A Woman on the Street

I Was Sitting In

Jeannette Walls, the author of the Glass Castle begins her writing of this memoir as an affluent woman living on Park Avenue in New York City. One evening she spots her mother through the window of a taxi. Her mother is rooting through garbage cans. Jeannette later contacts her through a mutual friend and arranges to have lunch with her. Jeannette finds both of her parents embarrassing and worries about them. She feels guilty that they are both street people who must scrounge for food.

At lunch, her mother is cheerful until Jeannette explains the shame and worry she feels for both of her parents and offers to help them. Jeannette's mother responds by saying that Jeannette's values are confused and that she is the one who needs help.

The Desert

I Was on Fire

Jeannette at age 3 is cooking hot dogs while wearing a pink tutu. She is in the kitchen of her family's trailer in Arizona. Her dress catches fire and her mother, who was in another room painting, wraps her in an army blanket and goes to a neighbor for a ride to the hospital.

Jennette is hospitalized for the next six weeks. She finds the cleanliness and quiet a pleasant change from life in the trailer, where she shares a room with her brother and her sister.

When her family visits she is informed by her mother that she (Jeannette) won a helicopter ride. She is excited until her mother further informs her that the family has already taken the ride. Her mother is offended by the fact that a nurse gave Jeannette gum. Her father (Rex Walls) is offended by the fact that she is wearing bandages. He threatens to hit the doctor and is thrown out of the hospital by a guard.

A few days later her father appears in her room, picks her up and runs out of the hospital where the car is waiting with the entire family in it.

A Few Days Later

Soon after having been taken from the hospital, Jeaneatte is back to cooking hot dogs on her own. Having been burned does not cause her to have a fear of fire, instead, she is fascinated by it. Her father shows her how to pass her finger through the flame of a candle, which she does over and over. She steals and plays with matches and makes small fires that she stomps out while yelling obsenities that she hears her father use. She enjoys watching her neighbors burn their trash, st˝anding as close as she can to the fire. One day, she takes her favorite toy, a tinkerbell action figure, outside and lights a match. She holds it close to the doll's face so that the doll can feel the heat. To her surprise and dismay, the doll's face melts. Jeanette tries in vain to repair the doll. Although it is disfigured, Tinkerbell remains Jeanette's favorite toy.

Dad Came Home

One night Jeanette's father (Rex Walls) comes home and tells everyone to grab only what they need to survive and get in the car. Everyone does so, and after Jeanette's mother finds her buried jar of cash, the family departs (or in the words of Rex, does “the skedaddle”). Jeanette realizes that she has left Tinkerbell behind. Her father tells her that Tink˘erbell will take care of herself, just like he would like Jeanette to do. Jeanette tries to hold the cat for comfort but it scratches at her and begins making noise. Her father throws the cat from the window, it lands and runs away. Jeanette's mother says that it is better to be a wild cat than a tame one, and tells Jeanette that they can get a new cat. The family spends the night on Army surplus blankets in the desert.

We Were Always Doing

The Walls family (with three children) lived a transient life. They would stay in small western towns where Rex (Jeanette's father) would work as an engineer or electrician in a mine. He would tell the children that the FBI was after him, when in reality it was bill collectors. At times they would stay with Jeanette's grandmother until she and Rex would get into a shouting match.

They spent a lot of time in the desert, where Jeanette and her two siblings would play outside during thunderstorms. Jeanette's mother had grown up in the desert.She knew which plants were edible and had a knack for finding water. Jeanette's father Rex was somewhat of a genius. He was able to repair nearly anything, was an inventor, and a master storyteller. He vowed that after he found gold, he would build the family a glass castle. In order to find gold he invented a machine called the Prospector that would be able to separate gold from other rocks and dirt by its weight.

Although a fascinating and skilled man, Rex had a penchant for violence. He taught his children to use a gun at an early age, and assured them that he could out fight any man they come into contact with. He was also a drunk. When only drinking beer, he was tolerable, but liquor would cause him to threaten his wife and throw furniture.

The stories he told all cast him as a hero, saving thousands of people by repairing a dam, or killing a pack of wild dogs that were threatening an injured horse.

The stories of his past were matched by ambitious claims for the future, such as the glass castle.

As Much As Dad

Rex Walls' favorite story is the one in which he met his wife. He and some Air Force buddies were trying to get the nerve to jump off a high cliff into the water below. Jeanette's future mother and a friend showed up, in bathing suits and made their way through the off duty airmen and went straight off the cliff. Rex fell in love with her the second he saw her, and followed her off the cliff. In the water, he told her that he would marry her some day, and six months later he did.

It wasn't long before she was pregnant with Lori, who didn't speak or grow hair until she was three. Next came Mary Charlene, who died of crib death at nine months. Jeanette was born two years later, and a year after that came Brian. Brian was born while having a seizure. The seizures continued until he was one year old.

Jeanette's mother believes that people worry too much about chldren, and that having to endure some hardships while young hardens them. She doesn't dote on them when they cry, and was remarkably unaffected by the death of Mary Charlene.

Rex, however, was deeply wounded by the event. He found her in the crib and let out a cry that Jeanette's mother likens to that of a wounded animal. She also claims that it changed her husband. It maked the begining of his drinking problem and also that of not being able to hold down a job.

At some point he sells her wedding ring, which her mother had bought. Often during arguments she would bring up the ring. He would tell her to quit complaining and claim that he would buy her a bigger ring some day, and also that he'd build a glass castle.

Do You Always

The Walls now have a green station wagon called the Green Caboose. They are on their way to Las Vegas and stop at a bar. While their parents are inside, Lori and Jeanette try to tabulate how many places they have lived, and lose count after 11.

The parents return with snacks, and Rex drives away while simultaneously smoking and drinking. During a sharp turn over some railroad tracks, Jeanette is thrown from the car. Pebbles are embedded in her skin, her forehad and nose are bleeding. The car keeps going. She wonders if she has been abandoned like Quixote, the cat her father flung from the car on an earlier trip.

After some time, the Green Caboose shows up again. While cleaning her up, Rex refers to her nose as a snot locker. The whole faimily finds this hilarious.

We Lived In Las Vegas

The family lives in a hotel in Las Vegas. Rex develops a method for blackjack and buys everyone vests, cowboy hats and numerous dinners out, the most notable being one in an old west themed restaurant which tops off the evening with a flaming ice cream cake. Rex's gambling method is discovered the next day and1 the family has to perform “the skedaddle”.

They go all the way to San Francisco and stay in a hotel that is also a brothel. Jeanette experiments with fire in the bathroom of the hotel, putting piles of toilet paper in the toilet, setting them ablaze and then flushing. Ironically, a few nights later the hotel catches fire (not due in any part to Jeanette's experiments). Everyone escapes and waits in a bar across the street while Rex helps fight the fire. While there, Jeanette thinks about fire. She wonders if the fire that burned her when she was cooking hot dogs is related to the fire she was flushing down the toilet and the fire that just burned the hotel.

After the fire, the family lives in their car on the beach until asked to leave by the police. The parents decide they are fed up with civilization and want to move back to the desert.

After We Pulled Up

The family drives until Mother is taken by the vision of a Joshua tree. The car stops so that she can make a painting of the tree, and Rex decides that this is a good a place as any to settle.

The town is called Midland and is in the heart of the desert. Water comes in by train twice a day.

