

Miss Annabel and Julia

Chapter 08

'Rhapsody In Blue', and the Small Piano, Too

Fiction by Angela Bauer

Tuesday, 20 June 1933, was as lovely in Philadelphia as it was in Manhattan. Julia, Richard and Annabel all had exciting and productive things to do.

The transition of the Rogers of Philadelphia Department Store DeLuxe to ownership and management by Barclay's of Fifth Avenue progressed very well. Tuesday was the day vendors traditional to Rogers as well as those already favored by Barclay's would be making sales pitches and showing off samples.

At first, before seeing the store in person, Julia had felt the value of the Rogers inventory was fairly priced. When she actually saw that inventory, especially both ladies' couture and ready-to-wear, she was not so optimistic. There was room for a vast improvement. Of course Rogers had been selling similar clothing in Philadelphia for decades, so there was an outside chance the stock on hand could be sold to customers at nearly full price.

Julia knew there was absolutely no chance of selling any of the Rogers dresses if shipped to the Barclay store on Fifth Avenue. But, what if another store, perhaps in Brooklyn or Newark, could be taken-over to serve as an outlet for unsold surplus inventory from the main stores? Of course that outlet store would require a name not connected to either the Barclay's or Rogers' brands.

Listening to the sales pitches and seeing the samples, Julia realized that a few of the traditional Rogers' vendors were capable of making higher quality and more stylish products, fully worthy of the Barclay's

brand. The executive and buying staff of Rogers' was polite and most impressed by the presentations from the traditional Barclay's vendors. Clearly they were excited by the opportunity to up-grade their merchandise, now that *Barclay's would be paying the vendors on time.*

That Tuesday turned out to be very long for Julia. She had eaten an early breakfast with Annabel, but would miss dinner with her. Julia would just be able to give her daughter a pre-bed spanking and diaper her for bed. While not the quality time of Julia's dreams, that ritual was very important to Annabel.

In Manhattan in the executive offices of Barclay's, Agnes Mayo, executive secretary to Richard, had managed to postpone all his morning meetings. She had received a call from the chief assistant architect to Walter Lockridge that the man himself wanted to be shown the Barclay Mansion by Richard as early as possible that morning.

Walter wanted to see the mansion for himself as he listened to Richard's hopes and desires. For this first meeting he brought along his own private secretary who was an expert at taking down in shorthand the conversations between clients, his staff and him. Also in his entourage would be two qualified architects who would be assigned the actual design job, as well as structural engineers who wanted to see the mansion as it was before starting precise surveys and an engineer/architect from Otis Elevator.

As the tour progressed, Lockridge realized that Richard was far more sophisticated about engineering and architecture than his previous clients. None of the desires was beyond realistic construction and all were in good taste. The mansion would be more livable and modern, while still respectful of its heritage. Richard wanted the public rooms to retain the feel of the original design, without all the obsolete features no longer popular. In the opinion of Lockridge, had Richard bypassed the Harvard Graduate School of Business for either the Harvard or MIT architecture schools, he could have been successful. But, then, Richard would not be able to afford to have done the work for which he had hired White & Lockridge.

The primary suggestion from Lockridge was to retain a room about the size of the present study, but in a more logical location, on the first floor. While there would be events requiring all the space of the reception room, ballroom and dining room, there would be far more events with a handful of guests. Rather than bring those outsiders into family space, it would be good planning to have a sparse formal room for the purpose. Since it needed to have doors from the reception room, the logical place was the corner facing Park Avenue on the south side of the mansion. That would make use of space not needed even for the extended formal dining room.

The enlarged ballroom would run from the east Park Avenue side all the way to the west side of the mansion, about one hundred twenty feet, including a four foot high stage the width of the ballroom and twenty feet deep. Allowing for the reception room and the width of the dining room still allowed the ballroom to be over sixty feet wide.

To leave room for the family elevator which needed to be somewhat central to the building, the Grand Stairway would be relocated to the south and also re-designed to eliminate a landing and turn. Doing so would make it grander and more contemporary, without clashing with the traditional wall and millwork treatment of the first floor.

