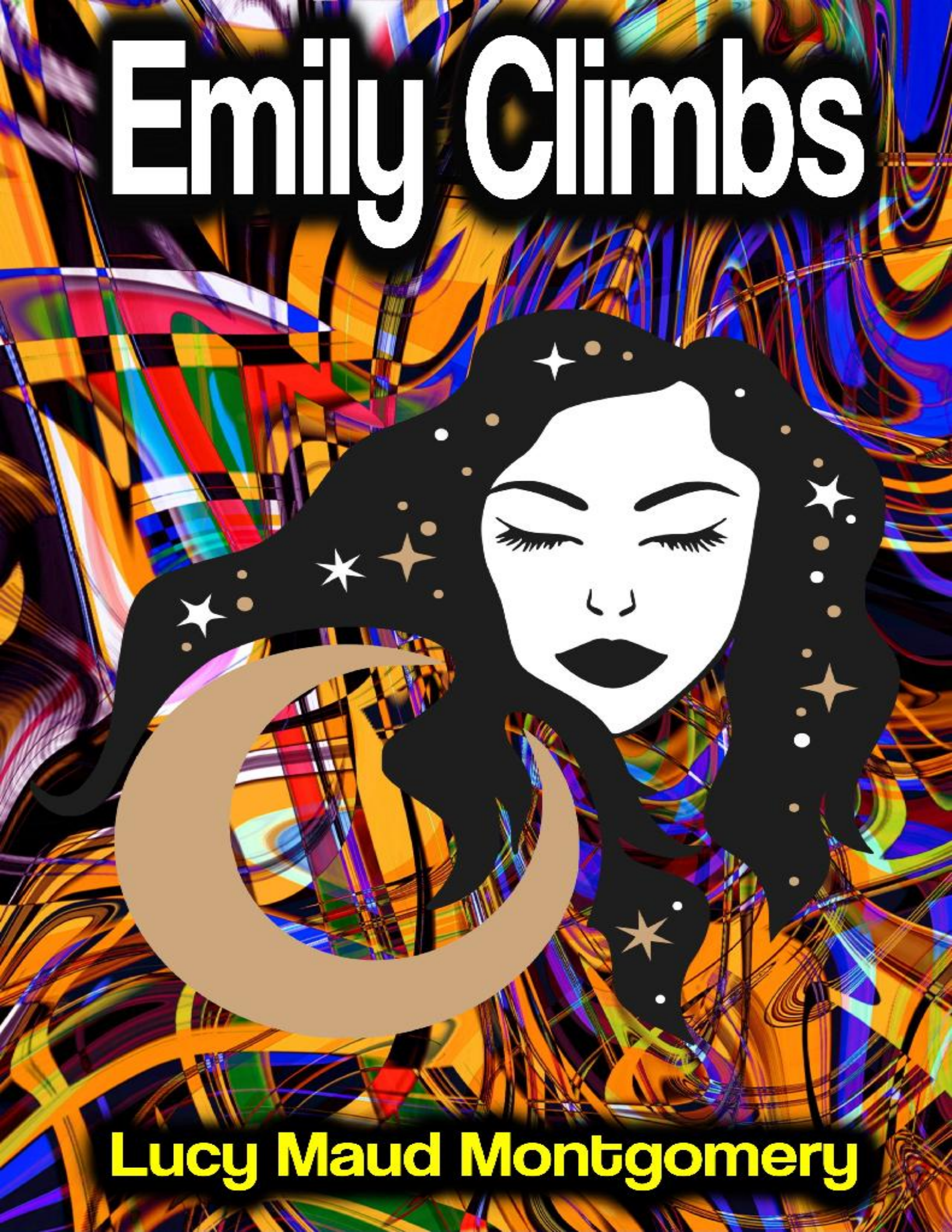
Emily Climbs



Lucy Maud Montgomery

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Chapter

1 Writing Herself Out

Emily Byrd Starr was alone in her room, in the old New Moon farmhouse at Blair Water, one stormy night in a February of the olden years before the world turned upside down. She was at that moment as perfectly happy as any human being is ever permitted to be. Aunt Elizabeth, in consideration of the coldness of the night, had allowed her to have a fire in her little fireplace—a rare favour. It was burning brightly and showering a red-golden light over the small, immaculate room, with its old-time furniture and deep-set, wide-silled windows, to whose frosted, blue-white panes the snowflakes clung in little wreaths. It lent depth and mystery to the mirror on the wall which reflected Emily as she sat coiled on the ottoman before the fire, writing, by the light of two tall, white candles—which were the only approved means of illumination at New Moon—in a brand-new, glossy, black "Jimmy-book" which Cousin Jimmy had given her that day. Emily had been very glad to get it, for she had filled the one he had given her the preceding autumn, and for over a week she had suffered acute pangs of suppression because she could not write in a nonexistent "diary."

Her diary had become a dominant factor in her young, vivid life. It had taken the place of certain "letters" she had written in her childhood to her dead father, in which she had been wont to "write out" her problems and worries—for even in the magic years when one is almost fourteen one has problems and worries, especially when one is under the strict and well-meant but not over-tender governance of an Aunt Elizabeth Murray. Sometimes Emily felt that if it were not for her diary she would have flown into little bits by reason of consuming her own smoke. The fat, black "Jimmy-book" seemed to her like a personal friend and a safe confidant for certain matters which burned for expression and yet were too combustible to be trusted to the ears of any living being. Now blank books of any sort were not easy to come by at New Moon, and if it had not been for Cousin Jimmy, Emily might never have had one. Certainly Aunt Elizabeth would not give her one—Aunt Elizabeth thought Emily wasted far too much time "over her scribbling nonsense" as it was—and Aunt Laura did not dare to go contrary to Aunt Elizabeth in this—more by token that Laura herself really thought Emily might be better employed. Aunt Laura was a jewel of a woman, but certain things were holden from her eyes.

Now Cousin Jimmy was never in the least frightened of Aunt Elizabeth, and when the notion occurred to him that Emily probably wanted another "blank book," that blank book materialized straightway, in

defiance of Aunt Elizabeth's scornful glances. He had gone to Shrewsbury that very day, in the teeth of the rising storm, for no other reason than to get it. So Emily was happy, in her subtle and friendly firelight, while the wind howled and shrieked through the great old trees to the north of New Moon, sent huge, spectral wreaths of snow whirling across Cousin Jimmy's famous garden, drifted the sundial completely over, and whistled eerily through the Three Princesses—as Emily always called the three tall Lombardies in the corner of the garden.