Spooked by the sounds of coyotes howling and gila monsters slithering, Jeanette thinks she hears something under her bed. When she tells her Dad, he becomes very serious about ridding the house of the demon. So, with a knife and a pipe wrench, the two go on a search for the demon, which has allegedly been trying to get Rex for years.After having no luck finding the demon, Rex tells Jeanette that all you have to do is show demons that you are not afraid of them and they will not hurt you.

The family's dog gets bitten by a rattle snake and dies. But, they have plenty of cats. So many that they have to take kittens to a pond and drown them. Jeanette's mother explains that they were able to give the kittens a little extra time on earth, and that the kittens should be thankful.

Rex gets a job in a gypsum mine, and Mary (Jeanette's Mother) devotes herself to art and writing. She is also pregant. The family decides to move to Blythe, a larger city in the desert, when it is time for her to deliver.

I Never Believed

By Christmas, Rex has lost his job at the Gypsum mine. The children have never believed in Santa Claus. The parents being against the whole idea. Christmas with the Walls family occurs several days after the actual holiday so that the family can find discarded trees and usable wrapping paper.

On Christmas eve on this particular year, Rex took the children one at a time outside and told them to pick a star. He said that all you had to do to own a star is to claim it the way Columbus claimed America. Each child chose a star, except Jeanette who chose Venus. Rex knew the names of the stars (Beetlegeuse and Rigel) and gave each child information about their star/planet. The children are happy with their gifts and laugh at all the children who believe in Santa Claus.

At Twilight Once

On the way to Blythe, the parents argue about how long the mother has been pregnant. Rex has been drinking, and the argument gets quite heated. Jeanette's mother reaches her foot over to the driver side and steps on the brakes, then runs away from the car. Rex follows her in the car, and begins chasing her. It appears as though he is trying to kill her with the car. The children beg him to stop, which he doesn't do until he corners her and drags her back into the car.

In Blythe, the family lives in an apartment, and Jeanette goes to school. She is a top reader in the class and always raises her hand enthusiastically when the teacher asks a question.

Other students call her a teachers pet and also pick on her because she is tall and skinny. On the way home from school, six Mexican girls jump her and beat her up. The next day, the girls are again waiting for her, but this time Brian, her younger brother helps her with a branch from a yucca tree. The girls are not scared of him or the branch and begin to beat him as well.Jeanette picks up a rock and hits one of the girls in the head. This causes them to leave.

Jeanette and Brian then go to an ice berg lettuce farm where they eat, play and get dusted by a crop duster that flys over.

The baby is born two months later and is called Lilly Ruth Maureen. Lilly coming from her mother, Ruth from Rex's mother, and Maureen being a derivative of her own name which is Mary (this is the first time we learn Jeanette's mother's name).

A Few Months After

Rex outruns a police car that is trying to ticket him for bad brake lights. Thinking the police will recognize the car, he parks it in a garage and the family walks home. The next day, the children find out that they are moving to Battle Mountain, Nevada, where they are sure to find gold.

Mary and Rex rent a U-Haul and the children, including Maureen, who is only a few months old, ride in the back. The children are cold and have to use the bathroom but have no way of telling their parents.

The truck hits a bump and the doors fly open. Brian is almost pulled out of the truck while trying to shut the door. Luckily, a car comes along and alerts Rex, who is angry and scared when he finally stops the truck and comes to the back.

After using the restroom, he double checks the lock on the doors to the trailer and continues with the drive.

Battle Mountain Had

In Battle Mountain, the Walls move into a former depot station that has no furniture. The children sleep in refrigerator boxes and the family uses spools that hold industrial cables as tables and chairs.

In the midst of this, Mary decides that the family needs a piano. So, Rex buys a used one from a saloon owner and borrows a truck to move it. He devises a pulley system to get it into the house, using ropes that go in the front door, through the house, and are attached to the truck which is in the backyard. The plan is for Mary to ease the truck forward while everyone else guides the piano inside. Unfortunately, she is not an experienced driver and takes off, splintering the front door frame, pulling the piano through the house, splintering the back door frame and landing the piano outside. This is where the piano stays. Mary goes outside occasionally to play it.

Dad Got A Job As

Rex gets a job at a Barite Mine, and stops drinking as heavily.Mary (or Rose Mary as Rex calls her) prefers painting to cooking reasoning that a painting lasts forever. Therefore, she usually cooks large amounts of food once a week and the family eats whatever is made for breakfast, dinner and lunch. The most common food at the Walls' residence is beans.

The family spends a lot of time reading, individually and to each other. They keep a dictionary handy and sometimes disagree with the definitions, which prompts a letter to the publisher. Any letter from the publisher defending the definition is met by another letter from Rex, who will write as many times as needed to get the last word.

Mom and Dad

Jeannette enrolls in second grade and this time is less enthusiastic about answering questions in order to make friends. Rex, sensing that Jeanette needs more of a challenge, makes her do math homework in binary numbers. This confuses the teacher and causes Jeannette to have to stay after school.

The Walls' neighborhood is full of rough and tumble kids from low income families. Rex enjoys playing with the children.

The Walls children are spanked with a belt for talking back and disobeying direct orders, otherwise the rules are very loose: come home when the streetlights come on and use common sense. Injuries that would alarm other parents, i.e. a gash in the thigh from a rusty nail, do not concern Mary or Rex.

In addition to playing various games with the neighborhood children, Jeanette enjoys exploring the desert. She collects rocks and attempts to sell them for several hundred dollars each (only one ever sold, to Rex on credit). She also enjoys exploring with Brian in a junkyard. She and Brian mix a number of chemicals they find there and light the mixture setting an old shack they deemed as their laboratory on fire. Jeannette escapes but Brian tries to put out the fire. Luckily, Rex is walking by and pulls Brian from the fire. The three watch the blaze and Rex explains that the hazy area around the flame is called the “boundary between turbulence and order”.

None of Us Kids

The Walls children redeem bottles and collect scrap metal whenever they want spending money. Jeanette and Brian meticulously choose the candy they buy with their hard earned cash. Routinely on the way home from the drug store where they buy their candy, they stop and spy on a house knows as the Green Lantern. According to Mary, it is a Cat House. The children don't know what this means and are only told that bad things happen there. One day Jeanette dares Brian to talk to one fo the women lounging on the porch. He reports back to her after asking what happens inside, saying merely that men go inside and women are nice to them. He also reports that the woman was nice and starts making a habit of waving to the women at the Green Lantern. Jeanette, however, is scared of them.

Our House in Battle Mountain

Numerous animals live at the Walls. Everything from cats and dogs to coyotes and wounded vultures. Mary refuses to kill the flies that inhabit the home reasoning that they are a valid link in the food chain ad that killing them would starve the lizards which would in turn starve the cats.

The family goes to a hot springs in a souped up Ford that Rex buys. Rex teaches Jeanette to swim by taking her to the middle and throwing her in. He does this repeatedly, until, trying to escape him, she begins to swim.

Bad News Lori Said

Rex loses his job at the mine, and the family starts to go hungry. Jeanette steals from the other kids school lunches and from friends' refrigerator. Brian is caught breaking into a house and is forced to eat the entire gallon of pikles he was attempting to steal.

Rex spends most of his time at the Owl Club gambling in oder to make money to create a cyanide solution that will leach gold from rock.

