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# Main Street

Ann M. Martin

Welcome to Camden Falls

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Sneak-Peek

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Includes a Sewing  
Activity Inside!

Look for the book in stores this May!

# Welcome to Main Street, where every story will become your own.

*Flora and Ruby were not pale waifs shivering under threadbare blankets. Nor were they off on a glorious, romantic adventure. They were just Flora and Ruby Northrop, whose parents had died in a car accident and who were now going to live with their grandmother, Min, in Camden Falls, Massachusetts.*



Ann M. Martin, author of *The Baby-sitters Club* series, brings the town of Camden Falls to life through the eyes of sisters Flora and Ruby from the moment they arrive. It's strange to be in a new place. But luckily, it's a very welcoming place—where new friendships and new adventures are found around every corner.



# Main Street

*Welcome to Camden Falls*

Ann M. Martin





## *A Peek in the Windows*

When the Row Houses were built, which was more than fifty years before Min was born, they were some of the grandest homes in Camden Falls. Each was three stories high, topped off by an attic accessible by a ladder that dropped down into a hallway below. On the first floor were a large kitchen, a butler's pantry, a dining room, and a living room. On the second floor were four bedrooms. And on the third floor were several smaller rooms, the sleeping quarters for maids. In 1882, the wealthy people who lived in the Row Houses all had maids who slept in the maids' quarters, and butlers who used the butlers' pantries. But now, 125 years later, while the Row Houses were still grand, the people who lived in them did not have maids and butlers, or chauffeurs and gardeners, for that matter. Many of the butlers' pantries had been turned into breakfast nooks or mudrooms, and the rooms in the maids' quarters were nurseries or playrooms or offices or dens or guest rooms. The backyards, which once boasted formal gardens, were now cluttered with basketball hoops and vegetable plots, jungle gyms and storage sheds and swing sets. Even Min's



yard, with her carefully tended flower beds, was home to a tire swing and a tree fort that Flora and Ruby's mother had played with when she was their age. The twelve children who lived in the Row Houses these days (twelve if you counted Lydia, Margaret, and Robby, who were teenagers and did not consider themselves children) ran freely through the eight yards and in and out of the houses, comfortable with each of their neighbors, old and young.

Now, if you were walking north along Aiken Avenue and came to the Row Houses on a warm Sunday evening in June, you would find most of the windows open to let in the summer air. And if you paused on the sidewalk, you might be able to take a peek in the windows and glimpse the lives of the people inside. In the house on the left end, you would find the Morris family, Elise and Paul, their four children, Lacey, Mathias, Travis, and Alyssa, and their hamsters and guinea pig. Supper is long over — the Morrises eat early — and Alyssa and Travis are already in their pajamas. Mrs. Morris is commenting to her husband that the children are growing up so fast. This fall Alyssa, who's the youngest, will be in all-day preschool, and what will Mrs. Morris do with herself while the children are gone?

In the next house you would find Bill and Mary Lou Willet. They're nearly seventy-eight years old, both of them. Their birthdays are just a week apart in August. Mr. Willet is encouraging his wife to change out of her clothes and into her nightgown, but she won't. She's been



wearing these same clothes for four days and four nights now, and Mr. Willet can't convince her to put on anything else. He can't convince her to take a shower, either, or to comb her hair or take her pills or brush her teeth.

"Come on, honey," he says. "You'll feel so much better in a nice clean nightgown. Trust me."

But his wife, who's patting their cat, Sweetie, replies, "You know, my sister was here again today and we had such a pleasant conversation."

Mrs. Willet's sister has been dead for more than twenty years.

Next door to the Willets are the Malones. There's Margaret, sixteen now, drinking tea with her father, Dr. Malone, the dentist. They're sitting at the kitchen table, their cats, Twinkle and Bandit, nearby, and Dr. Malone is laughing at something Margaret has said. Upstairs, Lydia, who's fourteen, has shut herself in her bedroom and is sitting before her computer, instant messaging her friends. When her father calls upstairs to her, she ignores him.

