts backward and forward through generations and years, focusing on a daughter who in one summer grows to understand her mother—and, through her mother, herself.

Like Ruth's classic coming-of-age novel, *The Cheerleader*, this novel features a fifties setting and an idealistic girl confronting reality. During the summer of 1952, thirteen-year-old Lydia Dearborn must navigate into the unknown toward the horizon of maturity, discovering the terrors and responsibilities of adventure and independence, always aware of her mother's hero, Charles Lindbergh, who had made a historic first flight across an unexplored sky.

But an early image in this novel describes the flag on a tourist information booth flying upside down. While Lydia absorbs the unfolding of her family history, finds her place in the family tree, and recognizes her mother's bravery, she learns that life has a tendency to be flying upside down.

*A Woman Who Loved Lindbergh* is a multilayered, multitextured tale of families, a family album that includes the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, Montana in the early 1900s, and mid-twentieth-century New England. Examining the complexities that bind families and celebrating the courage of individuals, it is a novel that brims with love.

Ruth says, "When I wrote this book, I felt the presence of Carson McCullers's *Member of the Wedding*, Elizabeth Bowen's *Death of the Heart*, and Christopher Morley's *Kitty Foyle*. *My Ántonia* came often to mind, as did Willa Cather's comment that her writing was best when she stopped trying to write and began to remember."

Like Ruth's other novels, *A Woman Who Loved Lindbergh* is profound, moving, and funny.

Ruth Dean MacDougall

**by Ruth Doan MacDougall**

*THE LILTING HOUSE*

*THE COST OF LIVING*

*ONE MINUS ONE*

*THE CHEERLEADER*

*WIFE AND MOTHER*

*AUNT PLEASANTINE*

*THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST*

*A LOVELY TIME WAS HAD BY ALL*

*SNOWY (A SEQUEL TO THE CHEERLEADER)*

***With Daniel Doan***

*50 HIKES IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS*

*50 MORE HIKES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE*

***Editor***

*INDIAN STREAM REPUBLIC: SETTLING A NEW*

*ENGLAND FRONTIER, 1785—1842, by Daniel Doan*

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*A Woman  
Who Loved Lindbergh*

Ruth Doan MacDougall



## *A Woman Who Loved Lindbergh*

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Lexington house in summer: Stuart Barrett

All others: Ruth Doan MacDougall



*In Memoriam*

ERNESTINE ELIZABETH CRONE DOAN

RUTH HOUGHTON CRONE

LOUIS LEONARD CRONE

# Charles A. Lindbergh

“In the spring of '27, something bright and alien flashed across the sky. A young Minnesotan who seemed to have nothing to do with his generation did a heroic thing, and for a moment people set down their glasses in country clubs and speakeasies and thought of their old best dreams. Maybe there was a way out by flying, maybe our restless blood could find frontiers in the illimitable air.”

—F. Scott Fitzgerald,  
*Echoes of the Jazz Age*

In this novel Ruth Doan MacDougall introduces thirteen-year-old Lydia Dearborn who must, during the summer of 1952, navigate into the unknown toward the horizon of maturity, discovering the terrors and responsibilities of adventure and independence, always aware of her mother's hero, Charles Lindbergh, who had made a historic first flight across an unexplored sky.

To a generation of women, Charles Lindbergh was the ultimate hero; he was the pinup in their college scrapbooks, the ideal they sought in husbands. So it was for Rachel Forbush Dearborn, Lydia's mother, who dreamed of Lindbergh soaring high, pure and young and handsome, the Lone Eagle!



# A Woman Who Loved Lindbergh

by Ruth Doan MacDougall

Chapter One 3

*Photo pages 1—2: LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1982*

Chapter Two 7

*Photo pages 5—6: BARNESPORT, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1952*

Chapter Three 81

*Photo pages 77—80: LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1952*

Chapter Four 375

*Photo pages 373—374: CHAPMAN'S ISLAND, MAINE, 1952*

Chapter Five 447

*Photo pages 445—446: LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1982*

**A Woman Who Loved Lindbergh** is entirely fictional, and the characters do not represent actual people. Although the photos have been chosen to show typical images of the specific years, they cannot and do not picture the characters in the story.