Walter Lockridge felt that by carefully deconstructing walls, there would be enough of the difficult to reproduce 1833 mill work left to realize the new first floor. Fortunately the same style mill work was used on the second floor, which did not need to retain 1833 traditions.

At the west side of the building on the first floor there needed to be a space connecting the dining room to the ballroom which would serve also as the service elevator lobby.

Richard thought the dumb waiter from the kitchen to just outside the dining room would be moved, enlarged and operated by electricity, not a manual rope and pulley system as in the 1833 design.

However, when the actual engineering started, it became obvious that places for the dumb waiter on the first floor convenient for serving, interfered with logical design of an efficient kitchen.

Therefore since a rapid and sophisticated service/freight elevator was being installed near the kitchen, it could carry food from the kitchen and bring back to the scullery used plates, etc. Thus, the dumb waiter was eliminated. It served for 100 years, but it outlived its usefulness.

Also, with the formal dining room so vastly expanded, space was found on the second floor, close to the service elevator, for an informal family dining area. No way could the dumb waiter handle that. Without the service elevator The Barclay Family would have continued eating in the huge dining room.

An advantage of the two elevator shafts was that on their outside walls would be room from sub-basement to the top floor for vital plumbing, heating, cooling, ventilation and electrical chases.

To retain the details of the original design, after the chimneys were demolished and removed, the historic chimney pots would be-reinstalled on non-functional decorative chimney stubs at roof level. If those stubs needed to be relocated to accommodate new functions, there would be no harm. The public would not have a vantage point looking down on the roof. The Empire State building was too far south west.

What especially impressed Walter Lockridge was Richard's concept of the rear door for the service/freight elevator with a landing at the rear driveway level. The first floor was only one foot nine inches above grade level and the basement fourteen feet below grade. Richard assumed having a freight loading area at grade would save a lot of labor loading and unloading trucks and vans, which routinely parked in the west alley.

However, that was a reason an Otis Elevator engineer was part of this walk-through. His suggestion was to only have the first floor stop for the freight/service elevator. Immediately outside the rear elevator door it would be more efficient to have a manually operated hydraulic lift, which could reach the bed of a freight truck (over four feet), stop at the elevator door and lower to grade level. Similarly, outside the stage freight door there would be a similar hydraulic lift, perhaps with a different side platform. Inside the building there would be one more lift, from the first floor level to the stage level. With those lifts grand pianos could easily and inexpensively be moved from storage, onto the stage and then back to storage. The lift outside the freight elevator would make loading and unloading freight from trucks much more efficient.

Currently the down ramp to the garage was from the alley to the west of the mansion, which connected to narrower alleys to the north and south of the mansion connecting to Park Avenue.

Between the Avenue and the east front of the building there was a slightly curved driveway, with some hedge shielding the main entry door from direct view from the Avenue and the sidewalk. That curved driveway did provide temporary parking for four limousines, which was always useful and would be even more important during large-scale entertaining.

There was an existing twenty-two feet high portico extending sixty feet either side of the main entrance, covering the entire width of the driveway. This needed engineering evaluation and probably rebuilding. However, any cost would be well-worth it because the portico and decorative columns close to the Park Avenue sidewalk was a distinctive feature of the Barclay Mansion. The portico also made it very comfortable for family and visitors to enter and exit their vehicles elegantly.

The 1933 New York building code only required a single safety stairway internal to the building. That could share a fire-proof masonry wall with the service/freight elevator. That would be within the distance from the east rooms to satisfy the code. The existing family and service stairways did not meet the modern building code but were allowed because they were 'grandfathered in'.

Having a masonry enclosed stairwell with self-closing fire doors would reduce risk of fire. Of course that did mean nothing could be stored on landings of that safety stairway. The stair doors would be next to the service/freight elevator doors. Each floor already had a service vestibule; after the re-modeling those vestibules would simply be in a different place.

Because the service elevator eliminated climbing so many flights of stairs, the bedrooms for the butler, housekeeper and chef/cook could be moved from kitchen-adjacent to the top floor where there would be space to provide those supervising ‘servants’ with suites instead of simple rooms. Of course offices for those staffers would remain kitchen-adjacent, as would the butler pantry and wine/liquor storage.