"I love a storm like this at night when I don't have to go out in it," wrote Emily. "Cousin Jimmy and I had a splendid evening planning out our garden and choosing our seeds and plants in the catalogue. Just where the biggest drift is making, behind the summer-house, we are going to have a bed of pink asters, and we are going to give the Golden Ones—who are dreaming under four feet of snow—a background of flowering almond. I love to plan out summer days like this, in the midst of a storm. It makes me feel as if I were winning a victory over something ever so much bigger than myself, just because *I* have a brain and the storm is nothing but blind, white force—terrible, but blind. I have the same feeling when I sit here cosily by my own dear fire, and hear it raging all around me, and *laugh* at it. And *that* is just because over a hundred years ago great-great-grandfather Murray built this house and built it well. I wonder if, a hundred years from now, anybody will win a victory over anything because of something *I* left or did. It is an *inspiring thought.*

"I drew that line of italics before I thought. Mr. Carpenter says I use far too many italics. He says it is an Early Victorian obsession, and I must strive to cast it off. I concluded I would when I looked in the dictionary, for it is evidently not a nice thing to be obsessed, though it doesn't seem quite so bad as to be *possessed.* There I go again: but I think the italics are all right this time.

"I read the dictionary for a whole hour—till Aunt Elizabeth got suspicious and suggested that it would be much better for me to be knitting my ribbed stockings. She couldn't see exactly why it was wrong for me to be poring over the dictionary but she felt sure it must be because *she* never wants to do it. I *love* reading the dictionary. (Yes, those italics are *necessary,* Mr. Carpenter. An ordinary 'love' wouldn't express my feeling at all!) Words are such *fas*cinating things. (I caught myself at the first syllable that time!) The very sound of some of them —'haunted'—'mystic'—for example, gives me *the flash.* (Oh, dear! But I *have* to italicize *the flash. It* isn't ordinary—it's the most extraordinary and wonderful thing in my whole life. When it comes I feel as if a door had swung open in a wall before me and given me a glimpse of—yes, of *heaven. More italics!* Oh, I see why Mr, Carpenter scolds! I *must* break myself of the habit.)

"Big words are never beautiful —'incriminating'—'obstreperous'—'international'—'unconstitutional.' They make me think of those horrible big dahlias and chrysanthemums Cousin Jimmy took me to see at the exhibition in Charlottetown last fall. We couldn't see anything lovely in them, though some people thought them wonderful. Cousin Jimmy's little yellow 'mums, like pale, fairy-like stars shining against the fir copse in the north-west corner of the garden, were ten times more beautiful. But I am wandering from my subject—also a bad habit of mine, according to Mr. Carpenter. He says I *must* (the italics are his this time!) learn to concentrate—another big word and a very ugly one.

"But I had a good time over that dictionary—much better than I had over the ribbed stockings. I wish I could have a pair—just one pair—of silk stockings. Ilse has three. Her father gives her everything she wants, now that he has learned to love her. But Aunt Elizabeth says silk stockings are *immoral*. I wonder why—any more than silk dresses.

"Speaking of silk dresses, Aunt Janey Milburn, at Derry Pond—she isn't any relation really, but everybody calls her that—has made a vow that she will never wear a silk dress until the whole heathen world is converted to Christianity. That is very fine. I wish *I* could be as good as that, but I couldn't—I love silk too much. It is so rich and sheeny. I would like to dress in it all the time, and if I could afford to I would—though I suppose every time I thought of dear old Aunt Janey and the unconverted heathen I would feel conscience-stricken. However, it will be years, if ever, before I can afford to buy even one silk dress, and meanwhile I give some of my egg money every month to missions. (I have five hens of my own now, all descended from the gray pullet Perry gave me on my twelfth birthday.) If ever I can buy that one silk dress I know what it is going to be like. Not black or brown or navy blue—sensible, serviceable colours, such as New Moon Murrays always wear—oh, dear, no! It is to be of shot silk, blue in one light, silver in others, like a twilight sky, glimpsed through a frosted window-pane—with a bit of lace-foam here and there, like those little feathers of snow clinging to my window-pane. Teddy says he will paint me in it and call it 'The Ice Maiden,' and Aunt Laura smiles and says, sweetly and condescendingly, in a way I hate even in dear Aunt Laura,

"'What use would such a dress be to you, Emily?'

"It mightn't be of any use, but I would feel in it as if it were a part of me—that it *grew* on me and wasn't just bought and put on. I want *one* dress like that in my life-time. And a silk petticoat underneath it—and silk stockings!

"Ilse has a silk dress now—a bright pink one. Aunt Elizabeth says Dr. Burnley dresses Ilse far too old and rich for a child. But he wants to make up for all the years he didn't dress her at all. (I don't mean she went naked, but she might have as far as Dr. Burnley was concerned.

Other people had to see to her clothes.) He does everything she wants him to do now, and gives her her own way in everything. Aunt Elizabeth says it is very bad for her, but there are times when I envy Ilse a little. I know it is wicked, but I cannot help it.

"Dr. Burnley is going to send Ilse to Shrewsbury High School next fall, and after that to Montreal to study elocution. That is why I envy her—not because of the silk dress. I wish Aunt Elizabeth would let me go to Shrewsbury, but I fear she never will. She feels she can't trust me out of her sight because my mother eloped. But she need not be afraid I will ever elope. I have made up my mind that I will never marry. I shall be *wedded to my art.*

"Teddy wants to go to Shrewsbury next fall, but his mother won't let him go, either. Not that she is afraid of his eloping, but because she loves him so much she can't part with him. Teddy wants to be an artist, and Mr. Carpenter says he has genius and should have his chance, but everybody is afraid to say anything to Mrs. Kent. She is a little bit of a woman—no taller than I am, really, quiet and shy—and yet every one is afraid of her. *I* am—dreadfully afraid. I've always known she didn't like me—ever since those days long ago when Ilse and I first went up to the Tansy Patch, to play with Teddy. But now she hates me—I feel sure of it—just because Teddy likes me. She can't bear to have him like anybody or anything but her. She is even jealous of his pictures. So there is not much chance of his getting to Shrewsbury. Perry is going. He hasn't a cent, but he is going to work his way through. That is why he thinks he will go to Shrewsbury in place of Queen's Academy. He thinks it will be easier to get work to do in Shrewsbury, and board is cheaper there.

