

***Margaret of Greenwich***  
***A Thirteen Year Old Battles Poverty,  
Her School Principal, And A Determined Murderer  
In The Richest Town In America***



**R. L. Rhyse**

**Book One In  
The Margaret of Greenwich™ Series  
Wyston Books, Inc.**

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R. L. Rhyse  
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Some people attack life. Others defend themselves from it.  
—Margaret

It can be a great advantage to start with nothing.  
—Margaret

## Introduction

This book is mostly about me and how I was nearly murdered. But it also tells of Hillary's fixation with former President Clinton who lives nearby; and about the art teacher, Mr. Cylinder, who Laurie was sleeping with.

Some events you may already know from Google News. But not the whole story since no one knows that except me and my husband, which no thirteen year old girl is supposed to have. Not even if she lives in one of those tiny Mormon towns along the Utah/Arizona border. And certainly not in Greenwich, Connecticut, the richest town in America where my family is one of the poorest.

We survive on food stamps, the Mormon food bank, and my father's Social Security Disability payments. I get my clothes from the Salvation Army store closest to us, the one across the New York State border in Port Chester. My best clothes are the hand-me-downs from my seventeen year old sister. These were bought before my family's bad luck began though I'm not complaining.

That my family wasn't always like this is also part of my story. And the rest, I must admit, will sound unbelievable but is true. Though if you won't believe me I can't imagine who you do trust since my family is fourth generation Mormon and we attend church religiously, to make a small pun.

This is why, in the interest of honesty, I must also state something else. That if you're a boy you probably won't like this book since it has a lot about romance but no actual sex, two murders without a car chase, and very little about the zombie killer video game which Randy, my boyfriend, loves. And I doubt that you'll be interested in the details of my menstrual celebration party which even I didn't want to attend.

Having said all this, like they say, it's time for me to raise the

curtain and present the drama in which fate cast me a leading role. How a seventh grader from a dirt poor family battled poverty, her school principal, and a determined murderer in the richest town in America.

Which I'll begin by telling about two boys. Randy, who is the nicest boy imaginable and the love of my life; and Brian, who boys call "weird wheels," which isn't nice at all.

# Chapter 1

If you don't know anything about skateboarding I probably should say a few words. Skateboarders are always breaking something: their ankle or leg or arm. Not from being klutzy but because the sport is dangerous though no skateboarder will admit it. If they do, they would be stopped from doing it by their parents. And by the police who are always hassling skateboarders, based on their mistaken belief that only born crooks are interested in anything with wheels but a car.

But I never thought that so this book also tells how I helped raise money to renovate the local skateboarding park.

Attitudes might be different in Los Angeles or New York but I was never to those places. I was born and am growing up but likely will not die in Greenwich, Connecticut. Even if, for a few months, it seemed like Randy and I might soon be buried here.

Randy was born forty-six days before me and will be my only love in this life and the next, as we Mormons believe. So because our being bound together had to happen, maybe did the terrible events I'm about to describe and nothing could have changed them.

But to understand my story you'll have to know more about me. People describe others by their age and appearance so I'll introduce myself by saying that I was thirteen last July sixth (two days after you know what holiday), and am five feet eight inches tall.

I have straight red hair and usually dress in the cheapest jeans and shirt you can imagine. Except for my hair, if you see me from the back you might think that I'm a boy since I have a thin butt and narrow hips.

I'm in the seventh grade, and sit in the back of all of my classes since seats are assigned by height and I'm the tallest. Taller than all the boys too.

Randy is shorter than me but his parents are taller than mine

and he thinks that he'll make up the difference in our heights over the next year. He also said that height won't ever make a difference in our relationship since no matter how tall he gets I'll always be bossing him around. Which probably is true since he only does listen to me.

When his mother tells him to get a haircut, he ignores her. But when I think that he needs a haircut, we walk to the barber shop and I tell the barber how it should be. A year ago he thought of taking the German exchange student to the sixth grade prom but I said that he was taking me and he took me.

His friends say I've turned him into a wimp (they really use a curse word which I won't repeat) but he ignores them. Because you see, deep down he knows that he's not a wimp, that he loves me, and that our being only thirteen doesn't matter.

