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The Road to Yesterday

L. M. Montgomery

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Susette was not actually engaged to Harvey Brooks but she knew when she came back from her visit to Glenellyn she would be. When Harvey had got along so far as to invite her to Glenellyn to meet his mother and his Aunt Clorinda and his Great-aunt Ruth and several other relatives, it meant only one thing . . . that he had at last made up his mind to marry her. It would not have occurred to Harvey that there was any other mind to be made up. And, indeed, there wasn't, as Susette, who was always honest with herself, admitted. She had long since decided to say "yes" when he said "Will you?" What else could the sub-editor of *Womanhood* do when Harvey Brooks condescended to her? To accept Harvey meant accepting wealth, social position, a beautiful home . . . and . . . and . . . and Harvey! Susette made an impatient grimace at her mirrored face as she pulled her smart green hat over the golden bronze of her hair. "You are the most unreasonable creature I know," she said. "Harvey is a catch . . . not only for what he has but for what he is. He . . . he's impeccable! Handsome, well-groomed, well-behaved, successful . . . what more do you ask, Susette King? You, who ran around a farm bare-footed till you were twelve and now, at twenty-eight . . . twenty-eight, Susette King . . . are hanging on by your eyelids to the sub-editorship of a new magazine and trying to delude yourself and the world into the belief that you have a career. You ought simply to be dying of joy to think that Harvey Brooks . . . *the* Harvey Brooks who was always supposed to be too busy making money ever to find time to make love but who would have been expected to choose a countess if he did . . . has taken it into his head to fall in love with you, to the horror of all his clan. Nay, more, has made them swallow you, hook, line and sinker, as shown by this invitation. Why are you not dying of gratitude, Susette King?"

The fact remained that she was not. Still, she liked Harvey very well, she loved what he could offer her, and she was going to marry him. There was no doubt in her mind about that as she ran down to Glenellyn that afternoon in her own little maroon roadster. Nevertheless, she was feeling a trifle stodgy. It was a bit of an ordeal to be appraised by Harvey's family, who thought so very highly and justly of themselves. And the minute she saw Glenellyn she hated it. It was such a self-satisfied house.

I would like to smash a few of your windows," was Susette's instant reaction to it.

Some impish devil whispered the same thing to her when Harvey, already rather heavily possessive, introduced her to his mother. Mrs. Brooks condescended kindly and Aunt Clorinda kissed her. Susette had not expected that and would have preferred not. It seemed to include her too quickly and too—inescapably in the family. The rest of the house party . . . almost all of them relatives of Harvey . . .

shook hands dutifully and almost pleasantly. On the whole, in spite of Aunt Clorinda's kiss, she felt that they did not quite approve of her. Probably she seemed too much of an embodied flame for their safe lives. But they were all going to hope for the best since Harvey was not to be budged. All but some third cousin called Eileen Garrett. Susette knew Eileen hated her and since there could be no other reason it must be because she wanted Harvey herself. Eileen was pretty but Susette saw at once that she was a girl whose clothes impressed you much more than her personality. Such a rival was negligible but her existence and presence lent a little spice to things.

Susette found dinner a rather interminable meal. They talked a good deal about people she did not know and when they had spasms of recollecting this they seemed to think the only thing *she* could talk about was newspaper work. Susette wondered if there would ever be anything she *could* talk to them about. Would she have to talk about stupid people all the time when she was Harvey's wife? Yet Harvey seemed to be enjoying himself. He had approved her dress and her slim, cool beauty and nothing troubled him. A sleek lover, absolutely contented with his world, his life and his prospective bride. It would be easy to get along with him. Susette sighed and wondered pathetically why life had to be so stodgy. Was it really necessary?

Aunt Clorinda, who had a reputation for saying the most poisonous things in the sweetest way, asked her if she wasn't tired after her hard day in a stuffy office.

"Let me see . . . what is the paper you're on?"

"*Womanhood*," said Susette a trifle shortly. Paper, indeed!

"Oh, yes. I don't think I've seen a copy. Harvey, you must get me a copy."