"'My old beast of an Aunt Tom has a little money,' he told me, 'but she won't give me any of it—unless—unless—'

"Then he looked at me *significantly.*

"I blushed because I couldn't help it, and then I was furious with myself for blushing, and with Perry—because he referred to something I didn't want to hear about—that time ever so long ago when his Aunt Tom met me in Lofty John's bush and nearly frightened me to death by demanding that I promise to *marry Perry when we grew up,* in which case she would educate him. I never told anybody about it—being ashamed—except Ilse, and she said,

"'The idea of old Aunt Tom aspiring to a Murray for Perry!'

"But then, Ilse is awfully hard on Perry and quarrels with him half the time, over things *I* only smile at. Perry never likes to be outdone by anyone in anything. When we were at Amy Moore's party last week, her uncle told us a story of some remarkable freak calf he had seen, with three legs, and Perry said,

"'Oh, *that's* nothing to a duck I saw once in Norway.'

"(Perry really was in Norway. He used to sail everywhere with his father when he was little. But I don't believe one word about that duck.

He wasn't *lying*—he was just *romancing.* Dear Mr. Carpenter, I *can't* get along without italics.)

"Perry's duck had four legs, according to him—two where a proper duck's legs should be, and two sprouting from its back. And when it got tired of walking on its ordinary pair it flopped over on its back and walked on the other pair!

"Perry told this yarn with a sober face, and everybody laughed, and Amy's uncle said, 'Go up head, Perry.' But Ilse was furious and wouldn't speak to him all the way home. She said he had made a fool of himself, trying to 'show off' with a silly story like that, and that *no gentleman* would act so.

"Perry said: 'I'm no gentleman, yet, only a hired boy, but some day, Miss Ilse, I'll be a finer gentleman than anyone *you* know.'

"'Gentlemen,' said Ilse in a nasty voice, 'have to be *born.* They can't be *made,* you know.'

"Ilse has almost given up calling names, as she used to do when she quarrelled with Perry or me, and taken to saying cruel, cutting things. They hurt far worse than the names used to, but I don't really mind them—much—or long—because I know Ilse doesn't mean them and really loves me as much as I love her. But Perry says they stick in his crop. They didn't speak to each other the rest of the way home, but next day Ilse was at him again about using bad grammar and not standing up when a lady enters the room.

"'Of course you couldn't be expected to know *that,'* she said in her nastiest voice, 'but I am sure Mr. Carpenter has done his best to teach you grammar.'

"Perry didn't say one word to Ilse, but he turned to me.

"'Will *you* tell me my faults?' he said. 'I don't mind *you* doing it—it will be *you* that will have to put up with me when we're grown up, not Ilse.'

"He said that to make Ilse angry, but it made me angrier still, for it was an allusion to a *forbidden topic.* So we neither of us spoke to him for two days and he said it was a good rest from Ilse's slams anyway.

"Perry is not the only one who gets into disgrace at New Moon. I said something silly yesterday evening which makes me blush to recall it. The Ladies' Aid met here and Aunt Elizabeth gave them a supper and the husbands of the Aid came to it. Ilse and I waited on the table, which was set in the kitchen because the dining-room table wasn't long enough. It was exciting at first and then, when every one was served, it was a little dull and I began to compose some poetry in my mind as I stood by the window looking out on the garden. It was so interesting that I soon forgot everything else until suddenly I heard Aunt Elizabeth say, 'Emily,' very sharply, and then she looked significantly at Mr. Johnson, our new minister. I was confused and I snatched up the teapot and exclaimed,

"'Oh, Mr. *Cup,* will you have your *Johnson* filled?'

"Everybody roared and Aunt Elizabeth looked disgusted and Aunt Laura ashamed, and I felt as if I would sink through the floor. I couldn't sleep half the night for thinking over it. The strange thing was that I do believe I felt worse and more ashamed than I would have felt if I had done something really wrong. This is the 'Murray pride' of course, and I suppose it is very wicked. Sometimes I am afraid Aunt Ruth Dutton is right in her opinion of me after all.

"No, she isn't!

"But it is a tradition of New Moon that its women should be equal to any situation and always be graceful and dignified. Now, there was nothing graceful or dignified in asking such a question of the new minister. I am sure he will never see me again without thinking of it and I will always writhe when I catch his eye upon me.

"But now that I have written it out in my diary I don't feel so badly over it. *Nothing* ever seems as big or as terrible—oh, nor as beautiful and grand, either, alas!—when it is written out, as it does when you are thinking or feeling about it. It seems to *shrink*directly you put it into words. Even the line of poetry I had made just before I asked that absurd question won't seem half as fine when I write it down:

"Where the velvet feet of darkness softly go.

"It *doesn't.* Some bloom seems gone from it. And yet, while I was standing there, behind all those chattering, eating people, and *saw* darkness stealing so softly over the garden and the hills, like a beautiful woman robed in shadows, with stars for eyes, the*flash* came and I forgot everything but that I wanted to put something of the beauty I felt into the words of my poem. When that line came into my mind it didn't seem to me that *I* composed it at all—it seemed as if *Something Else* were trying to speak through me—and it was that *Something Else* that made the line seem wonderful—and now when it is gone the words seem flat and foolish and the picture I tried to draw in them not so wonderful after all.

"Oh, if I could only put things into words as I *see* them! Mr. Carpenter says, 'Strive—strive—keep on—words are your medium—make them your slaves—until they will say for you what you want them to say.' That is true—and I do try—but it seems to me there is something *beyond* words—any words—all words—something that always escapes you when you try to grasp it—and yet leaves something in your hand which you wouldn't have had if you hadn't reached for it.

"I remember one day last fall when Dean and I walked over the Delectable Mountain to the woods beyond it—fir woods mostly, but with one corner of splendid old pines. We sat under them and Dean read *Peveril of the Peak* and some of Scott's poems to me; and then he looked up into the big, plumy boughs and said,

"'The gods are talking in the pines—gods of the old northland—of the viking sagas. Star, do you know Emerson's lines?'

"And then he quoted them—I've remembered and loved them ever since.

"The gods talk in the breath of the wold,
They talk in the shaken pine,
And they fill the reach of the old seashore
With dialogue divine;
And the poet who overhears
One random word they say
Is the fated man of men
Whom the ages must obey.

"Oh, that 'random word'—that is the *Something* that escapes me. I'm always listening for it—I know I can never hear it—my ear isn't attuned to it—but I am sure I hear at times a little, faint, far-off echo of it—and it makes me feel a delight that is like pain and a despair of ever being able to translate its beauty into any words I know.

"Still, it *is* a pity I made such a goose of myself immediately after that wonderful experience.

