



**RILLA OF
INGLESIDE**
Lucy Maud
Montgomery

Rilla of Ingleside

by Lucy Maud Montgomery

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Glen “Notes” and Other Matters

It was a warm, golden-cloudy, lovable afternoon. In the big living-room at Ingleside Susan Baker sat down with a certain grim satisfaction hovering about her like an aura; it was four o'clock and Susan who had been working incessantly since six that morning, felt that she had fairly earned an hour of repose and gossip. Susan just then was perfectly happy; everything had gone almost uncannily well in the kitchen that day. Dr. Jekyll had not been Mr. Hyde and so had not grated on her nerves; from where she sat she could see the pride of her heart—the bed of peonies of her own planting and culture blooming as no other peony plot in Glen St. Mary ever did or could bloom, with peonies crimson, peonies silvery pink, peonies white as drifts of winter snow.

Susan had on a new black silk blouse, quite as elaborate as anything Mrs. Marshall Elliott ever wore and a white starched apron, trimmed with complicated crocheted lace fully five inches wide, not to mention insertion to match. Therefore Susan had all the comfortable consciousness of a well-dressed woman as she opened her copy of the Daily Enterprise and prepared to read the Glen “Notes” which, as Miss Cornelia had just informed her, filled half a column of it and mentioned almost everybody in Ingleside. There was a big, black headline on the front page of the Enterprise, stating that some Archduke Ferdinand or other had been assassinated at a place bearing the weird name of Sarajevo, but Susan tarried not over uninteresting, immaterial stuff like that; she was in quest of something really vital. Oh, here it was—“Jottings from Glen St. Mary.” Susan settled down keenly, reading each one over aloud to extract all possible gratification from it.

Mrs. Blythe and her visitor, Miss Cornelia—alias Mrs. Marshall Elliott—were chatting together near the open door that led to the veranda, through which a cool, delicious breeze was blowing, bringing whiffs of phantom perfume from the garden, and charming gay echoes from the vine-hung corner where Rilla and Miss Oliver and Walter were laughing and talking. Wherever Rilla Blythe was, there was laughter.

There was another occupant of the living-room, curled up on a couch, who must not be overlooked since he was a creature of marked individuality, and, moreover, had the distinction of being the only living thing whom Susan really hated.

All cats are mysterious but Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde—“Doc” for short—was trebly so. He was a cat of double personality—or else, as Susan vowed, he was possessed by the devil. To begin with, there had been something uncanny about the very dawn of his existence. Four years previously Rilla Blythe had had a treasured darling of a kitten, white as snow, with a saucy black tip to its tail, which she called Jack Frost. Susan disliked Jack Frost, though she could not or would not give any valid reason therefor.

“Take my word for it, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she was wont to say ominously, “that cat will come to no good.”

“But why do you think so?” Mrs. Blythe would ask.

“I do not think—I know,” was all the answer Susan would vouchsafe.

With the rest of the Ingleside folk Jack Frost was a favourite; he was so very clean and well groomed and never allowed a spot or stain to be seen on his beautiful white suit; he had endearing ways of purring and snuggling; he was scrupulously honest.

And then a domestic tragedy took place at Ingleside. Jack Frost had kittens!

It would be vain to try to picture Susan's triumph. Had she not always insisted that that cat would turn out to be a delusion and a snare? Now they could see for themselves!

Rilla kept one of the kittens, a very pretty one, with peculiarly sleek glossy fur of a dark yellow crossed by orange stripes, and large, satiny, golden ears. She called it Goldie and the name seemed appropriate enough to the little frolicsome creature which, during its kittenhood, gave no indication of the sinister nature it really possessed. Susan, of course, warned the family that no good could be

expected from any offspring of that diabolical Jack Frost; but Susan's Cassandra-like croakings were unheeded.

The Blythes had been so accustomed to regard Jack Frost as a member of the male sex that they could not get out of the habit. So they continually used the masculine pronoun, although the result was ludicrous. Visitors used to be quite electrified when Rilla referred casually to "Jack and his kitten," and told Goldie sternly, "Go to your mother and get him to wash your fur."

"It is not decent, Mrs. Dr. dear," poor Susan would say bitterly. She herself compromised by always referring to Jack as "it" or "the white beast," and one heart at least did not ache when "it" was accidentally poisoned the following winter.

In a year's time "Goldie" became so manifestly an inadequate name for the orange kitten that Walter, who was just then reading Stevenson's story, changed it to Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde. In his Dr. Jekyll mood the cat was a drowsy, affectionate, domestic, cushion-loving puss, who liked petting and gloried in being nursed and patted. Especially did he love to lie on his back and have his sleek, cream-coloured throat stroked gently while he purred in somnolent satisfaction. He was a notable purrer; never had there been an Ingleside cat who purred so constantly and so ecstatically.

"The only thing I envy a cat is its purr," remarked Dr. Blythe once, listening to Doc's resonant melody. "It is the most contented sound in the world."

Doc was very handsome; his every movement was grace; his poses magnificent. When he folded his long, dusky-ringed tail about his feet and sat him down on the veranda to gaze steadily into space for long intervals the Blythes felt that an Egyptian sphinx could not have made a more fitting Deity of the Portal.

When the Mr. Hyde mood came upon him—which it invariably did before rain, or wind—he was a wild thing with changed eyes. The transformation always came suddenly. He would spring fiercely from a reverie with a savage snarl and bite at any restraining or caressing hand. His fur seemed to grow darker and his eyes gleamed with a diabolical light. There was really an unearthly beauty about him. If the change happened in the twilight all the Ingleside folk felt a certain terror of him. At such times he was a fearsome beast and only Rilla defended him, asserting that he was "such a nice prowling cat." Certainly he prowled.

Dr. Jekyll loved new milk; Mr. Hyde would not touch milk and growled over his meat. Dr. Jekyll came down the stairs so silently that no one could hear him. Mr. Hyde made his tread as heavy as a man's. Several evenings, when Susan was alone in the house, he "scared her stiff," as she declared, by doing this. He would sit in the middle of the kitchen floor, with his terrible eyes fixed unwinkingly upon hers for an hour at a time. This played havoc with her nerves, but poor Susan really held him in too much awe to try to drive him out. Once she had dared to throw a stick at him and he had promptly made a savage leap towards her. Susan rushed out of doors and never attempted to meddle with Mr. Hyde again—though she visited his misdeeds upon the innocent Dr. Jekyll, chasing him ignominiously out of her domain whenever he dared to poke his nose in and denying him certain savoury tidbits for which he yearned.

"The many friends of Miss Faith Meredith, Gerald Meredith and James Blythe," read Susan, rolling the names like sweet morsels under her tongue, "were very much pleased to welcome them home a few weeks ago from Redmond College. James Blythe, who was graduated in Arts in 1913, had just completed his first year in medicine."

"Faith Meredith has really got to be the most handsomest creature I ever saw," commented Miss Cornelia above her filet crochet. "It's amazing how those children came on after Rosemary West went to the manse. People have almost forgotten what imps of mischief they were once. Anne, dearie, will you ever forget the way they used to carry on? It's really surprising how well Rosemary got on with them. She's more like a chum than a step-mother. They all love her and Una adores her. As for the

little Bruce, Una just makes a perfect slave of herself to him. Of course, he is a darling. But did you ever see any child look as much like an aunt as he looks like his Aunt Ellen? He's just as dark and just as emphatic. I can't see a feature of Rosemary in him. Norman Douglas always vows at the top of his voice that the stork meant Bruce for him and Ellen and took him to the manse by mistake."

"Bruce adores Jem," said Mrs Blythe. "When he comes over here he follows Jem about silently like a faithful little dog, looking up at him from under his black brows. He would do anything for Jem, I verily believe."

"Are Jem and Faith going to make a match of it?"

Mrs. Blythe smiled. It was well known that Miss Cornelia, who had been such a virulent man-hater at one time, had actually taken to match-making in her declining years.

"They are only good friends yet, Miss Cornelia."

"Very good friends, believe me," said Miss Cornelia emphatically. "I hear all about the doings of the young fry."

"I have no doubt that Mary Vance sees that you do, Mrs. Marshall Elliott," said Susan significantly, "but I think it is a shame to talk about children making matches."