The staff dining/ready-room would stay near its place adjacent to the kitchen but might be reduced in size from the 1833 design when there were 50 servants living in the main building. This would provide space for staff men’s and ladies’ rooms at the end of the staff room away from the kitchen. There would be far less staff after the remodeling.

Although exact decisions about uses for most of the third and all of the fourth floors were not known, Walter Lockridge encouraged Richard to think ahead: “Mr. Barclay, the more we know before interior demolition starts, the better. Also, when the ceilings are removed is the time to rough-in drains, running water, heating and cooling plumbing, as well as electricity and telephone service.

“Yes, Mr. Barclay, I did say cooling plumbing. Even if the actual mechanical systems are not within budget now, adding cooling pipes to all the other plumbing will cost hardly anything now and would cost a great deal once the walls and ceilings are finished. Residential air conditioning is the future. It makes Manhattan living so much more comfortable in August and September.

“This is not such a problem for the fourth floor, since the only third floor ceilings to be re-installed will be for the guest rooms with their bathrooms. With the rest of that floors ceilings open, there is access to the entire fourth floor from underneath.

“This has been a most productive meeting. We will start doing preliminary budgets for the timing of the work and the costs involved. Since your wife is in Philadelphia and you are visiting her this weekend, I will have my staff make some sketches you can show her about the proposed first floor renovations.”

“Mr. Lockridge and all your staff, I thank you for the time with you this morning. Please contact my executive secretary, Agnes Mayo, at my store office so she can have a retainer check draw and messengered to you. I know Julia will enjoy seeing your sketches. Our hope is that she will be here on Park Avenue to make decisions during the bulk of construction. We have leased the Dyckman property a few blocks north for two years, with an option for a third year, as living space during construction,” Richard said.

Well before lunch time, Richard was not just back in his office, he was focused on the decision he needed to make.

About 3:00 P.M. Julia phoned him from the hotel office. She wanted Annabel to hear her father's voice. Once the child was off the line, Julia told Richard about her thoughts for at least one outlet store. Richard considered that a brilliant idea and promised he would put his real estate and acquisition attorneys to the task of finding a suitable existing business that could be bought on the cheap.

"Oh, Darling Julia, your brilliant idea does not get you out of trouble for giggling earlier. You still are to remind me to spank you on Friday, is that clear?"

"Crystal clear, Richard. Giggling was not dignified, so I deserve more than one spanking. Is there a chance you could take an earlier train? I miss you so much and Annabel misses you even more. Her photos are amazing. You will be so proud," Julia said while giggling.

"You are incorrigible, Darling, a true menace to productivity. I will ask Agnes to clear my schedule and have someone change my Pullman reservations. Nanny Parsons will be riding with me. She loved her last trip and you told me you needed more time alone with her. Someone will also inform the Bellevue-Stratford that Miss Parsons and Mr. Swift will need access to their rooms earlier than originally required. Try to behave and be creative. I love and miss you so much," Richard said as they hung up.

That Tuesday morning, Annabel did not waste time having her wet night diaper changed before she had a room service breakfast in Julia's suite with her Mommy.

Only after she had been kissed good-bye did Annabel return to her own suite to ask her Nanny Hannah Randall to remove the wet diaper and give her a bath.

As Hannah handled the soaked diaper she appreciated the fact the PlayTex stretchy rubber baby panties Annabel had worn over the diaper did as advertised: all the wetness was kept inside the panties and not spread to cause stains!

"Annabel, although you need diapers at night, you are nine years old. You are allowed to take a bath by yourself. Would you like to try now?"

"All right, Nanny, if you say so. You are right, I should bathe myself. May I call you when I am ready to get out of the tub?"

"Please do so, Annabel. I will get your bed ready for the next part of your morning ritual," Hannah answered from the bedroom.