"If I had just floated up behind Mr. Johnson, as velvet-footedly as darkness herself, and poured his tea gracefully from Great-grandmother Murray's silver teapot, like my shadow-woman pouring night into the white cup of Blair Valley, Aunt Elizabeth would be far better pleased with me than if I could write the most wonderful poem in the world.

"Cousin Jimmy is so different. I recited my poem to him this evening after we had finished with the catalogue and he thought it was beautiful. *(He* couldn't know how far it fell short of what I had seen in my mind.) Cousin Jimmy composes poetry himself. He is very clever in spots. And in other spots, where his brain was hurt when Aunt Elizabeth pushed him into our New Moon well, he isn't *anything.* There's just *blankness* there. So people call him simple, and Aunt Ruth dares to say he hasn't sense enough to shoo a cat from cream. And yet if you put all his clever spots together there isn't anybody in Blair Water has half as much real cleverness as he has—not even Mr. Carpenter. The trouble is you can't put his clever spots together—there are always those gaps between. But I love Cousin Jimmy and I'm never in the least afraid of him when his queer spells come on him. Everybody else is—even Aunt Elizabeth, though perhaps it is remorse with her, instead of fear—except Perry. Perry always brags that he is never afraid of anything—doesn't know what fear is. I think that is very wonderful. I wish I could be so fearless. Mr. Carpenter says fear is a vile thing, and is at the bottom of almost every wrong and hatred of the world.

"'Cast it out, Jade,' he says—'cast it out of your heart. Fear is a confession of weakness. What you fear is stronger than you, or you think it is, else you wouldn't be afraid of it. Remember your Emerson—"always do what you are afraid to do."'

"But that is a counsel of perfection, as Dean says, and I don't believe I'll ever be able to attain to it. To be honest, I am afraid of a good many *things,* but there are only two people in the world I'm truly afraid of. One is Mrs. Kent, and the other is Mad Mr. Morrison. I'm terribly afraid of him and I think almost every one is. His home is in Derry Pond, but he hardly ever stays there—he roams over the country looking for his lost bride. He was married only a few weeks when his young wife died, many years ago, and he has never been right in his mind since. He insists she is not dead, only lost, and that he will find her some time. He has grown old and bent, looking for her, but to him she is still young and fair.

"He was here one day last summer, but would not come in—just peered into the kitchen wistfully and said, 'Is Annie here?' He was quite gentle that day, but sometimes he is very wild and violent. He declares he always hears Annie calling to him—that her voice flits on before him—always before him, like my random word. His face is wrinkled and shrivelled and he looks like an old, old monkey. But the thing I hate most about him is his right hand—it is a deep blood-red all over—birth-marked. I can't tell why, but that hand fills me with horror. I could not bear to touch it. And sometimes he laughs to himself very horribly. The only living thing he seems to care for is his old black dog that always is with him. They say he will never ask for a bite of food for himself. If people do not offer it to him he goes hungry, but he will beg for his dog.

"Oh, I am terribly afraid of him, and I was so glad he didn't come into the house that day. Aunt Elizabeth looked after him, as he went away with his long, gray hair streaming in the wind, and said,

"'Fairfax Morrison was once a fine, clever, young man, with excellent prospects. Well, God's ways are very mysterious.'

"'That is why they are interesting,' I said.

"But Aunt Elizabeth frowned and told me not to be irreverent, as she always does when I say anything about God. I wonder why. She won't let Perry and me talk about Him, either, though Perry is really very much interested in Him and wants to find out all about Him. Aunt Elizabeth overheard me telling Perry one Sunday afternoon what I thought God was like, and she said it was scandalous.

"It wasn't! The trouble is, Aunt Elizabeth and I have different Gods, that is all. Everybody has a different God, I think. Aunt Ruth's, for instance, is one that punishes her enemies—sends 'judgments' on them. That seems to me to be about all the use He really is to her. Jim Cosgrain uses his to swear by. But Aunt Janey Milburn walks in the light of her God's countenance, every day, and shines with it.

"I have written myself out for to-night, and am going to bed. I know I have 'wasted words' in this diary—another of my literary faults, according to Mr. Carpenter.

"'You waste words, Jade—you spill them about too lavishly. Economy and restraint—that's what you need.

"He's right, of course, and in my essays and stories I try to practise what he preaches. But in my diary, which nobody sees but myself, or ever will see until after I'm dead, I like just to let myself go."

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Emily looked at her candle—it, too, was almost burned out. She knew she could not have another that night—Aunt Elizabeth's rules were as those of Mede and Persian: she put away her diary in the little right-hand cupboard above the mantel, covered her dying fire, undressed and blew out her candle. The room slowly filled with the faint, ghostly snow-light of a night when a full moon is behind the driving storm-clouds. And just as Emily was ready to slip into her high black bedstead a sudden inspiration came—a splendid new idea for a story. For a minute she shivered reluctantly: the room was getting cold. But the idea would not be denied. Emily slipped her hand between the feather tick of her bed and the chaff mattress and produced a half-burned candle, secreted there for just such an emergency.

It was not, of course, a proper thing to do. But then I have never pretended, nor ever will pretend, that Emily was a proper child. Books are not written about proper children. They would be so dull nobody would read them.

She lighted her candle, put on her stockings and a heavy coat, got out another half-filled Jimmy-book, and began to write by the single, uncertain candle which made a pale oasis of light in the shadows of the room. In that oasis Emily wrote, her black head bent over her book, as the hours of night crept away and the other occupants of New Moon slumbered soundly; she grew chill and cramped, but she was quite unconscious of it. Her eyes burned—her cheeks glowed—words came like troops of obedient genii to the call of her pen. When at last her candle went out with a splutter and a hiss in its little pool of melted tallow, she came back to reality with a sigh and a shiver. It was two, by the clock, and she was very tired and very cold; but she had finished her story and it was the best she had ever written. She crept into her cold nest with a sense of completion and victory, born of the working out of her creative impulse, and fell asleep to the lullaby of the waning storm.

Chapter

2 Salad Days

This book is not going to be wholly, or even mainly, made up of extracts from Emily's diary; but, by way of linking up matters unimportant enough for a chapter in themselves, and yet necessary for a proper understanding of her personality and environment, I am going to include some more of them. Besides, when one has material ready to hand, why not use it? Emily's "diary," with all its youthful crudities and italics, really gives a better interpretation of her and of her imaginative and introspective mind, in that, her fourteenth spring, than any biographer, however sympathetic, could do. So let us take another peep into the yellowed pages of that old "Jimmy-book," written long ago in the "look-out" of New Moon.