"Children! Jem is twenty-one and Faith is nineteen," retorted Miss Cornelia. "You must not forget, Susan, that we old folks are not the only grown-up people in the world."

Outraged Susan, who detested any reference to her age—not from vanity but from a haunting dread that people might come to think her too old to work—returned to her "Notes."

"Carl Meredith and Shirley Blythe came home last Friday evening from Queen's Academy. We understand that Carl will be in charge of the school at Harbour Head next year and we are sure he will be a popular and successful teacher."

"He will teach the children all there is to know about bugs, anyhow," said Miss Cornelia. "He got through with Queen's now and Mr. Meredith and Rosemary wanted him to go right on to Redmond in the fall, but Carl has a very independent streak in him and means to earn part of his own way through college. He'll be all the better for it."

"Walter Blythe, who has been teaching for the past two years at Lowbridge, has resigned," read Susan. "He intends going to Redmond this fall."

"Is Walter quite strong enough for Redmond yet?" queried Miss Cornelia anxiously.

"We hope that he will be by the fall," said Mrs. Blythe. "An idle summer in the open air and sunshine will do a great deal for him."

"Typhoid is a hard thing to get over," said Miss Cornelia emphatically, "especially when one has had such a close shave as Walter had. I think he'd do well to stay out of college another year. But then he is so ambitious. Are Di and Nan going too?"

"Yes. They both wanted to teach another year but Gilbert thinks they had better go to Redmond this fall."

"I'm glad of that. They'll keep an eye on Walter and see that he doesn't study too hard. I suppose," continued Miss Cornelia, with a side glance at Susan, "that after the snub I got a few minutes ago you will not be safe for me to suggest that Jerry Meredith is making sheep's eyes at Nan."

Susan ignored this and Mrs. Blythe laughed again.

"Dear Miss Cornelia, I have my hands full, haven't I?—with all these boys and girls sweethearting around me? If I took it seriously it would quite crush me. But I don't—it is too hard yet to realize that they're grown up. When I look at those two tall sons of mine I wonder if they can possibly be the faithful, sweet, dimpled babies I kissed and cuddled and sang to slumber the other day—only the other day," said Miss Cornelia. "Wasn't Jem the dearest baby in the old House of Dreams? and now he's a B.A. and accused of courting."

"We're all growing older," sighed Miss Cornelia.

"The only part of me that feels old," said Mrs. Blythe, "is the ankle I broke when Josie Pye dared me to walk the Barry ridge-pole in the Green Gables days. I have an ache in it when the wind is east. I won't admit that it is rheumatism, but it does ache. As for the children, they and the Merediths are planning a gay summer before they have to go back to studies in the fall. They are such a fun-loving little crowd. They keep this house in a perpetual whirl of merriment."

"Is Rilla going to Queen's when Shirley goes back?"

"It isn't decided yet. I rather fancy not. Her father thinks she is not quite strong enough—she has rather outgrown her strength—she's really absurdly tall for a girl not yet fifteen. I am not anxious to have her go—why, it would be terrible not to have a single one of my babies home with me next winter. Susan and I would fall to fighting with each other to break the monotony."

Susan smiled at this pleasantry. The idea of her fighting with "Mrs. Dr. dear!"

"Does Rilla herself want to go?" asked Miss Cornelia.

"No. The truth is, Rilla is the only one of my flock who isn't ambitious. I really wish she had a little more ambition. She has no serious ideals at all—her sole aspiration seems to be to have a good time.

"And why should she not have it, Mrs. Dr. dear?" cried Susan, who could not bear to hear a single word against anyone of the Ingleside folk, even from one of themselves. "A young girl should have a good time, and that I will maintain. There will be time enough for her to think of Latin and Greek."

"I should like to see a little sense of responsibility in her, Susan. And you know yourself that she is abominably vain."

"She has something to be vain about," retorted Susan. "She is the prettiest girl in Glen St. Mary. Do you think that all those over-harbour MacAllisters and Crawfords and Elliotts could scare up a skink like Rilla's in four generations? They could not. No, Mrs. Dr. dear, I know my place but I cannot allow you to run down Rilla. Listen to this, Mrs. Marshall Elliott."

Susan had found a chance to get square with Miss Cornelia for her digs at the children's love affair. She read the item with gusto.

"Miller Douglas has decided not to go West. He says old P.E.I. is good enough for him and he will continue to farm for his aunt, Mrs. Alec Davis."

Susan looked keenly at Miss Cornelia.

"I have heard, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that Miller is courting Mary Vance."

This shot pierced Miss Cornelia's armour. Her sonsy face flushed.

"I won't have Miller Douglas hanging round Mary," she said crisply. "He comes of a low family. His father was a sort of outcast from the Douglasses—they never really counted him in—and his mother was one of those terrible Dillons from the Harbour Head."

"I think I have heard, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that Mary Vance's own parents were not what you could call aristocratic."

"Mary Vance has had a good bringing up and she is a smart, clever, capable girl," retorted Miss Cornelia. "She is not going to throw herself away on Miller Douglas, believe me! She knows my opinion on the matter and Mary has never disobeyed me yet."

"Well, I do not think you need worry, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, for Mrs. Alec Davis is as much against it as you could be, and says no nephew of hers is ever going to marry a nameless nobody like Mary Vance."

Susan returned to her mutton, feeling that she had got the best of it in this passage of arms, and read another "note."

"We are pleased to hear that Miss Oliver has been engaged as teacher for another year. Miss Oliver will spend her well-earned vacation at her home in Lowbridge."

"I'm so glad Gertrude is going to stay," said Mrs. Blythe. "We would miss her horribly. And she has an excellent influence over Rilla who worships her. They are chums, in spite of the difference in the

ages.”

“I thought I heard she was going to be married?”

“I believe it was talked of but I understand it is postponed for a year.”

“Who is the young man?”

“Robert Grant. He is a young lawyer in Charlottetown. I hope Gertrude will be happy. She has had a sad life, with much bitterness in it, and she feels things with a terrible keenness. Her first youth is gone and she is practically alone in the world. This new love that has come into her life seems such a wonderful thing to her that I think she hardly dares believe in its permanence. When her marriage had to be put off she was quite in despair—though it certainly wasn’t Mr. Grant’s fault. There were complications in the settlement of his father’s estate—his father died last winter—and he could not marry till the tangles were unravelled. But I think Gertrude felt it was a bad omen and that her happiness would somehow elude her yet.”

“It does not do, Mrs. Dr. dear, to set your affections too much on a man,” remarked Susan solemnly.

“Mr. Grant is quite as much in love with Gertrude as she is with him, Susan. It is not he whom she distrusts—it is fate. She has a little mystic streak in her—I suppose some people would call her superstitious. She has an odd belief in dreams and we have not been able to laugh it out of her. I must confess my own, too, that some of her dreams—but there, it would not do to let Gilbert hear me hinting such heresy. What have you found of much interest, Susan?”

Susan had given an exclamation.

“Listen to this, Mrs. Dr. dear. ‘Mrs. Sophia Crawford has given up her house at Lowbridge and will make her home in future with her niece, Mrs. Albert Crawford.’ Why that is my own cousin Sophia! Mrs. Dr. dear. We quarrelled when we were children over who should get a Sunday-school card with the words ‘God is Love,’ wreathed in rosebuds, on it, and have never spoken to each other since. And now she is coming to live right across the road from us.”

“You will have to make up the old quarrel, Susan. It will never do to be at outs with your neighbours.”

“Cousin Sophia began the quarrel, so she can begin the making up also, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan loftily. “If she does I hope I am a good enough Christian to meet her half-way. She is not a cheerful person and has been a wet blanket all her life. The last time I saw her, her face had a thousand wrinkles—maybe more, maybe less—from worrying and foreboding. She howled dreadful at her first husband’s funeral but she married again in less than a year. The next note, I see, describes the special service in our church last Sunday night and says the decorations were very beautiful.”

“Speaking of that reminds me that Mr. Pryor strongly disapproves of flowers in church,” said Miss Cornelia. “I always said there would be trouble when that man moved here from Lowbridge. He should never have been put in as elder—it was a mistake and we shall live to rue it, believe me! I have heard that he has said that if the girls continue to ‘mess up the pulpit with weeds’ that he will not go to church.”