"You can buy one on any news-stand for ten cents," said Susette, her great green eyes shimmering limpidly and wickedly.

Mrs. Brooks would have sighed, too, if she had ever done anything so human. She distrusted green-eyed women.

When Susette woke in the night she felt like a prisoner. The house seemed to suffocate her. It was so saturated with Harvey. The whole kit and boodle of them were intolerable. Susette liked to call them kit and boodle in her thoughts because it would have horrified them so. And when they went to the Hunt Club breakfast at Somayo the next morning Susette was not in any better humour. She seemed to be possessed by a spirit of contrariness. Nothing pleased her and she did not pretend to be pleased. Harvey, she knew, would have proposed the night before if she had let him. She had not let him but she knew there would be no heading him off the coming evening. He was a little bit offended already because she was so

absent-minded, even though he paid her some Harveyan compliments. No man could have helped it. Susette always looked her best on a sparkling summer morning like this. She seemed to sparkle with it. Her white wool skirt and crimson jumper suited her colouring perfectly and Harvey complacently reflected that she was the smartest girl in the crowd. Eileen couldn't hold a candle to her. His manner became still more possessive.

"If I marry him," thought Susette, "I will be mistress of Glenellyn. I shall have all the money anybody could want . . . jewels . . . trips to Europe . . . perfectly-behaved children as good and unexciting as their father. Because they'll all take after him, I'm sure. I'll take after him myself before I've been married to him two years . . . I feel it in my bones. It will be all settled tonight but meanwhile I *must* get away by myself for a few hours. Just to draw one long, last breath of freedom. But I must have an excuse. What on earth can I say? Somayo . . . Somayo . . . where have I heard the name before? It seems hauntingly familiar . . ."

All at once she remembered. Somayo was only forty miles from Martin's Lake . . . and Peggy's Point.

Susette gave a little gasp. She had not realized that she was so near Peggy's Point . . . Uncle Duncan's old place. She had spent most of her summers there in prehistoric days after her mother died and before her father married again. Uncle Duncan hadn't been really an uncle . . . he was her mother's cousin. She had a sudden hankering to see the old place. Uncle Duncan and Aunt Marian were dead but there should be a son there. Anyhow, she was going to see.

"Harvey," she said at lunch, "I'm going to play truant this afternoon. I'm going to take my car and go off for a real spinster's spin on the road to yesterday. In other words to see an old farm where I used to spend my summers when I was a kiddy."

"I'll go with you," said Harvey.

"No." Susette shook her head. "I want to go alone . . . I'm going alone. To keep tryst with old memories . . . and eat red currants on a lettuce leaf. It would bore you."

"Besides, the Jollyons are coming over for tennis," Mrs. Brooks reminded Harvey frigidly.

Harvey frowned a bit. He did not understand this whim of Susette's and when he did not understand a thing he condemned it. Why should Susette want to run away from his house party on some crazy, mysterious excursion of her own? But there was a mutinous tilt to Susette's beautiful chin that warned him it was no use to protest. Harvey had learned already what that tilt meant. So he made a virtue of necessity and saw Susette off with a smile. Harvey did not look his best smiling. Gravity did

not misbecome his face but smiles seemed to have no place there. Susette wondered if she would dare to tell him so when they were married.

She drew a long breath as she spun out of the Glenelg gates. There was a delightful road ahead of her. Not a straight road. A straight road was an abomination to Susette who loved curves and dips. Up one long, spruce-walled hill and down into a green valley . . . another hill . . . another valley . . . Susette let her car out for all it was worth and felt like a bird swooping from crest to crest. It must be really almost as good as flying. Susette longed to fly but knew she never would. Harvey thought it wasn't safe.

And before her was Peggy's Point. She hadn't seen it for fourteen years. Would the dear old place be terribly changed? Who had Roddy married? Susette hoped his wife wouldn't mind her swooping down on them in this casual fashion. Was the old Wishing Stone still in the birch grove behind the barn? And the brick walk through the kitchen garden to the lake shore? And the little green corner among the pointed firs down by the lake where she used to go "to think things out"? Things sometimes had to be thought out even in childhood. The firs would be old, grim trees now. But one had to keep on thinking things out. If they would only stay thought out!

