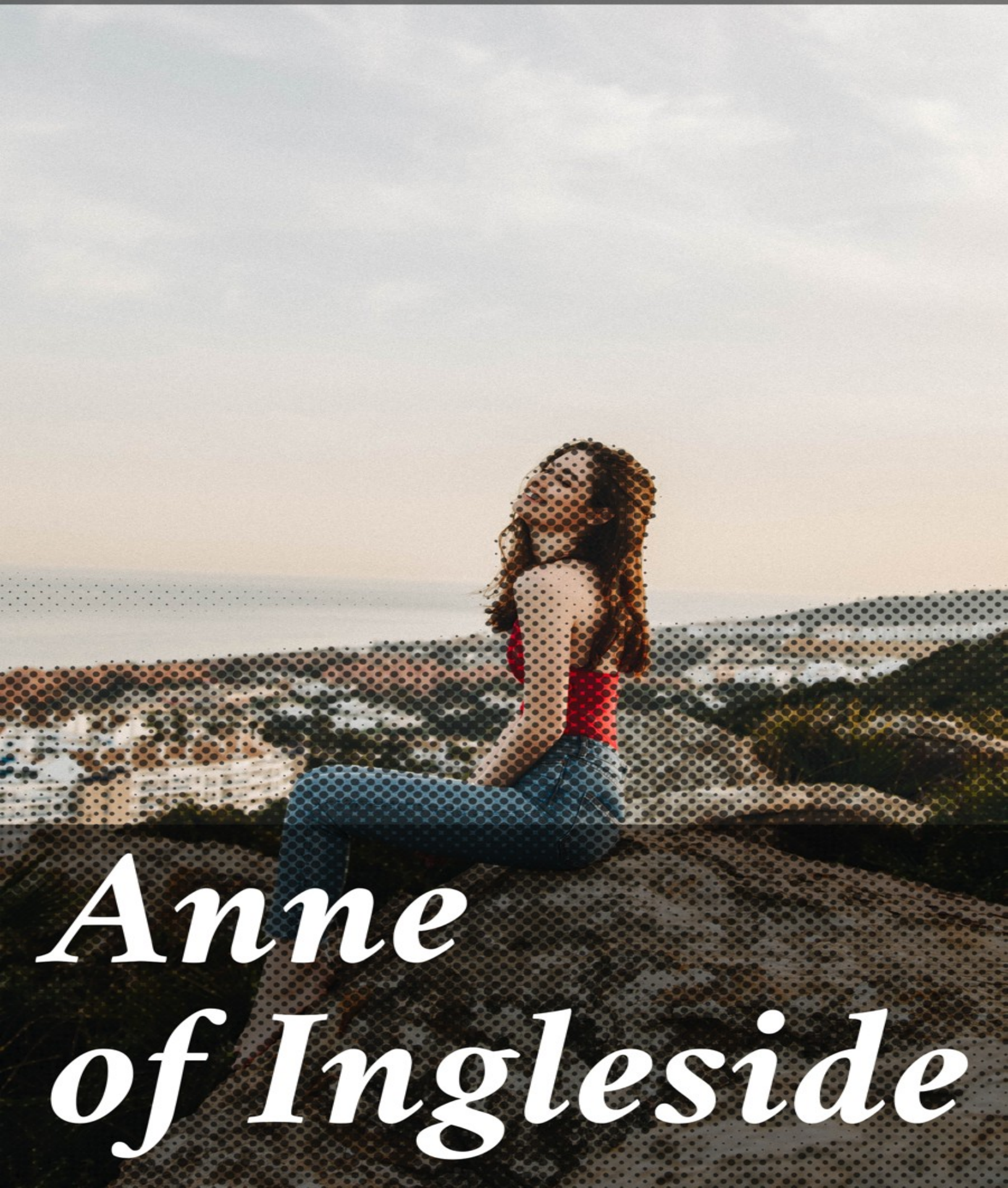
Lucy Maud Montgomery



Anne of Ingleside

Lucy Maud Montgomery

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"How white the moonlight is tonight!" said Anne Blythe to herself, as she went up the walk of the Wright garden to Diana Wright's front door, where little cherry-blossom petals were coming down on the salty, breeze-stirred air.

She paused for a moment to look about her on hills and woods she had loved in olden days and still loved. Dear Avonlea! Glen St. Mary was home to her now and had been home for many years but Avonlea had something that Glen St. Mary could never have. Ghosts of herself met her at every turn . . . the fields she had roamed in welcomed her . . . unfading echoes of the old sweet life were all about her . . . every spot she looked upon had some lovely memory. There were haunted gardens here and there where bloomed all the roses of yesteryear. Anne always loved to come home to Avonlea even when, as now, the reason for her visit had been a sad one. She and Gilbert had come up for the funeral of his father and Anne had stayed for a week. Marilla and Mrs. Lynde could not bear to have her go away too soon.

