

MAYBE TOMORROW
By Alberta H. Sequeira

So, this is what it's all about...marriage and motherhood, Maggie Simmons thought as she sipped her late morning coffee. She sat at the kitchen table, holding the mug in both hands and stared out the large bay window facing the backyard. The coffee cup was hot to the touch, almost burning her palms, but it felt comforting on this cold morning.

It was 1964, and a winter storm had arrived during the night in their hometown of Scituate, Massachusetts. The blizzard had left two feet of drifting snow on the ground. Maggie sat there, mesmerized, studying the accumulation that had covered the branches of the tall, pine trees by the wooden fence. The heavy snow made her feel trapped behind closed doors.

It was rare that Maggie had spare time during the day to sit alone. Today, she felt washed-out from not getting a full night's sleep. Her daughter, Jessica, who was only a year old, had been up most of the night crying from teething. Maggie had walked the floor with her for hours.

It was three o'clock in the morning when she finally crawled back into bed next to her husband, Bob. She couldn't understand how a baby's cry, during the silence of the night, didn't affect him.

She had just finished feeding Jessica breakfast and changed her into a warm sleeper before putting her down for a late morning nap. Her other daughter, Tammie, who was five, was being entertained by the Road-Runner cartoon on television in the living room. She sat motionless watching it. Maggie couldn't figure out if her daughter loved

the stupid bird, or was scared of it. Tammie had watched her daddy numerous times crack-up with laughter every time he heard the, “Beep, beep,” as it traveled down the roadways with tremendous speed crashing into everything in its path. Maybe his amusement gave her security that the feathered friend was harmless.

Tammie sat curled-up in a corner of the over-sized sectional, sucking her right thumb while holding onto her worn-out, pink, crochet blanket. It was dragged behind her all day long making her look like a twin sister to Linus. Maggie had to plot ways to take the cover from her so it could be washed now and then.

Maggie continued looking outside at the high mounds of snow, trying to analyze where her independent life had gone.

During the late fifties, high school never offered a curriculum to help prepare girls for the reality of becoming a wife and mother. It was normal for them to jump right into marriage and start a family once they left school.

Seven years had passed since Maggie had graduated and her dreams of living in a marriage with no disappointments or stress, was an immature way of thinking. It wasn't reality.

Days were routinely filled with housework, errands, and chasing two small children. She knew it was all expected, but the overtiredness this day had her depressed.

She envied Bob whenever he went out the door to go to work. He spent each day enjoying adult conversations while she listened to baby-talk. She couldn't imagine what it would be like to just get up, grab her pocketbook, and go somewhere.

She resented that Bob was free to talk on the telephone without being interrupted or could complete a project that was started at home without having to stop for children.

Maggie abruptly realized she couldn't recall Bob ever changing or feeding his daughters. She had to practically beg him to spend time with Tammie. He wasn't disturbed at all last night when Jessica cried uncontrollably. Obviously, he had no clue how stressful it could be hearing a baby's piercing cries.

She needed private time with Bob away from the children. Maggie wanted to capture the days of flirting, holding hands, kissing sweetly, and taking weekend drives-by themselves. *Oh, those days!* Maggie reminisced, as she leaned on her left elbow.

Maybe her gloomy frame of mind came from the long winter months, with the freezing, cold weather that went right through her bones. It certainly didn't tempt her to struggle putting on snowsuits, boots, hats, and gloves for the girls. She felt drained just thinking about the resistance that would come putting them into their car seats.

Maggie found multiple excuses to stay trapped in the house for another day, but it didn't pacify the loneliness that was engulfing her. She had been feeling this way for some time now.

She tried to push the blues aside and face the day. She left the table trying to convince herself, that this melancholy feeling would leave once she got up and moving.

Maggie passed by the brass-framed mirror in the hall and glanced into it. Her reflection stopped her dead in her tracks. Who was this strange woman that looked back at her? She approached the mirror image to get a close-up. The stranger had deep, facial lines and puffy eyes. *What happened to me? Is this what motherhood is doing to me?*

In high school, she had been an energetic teenager. She was a head cheerleader and a member of the girls' baseball team. She kept her weight at 110 pounds, which

suiting her tiny five foot, two inch frame. Her green eyes and curly, auburn hair got the boys attention. Bob was one of them.