Rex and Mary have a fight. Mary claims that Rex is doing nothing to help the family while Rex thinks Mary should ask her mother for money to fund his cyanide leaching project.

The fight continues the next morning and neighbors begin to wonder if they should intervene. They decide it is not their place to interfere and instead become spectators. Soon, a painting and then an easel come flying out of a second story window. Next come Mary's feet. Rex is holding her arms. She claims he is trying to kill her but it is obvious that he is preventing her from falling. The children rush inside to and help pull her back in.

The Next Morning

Mary gets a job as a teacher, an easy job to obtain in Battle Mountain, where teachers are fired for walking the halls with loaded rifles. Mary's students run wild. They love her, but the principal does not. Mary doesn't like teaching. To her, it is equated with being a failure as an artist. The children all encourage and help her with everything from getting out of bed in the morning to grading papers. Lori is especially helpful and is the most academically inclined of the Walls children. She is also in Mary's class and endures a paddling so that Mary can demonstrate to the administration that she has discipline, without hurting any of the other kids.

Once Mom Started Teaching

Mary tries to keep the money she makes away from Rex. He usually manages to get it, and when the family comes up short will claim that she is spending it on art supplies.

Although he occasionally comes through with food, the Walls children are starting to become leery of their father-stating that he spends more on drinking than on the family. Jeanette is not as quick as Brian and Lori to lose faith. Rex has proclaimed her his favorite and shares more details of his schemes and ventures with her.

When passing by the Green Lantern one day, a woman named Ginger makes an attempt to greet Brian, who ignores her. He tells Jeanette that on his birthday Rex bought him a comic book, which he read while Rex and Ginger were in a hotel room together. Jeanette asks if he found out any more about what happens in the Green Lantern. He replies merely that they make a lot of money.

Some People Liked

A Boy named Billy Deel moves to Battle Mountain.He is three years older than Jeanette and claims her as his girlfriend, a title that she does not want. He is also a juvenile delinquent, who is accused by a local woman to have set fire to some of her dogs and to have skinned cats.

He lures Jeanette to his house so that the two can laugh at his father, who has passed out and urinated on himself. Jeanette isn't amused. He tells her that he will always protect her if she will be his girlfriend, and that if she will not that she will regret it. She doesn't fear him, but a week later he gives her a ring. It is turquoise and Jeanette loves it. She tells him she'll keep it but will not wear it, and that this does not mean she is his girlfriend.

While playing hide and go seek, Jeanette finds a shack to hide in. While hiding Billy shows up and attempts to rape her. Luckily the other children find them. She goes to his house the next day and returns the ring.

The next day while the Walls parents are out, Billy comes over, knocks out a window and begins firing at the children with a BB Gun. Lori retrieves her father's real gun and fires at him, missing. Jeanette also fires at him as he runs away.

A police car shows up, with Rex and Mary in it. The officer informs the parents that they must appear before the magistrate in the morning. This prompts the Walls to leave town during the night. Their destination is Phoenix.

Grandma Smith's Big

On the way to Phoenix, Jeanette is told that her Grandmother has died. Jeanette loved her Grandmother and the structure she provided whenever the Walls stayed with her. It was a shock to find out she had died.

Mary has inherited a house in Phoenix and some money and looks forward to giving up teaching and buying new art supplies. She tells Jeanette that the episode with Billy Deel was a “blessing in disguise”. Mary is happy about the move to Phoenix and proclaims herself an “excitement Addict”.

When We Pulled Up

The house in Phoenix has fourteen rooms and trees in the yard. The children are thrilled with the house. They go to school and are all put into gifted reading groups. Lori is told that she needs glasses and experiences wonder at being to see clearly for the first time in her life. Rex gets a job as an electrician and buys the children bicycles.

Life seems ideal to the Walls except for the insect problem. The house is infested with roaches, which the family battles with shoes and rolled up magazines. Termites also reside, and the children are constantly putting their feet through soft spots in the floor. When this happens, Rex will flatten a beer can and nail it over the hole.

A Lot of Our Neighbors

The Walls' neighborhood in Phoenix is inhabited by a family of Gypsies and a host of perverts.

The Gypsies are thieves. They steal Brian's pogo stick and refuse to give it back when asked. In addition to not yielding the stolen toy they also leave a chicken with a slit throat on the Walls' doorstep. This prompts Mary to “fight magic with magic”, which constitutes standing in front of their house with a crucifix made from ham bones and cursing their home to essentially fall on top of them. The pogo stick is found on the Walls' lawn the next morning.

The perverts, as Jeanette refers to them, are old men who follow the children around offering to give them boosts over fences, or soliciting their friendship with candy and money. Jeanette feels compassion for the men until one sneaks into her room (the Walls never lock or even close their doors due to the heat) and begins touching her private parts and asks if she will play a game with him. Jeanette screams and Brian (who had previously been given a dirty magazine by this same man) comes into the room bearing a hatchet. Jeanette and Brian chase the man away and begin the act of “pervert hunting”, which entails the two of them walking the streets with a machete and baseball bat in search of old men who prey on children.

Mary and Rex stress to the children not to give in to fear, or to pre-judge. They view status-quo conformity with as much or more contempt as they have for the unsavory characters in the neighborhood. In one instance, Mary enourages the children to swim in a fountain outside the public library and tells anyone who comments to mind their own business.

An area in which Mary and Rex don't see eye to eye is religion. Despite her fierce non-conformist attitude, Mary considers herself a devout Catholic. Rex is an atheist. Church is particularly trying, as Rex usually heckles the priest until the family is asked to leave.

City Life was Getting

Rex is angered when he hears that the police kill a mountain lion that has wandered into a woman's back yard. He sets out to prove to the children that animals are not dangerous if you are not scared of them. He takes them to the zoo where he promptly stares down an alligator. He then climbs a fence surrounding a cheetah's cage and lures the cat to the side of the cage where he can reach through the bars and touch it. He pets the cheetah then has the children climb the fence and they too pet it. Jeanette is thrilled when it licks her hands. After attracting a significant amount of attention, they climba back over the fence. Rex nearly gets in a fight with a security guard on the way out. The family leaves amidst whispers that their father is drunk and that they, the children are urchins. Jeanette feels no shame from their jeers as the thrill of having her hand licked by a cheetah is more than any of them have ever experienced.

It Was Around

Rex loses job after job and starts going to bars. Luckily, the children have hot lunches at school for a quarter every day.

Maureen, the baby, has no one her age to play with so she develops imaginary friends and spends most of her time riding her tricycle. Since she has no one to play with, Mary decides that she should get special treatment and uses the other children to cause distractions while she shoplifts clothes for her.

Similarly, she and Rex devise a method of getting money from banks by opening accounts and simultaneously withdrawing all of the money (one at a teller's window inside, one at the drive through) and leaving before the transaction has cleared.

Rex's drinking is getting worse and worse, yet Mary decides that the family will have an extra special Christmas. The children all have a dollar to spend for presents at the thrift store, which they manage to use with extreme creativity. The site of the children in their threadbare clothes compels a tree salesman to let the family have a tree for a dollar.

Unfortunately, Mary decides that Christmas will wait until the family goes to mass. Rex, who is incredibly intoxicated and loudly refers to the virgin Mary as a “Jewish broad” and to Jesus as a bastard.