“The church got on very well before old Whiskers-on-the-moon came to the Glen and it is my opinion it will get on without him after he is gone,” said Susan.

“Who in the world ever gave him that ridiculous nickname?” asked Mrs. Blythe.

“Why, the Lowbridge boys have called him that ever since I can remember, Mrs. Dr. dear—I suppose because his face is so round and red, with that fringe of sandy whisker about it. It does not do for anyone to call him that in his hearing, though, and that you may tie to. But worse than his whisker, Mrs. Dr. dear, he is a very unreasonable man and has a great many queer ideas. He is an elder now and they say he is very religious; but I can well remember the time, Mrs. Dr. dear, twenty years ago, when he was caught pasturing his cow in the Lowbridge graveyard. Yes, indeed, I have not forgotten that and I always think of it when he is praying in meeting. Well, that is all the notes and there is not much else in the paper of any importance. I never take much interest in foreign parts. Who is this Archduke

man who has been murdered?"

"What does it matter to us?" asked Miss Cornelia, unaware of the hideous answer to her question which destiny was even then preparing. "Somebody is always murdering or being murdered in those Balkan States. It's their normal condition and I don't really think that our papers ought to print such shocking things. The Enterprise is getting far too sensational with its big headlines. Well, I must be getting home. No, Anne dearie, it's no use asking me to stay to supper. Marshall has got to think that if I'm not home for a meal it's not worth eating—just like a man. So off I go. Merciful goodness, Anne dearie, what is the matter with that cat? Is he having a fit?"—this, as Doc suddenly bounded on the rug at Miss Cornelia's feet, laid back his ears, swore at her, and then disappeared with one fierce leap through the window.

"Oh, no. He's merely turning into Mr. Hyde—which means that we shall have rain or high wind before morning. Doc is as good as a barometer."

"Well, I am thankful he has gone on the rampage outside this time and not into my kitchen," said Susan. "And I am going out to see about supper. With such a crowd as we have at Ingleside now it behooves us to think about our meals betimes."

Dew of Morning

Outside, the Ingleside lawn was full of golden pools of sunshine and plots of alluring shadows. Rilla Blythe was swinging in the hammock under the big Scotch pine, Gertrude Oliver sat at its roots beside her, and Walter was stretched at full length on the grass, lost in a romance of chivalry wherein old heroes and beauties of dead and gone centuries lived vividly again for him.

Rilla was the “baby” of the Blythe family and was in a chronic state of secret indignation because nobody believed she was grown up. She was so nearly fifteen that she called herself that, and she was quite as tall as Di and Nan; also, she was nearly as pretty as Susan believed her to be. She had great dreamy, hazel eyes, a milky skin dappled with little golden freckles, and delicately arched eyebrows giving her a demure, questioning look which made people, especially lads in their teens, want to answer it. Her hair was ripely, ruddily brown and a little dent in her upper lip looked as if some good fairy had pressed it in with her finger at Rilla’s christening. Rilla, whose best friends could not deny her share of vanity, thought her face would do very well, but worried over her figure, and wished her mother could be prevailed upon to let her wear longer dresses. She, who had been so plump and rolipoly in the old Rainbow Valley days, was incredibly slim now, in the arms-and-legs period. Jem and Shirley harrowed her soul by calling her “Spider.” Yet she somehow escaped awkwardness. There was something in her movements that made you think she never walked but always danced. She had been much petted and was a wee bit spoiled, but still the general opinion was that Rilla Blythe was a very sweet girl, even if she were not so clever as Nan and Di.

Miss Oliver, who was going home that night for vacation, had boarded for a year at Ingleside. The Blythes had taken her to please Rilla who was fathoms deep in love with her teacher and was even willing to share her room, since no other was available. Gertrude Oliver was twenty-eight and life had been a struggle for her. She was a striking-looking girl, with rather sad, almond-shaped brown eyes, a clever, rather mocking mouth, and enormous masses of black hair twisted about her head. She was not pretty but there was a certain charm of interest and mystery in her face, and Rilla found her fascinating. Even her occasional moods of gloom and cynicism had allurements for Rilla. These moods came only when Miss Oliver was tired. At all other times she was a stimulating companion, and the gay set at Ingleside never remembered that she was so much older than themselves. Walter and Rilla were her favourites and she was the confidante of the secret wishes and aspirations of both. She knew that Rilla longed to be “out”—to go to parties as Nan and Di did, and to have dainty evening dresses and—yes, there is no mincing matters—beaux! In the plural, at that! As for Walter, Miss Oliver knew that he had written a sequence of sonnets “to Rosamond”—i.e., Faith Meredith—and that he aimed at a Professorship of English literature in some big college. She knew his passionate love of beauty and his equally passionate hatred of ugliness; she knew his strength and his weakness.

Walter was, as ever, the handsomest of the Ingleside boys. Miss Oliver found pleasure in looking at him for his good looks—he was so exactly like what she would have liked her own son to be. Glossy black hair, brilliant dark grey eyes, faultless features. And a poet to his fingertips! That sonnet sequence was really a remarkable thing for a lad of twenty to write. Miss Oliver was no partial critic and she knew that Walter Blythe had a wonderful gift.

Rilla loved Walter with all her heart. He never teased her as Jem and Shirley did. He never called her “Spider.” His pet name for her was “Rilla-my-Rilla”—a little pun on her real name, Marilla. She had been named after Aunt Marilla of Green Gables, but Aunt Marilla had died before Rilla was old enough to know her very well, and Rilla detested the name as being horribly old-fashioned and prim. Why couldn’t they have called her by her first name, Bertha, which was beautiful and dignified instead of that silly “Rilla”? She did not mind Walter’s version, but nobody else was allowed to call her that, except Miss Oliver now and then. “Rilla-my-Rilla” in Walter’s musical voice sounded very

beautiful to her—like the lilt and ripple of some silvery brook. She would have died for Walter if she would have done him any good, so she told Miss Oliver. Rilla was as fond of italics as most girls of fifteen are—and the bitterest drop in her cup was her suspicion that he told Di more of his secrets than he told her.

“He thinks I’m not grown up enough to understand,” she had once lamented rebelliously to Miss Oliver, “but I am! And I would never tell them to a single soul—not even to you, Miss Oliver. I tell you all my own—I just couldn’t be happy if I had any secret from you, dearest—but I would never betray his. I tell him everything—I even show him my diary. And it hurts me dreadfully when he doesn’t tell me things. He shows me all his poems, though—they are marvellous, Miss Oliver. Oh, I just live in the hope that some day I shall be to Walter what Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy was to him. Wordsworth never wrote anything like Walter’s poems—nor Tennyson, either.”

“I wouldn’t say just that. Both of them wrote a great deal of trash,” said Miss Oliver dryly. Then, repenting, as she saw a hurt look in Rilla’s eye, she added hastily,

“But I believe Walter will be a great poet, too—some day—and you will have more of his confidence as you grow older.”

“When Walter was in the hospital with typhoid last year I was almost crazy,” sighed Rilla, a little importantly. “They never told me how ill he really was until it was all over—father wouldn’t let them. I’m glad I didn’t know—I couldn’t have borne it. I cried myself to sleep every night as it was. But sometimes,” concluded Rilla bitterly—she liked to speak bitterly now and then in imitation of Miss Oliver—“sometimes I think Walter cares more for Dog Monday than he does for me.”

Dog Monday was the Ingleside dog, so called because he had come into the family on a Monday when Walter had been reading Robinson Crusoe. He really belonged to Jem but was much attached to Walter also. He was lying beside Walter now with nose snuggled against his arm, thumping his tail rapturously whenever Walter gave him an absent pat. Monday was not a collie or a setter or a hound or a Newfoundland. He was just, as Jem said, “plain dog”—very plain dog, uncharitable people added. Certainly, Monday’s looks were not his strong point. Black spots were scattered at random over his yellow carcass, one of them, apparently, blotting out an eye. His ears were in tatters, for Monday was never successful in affairs of honour. But he possessed one talisman. He knew that not all dogs could be handsome or eloquent or victorious, but that every dog could love. Inside his homely hide beat the most affectionate, loyal, faithful heart of any dog since dogs were; and something looked out of his brown eyes that was nearer akin to a soul than any theologian would allow. Everybody at Ingleside was fond of him, even Susan, although his one unfortunate propensity of sneaking into the spare room and going to sleep on the bed tried her affection sorely.