—RDM



1982  
*Lexington, Massachusetts*

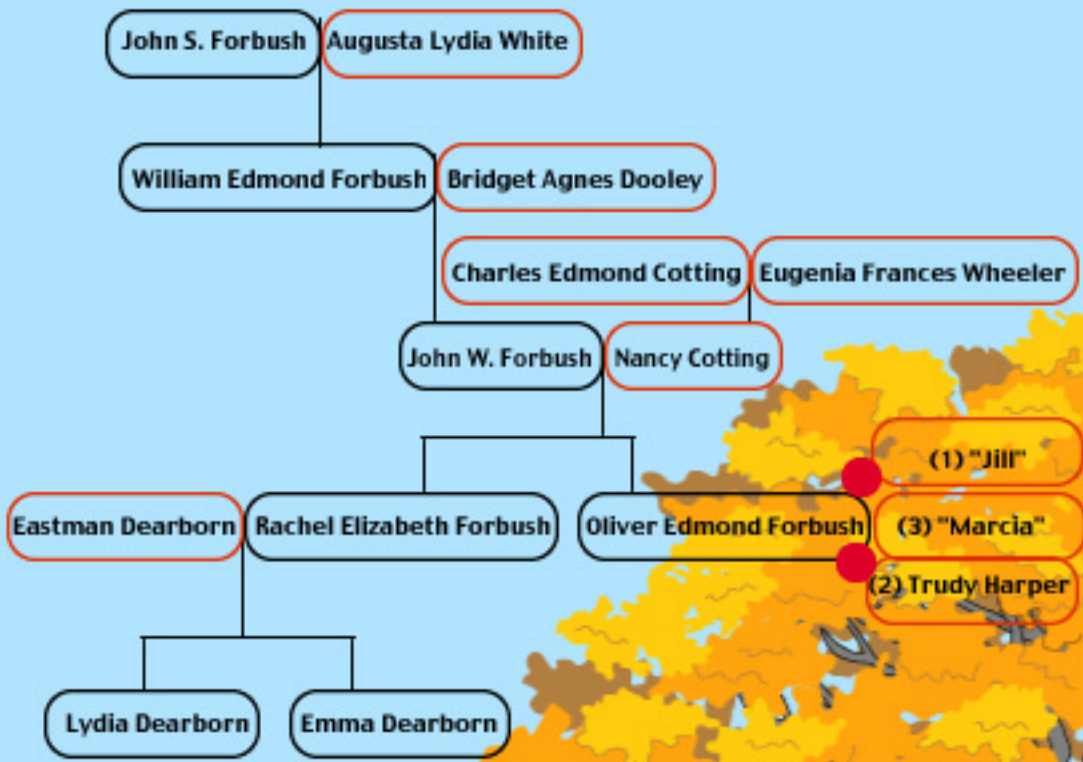


*Lexington, 1982*

## *Chapter One*




Thirty years later, Lydia drove down to Lexington, Massachusetts.

She hadn't been here in ages. As she'd expected, the town had kept growing, yet it seemed to have fewer changes than she'd nerved herself to find. She didn't get lost exactly; she got disoriented, because some of the streets had become one-way. After a harsh June, her July was already off-course enough, yawing so dizzily she feared she would capsize, and the last thing she needed was to approach her grandparents' house from the wrong direction. Obeying signs, she zigzagged through the neighborhood trying to discover a route that would allow her to come upon the house from the front, but suddenly she arrived back at the Green and she had to start all over, her shirt diagonally striped with sweat beneath her seatbelt. If she'd learned about independence during that summer thirty years ago, she had also learned the value of a certain variety of dependence. Her mother would say, "We're just twigs on the family tree," and then laugh.