When the family returns home, in hopes of calming Rex down, Mary let's him open a present. It is a lighter, which he promptly uses to set the tree on fire. Everyone works to put out the fire while Rex laughs. When the fire is out, all of the presents have been ruined.

I Turned Ten That

Rex asks Jeanette what she wants for her tenth birthday, and Jeanette asks him if he will stop drinking. Rex stops cold turkey and spends several days strapped to his bed with belts and screaming. Once the basic withdrawals are over, he has no appetite, shakes all the time, and spends most of his time sitting under the orange trees in the yard.

He then gets the idea of taking the family on a vacation to the Grand Canyon. Everyone is excited, but on the way he decides to see how fast the car can go. He floors it and reaches a speed of over 100 mph, but then the car breaks down.

The Walls leave the car and everything in it (which includes an Archery set of Mary's that was a gift from her father) and begin the 80 mile walk home. Luckily they are picked up by a woman whose daughter saw the family walking and reported it to her. She refers to the Walls' as “poor people”, which upsets Jeanette slightly.

When the family gets home, Rex disappears and doesn't return that night.

Three Days Later

Rex comes home drunk overturns a china closet filled with fine bone china. He drunkenly punches at his children and asks where Mary is. He refers to her as a bitch and a whore as he searches the house, finally finding her in bathtub. They begin to fight and pick up knives that were left on the floor from Rex's earlier rampage. Luckily Rex knocks the knife out of Mary's hand and drops his. Mary calls him a “stinking rotten drunk”. Rex says “Yeah, but you love this old drunk don't you”. Which seems to diffuse the situation, and the two begin laughing and kissing.

Mary decides that the family should move to West Virginia where Rex's parents are. She has some money from some land that she inherited in Texas which is being leased for drilling. With it she buys a car.

Rex refuses to go with the family until they are pulling out of the driveway. Jeanette asks one more time if he will come and says that the family needs him. Everyone else echoes the plea and Rex ambles over to the car and gets in.

Welch

Back in Battle Mountain

The Walls make their way across country in the car Mary bought. It breaks down frequently and has a top speed of twenty miles per hour.

They arrive in Welch, West Virginia in November and go immediately to the home of Rex's family. The Walls children meet their grandparents and Uncle Stanley. Their grandmother, a stern obese woman, insists on being called Erma. She greets Mary by saying “Nice of you to let me see my grandchildren before I die”. Jeanette looks for some trace of their father in the three of them but sees none. Erma brings the family to the kitchen and feeds them green beans overcooked on an old coal stove.

Although there are unused rooms in the house's upstairs, the family stays in the basement. The upstairs has not been used in ten years because the wood in the floor is rotting.

The children all stay in the same bed, and when they laugh are met with the sounds of a broom on the ceiling. It is Erma, who lets it be known that she does not want the children laughing when they are in her house.

The Next Day Was

The family awakes the next day to the sound of voices on the radio speaking in tongues. They drive around Welch that day, and Rex tells the family that the only reason the town exists is to mine coal. No crops will grow, and cattle can't be raised. They pass the Tug River which Rex explains is so full of fecal matter that one cannot swim in it or fish from it. The entire town seems to be covered in coal dust.

Most strangers who come to Welch are either coal mining executives who lay off workers or shut down mines, or bankers foreclosing on houses. For this reason, strangers are not welcome in the town.

Mary proclaims that she will probably be the only artist in Welch, and that her career could really take off.

The Next Day Mom

Mary enrolls her children at Welch Elementary. She doesn't have any of their school records. The principal has such a thick southern accent that Brian and Jeannette can't understand what he is saying. Which is too bad because he is quizzing them to see which class they should go in. He decides they are both a bit slow and places them accordingly. In an English class for children with learning disabilities, the teacher berates Jeannette for not having presented her school records. She tells the class that some people think they are special and above the rules others must follow, and essentially turns the entire class against Jeanette. Amongst the jeers a tall black girl pokes her in the back with a sharpened pencil. At recess, the tall girl and several friends beat Jeannette up.

When We All Got

Jeanette decides not to tell her parents about the bullying, which continued every day at recess. The ring leader of the bullies in Dinita Hewitt. Jeanette is convinced that there is some good in Dinita because of her smile.

One day Jeanette is walking and comes upon a small black boy who is cornered by a dog. The dog bites the boy but Jeanette then chases it off with a stick. She gives the boy a piggyback ride home, which is right across the street from Dinita, who sees them from her front porch.

The bullying stops and Dinita asks Jeanette for help with some school work. The two become friends. Erma, who is an all out racist is not pleased. She scolds Jeanette until Jeanette tells her that she shouldn't use the word nigger. This results in her being sent to the basement without dinner.

When Jeanette complains about Erma to her mother, she is told to have compassion for her as she has had a hard life. Mary goes on to say that you must look for the good in everyone. When Jeanette asks what good there was in Hitler, her mother replies that he loved dogs.

In Late Winter

Rex and Mary go back to Arizona to collect a few things, leaving the children with their grandparents. Erma one day insists on mending Brian's trousers while he is wearing them. She takes him into a bedroom and attempts to molest him. Jeanette walks in on them and tells her to stop. She tells Lori what happens and calls Erma a pervert. She stops Erma from slapping Jeanette, and it results in a full on fight between Lori and Erma which is broken up by Uncle Stanley.

Erma relegates the children to the basement and doesn't allow them upstairs. They are also not allowed to operate the stove for heat and have no bathroom.

When the parents return Erma tells Rex about the children and their bad behavior, which includes accusing her unjustly. Rex is angered. He takes Erma's side andˇ tells the children that he doesn't want to hear anything else about what happened to Brian.

The children, amongst themselves, wonder if Rex suffered the same sort of abuse as a child and wonder if it might explain his drinking.

Mom and Dad Told

According to Rex and Mary, the house in Phoenix had been burglarized. All that remained was put in a trailer, and that too lost when the car broke down in Tennessee. The couple then took a bus to West Virginia.

Still claiming her innocence, Erma banishes the family from her house due to the situation with Brian. The Walls somehow manage to buy another house. It is a run down three bedroom house with no indoor plumbing and a leaky roof. One room is the master bedroom and art studio for Mary, the second room is the childrens' bedroom, furnished with bunk beds made by the Walls and featuring matresses of rope and cardboard. The third is the kitchen which, due to faulty wiring, often shocks anyone who touches the oven.

The former tenant of the house left a sewing machine operated by a foot treadle. The Walls try their hand at making dresses, but the results yield nothing that can be worn in public.

Mary tries to make the place a bit cheerier by hanging up her paintings and placing colored bottles on the windows, but the children still long for Phoenix.

Seeing as How Welch

Rex tells the children that this will be the site of the Glass Castle, and that the dreary house is only temporary. Unfortunately, he spends most of his time out drinking.Brian and Jeanette take matters into their own hands and begin digging a foundation. Tney manage to dig a fairly large hole, which soon becomes the families garbage dump. The trash attracts a large river rat who shows up in a punch bowl that the Walls use to hold their sugar. Maureen is terrified, and at night insists that the rat is right next to her bed. Jeanette attempts to dispel the fear by turning on the light, at which time they find that the rat is in fact on Maureen's bed. Luckily, an adopted dog takes care of the rat.