On this particular afternoon Rilla had no quarrel on hand with existing conditions.

“Hasn’t June been a delightful month?” she asked, looking dreamily afar at the little quiet silver clouds hanging so peacefully over Rainbow Valley. “We’ve had such lovely times—and such lovely weather. It has just been perfect every way.”

“I don’t half like that,” said Miss Oliver, with a sigh. “It’s ominous—somehow. A perfect thing is a gift of the gods—a sort of compensation for what is coming afterwards. I’ve seen that so often that I don’t care to hear people say they’ve had a perfect time. June has been delightful, though.”

“Of course, it hasn’t been very exciting,” said Rilla. “The only exciting thing that has happened in the Glen for a year was old Miss Mead fainting in Church. Sometimes I wish something dramatic would happen once in a while.”

“Don’t wish it. Dramatic things always have a bitterness for some one. What a nice summer all your gay creatures will have! And me moping at Lowbridge!”

“You’ll be over often, won’t you? I think there’s going to be lots of fun this summer, though I’ll just be on the fringe of things as usual, I suppose. Isn’t it horrid when people think you’re a little girl who

you're not?"

~~"There's plenty of time for you to be grown up, Rilla. Don't wish your youth away. It goes to waste so quickly. You'll begin to taste life soon enough."~~

"Taste life! I want to eat it," cried Rilla, laughing. "I want everything—everything a girl can have. I'll be fifteen in another month, and then nobody can say I'm a child any longer. I heard someone say once that the years from fifteen to nineteen are the best years in a girl's life. I'm going to make them perfectly splendid—just fill them with fun."

"There's no use thinking about what you're going to do—you are tolerably sure not to do it."

"Oh, but you do get a lot of fun out of the thinking," cried Rilla.

"You think of nothing but fun, you monkey," said Miss Oliver indulgently, reflecting that Rilla's chin was really the last word in chins. "Well, what else is fifteen for? But have you any notion of going to college this fall?"

"No—nor any other fall. I don't want to. I never cared for all those ologies and isms Nan and Di are so crazy about. And there's five of us going to college already. Surely that's enough. There's bound to be one dunce in every family. I'm quite willing to be a dunce if I can be a pretty, popular, delightful one. I can't be clever. I have no talent at all, and you can't imagine how comfortable it is. Nobody expects me to do anything so I'm never pestered to do it. And I can't be a housewifely, cookly creature, either. I hate sewing and dusting, and when Susan couldn't teach me to make biscuits nobody could. Father says I toil not neither do I spin. Therefore, I must be a lily of the field," concluded Rilla, with another laugh.

"You are too young to give up your studies altogether, Rilla."

"Oh, mother will put me through a course of reading next winter. It will polish up her B.A. degree. Luckily I like reading. Don't look at me so sorrowfully and so disapprovingly, dearest. I can't be so solemn and serious—everything looks so rosy and rainbowy to me. Next month I'll be fifteen—and next year sixteen—and the year after that seventeen. Could anything be more enchanting?"

"Rap wood," said Gertrude Oliver, half laughingly, half seriously. "Rap wood, Rilla-my-Rilla."

Moonlit Mirth

Rilla, who still buttoned up her eyes when she went to sleep so that she always looked as if she were laughing in her slumber, yawned, stretched, and smiled at Gertrude Oliver. The latter had come over from Lowbridge the previous evening and had been prevailed upon to remain for the dance at the Fog Winds lighthouse the next night.

“The new day is knocking at the window. What will it bring us, I wonder.”

Miss Oliver shivered a little. She never greeted the days with Rilla’s enthusiasm. She had lived long enough to know that a day may bring a terrible thing.

“I think the nicest thing about days is their unexpectedness,” went on Rilla. “It’s jolly to wake up like this on a golden-fine morning and wonder what surprise packet the day will hand you. I always dream for ten minutes before I get up, imagining the heaps of splendid things that may happen before night.”

“I hope something very unexpected will happen today,” said Gertrude. “I hope the mail will bring me news that war has been averted between Germany and France.”

“Oh—yes,” said Rilla vaguely. “It will be dreadful if it isn’t, I suppose. But it won’t really matter much to us, will it? I think a war would be so exciting. The Boer war was, they say, but I don’t remember anything about it, of course. Miss Oliver, shall I wear my white dress tonight or my new green one? The green one is by far the prettier, of course, but I’m almost afraid to wear it to a show-dance for fear something will happen to it. And will you do my hair the new way? None of the other girls in the Glen wear it yet and it will make such a sensation.”

“How did you induce your mother to let you go to the dance?”

“Oh, Walter coaxed her over. He knew I would be heart-broken if I didn’t go. It’s my first really-truly grown-up party, Miss Oliver, and I’ve just lain awake at nights for a week thinking it over. When I saw the sun shining this morning I wanted to whoop for joy. It would be simply terrible if it rained tonight. I think I’ll wear the green dress and risk it. I want to look my nicest at my first party. Besides, it’s an inch longer than my white one. And I’ll wear my silver slippers too. Mrs. Ford sent them to me last Christmas and I’ve never had a chance to wear them yet. They’re the dearest things. Oh, Miss Oliver, I do hope some of the boys will ask me to dance. I shall die of mortification—truly I will, if nobody does and I have to sit stuck up against the wall all the evening. Of course Carl and Jerry can’t dance because they’re the minister’s sons, or else I could depend on them to save me from utter disgrace.”

“You’ll have plenty of partners—all the over-harbour boys are coming—there’ll be far more boys than girls.”

“I’m glad I’m not a minister’s daughter,” laughed Rilla. “Poor Faith is so furious because she won’t dare to dance tonight. Una doesn’t care, of course. She has never hankered after dancing. Somebody told Faith there would be a taffy-pull in the kitchen for those who didn’t dance and you should have seen the face she made. She and Jem will sit out on the rocks most of the evening, I suppose. Did you know that we are all to walk down as far as that little creek below the old House of Dreams and then sail to the lighthouse? Won’t it just be absolutely divine?”

“When I was fifteen I talked in italics and superlatives too,” said Miss Oliver sarcastically. “I think the party promises to be pleasant for young fry. I expect to be bored. None of those boys will bother dancing with an old maid like me. Jem and Walter will take me out once out of charity. So you can expect me to look forward to it with your touching young rapture.”

“Didn’t you have a good time at your first party, though, Miss Oliver?”

“No. I had a hateful time. I was shabby and homely and nobody asked me to dance except one boy—homelier and shabbier than myself. He was so awkward I hated him—and even he didn’t ask me again.”

I had no real girlhood, Rilla. It's a sad loss. That's why I want you to have a splendid, happy girlhood. And I hope your first party will be one you'll remember all your life with pleasure."

"I dreamed last night I was at the dance and right in the middle of things I discovered I was dressed in my kimono and bedroom shoes," sighed Rilla. "I woke up with a gasp of horror."

"Speaking of dreams—I had an odd one," said Miss Oliver absently. "It was one of those vivid dreams I sometimes have—they are not the vague jumble of ordinary dreams—they are as clear cut and real as life."

"What was your dream?"

"I was standing on the veranda steps, here at Ingleside, looking down over the fields of the Glen. All of a sudden, far in the distance, I saw a long, silvery, glistening wave breaking over them. It came nearer and nearer—just a succession of little white waves like those that break on the sandshore sometimes. The Glen was being swallowed up. I thought, 'Surely the waves will not come near Ingleside'—but they came nearer and nearer—so rapidly—before I could move or call they were breaking right at my feet—and everything was gone—there was nothing but a waste of stormy water where the Glen had been. I tried to draw back—and I saw that the edge of my dress was wet with blood—and I woke up shivering. I don't like the dream. There was some sinister significance in it. That kind of vivid dream always 'comes true' with me."

"I hope it doesn't mean there's a storm coming up from the east to spoil the party," murmured Rilla.

"Incorrigible fifteen!" said Miss Oliver dryly. "No, Rilla-my-Rilla, I don't think there is any danger that it foretells anything so awful as that."

There had been an undercurrent of tension in the Ingleside existence for several days. Only Rilla, absorbed in her own budding life, was unaware of it. Dr. Blythe had taken to looking grave and saying little over the daily paper. Jem and Walter were keenly interested in the news it brought. Jem sought out Walter out in excitement that evening.