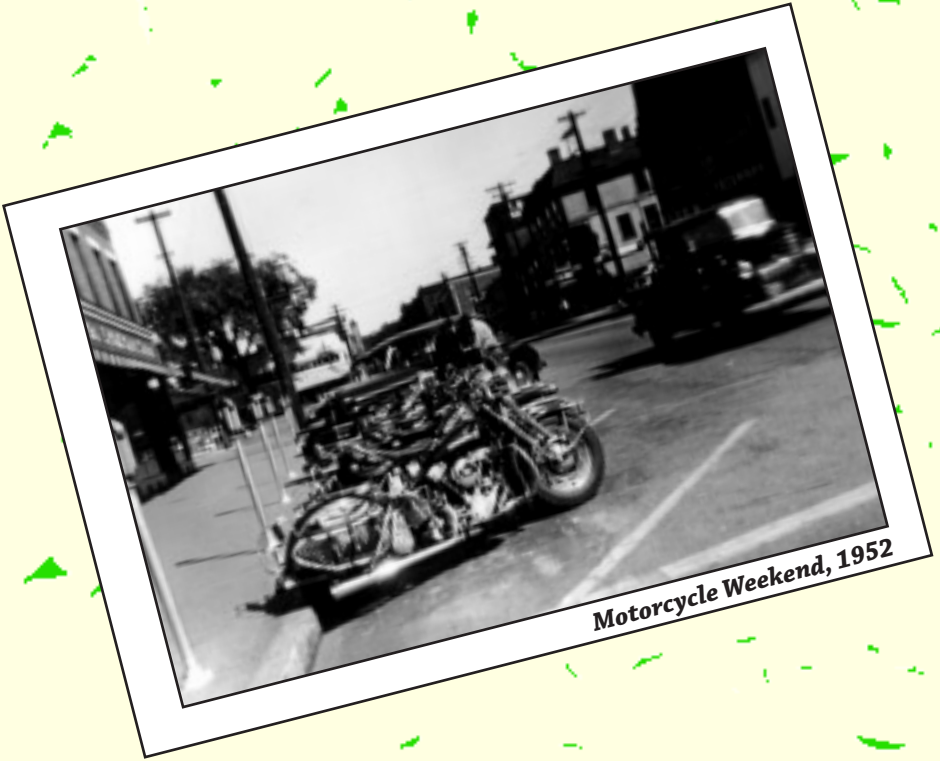


## The Forbush Family Tree—1952

**Legend**

-  Family Line
-  Marriages
-  Divorce

*"[Lydia's] mother would say, 'We're just twigs on the family tree,' and then laugh."*



*1952*  
*Barnesport, New Hampshire*



1950

## *Chapter Two*

The tourist information booth was in distress; its flag was flying upside-down.

“In the good old summertime,” thirteen-year-old Lydia Dearborn sang under her breath, skylarking abound- ing around her as she and her best friend, Antoinette Jolicoeur, stepped off the curb at the foot of Academy Hill amid the traditional jubilee—younger boys danger- ously joyful on bikes, older boys in honking jalopies, girls a-giggle—but this last day of school in 1952 happened to coincide with the start of Motorcycle Weekend and so their celebration seemed kid stuff, fiercely dominated by the roar of the invasion of out-of-town motorcycles whose riders had experienced raw life.

Toinette asked, “Is your mother opening the booth for Motorcycle Weekend?”

“In the good old summertime,” Lydia continued, omitting tootsy-wootsy because it sounded not only crude but also dated. Burdened with her brown shoulderbag and an armload of end-of-school possessions which included notebooks, her royal blue gym suit and bloomers, math tests bearing witness to torture, and a stuffed armadillo, she too was attempting to herald freedom on this June

twentieth, trying to shake the chalk dust of the seventh grade from her mind as she and Toinette darted through Main Street's traffic jam of cars and motorcycles, but still she felt equally burdened with a brain-load of school despite her song, and she gave a resigned glance back up at the Barnesport Senior and Junior High School atop Academy Hill. The brick building brooded like a vulture above the town; you couldn't escape school. Down at the bottom of Main Street lay Lake Kanopache shimmering below hazy mountains, representing a summer vacation she didn't yet believe had begun. "No," she replied at last, "and yes. Mother wants to have everything ready before the Fourth, but the motorcyclists don't count."

They were, however, certainly making their presence felt with their racket, a thunder of Harley Davidsons and Indians pierced by wolf whistles. Lydia knew full well that the whistles were meant for other girls, the ones whose blouses bounced, but nevertheless she kept hoping that maybe she would stir somebody's heart. Perhaps some sensitive rider would spot her and, seeing beyond her gawkiness, her freckles, her darkening blond locks curled into an attempt at a pert movie-star hairdo, would think, "Beneath her demure exterior lurks a tigress of a temptress." Unfortunately, the motorcyclists didn't look exactly discerning. But they were exotic, come here to New Hampshire from all over the country to go to the motorcycle races this weekend at the Barnesport Recreation Area, and they wore their cigarette packs rolled up in their T-shirt

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sleeves, jauntily they perched six-packs of beer on their back-fender racks and chugalugged in public, and how she yearned to be one of the women riding double, hugging for dear life.

