

# For a Dream's Sake

Lucy Maud Montgomery  
1935

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Lucy Maud Montgomery

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“I think I’ve been a little off my head ever since last night,” said Gilroy Gray.

He had hurried up from college as soon as his classes were over to make sure that last night had not been a dream . . . that Vere had really promised to marry him at last . . . after all these years of devotion when he had so little hope of winning her.

And it was true. She had met him in the rose garden and held up her lips to be kissed. Then she had turned again quietly to her occupation of cutting roses for pot-pourri. Vere still made pot-pourri every summer. It was a rule with her. None of the younger generation bothered with it. They gathered their roses while they might and flung them aside when faded.

There was a basket at Vere’s feet, half tipped, spilling its contents in a little pool of pink and white and crimson sweetness on the grass. She wore some kind of a pale blue dress, quite long. Gilroy was glad that long dresses were coming in again. They suited Vere as short ones had never done. In the shadow of her garden hat the distinction of her slightly lined, slightly sad face impressed him anew. She had a kind of pale, luminous beauty . . . the beauty of the first evening star in the sky or a white mountain peak smitten with dawn. She was not young, but when she came into a room every other woman in it suddenly became common and undistinguished. She was usually calm and fine and a little chill. She did not have many close friends, but those she did have were always unchangeably loyal to her. She had a strange holding power under all her aloofness.

Gilroy did not know just why he loved her or why she was so full of enchantment for him. But it had been so ever since he had first seen her. And now, at last, she was his . . . with reservations.

He had accepted those reservations. He knew—she had told him—that she had only second-hand love to give. He must be content with that. He had known something of it before, but she had told him the whole story the previous evening.

When she was a girl of seventeen she had loved Maurice Tisdale. She did not say a great deal about him, but Gilroy got the impression that Maurice had been a slim, romantic, starry-eyed youth, fonder of reading poetry than of work, although Vere most certainly did not say that. And her father, the irascible old entomologist, had sent him away.

“Father never liked him. He—he—the Maybee pride, you know. And Maurice was poor. I would have gone with him . . . what did I care for the Maybee pride or the Tisdale poverty? But I couldn’t leave Mother then. She was so ill. Maurice went west. We corresponded until . . . until the word of his death came. He had gone with a prospecting company into the mountains . . . he got lost . . . he was never found. Life seemed over for me . . . that kind of life anyway. I’ve never cared since . . . like

that . . . and I never can. I do care for you, Gilroy, and if having me will give you happiness, why, take me. Only . . . you know I have to be frank, Gilroy . . . the real me will always belong to Maurice. I can't forsake my dream. It has been a part of my life so long. He—he didn't deserve that I should ever be unfaithful to him. He died loving me."

Gilroy accepted it all and put it behind him. He would rather have half of her heart than the whole one of any other woman.

"All day I've been wondering if I only imagined last night," he said. "Come, darling, never mind the roses . . . I've only an hour and I want you to give me every minute."

"But I can give you only half an hour," said Vere, smiling. "Then I've got to help Father classify some lovely new bugs he's got. He's so excited over them, poor dear. Myself, I can get a little tired of them. I think . . . I really think I'd prefer you."

When the half hour was over and Vere had gone in to help Professor Maybee with his bugs, Gilroy went away, taking the short cut through the little park below the block where the old Maybee place was. He sat down on one of the benches to dream of Vere for a few minutes. He wondered if he would ever win her wholly . . . if there would ever come a time when he would not feel that his wife was the thrall of a dream whose core was another man . . . a dead man, dead in his youth . . . always young, romantic, alluring, in contrast to his—Gilroy's—greying middle age. Gilroy sighed in spite of his happiness. But he had lived long enough to learn that there are very few unspoiled things in this world.

"Hot, ain't it?" sympathetically agreed the man who was sitting on the other end of the bench.

Gilroy started slightly. He had not noticed his coming. He was a stout, rather commonplace man, rather flashily dressed, with a very weird and terrible necktie. He had taken off his hat to mop his forehead, and Gilroy saw that he was bald. His face was red, his eyes bleared and puffy. "I've been looking round this little old burg trying to locate someone I know," said the stranger. "I was born and bred here and it's sixteen years since I left. There doesn't seem to be any of my old pals in the place."

