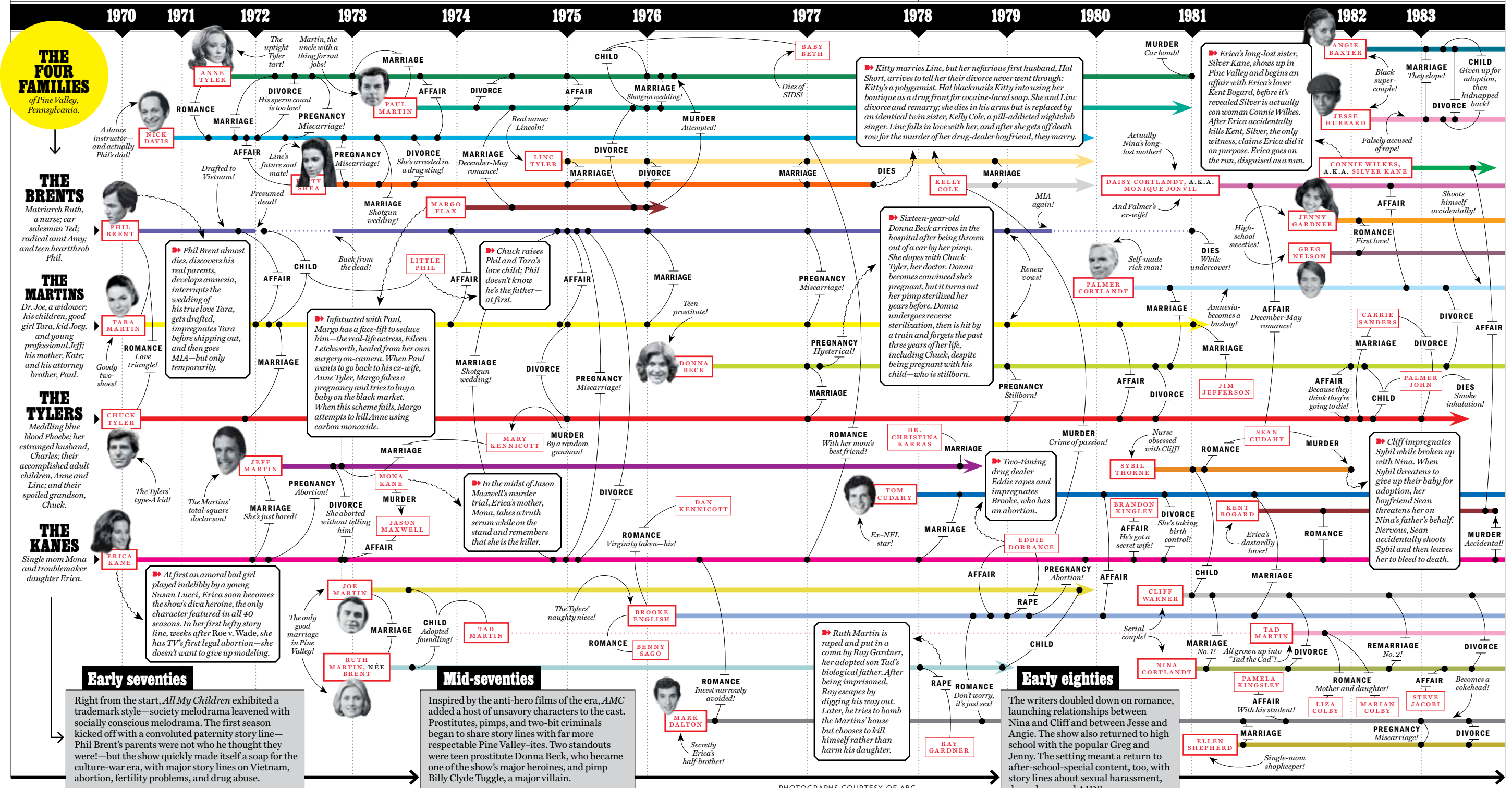


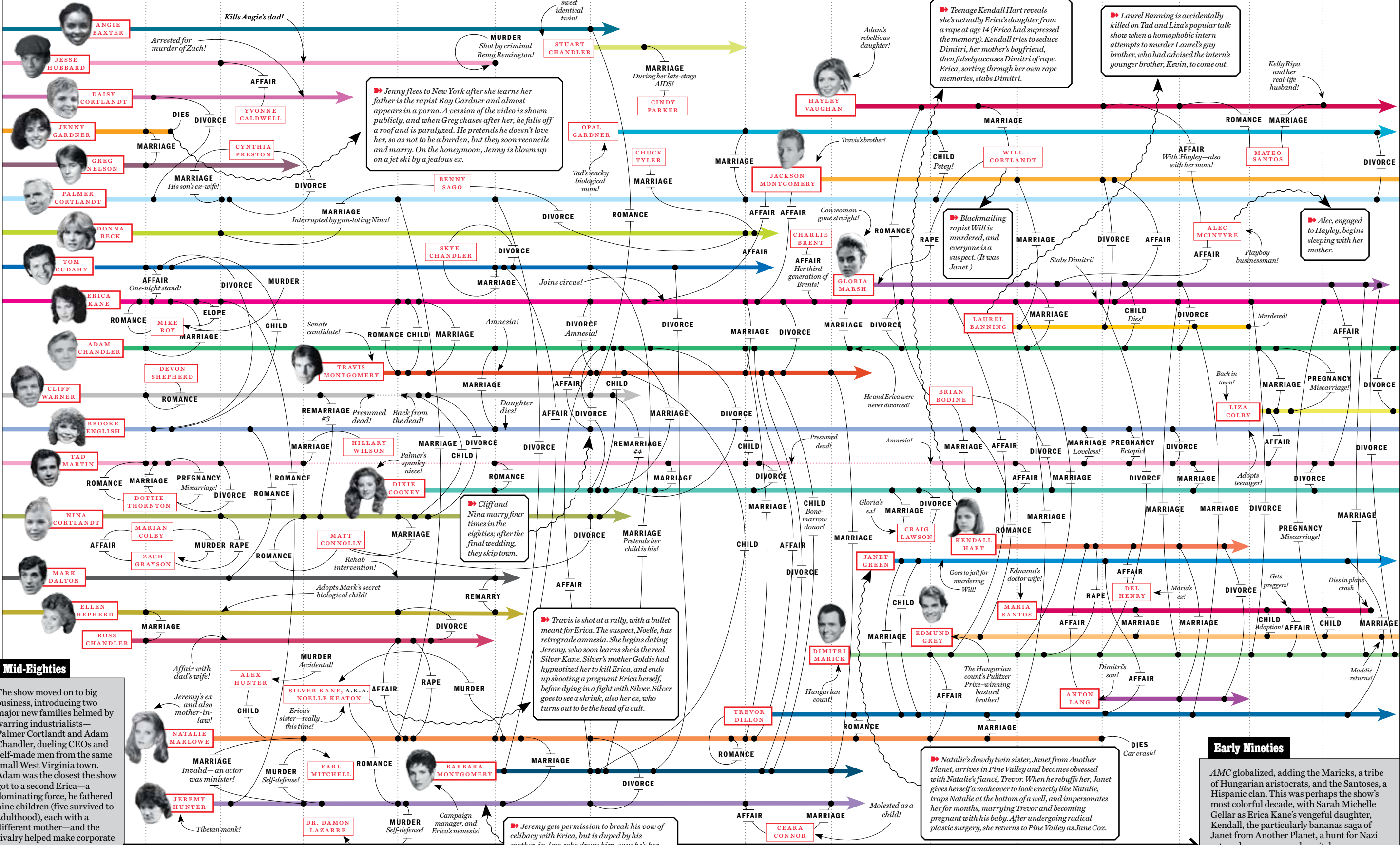
# ALL MY MARRIAGES, DIVORCES, AFFAIRS, MURDERS, AND RESURRECTIONS

Four decades of ridiculous melodrama will come to an end when *All My Children* goes off the air this Friday.

By WILLA PASKIN

AMERICA'S most histrionic soap opera, ABC's *All My Children* premiered in 1970, the story of four families in the Main Line Philadelphia suburb Pine Valley. Over the next 40-plus years, the cast and drama metastasized, with more than 200 characters and untold plot twists, love affairs, betrayals, and ponderous looks, dispensed at an increasingly frenetic pace and balanced, of course, with a high-minded interest in social issues. But they always saved time for ghosts.