Having got past the bathing suits in the window of Hirschfield's Apparel without for once a second-thoughts discussion of the bathing suits they'd bought there a week ago, Lydia and Toinette reached the tiny white information booth which stood between the Five-and-Ten and the marine supply store. When she was younger, Lydia had coveted the booth because it could be a perfect playhouse, and now here was Rachel, her mother, Mrs. Dearborn the penmanship teacher, richly brunette, short enough to seem almost a child herself, wearing over her blue slacks and white blouse a floral pinafore apron that Gran Nan had made (Rachel who usually scorned aprons), here Rachel was reeking of ammonia, surrounded on the pocket-handkerchief lawn by pails of water and heaps of crumpled newspaper, playing house, washing the cunning windows.

Lydia hopped across the low picket fence. Last summer she'd shot up two inches, she'd grown another four this year, and now at five-three she was taller than her mother, a marvelous state of affairs in some ways but disturbing in others, for around five-foot Rachel she didn't feel properly junior-miss dainty, she felt like a fee-fi-fo-fum giant. "Has the new engine come?"

"Yes, wonder of wonders." Rachel violently wrung

out sodden newspaper. "Your father's down at the dock and he's more of a nervous wreck than the day you were born. Hello, you two, got the seventh grade under your belt? Lydia, I don't suppose you'd want to come back here and help after you change?"

Lydia reflected that on the day she was born her father might have been nervous, but when he first saw her he'd collected his powers of observation enough to remark, as Rachel recalled with affectionate indignation, that she looked like a skinned rabbit. She asked, "Could I arrange the brochures?"

"Elbow grease is needed at the moment. Old Mrs. Norris didn't give this place even a lick and a promise when she closed after Labor Day. God, these motorcycles, the noise!"

Lately Rachel's temper had been as short as her stature.

Toinette said, "But maybe Mrs. Norris planned to do the cleaning now. She didn't know she was going to be heading for the last roundup." A left-handed person, Toinette was perilously balancing her load of school belongings on her right hand while with the other she smoothed the dark spicurl that caressed her left ear, showing off to the motorcyclists her burgeoning breasts. "Ma heard that just before Mrs. Norris died she got out of bed and took out all the Christmas cards she'd saved from year one and put them up all over the house. In *June*," she added as the soap carving of the Parthenon she'd done for social studies

topped off her notebook.

“So sad,” Rachel said and then recited somewhat obliquely, “but ‘ill blows the wind that profits nobody.’”

How practical her mother was! Rachel had profited by getting the plum job Mrs. Norris had hung onto as long as Lydia could remember, a summer job which at last suited Rachel’s teaching status after summers of waitressing, that being the only other type of summer job for women in Barnesport except cleaning cabins. Lydia had overheard some enlightening conversations and knew that Gran Nan and Pop—Lydia’s babyhood names for Rachel’s parents which had stuck—were distressed by Rachel’s working summers as well as during the school year, but it was Rachel’s way of not asking Pop for extra financial help except in emergencies, such as a new engine for the mailboat. Rachel had been triumphant about this information booth job. And Lydia had been relieved, because her mother was older than all her classmates’ mothers except Toinette’s, and a forty-five-year-old woman should not be running around the Lakeview Restaurant waiting on people. Yet with status came, in this instance, less money: no tips.

“Look,” Toinette said. “That guy over there, he isn’t wearing any shirt.”

Rachel’s newspaper squeaked against glass. “A fall off his motorcycle and he’ll wish he were wearing chain mail. Where’s Beanie, have you seen her?”

“Nope,” Lydia said. “Your flag’s upside-down, do you

want to be rescued?”

“Is it? I expect she’s made a beeline to the dock, keep her out from underfoot. You might tell your father that if he gets a spare moment he could come up here and show me how to raise the flag properly, but I doubt he’ll hear you. When I stopped there he didn’t recognize me, just like the time on October twenty-ninth, nineteen-twenty-nine, when your grandmother went in to Boston to do some shopping and meet your grandfather at his office for lunch. She found the office in an uproar and Papa looked right through her. The Crash.”

