

# The House on Sycamore Hill

*Created May 2025, main storyline supplied by Carg, text and pictures by ChatGPT 4o.*

## The House on Sycamore Hill (Part 1)

When Grandma Elsie moved into Rosewood Manor, it marked a bittersweet transition. She'd been fiercely independent since her husband passed, but age was catching up with her, and the family agreed—gently but firmly—that she needed more help than her old house on Sycamore Hill could offer.

The house had sat like a storybook castle on the edge of town for nearly a century. With its wide porch, tall windows, and turreted roof, it had an air of quiet mystery. Claire, 13, had always loved visiting it. Now, it would be her home.

Claire's parents were excited—her dad, especially, who'd grown up in that house and now saw a chance to bring it back to life. But the attic was off-limits, at least officially. "We'll get to it eventually," her mom had said, waving off the dust and clutter. "Right now, we have enough boxes to unpack down here."

Claire didn't wait.

The second afternoon after moving in, she invited her best friend Emma over. "We have to check out the attic," she whispered like it was a dare.

They snuck past the creaky third-floor door, flashlights in hand, and climbed the steep steps into the dusty, dim space above. Dust motes swirled in the sunlight spilling through the attic windows, and cobwebs hung like forgotten lace.

The attic was a treasure trove.

There were stacks of old postcards tied with ribbon, dated as far back as the 1920s. "Look at the stamps!" Emma said, holding one up to the light. "These are worth something, right?" Claire nodded. "My grandma used to collect them. Or maybe she just never threw anything away."

Then they found the chest.

It sat under the eaves, tucked behind an old rocking chair and a cracked mirror. It was made of thick leather, with dark brass fittings and a latch that resisted before popping open with a groan.

Inside were clothes—beautiful, strange clothes. Dresses in faded pastels, with lace collars and tiny buttons up the back. Built-in bloomers. Sleeves that tied closed at the wrists.

"These are like...costume dresses," Emma said, her voice hushed.

Claire held up a soft lilac dress. It was small, but not baby-small. It looked like it might fit them.

They giggled as they tried them on, helping each other with the long rows of buttons. The fabric was stiff in places but surprisingly intact. Emma twirled, the skirts flaring out. "I feel like a haunted doll," she joked.

Then Claire pulled something else from the bottom of the chest—a harness, made of thick leather straps. It looked like something for a horse at first, but the shape was wrong. It had buckles, padded cuffs, and even a small brass lock near the chest strap.

They examined it with the fascination of the curious and unsupervised.

“Think it’s for...pretend riding?” Emma asked.

Claire shrugged. “Only one way to find out.”

They took turns putting it on, adjusting the straps around their shoulders and waists. When Emma put it on Claire properly and clipped the chest strap, the lock clicked shut. Claire laughed. “Okay, now I’m stuck.”

Emma looked for the key, and found it tucked in the chest under a silk scarf. She tried to turn it in the lock—but it wouldn’t budge.

“It’s stuck,” she said, frowning.

Claire squirmed. “Try again.”

“I am!”

They pulled, twisted, even tried a little oil from a sewing kit they found, but the lock wouldn’t open. Claire couldn’t get the harness off. The more they struggled, the more real it became.

“Okay,” Claire said finally, face flushed, trying to sound calm. “We need help.”

Downstairs, her father was helping Jamie build a Lego spaceship when the girls came clattering down the stairs, Emma holding the rusted key, Claire in the harness.

“Dad,” Claire said sheepishly. “Can you...get this off?”

He blinked. Then stood.

“What in the world...?”

Her mother came in a moment later, drying her hands. “What are you girls doing?”

Claire shifted uncomfortably. “We found it in a trunk in the attic. It...locks. We didn’t mean to—”

Her parents exchanged a glance. Then her dad knelt down, taking the key and examining the mechanism.

“It’s old,” he said. “Let me get the toolbox.”

It took a few careful minutes, some WD-40, and a pair of pliers, but eventually, the lock gave way with a reluctant click.

Claire sighed in relief and wriggled out.

Then came the questions. Her parents sat them down in the living room.

“That chest,” her mom said carefully. “It belonged to your Aunt Margery.”

Claire blinked. “I have an aunt?”

Her father nodded slowly. “You had. She died when I was about your age.”