And the old house, once gay and full of beloved friends? What had happened to it? Perhaps Roddy had pulled it down and built a new one. It had been old when she was a girl. Old but lovely. A kindly, easy-going, humorous old house . . . one of those houses that look as if they had been loved for years. To go there was always an adventure. There had been a ghost connected with it, too, but Susette couldn't recall what kind of a ghost. She only remembered her disappointment over never seeing it.

And what had become of all the half and third cousins who had frolicked there with her? She had lost track of them all . . . forgotten all of them except Letty, who had been such a pal of hers, and Jack, who was called the Perpendicular because he was so stiff and straight, and Harry Bell, who was nicknamed Ding-dong . . . and Dick. She could never forget Dick, the bully and braggart and tell-tale. She had hated him so. Everybody had hated Dick. And justly. Even the very dogs at Peggy's Point hated him.

"What a little pig he was," remembered Susette. "If he'd been ugly one could have forgiven him. But he *was* a good-looking kid . . . he had fine eyes . . . big, gray, devilish eyes. I wonder what has become of him. He'll be married of course. He'd have to have a wife to bully as soon as he could. Oh, I'd love to meet Dick again and slap his face! Instead of which, I suppose I'd have to be grateful to him for

saving my life that day my dress caught fire. It's vile to owe your life to a person you loathe. And Dick *enjoyed* it . . . he loved rolling me over and over in that rug and thumping me. There was no need to thump me . . . he just did that to get square. How horrified darling Aunt Marian was because I wouldn't be civil to him after it any more than before! There are big white thunderheads rolling up in the southwest, I hope it doesn't rain. Harvey would think it a judgment on me . . . he'd approve it. Oh, it's lovely to skim along like this and think of what one darn pleases. I haven't really dared to think since I arrived at Glenellyn. I felt sure they could read my thoughts. When I *do* begin to think what will they do? What will poor Harvey do with a wife who thinks the things I do?"

The thunderclouds had turned from white with mauve shadows to a rather threatening purple when Susette finally turned in at the old, well-remembered gate of Peggy's Point. Her heart bounded to see the same wooden decoy ducks still on the gate-post. It seemed a good omen but Susette thought it had deluded her when she found nobody at home. The old house was there still, unchanged . . . the old lawn . . . the old garden . . . the gleam of the lake through the dark old pines. Everything was trim and shipshape so it was evident that Roddy or somebody still lived at Peggy's Point. But it was equally evident that the place was temporarily deserted. A thunderstorm was certainly coming up and if she couldn't get into the house it behoved her to scuttle back to Glenellyn at once. Susette hated the thought. In just that one look around dear old Peggy's Point Glenellyn had become more unsatisfying than ever.

Susette was on the point of turning sorrowfully away when a young man came around the corner of the house and stopped to look at her. He was in an aviator's costume and it was fourteen years since she had seen him but she knew him at once by the gray, devilish eyes and the crinkly mahogany-coloured hair.

"Why, Dick . . . Dick!" she said.

She ran to him with outstretched hands. She was glad to see even Dick. Hateful as he had always been he was still a part of the old life that had suddenly become so near and so real again.

Dick took her hands and pulled her a little nearer. He looked earnestly into her green eyes and Susette felt a queer, inexplicable thrill such as no look of Harvey's had ever given her.

"This must be Susette . . . Susette King," said Dick slowly. "Nobody else could have those eyes."

“Yes, it’s Susette. I’m stopping at Glenellyn up Somayo way . . . the Brooks place, you know . . .”

“Everybody knows Glenellyn,” said Dick. He seemed to have forgotten to let go of her hands.

“. . . and when I found out it was so near Peggy’s Point I just had to come. But nobody seems home. Where *did* you drop from, Dick? It seems perfectly astounding to see you . . . any of the old gang here.”