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"February 15, 19—

"I have decided that I will write down, in this journal, every day, all my good deeds and all my bad ones. I got the idea out of a book, and it appeals to me. I mean to be as honest about it as I can. It will be easy, of course, to write down the good deeds, but not so easy to record the bad ones.

"I did only one bad thing to-day—only one thing I think bad, that is. I was impertinent to Aunt Elizabeth. She thought I took too long washing the dishes. I didn't suppose there was any hurry and I was composing a story called *The Secret of the Mill.*Aunt Elizabeth looked at me and then at the clock, and said in her most disagreeable way,

"'Is the snail your sister, Emily?'

"'No! Snails are no relation to *me*,' I said *haughtily.*

"It was not what I said, but the way I said it that was impertinent. *And I meant it to be.* I was very angry—sarcastic speeches always aggravate me. Afterwards I was very sorry that I had been in a temper—but I was sorry because it was *foolish* and*undignified,* not because it was *wicked.* So I suppose that was not true repentance.

"As for my good deeds, I did two to-day. I saved two little lives. Saucy Sal had caught a poor snowbird and I took it from her. It flew off quite briskly, and I am sure it felt wonderfully happy. Later on I went down to the cellar cupboard and found a mouse caught in a trap by its foot. The poor thing lay there, almost exhausted from struggling, with *such* a look in its black eyes. I *couldn't* endure it so I set it free, and it managed to get away quite smartly in spite of its foot. I do not feel *sure* about *this*deed. I know it was a good one from the mouse's point of view, but what about Aunt Elizabeth's?

"This evening Aunt Laura and Aunt Elizabeth read and burned a boxful of old letters. They read them aloud and commented on them, while I sat in a corner and knitted my stockings. The letters were very interesting and I learned a great deal about the Murrays I had never known before. I feel that it is quite wonderful to belong to a family like this. No wonder the Blair Water folks call us 'the Chosen People'—though *they* don't mean it as a compliment. I feel that I must live up to the traditions of my family.

"I had a long letter from Dean Priest to-day. He is spending the winter in Algiers. He says he is coming home in April and is going to take rooms with his sister, Mrs. Fred Evans, for the summer. I am so glad. It will be splendid to have him in Blair Water all summer. Nobody ever talks to me as Dean does. He is the nicest and most interesting old person I know. Aunt Elizabeth says he is selfish, as all the Priests are. But then she does not like the Priests. And she always calls him Jarback, which somehow sets my teeth on edge. One of Dean's shoulders *is* a little higher than the other, but that is not his fault. I told Aunt Elizabeth once that I wished she would not call my friend that, but she only said,

"'*I* did not nickname *your friend,* Emily. His own clan have always called him Jarback. The Priests are not noted for delicacy!"

"Teddy had a letter from Dean, too, and a book—*The Lives of Great Artists*—Michael Angelo, Raphael, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Titian. He says he dare not let his mother see him reading it—she would burn it. I am sure if Teddy could only have his chance he would be as great an artist as any of them.

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"February 18, 19—

"I had a lovely time with myself this evening, after school, walking on the brook road in Lofty John's bush. The sun was low and creamy and the snow so white and the shadows so slender and blue. I think there is nothing so beautiful as tree shadows. And when I came out into the garden my own shadow looked so funny—so long that it stretched right across the garden. I immediately made a poem of which two lines were,

"If we were as tall as our shadows
How tall our shadows would be.

"I think there is a good deal of *philosophy* in that.

"To-night I wrote a story and Aunt Elizabeth knew what I was doing and was very much annoyed. She scolded me for wasting time. But it *wasn't* wasted time. I *grew* in it—I know I did. And there was something about some of the sentences I liked. '*Iam afraid of the grey wood'*—that pleased me very much. And—'white and stately she walked the dark wood like a moonbeam.' I think that is rather fine. Yet Mr. Carpenter tells me that whenever I think a thing especially fine I am to cut it out.

But oh, I*can't* cut that out—not yet, at least. The strange part is that about three months after Mr. Carpenter tells me to cut a thing out I come round to his point of view and feel ashamed of it. Mr. Carpenter was quite merciless over my essay to-day. Nothing about it suited him.

"'Three *alas's* in one paragraph, Emily. One would have been too many in this year of grace!' *'More irresistible*—Emily, for heaven's sake, write English! That is unpardonable.'

"It *was,* too. I saw it for myself and I felt shame going all over me from head to foot like a red wave. Then, after Mr. Carpenter had blue-pencilled almost every sentence and sneered at all my fine phrases and found fault with most of my constructions and told me I was too fond of putting 'cleverisms' into everything I wrote, he flung my exercise book down, tore at his hair and said,

"'You write! Jade, get a spoon and learn to cook!'

"Then he strode off, muttering maledictions 'not loud but deep.' I picked up my poor essay and didn't feel very badly. I *can* cook already, and I have learned a thing or two about Mr. Carpenter. The better my essays are the more he rages over them. This one must have been quite good. But it makes him so angry and impatient to see where I might have made it *still better* and didn't—through carelessness or laziness or indifference—as he thinks. And he can't tolerate a person who *could* do better and doesn't. And he wouldn't bother with me at all if he didn't think I may amount to something by and by.

"Aunt Elizabeth does not approve of Mr. Johnson. She thinks his theology is not sound. He said in his sermon last Sunday that there was some good in Buddhism.

"'He will be saying that there is some good in Popery next,' said Aunt Elizabeth indignantly at the dinner-table.

"There *may* be some good in Buddhism. I must ask Dean about it when he comes home.

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"March 2, 19—

"We were all at a funeral to-day—old Mrs. Sarah Paul. I have always liked going to funerals. When I said that, Aunt Elizabeth looked shocked and Aunt Laura said, 'Oh, Emily *dear!'* I rather like to shock Aunt Elizabeth, but I never feel comfortable if I worry Aunt Laura—she's *such* a darling—so I explained—or tried to. It is sometimes very hard to explain things to Aunt Elizabeth.

"'Funerals are interesting,' I said. 'And humorous, too.'