He had been the quarterback for the schools' football team. His warm smile, blonde crew-cut and deep blue eyes, absolutely melted Maggie's heart from the moment they had met.

This wasn't the same teenage girl Maggie saw in the hallway. Lately there had been no energy or enthusiasm to put on make-up. She had been waking-up with the "morning blahs" from being in the house day after day.

It was almost ten o'clock and her hair had not even been combed. She glanced over at Tammie and noticed her daughter's brown, curly hair was matted from sleep. She had over-looked her after putting Jessica down.

"Come over here, honey," Maggie said, bending down to pick her up tenderly in her arms from the sectional.

Her blanket was all tangled around her feet from the multiple holes in it. Maggie struggled and pulled, until she realized part of it was caught under the cushion. The tugging made her exhausted. She could feel her patience disappearing.

Guilt started to take over when she realized how innocent Tammie was to her mother's mood swing. Maggie wanted her maternal love to take over but felt like it was being brushed under the rug.

She brought Tammie into the bathroom and sat her on the toilet lid and started to braid her hair.

"Ouch!" Tammie cried out as the comb went through it.

"Sit still or Mommy won't be able to do this."

Maggie worked with the speed that came from the daily practice. She tied bright, yellow ribbons on the end of each of the braids. Tammie was young but loved getting pretty; especially for Daddy. When her mother finished, she stood-up on the seat and started to make faces in the mirror, sticking her tongue out at herself.

“Stop being silly,” Maggie insisted lifting her off the lid. “We have to pick out an outfit for you so Mommy can get dressed.”

Tammie ran to her bedroom before her mother could get there. Maggie moved in slow motion, wondering how small legs could travel so fast.

Her daughter was excited as she opened the bottom drawer of her dresser, and pulled all the folded clothes onto the bedroom rug. Maggie gave a deep sigh trying to hide her anger. By now, she didn't care what she wore.

Tammie looked up at her mother with big, brown eyes, “I'll put the clothes away for you, Mommy. I'm a big girl now.” She was trying to put two feet into one pant leg while holding onto an unmatched sweater.

Her mind raced in despair knowing, if she allowed Tammie to put the clothes back, they would be crushed together with no organization. Putting them back was going to be another added chore for the day.

Oh, Lord, help me get over these impatient feelings.

Before Maggie could do anything about the situation, Jessica woke-up screaming. Her cries were piercing from the jabbing, burning pain in her gums from the teething. It had only been a half hour nap and Maggie felt like she just put her down.

When she entered Jessica's bedroom, she was standing up, gripping the rails of the crib. She was the picture of her father with blonde, curly hair and blue eyes. Tears

spilled down her face when Maggie walked in. The baby sobbed even harder, when she saw her mother, and stretched her arms high in the air to be picked up.

Tammie jumped up and down, joyful that her baby sister was awake. She now had a playmate.

“I’ll get her clothes for you, Mommy,” Tammie yelled as she headed towards the changing table.

“Can you get Mommy the powder instead?”

Maggie feared Jessica’s clothes would also be thrown around and knew she couldn’t handle another room to clean up with the other chores facing her for the day.

Maggie put Jessica on the changing table, when the phone rang. She secured her daughter by placing her hand on her as she stretched for the headset on the night stand.

“Hello?”

“Hi honey.” It was Bob. “I left the envelope with the car payment on the kitchen counter. Do you think you could drop it in the mailbox before the mailman comes?”

Maggie first thought was, “*You have got to be kidding me. I have two children who need my full attention, and you want me to go out to the mailbox...in the snow!*”

“Yes, I think it could be *squeezed* into my quiet, non-productive day!”

“Are you alright, Maggie? You sound stressed-out.” Bob sounded surprised.

“Why, would I be stressed, Bob?” Maggie said sarcastically. He only gave her another request to fill.

“It has to be paid in two days,” he stated.

She wondered why he waited so long in the first place. “Don’t worry, Bob, I’ll take care of it.”

Hanging up, she muttered annoyed, “What else is new? I would be more shocked if he paid it on time.”

Everything was bothering Maggie. All she wanted was a full day to herself.

