



# Family Tree

## The Long Way Home

The Second Generation

ANN M. MARTIN



Scholastic Press / New York

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557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Martin, Ann M., 1955– author.

The long way home / Ann M. Martin.

pages cm. — (Family tree ; book two)

Summary: Dana is Abby and Zander's daughter, but growing up in New York City in the  
late nineteen fifties is not always easy, especially when you would like your own room  
separate from your twin sister — and when your beloved father dies and you are forced to  
move things just get worse.

ISBN 978-0-545-35943-6 (jacketed hardcover) 1. Families — New York (State) — New  
York — Juvenile fiction. 2. Twins — Juvenile fiction. 3. Fathers and daughters — Juvenile  
fiction. 4. Mothers and daughters — Juvenile fiction. 5. New York (N.Y.) — History —  
1951 — Juvenile fiction. [1. Family life — New York (State) — New York — Fiction.  
2. Twins — Fiction. 3. Fathers and daughters — Fiction. 4. Mothers and daughters —  
Fiction. 5. New York (N.Y.) — History — 1951 — Fiction.] I. Title.

PZ7.M3567585Lq 2013

813.54 — dc23

2013018597

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 13 14 15 16 17

Printed in the U.S.A. 23  
First edition, November 2013

The text type was set in Baskerville MT.  
Book design by Elizabeth B. Parisi

# Chapter 1

*Thursday, July 7th, 1955*

The smells drifting through the wide-open window of Dana Burley's bedroom weren't exactly pleasant, but they weren't exactly unpleasant either. She sniffed cautiously. Garbage truck, for sure. She had heard the grinding of gears and the rattle of metal cans and the calls of Howard and Arnold, who got to ride around all day long on the back of the truck, hanging on with just one hand and leaning merrily out into traffic. She sniffed again. She could smell exhaust, too, from the cars and taxis that rumbled along Eleventh Street, but mixed with everything else was the scent of leaves from the maple tree outside her window, and, drifting up from downstairs, various cooking smells — coffee and eggs and something sweet, which might be a birthday cake.

From across the room, as if she had read Dana's mind (and she probably had), Julia said, "I think I smell our birthday cake."

Dana pretended she was still asleep.

“Dana? I know you’re awake.”

This was one of the problems with having a twin sister. Dana had no secrets from her. Well, hardly any. She rolled over and looked across the room at Julia.

“We’re seven today!” exclaimed Julia. “Aren’t you excited?”

Dana grinned. “Yes.”

“How come you didn’t answer me before?”

Dana shrugged beneath her cotton blanket, then tossed it back. She sat up in bed and looked out the window just in time to see the garbage truck disappear from view, Howard waving to Mrs. Morgan, who was walking her poodle to the corner. Dana turned and surveyed the bedroom she shared with Julia. She thought of a word her art teacher had recently explained: *symmetry*. Her room certainly was symmetrical. You could see, on one side, Dana’s domain, and on the other side, the reverse image, as if someone had held a mirror up to Dana’s things. This was because every time Dana added something to her side, Julia hurried to add the same thing to the other side. If Dana asked her mother to look for a blue spread for her bed, Julia begged for the same blue spread. If Dana began a collection of marbles and arranged them in a tray on her bookcase, then — surprise, surprise — Julia suddenly became interested in

marbles and arranged them on her bookcase on the opposite wall.

Even worse, most mornings, Julia waited until Dana had gotten dressed and then put on the exact same outfit.

“We’re too old for samesies,” Dana had said over and over again.

“But we’re twins. *Identical* twins. We’re special,” Julia had replied.

“Mommy, she’s copying me!” Dana would complain to their mother, and Abby would say patiently, “She looks up to you. She just wants to be like you, lovey. You should be flattered.”

Dana was, after all, nine minutes older than Julia.

“Hi,” came a husky voice from the doorway.

Dana patted her bed, and her brother ran across the room and dove onto her pillows. Then he sat placidly next to Dana, his eyes flat, his mouth hanging open slightly. “It’s your birthday,” he said seriously. Actually, what he said was, “It your birfday.”

“That’s right!” cried Julia, rolling out of her own bed and joining Dana and Peter. “You remembered. Do you know how old we are?”