He paused. "Margery had...issues. Mental health problems. Back then, people didn't really understand how to help. She had trouble controlling herself—emotions, movements, sometimes even her voice. My mom did the best she could. The clothes were designed to keep her safe. Comfortable. The harness too. It wasn't for punishment. It made her feel secure."

The girls were silent.

"She liked dressing up," her mom added gently. "The clothes made her feel pretty, and calm. Your grandma sewed many of them herself. And Margery loved them."

Claire looked down at the harness on the floor. It seemed different now. Not a toy, not a relic. A reminder.

Later that evening, Claire and Emma returned to the attic, this time carrying soft cloths and a box for delicate storage. They carefully folded the dresses and cleaned the postcards. They found a faded photo tucked into the bottom of the trunk—a girl in one of the dresses, smiling shyly at the camera.

"Do you think she'd mind us playing dress-up?" Emma asked quietly.

Claire shook her head. "Not if we're careful. And kind."

From then on, the attic remained their favorite place—but not just for fun. It became a place of memory, of respect, and of quiet wonder.

And when Claire visited her grandmother at Rosewood Manor a few days later, she brought the photo with her.

"You found Margery's things," Elsie said, eyes softening.

Claire nodded.

"She would have liked you," Elsie said. "She would have loved sharing her stories."

So Claire asked for them.

And listened.

## **The House on Sycamore Hill (Part 2)**

After the harness incident, the chest was no longer just a curiosity—it had become something more delicate. Claire's parents stored the harness in a drawer downstairs, "just to be safe," as her dad put it. But they didn't stop the girls from returning to the attic. They only said: "*Be careful. And be respectful.*"

And they were. At least, mostly.

The dresses, though unusual, were fascinating. Some had tiny brass clasps along the collar. Others had mitt-style sleeves that could be buttoned closed. One had a sash that tied in the back and loops along the hem, almost like it could be fastened to something else.

"I think this one's my favorite," Emma said one rainy afternoon, as the girls dressed up again in the attic. She twirled in a faded sea-blue dress with thick, velvety fabric. "It's so soft."

Claire held up another—cream-colored with little pearl buttons all the way up the back. She turned it around. "Can you help me get into this one?"

The back-buttoned dresses were tricky. They had to help each other in and out of them, carefully fastening every button, which took patience and made them laugh when they missed one halfway up and had to start over.

Some of the dresses had bloomers sewn in—almost like old-fashioned onesies, but made for bigger kids. “These feel like pajamas that don’t want you to escape,” Emma giggled once, trying to get out of one while Claire fumbled with the back buttons.

They eventually found more in the trunk: soft cloth mitts with tiny buttons at the wrists, thick fabric belts that fastened at the back, and even a strange padded bonnet with long ties. Some things puzzled them. Some things made them laugh. Some made them go quiet for a while.

They didn’t tell the parents about most of it.

But the play turned thoughtful. They made up stories about Margery—how she might’ve imagined herself as a princess trapped in a tower, or a fairy in hiding. They started writing down these stories in a notebook, calling it *Margery’s World*.

Then one afternoon, after school, they found something new.

Emma was digging through a smaller box near the trunk and pulled out what looked like a notebook. The first few pages were blank. Then came a name: “Margery Elisabeth Harlow.” It was a journal.

Claire’s breath caught. “We shouldn’t—”

But Emma had already flipped to the next page.

It wasn’t quite a diary. More like a collection of thoughts. Scribbles. Doodles. Some in careful cursive, some messy and rushed. There were notes like:

*“Rain again. I asked Mother for the blue dress and she said no. I hate the green one. It scratches.”*

*“Tied my hands last night. Slept better. Felt warm and quiet. Floating.”*

*“Why can’t I go outside? I’ll be good. I’ll be quiet. I promise.”*

The pages hit differently.

“I think she was really lonely,” Claire said quietly.

Emma nodded. “And scared.”

They put the journal away carefully, unsure what to do with it yet.

Later that week, while Claire’s parents were out and Jamie was napping, they returned to the attic. They tried on a pair of the full mitt-style sleeves—sliding their hands inside and buttoning each other in. It was strange. Funny, at first.

“I can’t even hold a pen in these,” Claire said, wiggling her hands uselessly inside.

“That’s the point, probably,” Emma said. Then added after a pause, “Do you think she liked it? Or hated it?”

“I think... maybe both,” Claire said after a long silence.

