Sunsets and Homecoming
by Tinalouise88

Summary

A small snippets following Rilla and Ken after his appearance on her doorstep. They both know their feeling but knowing they both changed over the years make them face a reality that they don't know each other at all. But love always wins, doesn't it?
This came along from some conversations with Kslchen and our love for Rilla. So far this is just a one-shot, but it may be more one day.

War is never easy to forget, and despite being a hopeless romantic I know that Ken and Rilla would still have a lot of growing and relearning about each other after he knocked on the door. The war would have changed them both and both wonder if their feelings are still the same.

Sunsets and Homecoming

One always expects to walk happily into the sunset. At least that is what Rilla thought when Ken finally knocked on her door. They cared for one another, yet they knew nothing about each other. They learned that swiftly that night. Letters and promises were nothing compared to being in the same room with each other. No distractions, no little Jims. Just the two of them sitting in the living room staring at each other as one would disappear from their sight.

It was a sight to behold for the Blythes to come home to find their youngest daughter to be alone with a gentleman. Alone on the love seat as they spoke quietly to each other. Quietly with his arm around their youngest. It wasn't until he stood up they realized it was Ken who was still dressed in his khakis.

Her father looked briefly shocked before giving a knowing look towards his wife. She smiled sweetly and gave him a knowing look of I'll explain later. Surely her father knew that she had been writing Ken all these years?

She walked Ken to the gate as the sun was beginning to set. Wrapping her shawl around her shoulders as they walked slowly she felt her shiver from the cool night. Her pale green blouse and dark green skirt, skimming over her lithe body. She was still shorter than him, but he was over six feet to her own five and seven inches. She had grown taller than her sisters, almost as tall as some of her brothers. Her body trembled at the sight of him turning to face her at the gate like years before. She wasn't a girl anymore, she had seen men leave and never come back. How her heart still ached for Walter, why him of all her brothers?

There was a look of admiration on Ken's face as he swept back a lock of her ruddy hair. "We have a lot to work don't we?" Ken said softly.

"We both changed over this war," Rilla nodded. "How can we just pick up where we left off? When we don't even know where we left it?"

"How did you become so wise?" Ken breathed as his forehead touched hers. The connection they once felt was still there, she felt it more even more at almost nineteen. Did her parents ever feel this way about each other? Did they still?

"The war changed us all," she whispered as she gently traced over the silver scar that ran down over his cheek. "I mean I have almost decided to go to college. Who would have thought me taking on household science?" Rilla laughed lightly at herself.

"You should," Ken prompted her. "You should go out and see a bit more of this world. Don't wait for our honeymoon to leave your home or this island Rilla."
"So mother was right?" Rilla sucked in a breath. "I never-I was never sure about what you meant by our promise."

"Only if you want it to be, as you said we both have changed. We need to learn and get to know each other truly this time. But you are my main goal in life Rilla, and I will give you the proposal of your dream if you allow me to one day if you want one. I don't think your mother would allow anything else for you. Your father would skin me alive if I asked you to elope. I want to see you as the mother of my children. But I can't have that if we can't grow together and see who we are now. I know it seemed like I stopped caring, I felt like such a fool for writing as little as I did-

"You were in the middle of a war Ken, I can understand how easily sidetracked you could be now." Rilla interrupted him. "Did it hurt, did I question your feelings over the years of course. But I was a coward not to ask for any clarification. Instead, I sat in uncertainty. Wondering how despite being back in Canada you never said a word to me. Instead, I let the thoughts of seeing your old friends and girls you used to know; tell me you didn't care anymore. Making myself feel silly that you meant anything real back then."

"I was in a hospital," Ken admitted. "I don't sleep well, I have injuries that are still being treated. I pleaded with my family to not say a word to your mother or father. I won't lie to you Rilla, I have seen horrors that I could never speak of again. I have days that I wake up terrified, mornings where I have the images of my brothers minutes before a bomb went off."

Rilla nodded did the only thing she could think of-hug him.

She knew her parents were watching her. Her father with curiosity and over-protectiveness. Her mother with her eyes of taking in a fresh new love that was waiting to bloom. She tilted her head up to look at him with her bright hazel eyes.

He kissed her gently, but it was different from their first one. More passion, more intent as he drew her into his body. There was a new changing world waiting for them to devour and manoeuvre through together.

So Rilla learned that walking off into the sunset was never as easy as it seemed. Though with Ken by her side she knew it was possible. She had her soldier, her man; and for once in her life, she had a small inkling of what wanted to do. It revolved around Ken and the million other men who were coming home for the first time. She didn't know how, or if she was just dreaming but she had a pulsing need to help people like her father.

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Well, I hope everyone enjoyed this little fic. Let me know what you think, or if want more little snippets of Rilla and Ken growing towards each other after the war.

Tina
Chapter 2

These two won't leave me alone. Here is another small snippet

I hope you all enjoy it, thank you all for the reviews from the last chapter.

A few months later

It was the little moments that come out of nowhere that reminds you that even when you think you know someone. You don't. Much like the first time she saw the scars. Ones his clothing kept hidden from the view of the world she almost wept. Scattered over his body like puzzle pieces that had no home. It was entirely improper of her to see them as she did.

It had been one of his 'off' days. He had been in a daze, any slight touch or sound would make him jump. Rilla had come home for the weekend on the cool October night. Somehow she managed to get late acceptance to Redmond for the fall to most of her families surprise. She was always intelligent she just never used it to her full capacity. Or that is what she told him one night when they were out of a ride in his automobile. There was a strange pitch in her voice as she spoke about her parents never expecting much from her. Unlike her siblings who were all ambitious and keen to learn. They offered her queens once, but with her refusal, they never said another word about it. Even her taking care of her war baby was a shock to them.

They had a happy summer as he got back on his feet. He was working again; writing for the local paper. Spending evenings in Rainbow Valley; escaping the many eyes of Ingleside.

Life appeared normal while he lived at his parent's old house, but normal he learned with a relative term.

He was just about to take a drink of tea when a large horn from a passing boat went by harbour sounded loud. His eyes glazed over as the hot tea ran out of the cup over his shirt. He cursed at the hot liquid that was fresh from the kettle.

Rilla who had been looking around the house of dreams her mother called it. She has stopped by with the basket of clothing that she had ironed from him. Something she began when she saw the states of his shirts when he tried to iron them himself. It was strange to be in the house where her parents spent the first three years of their marriage. Knowing thing was where Jem was born in that small bedroom upstairs. She rushed to the small kitchen at his words, holding up her skirt to make more quickly. She said nothing as she helped him peel off his shirt undoing the buttons. He wasn't wearing an undershirt to her own surprise. She kept her features Schooled, not wanting him to recoil from her own shock. She pressed a cool cloth over the burn, much as her father did for them over the years. She could hear father's voice from her childhood as she ran through the steps of caring for a burn.

"I am barely surviving," Ken sighed in defeat.

"You are human, who has been through a lot," Rilla responded. A lot of the women who frequented the steps of Ingleside mentioned the aftermath and the effects of the war. Faith who has already married Jem in a small ceremony spoke of the nightmares that came at night. Jem had been a doctor on the field, and the transition of treating sick children and seniors was a relief.

"Is this why you didn't want to go to the beach with the rest of us?" Rilla asked quietly as she
gently rubbed the cream into his chest. Trying not to pay to close attention to all the markings. The one that stood out the most was a long jagged scar that ran over his shoulder. She ached to touch it, but she didn't want to change his reaction.

Ken nodded after a moment. "As much as seeing you in a bathing suit is high up on my priorities," he told her with a small smile. Despite his voice sounding tired and withdrawn. "I just can't get past the last beach I was at. Which was where I got the majority of these from," he added as he motioned to his chest.

Rilla found herself nodding. She had read about many of the battles from the papers. Yet seeing it first hand of how it could tarnish a body; she couldn't imagine what it would have been like.

"Though I am sure your father would skin me alive if he saw us together like this." Ken ran his fingers through his hair.

"I just turned twenty," Rilla contradicted him. "I have seen plenty of men shirtless in my life."

"Your brothers do not count," Ken cracked a small smile. "So unless you have been keeping company with other men while I was away. Or at the school of yours, I am sure the number is small." He teased her and feigned pain when she gently swatted his arm.

"What boys? Everyone so focused on the cause, though Fred Arnold tried to court me before he left." Rilla admitted after a moments thought. "That is when Mother found out about you. She found me crying after he left because I felt so horrible at telling Fred that I couldn't kiss him goodbye. She looked at me so queerly, like a mother sometimes does when something surprises her." Rilla told him as she handed him a shirt that came from the clean laundry she had brought over from Ingleside. "As for school, I am in applied sciences and intro-psychology and I am one of two ladies in the whole entire course. Most of the men were too young to be in the war and find our existence annoying. All we hear every day is that we don't belong and should go study art or get married. It's all rather dull," Rilla sighed.

"You are enjoying it though?" Ken questioned her. He wasn't entirely sure if she truly liked college yet.

"It is different, but Father and I can hold conversations about many new things lately. Not that we couldn't, but for the first time he's willing to actually explore and answer my questions honestly. It's all new and a lot of things we are learning first hand, much like a father himself. I think he enjoys that I can bring him all the new-fangled ideas of how to treat-" Rilla stopped herself short.

"Men like me?" Ken finished for her quietly. "We can say it out loud, shell-shock, we have some forms of shell shock. You saw it in my writing, during and after Passchendaele. Some of it was wanting to keep my memory of you innocent of all the horrors, but that would be a lie. I just didn't want to burden you with my own problems. I was only a captain because I managed to survive long enough to be one."

"I never-" Rilla flushed, but the dates added up in her mind. "I'm sorry," she sighed not sure what else to say to his admission. Such a Canadian thing to say in a moment such as this. "However you made captain on your own merit, Jem only made Lieutenant, and he was enlisted before you. You were rewarded for your bravery and heroism, your mother was so proud when she heard. I was proud when you sent that photograph of you, I slept with it underneath my pillow. I am still proud of you today. I tell everyone at school that I belong to a Captain who helped win a victory in the war."

"You tell them about me?" Ken raised an eyebrow.
"Of course! It was the only way for the young men to stop bothering me outside of classes." She shrugged like it was nothing big. "So how about my captain walks me home?" Rilla asked him looking at the time before offering her hand to him. He pulled her close, hands on her hips for a long moment.

"Do I need to come to that fancy school of yours and make my presence known?" Ken asked standing up, feeling rather jealous that other men were looking his woman. Yet proud that Rilla only had eyes for him.

"Only if you wish, I know you aren't good with large crowds just yet," Rilla replied softly. She stood as he locked the door to the house of dreams. Hands clasped they walked the familiar path to Ingleside. She felt him stop as he looked towards the shoreline. Squeezing her hand he directed her down the old stone steps. Walking closer to the old lighthouse where they first danced.

"An ocean still separates us," he spoke. "A small scale of an ocean, but still it separates us most of the time. I wonder if the war never happened if the thing would have been different. Would we be married already, possibly even a child? I am a selfish man Rilla-my-Rilla. I want you all to myself, yet I need to let you be free. My social butterfly, who skipped up those steps of the lighthouse that night we danced. So pure and full of light, you took my breath away that night."

"Ken-" Rilla breathed as he continued on.

"I was checking out a lighthouse. I heard them before I could see them coming, I turned around it was like you were telling me to get out. I ran, screaming to the others to get back to get to safety, where ever safety was." Ken spoke evenly. "I watch good men die that day, hell I thought I was good for dead. Instead, I suffered splinters and shrapnel being pulled from my chest for god knows how long."

"You get it though, you're one of the few who get it. You don't push me, you don't tell me to get over it, to move on with my life. Because at least I have a life to live." Ken shoved the sand with the toe of his boot. Rilla leaned into him, her forehead resting on his shoulder as she tried her best to silently console him.

"I know it will never compare, but when I told Mum and Father that I wanted to apply to Redmond they didn't believe me at first. They were shocked. I know they mean well, but sometimes it feels like every time I come home. They expect me to announce that I want to come home. The sad part is sometimes I do. The whole school thinks us girls are only there to catch a husband or waiting through an engagement." Rilla admitted out loud for the first time. Trivial compared to his but it ate at her either way.

"But I already have you, my friend, lover and confidant. Yet it seems so selfish to want more, that's what I'm told by teachers who find about you. But this is our life Darling and no one can change that." Rilla added on at the end.

It was moments like this Rilla was often reminded that even when you think you know someone. You don't. There is always another little piece hidden away that you never saw before it surfaces. All the insecurities and worries that live in one's mind are only shown when they are with the people they trust.

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I am not sure about the whole battle on a beach thing as I know Normandy didn't have any encounter with the war in WW1. But surely there had to be other places on the coast that were attacked at some point in time.
Rilla studying science and psychology...is it a stretch. Oh goodness yes, but I wanted to have a purpose for Rilla as she seemed to be the one with least ambition out of all the children. But then again she was raised by a doctor and a rather romantic dreamer. She must have some sort of ambition or dreams in her life?

Also shameless shirtless Ken? totally inappropriate and would have probably warranted a shotgun wedding by her father. But what Gilbert doesn't know won't hurt him haha.

Tina
Chapter 4

Welcome to Chapter three

Essentially life is crazy busy and I have two other stories that I need to write chapters for and yet I kept writing this one.

Thank you for the reviews and follows. I hope you enjoy this one.

Chapter 3

Survival of the fittest, a theory they learned as children. Something you don't think about much until you realize it is all around you. Everyone at some point makes a conscious decision of fight or flight. Everyone has that conscious decision battle their demons or allow them to take over. For three years, Ken only thought of survival. Fought for survival, and now survival was the last thing he wanted. Survival meant living in a terrifying new world that he had no idea how to live in. Survival meant waiting for his girl to come back to him. Survival meant reliving moments and emotions that he wanted to bury.

The house was dark and cold as he loosened his tie at the end of the day. He lit the fire for warmth, even though he felt little but the cold that was in his bones. He sank down at the table that was littered with papers and his typewriter. The whole house was an empty tomb with rooms he never used.

A tray of cigarettes, and empty bottles of ale that he had found in the seller. Along with a few bottles' his father's whiskey that had been hidden in the corners of the dark basement. It was the first thing he had found to drown out the nightmares since the war ended.

He hadn't seen Rilla for two weeks? Has it been weeks already? She called when she could but finals and exam were keeping her busy. Her free weekends were now jam-packed with studying and cram sessions. There was no point in travelling home when she needed to ace these exams. Christmas was around the corner, she would see everyone over the holidays. This was not what he expected when she went off to college.

Now he wasn't just tormented with nightmares of the war, but also Rilla mocking him in her dreams. Often flirting with other men, he knew she was not that type of woman. Yet still, the taunting of his dreams made it seem so real in the daylight hours.

More than once he called her in the middle of the night, waiting until her sleepy voice answered. He wondered just what she looked like in those moments, what she wore to bed? How long her hair was when she had it down? She never scolded him for calling late, just listened to him talk nonsense. Some nights he could tell when she fell asleep as her breath was slow and steady.

He reached for the phone wanting to hear her voice. Dialling the number that came so naturally now to him. It rang until he was cut off. He hung up, letting the darkness settle into his mind as he poured himself a stiff drink. Their relationship was anything but regular. Most soldiers came home to marry quickly and start a new life. It seemed like he was the only one wavering when he looked around Four Winds and the Glen. Instead, they were surfing the tide of never-ending changing times. Absence makes the heart grow fonder they said. Yet it was the most excruciating feeling he felt in the longest while.
The hours were long as she spent her free time studying in the small apartment that her parents owned. It wasn't long after the first of the Blythe children came to study at Redmond when her parents bought the apartment. Insisting it was easier than looking for boarding houses every year. It was in these moments that Rilla realized just how wealthy her family was.

Money was never an issue, they never wanted for anything. But as she walked the streets of Kingsport she saw another way of life. A lot of students depended on scholarships, working part-time jobs. All she had to do was study and clean her little apartment. A woman living alone was a strange thing, but she enjoyed it after the many years of living in a full house.

Her only female classmate came to spend the evenings with her studying not long after becoming friends. She looked around in amazement at the large and bright apartment the first time she entered it.

"My father is a doctor-," Rilla found herself explaining. As she watched her new friend take in her home. Littered over the tables were photographs of her siblings, parents. Alone photo of Walter in his uniform. She tried to remember just how he was, but it was such a distant memory now.

She rambled on one night, to Ken in the dark hours. Feeling guilty over the fact that some days it felt like she was forgetting her brother. They had been rather close the years before the war. It was Walt who managed to persuade Mum and Father to allow her to go to the dance.

Sometimes she wondered if feeling guilty was normal? Feeling at the unfairness of God that she got to go on with her life because she was a child at the time? A female at that? Even helping to raise Little Jims, who was still happily situated with his actual family. It never really made the feeling go away. Did she ever truly help at all?

"Is that your man?" Mavis asked as she spotted a photo of Rilla and Ken with their arms wrapped around each other. Rilla blinked taken from her own thoughts. The photo in question had been taken in the deep brush of rainbow valley. She had worn a new dress that was sheer creamy yellow with a light purple sash. A long skirt with delicate lacework and ribbon flowers. A dress that showed the exuberance of young woman who starred dreamily up at her lover. It was romantic, with a tint of innocence as they gazed at one another. Both so absorbed that it was like nothing else mattered in the world.

She looked over at Ken in the dark of the night. Oh, how livid would her parents be? Or the all unholy disappointment if they saw them this way? She wasn't the type of girl who did things like this, granted they were only sleeping. All right there had been some necking, but that was all. No, it was sleeping and nothing else.

She had walked out of the science hall earlier that day. Bundled up in her long coat and smart hat on her head. Snow was beginning to gather on the ground over the past days. She thought she had been dreaming when she looked up to Ken leaning against the lamp post dressed in his suit. She blinked, stopping mid-step when he didn't disappear she squealed. Rushing towards him she cares that several students turned as she ran as fast as her skirt would allow her. Crushing him with her embrace she kissed him squarely on the mouth.

"What are you doing here?" She asked him breathlessly confused slightly at his mysterious appearance.

"Well, you said you weren't able to come to the island this weekend so I came to visit you," Ken grinned. "I caught the ferry this morning and took the train over." He explained, even though it was the only way to come see her.
Maybe she should have noticed the dark circles under his eyes? The brash taste of whiskey still left on his breath from the night before? But one can easily turn a blind eye to what is in front of them when it comes to someone they love.

Love could blind you she learned.

Her parents weren't entirely against alcohol; although mother had a strange aversion to wine. While her father has a decanter of whiskey in his office. For those nights that never ended but with the new laws and prohibition, it was even rarer than ever on the island. Father had been allowed to keep his under the medical needs that pure alcohol could have in an emergency. Why would she ever consider such a thing for Ken to fall in to?

"Miss Blythe!" Someone shouted from afar in tactile tone. "Have some propriety!"

"I'm sorry Professor!" Rilla flushed as she stilled grasped Ken's hand in her.

"Captain Kenneth Ford, Miss Blythe's fiancé," Ken spoke up and held out his hand, which was shook firmly. It was always the same, once someone knew you fought in the war. They suddenly more conscious of their words and actions.

"I didn't realize, you were engaged." The professor looked down at her hand, that should have a ring on it, but it doesn't and raised an eyebrow.

"We haven't had time to look for rings, plus my mother plans on bringing the family ring over Christmas. That way Miss Blythe can have her choice," Ken explained after a moment. Slightly the truth, he did plan on giving Rilla a family ring if she liked it. If not he had a tidy sum of savings to buy her any ring she fancied.

They hurried away afterwards, stopping by various tree's to kiss one another. Finally, Rilla pulled away, his words finally making sense in her mind. "Why did you do that?" She asked him suddenly angry.

"It's the truth is it not?" Ken shrugged as he pulled out a cigarette.

"I thought you stopped that habit," Rilla questioned him. He knew she hated the smell of the smoke and promised to try and quit.

Ken sighed and put it away. "It's a habit that is not easy to break. I didn't come here to argue, I came to see the one thing in this world that makes me happy," he tried to woo her with his words.

"I heard there is a cozy little Italian restaurant not far from here?"

"I have to study-," Rilla sighed thinking about the amount of work she had to do. Her stomach betrayed her though as it rumbled loudly. Italian did seem much more appetizing than a peanut butter sandwich.

"You need to eat, and then I will sit and watch you study," Ken offered with a smile. A grin that could make her go weak in her knees. A grin that would make her do anything.

They walked down the streets, Rilla pointing out random places that she went to at times. When they stopped in front of a jewellery store. His words still echoing in her mind from what he told her professor. She was worried though, the more real the engagement became. The more taunting and questions of when she would leave school would happen. She has always been stubborn, and it wasn't that she didn't want to marry him. She just didn't want people to talk, to say 'I told you so' about her leaving school.
He did watch her study, drinking in her quirky faces as she chewed on her pencil as she read and jotted down notes. It started to pour rain about the time he realized he should leave. She looked around at the clock, and then the window. The hotel was too far walk in this weather, she had no landlady to check her room for overnight guests.

"Stay-," she said softly. Her body ached for him when she thought of him leaving once more. Why was leaving so hard? "It can be our secret?" She asked him.

Ken found himself gulping as he nodded. He was seven years older than her, he already knew just how much a slippery slope intimacy could be. Rilla-his Rilla was so naive and innocent at times. Even as the single diamond sat on her finger he wanted her more than ever. He could be a gentleman though. He was raised a gentleman after all, even if he spent many months travelling with his father around the world. He had women and girls constantly trying for his attention. Even in the war- in Paris on breaks, England when he went for a drink in the pubs. Women would be constantly throwing themselves at him. Thankfully by then, he had eyes only for Rilla and none of them mattered. He couldn't believe just how many men would forget about their wives. Their own sweethearts when a pretty woman neared them.

She led him into her room with a nervous smile. He watched her unpin her hair, brushing through the curls until they were fluffy and large. Her ring sparkling in the electric lights. He had told her he felt better knowing she wore his ring. He wasn't worried about when they would marry, but he needed the world to know she was his.

"Rilla?" He asked hesitantly as he sat in the plush chair of her room. It seems so sacrilege to be in her room at this moment. Looking around at more photos that graced her room. Mostly of him, a few of Little Jims. She would make a wonderful mother- he shook his head. He must not think like that just yet.

Another night of survival it seemed, but this night might be hardest for him. He watched her through half closed eyes, as she undid the buttons on her blouse, her skirt that fell away to the floor. The swish of her petticoat that came next, revealing the long line corset she wore. She twisted her arms and untied the bow at her waist and soon that too was tossed into the chair. She pulled on a pair of silk pyjamas from her chest of drawers. Ones that were far too large for her dainty figure that was covered by her camisole and drawers. So delicate and almost sheer in the lamplight.

He kicked off his boots, tossing his suspenders down his shoulders. Once she looked at him with a curious look at why he wasn't undressing. He pulled at the buttons of his shirt before pulling over his head. He let his trousers fall she turned her back to him, leaving him in his vest and long underwear. She embraced him, hugging him from behind. Her body soft was against his, as it lacked the rigidness of her corset. He never felt anything so perfect.

"Just let me hold you?" she asked him quietly.

Neither would admit that hearing the steady breath beside them gave them a small peace of mind. That possibly it was the soundest sleep they had since the war, at least for Ken it was. For Rilla, it was knowing she wasn't alone in the large apartment after sharing her room with Little Jims.

She tried not to think about anyone ever finding out. How she could be forced to marry Ken earlier than she wanted to; if anyone ever found out that he spent the night in her bed. It wouldn't matter if it was completely innocent or not? She was playing fire with her reputation and reputation was a woman's most valuable accomplishment.

She woke up to his whimpers and jolts, her instincts kicked in like how they did when Little Jims was around. She cuddled into him, whispering in his ear. Telling him that he was safe, that he was
home and safe until he calmed down.

She was here by his side.

Survival of the fittest. It may have been something they learned about, but surely there was another approach by now? Life was just a never-ending trial by fire. No one had the answers; so sometimes you had to find your own. While Ken may have survived the war out of pure will and determination. They both knew now that coming homes doesn't mean you are the fittest. It only makes you the luckiest.

In the end, it was all just survival of the fittest. Except they were surviving the only way they knew how to. No one needed to know how they spent the entire weekend, alone in her apartment. No one knew that he was in Kingsport at all. It was their own little secret.

They were constantly changing the rules, adapting them to fit their own needs and wants. The Victorian decorum of the old days was dwindling. The new modern age was beginning as the world repaired itself. More and more you saw the younger generation break away from the older society norms.

It would be 1920 in a few short weeks and even the Maritimes were beginning to change. Times were changing and they were approaching an era of great delight and most of all change.

Times were changing quickly after the war. The Flapper Era was rising, jazz music and prohibition was all the rage. Men and Women were going to school and courting and calling were becoming dating. While many couples and women still regarded sex for marriage there were fewer limitations on was appropriate during dating. Where the Victorians were completely hands-off, until maybe engagement. The young people of the 1920s were quick to experiment and have fun. Necking and snogging where fun activities.

It is also the era of slut shaming and shocking the older generation more than ever before.

Let me know what you are thinking of these little snippets, I love hearing peoples opinions and thoughts on my writing.

Tina.
Chapter 4

Hello All!

Welcome to another chapter. I hope you all enjoy it.

The heat of the moment, one never forgets the heat of the moment. Sometimes it's so intense that you lose your mind. You say things you never meant to say. You do things you don't mean to do. In the heat of the moment, sometimes you lose your will to say no, sometimes, you just don't care.

Rilla had come home two days earlier than planned. Having finished her midterm exams moved around due to scheduling conflicts. She had straight from the train station to the house of dreams. She wanted to surprise him, much like the times he surprised her over the past month. She had never seen a home is such disarray. How could one man make such a mess? She went straight into cleaning mode. It had been spotless over Christmas?

It was when she reached the kitchen, her heart stopped momentarily at the sight of the bottles. They were everywhere and then she saw the cigarette trays next to the lone typewriter. She cleaned out what she could before she sat down at the table and waited for him to come home. What was supposed to be a happy occasion, now weighed on her mind?

How could she have not seen it? A part of her mind nagged at her saying how could she have known? She wasn't here 24/7. She thought back to the random telephone calls in the middle of the night, the dark circles under his eyes.

"What is all of this?" She asked when he finally came home. He looked at her like he was seeing a ghost for a long moment.

"Rilla?" He asked hesitantly not sure if he was hallucinating or not. His jawline was covered in the stubble of at least two days.

"Well, who else would it be?" Rilla said a tad to sarcastically than she meant to. "What is all this?" She repeated to the box of empty bottles, along with the few half full ones of amber and clear liquids. Definitely homemade by the looks of it at this point.

"It's just liquor," Ken shrugged.

"It's illegal!" Rilla exclaimed. "In every province at that! Is this what you do when you're alone, get pissed?" Her voice was rising. Maybe she was reading too much into this? But after the recent studies that her class had been reading she was now way too worried to care.

"What else am I supposed to do? I can't sleep, all my friends are gone from that blasted war. Who cares if I have a drink at night?" Ken objected.

"A drink or five?" Rilla countered him, eyeing the empty bottles, and the ones she found in the cellar. "Drinking isn't going to fix your issues, Ken," she tried to reason with him.

"Don't you dare start diagnosing me," Ken snapped. "You have no idea, you will never understand what I did, what I went through!"

"That's because you never talk about, you never tell me anything! I have a vague idea, that is far
too romanticized from being a young girl at the time. Yet you constantly change the subject, you
never actually talk about it." Rilla snapped back. "I will not fall apart, I won't love you any god
damn less if you killed thousands of men. We were protecting our country!"

Ken barked out a laugh. "Yes, killing other innocent men for doing the same thing for their own
country? War is just a hypocrites reason for violence."

Rilla huffed. "Clearly this was a mistake to come here tonight." Her hands waving around as she
gathers her bag and hat.

"Don't go-," Ken pleaded. "Please, don't go. I'm sorry I'll clean up and dump everything out."

Rilla looked at him, her anger vanishing as she saw the broken man in front of her. She stayed the
night after they cleared away all the alcohol. It was the first time she had been upstairs in the house
of dreams. Knowing her parents once slept in the same room when they first married. Possibly in
the same old bed frame that creaked as they moved into a comfortable position.

Why did something so potentially wrong, feel so right? She heard Ken fall asleep as his head rested
on her bosom like a young child. She and Di were tall and slender like their mother, where Nan had
taken after the Blythe women with her curves.

Ken tried to reassure her that she was perfect to him. Especially after finding her near hysterics
when a dress came in that she bought from Eatons. Except that didn't fit right and needed hasty
alterations before heading to an event that night. She always felt self-conscious over lacking any
sort of natural volume up top. His response was going over every part of her that he liked. Kissing
the glimpses of pale skin. Later he grinned cheekily as he ran his hand over her hip that night.
Murmuring through stolen kisses that what she lacked up top, she made up for on the bottom.

Which was true she supposed?

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Gilbert looked up from the knock on his office door. Beckoning the knocker in, he was surprised to
see his youngest daughter. She looked tired and grown, which made him wonder when actually
began to wonder when she had exactly grown up.

"Dad?" She asked awkwardly, standing on one foot then the other in the doorway. "Can I talk to
you privately?" She asked. Maybe it was the way she had her hair? Or the strange quiver in her
voice? She was a great mix of both him and Anne, it was peculiar to see at times.

"Of course, shut the door. When did you get in? We didn't hear from you last night?" Gilbert
nodded with a friendly smile, before sobering when he saw her tired face. "Do you need, Dad, or
Doctor Dad?"

"I don't know," Rilla sighed. "Have you noticed anything about Ken over the past few months?"

"Not that I know of or truly seen?" Gilbert answered giving her a strange look. Doctor dad seemed
to be chosen. Half dad, half doctor who when his children needed honest, yet caring advice.

"I went over, as soon as I got to the island," Rilla started. "I wanted to surprise him, it's the day he
came back after all." She added. "He wasn't home, but I know where he keeps the keys-" She
explained. "There was bottle everywhere, littered in every room! I mean how could I have not seen
it? The late night calls, the surprise weekend visits when he clearly hasn't slept-?" Rilla stopped
short, blushing at her own admittance.

"Rilla-"Gilbert's voice croaked. He had a small inkling of just where Kenneth Ford had been
disappearing to on weekends.

"He's drowning Daddy, and there is nothing I can do about it," Rilla's voiced cracked. "I just keep making things worse. He buys me a ring, and yet I hate wearing it in public, at school. The one thing that makes him feel more confident I can't even give him that. I wear it around my neck most of the time because anytime I wear it I just get constantly asked when I'm leaving? When's the wedding? What are my colours? I can't stand it! All I ever wanted was to walk down to Rainbow Valley and just have a small no-fuss wedding. Even Persis is constantly sending me clippings and magazines of bridal fashions. The Ford's are dears of course, but constantly they are trying to figure out just who can come to the wedding. Asking if I'd be willing to have another ceremony in Toronto! I just can't take it!

"Oh Dearest," Gilbert softened. The Fords were rather well known due to Owen Fords Novels. Society was something Rilla was never brought up in. He never felt like he had to question her feelings or their relationship? But seeing her so unsure and frightened only made him wish she was still a little girl who he could protect.

"I love him, I love all the mixed up, broken pieces of him. But then he just shuts me out at times and hides things from me whenever things go bad. I know that being away isn't easy for him but he told me to go and do this." Rilla broke down.

"Believe it or not, I've been in your shoes," Gilbert leaned back in his chair. "I find it so strange that out of all my children you would be the one. Walking the path that your mother and I walked all those years ago. I had three years of medical school when your mother and I got engaged." Gilbert smiled at the memory. "There were no telephones back then yet really, and we got by on letters and holidays. I know exactly what it felt like to leave your mother every August, while she went to work. Counting days and waiting was torture as we were always so far away from each other. We managed though, even when things were bleak. Now though I do have to ask. Where does exactly Kenneth stay when he visits you? I know the youth today are far more relaxed. I also remember the days when I never wanted to let your beautiful mother out of my sight. When we dodged chaperones and hid in closets back in those days." Gilbert looked at her with a stern look that faded into a small smile remembering his own courtship days.

"Nothing happens," Rilla said blushing. She knew what her father was thinking, she wasn't that type of girl. "You knew," she looked up at him. Studying his eyes for a moment, the same hazel much like hers.

"You're downstairs neighbour alerted us of a male guest coming and going," Gilbert nodded. "As I said before, your mother and I had a three-year engagement. Along with your Aunt Diana, none of us are saints Rilla. Though I will say this, I swear to God Rilla, if you end up pregnant-"

"Dad!" Rilla shrieked. She did not want to have this conversation. She knew where babies came from. "Mom has already covered all those subjects when-well you know," Rilla blurted out. Her face was red for insinuating the word menstruation in front of her father. It may be a fact of life, and he may be a doctor, but he was still her father. She didn't even feel comfortable talking about her cycle with Ken. Even the passing mention of not feeling well a certain week of the month made her blush.

"No Rilla- if you are old enough to have house guests then you are old enough to hear this Rilla. Babies happen way too easily to young girls. I have birthed my fair share of them as a physician. You're an adult, and I've always believed in raising strong independent adults. Your decisions are your own. But actions have consequences, and consequences can be very real. There is no full proof way to prevent pregnancy. Especially when contraception is illegal. Not only that, society
still very much puts much emphasis on purity before marriage. You can lose friends, be expelled from of college and as archaic the word is. You could be ruined. Sadly a woman reputation is still her most valuable trait.” Gilbert told her.

"As for Kenneth, you both need to talk and communicate the cold hard truth. I know Kenneth has seen so much terror. I can only say it would be perfectly normal for him to find a way to numb his mind from the horrors. I've seen men addicted to morphine and other drugs trying to deal with what they faced. What they had to do in that war when war is all humans with a winner and a loser. The sad part is that he is a grown man, and can only make his own decisions at this point. But you two need to find a solution that suits both of you. If you give up school, you will resent him. But then again if you're at school is making him drink away his issues that are not good as well."

Rilla sighed and nodded.

"He wasn't violent was he?" Gilbert asked quietly.

"He never raised a hand," Rilla shook her head quickly. Even in his rage, Ken never did anything that truly frightened her.

The doorbell rang the next morning, Rilla sighed as she went to open it. It was most likely Ken as he told her he would stop by around noon. Sure enough, it was him, though this time he was clean shaven and his hair slicked back. His shirt was tucked into his pleated trousers. She held the door open for him as he slunk by her ashamed of himself. She turned as she heard her fathers study door open. Seeing him leaning against the doorway with his shirt sleeves rolled up and arms crossed. She rolled her eyes slightly at his over protective.

"Kenneth," Gilbert spoke sternly.

"Dr. Blythe," Ken nodded his head.

"You can talk in my study," Gilbert told them. "I have to go speak to your mother," he spoke to Rilla. Rilla nodded, hoping her mother wasn't going to go into any sort of detail of what they talked about up in her old room. Though she learned a few details of her parent's marriage she never needed to know about in the process. Somehow they came out with a solution. She would finish the semester and then during the summer they would marry in a small ceremony. He still had his work on the island, but he could come to visit anytime he wished. They would rent their own place if her parents didn't like the arrangement of them using the apartment. She would continue to wear her ring around her neck during school continuing as Miss Blythe. The school didn't need to know her marital status. If they did question her or her morals she would explain their decision.

At the end of it all, Rilla reminded him that she was a simple island girl, and he was a city boy. Their colliding world wasn't easy for her as she let on. Just how overwhelmed she was at his sister's excitement of their engagement. The plans of a large wedding, something she never wanted. Ken still couldn't comprehend or put much into words, every time he tried he was tongue twisted. But he repeated a number out loud for the first time, a number that tormented him every day he lived. Every life he intentionally took for his own self-perseverance.

Sometimes the aftermath puts everything into perspective. That those words said in the heat of the moment was the honest truth that you were too afraid to say out loud. They push the real fears and questions out in the open. Either forcing you to deal with them or live in a questionable wonder. If
you choose to deal with him, then maybe then you can start a new leaf in life. Learn and move on
The heat of the moment is a very real and tangible. It can make or break a person, a couple, a
moment.

When it is all said and done, sometimes there is a beauty in the heat of the moment; a beautiful,
tragic moment.

I tried and wanted to make Gilbert more upset, but in my mind, he's a physician, he knows that
despite what society or people say, people will do what they wish. He knows the world is
changing, and that his children are growing up in a slightly different world then he and Anne did.
He ultimately knows that telling her what to do might lead her into either running away. He's still
rather conservative but sees another side from his years as a doctor.

I was alluding to a few little things here and there. Anne was really sick after having Shirley and I
can see her being advised to not have any more children. Meaning Rilla was most likely an
'accident' in family planning methods lol.

Also, I have come to the conclusion that this Rilla and Ken is most likely the same Rilla and Ken in
Shadows Of Past and Present.

Let me know what you are thinking about these two...

I do love to hear your thoughts on all of this.

Tina
Hello all!

Welcome to chapter five. I hope everyone enjoys this one, its a little more mellow than the others. This is more about Rilla than Ken in this one.

It took a while to figure out what Rilla was feeling, and what she was trying to tell me, but I think I got it all figured out.

Thank you all for the reviews and follows. I do thrive on them and enjoy hearing your thoughts.

Enjoy!

It is always the darkest before the dawn and when the night is the darkest is when your fears come out. It's where the spirits play games and tricks. It was the witching hour where anything could happen.

When was the last time she had been awake at such an hour? When the phone rang? Being awakened by the ghosting kisses from her love? When word reaches Ingleside about Walter? The darkness was something so mysterious. How it could be terrifying and peaceful at the same time.

"Oh Walter," Rilla sighed. "If you could only be here to see me tomorrow," she mumbled into her pillow. How many years had it been since that day? Too many to count correctly at this time of night.

The wind blew through the open curtains. She shivered as she watched the tiers of silk and lace glittered from her small lamp on her bedside table. She should be sleeping, she shouldn't be awake at this hour. She was about to be married. A wedding she once dreamed about as a child. Walking barefoot in the grass in Rainbow Valley, flowers twisted into a garland in her hair.

"I hope you are proud of me" Rilla whispered. "I wish you were here to ensure me that I am doing the right thing."

Maybe it was in her sleepy haze, a dreamlike trance as she could feel the words of Walter in her mind. Only in these moments she truly remembered the sound of his voice. Whispering in the dark corners of her mind.

'Whispers on the water

Lovers first embrace

A crackling fire of crimson lace

Heaven's path and a golden gate

A raven night with stars of bliss

An angels laughter and a spirits song

Till the golden sun wakes, and the spell be broken
Ken seemed to be doing better, so far it was like he was keeping his promise by not drinking. He was still occasionally smoking but at least he wasn't drinking away his issues. She could deal with the smoking if she had to, drinking as he was not so much.

He was still working at the Charlottetown Telegraph. Though thankfully it was finally starting to venture away from the war. He was starting to be able to write about different things, some of his actual interests.

Even after the past year and most importantly over the past months. She was still learning things about him. The way he would tinker around on his auto surprised her. Seeing him dress so casually covered in grease, as he repaired and rebuilt engines in his spare time. Something that he could actually do now. Now that he sober enough to concentrate long enough finish tasks.

What surprised her the most was how he often spent hours, hand colouring photographs. Usually of her, but sometimes of landscapes of the island as well. While he had a way with words much like his father, he always had enjoyed photography. When it came to it, writing paid the bills and much more lucrative than the art itself. He was no Theodore Kent, a rather famous Islander of their time who was a painter who studied in Montreal. He knew that, and writing was a good substitute for mixed media. So when his twenty-eighth birthday rolled around. She presented him with an Aeroscope camera she had found second hand. Even then she spent most of her savings on it.

They spent the next few days driving around as he toyed with the camera. Filming her laughing smiles and hair blowing in the wind. Other times, she asked him to take photos in a way that surely was not proper. Those were hidden away in the drawers of his desk away from anyone who wasn't privy to them.

Slowly he was healing some of the broken pieces of him. Still, she found him whimpering in the dark of the night. Nights when no spoke of where she was if she wasn't at Ingleside. They had to be much more careful about being seen. Instead, they sought out old hiding spots, relishing in the moments alone. Stealing kisses and embraces that would be deemed improper by the general public.

Now that the Fords were in town, and their secret rendezvous were put on hold. Instead, Rilla spent the evening writing Rilla Ford, into her journal. Along with Bertha Marilla Ford, which she added with a flourish. Seeing it seemed so strange, writing it seemed stranger.

Was she ready for this?

Persis had been over to see her dress, it was simple. A drop waisted style with tiers silk, lace and tulle. She never admitted that she and her Mother had taken to making the dress themselves. After long hours of not finding anything on any island or mainland store. It didn't look handmade, It was still long, despite the hemlines becoming shorter as each year passed. Her veil was misty, with a beaded lace headband that covered her forehead. It looked like something from the motion pictures they had seen in Charlottetown.

She put it on often, starring at herself in the mirror with wide eyes in the large mirror of her room. A stirring pit of emotions refused to settle. Some days she wasn't sure if she nervous, scared or anxious?
She pushed herself up and slid her legs over the side of her bed. She looked around her room feeling the hair of the back of her neck tingle. She quietly crept over to her parent's room down the hall, the door open as it generally was. The floorboards creaked as she approached the bed. Her mothers grey eyes opening at the sound. They never said a thing as she lifted the summer quilt and let Rilla slide into the large bed.

When was the last time that she had done this? It had to be years by now? Her mother brushed back her hair, wrapping her arms around her youngest. Rilla sighed as she peered into the dark. She knew that bedside table, was photos of her and her siblings growing up. Photos of Marilla and Matthew, along with a photo of Walter in his uniform.

She felt Anne kiss her hair, and mumble something softly. How could her baby be not a baby anymore?

"As long as I find comfort in your arms. I'll always be your baby," Rilla whispered repeating similar words from years prior. "How do you know you are truly ready for something?"

"When something is new and frightening," Anne said after a moment. "It doesn't mean that you aren't ready for it. Being anxious, being afraid of the future is something completely normal. But the fact that you aren't running away, that you are steady on your feet and in your mind. I had my worries in the beginning. Wondering if you were doing this for the wrong reasons. Doing this because you felt like your owed it to Ken."

"I have always cared for Ken. It was a childhood fantasy, that grew into something so intense that it frightens me at times. College can be so lonely, so-ruthless with their comments. He has this way of centring me. He makes me want to be more, do more with my life. Ambitions were something I always lacked in my life. But he comes with ties to a life I have never lived, even in Kingsport the Ford name is known. I don't want to be known as an islander who caught Kenneth Ford, I don't want to be known as a gold-digger," Rilla sighed.

"Oh Rilla, you will not be the first, nor will you be the last to catch a man who people will think is too good for you. One of my school friends from Avonlea, Jane Andrews went onto to marry a millionaire," Anne offered her. "You've met her year ago in Avonlea, she is one of the sweetest souls. Do not worry about what others say, if you want to marry Ken Ford tomorrow, you marry him. Don't worry your pretty little head about what others think," Anne told her. "You are far more worthy of him than any other girl who chased him, and prettier too," Anne added. Anne was always a little vain in her daughter's good looks, they, after all, did inherit her nose.

Slowly the sun rose in the sky as she dozed in her parent's bed for most likely the last time in her life. She would belong to Ken by the end of the day in more ways than one. She was just finishing her breakfast in bed with her mother when Gilbert asked her to join him in his office. Rilla looked at her dad peculiarly but followed him tying her robe around her she walked down the stairs.

"Don't worry, I'm not about to try and talk you out of this," Gilbert spoke as he sat down. "If you say you are ready for this marriage, then I believe you."

"How did you feel, the morning you married Mum?" Rilla asked him as she browsed the bookshelves.

"I was a nervous wreck, but nothing would have stopped me from being at that alter waiting for her." Gilbert smiled at his own memories.
"Do you think I am doing the right thing?" Rilla asked him, looking over her shoulder.

"It's your choice to make so my opinion doesn't matter much," Gilbert answered. Avoiding her question the best he could. She would have stayed a baby if he had his way, but truthfully he still had his own concerns.

"Why didn't you ever, I don't know to get mad? Come and make a scene?" She asked him curiously. It was something that continued to bother her. Ever since he admitted that he knew about Ken spending weekends in Kingsport with her.

"Because it would have done no good, and change nothing. If anything it probably makes you more likely to elope?" Gilbert replied. He found himself straightening up when he saw her intense look. The one he often gave his children when they had been naughty. "I did come, I stood across the park I watched the two of you come back from someplace. You both looked tired and afraid. Yet you looked the most at peace than I had seen in the longest time. I decided that you were an adult and it wasn't my place to scold you for leading your own life," Gilbert told her honestly.

"It seems, no matter what you are weathering, dealing with good or bad days the two of you together just seems to work. Though I will say, if you are having second thoughts about a wedding? -" 

"It's not necessarily so many second thoughts," Rilla sighed. "I do want to marry him, and I feel like now is the best time. We waited so long already, it doesn't make sense to wait any longer. We both agreed that I'll finish college and go from there, but what happens-?" she trailed off not sure what she was even worried about herself.

"Rilla, come sit," Gilbert instructed as he opened a drawer of his desk. Passing a white paper bag that had no writing on it. He passed it across while adopting his physician persona. "You are entering a new phase in your life, read the pamphlets and find one that works with your body. Keep it hidden, and keep it safe." He warned her at the end.

It was then she looked curiously into the bag and blushed bright red. She shut her mouth looking at him slightly miffed. "How is when I'm playing with fire? You remind me to be responsible and think of my choices, yet the day of my marriage you give me these?"

"Because as your father, I wanted to keep you a child for as long as I could. I mean it Rilla those can get me into a lot of trouble." Gilbert retorted sternly. "As a man a faith, I cannot condone pre-marital relations. As a Doctor, talking to a soon to be a married woman, I can bend the rules. I have contacts in the states because every woman has a choice and right to her own life." Gilbert told her. "As a father, I don't want my youngest daughter to give up everything she has worked for. I am under no illusions that, you are going to wait another two years to be with your husband. Talk to him, don't hide the fact that you have those. Don't let him needlessly worry if you were planning on other methods. I am sure you spoke of it?" He looked at Rilla with an intense gaze. She nodded after a moment. They spoke of it for in the future, not in great detail but they have a plan A and B set up in their minds.

"So you and mom wanted six children?" Rilla asked him abruptly.

"Your mother and I would have had a dozen if we are able to," Gilbert told her sadly. He almost lost Anne twice during childbirth. The fact his younger daughter existed was due to the fact that Anne could make him weak in the knees. Thankfully, Rilla's own birth came and went without any complications. Something he thanked God for every night.
The sun was shining as Rilla walked down the grassy aisle of Rainbow Valley. The warbling of the songbirds sat in the many bushes surrounding them. Step by step, her enamelled toes peeked out from under her dress. Her sleeves fluttering in the gentle breeze leaving the majority of her arms bare. A triple string of pearls sat on her throat that she had borrowed from her mother's jewellery box. She had her choice of stones, but pearls were her thing. Gilbert walked proudly beside her, holding her arm steady with each step they took. Her bouquet of wildflowers that matched the garland that was pinned into her hair. An old brooch pinned to the ribbons of her flowers. Amethyst, a brooch that her mother had passed down from one of her namesakes.

She shyly looked up at Ken who was waiting nervously at the make-shift altar in a dark grey pine stripe suit. He refused to wear his khaki's. Jem standing beside him taking the role of best man of the day. Una her maid of honour standing in her own best gown next to her father who was asked to perform the marriage vows. Her sisters who graciously accepted the fact that she had grown rather close to Una over the war years. Shirley was beaming at her mischievously. He had been planning something for the past few weeks and never told her what it was.

Faith nodded her head to her as hands were resting on her growing stomach. It seemed rather unfair times that Jem was able to compartmentalize the war and regular life. Rilla was sure he was plagued by the nightmares of war like many other men, but Jem was just happy to be alive. Happy to be home, even Dog Monday who was still alive was beside his master.

Anne and Leslie were wiping their eyes as they watched her make her way to her groom. While Owen Ford held one of the many cameras that were there that day. To the side was Susan who sniffled into her own hankie. Dressed in her own best dress after spending the morning decorating the wedding cake. All that was missing was Walter, but in her mind, he was in the air, the warbling of the birds. Most of all he was in the tiny locket that was around her neck.

Gilbert gruffly cleared his throat as he passed his daughter over to the eager young man in front of him. "Take care of her Kenneth." He told Ken before turning to Rilla and kissing her cheek through the veil.

"I will Dr. Blythe," Ken nodded his head before turning to his bride. "You are beautiful," Ken whispered as he grasped her hands.

And so they were married, under the clear blue sky of Rainbow Valley. Days before from her twenty-first birthday and six weeks before the start of term. Reverend Meredith kept everything short and sweet. While still speaking of the years of watching Rilla grow up, and seeing Ken every summer.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, Ken pulled her veil back, cupping the side of her face in his hand. He kissed her gently, while his other wrapped around her body.

It as always the darkest before the dawn and when the night is the darkest is when your fears come out. Having fears doesn't make you weak, it doesn't mean that you are not ready. That having fears means that you are willingly stepping into the future. Without foolish notions or a schoolgirls fantasy. It was knowing marriage is a commitment. Something you should never walk into with rose coloured glasses. Marriage was a partnership, one that both parties needed to be on the same page.
In those dark hours is when you realize just how strong you are.