When you know that you're in love, age doesn't matter. Though hormones do and can lead to having sex and only imagining you're in love.

So Randy and I are committed to each other despite the one really big difference between us. That his family is as rich as mine is poor, which just tells you how great a boy Randy is and the kind of man he will grow up to be.

And no, despite being poor we're not living in the family car or one of those cheap motels which border New York State and are used to shelter the homeless. Actually, we live in a two story house in a nice area of Greenwich. Though it's not on the water or along Greenwich's mansion row where Randy lives. Nor does it have his tennis court and stable. But not with horses, which I love.

So though the paint on our house is peeling and the grass is too long (since mowing is my chore which I hate to do), it's far from being like one of the shacks in Appalachia which you probably imagined I live in.

And both me and my sisters, who are nine and seventeen, each have our own room. So how can we be poor and live in a house like this?



Nowadays, since the recent financial collapse, our situation is easier to understand. I have Internet friends across the country whose parents are down to nearly their last dollar and live in a house from which they'll soon be thrown out.

One girl scrounges for food by asking if kids in the lunchroom will be using their juice or cereal cartons. She doesn't want this food for herself but for her younger brother. He has a problem sleeping when he's hungry and they sleep in the same room.

I never gave a second thought to the food bank which the Mormon church maintains but now I think that it's great. And the government's food stamps after we started getting them, which are a great help too.

So how did my family wind up in this spot? Because of the tiny mistake from which a catastrophe can happen.

A driver goes through a stop sign, hits another car, and is paralyzed for life. The driver's life has changed in an instant. Or someone forgets a lighted candle and the resulting fire burns down the house.

Our family's mistake was in my father not putting on his shoes when walking on the grass. Being a hard working guy on his weekend off, he felt lazy and ignored what his wife told him to do. Not that wives are always right but that time she was. Particularly because what she asked for wasn't a big thing. Not a BMW or fur coat (which some still wear in Greenwich!).

My mom only wanted my father to put on his shoes before walking on the lawn. Why? Not because she was worried what the neighbors might think but because it was tic season and the state of Connecticut, despite its tiny size, is the Lyme Disease capital of America.

So my father didn't put on shoes and was bitten by a tic, whose mark he didn't notice or ignored (like men do!) and our life changed. Not quickly, since the effects of Lyme Disease take time to develop. But, slowly, my dad, Harvey (a name he hates), changed. He became

forgetful, even about such things as the route to his office over which he drove a thousand times.

My father had his own business until meeting this particular tic. Though he just had really bad luck since most tics don't carry Lyme Disease. Usually, if you're bitten by one of them, nothing bad will happen. But sometimes it does and people have learned. Now, though our town's gardens are beautiful, some people refuse to walk on the grass until the dead of winter when all of the tics are dead.

I used to laugh about this but no longer do. Because now I know what Lyme Disease can do to people. It drastically changed my dad's life, my mom's life, my sisters' lives, and my life too.

My dad is a lawyer and once had a well paying practice. Even if it was just a one man with secretary business. Since he was a kid he loved sailing so when he became a lawyer he specialized in maritime law. This is the law dealing with cases involving ships.

He was good at his work so money was never an issue for our family until he became sick when I was in the second grade. Before that there were dance classes (in which I was lousy) and piano lessons (no better). We got every cable channel, the highest speed Internet connection, and Macs and thirty-seven inch LCD TVs for each of us.

We still have the Macs and TVs but they're not much good without the cable or Internet connections which we can't afford anymore. Not after my father stopped working. He didn't want to stop and no one noticed anything different at first. When we did, it just seemed like another of the tiny things that happen to everyone. Forgetting a name or not being able to think of a word.

I first knew that something was wrong with my dad when he couldn't remember where my school was on the day that he drove me to the cheerleading Open House.

This event is where the coach tells girls how much fun cheerleading is and they try to recruit you. They really wanted me since I'm tall and could hold up another girl without gasping too. But this activity didn't grab me after I saw two team members with their

legs in casts. Who couldn't wait for the breaks to heal so they could return to the team. I've heard that other cheerleaders wind up in wheelchairs.