That night, as she passed her parents’ room, Claire noticed her father’s top drawer was slightly open. The harness was still there. Carefully folded.

She didn’t touch it.

But two nights later, the harness returned—though not in the way they expected.

Jamie had a tantrum—his worst in months. Shrieking and crying, kicking the wall. Claire and Emma were in the kitchen helping her mom when it started, and her dad had to carry him to his room. They all heard the crash of toys hitting the floor.

Later, after it quieted down, Claire heard her parents talking in the hallway. Whispering. She caught only a few words:

“...the same way Margery used to...”

“...just one night. Not as punishment...”

“...it made her feel safe.”

The harness wasn’t for show anymore.

Claire lay awake that night, wondering how many things in the attic had been misused, misunderstood. How many were tools, or comforts, or just desperate attempts at love when nothing else worked.

She told Emma the next day, and they both sat for a long time on the attic floor, the sea-blue dress laid across their laps.

“I don’t think it’s a game anymore,” Emma said quietly.

“No,” Claire said. “But it’s still a story. And it still matters.”

They took down the old photo of Margery from the trunk and framed it with cardboard and tinfoil. They placed it by the attic window.

Then they wrote in their notebook:

*“Margery was more than the clothes. More than the harness. She was brave in ways no one saw. But we will.”*

### **The House on Sycamore Hill (Part 3)**

Jamie had always been different.

Claire loved her little brother, but he was a puzzle—brilliant some days, unreachable others. He had bursts of joy that made everyone smile, but also meltdowns that could shake the walls. He didn’t like loud noises or surprises. Sometimes he would scream for no reason anyone could understand, or crawl under the table and not come out for hours.

Since the move to Sycamore Hill, things had gotten harder for him. New spaces, new routines, the ghosts of old emotions clinging to corners. Claire noticed the way he flinched when the wind whistled through the attic vents. How he became obsessed with the narrow cupboard under the stairs, hiding inside it when the world became too much.

Her parents were trying. Therapists. Weighted blankets. Patience.

And now, the harness.

The night after Jamie's worst episode yet, her parents quietly took the old harness from the drawer and adapted it. Not as punishment—but as comfort. Her mother explained gently to Claire later that Jamie liked deep pressure, the way some children do. He needed containment, something firm around him when his body felt too big for his skin.

The harness fit snugly. He didn't wear it for long—maybe twenty minutes at a time, under close watch—but it seemed to help. Claire watched him settle once while wearing it, lying on the couch with a calm she hadn't seen in weeks.

It made her think of Margery, and the strange, sad beauty of the trunk in the attic.

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One cloudy Saturday afternoon, Claire and Emma were back upstairs, poking through the last few untouched boxes in the attic. They found more dresses—some in surprisingly good condition. One in particular was striking: a long, thick velvet dress with a high collar and internal fastenings, including an attached bodice that buckled under the outer layer. It was warm and snug, like being wrapped in a heavy blanket.

"I want to try this one," Claire said, intrigued by the craftsmanship. It felt different—less like a costume, more like a contraption.

Emma helped her in. It took time. There were laces inside, a sash that pulled tight at the waist, and the back panel had buttons from the nape of the neck down to the hips. It also had an odd feature: attached bloomers with buttons that fastened in the back, just below the dress's opening. Once it was on, Claire could barely move her arms freely, and the high collar felt like it gently held her chin.



"This is...weirdly cozy," she admitted.

Emma laughed. "You look like you walked out of a Victorian novel."

But before they could take pictures or continue exploring, Emma's phone buzzed. Her mom was downstairs in the driveway.

"I have to go," Emma said, suddenly frantic. "I'm so sorry—she's early!"

"Wait—what about the dress?" Claire turned, awkwardly. "You have to unbutton me."

"There's no time! Just—stay still, I'll do the top row—"

But they only made it halfway before Emma's mom honked the horn again. Emma rushed down the stairs, promising to text later.

Claire sat on the attic floor, breathing in the warm velvet smell. The dress was snug, and now that she was left alone, she realized just how immobile it made her feel. Her arms couldn't reach the buttons. The bloomers underneath tugged slightly when she twisted. And the collar felt tighter the longer she sat still.

She tried to reach around, struggled, but gave up after a few minutes.

*Okay, she told herself. This is fine. I just need Mom.*

She went downstairs, shuffling carefully in the dress. The long hem almost tripped her on the way down.

