

Jean's  
Birthday  
Party

Lucy Maud Montgomery  
1907

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# Jean's Birthday Party

L. M. Montgomery.

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It was the afternoon recess at Burnley school and all the third class girls were sitting in a circle under the clump of spruce trees in the corner of Mr. Strong's field just behind the schoolhouse. This clump of trees was the third class's own private and particular resort; the fourth and fifth classes respected their claim and the primary grades would never have dared to go there.

Generally the third class played games and were jolly. Just now they all sat still and looked at each other in perplexity. All? No, not all. Jean Watson wasn't there. Jean had been there at first and Jean had looked very sober. But nobody had noticed this and Carrie Deane had asked gayly, "Your birthday party is next week, isn't it, Jean?"

To the surprise of everybody Jean's eyes suddenly brimmed up with tears.

"No-o-o," she said miserably, "it isn't. I'm not going to have a birthday party at all."

"Why, Jean Watson," said all the class together. They couldn't believe their ears. Everybody in the class had had a birthday party that summer and they knew that Jean's mother had promised her one. To be sure the Watsons were poor and Jean never had very nice clothes and always brought very plain lunches. But then—her mother had promised.

"No, I can't have it," said Jean. "Mother told me so last night. We—we can't afford it. Bob has been sick so long and there's such a big doctor's bill. Mother is awful sorry, but I can't have the party."

At this point Jean broke down altogether and ran away to the schoolhouse; and the rest of the girls sat down to talk the matter over.

"It's just too mean," said Georgia Smith. "Jean is awfully disappointed. She never had a birthday party and she'll feel so bad to be the only girl in the class who didn't have one."

"Ma says she doesn't understand how the Watsons manage to get on at all," said Emily Sharpe. "Jean's father drinks—everybody knows that—and he doesn't get much work to do, and they have so much sickness and there is such a lot of them. Ma says she doesn't know how Mrs. Watson could ever have dreamed of giving Jean a birthday party, anyhow."

Nothing more was said about the birthday party by either Jean or the other girls; but the next Monday morning Jennie White came to school with news.

"Girls, what do you think? Jean has sprained her ankle and she has to lie on the sofa for a whole week. I was in to see her on the way to school this morning and she is feeling dreadfully lonesome. We must all go and see her often and keep her cheered up."

"And Thursday is her birthday," said Georgia. "It is too bad to have to spend one's birthday lying on a sofa. It's worse even than not having a birthday party."

"Jean is feeling bad about that party yet," said Jennie. "I know she is,

although she never speaks of it. She was dreadfully disappointed.”

“Girls,” said Carrie Deane, “I have a plan—O, it’s a real nice plan—it just came to me this minute.”

When Jean’s birthday arrived it was a lovely day, all breeze and sunshine and blue. But to Jean, lying on her sofa, there really didn’t seem much beauty about it. There wasn’t a great deal of fun in a birthday when you had a sprained ankle and didn’t have the party to which you had been looking forward so long. Jean felt that she could never get over the disgrace of not having a birthday party when all the other girls in her class had had one. Jean did not mind having poorer lunches and shabbier dresses than her classmates. But at nine years Jean thought that her whole life was darkened because she couldn’t have a birthday party.

Somehow the morning dragged by. Jean thought she had never spent such a long morning.

“I wish the day was over,” she thought. “A birthday like this seems as if it would never end. Maybe when it is yesterday I won’t mind not having a party any more.”

But Jean’s birthday surprise was already on its way to her. Early in the afternoon a knock came at the door, and when Mrs. Watson opened it, Jean, looking past her, gave a little cry of astonishment. There on the platform stood all the girls of the third class. Every girl was dressed in her very finest dress and every girl carried a big bunch of flowers in one hand and a covered basket in the other.

“Many happy returns of the day, Jean,” cried Carrie. “We’ve brought your birthday party to you.”

“O girls,” said Jean, wondering whether she meant to laugh or cry and doing a little of both finally. “O, this is just lovely of you.”

They had a splendid time that afternoon and every girl there thought it was the very nicest birthday party she had ever been at. They played games galore—such games as Jean could join in, lying on the sofa; and then they had lunch out in under the apple-trees in the little orchard. Mrs. Watson and Jean’s big brother carried Jean and her sofa right out to it. It was a lovely lunch for every girl had coaxed her mother to make the nicest things possible, and the result was that there hadn’t been a spread at any of the parties equal to the one at Jean’s.

When evening came and the little girls went home, Jean said to her mother happily, “O mother, wasn’t it all splendid? And so sweet of the girls? I’m perfectly happy for I’ve had a birthday party after all.”

That night Carrie Deane said to her mother, “What do you suppose made Jean’s party so much nicer than all the others, mother? We had a lovely time and nobody got cross or offended or sulky as somebody mostly did at all the

other parties.”

“I think,” said Mrs. Deane with a kiss, “that it was because you were all thinking of Jean and trying to give her a good time and not of yourselves. Unselfishness is the secret of it all, little daughter.”

Cavendish, Can.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Jean's Birthday Party* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]