



Lucy Maud Montgomery

Anne of Ingleside



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CHAPTER 1

“**H**ow 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 booties 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 color to lose."

"At any rate, I've never a hint of a second chin yet," said Anne cheerfully. "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 have set 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 ago... 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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