Susette was rattling on because she didn’t know just what had happened to her and was afraid to stop talking for fear she’d find out. But she remembered that she had hated Dick and pulled away her hands.

“Roddy and his wife went away somewhere this morning. I’ve been staying with them for a few days . . . getting ready for my trip to Peru. I’m a humble civil engineer, you see, and I’m leaving tomorrow. I very nearly left this morning. Thank any gods there be that I didn’t.”

Something darted into Susette’s memory. This Dick had once kissed her against her will and she had slapped his face for it. She didn’t know why her face should burn over the recollection. Or why it should all at once have ceased to be an enraging, humiliating recollection.

“I ought to thank them, too,” she laughed, “because since you’re staying here you can probably let me into the house if it comes up rain. I *do* want to see all round the place now that I’m here but I wouldn’t have dared to stay for fear of a downpour.”

“Your laugh hasn’t changed, Susette,” said Dick. “There was nothing like it in the clan. And your eyes . . . what colour are they really? I never could decide . . . of course it’s hard to photograph green starlight.”

“You didn’t make such pretty speeches in the old days, Dick,” said Susette a little wildly. All at once . . . everything seemed to be happening all at once this amazing afternoon . . . it seemed to her vastly important that Dick should know she had always hated him . . . and hated him now . . . always would hate him. “Do you remember how we fought? How I detested you?”

“We certainly didn’t hit it off altogether when we were kids,” admitted Dick. “But . . . be fair now, Susette . . . was I altogether to blame?”

“You were,” cried Susette passionately . . . much more passionately than there seemed any need for. “You were always doing the meanest things. Do you remember how you pushed me into that bush of stick-tights and ruined my pink chiffon dress . . . and called attention to my freckles before company *always* . . . and burned my doll at the stake . . . and filled poor Bruno’s coat with burrs . . . and

. . . and . . .”

“Kissed you,” said Dick with his old, impish grin.

“Yes . . . and do you remember the whack I gave you on the nose for it?” cried Susette with relish. “How you bled!”

“Of course I was a little beast in those days but it’s all so long ago,” said Dick plaintively. “Just forget for this afternoon that you hate me . . . though I’d rather you’d hate me than think nothing about me if it comes to that. Let’s have a prow around all the old spots. If you don’t like me you needn’t pretend to.”

“I really ought to go back, you know,” sighed Susette. “It’s going to rain and Harvey will be peeved.”

“Who is Harvey?”

“The man I’m going to marry.” Susette wondered as she spoke why she felt so frightfully keen to let Dick know that.

Dick took it in slowly. Then . . .

“You’re not wearing any ring. I looked to see first thing.”

“It . . . it isn’t absolutely settled yet,” stammered Susette. “But it will be tonight. He’s going to propose tonight. That’s really why I ran away today, I think”

“I’ve heard of Harvey Brooks, of course. Everybody has,” said Dick. “Well, he has a good start of me but a fast worker can do wonders in an afternoon.”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” said Susette curtly. “Let’s prow, as you suggested. I want to see all I can see before it does rain. I’m so glad Peggy’s Point hasn’t changed much. Even the old, whitewashed stones around the flower-beds are the same. And that old silver maple in the corner where Letty and I used to sit on that big, horizontal bough and talk secrets . . .”

“Where none of us could hear you,” grinned Dick.

“*You* used to try hard enough,” retorted Susette. “Times out of mind we caught you sneaking. Oh, *do* you remember old Tom Drinkwine . . . Uncle Duncan’s hired man?”

“Yes . . . he had a wonderful old watch you wound with a key. There’s the old potato field back of the barn. Do you remember what fun we used to have firing potato balls from the tips of limber switches?”

“And there are no potato balls now,” sighed Susette. “They tell me they simply don’t come any more. All the romance has gone out of the world I think. You’re wearing an aviator’s costume, Dick. Is that a pose? Or do you really fly?”

“You always had a blistering tongue,” said Dick coolly. “I really fly. My ’plane . . . Merry Jack by name . . . is out there in the corner of the potato field. I’m flying to Montreal tomorrow morning. Does your Harvey fly?”