Her old porch gable room was always kept for her and when Anne had gone to it the night of her arrival she found that Mrs. Lynde had put a big, homey bouquet of spring flowers in it for her . . . a bouquet that, when Anne buried her face in it, seemed to hold all the fragrance of unforgotten years. The Anne-who-used-to-be was waiting there for her. Deep, dear old gladnesses stirred in her heart. The gable room was putting its arms around her . . . enclosing her . . . enveloping her. She looked lovingly at her

old bed with the apple-leaf spread Mrs. Lynde had knitted and the spotless pillows trimmed with deep lace Mrs. Lynde had crocheted . . . at Marilla's braided rugs on the floor . . . at the mirror that had reflected the face of the little orphan, with her unwritten child's forehead, who had cried herself to sleep there that first night so long ago. Anne forgot that she was the joyful mother of five children . . . with Susan Baker again knitting mysterious bootees at Ingleside. She was Anne of Green Gables once more.

Mrs. Lynde found her still staring dreamily in the mirror when she came in, bringing clean towels.

"It's real good to have you home again, Anne, that's what. It's nine years since you went away, but Marilla and I can't seem to get over missing you. It's not so lonesome now since Davy got married . . . Millie is a real nice little thing . . . such pies! . . . though she's curious as a chipmunk about everything. But I've always said and always will say that there's nobody like you."

"Ah, but this mirror can't be tricked, Mrs. Lynde. It's telling me plainly, 'You're not as young as you once were,'" said Anne whimsically.

"You've kept your complexion very well," said Mrs. Lynde consolingly. "Of course you never had much colour to lose."

"At any rate, I've never a hint of a second chin yet," said Anne gaily. "And my old room remembers me, Mrs. Lynde. I'm glad . . . it would hurt me so if I ever came back and found it had forgotten me. And it's wonderful to see the moon rising over the Haunted Wood again."

"It looks like a great big piece of gold in the sky, doesn't it?" said Mrs. Lynde, feeling that she was taking a wild,

poetical flight and thankful that Marilla wasn't there to hear.

"Look at those pointed firs coming out against it . . . and the birches in the hollow still holding their arms up to the silver sky. They're big trees now . . . they were just baby things when I came here . . . that *does* make me feel a bit old."

"Trees are like children," said Mrs. Lynde. "It's dreadful the way they grow up the minute you turn your back on them. Look at Fred Wright . . . he's only thirteen but he's nearly as tall as his father. There's a hot chicken pie for supper and I made some of my lemon biscuits for you. You needn't be a mite afraid to sleep in that bed. I aired the sheets today . . . and Marilla didn't know I did it and gave them another airing . . . and Millie didn't know either of us did and gave them a third. I hope Mary Maria Blythe will get out tomorrow . . . she always enjoys a funeral so."

"Aunt Mary Maria . . . Gilbert always calls her that although she is only his father's cousin . . . always calls me 'Annie,'" shuddered Anne. "And the first time she saw me after I was married she said, 'It's so strange Gilbert picked you. He could have had so many nice girls.' Perhaps that's why I've never liked her . . . and I know Gilbert doesn't either, though he's too clannish to admit it."

"Will Gilbert be staying up long?"

"No. He has to go back tomorrow night. He left a patient in a very critical condition."

"Oh, well, I suppose there isn't much to keep him in Avonlea now, since his mother went last year. Old Mr. Blythe never held up his head after her death . . . just hadn't anything left to live for. The Blythes were always like that . .

. always set their affections too much on earthly things. It's real sad to think there are none of them left in Avonlea. They were a fine old stock. But then . . . there's any amount of Sloanes. The Sloanes are still Sloanes, Anne, and will be for ever and ever, world without end, amen."

"Let there be as many Sloanes as there will, I'm going out after supper to walk all over the old orchard by moonlight. I suppose I'll have to go to bed finally . . . though I've always thought sleeping on moonlight nights a waste of time . . . but I'm going to wake early to see the first faint morning light steal over the Haunted Wood. The sky will turn to coral and the robins will be strutting around . . . perhaps a little grey sparrow will light on the windowsill . . . and there'll be gold and purple pansies to look at . . ."

"But the rabbits has et up all the June lily bed," said Mrs. Lynde sadly, as she waddled downstairs, feeling secretly relieved that there need be no more talk about the moon. Anne had always been a bit queer that way. And there did not any longer seem to be much use in hoping she would outgrow it.

Diana came down the walk to meet Anne. Even in the moonlight you saw that her hair was still black and her cheeks rosy and her eyes bright. But the moonlight could not hide that she was something stouter than in years agone . . . and Diana had never been what Avonlea folks called "skinny."

"Don't worry, darling . . . I haven't come to stay. . . ."

"As if I'd worry over *that,"* said Diana reproachfully. "You know I'd far rather spend the evening with you than go to the reception. I feel I haven't seen half enough of you and

now you're going back day after tomorrow. But Fred's brother, you know . . . we've just got to go."