When Annabel did call out, Hannah walked in and picked up a bath towel. But instead of wrapping it around Annabel, only her legs, front and head were dried. Her back, buttocks and upper thighs were left dripping. Hannah held the towel against Annabel's front as she led the girl to her bed.

There Annabel noticed, beside her new ‘Victorian Girls’ Spanker’ there was a stack of smoothed-out DyDee gauze diapers. She was placed across Hannah’s capable and smooth lap, only after said lap was covered by the diaper stack.

Annabel noticed that being spanked hurt much more on her wet derrière. She had expected to hold out awhile before crying, to get Hannah to prolong the spanking. With her wet bottom stinging so much so soon, she started sobbing immediately.

Her sobs did not shorten the spanking. Actually, Annabel liked the longer, more painful spanking. She cried her eyes out, knowing long before evening she would have a fresh supply of tears.

Hannah let Annabel cry it all out over her lap for as long as it took. Suddenly the girl bounced to her feet as happy as a clam. “Nanny, last night Mommy told me my adventures today would be a surprise. When will you tell me?”

“Lambie Pie, you will find out when we get there and not before. The hint I can give you is that you will be indoors and should dress nicely. You will be seated, which will be interesting for you after the spanking you wanted.

“It is completely your choice about starting off in a diaper. The advantage to a diaper is you will not need to get out of your seat when you need to go wewe,” was all Hannah would say.

Annabel did not hesitate for as long as a second, “Nanny, please diaper me. Pretty please!”

That is the way it went. Hannah pinned Annabel into a double diaper, snugly. Then she pulled on a dry pair of the PlayTex rubber panties. By way of a day outfit, Annabel wore a white blouse and a seersucker lined jumper with a full skirt hemmed just below the knees. Unless she was careless or deliberately showing-off, the diapers and rubber pants were concealed. To seem ladylike, she wore over the knee summer-weight white socks and flat heel black Mary Janes.

“Lambie Pie, you look so adorable. Take a look in the mirror. Now, without spoiling your surprise, it would be more fun if you brought your toy piano with you this morning.”

Annabel, lovingly carrying her beloved piano, and Hannah, carrying the large diaper bag, were waiting for a couple of minutes when John Merriman brought the Rolls Royce to a stop in the auto port of the Bellevue-Stanford. As a doorman rushed forward to open the right rear door, John stepped out of his door, took a long look around and nodded in a significant way to a large man in a moderate suit wearing a gray fedora.

After Annabel was inside the car that gentleman turned and left. What only John knew was that a result of his phone call to the Pinkerton office

about Mrs. Manchester, an armed operative was assigned to guard Annabel while Mr. Merriman was driving Julia to the store and returning to pick up the young lady.

Their destination was the Philadelphia Academy of Music. Its building dated from Revolutionary times.

It turned out that when Julia told the Rogers' store Executive Secretary Helen Wood about the music and lyrics Annabel was writing using her toy piano, Helen called in a tiny favor. Annabel was about to receive a lesson on piano playing from one teacher and another lesson about composing from another.

Inside the reception room of the Academy of Music, a kindly lady introduced herself as Sylvia Gershwin. Immediately she complimented Annabel's piano, "You know, Annabel, this is the first time a student has arrived carrying her own piano!"

For the next hour Annabel started out playing one of her tunes on her own piano, then on a small grand piano and finally on a Steinway Concert Grand. Professor Gershwin was amazed how well Annabel played on those instruments.

Sylvia showed her some exercises on the small grand and then listened as Annabel repeated that exercise on her own piano.

By the end of the lesson, Annabel was confident and wanted more piano lessons. One was reserved for Thursday and another on the following Tuesday mornings.

"When you go home to Manhattan, Annabel, I recommend another instructor. Thursday I will give you all those details. She has a studio in the Carnegie Hall Building. If you like me even a little, you will love her!" Sylvia gushed.

Annabel gave Sylvia a big hug and kiss goodbye, only reluctantly, and carrying her piano as if it were a doll in need of an embrace, did she leave.

Hannah broke through Annabel's reverie: "Angel, we only have a few minutes before your next lesson. How about we use a ladies' room so I can change you into a dry diaper?"

