She was good at her work—fast, nimble-fingered, diligent, and even in the nearly unbearable heat of the weaving room, apparently indefatigable. The overseer noticed from his high corner stool. Lyddie saw him watching, and she could tell by the smile on his little round lips that he was pleased with her. One afternoon a pair of foreign dignitaries toured the mill, and Mr. Marsden brought them over to watch Lyddie work. She tried to smile politely, but she felt like a prize sow at a village auction.

The pay reflected her proficiency. She was making almost $2.50 a week above her $1.75 board. While the other girls grumbled that their piece rates had dropped so that it had hardly been worth slaving through the summer heat, she kept her silence. With Diana gone, she had no friends in the weaving room. She worked too hard to waste precious time getting a drink at the water bucket or running out to the staircase to snatch a breath of air.