"Of course you have. And I just ran up for a moment. I came the old way, Di . . . past the Dryad's Bubble . . . through the Haunted Wood . . . past your bowery old garden . . . and along by Willowmere. I even stopped to watch the willows upside down in the water as we always used to do. They've grown so."

"Everything has," said Diana with a sigh. "When I look at young Fred! We've all changed so . . . except you. You never change, Anne. How *do* you keep so slim? Look at me!"

"A bit matronish of course," laughed Anne. "But you've escaped the middle-aged spread so far, Di. As for my not changing . . . well, Mrs. H. B. Donnell agrees with you. She told me at the funeral that I didn't look a day older. But Mrs. Harmon Andrews doesn't. *She* said, 'Dear me, Anne, how you've failed!' It's all in the beholder's eye . . . or conscience. The only time I feel I'm getting along a bit is when I look at the pictures in the magazines. The heroes and heroines in them are beginning to look *too young* to me. But never mind, Di . . . we're going to be girls again tomorrow. That's what I've come up to tell you. We're going to take an afternoon and evening off and visit all our old haunts . . . every one of them. We'll walk over the spring fields and through those ferny old woods. We'll see all the old familiar things we loved and hills where we'll find our youth again. Nothing ever seems impossible in spring, you know. We'll stop feeling parental and responsible and be as giddy as Mrs. Lynde really thinks me still in her heart of

hearts. There's really no fun in being sensible *all* the time, Diana."

"My, how like you that sounds! And I'd love to. But . . ."

"There aren't any buts. I know you're thinking, 'Who'll get the men's supper?'"

"Not exactly. Anne Cordelia can get the men's supper as well as I can, if she is only eleven," said Diana proudly. "She was going to, anyway. I was going to the Ladies' Aid. But I won't. I'll go with you. It will be like having a dream come true. You know, Anne, lots of evenings I sit down and just pretend we're little girls again. I'll take our supper with us . . ."

"And we'll eat it back in Hester Gray's garden . . . I suppose Hester Gray's garden is still there?"

"I suppose so," said Diana doubtfully. "I've never been there since I was married. Anne Cordelia explores a lot . . . but I always tell her she mustn't go too far from home. She loves prowling about the woods . . . and one day when I scolded her for talking to herself in the garden she said she wasn't talking to herself . . . she was talking to the spirit of the flowers. You know that dolls' tea-set with the tiny pink rosebuds you sent her for her ninth birthday. There isn't a piece broken . . . she's so careful. She only uses it when the Three Green People come to tea with her. I can't get out of her who she thinks *they* are. I declare in some ways, Anne, she's far more like you than she is like me."

"Perhaps there's more in a name than Shakespeare allowed. Don't grudge Anne Cordelia her fancies, Diana. I'm always sorry for children who don't spend a few years in fairyland."

"Olivia Sloane is our teacher now," said Diana doubtfully. "She's a B.A., you know, and just took the school for a year to be near her mother. *She* says children should be made to face realities."

"Have I lived to hear *you* taking up with Sloanishness, Diana Wright?"

"No . . . *no* . . . NO! I don't like her a bit . . . She has such round staring blue eyes like all that clan. And I don't mind Anne Cordelia's fancies. They're pretty . . . just like yours used to be. I guess she'll get enough 'reality' as life goes on."

"Well, it's settled then. Come down to Green Gables about two and we'll have a drink of Marilla's red currant wine . . . she makes it now and then in spite of the minister and Mrs. Lynde . . . just to make us feel real devilish."

"Do you remember the day you set me drunk on it?" giggled Diana, who did not mind "devilish" as she would if anybody but Anne used it. Everybody knew Anne didn't really mean things like that. It was just her way.

"We'll have a real do-you-remember day tomorrow, Diana. I won't keep you any longer . . . there's Fred coming with the buggy. Your dress is lovely."

"Fred made me get a new one for the wedding. I didn't feel we could afford it since we built the new barn, but he said he wasn't going to have *his* wife looking like someone that was sent for and couldn't go when everybody else would be dressed within an inch of her life. Wasn't that just like a man?"

"Oh, you sound just like Mrs. Elliott at the Glen," said Anne severely. "You want to watch that tendency. Would you

like to live in a world where there were no men?"

"It would be horrible," admitted Diana. "Yes, yes, Fred, I'm coming. Oh, *all* right! Till tomorrow then, Anne."

Anne paused by the Dryad's Bubble on her way back. She loved that old brook so. Every trill of her childhood's laughter that it had ever caught, it had held and now seemed to give out again to her listening ears. Her old dreams . . . she could see them reflected in the clear Bubble . . . old vows . . . old whispers . . . the brook kept them all and murmured of them . . . but there was no one to listen save the wise old spruces in the Haunted Wood that had been listening so long.

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"Such a lovely day . . . made for us," said Diana. "I'm afraid it's a pet day, though . . . there'll be rain tomorrow."