"I think I only made matters worse by saying *that.* And yet Aunt Elizabeth knew as well as I did that it was funny to see some of those relatives of Mrs. Paul, who have fought with and hated her for years—she *wasn't* amiable, if she is dead!—sitting there, holding their handkerchiefs to their faces and pretending to cry. I knew quite well what each and every one was thinking in his heart. Jake Paul was

wondering if the old harridan had by any chance left him anything in her will—and Alice Paul, who knew*she* wouldn't get anything, was hoping Jake Paul wouldn't either. That would satisfy *her.* And Mrs. Charles Paul was wondering how soon it would be decent to do the house over the way she had always wanted it and Mrs. Paul *hadn't.* And Aunty Min was worrying for fear there wouldn't be enough baked meats for such a mob of fourth cousins that they'd never expected and didn't want, and Lisette Paul was counting the people and feeling vexed because there wasn't as large an attendance as there was at Mrs. Henry Lister's funeral last week. When I told Aunt Laura this, she said gravely,

"'All this may be true, Emily'—(she knew it was!)—'but somehow it doesn't seem quite right for so young a girl as you, to—to—to be able to see these things, in short.'

"However, I can't help seeing them. Darling Aunt Laura is always so sorry for people that she can't see their humorous side. But I saw other things too. I saw that little Zack Fritz, whom Mrs. Paul adopted and was very kind to, was almost broken-hearted, and I saw that Martha Paul was feeling sorry and ashamed to think of her bitter old quarrel with Mrs. Paul—and I saw that Mrs. Paul's face, that looked so discontented and thwarted in life, looked peaceful and majestic and even beautiful—as if Death had *satisfied* her at last.

"Yes, funerals *are* interesting.

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"March 5, 19—

"It is snowing a little to-night. I love to see the snow coming down in slanting lines against the dark trees.

"I *think* I did a good deed to-day. Jason Merrowby was here helping Cousin Jimmy saw wood—and I *saw him sneak into the pighouse, and take a swig from a whisky bottle.* But I did not say one word about it to anyone—that is my good deed.

"Perhaps I *ought* to tell Aunt Elizabeth, but if I did she would never have him again, and he needs all the work he can get, for his poor wife's and children's sakes. I find it is not always easy to be sure whether your deeds are good or bad.

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"March 20, 19—

"Yesterday Aunt Elizabeth was very angry because I would not write an 'obituary poem' for old Peter DeGeer who died last week. Mrs. DeGeer came here and asked me to do it. I wouldn't—I felt very indignant at such a request. I felt it would be *a desecration of my art* to do such a thing—though of course I didn't say that to Mrs. DeGeer. For one thing it would have hurt her feelings, and for another she wouldn't have had the faintest idea what I meant. Even Aunt Elizabeth hadn't when I told her my reasons for refusing, after Mrs. DeGeer had gone.

"'You are always writing yards of trash that nobody wants,' she said. 'I think you might write something that *is* wanted. It would have pleased poor old Mary DeGeer. "Desecration of your art" indeed. If you *must* talk, Emily, why not talk sense?'

"I proceeded to talk sense.

"'Aunt Elizabeth,' I said seriously, 'how could I write that obituary poem for her? I couldn't write an *untruthful* one to please anybody. And you know yourself that nothing good *and* truthful could be said about old Peter DeGeer!'

"Aunt Elizabeth did know it, and it posed her, but she was all the more displeased with me for that. She vexed me so much that I came up to my room and wrote an 'obituary poem' about Peter, just for my own satisfaction. It is certainly great fun to write a *truthful* obituary of some one you don't like. Not that I *disliked* Peter DeGeer; I just despised him as everybody did. But Aunt Elizabeth had annoyed me, and when I am annoyed I can write very sarcastically. And again I felt that *Something* was writing through me—but a very different *Something* from the usual one—a malicious, mocking *Something* that *enjoyed* making fun of poor, lazy, shiftless, lying, silly, hypocritical, old Peter DeGeer. Ideas—words—rhymes—all seemed to drop into place while that *Something* chuckled.

"I thought the poem was so clever that I couldn't resist the temptation to take it to school to-day and show it to Mr Carpenter. I thought he would enjoy it—and I think he *did,* too, in a way, but after he had read it he laid it down and looked at me.

"'I suppose there *is* a pleasure in satirizing a failure,' he said. 'Poor old Peter was a failure—and he is dead—and His Maker may be merciful to him, but his fellow creatures will not. When *I* am dead, Emily, will you write like this about me? You have the power—oh, yes, it's all here—this *is* very clever. You can paint the weakness and foolishness and wickedness of a character in a way that is positively uncanny, in a girl of your age. But—is it worth while, Emily?'

"'No—no,' I said. I was so ashamed and sorry that I wanted to get away and cry. It was terrible to think Mr. Carpenter imagined I would ever write so about *him,* after all he has done for me.

"'It isn't,' said Mr. Carpenter. 'There is a place for satire—there are gangrenes that can only be burned out—but leave the burning to the great geniuses. It's better to heal than hurt. We failures know that.'

"'Oh, Mr. Carpenter!' I began. I wanted to say *he* wasn't a failure—I wanted to say a hundred things—but he wouldn't let me.

"'There—there, we won't talk of it, Emily. When *I* am dead say, "He was a failure, and none knew it more truly or felt it more bitterly than himself." Be merciful to the failures, Emily. Satirize wickedness if you must—but pity weakness.'

"He stalked off then, and called school in. I've felt wretched ever since and I won't sleep to-night. But here and now I record this vow, most solemnly, in my diary, *My pen shall heal, not hurt.* And I write it in italics, Early Victorian or not, because I am tremendously in earnest.

"I didn't tear that poem up, though—I couldn't—it really *was* too good to destroy. I put it away in my literary cupboard to read over once in a while for my own enjoyment, but I will never show it to anybody.

"Oh, how I wish I hadn't hurt Mr. Carpenter!

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"April 1, 19—

"Something I heard a visitor in Blair Water say today annoyed me very much. Mr. and Mrs. Alec Sawyer, who live in Charlottetown, were in the post office when I was there. Mrs. Sawyer is very handsome and fashionable and condescending. I heard her say to her husband, *'How* do the natives of this sleepy place continue to live here year in and year out? *I* should go mad. *Nothing* ever happens here.'

"I would dearly have liked to tell her a few things about Blair Water. I could have been sarcastic with a vengeance. But, of course, New Moon people *do not make scenes in public.* So I contented myself with bowing *very coldly* when she spoke to me and *sweeping past* her. I heard Mr. Sawyer say, 'Who is that girl?' and Mrs. Sawyer said, 'She must be that Starr puss—she has the Murray trick of holding her head, all right.'

"The idea of saying 'nothing ever happens here'! Why, things are happening right along—*thrilling* things. I think life here is *extremely* wonderful. We have always so much to laugh and cry and talk about.