She turned to continue changing Jessica when she discovered a white, dust cloud floating in the air surrounding the baby.

Tammie smiled and looked up proudly at her mother, “I put the powder on her.”

It was hard to see the baby at all. She was lost somewhere in the powder, and it was distributed all through Jessica’s hair to her little toes. Her daughter looked like a native from a vanished world with a white face.

The powder left on the edge of Jessica’s nostrils and mouth had Maggie frightened she might inhale it. She was flabbergasted seeing the baby smiling and kicking her feet like there wasn’t a problem.

“Next time wait for me,” Maggie said, trying to be calm as she took the powder out of Tammie’s hand. The container felt light from the amount she used on her sister. Powder was all over the floor.

Maggie made a swift move to clean Jessica up so she could get organized to depart for the mailbox. She placed both girls in the playpen in the living room. Maggie moved rapidly to vacuum the bedroom floor.

As Maggie slipped the belt off from around her heavy, white, terrycloth robe, she felt something sticky and wet on her fingers. Looking down, she found a large section where Jessica’s morning, hot pablum had spilled on her.

I have to put a wash through, too!

After getting dressed, she threw on her snow boots that were in the mudroom and grabbed the envelope off the counter. She was thankful Bob had shoveled the stairs and walkway before he left. Mello's Garage had plowed out the driveway.

"Tammie, watch your sister while Mommy goes to the mailbox."

"I will, Mommy," she said hugging Jessica.

After placing the letter in the mailbox, Maggie hesitated a few seconds to view the snow that had piled-up on the country roadway before starting back toward the house. It was so picturesque. Although she didn't enjoy the winter, she felt rejuvenated breathing in the cold, crisp air.

Before entering the doorway, she shook off the snow from her clothes. She glanced into the living room and saw Tammie bending over Jessica, softly talking to her. It took less than a minute, but she never relaxed leaving them alone. Maggie felt out-of-breath from rushing out the door and returning so fast.

Gathering a load of clothes, along with her soiled robe, she started the washer while the girls played quietly. When the clothes were spun, Maggie placed them in the dryer. It didn't take long when Tammie wanted out of the playpen. The baby couldn't talk or walk, so she got bored.

When Maggie lifted Tammie out, Jessica immediately realized that she was alone and not being entertained. The twenty minute peacefulness changed to complete chaos. Jessica started to fuss and cry while Tammie howled to go outside to play.

"Please, Mommy, I want to play outside in the snow. Can't we go out and make a snowman?"

She understood Tammie having cabin fever because she felt the same way.

“When Daddy is home tomorrow, you and I will go out.”

“I want to go *NOW!*” she screamed as she tugged and tried turning the front doorknob. “Open the door, Mommy.”

Maggie bent down and firmly took her arm, while staring directly into her eyes insisted, “You can’t go out today, Tammie.”

Losing control from fatigue, Maggie started shouting. It only made her daughter act worse. Both girls were at the point of being unmanageable. The more Tammie wailed, the louder the baby cried.

A sudden, excruciating migraine hit Maggie. She didn’t know which child to attend to first. *Okay, one at a time.* She could feel the muscles in her neck and shoulders tighten up. She could talk to Tammie, but Jessica understood nothing except the comfort of her mother’s arm.

Tammie took a tantrum by kicking her feet on the living room rug. Maggie wrapped her arms around her and slowly calmed her. She then placed some crayons and coloring books in front of her, which took her mind away from going outside.

Seeing Tammie was content, Maggie lifted Jessica out of the playpen and carried her into the kitchen to heat her bottle. She rocked Jessica back and forth in her arms as she tried to accomplish the task.

“Shhh, Sweetheart, its okay,” Maggie whispered while running her fingers lightly through her beautiful, soft curls. She tried to stay composed, while Jessica cried louder.

Instead of being soothed, she stiffened her legs out straight as boards. She pushed backwards against Maggie’s chest giving high-pitched screams and held her breath.

Maggie had been administering Tylenol and Orajel to Jessica for the past few weeks. There were moments when nothing gave her relief from the two bottom teeth that were struggling to erupt through the inflamed area. She knew once they broke through the gum, she would be more content.

Maggie tested the heated milk on the inside of her wrist. It was warm enough so she sat down on the sectional to feed her. Tammie was now upset that Jessica had her mothers' full attention, and started to pout.