“No,” said Susette shortly. “Oh Dick, there’s the white lilac poor Aunt Jenny planted the summer she was here. Do you remember the day Aunt Marian went away and left her in charge and you did something awful and she was going to whip you but you wouldn’t hold out your hand? And she said, so sorrowfully . . . you remember, Dick, how plaintive she always was . . . that *somebody* had to be punished and if you wouldn’t take it *she* would have to. And she told *you* to punish her . . . and held out her hand . . . and you gave her such a whack . . .”

Dick roared.

“I’ll bet she was the most surprised aunt in the world at that particular moment. Was she the one who used to have heart attacks and gasp for breath and shriek for cold compresses?”

“No, no, that was Aunt Elisa . . . if she was an aunt . . . I really can’t remember who everybody was . . . there always seemed to be so many relations of all degrees at Peggy’s Point.”

“Who was the elderly female who always wore a bustle although they’d been out of date twenty years?”

“Cousin Rhoda Oliver. And there was a ghost, wasn’t there, Dick? I was trying to remember as I drove down what it was.”

“A tall lady in black with her hanky to her face as if she were crying. She was supposed to haunt the staircase. I saw her once.”

“I don’t believe you. We never *could* believe you, Dick. You never would admit you had missed seeing anything that could be seen. Do you remember the tableau Letty and Nell and I put on at the church concert? The three Graces . . .”

“Dressed in sheets with long flowing hair after the chromo in the spare bedroom?”

“*And* bare feet. Only we didn’t copy the picture in *that*. The sheets hid our feet so we kept our boots on. But Letty pretended we didn’t . . . and lamented that nobody seemed to have noticed our lovely bare feet. And you said, ‘Oh, *I* did. They were the first thing I saw when the curtain went up.’ What a laugh we had on you!”

“Why dig up all those unhappy, far-off things?” protested Dick. “I don’t want to waste time on the irrevocable past. It’s the present that interests me . . . and the future. Susette, you are beyond any question the most exquisite creature I’ve ever seen.”

“Do you say that to every girl half an hour after you’ve met her?”

“If I’d ever happened to think it I would . . . but I never happened to before. I decided recently that I’d always say what I really thought the moment I thought it. You’ve no idea what pep it gives life. And things go stale if you keep them unsaid.”

"I daresay." Susette wondered what would happen if she said everything she thought . . . just when she thought it . . . to Harvey.

"Besides it isn't half an hour since I met you . . . it's years. We're . . . second cousins, isn't it? . . . and old fir . . . enemies. So why shouldn't I say that you're exquisite and beautiful and wholly charming, with hair like the sunset light on old firs and eyes like that lake down there at dawn and a skin like a tea-rose petal?"

"Do you remember the day you pointed out all my defects to the assembled cousins?" said Susette. "You said my hair was like a stack of dried hay and that I had eyes like a cat and a million freckles, and a figure like a slat. You called me a *slat!*"

"My aunt, there you go again," groaned Dick. "Why can't you let the dead past bury its dead?"

Why, indeed? Susette wondered herself. Why did she feel that she *must* drag up these things . . . *must* remember how hateful Dick had been . . . must not let herself forget it for a single moment? Because he couldn't have changed really. People didn't. He had just learned to cover up his meanness with a certain debonair charm made possible by his indisputable good looks. Suddenly Susette felt oddly panic-stricken. She must get back to Glenellyn instantly, before . . . before . . . well, before it rained.

"You can't," said Dick. "There's the first growl. You will be sensible and come right into the house until the storm is over. Then we'll finish our prowl."

"But it is five now," protested Susette. "If I don't start at once I'll be late for dinner . . ."

"I can get you a bite. It's out of the question to think of starting for Somayo in the teeth of that sky. You were always a fearless little demon but that is a thing I'm simply not going to let you do."