"Oh, boy, Germany has declared war on France. This means that England will fight too, probably—and if she does—well, the Piper of your old fancy will have come at last."

"It wasn't a fancy," said Walter slowly. "It was a presentiment—a vision—Jem, I really saw him for a moment that evening long ago. Suppose England does fight?"

"Why, we'll all have to turn in and help her," cried Jem gaily. "We couldn't let the 'old grey mother of the northern sea' fight it out alone, could we? But you can't go—the typhoid has done you out of that. Sort of a shame, eh?"

Walter did not say whether it was a shame or not. He looked silently over the Glen to the dimpling blue harbour beyond.

"We're the cubs—we've got to pitch in tooth and claw if it comes to a family row," Jem went on cheerfully, rumpling up his red curls with a strong, lean, sensitive brown hand—the hand of the boy surgeon, his father often thought. "What an adventure it would be! But I suppose Grey or some of those wary old chaps will patch matters up at the eleventh hour. It'll be a rotten shame if they leave France in the lurch, though. If they don't, we'll see some fun. Well, I suppose it's time to get ready for the spree at the light."

Jem departed whistling "Wi' a hundred pipers and a' and a'," and Walter stood for a long time where he was. There was a little frown on his forehead. This had all come up with the blackness and suddenness of a thundercloud. A few days ago nobody had even thought of such a thing. It was absurd to think of it now. Some way out would be found. War was a hellish, horrible, hideous thing—to see it horrible and hideous to happen in the twentieth century between civilized nations. The mere thought of it was hideous, and made Walter unhappy in its threat to the beauty of life. He would not think of it—he would resolutely put it out of his mind. How beautiful the old Glen was, in its August ripeness with its chain of bowery old homesteads, tilled meadows and quiet gardens. The western sky was lilac

a great golden pearl. Far down the harbour was frosted with a dawning moonlight. The air was full of exquisite sounds—sleepy robin whistles, wonderful, mournful, soft murmurs of wind in the twilight trees, rustle of aspen poplars talking in silvery whispers and shaking their dainty, heart-shaped leaves, lilting young laughter from the windows of rooms where the girls were making ready for the dance. The world was steeped in maddening loveliness of sound and colour. He would think only of these things and of the deep, subtle joy they gave him. “Anyhow, no one will expect me to go,” he thought. “As Jem says, typhoid has seen to that.”

Rilla was leaning out of her room window, dressed for the dance. A yellow pansy slipped from her hair and fell out over the sill like a falling star of gold. She caught at it vainly—but there were enough left. Miss Oliver had woven a little wreath of them for her pet’s hair.

“It’s so beautifully calm—isn’t that splendid? We’ll have a perfect night. Listen, Miss Oliver—I can hear those old bells in Rainbow Valley quite clearly. They’ve been hanging there for over ten years.”

“Their wind chime always makes me think of the aerial, celestial music Adam and Eve heard in Milton’s Eden,” responded Miss Oliver.

“We used to have such fun in Rainbow Valley when we were children,” said Rilla dreamily.

Nobody ever played in Rainbow Valley now. It was very silent on summer evenings. Walter liked to go there to read. Jem and Faith trysted there considerably; Jerry and Nan went there to pursue uninterruptedly the ceaseless wrangles and arguments on profound subjects that seemed to be the preferred method of sweethearting. And Rilla had a beloved little sylvan dell of her own there where she liked to sit and dream.

“I must run down to the kitchen before I go and show myself off to Susan. She would never forgive me if I didn’t.”

Rilla whirled into the shadowy kitchen at Ingleside, where Susan was prosaically darning socks, and lighted it up with her beauty. She wore her green dress with its little pink daisy garlands, her silver stockings and silver slippers. She had golden pansies in her hair and at her creamy throat. She was so pretty and young and glowing that even Cousin Sophia Crawford was compelled to admire her—and Cousin Sophia Crawford admired few transient earthly things. Cousin Sophia and Susan had made up or ignored, their old feud since the former had come to live in the Glen, and Cousin Sophia often came across in the evenings to make a neighbourly call. Susan did not always welcome her rapturously for Cousin Sophia was not what could be called an exhilarating companion. “Some calls are visits and some are visitations, Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan said once, and left it to be inferred that Cousin Sophia were the latter.

Cousin Sophia had a long, pale, wrinkled face, a long, thin nose, a long, thin mouth, and very long, thin, pale hands, generally folded resignedly on her black calico lap. Everything about her seemed long and thin and pale. She looked mournfully upon Rilla Blythe and said sadly,

“Is your hair all your own?”

“Of course it is,” cried Rilla indignantly.

“Ah, well!” Cousin Sophia sighed. “It might be better for you if it wasn’t! Such a lot of hair taken from a person’s strength. It’s a sign of consumption, I’ve heard, but I hope it won’t turn out like that in your case. I s’pose you’ll all be dancing tonight—even the minister’s boys most likely. I s’pose the girls won’t go that far. Ah, well, I never held with dancing. I knew a girl once who dropped dead while she was dancing. How any one could ever dance again after a judgment like that I cannot comprehend.”

“Did she ever dance again?” asked Rilla pertly.

“I told you she dropped dead. Of course she never danced again, poor creature. She was a Kirke from Lowbridge. You ain’t a-going off like that with nothing on your bare neck, are you?”

“It’s a hot evening,” protested Rilla. “But I’ll put on a scarf when we go on the water.”

“I knew of a boat load of young folks who went sailing on that harbour forty years ago just such

night as this—just exactly such a night as this,” said Cousin Sophia lugubriously, “and they were up and drowned—every last one of them. I hope nothing like that’ll happen to you tonight. Do you even try anything for the freckles? I used to find plantain juice real good.”

“You certainly should be a judge of freckles, Cousin Sophia,” said Susan, rushing to Rilla’s defence. “You were more speckled than any toad when you was a girl. Rilla’s only come in summer but you stayed put, season in and season out; and you had not a ground colour like hers behind them neither. You look real nice, Rilla, and that way of fixing your hair is becoming. But you are not going to wait to the harbour in those slippers, are you?”

“Oh, no. We’ll all wear our old shoes to the harbour and carry our slippers. Do you like my dress, Susan?”

“It minds me of a dress I wore when I was a girl,” sighed Cousin Sophia before Susan could reply. “It was green with pink posies on it, too, and it was flounced from the waist to the hem. We didn’t wear the skimpy things girls wear nowadays. Ah me, times has changed and not for the better I’m afraid. I tore a big hole in it that night and someone spilled a cup of tea all over it. Ruined it completely. But I hope nothing will happen to your dress. It ought to be a bit longer I’m thinking—your legs are so terrible long and thin.”

“Mrs. Dr. Blythe does not approve of little girls dressing like grown-up ones,” said Susan stiffly, intending merely a snub to Cousin Sophia. But Rilla felt insulted. A little girl indeed! She whisked out of the kitchen in high dudgeon. Another time she wouldn’t go down to show herself off to Susan—Susan, who thought nobody was grown up until she was sixty! And that horrid Cousin Sophia with her digs about freckles and legs! What business had an old—an old beanpole like that to talk of anybody else being long and thin? Rilla felt all her pleasure in herself and her evening clouded and spoiled. The very teeth of her soul were set on edge and she could have sat down and cried.

But later on her spirits rose again when she found herself one of the gay crowd bound for the Fox Winds light.

The Blythes left Ingleside to the melancholy music of howls from Dog Monday, who was locked up in the barn lest he make an uninvited guest at the light. They picked up the Merediths in the village, and others joined them as they walked down the old harbour road. Mary Vance, resplendent in blue crepe with lace overdress, came out of Miss Cornelia’s gate and attached herself to Rilla and Miss Olivia who were walking together and who did not welcome her over-warmly. Rilla was not very fond of Mary Vance. She had never forgotten the humiliating day when Mary had chased her through the village with a dried codfish. Mary Vance, to tell the truth, was not exactly popular with any of her set. Still, they enjoyed her society—she had such a biting tongue that it was stimulating. “Mary Vance is a habit of ours—we can’t do without her even when we are furious with her,” Di Blythe had once said. Most of the little crowd were paired off after a fashion. Jem walked with Faith Meredith, of course, and Jerry Meredith with Nan Blythe. Di and Walter were together, deep in confidential conversation which Rilla envied.