"Never mind. We'll drink its beauty today, even if its sunshine is gone tomorrow. We'll enjoy each other's friendship today even if we are to be parted tomorrow. Look at those long, golden-green hills . . . those mist-blue valleys. They're *ours,* Diana . . . I don't care if that furthest hill is registered in Abner Sloan's name . . . it's *ours* today. There's a west wind blowing . . . I always feel adventurous when a west wind blows . . . and we're going to have a perfect ramble."

They had. All the old dear spots were revisited: Lover's Lane, the Haunted Wood, Idlewild, Violet Vale, the Birch Path, Crystal Lake. There were some changes. The little ring of birch saplings in Idlewild, where they had had a playhouse long ago, had grown into big trees; the Birch Path, long untrodden, was matted with bracken; the Crystal Lake had entirely disappeared, leaving only a damp mossy hollow. But Violet Vale was purple with violets and the seedling apple tree Gilbert had once found far back in the woods was a huge tree peppered over with tiny, crimson-tipped blossom-buds.

They walked bareheaded. Annie's hair still gleamed like polished mahogany in the sunlight and Diana's was still glossy black. They exchanged gay and understanding, warm and friendly, glances. Sometimes they walked in silence . . . Anne always maintained that two people as sympathetic as

she and Diana could *feel* each other's thoughts. Sometimes they peppered their conversation with do-you-remembers. "Do you remember the day you fell through the Cobb duckhouse on the Tory Road?" . . . "Do you remember when we jumped on Aunt Josephine?" . . . "Do you remember our Story Club?" . . . "Do you remember Mrs. Morgan's visit when you stained your nose red?" . . . "Do you remember how we signalled to each other from our windows with candles?" . . . "Do you remember the fun we had at Miss Lavender's wedding and Charlotta's blue bows?" . . . "Do you remember the Improvement Society?" It almost seemed to them they could hear their old peals of laughter echoing down the years.

The A. V. I. S. was, it seemed, dead. It had petered out soon after Anne's marriage.

"They just couldn't keep it up, Anne. The young people in Avonlea now are not what they were in *our* day."

"Don't talk as if 'our day' were ended, Diana. We're only fifteen years old and kindred spirits. The air isn't just full of light . . . it *is* light. I'm not sure that I haven't sprouted wings."

"I feel just that way, too," said Diana, forgetting that she had tipped the scale at one hundred and fifty-five that morning. "I often feel that I'd love to be turned into a bird for a little while. It must be wonderful to fly."

Beauty was all around them. Unsuspected tintings glimmered in the dark demesnes of the woods and glowed in their alluring by-ways. The spring sunshine sifted through the young green leaves. Gay trills of song were everywhere. There were little hollows where you felt as if you were

bathing in a pool of liquid gold. At every turn some fresh spring scent struck their faces . . . spice ferns . . . fir balsam . . . the wholesome odour of newly ploughed fields. There was a lane curtained with wild-cherry blossoms . . . a grassy old field full of tiny spruce trees just starting in life and looking like elvish things that had squatted down among the grasses . . . brooks not yet "too broad for leaping" . . . star-flowers under the firs . . . sheets of curly young ferns . . . and a birch tree whence some vandal had torn away the white-skin wrapper in several places, exposing the tints of the bark below. Anne looked at it so long that Diana wondered. She did not see what Anne did . . . tints ranging from purest creamy white, through exquisite golden tones, growing deeper and deeper until the inmost layer revealed the deepest richest brown as if to tell that all birches, so maiden-like and cool exteriorly, had yet warm-hued feelings.

"The primeval fire of earth at their hearts," murmured Anne.

And finally, after traversing a little wood glen full of toadstools, they found Hester Gray's garden. Not so much changed. It was still very sweet with dear flowers. There were still plenty of June lilies, as Diana called the narcissi. The row of cherry trees had grown older but was a drift of snowy bloom. You could still find the central rose walk, and the old dyke was white with strawberry blossoms and blue with violets and green with baby fern. They ate their picnic supper in a corner of it, sitting on some old mossy stones, with a lilac tree behind them flinging purple banners against a low-hanging sun. Both were hungry and both did justice to their own good cooking.

"How nice things taste out of doors!" sighed Diana comfortably. "That chocolate cake of yours, Anne . . . well, words fail me, but I must get the recipe. Fred would adore it. *He* can eat anything and stay thin. I'm always saying I'm *not* going to eat any more cake . . . because I'm getting fatter every year. I've such a horror of getting like great-aunt Sarah . . . she was so fat she always had to be pulled up when she had sat down. But when I see a cake like that . . . and last night at the reception . . . well, they would all have been so offended if I didn't eat."

"Did you have a nice time?"