A flag-raiser in grammar school, Lydia explained, “You’ve just got the wrong clip in the wrong grommet,” although she knew her mother must have already figured that out but liked excuses to see and be seen with Eastman, her father. After seventeen years of marriage, wasn’t romance almost indecorous? Her parents even had their suppers tête à tête despite the extra work of feeding their daughters first. Which reminded her. “Am I supposed to start anything for supper?”

Rachel contemplated a windowpane, apparently trying to picture the inside of the refrigerator.

“The roast’s gone,” Lydia said, “and we had macaroni last night.” She and Eastman kept better track of food supplies than Rachel did, and in the past summers, with Rachel working the dinner shift at the Lakeview Restaurant, they made the suppers; they also often did so in the winter, desperate for a more varied menu. Rachel’s idea of

meal-planning was to cook a roast or a ham or a chicken on Sunday and then eat the remains reincarnated as far into the week as possible.

Rachel flung down a shredded wad of newspaper. “*Damn* these motorcycles, I can’t think straight with this noise!”

But usually Rachel enjoyed the excitement of Motorcycle Weekend. Sometimes, though, because of its timing, the Dearborns had already left for Chapman’s Island, and Lydia wanted to point out that if they were going to Chapman’s tomorrow the way they should be, they’d escape two days of noise.

“Hamburg,” Rachel said. “And rice, for a change.”

“We don’t have any hamburg.”

“I’ll pick up a pound.”

“So I don’t have to start anything?”

“I guess not. Why are you dawdling, aren’t you dying to see the engine?”

No, Lydia thought as she and Toinette walked on down the street. That engine had upset the household for weeks, it meant she couldn’t go to Chapman’s, and anyway the motorcyclists had stolen the show today. In the parking spaces along the sidewalk, motorcycles gleamed, larger than ever when arrogantly immobile. She could see motorcyclists inside the grocery store owned by Toinette’s father, bizarre customers swaggering around, stocking up on essentials like cigarettes and potato chips and beer and souvenir banners. In its window, Jolicoeur’s

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Market welcomed the motorcyclists with posters advertising the races, a display that overshadowed the pyramid of canned tomatoes, a fruit basket, some sun-bleached Regal Theater placards and a fresh new one announcing the latest double feature, *Belles on Their Toes* starring Jeanne Crain, Myrna Loy, and Debra Paget, and *Here Come the Marines* starring Leo Gorcey and Huntz Hall.

“Beer and skittles,” Lydia said, still attempting to convince herself school was over, “two months ahead all beer and skittles.” The arrival of the motorcyclists certainly ought to prove that summer had started, and suddenly she saw a sure sign, a car with Massachusetts license plates parked outside the hardware store, wearing a picnic table turned-turtle on its roof.

Toinette said, “Dummies, they should’ve waited until after this weekend.”

“Remember how we used to keep a list of license plates, we’d try to get every single state every summer?”

“Did we ever get all?”

“Not quite. North Dakota, Arkansas, we never got a few.”

Nearing the fanciful library, they automatically took the cement path along the groomed green lawn around to the back where a cement pond’s serene water mimicked the lake visible only in strips between the elms. The invaders hadn’t discovered this downtown oasis, so it was relatively quiet, the revving of motorcycles muted.

Since kindergarten, Lydia had always stopped at the

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library pond after school, to recover from the day-long prison and reassure herself that she was, briefly, free. There were two cement benches upon which you could sit and admire two different views: the library itself, a pale edifice of mysterious miniature onion domes and minarets, and, across the street, the grim gates and blackened brick buildings of the Barnesport Malleable Iron Company.

But today she just peered into the pond. One afternoon long ago, she had dreamily started to go wading—“Strictly forbidden!” cried the librarian who had rushed outdoors embarrassing her to death and asking, “Why on earth, Lydia Dearborn, would you want to wade here when you can go to the beach?” The pond; the lake. The lake versus the ocean; this was the mock debate her parents had about the place where Rachel had spent at least part of her summers ever since she was four years old, except when wartime gas rationing had made it out of reach, and except for this summer. The little cottage on Chapman’s Island way off the coast of Maine. The cottage had been built by Pop’s father, and Pop and Gran Nan had vacationed there, with the wartime exception, until five years ago. Gran Nan had then declared it was too much trouble and they’d decided to rent it in July and August, they themselves renting a cottage on Lake Kanopache in August. But Lydia and her sister and parents still stayed there each June after school let out, before the mailboat runs began the day after the Fourth of July and the Lakeview Restaurant opened for the tourist season. This summer,

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however, the mock debate had become a battle, all because of the new engine which hadn't arrived on time so Eastman would be out straight right up to the Fourth, and though he told Rachel to take the girls and go to Chapman's without him, Rachel had turned mulish and refused to budge.