Carl Meredith was walking with Miranda Pryor, more to torment Joe Milgrave than for any other reason. Joe was known to have a strong hankering for the said Miranda, which shyness prevented him from indulging on all occasions. Joe might summon enough courage to amble up beside Miranda if the night were dark, but here, in this moonlit dusk, he simply could not do it. So he trailed along after the procession and thought things not lawful to be uttered of Carl Meredith. Miranda was the daughter of Whiskers-on-the-moon; she did not share her father’s unpopularity but she was not much run after, being a pale, neutral little creature, somewhat addicted to nervous giggling. She had silvery blonde hair and her eyes were big china blue orbs that looked as if she had been badly frightened when she was little and had never got over it. She would much rather have walked with Joe than with Carl, with whom she did not feel in the least at home. Yet it was something of an honour, too, to have a colleg-

boy beside her, and a son of the manse at that.

~~Shirley Blythe was with Una Meredith and both were rather silent because such was their nature.~~ Shirley was a lad of sixteen, sedate, sensible, thoughtful, full of a quiet humour. He was Susan's "little brown boy" yet, with his brown hair, brown eyes, and clear brown skin. He liked to walk with Una Meredith because she never tried to make him talk or badgered him with chatter. Una was as sweet and shy as she had been in the Rainbow Valley days, and her large, dark-blue eyes were as dreamy and wistful. She had a secret, carefully-hidden fancy for Walter Blythe that nobody but Rilla ever suspected. Rilla sympathized with it and wished Walter would return it. She liked Una better than Faith, whose beauty and aplomb rather overshadowed other girls—and Rilla did not enjoy being overshadowed.

But just now she was very happy. It was so delightful to be tripping with her friends down that dark gleaming road sprinkled with its little spruces and firs, whose balsam made all the air resinous around them. Meadows of sunset afterlight were behind the westerning hills. Before them was the shining harbour. A bell was ringing in the little church over-harbour and the lingering dream-notes died around the dim, amethystine points. The gulf beyond was still silvery blue in the afterlight. Oh, it was all glorious—the clear air with its salt tang, the balsam of the firs, the laughter of her friends. Rilla loved life—its bloom and brilliance; she loved the ripple of music, the hum of merry conversation—she wanted to walk on forever over this road of silver and shadow. It was her first party and she was going to have a splendid time. There was nothing in the world to worry about—not even freckles and over-long legs—nothing except one little haunting fear that nobody would ask her to dance. It was beautiful and satisfying just to be alive—to be fifteen—to be pretty. Rilla drew a long breath of rapture—and caught it midway rather sharply. Jem was telling some story to Faith—something that had happened in the Balkan War.

"The doctor lost both his legs—they were smashed to pulp—and he was left on the field to die. And he crawled about from man to man, to all the wounded men round him, as long as he could, and did everything possible to relieve their sufferings—never thinking of himself—he was tying a bit of bandage round another man's leg when he went under. They found them there, the doctor's dead hands still held the bandage tight, the bleeding was stopped and the other man's life was saved. Some here wasn't he, Faith? I tell you when I read that—"

Jem and Faith moved on out of hearing. Gertrude Oliver suddenly shivered. Rilla pressed her arm sympathetically.

"Wasn't it dreadful, Miss Oliver? I don't know why Jem tells such gruesome things at a time like this when we're all out for fun."

"Do you think it dreadful, Rilla? I thought it wonderful—beautiful. Such a story makes one ashamed of ever doubting human nature. That man's action was godlike. And how humanity responds to the ideal of self-sacrifice. As for my shiver, I don't know what caused it. The evening is certainly warm enough. Perhaps someone is walking over the dark, starshiny spot that is to be my grave. That is the explanation the old superstition would give. Well, I won't think of that on this lovely night. Do you know, Rilla, that when night-time comes I'm always glad I live in the country. We know the real charm of night here as town dwellers never do. Every night is beautiful in the country—even the stormy ones. I love a wild night storm on this old gulf shore. As for a night like this, it is almost too beautiful—it belongs to youth and dreamland and I'm half afraid of it."

"I feel as if I were part of it," said Rilla.

"Ah yes, you're young enough not to be afraid of perfect things. Well, here we are at the House of Dreams. It seems lonely this summer. The Fords didn't come?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Ford and Persis didn't. Kenneth did—but he stayed with his mother's people over the harbour. We haven't seen a great deal of him this summer. He's a little lame, so didn't go about very

much.”

“Lame? What happened to him?”

“He broke his ankle in a football game last fall and was laid up most of the winter. He has limped a little ever since but it is getting better all the time and he expects it will be all right before long. He has been up to Ingleside only twice.”

“Ethel Reese is simply crazy about him,” said Mary Vance. “She hasn’t got the sense she was born with where he is concerned. He walked home with her from the over-harbour church last prayer meeting night and the airs she has put on since would really make you weary of life. As if a Toronto boy like Ken Ford would ever really think of a country girl like Ethel!”

Rilla flushed. It did not matter to her if Kenneth Ford walked home with Ethel Reese a dozen times—it did not! Nothing that he did mattered to her. He was ages older than she was. He chummed with Ned and Di and Faith, and looked upon her, Rilla, as a child whom he never noticed except to tease. And she detested Ethel Reese and Ethel Reese hated her—always had hated her since Walter had pummelled Dan so notoriously in Rainbow Valley days; but why need she be thought beneath Kenneth Ford’s notice because she was a country girl, pray? As for Mary Vance, she was getting to be an out-and-out gossip and thought of nothing but who walked home with people!

There was a little pier on the harbour shore below the House of Dreams, and two boats were moored there. One boat was skippered by Jem Blythe, the other by Joe Milgrave, who knew all about boats and was nothing loth to let Miranda Pryor see it. They raced down the harbour and Joe’s boat won. More boats were coming down from the Harbour Head and across the harbour from the western side. Everywhere there was laughter. The big white tower on Four Winds Point was overflowing with light while its revolving beacon flashed overhead. A family from Charlottetown, relatives of the light keeper, were summering at the light, and they were giving the party to which all the young people of Four Winds and Glen St. Mary and over-harbour had been invited. As Jem’s boat swung in below the lighthouse Rilla desperately snatched off her shoes and donned her silver slippers behind Miranda Oliver’s screening back. A glance had told her that the rock-cut steps climbing up to the light were lined with boys, and lighted by Chinese lanterns, and she was determined she would not walk up those steps in the heavy shoes her mother had insisted on her wearing for the road. The slippers pinched abominably, but nobody would have suspected it as Rilla tripped smilingly up the steps, her soft dark eyes glowing and questioning, her colour deepening richly on her round, creamy cheeks. The very minute she reached the top of the steps an over-harbour boy asked her to dance and the next moment they were in the pavilion that had been built seaward of the lighthouse for dances. It was a delightful spot, roofed over with fir-boughs and hung with lanterns. Beyond was the sea in a radiance that glowed and shimmered, to the left the moonlit crests and hollows of the sand-dunes, to the right the rocky shore with its inky shadows and its crystalline coves. Rilla and her partner swung in among the dancers; she drew a long breath of delight; what witching music Ned Burr of the Upper Glen was coaxing from his fiddle—it was really like the magical pipes of the old tale which compelled all who heard them to dance. How cool and fresh the gulf breeze blew; how white and wonderful the moonlight was over everything! This was life—enchanted life. Rilla felt as if her feet and her soul both had wings.

The Piper Pipes

Rilla's first party was a triumph—or so it seemed at first. She had so many partners that she had to split her dances. Her silver slippers seemed verily to dance of themselves and though they continued to pinch her toes and blister her heels that did not interfere with her enjoyment in the least. Ethel Reese gave her a bad ten minutes by beckoning her mysteriously out of the pavilion and whispering with a Reese-like smirk, that her dress gaped behind and that there was a stain on the flounce. Rilla rushed miserably to the room in the lighthouse which was fitted up for a temporary ladies' dressing room, and discovered that the stain was merely a tiny grass smear and that the gap was equally tiny where a hook had pulled loose. Irene Howard fastened it up for her and gave her some over-sweetened condescending compliments. Rilla felt flattered by Irene's condescension. She was an Upper Glen girl of nineteen who seemed to like the society of the younger girls—spiteful friends said because she could queen it over them without rivalry. But Rilla thought Irene quite wonderful and loved her for her patronage. Irene was pretty and stylish; she sang divinely and spent every winter in Charlottetown taking music lessons. She had an aunt in Montreal who sent her wonderful things to wear; she was reported to have had a sad love affair—nobody knew just what, but its very mystery allured. Rilla felt that Irene's compliments crowned her evening. She ran gaily back to the pavilion and lingered for a moment in the glow of the lanterns at the entrance looking at the dancers. A momentary break in the whirling throng gave her a glimpse of Kenneth Ford standing at the other side.