Rex buys a gallon of yellow paint, and Jeanette attempts to paint the house. She gets most of the front porch done but has no ladder. Soon, cold weather sets in and stops her efforts entirely. When warm weather comes, the paint is unusable.

Little Hobart Street

The children of Little Hobart Street hang out at the National Guard Armory where the boys play football and girls sit on a wall preening and hoping a reservist will whistle at them. Maureen has real friends for the first time.

Their neighborhood has numerous sketchy characters.Brian and Jeanette at one point find themselves being fired at by an older boy with a shotgun as they run through the woods. There is a family that had six retarded kids, all of whom still live at home in their middle ages. One of them, named Kenny Hall develops a crush on Jeanette because she is friendly to him. Other neighborhood children often fool him into thinking they can arrange for him to have dates with Jeanette if he will pay them or show them his privates. This results in him standing outside of the Walls' house yelling for Jeanette who would have to explain to him that he had again been fooled, and that she does not date older men.

The town whore, Ginny Sue Pastor, lives on Little Hobart Street and one of her daughters (she has 9 children) befriends Jeanette. Jeanette is very curious about the Ginnie Sue, who doesn't at all resemble the women of the Green Lantern. One day Jeanette goes over to the house one day and helps them pick meat off a chicken. She tells them about life in California. Nothing incredible happens and Jeanette doesn't get to ask the woman any questions about being the town whore. She acknowledges, however, that it does manage to put a chicken on the table.

We Fought A Lot

Adults and children alike fight in Welch. Jeanette is targeted by a child named Ernie Goad who teases her about the garbage pit next to the house.It starts with a shoving match at the National Guard Armory, but then one day Ernie and some other boys on bicycles throw rocks at the Walls house. One rock breaks a window, another hits Brian in the head. Brian and Jeanette chase the boys, who ride away only to taunt them. Knowing that the boys will return, Brian and Jeanette decide to make a catapult from an old mattress. They rig the mattress with “ropes looped over tree branches” and put rocks on the mattress. The device works, and when they unleash it on Ernie and his gang, their victory is quick and decisive.

As the Weather

The Walls' read a lot, but it was not the same as in Battle Hill when they read to each other. Lori reads the most and enjoys fantasy books. Jeanette likes more realistic storys, her favorite being A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, and compares her relationship with Rex to that of Francie Nolan and her father.

One night Rex comes home bleeding claiming that he “got in a fight with a mountain”. Jeanette ends up having to put stitches in her father's arm using a home made tourniquet and Mary's sewing kit.

Dad Had Taken To

Rex develops the habit of being gone for several days at a time. He tells the family he is trying to devise a way to burn more coal efficiently. Jeanette tries to be encouraging but is doubtful that any such plans exist. The only money that comes in are the checks Mary gets from the oil company for drilling rights on her property in Texas.

Again, the children are going hungry. When there is money they eat beans or entire meals of popcorn. Jeanette hides in the bathroom during lunch at school because she is embarrassed that she has no food. She will position herself in a stall with her feet up so that no one will know it is her. When girls leave the bathroom, she forages through the trashcan and gets uneaten food that they throw away from their lunches.

Jeanette and Brian go to the forest for berries and other plants that they hear are edible. At one point they find an abandoned house and attempt to open some canned tomatoes they find, only to have them explode and stain their clothes.

Maureen eats well because she has lots of friends and will go to their houses at dinner time.

One night, the family minus Rex are at home and hungry. The children discover that Mary, their mother, has a large candy bar hidden beneath the blanket she is covering herself with. She proclaims that she is a sugar addict, in the same manner that Rex is an alcoholic. She asks their forgiveness. They do not grant or deny her request, they merely split up the remaining chocolate amongst themselves.

Winter Came Hard

After Thanksgiving, it starts snowing. The Walls use can't afford coal for heat so Brian and Jeanette try collecting coal dropped from the delivery trucks. The chore does not yield much, so they instead burn wood collected in the forest. The heat produced by the wood is insufficient, and on top of that the house has no insulation. The children fight over who will get to sleep with the dogs the family has adopted. Brian has an Iguana he bought at a pet store and he sleeps with it to keep it warm, but it freezes to death during the night. Pipes freeze and the family melts snow to get water. A highlight of the winter season is a trip to the laundry mat where the children revel in the warmth given off from the washers and dryers.

Lori sustains burns when some kerosene she is using to make a fire explodes. She is treated only by having snow put on her wounds, and endures blisters that run the length of her thighs.

Jeanette visits a more affluent class mate's home and is in awe of the modern heating system with the plastic box on the wall that controls the furnace and the heat. She dreams of having the same on Little Hobart Street where she lives.

Erma Died During

Towards the end of the winter Rex's mother Erma passes away. She had made elaborate preperations for her funeral, having already purchased the clothes she was to be buried in and the casket.

At the funeral, Rex wears a tie (the first time Jeanette has ever seen him in one) and Mary kisses the corpse. On the walk home, Lori begins singing “Ding Dong, The Witch is Dead”. Rex is angered and shouts that the kids make him feel ashamed before turning and walking in the direction of a bar. Lori shouts “You're ashamed of us?”

Four days later he still has not returned, and Mary deems it Jeanette's job to find him. The task consists of going to a begrudging neighbor's house to use the phone, then going from bar to bar until she finds him. He drinks several more shots and then a fellow bar fly helps put him in the back of a truck where he sings “Swing Low Sweet Chariot” while Jeanette rides up front. The driver makes the mistake of calling Rex the town drunk, which angers Jeanette who is humiliated that she has no other means but to accept his hospitality.

The Walls' grandfather and Uncle Stanley move after Uncle Stanley burns down the house after having fallen asleep while smoking. They move into an apartment with no windows, walls covered in graffiti. The children go there once a week for a bath. One week while waiting her turn, Uncle Stanley begins touching Jeanette (and himself) inappropriately. Mary's reaction is to tell Jeanette that sexual assault only hurts you if you let it.

In the spring, the house on Little Hobart Street is spared from the floods that damage much of the area around Welch. However, the wood on the porch rots which is especially dangerous as the children fall from the porch at night on the way to the toilet, which is under the house. Mary remedies the situation by getting a bucket that the family uses as a toilet which is kept on the kitchen floor.

One Day While

Jeanette and Brian find a diamond ring in their yard. They give it to Mary, with hopes that she will sell it to buy food. Instead she keeps the ring for herself, stating that it will help her self esteem.This made some sense as her moods had been compelling her to spend much of her time in bed complaining that she could have been a famous artist if not for the burden of raising a family.

After a half baked attempt at cleaning the house one day, Jeanette confronts her mother about the family's dour situation. She tells Mary that she should leave Rex so that the family can receive some of the benefits other neighbors on Little Hobart Street receive from the government. Mary is appalled at the idea of leaving her husband, and of being a charity case, stating that getting welfare causes psychological damage.

Jeanette then suggests that Mary get a teaching job. She says that it sounds like a horrible life, and reiterates that she is an “excitement addict”.

Mom Never Told

It is summer and the heat is intense. Most children in Welch find refuge in the swimming pool, but when Brian and Jeanette go to the pool, Ernie Goad and his friends make so much noise about the two being a “health epidemic” since they live in garbage, that the two decide to leave.

