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## “What Hadn’t Happened” – Audio Collage Transcript

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**Erin:** So you knew as a child that you hadn’t done it.

**Olive:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

**Erin:** Ok.

**Olive:** Oh yeah.

**Erin:** But you just kept quiet about it.

**Olive:** Well, yeah, might as well (laughs). I mean, they’re more apt to believe an older woman than a little four-year-old child. Although, I don’t know, I think—I don’t even know if a four-year-old child would know how serious that was at the time and would, you know, try to tell what had—what *hadn’t* happened.

*Musical transition*

**Gorden:** We had a sister that died two weeks before I was born.

**Olive:** I remember bits and pieces, I remember...

**Gorden:** All I remember is what they—

**Olive:** Uh...

**Gorden:** —told me.

**Helen:** I knew it was something my mother didn’t like to talk about.

**Olive:** My mom went upstairs and was washing floors.

**Gorden:** She was what—

**Harold:** Gloria wasn’t very old, I don’t think.

**Gorden:** —just barely three years old.

**Harold:** I think she must’ve been walking, if I remember right.

**Gorden:** Gloria was 18 months old.

**Olive:** She and I were playing in the dirt outside the house, you know and had pieces of paper that we'd—the Raleigh man had left a little catalogue and were tearing pages out of it and using it to build roads and stuff like that. And then she decided she'd go up on the porch, which was a—it was a good-sized porch. Um. And there was a boiler of—a copper boiler—full of rinse water from washing clothes. Mom hadn't thrown it out because she was gonna use it to wash floors 'cause they had to haul the water from the river in order to wash the clothes. But there's supposed to be a cover on it.

*Musical transition*

**Harold:** Olive and I weren't—

**Helen:** She shouldn't have been—

**Harold:** —I don't think old enough to take care of Gloria.

**Helen:** —out there taking care of that child!

**Olive:** So, Gloria went up on the porch and there was the copper boiler. And, uh, she obviously went to go wash her papers and I sat down on the porch along the rail and... (pause) I don't remember seeing her fall in or anything like that, but I remembered I went to the door because, uh, I went to see my mom. (swallows) Then she came down later and she said, "Where's Gloria?" And I, and I re—I've been told many times what I said, I said, "She's in the boiler. She can't cry." And my mom, I can remember my mom screaming and grabbing her up out of the boiler and running down the path to the barn and yelling for Grandpa. And Grandpa came out, and he could see right away what had—what was happening. And so he grabbed her, he started giving her artificial respiration, and it just, it didn't work.

*Musical transition*

**Harold:** You can't retract what's done, you tell yourself.

**Olive:** So, she—

**Gorden:** She knew it wasn't her fault she said, but—

**Olive:** Well, that's really all I knew of my little sister, so...

**Gorden:** —but they said it was.

**Olive:** I heard a lot about it (laughs).

**Gorden:** And I don't know how anybody could say that.

**Olive:** I remember sitting at the dinner table one night— (laughs) It's funny the things you remember because at the time, I was looking at a red, uh—no, a sugar bowl that had red roses on it. But evidently something was said about taking the cover off the boiler, and I said, (in childish voice) “Well I didn't, I didn't do it. I didn't take—” And I got, I got smacked across the face because—didn't want that coming out, my mom didn't. I know it was my mom that hit me.

*Musical transition*

**Gorden:** I didn't find this out until—

**Harold:** I don't remember that part.

**Gorden:** —maybe the last year of Olive's life.

**Harold:** It might be true. I don't know.

**Olive:** (crying) I was, I was uh... accused of taking the cover off.

**Gorden:** She told me that they'd blamed *her* for Gloria drowning.

**Olive:** And actually what had happened was my mom forgot to put the cover on. And she didn't want to ad—say so because of the seriousness of what had happened, and my grandparents didn't really like my mom all that well anyway. So, um, she said that *I* had taken the cover off.

*Musical transition*

**Helen:** That bothered me.

**Gorden:** And she carried that for a long time, and it bothered her quite a lot.

**Helen:** It *still* bothers me.

**Olive:** And it wasn't until—

**Gorden:** It really hurt her for—

**Olive:** Oh gosh!

**Gorden:** —all those years.

**Olive:** It must've been about 10 years later that she... My mother, she was in a TB sanatorium 'cause she had tuberculosis. And they kept 'em there a long time because of the fact that they didn't—it wasn't medication that they gave them, it was a rest care. Anyway, when we were down there to visit with her she said she—that everybody was all together; she had something that she wanted to say. And then she told them the fact that *she* hadn't put the cover on the boiler and that I shouldn't be blamed so... that was that.

*Musical transition*

**Helen:** I'd ask her why, why, *why* she blamed Olive.

**Gorden:** Well it never was discussed that much anyway.

**Helen:** “That's all settled.”

**Gorden:** But that one thing I guess had—

**Helen:** “Not talkin' about it.”

**Gorden:** —stayed in Olive's mind quite a bit.

**Erin:** And how did you feel at that time?

**Olive:** Well, you know, at that time... Well, I, uh (struggles for words and sighs)... I really hadn't expected her to ever, ever say that. Because I was quite little when that happened and she figured, you know, I mean she figured that I would be excused whereas she certainly would not be, so...

**Gorden:** My mom told her later I guess that—within the last couple years of her life—you know, it wasn't her fault and she shouldn't even think that but... kinda late.

**Olive:** I never felt badly to my mother for that. Because even then I could, I could kinda realize that, you know, that she would be, uh, blamed—of course she was blamed, but... They didn't, wouldn't, they wouldn't—I don't know I didn't try to understand it.

*Musical transition*

**Helen:** If it had happened to me, I would've been... I would've been angry.

**Olive:** No, you know, at four you forget (laughs).

**Gorden:** Mom and Olive were quite close.

**Olive:** You forgive a lot easier than if you were older, I think.

**Gorden:** I remember that.

**Helen:** I would've, I would've been angry.

*Musical outro*