"Look at all the things that have happened in Blair Water in just the last three weeks—comedy and tragedy all mixed up together. James Baxter has suddenly stopped speaking to his wife and *nobody knows why. She* doesn't, poor soul, and she is breaking her heart about it. Old Adam Gillian, who hated pretence of any sort, died two weeks ago and his last words were, 'See that there isn't any howling and sniffling at my funeral.' So nobody howled or sniffled. Nobody wanted to, and since he had forbidden it nobody pretended to. There never was such a cheerful funeral in Blair Water. I've seen weddings that were more melancholy—Ella Brice's, for instance. What cast a cloud over hers was that she forgot to put on her white slippers when she dressed, and went down to the parlour in a pair of old, faded, bedroom shoes with holes in the toes. Really, people couldn't have talked more about it if she had gone down without *anything* on. Poor Ella cried all through the wedding-supper about it.

"Old Robert Scobie and his half-sister have quarrelled, after living together for thirty years without a fuss, although she is said to be a very aggravating woman. Nothing she did or said ever provoked Robert into an outburst, but it seems that there was just one doughnut left from

supper one evening recently, and Robert is very fond of doughnuts. He put it away in the pantry for a bedtime snack, and when he went to get it he found that Matilda had eaten it. He went into a terrible rage, pulled her nose, called her a *she-deviless,* and ordered her out of his house. She has gone to live with her sister at Derry Pond, and Robert is going to bach it. Neither of them will ever forgive the other, Scobie-like, and neither will ever be happy or contented again.

"George Lake was walking home from Derry Pond one moonlit evening two weeks ago, and *all at once* he saw another *very black* shadow going along beside his, on the moonlit snow.

"And there was nothing to cast that shadow.

He rushed to the nearest house, nearly dead with fright, and they say he will never be the same man again.

"This is the most *dramatic* thing that has happened. It makes me shiver as I write of it. Of course George *must* have been mistaken. But he is a truthful man, and he doesn't drink. I don't know what to think of it.

"Arminius Scobie is a *very mean man* and always buys his wife's hats for her, lest she pay too much for them. They know this in the Shrewsbury stores, and laugh at him. One day last week he was in Jones and McCallum's, buying her a hat, and Mr. Jones told him that if he would *wear the hat* from the store to the station he would let him have it for nothing. Arminius did. It was a quarter of a mile to the station and all the small boys in Shrewsbury ran after him and hooted him. But Arminus didn't care. He had saved three dollars and forty-nine cents.

"And, one evening, right here at New Moon, I dropped a soft-boiled egg on Aunt Elizabeth's second-best cashmere dress. That *was* a happening. A kingdom might have been upset in Europe, and it wouldn't have made such a commotion at New Moon.

"So, Mistress Sawyer, you are vastly mistaken. Besides, apart from all happenings, the folks here are interesting in themselves. I don't *like* every one but I find every one interesting—Miss Matty Small, who is forty and wears *outrageous* colours—she wore an old-rose dress and a scarlet hat to church all last summer—old Uncle Reuben Bascom, who is so lazy that he held an umbrella over himself all one rainy night in bed, when the roof began to leak, rather than get out and move the bed—Elder McCloskey, who thought it wouldn't do to say 'pants' in a story he was telling about a missionary, at prayer-meeting, so always said politely 'the clothes of his lower parts'—Amasa Derry, who carried off four prizes at the Exhibition last fall, with vegetables he stole from Ronnie Bascom's field, while Ronnie didn't get one prize—Jimmy Joe Belle, who came here from Derry Pond yesterday to get some lumber 'to beeld a henhouse for my leetle dog'—old Luke Elliott, who is such a systematic fiend that he even draws up a schedule of the year on New Year's day, and charts down all the days he means to get drunk on—*and sticks to it:*—they're all interesting and amusing and delightful.

"There, I've proved Mrs. Alex Sawyer to be so completely wrong that I feel quite kindly towards her, even though she did call me a puss.

"Why don't I like being called a puss, when cats are such nice things? And I like being called *pussy.*

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"April 28, 19—

"Two weeks ago I sent my very best poem, *Wind Song,* to a magazine in New York, and to-day it came back with just a little *printed slip* saying, 'We regret we cannot use this contribution.'

"I feel dreadfully. I suppose I can't really write anything that is any good.

"I *can.* That magazine will be *glad* to print my pieces some day!

"I didn't tell Mr. Carpenter I sent it. I wouldn't get any sympathy from him. *He* says that five years from now will be time enough to begin pestering editors. But I *know* that some poems I've read in that very magazine were not a bit better than *Wind Song.*

"I feel more like writing poetry in spring than at any other time. Mr. Carpenter tells me to fight against the impulse. He says spring has been responsible for more trash than anything else in the universe of God.

"Mr. Carpenter's way of talking has a *tang* to it.

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"May 1, 19—

"Dean is home. He came to his sister's yesterday and this evening he was here and we walked in the garden, up and down the sundial walk, and talked. It was splendid to have him back, with his mysterious green eyes and his nice mouth.

"We had a long conversation. We talked of Algiers and the transmigration of souls and of being cremated and of profiles—Dean says I have a good profile—'pure Greek.' I always like Dean's compliments.

"'Star o' Morning, how you have grown!' he said. 'I left a child last autumn—and I find a woman!'

"(I will be fourteen in three weeks, and I am tall for my age. Dean seems to be glad of this—quite unlike Aunt Laura who always sighs when she lengthens my dresses, and thinks children grow up too fast.)

"'So goes time by,' I said, quoting the motto on the sundial, and feeling *quite sophisticated.*

"'You are almost as tall as I am,' he said; and then added *bitterly,* 'to be sure Jarback Priest is of no very stately height.'

"I have always shrunk from referring to his shoulder in any way, but now I said,

"'Dean, please don't sneer at yourself like that—not with me, at least. I *never* think of you as Jarback.'

"Dean took my hand and looked right into my eyes as if he were trying to *read my very soul.*

"'Are you sure of that, Emily? Don't you often wish that I wasn't lame—and crooked?'

"'For your sake I do,' I answered, 'but as far as I am concerned it doesn't make a bit of difference—and never will.'

"'And never will!' Dean repeated the words emphatically. 'If I were sure of that, Emily—if I were only sure of that.'