The house to the north of the Malones' is Min's. She was born in that house — she was Mindy Davis then — and has lived there for most of her life, first as a child with her parents and her brother and sister, later as a wife and mother, and now as a grandmother. On this evening, Min, Flora, Ruby, Daisy Dear, and King Comma are in the kitchen and Min is making dinner. Daisy and King are lying on the floor just inches apart, and this is one of the first



times they have been so close to each other without growling.

"They're finally getting along," Ruby whispers, not wanting to break the spell. Then she adds, still whispering, "Min, is there a dance school in Camden Falls?"

Next door in Olivia's house, Mr. Walter closes up his home office on the third floor and leaves his computer and papers behind. He finds Olivia, her younger brothers, Henry and Jack, and his wife playing Clue on the living room floor. Olivia looks up when her father enters the room and thinks he looks not only tired but discouraged.

In the next house is Mr. Pennington. He's eighty-two years old, and Jacques, his cocker spaniel, is nearly as old in dog years. Mr. Pennington is peering in Jacques's food dish, seeing lots of kibble there and trying to remember if it's old kibble or new kibble.

In the seventh house, the house belonging to the Edwards family, Robby and his parents are lingering over dessert, and Robby is talking about his beloved day camp.

"When does it start, Mom?" he asks.

"In two weeks," replies his mother.

Robby is grinning. "Swimming in the pool!" he says. "Basketball, nature walks, arts and crafts, swimming in the pool, snacktime when we make our own snacks. That's what I like best. Making our own snacks. Except for swimming in the pool."



In the last house, the one at the right end, live Mr. and Mrs. Fong, artists who make furniture and jewelry. They have a studio in town, where they work and sell their pieces. At home they have turned the small rooms on the third floor into a second studio, and this evening they are there, working side by side, their puppies resting in the doorway.

Now walk back to the fourth house, to Min's, and take one last peek in the windows. Min is almost finished making dinner, and Flora is tossing a salad. It's Ruby's job to set the table.

"Let's use the good china," says Ruby. "I know where it is. We can have a fancy dinner tonight."

You would never guess, from a quick peek in Min's window, that she and Ruby and Flora have been a family for just five months.



## *Sew What?*

On one of the very last days of July, the cool weather still gracing Camden Falls, Nikki sat cross-legged on a patch of dry earth in front of her house. Mae sat beside her, holding out a fistful of dog kibble.

"Look, Nikki. Paw-Paw takes it right out of my hand. See?"

Sure enough, the scruffy dog nibbled delicately from Mae's outstretched palm.

"That's great, Mae," said Nikki absently. Her mind was on the arrival of Mrs. DuVane, and her ears were pricked for the sound of tires on gravel.

"Nikki?" said Mae a few moments later.

"What?"

"I *said*, isn't it too bad we have to keep Paw-Paw a secret?" She paused. "Aren't you listening?"

"I'm sorry," said Nikki. "I guess I'm just thinking about the old — I mean, about Mrs. DuVane. That's all."

"She's coming today, right?"

"Any minute now."

"And where's she taking you?"



“Into town to that sewing store. For some kind of lesson.”

“I want to learn to sew,” said Mae.

“Every time I get back from the store I’ll teach you what I learned, okay?”

“Okay. . . . Nikki? Who’s going to watch me while you’re in town?”

“Mom’s here.”

Mae lowered her voice. “She’s *asleep*.”

“Oh. Already?” Mrs. Sherman was having another bad day. “Well, you know the rules. If Tobias and I aren’t here, you have to stay on our property. So just . . . keep quiet so you don’t disturb Mom, and stay out of Dad’s way if he comes home. Maybe Tobias will be back soon.”

At that moment, Nikki heard gravel crunching. Mrs. DuVane honked twice and waved gaily out her car window. “Hello, Nikki dear! Ready for your big day?”