“Five?” guessed Peter. His tongue protruded from his mouth and he breathed heavily.

“No, *you’re* five,” said Dana. She didn’t want to hurt his feelings, though, so she added, “But that was a good guess.”

“Party?” asked Peter.

“Yup, there’s a party today, and a magician is —”

“Cake?” Peter interrupted.

“Yes, there will be cake,” said Julia.

“I like cake,” Peter announced.

“We know you do,” said Dana. “Come on. Let’s go downstairs. But first, do you need to use the potty?”

Peter didn’t answer and Dana hurried into his room, pulled back the covers, and saw the wet stain on the sheets. Potty training was not going well.

“Do you need a diaper today?” asked Dana as she handed her brother a fresh pair of pajama bottoms.

Peter stepped into them and headed for the stairs. “I don’t know.”

Dana passed him. Then, followed by her sister and brother, she hurtled down the stairs to the second floor, ran by their parents’ bedroom, and hurtled down another flight of stairs, jumping over the last two steps to make a dramatic entrance in the hallway.

“Are those the birthday girls?” their father called from the kitchen.

“Yes!” cried Dana and Julia, making their breathless way to the breakfast table.

“And me!” said Peter.

“And you,” agreed Zander Burley, pulling Peter into his lap. He looked at the twins. “My goodness. Seven years old. What do you suppose is going to happen to you girls this year?”

Dana slid into her place at the table and watched her mother drop orange halves in the juicer and pump the arm up and down, juice flowing out the other side into a glass.

“Well,” said Dana slowly, “I’m going to start second grade.”

“*We’re* going to start second grade,” said Julia pointedly.

“And I’m going to keep taking art lessons with Mrs. Booth.” Dana glanced at her sister. This was one claim that Julia couldn’t make. She had no interest in art.

Abby turned away from the juicer and bent to kiss each of her children on the head. “Happy birthday,” she said to Dana. “Happy birthday,” she said to Julia. “Good morning, lovey,” she said to Peter.

“Presents!” Peter shouted suddenly.

Dana’s mother smiled. “Peter knows where your birthday presents are hidden.”

“Ooh, can we open them now?” asked Julia. “Please?”

Dana stared out the window at the garden behind their town house.

“Don’t you want to open our presents now?” Julia prodded her.

Dana hesitated. “I didn’t ask for anything.”

“Well, you know you’re getting presents anyhow,” said Julia.

Dana continued to study the garden.

Her father eyed her from across the table. “Is there something you haven’t told us?”

Dana picked up her spoon and saw her warped reflection in it. “There is one thing I want, but it isn’t something you can buy.”

Now everyone was staring at her.

“I get the presents?” said Peter, heading for the door.

No one answered him.

“Dana? Lovey?” said her mother.

“I want my own room,” Dana whispered.

Julia opened her mouth and then closed it again.

“Please?” said Dana. “I know you think Julia and I want to share a room.”

“We do!” exclaimed Julia. “We do!”

“*You* do. But I don’t. I don’t want everything to be same-sies. I want to be just myself in my own room. We could turn



the den into my room. Please?” Dana said again. “It’s right next to our bedroom, Julia, so we’d be next door to each other.”

“No!”

“We already have a library downstairs, and, Daddy, you have your study on the top floor, so it isn’t like we *need* a den. It could be my room, my very own room.”

Dana saw her parents exchange a glance over her head. She had long ago realized that Abby and Zander could talk to each other with just their eyes. That was how close they were. They had known each other since grade school, which was a long time. True, they had become separated when Zander had gone off to fight in World War II, but after he had come home, he’d tracked Abby down in New York City and proposed to her (for the second time). Now they had been together for ten years, and seemed, to Dana, to live secret, impenetrable lives.

“This is something Daddy and I need to discuss, lovey,” Abby said to Dana. “We’re not saying no. We just need to talk about it.”

“And we might not have a chance to talk about it today,” said Zander. “Too much going on. We have party preparations this morning —”

“Cake!” cried Peter, who had returned, presentless, to the table.

“Yes, cake,” his father repeated fondly. “And then there’s the party this afternoon and your special evening tonight.”