"'You *can* be sure of it,' I declared quite warmly. I was vexed because he seemed to doubt it—and yet something in his expression made me feel a little uncomfortable. It suddenly made me think of the time he rescued me from the cliff on Malvern Bay and told me my life belonged to him since he had saved it. I don't like the thought of my life belonging to any one but myself—not *any one,* even Dean, much as I like him. And *in some ways* I like Dean better than any one in the world.

"When it got darker the stars came out and we studied them through Dean's splendid new field-glasses. It was very fascinating. Dean knows all about the stars—it seems to me he knows all about everything. But when I said so, he said,

"'There is one secret I do not know—I would give everything else I *do* know for it—one secret—perhaps I shall never know it. The way to win—the way to win—'

"'What?' I asked curiously.

"'My heart's desire,' said Dean dreamily, looking at a shimmering star that seemed to be hung on the very tip of one of the Three Princesses. 'It seems now as desirable and unobtainable as that gem-like star, Emily. But—who knows?'

"I wonder what it is Dean wants so much.

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"May 4, 19—

"Dean brought me a lovely portfolio from Paris, and I have copied my favourite verse from *The Fringed Gentian* on the inside of the cover. I will read it over every day and remember my vow to 'climb the Alpine Path.' I begin to see that I will have to do a good bit of scrambling, though I once expected, I think, to soar right up to 'that far-off goal' on shining wings. Mr. Carpenter has banished that fond dream.

"'Dig in your toes and hang on with your teeth—that's the only way,' he says.

"Last night in bed I thought out some lovely titles for the books I'm going to write in the future—*A Lady of High Degree, True to Faith and Vow, Oh, Rare Pale Margaret* (I got that from Tennyson), *The Caste of Vere de Vere* (ditto) and *A Kingdom by the Sea.*

"Now, if I can only get ideas to match the titles!

"I am writing a story called *The House Among the Rowans*—also a very good title, I think. But the love talk still bothers me. Everything of the kind I write seems so stiff and silly the minute I write it down that it infuriates me. I asked Dean if he could teach me how to write it properly

because he promised long ago that he would, but he said I was too young yet—said it in that mysterious way of his which always seems to convey the idea that there is so much more in his words than the mere sound of them expresses. I wish I could speak so *significantly,* because it makes you *very interesting.*

"This evening after school Dean and I began to read *The Alhambra* over again, sitting on the stone bench in the garden. That book always makes me feel as if I had opened a little door and stepped straight into fairyland.

"'How I would love to see the Alhambra!' I said.

"'We will go to see it sometime—together,' said Dean.

"'Oh, that would be *lovely,'* I cried. 'Do you think we can ever manage it, Dean?'

"Before Dean could answer I heard Teddy's whistle in Lofty John's bush—the dear little whistle of two short high notes and one long low one, that is *our signal.*

"'Excuse me—I must go—Teddy's calling me,' I said.

"'Must you always go when Teddy calls?' asked Dean.

"I nodded and explained,

"'He only calls like that when he wants me *especially* and I have promised I will always go if I possibly can.'

"'*I* want you *especially!'* said Dean. 'I came up this evening on purpose to read *The Alhambra* with you.'

"Suddenly I felt very unhappy. I wanted to stay with Dean dreadfully, and yet I felt as if I must go to Teddy. Dean looked at me piercingly. Then he shut up *The Alhambra.*

"'Go,' he said.

"I went—but things seemed spoiled, somehow.

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"May 10, 19—

"I have been reading three books Dean lent me this week. One was like a rose garden—very pleasant, but just a little too sweet. And one was like a pine wood on a mountain—full of balsam and tang—I loved it, and yet it filled me with a sort of despair. It was written so beautifully—I can *never* write like that, I feel sure. And one—it was just like a pigsty. Dean gave me that one by mistake. He was very angry with himself when he found it out—angry and distressed.

"'Star—Star—I would *never* have given you a book like that—my confounded carelessness—forgive me. That book is a faithful picture of one world—but not your world, thank God—nor any world you will ever be a citizen of. Star, promise me you will forget that book.'

"'I'll forget it if I can,' I said.

"But I don't know if I can. It was so ugly. I have not been so happy since I read it. I feel as if my hands were soiled somehow and I couldn't wash them clean. And I have another queer feeling, as if *some gate had*

been shut behind me, shutting me into a new world I don't quite understand or like, but through which I must travel.

"To-night I tried to write a description of Dean in my Jimmy-book of character sketches. But I didn't succeed. What I wrote seemed like a photograph—not a portrait. There is something in Dean that is beyond me.

"Dean took a picture of me the other day with his new camera, but he wasn't pleased with it.

"'It doesn't look like you,' he said, 'but of course one can never photograph starlight.'

"Then he added, quite sharply, I thought,

"'Tell that young imp of a Teddy Kent to keep your face out of his pictures. He has no business to put *you* into every one he draws.'

"'He doesn't!' I cried. 'Why, Teddy never made but the one picture of me—the one Aunt Nancy *stole.'*

"I said it quite viciously and unashamed, for I've never forgiven Aunt Nancy for keeping that picture.

"'He's got *something* of you in every picture,' said Dean stubbornly —'your eyes—the curve of your neck—the tilt of your head—your personality. That's the worst—I don't mind your eyes and curves so much, but I won't have that cub putting a bit of your soul into everything he draws. Probably he doesn't know he's doing it—which makes it all the worse.'

"'I don't understand you,' I said, *quite haughtily.* 'But Teddy is *wonderful* —Mr. Carpenter says so.'

"'And Emily of New Moon echoes it! Oh, the kid has talent—he'll do something some day if his morbid mother doesn't ruin his life. But let him keep his pencil and brush off *my* property.'

"Dean laughed as he said it. But I held my head high. I am not anybody's 'property,' not even in fun. And I *never* will be.

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"May 12, 19—

"Aunt Ruth and Uncle Wallace and Uncle Oliver were all here this afternoon. I like Uncle Oliver, but I am not much fonder of Aunt Ruth and Uncle Wallace than I ever was. They held some kind of family conclave in the parlour with Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura. Cousin Jimmy was allowed in but I was excluded, although I feel perfectly certain that it had something to do with me. I think Aunt Ruth didn't get her own way, either, for she snubbed me continually all through supper, and said I was growing weedy! Aunt Ruth generally snubs me and Uncle Wallace patronizes me. I prefer Aunt Ruth's snubs because I don't have to look as if I liked them. I endured them to a certain point, and then the lid flew off. Aunt Ruth said to me,

"'Em'ly, don't contradict,' just as she might have spoken to a *mere child.* I looked her right in the eyes and said *coldly,*