Jeanette runs into Dinita Hewitt who invites her to come swimming with the black people, who all swim in the morning before the pool starts charging admission. Jeanette notes that the black women in the dressing room are much freer than white women. Joking, singing along with the radio, doing the bump and commenting on each other's bodies. After a comment about her sprouting pubic hair is made, Jeanette reels off a snappy comeback and then feels more at home. She has a delightful time swimming with Dinita .

That Afternoon I Was

When Jeanette is alone in the house, a man from the department of Child Welfare visits and tells her that there are reports that children in the home are being neglected. Jeanette takes his card and he leaves. Jeanette is greatly angered by the visit and is afraid that she might be separated from her brothers and sisters. When Mary comes home, Jeanette explains the situation to her.Mary does not react in her typical non-worried fashion, but instead thinks the problem over while painting a picture of a drowning woman. When the picture is finished, she announces that she will get a job teaching.

Qualified Teachers

Mary gets a job teaching in a neighboring community and rides to school everyday with an unpleasant and obese woman who was more or less ordered into providing transportation. She chain smokes, sprays the seat with Lysol whenever Mary exits, and mistakes a comment about Jackson Pollack for an ethnic slur against Polish people.

With the checks coming in, the Walls are able to keep up with their bills. Lori and Jeanette ask Mary to give them the money as they had worked out a budget for the family that should, according to their calculations allow the family to save money so that they can get indoor plumbing and buy coal. She does not adhere to the advice of her children, which leaves the family only slightly better off than they were before she got the job.

I'd Started Seventh

In Seventh Grade Jeanette attends Welch High School. She has study hall with Dinita Hewitt, who is going down hill. She drinks at school by putting mad dog 20/20 in a soda can and carrying it into class and complains about her mother's new boyfriend. She passes Jeanette a note saying that she is pregnant, and soon stops attending school.Jeanette goes to her house and is turned away at the door by a strange man. Jeanette learns later that Dinita has been arrested for killing her mother's boyfriend.

Although not as consumed with preadolescent drama as many of her peers, Jeanette is self conscious about her large teeth. Knowing that the family can't afford braces she develops a head gear from a coat hanger, rubber bands, and a feminine napkin which she wears to bed every night. One night Rex comes into the bedroom and is thrilled by the device, proclaiming that Jeanette has inherited his inventive nature, he also believes that the device is working.

That Year I Started

Jeannette begins working at the school newspaper, the Maroon Wave. She is under the instruction of a teacher named Jeanette Bivens who had been Rex's teacher when he was in school. She had encouraged him to submit a poem that won a contest and was one of the only adults in Rex's life that had encouraged him. So, he named his second daughter after her, with an extra "n" added by Mary to “make it more elegant and French”.

Jeannette works as a proofreader and spends lots of time at the local newspaper office performing her duties.She enjoys seeing the reporters at work and also the office is much warmer than her house. There is a female typesetter that complains about her being dirty, smelly, and possibly having head lice. She will spray disinfectant in her general direction and even complains to the management-which prompts Jeannette to begin bathing at her Uncle and Grandfather's house (she steers clear of her Uncle, who in the past proved himself a potential sexual predator).

When finished with her work, Jeannette will read stories from the wire service. She decides that she wants to be one of the people that genuinely knows what is going on in the world.

At Times I Felt Like

Maureen, the youngest of the Walls children is also the most attractive and seemingly the most content. She spends the majority of her time with other families, and has a keen interest in California, saying that she will live there when she is older.

Mary has mood swings in which she is happy for days and conversely getting so depressed that she will not leave her bed. In one of her down periods she fails to complete some student evaluations and the next day refuses to go to work.

Lori feels some compassion for her mother but Jeannette feels she needs to be stronger and handle Rex with more discipline.

That summer, Jeannette becomes the woman of the house when Lori goes to a camp for gifted students and Mary goes to Charleston to renew her teaching certificate. She leaves Jeannette with 200 dollars. She finds that she is unable to deny her father his requests for money and gives him five dollars on two occasions but questions him when he asks for twenty. When she tells him that she has responsibilities (i.e. taking care of Brian and Maureen) he says that this is his job and that she shouldn't worry about it.

The following Saturday he tells Jeannette that he needs her help getting the money back and takes her to a roadside bar where she is promptly approached by an older man, whom she dances with. Instead of being angered, Rex asks him to play pool. The men play a series of games, in between the games the man will dance with Jeannette. Rex says to his daughter; “Keep your legs crossed honey, and keep ‘em crossed tight.”

After Rex has won eighty dollars, the man tells Jennette that he lives above the bar in an apartment and has a record that isn't on the juke box that he wants to listen to. He invites Jeannette upstairs, and Rex allows her to go. Upstairs, in front of his two roommates, the man, whose name is Robbie, pushes Jeannette on the bed and begins kissing her. She thinks about yelling for help, but is so angry at her father that she doesn't want his help. She struggles with Robbie who says that she is “too bony to screw”. She takes this opportunity to show him the scar she has from being burned as a child, and as Robbie looks to his friends, she bolts out the door.

In the car, Rex gives her 40 dollars and says they make a good team. When Jeannette tells him that she was attacked, Rex shrugs it off as insignificant.

The Next Evening

Rex gets upset with Jeanette when she doesn't want to repeat their routine at another bar. He then talks her out of more money for pool shooting. They are expecting a check from Mary's land in Texas, when it comes Rex and Jeanette hide it together. When Jeanette goes to re-hide it, it is too late, the check is gone. Rex claims not to know what happened to it.

Jeanette gets a job at a jewelers to help make ends meet. She is only 13 but tells her boss that she is 17. Mr. Becker, the shop's owner, acts inappropriately towards Jeanette by rubbing up against her when she is cleaning display cases. She ignores it, but takes offense at the fact that he takes the key to the most expensive display case with him when he goes to lunch, and on one occasion when he forgets to take the key, counts all of the rings from the case in front of her, making it obvious that he doesn't trust her. She also takes offense when she learns that other employees are getting commissions on their sales, whereas Jeanette gets only a weekly salary of 40 dollars.

With all resentments in mind, Jeanette steals a watch. She gets away with it, but realizes that in order to keep it she will need to tell lies, which she is no good at. She imagines that she will get caught, go to reform school, and worse yet, give Mr. Becker the satisfaction of knowing that he was right not to trust her.

She experiences more anxiety about the possibility of being caught putting the watch back than she did stealing it.

In Late August

Lori returns from camp glowing from having eaten and bathed regularly all summer at camp. She reports that at camp she was considered a normal person and even had a boyfriend. She looks forward to someday getting out of Welch and being on her own.

Mary returns from her summer in Bluefield with a similar feeling of empowerment, but the end result of her soul searching is that she quits her job teaching. This infuriates Jeanette who speaks to her disrespectfully, telling her that if she expects the respect due to a mother, that she should act like one.

When Rex finds out about the altercation, he is furious with Jeanette and demands she apologize. She is similarly disrespectful to him. The two have a stand off. Rex threatens to spank her and expects her to apologize, Jeanette expects him to walk away or “lose [her] forever. He ends up whipping her with his belt. She runs off into the woods and decides that she will never receive another whipping in her life, and that she, like Lori, will someday leave Welch. She buys a piggy bank and puts in it the seventy five dollars she saved over the summer, proclaiming it her “escape fund”.