Susette yielded. She knew she couldn't negotiate that road in a thunderstorm . . . it would be hard enough even when it was over. Besides, she wanted to scare Harvey just once as a sort of dying protest. Moreover, she felt that she had not yet made Dick realize how she hated him. And she was not going to leave Peggy's Point until that job was completed.

They went into the house. It was changed . . . new furniture . . . new curtains . . . new rugs . . . new paint. But the old rooms were unchanged. Susette ran all through them while Dick did something in the kitchen. When she came back to the living room the rain was flooding against the windows and the thunder was crashing overhead. Susette revelled in thunderstorms. She wondered if Harvey would worry.

She did not think Aunt Clorinda would and she was quite sure Eileen wouldn't.

Dick came in from the kitchen carrying a tray whereon was a pot of tea, a plate of toast, and a jar of jam. He went to the corner cupboard and took out dishes . . . Aunt Marian's old fluted set with the gold pansy on the side, and her little brown jug with the creamy lining.

"Oh," sighed Susette, forgetting everything, "this is heaven."

"With a little dash of hell in it like a spice of cayenne," grinned Dick. "Pull up to the table, Susette, and let us break bread together. Don't forget to compliment me on my tea. I'm a cracker-jack at making tea."

"Boastful as ever," mocked Susette.

But she sat down at the table obediently. The tea *was* good: so was the toast: and the jam had evidently been made from Aunt Marian's old recipe.

"A jug of tea . . . a crust of bread . . . and *thou*," said Dick impudently. Omar was dead and couldn't resent it. Susette was alive and refused . . . temporarily . . . to resent it. But why, oh, why should it be so delightful to sit here in this half-dark room, drinking tea and munching toast with hated Dick?

"I ought to telephone Glenellyn," she said weakly.

"You can't. This is a rural line and Central never answers in thunderstorms. It's verboten. Besides, the line always goes out in a storm. Forget Glenellyn . . . live in the present. Susette, did any poor devil ever tell you that the way you looked over your shoulder at him drove him mad entirely?"

"Do you remember," said Susette slowly, "how, when we were going to play Robinson Crusoe you wouldn't let me be Man Friday because I was a girl?"

"And quite right I was! How could Crusoe have Crusoed with a distracting Man Friday like you? I showed my sense."

Susette decided to cease casting up the past to him. It wasn't any use. He had no sense of shame. The storm was getting worse. The whole outside world was a welter of wind and flame and water. But here was calm and beauty and peace. Such peace! Susette hadn't felt so much at home anywhere for years. Before she could prevent herself she thought it was delightful to be shut away from the wind and rain with him . . . to be drinking amber tea and eating bits of toast and spoonfuls of ruby-hued jam with him.

"I'll take another cup of tea, I think," she sighed deliciously.

Much later . . . it might have been hours . . . months . . . years . . . Susette awoke to the fact that, although the thunder and lightning had ceased, the rain was still pouring down in a businesslike way as if it meant to keep on for days. She looked at

her watch and exclaimed in dismay.

“Half past six! It will be dinner time in Glenellyn in an hour. I can never make it.”

“I should think you couldn’t,” said Dick. “Have some sense, Susette. The only road from here to Somayo will be absolutely impassable for that little car of yours. You can’t go back tonight. You’ve just got to stay here.”

“Here . . . alone . . . with you!” gasped Susette.

“Why not? Aren’t we cousins?”

“Nonsense! I can’t stay here. I must ’phone . . . Harvey will come for me somehow . . .”

“Just try to ’phone.”

Susette tried. There was no reply. She stood for a few minutes before the ’phone wondering why she didn’t mind.

“I . . . I don’t know what to do,” she said miserably. “Oh, I know it would be madness to try to get back in this storm . . . but I have to be at the office tomorrow morning . . . and . . . and . . .”

“And how about Harvey’s proposal in the meantime?” grinned Dick. “Never mind, Susette. There are other proposals. I’m going to make one myself in the morning.”