She awoke his warm breath on her shoulder; as his arms rested against the bare skin of her stomach. Still, in a daze, Rilla turned her head to look at her husband. The slight ache between her legs brings her back to the tender moments they shared. The way he covered her body in hundreds of tiny kisses. Finding every dip and freckle on his exploration. They had the house of dreams to themselves. The Fords staying at Ingleside to give the newlyweds a few days of privacy before they went back to Toronto.

Her wedding dress was draped across a chair, her knickers and brassiere on the floor. She had shocked her mother when she refused to wear a corset. Opting for a lighter less confining option that had come out recently. Her undergarments were a shade of pale blue silk. A conscious choice to fulfill the old superstition that she heard since she was young.

Rilla didn't know what life had in store for them. But as she felt the gentle breeze from the window whisper in her ear, she was no longer afraid. Walter always approved of Ken, he was the first person to know of her fancy for Ken.

"Rilla, you beautiful little thing, are you anybody's sweetheart? If you are, tell me before I go." She remembered his voice asking her.

"Penny for your thoughts?" Ken mumbled in his sleepy haze.

"I didn't mean to wake you?" Rilla answered, twisting her body so she could face him. "I was just remembering when Walter asked me if I was somebody's sweetheart. It was right before his left for war," Rilla said after a moment. "I kept waiting for a sign, his approval of us-this." She waved her hand between them. "I didn't realize I already had it. Even years ago, he knew that we were meant to be. He told me to be strong in his own strange way."

"Walter was always an old soul," Ken pulled her close. "He was there in his own way, Rilla." He kissed her collarbone. Walter had been a great friend, sure he was queer in his ways. But a good chum was the last thing he wanted to be thinking of on his wedding night. It worked as Rilla let out low moan as he lapped his tongue over that spot. He was still finding those little spots that made her melt into his. He looked at her with a question in dark eyes. She nodded with a smile as squeaked as he rolled so she straddling his waist. Her long ruddy hair covering her shoulders. Only in the moonlight, he could see the rosy tips peek through the loose waves.

Not part of the chapter per se...as it won't flow with this one. This a separate little blurb that is on its own.

Meanwhile at Ingleside the next morning.

"It seems strange that Rilla is married," Jem commented to his dad as they sat in the study. "I heard some strange rumours though. So I am sure it best that they are married now. Apparently, there have been some rumours of them sneaking around in the middle of the night. Faith has been telling people they were clearly mistaken because Rilla isn't that sort of girl."
"Rilla is far from the child she was when you left for war," Gilbert said after a moment. "I don't know the exact definition of their relationship prior to today. But it wasn't necessarily innocent," Gilbert took a drink of his black coffee. Watching his son's face contort into a weird look.

"Oh Josephy-I needs some bleach," Jem said with disgust. His mind going back to the book of photos he found while looking for paper in the house of dream. A book that contained a half-clothed woman hiding her face. It was odd, but the Fords were never quite normal in their love of arts.

Or the silk robe that he saw hanging one of the bedrooms? Or what he thought looked like a pair of lace and silk pants underneath the bed? He assumed Ken had given his parents or Persis that room.

They had been of Rilla, and were Rilla's?

"Woah there!" Gilbert grabbed his son's arm. "Where are you going?"

"Where do you think I am going! Married or not I am going to go kick that mans arse for taking advantage of my little sister!" Jem exclaimed. Unsure of when he jumped up, with the random need to protect his little sister's reputation.

"Jem, leave them be-," Gilbert warned his son. "There is plenty to the story and it's not my place to tell it. I can't imagine what it was like over there Jem. But Ken hasn't had an easy time transitioning into civilian life. I have a feeling, your sister if the one pushing boundaries, not Ken." Gilbert gave a hard look at Jem who finally took a deep breath to calm down.

"I still don't like it," Jem huffed.

"Neither do I, but its something we both have to live with; and that is the fact that your sister is an adult," Gilbert replied. "You'll understand one day when your little one is grown up."

Well, there you have it. I had to add a small snippet of Gilbert and Jem. I feel like someone had to have over a protective moment, so I choose Jem.

The small poem is mine, one I wrote back in high school. I feel like Rilla would have longed for her brother leading up to the wedding.

The Aeroscope Camera. I couldn't find a price of them while researching early motion picture cameras, but I am assuming they would have cost a pretty penny, even second hand. They were used a fair bit during the war. Rilla finding one was most likely a heck of a find for her.

1920's wedding gowns were not that attractive, Cornelia Vanderbilt's wedding in the 1920s was gorgeous and help give me some inspiration for Rilla.

Anyways as always, feel free to let me know what you think of these snippets.

Things are good for the time being, but me knowing me...it probably won't be this easy for long. Haha!

Tina
Welcome to chapter 6

Thank you for all the reviews and follows. I am glad that all you fellow Anne lovers are enjoying these stories and letting me know how much you enjoy them.

Rilla used to think marriage was an automatic happy ending. Marriage was an ultimate goal if you wanted to have accomplished something in your life. She never considered that even when two people were deeply in love. That navigating a new life together that wasn't always easy. It was a quick lesson to learn when the honeymoon ended. That marriage was never a walk in the park even if Ken was a man who considered women equals and not lesser beings.

Marriage was a compromise and the constant game of give and take. She looked to her own parent's marriage. Remembering the teasing and laughter of her parent's marriage. She was too young to remember Anne's insecurities, Gilbert endless working. She has a vague memory of watching her mother dress one evening. Only to change into something less pretty when Father didn't compliment it. When she told her mother that one evening, Anne smiled and laughed softly. It had been such a strange year. Every marriage has it up and downs, heartbreaks and laughter. Her father and Mother had their fair share. Sometimes it was easy to forget how a person needs to be reminded just how loved they are.

It wasn't long after the wedding when the first real-life moment came. She had turned around to see Ken with a long blue box she had bought at the pharmacy. They were packing for their trip to Toronto and ran out to get a few things for the trip.

"Kotex?" He read as she tried to grab them from him embarrassed from his curiosity. "What in the world is this?" He asked before reading the small price circle. "For 60 cents?" His eyes widened slightly. She looked down uncomfortable. Even if her father was a doctor. It was always made for an awkward conversation when her father came home with new female hygiene items for the ladies of the house. Especially when her sisters had left and it was really only her left in the house.

She had grown up in a family with a live-in doctor. All her brothers knew all about mother nature and women. While Ken obviously had heard it mentioned by his mother or sister. It was the first time he had come face to face with the reality of dealing with such a normal thing for women.

While all her life she had been surrounded by sympathetic brothers. Which Nan and Di used for their own advantage. They knew that Walter would have a hidden stash of chocolate. Jem always went pink in the face but went to find the pain reliever. Shirley was the only who could sneak the extra cookies from the pantry for them.

Father was less sympathetic at times. Telling you that life didn't stop because of natural bodily functions. School, chores were still a requirement unless you could truly tell him how awful you felt.

"Ken," Rilla begin after a moment. "What do you think they are for?" She watched him open the box slightly.

"Oh-!" Ken almost dropped the long box that he partially opened onto the table. "Is it that time already?" He asked awkwardly.
Rilla shrugged, "Soon most likely, its not an exact science but I am pretty regular," she told him. "As long as we were careful enough that is."

"Of course," Ken nodded. "I'm sure we'll be fine." He added trying to reassure her. Rilla nodded. They never thought it could be so nerve-wracking. Most newlyweds were waiting for the opposite of what they were waiting for. As they both silently praying for her cycle to come.

Their wedding night had been a flurry of nerves and excitement. The skin on skin, warm breaths and low moans. She never had a chance to show him the 'present' her father had given them. It weighed on their mind greatly even if they never said as much. Even using every piece of self-control or imagination had prepared him for what his bride felt like. She was perfect, they were perfect together. Except for perfect endings where never perfect in reality, and all they could do it pray. Rilla tried to reassure him. Telling him that the chances of becoming pregnant from one night were rather slim. That it took her mother almost two years to have a Jem. But still, there was a constant unknown fear in the back of both of their minds.

"I'm afraid this will be a rather new thing for me. I mean I have a sister, but we weren't a talkative household" Ken joked trying to lighten the mood.

"And I'm afraid I grew up in a rather open household. Despite my own reserves about talking about it." Rilla nodded sympathetically as she grabbed her item from the table. Pushing the box closed in her hands. "As for these, they are worth every penny I spend on them. I don't have to worry about washing out cloths or dealing with wet bags at school." She explained before adding on. "Don't worry I can buy them with my own savings." Rilla offered to him. "I know they are expensive." Her eyes cast downwards.

"I don't care about the price Rilla if they make your life easier buy them. I mean considering the alternatives and what it means when you don't have to use anything. I rather have us spend 60 cents once a month for the next two years," Ken responded, lifting her chin up to look at him. "We're married Rilla, at the end of the day I am going have to get used to such things. We do share a bed after all. Which makes these little things important to actually talk about and discuss?" He tried to make her feel comfortable about not hiding the fact she was buying them.

He kissed her sweetly as she pulled at his tie. Packing lay forgotten for the moment. A flurry clothing suddenly being pushed out the way as he lifted her up on to the table.

He pulled back for a moment with a questioning look. She returned her question with a nod of her head. That was all he needed as encouragement as he lips found hers once more.

It was Rilla's first trip out west. The scenery, the train ride was something breathtakingly beautiful. Watching the passing forestry and rock formations. Ken had asked for the family cottage in the Muskoka's for two weeks in August. Which was quickly granted, as they needed some seclusion after the wedding?

When they reached Union Station in Toronto he watched her spin in all directions. Her eyes wide with amazement as looked around her as they waited for the car his parents sent for them.

Everyone was so stylish and the height of fashion. The buildings were taller than she ever imagined. Ken watched her chuckling once and a while at her half-opened mouth. Especially when they drove down on Spadina. He heard her see it before he caught the look on her face.

There on Spadina was a large castle-like Mansion. He had grown up being it be built, as his parents didn't live far from the large house.
"What is that place?" Rilla asked the driver.

"That was Lord and Lady Pellatt's place. They call it Casa Loma Ma'am it told it has a bowling alley, underground tunnels and even a swimming pool in the works." He told her. "The local girl guides often went to meeting there with Lady Pellett."

Rilla nodded with wide eyes. She remembered reading about the local guides. It was something else to be invited to Lady Pellets house in the ladies magazine. But to see the large house was something else entirely.

"They call this the Annex," Ken told her. It was strange to think he grew up in such a place. As the next turn of the auto lead them into the neighbourhood. The whole street was tree lined with large homes in the typical Edwardian style. This was Toronto, a large big city. When they pulled up to the Fords Home she blinked at the rather simple yet large home. Ken paid the driver and rushed around to open her door for her.

He watched her straightened her dress and patted her hair.

"It's just my parents Rilla. Three days in the city, probably a dinner party and then a whole two weeks in the outback alone just the two of us." He kissed her hair and grabbed her luggage. "Persis will probably want to show you all the good shops at some point, as well as the Eaton store," he teased her. She adored the Eaton's catalogue and was rather excited to see an actual department store in person. Maybe one day Kingsport would have one?

His family was waiting by the door. It's only been little over a week since the wedding yet it felt like they hadn't seen them in years. She walked into the house which is decorated with many things from the Fords travels. Feigning the need to clean up and rest for a little, they were shown to their room. Rilla looked curiously around the room that had been his growing up. It had changed over the years but still had many of his childhood artifacts placed in it. Across the hall was a large bathroom, she sighed when she saw it. Three days with wiping down her body in train stations, she gathered up her toiletries and robe. She pinned up her hair as the clawfoot tub filled. She was soaking when Ken snuck through the door with an elvish grin on his face.

"Move over," he told her as he pulled off his shirt and began working on his pants.

"We're at your parents!" Rilla gapped at him like he was insane as he kicked off his trousers and socks. He was truly a beautiful man to look at. Even with the scars from the war, he was perfectly built. Tall and lean. Along with perfectly what she assumes to be above average?-She cut off her thoughts. Now was not a suitable time, at his parents home and her veil was tucked away in the other room. "What would they think of us?"

"That were newlyweds who can't keep away from each other. All while saving time and water?" Ken grinned even more cheekily. "Move forward."

"We can't-," Rilla gave him a look.

"I'm not proposing that. I mean we could if you wanted to?" Ken told her smirking. "But after our last adventure in the bathtub…" he trailed off with a laugh.

"Which was a complete utter mess." Rilla blushed as he settled in behind her. Despite their agreement, she still felt him half saluting her. "Also I don't have the veil in," she told him quietly. "So don't get any idea's until later."

"But there is a later?" Ken smirked as he kissed her neck.
Ken was right about the Dinner Party, it was the first thing that Leslie had told them about. Two days of family, but then she just had to show off her darling daughter in law. This also meant acquiring a new dress, as Persis deemed that none of her would do for the occasion.

"Don't worry so much, Daddy has an account here for us ladies, "Persis took the tags from her hands. "Just pick out something you like and buy it. She made it sound so simple. Rilla once had a guilt trip over a new green velvet hat during the war.

Instead, she found a gown of ivory. Decorated with large ribbon flowers that flowed around the gown. It had a drop waist but had large amounts of tulle on the side of the skirt allowing it to poof out. She almost fainted when she saw the price of the gown. She went to put it back when Persis grabbed it out of her hands shaking her pretty dark head.

"You have to try this one on! It's a Callot Souers" Persis urged her trying to find the lady who ran the store. "We need some help!"

The dress fit perfectly, she was tall enough to pull off the gown though she had opted out of the hip pieces. "It's too much," Rilla shook her head while Persis spoke to the shopkeeper.

"Oh pish posh," Persis shook her head. "Apparently it came in the wrong size. This is one of a kind Rill," Persis was not allowing her new sister in law to back out of such a dress.

"It's a 145 dollars!" Rilla exclaimed.

"So? That likes half of the cost of what they are in New York new," Persis handed over her father's account card. "We'll take both of these," she waved to her own midnight blue bead gown. "Really it's nothing Rilla, don't worry so much about it."

The whole party had Rilla on edge. She wasn't sure it was the cost of the dress or the numerous faces she didn't know. Either way, she didn't tell Ken how much her gown cost or how out of place she felt for the first half of the party.

It wasn't until Ken spoke about her interest and her path in school people became truly interested in her. She just wasn't a nobody from the Island. It was strange to be in a room where people were generally interested in her studies. That being a woman didn't have any stigmatism with her choices. No used her sex to make her feel guilty about her choices in life.

Toronto always appeared to be uptight and all about social classes. She was sure there were society circles who would be a stickler for the rules. However, she was learning that Toronto was, in fact, it was a melting pot of a variety of people. She had met more women who held careers than she ever had before. Female authors, doctors, and even a morality officer. All of them trying to find a way into the men's world. Maybe she would fit into the strange world of Toronto? Maybe she would be more accepted in the large city.

Still, in the corner of her eye, her eyes followed the trays of what most likely was homemade liquor and wine. This couldn't be good for Ken? Surely his parent's know about his problems?

She excused herself and sashayed over to her lover.

"You doing all right?" She asked Ken, looking at his glass.

"It's only soda," Ken told her taking a puff of his cigarette. "Somehow my parents noticed that I hollowed out their cellar. They haven't said anything to me, but the servers have been avoiding me. Quite sad since having a drink was the only way to survive these parties."
"I think it would be hard to miss," Rilla said somewhat sarcastically as she handed him an ashtray. Her subtle way to tell him to finish up. "You keep hiding out here?

"People tend to fixate on two things about my life," Ken said bitterly as he inhaled for the final time. He put off the fag and tossed it into the old coffee tin. It was the first time she noticed that his hands were shaking. "Sadly the war still takes precedence over my beautiful new wife when she is not on my arm. I should be asking you though how you are surviving?"

"Beside's frantically trying not to tear my dress, it been interesting. You parents know a lot of different people. Apparently, studying science and intro to psychology isn't terribly strange out here." Rilla smiled lightly as she rubbed his arm. "I was rather enjoying myself strangely enough."

"I'm glad you are enjoying yourself. I know you have been worried. Though you do look beautiful, like a fairy in the gown." Ken complimented her. "It makes me want to you out in the woods and photograph you, along with many other wicked things." He whispered drawing her close while kissing her ear. "I can't wait to have you all to myself."

Rilla just hummed in response. Looking around before pulling him the door to what appeared to be the mudroom. They made a quick escape from the party.

The train to the cottage was a half days travel. They arrived little after the noon hour on a warm summer day. Ken hired a car to bring them to the secluded cottage on the lake. They spent the first afternoon sunbathing and swimming in the cool blue waters.

The whole area was beautiful, lush and green. It was so different from the Island. So wild and mysterious in its own way as they drove through the small towns. More than once she looked at him grinning as she stripped down to nothing. Standing in the moonlight so her milky skin glowed before she waded into the water. Telling him to join her for a moonlight dip.

"Rilla-my-Rilla," Ken asked her as they laid on the grass. "You really are the sweetest thing." His words echo the past. Such a different time it was back then, the early days of the war.

The rest of their days they walked along the many trails. Collecting berries and flowers that grew wild around them. Rilla spent most of her days in her bathing suits. Ken had taken to the majority of the cooking on the old camp stove. In reality, he cooked most dinners for them. Rilla could manage a simple breakfast and lunch, but dinner she never managed to get right. They were truly a modern marriage.

It was three weeks after their wedding when Ken had come back from fishing to find Rilla resting on the bed. She hadn't been feeling well most of the morning. He covered her up and went to wash up when he saw a pair of tap pants soaking in a bucket of cold water. It told him all that he needed to know.

Maybe things would be different if she wasn't in school. It was a strange sad relief knowing that all their precautions had worked.

It was later in the evening as she was sitting by the fire a cup of tea in her hand.

"I never liked babies," she admitted out loud to him. He turned to look at her quizzically as she continued. "I mean I took care of Jimmy, that's what they call Little Jims now." She explained. "But in the beginning, I was so determined not to love him but of course that all changed. How could someone not love him?"
"Rilla?" Ken exhaled.

"But still I wonder, is it selfish of me to not care about babies? I have never dreamed of being a mother. I never dreamed about anything until the past two years," Rilla continued on. "I've been told countless times. I'll change my mind when I'm married, that it's different when your older when they are yours. But it doesn't feel that way. I still avoid babies like the plague. I avoid the baby talk that Faith brings every time she visits Ingleside. It all terrifies me to know that I will have to go through that."

"Rilla, no one is going to make you have a baby-," Ken started out carefully

"But you want children!" Rilla objected. "I don't want to be that wife," she shook her head.

"Rilla-Rilla, I would rather have you ten fold all to myself, then have to share you." Ken shook his head. "Yes, I've always thought of myself being a father. And seeing you with Little Jims all those years ago made me only want it more. Dreaming of you cradling our own children to your chest, singing softly to them. I have done all those things, but I'm also very afraid of losing you from it all Rilla." Ken admitted. How many time had he heard of men losing wives and children in childbirth while they sat down in the trenches? He beckoned Rilla to come over to him. She nodded and carefully placed herself onto his lap as he wrapped his arms around her. She rested her head on his shoulder with a tired sigh.

"We just continue on like we are until you graduate. Then in two years time, we can revisit this conversation and see where we stand? There is no point stressing over something that is not for us at the moment. At the end of the day, if He wants us to have children he will give us children whether we want them or not." Ken reminded her about the words of the bible.

Marriage didn't ensure a happy ending. It may have ensured a life and protection for women when they left their fathers home. But never a happy ending, that was something you had to create that yourself. It was knowing marriage was a lifetime commitment that made a happy marriage. Knowing the wants and needs of the other person was just as crucial as knowing your own. Knowing about their fears. While never passing judgement on them was a large part of the commitment you made to each other.

It was knowing you both had to work together if you wanted any sort of resemblance of a happily ever after. Even then, it would be far from the fairytales you read as a child.

They didn't know exactly what the world held for them or the children they might have together. But At this moment in time, they knew exactly what they wanted and needed and that was each other and only each other.

I hoped everyone enjoyed this one. Because I am really enjoying writing these two at the moment haha.

They speak to me in a way that I never expected them to speak to me.

As always I enjoy hearing all your thoughts and ponderings about these two.

Tina
Chapter 7

I want to thank everyone for the reviews and follows. I am really glad how people are responding to this.

September 1920

Their marriage, no their entire relationship was a many of firsts for Rilla. First kisses, first times, first quarrels, first burned dinners. Many of those firsts Rilla could look back and smile at, he was her one and only. Something she cherished deep down in her heart, knowing he was her first love, and hopefully her last love.

For Ken life was a many of seconds. He wasn't sure if he truly loved Amelia Blackwood, but she stirred something in him in his teen years. The strange nights in Amsterdam, where he escaped his father. Wandering into the most peculiar of a district. His own mother had been widowed without knowing it.

He was a family of seconds, but Rilla always came first in his mind. Her comfort and safety, they were placed well above his. She was the first thing he thought of in the morning. She was one of the most important things in his life. She may have not been his first, but he made her his first.

Still, somehow they came together, came together in a strange wonderful life.

Rilla had been sitting at the small table, trying to put together a monthly budget for the first time. She knew they were well off, Ken never seemed worried about money. Both of them had come from affluent families in their own way. It was when they returned to Kingsport, Rilla became conscious about the money they had. It was only then she realizes she had no idea how much truth they had coming in each month. How much they had in the bank? Ken much like any other man, he wanted to support her and their home. That was his job as a husband supporting his family as small was. His pride wouldn't allow anything else. It took a fair bit of persuading to allow her father to gift them the apartment in Kingsport.

"This is ridiculous!" Rilla shouted as her hands shot into the air. "It's a gift, a wonderful practical gift for us Ken!"

"It like they don't think I can provide for you Rilla!" Ken spat out frustrated with the whole situation.

"You know that's true! It's like they said, the place is mine practically at the end of the day! What difference does it make?" Rilla countered she couldn't get over how he could be so pigheaded about something so wonderful. Any newlyweds would love to have a place to live gifted to them? "Or is it the fact that it comes from my family and not yours? Do you have no problem living here which belongs to your parents? So why! Why is this any different! Because I sincerely hope its not because it's my name on the deed?" Rilla asked him bluntly.
"Of course not!" Ken exclaimed. "Who gives a lying pigs ass who the place belongs to!"

"Then I suggest you check your pride at the door Kenneth Ford and get over yourself," Rilla told him sternly. "They aren't offering this, because they think you can't provide for me! They are offering us, a way to save more money for when we want to buy a house! A little help has never hurt anyone!"

Rilla had been telling the truth when she told him the place was already hers. As Shirley didn't need it as he was studying engineering in Montreal. Nan and Di both were teaching in different school around the Island. They had spent the better part of an evening arguing over it. It wasn't until Rilla asked him how it was any different from them living in his families summer home? It wasn't, it was a wedding gift. A way for her parent to sleep better at night. Knowing they weren't wasting money on lodging when they had a perfectly suitable option. In the end, he agreed begrudgingly. It was close enough to the college for Rilla, yet still far enough away that they had their privacy. Privacy away from the prying eyes of the many students. They could have a relatively normal life, in their area of town.

After the debacle, when she mentioned going into the bank to get a bank note for her tuition. He merely nodded and asked if she wanted a ride into town. Still feeling rather small about his pigheadedness about the apartment.

In the end, they went back and forth between the island and Kingsport. Trading out furniture and decorating the apartment so that it suited both of them. They replaced the old, slightly too narrow for two people bed for a larger one. For the living room, they found room another desk. Allowing him space for his typewriter while next to it was a new shelf for the books he wanted to bring with him. Rilla was never a great reader and only had a stack of textbooks and a few older novels.

It was a teary-eyed day when they left the island for the start of term. Her parents had come to see them off. Her mother dabbing her eyes as she went on a mile a minute about a new adventure. She had been married for six weeks, yet it was like it was truly hitting her parents that morning.

Gilbert pulled her into a hug her. "You have everything?"

"More than needed," Rilla confirmed with a nod to her hatted head. "We'll be fine, and we will see you at Thanksgiving," she added as she kissed his cheek.

"Take care of her Ken," Anne added as she straightened her son in laws tie. "If you ever need anything, just give us a ring."

"Of course Mrs-"

"How many times have I told you-you can call me Anne, or mom if you are feeling sentimental," Anne gave him a look. "Just no grandmother just yet from you too," she warned him with a cheeky smile. Suddenly he understood just where Rilla got her smile, her sass.

"Of course," Ken nodded. "I'm afraid, it will take a while for me to get used to addressing your so informally," Ken half smiled as he adjusted his hat.

So life began truly for them for the first time. The previous six weeks was barely a trial run of what real life would be like together. The daily morning rush to get to school and work, the keeping on top of chores and groceries. She had taken to wearing her wedding band around her neck while in classes. Not wanting to let on to anyone know of the changes in her marital status. Though she
mentioned in passing that he was working in the city. It was an easy way to explain his appearances if they were seen around town. All she had to say he was living in the city to be closer to her.

"Ken?" She asked him as he came from the bathroom. His suspenders still hanging and his shirt unbuttons and tails out. She stared for a moment, realizing how comfortable they had become with each other.

"Yes, my dear?" He hummed as he rummaged through the pantry, they were running low on groceries it appeared. He instead poured himself some coffee, grimacing when he realized Rilla had made it. He really needed to show her how to make coffee, somehow she always made its way like it was supposed to be jet fuel. How she drank it was a mystery. He still remembers the first morning she made upon their move back to Kingsport.

"It's called espresso," Rilla told him the one day. "Apparently it's Italian," she explained.

"I know what espresso is, this is not espresso," Ken teased her. "This is can power a tank-," he said before he stopped himself short.

Rilla sucked in her breath, she wasn't sure if he made a joke about the war, or if he was going to spiral into an episode. They were far and few at this point, but still she knew the nightmare still plagued him. She could find him up at 3 am, starring out the window the moonlight highlighting the angles of his body.

Some nights she would quietly lead him back to bed, cradle him like a baby in her arms. Sometimes things got intimate. Her allowing him to focus on something he could actually grasp. It wasn't often, knowing for the majority of those moments he barely realized who was with him. He never hurt her, but the soulless look in his eyes would haunt her own dreams.

Other nights that weren't so bad they talked until he came back to reality.

"Who was the first girl you kissed?" Rilla asked him curiously.

"Do you really want to know, or is this some sort of weird woman thing where you will get mad at me for answering?" Ken answered after a moment.

"Ken you are several years older than me," Rilla drawled. "I can safely say that you kissed other women before I grew up and turned pretty. I can also be all right with the idea of you being with other women before me," she blushed at her own admittance. "Where else do those skills of yours come from? One of us was a fumbling virgin, and it wasn't you."

"My first kiss was with a girl named Amelia, I went to school with her for a short while. I supposed I cared for her in some way." Ken spoke after a moment. "She wasn't that sort of girl though," he added. "She ended up marrying a classmate I believe."

Rilla nodded and absentmindedly drew figure eights on his bare chest.

"As for the other question, I have travelled to many places with my father. I may have landed in some strange districts. But I will tell you there has never been another since the day I saw you at the lighthouse dance."

"I know," Rilla answered. She didn't need him to tell her that. It was something she felt like she knew along.
"Earth to Rilla?" Ken's voice brought her out of her thoughts.

"Oh! Umm I was wondering just how much money do we have?" She asked him out loud for the first time. She felt silly for not asking about their financial situation over the past six weeks. "I'm trying to set up a household budget and I know what I could live off of when my parents were supporting me here. But you eat three times more than myself and laundry is doubled," Rilla tried to explain.

"Well, I make about twenty-five dollars a week writing for The Telegraph in Charlottetown and the Chronicle in Kingsport. There is also the various newspapers that I send out to. As well as the photographs that I sell to magazines. I get paid generally five dollars for a local magazine. Regional can go up to ten dollars depending on the publication. While national ones sometimes can go up to twenty-five to thirty depending on the issue and photo?" Ken replied after a moment. "Then I have the interest from my own trust that I use to offset any wants or needs" He added after a moment. "I don't think we need to worry," he kissed the top of her head.

"I'm a woman, it is my job to worry," Rilla remarked as she went back to her list, filling the amounts that he had given her. The fact that they didn't have to pay rent made their budget much more padded. The groceries averaged out to about ten dollars for the week. While the hydro bill and telephone rental were about another eight dollars a month. If she went by the past bills her parents paid for her. Laundry service and ice delivery were another three dollars a week.

She even had a column for miscellaneous items. Those held clothing and entertainment funds. While another column showed what she considered a good amount to try and save each month. Her parents always had installed the notion to save for a rainy day. To save for the future because everything could be lost in a moment. Both of them came from very little. Her own mother had been an orphan living in situations and homes that were not kind to her. Her father worked his way through medical school. They led a privileged life, but that life could be taken away in a moment.

"Don't you have class?" He asked looking over at the clock that was little past eleven.

"At one" Rilla nodded. She was still nervous about going to school. It was strange to write B.M Blythe on her papers after adjusting to being called Ford for the past six weeks. "You'll be fine for dinner?" She asked looking at her watch, wondering if she had time to prepare something ahead of time for him.

"For the hundredth time Rilla, I don't mind cooking," Ken chuckled. "I enjoy cooking, which suits both of us at the end of the day."

"I know, I just feel guilty leaving you to fend for yourself." Rilla sighed as she packed up her papers. "Or not being able to help you." She added knowing that she would be home until past seven in the evening. "Sometimes I feel like a lousy wife, after seeing all those women at the church socials." It was the first time she had voiced such a notion that was planted her mind.

"Rill's, just because you're my wife, hell, just because you are a woman doesn't mean you have to cook, or even be good at it." Ken tried to reassure her. "We all know I didn't marry you for your abilities in the kitchen. Your brother made sure everyone knew that at the wedding supper," Ken smiled at the memory.

"Uh!" Rilla made a sound of disgust. "Please don't remind how much I to get back at Shirley," Rilla huffed. "He can barely make toast himself. Actually, only Nan and Di managed to learn how to cook fairly well. Jem is decent in a pinch the same with Walter," she faded softly thinking of her brother. She stood straightening her weight and a tan plaid skirt that was pair with a soft long camel coloured sweater. She packed away her papers into her leather school bag.
"I know Susan and Mother tried their best to teach us how to cook and survive out on our own. But the reality is that we knew it wasn't expected of us to really learn. What can I say I aimed to marry well and have my own Susan one day," Rilla told him cheekily as she patted his cheek.

"Oh was that your plan?" Ken smirked as his hand reached for her waist, posing to tickle her at a moment notice. "Maybe I should take away your allowance? I could threaten to make you cook every meal? But that hurts me too." He grinned.

"I am not fifteen years old, I do not have an allowance," Rilla objected. "I am twenty-one years old, and I earn my keep thank you very much. Unless you don't want repeats of the other night?"

"Oh that is low Mrs. Ford," Ken feigned hurt by covering his heart with his hand. "You know how to hit a man right where it hurts."

"Well, I only learned from the best," Rilla smirked. All her siblings had grown up knowing how their mother and father danced around each other for years. They had grown up hearing about the whole slate incident and the coincidental teasing that came with playful quarrels. She knew her father would do almost anything for their mother. She knew her mother could play their father with a twist of her dainty wrist. They were still very much lovesick for one another, it was oddly romantic seeing her parents as they were.

"I am sure that you have," Ken agreed. "Though I do have to say, I am mighty glad you are not fifteen," Ken whispered huskily.

"Don't get any idea's I have to run to the library before classes," Rilla warned him as she took a step back with a shake of her head. "Don't you start pouting you have your own work to do," she chastised him when she saw his eyes soften. She turned to reach for her hat and her light coat.

"Outside," she warned him, as her back was turned as she heard him rustling for his lighter.

"How do you?" Ken shook his head exasperated at her abilities as he held a cigarette in his hand.

"Magic darling," Rilla grinned and kissed his cheek. "I'll see you tonight.” She waved to him as she reached the door.

She turned to look back, seeing him barefoot on the small balcony, his shirt done up properly. She shook her head and blew him a kiss before skipping away to walk the fifteen minute to her school.

Life was much more different, more than either of them ever imagined. It wasn't until they both realized that their marriage was theirs alone, they began to relax. Society could be damned. The government and church who tried to dictate their rights on them or more so Rilla as a woman could be damned.

Life was a series of firsts and seconds, even thirds. It didn't mean anything which they were, or what they came as. It was the moments when Rilla came home late in the evening. Frazzled from school, and shoulder aching from her books to find dinner waiting for her. One of the many recipes the Ken liked to try from the various cookbooks she had been given as wedding presents.

It often brought her back to that first night, one that barely happened a year ago. She would never think life would be as it was then. Her firsts were held dear to her heart as she felt herself tremble from the sacred memories.
Well, I hope everyone enjoyed this one.

Next Chapter will end up probably about Remembrance Day 1920, and the whole mental battle that will accompany such a day for our couple.

I had to do a fair bit of historical research about a woman owning property as well as daily, monthly yearly earnings for mine. The average income in Halifax in the '20s was about 25$ a week for a man, with Rent being around 25$ some of the highest in Canada at the time. Rilla owning the apartment really elevate them in a way as they aren't struggling newlyweds. Still, at this time, Rilla could own property, but if she ever wanted to sell it, she would need either her husband or fathers to sign the documents and actually do allow the sale.

Anyways enough of my research, as always i enjoy your comments and look forward to hearing them. Don't be shy, i don't bite haha.

Tina
The what might have been? A stream of disappointment when things didn't happen the way you imagine them to be. There will always be what might have been, and the years he spent fighting for his country is one of his largest. It was easy to imagine how his life may have looked like without the war. But as time passed one can wonder if the idealistic dreams were what you really wanted in life.

Life and dreams are ever changing, at twenty, Ken thought he had it all figured out. Court for a two or three years and then marry his pretty island redhead and make a name for himself. The war had other plans.

The war changed all his plans and he was only beginning to realize that change can be a great thing. The war was still altering his life in a way he never imagined especially as November approached.

Armistice Day, a day where the whole country stood still for three minutes. It was the day to remember the war of all wars. How could there be another war after such a war? Many still remember the day. The day two years ago when the news came, when the entire nation rejoiced.

Families cried at the prospect of their remaining sons returning to them for good. The men in his platoon hollered at the news that came through the radio. The armistice was signed, they had won. It was over they could start sending the soldiers home.

For Ken, it was one of the hardest transitions in his life. Returning to Kenneth Ford and letting Captain Ford rest was harder than he ever thought. If it wasn't the nightmares, it was the constant rehashing of the war in his mind. It was the steady stream of letters wanting accounts of the war for history books.

He managed to hide away the prior year. Rilla had been at college, he ignored the calls and letters from fellow officers in the area. Instead, he drank away his sorrows as the clock chimed 11 am. Drunkenly saying cheers to the end of the war. This year instead, Rilla had somehow persuaded him to face his fears.

They weren't fears he objected when she asked him why he was hesitant. After she listened to him try to make an excuse at speaking at the ceremony. He still didn't completely understand her girlish tendency to romanticize his rank. Or the medals he may have gathered over those years.

"You can't change the past Ken," Rilla told him as he comes to sit back down after another phone call about the ceremony. She had curled on the sofa her school books scattered around her. "But you can educate and hope for a better future. Should we ever have children I pray to God that they will never have to live through such a thing. I will always be proud of you, but you can't hide your involvement with the war. You can't pretend that it never happened."

It was always hard to swallow the truth that Rilla always managed to tell him. Sometimes he wondered if she knew just how intelligent she was? How wise she could be when she wasn't even trying to be?

He spent so many hours, days trying to move on. Trying to live a normal life? All while wondering what his life would have been like if the war hadn't crashed the party at the lighthouse. Despite the
damper on the evening. The memories of Rilla in her green dress with its garland of daisies around the waist. How he dearly wanted to kiss her that night. More than what was considered proper. She had changed over the course of the year. She had been a gangly fourteen-year-old who was still growing into her limbs when he last saw her. Suddenly she was there in front of him taller than her sisters and nearly as tall as her brothers. She was so pretty, he felt rather ashamed at his attraction to the kid. No- the young lady in front of him because he was her brother's friend.

How long would they have courted before he asked Dr. Blythe for permission to marry his daughter? What would the world be like for them without the war? An old fashioned marriage? Babies?

He wasn't sure if he liked the thought of not seeing Rilla in her element. The look of success when she read or understood something for the first time. What type of woman would she have become if there had been no war that would force her to grow up? Allowing her to care of a war baby?

He didn't want to imagine Rilla to be anything but who she was in this time and place as she sat on their sofa.

"What are you reading?" Ken asked her curiously as he noticed it was not a textbook in her hands. A rather strange sight to him, though the book looked oddly familiar. He couldn't place where he had seen before though.

"The Secret Garden," Rilla said after a moment passing it to show him it. "I do read occasionally you know," she added rolling her eyes after seeing the shock on his face. "This one tends to be a favourite of mine."

"Ahh," Ken hummed as he reached for the hardbound book. "I went to the bookstore looking for it, the clerk asked me if it was for a younger sibling." He smiled at the memory. "I replied, no it was a surprise for a young lady who was rather upset that her own copy went missing."

"I was rather surprised when it turned up," Rilla admitted. "We barely saw one another and you were rather distracted after the news of war broke out. Then the times you came to say goodbye and I wasn't there. Di relayed the message of 'Good-bye Spider, don't forget me in your maternal duties'. I was so insulted that you called me Spider, especially after you took to Walters nickname." Rilla shook her head sighing at her teenage self. "I had picked up the mail that day, so when I came home to find I had a package. One from you a few evenings before Christmas I was excited. I hurried up into my room before anyone could see it, hiding away to read your letter." She quietly as he flipped through the pages before pulling out the worn letter from the pages of her book. "I keep this one here, mostly because it was the safest place to hide it at the time."

Ken smiled softly as he gingerly took pulled out the letter. The ink had faded in spots but his memories of writing such a letter were still fresh in his mind.

"Dearest Rilla-my-Rilla

There is a fair bit of snow on the ground this winter in Toronto. Not as much as the Island but it is enough to make me wish for summer once more. Maybe its the memory of you tripping up the lighthouse steps. Those silver slippers mother had sent you the previous Christmas on your dainty feet. It was like you suddenly grew up without any of us knowing it.

I wished to say goodbye after you disappeared from the station when Jem went off. I looked for you but you were nowhere to be seen. Then every time I visited Ingleside, you were away to my disappointment."
I told Di to tell you goodbye, do not forget me while you were taking care of your charge. She looked at me strangely which made me feel rather guilty about my interest in her younger sister. So I jokingly added Spider, despite knowing how much you hate it. I knew it would let me off the hook with your sister who knows me too well to begin with.

So please forgive me for that Rilla-my-Rilla. I never would cause you pain willingly.

I hope you enjoy your present, please don't lose this one. I don't know when I will be able to get you a new one if you do.

My ankle is about as good as new. I'll be fit to join up in a couple of months more, Rilla-my-Rilla. It will be some feeling to get into khaki all right. Little Ken will be able to look the whole world in the face then and owe not any man. It's been rotten lately since I've been able to walk without limping.

People who don't know look at me as much as to say, 'Slacker!'

Well, they won't have the chance to look it much longer.

Yours Kenneth

"You were worried about what my family might have thought?" Rilla asked him for the first time. As she skimmed through the old letter herself.

"I was a little worried, being six years older than you. You just left the schoolroom, I was finishing college." Ken admitted. "I know the age difference wasn't that uncommon. I didn't help that I was worried about your brothers and even your father forbidding if they had found out. Of course, when Jem shipped out, he gave me a rather heady warning about breaking your heart. Shirley was too clueless to pick up on it. While Walter he just went with it with a smile and notion that he saw something that no one else did."

"Jem warned you?" Rilla mouth dropped at that information she had never known.

"Of course, I hadn't the greatest track record with the ladies. Everyone thought I was courting Ethel Reese back then. Or that is what she was hoping," Ken said solemnly before he chuckled. "Your brother had every right to be overprotective. I am sure he would have blown a gasket if he had seen how with behaved in our engagement?"

"Apparently he did," Rilla smirked to him before going on to explain when she saw his puzzled face. "My brother is a snoop and found some the hidden photos and the pair of my pants. The ones that got lost underneath our bed when I changed one morning. Father alluded to a few things and Jem pieced things together. He put a rather indignant face when he caught me alone after our honeymoon. I put him in his place though."

"Well, that explains his intense glares," Ken ran his hand through his hair. "I should try and write," he looked towards his desk. "I just don't know what to even say at this thing"

"It will come," Rilla told him as she pulled at his tie to kiss him. "I have numerous amounts of faith in you."

"Oh? Do you?" Ken murmured, his hands pulling at her waist. Nibbling on her ear as his palms grazing the bare skin of her thighs where her skirt ridden up. "I can,-," he started.

"Don't you dare finish that sentence Kenneth Ford," Rilla warned with a look but allowed him to sweep her into his arms.
The morning came too fast as he fastened the many buttons of his uniform. Pinned the medals he was awarded to his left breast. Rilla had dressed carefully in a dark green dress with black silk stockings and boots. Her red hair was pinned up with small waves she worked into after sleeping in pin curls.

He was on his fifth cigarette of the day. Not his best track record and he probably could smoke another two before they even got there. If anything he would kill for a stiff drink to get him through this day.

"Breathe Ken, just breathe and it will be all right," Rilla told him softly rubbing his back. She tried not to seem hurt as he shook his head and ducked out to the small balcony lighting another cigarette. This was something that he would never be ready for.

Three-quarters of Kingsport showed up for the Armistice Ceremony it seemed. Possibly even more as all the men fell into old routines of salutes and honourifics. Many showed up with wives and children. Others still in wheelchairs and other visible aids for surviving. Everyone was bundled up in their winter wear. Scarves blew in the wind, as the trumpets began their melody.

They listened intently to the introduction and what the day meant to their nation. Finally, after fifteen minutes, Ken heads up after being introduced. He turned to Rilla who straightened his hat and kissed his cheek for encouragement.

Slowly he walked to the makeshift podium. Taking deep breathes as he turned and placed his papers on the ledge.

"I stand here before everyone, a man who has a talent of words. Except words never come easily for me when it comes to the war. For three years, I fought in the war. Praying, hoping to survive when I saw my comrades be stricken down beside me. Later I saw my brave men come back injured, near death. Sometimes begging to put out of their misery as I was further away from the trenches. I couldn't understand why I had been promoted to Captain? Who was I any better, quicker than the other men I had fought beside?

Today we are here to honour the men who gave their lives for their country. When we have nothing but condolences to truly give back to the families who had lost them. War isn't pretty, war is exactly the world we use to describe it. War.

Still, after two years I still cannot fully comprehend what I went through. What we all went through during those years, wishing and praying to survive another day. How we longed for home when the letters and care packages arrived. The homesickness never left us alone.

We all carried photographs of our loved ones, we all cried in our sleep praying that it would soon all be over. Yet the night that treaty of Versailles was signed we cried for joy for the first time.

You see we may have fought for our country with honour. But it was the words and promises from loved ones that kept us going. You made us strive and overcome the enemy. We made have been the ones fighting for our lives. It was everyone one of you who made it possible for us to continue. Making it possible to live another day. Knowing you were all waiting for us to come home until the day some of us came home.

So why do I keep wondering what my life may have been like if there had been no war? Why do I ponder on what could have been? Yes, I might have married the girl of my dreams the second her father allowed it? I might even have a child on the way or one already?
Yet I see the woman she had become because of the war and the impact on the lives of our civilians. I see her achieving her dreams because the war gave her the confidence to try and make a difference in the world. Confidence to make her way in the world on her own terms. Confidence to embrace a broken man. A man who is trying to put himself back together each day at a time," Ken stopped and smiled down at her. His dress uniform had been freshly pressed for the occasion. After being retrieved from the depths of the closet where he kept it hidden away.

"War isn't glorious, but as I look at all the changes to the world around us I can breathe a little easier. Maybe it wasn't all for nothing, all the lives we lost. The ones we remember today wasn't all in vain? All we can do is move into a brighter future, and remember all that we fought for and what it achieved." Ken then saluted to the cenotaph before returning to Rilla's side. They watch as a young boy begin the first words of a poem. One they would hear each year until they were both gone from this world."

They stood for a moment of silence as Rilla held onto his arm trembling in her long winter dark Burgundy coat. Tears pouring down her eyes as looked at the monument. One that held all the names of the Kingsport men who had lost their lives. Much like the Four Winds had Walters name on it. He held onto her as she leaned into his body. They had made an agreement for them to appear only engaged for this public appearance. Only a select few people knew of their marriage in Kingsport. Today was no exception as there were students and professors watching them from afar.

The trumpets and drums started once more as young girls and boys placed wreaths on the cenotaph. They all stood in the silence of the cool fall weather. Remembering the past with the hope that it would never happen again.

Ken learned over the months that healing took time and knowledge to heal you actually needed to want heal. That healing meant you couldn't live in the past. He couldn't live wondering what could have been if the war never happened. The war happened and it changed any lives. It changed his life. A brief dream of a love-stricken fool, couldn't take precedence over the life he had now.

Life was different but it was also so much more than he ever imagined it could be.

I was doing some research for this chapter which had me rereading part of ROI and I noticed or realized I had forgotten a few things between the dance and Ken visiting before leaving for the front. Like he sent her a Christmas gift, and another letter saying he officially in khaki and probably won't be able to see her before he leaves.. Were they writing to each other? Obviously, her parents had no idea about an attachment since Anne was given a shock over Ken's request for Rilla to not kiss other boys?

I also wondered just what her brothers may have thought about Ken sudden possible? Attraction to their baby sister? By my calculations, Ken is about 5 to 6 years older so he was 21-. So he was 20 turning 21 possibly when she just turned 15. I know that age difference wasn't a huge issue back then…I mean hello Prissy and Mr. Phillips lol. But still, it has me wondering a bunch of things.

Canada didn't call Remembrance Day, Remembrance Day until the 1930s and it was celebrated the Monday of the week that 11th fell on.

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed this chapter and the insight into Ken's mental state and how far he has come since coming home.

I have the next few chapters planned I believe and I will be diving into a few topics I have already touched on. If there is anything you want to see from them, something I may have not thought about yet, let me know I may be able to work it in!
Hello!

Just want to say thank you for all the reviews and follows. They really do keep me going at times. Sorry about the delay with this one, I meant to have it out last weekend. Sadly I have been sewing, which isn't really sad since I love sewing haha.

I'm not sure if I'm totally satisfied with this one. I was trying to add some of the siblings and get more canon-like personalities for them. Which meant having to research and read some of Rainbow Valley. Not my favourite book, but we shall see what happens.

Chapter 9

The holidays were a time for family. It was the time when the young and old were old joyous. It was almost contagious how the mood grew the closer to the day. The previous year Ken had gone to Toronto, meaning this was truly one of their first Christmas's together.

The whole family was to be at Ingleside for Christmas and much to the delight of the ladies there was a new baby to obsess over. It was the first time Rilla would meet her niece. Faith had given birth to a daughter back in October. The first grandchild for the Blythe and Meredith family had been a huge deal. They ended naming her Cecilia after Faith's late Mother.

Even the Fords as well, travelled to the Island, staying in the house of the dreams, along with Persis's new fiancé. Leaving little room for them to stay, so Ingleside was the only choice they had. It had been years since they had an Island Christmas. Not since Ken had been a child, but and if travelling meant they could have a family Christmas. They would brave the island winters.

It was early afternoon when Rilla and Ken arrived at Ingleside. It was still empty as they were the first to arrive. The doctor was out on a call and only her mother and Susan were around. It was nice to be home, though it was strange seeing the two beds pushed together in her old room.

It was strange being in her old room together alone. Where she had spent so many nights, praying that he and her brothers would return home. It was the room where she cried all night trying to understand just what she meant to him. It was where she mourned Walter and the loss of Little Jims when his father came back.

"I always wondered what this room looked like?" Ken said on arrival, noting the pale blue walls that were covered in a floral embossed paper. Old magazine clippings and photos were pinned to the walls.

"Is that some strange fantasy men have?" Rilla asked him as she hung up her dresses in the closet as she unpacked their suitcase.

"Well, when you put it that way, I'll pretend that you weren't sixteen at the time," Ken chuckled as he smirked at her.

"Behave," Rilla chided him, though as turned away from him she smiled to herself. She was rather glad they had a few days before Jem and Faith came with the new baby. She knew as soon as they arrived they question most directed at her would be when or if they were expecting yet.
"Rilla?" She heard her mother call out softly as there was a knock on the door. Rilla turned and opened the door.

"Oui?" Rilla asked with a smile.

"Since when do you speak French?" Anne asked with a raised eyebrow in surprise. Rilla had not taken to languages in school if she remembers correctly.

"I don't," Rilla shrugged. "I just like saying random words."

Anne laughed and shook her head. That was such a Rilla thing to do. "Your father, just called he'll be a little while," Anne explained to them. "Do you need any help with anything?"

"I think we'll be fine?" She turned toward Ken who nodded in agreement.

"Perfect!" Anne smiled. "I am going to run over to the manse. I meant to pass along some patterns to Rosemary for Little Cecilia yesterday. You two will be okay for a little bit?"

"Of course Mum," Rilla held back an eye roll. "It's not like I didn't live here all my life. Either way we were going to head over and say hello to the Fords and let them know we got here safely."

"Of course, say hello to Leslie and Owen for me, I hear the Persis brought a young gentleman with her?"

"She did," Rilla confirmed. "His name is Joseph, he's never been to the island and wanted to see it. I believe she said his family is out in Vancouver."