**Mid-Eighties**

The show moved on to big business, introducing two major new families helmed by warring industrialists—Palmer Cortlandt and Adam Chandler, dueling CEOs and self-made men from the same small West Virginia town. Adam was the closest the show got to a second Erica—a dominating force, he fathered nine children (five survived to adulthood), each with a different mother—and the rivalry helped make corporate intrigue a story-line staple.

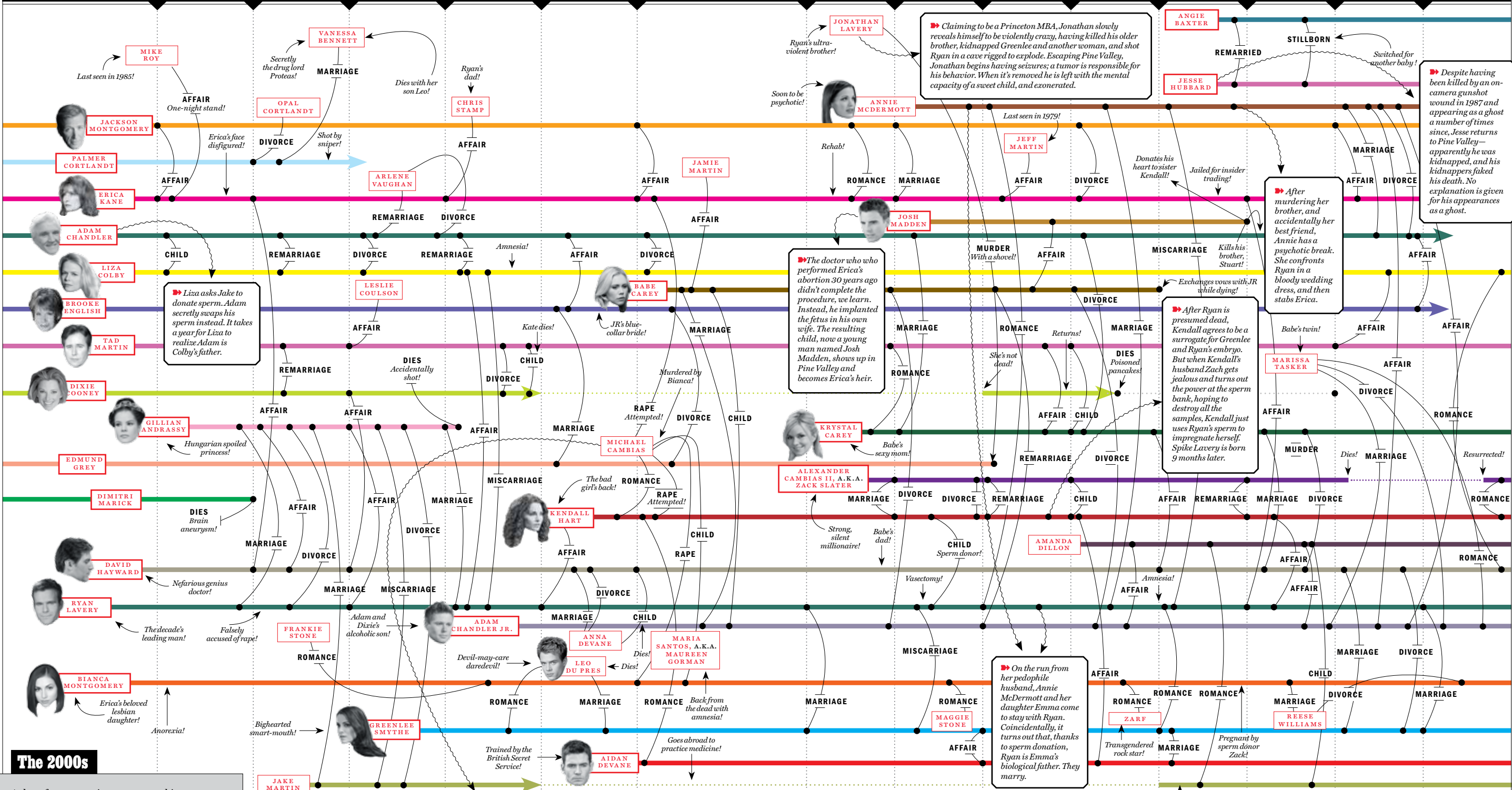
▶ Travis is shot at a rally, with a bullet meant for Erica. The suspect, Noelle, has retrograde amnesia. She begins dating Jeremy, who soon learns she is the real Silver Kane. Silver's mother Goldie had hypnotized her to kill Erica, and ends up shooting a pregnant Erica herself, before dying in a fight with Silver. Silver goes to see a shrink, also her ex, who turns out to be the head of a cult.