That was done. They were back in Reception waiting when a tall distinguished gentleman entered from the school. He introduced himself as Professor Theodore Bernstein: "You have to be Annabel. Professor Gershwin told me you brought your own piano, a very fine one at that. She also told me you played and sang a song you composed.

"That is why we are here, to help you become more confident writing music. If a guy like me can do it, so can you. Please walk with me to my studio."

The lesson was only scheduled to last 45 minutes, but both Annabel and Prof. Bernstein were having so much fun that they only stopped playing music at each other when a student who had been waiting opened the door.

Theodore asked Annabel to show him some music she had written recently. But because her lessons were a surprise she had not brought any of her songs with her. Of course she had them memorized. Hannah was sitting quietly at the far end of the room, reached into a dry compartment of the diaper bag and presented Annabel with the original verses of 'Gwendolyn and Christopher'.

By then Annabel had started playing it on her piano, while singing, "Gwendolyn Rabbit and Christopher Pig were walking up a hill. They met a girl named Annabel who wouldn't take her pill. I don't want to go to bed; I'm having too much fun."

The professor looked at the sheet of paper, written in a hand far more sophisticated than an average nine-year-old.

"Annabel, your piano is very fine, but could you play and sing these other verses on my piano?"

That was a Steinway Baby Grand, tuned to perfection. Annabel vamped an introduction and sang as she played without a glance at her lyrics sheet.

"What a marvelous song, Annabel. Clever lyrics and modern music; publish it and record it; you will have a hit. Now, after hearing a sample of your talent, what can I teach you?"

"Professor, these lessons are a surprise. I am sure I have so much to learn about writing music. Could you start teaching me how to actually write down the music I hear in my head? I can read simple music, I think, but I am never sure if I am playing it the way the composer intended" Annabel admitted.

"Here, Annabel, is a sophisticated piece for the piano and orchestra. This is the piano part. Try playing it for me from the sheet. It was written about the time you were born and became popular but is not played often recently," Theodore asked.

To his surprise, Annabel could sight-read the music very well. He asked if she could slow down the tempo and start again.

He got up and walked to Hannah: "Miss Randall, please go to reception and have them ask Professor Gershwin to come here as soon as she can."

A few minutes later, as Hanna and Sylvia returned to the studio, Annabel was still playing the piano part of '*Rhapsody In Blue*' very well.

Sylvia Gershwin walked into the studio assuming it was Theodore playing. She started to weep when she saw it was Annabel playing from a score. Annabel continued playing until the end of the rhapsody. There was much applause.

“Darling, my cousin George would be thrilled by your playing! How long have you practiced?” Sylvia asked.

“Ma’am; that is the first time I ever even heard the music. I was telling Professor Bernstein I am uncertain when trying to read music if I am playing the way the composer intended, so he handed me that music and asked me to try.

“Next time, after I do my exercises you taught me, could you coach me so I will be able to play that piece correctly?” Annabel begged.

“Doing so will be an honor, Annabel!”

“Now, if you will excuse us” Theodore interrupted, “I would like to teach Annabel how to write down the music she hears.”

For the next 45 minutes, she would play a bar of the “Gwendolyn and Christopher” song. First Theodore would write down the notes. He would show her that, without giving her a chance to memorize the notation. Then he would slowly play the same bar, as Annabel sat at the desk and wrote her own notes. Within 20 minutes she was writing down her music fairly accurately.

The next part of the lesson was for her to put blank music paper on the piano’s music stand which was specially made for the purpose, with a solid back and spring clips to hold the sheet in place. Annabel would play her song with just her left hand and write the notes with her right hand.

By the time the lesson was interrupted, she understood the principles of music notation. Professor Bernstein gave her some blank music paper, all the notes they had made and even a small music stand clip board so any piano could serve her needs.

“Borrow a piano from your hotel, since the clip board is too big for your own fine piano.

“Practice as much as you can. I look forward to seeing you on Thursday morning” Theodore said, as he kissed Annabel’s hand.

Between Annabel and Hannah they were just able to carry the clip board, toy piano, the music and the diaper bag to the front door of the Academy.