"Be sure to show him all the haunts. I will see you at dinner?" Anne said brightly, quickly kissing Rilla on the cheek before she shut the door and headed out to the manse. Mothers were truly the dearest things.

Rilla turned to Ken who was fixing his tie in the mirror. "Excited?"

"Excited to grill the young many my sister is about to marry? Of course." Ken grinned as he grabbed his overcoat from the peg on the wall.

"Be nice to him," Rilla urged him with a look. "Remember how it felt when my brothers found out about us?"

"Yes, dear," Ken drawled sarcastically but grinned at her through the mirror.

In reality, Ken couldn't find a fault with the man who tolerated his sister in a way he never could. Persis was beaming with her golden hair cut straight off the back of her neck. It was rather a shock to see. Rilla knew the shorter styles were gaining popularity, but never considered it for herself. Yet Persis managed to pull off with a peculiar grace that made her want to try it.

Joseph Murdoch was very a young gentleman with family in the Toronto business scene. He sport golden brown hair and fair blue eyes and a kind smile. He was rather tall, though not as tall as his soon to be father or brother in law. He was well read and enjoyed the playfulness that Persis brought to any party. While for the first time, Ken wasn't asked about his time in the war, but what his interests were and how he and Rilla met.

"I'm sure you all know by now, but you asked to come for Christmas dinner," Rilla reminded them. "You'll meet the rest of my family," she turned to Joseph.
"You have a lot of siblings?" Joseph asked curiously.

Rilla nodded. "Six of them, well, five since the war," she said explained with a sad smile.

Joseph nodded solemnly. "We lost a lot of good men and women who had such bright futures. I depending on how you look at it, I was fortunate to do be excluded from enlistment for medical reasons." He added after a moment.

"I am sure your family was relieved that you were spared." Rilla offered him honestly.

"Seeing my brothers, Ken, leave one by one. Knowing they may not make it home. It was excruciating, and one did not come home which was heartbreaking" Rilla said after a moment. "But enough about such things, how did you and Persis meet?" She asked changing the subject as she squeezed the top of Ken's thigh.

Ingleside was filled to the brim within a few days. Shirley had come home a few days after her. He was quiet, while occasionally mentioning a girl named Lilian. But yet he never revealed anything else about her, no matter how hard they tried to get it out of him. In all his whole mood was melancholy as he moped around the house. Nan and Di were home as well from their posts with their schools. While Jerry was often around to be with Nan, it seemed even her siblings were beginning to begin their lives. Jerry seemed to have grown even more since the war, sporting a mustache. He had just finished his apprenticeship at the Charlottetown Bank. Allowing him and Nan to finally set a date for their wedding. A wedding that was essentially already planned down to her dress.

It was rather late when Nan poked her head into her room after a gentle knock on the bedroom door. Rilla looked up as she sat cross-legged on the bed. Ken was laying down beside her only his undershirt and trousers. His suspender lying down at his hips. Rilla called out enter, surprised to see her sister poke her head through the door.

"I was wondering if I could ask you something?" Nan asked after a moment. Rilla wasn't sure if the sight of their domestic scene shocked her sister or if she was truly worried over something? Though surely her sister knew how to not just open doors of married couples?

"Of course, your room?" Rilla asked closing her textbook. "I was just re-reading some material for next semester."

Nan nodded and watched her sister kiss her husband before crawling off the bed. Rilla waved her out of her room and followed her across the hall.

"What can I help you with?" Rilla asked her as Nana shut the door to the room she still shared with her twin

"Faith was no help when I asked her about things. Then again she really doesn't talk much about things that are private anyway." Nan sighed.

"Nan if you are looking for advice-," Rilla flushed bright red. "You'll be fine."

"It's not that," Nan shook her head her cheeks bright much like her younger sister. "I am all prepared for that," she stressed. "I just know because of your studies that you know more than anyone. About how to deal with the aftermaths of the war," Nan said after a moment. "Una mentioned the nightmares the Jerry has at night sometimes?"

"Well, nightmares do generally happen at night-," Rilla started off before sobering realizing it
wasn't the time for jokes." Rilla took the moment to wrap her arm around his sister's shoulder.

"The only thing you can do is just help him pull back to reality. Help him see the reality of where he is. Ken and I were unconventional from the beginning starting with our courtship. Those oddities helped us find ways that helped him deal. Jerry seems to have coped rather well with the transition. The only thing I can say truly is to watch out if there are any habits he may have developed while trying to cope. I know he's a ministers son, but they consumed a lot of alcohol during the war. It helped numb their reality and get them through the night," Rilla explained

"Is that what happened with Kenneth?" Di asked quietly, looking at Rilla who nodded after a moment. Ken didn't like people knowing how much he had fallen after the war. But there was no point in lying to her sister. "Is that why you married so quickly?"

"We decided to get married because it was what we wanted." Rilla corrected her sister. Somehow she was already somewhat frustrated with the short mindless of her sister. "He needed me, but I also needed him in my own way. Sometimes being at school, him on the island it felt like I was seventeen again waiting for his letters. Never knowing what we really are, even though I was the holding us back this time. I was the one afraid of losing myself and all the independence that I had gained. It took me a long while to figure out that you have to make your own happy ending, you can't wait for it to happen. I also learned that marriage doesn't equal a happy ending as well."

"You never said a word back then," Nan noted. "I saw his letters come, but I never imagined. You were barely friends. One dance, and a walk on the beach, suddenly he comes home and you were practically engaged."

"I was never one to follow the rules," Rilla smiled slyly. "We corresponded after the dance but sometimes it was like all he would talk about was the war. Other times he would write this letter that made my heart skip a beat. Then suddenly he got stuck on the mainland and asked for leave and wanted to see me alone." Rilla blushed at the memory of that phone call. "I always had a crush on him, but I never thought he would ever see me as something other than the baby of the Blythe family."

"It surprised a lot of us," Nan told her honestly. "We all thought you were going to just get married, and then you surprised us all again going to Redmond. Which I am assuming was to better help Kenneth?"

Rilla teetered for a moment. "I didn't go just for him, I planned on taking household sciences with Una when I wasn't sure if I meant anything to Ken. Our entire thing could have been nothing to him. Then he came to me, and I realized that we had no idea who each other was. We knew we wanted to be together, but we didn't know how to get there. How to find out if this would last if this was real? Still, he helped me find a better focus, telling me to explore the world around me. I still don't always enjoy school, but knowing I can help Ken in his moments of need. It drives me forward. It drives me forward. Knowing that the majority of you, Mum and Dad included thought I would give up after a semester. I learned, that I can't heal Ken, but I can help him cope and heal himself. It doesn't like it when I practice on him, but he's always a lot calmer afterwards."

Nan nodded. "So essentially I just have to be patient and support him?"

"Like you would anyone, they are all broken, two years so little time to heal from what they went through. I see men much worse off in hospital when I do rounds as part of one of my courses at school," Rilla nodded. "Faith doesn't speak of it much, but I know Jem had a rather tough time in the beginning as well. He was just better at hiding it, but Jem being able to save lives, rather than take them helped him greatly I believe. But I can never know for sure how he coped truly unless he actually talked to me like an adult and not a child." Rilla explained and patted her sister's arm. They
never were extremely close and Nan coming to her, even if she was the second choice meant something to her.

The house was constantly filled with laughter as the families gathered all together. Jem and Faith had finally arrived with the baby who was adored and cooed over. She was constantly held from the moment she was unwrapped from her blanket.

Rilla herself focused on Faith that morning. Faith who seemed to illuminate motherhood with her soft curves. Her golden brown hair shining with a constant look of happiness on her face. Little Cecelia had light auburn hair and fair skin.

Another redhead, her mother shook her head. The entire family would never get away from the red hair it seemed. It made Rilla almost was tempted to think about just how her own children might look one day.

That all ended rather quickly. It seemed like every room she walked into she was immediately handed the baby.

Time and time again.

After the second day of awkwardly holding the child, she had enough. She began to pass the infant over Ken if he was around or place her back in the cradle the first chance she got.

The men had taken to cutting down the Christmas tree, leaving the ladies alone for tea that afternoon. It was the day before Christmas when all the ladies were having tea. Nan and Persis were exchanging details about their upcoming nuptials with Mrs. Ford. While her mother and Mrs. Elliot were knitting for the newest members of the community. Commenting on the many conversations here and there of the grown children.

"Rilla?" Someone called her name as she came into the room with a plate full of cookies she had made that morning. Cooking she was pitiful at, but baking she always managed to pull off if she followed the recipe. She looked towards Persis who was offering up the young Blythe in the room.

Rilla shook her head to the offered infant. "I'm fine really."

"I can't wait until I'm an auntie," Persis told her pushing the child at Rilla "What if we have children at the same time? Oh if you and Ken move to Toronto!" Persis rambled off before Di's voice rang above it.

"Oh! Just hold her already Rilla!" Di exclaimed as she saw Rilla turn towards Una as the infant was deposited into her arms by Persis. "She's a baby she's not going to hurt you. It's no different from your war baby," She reminded Rilla of Little Jims.

"It's entirely different," Rilla contradicted with a shake of her head. "This one is not my responsibility to hold or comfort."

"Oh pish posh Rilla, all babies are darling and deserved to be loved on." Di waved her hand at Rilla remark disregarding it completely. "It's only a matter of time before you have your own?"

"Yes, and clearly you have the hips for it," Miss Cornelia stated from her spot in the room, outspoken as always.
"See!" Di laughed. "And when the children come, all these years studying will be put on the sideline. Going to school to be a teacher is one thing, it's something to fall back on should something happen."

"Di, just leave her be," Nan cut in trying to get her twin to see reason. "It's Christmas, we need to stop bickering and just enjoyed the time we have with each other."

Either way, Rilla had enough and made an excuse to leave the room. Escaping to her father's study. The only quiet place in the house it seemed like. She sank down in his large leather chair that spun around. Sighing loudly as she relaxed for the first time since Jem and Faith had come over with the baby.

"At least I'm the married one," Rilla said bitterly. "I may not have a BA but I spend the majority of my time studying. I study so much that Ken has to remind me to eat. I study so much, I wonder what it would be like to enjoy reading again?" She thought to herself, remembering how before the war. How she enjoyed spending countless hours reading the books her mother gave her. Somehow that just disappeared from her life, the war taking another thing from her it seemed. She had been to busy taking care of Little Jims, the junior reds and the concerts she helped put on. Reading only became a chore after she had quit school at fourteen.

She wasn't sure how long it took before someone barged into the office. She looked from one of the books about the human mind that her father had.

"Oh! I didn't know you were in here" Jem noted as he grabbed something from the shelf. "You know the baby is in the other room?"

"Which is precisely why I am in here. If I have to sit through another quip about babies and my slim waistline or the size of my hips I may scream?" Rilla snapped before sighing. "I mean, Cecilia is very pretty and seems like a very well behaved baby," she added complimenting her niece. "I just do babies well?" she tried to explain to her brother.

"Didn't you take care of a baby for two years?" Jem raised an eyebrow. "I think I remember Nan and Di writing about something, or Dad mentioning it once or twice."

"Sure, I looked after Jimmy," Rilla nodded in agreement. "Doesn't mean it made me want babies. If anything it made me more against them in a way knowing just how much work they are."

"But you're married?" Jem gave her a slightly puzzled look. "Of course you want children!"

Rilla fought the urge to snap back and sat up straighter. "Look Jem, you were never around much when I grew into the woman I am now. So please don't think you know me at all. I can safely say that children are probably the foremost bottom end of the list of reasons why I married Ken. Being married doesn't automatically make me want babies. I have school, and Ken is more than accepting of my views on the matter at the moment. So stop making assumptions of what I want out of life!"

"All right, I'm sorry I assumed," Jem stepped back a step in shock more than anything. "You always seem so in tune with each other. I assumed that you weren't waiting for you to finish school."

"Jem? Are we really going to have this conversation?" Rilla gave him a look who looked rather stunned still. "All right I guess we are. My relationship with my husband is normal as any, we are like any other newlywed couple. We just have our ways to ensure that I can finish school without getting pregnant and what those are is between us." She snapped her book shut and stood up.
It was Ken who found her hiding out in her old room curled up on the bed. Even he noticed it for the first time that many of her siblings still only saw her as the baby of the family. The one who tagged along at their games. He saw how hurt she was when one of them reverted to old ways of teasing. It seemed like they forgot she had grown up as well. Only Nan seemed to empathic towards her younger sister. Di seemed oblivious of how her comments made Rilla feel. Then there was Shirley who was Shirley. Caught up in his own world as he tinkered with scale models he brought from school ignoring her most of the time. While Jem barely seemed to notice she had grown up in the years he had been away. As he chided them for not being proper when he walked in on them kissing in the kitchen the previous morning.

She curled up against him as he laid down beside her as he rubbed her back. They didn't speak. Speaking wouldn't change their minds about their decisions regarding their family.

"Stop the necking, it's time to decorate the tree!" A rather excited voice called out from the hallway. Only Shirley would say something like that. Rilla looked at him through her thick lashes.

"I think that is the most I heard Shirley talk for the past few days," Rilla noted.

"He had a telephone call," Ken replied. "I think it was his lady friend."

"I wonder if they made up?" Rilla pondered as they both crawled from the bed and straightened their clothing. Ken took the moment to kiss her soundly before leaving the room.

The evening was spent decorating and eating popcorn that they were also stringing up on the tree. Rilla smiled at the glass bobbles and old handmaid ornaments her and siblings had made. She always loved Christmas Eve, there was something special about it. Everyone was dressed up, ready for Christmas Eve service after a quick dinner. Allowing the families to gather once more at the church. Three families were truly entwined for the next generation. No one would have believed fifteen years ago that their children would marry each other.

The only person who didn't get the memo about it being Christmas Eve was little Cecelia. Somehow she decided near midnight to begin crying. Maybe she was excited for Santa as well?

After the second round of colic, Rilla stumbled out of her room. Shrugging on a kimono over her rather delicate nightgown, one that was not meant to be seen by brothers. She found Jem walking the halls with his daughter, which shocked her slightly. She would have pegged Jem as the type of man who would leave the calming to the mother.

Rilla beckoned silently to him, with a hard gaze of don't you dare say a word. She aptly adjusted the blanket around the child and patted the her back. Swaying back and forth as she hummed lightly until the child quieted down.

"Rilla?" Jem said after a moment.

"Babies don't always like to be swaddled so tightly," Rilla told him curtly. "She was too warm and had some gas. I'll leave the nappy to you."

"Thank you," Jem whispered. He never though fatherhood could be so hard. "Spid-Rilla," he corrected himself quickly. Looking at her sheepishly, knowing she hated that old nickname. Nor was she the spider as she had been as a teen he was noticing for the first time. "I didn't think it
would be this hard," he admitted.

"No one does, though I am surprised that you are the one out here," Rilla told him truthfully.

"Why? Father used to help out all he could with us?" Jem's brow furrowed. "Especially when Mum was recovering. I remember him walking the halls with you some nights."

"Really?" Rilla took in a breath. Their father had always been missing in action for most of life. Concerts and school functions was always a hassle, they knew their mother would be there. It was never knowing if their father would be there was the thing that bothered them the most.

"I mostly remember being rather jealous when you were born. You had dad wrapped around your little finger." Jem stated before continuing on when she gave him a puzzled look. "Looking back I can see I was rather confused, maybe even angry at you. I was old enough to remember vaguely losing mother when Shirley was born. I couldn't fathom why they would have another. I mean you did grow on me after a while. But I still remember Mum pale as a ghost when they deemed her well enough for a short visit after having Shirley."

"Gee thanks," Rilla said somewhat sarcastically before sobering. "I have a question though, something Ken mentioned to me a while back. When you came home to hear that Kenneth and I were practically engaged, you were shocked. Though according to Ken you warned him to not mess with me after the dance?"

"Did I?" Jem pondered for a moment as he adjusted his daughter in his arms. "All I remember at the dance with talk about war and being focused on Faith. I mean I saw you dancing once, and then I heard in passing that you went off together. I ribbed up Ken once before leaving. Joking about how 'impressionable' our little spider was and that I didn't want for you to get the wrong idea from him. Maybe he took it a little more to heart than I attended?"

Rilla nodded this was definitely more of her brother. Making a joke not realizing his friend's true feelings.

"You had him thinking you knew and he took the joke as a warning," Rilla admitted to him. "It makes sense why his letters were so up and down if he was battling his feelings. Most likely thinking my family possibly disapproved of his feelings, or how old I was?"

"Well, probably he was right about that," Jem told her truthfully. "You were too young, but the war changed many things. I came home to find you all grown up, the war made everyone grow older. I didn't expect to find my sister engaged to an old friend either way."

"I didn't even know if we were engaged or not?" Rilla offered him before yawning.

"Go back to bed," Jem told her quietly. "Someone needs to get some sleep tonight, and I doubt it will be me?" he joked as he carefully cradled the wide-awake infant in his arms.

Rilla nodded, and bade him goodnight, before heading back into her room. Ken was still snoring lightly in his sleep. She tossed her robe aside and crawled back into the makeshift bed. He pulled her closer, nuzzling her neck in his sleep. If she only knew what he was dreaming, when he smiled in his sleep.

Family, even when they aren't at their best, are still your family. Christmas morning was a cheerful early start of the day. Coffee and tea were made as they all unwrapped their gifts, still in their sleepwear and robes. There was countless awes and laughter at the choice of gifts. Diamonds and jewels were abundant with the married men of the group. Her mother had a new ring from her
father. While Rilla kissed Ken openly after she opened the velvet box. A box that held an elaborate silver floral motif necklace. Studded with tiny rhinestones or was it diamonds? She didn't know but she did smile over the few rubies which were her birthstone. It would come in handy when they went to Toronto for part of the summer in the upcoming year. While Rilla had a pocket watch with engraved with the date of their wedding for Ken. Books and new stationery to help her relax from her studies from her siblings. Her parent gave each of the girls a new pair of earrings.

It wasn't until late in the evening when Ken found Rilla, talking quietly to herself. He stopped himself when he realized she was her holding her niece. It was a sight he wanted to see repeated for years to come. It was then he realized that she wasn't afraid of children per se, it was she was afraid of saying goodbye to them. If she didn't get attached to them, they couldn't hurt her. They couldn't be taken away from her.

A family is a family, even with all the differences that they could have. All the misunderstandings and quarrels. A family was the one constant thing you had in life. A family isn't always blood, a family is sometimes is a makeshift group of people who make up your life.

I always wonder how Rilla could truly just give up Little Jims as she did. It must have been utterly heartbreaking to her at the end of it all.

Rilla and her siblings, I don't see them having a close relationship at all. She was mentioned maybe five times in all of Rainbow Valley! I can and do think Jem could remember Shirley's birth and Anne being sick. Kids can be intuitive, he may have not understood then. But looking back, and being a doctor know, he could wonder why after such traumatic(ok he wouldn't remember Joys obviously, but still) deliveries why his parents would have another child.

Anyway I hope everyone enjoyed this one, I think I got it to a point where I am happy with it. Nothing extremely pivotal but still shows a lot of character of our characters. Rilla being seen as an adult and not a child by a lot of her siblings, and Nan worried about Jerry and asking Rilla for advice.

Let me know what you think of this one either way!

Tina
Welcome to chapter 10!

Is it already chapter 10? This started off being a one-shot, and now I have ten chapters!

Thank you all for the kind reviews and words. It really made a bleak weekend turn into something special for me.

White lies they seem so harmless, they seem so inconsequential at the time when you make them. You may not realize the impact they can make when they come out. Sometimes, when they come out, things get blown out of proportion.

Sometimes it makes you realize the own lies you have told.

Rilla had been cleaning trying to tidy up the large mess that had accumulated over the last two weeks. Between her own papers and the article that Kenneth had been working one over the past few days. There were papers everywhere around the room. He was out working, allowing her to clean without distractions. She opened the door to one of the drawers. She was never one to snoop, but as she went to put away the handful of pencils and pens. She noticed a slip with her father's name on it.

It was a bank receipt for fifteen dollars, and by the looks of it, there were months of them. Her brow furrowed, confused about why Ken was paying her father? She counted back, noticing each one was dated on the first or second of each month. The first one beginning the month they had moved to Kingsport.

Rilla began to almost fume as she shoved them back into the desk. She didn't understand, she didn't understand why he would hide something like this? She had thought he had agreed to accept the gift from her parents. In reality, it appeared he just made his own agreement with her father.

She stomped around, not feeling sorry for the people underneath her. If anyone saw her they would tell her to stop acting like a child. She didn't like being treated like a child, she didn't like being left out of the loop. She didn't like being lied to.

She was icy when Ken came home, camera in his hands as he tried to kiss she turned her head. 

"Okay?" He said under his breath. Suddenly confused over her mood. "Everything all right?" He asked cautiously.

"Just peachy," Rilla retorted sarcastically.

"Is this a female thing?" He asked even more cautiously. She could be unpredictable on those days he learned first hand after the setup house.

"Really Kenneth?" Rilla gave a harsh look of are you really going there. "Not every mood I have is linked to my period!" She snapped at him.

"Then can you please ask what the hell is up?" Ken's voice raised slightly.

"You really want to know?" Rilla spat out, before stalking over to his desk and pulling out the receipts. "I wasn't snooping, by the way, I was just cleaning before you accuse me of that."
Ken paled slightly as she flung the bank receipts on the table. "I can explain?" He said after he raked his hand through his hair.

"Oh you're going to," Rilla stated rather sternly. "I am assuming you have an excellent reason of why? So why have you been paying my father fifteen dollars a month since September? Behind my back as well!"

"Oh come on Rilla, you're acting like I killed or committed some heinous crime or sin," Ken tried to reason to her.

"You deliberately went behind my back!" Her voice was shrill as she threw her hands up on the air. "Bringing my father into it as well!"

"I never asked him to keep it a secret if you must know!" Ken exclaimed, his hands shaking as he went for his tin of smokes. Except Rilla got to them before she did, and threw them across the room. "Oh real mature Rilla," he said spoke rather sarcastically.

"You still both excluded it from my knowledge!" Rilla stated. "But go ahead, talk your way out this one." Rilla sat down rigidly on the chair, arms crossed. Her lips pressed together firmly as one her eyebrows rose slightly.

"Fine, I went to your father, when it still didn't set right that they were giving us the place. Living at the summer house was never the same thing. My parents weren't going to let us live rent free, or give it to us after we got married. I may have a trust fund, but my father always made sure I made my own way in the world. I went to your father with the same sort of deal my father had for me, the fair market value for this place. It's still all in your name, but I refused to accept such a large gift, I couldn't." Ken explained after a moment.

"If anything he appreciated my honesty, my own conscious decision to him. When I decided I couldn't go through with such a gift. I am a proud man Rilla, you know that. I could not just accept such a gift. It didn't set right with me. Your father had his own terms and conditions though. I went in with fair market value and he talked me down to fifteen dollars a month until we decide to move or five years. Half of what the mortgage was when he first bought the place when your brothers went off to Redmond." Ken told her. "It's more than fair, and I can sleep better knowing that I am not just free loading. I am still supporting and providing for our family without handouts."

"You still should have told me," Rilla said after a moment. She couldn't really argue with him. She had no idea who to argue back after his explanation.

"Oh come on Rilla, we all know that once you have your mind set on something you refuse to let go of it." Ken exhaled. "I love that about you, don't get me wrong. But my god sometimes you are so bullheaded stubborn. So stubborn that you refuse to see reason in anything if it goes against what you want."

"It doesn't mean you get to lie to me!" Rilla felt her blood rising once more, her head shaking as she found herself wanting to just not look at him. "I can't be here right now," Rilla told him as she stood suddenly as she grabbed her purse and wool coat.

"Rilla!" Ken called after her.

"I'll be at the library," Rilla retorted as she quickly grabbed her school bag. She didn't look back as she rushed out the door leaving him there.

He didn't follow her.
She threw her stuff down on a table, sighing. Brushing away the stray tears, she didn't remember if they ever had a fight so large before.

"Rilla, are you all right?" Said the only female who occupied the science wing of the library.

"I don't know," Rilla sighed as she caught Mavis, the small brunette starring at her end with large brown eyes. Her wedding band was still on her finger, resting beneath the diamond engagement ring. She sighed as she twisted it for a moment.

"You're married?" Mavis said after a moment, quietly thankfully. "Well, that explains why you never invite me over to study anymore."

Rilla opened her mouth and realized she had been lying for months to her friends at school. How much of a hypocrite was she for getting mad at Ken for lying to her? "We got married in the summer. The school doesn't know, I didn't want to add more fuel to the fire with the boys of our class." Rilla explained carefully.

"Make's sense I suppose," Mavis nodded. "I'm a little hurt that I didn't get an invite, though." She joked. Mavis was from Newfoundland and spent her holidays there. "Though going back to my first question. Are you all right?"

"I don't know? I just had a massive quarrel with Ken," Rilla sighed, resting her forehead in her hands. "I was just so angry-I couldn't even think straight. I just stormed out of there."

"Men are fools," Mavis tried to cheer her up. "Can I ask what happened?"

"Essentially, my parents as a wedding gift signed over the apartment into my name. Ken didn't like the idea of such a large gift and we argued about it, but he later accepted it. Except I found out, behind my back he went to my father refusing the gift and offered to buy it from them. Apparently, they worked out a deal, and he decided I didn't need to know about it. The only reason I found out it because I found the receipts from the bank." Rilla explained quietly. She played around with the loose tendril that escaped the ribbon she wore. She waited years to wear her hair up, begging to be allowed to even wear it up around the house once she turned sixteen. Now she barely had the energy to tame the coils that came naturally.

"Well, he was wrong to keep it from you," Mavis started. "But, is it really that big of a deal? If it makes him sleep better at night? If it makes him feel more like a man, to feel like he is needed?"

Rilla sighed, letting her head fall into her hands on the table. "Why are relationships so complicated?" She groaned loudly.

"Well, I don't have much experience with them, but Mama always said, marriage is a compromise. Two people learning to live with each other and respecting each other. There are no winners and losers. Just give and take, compromises that make a marriage work."

"You sound like my mother," Rilla groaned once more. "Even more my father, I don't know what is worse."

"Go home, apologize for running off," Mavis ordered her. "He must be worried sick about you, knowing what I know about him. Then next week I want all the details and to meet him properly."

Rilla sighed she knew studying was a waste of time when she felt so horrible in the aftermath.

"We'll figure something out," she told her friend with a tired smile.
She barely made it off campus when she saw Ken leaning against a tree. Cigarette hanging from his mouth, as his hat was tilted downwards. He looked so dashing, so daring. He was always the type of man who would turn a girls head. Sometimes she wondered just how she managed to marry him.

She wrapped her arms around herself, mentally preparing to try and apologize to him. He looked up as she neared him. He said nothing as he took her school back from her. Something he always did if he picked her up from school. Today was no different for the habit.

They walked in silence, his free hand grasping hers after a moment. The walked for a fair distance until they reached the park her mother shown her once. The same park where her parents often to each back in their own college days.

Now it was the place where she and Ken came when they could. Today they huddled under the gazebo shelter as the rain spat around them.

March was always a dreary month.

"I'm still angry," Rilla started off after a deep breath leaning against the railing. "But I shouldn't have left as I did." She added.

"And I shouldn't have I kept it from you," Ken responded. "For that I am sorry."

"I'm sorry for throwing things at you," Rilla said sheepishly.

"Its far from the first thing you have thrown at me," Ken informed her, his lips turning upwards at a memory. He smirks. "I believe once you got annoyed at us older kids excluding you. You threw your doll at us, only to smash her china head."

"I was rather spoiled," Rilla admitted with a small shrug of admittance.

"You were the most petted, vain child I ever met." Ken corrected her.

"I was not that bad!" Rilla objected huffing.

"Either way, you grew into a wonderful, caring, beautiful woman." Ken took her hand in his.

"I won't stop though," he added going back to their previous argument."

"I didn't expect you too." Rilla sighed. "It's going into the budget though." She warned him.

"Just leave it be Rilla, I have plenty of money. I only am paying your father monthly, because he refused a lump sum." Ken explained to her.

"I'm really starting to wonder just how much money you have in that one account?" Rilla commented underneath her breath.

Ken turned towards her. "More than you ever imagined," he teased her. "But if you want to know the balance. All you have to do is ask," he told her.

"Mavis knows about us," Rilla said after a moment.

"Thats good," Ken nodded. "It might be nice for you to have someone that can you still have over or hang out with her without having to worry?"

Rilla nodded. "I didn't realize how much I missed the few friends I have made."
"I never asked you to keep our marriage a secret," Ken reminded her. "You wanted to do that."

"I don't want you to have to have to sign a piece of paper allowing me to go to school." Rilla shook her head. "I don't want to be told, that I need a man's permission to have a mind."

"I get that, but at some point, people are going to find out," Ken reminded her. "I have no issues, signing whatever they would want me to sign. While having no issues telling them that my wife is incredibly smart and I love that about her."

"I know that," Rilla kicked a stone with her show. "But I am more than Kenneth Ford's wife," she reminded him. It always annoyed her that she needed Ken's approval to take money out the joint account. The fact that when they sent away for her passport and it came back with the documentation referring to her as 'Mrs. Kenneth Ford.

"And I am more than Captain Kenneth Ford," Ken reminded her of his own aliases. "I am more than the man who had to write to families about how brave their son was. We only are who we are. You taught me that more than anything. This came for you though," Ken pulled out a letter that had a childish scribble of Rilla Ford. Underneath the childish writing was a neatly written address.

"Jimmy," Rilla let out a laugh and shook out her head.

---

**Dear Rilla**

*I am lurning how to right are your praoud of me? Tank you for the toy train at Chrismas, I play wit it ever day. I miss your visits and your cokies.*

*I have a nuw puppie I named her Willow.*

*Pleaeze comes vizit me soon, I mess you.*

*Jimmy*

---

**Rilla**

*You'll find a letter from Jimmy enclosed. He wished to write to you, I helped him a lot with the spelling or at least what he allowed me to help with.*

*Next time you are on the Island, you must visit us and see Jimmy. He is getting rather tall and I have a feeling I will have to cut his hair soon. If we do, I will save you a lock of it, just like you did for us all those years back if you wish it.*

*I hope your studies are going well and that you are enjoying married life. I so dearly regret not being here for your wedding. Jimmy keeps the photo you gave us by his bedside table that you gave to us at Christmas.*

*We have a new another addition arriving soon in the family this summer. Jimmy is rather excited. If you are in the area this summer you will have to come to visit. I am sure he would love to see you and Ingleside.*

**Adaline Anderson**

"That little tyke," Ken chuckled. "I know we planned to go to Toronto for most of the summer, but we can spend some time in the glen as well." He offered her, she was disappointed when Jimmy
couldn't come to their wedding. As he ended up being rather sick the week they married.

"I would like that," Rilla said quietly. She stroked the photo that was also in the envelope. He really did need a hair cut, she noted. She was silent for a moment.

"If Jimmy's father didn't come home from the war-" Rilla started.

"You would have kept him?" Ken finished for her.

Rilla nodded him looking at him quietly. She had wanted to keep him forever "But then there would be a likely chance we would not be married. Nor would I be in school."

Ken was silent for a moment. "You don't know that," he answered truthfully. "I mean I want to say yes. That I would have still married you with Jims around, but knowing how I was back then," he trailed off. It would have looked extremely strange to the people who didn't know them. If they didn't know the story behind Little Jims. Would either assume Jimmy was his from a previous marriage? Maybe he married Rilla out of pity?

The boy looked nothing like either of them though. Ken would have learned to love the boy he supposed. Rilla loved him, she would constantly write about the tyke in some way or form in her letters.

"Either way it all worked out the way it was supposed to work out." Ken broke out of his own thoughts.

She nodded before she straightened up and pocketed the letter.

Ken realized she was done talking about her war baby. He noticed it before how she often cut herself from any emotion. Any emotions that came from talking about the little boy for more than five minutes. She was always so happy when he came to visit her or when she went to visit the Andersons farm. Yet she seemed so quiet after the visit ended. It was only after his own realization over Christmas he was beginning to worry about it. He was curious if she ever truly grieved. If she ever allowed herself to cry more than the day he left?

"Should we head home?" He asked her looking at his watch. Rilla nodded they both fell in sync as they started the walk home.

Sometimes what may seem like a little white lie to one, is not to another. You may not even realize that you are doing it. Because it seems so innocent to bend the truth, to spare someone's feelings.

Sometimes it's your own secrets that turn into little white lies. Something Rilla learned herself, as she was hiding half of her life while in Kingsport.

Sometimes you lie so much to yourself. That you forget to remember the truth of what you were lying about at the beginning of it all.

They will all come out at the end of the day it was only just a matter of time.

I'm really starting to explore, the whole Little Jims angle with Rilla, which is interesting. Rilla who seems to have it all together, to be the one who is the stable one of the relationship. It starting to show just how much the war and her war baby impacted her life.

Anyways I hope everyone enjoyed this one.
I have a busy weekend and work week coming up. One month until Wizard of Oz opens at the ballet and its crunch time for sure! but I will try my best to not keep you waiting too long for another chapter!

As per usual, I look forward to your thoughts!

Tina
Welcome to chapter 11

I want to thank everyone for the kind words and follows.

Fun story, I had this all edited and then instead of hitting copy in my editing program, I hit paste… and I could un paste. So I had to edit it all over again, but I think I got everything I wanted out of this chapter.

They came from different worlds, sometimes it was easy to forget that. He somehow fits in beautifully in the vibrant life of the Maritimes. He always did, it could fit in anywhere he just had that ability it seems. It didn't seem fair at times when she thought of it. How she faltered easily, she was too in tune about what others thought about her. She relied on what others thought about her a little too much at times. She knew this trip was going to test her, she knew this trip wouldn't be easy as the last time.

Still, the idea of being outside of one's element was terrifying. She spoke of it to Mavis on numerous occasions as they sat at the small table studying. Usually, while Kenneth was out working or bringing back dinner for the three of them.

She was excited yet so very anxious about actually stepping into Toronto Society for more than a night. She had packed her best gowns, along with what would be a lengthy shopping trip with Persis. She was ready for Toronto society. For seven weeks she would be in the city. Until they travel back for Nan and Jerry's wedding that was in mid-July. She was surprised they waited so long. Jerry wanted to find them a house in Charlottetown and Nan had her contract to fulfil with her school.

She found the Fords day to day life more than she imagined. Persis flitted around the town. Shopping and helping out with various charities with her mother. While the evenings were spent often with her fiancé. Going to parties that were hidden beneath the streets of Toronto.

Rilla for the first time in her life didn't know what to do with herself. She hadn't been this idle since before the war. Even their honeymoon seemed more scheduled than their month here. Ken still was writing pieces through correspondence. Yet Rilla had thrown her books down refusing to spend her vacation studying. Instead, she found herself picking up old hobbies as she visited different stores. Buying silk threads and ribbons and needles for embroidery at the milliners. New stockings to embroider around the ankles at Eaton's. She was always talented in the art of needlepoint and delicate sewing. She remembered she was the first to be able to turn the heel on socks before they did.

Other mornings, when the Ford left for various errands or calls. Rilla and Ken lounged around in the wide bed in his room. Him whispering things that made her blush. His morning stubble scratching her milky freckled skin. Soft moans escaped as he explored her body with great need. It was during those moments when she felt completely at ease while living in a city she was not used to.

At first, she was hesitant. Even embarrassed to allow themselves such liberties as they visited his
parents. They were married though, Ken reminded her. They knew that when they offered to house
them for the duration of their trip. Soon the mornings where they had the house to themselves as
the time she cherished most. Being alone with him without worrying about what others thought. It
made her miss their little apartment back in Kingsport where she could sleep nude if she wanted to.

Their evenings were spent going to various shows around the city. While Massey Hall was often a
destination for various concerts. She was in awe of ladies dressed in their finery as they sipped
bubbling water. Of all the theatres this was her favourite. It was nothing like she ever saw before, it
was so large and ornate. While more than once the local photographer took her and Ken's
photograph. Dressed in their finery. Only to see it days later, with the headline of the gossip column
of who was Kenneth Fords Bride?

It was the underground clubs that Persis had shown them that terrified her. Jazz was all the rage
and Toronto was not immune. Illegal alcohol was poured freely as the girls danced in ways that
Rilla had never seen. Surely this couldn't be good for Ken? She watched him from the spot as she
came back from the ladies room. Cigarette in hand, he chatted to other men.

They had argued beforehand in the car. One drink to hold he argued. One drink to hold throughout
the night. It would appear to strange for him not to have a drink in hand. Rilla wasn't ecstatic but
seeing the underground club. She had to admit he was right, anyone who wasn't drinking stood out
like a sore thumb. She just afraid he would give in.

One drink couldn't hurt him? He had been sober for over a year and still the idea of him drinking
terrified her. She had been making her way back to her husband when she stopped hearing Ken's
name on a woman's lips.

"I see that Kenneth Ford is back in town," A woman who had dark hair inquired to another.

"Bringing his bride with him as well." The second confirmed who was a light brunette.

"Not that anyone has laid eyes on her or anything yet," A blonde responded. "Keeping her out of
the all the fashionable places?"

"I heard she's from the Island?" The pretty brunette piped up who was wearing a rather daringly
short dress.

"He married a country girl, how quaint. She must be dreadfully dull." The raven hair beauty added
on. "A regular country bumpkin!" She let out a high pitched laugh as her red dress sparkled from
all the sequins and beads.

"You're just sour because you couldn't snag him for yourself." The blonde who was dress in blue
responded.

"He was always so over the place. Before the war he was all too interested, then he went away for
the summer to come back all dreary. Then it was up and down. Some days it was like he made up
his mind on me, and other days he barely knew what I looked like." The raven-haired woman
explained with an air of something that Rilla couldn't place.

"I heard she is dreadfully young or was young back then. They've known each other since
childhood is from what I have heard," the blonde bounced on the heels of her shoes. Excited over
the gossip.

"I heard that her father almost forbid the union. They only married to escape scandal," the brunette
chipped in with a low voice.
Oh if only the knew the whole story! Rilla thought to herself.

"Didn't you see him in the hospital when he came home?" One woman asked the dark-haired woman.

"I saw him only for a moment before Mrs. Ford closed the door." The dark haired lady responded still miffed that she had been rejected. "Next thing I know he's engaged to some islander who probably has no fashion sense or beauty."

Rilla took a step from her spot in the shadows behind them. Trying not to allow herself to feel anything over their words. They didn't even know her! Susan once called her the beauty of the whole island!

"Either way it seems to be a good night tonight" she looked about the room.

"Indeed, and I saw the most gorgeous dress earlier. I don't know who she was but she had fantastic taste." The blonde stated with a dreamy sound to her voice

"That gold and silver one?" The brunette asked eagerly. "I know, I swore I recently saw it in the window to M'Cleary's the other day."

"Oh look, Kenneth is making his way over here!" One preened as they all patted their hair and smiled brightly.

"Ladies," Ken nodded his head. "Excuse me, I wanted to introduce you to my bride, Rilla!" He called her over, as the three women turned in disbelief. Rilla demurely went to Ken, her hair curled and combed under. A large headband covered half of her forehead and top of her auburn hair. Her eyes lined with smokey kohl, her lips reddened with a stain. The silver and gold dress swished as she walked with dainty silver slippers. They all look at her with disbelief that such a girl catch Kenneth Ford as a husband.

That such a girl was from the Island.

"Rilla this is Alice Cooktown," the petite blonde nodded her head. "Edith Summers," the Brunette smiled tightly to her. "Ethel Mclean," Ken finished as he waved towards the dark haired woman.

"Pleasure," the trio said in unison to Rilla.

"Likewise," Rilla nodded to them if this was the first taste of Toronto Society. Rilla wasn't sure if she wanted to be part of it. "How do you all know Ken?" She asked out of politeness.

"School and our brothers mostly," Ethel replied for the group. She continued to look over Rilla with barely hidden interest or was it disgust? Rilla had a few good inches on each of the women and found herself straightening her back to her full height. "We have always been in the same circles since school."

"My siblings and I always looked forward when the Fords came during the summer." Rilla countered bravely. "Kenneth would always have the most delightful stories to tell us."

"I still remember the summer Rilla was born vaguely," Ken smiled. "But mostly I remember her tagging along any chance she got to follow the older children. Then suddenly she all grown up and the breathtaking." Ken wrapped his arm around her, settling his hand on her hip protectively.

"No children yet? Or is the grandparents on duty tonight?" Edith asked with thinly veiled innocence. It was just a ploy to insinuate that they only married because of scandal.
"Not yet," Rilla gritted her teeth. "I am sure when the time is right it will happen?" That was her new response to the lack of any impending children. "We are content as we are though aren't we dearest?" Rilla looked up to Kenneth, pleading to him with her eyes to get her away from these women.

It was strange how he managed to fool everyone, she never actually saw him take a drink from the glass he held. He smoked more than she cared for, but if it was one or the other? Heavens no wonder he resorted to drinking his way through these parties back then they could be torturous after a while. The barely veiled criticism and backhanded compliments. No one could understand why Kenneth Ford had married someone who had no idea about Society. She was a pretty thing no one could deny that. Still out of all the society girls, the mergers and companies that could happen.

Yet he married this pretty islander, who apparently was in school? It was unbelievable to his classmates who had seen him in his reckless days. She heard them whisper about how prim and proper she was; with her long skirts and hair, modestly cut gowns. Rilla wanted to speak to him about it, but as they stumbled in half past three in the morning. Her mind is cloudy from her own drinks that had been pressed into her hands by his classmates.

What do you mean you don't wish for a drink? They asked shocked, was she raised in a conservative household?

Did she really drink that much? She only counted two or three drinks? If anything it made her so tired that sometimes Ken had to carry her to bed.

The Fords never spoke about their partying ways when they met with the old classmates of Ken. They were adults, though she always knew that one of them was up when they came home. She kept thinking about how her parents would cringe to see how she behaved as each glass of gin went to her head. The fact that she was drinking was another thing she wasn't sure about. Was she really that girl who did things to merely fit in? Father, always had a decanter of whiskey in his office while they were growing up. She was also sure that Jem had been drinking with his pals since his Redmond days.

"No more," she said one morning after the third saturday night party. "I really don't like this, and you need to slow down on the smoking. I know they are your friends but I just can't do this," she informed him. Tired from her hangover that clung to her body like nothing she ever felt before.

How did he ever live like this?

The weeks wore by, and much to Rilla's insistence, the parties ended. Instead, they spent the evening playing cards and games on Saturday night. If the others were out, they would retire early. Undressing each other slowly, shivering as she felt his breath on her thigh. A tender kiss as he rolled down her stockings. His dark eyes, almost black as he looked up at him from his spot at her knees.

It was a fine morning when they were finishing breakfast when Owen Ford closed his newspaper. Looking in the direction of his son, "I forgot to mention your Uncle wants you to go see him,"

Rilla watched Ken nod. "I'll go see him at the office," he said before turning his head over to his wife. "Do you wish to see the family business?" He asked. Rilla only nodded, curious of just what the Fords did. Whenever she asked Ken he just shrugged and said they were in print and publishing. Like she should know what his family did.

She excused herself, telling them she was going to get ready to go out. She powdered her face and
dapped on some lip tint the Persis had given her. She arranged her curly hair into a low cascade of curls at the base of her neck. Not bothering to pin it up.

She double checked her stocking for runs in the large mirror.

Sometimes she felt like another person in Toronto.

Mostly because she looked like another woman in the mirror.

She watched with wide eyes as they drove through the streets. Toronto was something she would never get used to. All the building and the number of people bustling about. They stopped at a large building. She had to look up to see the name of the building, but all it said was Fords Publishing. She followed Ken up the stairs, his hand resting on her lower back as she climbed. Waiting for him to open the door for her as he always did.

"Mr. Ford!" An older woman who sat at the desk in the front exclaimed. "Why look at you!"

"Hello, Mrs. McMillan. My Uncle in yet?" Ken asked as he watched Rilla from the corner of his eye. Turning slightly as she looked up to the ceiling. Marvelling in the sunbeams that filtered in from the large windows.

"He arrived twenty minutes ago," she nodded her head looking towards Rilla.

"I'm sorry, this is my wife Rilla," he smiled as he gentle gasped her hand to bring her into the conversation. "Darling, this is Mrs. McMillan, she's worked for the family for many years," he explained.

"Pleasure to meeth you," Rilla stumbled over her words. Lisping in a way that she always hated. She blushed bright red, but felt Ken wrapped his arm around her waist. Squeezing her gently as encouragement to no be embarrassed.

"You are such a darling," The older woman smiled. "Mrs. Ford goes on and on about how pretty her daughter in law is, but my you are breathtaking my dear."

Back when she was young she would have preened at such a compliment. Now she quietly said thank you as she flushed bright red.

"Well, go on up you two," the older woman ushered them toward the elevator.

Rilla looked around at the various desks and people working. Then for the first time, she saw the name of the Magazine she had seen at her parent's house for a year. She looked at him with her jaw dropping.

She didn't have time to say anything before the elevator dinged and the liftman opened the door for them.

"Thank you," she murmured as she passed him.

Ken held her hand as he led her into the office. Inside was a man who was slightly larger, yet had a familiar resemblance to her father in law. Ben Ford was his name Rilla remember

"Kenneth!" The older man stood up. "I didn't expect you so soon when I sent a note over to your Father."

"We had nothing else going on today, and I assume you wished to see Rilla again?" Ken spoke as
he ushered Rilla into the plush chair and stood behind her.

"Yes, last summer was such a short visit before you whisked her away to the cottage to have her all to yourself." Ben jested with a small smile. He turned to Rilla with a large grin "Yes, yes I do remember about your studies. I am looking forward to hearing more of them, young lady. It was terribly fascinating."

"And what a wonderful two weeks that was," Ken said under his breath.

"Thank you," Rilla flushed and nodded her head.

"Well, I called you here for a reason. Its nothing extremely pressing but may change your future plans possibly." Ben started.

Rilla turned and watched Ken straighten his back.

"He is ill again?" Ken said after a moment. He heard the rumours and he knew what would happen should it happen.

"It appears so," Ben Ford nodded. "He may get well once more, but the doctors are weary of a full recovery. Which leads me to ask you what your future attention are within this company?"

"Am I going to be like Father on the sidelines, or will I step up should you need me?" Ken responded after a moment. "It would have to be something I would have to talk to Rilla about," he added turning to her, trying to judge her reaction.

Her mind was racing, how could she have not known? How could he have never told her?

"Of course, it is a rather large decision for a family. Though I do plan on being here for at least another fifteen years" Ben tried to ease their minds. Letting them know a decision wasn't necessary anytime soon. "But do show your bride around, you know this place as much as anyone."

"Seriously? Your family owns a huge national magazine and you say nothing about it, let alone work for it? Is this some sort of family secret?" Rilla hissed at him as they walked down an empty hallway.

"It's never been a secret," Ken's brow furrowed. Did she seriously never put it together? "Your family knows of my parent's connections. Of my father's connections to the media industry, seriously Rilla I thought you knew?" Ken retorted slightly bewildered.

"I thought your father just sold a lot of books," Rilla shook her head. "My god, no wonder why girls chased you before the war, you probably have a trust fund of thousands of dollars."

"Rilla, slow down. You're running away with things that do not matter. Yes, my father has a stake in the company. Yes, that probably has filled my and Persis's Trust funds from the time we were born." Ken told her squarely.

"You have a business degree along with journalism," Rilla said after a moment.

"Because it seemed useful, I was never heir to this company. But my cousin health has always been particular. But I rather be ready to take something on, then go on blindly." Ken spoke calmly.

"I am sorry that this is a shock to you Rill, but a part of you must have known in some sort of way?" Ken asked her. Sighing when she shook her head. "I don't speak of it much, because this wasn't supposed to be my life. I am decent at writing, but I am nowhere near my father's talent for
words. While my uncle is the one running the company. It was never supposed to be my destiny. It was never supposed to be a secret, trust me on that one. How you managed to not know the truth this long is rather shocking.”

"Well, you never exactly told me," Rilla crossed her arms. "Even if you went around telling Jem or Walter about your life in Toronto as you did like you did about Japan. I was young! How could I remember such a thing?"

"You remember my stories about Japan?" Ken raised an eyebrow.

"Of course, it's seemed so foreign and beautiful," Rilla retorted.

"We can always go next year, it can be a graduation present?" He replied smoothly.

"Don't go changing the subject. If you take over the company-," Rilla trailed off knowing that they would have to move to Toronto. She wasn't sure if she wanted to be parted from her Island. Her family, she would only see them once or twice a year possibly. She wasn't even sure if she could be the type of a wife he would need in Toronto Society.

"We'll figure it out," Ken said softly. "It's not a decision we need to make today."

"I know," Rilla sighed. "It's just a very large surprise. Your family owns, one of the most promenade magazines of the country!"

They come from two different worlds. That was something she always knew. But those worlds seemed to be colliding much faster than she ever anticipated.

Still was it really such a bad thing? The ability to possibly use her own studies for a career. She knew at the end of the day, she would follow Ken to the ends of the earth.

That if this was a possible future for them, then they would make it work together somehow. His uncle said it himself, it could be years before he retired.

She looked at him, as the sunlight filtered through the large window. She saw it there at the moment in the corners of her mind.

He belonged here.

______________________________________________________________

Well, there you have it!

I finally tackled the lovely question of where Ken's money comes from.