“You don't love me, Mommy.”

“Of course I do. Come sit next to me. You can hold your sister's bottle and feed her. You always liked that.”

“I want a cookie.”

“Mommy can't get it for you now. After we feed Jessica, I will get you one.” She said trying to control her raised voice.

“I WANT A COOKIE!”

“You can't have one, if you don't stop crying.”

Tammie ran to her room to get her blanket for security and crawled next to her mother. She put her head against Maggie's shoulder and started to suck her thumb while hiding her face in the blanket. Maggie lifted her arm and tucked her daughter close to her.

The buzzer to the dryer went off. She tried to ignore it. *It will have to wait.* Her head was spinning with everything happening all at once. It nagged at her; if the clothes stayed in too long, they would wrinkle and need ironing.

The baby fell fast asleep so Maggie got up and walked slowly to the crib with Tammie following right behind her. After placing her down, she turned and put her finger

to her lips, motioning Tammie to be quiet, as they walked out of the room together holding hands.

The dryer buzzed again. “Okay, okay!” Maggie shouted, irritated. She took the clothes out hoping the small wrinkles that had started to settle in would disappear once she folded them.

Maggie decided to be productive and make a chocolate pie for supper since the baby was sleeping. Her patience was short, but she wanted to share time with Tammie and give her special attention. Maggie gathered all the ingredients together and gave her a small amount of batter for the pie to play with so she wouldn’t interfere.

Maggie pulled and stretched the batter only to see it break into pieces. She became irritated and ended up patching the loose pieces in the aluminum pie plate. They looked like pieces to a puzzle. She had hoped that once the chocolate pudding was added into the crust, no one would notice the breakage.

Maybe this was not a good idea.

She looked over and saw Tammie happily putting sugar on her batter.

Maggie placed the crust in the stove to bake for a few minutes. While waiting, she cooked the chocolate, pudding mix in a small pan. When the crust was done, she started to carry it to the kitchen counter to cool off on a rack.

Without warning, she hit a small water spot on the kitchen floor that had dropped from her wet clothes earlier. Maggie slid and both she and the pie plate went flying up in the air. She landed flat on her bottom on the kitchen floor, while the plate and crust scattered and broke into tiny pieces.

She sat there, numb from shock while Tammie started to cry from being scared. Maggie felt defeated. Nothing good was going to come from this day. She refused to find any humor in the fall. She threw the pudding in a deep, dessert dish and added whip cream on the top.

Bob was due home from work soon, and she was in no mood to make supper. Without her, a meal wouldn't be placed on the table. Maggie made a meatloaf since it was fast and placed it in the oven with baked potatoes. She grabbed a can of string beans and dropped them into a small, covered pan and placed it on the stove to simmer.

A half hour had passed and she accomplished picking the clothes up off Tammie's bedroom floor. She placed them back in the drawer without caring what went where.

After setting the table, she craved to relax with a hot cup of tea while Tammie played peacefully with her doll house. Maggie wanted ten minutes to herself to unwind. Her nerves were on edge, and she could feel her body starting to tremble from the disastrous day.

The tea kettle whistled and she poured the hot water over the teabag in the china cup. Maggie sat and started to think back to the same time last year when she had found a motel key in Bob's pant's pocket while trying to hang them in the closet.

He was a District Manager for the Central Banking in Boston, Massachusetts. Bob had been traveling monthly to Washington, DC for the company. He always came home acting distant and tired. She blamed the rejections to her warm hugs and kisses to his stressful business trips.

It wasn't until she had discovered the key that the odd events started to make sense; the phone calls that disconnected when she had answered, his wardrobe changing too often, or his calls stating that he'd be staying longer on his trips than he had planned.

The incident was a year ago, but her emotional connection and trust had vanished. She was going through her wifely responsibilities because of the two girls. Maggie had given up an office management position at the Dunn and Bradford Insurance Company to stay home with the children; a position she had worked years to reach.

Bob insisted the affair was over but he hadn't showered Maggie with the genuine affection from the heart or given his daughters any of his time since his actions were exposed. Love between them seemed to be forced or polite.