Dana’s thoughts, ever since she had begun to eye the den as her future bedroom, had not been on her birthday, but now she began to feel excited. “Pockets the Clown will be here, Peter! Remember Pockets? He came to your fourth birthday party.” She turned to her parents. “Thank you,” she said. To Julia she added, “You’ll have your own room, too, you know. Won’t that be great? You can have privacy and —”

“I just want you,” muttered her sister.

“Now I get the presents?” said Peter, heading for the door again. And when he returned with an armload of wrapped packages, Julia brightened. She said no more about Dana’s birthday wish.

Dana’s mother had worried that the day would be rainy or that a thunderstorm would come along in the afternoon. She wanted to be able to hold the party in the garden, although Dana didn’t see why they couldn’t have the party indoors, since their town house was enormous. But the sun shone all day long, and Dana and her family and the twelve guests were entertained in the bright, humid July air of a New York afternoon by Pockets the Clown and Sinbad the Magician.

Peter wore a suit and tie and his new brown oxfords, and Dana and Julia wore party dresses that stood out stiffly with crinoline. (Julia had waited to see which dress Dana would wear and had selected the matching one, and then Dana had secretly changed into a different party dress when it was too late for Julia to do anything about it.)

In the garden Dana sat surrounded by her four best friends, holding hands with her two *best* best friends, until Julia unhitched Marian Hackenburg's hand from Dana's and replaced it with her own. The guests watched, fascinated, as Pockets pulled twenty-five American flags from a pocket the size of a postage stamp, and then pulled fifteen gumdrops from an equally small pocket and passed them out to the children. Later they watched Sinbad turn a bottle of milk into a dove, and make a rose disappear . . . only to turn up later in Peter's ear. This came as no surprise to Peter, who simply smiled vaguely. Dana realized that this was because Peter didn't understand enough to know that a rose shouldn't be in his ear in the first place, but everyone else was amazed and clapped loudly for Sinbad when the show was over.

Later there was ice cream and cake, and before the twins opened the presents from their friends, they all took turns whacking a stick at a donkey-shaped piñata that Dana's father had hung from a limb of the ginkgo tree. Marian was

the one whose crashing blow finally broke the piñata open, and then everyone scrambled to gather up the candies and trinkets. Patty Morris gave all of her candy to Peter.

The party ended, the guests went home, and Dana was in the garden examining her presents — pleased that several of her friends had chosen not to get identical gifts for her and Julia — when her mother called from the back door, “Girls, time to get ready for tonight. I think you’ll both need baths before you put on fresh clothes.”

Peter’s babysitter arrived at five thirty.

“Can’t Peter come with us, Daddy?” asked Dana.

“He isn’t quite old enough for *Plain and Fancy*,” said her father. “He’d get too wiggly. Remember how wiggly he was the last time we went to the theatre? We’ll do something fun together on the weekend.”

“How about tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow is Friday. I already took one day off from writing. I need to get back to work. The book is due in a month. Now go change! Our chariot awaits.”

The chariot was not a chariot and it wasn’t waiting. It was a cab the Burleys caught at the corner of Eleventh Street and Sixth Avenue, and it drove them to the 21 Club for a very

grown-up dinner before they walked to the Winter Garden Theatre, where *Plain and Fancy* was playing.

“This certainly is different from the birthdays I used to have,” said Dana’s mother as they settled into their seats in the theatre.

“You didn’t go to any musicals?” asked Julia.

“Your daddy and I lived in a very small town in Maine. There was only one theatre and it was a movie theatre. And when I was little, we hardly had any money. I didn’t even have a birthday party until I was eleven. Then we had a picnic on the beach. I thought it was very grand.”

“A picnic? That was all?” said Dana.

“Well, it was a very nice picnic and lots of people came. And your aunt Rose and I got new dresses.”

“Were you there, Daddy?”

“I was. But I hardly knew your mother then. I already liked her, though,” he said, and reached across Dana’s lap to take Abby’s hand.

“Don’t kiss her!” Dana hissed, and Julia giggled. “Not in public!”

The lights dimmed then, the orchestra began to play, and Dana settled in her seat, her eyes on the stage as the curtain rose.

She felt quite grown-up, having eaten dinner at the 21 Club, and sitting now in the Winter Garden, surrounded by dressed-up theatergoers, mostly adults. She had a feeling that this year was going to be very different from any year before.