While researching different careers for him. I settled on the tried and true semi-canon with keeping him in writing. Though I chose to have the Fords in a publishing company after inspired by Maclean's Magazine, which is one of the oldest Canadian magazines beginning in 1905.

Rilla is really beginning to see just how different their upbringings are and finding herself the topic of much gossip by the mean girls of Ken's school days. She relies on Persis to help her fit in but then finds herself feeling not like herself.

Speakeasies and prohibition were still in full swing in Toronto in 1921. There are at least two bars, that we know of today that was used in the 1920s. One was called the cold tea room, that was Kensington Market and another called the Libertine that had its own fortune teller on Dundas West.
Rilla finding herself drinking was something I never planned on, but it happened. While Ken savours a drink, I don't think she's doing it for any particular reason, other than the fact she is only trying to fit in with the crowd. There is definitely some inner turmoil building in her as time passes and she and Ken try and figure out their future.

As always I enjoy your thoughts on these or if you have any question I will do my best to try and explain my reasoning to you!

Tina.
Chapter 12

Thank you all for the reviews and follows, it means a lot to me.

I hope everyone is having a good easter/holiday weekend!

I'm Sorry, this took longer than usual. Work has been crazy and I've also been busy sewing as well.

A beautiful mess, an ironic phrase everyone has heard before. How can a mess be beautiful?

That beyond those moments are moments where something shines brightly. It when the walls we make slowly fall away. Allowing others to see the depth of your soul that you have hidden away.

It doesn't matter how long you have known the person. A week, a year, a decade, the moment you show your soul to another is another piece to the puzzle that you are.

Sometimes those people can place that tiny piece and give it new meaning. Allowing you to mend and learn from your past mistakes and let others into your life.

Because sometimes the hardest times of your life are the times you grow the most.

The last weeks of Toronto had been tense, to say the least. Even the Fords had noticed something off was off with the younger pair. Rilla who was in generally in high spirits barely spoke. While their son seemed preoccupied with all the possibility of changes.

Owen knew the news would change their lives and their own future plans. While Leslie understood just how Rilla felt about life on the Island and Kingsport. It was hard to not get caught up on the details. Especially when both Rilla and Ken knew it could be years before his uncle stepped down.

The only thing that Rilla seemed to be happy about. Was the fact she had by chance met a young woman during a wardrobe mishap at a local library.

"I'm sorry, but your dress in the back has come undone," a dark-haired girl whispered to her.

"Oh!" Rilla exclaimed flushing reaching behind her. Trying to figure out which she had missed that morning.

"Here, let me?" The young woman asked, Rilla nodded and within a moment the woman fixed her dress. "There, I'm Marianne by the way. Marianne Ramsey," she introduced herself.

"Rilla Ford," she responded.

"You're not from around here?" Marianne asked as she heard a small accent.

"I grew up on Prince Edward Island. I am visiting with husbands family." Rilla explained. It wasn't the first time that some picked up that she wasn't from Ontario.

"Oh! I hear its absolutely gorgeous there," Marianne said rapidly. "I never left Ontario."

"I am rather a bias, but it is really beautiful. We are heading back in two weeks. One of my older sisters is getting married and I am a bridesmaid despite being married already." Rilla explained.
"I know this is rather forward, but would you like to get some tea. I've seen you in here before and I just never have had the courage to talk to you until now."

"I would love that, Toronto this time around has been a rather difficult trip for me. Small town girls and big cities don't always go together well." Rilla explained. "I mean my sister in law tries her best, but sometimes I find myself realizing that I have nothing in common with her. Other than out love of shiny things."

"Of course," Marianne smiled. "There is one down the street, it's little pricey but they have the best pastries?" She explained not wanting to assume Rilla's situation. Even when her clothing looked expensive.

"You can never put a price on the cake," Rilla smiled, insinuating that money was not an issue.

Over the next few days, Rilla and Marianne had met up for tea and cakes. Marianne only lived a tram away so often they browsed various stores that Rilla had never been into.

Marianne who was a pretty woman maybe a two or three years older than Rilla herself. Though she was rather short in stature, she made up for it in a large personality. She reminded Rilla of the girls from the Island in many ways. Like many women, she hadn't cut her hair for the sake of fashion. She also adored that Rilla still wore her Mary Pickford curls, when she out during the daytime. Her hair was up in the evening but never during the day.

She lived with her elderly father in a middle-class neighbourhood. When she found out just who Rilla was married to, and what family she had married into she didn't believe it at first. Rilla seemed so approachable and nothing like the society girls that she had grown up with.

"I don't really have any hobbies," Rilla admitted as she sipped her tea. "I learned how to knit during the war and haven't since. I used to read before the war, and now I barely have time for it. I spend all my time studying and writing papers. Ken is the one who is always tinkering with auto parts, always taking photos to sell to magazines. He makes small home movies with the Aeroscope that I found for him. If I have any downtime I suppose I try to learn some more ribbon embroidery. But even that is only something I learned because of the vanity I have towards pretty clothing." Rilla laughed lightly. Thinking about the old green hat she bought during the war.

"What did you do as a child?" Marianne asked. "Surely you had some sort of hobby as a child?"

Rilla shrugged. "I've always been this way. I left school at fourteen, even my parents didn't see the point in my going to teaching academy. I was never good at drawing or painting, my sewing was less than hopeful for a long while. I can't sing, and my piano has always been plagued by never practicing enough. My sisters are twins always had the grades and talents. Jem and Shirley are both extremely smart, even if Shirley is more humble about it." She explained. "Then there was just me who is just average?"

"Your studying psychology," Marianne shook her head. "That is something in itself, so you do have some interests and smarts. You find the human mind interesting and want to learn more about it. Why people react and do the things they do? I see how you watch people. Trying to understand why do the things they do?" Marianne contradicted her average life.

"It's a shame that I only have only a week left," Rilla sighed. "It's been years since I felt like I truly had a good friend. Gertrude finally was able to get married and moved a distance away. While all the Island girls I grew up with we got along all right; but it was never what my mother would call kindred spirits or bosom friends."
"Well, I can be easily persuaded to visit," Marianne grinned. "I always wished to see the East coast."

"We will definitely have to stay in touch," Rilla agreed with a large smile. She waved her arm towards Ken who walked into the cafe. He often stopped by to pick Rilla up, sometimes he joined them as they walked through the various parks. Taking photos with his camera of the gardens as well as the two young women in his company. Rilla had promised to mail Marianne some of the photos.

In the end, the trip, despite its low moments turned itself around.

From spending countless hours on the beach soaking up the sun at Sunnyville Pavilion. A local watering hole for the civilians of Toronto on Lake Ontario. It's where Rilla ran around in her bathing cap and her new dark red bathing suit. One that Ken seemed to enjoy because it was a short tunic that hit the top of her thighs. While her shorts only covered her legs by another two inches leaving her legs bare to the world. The whole outfit skimmed her body, it was nothing like the bathing suits she had worn back home.

Ken accompanied them most days, along with Persis and Joseph who were about to be married in a few weeks time. It seemed to be her favourite thing about Toronto. It was no ocean, of course; but the lake water was nicer than the salty ocean water. It wouldn't get stuck in her hair and dry out her skin. It made him happy to see her laughing and genuinely having a good time.

The last weekend they spent in the city was his sister's wedding. Which went off without a hitch. It was large and she sparkled like the bride she had wanted to be. He watched Rilla as she watched the ceremony, at least the reception was would be easy for them. Prohibition made it a dry reception, but Persis had never-ending sweets. With an abundance of different drinks to satisfy any person.

Still, by the end of the night, they both looked at each other. Knowing that they both preferred their small intimate wedding in the rainbow valley.

Both amazed how quickly the year had gone by. Their first anniversary was quickly approaching them.

Her parents had picked them up from the station. Rilla saw the look her mother gave them. After they remained rather tight-lipped about the stay in Toronto. Her mother took it upon herself to air out the house of dreams for them. Allowing them to have their privacy once more. Something they both craved after living with his parents for so many weeks. It was surprising just how one got used to privacy.

So much had happened, been shared in that little house. By her family, his family, by the two of them, it was filled to the brim with memories. The wedding was only a few short days away so they had no time to settle in. Rilla still had to retry on her bridesmaid dress on. Nan had been fretting about it not fitting in letters for weeks. Even though she has been reassured by Rilla that she had not lost or gained anything substantial.

So as Ken went to pick up supplies for them, Rilla went over to her parents. The dress fit perfectly of course and it was a pretty shade of pink. A colour Nan loved, that didn't Rilla would have never chosen for herself. Redheads can't wear pink she was always told, but with her creamy skin and auburn hair, it suited her fairly well.

"Mum?" Rilla asked as she knocked on the door to the drawing room. Susan was out running
errands, the house was empty as her father was out on a call. Even her sibling was out at the manse. The pink gown shimmered slightly in the stream of sunlight from the window.

"Yes, sweetheart?" Anne looked up from her pile of mending. She smiled at the pink dress. "That fits you like a glove," she approved as she watched Rilla sit down next to her.

"What are some of the first signs of pregnancy?" Rilla asked quietly. So quietly her mother almost didn't believe she heard what she had heard.

"Well, for the majority of all of you I was sick most of the day during those first few weeks. My breasts felt tender and swollen. Even your father's cologne and aftershave made my headache to the point he couldn't wear it. The largest sign though is that fact I stopped menstruating." Anne said after a moment. "Rilla? Do you think?"

"I don't know." Rilla sighed. "I feel fine most of the time. I'm exhausted lately but it's been a long few weeks. I'm late though, well later than I usually ever am."

"Does Ken know that you're worried?" Anne asked her curiously.

"No, there's no point in worrying him, if it's nothing." Rilla shook her head. "He has enough on his plate without having to worry about this as well."

"Even so Rilla, if you're worried you need to talk to him. It will be easier for both of you whatever the outcome is if you both expecting it. Also, you both seem so out of sorts, did Toronto not go well?"

Rilla hummed and rested her head on her mother's shoulder. "It was fine, I met a wonderful new friend." Rilla told her mother. "There was something unexpected though..." Rilla paused for a moment. "Ken's uncle offered Ken to be the heir of the company. If his cousin doesn't get better." She explained.

"Well, that's wonderful," Anne smiled. "Ken has always been a bright young man."

"It also means we would have to move to Toronto one day," Rilla countered. "I would leave my home."

"So?" Anne raised an arched brow. "Home is wherever you are loved, nothing more. The scenery can change. But if you have someone who loves you. You are home Rilla." Anne spoke, almost as she remembers her first real home in her life. The people who loved her, and allowed her to love them.

"Don't hide from him dearest If you think you're pregnant even in the slightest. Tell him." Anne urged her. "And if it doesn't come I suggest you either talk to your father. Sometimes the symptoms don't start right away, you may not have any at all. With you, I didn't even realize I was expecting for almost two months " Anne told her truthfully. Then again Gilbert had been adamant about not having any more children after Shirley. She had been a little worried over his response to the news.

Having a father who was a doctor was not as fun as it seemed. It was embarrassing at times when you had inquiries of female nature. Though usually, he would refer them to the midwife or a local nurse. Her father had a strange relationship with the midwives on the island. While most doctors tried to drive them away. Her father always welcomes their knowledge. If he could save a life with their help if he could help a young woman feel more comfortable why wouldn't he? He learned to work with them, then against them over the years. In return, they would call upon him for second opinions or in emergencies.
It was after dinner when they were driving home they stopped and walked down to the lighthouse. Breathing in the salty air of the shoreline by the lighthouse she sighed as she leaned into Ken.

She really did miss that place, but knowing that she knew that Ken most also misses his family back in Toronto. She was selfish in a way for wanting to stay here forever.

"Ken?" Rilla spoke out loud as she starred out at the ocean.

"Yes, dearest?" Ken asked it was only the second time he managed to come to this place.

Each time was easier on him, though it still gave him the chills.

"I'm late," Rilla exhaled.

"What do you mean?" Ken asked confused. "Late for what?"

"There's a chance one of the nights back in Toronto, that you knocked my diaphragm out of place." Rilla gave him a look if you know what I mean.

She felt him straighten up, the information going through his mind.

"We've been careful and find all this time?" He asked carefully. It made him seem like he was trying to judge how she felt more than anything.

"I know, I don't think I am, but nothing is full proof," Rilla sighed. "I feel fine. I don't feel any different, but it is a possibility."

Ken nodded. "Whatever happens, we will make it work. Let's just go home and get some rest? I am sure someone will want to do everything tomorrow?"

Rilla nodded. She was excited to see Jimmy. She wanted to see him but at the same time, it was like pouring salt into a wound he never wanted to close.

Rilla was nervous as she walked up to the gate towards the small farmhouse. She was barely halfway when she heard the familiar laughter.

"Willa! You're here!" His voice shrieked as his legs ran towards her. Tackling her legs as he embraced her. When did he get so tall?

"Hello, Jimmy," Rilla crouched down to hug him. To breathe in the scent of his hair, he still smelled like what she remembered. "I am here," she murmured as she heard Ken approach behind them holding a colour paper bag.

"Did you get me presents?" Jimmy asked bouncing on his heels.

"Well, is it not your birthday soon is it not?" Rilla smiled. "I thought birthday's come with presents?" She scooped him up. He was heavier than she thought, but he was older of course, but it still caught her by surprise.

"Rilla," Adeline smiled as they approached the small veranda. She wrapped her one arm around Rilla's shoulder. Embracing the woman who was only a few years younger than herself. Her other still resting on her large stomach. "I have tea on, and lunch will be ready whenever you wish it."
"Just follow your usual schedule, I don't want to starve this cookie monster." Rilla laughed as she tickled the boy's side.

"He usually eats around noon," Adeline responded before she turned toward Ken. "It's nice to see you again. Jim is around back in the barn, he's been trying to get the tractor to work."

Rilla looked towards Ken and nodded. "I'll go see if he needs any help, it was nice of you to have us today." Ken retorted as he places the bag he was holding in an empty chair and rolled up his sleeves.

"Can I open it now?" Little Jims asked as he squirmed out of Rilla's grasp and over to the bright bag.

"If you must," Rilla laughed as he attacked the tissue paper. Watching pull out the rectangular box she had bought back in Toronto. She tried to be conscious of the price of the gift. Not wanting to make his real family awkward at an extravagant gift.

"It's a train set!" He shrieked.

"What do you say Jimmy?" his stepmother reminded him gently.

"Thank you, Willa!" He beamed up at her. It amused her that he still said her name the same way he always had.

Lunch was forgotten about as they sat on the veranda playing with the train set he had created out of the tracks. Sitting in her lap, he played nonstop for almost two hours before he had to be bribed to eat. Even then he crawled into her lap at the table, something he would have done two and a half years ago. His train still clutched in his hand as he ate his sandwich. She absentmindedly combed her finger through his hair, fluffy the curls each time.

More than once she heard the click of the camera that Ken had brought with him. It wasn't until the young boy had fallen asleep, that Jim Anderson got up and went over to a tin that sat in a cupboard.

"I talked to your father a few weeks ago when I ran into him. I have been wanting to repay your family kindness for taking in my boy. He, in turn, told me that it was all you and that if I should still feel the need that it belongs to you." He passed along an envelope. "It's not nearly enough, but I can only imagine just what you went spent when he was a baby."

"I don't need-," Rilla shook her head not even looking inside the envelope. "I never took care of him because I expected any sort of repayment." She choked on her words.

"I know, but I need to repay you in some way and this is the only way I can. I am sure that fancy school you go to costs a fair penny." Mr. Anderson countered back.

"I know, but I need to repay you in some way and this is the only way I can. I am sure that fancy school you go to costs a fair penny." Mr. Anderson countered back.

"Then put it in the bank and save it for Little Jimmy," Rilla refused once more. "I have more then what I need to finish school," Rilla explained. "You're allowing us to see him. Writing about his accomplishments, it is enough. Knowing that he's happy," Rilla struggled to remain calm.

It was Adeline who quickly changed the subject. Asking if Rilla wanted to take the young boy out for a walk on the shoreline who was just waking up from his small nap. Something his adoptive mother could not do being so close to her own due date.
Anne wasn't expecting Ken to be knocking on her front door, but even so, she beckons him in. He had the same question look on his face that his mother had when something was bothering him.

"How did the visit go?" Anne asked as she looked around for her daughter.

"She's resting at home, I told her I had to run out," Ken explain as he stuffed his hands in his pocket. "I'm just going to cut right to the chase, Rilla's relationship with Jimmy. How did she react when she had to let him go?"

"She was sad of course, she cried most of the night," Anne said after a moment. "Then she seemed to just carry on."

"I don't mean to rude, Mrs. Blythe but I need to be frank. Did anyone ever consider that giving up the child would be emotionally traumatizing her? Actually not even her, but the little boy as well? She was the only parent he ever knew and he was just taken away from her? How does a four-year-old comprehend that his father coming back? That he now had to live with him in a strange house? Apparently, he cried for days wanting Rilla, because despite the photos of his father. He was handed over to a stranger and expected to just adjust?" Ken spat out quickly.

Anne stared at him, not taking his harshness with insult. "It wasn't our choice, Ken. I tried to argue that there should be an adjustment period. But legally he belonged with his father and there was nothing we could do." Anne said slowly but sternly.

"Okay I get that, but still doesn't excuse the fact that it was treated like it meant nothing to her? That no one even considered the impact it could have on her life? I'm not even sure she can even admit it to herself. I read her letters back then, she loved the little boy and would walk the ends of the earth for him. Yet no one thought to talk to her about it? She lost her brother, essentially her child. You could even say her adolescence because of that damn war. Yet no one once considered that her brave face is nothing more than a broken heart?" Ken rambled on trying to make sense of his own wife.

"Ken, you should know as well as anyone that Rilla isn't one to open up easily. Unless you directly ask for the answers you seek. You will never know what she thinks or what is going on in her mind. I didn't know for almost two years that you two were an item because she never said a word about it to anyone! And if she did, those secrets were taken to the grave with him." Anne reminded him that Walter had always been Rilla confident. "Unless she wants to talk, her mind is closed off to others. She was always that way and she hides it well."

"Then why did you allow them to act like that did at Christmas?" Ken countered. "Allowing them to constantly have the baby pushed at her? Making fun of her? It was the first time I put the whole thing together. Just how much it hurt Rilla to give him up as she did and why she is so wary of children."

Anne gave him a stern motherly look. "I scolded Di privately just so you know. I scolded them all privately for their teasing." Anne explained. "When did you ever see me scold a person in front of others? Did I ever scold you as a little boy when others were present?" Anne reminded him. "How is she doing?" Anne asked hesitantly, concerned about her daughter.

"Emotionally worn out," Ken sighed. "Mr. Anderson tried to repay Rilla for taking in Jimmy when she did. She refused outright, but she was more insulted than anything. Told him to save it for Jimmy to go to school when he was older." Ken explained before he went silent for a moment. "I'm more worried over the fact that she thinks she's pregnant and yet doesn't even seem phased by it. I
would have expected her to be frightened, angry, anything but how calm she is acting about it."

"She's not calm," Anne replied after a moment. "I don't think she knows what to feel or do. Though truthfully from what she told me, I don't think she is." Anne told him honestly. She knew Ken wanted children and didn't want to truly get his hopes up. "Women's bodies go through changes, stress can make things chaotic and out of order. Her letters weren't exactly reading happy or exciting when you were in Toronto. She didn't say much but I gathered she didn't quite have a good time as expected?"

"The younger generations of Toronto society is not quite what she is used to," Ken admitted after a moment. Even he saw just how much he had changed over the years from leaving college. It was one of the reason that he didn't say argue when Rilla told him no more. If anything it helped him not smoke every five minutes. It had been more difficult than he wanted to admit to not drink his drink. "But she seemed to have found a friend in a young woman she met at the library one day," Ken added. "They spent the majority of the last three weeks together window shopping or we all went down to the lake."

Anne nodded. "She was always my odd duck," she said after a moment. "She always made friends with older girls and teachers than girls who own age."

Ken nodded and looked over at the clock. "I should get back to her."

"I rather you be rude, then not be. It only shows how much you love her," Anne waved him off. "Though don't make a habit of it, I don't wish to write your mother about you not respecting your elders." She smiled playfully.

Ken found Rilla sitting in the window when he got home. He dropped a kiss on the top of her head.

"How are you feeling?" He asked as he set down the bag of groceries.

"All right," Rilla shrugged. "Drained I suppose but I'll be all right with a good nights sleep. I don't think Nan will forgive me if I show up to her wedding looking like I haven't slept in three days."

"I am sure you will look beautiful either way," Ken smiled softly as he tilted her face up and lightly kissed her. "Are you hungry?"

Rilla nodded. She followed him towards the kitchen as they set out making a simple dinner.

How the tables have turned with them.

Once it was she who was the strong stable one. But even the strongest buildings and walls have tumbled down. Titanic that was named unsinkable had sunk. She had spent so long looking after others, looking after him. Never allowing herself to feel anything more than a day.

Keeping things bottled inside until it started to trickle out. Now Ken found himself being the one who was watching his loved one carefully.

They were a beautiful mess, broken from a multitude of things.

Well, there you have it.
I hope everyone is still enjoying these. I hope I am not being overly cruel to you guys, as much as I enjoy writing fluff there is still many things I have in my head that need to be sorted. Even if it means flipping thing upside down for them.

As always, I look forward to your thoughts and ponderings.

Tina
Well OZ finally arrived, and I finally got this chapter finished after two weeks of writing.

Thank you for all the reviews and follows. I really do appreciate them, and love to hear your thoughts.

Chapter 13

Sometimes you just learn to live with the heartache. You decide that it's easier to bottle everything up, to push it down rather than to work it out. You hide it from your mind for so long you almost forget what you're hiding from the world. Then one day it slowly starts to build until a crack begins to appear, and then another. Slowly a small trickle becomes a tidal wave rushing through you.

Rilla tucked the final curl in before she turned towards her sister who was already dressed in her dress. "Are you ready for this?" She asked Nan. Di had run downstairs to get something leaving them alone.

"I was ready six months ago," Nan smiled. Rilla looked over her sister, she was a beautiful bride, in her white dress with hints of lace and tulle. "No, I am done waiting," Nan shook her head with a large smile that couldn't be wiped off her face. "Our house is ready, my contract is over with and I can finally be alone with the love of my life," Nan spoke dreamily.

"I'm rather worried that you haven't been alone with him yet," Rilla teased her.

"You know what I meant!" Nan, smacked her with her dainty fan while laughing.

"Oh, so you just can't wait to get him into bed?" Rilla raised an eyebrow. "I hope he doesn't snore."

"Oh hush you, not everyone is having secret midnight rendezvous with their beaus." Her sister retorted.

"How do you even know about those?" Rilla jaw dropped slightly.

"Rilla I have friends in Kingsport, we all have friends in Kingsport." Nan gave her a look, "Did you really think it would be kept a secret?" Rilla blushed and hid her face by looking out the window.

"We only ever slept," Rilla objected. "Well, mostly," she slyly smirked. "But I was never that sort of girl." She stressed. "Though don't be nervous, I am sure everything will be wonderful." She said quietly as she heard Di's voice coming up the stairs.

Nan's wedding was an elegant mix of who she was. Feminine, romantic, not over the top, yet still breathtaking. A small contrast to Rilla's own wedding which was intimate with a touch whimsical and shiny things.

Nan was elegant, beautiful everything a bride should be. All eyes on her as she entered the Church on their father's arm. His second time walking a daughter down the aisle, Di stood as the maid of honour. Sniffling as each step her twin took, it was like the end of an Era for the two of them. Nan swore nothing would change, but she knew it would whether they wanted it to change or not.

Rilla looked over to Ken who standing next to Shirley who had a pretty blonde standing beside him. Apparently, his lady decided to come after all? What was her name again?
Lilian?

Jem, Faith and little Cecelia stood together all in a pew together. Faith bouncing slightly to keep the young child who was dressed up in lace from making a fuss. Carl was standing up next to Jerry, while Una had come with a young man whom she was currently dating for the past year. It had taken her much longer than Rilla thought for her to move from Walters death. Like she had been waiting for him to show up like it all had been a mistake, a dream. Una had distanced herself from the Blythes of the years, while she and Rilla got along all right. It was never quite the same since the end of the war.

Still as the reception that was held out on the lawn in the backyard of Ingleside that was covered in tents. Rilla made the smiled tiredly after the 100th hello of the day.

She sank down in a chair at the family table.

"I'm Rilla," she introduced herself to the blond she saw earlier on Shirley's arm.

"Lilian," She smiled back shyly. "You're the younger sister?" She asked hesitantly with a look of concentration on her face.

"I am," Rilla nodded. "My husband is over by the food," she waved toward the table where Shirley and Ken were making plates of food at. "You have been quite a mystery to us. We were beginning to think that Shirley made you up." Rilla told her honestly.

"No, it's just been a slow process of getting to a point where we could be together." Lilian flushed. Rilla raised an eyebrow but nodded. Such an odd thing to say. She seemed out of sorts as she looked around the room. Only looking relieved when Shirley had come back with two plates of food.

It was strange to see Shirley so attentive.

"I see you have met my little sister," Shirley noted as he placed a plate down in front of Lilian. Rilla made a face at the little part of his sentence. He just laughed and ignored her.

Lilian nodded her head, still looking out of place. Like she was unsure if she should truly be at this family event. Looking to Shirley apprehensively who gently rubbed her shoulder. Something the Rilla noticed instantly. It was strange to see Shirley be so open with his emotions.

"We're a rowdy crowd, but we don't bite," Rilla said trying to break the ice, oh where was Ken when she needs him. He could talk to anyone and make them feel comfortable.

"Shirley told me, that you've known the Merediths for many years?" Lilian spoke after a moment.

"Oh yes, Jem and Faith are married, and now Nan and Jerry. Once upon a time Carl and I were really good friends growing up. To the point, we had to make the point of swearing to never marry each other." Rilla laughed.

"You never mention that before," Ken's voice came up behind her.

"We were eleven," Rilla shrugged. "By the time I was thirteen the only thing on my mind was you most of the time." She admitted as squeeze his thigh when he sat down next to her.

"How long have you been married?" Lilian asked politely.

"Our first anniversary is next week," Rilla smiled brightly over towards Ken. "How long have you
"We met last fall," Shirley spoke for Lilian. "She lived in the flat across the street from me in Montreal for a while."

"She doesn't now?" Rilla asked rather confused.

"No, I ended up having to move," Lilian said quietly.

"Look, I plan on to explain everything later on," Shirley said after a moment as he looked at Lilian who nodded her head. "Dad knows a little of the story, and has been helping us, but it's not a story for a wedding. But now I wish to claim a dance," Shirley extended his hand to his lady who gladly took it.

Rilla turned to Ken with a raised eyebrow. "Why do I have a feeling that it's going to be a heck of a story? Maybe she's a widow?"

"Who knows? Maybe she's a divorcee? But by the look of Shirley adoration and sealed lips over the past year. It must be something worth keeping quiet," Ken responded. "All I know all of you Blythes of fickle creatures, but once you know what you want. You go after it." Ken kissed her nose. "I can't believe that it's almost been a year already," he whispered. He said the same thing during Persis's wedding. "I know things are all mixed up at the moment, but we will figure everything out."

Rilla could only nod. She was planning on finally talking to her father about the possibly being pregnant.

Rilla sat on the table in her father's office, he peered over his reading glasses. She had waited for her sister to leave on her honeymoon. Only then she could bravely knock on her father's office door. It was him or wait until they went to Kingsport. She had found out the local midwife had travelled for her own grandchild's impending birth.

She fidgeted for a moment not looking at him in the eye.

"Any sickness?" He asked going through a list.

"Not really," Rilla shook her head.

"Any swollen, tender areas? Weight gain?" He asked casually checking things off as he went. "Heartburn?"

"Depends on the day or week," Rilla admitted. "Though that is also rather normal for me, I haven't gained any weight. Actually, I'm pretty sure I lost a few pounds walking all over Toronto. Despite the amount of cake I ate. Which only led to indigestion, really," Rilla sighed as she shoulders slump forward.

"When was your last cycle?" Her Father finally asked. She opened the small pocket calendar that she had taken from her purse earlier. Flipping through it until she found the month in question.

"June 8th," she muttered, it was now July 20th. "My cycle is longer than average. Which is why I am only here now," Rilla sighed quietly still rather red in the face.

"Well, drop to your drawers," Gilbert stated like he would any other patient.
"What?" Rilla asked shocked. She hadn't considered this impromptu visit when she dressed this morning.

"I can't make a diagnosis in your dress," Gilbert told her matter of factly. Still, she looked at him with a look of horror on her face. "Really Rilla, I changed your diaper. Not to mention this is a daily occurrence in my profession. Leave your slip on if you must," Gilbert offered her.

Rilla still stared at him. "I'm just going to go quickly borrow something from Di or mum," Rilla shook her head.

"Seriously Rilla, I've seen every sort of undergarment known to man. I don't pay enough attention to care or even take notice since my first year of medical school." Gilbert tried to reassure her. How many times has the joke been made about the women of glen dressing up for him for doctor visits? In the end, he passed her a small blanket that looked like Jem had left in the room from little Cecelia.

"Why didn't I think about my day when dressing this morning," Rilla groaned to herself. Her pretty lacy things were for own amusement as much as Kens. It also meant she never wanted her father to see them or actually anyone in her family at the end of the day. She shrugged off her dress as his back was turned. Quickly pulled the blanket over her lace portion of her camisole combination. At least her pants were opaque in the important places.

It only took him a moment. As he listened to her pulse and did the usual check up things in the beginning. When he made her lie back, a made quick work pressing into the lower stomach. He said nothing of consequence as he turned back to his desk telling her she could put on her dress once more.

She sat there for a moment as he wrote things down.

"Well, your mother is right, you're not pregnant. At least it seems like you aren't, there is no way to truly test such a thing. Though I have read some interesting studies lately coming from Europe." Gilbert told her. "Although from my own diagnosis I say that you aren't. Which only leads me into the question of what happened?"

"I don't know," Rilla sighed. "I just remember trying to get Ken's attention one night," She said quietly. "Apparently the drinks went more to my head than I assumed."

"Let me get this straight, you were drinking and tried to," Gilbert swallowed. "Be intimate with your husband and him…?" Gilbert asked carefully. His face void of any reaction, it was really none of his business.

"Oh goodness no, no! He refused and put me to bed and I believe he sat in a chair until he knew I was actually asleep." Rilla rushed in to clarify. "We had the house to ourselves the next morning. Later that afternoon I realized that it hadn't been in correctly."

"Rilla, why we were you evening drinking in the first place. For someone so against it when it was Ken. Was Ken drinking?" Gilbert asked her plainly.

"No, it was just me," Rilla sighed. "I was never against alcohol, per-say. I was against how he used alcohol. There is a difference." Rilla countered.

"Okay, but it still illegal which makes your point invalid." Gilbert reminded her. "Don't you think it was a little hypocritical of you to drink to such excess when you are so against Ken drinking?" Gilbert looked her in the eyes that resembled his in these moments.
"Trust me, I know how hypocritical it was, but I was just trying to I don't know fit in? Not seem like such a simple island girl next to everyone?" Rilla spoke after a moment still unsure of why she did it. "It's safe to say, I'm not proud of myself in those moments and look where it got me?"

"Rilla, what would you have done if you were?" Gilbert looked at her. "You seem all to rather calm for someone who barely tolerated her own niece at Christmas?"

"What could I do either way?" Rilla shrugged. "I either was having a baby or not having a baby? I would just have adapted if I was. It would be no different than when you told me that Jimmy was my responsibility all those years ago. Except for this time, I would know what to do." Rilla shrugged.

"It would be very different," Gilbert objected. "Babies, cost a fair amount of money, something you never worried about with Jimmy."

"Well, that isn't much of an issue either." Rilla crossed her arms trying to not roll her eyes. "I also wouldn't have to worry about ever having to give them up. I wouldn't have to hear them scream my name all the way down the driveway as strangers took him away." Rilla spat out harshly. She stopped herself she had tried to wipe that memory.

"Rilla?" Gilbert cautiously walking from his chair towards her. Laying a hand over her shoulder.

"I have to go," Rilla jumped up. Trying to not let the tears fall as she gathered her bag and jacket and rushed for the door. Only her father got there before her. Her fists pounded weakly against his chest as she let out a howl.

"I'm sorry, I am so sorry," Gilbert chanted, and he was. He was sorry for never noticing or considering the impact it had on her life. How could someone not become attached, even he missed the young boy? Finding the house quiet after the little boy left with his father. "Oh my lily of-the-field, I am so sorry."

Di who had just come down the stairs was passing the office stopped at the commotion. "What in the world?" Gilbert just looked over at his other daughter with a silent plea of help.

"Why did you make me give him up like that," Rilla sobbed, asking the question that had been on her mind for over two years. Gilbert looked at Di who quickly entered nurse mode. They led Rilla back over to the chaise and sat with her as she cried her heart out. Saying words that made no sense as she lisped and hiccuped.

"Come on," her sister spoke gently. "Let's go have some tea and cookies," she coaxed her sister like the many patients she helped during the war.

She made quick work of the kettle after she settled the obviously shaken Rilla. She pushed a plate of monkey cookies that Susan had left out. She watched her sister curl up, sitting in the strangest way with her knees to her chest. She made a quick grab and nibbled on the cookie she took.

"I'm sorry about what I said over Christmas," Di said after a long silence. "I never considered, I should have thought." She smiled weakly.

"No one thought," Rilla said after a moment. "No one thought about the two people actually in the equation. Being ripped apart like neither of them meant anything to each other."

Di just nodded. She had been so absorbed in her own world back then. She had never given it a second thought when she came home to find the little boy gone. "I'm sorry that it happened the way it did," she added sympathetically. "I'm sure it felt much worse than what it felt like seeing
Nan leave on her honeymoon, but its the only thing I can compare it to." She tried to understand her sister's emotions. Rilla nodded it was the twin thing.

I spent her whole life with her twin, now Nan was married. If Di didn't sound so sincere. She would have thought that Di was trying to tell her that her own situation was worse than her own.

"It's a horriblith feeling," Rilla lisped after a short pause. She wasn't sure if she was ready to face such things about her own life just yet.

Di nodded, stopping for a moment. "I was always found it endearing that you for took care of Little Jims. We were all worried for a while but you were so determined. Like suddenly you were knee deep like you were doing it all your life." She said quietly. "I never thought of the repercussions when his father came back. I assumed it turned you into like every other woman when it comes to babies."

Rilla gave her a sad smile. "I'm just indifferent I would be okay if it never happened, but I know Ken wants them even if he says he's okay without them." She admitted. She paused for a moment as she turned her head as she heard the front door swing open. Not a moment later was there the familiar sound of Ken's shoes on the hardwood floor. He was breathless as if he ran the entire way from the house of dreams. His head was bare with his hair flopping around his forehead as he forgot his hat.

She looked at him sheepishly, with tear stains still on her face. Her eyes still showing him how exhausted she was. He spoke quietly crouched in front of her before he moved to a chair.

It was over an hour before the Dr came out of his office. Holding a piece of paper in his hands and placing it in front of her. "Call them, soon as you can," he said gently. "I wish I could help you, but this is beyond anything I have ever learned about." He told her truthfully. Broken bones, cuts and bruises he could fix. Broken hearts and minds, even in his own children were something he could never truly fix.

Rilla stared at the address and number of a Dr. S White of Kingsport. She knew the name, she had seen and heard the doctor speak to her class. She placed it in her bag and nodded to her father who promptly kissed the crown on her head.

Rilla laid in the bed that night, still feeling the waves of emotions that had been kept so hidden from the others. She clung to Ken in the same way he used to do, back when his nightmares were still a nightly occurrence.

"Why don't you sing more?" He asked out of the blue when she swore he had been sleeping.

"What do you mean?" Fatigued laced confusion in her voice.

"I heard you singing to Jimmy," Ken explained. "For someone who often spoke about not having a great voice. You truly do Rilla, it's sweet like a bird in the sky."

"I did a concert once during the war," Rilla spoke after a moment as she drew out lazy eights on his bare chest. "Afterwards the girls seemed to never ask me again. I just assumed I wasn't really good."

"Well, you are," Ken confirmed as he pulled her close. His mind was more at ease knowing she wasn't pregnant. Still, she seemed so fragile to him with everything that had happened.

When a small trickle turned into a tidal wave and that tidal wave only led that way for healing. We
can't run from your emotions, as they are ever present. Present like the sun and moon each day with living.

It's only when you have a choice to ride that wave and swim to the shore. Stronger and wiser than before, or sink in the ocean that is your own misery.

I was rereading parts of Rilla Of Ingleside, and it's mentioned more than once Rilla singing to Little Jims or around the house. So I am grasping that small tidbit of skill for her, but also a way for Ken to see something he didn't know about Rilla either.

I am having a bit of fun, fleshing out Shirley as well, and his lady Lilian who you will see more of in the upcoming chapters.

As always, leave me your thoughts if you have the time. They really are appreciated and encouraging to the writing process.

Tina
Chapter 14

I want to thank everyone for your comments, follows and favourites. They really do brighten my day!

The aftermath of each storm reveals many things. It's can show you the good and bad, your strengths and your weaknesses. It's the tranquillity of knowing just where you stand. It's each step you take is forging a new pathway. It's the road that will bring you to the next fork in your life.

Rilla sat on the shore, her hair blowing as she faced the ocean. "I thought I would find you here," Shirley spoke as he sat down beside her.

"Where's Lilian?" Rilla asked surprised to see him alone.

"Where's Ken?" Shirley repeated her question towards her.

"Working," Rilla answered rather put out. "We do spend time apart believe it or not."

"I know," Shirley smirked. "She at Ingleside, baking with Mother Susan," Shirley said after a moment.

"What is with the two of you?" Rilla asked him curiously.

"I met Lilian last year, she was in a difficult situation and I have been helping her get out of it," Shirley explained. "She doesn't like talking about it, but we can't hide it forever."

"You're talking nonsense," Rilla gave him a look.

"Lilian's technically married," Shirley said after a moment. "She's separated from her husband and has been trying to obtain a divorce."

"A divorce?" Rilla looked at his mouth gaping, a touch of judgement in her voice. "Why would you attach yourself?"

"Don't you dare start judging us," Shirley warned her. "Not after your own lapse of judgements."

"That is entirely different," Rilla objected. "I don't understand why everyone keeps bringing up my choices into conversations." She huffed at the injustice.

"Because those who judge will be judged." Shirley quoted. "Plus we all know how you riled up you get about things." He smirked.

"Really, all of you are horrible." Rilla crossed her arms. "So what happened?" She said after a moment.

"The first time I met her, she was covered in bruises. The second time she had a split lip, the third time I had taken her to the hospital with a broken arm. "Shirley explained quietly. "The fourth time I made her talk to the police. That time I brought to the hospital when I found her in a pool of her own blood on my kitchen floor. I had given her a key in case of emergencies, I hoped she wouldn't need it."

"Shirley," Rilla let out her breath. "I couldn't imagine."
"No, you couldn't, then again until I saw it with my own two eyes. Neither did I." Shirley admitted. "I never once saw Dad raise a hand to mother. I thought it was just an old myth that men hit their wives." He sighed. Raking a hand through his curls, making them frizz and stand up. "It's not even the worse thing he had done, the worst part is they don't even consider it a crime."

Rilla gave him a puzzled look before she realized what he had meant. "He forced her?" she whispered looking down at her hands. "How could anyone?" She shivered. "How could anyone do such a thing?" She repeated.

"He's a despicable bastard?" Shirley spat out.

"I just don't understand though?—" Rilla hesitated. "After everything, she's been through, you and her?"

"She's see's the difference in temperaments. Of course, there are days when I can barely touch her hand. Somehow though, she still trusts me enough try." Shirley spoke quietly. "It's not that much different with you and Ken after the war."

"What did you mean when you said it wasn't a crime?" Rilla asked quietly still rather confused by his statement.

"According to the law, it's not assault if you are legally married to the person." Shirley bent forward and pick up a stone. "It's only assault when you not legally bound." He said with disgust as he threw the stone towards the ocean.

"How is that even possible?" Rilla squeaked.

"It just is," Shirley sighed.

"You love her though?" Rilla asked him looking down at

"I do," Shirley Confirmed. "You and Ken? I don't ever have to worry about you?" He asked shyly. Ken may have been their childhood friend, but he still needed to make sure.

"I think if you have to worry about anyone flying into a rage, it would be me," Rilla admitted frowning. "Thankfully my aim has never improved." She looked at him as he snorted lightly while shaking his head. It wasn't a laughing matter to him, but remembering his sisters lack sporting skill made him smile.

"Are you coming over for dinner?" Shirley asked after a long pause as he stood up.

"That is the plan," Rilla nodded joining him. "Susan beats both Ken's and my cooking any day. When do you leave for Montreal?"

"We go back this weekend," Shirley replied.

"Where does Lillian lives?" Rilla asked as they walked a slow pace towards the summer house.

"With me," Shirley said quietly after a moment. "Well, with my landlady downstairs. We need to appear proper, even when it would the easiest way to obtain a divorce would not be. My landlady took pity on her. She does housework for Mrs. Lalonde and does light sewing for some of the neighbours."

Rilla nodded ."She speaks English rather well, I can hear the French accent," she explained.
"She is fluent in both, although she prefers conversing in French," Shirley nodded. "It helps, while Montreal is much more accepting of English compared to Quebec City. Speaking French is much easier for day to day life. I have improved a lot over the past ten months."

"Do you find it strange living in the house that Mom and Dad spent their early marriage in?" Shirley asked as they walked up to the drive.

"I never think of it," Rilla spoke honestly. "I don't think Ken does either, Leslie and Owen lived here as well for a few weeks when they got married. The whole house is filled with memories, lovely loving memories."

"Thanks for the mental images," Shirley crinkled his brow.

"You asked," Rilla laughed. "While no one enjoys thinking certain thoughts. We all know there is beauty in them. None of us would be here if not." She ended quietly.

"It seems unreal how much we have all grown," Shirley nodded. "Every time we gather together, I see you older and older. You spent so many years wearing a brave face, you were brave like the rest of us."

"No, I wasn't," Rilla shook her head. "Nor did I escape the war with my own scars." She folded her arms around her. "I just don't know how to fix them, and no. Having a baby will not automatically fix them." She gave him a look. "It's complicated and for someone interested in psychology. It's not easy to admit that you have no clue how to fix your own issues."

"I wasn't going to even say anything," Shirley held up his hands in defeat. "I'm proud of you either way. I'm not sure if I ever told you that."

"You didn't, but thank you," Rilla said quietly her eyes still tired. "You're a good man Shirley, don't ever change."

It had been a rather quiet few days as Rilla cuddled closely to the warm body behind her. The night turned cool, a welcomed break from the humid heat. They were in a hazy half sleep when there was a heavy banging sound that woke them up out of their daze. They gave each other puzzled looks as Ken reached for his pants telling Rilla to stay behind him.

The crept down the stairs, only to see the face of a panicked Mr. Anderson.

"They have to take Adeline to Charlottetown—I need someone to watch Jimmy," he blurted. "We thought we had more time, our neighbours are out of town, please." He added in his panic.

"Of course," Rilla exclaimed.

"I think your brother is going to drop him off. Your father is waiting for the ambulance. I need to get going." James Anderson nodded as quickly remounted his horse.

The boy was still rambling half asleep when Jem dropped off the blonde child. Ken silently placed on the sofa as they were quietly filled them into the situation. It was a preventive measure Jem reassured them. Adeline was showing symptoms of toxemia. They wanted to deliver the child before it progressed.

They watch Jem leave, as Ken gathered the boy in his arms and followed Rilla up the stairs. They placed him in the spare room, Ken watches Rilla kiss the boy's forehead. Quietly explain to the half-awakened boy that he was with them.
Ken had breakfast on the table for both of them when the made it down the stairs. Rilla had helped the boy get dressed and hair brushed.

"Willa is Dr. Blythe gonna fix my momma," Jimmy asked as he ate his porridge. It still felt strange hearing him call Adeline that. Even when she never once considered having him calling her anything besides her name.

"He will do his very best," Rilla said after a moment. She looked towards Ken who was sitting back in his chair just watching them. His hands wrapped around his coffee cup, like he was breathing in the aroma of the heavenly liquid. She had just gotten back to her cheerful self after a few quiet days, he really hoped this didn't set her back. The only good things that had come from such a week was the fact that Rilla had finally opened that Kotex box.

By evening as the little boy played with a box of toys that Ken found hidden away from his own childhood. They had spent the afternoon out by the shore, Rilla in her large hat and Toronto bathing suit. Ken had rolled up his pants and kicked around the football with the boy.

It was after an easy dinner of grilled cheese sandwiches when Jem rang and asked to speak to the young boy.

"I have been instructed to tell you, young man, that you have a baby sister. Are you ready such a task?" Jem said in a voice he used with children patients. He quickly passed the telephone to Mr. Anderson who spoke to his son.

"Really!" Jimmy bounced. "What's her name?"

"We don't know yet, do you have any ideas?" Mr. Anderson asked, not realizing that you should never ask a seven-year-old to name a sibling.

"Willow," Jimmy turned. He smiled toothily, at the redhead he could remember in his earliest memories. "Can we name her Willow?"

Rilla dropped her book, knowing very well what Jimmy has done.

Kingsport was bustling as they return, and unlike the island house. They had no one to air out the apartment. Instead, they spent the afternoon cleaning as the ice delivery arrived for them. Her mother and Susan had thankfully sent them with a basket. One with enough to make enough meals until they could make it to the grocers.

Rilla ran to the post office to collect any mail that hadn't been addressed to the island. She had various letters and one from Marianne already waiting for her. She smiled and placed that one on the table to read first. She flipped through the rest before frowning when she saw a letter from the Deans office.

Tearing it open it was nothing more than a request to see her at the earliest convenience.

"The school wants to see me," Rilla spoke rather puzzled.

"What about?" Ken walked up behind her, resting his chin on her shoulder as his hand wrapped around her waist. She leaned into him signing.

"No idea?" She replied. "Doesn't say why just to come when I able to before registration."

"Well, that doesn't give you much time," Ken looked towards the calendar. "Isn't that tomorrow?"
"It is," Rilla confirmed. "I guess I will leave early and go talk to them tomorrow."

"I have to stop by the office so I can walk you part way," Ken told her, kissing her neck. "You'll call that doctor?" He asked quietly. They hadn't truly spoken of it, the reality of it all they had barely tackled any issues all summer.

She could only nod her head after a long pause. "Can I ask you something?"

"Of course," Ken quickly answered her. "What Is it Rilla?"

"Were you disappointed?" Rilla asked quietly.

"Was I disappointed?" His voice was tinged with confusion as he turned her around.

"That I wasn't?" Rilla whispered.

"Were you?" Ken directed her question back towards her, keeping his hands firmly on her hips to remind her that he was there. "You don't breakdown over nothing Rilla. I get it, you're scared and never want to go through another situation like that. But I've been watching this unfold since Christmas. Yes, Christmas, Rilla, Christmas," Ken let out his own secret. "But babies, children. Ones that are ours, we never have to worry about those things."

Rilla sat in the Deans office of Redmond when she announced herself to the receptionist. She nodded and then spent the next five minutes on the telephone in a low voice. She waited for almost ten minutes before the phone rang.

"You may go in now," The older woman told her as she hung up the phone.

Rilla nodded and gathered her purse and walked through the large wooden door. Three men were in the office. The Dean, the head of applied sciences, and one of her professors from her psychology courses.

"Miss Blythe, thank you for coming in, we have been waiting for you to arrive back in Kingsport."

The Dean spoke up. "I hope your holidays went well?"

"They were adequate," Rilla answered after a moment. "I am confused though about this meeting?"

"Well, Miss Blythe, we landed on something peculiar." He nudged over what appeared to be an old Toronto Star. "Or should we congratulate you Mrs. Ford on your first anniversary if the paper is correct?"

Rilla went pale for a moment.

"I don't see why my marital status is any sort of issue to the school?" Rilla retorted stiffly

"So you didn't deliberately hide your marriage?" The Dean pressed her.

"I never informed the school, because it made no difference to my attendance," Rilla stated. "There is no law against my coming to college. My husband obviously knows and allows me to attend."

"Yes, but we have no such proof of that," The Dean spoke carefully. "Not to mention the social life you were living in Toronto." He made reference to the photo. "It does not look well for our school."

"Are you serious?" Rilla looked at him, her mouth gaping as if he had two heads. "I went to the theatre, with my husband. In a dress that was modest compared to the others that I saw there.
Professor Burke, have I ever been anything but a model student?" She turned to the head of her program.

"You are top of your class naturally," Professor Burke spoke up. "Surely we can cut Mrs. Ford some slack. Her classmates tease the girls often enough. I can understand why she would keep such news to herself." Rilla sighed. At least it seemed like she had one person on her side.

"Your academic reputation may be pristine but we uphold our students too also to have good morals." The Dean countered. "This is your one warning Mrs. Ford, we hear or see anything from you—." Rilla knew that was code that they would be watching her waistline. In the end, they requested what she had always known. Proof of her marriage, and Ken's consent. She still wasn't sure how that managed to get the newspaper. She saw a large group of her classmates. Some of them waved the more awkward studious men as walked over to them. Mavis was with them who waved her hand hazardless towards her friend and pulled her off to the side.