Maggie had been holding onto the hope of tomorrow healing the hurt and broken faith. She wanted Bob to fall madly in love with her the way he had before the other woman had won his heart.

She was brought back to reality when Jessica's cries broke her daydreaming to an end. Bob had perfect timing by walking through the door at the exact time. He put his arm around Maggie's tiny waist pulling her toward him. He placed a kiss on her cheek.

"Hi, honey. Is supper ready?" He was already opening the oven door to take a peek. "Oh...Meatloaf," he said, sounding disappointed. It wasn't one of his favorite meals. "I had no time to get lunch this afternoon. How long before we eat? I'm starved!"

Maggie started to feel a tight pressure in her chest. She was desperately trying to fight back tears.

"It should be done in fifteen minutes," she answered trying not to sound frustrated. By now, everyone wanted her attention. She felt spread too thin with no help.

She could feel her body starting to tremble. Her heart was racing from exhaustion from not having had a good night's sleep. Their past problems still flashed through her daily thoughts. Maggie might have forgiven Bob, but she couldn't forget.

She changed Jessica and set her in the highchair. Supper was placed on the table, and Maggie started to cut the vegetables up for the girls. It didn't matter to Maggie if her meal got cold; she had no appetite.

"Boy, what a day I had today," Bob stated. "Nothing seemed to go right. Half the things I had planned to do never got done."

Maggie stared at him with disbelief while both her hands were busy attending to the girls. He talked non-stop in-between bites, and was completely blind to the fact she had no time to eat her own meal.

He had a hard day?

"I'm really glad we can afford for you to stay home, Maggie. I would hate to see you in this rat race. I like knowing you're home relaxed."

Saved from a rat race...Relaxed!

"Bob, you don't know what a hard day is until you have chased after two small children—all day long," she snapped through her teeth. "It's not all about you. Have you ever come home and asked or cared how my day went?"

"How hard can it be Maggie? I give you everything."

"How about help with the girls, Bob?"

"Maggie, all you have to do is ask."

“Ask? I can’t count how many times I have. Can’t you see when I am bombarded with everyone pulling me in different directions?” By now she was wild with anger and hopelessness.

“Don’t worry, things will get better,” he said with no solution. He continued talking about work like her requests weren’t heard.

After everyone had finished, Maggie got up from the table, mentally drained, and picked up the splattered food off the floor. She bathed the girls, tucked them in bed and cleaned the kitchen.

Bob was in bed by nine o’clock, relaxed and reading a book, when Maggie went into the bathroom. She closed the door wanting to block out the world. The tightness in her chest started to ease when she went into the shower.

She bent her head back allowing the hot water to run down her hair. Maggie never wet it this late, but she emotionally had to nourish the strong desire to submerge her body in the intense heat from head to toe. The powerful strength of the waterspray coming down from the showerhead felt like massages on every tense muscle from her earlier fall on the kitchen floor.

Maggie dried herself off with an over-sized, blue towel and then wrapped it around her hair. She slipped her robe on and strolled down the hall to Jessica’s room. She tip-toed to the crib and peeked in to find her daughter content and sound asleep—for the moment.

She walked across the hall to Tammie’s room. Her fingers clung tightly around her inseparable blanket and had fallen asleep with her thumb in her mouth. Maggie took a small, wool blanket at the foot of the bed, and covered her.

She walked to her bedroom and slipped under the covers with Bob.

“I promise I’ll do my best to help out more,” he said.

He pulled her closer and whispered in a flirting tone, “I think we should get a babysitter and go out tomorrow night. After all, Saturday is date night. Maybe we can go to a drive-in like the good old days? What do you think?”

Maggie was still burning with bitterness that he didn’t want to discuss helping her raise two small children. It hadn’t been the first time. He stopped having the desire to fill her emotional needs. His promises were old and never kept. She felt trapped. She had to accept his faults or move on with her life with the two girls alone. Maggie had been craving her independence but feared taking the step because of she had no job to support her daughters.

Their past two months of counseling had faded with the promises of changes from Bob. There was no rush for making a decision to separate. For now, she accepted his offer for a night out together. Maggie continuously hung on to the anticipation that their relationship would return to happy times with each occasion he reached out to her. She clung to her continuous hope—maybe tomorrow will be better.

-The End-