

The Anne of Green Gables Novels #4

L.M. MONTGOMERY

Anne of A Windy Poplars



Illustration by [unreadable]

PUFFIN CLASSICS

ANNE OF WINDY WILLOWS

LUCY MAUDE MONTGOMERY (1874–1942) was born on Prince Edward Island, off the east coast of Canada. She lived there throughout her childhood with her grandparents (following her mother's death in 1876). Readers of the *Anne of Green Gables* series of books will find plenty of scenes drawn from the author's happy memories of the island and the farmhouse where she was brought up.

Like many a future writer, Lucy Maude Montgomery was not only an avid reader as a child, but also composed numerous short stories and poems. Her first published piece was a poem that appeared in the local paper when she was fifteen years old. Later, after she had finished school and university, she turned her love of books to good effect by becoming a teacher.

She continued to write, and was once asked to contribute a short story to a magazine. She dusted off an idea for a plot she had jotted down when she was much younger – and turned it into one of the most popular books ever written for children. *Anne of Green Gables* was first published in 1908.

Lucy herself said about *Anne of Green Gables*: 'I thought girls in their teens might like it. But grandparents, school and college boys, old pioneers in the Australian bush, girls in India, missionaries in China, monks in remote monasteries, premiers of Great Britain, and red-headed people all over the world have written to me, telling me how they loved *Anne* and her successors.'

The 'successors' are nine further *Anne* books, all of which are now published in Puffin Classics. Lucy Maude Montgomery continued to write under her maiden name after marrying a Presbyterian minister, Ewan MacDonald, in 1911. And, despite moving with him to Toronto, she continued to set her stories on 'the only island there is', and where her heart always remained.

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L. M. MONTGOMERY

Anne of Windy Willows

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To the Friends of Anne Everywhere

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THE FIRST YEAR

1

A letter from Anne Shirley, B.A., Principal of Summerside High School, to Gilbert Blythe, medical student at Redmond College, Kingsport

Windy Willows
Spook's Lane
S'side
P.E.I.
Monday, Sept. 12

DEAREST,

Isn't that an address! Did you ever hear anything so delicious? Windy Willows is the name of my new home, and I love it. I also love Spook's Lane, which has no legal existence. It should be Trent Street, but it is never called Trent Street except on the rare occasions when it is mentioned in the *Weekly Courier* – and then people look at each other and say, 'Where on earth is that?' Spook's Lane it is – although for what reason I cannot tell you. I have already asked Rebecca Dew about it, but all she can say is that it has always been Spook's Lane, and there was some old yarn years ago of its being haunted. But *she* has never seen anything worse-looking than herself in it.

However, I mustn't get ahead of my story. You don't know Rebecca Dew yet. But you will – oh, yes, you will! I foresee that Rebecca Dew will figure largely in my future correspondence.

It's dusk, dearest. (In passing, isn't 'dusk' a lovely word? I like it better than twilight. It sounds so velvety and shadowy and – and – *dusky*.) In daylight I belong to the world; in the night to sleep and eternity. But in the dusk I'm free from both and belong only to myself – and *you*. So I'm going to keep this hour sacred to writing to you. Though *this* won't be a love-letter. I have a scratchy pen, and I can't write love-letters with a scratchy

pen, or a sharp pen, or a stub pen. So you'll only get *that* kind of a letter from me when I have exactly the right kind of a pen. Meanwhile I'll tell you about my new domicile and its inhabitants. Gilbert, they're such *dears*.

I came up yesterday to look for a boarding-house. Mrs Rachel Lynde came with me, ostensibly to do some shopping, but really, I know, to choose a boarding-house for me. In spite of my Arts course and my B.A. Mrs Lynde still thinks I am an inexperienced young thing who must be guided and directed and overseen.

We came by train, and, oh, Gilbert, I had the funniest adventure! You know I've always been one to whom adventures came unsought. I just seem to attract them, as it were.