"You're back!" She said gleefully. "How was the trip?" She pulled Rilla into a hug

"It was fine," Rilla hugged her back. "I just had a meeting with the Dean," Rilla spoke quietly. "Apparently the gig is up, I'm allowed to register, but they need Ken's written consent by the first day of classes."

"How did they even find out?" Mavis brow furrowed as she tried to find the link.

"I don't know, I suppose one could have been in Toronto when I was there?" Rilla shrugged. "I just have a feeling that it will be an interesting year of insults and inquiries. I wonder what they will come with first." Rilla shook her head.

"I'm sure it will be fine," Mavis tried to comfort her friend.

In the corner of her eye, she saw Una at her own program registration. "Excuse me for a moment," Rilla apologized and quickly crossed over the lawn.

"Una!" She waved enthusiastically.

"Rilla," Una smiled quietly. "Happy to be back?"

"Never," Rilla laughed. "You disappeared from the wedding, we never got the chance to talk much."

"Timothy wasn't feeling well," Una explained. "Actually, I was wondering if you wanted to meet up?" Una said quietly. "I was cleaning my old room at the manse and found some things I thought you may want back."

Rilla titled her head, she wasn't missing anything but agreed to meet up the next day at a cafe. She had a feeling she knew just what Una was finally letting go of. It was just another step of moving on, another step for a new future with another man. Walter had been incredibly thick when it came to the opposite sex. She wondered at times if he even had any interest at all in women.

"Of course, I'm free tomorrow afternoon?" Rilla offered. "We can go to that little cafe?"

Una nodded in agreement.

"You're wearing your wedding ring," Una noticed for the first time.
"Yes," Rilla sighed. "I am sure it will be a fun-filled year of every insult under the sun. Apparently, either one of my teachers was in Toronto, or some student from here was in Toronto. It's not the only photo of Ken and I in the papers either."

"I'm sorry," Una frowned, her long black hair shined in the sunlight as she nodded her slightly in a form of condolence.

Rilla shrugged. "It is what it is, what can I do?" Her head turned at the sound of her name. Her few nicer classmates calling her back so they could gather their books together.

"Go," Una smiled. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Rilla quickly hugged her and skipped back across the lawn.

Just as he said Ken came to the campus to pick Rilla up. Grasping his hand she pulled him toward a small group that was sitting around a picnic table. A couple of girls and some boys who were in different programs in their wing of Redmond.

"I have some news," Rilla said. "I just wanted everyone to hear it from me before word gets out." Rilla started as she looks at Ken who gave her a questioning look.

There was a loud eruption of questions. The girls wanted to see the ring, the men clapped Ken on the back. None of them would admit that they all had moments of fancy for their classmate. They knew and saw Ken time to time, but there was a large difference between being engaged and married.

They arrived him around 3'o'clock. Too early to start dinner so Ken went to work. He watched her paced for a moment mentally preparing herself. She read the name and number on the piece of paper more than twenty times before she went over to the telephone.

"Hello, central, 5420 please." Rilla spoke quietly into the receiver. "thank you," she added as she waited for her call to be connected.

"Dr. White's Office, how may I help you?" A woman answered.

"Hello, this is Mrs. Ford, I got your number as a referral from a Dr. Blythe in Glen St Mary," Rilla explained.

"Of course, let me look at the bookings. Do you have any day that works best for you?" She asked Rilla.

"Wednesday's?" Rilla said wearily. "Preferably in the afternoon? Yes, that is fine, thank you." Rilla hung up the receiver.

With each step you take, is another piece of the puzzle being filled. Even when you stumble and fall, when you kneel on the ground broken and confused. Something reminds you of what you trying to accomplish. Those first steps may never be easy, but they are the ones that you will remember for years to come.

They are the ones that allowed you to move on and grow. Because after every storm there is a rainbow that will shine.

To Guest- Rilla doesn't necessarily blame or resent her family when it comes to having to give up
Jims. She knew she had to, but nothing prepared her for the emotions that followed. She resents them for not caring enough to check in on her, how they assumed that she would be fine.

They allowed her to raise a child and then allowed the child to be taken away. Without any thought of emotion consequences for either of the duo is what I don't understand. Anne and Gilbert offer very little emotional support.

Rilla sees Little Jims whenever she can, but her life is much different. She doesn't live on the island, and she is married. But she also doesn't want to interrupt his own life, even when his parents encourage her to come around. They still exchange letters and Adeline most definitely asked Rilla questions in the early days.

Another big thing would be, how hard it would be for Rilla to just visit him regularly with all her emotional scars? It's her double-edged sword, she loves her time with him, but emotionally it only makes it worse for her.

I hope everyone has a good weekend, I had a rather dismal week but it's slowly picking up. It's a holiday weekend here so yay!

So please leave your comments about what you think so far.

I especially enjoyed writing Shirley and his own life in Montreal. Researching divorces and laws in the 1920s isn't exactly easy. I don't think there were any direct laws about spousal abuse really. I think Canada would have followed British Law as well, where it was once stated a man could beat his wife as long as he followed the rule of thumb. As well they didn't recognize rape or sexual assault in marriage. It wasn't well into the later part of the century, was rape criminalized.. allowing any man or woman to charge a spouse with it. Before that, You could only charge a man or person with rape only when the victim and accused were not married.

Divorce was still rare in the 1920s and often took private bills to get annulments or divorces and had to be proven. The easy way to petition would be for adultery on the man's part. Women had little to no options beside prove beastiality or impotency. It wouldn't be until 1925 when it become more easily obtainable for woman as they could use the same grounds of divorce men had.

I also managed to throw a little Una in there as well. I think we all know what she wants to give back to Rilla.

Tina
Chapter 15

Well, this took much longer than I wanted, but what can I say?

Thank you, everyone, for all the comments, follows and favs. They really do mean a lot to me. So thank you!

There is something about baby-steps. Those named for those first shaky hesitant steps that we make in our life. They never really stop, they are just replaced by another decision we make. Those first steps are monumental, they allow you to grow. They allow you to see how far you have come when you turn and look over your shoulder. Wondering just how you managed to come so far.

Rilla saw Una waiting for her at the cafe by way of the window. She rushed inside one hand holding her hat on her head. Another holding a large bag full of books from her trip to the bookshop.

"I am so sorry, the line was atrocious," She bent to kiss Una on the cheek. "You haven't been waiting long have you?"

"Not at all, I just order a pot of coffee for us," Una shook her head.

"Oh! Thank you!" Rilla sat down as she divested her light coat. She was wearing a bold tartan skirt with a cream coloured blouse. Her hair was pinned back in a hasty chignon and she had a dark stain on her lips. Una was slightly taken back at her friend's modern look.

"I am glad we got to do this," Rilla settled into her chair. "I feel like we barely see each other anymore. You're done this year as well?"

"Yes, last year I had to change my schedule. I have one more semester and I will graduate in the spring with everyone," Una explained. Household sciences were only a two-year course, it was more than just learning how to run a household. It was learning about nutrition, how to do basic repairs to household appliances.

"Are you excited?" Rilla asked sincerely.

"I am, Timothy is finishing as well this year. We have been talking about our future together." Una blushed. "We think we will settle in his home town, his father has a firm and he will work there."

Rilla nodded. "I am glad that you found someone Una," Rilla said quietly. "I know you had feelings for Walter, and I miss him greatly too. But I am glad you allowed yourself to move on."

"I suppose I woke up one day and realized that I couldn't mourn a ghost any longer. Everyone was pairing off, your Ken had come home. I saw everyone in love and realized one day that I could have that too." Una said after a quiet moment. "Then after out of the blue, I met this man who had the bluest eyes I have ever seen. We somehow saw each other again at one of the concerts and begin talking." Una filled in some of the blanks that Rilla never knew about. "I never thought I could be happy again, but he proved that wrong on many occasions."

"You deserve to be happy," Rilla smiled softly to her old friend. "Walter was a dunce when it came to the opposite sex," Rilla offered an excuse for Walter. Not wanting to tell her about the paper she had found one night in his room one night. Una didn't need to know about how Walter poems about her sister.
"I wanted to give these back to you," Una passed over a small stack of letters and a couple of photographs. "He spoke about you a fair bit when he did write. I thought you may like them. It wasn't fair of me back to then to ask you for his last letter." Una said quietly

"We were all hurting," Rilla tried to comfort her.

"It was still wrong of me," Una shook her head. "Though how are you doing?"

"I'm a mess," Rilla answered honestly. "But I am working on it."

"You did seem rather out of sorts during the wedding and afterwards," Una confirmed gently.

"Toronto was a whirlwind that wasn't the best of situations," Rilla answered honestly. "I also thought there might be a little Ford to be arriving soon," Rilla said quietly as Una's eyes widened.

"Turned out to be a false alarm, but I never want to have that talk with my father again."

"I could imagine, he delivered Cecelia though didn't he?" Una asked about her niece.

"He did, I believe Jem tried to help but ended up being into such a daze and panic to actually help any."

"Father was present for most of our births, but always had a nurse and another doctor when available. Though I can safely say that I will ban him from the room when my own time comes." Rilla told Una.

"So you will have children?" Una asked curiously.

Rilla just shrugged. "If it happens it happens."

"That's not much of an answer?" Una prodded her.

"I'm not considering it right now," Rilla phrased carefully. "Though I am sure Ken and I will speak of it once I finished school next year." She explained as she waved over a worker and asked for two butter tarts for their table.

"Well, I am glad you'll at least talk about it," Una told her honestly. "I saw you back then with Jims. You were amazing with him and I know from the grapevine just what it did to you. But don't deny yourself happiness because of your scared Rilla." Una urged her as she grasped the white hand of her friend.

"I'm working on it Una," Rilla spoke after a moment. "I can't promise anything, but I am trying."

The first day of classes was the usual sense of excitement and stress. It was their final year, many would continue on to achieve a BS, some would continue on to become doctors. Mavis was going to continue on. She like Rilla had grown up in a town that had no high school. Though she also had no beau at the moment and wanted to achieve something in her life.

Rilla was ready to be done with her schooling. Though the thought of completely settling down was frightening to her. Maybe she could get Ken to take her on an extended vacation?

She made her way to the large tables of the classroom, setting down her bag and carefully took off her hat. She took her usual seat next to Mavis who was already situated and ready for the mornings class.

"Morning," She spoke to the classmates who were already seated. Mavis smiled to her and raised an eyebrow at Rilla's rushed entrance.
"Morning," Her classmates responded. Some of them smiled at her the ones who knew her secret. The other ones just nodded politely towards her. Some of them had gotten pre-term hair cuts. Others seemed to be trying out new skinny moustaches. It seemed the old days of facial hair was gone completely. Even Ken shaved every morning and while going to the barber once a month to get his hair trimmed. She had a never-ending supply of doilies that sat on the back of his chair like any other housewife. Ones that soaked up the excess hair-oil men used to make their hair slick.

Rilla smiled and sat down, crossing her legs in the process. Sorting her notebooks and pencils out in front of her.

"Just a busy morning," she whispered to Mavis blushing slightly.

"Good morning everyone!" The loud voice of her professor called out as he stepped into the room. "I think after three years I can skip the roll call?" He asked them. "So let us get straight into the books? What did we learn about Freud's latest papers? Can anyone talk about a point or two about what Freud has written about?"

Rilla raised her hand before standing up. "According to Freud, we all have an ego that drives our desires and admirations. The leader also known as the Ego takes place through the process of idealization. Which can unbalance the narcissistic libido, when the libido is displaced to the object. Which is "loved because of its perfection which the individual has sought for his own ego'. Which are the words of Freud himself wrote"

"Very good, Mrs. Ford," the professor nodded his head. Walking along the large chalkboard, ignore the sudden gasps at the title. "It seems you have kept up with your reading."

"Spent plenty of hours on a train," Rilla answered simply as the teacher nodded. It was a lie, of course. She didn't read until after Nan's weddings.

"I know the translation is still being worked on, but I hope you all got what Sigmund Freud is writing about." He went back to his class.

Rilla peaked around the corner of the arm she rested on. She watched the men who always tormented her. They watched her and the ring that sat on her finger that played with a piece of auburn hair. Maybe they heard already and didn't believe it?

"Did we miss the announcement?" She heard one whisper to the other.

"Apparently, I always knew something was strange about their relationship." The other whispered back.

Rilla turned back to her professor. Trying to block out the whispers and when class finished she packed up her bags.

"Well, at least we know why she late in the mornings," One commented. "Someone has to get breakfast on the table,"

Rilla straightened her back and gave them a look. "Actually my husband does the cooking most of the time. I just don't like waking up in the morning." With that, she walked away from them catching up with Mavis who was waiting for her.

Her social and natural science classes of psychology, Biology, Sociology and Anthropology. They courses she took to better understand the varying differences of what made a person. Whether it is the culture they were raised in, nature vs nurture, how the body can impact life itself.
You needed all the facts before you could conclude anything meaningful.

It took a moment to walk into the nondescript white building that had the name plaque on it. She took a deep breath and turned the handle. Walking through the door she walked to the desk where a young woman was sitting.

"I have a 2 pm appointment," Rilla spoke up. "Rilla Ford," she gave her name realizing it would help the lady.

"Of course, I'll let her know that you are here." The lady smiled and slid out of her chair and disappeared through an archway. Within a moment she was back beckoning Rilla to follow her down the small hallway to back room.

"Please sit," A woman's voice spoke up as she moved away from her desk.

Rilla nodded, trying to hide her confusion as she set down her purse and sat primly on the chaise.

"Why don't we just start off simple?" Dr. White stated as she sat with her feet curled under her.

It took Rilla a fair moment to actually realize that the woman was the doctor.

"I thought—Dr. White who came to the school was a male." Rilla stumbled over her words.

"Yes, my brother does more of the presentations at Redmond, Samuel and Samantha. The S can throw some people off. I met your father on several occasions. Though what is said in this room will never leave this room." She reassured her patient. "Your name is Rilla? May I call you that?"

Rilla only nodded with a small smile. "Bertha Marilla actually, but my family has had a thing for nicknames."

"Most families do, and you go to Redmond?" Samantha White asked as she sat with her notebook.

"Yes, after a long break of no schooling" Rilla nodded explaining. "I left school when I was just turning fifteen," Rilla explained,

"You didn't go to high school?" The Dr probed, her face emotionless.

"The nearest high school was in Shrewsbury from what I recall. My parents usually had us kids attend Queens to gain a teaching license. I never wanted to teach. So I just stayed home. The Glen school only went up to grade nine. I suppose I could have stayed and continued on for another yet. Though everyone was leaving and I already read through all the books." Rilla explained.

"What made you go to college?"

"My husband, back when he came home from the war. We weren't married then and there was something broken in him that I wanted to fix." Rilla sat there for a moment. "Next thing I knew I was applying to go Redmond trying to make sense of what I wanted in my life," Rilla explained. "I had to take an exam to prove literacy and my level of learning. I am taking courses that are a prelude into other courses essentially. I am no way of getting a BA or any sort of degree at the moment."

"Yes, not many places have high schools. Colleges try to have a way for students to still further their education." The older woman nodded. "So those years at home, I gather it was during the war?" She asked Rilla.
Rilla nodded, this was the reason she was here after all.

"Yes, I just turned 15 when the war began. One by one I saw my brothers, friends and love leave," Rilla recalled as she looked down at her clasped hands. "I fell in love more than once during those years."

Ken only asked her once how her afternoon went when she came through the doorway. She smiled lightly as he kissed her lightly. She still smelled like lilacs, something she always talked about when they got a house. She wanted lilacs in the yard.

"It was fine," Rilla told him quietly. She wasn't ready to talk about her sessions just yet. They have barely broken the ice about her issues. She was still curious about the female doctor. She never gave much thought what to do with what she was learning beyond helping Ken. Yet here was a woman who actually was a psychologist?

"How was your class?" Ken asked knowing he wouldn't get much out of her from her answer.

"Good surprisingly," Rilla smiled. "Apparently they managed to mature over the summer. They only snickered twice when they heard my name change."

"Well, I can't say that it's not a striking name for you. I am rather enamoured that you took it." Ken grinned.

"Well, it's was between Ford and Arnold," Rilla teased him. "Ford seemed classier," she told him cheekily as she pulled at his tie. "Plus you were much better looking."

"Oh, so you choose me for my looks?" Ken feigned hurt as he grasped her bottom lifting her onto the table. "I didn't realize that you were that shallow Mrs. Ford?" He said smoothly. He grinned as he pushed her skirts high enough. High enough so he could feel the tops of her thighs that weren't covered by her stockings.

"Oh yes, because you entirely didn't decide to dance with a fifteen-year-old based on her looks?" Rilla countered back as she felt his hands knead into the flesh of her thighs.

"You had me completely enthralled that night," Ken murmured as he kissed her neck.

"Until the news broke that is," Rilla sighed. Partly from the timing of that night and partly from his firm wet kisses on her neck. She used the moment to grasp his shirt, pulling the tails out of his trousers. She felt him pull away for a second like he was going to say something. Instead, he merely kissed her. His hands pulling at the hem of her blouse only breaking away long enough to pull it over her head.

His eyes sparkled as he grinned at the sight of her bandeau.

"Do you want me to meet you after class tomorrow?" Ken asked from the bed later in the evening. "I need to get another ribbon for the typewriter," he explained.

"You're willingly going to bring me, to the department store?" Rilla turned towards him with a teasing voice.

"Well, when you put it that way," Ken retorted seriously. "I saw those Toronto bills, sometimes I wonder just how much more you need." He teased her.

"I didn't spend that much," Rilla huffed as her stomach let out a rumble. Ken looked at her letting
out a deep laugh.

"I guess that is a cue for dinner?" Ken rolled off the bed looked around for a moment. Rilla glanced at him with a smile he was stark naked as he looked for his pants that were still in the other room. "Does pasta sound all right?"

Rilla only nodded as she stretched out, looking over at the bundle on her bedside table. She picked it up gingerly. It was almost surreal to see the familiar scrawl of Walters writing, the familiar photos.

"Dear Rilla-My-Rilla

She found his last letter. She remembered too vividly the moment her father had come into her with the news. How she cried for hours in his arms, she spent the entire day curled up in the large bed in her parent's room. Her mother clutching her in her own grief. While her father sat in a chair looking more ashen and distraught than she had ever seen him. She supposed losing a son was far worse than a patient. His own flesh and blood, gone without a chance to say goodbye.

It was a price of war. A price that everyone knew could happen.

At one point they all lay on the large bed unsure of what to say or how to go on. Even little Jims had joined them at one point or another. He did not understand why the women were crying. He patted them with his chubby hands. Babbling words of comfort that Rilla often used when he hurt himself.

The news must have spread as the telephone did not ring that night. No one disturbed the Blythes on such a day.

She closes her eyes trying to hear Walters voice in her mind. All the childhood memories she had, the Christmases, the dancing in the living room. He knew he wasn't coming home, he knew deep down that it was his time with ending. He said it so in his letter.

Rilla woke up with a start as she palmed her stray hair from her face as she sat up in the bed. It was strange to dream such a thing or to fall asleep as she did. It felt like a parallel timeline where things had gone differently. Walter had survived somehow, Mr. Anderson never came back. Ken let her keep her golden boy, though it wasn't long before they had their own.

"So sleeping beauty is awake."

"How long was I asleep for?" Rilla asked rubbing her eyes.

"Not long," Ken looked over the clock. "I set aside dinner when I noticed you had fallen asleep." Ken kissed her forehead.

Rilla nodded, did she dream that much in such a short amount of time? She reached for her kimono she wrapped it around herself. As she set aside the bundle of letters, making a note to buy some new frames for the photos of Walter.

They worked together setting the table as the food reheated in the oven. Kingsport always seemed much calmer to her, even the chaos of school and work.

"My doctors a female," Rilla said out of the blue.

"Really?" Ken looked up rather surprised.
"Yes," Rilla nodded. "I suppose it makes it easier for other women to talk to her. She told me she does a lot of work in asylums and hospitals as well."

"I thought you were going to talk about yourself?" Ken teased lightly.

"She's say's the best therapy comes from building trust first. Plus when I told her of my studies it was a common interest I suppose?" Rilla explained as she poured each of them some milk from the icebox.

They ate their supper while keeping up light conversations. Life was just a series of small steps that turned into larger ones. Baby steps terms she heard all her life, baby steps were all she could do at the moment.

Even when you reached that inevitable fork in the road. Those first few steps in the direction you hoped were right was the hardest. Though once you passed them, everything confusing would fall into place. Those first steps may be exhausting, larger than life. Though those first steps would ultimately bring you happiness.

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Side note-I am no way a scholar in anything psychology related or anything really. I researched what I could on google and tried to make sure the dates were good. I am sure I possibly wrong and possibly not even translated to English at that time. Please go easy on me haha!

That said, I hope everyone enjoyed this one. I rather enjoyed giving Una a voice and an actual life!

I was pushing the T rating a fair bit...still really tempted on writing some M rated snippets between these two. If you would like some of those stories let me know!

Tina.
Chapter 16

Hello all!

Welcome back to chapter 16. I would like to thank everyone for all the kind and wonderful reviews. They really do make my day!

Thank you for all the follows and favourites as well.

Also if you haven't seen it yet. I do have a companion piece to this story called 'The Afterglow' its rated M and contains some adult content. If you haven't seen it yet, let me know what you think of it!

Life always goes on, there is no way of stopping it after all. School, housework, work all took over their daily lives once more.

Still, Rilla found herself noticing a change in Ken. He was quieter than usual, and she caught him more than once caught in his own thoughts. More than once she caught sight of the letter that came from his uncle.

"Rills?" Ken spoke up after he swallowed. "I was hoping to discuss something with you?"

"Of course what is it?" Rilla replied.

"Well, I came up with this idea." He started. "I think since we are planning on staying here for a while."

Rilla titled her head but nodded for him to continue.

"I was writing my uncle back and forth and I laid out a few concerns that I had about the offer," Ken said after a short moment. It was the first they truly brought it since the offer happened. "I was worried about not knowing enough about running a business. Or I have little to no experience in running one. Freelancing is one thing, but it's not the same."

"Which is completely normal," Rilla said after a moment. "To be worried, about such things and all that comes with it."

"Well, I thought for a moment, if we are here for the next little while. Why not open my own sector of the company? It will give me the means to learn about how to run a company beyond what I learned in school. It will give me more of the stability of an everyday job while learning how to be an employer to others." Ken explained carefully. "It would also be a good investment for the long run, should we end up staying here"

Rilla nodded. "Then go for it," Rilla said after taking a drink from her water glass. "Though we both know that your cousin is not getting better." She reminded him.

"We don't know that," Ken shook his head. "It happened before."

"Your uncle also has never asked you to step up before now," Rilla told him pointedly. "Which only means it was far worse than before? I have come to terms with moving to Toronto one day. All I want is a house. Away from the busy part of the city where I can just be a normal wife and not have to be in the spotlight all the time." Rilla told him. "If we have children I don't want them
growing up in the middle of a large city."

"Rilla coming to terms is not the same as agreeing with it," Ken countered with a sigh. He would let her last statement slide. It was easier to tackle one topic at a time.

"I'm not sure if I can ever agree to leave this place but at least I am trying. At least I am willing to try it out and support you. You supported me through all this schooling when we only just began our relationship. Why can't I do the same for you?" Rilla argued back.

"The big difference was I was happy for you to do it!" Ken's voice raised.

"Oh yes, because drinking away your problems was you happy." Rilla shot back. "You were happy to let me go to school, yet six months in you couldn't even handle me being away from you?" It was a low blow but she didn't care. "So why don't we just end this? Especially before we start really saying things we don't mean!" Rilla told him as she got up as she placed her plate into the sink of dishwater. Scrubbing it as she tried to calm down as let the plate fall as she gripped the sink.

"Heavens what is wrong with me?" Rilla stammered as she felt her body tremble as she tried to stop herself from crying. "I'm a mess."

"You're tired from studying and judging by the calendar," Ken told her softly as he leaned against the counter. "You're about due soon," he told her simply. Some days it was like he knew her body better than she did, these days. "So how about you go take a bath, relax and then it's an early night," Ken instructed her even as she shook her head. She had mid-terms and exams coming up.

"I mean it, one night of nothing will not harm that mind of yours." He told her sternly but had an air of tenderness in his voice. Rilla only nodded as she rested her head against him. They stood for a moment before he kissed the top of her head. "I'll go draw you a bath and then clean up." He said softly. He did as he said, filling the tub with warm water and pouring the salts he knew she enjoyed.

She undressed in the bedroom, tying the kimono around her as she pulled her hair up and out of the way. Slipping into the old clawfoot tub she sighed as she felt the heat of the water. She could smell the cigarette smoke from the crack in the window that was above the balcony.

She heard him come back in. After a moment she heard the familiar clanks of the dishes being washed. Next, she heard footsteps that would linger near the door. She waited for the light knock on the door to see as she was all right.

"If you going to check on me every five minutes you might as well just come in," Rilla called out. The door opened sheepishly, Keen looked at her for a moment before he went and sat down on the toilet seat. They didn't speak for almost fifteen minutes.

Neither knew exactly what to say to make the situation better.

"You seem out of sorts today?" Was the first question that Rilla heard on her Wednesday afternoon appointment.

"Just dealing with things," She shrugged. "Every time we talk about it, we fight. It's just exhausting."

"Fight about what?" Dr. White prompted her. They talked about many things during this hour they spent together. It was the first time Rilla had mentioned any true marital discord.
"Ken is heir to his uncle's company in Toronto. He grew up there, while I grew up on the Island. Our families are friends so we saw them every summer. He doesn't agree with coming to terms with something is the same as willingly accepting it. Happily accepting it," Rilla sighed as she ran through it once again. "I mean I want him to have the chance, how can I not? After everything and how patient he has been with my silly notions of schooling."

"Your schooling isn't silly," The doctor shook her head. "What makes you dislike Toronto?"

"I don't like the people we are in Toronto, the parties, the people who went to school with," Rilla curled up. "I am also against him drinking, but yet I was the one drinking. I let him watch me get intoxicated."

"There is nothing wrong with drinking, Rilla," Dr. White objected. "It's when it used in a way that isn't good is when problems arise. Why do you dislike drinking?"

"Ken drank a lot after the war. I don't know exactly how long he drank for, but I can take a guess." Rilla explained. "I can piece together a few months where I feel like he was drunk any chance he got," Rilla explained. "It was one of the reasons why we got married when we did. He said it would be easier to never touch a drink again if he had me to hold him accountable." Rilla explained. "I wanted to wait another year or so but he was drowning in his own nightmares. Having me close to him, he said it was easier for him to adjust. He still smokes, but I can handle that if he doesn't drink."

"So he pressured you into marriage, on the promise he would stop drinking?"

"No!" Rilla exclaimed. "Why does it always sound like that? My parents would have never allowed it if it was like that. I would have never gone through with it. I was lonely at school. I missed him as much as he missed me. I hated the comments. Was I worried? Of course but I realized that being afraid was normal when entering a new stage in life." Rilla tried to explain calmly. "I wanted to marry him." She shook her head.

"I believe you," The doctor reassured her. "However, Toronto can open many doors for you. You could continue your education could you not?"

"I can do that here as well," Rilla stated back. "If I wished to continue and get a BA it will be another two to three years."

"So what is hindering your decision?" The doctor probed, trying to understand her patient more. She had a feeling she already had an idea. Being a young married couple as they were.

"The prospect of children?" Rilla stated. "The college has already told me if I get pregnant that they wouldn't allow me to continue. I doubt they would allow me back as a mother."

Dr. White hummed. "You said before you don't particularly enjoy children?"

"I never have, I was never that sort who dreamed of having a gaggle of children," Rilla confirmed. "I took care of a little boy during the war. I raised him for four years, he was my responsibility. My parents provided the cost of raising him, but he was my responsibility. How I hated him when I brought him home. Such an ugly little thing, but I couldn't leave him there. The father was telling me if I wanted to keep him, it was up to me. That mother couldn't be bothered. Of course, she still answered my questions when I needed advice. But everyone knew that Little Jims was my charge."

"What happened to this little boy?"

"His father survived the war," Rilla said quietly after a moment. "He remarried and she is a sweet
thing. Then they came to collect him and he was gone."

"They just took him? Did you have any sort of introduction?"

"They stayed for the afternoon, we all explained to Jimmy that was his father was back. That he was going to live with them from now on." Rilla winced at the memories. "Neither of us took it well that day, but I never truly got over it."

"The day your father called me. He said that you had an episode that worried him greatly," the Doctor said carefully.

"I thought I was pregnant, my whole world was crashing around me after being bottled up for so long. I blamed myself, I blamed my parents for never once checking in on me. I can still hear him screaming my name when they left. I just stood there motionless. I suppose something just in me snapped and I broke down that day in dads office?"

"Do they allow you to see him?" The Doctor asked after a moment.

"I have an open invitation at their place, and Jimmy will come by while we are on the island as well. He had never forgotten me," Rilla stated. "But with us not living on the Island, it complicates things. However he does write to me, and his step-mother as well."

"I can see why you are hesitant. You raised an infant and no matter how much you can prepare yourself for such an event. It is never enough. You essentially gave your child up. While he wasn't yours biologically. You were his mother in all sense of the word and as many women before you were expected to deal with it by yourself." The Doctor said the words that had been in her mind for so long.

She had been Little Jim's mother. She never called herself such, but she had been.

No one had ever called her that word, not until today.

"I was wondering if I could extend an invitation to Marianne? To see if she wants to visit sometime over the holidays?" Rilla asked him quietly as they sat on the couch much later in the week on a Friday evening.

"Of course," Ken replied instantly. "I also got a letter from one of the men I served alongside during the war. He's getting married this upcoming summer and asked if we wish to come to the wedding. Apparently, it will a rather large affair in some stately manor house. I thought we could go? It is easy enough with wanting to explore the world after you graduate."

"Can we still do that?" Rilla looked at him sheepishly.

"Of course why not?" Ken asked taken back.

"Well, starting up a company takes a fair amount of time. If you're running a company, especially a new one-," Rilla motioned awkwardly with her hands.

"By the time I have the logistics planned out and finding a building to rent and build my actual business plan." Ken started. "It most likely will not get off the ground and running until the end of summer." He told her. "I figure I can plan for our trip and then come back and officially start the press."

Rilla nodded. She had assumed that the trip would be impossible with him starting up a business.
His life had been rather carefree since the war. Being freelancer and writing from home most weeks, he could come and go as he pleased. They could come and go as they please.

A company would change that. Sure they could escape to the island easily but the trips to the Muskoka's, the big cities. Those would be much harder to plan. He would need a second in command if they wanted to leave for an extended amount of time. But it would be the same when he took over the main branch.

"Did you serve alongside many aristocrats during the war?" Rilla asked him.

"I suppose I ran into them when I was captain. Titles were built into their rank, so we always know who they were. But at the end of the day, we were all men." Ken said after a long pause. Rilla nodded and went back to the book that was sitting in her lap.

"A lot of the time we were just going through the motions. Other days when we had leave, we would drink and smoke until we all forgot what we were drinking about." He told her honestly.

"Then there were other days I would spend my leave wandering London, Paris. Sometimes I would find small things. Trinkets that you might like, but I always second guessed myself thinking if you would like it or not. Though a few had survived my hesitance, mostly a small postcard with artwork on it that reminded me of you. That kissable little dent on your top lip." Ken grinned.

"I don't remember that," Rilla frowned. She had kept every letter and never once had gotten a postcard.

"Maybe it got lost?" Ken frowned. "I wondered if you got it or not. You never spoke of it, I must have had a sixth sense." Ken said as he got up. She watched wander into the bedroom and return with the familiar green lockbox that sat in their closet. He sat down on the floor near her feet and clicked it open, it held his medals and other memorabilia from his service. Underneath it was the letters that he had managed save. Mostly hers, a few of his parent's, and Persis. Then there were a few photographs she had sent him. He admitted he had mailed many of them back to his parents over the course of the years. Those sat in another box in the closet as she had cleaner copies of those photos. She recognized the four studio ones from when she got when she went for portraits of Little Jims when she lifted them out of the box.

She never would know how unprepared he was for who would answer the door the night he arrived. Photographs gave no justice to her beauty or how much she had grown those four years.

Underneath it all, he pulled out a worn postcard. "I bought two of them for some reason." He passed it over to her.

"Alphonse Mucha's 'summer,'" Rilla smiled at the familiar drawing. She had seen it before in books that her mother had. "My hair is redder though," she teased him as she lowered herself down on the floor next to him. It was the first time she had seen inside this box of his. "What else is in here?" She asked curiously.

Ken nudged it over to her. It was the first time he was willing to look through it. Photos of his brother's in arms. The ones he lost, and others who survived. Groups of young men, some only boys in their uniforms. He didn't know why he took as many photos as he did, it was never like he wanted to remember those days. Still, he took the photos, getting them developed at he could on leave. On occasion, a photograph would find its way into a letter to a grieving mother or wife if he had one.

"Oh, who is this?" Rilla flipped over the photo of what appeared to be a black lab. " d'Artagnan, how classic."
"He was one of the brigades mascots," Ken replied taking the photo. "He actually managed to survive, not exactly sure what happened to him but I am sure he found a comfortable home."

"What is this?" Rilla lifted up a velvet bag with a questioning look.

"I believe it is a gift that I never had the courage to send you," Ken said sheepishly. "I bought it on leave one winter and then I realized it might raise some eyebrows. I wasn't sure if you mentioned anything to your parents." He explained. "I meant to give it to you when I arrived home, except I couldn't bear to look inside this box this it was packed in."

Rilla look softened at his admission. "May I?"

"Now is good as time as anything," Ken chuckled. "It's nothing extravagant." He warned her.

"In the words of my mother, I don't need sunbursts and marble halls, I just need you." Rilla reminded him while paraphrasing her father's acceptance of her father's hand. Inside was a simple gold chain with a simple gold etched, heart locket. She opened it curiously, to find it still empty.

"It's beautiful," Rilla kissed him lightly. "Though however did you buy it?"

"We were paid, Rilla. When I made captain I was getting paid over three dollars a day." Ken explained with a chuckle at her innocence. But maybe that his own fault for never explaining things to her? "I saved a fair bit only buying cigarettes and this one point. I found it in a little shop in Paris. While a bunch of men were running around looking for drinks and women. I just spent my time wandering the streets."

Rilla nodded. "Jem and Faith met once or twice in London I think."

"I am sure it is one of the reasons they eloped as they did," Ken responded not thinking about what he said.

"You are joking?" Rilla gapped at him, "Faith Meredith would never!"

"War changes peoples judgment," Ken shrugged. "Plus its only speculation on my part, I rarely saw your brothers."

"Can I ask you something?" Rilla changed the subject.

"Of course," Ken responded as he placed some paper back into the box.

"You once told me you landed in some areas of Amsterdam that were peculiar," Rilla said after a moment. "In sociology class. We were talking about the many cultural aspects of prostitution. I know what a class to have, but Amsterdam was brought up." Her voice was quiet. "It made me curious about what you told me that one-night last year."

She watched think for a moment. Frowning and scratching at his chin.

"First I will say I never actually went looking for them that night." Ken began. "My mates and I were just wandering around one night. We escaped my father who turned in early. I was young and foolish. I didn't realize what she was until I was in her room and too drunk to say no." Ken explained. "It's definitely not the proudest moment of my life that is for sure. Not to mention my father had given us a long talk when we all stumbled in smelling of cheap perfume at three am."

Rilla nodded before bravely asking. "And you were never tempted during the war?"
"Honestly, war can be lonely, but how could I ask you to keep your lips to yourself. If I didn't do the same?" Ken admitted. "So yes sometimes I was tempted. But remembering my father's worlds about honouring my future wife made it easier. However, while pretty women could turn heads of men easily. Sex was looked down upon and we knew that. We also knew being unhonorable wounded by VD was not something you wanted to be known for. Most of the time, we were simply kept too busy to actually think about sex." Ken explained as best as he could for her.

Rilla looked at him for a good fair moment. "I thought I would be angrier at you," she admitted. "I don't know why, considering I was what eleven-twelve at the time? But thank you for telling me the truth." She told him, before picking up another photograph from the pile with a small smile. It was of her, this time smiling at the camera.

"You know the men around me often commented you were too pretty for me after I got my scar." He stated leaning to look at the photo.

"I like your scar," Rilla shook her head. "It tells a tale of bravery," she told him as she traced her fingertips across the thin line.

"That scar is nothing more than a reminder of fools wipe out. It wouldn't have been so bad if it didn't get infected and had to be restitched and cleaned out a second time." Ken said after a moment. He looked over at his wife who had a puzzled look on her face.

"The story of how I got this scar, is this. I was piss ass drunk and I fell down a ladder that went into the cellar that lodging I had for the night had. I was knocked out cold for a good moment, I bruised up but I think I was so drunk I didn't feel it until the morning after." He sighed. "When I went to check back in. They looked me over and shook their head and told me to report to the medical tent before heading back to the front." He stole a look, only to see Rilla trying not to laugh. "Oh sure, laugh at me why don't you?" He teased her.

"I'm sorry it's just too funny," Rilla spat out between giggles. It wasn't nice for her to laugh, but it was such a different story than she expected. "I never would have guessed that was the story behind it. A bullet, something exploding? Not you falling down a ladder." She laughed. "Don't worry I won't tell people." She patted his arm.

It was in the corner of her eye she spotted a tiny bottle of perfume. She arched a brow and uncorked it. It still smelt like the one her father had gifted her one birthday when she turned thirteen.

"You smelt like lilacs the night of the dance, and later on the night." Ken cleared his throat embarrassed. It was all that he needed to say as Rilla twisted her body, towards him and kissed him. She pulled back and passed him the locket as she motioned from him to put it on her.

Life always manages to move forward. Whether you're ready for it not, motions are made. Steps are taken one at a time, it didn't matter if you were hesitant or steady on your feet. Then one day you realize that you are ready to confront the part of the past that was hidden away from your mind. You're ready to remember, you're ready to face those moments.

It then you realize in those moments are moments you never want to forget.

Well, there you have it. This chapter gave a lot of ups and downs to figure out. They aren't totally ready to talk about Toronto, but they are slowly making their way towards the talk, without the need to argue or fight over it.
We see another move forward for Ken as well which came unexpectedly to me.

Until next time, but until then I look forward to your musing on this one.

Tina
hank you for all the wonderful reviews and follows! I really do appreciate and enjoy how much everyone is enjoying this story.

This is my last week of vacation and starting next week I go back to work. Yay!

Chapter 17

The train was late, as the large clock on the wall of the station rang out on the half-hour. Rilla's foot was in constant motion as she counted the minutes. Ken was sitting beside her reading one of the papers he picked up when they heard the train was late.

"Fidgeting won't make the train come faster," Ken told her amused at her anxiousness. Then suddenly in the distance, you heard the clear sound of the train's horn. Rilla bounced up and made way toward the doors. Ken chuckled and followed her slowly as he pulled on his leather gloves.

The train pulled in with a cloud of steam.

"Rilla!" Marianne shouted as she ran off the train. Easily spotting Rilla who was bouncing on her heels trying to find her friend's dark hair. "Oh, my heavens it is cold out here!"

"Didn't I tell you to bring a warm jacket?" Rilla laughed as she pulled her friend into a hug. Rilla was wrapped up in her warmest coat and scarfs. She even had long knitted let warmers pulled over her boots and stockings. "She quickly unwrapped her one scarf and wrapped around Marianne. "Welcome to Kingsport! You have seen snow before right?" She joked as she led her friend towards the trunks that were being unloaded. "Which one is yours?" She asked as Ken who was wearing a dark wool jacket and heavy-looking boots.

"That one," Marianne pointed to the one that looked had brass claps on it. Ken nodded and quickly grabbed it by the handles as the ladies bounced in the cool air. "Oh, I can't believe I am here."

"How exactly did you manage it?" Rilla asked as they walked toward the automobile.

"My Aunt and cousin are looking after the house and keeping my father company," Marianne explained. She never went into great depth of her father's illness but it did take up a lot of her life.

"Well, I'm glad you have come." Rilla smiled brightly. "I'll show you around the city and I'll take you down to the harbour as well. I just have one last exam in two days time. I don't know why they had it so late."

Marianne smiled "I am sure I can amuse myself for a few hours. I still find it fascinating that you're in school, I went to highschool of course but that was the end of the road for me."

"I never even went to high school. I just had to write a massively long entrance exam when I applied to Redmond." Rilla explained. "They don't even tell you how you did. I thought I did pretty dismal, but they later sent a letter of acceptance. So I can only assume I did better than I thought."

"I am sure you did well," Ken commented as he tied down the trunk on the back of the car. He helped both of the ladies into the car before jumping over to the driver's side.

"Well, Ingleside and the Island is quite a pretty place in winter. We don't have enough time to
make it to the Island, but the Island is prettier in summer either way." Rilla told her.

"Even if we stay here the entire visit I will be fine, we can save the Island for more of a warm-weather trip?" Marianne shook her head laughing

They had cleaned out the small spare room prior to Marianne's arrival. Freshening up the sheets and pillows. Clearing away a large stack of books that had accumulated over the past year and a half. "the bathroom is just across the hall and our room is on the other side of the apartment." Rilla explained. "So you will have some privacy while you are here."

Marianne nodded looking around the rather bright cheerful place. Pretty lace-covered cushions, with dark cherry stained furniture in the small living room. An open kitchen with an oak table and four chairs. Two decks on either side of the rooms, typewriters and stacks of papers on them.

A large calendar on one wall with different colours of ink on certain days. Errands and appointments written on it all in neat handwriting that she knew to be her friends. With the winter wraps hung up and shoes switched over to large slippers. She watched Ken kiss Rilla sweetly before he bade them both a 'see you soon'.

"Ken's just going over to the paper," Rilla explained as she lit the stove for tea.

It was the first time she saw the pair in their own environment. It was easy to see that they were used to their own privacy and often forget others were in the room. The intense gazes, the hidden smiles. They were always touching, small touches, catching each other's hands when passing by. The briefest of contact when passing over the coffee in the morning. The lingering kisses when Ken left in the morning, or when they went out as girls.

She also saw the moments that made little sense to her. The ghost-like eyes that Ken had most mornings, how Rilla frowned when he spoke of certain topics. Still, the days were spent exploring and showing her around the city Rilla had come to know as her own. Renting skates and skating on the open rinks. Drinking hot chocolate as they found shelter from the cold. It was like Toronto but colder, though Rilla had joked about the men who did the polar bear plunge for charity.

Her last exam and her ever standing appointment were things Rilla couldn't get out of. She apologized each time she left her guest to entertain herself.

"I shouldn't be too long, maybe an hour and a half? I have a standing appointment, today," Rilla apologized once more as she pulled her toque on her head.

"I'll be fine," Marianne reassured her. "I will sit and read for a while," she held up her book and she was. It beat going outside in such cold weather. Even with all the layers and knitted leg warmers, Rilla leant her, she couldn't get used to the cold.

"If you need anything, Ken should be home within the next half hour or so." Rilla looked at the clock.

"I'll have some lunch ready," Marianne jested. Knowing the last time Rilla made lunch she burned it.

"You and Ken have too much fun mocking my cooking," Rilla shook her head. "It's not that bad."

"Your skills are more in pastries and sweets." Marianna tried to reassure her friend that she wasn't all that bad in the kitchen.

"Oh, I'll buy some chocolate on the way home." Rilla perked up. "We can make some brownies
later tonight." It made her smile to here her friend laugh deeply at the thought of brownie.

"Oh! I am holding you to that!" Marianne laughed. "Have fun, don't talk to strangers"

"Funny since you talk to strangers all the time." Rilla teased her about their first meeting. "I will warn you, these appointments sometimes turn me into a crying mess. So if I looked a bit of a mess —.

"I will make tea for you and you can settle yourself," Marianne said promptly. Rilla had mentioned in letters that she was trying to work through a few things. She never outright said she was talking to someone. However, it was rather apparent at this point. Whatever she was doing, it was working.

she felt like her friend was happier and more confident in herself.

Marianne only had two days left in Kingsport when a storm swept by the coastal town. It was early in the morning when the crash and the sound of doors opening and footsteps in the common area.

It was silent for a moment before she heard the high pitched whispers of Rilla

"Ken! Ken!" Rilla pleaded. "Please love, you need to wake up?" She opened the door a crack peering out into the darkness. A small amount of light coming in through the window from the electric street lamp outside. Which illuminated what looked like a broken lamp on the ground behind them.

"Get down," she heard his voice for the first time. "They are coming," It was filled with terror, yet held a tone of authority. His face looked stoic as she swore she could see his body tremble as he was facing something in her mind.

The war, he had been in the war. Rilla had mentioned it before, but he seemed so put together when she had seen in him the summer.

"Ken, no one is coming," Rilla pleaded once more. "We're at home, you're safe, we're all safe."

The wind howled as the windows creaked. "Darling, sweetheart," Rilla begged as she tried to grasp him. Like she knew she only had a moment before another fog horn went off in the distance.

It was the thing that works her up in the first place.

"It's just the harbour horn," Rilla grasped his arm that held him in place. Not by force because there was no force in her touch. Something in him changes, his facial features soften, leaving behind the man she had come to know. "Come back to bed." She carefully caressed his face, down the over the scar. Kissing him lightly to remind just who he was with.

"We're safe." She repeated softly as she took his hand with her free hand.

When morning came it was like nothing transpired the night before. Rilla was up drinking coffee while setting the table and Ken was frying up the bacon. Marianne shyly buttered the toast as she watched them. The storm had stopped early that morning and when she looked outside the window. Kingsport was covered in a blanket of snow, shining sparkling snow.

"It's pretty when it fresh is it not?" Rilla spoke up as she glanced towards the window. She was wearing a loose sweater that had a higher neckline. But the way she turned her neck, Marianne could see the small marks that covered parts of her neck. She blushed at the sight of them adverting her eyes and back towards the window. They were married. Marianne told her herself. Lovebites were nothing to worry about though seeing a more intimate side of that marriage. Rilla seemed to
be smiling constantly despite her tiredness for her to worry.

"I swear if this happened in Toronto people would be panicking" Marianne laughed. "Yet I see people just out there walking around. Will the train will still be on time?"

"People have seen the worse storms. Though I will admit, it did take me a while to get used to the winters," Ken replied as he set the platter of food on the table for everyone. Marianne almost wondered if he remembers his episode. "The train should be running all right, I think I heard the early train this morning be on time."

"That's good," Marianne smiled. Ken only nodded and drank a mouthful of his black coffee. He made a face before getting up and coming back with the cream from the icebox. She already learned first hand that you never trusted Rilla's coffee and took the offered cream.

The visit went smoothly as it could and when Marianne hugged and kissed Rilla goodbye. "Whatever you're mulling over in the head of yours, don't be so frightened about it." She whispered. "You can do amazing things if you just allow yourself too. Who knows maybe I'll go apply to some college in Ontario now."

"You should, and I will try," Rilla returned the kiss on the cheek back. Rilla waved her friend off. Before she went to find Ken who was talking to a fellow gentleman.

"Mr. Morton!" Rilla greeted him. "Didn't expect to see you here?"

"Ahh I was waiting for a parcel my brother-in-law mailed to me" he explained. "I'm assuming the both of you are heading to the Island for the holidays?"

"We are, you know the whole family and whatnot." Rilla smiled, she was rather excited to see her niece this time around. Now that Cecelia apparently walking and talking up a storm. As well as being her parent's source of constant heart attacks. She wouldn't admit it publicly of course.

"Are we still on for poker on Thursday?" Mr. Morton asked which shocked Rilla as it was the first time she had heard of it.

Ken looked towards Rilla. "I believe so," he said after a moment. "I'll let every know if plans change Tom. We best get going out of this cold."

He could feel his wife's eyes stare at him. Waiting as he got himself into the car before asking what she wanted to know.

"I thought Thursdays were staff meetings?" Rilla asked him after a moment.

"It is we have our weekly meeting. Then, you had classes and it was easier to stay at the paper and wait for you to finish classes. It sort of morphed into poker night." Ken tried to explain. "We play cards, smoke and swear an awful deal."

"Yet you never told me about it?" Rilla countered back quietly. Her mind going straight into the many possibilities of those late nights.

"I'm not drinking if that is what is going through your head. You would have known since I pick you up from class," Ken told her. "We just sit around and talk, Tom and Paul, they were also in the war. They understand things, we all understand what it's like to have sleepless nights." He explained quietly. "We all get it."
Rilla felt her face soften. Of course, he would feel the need to talk about it to someone. It made sense to talk to people who understood what you were talking about? "I just worry about you," she said softly.

"I know Rills," Ken rubbed the back of her hand. "We also don't gamble. We just play for by-lines, and whoever loses get the challenge of the weakest story pitch from the list. If anything of substance is wagered its generally baked goods. Your cookies are generally a hit."

"Well, that explains the missing cookies every other week," Rilla laughed. "I'm glad you talking about in some form or way," she spoke quietly. "You don't have to hide it."

"I know but you tend to get paranoid if I mention spending time anywhere that isn't public. Even when we go out for Chinese for lunch which are naturally dry establishments. You tend to think the worst." Ken explained giving her a look.

"I just worry about you," Rilla crossed her arms pouting. "And they are not dry," Rilla gave him a pointed look. " The special cold tea they offer to certain people? Ken, I am not that dumb. They just know how to hide it from the constabularies. Prohibition has done truly nothing to curb any sort of alcohol consumption. All it does it make it go underground. It only becomes more dangerous on the grounds of distribution of buying and selling. However, they do need a legal age limit to legally consume alcohol."