Nikki rolled her eyes, then kissed the top of Mae’s head before starting toward the car. “Hi, Mrs. DuVane,” she said flatly as she opened the door.

Mrs. DuVane eyed Nikki’s dusty shorts and her smudged legs. “Is that how you’re going to go to the store?” she asked. Without waiting for an answer, she glanced at her watch, then said, “Well, you haven’t time to change. But next week, Nicolette, try to look a bit more presentable.”

“Okay,” said Nikki. “I mean, yes, ma’am.”

Nikki stared out the window as Mrs. DuVane drove into Camden Falls. She didn’t feel like speaking.

Mrs. DuVane parked her car across from Needle and Thread. “Now remember, Nicolette,” she said as they climbed out of the Audi and closed the doors behind them, “this embroidery class is for adults, so you won’t be able to participate per se, but there are usually two or three other little girls here at the store, so maybe they can teach you some things while I’m taking the class. You can all learn from one another!” She added brightly, “Sewing is a very respectable pastime.”

“Yes, ma’am,” mumbled Nikki.

When Mrs. DuVane opened the door to Needle and Thread, a bell rang. Nikki stepped into the cool air of the store and was engulfed by the smell of new fabric, of coffee, and of something sweet she thought might be cookies.

“Hello, Mrs. DuVane,” called a woman from behind the counter. “You’re just in time for the class.”

Mrs. DuVane smiled. “And I’ve brought someone with me,” she said. “This is Nicolette. I know she can’t take the class, but I thought she might enjoy looking around the store. Nicolette is very creative. Aren’t you, dear?”

“I like to draw,” said Nikki, staring down at a piece of tape that was stuck to the floor.

“Hey!” called a voice, and Nikki turned around. Sitting on some couches at the front of the store were three girls about her age, and spread on a table in front of them were



squares of fabric, which the girls were cutting into shapes and arranging in patterns. “You’re Nikki Sherman, aren’t you?” said one of the girls.

“Yeah,” said Nikki. She couldn’t believe her bad luck. This girl — Olivia Walton? Was that her name? — had actually said to her on the school playground just a couple of months ago, “You know, if you washed your clothes more often, they’d smell better.”

Nikki had stared at her. This tiny little girl (she was in Nikki’s grade, but not in her class, and Nikki thought she might have skipped a grade at some point), this tiny little girl had had the *nerve* to tell Nikki how to do her housework. Let *her* try to wash clothes in a machine that didn’t work half the time. This girl probably didn’t even have to *do* her family’s laundry.

When Nikki hadn’t been able to stop staring, Olivia finally said, “I — I didn’t mean anything by that. I hope I didn’t hurt your feelings. I just thought you’d like to know that there’s an easy way . . .” Her voice began to trail off. “. . . an easy way to, um, to improve your personal hygiene.”

At this point, Nikki, disgusted, shook her head, turned around, and walked off. Her only wish then had been that she not wind up in Olivia’s class in the fall.

And now here she was, facing Olivia and two of her friends. Worse, she was stuck with them for an entire hour.



“Come on and sit with us,” said Olivia. “Our grandmothers gave us a job. There’s a kids’ patchwork pillow class coming up, and we’re supposed to make up designs for some easy pillows. You can help us.”

Nikki sniffed pointedly at her underarms. “If you’re sure I won’t oh-fend you,” she said, and was pleased to note that Olivia’s cheeks reddened slightly.

Three couches were arranged around the table. Olivia and one of the girls sat on one, and the third girl, the youngest-looking one, sat on another. Nikki sat down by herself in the middle of the remaining couch. She eyed Olivia’s friends.

“Um,” said Olivia, “do you want to help us? Our grandmothers —”

“Am I supposed to know who your grandmothers are?” asked Nikki.

“They own this store,” spoke up the girl who was sitting next to Olivia.

“Wow,” said Nikki. “The *owners*.”

After a brief pause, the girl spoke again. “Do you know how to sew?”

Nikki hesitated. She frequently mended the clothes that got tossed into a wicker basket sitting in the corner of the kitchen, but she had a feeling this wasn’t the kind of sewing the girl meant.

