



*Hello, Notebook! It's me, Katie Roberts, age 11.
From now on, I am going to write down every single
thing that happens. Or at least everything important.
And remember, this notebook is **PRIVATE!***



So begins the first of Katie Roberts's diaries, which chronicle the triumph and tragedy of two fascinating years of her life. Katie Roberts was just seven when her father died in World War II. Now she is eleven and her life is about to change all over again. Her mother is getting remarried and is taking her away from New York City to a ranch in Texas—away from everything and everyone she knows.

Katie's funny and touching take on her new life reflects her longing to fit in without forgetting where she came from.

Amy Hest tells Katie's award-winning story with characteristic humor and spunk, vividly revealing her world of new beginnings, confusing relationships, and the pull and tug of being a girl and having to face growing up.



www.pjourway.org

Sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation

Winter 1995

The war came and took my father forever. I was seven.

Weeks passed. I went to school and the library. Months slid into years. I went to temple with my mother, and bought flowers at the market. Oddly, I could still smile. From time to time, I could even laugh. But always, the question: Why did my father die in the war? Why couldn't he just come home, the way you're supposed to?

More upheaval when I was eleven. That was the year Mama decided to marry Sam Gold. We would pack our bags and our lives and move to Sam's ranch in faraway Texas. My mother danced through the rooms, happy again. But I was scared.

My favorite neighbor, Mrs. Leitstein, came to the station to see us off. She was old like a grandmother, cozy and wise. We held hands in the station but did not talk much. There were pearls wrapped in cotton for Mama, all the more precious because they were Mrs. Leitstein's pearls. And for me, a notebook of my own, beautiful red leather with 100 lined pages. You could use the crispy paper to write letters. Or, you could make it private and write anything you wanted. I did both.

August 7, 1947 5:05 A.M.

Hello, Notebook! It's me, Katie Roberts, age 11. From now on, I am going to write down every single thing that happens. Or at least everything important. And remember, this notebook is **PRIVATE!** No one is allowed to see what's inside, and ESPECIALLY NOT MY MOTHER, who is getting married today at noon. (The man she is getting married to is called Sam Gold. I will maybe tell you more about him later, but first I have to talk about me.)

I am sitting on my new bed in my new room in Texas. There's a canopy, which I like. But I miss my old bed in my old room in New York City and . . . I WISH WE NEVER MOVED HERE 8 DAYS AGO. Why? Because I HATE living on a ranch in the middle of nowhere! It is hot here every minute and this house is too big. There are no neighbors nearby. No subways. Not a single tall building. I LIKE CITIES NOT WILDERNESS, AND I AM NO PIONEER!

Mama says new things take getting used to, but she is wrong. Because I will never get used to Texas and I want to go home now.

And one more thing. I don't understand why SHE (my mother) has to get married all of a sudden. We were fine, just the two of us. Perfectly,

wonderfully fine. Now everything is spoiled and it's not fair. Well at least I have new shoes for the wedding. Patent leather with a strap across. They look sensational and gorgeous with pink pajamas, which I am wearing right now. Presenting . . . Katie Roberts tap-dancing pajama queen! I like new shoes. And also pink pajamas.



*Katie's Shoes
(gorgeous!)*

More later. After the w_____.

August 7, 6:00 P.M.

✧ Here I am at Mama's wedding. Miss America, HA! My dress has smocking at the waist and tiny rosebuds all over. ✧

I look very pretty.

Mama did not wear a white dress. She wore navy blue. When I get married, I will only wear white and my dress will be a gown. My mother has a new name, which is Mrs.



Sam Gold. She has a new ring, too. It's not that pretty. I like the old one better. My father gave it to her.

We had to drive 30 miles just to find a Texas rabbi, and guess what, he had no beard! I've never seen a rabbi without a beard. This one looked like a regular man and his house was a regular man's house. His wife had red hair, green shoes, and a boy baby called Charlie on her hip. He kept on waving and I waved back. I like babies. When I grow up, I will have a lot. Are you ready for this? THE CEREMONY WAS IN THE KITCHEN! Mama held my hand the whole time and I held hers tight. My stomach was knots. At the end Sam stomped on a glass, which is what you do at a wedding when everyone is Jewish. We all clapped. Even baby Charlie. I was laughing and crying at the same time. Mama, too. Then the groom kissed the bride and she maybe kissed him back. Her hat fell off. I hope that's the end of kissing.