Ken raised an eyebrow. "What have they been teaching you in those classes of yours?" He teased her slightly. Her views of the world were constantly changing. "But in all seriousness, I love you for all your worrying. You have every right to worry about what you walked into during our engagement." Ken spoke as he pulled the car into the garage.

"Do you think you can teach me how to drive coming springtime more?" Rilla asked him as he shut off the car and quickly jumped climbed out.

"You want to try again?" Ken asked rather shocked as he opened her door. The last time he tried to teach her how to drive the almost drove into a ditch.

"I suppose that I should learn, I see more and more lady drivers and I think it will be good for me," Rilla explained. "It will good for me to get around places if you're at work and whatnot. I've been thinking a great deal about things." Rilla said quietly. "With graduation coming up in May, I'll be at home more during the day time. I can't rely on you to get me places all the time."

"Fair enough," Ken agreed with her. "You have something from Shirley?" He asked as he grabbed the mail that had been delivered while they had been out. "He does know that he can call us right?"

"He does call, but he did say he was sending us something." Rilla explained. She waited until the apartment to open the envelope. "He was hoping as well to spend a day or two here before heading over to the Island before Christmas?"

"Of course, he is your brother," Ken nodded. "I am assuming the Lillian will be coming this time again?"

"Most likely," Rilla confirmed. "He doesn't feel safe leaving her behind, he came home to find her husband trying to get into the boarding house. It didn't go well. They had a hearing in court the previous week."

Ken scoffed as he took off his jacket. "It's horrible that she is such a situation. Is she all right?"

Rilla nodded. "A few bruises, which he documented. Sadly abuse is rarely counted as evidence.
The things Shirley told me, about his behaviour. It was horrible. Even Shirley admitted he suddenly saw the world in another light. He actually asked me if he ever had to be worried about you." Rilla frowned at the memory. "I told him he needn't worry about you."

"There is no way to get him to agree to a divorce, for him to petition for one?" Ken frowned.

"Apparently not," Rilla shook her head. "He can easily accuse her of adultery, but it seems like he really enjoys toying with them. All they can do is a contest and hope one day the law will change." She tore open the thick envelope and found a thick folder that was completely enclosed. Ken looked at it with a confused look.

"He's worried about her husband trying to destroy things. You know a way to hinder the divorce," Rilla explained. "I told him I would keep whatever I could safe for him."

"I'll put them away in the firebox," Ken nodded. "Rill?" He turned around suddenly. His mind going back to what Rilla had mentioned about Lillians husband. "I don't ever make you feel obligated to do I?"

"I have told you no plenty of times," Rilla gave him a confused look.

"Last night though-," Ken started. "It's not the first time that you have allowed such liberties."

"Keyword is, allow Ken. Also, you sound like some victorian saying the word liberties as such. I allow you since I know it is the easiest way to make you feel safe." Rilla explained. "My body makes you feel safe and I enjoy that fact about us."

"It still doesn't seem morally right," Ken objected.

"It doesn't have to morally right, it just has to be right for us," Rilla countered back. "You were stuck in some sort of nightmare in your head. I tried to bring you around, I tried to wake you up and you wouldn't. I did the only thing I knew would work. It's only in the extreme moments I ever use my feminine charm to woo you out of whatever is going on in there."

Ken nodded, as he watched her carefully.

"Furthermore, I can understand the need to talk to others. Someone who understands, and knows what you went through." Rilla added on. "Sometime's I forget that it's only been two and a half years and two and a half years isn't long at all. You go through your days in such a carefully organized way. That sometimes I forget you're still coping, learning how to live again."

"Sometimes I can't believe it's been almost three years since I came home." Ken nodded. "Let alone a year and a half since I married you."

"People always say how time passes quicker as you get older. I suppose it is true," Rilla nodded. "I mean look at us I'm twenty-two now, you just turned twenty-eight."

"Two years away from thirty," Ken whistled at his age. "I thought I would feel older. instead, I just feel youngish while looking older with this speckles of grey hair."

"It's dashing, though I can always dye it for you?" Rilla teased him.

"Nah, I think I will keep it, I'll wait for the children before dying it," Ken teased her, pulling her in for a kiss.

Sometimes its knowing that time is the ever-constant motion that drives you forward. While
sometimes you don't realize just how much time has past until you truly think about it.

Suddenly you see just how far you've come, grown, how much the children have grown that are right in front of you.

Time is the ever-constant reminder of everything that has been, and everything that will be.

Well, I hope everyone has enjoyed this one. It gave a small bit of trouble, but I think I managed to pull it all together. I wanted to have Marianne come back in, and have some news about Shirley and Lillian, hopefully, I'll have then in an actual chapter soon enough.

Until next time,

au revoir mon ami.
Chapter 18

Welcome to chapter 18

I hope you all enjoy it!

Thank you all for the comments and follows and favs. You are all amazing!

The sun was just beginning to set when the train pulled into Kingsport. It was only a few days before Christmas. Which left many of its travellers in a frenzy as they wanted to reach their destination.

The sky was filled with streaks of pinks and oranges as they a couple stepped off the train. His hand grazing the small of her back. To the other passengers, the two seemed like newlyweds who only had eyes for each other.

Shirley had rejected the idea of them picking them up. Instead, he hailed a cab and made his way towards the old apartment. A place he never truly saw. Only Jem, Walter, and the twins had lived there and shared the two bedrooms during their years at School.

He ushered Lilian off the train and grabbed their bags. Her blonde carefully arranged to one side of her face.

"A Quelle distance se trouve ta maison de tes soeurs?" She whispered quietly. Glancing towards the ladies room which would only be packed.

"pas loin du tout," Shirley responded. "Nous pouvons attendre si vous avez besoin de vous rafraîchir?"

"Non, non je peux attendre," Lilian shook her head as she took his hand.

The knock on the door alerted Rilla to her brother arriving. She wiped her hands on her skirt and quickly walked over to the door. Opening it smiled as she quickly looked over the couple. Shirley large and manly, while Lilian was petite and only reached his shoulder. She pulled Shirley into an embrace and kissed his cheek.

"You got here safely?" She asked as she lightly embraced the blonde woman.

"We did, thank you again," Shirley nodded and helped Lilian out of her clock. It took Rilla back slightly to see Lilian arm in a sling and a faint bruise still dusted under the skin of her cheek. She shook her shock and quickly told him to place the bag in the spare bedroom. She already told him that she wouldn't make a fuss of whatever arrangements they had personally.

"If you like to refresh after the trip, the washroom is just down the hallway. There are fresh towels in the closet and you need anything we have plenty in the cupboard." Rilla smiled towards Lillian.

"Merci," Lillian nodded her head. "I would like that," she spoke quietly. Looking in the direction of Shirley who was talking to Ken and the multiple buttons on the back of her dress.

"Do you need help?" Rilla asked quietly as she looked over the sling once more. She watched the woman for a moment. She knew Rilla knew about the situation. Still it was always embarrassing to
have others help you.

After a long pause as she shook her head and allowed Rilla to lead her to the guest room. Lillian opened her bag for some clean clothes and her toiletries. They crossed the hall into the bathroom, which was sparkling for their guests.

"Here," Rilla spoked as she motioned towards the sling. She helped untie the sling and undid the multiple hooks that held part of the back. She was used to seeing scars, Ken had quite a few of them after all. But to see the cigarette burns scattered over the pale skin of her brother's sweetheart. It made her heart ache. She averted her eyes and made herself busy turning on the taps of the tub.

She turned back to the blonde who had stepped out of her dress and still covered by her slip. Struggling with the clasp in the middle of her back.

"Oh let me," Rilla offered and undid the hook for her.

"Just let me know when you need me," Rilla told her, allowing the woman who was the same age to have her privacy. "Or Shirley," she added figuring they seemed to be rather close.

She left the room quietly and found the two gentlemen sitting at the table drinking tea.

"She's just refreshing herself," Rilla told Shirley as she poured herself some tea. "So how was the train?"

"Not bad, we had our own compartment," Shirley explained as his eyes flick back and forth from the washroom door and back to his sister. "She's still rather shaken up over the ordeal," he spoke quietly. "He fucked off for a while," he explained, not caring about his profanity. "She was just coming back from the market. Usually, we go together but she wanted to surprise me with tarts for finishing my last exam. I had finished earlier than expected and found them fighting in the foyer."

Rilla nodded looking towards Ken who remained emotionless as ever in such situations. They were both glancing at the busted up knuckles of her brother right hand. Shirley was no shrimp of a man. He was tall, taller than their father and muscular. She wondered what the other man looked like, but decided against asking.

"We ordered some Chinese food just before you came so I hope you are hungry. I also did make some cinnamon rolls and butter tarts to take to the island. So please don't eat them before we leave." Rilla gave him a looked.

"Is it Grandmother Blythe's recipe?" Shirley's ears peaked at the butter tarts. There has always been full out wars about who got the last butter tart during the holidays.

"Complete with a dash of vinegar," Rilla smiled and shook her head at him. He laughed before turning his head sharply as he heard the bathroom door open. Lilian stepped out dress in a loose dress and cardigan.

"Come sit," Rilla motioned toward the empty chair. "Would you like some tea? Water?"

"Tea is fine," Lillian spoke softly as she took the chair beside Shirley. Shirley smiled at her and rested his arm across the back, his hand resting lightly on her shoulder.

"Ken will run across the street and pick up dinner. I hope you are fine with Chinese? With us leaving tomorrow we didn't want to have a bunch food left over?" Rilla asked her, she knew from Shirley that it was fine, but she wanted to be polite either way.
"Of course," Lillian nodded. "We have our fair share out it in Montreal," she said as she looked at Shirley with an amused look on her face. "They one place we go to, they know Shirley will try pretty much anything they will give him. I believe one time they made a dish so spicy that Shirley sweated through his shirt."

"While you and Mei sat and laughed at me?" he crossed his arms but had a goofy smile on his face that told everyone he wasn't embarrassed.

"Mei is one of the owners, I helped her mend a few of her Cheongsam's," she stopped as she spoke quietly in French. " Robe de mandarine—Mandarin gown is somewhat of a translation."

"I think I saw a few of those in Toronto in the summer, those colourful silk gown Asians wear?" Rilla spoke snapping her fingers. "They are beautiful, I know you didn't enjoy me going there-" Rilla turned to Ken.

"I did not like you going there alone," Ken nodded his head as he stood up to gather his coat. "and Marianne doesn't count." He retorted. She remembers how angry he had been when she told him she went to Chinatown. He had nothing against the orientals but it was Chinatown in itself. I was known for being raided by police and the underground markets for alcohol and opium.

Rilla shook her head at him. "They are some of the nicest people I have met, and they have so many pretty trinkets in the market." Rilla grinned as she stood up and kissed him. "You'll be fine by yourself?"

"I can handle two bags of food." Ken laughed. "I will be back in a moment." He nodded his head to his brother in law and Lillian before walking out the door.

"Oh, I'll show you my fans I got," Rilla clapped her hands together. Quickly she disappeared into her own bedroom and came out with silk fans. Ones that had been embroidered with various flowers and birds.

The trip to Glen was uneventful, the trains were on time and so was the ferry. Much like last year, all the children were home. Leaving Rilla and Ken to stay at the house of dreams as all the room were already spoken for.

The Manse was full with Bruce and Una at home, which meant Jem and Faith and Nan and Jerry were all at Ingleside. That left enough room with Shirley to have a one and Lillian would be rooming with Di.

The house was full when they were dropped off, both families gathering together. The laughter of Cecelia being chased by grandpapa who was on his hands and knees pretending to be a bear. Di was laughing as the woman was talking about her new hair cut. Cut right off the back of her neck into a bob I wondered what the school board would say about it when they saw it.

I turned to Nan was who smiling brightly as sat curled into Jerry. Something in her smile made Rilla think she had some sort of news to share soon enough.

Carl was talking to Timothy who was spending his first Christmas with the clan are Una's fiancé. She smiled and waved to them. She wondered when Carl and Di would find someone to start a life with. Di was twenty-five and still teaching Charlottetown at an all-girls school. Residing as a chaperone for the boarding students at her school.

While Carl was twenty-four and seemed happily contented in his bachelor's life. He was still continuing his education at the university while collecting his creatures.
"Can you go say hello to Auntie Rilla?" Faith spoke to her daughter across the room. Rilla smiled as the toddler toddled over to her.

"Ahh, your mama doesn't know better yet," Rilla tickled her. "I'm the one who will feed you all the candy." Cecelia giggled and shrieked.

She could feel many eyes on her but decided not to care. She had learned quite a bit from her times with Dr. White.

Losing Little Jims will never truly leave her. But now she knew that it was okay to have some days would be worse than others. That her memories should be cherished and not pushed into a dark corner. Just as well she had written wanting to see him while she was on the island. In reply, they said she could have him on boxing day if she wished it and she would see him during church.

"Mum?" Rilla asked as she sprawled out on her parent's bed.

"Yes, sweetheart," Anne looked over to her grown daughter. She was already dressed for Christmas Eve service.

"I was Jimmy's mother," Rilla told her. So matter of factly that it took back her mother for a moment. "He was mine, I raised him, cared for him. I was his mother in the deepest sense of the word. I know it was wrong for him to call me as such. But I was."

"You were, weren't you?" Anne said after a moment with a small nod of her head. It was like she trying to understand her daughter at that moment. She had spent years taking care of children who were younger than her. She never once considered herself more than their nanny. Of course, Rilla had been in an entirely different situation.

"Does this mean I can expect some grandbabies from you?" Anne asked her half-joking, but still had an air of curiosity in her voice.

Rilla gave her a look before she merely shrugged. "I don't know yet, maybe? In the future? That is a conversation that Ken and I will have to actually talk about. How did your dad decide to have us all?"

"We didn't have an exact number," Anne spoke after a moment. "We wanted a large family, we thought we were finished after Shirley, but it seemed that the Lord had other plans."

Rilla shook her head. "According to Dad, God had nothing to do with me coming along." She retorted saucily. She raised herself from the bed and check herself over in the mirror. "So what do we really think of Di's new hairstyle?" Rilla asked as she patted her low chignon.

"I rather like it on her," Anne gave her daughter a look of don't go starting trouble. "And don't believe everything your father tells you. Are you ready?"

Rilla nodded and fixed her skirt. "I will just go make sure that Lillian is managing by herself."

"You have really bonded with her?" Anne asked as it dawns on her.

"She's sweet, and what I have heard and seen. She doesn't serve any of it." Rilla said softly. "I just hope that neither of them gets hurt by this. I'll meet you downstairs?"

"Of course Darling." Anne waved her off and finished patting her hair in the mirror and Rilla left the room.
She walked down the hall to the room that Lillian was occupying. She stopped at the door ready to knock when she heard voices.

"Pouvez-Vous me boutonner?"

"Bien sûr chéri, seras-tu assez chaud dans tout ça?" She heard Shirley reply back in french. It was the first time she heard speak French.

"Arrête de t'inquiéter chérie. Je vais bien." Lilian responded with a light laugh. "Allez, avant que quelqu'un vous attrape ici,"

Nous allons bien Lily, personne ne nous dira rien. Rilla n'a même pas remis en question nos arrangements de sommeil," Shirley responded.

Rilla could hear him shake his head, and her ear peaked at her own name.

"Ca compte," she objected rather passionately. They had to be talking about something important. "Je ne veux pas que ta famille ait une fausse impression de moi."


She had no idea what they were saying, but it seemed wrong to listen in.

Christmas passed by them, the day spent together with two families. Presents were passed around and sweets were eaten to the excess. Her day with Jimmy was a happy day where the three of them explored the outdoors snowshoeing.

Rilla was laughing as she tried to catch up to the boy. Her strides unhindered by the wool trousers she had tightly belted. The pockets pulled and the pleats didn't sit properly across the width of her hips. Still, it made much more sense to wear them for the day. Later they warmed up and played games while drinking hot cocoa by the fireplace.

"You should wear my trousers more often," Ken kissed her shoulder as they undressed for the night.

"I, wear pants?" Rilla turned to look at him with a gaping mouth. "Why would I do such a thing? Snowshoeing, or wear dungaree's while cleaning out the garbage is one thing. But a lady does not just simply wear pants!"

"Why not?" Ken asked as he made his way down her shoulder. "You do everything else that society thinks is wrong. Why not wear pants?"

"You just want an excuse to get in them," Rilla gave him a look. "or out of them should I say."

"Can you blame me?" Ken smirked as he let his hands trail down over her hips. Rilla shook her head but felt her body shake with anticipation as she felt him pop open the buttons.

"You're absolutely smooth Ford," Rilla answered with a low voice. She gave him a sultry look that had her squealing before they both tumbled towards the bed.

Rilla was the first one up the next morning. She smiled as she saw Ken asleep on his stomach, drooling on his pillow. It was already eight in the morning, and she was used to waking up earlier.

She grabbed her robe and sauntered over to the washroom. Relieving herself first she went to wash...
her hands. With a quick squat, she removed her veil and rinsed it off and inspected the thin rubber
disc.

She swore to herself when she noticed a large tear near the rim. As if her nail went through it.

She hoped that it wasn't torn on inserting, but still, it was irrevocably torn and now useless. She
counted the days in her head and breathed a sigh of relief at least she was past the middle of the
cycle.

She stood there for a moment before she heard the footsteps of Ken leaving their bedroom.

"Ken!" She called out. He hesitated outside the door for a moment before poking his head in.

"Yes, my Queen?" He joked, confused at why she called him. In the year and a half, they had been
married he had only seen her in such a state a few times. When he had been in the shower and she
needed to use the toilet. They tried not to make a habit of it, relieving oneself was not generally a
thing people wish to do in front of others. But there she was only wrapped in her robe.

"We have an issue," Rilla said holding up the damaged veil, showing him the tear.

"And that's your only one?" Ken asked solemnly.

"At the moment yes," Rilla sighed. "I'll have to ask dad about procuring another one, or hope he
has a few spares hidden in his office somewhere. But I doubt it."

Ken nodded.

They spent over a year relying on the method, from the early days of awkwardly talking about it.
Now they comfortable with it, too the point of Rilla easily slipping it in at a moments notice with
him in the room. The first few days of their marriage was something that Rilla looked back fondly
at. Yet nothing had been more of a learning experience than facing her own body in such a way.

Remembering as she wiggled and shook her hips in the mirror of the bathroom. The instructions
and laid out before her and at first she blushed profusely as she read them.

"I am a married woman," she shook her head at her innocent. She spent all her life being told to
never touch herself in such a way. Now she was getting up close and personal and learning more
about her body than she ever imagined. Of course, she dealt with her menstruation and basic
hygiene. That was a given in her life as a woman. Though beyond that it was like Ken knew her
body more intimately than she did until this moment.

She sighed and decided that the fourth time would be best. She already learned that relaxing made
it much easier. She pulled out the small rubber disc and set it in the bowl of hot water to sanitize it.
The other one had felt uncomfortable and wouldn't stay in place.

"Rilla?" Ken knocked on the door.

"One moment!" She exclaimed as she wrapped around her robe around her once more.

"Everything okay in there?" Ken asked rather amused at her rather flushed face.

"Yes," Rilla shook her head. "Just you know," she waved her hand at the papers blushing. "I think
we have a winner. I don't feel it and it seems to be in place once I get it in." Rilla continued to
blush.
They only married for a little over twenty hours, the blushing bride had yet to wear off. Even after the early morning exploration of each other. Where the morning sunlight filtered in as they got their first good look at each other.

She was still blushing at the emotions and memories.

"How do you put it in?" Ken asked which only made her turn a shade brighter.

"How do you think?" Rilla squeaked. It was Ken's turn to turn pink around the ears. "Give me a moment," she said waving him out of the room until he turned and shut the door.

She took a deep breath and looked at the veil floating in its bath of water. "Here goes nothing." Rilla cheered to herself. She did another wiggle and lunge to make sure that it felt what she assumed in place.

She wrapped the robe back around her and shimmied into her drawers once more. She washed her hands Grabbing the papers she put them in the linen closet. She poked her head outside the door to find the hallway deserted. She ventured down the stairs and into the kitchen where Ken was drinking the tea they had made earlier. She wrapped her arms around his waist as she pressed a kiss into his shoulder.

He turned around to face her, smiling at her as she merely nodded her head. He grinned as he unexpectedly picked her up. Squealing as she wrapped her arms and legs around him. Most of her embarrassment and uneasiness fading away as she felt the familiar ease that she felt around him.

How it strange how all the initial jitters and worries washed away. They were in a state of wedded bliss and like many couples who bore longer engagements. They had yet to leave the house.

The bright turquoise of her kimono stood out against her creamy skin. A wedding present from her husband. He had found the material in a trunk. Remembering his mother buying it years ago from their trip from Japan. He made a simple phone call, asking if he could have it, which was granted. Later a trip to the dressmaker he had it made into a short, long-sleeved kimono.

"You know, we don't have to—," Ken started cautiously. "I mean we only have a few months left before graduation."

"It's still too risky," Rilla sighed with a shake of her head. Any excuse to call into the dean's office was a risk. "I'm not saying no, just it's still too early."

Ken nodded after a moment. "Fair enough, if your father has one."

"If he doesn't then we can talk," Rilla told him as she wrapped her robe tighter around her. "As for right now, we should be fine."

Ken nodded his head and kissed her forehead. Change was always on the horizon, you never could get away from it. All you could do was embrace it and hope that it would all go well.

The French Translations( I used google, because my French is not my strong suit!)

"How far is your sisters' house?" She whispered quietly. Glancing towards the ladies room which would only be packed.

"Not far at all," Shirley responded. "Can we wait if you need to cool off?"
"No, no I can wait," Lilian shook her head as she took her hand

"Can you button me?"

"Of course darling, will you be hot enough in all this?" She heard Shirley reply back.

"Stop worrying sweetheart, I'm fine," Lilian responded with a light laugh. "Come on, before someone catches you here,"

We're fine Lily, nobody will tell us anything. Rilla did not even question our sleep arrangements, "Shirley responded.

Rilla could hear him shake his head, and her ear peeked at her own name.

"It matters," she objected rather passionately, "I do not want your family to have a false impression of me."

"Then let them judge, it does not hurt us, we did not do anything wrong." Shirley's voice went deep.

Anyway. I hope you all have enjoyed this one and I look forward to your thoughts and comments on it. I hope you enjoyed seeing Shirley and Lillian as well.

I can finally get into some things next chapter that I have been building towards as well. So this chapter may be slightly filler but I hope everyone enjoyed it!

Tina
Welcome to chapter 19

As always I thank everyone for all the lovely reviews and comments. I am over the moon that everyone is enjoying this.

Fun-fact...Today was my birthday I am officially 31! So I finished this for everyone as a gift to myself haha.

"There has to be away?" Rilla asked as she leaned against the cabinet in their father's office.

"Quebec won't allow divorce and trying to file in Ottawa hasn't been working," Shirley shook his head. "We're getting nowhere, and we're running out of options. I'm afraid that one day I will come home to find her dead."

"Why don't you get a second opinion?" Rilla asked him. "Una's fiancé is graduating law school. Maybe there is something you haven't tried yet?"

"I don't want the whole bloody island knowing," Shirley growled. He swore under his breathe as Jem looked over the busted hand with a doctors curiosity. "Must you?"

"It will remain confidential, but Shirl, If Nan knows, Jerry knows. Faith knows, which mean Una probably knows." Jem said from his place beside him ignoring him as wiped ointment over the bruised knuckles. "Let's just ask him his thoughts on the whole situation. He's will be practically family come summertime."

"Jem is right," Rilla said softy to Shirley. "It won't hurt to ask, and no one else will know, but the longer this goes on—," Rilla stated. "It won't end well for either of you."

Shirley just glared at the both of them, before he nodded his head. He stood up from his seat, "I need to ask Lillian about it before anything."

"Of course," They both responded, they hadn't meant to talk about this without her but it happened.

"I think I she's in the sitting room, I heard the treadle going earlier," Rilla told him. She watched Shirley's lip turn upwards with a shake of his head. "Seems about right, put her near a sewing machine and she'll be there for hours."

"She noticed a few dresses that Mum started for Ceci. I believe she is helping to finish them," Rilla told him as he walked past her. She looked back towards Jem who was throwing out the old bandages.

"You're good with Ceci," Jem stated, thinking back to Christmas Eve.

"It's just practice," Rilla shrugged. "Plus toddlers are generally easy to please if you know the right things. Jims was a handful at times but he was generally well behaved. So when do you think Nan and Jerry will announce the expected news?"

"What do you mean?" Jem gave her a puzzled looked.

"Well, clearly she's hiding some sort of secret," Rilla said deadpanned like he should be able to see
"They're married after all."

"If she is, that is news to me," Jem said after a moment. "And please, I don't like thinking about such things."

"Heavens, if you are this bad with your sisters, I can't wait to see you when Cecelia is old enough to date and get married." Rilla joked with him.

"How about you little sister? Graduation coming up isn't it? Should we be expecting some news coming soon from you?" Jem shot back at her with a smirk. "

"Careful there Jem. You don't want to hear what we get up to when we're alone?" Ken warned him with a smirk as he walked into the office. He laughed when he saw Jem's face go white. As if he suddenly remember those photos he found the day of their wedding. It took a moment for Jem to gain his composure.

"Well, don't wait too long Ford, what are you twenty-eight?" Jem egged him. "Those babies will wipe every ounce of energy out of you. I'd say they turn your hair grey, but we already have that going on."

"We'll just have to take our chances. Either way, whatever our plans are, they are ours alone. " Ken shrugged not showing any emotion towards the subject. "Lunch is ready though if anyone is interested."

"We'll be right out," Rilla kissed him lightly before he left the room. "Must you be like that!" She turned to her older brother.

Jem just shrugged and grinned rather impishly.

Rilla just shook her head and went to follow Ken to the dining room. She grabbed his hand underneath the table smiling at him.

"Up!" A little voice asked coming from under the table.

"Ceci!" Faith exclaimed. Rilla chuckled and watched the toddler moved from the side of the chair.

"Up!" The little voice repeated and tried to climb up onto her uncle. Ken pushed back his chair slightly for her.

"Watch your head," Ken told her as he practically lifted her from her spot and sat her down on his lap. "You know you have a chair that's all yours,"

"No, I sit with uncley En…" She shook her coppery head.

"It seems you are her new favourite person," Rilla smiled at him cheekily.

"Well, I did just spend an hour reading to her," Ken explained as he kept one arm around the toddler while eating with the other. It took Rilla back slightly as he seemed so at ease for someone who hadn't been around children much.

"Let me she kept asking for guess one more?" Faith piped in as she passed over a plate of small cut up fruit for her daughter.

"We may have not got to nap time," Ken admitted sheepishly.

"She does it to Jem all the time, I have a feeling that mid-morning naps are a thing of the past."
Faith explained with a sigh.

"Faith, is Una and Timothy at the manse today?" Rilla asked her sister in law.

"I believe so?" Faith said after a moment. Looking towards Shirley and Lillian, as if she already knew what we were thinking.

It was after lunch when Rilla sought out her father. Rilla knocking nervously at her father's office door that was already partially opened. "Can I talk to you for a moment?"

"Of course," Gilbert spoke up and beckoned her in. He watched her shut the door and sit down in the chair in front of his desk. Her face was seemly stoic as she fixed her skirt. "What can I help you with?"

"That contraceptive device that you gave me? I was wondering if you have more," Rilla said desperately trying to pretend that this was not her father.

"Can I ask why?" Gilbert sat up straighter in his chair. Following her lead with the situation that she brought to his attention.

"Mine has a tear in it," Rilla spoke after a moment. "I think my nail went through it."

"You think?" Gilbert raised an eyebrow and shook his head. He did not want to know anyway. He got up and walked over to the large filing cabinet and unlocked it. "Which size?"

"Uhh, it has a blue marking on it," Rilla blushed slightly.

"Size 1 it is," Gilbert rifled through his cabinet before grabbing what he needed. He held it out to her. "I think it is safe to say that you should be more careful."

"Well, it's not like I did it on purpose. I just want to make it to graduation without having to worry." Rilla objected.

"And after graduation?" Gilbert asked her curiously.

"Why does everyone keep asking me that?" Rilla groaned. "I don't know, I don't know anything right now. I just want to make it to graduation." She shook her head almost whining at all the questions.

"All right then," Gilbert said after a moment. "Though I should ask if yours had a tear in it—?" He spoke carefully.

"Don't," Rilla warned him blushing slightly once more. "Please just don't. I'll be fine, let's leave it at that."

"Very well," Gilbert let his question go.

"Dad?" Rilla spoke after a pause.

"Yes, Rilla?" Gilbert silently morphed into his father voice.

"Thank you," She whispered.

"Anytime Rilla, you know that," Gilbert replied.
"Just so you know though, if I ever do have children. I'm going for a midwife if I'm on the island, and you and Jem are banned from my labour." Rilla told him as she browsed his bookshelf. "and I mean that."

"Understandable," Gilbert smiled at her with a nod of his head.

"Can I borrow this?" Rilla asked him as she flipped through the latest medical journal. Knowing if it was on the shelf he already he had finished it.

"Of course," He nodded. "Have you thought of medical school?"

"You mean to do another two years to get a B.A and another three years after that of medical school?" Rilla looked at him with a strange look on her face. It told him that she had considered it at some point in her thoughts. Though she was still very much undecided about what she truly wanted to do after graduation.

"I was just curious," Gilbert stated as he turned as the phone rang.

Rilla excused herself and carefully placed the hard container in her purse. She smiled and nodded her head to Ken as he looked towards her as she stepped into the living room.

In the end, they met at the house of dreams, allowing for a touch of privacy for Lillian and Shirley. They huddled in the sitting room, as the radiators emitted a constant heat in the room. Everyone nursing a cup of tea as they fought off the chill of the afternoon.

Timothy spoke up from his spot in the room as listened to the tale. His features remained miraculously schooled as he took in the story for the first time. He nodded at the right times and jotted down small notes once or twice.

He straightened up when the tale came to an end.

"Well, first off. I wish to offer your condolences and my heartfelt sympathy over this whole situation. Though the solution is easy enough after hearing what has come from the union. Mrs. Gagnon will have to file for divorce in Nova Scotia." Timothy said simply. "Though to file she will have to be living in the province for at least three months and have evidence of the abuse."

"Live in Nova Scotia?" Shirley said hesitantly. He wasn't sure if he wanted her to be alone.

"Yes, the only way the courts will take it seriously if she is a resident of the province. You do have evidence of the trauma and abuse?" He asked tactfully. "It has to be concrete and can't be misconstrued. However, nova scotia has a long history allowing women to divorce on the grounds of cruelty. How long have you been separated from your husband?" Timothy asked turning his head toward Lillian.

"About a year," Lillian said quietly.

"Very good, and no child?" He asked hesitating for a moment.

"Non, none that survived," she whispered after a moment.

"Whatever you need I have, hospital records, photographs," Shirley told him. Sober despite all the good news for them. He knew she had lost children, he knew the exact number which only made him angrier when he thought about it.
"Lillian can live with us?" Rilla asked turning towards Ken who nodded. "Or she can have the apartment and we can look into getting another place?"

"I don't want her alone," Shirley shook his head.

"Our door is always open," Ken said. "Though it may be best to look into getting a house, we can all have more privacy that way? We can always rent out the apartment"

"Then I will leave you all to settle the details," Timothy said after a moment. "We can go through the finer details, alone if you wish." He looked towards Shirley and Lillian.

"When we go back to Kingsport?" Shirley asked and Timothy nodded his head. They were all expected to leave on the same day which worked out for the best.

Shirley and Lillian stayed the day at the house of dreams. It was quieter for them and Rilla left them to their own devices as she went through her cleaning. While Ken was in the cellar developing some photographs that he had taken.

She had an arm full of clothing when caught sight of her brother embracing the blonde woman. It was in that moment Rilla realized she didn't even know how old Lillian was or when she got married. She didn't seem any older than Rilla herself, but she could be younger or even older.

She looked away and hurried up the old stairwell with her linens. She was putting away the clean linens when she heard the stairs creak.

"Is it all right that I'm up here?" Lillian asked her shyly.

"Of course it is," Rilla smiled brightly as she shut the cupboard. "There's not much up here, but three bedrooms and a water closet."

"Shirley says your parents lived here when they were newly married?" Lillian spoke looking around the hallway.

"They did, Jem was born here as well. Later Ken's parents bought the place as a summer house." Rilla explained as she led them into the cozy love seat that sat in the old master bedroom. "Now Ken and I use the place when we visit."

"Ken was in the war was he not?" Lillian asked as the men were off doing something in the garage.

"He was," Rilla nodded. "I suppose we had a courtship of letters before our engagement," Rilla explained. "I was sixteen when he left, and nineteen when he came back." She got up and rummaged through a dressing table drawer. She handed over an old photograph of Ken in his captains uniform. While she flipped through a small photo album she brought out. Another of Ken before the war that she found one day.

"He seems so different," Lillian says honestly. "So much younger than what he was there."

"They all seemed much older when they came home," Rilla agreed as she looked at the photo herself and sighed.

"Shirley is vingt-quatre, you are two years younger?" She asked counting in French as she tried to translate to English.

"Shirley is twenty-four and I am twenty-two. Ken ss twenty-eight." Rilla replied, "How old are you?" She asked curiously.
"I am the same age as Shirley," Lillian said automatically. "Though I am a few months older."

"When is your birthday?" Rilla asked wanting to make a mental note to write it in her calendar.

"Le vingt huitième Janvier" Lillian frowned as she wracked her mind "I am sorry my numbers are not good in English."

"January twenty-eighth?" Rilla brow furrowed. Vingt was twenty and huitième had huit in it which meant eight if she remembered correctly

"Oui," Lillian blushed and nodded her head. "Yours?"

"July twenty-first," Rilla smiled at her. "Juillet vingt et un?" She stumbled over her worlds.

"Le vingt et un Juillet," Lillian repeated correctly.

"Ehh I was close," Rilla laughed and shrugged. "Shirley," She passed over the small album. Dressed in his RAF uniform, next to it was a photo of Rilla and Shirley dressed for the first day of school. "I don't have many here, but when we can look at the ones that Mum has when we go back to Ingleside."

"I would enjoy that," Lillian murmured as she looked at the little boy who would later grow up to change her life.

"How old were you when you got married?" Rilla asked hesitantly. Unsure if the question would be welcome. It was a fair moment of silence when Rilla was going to apologize for prying when Lillian spoke.

"I was, seize? Uhh sixteen," she said quietly and she stared at a photo of teenage Shirley. "It was not something I wanted. I mean I thought I loved him at the time, but it seemed like such a gigantic step that I wasn't for. But mama felt I was old enough and with the young ones growing. We had two weeks together before he left. I want to say the war changed him, but it wasn't the war, he was had his issues before the war as well."

Rilla sucked in her breath. She had been taking care of Jimmy and had her first kiss at sixteen. Then spent years waiting for Ken and her brothers to return.

"We married before he left. I stayed with his parents who took the separation allowance and put it towards the household. I was all allowed to keep only the bare minimum for my own allowance." She explained as her voice felt millions of miles away.

Rilla paused before she pulled her in for a hug. She wanted to know more, but then again she almost didn't.

It was Ken who found them still wrapped up in their quilts. Looking at any photograph that Rilla could dig up of her family.

"Its blowing snow rather heavily outside and the roads are horrid. We have enough supplies for the four of us, but I think it's best if we stay in?" Ken told them.

Rilla nodded. "Are you all right spending the night?" She turned to Lillian how nodded. "I can lend you some nightclothes."

Lillian only nodded.
"I'll do up the downstairs bedroom for you," Rilla told her. "It's warmer." It would also allow privacy for the two couples.

Lillian nodded as they unwrapped themselves from the quilts.

Shirley was downstairs adding more wood into the fireplace. But he turned at the sound of the creaks. He smiled at Lillian.

"Comment ça va?" He asked her giving her a sweet kiss on her forehead.

"C'est bien, Rilla est adorable et m'a montré certaines de tes photos de bébé," She replied back. "Nous ne devrions pas être impolis cependant," she warned him.

"All right, English it is," he shook his head chuckling at himself. French was becoming almost second nature to him when speaking to her.

The two couples settled into making dinner for themselves and setting the table. They spoke of lighter topics and conversations. Rilla's final term of a school, and the upcoming trip to England that summer.

Rilla brought down a nightgown and a pair of old flannel pants and fresh towels for the washstand.

She cuddled into Ken that night, thankful for his presence but also his genuine kindness. "I can't imagine Ken," she whispered. "Sixteen?"

"You were no older when I fell in love with you," Ken reminded her.

"But you never asked me to marry you when I was sixteen," she shook her head. It was different for them.

"No, but I did ask you to keep your lips for myself, which is close enough to a proposal." Ken smiled, he still could see her standing among the bushes at the gate of Ingleside.

"You know, you never actually asked me to Marry you," Rilla flipped and poked him in the chest. "Keep my lips for yourself, yes. But I never had a true proposal from you. We just sort of got married."

Ken sat up with a deep rumbling hmm as he flicked on the lamp beside the bedside. Pulling Rilla up with him as he stood on his knees. He grasped my hand and twirled my ring until it slides down my finger. He grinned to himself before he continued.

"Bertha Marilla Blythe, it would be my greatest honour and most utmost dream to have your hand in marriage."

Rilla let out a laugh and nodded her head. "I suppose I should, I mean my reputation would be in tatters if I didn't. I mean we're in bed, half-dressed." Rilla said with a tease in her voice as she stared into his eyes. "I would marry you a thousand times over, you know that," Rilla said quietly.

Hands clasped as he pushed the ring back up her finger. Smiling as they tumbled into the pillows. Reaching for the blankets that shielded them from the cold. He smiled, knowing her answer hasn't changed, and hopefully would never change. He knew that sometimes the answer was hidden between the lines, away from view. Sometimes the answer was in your face yet you were too afraid to see it.

Because that was life because sometimes there is no direct answer. There were only hopeful
outcomes and many prayers. So they prayed for the two who were also bundled together. Holding each other's hand as they spoke quietly. Deciding on the best course of action, knowing that change was on the horizon and what needed to be done.

Well there you go, I hope everyone enjoyed this one.

The whole Shirley and Lillian things is just growing by the second and keeping me in this moment.

Thank you Kslchen for her helpful research and info about divorce in Canada. You are amazing and awesome.

Tina.
Thank you all for the lovely reviews and follows.

They mean the world to me and I love each and every one of them. So thank you!

I hope everyone enjoys this chapter.

Chapter 20

It was shortly after the new year when the quartet made their way back to the mainland. They already have a meeting set up with Timothy and his father. While Ken was already looking for houses in the area that were available to let or buy. Which one they were sure, but they knew they needed a larger place.

It was a bright afternoon when Ken made the long-distance call to his parent's house. Rilla had gone out with Shirley and Lillian and he had peace and quiet for the call.

After being filling on all the Christmas events and Persis burnt Turkey as she tried to cook it herself. He filled his mother in on the Ingleside Christmas and all its festivities. Finally, he gave an edited version of Shirley and Lillian, when his mother asked about the new year.

"That is quite a story dearest," Leslie murmured "It reminds a fair bit of my first marriage. If she ever needs to talk about anything I can understand her plights." Leslie said quietly.

"I will let her know," Ken nodded. "I know Rilla has been trying to gently get her to open up more, but I warn her to not push her too far."

"Rilla does have an easy way of talking to people, and getting people to talk," Leslie agreed. Knowing full well that Rilla had helped her son adjust after the war. More than he liked to admit sometimes. "Still this is something she can never understand. She can never truly understand why or what goes through a woman's mind in those unjust times."

"Was it truly that horrible?" Ken asked meaning his mother's first marriage.

"It wasn't ideal," Leslie said after a moment. "After George came out of surgery and regained some of himself. When the truth came out and that I was a widow. I was relieved, I was free."

"Then you met Dad," Ken spoke with a nod of his head.

"Oh we met and I was in love him far before we learned the truth," Leslie told him with an air of remembrance in her voice. "I was terrified but I was in love with him. I was so angry at Anne when she refused to tell me he was coming from Vancouver to see me."

"Angry, didn't you get married three months later," Ken chuckled. "Christmas of 1892, was it not?"

"Four months dearest, we got engaged in late August. Then some months later you were born," Leslie teased him. He had learned as a teenager his birthday and parents marriage date was off by at least a month.

"Ugh, thanks mom," Ken made a face into the receiver.

"So how is that topic going?" Leslie probed.
"It is the same as usual. It's no one's business but our own." Ken replied coolly. "If you are looking for grandchildren I suggest you look to Persis at the moment."

"Ken I am your Mother, we can talk about things?" Leslie urged him.

"I know, but the fact of the matter is that the decision is Rilla's and mine alone. She knows how I feel, and I know how she feels. There is little to talk about." Ken responded with a sigh.

"You seem disappointed?" Leslie noted over the line.

"I'm not," Ken rebuffed gruffly. "They will come eventually, I am sure He has it all planned out for us. Between my mental state after the war, and Rilla dealing with her trauma that came with her baby. It is for the best that we had waited."

"Fair enough," Leslie said quietly. She still remembered the first few days he came back from the war. He had been like a ghost of the man he had been. Still, she felt like she had failed him that day. The angry red scar on his shoulder and the lack of sleep that sent him in a downward spiral. A spiral so quick that had Owen driving to the hospital. Then a letter came, directed from England that had gotten lost. Suddenly he was up and out of bed, talking about going to the Island.

She had been worried when he decided that he couldn't wait any longer and wanted to go to the Island. She had seen some of the letters he mailed back to the house. She never read them, but she had seen the familiar script of Rilla's handwriting. Still, it came quite a surprise when he told them that he was planning on marrying the youngest Blythe.

"I have to go," Ken said as he looked toward the doorway. "The ladies are home."

"Alrighty dear, I'll put in for a call sometime in the next week. I'll let you know in a telegram. I love you and give my love to Rilla," Leslie said brightly.

"I love you too mom, and I will tell Dad goodbye for me," Ken responded before hanging up the phone.

"Did the two of your ladies have a good afternoon?" Ken asked as stood up as Shirley came in laden in bags. "Did you buy the entire store?" He joked.

"Of course not," Rilla rolled her eyes as she unwrapped herself and kicked off her winter boots. She smiled and kissed him before slipping into her house shoes. "Most of these are groceries among other things. How is your mother?"

"She is well, she sends her love," Ken told her as he peered into the multiple bags and made quick work of putting things away. "You got your ticket for the train?" He turned to Shirley.

"I did," Shirley nodded. He was still rather reluctant about leaving Lillian here without him. It was safer of course but still, he was worried.

"She'll be safe with us," Rilla reminded him gently as she looked over at Lillian.

It was solemn morning when Shirley left for Montreal. Rilla and Ken both stepped aside, allowing the couple to have a private moment. Tears flowed down Lillian's face as she hugged Shirley as they said goodbye. The station had seen many tearful goodbyes and no onlooker said a word. They were like every other parting couple. Ones separated by something that could not be helped.

"Sois prudent, Chéri ne sois pas stupide," Lillian told him playfully despite the tears that ran down her face. "S'il vous plaît?"
"Je ne le ferai pas, je télégramme quand je rentre," Shirley replied quietly. They were both worried but he was going to concentrate on school and not get into any more fights.

"Vous avez la liste de mes affaires?" She asked him about sending her things and only the things of importance for now.

"Bien sûr," He smiled at her worries. He looks around for a brief moment. Spotting his sister and Ken talking about something candidly as they often did. Definetly not paying attention to them.

"Prends l'argent Lily, s'il te plaît" Shirley spoke softly holding out an envelope. She needed the money more than he did. She gave him a look, which he returned until she hesitantly took the envelope and pocketed it.

Je t'aime," he pulled her close gently.

"Je connais," she replied with a smirk. This was truly happening, things were beginning to look up. Things were going to change. She felt the happiness bubble inside her for the first time in years. "Je t'aime aussi," she said timidly, her heart praying that he wouldn't break hers.

He waved back as he stepped on the train, watching as Rilla wrapped her arm around the woman he had fallen for. How many times have women watched their men lives them over the past decade?

It felt like far too many.

It was a quiet night when Rilla rang over to Ingleside asking for her Mother I hopes to ask her something.

"No, she is over at Nan's. She's been there since last night." Gilbert said after a moment. "Nan isn't well at the moment."

"She was fine over Christmas," Rilla frowned. "She seemed positively beaming."

"Yes, she was but sometimes things don't go as planned," Gilbert spoke carefully. "She will be fine, but it will take some time. I know you didn't mean anything by it, but please Rilla don't ever speculate, ever. Jem told me what you said to him, I suppose the only saving grace is that Faith was over and had an inkling from Jem."

Rilla gulped. "I didn't mean anything by it—."

"I know, and Nan doesn't know what you told Jem. But I felt like I should scold you for being so inconsiderate. Whether it was intentional or not, even if it was just curiosity on your part. You don't go around saying things like such or assuming other peoples news. You don't like it when they tease you. I am sure you would not enjoy them talking behind your back about such things? Or telling news that is not yours to tell?" Gilbert told her sternly over the phone.

"I'm sorry," Rilla let her head hang in shame. "I'll apologize to her."

"She doesn't know that it came from you. She just assumes that between being a doctor and a nurse. Jem and Faith worked it out for themselves," Gilbert replied.

"I'm sorry," Rilla repeatedly quietly. She said goodbye to her father and was left to her own miseries. She was appalled at herself for her lack of consideration and restraint at Christmas.
"How did you meet?" Rilla asked her one evening hands wrapped around mugs of hot chocolate. "You and Shirley, I know you lived near each other but how did you actually meet?"

"Well, the first time I remember seeing Shirley was in the crowd. I was doing some shopping and went to pay only to realize bourse de monnaie en perles." She stopped to think before pulling out a small beaded change purse from the pocket of her skirt.

"Change purse," Rilla offered her the word.

Lillian nodded trying to commit it to memory. "I started to panic, I was afraid of losing the little money that I had. Afraid of what Yannick would do if he knew that I lost it. When suddenly I heard someone call out Miss! Mademoiselle! I turned to see him holding out my petite beaded change purse." Lillian recalled. "He was so tall, I thought he was a giant."

"Shirley is rather tall," Rilla agreed. "Most of us are tall though, beside Nan and Di."

"They are still taller than moi," Lillian laughed lightly. Sometimes she felt like a child when in the same room as most of the Blythes.

"Well, I think most people are taller than you," Rilla teased as she sat huddled in her quilt. "Did you make the purse?" She asked looking over the intricate beading.

"Back when I was young, I would save up to buy beads and worked out the pattern over the weeks," Lillian nodded.

"It's beautiful, we made my wedding dress, my mother and I. She's a rather good dressmaker when she put her mind to it. We spent ages sewing tiny beads on the tiers of lace." Rilla turned to the portrait from their wedding. "She even helped make Nan's wedding dress, it's the last thing she says she will make for us."

"Nan looked very sweet in hers," Lillian agreed. "I would make shirts for Shirley and a few of his mates for something to do during the day."

"I know Shirley's side of the story, besotted and all. But I can't fathom how you managed to trust him?" Rilla spoke carefully. She watched the other woman think for a long moment.

"I didn't at all at first, the second time I ran into Shirley. Yannick had left in a hurry and I already wore the results of his anger over my face and arms. The lady who owned the tea shop across the way took pity on me and gave me a cup of tea. Shirley came in that day, he sat near me and didn't say a word for a good half hour. Finally, he got up and I thought he finally left, instead he pushed a tart towards me. Saying 'Je m'appelle Shirley' in very ill français, I jumped off my seat, spilling the little tea that I had and ran out. I could hear the matron telling him that I was mariée and that trying to talk to me would do more harm than good."

"Yet he did anyway?" Rilla said out loud.

"He did," Lillian nodded with a small smile. "Somedays I would see him with his classmates or tinkering on his bicyclette. I learned he lived across the street. I refused to talk to him, even if he kept nodding his head to me whenever I passed him on the street. But tell me about your schooling?" She asked, diverting Rilla's questions away from her.

"Well, my semester starts on Monday starting with Anthropology 3. Along with other soft sciences and of course a continuation of Psychology." Rilla told her. "I study a lot, and write a lot of papers for it."
"Sounds like hard work," Lillian commented. She herself only went to school until she was thirteen. "I can read and write, but only in French. The English I know is verbal only." She admitted.

Rilla smiled. "It makes sense if you were raised in Quebec. But I am curious, Shirley can't read or write French, and you can't read or write English?" Rilla asked her slightly confused.

"He can read it better from school, we shall be fine." Lillian blushed.

"Well, if you ever need help," Rilla offered. "We are here." She watched Lillian nod in acknowledgement. "Well, I guess I should give you a breakdown of our day to day. Ken splits his time between the office and working from home. But I do want you to feel at home here. Though I should warn you, we aren't your typical married couple. I am not great at housekeeping so Ken takes care a lot of the household. There is a sewing machine in the storage closet. Ken can bring it out for you if you wish, as well as a rather large box of old fabric. I'm not sure what's in there, I haven't used it since I made the curtains for the apartment."

"I'm sure I can find something worthwhile," Lillian laughed lightly. "Even so I have a few dollars saved that if you direct me to a dressmakers shop I can buy some fabric and find things to do. Though please allow me to help with meals and daily cleaning. I do want to feel useful."