"Oh, yes, in a way. But I fell into Fred's Cousin Henrietta's clutches . . . and it's *such* a delight to her to tell all about her operations and her sensations while going through them and how soon her appendix would have burst if she hadn't had it out. 'I had fifteen stitches put in it. Oh, Diana, the agony I suffered!' Well, she enjoyed it if I didn't. And she *has* suffered, so why shouldn't she have the fun of talking about it now? Jim was so funny . . . I don't know if Mary Alice liked it altogether. . . . Well, just one teeny piece . . . may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, I suppose . . . a mere sliver can't make much difference. . . . One thing he said . . . that the very night before the wedding he was so scared he felt he'd have to take the boat-train. He said all grooms felt just the same if they'd be honest about it. You don't suppose Gilbert and Fred felt like that, do you, Anne?"

"I'm sure they didn't."

"That's what Fred said when I asked him. He said all he was scared of was that I'd change my mind at the last moment like Rose Spencer. But you can never really tell

what a man may be thinking. Well, there's no use worrying over it now. What a lovely time we've had this afternoon! We seem to have lived so many old happinesses over. I wish you didn't have to go tomorrow, Anne."

"Can't you come down for a visit to Ingleside sometime this summer, Diana? Before . . . well, before I'll not be wanting visitors for a while."

"I'd love to. But it seems impossible to get away from home in the summer. There's always so much to do."

"Rebecca Dew is coming at long last, of which I'm glad . . . and I'm afraid Aunt Mary Maria is, too. She hinted as much to Gilbert. He doesn't want her any more than I do . . . but she is 'a relation' and so his latchstring must be always out for her."

"Perhaps I'll get down in the winter. I'd love to see Ingleside again. You have a lovely home, Anne . . . and a lovely family."

"Ingleside *is* nice . . . and I do love it now. I once thought I would never love it. I hated it when we went there first . . . hated it for its very virtues. They were an insult to my dear House of Dreams. I remember saying piteously to Gilbert when we left it, 'We've been so happy here. We'll never be so happy anywhere else.' I revelled in a luxury of homesickness for a while. Then . . . I found little rootlets of affection for Ingleside beginning to sprout out. I fought against it . . . I really did . . . but at last I had to give in and admit I loved it. And I've loved it better every year since. It isn't too old a house . . . too old houses are sad. And it isn't too young . . . too young houses are crude. It's just mellow. I love every room in it. Every one has some fault but also

some virtue . . . something that distinguishes it from all the others . . . gives it a personality. I love all those magnificent trees on the lawn. I don't know who planted them but every time I go upstairs I stop on the landing . . . you know that quaint window on the landing with the broad deep seat . . . and sit there looking out for a moment and say, 'God bless the man who planted those trees whoever he was.' We've really too many trees about the house but we wouldn't give up one."

"That's just like Fred. He worships that big willow south of the house. It spoils the view from the parlour windows, as I've told him again and again, but he only says, 'Would you cut a lovely thing like that down even if it does shut out the view?' So the willow stays . . . and it *is* lovely. That's why we've called our place Lone Willow Farm. I love the name Ingleside. It's such a nice, homey name."

"That's what Gilbert said. We had quite a time deciding on a name. We tried out several but they didn't seem to *belong.* But when we thought of Ingleside we knew it was the right one. I'm glad we have a nice big roomy house . . . we need it with our family. The children love it, too, small as they are."

"They're such darlings." Diana slyly cut herself another "sliver" of the chocolate cake. "I think my own are pretty nice . . . but there's really something about yours . . . and your twins! *That* I do envy you. I've always wanted twins."

"Oh, I couldn't get away from twins . . . they're my destiny. But I'm disappointed mine don't look alike . . . not one bit alike. Nan's pretty, though, with her brown hair and eyes and her lovely complexion. Di is her father's favourite,

because she has green eyes and red hair . . . red hair with a swirl to it. Shirley is the apple of Susan's eye . . . I was ill so long after he was born and she looked after him till I really believe she thinks he is her own. She calls him her 'little brown boy' and spoils him shamefully."

"And he's still so small you can creep in to find if he has kicked off the clothes and tuck him in again," said Diana enviously. "Jack's nine, you know, and he doesn't want me to do that now. He says he's too big. And I loved so to do it! Oh, I wish children didn't grow up so soon."

"None of mine have got to that stage yet . . . though I've noticed that since Jem began to go to school he doesn't want to hold my hand any more when we walk through the village," said Anne with a sigh. "But he and Walter and Shirley all want me to tuck them in yet. Walter sometimes makes quite a ritual of it."

"And you don't have to worry yet over what they're going to be. Now, Jack is crazy to be a soldier when he grows up . . . a soldier! Just fancy!"