It happened just as the train was coming to a stop at the station. I got up, and, stooping to pick up Mrs Lynde's suitcase – she was planning to spend Sunday with a friend in Summerside – I leaned my knuckles heavily on what I thought was the shiny arm of a seat. In a second I received a violent crack across them that nearly made me howl. Gilbert, what I had taken for the arm of a seat was a man's bald head. He was glaring fiercely at me, and had evidently just wakened up. I apologized abjectly, and got off the train as quickly as possible. The last I saw of him he was still glaring. Mrs Lynde was horrified, and my knuckles are sore yet!

I did not expect to have much trouble in finding a boarding-house, for a certain Mrs Tom Pringle had been boarding the various Principals of the High School for the last fifteen years. But for some unknown reason she has grown suddenly tired of 'being bothered', and wouldn't take me. Several other desirable places had some polite excuse. Several other places *weren't* desirable. We wandered about the town the whole afternoon, and got hot and tired and blue and headachy – at least, *I* did. I was ready to give up in despair – and then Spook's Lane just happened!

We had dropped in to see Mrs Braddock, an old crony of Mrs Lynde's, and Mrs Braddock said she thought 'the widows' might take me in.

'I've heard they want a boarder to pay Rebecca Dew's wages. They can't afford to keep Rebecca any longer unless a little extra money comes in. And if Rebecca goes *who* is to milk that old red cow?'

Mrs Braddock fixed me with a stern eye, as if she thought *I* ought to milk the red cow, but wouldn't believe me on oath if I claimed I could.

'What widows are you talking about?' demanded Mrs Lynde.

‘Why, Aunt Kate and Aunt Chatty,’ said Mrs Braddock, as if everybody, even an ignorant B.A., ought to know that. ‘Aunt Kate is Mrs Amasa MacComber – she’s the Captain’s widow – and Aunt Chatty is Mrs Lincoln MacLean, just a plain widow. But everyone calls them “Aunt”. They live at the end of Spook’s Lane.’

Spook’s Lane! That settled it. I knew I just had to board with the widows.

‘Let’s go and see them at once,’ I implored Mrs Lynde. It seemed to me if we lost a moment Spook’s Lane would vanish back into fairyland.

‘You can see them, but it’ll be Rebecca who’ll really decide whether they’ll take you or not. Rebecca Dew rules the roost at Windy Willows, I can tell you.’

Windy Willows! It couldn’t be true – no, it couldn’t! I must be dreaming. And Mrs Rachel Lynde was actually saying it was a funny name for a place.

‘Oh, Captain MacComber called it that. It was his house, you know. He planted all the willows round it, and was mighty proud of it, though he was seldom home and never stayed long. Aunt Kate used to say that was inconvenient, but we never got it figured out whether she meant his staying such a little time or his coming back at all. Well, Miss Shirley, I hope you’ll get there. Rebecca Dew’s a good cook and a genius with cold potatoes. If she takes a notion to you you’ll be in clover. If she don’t – well, she won’t, that’s all. I hear there’s a new banker in town looking for a boarding-house, and she may prefer him. It’s kind of funny Mrs Tom Pringle wouldn’t take you. Summerside is full of Pringles and half-Pringles. They’re called the “Royal Family”, and you’ll have to get on their good side, Miss Shirley, or you’ll never get along in Summerside High. They’ve always ruled the roost hereabouts. There’s a street called after old Captain Abraham Pringle. There’s a regular clan of them, but the two old ladies at Maplehurst boss the tribe. I did hear they were down on you.’

‘Why should they be?’ I exclaimed. ‘I’m a total stranger to them.’

‘Well, a third cousin of theirs applied for the Principalship, and they all think he should have got it. When your application was accepted the whole kit and boodle of them threw back their head and howled. Well, people are like that. We have to take them as we find them, you know. They’ll be as smooth as cream to you, but they’ll work against you every time. I’m not wanting to discourage you, but forewarned is forearmed. I hope you’ll make good just to spite them. If the widows take you, you won’t mind eating with