“I can sew a little,” she said at last.

“Have you done any quilting?” asked Olivia.



“No.”

“Well, that’s okay.”

“I know it’s okay.”

“Hey!” exclaimed Olivia after a few moments, during which Nikki had sat glaring at the fabric pieces and no one had spoken. “I just realized we haven’t introduced ourselves. Well, you know me. I’m Olivia Walter.” (Oh, *Walter*, thought Nikki.) “But you don’t know Flora and Ruby. This is Flora, and this is Ruby,” she said, pointing to each of them. “Flora and Ruby Northrop. And this” (she pointed to Nikki) “is Nikki Sherman. She’s in my grade. Flora and Ruby just moved to Camden Falls. Flora is going to be in our grade, too, Nikki. Ruby will be in fourth.”

Nikki, looking desperately at the pieces of fabric being arranged on the table and having no idea what to do with them, finally said, “So how come you guys moved here? Did your father get a new job or something?”

At this, silence fell. Flora went still as stone, then began arranging the fabric again, her eyes boring into the table. Ruby slid back onto the couch for a moment, then moved forward and whisked a triangle of blue calico away from Flora. Wordlessly, Flora grabbed it back from her.

“That’s mine!” cried Ruby.

“No, it isn’t. I was using it.”

“But I had it before and I need it to go right here. See? I’m making a *star*? SEE?”



“Then cut your own triangle. That’s why we have scissors. Anyway, a star pattern is going to be too complicated for beginners.”

“I’m a beginner, and I’m making a star.”

“Well, stop.”

From across the couch, Olivia eyed Nikki. “Nice move,” she said.

“What? What did I do?”

“Flora and Ruby moved here because their parents . . . their parents . . .”

“Go ahead and say it. Our parents died.” Ruby grabbed a pair of scissors and cut a sloppy triangle out of the calico fabric. “We’re orphans,” she added, slamming the triangle down on the table.

“I’m sorry,” said Nikki, and now she could feel her own face flushing. “I’m *really* sorry.”

“It’s all right,” said Flora.

“You didn’t know,” added Olivia. “Okay, come on. Here. Cut all these pieces of fabric into four-inch squares.”

Nikki took the fabric and scissors that Olivia held toward her, but she said, “Are you always so bossy?”

“Pretty much.” Olivia turned back to Flora and Ruby. “Now, I think that all the pillows should be made up of squares only. That’s easier for beginners. Nine squares will make up into a very nice pillow.”

Flora let out a sigh. “Okay. Half the fun is in choosing the fabric anyway, seeing which ones look best together.





Ruby, quit working on that star. Put the triangle pieces away.”

“No!” Ruby slid away from the older girls, and for a while, Nikki, Olivia, and Flora concentrated on laying out squares.

“With squares you could make theme pillows,” commented Flora. “You could use this fabric with the Eiffel Tower on it, and this one with the globes, and this one with the French poodles to make a Paris pillow.”

“You could do the same thing with stars,” muttered Ruby, coming back to the group. And after a moment, she added, “I’d *much* rather be in a tap class right now.”

Nikki glanced at her, then back at the table, where she halfheartedly began arranging squares of fabric again.

“What’s your theme?” Olivia asked Ruby a few moments later.

“I don’t *know*, okay? I’m just experimenting.”

“Hey,” said Nikki, “didn’t you say you were supposed to come up with several patterns for the class? Now you only have the pillows made from nine squares.”

“And the stars!” cried Ruby.

“Would you forget about the stars?” shouted Olivia.

“Girls, what’s going on over there?” called Min.

“Nothing.”

Half an hour later, when Mrs. DuVane’s embroidery class ended, Nikki, Ruby, Flora, and Olivia were still sitting

on the couches, but they were sitting as far from one another as they could manage.

“This store,” said Nikki, getting to her feet, “should be called Sew What?”