That Fall, Two Guys

Inspired by two filmmakers from New York who come to Welch as part of a government enrichment program, Lori and Jeanette decide that New York City is where they want to move. They make a plan in which Lori will move in June, when she graduates.Jeanette will follow as soon as she can.

They begin to earn and save money. Lori makes customized posters for people that might include anything from a lover's name in day-glo letters to a rock band's logo. Jeanette babysits, tutors and does the homework of those willing to pay. Brian also pitches in although he at this point is not included in the plan. His work involves mowing lawns and cutting weeds. They name the piggy bank “Oz”.

Meanwhile, Rex wins a Cadillac in a poker game and names it Elvis. The family takes trips to craft fairs where Mary tries to sell her paintings and also does charcoal drawings on commission. The mobility Jeanette experiences on these trips further inspires her to move.

As Spring Approached

Lori doesn't know exactly what she will do when she moves to New York, and all plans that unfold are foiled. First, she tries to get a National Merit Scholarship so that she can attend College in New York. She has to hitch-hike to Bluefield to take the test and is an hour late due to the truck driver who picks her up propositioning her. Her tardiness causes her to perform poorly.

Next, she puts together a portfolio of her art work so that she can apply to an Art School, but spills coffee on the portfolio and ruins it. She then tries to win a scholarship from a literary society by creating a bust of Shakespeare, which Rex intentionally ruins. He also steals all of the money from Oz, the piggy bank holding the collected funds of the Walls children, which puts an end to the idea that Lori will move to New York and live off of the saved money until she figures out what to do.

Luckily, Jeanette is offered a unique baby sitting opportunity. A family that she works for is moving to Iowa and they want her to go with them and spend the summer looking after their children. They offer her 200 dollars and a bus ticket back to Welch. Jeanette suggests that the family take Lori instead, and make the bus ticket for New York City as opposed to Welch. The family agrees, and Lori leaves at the beginning of the summer.

That Fall, when I

In Tenth Grade, Jeanette is made editor of the school newspaper, The Maroon Wave. She loves working for the paper as it gives her the opportunity to go to extracurricular events without feeling awkward. She manages to double the circulation of the paper by publishing the birthdays of students, most of whom have never seen their names in print.

When aviator Chuck Yeager visits their school, Rex educates Jeanette in aviation history and the life of Mr. Yeager. He helps her create a list of questions and even rehearses the interview with her.

During the interview, Chuck Yeager is impressed by Jeanette's knowledge. Her classmates are in awe of the fact that she gets to speak with him, and she enjoys a rare moment of popularity.

Lori Had Been Writing

Lori writes regularly and has found a job as a waitress. She loves New York City and knows Jeanette will too.

Jeanette is now a Junior in High School and visits the guidance counselor who cannot fathom leaving West Virginia for any reason and discourages Jeanette from doing so. This has the opposite of its desired effect, as it inspires Jeanette to go to New York for her senior year of high school so that she can get in state tuition when it is time for college. She makes a plan to do so, and Lori agrees that it is a good idea.

Rex and Mary are not pleased. Mary is jealous that the kids get to go to New York City and that she doesn't. Rex shows Jeanette updated plans for the glass castle and hopes it will entice her not to leave. She tells him in no uncertain terms that she will be leaving for New York City as soon as the school year is over.

It Had Been A

The school year comes to an end and Jeanette experiences feelings ranging from excited to “just plain scared” in regards to her move.

Brian is happy for her, and encourages her with a countdown of the hours before she leaves. Mary, obviously still feeling envious lets Jeanette know that she will not be seeing her off.

Brian awakes Jeanette in the morning, and she finds Rex outside waiting for her. He carries her suitcase to the bus station and gives her a knife for protection. She waves goodbye despite her determination not to look back. She touches the knife in her pocket as she watches her father disappear in t he distance.

Part 4

New York City

Things happen quickly for Jeanette in New York, she begins by working in a hamburger joint, then finds a school that allows her to do an internship instead of attending classes. She interns at a weekly paper called “The Phoenix” and soon the internship turns into a job. After some time with this occupation, the editor/owner of the paper encourageˇs Jeanette to go to college. Through numerous grants and loans (plus a year of answering phones on Wall Street), Jeanette is able to attend Barnard college where she becomes the news editor of the Barnard Bulletin but is hired away by an un-named magazine. She lives free in the apartment of a psychologist in exchange for looking after her children.

Reports from Welch go from bad to worse. Rex drinks more and more, the roof in the bedroom collapses, mudslides wash away the outside steps. Like Jeanette, Brian comes to New York City after his junior year of High School. Soon, twelve year old Maureen joins them, enrolling in school using Brian's address.

It seems that growing up in adverse conditions were a good preparation for NYC. Jeanette never yields to muggers and fights her way through them, sometimes victorious, sometimes not.

One Morning Three

Jeanette is listening to the radio one day and hears about a van breaking down on the New Jersey turnpike and causing a traffic jam. Furniture and clothing spilled from the van, and a dog escaped from it which is running up and down the turnpike pursued by the police. Thousands of people are late for work.

That same night, Jeanette gets a phone call from her parents and is informed that they have moved to New York. She confirms that the incident on the radio was in fact them.

After a little time in a boarding house, then a flophouse, Rex and Mary move in with Lori and Maureen.When Rex's drinking and arguing become more than Lori can bear, Brian allows Rex to stay with him. After Rex breaks into a liquor cabinet that was locked intentionally to keep him out and drinks every drop of alcohol, Brian gives him the ultimatum to give up drinking or leave. Rex begins sleeping in the van they drove from West Virginia.

Meanwhile, Mary has cluttered Lori's apartment with her paintings and does not adhere to deadlines given by Lori to straighten the place up. After talking it over with Jeanette, Lori asks her mother to leave.

She stays in the van with Rex until it is towed away for being in a no parking zone. At this point Rex and Mary are officially homeless.

Mom and Dad called

Rex and Mary are adjusting well to homelessness in New York City. They find a plethora of free things to do (movie screenings, museums, recitals) and sleep on park benches or in the bushes of parks. Most of their time is spent in libraries where they read the works of Balzak as well as Scientific Journals.

Jeanette is feeling conflicted about her parents. When friends tell her not to give change to homeless people, because it encourages them, she is offended, but when professors wax hypothetically about the plight of street people she does not agree, yet can't quite find the words to express how she does feel.

That January It Got=

The winter was not as easy for Rex and Mary.Rex considered the shelters to be “human cesspools” and so, when possible, they would stay in Churches that opened their doors to the homeless. At times, the churches filled up and Rex would have to resort to staying in a shelter while Mary (along with their dog) would go to Lori's house. At these times, she would confess to Lori that life on the street was difficult.

Jeanette feels guilty about going to a private school while her parents are homeless and considers dropping out to help. Fortunately Lori and Brian convince her that this is a bad idea by pointing out that; Mary has a large collection of jewelry she could sell, she has land in Texas and Arizona, they could both go back to West Virginia, and that Rex is very proud of Jeanette and her academic accomplishments.

Mom and Dad Survived

Although Rex and Mary manage to make it through the winter, when spring comes Rex is hospitalized with tuberculosis. Jeanette visits him in the hospital and finds him sober and enthusiastic about the books he's reading on Chaos Theory. He states that his bought with TB has started him thinking about mortality, and that his studies are indicating the existence of a “divine creator”. His hands shake either from TB or detoxification as he shows Jeanette his calculations.Jeanette asks him to promise her he will not try to leave the hospital before he is fully recovered. He laughs, which turns into a “fit of coughing”.