"I wouldn't worry over that. He'll forget about it when another fancy seizes him. War is a thing of the past. Jem imagines he is going to be a sailor . . . like Captain Jim . . . and Walter is by way of being a poet. He isn't like any of the others. But they all love trees and they all love playing in 'the Hollow,' as it's called--a little valley just below Ingleside with fairy paths and a brook. A very ordinary place . . . just 'the Hollow' to others but to them fairyland. They've all got their faults . . . but they're not such a bad little gang . . . and luckily there's always enough love to go round. Oh, I'm glad to think that this time tomorrow night I'll be back at

Ingleside, telling my babies stories at bedtime and giving Susan's calceolarias and ferns their meed of praise. Susan has 'luck' with ferns. No one can grow them like her. I can praise her ferns honestly . . . but the calceolarias, Diana! They don't look like flowers to me at all. But I never hurt Susan's feeling by telling her so. I always get around it somehow. Providence has never failed yet. Susan is such a duck . . . I can't imagine what I'd do without her. And I remember once calling her 'an outsider.' Yes, it's lovely to think of going home and yet I'm sad to leave Green Gables, too. It's so beautiful here . . . with Marilla . . . and *you.* Our friendship has always been a very lovely thing, Diana."

"Yes . . . and we've always . . . I mean . . . I never could say things like you, Anne . . . but we *have* kept our old 'solemn vow and promise,' haven't we?"

"Always . . . and always will."

Anne's hand found its way into Diana's. They sat for a long time in a silence too sweet for words. Long, still evening shadows fell over the grasses and the flowers and the green reaches of the meadows beyond. The sun went down . . . grey-pink shades of sky deepened and paled behind the pensive trees . . . the spring twilight took possession of Hester Gray's garden where nobody ever walked now. Robins were sprinkling the evening air with flute-like whistles. A great star came out over the white cherry trees.

"The first star is always a miracle," said Anne dreamily.

"I could sit here forever," said Diana. "I hate the thought of leaving it."

"So do I . . . but after all we've only been pretending to be fifteen. We've got to remember our family cares. How those lilacs smell! Has it ever occurred to you, Diana, that there is something not quite . . . chaste . . . in the scent of lilac blossoms? Gilbert laughs at such a notion . . . he loves them . . . but to me they always seem to be remembering some secret, *too*-sweet thing."

"They're too heavy for the house, I always think," said Diana. She picked up the plate which held the remainder of the chocolate cake . . . looked at it longingly . . . shook her head and packed it in the basket with an expression of great nobility and self-denial on her face.

"Wouldn't it be fun, Diana, if now, as we went home, we were to meet our old selves running along Lover's Lane?"

Diana gave a little shiver.

"No-o-o, I don't think that would be funny, Anne. I hadn't noticed it was getting so dark. It's all right to fancy things in daylight, but . . ."

They went quietly, silently, lovingly home together, with the sunset glory burning on the old hills behind them and their old unforgotten love burning in their hearts.

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Anne ended a week that had been full of pleasant days by taking flowers to Matthew's grave the next morning and in the afternoon she took the train from Carmody home. For a time she thought of all the old loved things behind her and then her thoughts ran ahead of her to the loved things before her. Her heart sang all the way because she was going home to a joyous house . . . a house where every one who crossed its threshold knew it was a *home . . .* a house that was filled all the time with laughter and silver mugs and snapshots and babies . . . precious things with curls and chubby knees . . . and rooms that would welcome her . . . where the chairs waited patiently and the dresses in her closet were expecting her . . . where little anniversaries were always being celebrated and little secrets were always being whispered.

"It's lovely to feel you like going home," thought Anne, fishing out of her purse a certain letter from a small son over which she had laughed gaily the night before, reading it proudly to the Green Gables folks . . . the first letter she had ever received from any of her children. It was quite a nice little letter for a seven-year-old who had been going to school only a year to write, even though Jem's spelling was a bit uncertain and there was a big blob of ink in one corner.

"Di cryed and cryed all night because Tommy Drew told her he was going to burn her doll at the steak. Susan tells us nice tails at night but she isn't you, mummy. She let me help her sow the beats last night."

"How could I have been happy for a whole week away from them all?" thought the chatelaine of Ingleside self-reproachfully.

"How nice to have someone meet you at the end of a journey!" she cried, as she stepped off the train at Glen St. Mary into Gilbert's waiting arms. She could never be sure Gilbert would meet her . . . somebody was always dying or being born . . . but no homecoming ever seemed just right to Anne unless he did. And he had on such a nice new light-grey suit! *(How glad I am I put on this frilly eggshell blouse with my brown suit, even if Mrs. Lynde thought I was crazy to wear it travelling. If I hadn't I wouldn't have looked so nice for Gilbert.)*

Ingleside was all lighted up, with gay Japanese lanterns hanging on the veranda. Anne ran gaily along the walk bordered by daffodils.

"Ingleside, I'm here!" she called.

They were all around her . . . laughing, exclaiming, jesting . . . with Susan Baker smiling properly in the background. Everyone of the children had a bouquet picked specially for her, even the two-year-old Shirley.

"Oh, this *is* a nice welcome home! Everything about Ingleside looks so happy. It's splendid to think my family are so glad to see me."

"If you ever go away from home again, Mummy," said Jem solemnly, "I'll go and take appensitis."

"How do you go about taking it?" asked Walter.

"S-s-sh!" Jem nudged Walter secretly and whispered, "There's a pain somewhere, I know . . . but I just want to scare Mummy so she *won't* go away."