Cheerleading is glamorous like football, but it's even more dangerous. I'm sure that Randy will always love me, but asking him to be faithful to me while I sit in a wheelchair is a risk which I'm not prepared to take.

## Chapter 2

I hated the idea of having a menstrual party but knew that it would happen. Changing my mother's mind about a plan she made is about as likely as being able to convince a hungry bear that a tastier meal than you lay beyond the next turn in the road. So I accepted that it would happen. Just as I do with my math tests which I also hate.

I get what they call “test anxiety.” Which just means that when the math teacher tells us about an exam the following week, my hands go from being sweaty to feeling clammy, my stomach gets upset, and my mouth gets dry. Which, Hillary informed me after her WebMD investigation, are the typical symptoms of anxiety. What everyone feels when they are nervous. This made sense to me, as does the fact that understanding something doesn't mean that it will change.

“So what can I do about it?” I asked her.

“Think positive thoughts. 'I will get 100. This test is easy.' Things like that.”

“I'll try,” I said, though I doubted that it would help.

Hillary changed the subject. “Is your menstrual celebration party still on?”

“Of course. Trust my mother!”

“Who's coming?”

“You.”

“Yes, and who else?”

“We're still hung up on whether to invite boys. The social worker at Planned Parenthood thinks that it would be a good idea. Start a healthy trend. Educate boys about what girls are really like. Cut down on date rape...”

“And increase world peace and happiness,” Hillary added in a mocking tone. She was right. While the idea of having a party to note the onset of my menstruation might make sense for some people, the

details of mine were becoming more ridiculous by the day.

My mom decided that the party should have both educational and celebratory aspects. Sort of like the cosmetic parties sponsored by women who hustle the same kind of lipstick and blush you can buy at Rite Aid but for three times as much.

The women sit in a group and chat and “ooh” and “ahh” and waste the money they should be spending on their kids. And, you guessed it, mom and Planned Parenthood even managed to find a drug company to sponsor my party. To give it the right atmosphere with their tampon samples, Midol pills, and colorful booklets. They even offered an instructional video on the proper method of tampon insertion, one which the thirteen year old boys in my school would probably kill to see.

While anxiously awaiting my Big Day, as my mom had begun to call it, I still had my normal worries: the upcoming algebra test and my science project.

Though I knew that there wasn't anything I could do about my being a math idiot, I did try. Randy, who loves math and science only a little less than he does me, was tutoring me daily but it wasn't helping. Even with him right next to me, just opening the algebra book caused my stomach to rumble and my hands to sweat. Which Randy noticed right away since we held hands under the kitchen table during these lessons.

One afternoon, when my younger sister was being particularly noisy, I suggested to my mom that Randy and me study in my room. Her glare gave me the answer which I didn't want. Not that being in my room would have led us to do more than hold hands. And maybe kiss too, though it would be me who would press this.

Some boys do push for sex but most, despite what they say, are more frightened of it than their girlfriends. Girls seem less afraid to try new things and fail. They'll just try again later. But with boys, failing at something important means that they'll believe themselves to be less of a man, even if this doesn't make any sense.

But to return to my algebra block. Though Randy and I studied seriously, I still barely passed the exam with a 71 (70 is passing in my school). Then, having survived math, I concentrated on my science project, which also upset me. Though it didn't make me nervous like math did for I did understand science. Which is strange for usually kids who are good in science are also good in math. Randy, who I said is both a science and math genius, explained this to me as he understood it.

“Your problem with math is not that you're not smart...”

“Thanks a lot!” I said, angrily. No more hand holding for him that day.

He made an “uhh” sound and continued. “But what you are is creative, and more than most people. Which is why you do so well in science since the teacher has us discover things rather than just memorize them. But with algebra there are principles which you must accept and follow. And because your thinking doesn't go along that pattern, you have more difficulty solving math problems than people who are only half as smart as you. You'll be OK in college where the teachers prize creativity. You're just too smart for the seventh grade.”