“Ha-ha,” said Olivia as Mrs. DuVane appeared, smiling and clutching a square of muslin adorned with ribbon flowers and bees.

“Well, that was a wonderful class, just wonderful,” said Mrs. DuVane. “I hope you girls had fun. Nicolette, let’s buy you a few supplies and then we should be on our way.” She turned to Flora, Ruby, and Olivia. “We’ll be back again next week.”

“Goody,” muttered Olivia.



**To find out more about Ruby, Flora,  
and the world of Main Street,  
look for the book in stores this May!**



# Make Your Own Patchwork Pillow!

## What you will need:

- Needle
- Thread
- Fabric 1-Piece A
- Fabric 2-Piece B
- Fabric 3-Piece C
- Fabric 4-Piece D
- One 12" Pillow

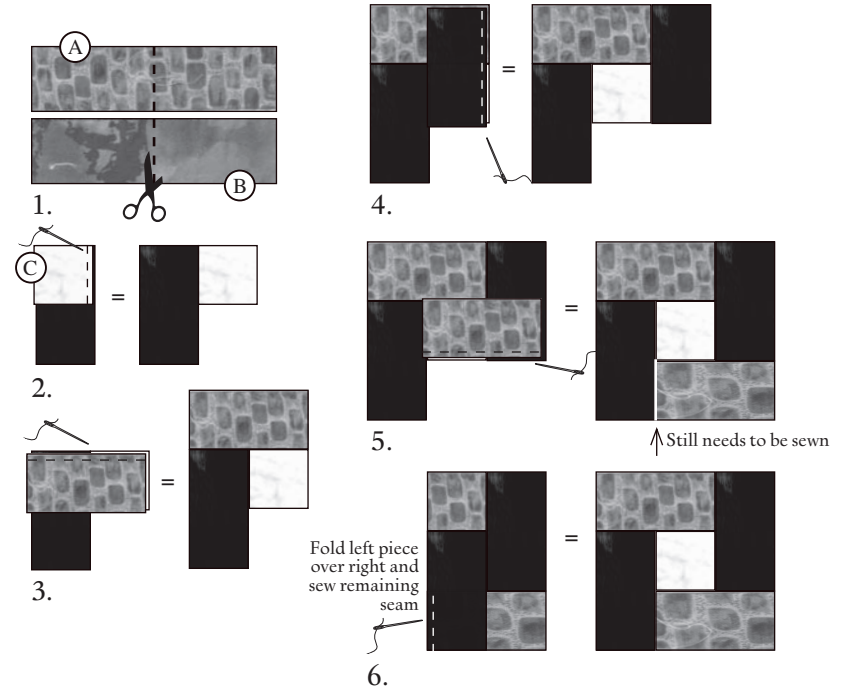
Fabric 1: Needs one 4½" x 17" strip  
 Fabric 2: Needs one 4½" x 17" strip  
 Fabric 3: Needs one 4½" square  
 Fabric 4: Needs one 12" square

Stitch with a ¼" seam allowance.

1. Start by marking and cutting the **Fabric A** and **Fabric B** 4½" x 17" strips into two 4½" x 8½" rectangles each.
2. Sew the **Fabric C** background square to the right edge of a **Fabric B** rectangle, edges aligned and right sides together.
3. Next sew a **Fabric A** rectangle to the top of what's already been sewn, pressing seam towards top rectangle.
4. Then sew the remaining **Fabric B** rectangle to the right side of what's already been sewn.
5. Now place the last **Fabric A** rectangle lined up with the right hand edge of the block, right sides together, and sew from the outer right hand edge in towards the center.

6. Fold the block towards you to line up the remaining unstitched seam...and stitch from your stopping point to the edge.
7. Now take the 12" piece of fabric and lay it on top of your fabric square (**Fabric D**). (Note: You are going to be sewing inside out.)
8. Sew three sides of the square, leaving one side unstitched. And turn right side out.
9. Add pillow and sew remaining side closed.

**DONE!**



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# Main Street

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