Anne wanted to do a hundred things first . . . hug everybody . . . run out in the twilight and gather some of her pansies . . . you found pansies everywhere at Ingleside . . . pick up the little well-worn doll lying on the rug . . . hear all the juicy tidbits of gossip and news, everyone contributing something. How Nan had got the top off a tube of vaseline up her nose when the doctor was out on a case and Susan had all but gone distracted . . . "I assure you it was an anxious time, Mrs. Dr. dear" . . . how Mrs. Jud Palmer's cow had eaten fifty-seven wire nails and had to have a vet from Charlottetown . . . how absent-minded Mrs. Fenner Douglas had gone to church *bare-headed .* . . how Dad had dug all the dandelions out of the lawn . . . "between babies, Mrs. Dr. dear . . . he's had eight while you were away" . . . how Mr. Tom Flagg had dyed his moustache . . . "and his wife only dead two years" . . . how Rose Maxwell of the Harbour Head had jilted Jim Hudson of the Upper Glen and he had sent her a bill for all he had spent on her . . . what a splendid turn-out there had been at Mrs. Amasa Warren's funeral . . . how Carter Flagg's cat had had a piece bitten right out of the root of its tail . . . how Shirley had been found in a stable standing right under one of the horses . . . "Mrs. Dr. dear, never shall I be the same woman again" . . . how there was sadly too much reason to fear that the blue plum trees were developing black knot . . . how Di had gone about the whole day singing, "Mummy's coming home today, home today, home today" to the tune of "Merrily We Roll Along" . . . how the Joe Reeses had a kitten that was cross-eyed because it had been born with its eyes open . . . how Jem had inadvertently sat on some fly-paper before he had put his

little trousers on . . . and how the Shrimp had fallen into the soft-water puncheon.

"He was nearly drowned, Mrs. Dr. dear, but luckily the doctor heard his howls in the nick of time and pulled him out by his hind-legs." (What is the nick of time, Mummy?)

"He seems to have recovered nicely from it," said Anne, stroking the glossy black-and-white curves of a contented pussy with huge jowls, purring on a chair in the firelight. It was never quite safe to sit down on a chair at Ingleside without first making sure there wasn't a cat in it. Susan, who had not cared much for cats to begin with, vowed she had to learn to like them in self-defense. As for the Shrimp, Gilbert had called him that a year ago when Nan had brought the miserable, scrawny kitten home from the village where some boys had been torturing it, and the name clung, though it was very inappropriate now.

"But . . . Susan! What has become of Gog and Magog? Oh . . . they haven't been broken, have they?"

"No, no, Mrs. Dr. dear," exclaimed Susan, turning a deep brick-red from shame and dashing out of the room. She returned shortly with the two china dogs which always presided at the hearth of Ingleside. "I do not see how I could have forgotten to put them back before you came. You see, Mrs. Dr. dear, Mrs. Charles Day from Charlottetown called here the day after you left . . . and you know how very precise and proper she is. Walter thought he ought to entertain her and he started in by pointing out the dogs to her. 'This one is God and this is My God,' he said, poor innocent child. I was horrified . . . though I thought that die I would to see Mrs. Day's face. I explained as best I could, for

I did not want her to think us a profane family, but I decided I would just put the dogs away in the china closet, out of sight, till you got back."

"Mummy, can't we have supper soon?" said Jem pathetically. "I've got a gnawful feeling in the pit of my stomach. And oh, Mummy, we've made everybody's favourite dish!"

"We, as the flea said to the elephant, have done that very thing," said Susan with a grin. "We thought that your return should be suitably celebrated, Mrs. Dr. dear. And now where is Walter? It is his week to ring the gong for meals, bless his heart."

Supper was a gala meal . . . and putting all the babies to bed afterwards was a delight. Susan even allowed her to put Shirley to bed, seeing what a very special occasion it was.

"This is no common day, Mrs. Dr. dear," she said solemnly.

"Oh, Susan, there is no such thing as a common day. *Every* day has something about it no other day has. Haven't you noticed?"

"How true that is, Mrs. Dr. dear. Even last Friday now, when it rained all day, and was so dull, my big pink geranium showed buds at last after refusing to bloom for three long years. And have you noticed the calceolarias, Mrs. Dr. dear?"

"Noticed them! I never saw such calceolarias in my life, Susan. How *do* you manage it?" *(There, I've made Susan happy and haven't told a fib. I never did see such calceolarias . . . thank heaven!)*

"It is the result of constant care and attention, Mrs. Dr. dear. But there is something I think I ought to speak of. I think Walter *suspects something.* No doubt some of the Glen children have said things to him. So many children nowadays know so much more than is fitting. Walter said to me the other day, very thoughtful-like, 'Susan,' he said, 'are babies *very* expensive?' I was a bit dumfounded, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I kept my head. 'Some folks think they are luxuries,' I said, 'but at Ingleside we think they are necessities.' And I reproached myself with having complained aloud about the shameful price of things in all the Glen stores. I am afraid it worried the child. But if he says anything to you, Mrs. Dr. dear, you will be prepared."