I was floored. Not only by what Randy said but because that was the longest statement he made in all the years I knew him. So I squeezed his hand hard and, when my mom went to answer the phone in the living room, I kissed him. How could I not do so?

Like all feared events, the day of the party finally did arrive. And despite the passion of the Planned Parenthood social worker, boys were not invited to it. Even my mom decided that she wouldn't be able to negotiate the subject matter along with their embarrassment. Nor did we have wine for its symbolic effect: a neighbor's father had recently been arrested for trying to educate his son into healthy drinking by bringing beer to his fifteenth birthday party.

What we did have were a carton of Mallomars. These were donated by Nabisco as a public service. This is a favorite cookie among suburban New Yorkers. They are available only in the winter and may

be the best cookie made. A marshmallow cookie with graham crust, all enrobed in dark chocolate. Because of its cost (nearly four dollars for a small box), this treat had been absent from our home since my father's illness began. So the Mallomars did create joy at this party, even if it could not have, to the farthest reach of anyone's imagination, an association with menstruation.

My mother fancies herself a poet so she wrote a poem which we began the party by chanting twice. I fixed a smile to my face and was glad that only Hillary, my sisters, and the Planned Parenthood social worker who suggested this event and was filming it, were present.

The chant went as follows:

“Holy Lord, holy Lord hear this vow we make,

“That after entering into fertility, we will always remember for Your sake,

“The power of the womb we bear which contains the life within,

“And that we will never forget, even after marriage, the needs of our female kin.”

After chanting these lines, while holding hands in a circle, only the thought of my later gorging on Mallomars kept me sane.

This craziness made up the celebratory part of my “entrance into womanhood.” The educational part of our drama consisted of a graphic movie of an adult woman. She successfully inserted a tampon with her legs spread wide apart, while managing to hold a stunning smile on her perfectly made-up face.

“Why isn't she clean shaven?” Hillary asked with a straight face, as I choked on the milk I was drinking.

My mother glared but the social worker handled the question calmly.

“That's a matter of choice and depends on the cultural climate. Decades ago, few American women shaved their pubic area. More do today and in some countries it is generally done. The function of pubic hair is to act as cushioning, protection if you will.”

But Hillary doesn't let up easily. “Protection against what,” she

asked. "I can't see how it would protect against being raped."

"No, it protects against injury, as during a fall."

"I'm gonna shave there when I get hairy," my nine year old sister informed us.

Recognizing that she was being baited, my mom turned to the social worker who changed the subject by bringing out tampons, sponges, and pads, and then describing the benefits and drawbacks of each. Though I hadn't expected to I did find her lecture to be interesting and informative.

Being a tampon user of several months, there were things I hadn't known. Like the need to change them every four to eight hours depending on how heavy the menstrual flow is. And the possibility of getting toxic shock syndrome (TSS), a potentially deadly viral infection which, though rare nowadays, can occur. But mostly when tampons are left unchanged for far too long.

I also learned that the menstrual cycle can range from twenty one to forty five days in young teens, though it becomes shorter and more regular with age. And that about forty percent of women suffer from PMS. Which, despite the joking attitude of men, is a serious matter.

After receiving this information, my menstrual party came to a close and the snacks were broken out.

I took a small bite of a Mallomar and entered heaven though there is another cookie which I like just as much. It's called a Chocolate Jelly Graham and is raspberry jelly atop a graham crust, all enrobed in dark chocolate. A girl in kindergarten once brought these to her class birthday party and we were all floored, this being the best cookie which any of us had ever eaten.

Like the Mallomar, it's mostly a New York area delicacy and hard to get. In fact there's no local store which carries them though I look every time that I'm in the supermarket even if we can't afford them. You can probably find them in New York City deli's and according to the Internet they are still produced by a large baking



company in Pennsylvania. A local store did carry them until it closed. It seems that whenever I love something it becomes unavailable.

While gorging, Hillary and I gossiped.

“What would you call a thirteen year old who is sleeping with her teacher?” she asked.

“Dumb,” I replied, thinking that she must be kidding.

But Hillary was serious. “I'd call her Laurie,” she said.