Susette sat down because there didn’t seem to be anything else to do. Dick lit the candles on the mantelpiece . . . Mrs. Roddy’s prized candles that she never meant for burning . . . crossed one long leg over the other and took a new slant. He didn’t pay Susette any more compliments or rag her about Harvey; he talked all the evening about aviation. Susette listened greedily. She almost forgot, until she found herself between the lavendered sheets of Mrs. Roddy’s guest-room bed in the upstairs, south-east corner of Peggy’s Point, that she had hated Dick. Then she tried hard to remember.

“Think,” she told herself desperately, “how he used to bully the other boys . . . how he once twisted Ding-dong’s arm to make him do something . . . how he told Aunt Marian it was Jack who took the pie . . . what he did to the kitten . . .”

That memory was intolerable. Susette buried her face in the pillow and groaned. She hated him . . . she hated him . . . she would get up ever so early in the morning and sneak away before she saw him again . . . before she could again succumb to that devilish charm of him which had made her temporarily forget those things.

The rain was still coming down outside but more gently. The boughs of the old fir tapped against the window. She had always liked the sound and scent and freshness of rain and fir trees in the dark. And life had suddenly become romantic again. The

possibilities . . . not the probabilities . . . *they* were stodgy . . . enthralled her. Was it only this morning she had been so bored with existence? Of course she would marry Harvey . . . there was no getting out of that . . . but there were still lovely things in the world. Flying! She *would* fly. Harvey shouldn't stop her. What adventures Dick had had in Merry Jack . . . if one could believe him! And in Peru . . .

Susette sat up in bed and shook her small white fist at the darkness. She had just remembered what had happened to her sensations when her fingers had chanced to touch Dick's as he gave her the second cup of tea.

"I won't fall in love with him . . . I won't . . . I won't!"

She was aghast. When she put her danger into words it terrified her. There was nothing for it but an early morning flitting, back to safety and sanity and . . . and . . . Harvey.

When Susette awoke in the morning she knew something she had not known when she went to sleep. She had only been afraid of knowing it. She got out of bed very softly and tiptoed to the window. The sun was not yet visible but the whole morning sky behind the eastern hill of pines was rose-hued, with gossamer clouds of pale gold strewn over it. Little shivers were running over the silver-green lake. The distances were hung with pale blue mists. Susette knew she must drive instantly away through those lovely morning mists or she was a lost woman.

Swiftly and noiselessly she dressed. Slowly and noiselessly she crept down the stairs, opened the front door and stepped out. She looked about her and caught her breath with delight. The sun was up now and a new lovely world, with its face washed, was blinking its innocent baby eyes at it. She had forgotten what Peggy's Point was like at dawn. And she hadn't seen all the dear spots she had loved. Wasn't there time at least for a sneak down to the lake? Dick wouldn't be up for an hour yet.

She would take a stolen run through this golden world. She would slip down to the lake on the old brick pathway with the wind as a gallant companion. The grasses would bathe her feet in green coolness and the water would sing to her . . . just once before she went back to Harvey.

When she was almost at the lake a suspicious fragrance met her nostrils. Before she realized the truth she had broken through the trees to the shore and saw Dick squatted by a fire of driftwood on the rocks, broiling bacon, with a coffee pot beside him. On another rock an oilcloth tablecloth was spread and . . . *what* was on it? Wild strawberries! Wild strawberries on a green leaf! How long was it since she had eaten wild strawberries of any kind, much less the kind that grew at Peggy's Point?

Dick waved a fork with a piece of bacon on it at her. "Good girl! I was just going to call you. We've got to start soon to be in Toronto in time. Besides, I didn't want you to miss such a chance to bathe your soul in dawn. Look what I have for you . . . I found a plot of them over in the pasture field. Such amazing luck! But then Peggy's Point has always been noted for its gobs of good luck. Besides . . . see . . . a bunch of the little red wild columbines you used to love. Pick out a soft spot on that rock and sit down."

Susette did as she was bid. She felt a little dazed. Dick poured her coffee for her and fed her bacon and wild strawberries. Neither of them said much. There were zones of beautiful colour on the lake, with little pools of pellucid shadow here and there. Great white cloud-mountains with amber valleys rose up in the sky. Presently, she supposed, Dick would be flying across them in Merry Jack. The idea drove her to the banality of offering Dick a penny for his thoughts.