"I'm sure you handled the situation beautifully, Susan," said Anne gravely. "And I think it is time they all knew what we are hoping for."

But the best of all was when Gilbert came to her, as she stood at her window, watching a fog creeping in from the sea, over the moonlit dunes and the harbour, right into the long narrow valley upon which Ingleside looked down and in which nestled the village of Glen St. Mary.

"To come back at the end of a hard day and find you! Are you happy, Annest of Annes?"

"Happy!" Anne bent to sniff a vaseful of apple blossoms Jem had set on her dressing-table. She felt surrounded and encompassed by love. "Gilbert dear, it's been lovely to be Anne of Green Gables again for a week, but it's a hundred times lovelier to come back and be Anne of Ingleside."

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"Absolutely not," said Dr. Blythe, in a tone Jem understood.

Jem knew there was no hope of Dad's changing his mind or that Mother would try to change it for him. It was plain to be seen that on this point Mother and Dad were as one. Jem's hazel eyes darkened with anger and disappointment as he looked at his cruel parents . . . *glared* at them . . . all the more glaringly that they were so maddeningly indifferent to his glares and went on eating their supper as if nothing at all were wrong and out of joint. Of course Aunt Mary Maria noticed his glares . . . nothing ever escaped Aunt Mary Maria's mournful, pale-blue eyes . . . but she only seemed amused at them.

Bertie Shakespeare Drew had been up playing with Jem all the afternoon . . . Walter having gone down to the old House of Dreams to play with Kenneth and Persis Ford . . . and Bertie Shakespeare had told Jem that all the Glen boys were going down to the Harbour Mouth that evening to see Captain Bill Taylor tatoo a snake on his cousin Joe Drew's arm. He, Bertie Shakespeare, was going and wouldn't Jem come too? It would be such fun. Jem was at once crazy to go; and now he had been told that it was utterly out of the question.

"For one reason among many," said Dad, "it's much too far for you to go down to the Harbour Mouth with those boys. They won't get back till late and your bedtime is supposed to be at eight, son."

"*I* was sent to bed at seven every night of my life when I was a child," said Aunt Mary Maria.

"You must wait till you are older, Jem, before you go so far away in the evenings," said Mother.

"You said that last week," cried Jem indignantly, "and I *am* older now. You'd think I was a baby! Bertie's going and I'm just as old as him."

"There's measles around," said Aunt Mary Maria darkly. "You might catch measles, James."

Jem hated to be called James. And she always did it.

"I *want* to catch measles," he muttered rebelliously. Then, catching Dad's eye instead, subsided. Dad would never let anyone "talk back" to Aunt Mary Maria. Jem hated Aunt Mary Maria. Aunt Diana and Aunt Marilla were such ducks of aunts but an aunt like Aunt Mary Maria was something wholly new in Jem's experience.

"All right," he said defiantly, looking at Mother so that nobody could suppose he was talking to Aunt Mary Maria, "if you don't *want* to love me you don't *have* to. But will you like it if I just go away 'n' shoot tigers in Africa?"

"There are no tigers in Africa, dear," said Mother gently.

"Lions, then!" shouted Jem. They were determined to put him in the wrong, were they? They were bound to laugh at him, were they? He'd show them! "You can't say there's no lions in Africa. There's *millions* of lions in Africa. Africa's just *full* of lions!"

Mother and Father only smiled again, much to Aunt Mary Maria's disapproval. Impatience in children should never be condoned.

"Meanwhile," said Susan, torn between her love for and sympathy with Little Jem and her conviction that Dr. and Mrs. Dr. were perfectly right in refusing to let him go away down to the Harbour Mouth with that village gang to that disreputable, drunken old Captain Bill Taylor's place, "here is your gingerbread and whipped cream, Jem dear."

Gingerbread and whipped cream was Jem's favourite dessert. But tonight it had no charm to soothe his stormy soul.

"I don't want any!" he said sulkily. He got up and marched away from the table, turning at the door to hurl a final defiance.

"I ain't going to bed till nine o'clock, anyhow. And when I'm grown up I'm *never* going to bed. I'm going to stay up all night . . . every night . . . and get tattooed *all over.* I'm just going to be as bad as bad can be. You'll see."

"'I'm not' would be so much better than 'ain't,' dear," said Mother.

Could *nothing* make them feel?

"I suppose nobody wants *my* opinion, Annie, but if I had talked to my parents like that when I was a child I would have been whipped within an inch of my life," said Aunt Mary Maria. "I think it is a great pity the birch rod is so neglected now in some homes."

"Little Jem is not to blame," snapped Susan, seeing that Dr. and Mrs. Dr. were not going to say anything. But if Mary Maria Blythe was going to get away with that, she, Susan would know the reason why. "Bertie Shakespeare Drew put him up to it, filling him up with what fun it would be to see Joe Drew tatooed. He was here all the afternoon and