▶ Natalie's dowdy twin sister, Janet from Another Planet, arrives in Pine Valley and becomes obsessed with Natalie's fiancé, Trevor. When he rebuffs her, Janet gives herself a makeover to look exactly like Natalie, traps Natalie at the bottom of a well, and impersonates her for months, marrying Trevor and becoming pregnant with his baby. After undergoing radical plastic surgery, she returns to Pine Valley as Jane Cox.

**Early Nineties**

AMC globalized, adding the Maricks, a tribe of Hungarian aristocrats, and the Santosos, a Hispanic clan. This was perhaps the show's most colorful decade, with Sarah Michelle Gellar as Erica Kane's vengeful daughter, Kendall, the particularly bananas saga of Janet from Another Planet, a hunt for Nazi art, and a sperm-sample switcheroo.

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**The 2000s**

A slew of very attractive twentysomethings were added to a remodeled cast. Many of the new female characters took an ownership stake in Fusion, a rival cosmetics company to Erica's Enchantment, and the show's interest in corporate intrigue took on a distinctly girl-power vibe. But as ratings continued to fall, there was incentive to make every story line an "event": plots about a serial killer, a very convoluted baby-swap, a redux of the town's 1994 tornado, and more partner-swapping than ever gave these years an especially frenzied feel. And they saved the mass-resurrection plot for last.

▶ **Jake gets shot in Chechnya, and returns to Pine Valley impotent (like Jake Barnes!). In order to sleep with his wife Gillian, who is really in love with Ryan Lavery, Jake takes Libidizone, the show's version of Viagra, invented by David Hayward. David later tests it on Erica, turning her into a sex maniac.**

▶ **Michael tries to rape Kendall and her mother Erica, fails, then successfully rapes and impregnates Bianca. Bianca murders Michael and delivers his baby in the woods with the help of Babe, also pregnant, who gives birth soon after. In the hospital, the women learn Bianca's new daughter died during the helicopter rescue, but that Babe's daughter Bess survived. Babe realizes that Bess is really Bianca's baby. Babe flees her own marriage and goes on the run to One Lift to Live's Llanview, where she meets baby Ace, actually the child she thought she lost. After a rush DNA test, Bess is returned to Bianca, who wakes up from a coma once the child is placed in her arms.**

**The End**

When *All My Children* debuted, there were 19 soaps on the air. AMC ranked seventeenth, with a 4.4 ratings share. By the '78-'79 season, it had become the number one soap, with a 9 ratings share, and would remain in the top three through the mid-90s, after which, its ratings would start to precipitously decline. By 2006 the show was averaging only 3.2 million viewers, and earlier this year, when its cancellation was announced, *All My Children* was pulling in 2.4 million viewers, a .9 household ratings share, and was the fourth-ranked soap, of only six.

**BACK-OF-THE-ENVELOPE ALL MY CHILDREN**

Total seasons	42	Most children	Adam Chandler, 9
Total episodes	10,712	Most deaths	Dixie, 2
Most marriages	Erica Kane, 12 ("valid," and 5 "invalid")	Most resurrections	Dixie, 2
Pregnancies ending:		Most time between death/resurrection	Jesse Hubbard, 21 years
In miscarriage	One in three	Least time between death/resurrection	Babe Carey, 3 years
In live birth	Half	Most Daytime Emmy nominations	Susan Lucci, 21 (1 win)
In infant death	One in four		

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