Rilla's heart skipped a beat—or, if that be a physiological impossibility, she thought it did. So he was here, after all. She had concluded he was not coming—not that it mattered in the least. Would he seek her? Would he take any notice of her? Of course, he wouldn't ask her to dance—that couldn't be hoped for. He thought her just a mere child. He had called her "Spider" not three weeks ago when he had been at Ingleside one evening. She had cried about it upstairs afterwards and hated him. But her heart skipped a beat when she saw that he was edging his way round the side of the pavilion toward her. Was he coming to her—was he?—was he?—yes, he was! He was looking for her—he was here beside her—he was gazing down at her with something in his dark grey eyes that Rilla had never seen in them. Oh, it was almost too much to bear! and everything was going on as before—the dancers were spinning round, the boys who couldn't get partners were hanging about the pavilion, canoodling; couples were sitting out on the rocks—nobody seemed to realize what a stupendous thing had happened.

Kenneth was a tall lad, very good looking, with a certain careless grace of bearing that somehow made all the other boys seem stiff and awkward by contrast. He was reported to be awesomely clever, with the glamour of a far-away city and a big university hanging around him. He had also the reputation of being a bit of a lady-killer. But that probably accrued to him from his possession of a laughing velvety voice which no girl could hear without a heartbeat, and a dangerous way of listening as if she were saying something that he had longed all his life to hear.

"Is this Rilla-my-Rilla?" he asked in a low tone.

"Yeth," said Rilla, and immediately wished she could throw herself headlong down the lighthouse rock or otherwise vanish from a jeering world.

Rilla had lisped in early childhood; but she had grown out of it. Only on occasions of stress and strain did the tendency re-assert itself. She hadn't lisped for a year; and now at this very moment, when she was so especially desirous of appearing grown up and sophisticated, she must go and lisp like a baby. It was too mortifying; she felt as if tears were going to come into her eyes; the next minute she would be—blubbering—yes, just blubbering—she wished Kenneth would go away—she wished he had never come. The party was spoiled. Everything had turned to dust and ashes.

And he had called her "Rilla-my-Rilla"—not "Spider" or "Kid" or "Puss," as he had been used to call

her when he took any notice whatever of her. She did not at all resent his using Walter's pet name for her; it sounded beautifully in his low caressing tones, with just the faintest suggestion of emphasis on the "my." It would have been so nice if she had not made a fool of herself. She dared not look up lest she should see laughter in his eyes. So she looked down; and as her lashes were very long and dark and her lids very thick and creamy, the effect was quite charming and provocative, and Kenneth reflected that Rilla Blythe was going to be the beauty of the Ingleside girls after all. He wanted to make her look up—to catch again that little, demure, questioning glance. She was the prettiest thing at the party there was no doubt of that.

What was he saying? Rilla could hardly believe her ears.

"Can we have a dance?"

"Yes," said Rilla. She said it with such a fierce determination not to lisp that she fairly blurted the word out. Then she writhed in spirit again. It sounded so bold—so eager—as if she were fairly jumping at him! What would he think of her? Oh, why did dreadful things like this happen, just when a girl wanted to appear at her best?

Kenneth drew her in among the dancers.

"I think this game ankle of mine is good for one hop around, at least," he said.

"How is your ankle?" said Rilla. Oh, why couldn't she think of something else to say? She knew Kenneth was sick of inquiries about his ankle. She had heard him say so at Ingleside—heard him tell Di he was going to wear a placard on his breast announcing to all and sundry that the ankle was improving, etc. And now she must go and ask this stale question again.

Kenneth was tired of inquiries about his ankle. But then he had not often been asked about it by lips with such an adorable kissable dent just above them. Perhaps that was why he answered very patiently that it was getting on well and didn't trouble him much, if he didn't walk or stand too long at a time. "They tell me it will be as strong as ever in time, but I'll have to cut football out this fall."

They danced together and Rilla knew every girl in sight envied her. After the dance they went down the rock steps and Kenneth found a little flat and they rowed across the moonlit channel to the sandy shore; they walked on the sand till Kenneth's ankle made protest and then they sat down among the dunes. Kenneth talked to her as he had talked to Nan and Di. Rilla, overcome with a shyness she did not understand, could not talk much, and thought he would think her frightfully stupid; but in spite of this it was all very wonderful—the exquisite moonlit night, the shining sea, the tiny little waves lapping and swishing on the sand, the cool and freakish wind of night crooning in the stiff grasses on the crest of the dunes, the music sounding faintly and sweetly over the channel.

"'A merry lilt o' moonlight for mermaiden revelry,'" quoted Kenneth softly from one of Walter's poems.

And just he and she alone together in the glamour of sound and sight! If only her slippers didn't bite so! and if only she could talk cleverly like Miss Oliver—nay, if she could only talk as she did herself to other boys! But words would not come, she could only listen and murmur little commonplace sentences now and again. But perhaps her dreamy eyes and her dented lip and her slender throat talked eloquently for her. At any rate Kenneth seemed in no hurry to suggest going back and when they did go back supper was in progress. He found a seat for her near the window of the lighthouse kitchen and sat on the sill beside her while she ate her ices and cake. Rilla looked about her and thought how lovely her first party had been. She would never forget it. The room re-echoed to laughter and jest. Beautiful young eyes sparkled and shone. From the pavilion outside came the lilt of the fiddle and the rhythmic steps of the dancers.

There was a little disturbance among a group of boys crowded about the door; a young fellow pushed through and halted on the threshold, looking about him rather sombrely. It was Jack Elliott from over the harbour—a McGill medical student, a quiet chap not much addicted to social doings. He had been

invited to the party but had not been expected to come since he had to go to Charlottetown that day and could not be back until late. Yet here he was—and he carried a folded paper in his hand.

Gertrude Oliver looked at him from her corner and shivered again. She had enjoyed the party herself after all, for she had foregathered with a Charlottetown acquaintance who, being a stranger and much older than most of the guests, felt himself rather out of it, and had been glad to fall in with this clever girl who could talk of world doings and outside events with the zest and vigour of a man. In the pleasure of his society she had forgotten some of her misgivings of the day. Now they suddenly returned to her. What news did Jack Elliott bring? Lines from an old poem flashed unbidden into her mind—"there was a sound of revelry by night"—"Hush! Hark! A deep sound strikes like a rising knell"—why should she think of that now? Why didn't Jack Elliott speak—if he had anything to tell? Why did he just stand there, glowering importantly?

"Ask him—ask him," she said feverishly to Allan Daly. But somebody else had already asked him. The room grew very silent all at once. Outside the fiddler had stopped for a rest and there was silence there too. A far off they heard the low moan of the gulf—the presage of a storm already on its way up the Atlantic. A girl's laugh drifted up from the rocks and died away as if frightened out of existence by the sudden stillness.

"England declared war on Germany today," said Jack Elliott slowly. "The news came by wire just as we left town."

"God help us," whispered Gertrude Oliver under her breath. "My dream—my dream! The first war has broken." She looked at Allan Daly and tried to smile.

"Is this Armageddon?" she asked.

"I am afraid so," he said gravely.

A chorus of exclamations had arisen round them—light surprise and idle interest for the most part. Few there realized the import of the message—fewer still realized that it meant anything to them. Before long the dancing was on again and the hum of pleasure was as loud as ever. Gertrude and Allan Daly talked the news over in low, troubled tones. Walter Blythe had turned pale and left the room. Outside he met Jem, hurrying up the rock steps.

"Have you heard the news, Jem?"

