

A continuation to the previous book [*Flowers in the Attic*](#), the story starts off with Cathy, Chris and Carrie running away from the Foxworth mansion in Virginia. Their plans were to travel all the way to Sarasota. However, they chance upon the home of Dr. Paul Scott Sheffield in South Carolina. Paul is a kindly doctor who heals Carrie who had taken ill on the bus to Sarasota. Dr Paul raises them as his own, putting Chris through medical school, Cathy through ballet school, and enrolling Carrie in an expensive all-girls boarding school. Chris adapts well to freedom and excels at medical school except for the fact he is unable to forget his deep love for Cathy, who had begun a love affair with Dr. Paul. Carrie, having missed out on sunlight and adequate nourishment between the ages of 5 and 8, remains shorter than most girls her age and suffers from low self-esteem. She is bullied in her exclusive all girls boarding school for her diminutive height and proportionally-large head. After a harrowing ordeal, Dr. Paul removes Carrie from the boarding school and enrolls her in public school, which further contributes to Carrie's low self esteem but allows her to live at home.

Cathy becomes quite a famous ballerina and is about to marry Dr. Paul, when his sister implies that a fetal specimen that Paul keeps in his office; twin embryo with two heads, two arms and three legs, is Paul and Cathy's aborted baby (Cathy thinks "but Paul hadn't touched me then" and believes that it was the result of her and Chris' incestuous intercourse), though it is insinuated in the first portion of the book that the affair between Cathy and Chris did result in a miscarriage; Cathy is rushed to the hospital following an audition and is immediately given a D & C). This turns out to be untrue, as the embryo Paul keeps turns out to be a gag gift, given to him by his classmates from when he was in medical school. Mortified about her past and incensed by the thought that he may have lied to her, she marries another dancer, Julian Marquet (who had been pursuing Cathy since she arrived at his parents' school), on impulse. However, the marriage is rocky as Julian is ill-tempered and wildly jealous of Chris and Dr. Paul, whom he feels his wife still loves.

When Cathy and Julian receive an invitation to Chris's graduation, Julian quickly refuses to go and forbids Cathy from attending. Cathy, against Julian's wishes, goes to his graduation anyway. Julian retaliates by cutting Cathy out of their upcoming show, a television production of *Giselle* and replaces her with her most hated rival Yolanda Lange, whom Julian is having an affair with. Cathy quickly flies up to New York with Chris to reclaim her role and to settle things with Julian. After replacing Yolanda, Julian dances with Catherine and purposely stomps on her feet, breaking her toes. While at the hospital with Chris, Yolanda trashes Julian and Cathy's apartment, completely destroying many valuable objects. While at the apartment with Cathy (by then Yolanda and Julian are gone), Chris pleads with Cathy to leave Julian and love him instead, proclaiming his love for Cathy once again. Cathy, in the moment, confesses to Chris that she is pregnant with Julian's baby and that she cannot leave him, Chris at first shocked by the news, then pleads with Cathy to run away with him, that they can raise the baby as their own. Cathy refuses, but she then receives a phone call from the hospital.

Julian is badly injured in a car accident, and Cathy realizes she loves him after all and rushes to his side. Despite this, Julian commits suicide when he finds out he may be paralyzed and unable to dance and also because he feels Cathy did not truly love him. After Julian's death and the birth of their son, Jory, Cathy starts to finalize her plan for revenge on her mother who she hates and blames for all their sufferings (even the death of her husband Julian).

She moves back to Greenglenna, South Carolina, and begins subtly wooing Bart Winslow, a lawyer and her mother's young husband. In 1972, Cathy moves to Virginia, to a town near Foxworth Hall, with her son Jory and her sister Carrie. Cathy has ended her ballet dancing career, though she is only 27 years old, and begins teaching ballet at the local ballet school. Carrie meets a young man named Alex with whom she falls in love, but a chance meeting with her mother Corinne Foxworth on a local street ends with her mother stating, "I don't know you." Depressed, Carrie commits suicide by eating doughnuts she has covered with rat poison.

Cathy blames her mother for Carrie's death, causing her to hate her even more. She continues to pursue Bart Winslow, has a prolonged sexual love affair with him, and becomes impregnated by him. Bart is torn between his duty to his wife versus his desire to be a father (according to her father's will, Corinne Foxworth would forfeit all she inherited if she ever bore any children). Cathy takes her revenge on her mother by exposing the truth to Bart and a crowd of guests at her mother's Christmas Party at Foxworth Hall. The novel then takes a sinister turn as the mother confesses in front of Bart but then exposes her side of the story, claiming to be a victim of her father, whose vicious plot was to ensure his grandchildren died in the attic. However, Cathy is reluctant to believe her mother's portrayal of having been a victim rather than a villain.

Afterwards, the mother starts a fire that burns down Foxworth Hall to the ground, in which the grandmother (now really old) and Bart die of smoke inhalation. Corinne Foxworth is committed to a mental institution. Although she forfeited her father's inheritance when it was revealed she had borne children to her first husband, all that money reverted to Corinne's now dead mother, who stated in her will that Corinne was to receive everything, and as the book states, Corinne is "cursed with millions, yet unable to spend a cent."

Cathy finally marries Paul, but due to complications from a heart attack, Paul dies. On his deathbed, Paul encourages Cathy to be with her brother Chris, who has loved her and waited for her all these years. Cathy is amazed that Chris still loves her and that he wants to be with her, noting that all the men she has loved have died.

The story ends on an ominous note as Cathy recalls how she went up to the attic the other day and realizes how it could comfortably accommodate 2 boys (her son with Julian and her son with Bart).