Her mother was in the laundry room, dealing with Jamie, who was curled on the floor in his post-meltdown quiet. He looked peaceful now, swaddled in a fleece blanket, but her mom was clearly exhausted.

"Mom?" Claire called gently from the hallway.

Her mother looked up. "Claire, honey—not now. I need five minutes, okay?"

"I'm kind of—stuck," Claire said, lifting her arms slightly.

Her mom blinked. "Why are you—" She sighed. "Can you sit down? I'll come help soon."

Claire nodded and backed into the living room. Sitting down in the dress was a project in itself. The internal buckles pressed against her spine, and she couldn't bend her knees easily with the bloomers snug between her legs. Still, she managed to lower herself into an armchair and tried to stay calm.

Twenty minutes passed.

She heard the washing machine start. Heard Jamie talking softly to himself.

The dress didn't hurt—but it didn't give, either. She could see now how Margery might've worn something like this every day. It didn't just hold you—it *held you back*. And maybe, in Margery's mind, that felt like safety.

When her mother finally came, Claire had gone quiet.

Her mom knelt by her chair and started unbuttoning the dress, carefully loosening the hidden fastenings and laces. Her hands were gentle.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I should've come sooner."

Claire didn't answer right away. Then, softly, she asked, "Was it like this for her?"

Her mother paused, fingers on the final buttons.

"Yes," she said. "Some days she needed it. Some days she hated it. We were always guessing."

Claire looked down at the folds of velvet in her lap. "It's not just dress-up anymore."

"No," her mom agreed. "But that doesn't mean it's wrong to want to understand."

After she was out of the dress, Claire folded it carefully and brought it back to the attic. She laid it in the chest, smoothing the sleeves. Then she took out the notebook she and Emma had started and wrote:

*Today I wore one of Margery's dresses. Not just for fun. To understand. It's strange how something can feel like both a cage and a blanket.*

*Maybe Margery wasn't trying to hide. Maybe she was just trying to feel okay.*

## The House on Sycamore Hill (Part 4)

It was a week after the dress incident, and something had changed in Claire.

She wasn't just playing anymore. The attic, the dresses, Margery's journal—they'd become part of her internal landscape. Her thoughts lingered on them even during school. Sometimes, in the quiet moments before bed, she imagined Margery sitting in the attic window, writing her strange little notes in the flickering candlelight.

Her parents noticed.

Claire had begun helping more with Jamie, learning how to soothe him when the overstimulation crept in. She knew when to talk gently, when to sit beside him silently, and when to wrap the blanket around his shoulders like armor. She understood now—more than most kids her age—what it meant to live between comfort and constraint.

One evening, after Jamie had gone to bed and the dishes were done, her father sat down beside her in the living room. Her mother joined a moment later, quietly folding laundry.

"You've been thinking about Margery a lot," her dad said.

Claire nodded.

Her mom gave a small smile. "You've been...very kind about her. Curious in a good way."

Claire shrugged. "I don't know. I just feel like no one ever really got to know her."

They were quiet for a moment.

Then her dad said, "We found one of her nightdresses. In the cedar box at the foot of her bed."

Claire looked up.

"We washed it. It's soft, simple. Would you like to wear it tonight?" he asked, gently. "Not as a costume. Just to see what it felt like for her. Only if you want to."

Claire hesitated, then nodded.

That night, her mom brought it to her room—a long white cotton nightgown with delicate smocking at the chest and ribbon at the collar. It was a little loose, clearly made for someone shorter and stockier than Claire, but it was warm and smelled faintly of cedar and lavender.

It felt...quiet. Like it muffled the outside world just a little.

She slept deeply.

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The next morning, sunlight poured through her window. She shuffled sleepily down the stairs in the nightdress, rubbing her eyes. Her mom was already in the kitchen, scrambling eggs. Her dad looked up from the table and smiled.

"Morning," he said. "How'd you sleep?"

"Good," Claire said softly. She didn't want to change out of the nightgown just yet.

Then her mom gestured to a chair. "Come sit."



Claire sat at the table and noticed something lying beside her plate.

The harness.

It was folded neatly, the leather dark and oiled, the brass fittings freshly polished.

She blinked. "What's this...?"