"Yes. The Piper has come. Hurrah! I knew England wouldn't leave France in the lurch. I've been trying to get Captain Josiah to hoist the flag but he says it isn't the proper caper till sunrise. Jack says they'll be calling for volunteers tomorrow."

"What a fuss to make over nothing," said Mary Vance disdainfully as Jem dashed off. She was sitting out with Miller Douglas on a lobster trap which was not only an unromantic but an uncomfortable seat. But Mary and Miller were both supremely happy on it. Miller Douglas was a big, strapping uncouth lad, who thought Mary Vance's tongue uncommonly gifted and Mary Vance's white eye stars of the first magnitude; and neither of them had the least inkling why Jem Blythe wanted to hoist the lighthouse flag. "What does it matter if there's going to be a war over there in Europe? I'm sure it doesn't concern us."

Walter looked at her and had one of his odd visitations of prophecy.

"Before this war is over," he said—or something said through his lips—"every man and woman and child in Canada will feel it—you, Mary, will feel it—feel it to your heart's core. You will weep tears of blood over it. The Piper has come—and he will pipe until every corner of the world has heard his awful and irresistible music. It will be years before the dance of death is over—years, Mary. And in those years millions of hearts will break."

"Fancy now!" said Mary who always said that when she couldn't think of anything else to say. She didn't know what Walter meant but she felt uncomfortable. Walter Blythe was always saying odd things. That old Piper of his—she hadn't heard anything about him since their playdays in Rainbow

Valley—and now here he was bobbing up again. She didn't like it, and that was the long and short of it.

"Aren't you painting it rather strong, Walter?" asked Harvey Crawford, coming up just then. "The war won't last for years—it'll be over in a month or two. England will just wipe Germany off the map in no time."

"Do you think a war for which Germany has been preparing for twenty years will be over in a few weeks?" said Walter passionately. "This isn't a paltry struggle in a Balkan corner, Harvey. It is a death grapple. Germany comes to conquer or to die. And do you know what will happen if she conquers Canada will be a German colony."

"Well, I guess a few things will happen before that," said Harvey shrugging his shoulders. "The British navy would have to be licked for one; and for another, Miller here, now, and I, we'd raise dust, wouldn't we, Miller? No Germans need apply for this old country, eh?"

Harvey ran down the steps laughing.

"I declare, I think all you boys talk the craziest stuff," said Mary Vance in disgust. She got up and dragged Miller off to the rock-shore. It didn't happen often that they had a chance for a talk together. Mary was determined that this one shouldn't be spoiled by Walter Blythe's silly blather about Pipes and Germans and such like absurd things. They left Walter standing alone on the rock steps, looking out over the beauty of Four Winds with brooding eyes that saw it not.

The best of the evening was over for Rilla, too. Ever since Jack Elliott's announcement, she had sensed that Kenneth was no longer thinking about her. She felt suddenly lonely and unhappy. It was worse than if he had never noticed her at all. Was life like this—something delightful happening around then, just as you were revelling in it, slipping away from you? Rilla told herself pathetically that she felt years older than when she had left home that evening. Perhaps she did—perhaps she was. Who knows? It does not do to laugh at the pangs of youth. They are very terrible because youth has not yet learned that "this, too, will pass away." Rilla sighed and wished she were home, in bed, crying into her pillow.

"Tired?" said Kenneth, gently but absently—oh, so absently. He really didn't care a bit whether she were tired or not, she thought.

"Kenneth," she ventured timidly, "you don't think this war will matter much to us in Canada, do you?" "Matter? Of course it will matter to the lucky fellows who will be able to take a hand. I won't—thank you to this confounded ankle. Rotten luck, I call it."

"I don't see why we should fight England's battles," cried Rilla. "She's quite able to fight them herself."

"That isn't the point. We are part of the British Empire. It's a family affair. We've got to stand by each other. The worst of it is, it will be over before I can be of any use."

"Do you mean that you would really volunteer to go if it wasn't for your ankle?" asked Rilla incredulously.

"Sure I would. You see they'll go by thousands. Jem'll be off, I'll bet a cent—Walter won't be strong enough yet, I suppose. And Jerry Meredith—he'll go! And I was worrying about being out of football this year!"

Rilla was too startled to say anything. Jem—and Jerry! Nonsense! Why father and Mr. Meredith wouldn't allow it. They weren't through college. Oh, why hadn't Jack Elliott kept his horrid news to himself?

Mark Warren came up and asked her to dance. Rilla went, knowing Kenneth didn't care whether she went or stayed. An hour ago on the sand-shore he had been looking at her as if she were the only being of any importance in the world. And now she was nobody. His thoughts were full of this Great Game which was to be played out on bloodstained fields with empires for stakes—a Game in which

womenkind could have no part. Women, thought Rilla miserably, just had to sit and cry at home. But all this was foolishness. Kenneth couldn't go—he admitted that himself—and Walter couldn't—thank goodness for that—and Jem and Jerry would have more sense. She wouldn't worry—she would enjoy herself. But how awkward Mark Warren was! How he bungled his steps! Why, for mercy's sake, did boys try to dance who didn't know the first thing about dancing; and who had feet as big as boats! There, he had bumped her into somebody! She would never dance with him again!

She danced with others, though the zest was gone out of the performance and she had begun to realize that her slippers hurt her badly. Kenneth seemed to have gone—at least nothing was to be seen of him. Her first party was spoiled, though it had seemed so beautiful at one time. Her head ached—her toes burned. And worse was yet to come. She had gone down with some over-harbour friends to the rock shore where they all lingered as dance after dance went on above them. It was cool and pleasant and they were tired. Rilla sat silent, taking no part in the gay conversation. She was glad when someone called down that the over-harbour boats were leaving. A laughing scramble up the lighthouse rock followed. A few couples still whirled about in the pavilion but the crowd had thinned out. Rilla looked about her for the Glen group. She could not see one of them. She ran into the lighthouse. Still, no sign of anybody. In dismay she ran to the rock steps, down which the over-harbour guests were hurrying. She could see the boats below—where was Jem's—where was Joe's?

"Why, Rilla Blythe, I thought you'd be gone home long ago," said Mary Vance, who was waving her scarf at a boat skimming up the channel, skippered by Miller Douglas.

"Where are the rest?" gasped Rilla.

"Why, they're gone—Jem went an hour ago—Una had a headache. And the rest went with Joe about fifteen minutes ago. See—they're just going around Birch Point. I didn't go because it's getting rough and I knew I'd be seasick. I don't mind walking home from here. It's only a mile and a half. I suppose you'd gone. Where were you?"

"Down on the rocks with Jem and Mollie Crawford. Oh, why didn't they look for me?"

"They did—but you couldn't be found. Then they concluded you must have gone in the other boat. Don't worry. You can stay all night with me and we'll 'phone up to Ingleside where you are."

Rilla realized that there was nothing else to do. Her lips trembled and tears came into her eyes. She blinked savagely—she would not let Mary Vance see her crying. But to be forgotten like this! To think nobody had thought it worth while to make sure where she was—not even Walter. Then she had a sudden dismayed recollection.

"My shoes," she exclaimed. "I left them in the boat."

"Well, I never," said Mary. "You're the most thoughtless kid I ever saw. You'll have to ask Hazel Lewison to lend you a pair of shoes."

"I won't," cried Rilla, who didn't like the said Hazel. "I'll go barefoot first."

Mary shrugged her shoulders.

"Just as you like. Pride must suffer pain. It'll teach you to be more careful. Well, let's hike."

Accordingly they hiked. But to "hike" along a deep-rutted, pebbly lane in frail, silver-hued slippers with high French heels, is not an exhilarating performance. Rilla managed to limp and totter along until they reached the harbour road; but she could go no farther in those detestable slippers. She took them and her dear silk stockings off and started barefoot. That was not pleasant either; her feet were very tender and the pebbles and ruts of the road hurt them. Her blistered heels smarted. But physical pain was almost forgotten in the sting of humiliation. This was a nice predicament! If Kenneth Forster could see her now, limping along like a little girl with a stone bruise! Oh, what a horrid way for her lovely party to end! She just had to cry—it was too terrible. Nobody cared for her—nobody bothered about her at all. Well, if she caught cold from walking home barefoot on a dew-wet road and went into a decline perhaps they would be sorry. She furtively wiped her tears away with her scarf-

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