Dad Stayed in the

Rex sobers up completely in the hospital, and fears that he will start drinking again if released back onto the streets.An administrator from the hospital takes an interest in Rex and arranges for him to go to an upstate resort where he is given a job as a maintenance man. He works and seems happy through the summer and fall, but in November, Mary convinces him to come back to New York. He begins drinking again right away.

The Walls all get together for Christmas.Mary and Rex have an assortment of odd gifts that they've found here and there (porcelain dolls with no hair for Maureen, stained sweater for Jeanette etc.) Jeanette buys her father some new winter clothes, but when he opens the first package he gets offended and leaves.Mary says that it is because he is a father he feels that he should be taking care of his daughter, not the other way around. It puts a damper on the evening to an extent, but Mary is still excited about getting her gifts.

By The Following

Rex enthusiastically follows Jeanette's academic career. He reads all of her text books so that he will be able to clarify things for her if the need arises. Mary says that he is trying to get a college education along with her.

Unfortunately, when fall term nears Jeanette is short one thousand dollars for tuition and is thinking she will have to drop out. Rex reacts by saying “Why didn't you tell me sooner.” A week later, he presents Jeanette with nine hundred and fifty dollars in worn and crumpled bills that he has won playing poker. He also gives her a mink coat that he says will easily bring the remaining fifty dollars. Jeanette is hesitant to take the money, but in the end takes the money and pays her tuition with the weathered bills.

A Month Later

Rex and Mary move into an abandoned building (a squat). They seem to have found a niche for themselves. The other squatters lead similarly chaotic lives and share their disdain for authority.Rex is a hero among the squatters for managing to hi-jack electricity to the building. The apartment they inhabit reminds Jeanette of the house in Welch. Mary's art supplies, various clutter, and smells ranging from stale beer to food going bad.

In the meantime, Jeanette is graduating from college and needs to find new living arrangements. She has been seeing a man named Eric, who comes from a wealthy family and is also quite prosperous in and of himself. He invites her to live with him on Park Avenue. So, with a pro-rated rent agreement, Jeanette moves in to an apartment building that boasts a uniformed door-man, and an apartment with a fireplace and cross-beamed ceilings.

I Invited Mom

When Mary visits Jeanette's posh new apartment, Jeanette offers to help her parents in some way now that she is doing well financially. Mary declines the help and states that she is concerned for Jeanette, accusing her of selling out, worrying that she might become a republican.

Jeanette at this point has been given a weekly column writing about what can be best described as the jet set. She goes to all sorts of high profile events and meets lots of powerful people. Mary thinks that she should be writing about social injustice, but Rex thinks her new job is great, and does research on the people that she interviews and calls her with “tips” about them.

Jeanette feels her new position would be in jeopardy if some of the people she worked for and with knew about her background.When asked about these things, she bends the truth or out and out lies. In one instance repeating her childhood mantra about her father developing a means of burning coal more efficiently and stating that her family still lives in West Virginia in a restored old house which affords a lovely view of a river.

My Life With Eric

Jeanette marries Eric after living with him for four years. Not long after the marriage Mary's brother passes away, leaving a parcel of land for sale that borders the land that Mary owns in Texas. She wants to borrow the money from Eric, Jeannette's new husband. After some cajoling, Jeannette finds out that the land her mother owned and did nothing with during all of their years of poverty is worth approximately one million dollars. On top of this, Mary wishes to borrow this same amount from Eric to purchase the other half of the land, and has no plan or use for it. Somehow, keeping land in the family has become a sacred unbreakable rule for Mary. When Jeannette does not comply with her mother's wish of asking her new husband for a million dollars, Mary is “deeply disappointed” in her daughter.

Lori Was Working

NYC worked for every member of the Walls family except for Maureen, the youngest of the children. Once out of high school Maureen starts attending a city college, but ends up dropping out and living in the squat with her parents. She is a very attractive young woman whose life consists of jobs and boyfriends that offer no security, and usually don't last long to begin with. She eventually becomes very introverted, spending all of her time, sleeping, reading, painting nude self portraits and chain smoking. Jeannette tries to intervene by inviting her up to her apartment to discuss the future. Maureen arrives and has dyed her hair and eyebrows platinum blonde. As for a future, she is only interested in stopping Mormon Cults in Utah that she alleges have kidnapped thousands of people. When Jeannette questions the validity of the cults, Maureen accuses her of being part of the conspiracy.

Jeannette and Brian talk and suggest to their parents that Maureen seek professional help. Mary insists that all she needs is fresh air and sunshine. Six months later, however, when Mary asks Maureen to move out of the squat, Maureen stabs her. She is arrested, jailed and eventually sent to an upstate hospital where she remains for a year.

At the trial, the Walls and shout at each other in the hallway for the court house, blaming one another for the demise of Maureen.

Upon release she immediately buys a ticket and goes to California. Brian convinces Jeannette that this is the best thing.

Maureen does not want the family to see her off, but Jeannette wakes herself up so that she can at least think of her sister as she departs.

After That, I Hardly

Communication between the Walls children and their parents becomes scant.At this point Brian is a police officer, married and fixing up an old home on Long Island.Lori has more contact with her parents than Brian or Jeannette.

Roughly a year after Maureen's departure, Jeannette gets a call from her father requesting a bottle of vodka and a meeting. Despite some reservations she complies. On her visit, Rex tells her that he is dying from a rare disease he contracted from fighting with Nigerian drug dealers. Although the story is questionable, the fact that Rex is dying is not. Jeannette indulges herself with some of the vodka and spends the rest of the evening reminiscing with her parents.

Two Weeks Later

Rex has a heart attack and spends his final hours hooked to a life support machine. Jeannette holds his hand and recalls how he once expressed the wish to have his body placed upon a mountain for the elements to devour when he died. She has the urge to take his body and “check out Rex Walls style” as demonstrated when she was in the hospital as a girl. The life support machine is turned off an hour later.

Grief strikes Jeannette in the form of always wanting to be on the move. She takes up ice skating, rising early in the morning and going to the skating rink before work. She begins to think about her life and “reconsider everything”.

Within a year, she has left Eric. She respects him but doesn't feel he is the right man for her, and is tired of Park Avenue.

After moving to her own apartment, her need to be on the move all the time fades and she eventually stops skating altogether. But she does take long walks, sometimes gazing at Venus and thinking of her father.

Part 5 Thanksgiving

I Was Standing On

Roughly five years after Rex's death, Jeannette has remarried to a man named John and the two live in a nice country home. John decides to have the Walls over for Thanksgiving. Brian has divorced but has an eight year old daughter that he brings with him. He is a detective on the police force and is in charge of a special unit that investigates organized crime. Mary and Lori also come. Maureen is still in California, but has been in contact with Mary and is possibly planning a visit.

Mary has her usual assortment of junk gifts for everyone, and is pleased to report that the city is going to sell the tenements she has been squatting in to the residents for one dollar a piece.

At dinner they begin talking about Rex and some of the adventures they'd had (petting the cheetah, demon hunting, giving stars for Christmas). They propose a toast to him, which comes from Mary as follows; “Life with your father was never boring.”