"I was wondering what would happen if I suddenly called you 'darling'," he said solemnly.

"I should go away of course," said Susette. "I'm going anyway. We can't sit here forever."

"Why not?" said Dick.

"That is a rhetorical question, I suppose, and not meant to be answered," said Susette getting up.

Dick got up, too.

"I'm going to answer it. We can't sit here forever, heavenly as it would be, because I've got to sail for South America the day after to-morrow. There isn't a great deal of time for us to fly to Toronto, get a special license, be married, and then fly to Montreal to catch the steamer. But Merry Jack is a good wee beast and I think we can do it."

"You're quite mad," said Susette.

"It's a poor family that can't afford one madman," retorted Dick. "I never was much of a guy for poetry but didn't somebody once write something like,

*"There is a pleasure sure in being mad
That none but madmen know?"*

"I am going to the house to get my car and hurry back to Glenellyn," said Susette firmly.

"I know that's what you intend to do but it won't take long to change your mind."

Susette looked about her a bit helplessly. Then she happened to look at Dick.

The next moment she was caught tightly in his arms and was being kissed . . . one long, wild, rapturous, breathless kiss.

“Sweetheart . . . joy . . . delight . . . *wonder!* Don’t look so furious, calf of my heart. You must know that when you look at a man with eyes like that you are simply asking him to kiss you. You are mine, Susette. I’ve made you mine with that kiss. You can never belong to anyone else.”

Susette stood very still. She knew this was one of the rare, splendid moments of life. She knew she would never marry Harvey.

“We’ll be on our way to Toronto in fifteen minutes,” Dick was saying. “It’ll take me that time to put away Mrs. Roddy’s frying pan and lock your car into Roddy’s barn. We can leave it there until we come back from Peru in about three years’ time. The telephone will do the rest.”

Susette went back to her room for her watch which she had left under her pillow. She supposed she was bewitched . . . literally bewitched. Nothing else could account for it. If she could only forget about the kitten!

When she got back to the lake she could not see Dick anywhere at first. Then she saw him standing a little way off in the shadow of some firs. His back was towards her and a red squirrel was perched on his shoulder. He was feeding it something and the squirrel was talking to him.

Susette stood very still. She knew another thing now. And she would have run if Dick had not wheeled around at that moment. The squirrel made a wild leap to the trees and Dick came striding to her.

“Did you see that little chap? They’ve always been fond of me . . . the folk of fur and feathers.”

“*You are not Dick,*” said Susette in a low tone, looking up at him.

Dick stopped. “No,” he said, “I’m not. I was wondering how I was going to tell you. But how did you find out?”

“When I saw the squirrel on your shoulder. Animals always hated Dick . . . he was so cruel to them. No squirrel would ever have climbed *his* shoulder. And may I ask who you really are?”

“Having promised to marry me you have a right to the information,” he said gravely. “I am Jerry Thornton . . . a first cousin of Dick’s through Aunt Marian but no earthly relation of yours. We lived out west but I was at Peggy’s Point one summer when you weren’t. I heard all about you from the rest of the gang. And remember *you* called me Dick first. I was afraid if I undeceived you you wouldn’t stay long enough at Peggy’s Point to let me make you love me. I thought I’d a better

chance as Dick . . . even though you had such a grudge against him. We always looked alike . . . our mothers were twin sisters . . . but honest to goodness, Susette, we aren't alike under our skins. Besides . . . Dick is married."

"He would be," said Susette.

Jerry looked down at her a bit anxiously. "A little thing like a mistake in the man isn't going to make any difference, is it, Susette?"

"I don't see why it should," said Susette. "But tell me two things. First, how did you know Dick once kissed me?"

"As if any boy *wouldn't* kiss you if he ever got the chance," scoffed Jerry.

"And how did you know I loved wild columbines?"

"Everybody loves wild columbines," said Jerry.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *The Road to Yesterday* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]