Her dad sat back. "You've wanted to understand her, Claire. The whole picture. You said you felt safe in the dress, like Margery might've. So we thought—only if you want—we'd try this. Just for a little while. Not to restrain. Just to...contain. Let you feel what she might've felt. In the mornings. Sitting at this table."

Claire looked down at the harness.

She nodded, just once.

Her mother helped her put it on—gently, carefully. The straps crossed her chest and buckled at her waist. It wasn't tight, but it was firm. Familiar now.

Then her father picked up the small brass key and gently clicked the front clasp.

Claire exhaled. It was strangely calming. She sat up straighter. Her hands rested on the table. The nightdress flowed softly around her knees, the leather snug against her ribs.

And for a moment—just a moment—it felt like Margery was there beside her.

They ate breakfast in silence. Eggs, toast, jam. Her mother brushed her hand over Claire's shoulder now and then. Her father poured her orange juice and smiled.

When they were done, her mom gently unlocked the clasp and removed the harness.

"Thank you," Claire whispered.

Her dad leaned over and kissed the top of her head. "You're helping us remember her better than we ever did, Claire."

Claire smiled—and later that day, when she returned to the attic, she opened the notebook and wrote:

*Today I wore her nightgown. Sat at her place. Wore the harness. Not as a game. Just...to feel like she did. Not trapped. Just held. Like maybe she wasn't alone at that table after all.*

### **The House on Sycamore Hill (Part 5)**

The next day, Claire invited Emma over again.

They went to the attic, as always, but this time it wasn't just play. Claire brought the notebook, carefully opening it to the page she'd written after wearing Margery's nightgown and harness. She let Emma read it in silence, the dust of the old wood swirling in the late afternoon light.

When Emma looked up, her eyes were wide—but not mocking. Not even confused. Just...quiet.

"You really did it?" she said. "They let you wear it?"

Claire nodded. "Only for a little while. Just at breakfast. But it was...weirdly peaceful. Like, everything else just kind of stopped."

Emma sat back on a pile of old linens. "That's not what I expected. I thought it would feel awful. Like being trapped."

Claire pulled her knees to her chest. "I thought so too. But it didn't. Not like that. It felt...like someone was holding me. Even though no one was."

Emma glanced at the chest. "Are you going to do it again?"

Claire looked at her, hesitated, and then said, "I want to try one of the more...restrictive ones. Just for one night."

Emma blinked. "Like which one?"

Claire stood and walked to the cedar chest. She reached down carefully and pulled out a folded bundle she'd noticed before but never touched—cream-colored flannel, heavy and soft, with satin piping and long back-fastening sleeves. Attached to it were a pair of bloomers sewn into the bottom, buttoning at the back. The neckline was high and closed with three small buttons at the back of the collar. The wrists had enclosed mitten-sleeves—no openings, no fingers.

It was clearly designed to keep Margery still. Safe. Contained.

"This one," Claire said.

Emma stared. "Won't it be hard to sleep in?"

"Probably," Claire said. "But maybe Margery did. Maybe it helped her feel okay."

"Will your parents even let you?"

Claire shrugged. "I think so. If I explain why."

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That night, after dinner, Claire brought the gown downstairs.

Her parents were folding laundry on the couch. She laid the nightgown carefully across the ottoman.

"I want to wear this tonight," she said. "Just to see."

Her mom ran her hand along the fabric. "This one is...more intense."

Claire nodded. "I know. I want to understand what it felt like. Just once. I trust you."

Her father looked at her gently. "You won't be able to get out by yourself."

"I know."

They exchanged a long look, then her mother said, "We'll help you into it. If anything feels wrong, you say so. And we'll check on you in the night."

Claire's heart fluttered. "Okay."

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Later, in her bedroom, the routine was quiet and calm. Her mom helped her step into the gown first—the bloomers were snug, the buttons tricky. Then her arms slid into the long sleeves, and her mom carefully buttoned the wrists closed over the mittened ends. The back buttons were done slowly, one at a time, all the way from the small of her back up to her neck. Finally, the collar closed, firm but not choking.

“Comfortable?” her mom asked.

“Sort of. Tightly comfortable.”

Her dad smiled faintly. “Let us know if that changes.”

Claire lay down on her bed, covers over her legs, arms resting gently at her sides. The mitts kept her hands from fiddling, from scratching. From anything. She could only wiggle her fingers inside the soft flannel.

Her parents turned out the light and closed the door.

