Chapter One

Is the Rabbit Dead?

The rabbit was in limbo.

Could I actually be headed for maternity? No one at the office would believe it. After ten years of marriage, even my mother had given up on me. "Her career is her baby," people said, and so far they'd been right.

But a funny thing happened on the road to middle age. I decided to have a baby. During the summer and fall of my thirty-first year, I began to pour over books with titles like How to Get Pregnant. Their detailed accounts of the miracle of conception made it look like far too difficult a thing for a mere mortal such as I to accomplish. In fact, I came away from the descriptions of thinning mucus and precise timing amazed that anyone ever had a baby at all. Statistics decreed that a woman at my advanced age would take six-and-a-half to ten months to conceive - considerably longer than those fertile eighteen-to twenty-five-year-olds. I braced myself for the long haul, wondering if all those years on the pill had been for naught.

The first week in November turned out to be hectic. On Monday I was offered a public relations job that I had been seeking since early summer. On Tuesday I stayed up late to watch Ronald Reagan get reelected as president of the United States. On Wednesday I turned in my resignation from the job I had loved for six years. I also noticed that my monthly cycle seemed to be out of kilter. "Must be nerves or fatigue," I figured.

But my body felt strange. Each morning I woke up with a shot of nausea. My basal body temperature, which I was taking every morning before I got out of bed, and which, according to the chart, was due for a precipitous drop, had flattened out at 98.6° F. Either my body was going wacky - or I was pregnant.

I have never liked to wait. As a type-A person, always on the go, waiting seemed like a terrible waste of time. I got my driver's license the day I turned sixteen, Calvin and I got married the day I finished college. I started a new job the day after our honeymoon. If I was pregnant, I wasn't going to wait to find out.

Walking down the aisles of Thrifty Drugstore that Wednesday evening, I felt embarrassed, like a sixth grader in sex education class.

"I've been married for ten years," I told myself. "It's OK to buy a pregnancy test." Two women approached the display I was scanning. I turned away, shaking inside. They left, and I looked over the possibilities. "Accurate as early as three days after a missed period," claimed the label. I paid for it quickly and darted into the darkness of the parking lot.

Thursday morning I awoke at six. I decided to go to work late and take the test as soon as my husband Calvin left the house. In the meantime, I took my temperature, still expecting a drop. Once again, it leveled out at normal.

Pregnancy tests work best on the first morning urine. That morning, I thought Calvin would never leave for work! At a quarter past eight his diesel Dasher finally smoked and pinged its way out of the driveway. I grabbed the kit and read the instructions. Chemistry lab had never been my strong suit, but the test sounded simple enough: Put three drops of urine into a test tube containing some kind of chemical, agitate it gently, put in the stopper, and wait.

One drop, two drops, three drops. My hands were shaking so hard I could hardly hold the tiny test tube. I put it into its little plastic stand with the mirror underneath and checked my watch. In forty-five minutes I would know if I, the one who seemed married to her career, the one people laid wagers would never give in and produce an heir, was on a collision course with motherhood.

But I'm getting ahead of my story.