"Of course, whatever you wish. Though please remember that you are a guest, you are also free to roam around the city if you wish. There is no way he can know that you are here, not until the papers are filed." Rilla smiled. "We have a large calendar on the wall with our comings and going. If you ever wish to know where we are you will have some clues. I know Shirley goes down to the telegram office to use the telephone, but feel free to set times with him if you need to. Just as well, I should tell you milk comes by every three days. Laundry is sent out Friday evening and returns Saturday. Ice comes on Wednesday mornings as well." Rilla explained. "Oh and under the sink in the bathroom is where any feminine products are stored. While the aspirin is in the medicine cabinet for any discomfort or headaches."

"You are being so kind," Lillian said quietly. She knew Shirley had tried to get Rilla to take the few dollars she had to help with expenses but had refused.

"We are practically family." Rilla patted her hand empathetically.

As the new year began, classes and appointments picked up once more. She found herself in the same old seat of the little cheerful yellow office.

"I don't even know what I am doing," Rilla sighed as she fidgeted on the sofa. "Graduation is months away and I'm just constantly trying to understand why I still can't figure out what I want."

"Well, what do you want?" Dr. White asked her.

"I want to continue with school, I want to help people, I want to feel like I've accomplished something." Rilla sighed.

"Why can't you continue with school?" Dr. White asked. She was sure she knew the answer but wanted the clarification of an answer.

"I can't continue school if we decide to have children." Rilla sighed.

"Well, you've been married a year and a half," Dr. White stated. "I can only gather from the importance of your schooling. That the lack of children was more intentional?"
"It wasn't just because of school, I was never one to coo and awe over babies. I barely like babies even now." Rilla explained. "Then after Little Jims being taken away from me," she went silent.

"You don't want the risk of losing someone you love again? But surely having your own would mean you wouldn't have to worry?" Dr. White replied.

"I don't know if I can take that risk when there is so much risk involved. More if you think of it, so many chances and possibilities for things to go wrong." Rilla whispered thinking about her mother who had almost died once. Her sister was going through her grieving period now.

"Sometimes you just need to have a leap of faith and believe that everything will be all right." The Doctor offered.

"Somedays I think I can be all right with the decision, and just be a wife and mother. But other days I want more than just to sit at home and raise children. Then I see women like my brother's girlfriend who is staying with us. Trying to escape her abusive husband and has lost children. I feel awful and selfish for thinking how I do, for feeling like I do."

"First off you are not selfish, Second I want to come back your guest at the end of this session. But First I want you to know that you can do both." The Doctor told her. "I have family outside of these walls, it takes work but it can be possible."

"How? I've already been told I'll be kicked out of school if they ever see a sign of pregnancy." Rilla objected.

"I don't know all the details to your schooling, but you can look into doing a few courses by correspondence. You may be able to work towards you B.A at home, while you focus on your family. I can contact my friend who is at the University of Toronto to learn more if you wish. I can also have them contact you to talk about options if it is possible?"

Rilla found herself nodding. She didn't think it was possible, but if she wasn't on campus and at home. The school should have no issues about her life, but would they even accept a married student?

"It may give you the ability to do more schooling while planing for a family with your husband." The doctor said as she went over to her desk. "Later if you still wish to go to medical school after your family has grown, you can. You don't need to rush things, you can work things out to suit your needs."

"Do you think it's possible? How do you know I've been thinking about medical school?" Rilla asked letting out her breath that she had been holding.

"Because you remind me of my younger self Mrs. Ford, but you should talk to your husband about this Mrs. Ford. Let him know what you thinking and allow both of you to figure out together what both of you want in your future." Rilla nodded in reply as the Doctor set aside her notebook. "Now about this guest of yours."

Rilla nodded, thinking for a moment. But the doctor most likely only wished to help.

"Her name is Lillian, she's living with us while trying to file for divorce in Nova Scotia. They were trying in Ottawa but it wasn't working. We were told by a law student that women can file for divorce on account of cruelty here. He suggested she reside here for at least three months before filing. She is staying with us for the time being, she's sweet. A little timid at first, but she has seemed to warm up to the family since the last visit. Shirley had to go back to Montreal for school,
so we are looking after her." Rilla explained.

"That is very kind of you to do," Dr. White told her sincerely. "For a woman to leave an abusive situation, it must have taken great courage."

"She is brave," Rilla agreed. "She's talking to me sometimes, but I try to stick to more of her and Shirley questions than the entire situation."

"She will talk when she is ready, but my door is always open to women like her. Just keep an eye on her, offer her a shoulder to cry on and most importantly just offer to listen to her." The Doctor replied as she looked to the clock. "Are Wednesday still good for this semester?"

"I think so unless something changes of course," Rilla replied as she gathered her purse.

"Do you really believe I can do both?" She asked once more.

"Of course." Dr. White smiled and she did believe it.

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"I found us a house!" Ken exclaimed as he rushed through the door. Both women jumped at the sound of his voice. Rilla cursed as she dropped her banana. Before looking over towards Lillian who turned pale at the loud voice. A loud shatter followed as her tea mug fell from her hands hitting the floor.

Ken frowned and held his hat to his chest.

"I'm so sorry!" Lillian squeaked like a frightened mouse.

"No, I'm sorry," Ken said shaking his head. "I shouldn't have surprised you as I did."

"Why don't you both go sit down and I will clean this up?" Rilla said holding the broom and dustpan that she retrieved from the utility closet. "Then you can tell us about the house that you found." spoke to Ken before shooing them over to the sofa.

"It's in the South end, so still close to the school, and downtown. It's a quaint little house, has two lovely bay windows in the front of the house. Four bedrooms with a full bath upstairs and a powder room on the main floor. A fireplace in the living room, and another one in the master bedroom. Lots of radiators and storage space. One of the bedrooms is on the main floor, which would give everyone some space."

"That sounds wonderful," Rilla expressed softly as she passed over a new cup of tea to Lillian and another too Ken. "When can we move in?"

"At the beginning of the month," Ken answered. "Though we can move in slowly as we wish, we can either rent this place out to a student or we can sell it. It is in your name after all." He reminded her that it was her decision.

"We can discuss it later," Rilla blushed, not wanting to talk about money in front of Lillian. While it was plain to see that Rilla and Ken wanted for nothing. It still felt wrong to discuss such things in front of others. "We have dinner in the oven though, Lillian has been teaching me some new recipes. Tourtiere, it's a meat pie. It's rather like baking in a way, but it's savoury." She beamed as she explained.

"Of course," Ken nodded with a smile.
A change was in the air, they all felt it, they all expected it. No one knew what would happen or what was in store for them. Would it be welcomed? Would it be a disappointment?

No one knew but change could be good could it not be? Change could be welcomed instead of feared.

French Translations.

"Be safe, don't be stupid darling, please .

"I won't, I telegram when I get in."

"You have the list of my things?

"Of course,"

"I love you,"

"I Know"

"Take the Money, Lily, Please"

As always I look forward to all your musings and comments!

Tina
Oh looks, it's only been little over a week. A Miracle!

Thank you all for the wonderful reviews. You are all amazing!

It was quiet, then again it was well past midnight and they were both quiet as they lay facing each other.

"So a house," Rilla said with a smile. She always had dreamed of a house of her own, the apartment was lovely but a house with space to grow.

"I think you will love it," Ken smiled at her. "I will take you to it tomorrow, I told them I wanted you to see it before I sign the papers."

"I look forward to it," Rilla replied happily. "I was sad that I could go with you that day with school and all, but I do trust your judgement."

"I hope so!" Ken joke quietly. "I was thinking we could rent this place out for a while, or we can sell it. The choice is yours, as it is in your name." Ken replied.

"I don't know," Rilla admitted honestly. "I know we'll need something bigger, but yet there are so many memories here." She whispered.

"The good things about memories we can keep them forever if we try hard enough." Ken smiled as he shifted to be closer to her. Tracing over the curve of her body through the soft flannel of his nightshirt she was wearing. He smiled as he found the soft skin that he was looking for under it.

"Ken," Rilla mumbled, her eyes closing as she found herself melting into his touch. "We have much to talk about," she stumbled over her words.

"It can wait until morning," he replied as he pressed a kiss into the crook of her neck.

The move into the new house was worked over the last weeks of January. Not the greatest time to move into a new place but they managed it. Hiring men and trucks or buggies when needed to move large pieces of furniture.

The women cleaned it from top to bottom before any of the furniture arrived. Scrubbing the house until they were satisfied with the shining floors and wainscoting. Often singing various songs as they worked gleefully.

"I learned this back in school, it's probably the most French I know," Rilla said as she thought for a moment.

"Alouette, gentille alouette,

Alouette, je te plumerai." Rilla sang brightly.

"Je te plumerai la tête, Et la tête

Et la tête, Alouette, gentille Alouette!"
"Alouette, gentille Alouette,

Alouette, je te plumerai,

Alouette, gentille Alouette,

Alouette, je te plumerai,

Je te plumerai le bec," Lillian added on before both of them ran through the entire song.

"Please, never sing that song," Ken spoke from the doorway. His voice hollow and face haunted as he set down the cans of paint at his feet.

Rilla looked over to Lillian was went white stood there motionless. She turned to look back over to her husband who walked through the kitchen to back door.

"I'll be right back," Rilla said looking rather unsure about leaving Lillian, yet she really needed to see to Ken. "Everything is all right, we did nothing wrong." She tried to explain as she grabbed her coat from the peg on the wall and hurried into it.

Walking out she shivered from the cold January air she found him piling wood behind the house.

"Darling?" Rilla spoke softly, not wanting to spook him any more than he already was.

"You should be inside," Ken responded. "It's below minus ten right now."

"Ken," Rilla spoke more deliberately, a way to say she wasn't backing off.

"Just leave it, please, Rilla," Ken growled at her. "Not right now, please just let it go." He sighed and threw the kindling down the chute that ran down into the basement.

Rilla sighed and shook her head as she turned to go back inside the house. She hung up her jacket and went back to the living room.

"I'm sorry about that," Rilla excused the situation with a shaky smile. "I suppose I should have warned you. I'm sorry if he frightened you."

"The war?" Lillian asked quietly.

"Most likely, why and how it all adds up I'm not sure about. But I am sure he will explain himself when he is able to."

"Men used to sing the song," Lillian spoke quietly. "The song is about plucking feathers from an Aoulette, which is a type of bird. I heard men say that they would sing it around the camp when they came from the front."

"Oh Josephy," Rilla muttered. "I would have never thought, nor would I have ever have sung it if I had known." She groaned. "It's no wonder why Ken reacted the way he did," she sighed wanting to bang her head on the wall.

It took him a half an hour to come back indoors, looking more like himself as he glances sheepishly at the ladies.

"I am going to check, on-" Lillian spoke up and made herself scarce as she carried her cleaning supplies with her.
"I didn't mean to be so cold," Ken began. "I'm sorry, I haven't heard the song in a long while."

"It's all right dearest. Lillian somehow explained about the song and its connection to the front." Rilla told him as laid a hand on his arm as comfort.

"I'm still sorry," Ken repeated himself to ensure that she knew it.

"I know," Rilla kissed him as she wrapped her arms around him.

The work resumed on the house, keeping to lighter songs that they had grown up with. Ken had brought a tuner for the piano that had found hidden away in one of the rooms. Both had little musical knowledge but they figured if they worked on it they might get better.

Trips to the fabric counter were endless as lace and light pieces of cotton were chosen for curtains. Heaver sturdy velvets and cotton were bought for cushions and window seats. Just another way to make the house their own.

The constant sound of the treadle was heard during the day. While Rilla finished off small hand sewing tasks. At the end of the sewing, Rilla pressed a few bills into Lillian's hand. Refusing all refusals, saying she would have paid someone else for the work.

Many of the rooms remained empty, but they were in no hurry to fill them. So the sewing machine sat in the small dining room. They painted the walls were painted in bright light colours. Buttery yellow in the kitchen, light blue in the bathrooms. The master bedroom was papered in a silvery grey, decorated with fallen leaves. While the living room had embossed oriental floral paper that Rilla had fallen in love with.

When it was inhabitable, they finally settled in after a quiet goodbye to their first home in many ways. Leslie had shipped them a large crate of things she had bought on her various travels. Things she always meant to pass onto Ken one day.

"Ken Darling?" Rilla called out as she flipped an old packet of old childhood photographs that she has sent along in the crate. Mostly doubles of the ones she had. Rilla smiled as she flipped through them, smiling at the dates written on the back,

Along with the few baby and child photos, there was also a wedding photo. Seeing Leslie and Owen in their younger days was interesting. She could Leslie in the many aspects of Ken's facial features yet his colouring was much of Owen.

"Look at these," she passed them over to her husband who sat down next to her. She smiled as she looked at the wedding photo that had her parents in it as well. She flipped the photo over, reading the date her brow furrowed.

December 25th, 1892

She went back to the one of Ken, looking a couple of months old for his first official photograph. Summer 1893— Two months old.

"Found some did she?" Ken chuckled. "I really was an ugly bald infant," he made fun of his photo. "I do hope our children do not take after me in infant stages."

"You were adorable," Rilla shook her head at him before looking at another photo. "Ken?" Rilla looked at him confused. "You were born June 1893 right?"
"Yes," Ken grinned, watching her to piece together something he already knew.

"Your parents were married Christmas 1892," Rilla spoke in disbelief.

"Yes." He grinned cheekily.

"But—?" Rilla let out an exasperated breath. "That would mean…"

"I'm the reason why they pushed up their wedding? Or the reason why they never said a word about us and our sleepovers during our engagement?" Ken offered her as a response with a crooked smile.

"Your mother was married before," Rilla asked him. She knew the answer, but still the story had been stretch thin over the years.

"She was, her story was much like Lillian's," Ken said after a short pause. "She was pressured into marriage at sixteen. From the things, I have pieced together it was more volatile than I was led to believe at a young boy. He left her, leaving for Havana and just disappeared for a year, then one day he appeared, or so they thought." Ken told her.

"They found out years later that it was his cousin of course. But back then he was her husband. Who was very much an invalid, childlike in many ways, she took care of him as she was his wife. It wasn't until your parents married and moved to Four Winds when things began to change for her." Ken explained.

"So she went from have brute of a husband, to an invalid to take care of who ended up not even being her husband?" Rilla repeated trying to make sure she understood correctly.

Ken nodded. "She met my father when he boarded with them, it was the summer after your parents married. He was boarding there while writing one of his books, providence some would say. " Ken smiled to himself.

"Dad, says George Moore was pretty harmless. Though he does remember a few afternoons when he would find Mom crying or covering up a bruise on her arm. Usually when George misjudged his strength when she tried to get him to see reason. Trying to get him to calm down in a fit on his difficult days."

"Then my father told her about the surgery?" Rilla continued. "Apparently my parents were at odds about it, or that's what I heard through the grapevine over the years. Mother was afraid that if they did the surgery that Leslie would suffer a fate worse than caring for in invalid."

"Yes, but Mom felt like she had to try anyway. Luckily, the truth had come out, and her world changed again. She was free of everything that had trapped her for so long." Ken confirmed. "Your mother had written to my Father. Telling him about it all and that my Mom had been freed from her commitments. He was in Vancouver at the time, he came as quickly as he could. Mom had no idea what your mother had done."

"That sounds like my mother," Rilla agreed and Ken nodded in agreement.

"He arrived in August and it didn't take long for him to propose. His holiday was over by early September. When I asked about it for the first time I had been sixteen I believe. She said she had been starved for love, that she didn't care if it wasn't proper. She wanted to feel. She wanted to make sure she was truly in love with him. That they would be right for each other," Ken explained. His neck turning pink with old embarrassment.
"Father still has the letter she wrote to him to tell him the news. She was so worried about his reaction, but he was ecstatic. He rushed to finish up his business and planned to be back by Christmas."

"I suppose it worked out all worked out in the end," Rilla spoke still thinking about the entire story. "Still, it seems like such a leap of faith."

"I suspect it was, a leap of faith. Though she once said that she had twelve years to come to terms and heal from that first year of marriage. It wasn't until Lillian that I truly wondered what my mother went through. Which sounds horrible I know, but I still don't think I will ever get a real answer from her," Ken said after a moment.

"Maybe it for the best then," Rilla concluded. "No use in reliving the past if you can look past it, but I'm curious. Didn't they leave for Toronto after they married?"

"They did, and I know Mom was slightly embarrassed when they moved. Already visibly expecting a child, it was not like they pretend I was that early. In the end, Father hadn't been home in so long and the family just said that they eloped and mail had gotten lost somehow. They just went along with it," Ken told her. "As far as I know no one in Four Winds ever truly mentioned it. I think they were just happy my mother had found someone like Owen Ford who worshiped the ground she walked on."

"Oh so that is where your romanticism comes from," Rilla smiled poking him lightly in the shoulder. "Tea?" She asked him as she stood up deciding to make some tea.

Ken nodded and grinned. "Please," he told her before playfully swatting her butt as she passed him by.

"Oi!" Rilla turned to him giving him a look to behaving yourself as they both turned as the telephone rang.

"I'll get it," Rilla told him as she went to the receiver and picked it up from the cradle.

"Oh, well, thank you for the call," Rilla said after a long moment of listening. "I will look into it, thank you." She said once more before she placed the receiver down once more.

"Everything all right?" Ken asked her from his spot.

"Dr. White has to take a leave an absence. Family emergency," Rilla explained.

"I hope everything will be all right," Ken frowned. "Will, you all right?"

"I will survive," Rilla told him. She didn't tell him that ever since her one appointment she felt like something had been off with the Doctor. Or that when she apologized for overstepping professional boundaries. Rilla had tried to reassure her that she never saw it as such. But looking back on it more and more she could see crossed lines from that previous appointment.

Still just as the Dr said, she had a rather official-looking envelope with her name on it waiting to be read. Except she was too afraid to open it. Too afraid to see what other professors thought about her quest for school.

It took her all night to open it. It gave her a good idea of what she could do. Schools she could apply to. The expectations of distance learning. The advantages and disadvantages labelled out for her.
She wouldn't be able to do it all through correspondence. She would most likely need at least an additional semester or two of classroom studies. But she could stretch out her studies until she was ready to return, or able to return. Whoever this contact was, he did highly suggest applying to a university and not college. Redmond was too strict, to religious in many ways. A University would be more diverse, and appropriate for her. Though Rilla assumed it would just as prejudice against the female students in many ways.

She set the papers aside, going back downstairs to help with dinner. She peeled potatoes and dutifully followed every instruction that Lillian had shown her. Or told her, which was most often in french. Which only led to confusion and Lillian clicking her tongue.

"You're speaking french," Rilla reminded her.

"Then watch me," Lillian shook her head. "I thought with all your schooling you would be able to watch and take directions." She teased lightly as she stirred the skillet. It was the first time that Rilla saw what Shirley most likely saw in Lillian. She looks cautiously at Rilla blushing, retreating slightly into her shell once more.

"So this is what normal husbands come home to?" Ken jested as he came through the back door of the kitchen. He hung up his coat and set the large stack of papers on the counter that was in a large folder.

"Lillian I think we may need to stop all this. He's getting to aquainted to coming home to cooked dinners," Rilla smirked as she stirred the skillet.

"Hardy har har, oh I got the mail," Ken told them placing a small pile on the table. "A little from Shirley for you Lillian," he passed it along. She looked at it briefly before putting it in the pocket of her apron.

"Merci," she said quietly. "You know both of you may call me Lily if you wish," she said as she busied herself with the teapot.

As Ken pulled Rilla in for a welcome home kiss and he gave a curious look towards Lillian. Rilla just smiled playfully and gave a small shrug, they both knew that Shirley called her Lily at times. It was easy enough to pick up when they spoke, but it was the first time she allowed them to call her such.

"Oh no!" Rilla turned back in a rush at the smell of burning. "Oh! Are you kidding me!" She groaned.

The room erupted into laughter as she glared at the two other.

"Go sit down," Ken told her. "I will whip something up for us all," Ken told her kindly as he rubbed her back. Rilla sighed and made her way out of the kitchen, defeated by her clumsiness.

She waited until after Lillian retired to her room to read her letter before she brought it out to show him. Her hands shaking as she placed them in front of him. He read it quietly, his face void of any emotion.

"You were excited to finished school," Ken asked rather bewildered. "Yet now you're looking into more?"

"I am excited, but I just don't feel like it's over. I don't want it to be over." Rilla admitting trying to explain to him. Watching him light a cigarette and take a long drag of it, "I wish you wouldn't do that in here," she reminded him.
"Damnit Rilla," Ken growled ignoring her as he took another drag. "What about our plan? What about that family we spoke about having? Isn't that what all your therapy has been working towards?"

"My therapy was to help me come to term and allow myself to acknowledge what I went through." Rilla objected. "What do you want to hear Ken? That I'm ready for children? That I'll be happy being a stay at home wife and mother, letting all my studies and passions just rot away in the attic?"

"Of course not, but I didn't expect to be caught off guard with something like this!" Ken rebutted, tapping the ashes into the tray with a heavy flick.

"I wasn't trying to blindside you or keep this from you. I just wanted to get the information before I even talked to you about it. I wanted to be prepared, to know what my options were. I'm just trying to make sense of everything I want." Her voice trembled as she tried to explain. How could she get him to see that she had a plan. That she wasn't saying no to him.

"All I am trying to do is find out if I can take a course or two a year to put towards a B.A later on down the road. By distance, by correspondence. Something in-between that allows me to be here at home majority of the time. While still working towards something."

"What are you planning to do with a B.A?" Ken asked almost afraid of her answer.

"It means I can work towards medical school. It means I can potentially help other people," Rilla answered quietly. "But that will be years off if I get in at all."

"And after this graduation?" Ken asked hesitantly. He prayed for the day that her eyes would light up at the thought of children as they did for other things.

"Come May if you want to—" Rilla swallowed. The thought terrified her still, but she was beginning to realize it was like everything other life change. Sometimes you just had to jump all in, ready to take on whatever life brought you. "With the trip planned, it might seem like a second honeymoon and all." She whispered as she looked up at him.

He saw many emotions in her eyes that were an alluring green tinge. Telling him she was afraid, but as she held his steady gaze, showing him she was trying to embrace those fears.

It was the subtle acceptance, knowing that there will always be something to make you say 'Not now,'. It reminded him of their wedding day, that same look in her eyes.

A look that told him she was ready to take that leap of faith.

A leap of faith that held an undying hope for a bright future.

Okay, I decided on a route for Ken and his birthday that is a touch on the crazy side. I know! but I had some fun with it and I tried to explain my reasoning as best as I could. That said I also read a fair bit of House of Dreams for this chapter which I haven't in a while which was good for research.

Alouette is a French Canadian folk song that is taught in school in french class as young kids to teach you about body parts and whatnot. According to history soldiers used to sing it during the war, which led to other men from other countries to hear and bring it back home with them.

I think that is the most to this authors note, but I am tired so I am not exactly sure haha!
But now I am off to bed for tonight and I hope everyone enjoyed this one.

Tina
Chapter 22

So I'm not going to lie, I was rather depressed while writing this chapter over the weekend. But I keep looking at it, keep staring at it and say no I need this whenever I want to throw it all away.

I am feeling a bit happier, it was just a rough weekend and I am coming around.

Thank you again for all the reviews and follows!

So here is chapter 22.

Montreal was cold, it always was cold in February. Tea that sat in the mug that had long grown cold. Letters and paper lay strewn across the table. Photos and old handkerchiefs with delicate stitches placed in their spots.

He was used to her voice, her soft laughter. Instead, it dreadfully quiet with only the sounds of the streets came through the double pained windows.

All It needed was a stamp. A stamp and a quick walk to the post office. The occupant turned to the thermometer that sat in the window. It was below minus twenty and his boots were still drying out from this morning walk from campus.

Ma chérie,

J'espère que tu vas bien et que tu es à l'aise à Kingsport.

L'école est toujours le même nombre de projets et de tests. Nous travaillons sur un projet de classe qui représentera la moitié de notre note.

J'ai rencontré Yannick alors que je faisais mes courses chez le marchand. Je vais vous épargner les détails, mais il a remarqué votre disparition. Je doute qu'il ait une idée d'où vous êtes. On sait mal que je viens de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard. Mais soyez en sécurité et conscient de votre entourage lorsque vous sortez.

Je vais bien sinon, je vous promets le plus cher. J'espère que vous pourrez mieux le lire. Madame Leblanc m'aidait et le récapitulait déjà deux fois. Elle lui adresse ses vœux de bonheur et me nourrit relativement souvent, me prenant souvent à pied de l'école le soir. Son café est toujours un lieu sûr pour beaucoup.

Georgina et Theresa vont bien et demandent aussi de vous quand je les vois. Mei est sur le point d'accoucher tous les jours et espère que vous pourrez rencontrer l'enfant une fois que tout sera réglé. Les Fongs s'assurent également que je reste nourri. Qu'est-ce que vous leur avez écrit?

Je vais terminer ceci ici car je devrais terminer mes devoirs avant de me coucher.

Sois prudent, reste fort mon amour.

Je t'aime

Shirley

The silence is deafening when you're trying to stay confident. Maybe it was the lack of letters, the
missed call that they had scheduled. It was enough to send anyone into a pit of worry considering the circumstances.

Rilla watched Lillian watch the mail. Every day she was at the door whenever Ken or herself brought it home when they came from work or school. A week had gone by with no letter. Usually at least one, maybe even two if one had come on Monday or Tuesday.

"Something isn't right," Rilla whispered to Ken. "It's not Shirley to not write, or call."

"I know," Ken agreed as he set aside the milk jar he rinsed out. Rilla grabbed the empty crate and placed it by the door to take out before they went to bed that night.

"Is there any way to get someone to check on him?" Rilla asked.

"There's a division of the magazine," Ken spoke after a moment. "I can try and see if they can send some down to check on him."

"Would they?" Rilla replied unsure if strangers would look in after someone they didn't know.

"He's family and I know Gerard rather well," Ken stated as he unplugged the sink and rinse it out. Despite all the worry and concern, Ken kept walking around like he was the happiest man on earth. He smiled when he thought of Rilla's promise. He was so over the moon even his friends commented on his whistling.

It went unneeded as over in Montreal things were shifting. They hadn't seen Shirley since last Wednesday?

"Did you try his residence?"

"Of Course!" The one exclaimed. "But His landlady was away for the weekend, but let us know an hour ago that he wasn't there and all his things are still there."

"He hasn't been to classes either," The other spoke up. "Since the previous Friday. Before we had our reading week. We was catching up on things but we met up at the pub for food last Wednesday."

"What does he look like?" The constable asked

"Tall, over six feet, curly brown hair and rather tannish." He classmate explained. "Rather large and burly like a lumberjack if he wears plaid."

One of the many constables looked up. "I think he is the man we found Friday night. He's at Royal Victoria Hospital. I will bring you to him."

As soon as they had a name for the man, a message to the school went out. Asking for any emergency contacts they had for Shirley Blythe which they provided the next morning. Not long after a telegram went out to Dr. Blythe.

Mr. Shirley Blythe, stop, at Royal Victoria Hospital. Sedated but in stable condition. An investigation is in progress. Please Call for more information.

It was Lillian who picked up the phone that afternoon, breaking the news to he could to her. He reassured her the Shirley was alive and that he was going to Montreal to check over his son.
"I did this," Lillian cried "Si Je rentrais chez lui après Noël," she switched over to French not thinking about it. "C'est ce que j'ai fait, oh mon Dieu, Yannick doit être tellement en colère."

"Lillian, I only caught a few words of that, but you did nothing wrong. You are trying to claim your own life back. Shirley knew going back without might cause some difficulties. However, none of this is your fault." Dr. Blythe reassured her. "Is anyone home?"

"Rilla is at school and Ken is doing something at the paper," Lillian hiccuped.

"Then I want you to sit down and just breathe. Anne and I are going to catch the evening train and ferry and arrive sometime tomorrow morning. I gave them your number should anything change."

Gilbert told her. "You should get a call, along with the detective as I told them we have a good idea who may have done this."

"What happened, Is it bad?" Lillian whispered into the receiver.

"I was told he has rather nasty head wound they said, he lost a fair amount of blood from various other shallow wounds." Gilbert worded carefully. He didn't want to alarm her more than necessary. "He'll pull through, he saw and had worse during the war. He put up a fight from what they can reckon."

Lillian was still sitting there in a daze when Rilla arrived home. Much like the Dr said, the telephone rang once more. It was the constabulary in Montreal. After a short conversation, she answered every question that had given her.

"Hello! Bonjour!" She called out as she unwrapped her scarf from around her neck. "Lily?"

"Ici," Rilla heard her call out.

"Lily, is everything all right?"

"Your Pére called," She whispered. "They had a telegram about Shirley."

"Oh Please! Lord no—." Rilla sank on the sofa. "Please don't tell me?"

"He's alive, in the hospital but he is alive," Lillian told swiftly. "I can only imagine what happened."

"Did my father say anything else?" Rilla asked.

"That they are on their way here, they are going to Montreal," Lillian explained.

"Are you going to go with them?" Rilla asked rather much in a daze about the whole situation. Despite her mind already mentally figuring out when her parents around arrive, the last ferry was at 8 pm. Which meant they would stay overnight at the harbour, while the morning train got in around 9 am. At least it was a Thursday and she didn't have classes until the afternoon.

"I wish to," Lillian replied honestly. "I don't know I can or not."

"Oh fiddlesticks! A small visit won't hurt or change anything given the circumstances," Rilla told her. "If this is about money—," Rilla trailed off not wanting to embarrass her. "We can cover whatever you need, you are practically family at this point. We'll figure it all out together. Though I wish I knew if they are going to catch the evening train tomorrow or the day after in the morning."

" Rilla sighed. "I suppose I will air out the spare room just in encase."
"I'll do that," Lillian offered. "It will give me something to do, I am sure you have homework?"

"That I do, but I can manage." Rilla objected.

"Please, let me feel useful?" Lillian pleaded quietly. Rilla agreed with a sigh as the thought about the paper she needed to write.

The Blythes arrived in their luggage little before 10 am. It was the first time they had seen their daughter's new house. Rilla watched her take in the quaintness of her home with small pride. They went straight into brunch as Gilbert relayed all the information that he knew so far.

"Do you wish to come with us, dear?" Anne turned to the petite blonde who looked rather tired with dark circles under her eyes.

Lillian shyly nodded in response. "I would like to see him," she responded. Mrs. Blythe was a sweet lady but still felt somewhat of a stranger to her.

"How about I accompany Lillian as well?" Rilla spoke up seeing the uneasiness that her mother didn't see. "I can say that I have a family emergency and make up the work next week."

Ken looked up from his plate to look at her. "I'm manning the printing this weekend, so you will have to go without me." He told her.

"I am sure I can manage," Rilla told him. "I think we are past the age of chaperones." She teased him.

"Then it's settled, we'll get four tickets," Anne stated giving her husband a look. "We can take the morning train tomorrow then. We will pick up a few things for the journey and I think your father and I will go see an old haunt or two."

"I have some money for the fare," Ken stated as he reached for his money clip that was in his pocket. Flipping through a few bills until he was satisfied. "That should do it, if not let me know. Also, take the car if you need to, it is better than walking. I usually catch the trolley to the printers so I won't miss it today." Ken told his father in law who took the cash without hesitation. Both understanding the need to provide for one's family.

"Thank you, I will bring you the change." The older man took the offered money and put it in his pocket for safekeeping.

"What time is your class today?" Anne asked Rilla.

"Two-thirty until five," Rilla replied. "Then I will talk to my program head about missing Friday and Monday. So I will be home most likely little after six."

"Do you need help packing?" Anne asked her.

"Thank you but I will be fine," Rilla shook her head. "Laundry was just delivered a few days ago so plenty of clean clothing."

"Do you need anything Lillian?" Anne asked the blonde kindly. Drawing her back into the conversation.

The rest of the day was filled with errands and when Rilla came home she found her mother cooking dinner. She couldn't remember the last time her mother cooked dinner, even at Ingleside.
Susan had reigned in the Kitchen for all of her life. When she looked towards her father who had an amused look on his face. She suddenly understood where her own cooking skills came from. Aunt Marilla taught her mother foolproof recipes, but never managed more than three. One which was sitting on the table and another that was in the fridge for Ken on the weekend.

The rest of the evening was spent making fudge for the trip which had the ladies all laughing with sore arms. While the two men settled into the chair by the fireplace with books. Listening as the ladies decided if they should wash their hair before the train, or when they arrived.

In the end, Rilla decided to wash hers before as it would be easier to manage. She was in the middle of her bath when there was a knock on the door.

"Rilla it's me," Anne called out.

"One moment," Rilla called out as she reached for the bath curtain to hide her body from view. "All right come in."

"Sorry I don't mean to disturb you, I was wondering if you have any moisturizer? I forgot mine."

"Oh yes, the middle shelf in the cabinet," Rilla told her.

"Elizabeth Arden?" Anne commented as she glanced at the trio of skincare. While glancing at various cosmetics that lived in the cabinet. She knew her daughter wore cosmetics when off the Island but it was still strange to see in her cabinet.

"Leslie sent them to me from Toronto," Rilla explained as her mother rubbed the cream into her face.

"Well, thank you," Anne smiled. "I will leave you be, enjoy your bath. Do you need help with your hair later?"

"I would like that," Rilla nodded with a small smile as she heard her mother shut the door on her way out.

She quickly washed and pulled herself out of the bath. Drying off she pulled on her flannel pyjamas and wrapped her robe around her. She slipped into her slippers and went to the living room where her mother was French braiding Lillian's hair.

"Your hair reminds me of Nan, somehow she got my rather straight hair," Anne remarked. "Of course Di has wavy, the boys and Rilla all have curly like their father."

"Walter had straight hair," Rilla reminded her.

"He did," Anne hummed as Lillian looked towards Rilla with question eyes.

"Walter died in the war, did Shirley never tell you that?" Rilla asked her after explaining.

"He said he had lost a brother," Lillian thought for a moment. "And a sister?" Her brow furrowed.

"He told you about Joyce?" Anne set down the hairbrush.

"Only when I asked him how many siblings he had. 'Six in actuality, but only four are living."

"Joyce only lived for a few hours. She was our firstborn," Anne explained after a quiet pause.

"Oh, Je suis désolée," Lillian blushed.
"It's fine sweetheart, it was many years ago," Anne patted her shoulder.

"But you never forget it," Lillian murmured and Anne looked at her.

"You lost a child as well?" Anne asked gently. Lillian nodded it was always easier to admit such things to another who experienced loss as well.

Rilla sat back in her chair. Lillian didn't offer up any more information but she watched her mother empathize in other ways. A light touch on the shoulder, a caress as she finished off the braid.

"I lost Jimmy because of the law, which was excruciating. I don't know how you both lived through it." Rilla whispered. Her mother turned her attention to Rilla and caressed her cheek lovingly. Picking up the hairbrush she began brushing out the curls of her daughter's hair. "It seems much worse."

"Every young woman is afraid. Motherhood is a terrible unknown thing to us in the beginning." Anne explained. "We women are resilient though, we always find our way. I wish I can promise that things will go well and that everything will work out for you, but I can't. However, I can promise to always be there for you. Plus I am sure that Ken will be there as well every step of the way. Though unlike your father I am sure he will have his place outside of the delivery room." Anne laughed. Remembering how her Gilbert bravely decided when Walter had been born that he would do it by himself. He was a doctor after all and her husband.

"Yes and apparently the province has driven out the last of the midwives though. Which is a shame, so many women still don't live close enough to hospitals especially on the island." Rilla explained. "Though I am sure dad has told you all about it."

"I have heard about it yes," Anne nodded her head. "But I will be here as soon I can make it here, or if you're on the island I'll be there at first call."

"Jimmy?" Lillian asked rather confused. She was still concentrating and translating over quick words between mother and daughter. Shirley's family could be mentally exhausting with all their fast-paced talk.

"Jimmy was my war baby," Rilla promptly explained. "His mother died giving birth to him, I happened upon him not long after she died. I decided I couldn't leave the baby there and I brought him home. His father was away at war, and I was told if I wanted to keep him I was had to do it myself."

"Rilla was only fifteen, I came home from being away for two nights to find her putting her baby to bed." Anne laughed at the memory. "It was rather a shock."

"Anyway, his father survived and remarried. I had to give him back after four years, it was horrid." Rilla sank into her armchair. "I still see him occasionally. He was the little boy who we were with over Christmas."

"Alas, I think we should all head to bed?" Anne spoke as she set down the brush. Quickly she braided and tied off the long braid that hung down her daughter's back. "We have a rather long day ahead of us."

"We do," Rilla nodded.

As I said, rather blue this weekend so I hope this isn't too awful.
You will find out more next chapter about what happened to Shirley, plus i get to do some research about Montreal!

Fun Fact Elizabeth Arden was created by a Canadian! Florence Nightingale Graham!

The Letter translated.

My darling, I hope you're doing well and that you're comfortable in Kingsport.

The school is still the same number of projects and tests. We are working on a class project that will represent half of our grade.

I ran into Yannick while I was shopping at the mercantile. I will spare you the details but he has noticed your disappearance. I doubt he has any idea where you are. It's not well known that I am from PEI. But be safe and aware of your surrounding when you are out.

I am fine otherwise, I promise you that Dearest. I do hope you can read this one better. I had Madame Leblanc help me out and rewrote it twice already. She sends her well wishes and she keeps me relatively fed often catching me walking from school in the evenings. Her cafe is still a safe space for many. Georgina and Theresa are doing well and ask about you as well when I see them. Mei is about to deliver any day and hopes you will be able to meet the child once everything is settled down. The Fongs are also making sure I stay fed. Whatever did you write to them?

I will end this here for I should finish my schoolwork before I head to sleep.

Be safe, stay strong my love.

I love you

Shirley.

***

I did this, oh heavens Yannick must be so angry.
Chapter 23

The platform was cool and filled with the steam of the train that was waiting for it, passenger.

"Wait! Wait!" Timothy called out as he finally spotted the Blythes on the platform. They all turned to him as he raced towards them.

"Is everything all right?" Rilla turned to ask him puzzled at his appearance.

"Yes, and no, I heard from Una, who heard from Faith that you were leaving for Montreal for your brother. I had to warn you," he turned to Lillian. "I can't tell you not to go, but you need to understand that this is probably what he wants. If you see him, he can twist it into a million things in court"

"I cannot go," Lillian said shaking her head. "But I cannot sit here while Shirley is, Non, I cannot."

"We'll all watch over her," Gilbert stepped in, rather ashamed that he never considered such a thing. But he was a doctor and not a lawyer.

"If he managed to corner and put Shirley in the hospital," Timothy stressed.

"He wouldn't dirty his hands with such," Lillian spoke quietly. "He would have had his friends do that for him."

"Lil—?" Rilla spoke up as the train sounded once more, all aboard being called.

"Non!" Lillian stood her ground. She didn't care if it wasn't right, or safe. This was all her fault, to begin with. She just had to be there for Shirley, just like he had been for her.

"Then we must get boarded," Anne said gently wrapping her arm around the blonde showing her support. She could understand Timothy's reservations but Lillian spoke up for herself.

Rilla waiting until they were almost boarded before turning back to Timothy.

"Don't take it personally, but I think she needs to do this to show that she's not afraid of him," Rilla explained.

"When her life could be in danger?" Timothy balked.

"It's nothing she hadn't lived through before." Rilla stated sadly before turning to Ken. Who had been watching the exchange wordlessly, He looked solemnly towards her. His hat casting a shadow over half of his face. His eyes were cloudy with emotion like all the previous times they had said goodbye.

"I love you, don't work too hard," Rilla kissed him swiftly and ran her leather gloved hand over the side of his face.

"I love you too," Ken murmured holding her until he knew he had to let her go. He watched her as she jumped on the train last second before it started to move and the doors shut.

She watched him wave the train off, a pang shot through her heart as she waved back from the window. This was the first time she had travelled without him. It would be the first time since their marriage that they will be parted for any length of time.
"Come, one Sweetheart," she heard her mothers voice. "Let's get settled in."

"I didn't have enough time to consider that this the first time we will be apart," Rilla explained weakly to her mother.

"The first time is always the worst, but it will only make you appreciate each other more." Anne rubbed her back as they made their way down the different compartments. "Everything all right between the two of you?" Anne asked her quietly. "I can kick your father out of the cabin if you need to talk?" Anne grinned like a schoolgirl at the thought of teasing her husband.

"Everything fine," Rilla said after a small pause as they came to their compartments. Not ready to tell her mother about the new or the discussion about after graduation. "Just a busy semester and he's working a fair bit on the maritime division of the Magazine," Rilla explained. "I think we both are looking forward to the trip to England to see his war friend get married."

"Oh you will love England," Anne gushed. "You were only six when your father and I went, and I missed you all dreadfully of course."

"There will be some Lords and possibly even a Duke" Rilla told her.

"Well, aren't we going to be all posh now?" Anne nudged her. "You have outgrown the island in many ways."

"I will never outgrow the island," Rilla said rather put out at her mother's comment. They walked down the train until they reached their destination. Finding her Father talking to Lillian about what Timothy had said to her.

"We'll just have to be vigilant," Gilbert stated. "Don't ever let yourself be alone."

"I am sure it will be fine," Lillian responded as they went into the compartment.

"What did you mean that you don't think it was Yannick who did this?" Rilla asked quietly.

"He had a group of friends who did his dirty work for him when people owed him money," Lillian said quietly after a moment. "They never paid much attention to me when I was in the room, so I heard a fair bit. As long as I poured their drinks they ignored me, they knew better than to talk to me. Which I suppose is some sort of strange blessing in a way?" She spoke quietly.

Rilla saw her mother give her father a look. Every time they saw Lillian, pieces of information came out. Over the past two months, she said things in passing that had Rilla turn her head in shock. Even some had caused the urge to hug the older woman.

"Well, I am going to find some coffee, can I get your ladies anything?" Gilbert asked standing up and smoothed over his trousers. The grey in his hair standing out more than every Rilla noticed, but at fifty-eight it was to be expected. Even her mother while still beautiful with her red hair had a long streak of white in it now.

"Tea for me darling," Anne smiled at him.

"Very well Anne-girl, ladies?" Gilbert looks to the two younger women.

"Coffee with milk and sugar," Rilla answered with a yawn.

"Same for me thank you," Lillian spoke quietly.
"I will be back," Gilbert spoke before leaving the compartment.

"Either I'm going to need a lot of coffee or a lot of naps," Rilla yawned covered her mouth. "I didn't think anything could be more boring after the second time than a train excursions."

"It's not that horrible," Anne tutted her.

"When you spend days on a train, it is." Rilla leaned against the armrest. "I'm sure Lillian agrees with me."

"It does get tedious, though Shirley always brought games for us to play. Or we found others to make conversation with during meal times." Lillian agreed.

"Ken often told me I was worse than Persis about travelling," Rilla told him. "Persis is my sister in law. She's your age," she quickly explained to Lillian. "They travelled a lot with their parents. Mr. Ford is a writer and traveled the world often took the family with him.

"I feel like I should sympathize with Ken," Anne teased her daughter. "Keeping you interested or occupied with something has always been a task."

"Well, Ken has certainly found ways to keep me occupied," Rilla replied rather saucily.

"Bertha Marilla Blythe," Anne gave her a look. "We may all be married women in here, but you should still have some more decorum. Especially given the circumstances," her voiced dropped low,

"It's all right Mrs. Blythe," Lillian spoke up. "I have heard far worse from Georgina and Teresa talking after their shifts. They were workers at a nightclub," Lillian explained. "They helped me occasionally, they even offered me a train ticket once."

"Montreal doesn't have temperance?" Anne said out loud.

"Non, it doesn't, but it is regulated to a degree and you need licenses to serve it. Provincial stores sell wine and spirits as well," Lillian explained. "A lot of young women work in clubs as barmaids, or dancers. Generally it one of the few jobs they can find when they are thrown out of their homes or left with little options. Sometimes they have more compassion out of everyone."

"Does Shirley ever drink?" Anne asked rather curiously

"Non, he dislikes anything that makes you feel less of yourself or makes you sloppy," Lillian stated.

Anne nodded. "Shirley has always been the steady one of my flock."

Lillian nodded her head, suddenly remembering that he was lying in the hospital. There was a knock on the door which Rilla answered.

"Thank you," Gilbert said as he carried a tray of drinks. "I am going to look over some journals and leave you ladies to talk."

"Do you mind if I join you," Rilla asked thinking about the amount of reading she had in her bag. "I should try and get some school work done and all. Do you mind?" She looked towards her mother and Lillian.

"I think we shall be fine?" Anne looked towards Lillian who agreed to nod. Rilla nodded gathered
her bag and her coffee cup as Gilbert held the door open for her. They were silent as they went to the next compartment. She kicked off her shoes and pulled her legs up on the seat and draped her jacket over her lap settling in.

She worked steadily through the chapters that her professor had given her. Chewing on the end of her pencil, when she concentrated on different parts of her reading. After a long hour of silence she looked up to her father. "I applied to Dalhousie University," she said outlaid for the first time to someone besides Ken.

"Did you?" Gilbert set aside his journal.

"I did, for correspondence though. I should be able to work through a few courses on my own over the next few years. I will most likely have to off my B.A in a semester in the classroom though," Rilla explained.

"Sounds like you have a plan," Gilbert stated with a smile.

"It's an ever-changing one, but we have a plan." Rilla agreed with a small smile. She knew her father wouldn't ask any probing questions. "I still have to hear back from admissions though, and then wait for my final grades."

"I'm glad, and I am sure that you will be fine. Dalhousie is large and slightly more progressive than Redmond. They took over the medical school that I went over a decade ago. I'd be surprised if they didn't take over Redmond one day," Gilbert smiled.

"Could they do that?" Rilla asked him.

"Possibly," Gilbert spoke with a small shrug. "Do one thing for me?" He looked at her as she gave him a puzzled look. "Don't worry so much about time. There is always a way to find balance," Gilbert told her. "Even if it means admitting you need help in any way or form."

Rilla nodded and glanced down at her notebook. "I'll try to remember that."

The train pulled into Montreal in shortly before 10 am the next morning. Lillian took the lead, feeling more at home than she ever did in Kingsport. Leading them through the crowds of people and Bonaventure Station. Collecting their trunks from baggage, they made their way outside.

"It's so…" Anne said bewildered by the site of the city. England seemed like a lifetime ago to her. Now seeing her how her country had its own wonderful spots made her feel elated. "Is it much different from Toronto?"

Rilla could only nod as she kept close to Lillian. Who was looking around before she found the desk to hire a cab? Rapidly speaking French she secured them, she looked toward Gilbert for the name of the hotel.

Gilbert relayed the information to the man who nodded.

"This part of town is where the universities and hospital is." She explained to them as they drove down the street. "We live in Chinatown essentially," she explained. "It's in the opposite direction."

The hotel wasn't far and it wasn't long before they were checked into the hotel. Given rooms across the hall from each other, everyone took turns freshening up from the day on the train. No one was particularly hungry when they all wanted to reach the hospital as quickly as possible.
The hospital was large and stately as they pulled up to it and her father paid the cab driver. There was a faint buzz as they walked into the building. Gilbert holding the door as they passed through. Anne looked around finding reception and headed towards its. Rilla looked over at Lillian who looked around blankly around the bright foyer. Rilla took her arm gently and walked towards her parents.

"It will be all right," Rilla whispered to Lillian, squeezing her hand. They followed the young nurse in a white uniform walk them down the hall to the lift. She smiled as she made polite conversation about how alert young Mr. Blythe was this morning. They smiled at the news as they rode the elevator to the second floor to the nurse's station. "Can you please fetch Dr. Orwell, Dr. Blythe is here about his son." She spoke to another nurse who nodded went through the door behind her.

"Bonjour, hello, I hope your journey wasn't too difficult?" The Doctor greeted them.

"Not at all, the train to Montreal is rather straightforward. Few stops here and there but nothing over the top," Gilbert stated. "My wife, Anne Blythe," he introduced his wife.

"Mrs. Blythe," The doctor shook her hand. "I'm Dr. Orwell your son is a doing extremely well. He's already complaining about being bedridden, despite not being able to speak well"

"Shirley never enjoyed being ill," Anne agreed with him. "This is our daughter Rilla Ford, and here is Shirley's…?" Anne stopped for a moment. Unsure of the correct way to introduce Lillian to the doctor.

"Madame Gagnon," Lillian spoke up, not wanting to lie if necessary.

"Ahh, I am glad that you could come." The doctor said no skipping a beat. He heard all about from the young men who identified his patient. He is still recovering, and he has quite a few bruises and cuts over his body. A rather large gash on his forehead that was stitched up. We thought at first that his jaw had been fractured but x-rays show that it was dislocated. It has been corrected and he his gaining back his voice," the doctor explained as he walked. "A couple of his knuckles were broken and had been set on his right hand." The Doctor said from memory.

"We kept him fairly sedated the first few days, to keep him from moving around too much. I apologize for the length of time it took to contact you. He couldn't speak and it wasn't until his friends went looking for him that we were able to identify who he was. We can go over his chart properly in my office if you wish Dr. Blythe, but I assume you wish to see him?"

"Yes," Gilbert nodded. "And I'm also interested to know if anyone in this hospital knows about the insulin trials?" They all followed him down the hall, passing doors that held nothing in them for them. The light green walls, whitewashed wood. Nurses passing

"Oh! Of course, I can direct you to the diabetic ward we have a small wing of research ourselves since the discovery. It is quite fascinating and a relief," Dr. Orwell spoke with a clear sense of relief over the new medical discoveries. "Here we are, I suggest we keep visiting to an hour. We do not want to overwhelm the patient."