At first, the sensation was strange—too warm, too still. She couldn’t shift easily. Couldn’t turn onto her side without effort. But as the minutes passed, her thoughts quieted. The snugness became a kind of whisper: *You’re safe. You don’t need to do anything. Just be still.*

For the first time in a long while, Claire’s thoughts didn’t race before sleep.



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She woke to soft sunlight and the sound of the door opening.

Her mom stepped in, smiling. “Good morning, sweetheart.”

Claire blinked and realized she hadn’t moved once during the night. “I actually slept.”

Her mom sat beside her and began unbuttoning the back of the gown. “It’s not something you need to do all the time,” she said gently. “But I’m glad it helped you feel close to her.”

When the sleeves came free, Claire flexed her fingers, surprised how strange her hands felt—like they were waking up too.

Downstairs, her dad had made pancakes. They didn’t bring out the harness this time. They didn’t need to. Claire sat at the table in her robe, still feeling wrapped in something Margery had once known.

Later, when Emma came over and asked, “So? How was it?” Claire said only:

“Like floating. Like being held by the past, and not falling through.”

They wrote it down together in the notebook:

*Margery slept in stillness. I think she found peace there. Not every night. But enough. And now I understand just a little more of who she was.*

### **Final Chapter: The Letter in the Floorboards**

Spring came slowly to Sycamore Hill. Buds crept along the vines outside the attic windows, and sunlight filtered in with a warmer tone, full of dust and the smell of old wood coming alive again.

Claire and Emma had started spending less time in the attic. Not because it wasn't special anymore—but because it had become sacred. They had learned Margery's rhythms, her fears, her comforts. The nightgowns and postcards, the strange quiet of the harness—they weren't mysteries now. They were memories. And the girls were beginning to let them rest.

But there was one last box.

It was flat and square, half-hidden beneath a stack of broken picture frames. When Claire reached for it, a splintered board beneath her creaked, and something shifted.

"Wait," she said. She knelt, fingers brushing the floor. One of the boards felt looser than the rest.

Together, she and Emma pried it up gently.

Beneath the plank, tucked into the space between joists, was a folded bundle of yellowed paper tied with string.

Claire untied it slowly. Inside was a letter—written in faded blue ink, in a looping, careful hand. A name sat at the top:

**"To whoever finds this after I'm gone."**

Emma leaned in as Claire read aloud.

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**\*\***"My name is Margery Elisabeth Harlow. If you are reading this, you have found the place where I put the words I could never say out loud. Where no one could take them away or tell me I was wrong.

I am not broken. I am not shameful. I am not what they say in hushed voices.

I see more than they think. I feel everything, too much. I love fiercely, and that frightens people. But I do not want to disappear.

I like the dresses. I like the stillness. But I also want to run. To speak. To be more than what they let me be.

If you're reading this, please remember: I was real. I was whole, even when they didn't understand how."**\*\***

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The letter ended there—signed with a tiny, careful heart drawn beside her name.

Emma swallowed. "She knew."

Claire nodded. Her hands trembled slightly as she folded the letter back along the original creases. "She knew exactly who she was. She just didn't get the chance to be it out loud."

They sat there for a while, quiet.

Then Claire carefully placed the letter in their notebook, sliding it into the final pages.

"I think this is where it ends," she said softly.

Emma didn't argue.

They gathered the items they'd been cataloging—the clothes, the photos, the postcards—and wrapped them gently in linen, storing them in labeled boxes. The harness went into a cedar-lined drawer. The dresses were hung on padded hangers, each tagged with a memory or note they had written.

Before they closed the trunk for the last time, Claire placed a copy of the letter inside, beneath the framed photograph of Margery.

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That evening, Claire and Emma sat on the front steps of the house, watching the sun dip behind the trees.

"No more dress-up?" Emma asked, not sadly—just checking.

Claire shook her head. "Not for now. We weren't just playing. We were remembering. And now... we've remembered enough."

"What will you do with the notebook?"

"I'm going to give it to Grandma Elsie."

Emma raised an eyebrow. "You think she'll want to read it?"

Claire looked at the sky. "I think she needs to."

And maybe, for the first time in decades, the silence around Margery would lift—not in shame, not in fear, but in love.

The past, once hidden under floorboards, was now in the light.

And Claire knew it was time to go forward.

**THE END**