I like weddings and also wedding cake. Especially the kind with whipped cream, and strawberries piled high.

Sam Gold is nice but I wish my father didn't die in the war. I wish he just came home, the way you're supposed to.



*Good
Cake!*

August 14, 4:10 P.M.



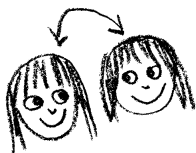
Hello again, Notebook! It's me, Katie Roberts, age 11, and I am still in Texas. Mama and Sam the man she married did not go on a honeymoon, but THEY ARE BEHAVING VERY BADLY. They give each other looks and smiles that make me feel left out. I pretend not to notice. I pretend not to care, but I do. For example whenever we drive to town in Sam's old car, they make me sit in back. Dust blows in the window in my mouth and my nose. It isn't fair because THEY sit up front where I can't hear all the things they are saying. Sometimes they sing. The songs they sing are really bad. I like to plug my ears.

Sam took us to the town pool this afternoon. The water is ice! Everyone who goes there knows everyone else. Except me. I don't care, they all look stupid. I swam in the deep end. I went off the high board. There she goes . . . Katie Roberts movie-star champion swimmer! I bet everyone noticed the too-tall girl in a green bathing suit. I bet they are DYING to meet me, ha!

Cows. All you see around here are cows, and also a lot of brownish-greenish grass. Sam used to live in New York like us. But after the war he got this BAD idea to build this dumb old ranch in dumb old Langley. So here I am, stuck for life

in the most boring place in the history of the world AND I HATE IT. There is nothing to do in Texas, and no one to do it with, either!

I NEED A BEST FRIEND.



Someone like me with streaky blond hair like my hair sounds nice. We do everything together such as swim at the town pool. We jump in the deep end holding hands and I can teach her how to dive. We laugh all day and tell secrets and lie in the sun on a towel that we share.

I NEED A BEST FRIEND.

HOW!

August 28, 5:02 P.M.

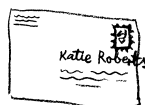
SCHOOL STARTS NEXT MONDAY – **HELP!**
I hope I get sick. Not too sick, just a sore throat or maybe a bad cold. Even in a place like Langley, they can't send a sick girl to school.

The principal sent a letter. WELCOME TO MEADOWLAWN SCHOOL. They make you take a school bus. No one will sit next to me or talk to me, which is all my mother's fault. SHE doesn't care that I am miserable in Texas. SHE doesn't care that I will never have a best friend – or any friend – for the rest of my life. All SHE cares about is her new husband PRINCE CHARMING. And now she is learning to milk cows. Isn't that crazy? She goes around in overalls that are baggy and bunchy like a man's overalls. She forgets about lipstick. She used to look pretty when we lived in the city. She always wore a dress.

★
MY MOTHER
★ MAKES ME
CRAZY★
★ MAD!

I am so scared about school. I hope my teacher is pretty. I hope she is nice. No one else will be (nice) to the new girl (me).

September 4, 6:00 A.M.



Mrs. Leitstein wrote me a letter! She wants to be my pen pal! I bet she misses me a lot. Well I miss her, and also her kitchen. Her house always smells

good, like cookies in the oven. I wish I could go there tomorrow. We could drink cocoa and talk about things. Mrs. Leitstein is the best person to talk to when you have troubles. She knows exactly what to do. That's because she's old.

September 4, 1947

Dear Mrs. Leitstein,

I do not like Texas. They make you go to school when it still feels like summer. My room has tulip wallpaper. When you look out the window, there is nothing to see. Unless you like looking at a bunch of cows, *Mooooo!*

How are you? Now that we are pen pals, don't forget you have to write back right away please.

Thank you for the notebook that you gave me at the station. I love it! As you can see, I am using a piece of the paper to write you a letter. I write many things in my notebook. All of them are private.

Very truly yours,

Katie

Your pen pal Katie Roberts