Hannah’s original plan was to take Annabel to lunch and to an art museum where children could drop in. There were informal classes in sketching and painting as well as both more and less advanced classes. When Hannah had discussed Annabel with a representative of the

museum, he suggested letting her participate in the sketching class. From there it could be decided on additional classes.

When she was asked what she wanted to do after lunch, Annabel responded, “Nanny, could we go back to the hotel? It would be nice if we could go to a music store. I want more music paper and also a recording set of *‘Rhapsody In Blue’* played by George Gershwin.

“My preference would be to just eat a simple meal somewhere that will not take very long. That way I can use a piano to practice playing and writing down music.”

“Lambie Pie, that is a marvelous idea! But, you also need some sun, fresh air and exercise. May we compromise that if you eat a nutritious lunch and run around in a park for an hour, you can then spend as much time as you like writing your music? From the restaurant I will phone Trudy Josse at the hotel. She is probably the person to sweet talk the hotel into either sending a piano to our suite or letting you use one in another room.”

“That is a fair deal, Nanny!” Annabel promised.

As Mr. Merriman pulled up near the front door, Hannah was getting directions to a really good music store and a friendly informal restaurant with good food.

They ate lunch, with John Merriman eating alone at a rear table against a wall. While Annabel and Hannah were waiting for the check, she asked, “Nanny, I am about to wet again. Please change my diaper?”

“Lambie Pie, since you are about to wet, I’ll wait until you finish. You are a responsible girl to tell me. Knowing you are about to wet is a big step to gaining bladder control,” Hannah said.

As soon as the waitress brought her the change and she left a tip, Hannah took Annabel to the ladies’ room and changed her diaper, which was not very wet.

In the music store Annabel asked if she could add the sheet music to *‘Rhapsody In Blue’* to her shopping list. Hannah assured her that would be very nice.

Between the music store and a park, the car was approaching the photo store. Hannah and Annabel rushed in. Her photos had just been done a few minutes before. Hannah allowed Annabel to buy four more rolls of film.

Annabel said she was so happy that she had learned to load and unload her Brownie by herself. She looked through the printed photos with Hannah. They decided to have re-prints made of all the photos of Susan, her mother and Mr. Merriman. The clerk promised those would be ready for pick-up early enough on Wednesday a detour to the photo store would not delay the trip to the zoo with Susan.

When Hannah was satisfied Annabel had exercised enough running around on the grass and climbing on the monkey bars, she waved to John Merriman. While he was fetching the Rolls, Hannah changed Annabel's diaper one more time.

The piano situation at the Bellevue-Stratford was complicated. All of the pianos in public rooms could only be played by union musicians. There were two private function rooms with pianos, often used by song pluggers.

However, several years before a mother insisted her son was a musical prodigy. The boy was allowed to practice on one of the private pianos. The problem was he played very badly to the point it annoyed other guests. From then on the policy was that nobody under 16 could play a musical instrument in the hotel.

The best compromise Trudy Josse could negotiate was that an Assistant Manager named David Ramsey would give Annabel an audition. If he believed she could play well enough doing so would not annoy the other guests, then she would be allowed to practice for no more than an hour at a time.

Annabel was changed into a fresh diaper and a lovely frock, with clean white socks and Mary Janes. She tucked the *'Rhapsody...'* sheet music under her arm, took Hannah's hand, and politely walked to Mr. Ramsey's office. He unlocked the room with a private piano.

Annabel adjusted the stool until she could reach the peddles and the keyboard. She put the sheet music on the stand, sat down and began to play the *'Rhapsody...'* with confidence and skill. After less than five minutes, Annabel had permission to play that piano when she wanted during daylight hours.

Trudy learned the outcome of the piano request and the audition. She phoned Julia. As a result Julia told a coalition of vendors she needed to go to her hotel to change before their dinner. While doing so Julia heard how well Annabel could play. She was so proud she hugged and kissed her daughter, whispering, "Young Lady, you certainly earned yourself 'a first class wallop'". Remind me to give you that tonight." Then they kissed again.