"That is . . . sad," said Gilroy idiotically. He did not want to talk to this man.

"It would have been a bit of a shock to them if I had found them," said the man, with a grin. He paused to light a cigarette, a huge diamond shining like a small sun on his little finger . . . the nail of which was not impeccable. "You see, everybody in this town thinks I'm dead."

"Indeed?"

“Yes. After I’d been west awhile I went out with a prospecting party and got lost. Had a dickens of a time finding my way back to civilization. Found everybody thought I was a goner, so I let ’em think so. I had my reasons. There was a skirt . . . well, you know. Lit out for another town and went into the real estate business. I’ve done well . . . you bet I ain’t the poverty-stricken kid I was when I left here. It used to be a saying that all the Tisdales had holes in their pockets. But you bet I sewed up mine.”

Gilroy sat as if stunned. He could not have spoken if his life had depended on it. This was Maurice Tisdale . . . this!

“I’m taking the wife and kids east to visit her people. She wanted to stop off in Trentville to see an old chum, so I thought I’d come on here and she could pick me up on the 6:15 train. But I’m blessed if I don’t wish I hadn’t bothered. Can’t find anyone who ever knew me and there isn’t even a place where a fellow could wet his whistle.”

Still Gilroy said nothing. What was there to say?

Maurice Tisdale mopped his face again.

“Say, when I used to live here there was an old bug-hunter on that street up there . . . old Professor Maybee. Maybee, he was some guy. Went off his chump watching bugs. He had a daughter, though. There was some class to her . . . a bit skinny . . . no more figger than an umbrella. We were quite sweet on each other in those days. Not that I meant anything much, but her face was easy to look at and a fellow had to kill time. We read miles of poetry together . . . say, she used to write some herself, ’pon my word, and read it to me. Then the bug-man got his dander up . . . the Maybees had a rotten pride. He packed me off . . . if you could have seen him”—Maurice paused to give an imitation of Professor Maybee in the act of dismissal. It was so well done that even the frozen Gilroy almost smiled. The creature could mimic.

“I pretended to be a bit cut up—just to let Vere down easy—but I was glad enough to snap out of it. We wrote for a while after I went west, but when I found I was so conveniently dead . . . well, that suited me too. D’ye happen to know what became of Vere? I suppose she’s been married for years and put on weight like myself.”

“No, she is not married,” Gilroy found himself able to say.

“Whew! I’m surprised . . . and yet I’m not. ’Taint everybody that would interest her. Well, she’s no chicken now. Must be pretty definitely on the shelf. Do they still live up there?”

“Yes.”

“Then I believe I’ll toddle up and see her. It’ll help to put the time in. I suppose since I’m safely married old Maybee won’t be scared of my running off with his lady daughter.”

For a moment Gilroy wavered. Should he let him go? If Vere saw him, just as he was . . . well, he, Gilroy, would be under no necessity of sharing her with a ghost all their life together. When she saw Maurice Tisdale of today her dream would be scorched out of existence in the humiliation of the moment. He would be left without a rival.

But . . . what would it do to her? If her dream went would it not take with it something that was part of her charm? She would be nothing but a shamed, broken woman, all the fine aloofness and evasive frost of her smirched and draggled. Could he do this thing to her?

“I’m afraid it’s no use your going up there,” he said quietly. “The Maybees aren’t home just now . . . off for a visit somewhere, I understand.”

Maurice Tisdale shrugged his fat shoulders.

“Just my luck. However, maybe it’s as well. Vere was the type that would make an awful skinny old maid. But she was one of the kind that sort of hang on to an idea. Just as well to let sleeping dogs lie. Guess I’ll toddle down to the hotel and wait for my train. It’s too darned hot to prowl about any longer.”

Gilroy watched him out of sight . . . the fatuous sordid creature who still held sway in the deepest recesses of Vere Maybee’s heart. He laughed . . . a little bitterly but unregretfully.

“I have saved her dream for her,” he thought.

[The end of *For a Dream's Sake* by L. M. Montgomery]