She's jealous of that engine, Lydia thought, saying to Toinette, "This summer I'm not going to get sunburned, I'm going to tan to a deep perfect copper."

"You'll peel," said Toinette, who always darkened quickly—and smugly—into a nut-brown maid.

Shifting the weight of their armloads, they followed the path on past pink petunias and orange marigolds (unimaginative, in Lydia's opinion, and planted too parsimoniously, a far cry from the riotous effect of Pop's perennials), around to the sidewalk again, and at last, as the lake breeze came swirling through the hot loud afternoon, Lydia began to feel that school might really be over and tomorrow she actually would be lying on the beach reading *Gone with the Wind*.

At the bottom of Main Street they ran into crowds of spectators, some on foot, some in cars and on motorcycles parked in the middle of the street, others standing on the public wharf still empty of summer-people boats, a fascinated audience watching the commotion at the mailboat dock where the boatyard's crane was hoisting an engine from a flatbed truck toward the *Miss Liberty*, the mailboat owned by Eastman Dearborn.

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Although his winter work supposedly consisted of repairing other people's boats, Eastman always spent a good part of the winter lavishing care on his own boat, puttering and painting, and now every inch of the *Miss Liberty's* sixty feet dazzled, her white hull and blue superstructure sparkling in the sun. The red canopy which soon this summer would shade the seventy-five-or-so sightseeing passengers had faded over the years, yet it seemed splendidly venerable instead of just plain shabby. The *Miss Liberty* was a long narrow boat, her slender cigar shape deceptive; neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night, nor the twelve-foot waves that Lake Kanopache's storms could stir up had ever stayed Eastman's *Miss Liberty* from the completion of her appointed rounds out there amongst the islands.

"Well," Lydia said, edging nearer, wary of an armadillo accident in the crowds, thinking that if Rachel were wearing a red apron she'd match the *Miss Liberty's* color scheme, "the new engine has finally arrived." It cost as much, Rachel had commented, as the boat originally had, but Lydia didn't know how much, only that for both purchases Rachel and Eastman had got a down payment from Pop for a bank loan. Loans, she'd overheard, "floated," appropriately enough.

Toinette said, "Hey, that's the wrong direction, come on," and they veered out of the clumps of townspeople to skirt titillatingly closely the motorcyclists straddling those throbbing machines. Nobody whistled at them.

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Lydia caught sight of her father on deck guiding the engine, positioning it above the hatch. The captain: tall, dark blond, curly-headed, so handsome even a daughter noticed, and seven years younger than Rachel. Usually carefree, he looked harried. But when the engine successfully disappeared through the hatch, clapping and cheers rose, the way they did at nighttime during the Fourth of July fireworks over the lake, and as Eastman stepped onto the engine to ride it below, he acknowledged the applause with a smile and a wave. The applause died down. Motorcycles leapt away, townspeople got back into their cars or wandered off, and Lydia saw Beanie then, almost-eleven-year-old Beanie standing on the mailboat dock, obviously told not to come aboard so she wouldn't be squashed flat if the engine fell, obeying orders for once but fairly quivering with yearning, even her short pigtails agog. Beanie was growing into a blond version of Rachel at that age in photograph albums. Whereas Lydia's features were angular, Beanie's were round like Rachel's, and ever since she was born Beanie had always been the epitome of cuteness, exactly what she should look like at each age, a Winston-Churchill baby, a magazine-cover child, her only imperfection her faculty for getting filthy anywhere; Rachel claimed she could emerge from the bathtub dirtier than she went in. Today, for the fifth grade party, Beanie was wearing Lydia's outgrown seersucker party dress, its sash now yanked out of a socket. After Beanie's use, Lydia's clothes could never be hand-me-downs again. The sudden

sight of Beanie made Lydia momentarily perceive her as a separate person, but then Beanie turned to say something to Kathy, her best friend, and she became a kid sister again, a nuisance whose vulnerability always struck a pang of responsibility in Lydia's core.