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A STITCH IN TIME

I once believed that what had been broken could never be repaired. I felt that when something had gone wrong, it could never be made right. I had seen lives wrecked by acts of selfishness and brutality. It seemed that the survivors of tragedy could never recover, that they were doomed to wander the earth, visibly marked by misfortune, shunned by the happy and the secure.

It was my parents' marriage that inspired such reflections. They had married in their early twenties. Children themselves, spoiled by doting parents, they had no business getting married, let alone having children of their own.

Their wedding is immortalized in large, matte photographs. My mother is beautiful, wearing a white silky gown and pearls, her long brown hair falling around her neck in curls, her face radiant. My father is impossibly boyish and thin, a lank of hair charmingly awry, falling down his forehead. They look like blushing teenagers, stunned at their good luck, expecting a grown-up to intervene, to put a halt to the charade of such innocents entering into relations requiring gravity and maturity.

The ceremony was performed in the little white church of the tiny central Indiana town of Mount Summit. The reception was held at my grandfather's house, known as "The Maples" for the avenue of maple trees leading up a long lane to an old white two-storey farmhouse that is encircled by a large porch, its yard full of trees and flowering bushes.

The photographs depict a long-ago world. All the men are slender but muscular, individuals used to physical labor wearing suits and ties; the women are buxom and assured, dressed in their best finery, corsages pinned at the shoulder, contented, well-fed faces shaded by hats. They are pictured in rooms decorated with sprigged wallpaper and antique furniture and mantled fireplaces. Or the guests wander outside, around the front garden of a house that is isolated in the depths of the rural Midwest, surrounded by fields of