"Does he know we are coming?" Rilla asked the doctor. "A large shock may not be the best for him without prior warning."

"I had the nurse warn him that he had visitors coming," The doctor reassured her.

"Go on dearest," Anne said quietly to Lillian who was pale and quiet.

Lillian nodded, wondering just how long ago it had been since the tables had been turned. The
morning when she woke up to see Shirley sitting in a chair in her room. She had told him that they could never be together a month previous of that morning.

That they needed to end their quasi friendship before it made things even worse for her. That it was useless to even imagine anything else.

"You can't go back, I beg you not to go back there," Shirley said quietly. "How can someone—?"

He couldn't even finish the sentence. "You were with child."

"He didn't know, I didn't tell him," Lillian argued, sickened at the thought that she was still defending him by default. She hadn't told him. She didn't want to tell him if it made her remember. Remember the sneer on his face afterwards. She fought him that night, begging him to stop. She had been almost eight months pregnant that time. The baby had not stood a chance at life after the horrible hours of labour. She swore to love it, maybe it being loved would make up for everything else she couldn't control?

"Il a été créé par la cupidité, il est mort par sa colère," She told him that day. Created by greed and taken away in anger. He stumbled through the translation as his stomach lurched. Greed, what a polite sickening way to word the reality of what happened.

"Shirley?" Lillian spoke quietly as she entered the room. Trying not to give away her shock when she saw him lying on the bed. "Oh qu'est-ce qu'il vous a fait?" She whispered to herself. What did he do to you?

"Lily?" He groaned, his voice filled with pain. "What are you?"

"If you think I wouldn't come," she chastised him for even thinking she wouldn't. "Je ne te laisserai pas être seul à l'hôpital." She shook her head. Do you really think I would leave you here alone? "Pas quand tu es assis à mon chevet."

Not when you sat at my bedside he translated.

"Fair enough," Shirley gave in. "Who else is here?"

"Your parents and Rilla," Lillian told him as she sat on the edge of his bed. "I should let them see you before you tire."

"They can wait a few more minutes," Shirley told her as he gripped her hand with his bandaged left hand. His right one was splintered and wrapped up. "I rather have you all to myself for a few more minutes. Maybe you can make a few of these few scratches better with a kiss?" He grinned.

"I think you are still feeling all that pain relief they gave you." Lillian shook her head but smiled at him.

They had a few moments together before she beckoned the others in. They kept the conversation light for that first visit. When their stomachs began to grumble. Shirley waved them off stating he needed to rest and that they should go eat so that they could come back later.

In the end to reluctantly left and went back to the hotel not wanting to be seen wandering the streets. They sat down for lunch before retiring to their rooms for an afternoon rest. The hotel was larger than she expected, grander. Even her mother gave her father a look when he secured their rooms.

Rilla yawned as she sank onto the small twin-sized bed. Feeling rather pathetic at missing Ken as
she did already. Was this how Lillian felt every day? Every day when she was apart from Shirley?

"You miss him?" Lillian asked quietly as she hung up her dresses in the wardrobe.

"I do," Rilla sighed. "I shouldn't complain, but I just worry about how he gets when I am not there."

Lillian gave her a confused looked.

"Ken had a hard time adjusting after the war," Rilla tried to explain. "He took too drinking to try and forget it, which is also why he smokes as much as he does," Rilla added on. "He still gets nightmares, and I worry about not being there."

"Which is only natural," Lillian agreed.

"But I have to trust him, otherwise what is the point?" Rilla asked more to herself than her roommate.

"Trust is essential," Lillian nodded. "It was a instinct, viscéral, that allowed me to go to Shirley's that day. I didn't know why, but it was there the first day I met him. It made me realize there has always been a trickle of doubt in my mind about Yannick. I wished I had fought harder. Ran away, anything but let me mother drag me to city hall."

"You did what you could, you were young," Rilla told her. "All we can do is hope for a better future. Mom always told us that, 'tomorrow is always fresh, with no mistakes in it'. It was her way to make us see that you always had a fresh start the next day. You always had a day to right the wrongs of yesterday."

"Your mother is very wise," Lillian replied. "Your parents are very loving towards each other."

"They were engaged for three years, while dad finished medical school. They met when Mom was sent to Avonlea, apparently the day she met father she broke a slate over his head." Rilla giggled before yawning. "I think they have known each other for? Well, Mom and Dad are fifty-six and fifty-eight this year, forty-four years?" Rilla did the math in her head as she laid she cuddled into her pillow.

"Childhood sweethearts?" Lillian smiled. Rilla nodded and looked at the small clock on the table beside her.

"We need to gather a few things of Shirley's though tonight, Dad and I will go. Mom extends the offer to order in tea and cake if you wish?" Rilla told her.

"I can show you—," Lillian started to offer.

"Lillian, I know you mean well, but think about it. The last place you need to be seen is there," Rilla told her gently. "But if there is anything you need, I will grab it for you?"

Lillian nodded and jotted down a small list and where things where, but by the time she had finished. She found Rilla sleeping like a small child. Eyes crinkled up in a fashion she had never seen before.

Rilla met her father in the lobby of the hotel, her jacket buttoned up and her boot tied up. Gilbert placed his hat on his head as he led her out of the hotel to the waiting cab. The ride brought them past downtown and into the streets of Chinatown. The quaintness dissipating and the reality of city living was more apparent. Chinese names and symbols were far more predominate than French or
even English.

"We need a few moments," Gilbert told the driver passing over a few coins extra.

"Of course sir," he nodded.

Rilla slid out the open door her father held for her. They knocked on the door and waited until a plump woman opened it.

"Doctor Blythe?" She asked without hesitance.

"Yes, Thank you, Madame Trudeau" Gilbert tipped his hat towards her. "This is my daughter Mrs. Ford, we were hoping to collect a few things of Shirley's."

"And Lillian's if possible," Rilla added.

"Of course, his classmates came around and told me what happened. I have a care package for him as well. His room up on the main floor, while Lillian is on the second. I don't allow any funny business here." She told him proudly as lead them up the first stairwell of the boarding house. Rilla surprised a small laugh. Knowing that the possibility of Lillian sneaking down into Shirley's room was likely.

They collected Shirley's things first, gathering clothing and pyjama that would fit him. His room looked much like the one he had back at Ingleside. Disorganized, littered with a variety of drawings that were tacked to the wall. Aeroplanes, bridges, buildings, all of them carefully hand-drawn by him. On the dishevelled bed was an old quilt from Mrs. Lynde, the bedside table was a few old photos. A family photo that was before the war, a photo that looks rather recent of Susan. A photo from Nan's wedding of him and Lillian sitting primly in their seats.

Rilla ventured up the stairs to where she was told Lillian slept. A sewing machine sat in the corner of the room, a crocheted afghan laid spread across the bed. A small piece of tatted lace across the washtand of the dresser. She collected the things that had been missed. A French novel that had something written on the first page. Beside it in a drawer was a small wooden box which sat a small pair of little white knitted booties. Rilla snapped it shut like she had been shocked.

Of course, she would mourn her child. She probably had anticipated, awaited. Prayed that it would change him into a better person. Except it hadn't from what Rilla gathered, with no true knowledge of what exactly happened to that baby.

"Ready?" Gilbert asked from the doorway.

"Yes," Rilla nodded as she tucked away box into the bag of things.

Shirley was more alert and talkative the next day they visited. You could see that he was fighting off the pain, which only led to his stubbornness at every concern.

"I need to finish," Shirley shook his head at his father. Earlier the ladies had stepped out at he was dressed in a pair of flannel pants and white undershirt. He was also squeaky clean with the help of some nurses

"Then transfer to another university, Toronto, Kingsport, anywhere. But I refuse to allow you to stay here." Gilbert told him sternly.

"I'm twenty-five years old," Shirley rebutted. "I don't need your permission."
"You could have been killed, Shirley," Anne spoke up. "Please just come home until this is all over and dealt with."

"It will look like I am running away. I'm not afraid of him." Shirley said through gritted teeth. His head was pounding from a headache of going over this once more. "I'm not eighteen asking permission to go to war."

"That is not the same," Anne frowned.

"If we both leave, he will just follow us. If Shirley stays, it will at the very least make it seem like I am coming back." Lillian spoke up. "I don't like it either Madame Blythe but it's the truth. But we can't have you just disappearing for two weeks mon Cher."

"What do you mean? Shirley grimaced as he moved slightly to get more comfortable.

"Shirley we haven't had a letter from you for almost two weeks. I had flashbacks to the war when Lillian told me that Dad got that telegram. It didn't help when it said you were in the hospital of all places." Rilla spoke up.

"That makes no sense, I wrote two or three letters. I was coming from the post office last Friday when those fools jumped me." Shirley frowned confused.

"We haven't gotten any of them." Rilla shook her head. "You even missed your telephone call that you scheduled the week before in the last letter you sent."

"I told the detectives everything that I know, and if I look like this? You can be sure that they look worse," Shirley said gruffly with a touch a pride in his voice.

"They aren't the ones lying in the hospital bed after being sliced up with a knife," Gilbert told him sternly.

"Well, there was one of me and three of them," Shirley winced as he shrugged before yawning. They gave a quiet moment to Lillian as the Blythes exited the room.

Kingsport-

"Excusez-Moi, I was told by the post office that if I was looking for someone to come here." A thick French accent spoke up as the three men who were working on the printer turned.

The first trials on insulin were in January of 1922 in the University of the Toronto and quickly spread to other hospitals. I figured Dr. Blythe would use the opportunity of a large hospital to find out more about it.

Is Lillian crazy for going to Montreal, most likely but I felt like I needed for her to go. Then again this has morphed into something I never planned or even imagined I'd be writing. Shirley is pretty beat up, but he is on the mend.

I don't know Montreal at all, so google and trying to get the feeling of a city I have never been to it not easy. But I have heard that it's a wonderful colourful city.
Chapter 24

Thank you for all the reviews and follows!
Thank you, Julia, for your guest reviews I am glad you are enjoying this story!
I hope everyone enjoys this one!

Chapter 24

A polite knock sounded as Lillian pinned up her hair. "Ici!" She called out as she hastily pinned the hair to the nape of her neck. She opened the door to see a young girl stood in the doorway. Wearing a maids outfit holding a tray of coffee and breakfast.

"Oh! Merci put it on the table there, s'il vous plaît?" Lillian instructed as she threaded the last hairpin into her chignon.

"Quelque chose d'autre ce matin?" The young blonde asked stumbling over her french, looking over the older woman.

"Non, Merci," Lillian replied as she looked over the young girl who barely looked over the age of sixteen. She had a haunting look to her that set her back years. She shook her thoughts and smiled at the maid as she quietly made her way out.

Rilla rubbed the sleep from her eyes as she returned to her room, still in her long kimono that Ken had given her.

"Oh! Thank goodness, coffee!" She exclaimed as she reached for the pot and poured herself a cup and blew on it before taking a long sip. "Visiting hours don't start until eleven. Mother and Father are going to the department store down the street to pick up a few things. I do need to call Ken and check-in, if you wish to go with them don't feel worried about me."

Lillian nodded as Rilla sat cross-legged on the bed. Her robe parted as she sat in her undergarments as she savoured her coffee. "It will be nice to get out and see a bit more the city. Though you never to turn down shopping?"

"I'm saving my pennies for England," Rilla said cheekily. In truth, she wanted to talk to Ken without people around.

"Well, I am sure you will find plenty there." Lillian laughed as she sat down and pulled on her stocking and hooked the garters. "I will go find your parents."

Rilla nodded and grabbed the telephone from the bedside table. She watched Lillian buckle her boots and grab her boots. She waved goodbye as she picked up the receiver.

"Kingsport Nova Scotia please," She asked the operator. "24 Woodlawn drive," she said before rattling off the telephone number to them.

It rang three times before she heard Ken pick up.

"Hello?" He asked
"It's Rilla darling," She told him with a small smile. "How are you?"

"I am well, how is Montreal? Ken asked her after what sounded like a long sip of his morning coffee. "I got your telegram yesterday about arriving, I was planning on calling but you beat me to it. Is anyone else around?"

"No, it's just me at the moment," Rilla replied.

"Yannick is looking for Lillian, or I think it's him. Either way, someone came in looking for her, I don't think he knew who was talking too, I obviously did not tell him my name." Ken explained. "He arrived on what I can only assume the morning you had left. The thought of him being at the train station with us," Ken told her before stopping. "He asked a few questions and then left. I haven't seen anyone watching the house and no neighbours mentioned anything."

"What should we do?" Rilla asked. "Should she go to the island with my parents? Get off at the ferry and not even come back to Kingsport?"

"Maybe but it still doesn't make sense of how he knows she's here?" Ken stated.

"The missing letters, Shirley told us he mailed letters to us but we never received them. What he if managed to intercept the mail? Oh heavens, he probably knows where we live!" Rilla exclaimed. "We need to find out what post office Shirley used and—," Rilla rattled off.

"Rilla please, please be careful," Ken warned her. "I mean it, don't go poking into things and being foolish. You are there for Lillian and Shirley. Not to poke the bear," Ken told her sternly. "I warned whoever I could about who knows about Lillian being here to not say a word. I also warned Tim, I think he's rather relieved that Lillian decided to go."

"What if it's just one of his goonies?" Rilla asked him. Shivering from the thought of what the situation was turning into.

"I don't know Rills," Ken sighed. "Do you have any idea of when you'll be back?"

"In a few days, Shirley is awake and recovering. Dad is rather relieved, we weren't sure exactly what was happening. His jaw had been dislocated and his hand broken, so he couldn't write or talk for a few days. He's annoyed at Mom and Dad for wanting to bring him home, he just won't have it." Rilla explained.

"Just be careful. Tell your folks and Lillian about what happening here. Make up a plan and see If she wants to go to the Island until he is gone," Ken told her.

"I will," Rilla told him. "How's work and the men?" She asked curiously. "What did you do last night?"

"We set up the edition and got it printed," Ken told her. "Ordered some Chinese food and played some poker. Raided the pantry for the rest of your baked goods." Ken told her sheepishly.

"As long as it's only baked goods," Rilla told him with a peaked voice.

"Jeez Rilla, won't you have a little faith in me?" She could hear Ken roll his eyes over the phone.

"I do have faith in you," Rilla stressed into the phone. She fell back on to the bed, "I wouldn't agree to start a family if I didn't." She could hear the smile on his face come to life as he hummed at the thought.
"Shirley, I want to ask," Gilbert asked clearing his throat. "Your relationship with Lillian—?"

"Don't even go there," Shirley stopped him. "If you need another reminder, I am twenty-four years old."

"I know that I was there when you were born. I delivered you, but I am not blind that you are in love with her." Gilbert told him. "Love makes you do crazy, stupid things at times. She was sleeping in your room, even if you landlady thinks otherwise."

"Dad, it's not like that. Never has it been like that. Yes, we seek comfort in each other, but it's never been sexual. Not yet, not until we are married. Actually not until she is ready married or not. Hell not until we're both ready." Shirley necked flushed red. "I'm a good old, Presbyterian boy feel proud of yourself," he added on.

"Does she know that?" Gilbert asked him which only made Shirley's ears go red. It hadn't been a very fun conversation. Usually, it was the other way around when it came to such things.

"I know how babies are made Lillian," Shirley rolled his eyes. "I am twenty-three years old, and the son of a doctor."

"I am his wife," Lillian said simply as she stared at the book in her hands. The Hunchback of Notre Dame, he had brought it over for her. Scouring the nearest bookstore when she had told him that hers had been destroyed. It was in French of course, much like his own was in English.

"It doesn't make it right," Shirley growled. "You can't keep going back there, not now. How many time will he do this to you? How many times has he already?"

"Don't ask questions you don't wish to know," Lillian gave him a look, which he returned. "Do you want to know that I've lost count? Thats it's easier just to not fight him all the time? Is that what you want to hear?" She said rather defensively. How could any man understand her circumstances?

"Jesus, Lillian," Shirley cursed. "All I know and was taught to respect a lady when she says No. I may have grown up in a conservative household, my family are good friends with the ministers family. Which meant we are all expected to remain chaste and pure until marriage. However my father is a doctor, he knows things happen so we were taught to respect women. Respect our own bodies at the end of the day."

"You mean you never?" Lillian looked at him with a look of shock.

"Does it seem that outrageous? War keeps you rather busy and most of my university days has been watching over you." Shirley shrugged. It never bothered him, even when his classmates mocked him for it. Even daring to ask him if he preferred gentleman to women once before.

In his teens, he may have wondered for a while if something was wrong with him. After seeing Jem and Faith dance around each other and often found hiding away from the crowds. While Walter had been too much in his own mind to pay attention to the gaggle of girls that followed him. Let alone Una Meredith with her crush.

Why had he never met anyone who had tempted him in such a way? That was until now, of course, not the Lillian needed to know about his internal struggles.

"Just surprising that is all," Lillian told him honestly with a blush creeping over her face. "Read to me?"
Shirley nodded as he took the book from her. "Pardon my French," he joked as he started chapter one.

"Do you think we can do this? It feels like everything is stacked against this?" She interrupted him.

"We'll figure it out, how many times do I need to tell you that I'm not backing out or down. We write our own future, I will be damned to let society dictate what should happen." He tried to reassure her.

"I'll never be welcome in a church again," Lillian objected.

"Well, considering you're Catholic and I am not, less of an argument later down the road." Shirley grinned at her. "It's up to us Lily, no one can tell us otherwise. Then can cast us out turn their noses up at us, treat us like Esmeralda and Quasimodo. But we will have each other." Shirley retorted.

"I think you need to finish reading the book," Lillian gave him a look. "They both die Shirley."

"A minor nuisance," Shirley shrugged it off. "Either way they are together in the end."

"We both know what we need to know," Shirley told him gruffly, before explaining in the only way he could. "I think it comforts her, makes her trust me more knowing it." Sighing as he saw his mother and Lillian in the small window of the door. His mother holding a hamper of food from the canteen to have a small luncheon in one of the family rooms.

His father helped him maneuver into the wheelchair. Directing the chair as they made their way into one of the common rooms. One that was filled the first signs of spring sunlight. Rilla was already sitting at one of the tables, claiming it for them, as other families filter into the room.

"I spoke to Ken today," She spoke up as they all picked at their food. "Someone is in Kingsport looking for you Lillian. They came by the newspaper, he isn't sure if it was on purpose or not, but he said we should decide on a chorus of action. Since we don't know what Yannick looks like…" Rilla trailed off.

"Call him, and tell him to go into the file of paperwork in my room. It's in the desk," Lillian spoke quietly. "There is an old photograph of our wedding. He will look the same, I suppose it is a good thing I never burned the photo." She sighed as Shirley gripped her hand in his good one. "He can decide if it's him or not, I am sure he hasn't given his real name if he is there."

Rilla nodded as the church bells tolled at the hour. "I will let him know that, I will send a telegram he should get it tonight," she checked her watch.

"Votre nom? quel est votre nom?" Lillian turned at the sound of the voice. "Your name what is your name?" She switched to English as she heard the older woman speak it often with her friends. "You look so familiar?" The young girl asked her out in the hallway this time she was in regular clothing.

"Excusez?" Lillian asked.

"Je m'appelle Amelie," she spoke out. "My name Amelie, and if I am right you are my sister Lillian."

"Tu n'avais que six ans quand je suis parti," Lillian spoke in a daze. Realizing just why this young
girl had sent her a decade. The familiar blue eyes, her hair was a shade darker but still blonde. The small beauty mark was still prominent.

"I was," Amelie nodded. "I was just old enough to remember you."

"You are very good at English," Lillian commented unsure of what to say or even think.

"I grew up in Ottawa, we left shortly after you were married," Amelie explained.

"Lily?" She heard Rilla called out from down the hallway. She had just sent the telegram to Ken and left her parents in the lounge of the hotel. "Are you coming for tea—?" She stopped at the sight of the two women. One who looked much like her friend in many ways, yet still very much her own person.

"Lily?" She asked hesitantly.

"Everything is fine," Lily shook her head. "Excuse me for a moment," She grabbed Rilla's hand and pulled her into the room.

"She says she's my little sister," Lillian blurted out.

"Oh," Rilla nodded her head. "And we believe her?"

"I don't know, she looks the same, older but the same." Lillian paced the small hallway.

"Then why don't we find out?" Rilla asked and opened the door to see the young girl still standing there.

"We were just heading down for tea?" Rilla spoke first, "Do you wish to join us? You and Lillian can talk about more?"

"It's not encouraged, but I don't think I can get in trouble if I'm with family," Amelie replied, and with a puzzled looked she continued. "I work here." She explained looking down at her shoes.

The conversation was stilted and awkward as they waited for the tea to arrive. "I suppose you don't remember much," Lillian stared. "I went back to see you after a few months of being angry with mother. It was a shock to find out you moved without saying a word or even goodbye to me."

Lillian asked.

"Your right, I don't remember all that much. But I remember crying and crying, and settling into the new home." Amelie replied. "Most of what I know is all second hand. Matteo didn't say much, neither did Angeline for many years"

"What the others, what are they up to?" Lillian asked. "What about Lottie?"

"Matteo is married and lives out west in Winnipeg, his wife is a pretty thing from the photo he sent us. We never met her, the wedding happened much out of nowhere. Angeline got married shortly after the war finished. Lottie got caught something dreadful few years back, she was only eight. It was like living the plot Little Women."

"I never read that," Lillian frowned. She knew the book title from the few books the Rilla had in her house but as it was in English it was still a mystery to her.

"I have, scarlet fever?" Rilla spoke up from her place at the table. "That is terrible, I am sorry for your loss." She said to both of them.
"She's in a better place," Amelie smiled sadly. "I'm sorry that you are finding out this way."

"She was only a baby when I left," Lillian said quietly, still dumbfounded by the news. "You were only six years old."

"Your only fourteen!" Rilla mentally calculated in her head. "What are you doing here on your own?"

"I left?" Amelie shrugged. "Better than at home, papa gambles a fair bit still. I got myself a job and live in an apartment with a few other girls who work here."

"But what about school!" Lillian exclaimed.

"I passed grade eight," Amelie shrugged. "I wanted to go to high school, but mama wanted me to work and bring in money. I decided if I was going to be put to work that I would work for myself." She told them.

"Your mother must be worried sick," Rilla shook her head, all while thinking how and when did she get so old. She had left school at fourteen and now it seemed so appalling.

"Momma would have only encouraged me to get married, at least now I can make my own choices." Amelie shrugged. "I'm a good girl and the hotel is generous to us girls. Clean and proper is what they want, and I get by."

"Still Amelie," Lillian shook her head. Her mother was still pushing her daughters to get married young. "Angeline where is she?" She was almost afraid to ask.

"Angeline is near Kingston," Amelie replied. "She got married after the war, her husband is nice I suppose, they have a little one. You're an auntie, I guess I should have told you that? Angeline looked for you for a while, she wrote to you. But you never replied. She told me that she would never forgive momma for using you to pay off their debts last time I visited. She still keeps an old photo of you on the mantle. The lost sister she calls it," Amelie said rather dreamily.

"What do you mean?" Lillian swallowed, she had always wondered, but it's not like she could have asked Yannick's family.

"Papa got into trouble gambling one night. He couldn't pay, he knew Yannick had found your pretty. He used it to his advantage from what Angeline remembers. He told Yannick to woo you and he would sign the papers to let you marry." Amelie explained.

Lillian just stared in disbelief.

"I can only guess Mama was afraid of something worse happening, and maybe that is why we moved?" Amelie pondered out loud. "I'm sorry I am probably no much help." She frowned.

"You gave me plenty for explanations," Lillian shook her head and patted her hand.

"Lillian?" Rilla asked hesitantly. "What sort of family did you marry into, and how old is Yannick?" Thinking back to Ken telling her someone was looking her Lillian in Kingsport. Lillian sighed and drank some tea. She gathered her thoughts for a moment before she spoke.

"You know I was only sixteen when I married. Well, Yannick just turned twenty-four or twenty-five?" Lillian admitted to Rilla for the first time. "I always wondered why she had been so insistent despite my protests."
Rilla stared, Ken was six years older than her and felt his own guilt over his attraction towards her. Yannick had an even larger age gap with Lillian and had no conscious about it, it appeared.

"We need more cake," Rilla stated as she waved towards a waiter as she spotted her parents looking from them. She waved them over and quickly excused herself to greet them. She pulled her mother into the nearest ladies room. Giving her the quick rundown of what had happened.

"Rilla, I don't want to be negative," Anne started. "But what if this is a trap? I mean look of what we know of him? Would be using her sister to get to her be really that beneath him?"

"I know, I thought the same thing, but part of me believes her. Through why her family hasn't come to bring her back is another thing? Maybe you can talk to the housekeeper and ask about how she was hired? How long she has been here?" Rilla asked her mother.

"I'll see what I can do," Anne nodded her head. "She looks so young," she commented as she looked over at the table. "Do you want us to join you?"

"No, we should be fine," Rilla shook her head. "She's just a child."

"You were no different than her at that age. Thinking you were grown up and wanting longer skirts." Anne reminded her.

"I know but I could never imagine actually runny away at fourteen," Rilla shook her head. "Does it always feel like this? The older you get, the younger children look?"

"Welcome to adulthood, it only gets worse when you have your own," Anne smiled. "I think your father is going to call a cab in an hour so we can visit Shirley over evening visiting hours."

"I will tell Lillian and we'll be ready." Rilla nodded before heading back to the table and rejoining the conversation.

"Can we have some time alone?" Shirley spoke up, annoyed that his family felt like they needed to be chaperoned.

Gilbert looked towards Anne who spoke up. "How about a walk to the nursery?" She smiled, "See all the precious new little ones?"

"I'm going to go find the ladies room," Rilla stated getting herself out of the trip to the maternity ward. "And call the hotel to see if Ken has replied."

Shirley waited for his family to leave before turning to Lillian.

"It's Saturday, I was thinking and we would like to continue a tradition if we can." Shirley smiled. He already spotted the rosary that was wrapped up in her bracelets. A tradition that started when Lillian had first felt the backlash of her decisions. When Sunday Mass was no longer welcoming as it once was.

Hypocrites he said out loud to himself on the steps when some old busy body made a point to make Lillian feel small. It sickened him that they allowed women to suffer at the hands of men. Yet they always turned their back when she fought back with the law.

"Can you make it into the chair?" Lillian asked him.

"I believe so," Shirley nodded as he moved carefully. Limb by limb he shakily stood up. Turning
halfway before he collapsed into the wheelchair beside his bed.

"See getting stronger every day," he painfully smiled at her.

"Don't push yourself," She warned him. "Something strange happened today," she told him as she pushed him out of the room. "I ran into my little sister."

"Little sister? As is Emily?" Shirley asked.

"Amelie," Lillian corrected his pronunciation. "Yes, she is working at the hotel, I can't decide if this is a coincidence or something else?"

"You think Yannick would do something like that?" Shirley asked.

"Threaten my family, lure me into false hopes?" Lillian said deadpanned. "He's done worse, so no I wouldn't put it past him. But she seems too sincere in awe of finding me. she doesn't ask many questions. Just tells me about the family."

Shirley nodded as they turned into the small chapel of the hospital. "Are you seeing her tomorrow?"

"We're going to meet for tea," Lillian nodded. "I wish I can just take her away from all of this, it's not right for her to be on her own. She's fourteen, she should be finishing school. They didn't even let her go to high school. I feel awful, I can hardly support myself yet I feel like I need to support her as well."

"Of course, she's your sibling," Shirley told her. "Why wouldn't you feel that way?" He handed her a long match. "Light your candle and pray about it. It always makes you feel better, maybe it will look brighter in the morning?"

He watched her as he usually did, smiling how her faith had yet to falter despite everything. How every Saturday evening as she prayed and lit her candles with the few others who came and went. He was learning the differences and similarities of their faith. How the prayers were different yet the messages were all the same.

He promised himself one evening as they were silent in the large cathedral. That one day he would take her to Notre Dame. Take her to Paris and show her the world without the evils lurking in the shadows.

"She's not here boss, and no one is talking," the man spoke into the telephone receiver.

"I know, she foolishly came here. So I am using it to my advantage," the man grinned. He turned his head at a rustle and squeak. He glanced at the young blonde with frightened eyes. Tears silently streaming down her face as she fought her restraints. A bandana tied around her mouth muffled her cries.

This hadn't been the plan but if he knew anything about his wife is that she would do anything for her sister.

Still, have much to come, but I think I am slowly working my way through everything that I have planned!

I look forward to all your thoughts and comments on this one. Please don't be shy I do love reading
your reviews!

Tina
Hello!

I am back after a long couple weeks. I had visitors and then lost power for 18 hours during a snow storm and lost my prime writing day!.

Yes! A snow storm in the middle of October.

Welcome to Winnipeg life!

Anyway I hope I did this chapter justice and it didn't fall flat. It wasn't easy to write that is for sure!

"Are you the matron to the housekeepers?" Anne Blythe asked the rather prim looking lady who walked up to the front desk.

"What has one of my girls done now?" She replied automatically.

"Oh no, forgive me this is no complaint. I wanted to know about one of my daughter's companion ran into her younger sister yesterday. Given varying circumstances of our visit. I just want to make sure that her sister's appearance isn't a coincidence with bad intentions." Anne corrected her.

"Come to my office," the matron instructed. She led Anne through winding hallways that guest never see. "Who are we talking about?"

"Amelie—, forgive me I actually don't know her last name. Her sister is married, and I have only known her married." Anne laughed at herself.

"It is all right, Amelie you say. I know exactly who you are speaking of. She came a few months back. A little younger than I prefer but she seemed intent to work hard. I put her up in the apartment of other maids. She seems like a good girl goes to church on Sundays and knows her manners. Doesn't keep the company of boys which I like for my girls."

"She is working this morning?" Anne asked.

"I believe she is, I don't always get to see when my girls begin but I can check the time cards," She nodded as she stood up. As she did there was a timid knock on the door. "Pardon me," she said to Anne.

She opened the door. "Yes, Ethel?"

"Have you seen Amelie? I thought she was in her room when I got home from evening church last night. Then this morning I found her bed empty and I can't find her anywhere in the building," Ethel spoke nervously.

"It seems Amelie is a popular person today," The matron tutted and walked over to the time cards. Frowning when she saw that Amelie hadn't been punched in, she turned walking over to another doorway. "Chantelle have you seen Amelie this morning?"

"Not yet," Another voice responded. "Is everything all right?"

"Ethel came and told me that she hadn't seen Amelie since yesterday. She thinks she never came home. She hasn't spoken about going home has she?" The Matron asked with a frown she turned
back towards Anne who was standing in the doorway.

"Please let us know if you see her, we're in room 402." Anne said simply.

"Of course," The matron nodded. "I am sure there is some sort of explanation over this."

"I'm sure there is," Anne agreed. She allowed herself to be escorted back into the main hallway. She looked around until she spotted her husband. Who was waiting for her to take her out in the lobby.

"Where Are Rilla and Lillian?" She asked looked around.

"They went too ahead to see Shirley this morning," Gilbert told her. "Everything all right Anne-Girl?"

"I think so," Anne said after a moment. "I was speaking to the matron. Lillian's sister didn't come to work this morning and her roommate hasn't seen her since last night."

"That is strange," Gilbert nodded. "Though I am sure there is an explanation. We can stop by the constabulary if you like?"

"Please, and the post office as well. I want to telegram home and let them know that we will be heading back in a day or two." Anne nodded.

"Of course," Gilbert nodded.

"You can't be serious?" Rilla asked her as she looked at the note that had been waiting for them when they stopped by the hotel to allow Shirley to shower properly for the first time in days. "You clearly can't actually be thinking about going over there!"

"What choice do I have?" Lillian retorted.

"Call the constabulary? If he has her if you think he has her call the constabulary!" Rilla exclaimed.

"That won't stop him," Lillian refused with a shake of her head. "If I know him at all, I know what he wants."

"So you will just hand yourself over to him?" Rilla shook her head in disbelief. "Seriously I have never asked out of politeness. But what does he have on you that has made this situation what it is? No man would go through such length to keep a woman who doesn't want him!"

"Leave her be," Shirley groaned from the doorway. Sweat beading on his forehead as he barely managed to stay upright. Lillian fussed over him. Fixing a few buttons on his shirt and loosened his suspenders slightly for him. How the doctors allowed him to discharge himself from the hospital was something Rilla couldn't understand.

"We have the constabulary on our side, watching all of you, not that you knew of course but they have been." Shirley informed them as he gingerly sat down on the bed. "I just regret them not knowing about Amelie."

"But—!" Rilla whined almost stamping her foot in the process.

"Rilla, you're twenty-two. Grow up," Shirley growled. "Lillian doesn't have to tell you anything she does not wish to tell you. It's called privacy and you should respect that. I thought with all your
schooling that you would understand such things. As for being watched, it was for your good and we wanted you to act normally."

"You shouldn't even be out of the hospital," Rilla countered.

"Well, I am not going to sit by and watch him destroy everything," Shirley told her pointedly.

"You can barely stay upright!" Rilla threw her hands around in frustration. "What help will you be, are you seriously going to allow her to sacrifice herself to him?"

"No one is sacrificing themselves," Shirley corrected her. "The world isn't black and white, there is no right or wrong. Lillian is her own person, and Amelie is her sister. Are you going to condemn a fourteen-year-old to him? If you had a chance to save Walter, would you have taken it?"

Rilla took a step back and looked over towards Shirley. Who had been around when that telegram had come. He had seen her breakdown, he had heard her cry through the walls of the house.

"That is completely different!" Rilla cried out. "That was war! No one could save Walter!"

"And this is my war," Lillian spoke up.

"You won't be coming either way," Shirley told her. "There is no need for you to be subjected to him."

Rilla gave him a look. "Like hell, I am letting both of you go there alone! But what will mother and father say?"

"Hopefully they will never find out," Shirley gave her a look.

"I'm sure they will. Especially if we all end up in the hospital or worse," Rilla stressed to them. Heaven's lord what Ken would do if he was there with them? Probably prohibiting her from going with them? "Do we need money?" She asked as they both looked at her. "What it's an honest question! Would money sway him?"

"I doubt money around will help," Shirley sighed. "But if you wish to try then do so. But don't bleed Ford dry doing it."

Rilla watched as they drove down unfamiliar streets. Houses and grand apartment buildings flashed by them from the taxi window. Turning here or there until they reach a street where she saw Lillian stiffen. This had to be her old neighbourhood. Shirley used to live down here before he had moved. Rilla still didn't quite understand why he had moved. Now she had long given up trying to piece together his early days in Montreal.

The apartment building was larger and grander than what she had expected. Then again she didn't know much about Lillian life in Montreal, or her husband at that. Some of her clothing looked like it was beyond the Eaton catalogue. But at the same time Rilla was never sure she had made them, or if they had been boughten.

They watched carefully as Shirley hobbled out of the cab after paying the driver.

"Allez-Vous aller bien?" Rilla heard Lillian ask Shirley who grunted. "Tu aurais dû rester à l'hôpital."

She could only assume that Lillian asking if Shirley was all right. Maybe she was telling him that
he should have stayed in the hospital?

"Madame Gagnon," A voice echoed from the doorway, a little boy who had dark hair and striking blue eyes.

"Eric," She said after a moment. "Tu devrais être à l'intérieur avec ta maman," she patted his head. She looked around for his mother but couldn't didn't see her.

"Mama se bat à nouveau avec papa," he shrugged and rubbed the toe of his shoe on the concrete floor.

"Je suis désolé, pourquoi ne cours-tu pas dans la rue pour te procurer un biscuit?" Lillian patted his head and passed him a nickel from her change purse. Rilla watched him smile and run down the stairs. Stopping to look both ways before they watched him enter a small bakery.

Rilla wasn't sure who or what she expected Yannick to be, it was strange to think of him as a real person. He had dark hair, with bright blue eyes, tanned olive-toned skin. He was tall, but short then Shirley more of Jem's height. It was the eyes that sent her into a frown, they seemed so similar to the boys downstairs. Surely he didn't keep his mistress and illegitimate children in the same building where he lived with Lillian?

"Brought yourself an entourage did you?" His voice clear, with a slight accent. He was dress in a well-cut suit. He reminded Rilla of the many men she had met at the parties she and Ken would go to in Toronto.

"She wasn't going anywhere near you alone," Shirley spoke up from where he stood beside her. "You touch one hair on any of these women I will—," He began to threaten.

"Shirley," Rilla hissed at him.

"You must be the sister who is sheltering my wife," he looked towards Rilla. "Prettier than what I expected considering your brother and all."

"Où est-Elle?" Lillian spoke up. Thrusting his note at him. "Elle a quatorze ans pour l'amour du ciel."

They heard an angry groan and a rattle of a wooden chair. Two men came forward as Yannick opened the door more widely. Her eyes wide as she tried to scream against the rag in her mouth. Her eyes pleading, trying to explain that she had nothing to do with this as she struggled.

Rilla stalked past them ignoring the two men who watched her. She approached Amelie and untied the cloth around her mouth. She watched Yannick motion for them to leave the room.

"Ce faible Yannick, même pour vous, il est faible." Lillian spoke to him.

'Je n'ai rien fait d'autre que de saisir une opportunité." He smirked.

"C'est une enfant!" Lillian's voice raised. Yannick looked back towards Amelie who still crying and Rilla tried to comfort her.

"Shut up!" He turned to look towards Rilla and Amelie which only made Amelie sob more.

"I said be quiet," he growled his hand raised as he went to strike the crying young girl.

"Rilla!" Shirley called out as she ducked in front of Amelie taking the full force of the strike to her
"Foolish woman," Yannick shook his head as Rilla bite back a cry of her own. "The brat is not worth your protection."

"Every child is worth protecting and especially from you," Rilla spat in his face. Holding her ground as she saw him raise his hand once more.

"You touch my sister again and I will have you on the floor," Shirley grabbed his hand. Rilla stomach sank at the sight of her brother struggling to appear put together. Trying not to look like he was keel over at a moment's notice.

"Threats mean nothing to me, Blythe, though you stole my wife. It's only fair if I get something in return. She is rather pretty…" Yannick smirked as his eyes roamed over Rilla. "Lacking in some areas but you can never know these days."

"Leave her alone," Lillian told him.

"Such big threats," Yannick turned away from him bored with Shirley. Walking toward Lillian he looked over as he approached her. "You will never be rid of me, I will haunt your dreams and forever be in the corner of your eye. Even if you succeed in the divorce, you will never get it annulled in the eyes of the church. Not with a buried child to prove that we shared a bed," he spoke without breaking eye contact.

"God will understand," Lillian spoke after a shaky breath. Looking towards Shirley who knew just how hard it had been for her. How she had struggled with it, how she still struggled with it at times. She would rather be alive, then to live by the words and rules of others. Even if it meant leaving behind the one true comfort she had found over the years.

Something so innocent and small, a way to get out of the house when he was at war. His mother never questioned her when she was going to church. Even though she never went herself. Her own family were more of holiday attendees. Christmas, Easter, the rare Sunday when her mother wanted to put on a good appearance.

After she had married Yannick, she had been lonely and longed for company. She found it in the young wives of the church, working for the war cause. It was after he came home, after the first fight. The first bruise that they saw and ignored. The sad pitiful looks when she returned after three missed Sundays without her baby. Her safe haven it had been taken away. Her faith was question by others, her own faith been shaken believing they had been right. Yes every time the strange sense of peace came to her when she was inside the walls of the cathedral.

"Oh, I am sure he will, planning an outdoor wedding aren't we one day? Yet you haven't even told the truth to what is her name, Susan? I am sure she would love to have her favourite charge, marrying a divorcee by a justice of the peace. No Minister, or no church?" Yannick drawled.

"My letters?" Shirley staggered forwards. "Where are they? What did you do to them?"

"Oh nothing much, just convinced a pretty young thing to hold any mail of yours to give to me. Rather an easy task if I say so myself." Yannick chuckled to himself.

"So you had a young girl break the law, for what? This?" Lillian shook her head at the insanity of it all. "I will never be your Yannick. I will never come back."

"So you will choose him over your own sister?" Yannick asked. "Only one of you are leaving this place. Are you really going to sacrifice your sister for your freedom?"
"You bastard!" Shirley's voice boomed out of shock. "You can't ask her to choose!"

"Watch me?" Yannick smirked. "I heard to Louis is looking for a wife, maybe she'll learn faster than her sister of how not anger her husband." He spoke before shouting for his friend. "Still looking for something to warm your bed at night?"

"I will never!" Amelie exclaimed. "Don't you dare touch me!" She shouted at the man who had been waiting by the door. Shirley stepped in front of the man who sneered at Shirley.

"Didn't haven't enough last time Blythe?" He made a quick jab to where he had stabbed the younger man. Shirley doubled over with pain, falling to his knees gasping as he tried to breathe through the pain.

Then it all happened so fast that no one could comprehend or prepare for Amelie launching out of the chair. Grabbing the knife that had been laying on the table and lunging at Yannick. A loud howl when the blade sank into his shoulder. He had never noticed that Rilla had untied Amelie until then, he looked around in disbelief.

"Run!" Shirley instructed them. "Get out of here," he yelled at the women as they hesitated. Rilla grabbed Amelie who was in a state of shock and raced downed down the stairs.

"Please! Please! Help us!" She exclaimed to the nearest constable that she found walking about. Never taking notice that there many of them there. Just as if someone had told them to be there, that it had been all been planned. Because who could plan such a thing?

It had been a long afternoon with the constabulary. Going over what had happened, they had already charged Yannick and his two men for the assault on Shirley. Which had only had him checked back into the hospital to check for any additional damage?

Both Anne and Gilbert exasperated that they all had done. At the end of the day, they seemed to worry less as they added on kidnapping and after the search of the apartment. They uncovered his gambling and bettings book. Being his wife, it was a long hour before Lilllian finally was released. She told them what she knew, which was little but it was enough for them. She was no accomplice, something they had all agreed on. The next word out of her mother was enquiring about her sister. After a quick check over by the doctor, Amelies own statement was taken. Self-defence they called it when it came to her moment erratic behaviour. She barely harmed the fully grown man, but it was enough for him to lose the reign of the situation.

By the end of the day, they all were exhausted but relieved that at least this was over for now. Rilla sank into her parents bed exhausted, yet still wanted to be held by one of them. Which ended up being her father. Why was it always something dire that made her seek out her fathers embrace? When was the last time she sought him out for emotional comfort?

A memory she rather not think about as it only made her think of Walter.

"Are you going to send me home?" She looked at Lillian.

"Actually I was speaking to the Blythes when you were napping," Lillian told her. "We will need Mama's permission, but one of Rilla's sister is a teacher at a high school on Prince Edward Island. We were thinking if you wanted to, you could come to the Island. Mrs. Blythe can access your education and see where you stand. Then come September you can go to high school."

"But I have no money?" Amelie frowned. "How can I afford the train ticket, books for school?"
"Don't worry about money," Lillian told her. "It can all be worked out, but this will allow you time to be young, to have friends. Go out have fun, go to dances." She said softly.

"Will you be there?" Amelie asked.

"I have to be live in Kingsport for the time being, until the divorce is granted and finalized," Lillian said sadly. "But after that, when Shirley comes home for summer vacation, I should be around. Plus you can always come to visit me, I am sure Rilla will not mind too much. But the Blythes are nice folks, and will take care of you in my absence."

"What did Yannick mean when he asked if this Susan person knew?" Amelie asked hesitantly.

"Susan is like a second mother to Shirley. She can be a little narrow-minded and prejudice about certain things." Lillian spoke carefully.

"Like being catholic and possibly a divorcée?" Amelie replied back knowingly.

"Shirley says she will get over it. She already met me, she just doesn't know all the details." Lillian explained. "Still come back with us, if you don't like it. You have my permission to come back here."

Amelie nodded after a short pause before curling up to her sister in her borrowed nightgown.

The trip came to an end as they all boarded the train the next night. Shirley waving them off. Everyone too caught up to talk about any but the weather and the bright blue sky that shone down on the train.

Rilla sighed as her parents and Lillian and Amelie got off to meet the ferry. Her head leaned against the window as she watched the sunset as she travelled the short stretch to home. She yawned, she hadn't been able to sleep the entire weekend and she longed to see Ken. Who had told her that the mysterious fellow had disappeared over night.

Still, she breathed a sigh of relief with Yannick behind bars for the time being. His bail being withheld as they had a long list of reasons that seemed never-ending. Shirley stayed behind in Montreal to wrap up his school year. Lillian would be coming back from the Island at the end of the week. Explaining as she wanted to get Amelie settled in and comfortable with the Blythes before going back to Kingsport.

As the train came to a stop she stood on tired legs. Fixing her green plaid skirt and cream sweater before pulling on her wool jacket. She patted her hair before wrapping her scarf around her neck. She wearily stepped off the train holding her carpetbag in her hand. Her hair mused, her hat was long forgotten and dark circles under her eyes. It didn't take long for her to see Ken leaning against the pillar, his long grey trench coat ruffling in the wind. The black fedora she had bought him over Christmas sat perched on his dark hair.

She didn't care about propriety as she ran to him, letting his arms wrap around her. His lips finding any spot they could to kiss. He frowned as his fingertips ran over the discoloured skin of her face. He already heard from her father what exactly had happened. He hadn't been happy but, knowing she had protected the young girl made him proud of her.

A silver lining if you could call it such.

Well I can finally get back to some more fluffy stuff, this has been an adventure and I adore Shirley.
and Lillian. But I do look forward to getting back to some good old Ken and Rilla

I truly hope that I did this justice, I did my absolute best and that is all I can do. But I hope everyone is somewhat satisfied with how things are going for now. It won't be the end for them. But right now they can breathe easier.

Translations.

"Where is your mother?"

"She and father had a fight"

"Where is she?"

"She's fourteen for heavens sake!"

"This is low Yannick, low even for you,"

"I saw and opportunity and took it,"

"She a child!"
Chapter 26

Hello!

Well, this feels positively boring after the last few chapters but hopefully, it's not that boring. I have a few things lined up and ready to be written over the next few chapters which will be nice to get to!

Thank you for all the reviews and follows! I adore everyone so much.

Sorry for the delay, Halloween is busy for me, I have a rather adorable commission to make this year which took some of my writing time.

Life has a way of calming down, settling into old routines after trying events. After a note from the Montreal constabulary to explain her absence was given to the school. A way for Rilla to be granted new deadlines for the ones that were impossible to make. Mavis who had been shocked to see her friend in such a state upon her return jumped into to help her catch up.

"I think it good you're taking a holiday this summer," Mavis told her. "England sounds lovely, and after everything that has been going on I think you will enjoy it."

"Well, it will be a fairly short break, I do plan on continuing for a B.A just through correspondence," Rilla explained. "Then by the fall the new division of the company should be up and running as well so Ken will have that."

"Oh yes, the infamous Fords Magazine getting their maritime division." Mavis grinned. "Are you helping with anything with that?"

"Oh no, that is all Ken." Rilla shook her head. "I shall have plenty to do I believe. Even if I wished to, I doubt he even consider it if I even asked. I mean mother helped with father's appointment books and taking messages for him. But even we helped with that as we got older. It was just a thing that was done." Rilla shrugged. "But we have other ideas and plans."

"With babies?" Mavis gave her a crooked smile.

"We shall see," Rilla said quietly after a moment with a nod of her head. Going back to her paper. Mavis smiled to herself and went back to her paper.

"Your brother is doing better?" Mavis asked after she finished her one paragraph.

"He is," Rilla assured her friend. "I got a letter from him this morning. Apparently, in all the aftermath, Lillian had told him to apologize for some of the things he had said to me. They were a little out of line but at the moment I knew he was just trying to be brave."

"That is nice that he apologized, and Lillian is out tonight?" Mavis inquired

"She is staying Amelie until next week," Rilla explained. "Poor child, though Mother has rather chipper about having someone in the house again."

"Are they coming to graduation?" Mavis asked out of curiosity.

"They most likely will be, its easier to get away when you have another doctor in the area. Jem
does his fair share when Dad is away.” Rilla spoke.

"Do you know what you are going to wear yet?" Mavis asked knowing her friends loved fashion.

"I'll probably have to buy something," Rilla admitted. "Last time I wore full white was my wedding. Though I'm not even sure if I will be allowed to wear white."

"Fair enough, though I think we all wore white back in those days." Mavis nodded.

"White and green were my go-to colours, Di wore blue, Nan wore pink when we weren't in white," Rilla explained. "Not that I couldn't wear others, but that is what mother went with most of the time when making us clothing. She was practical with clothing, growing up frugally as she did, but she did allow us pretty things. Mostly since she enjoyed pretty things as much as we did." Rilla laughed lightly. Smiling as she remembered all the pretty gowns her mother wore when she was little. "The only thing she was oddly set on was the length of our skirts. I would argue, beg for an extra inch or two whenever I could when I turned thirteen and grew overnight it seemed. My brother took to calling me spider," Rilla recalled with a sigh.

"That is awfully mean," Mavis frowned.

"It was awful of us," Ken announced as he walked into the room. "But you did grow into your limbs." Dropping his bag on the table he bent to kiss the top of her head.

"Oh yes, he joined in as well," Rilla told Mavis as she looked cheekily at Ken.

"Well, I should head home, Allen should be here in a moment to walk me home," Mavis told her looking up at the clock.

"How is your brother?" Rilla asked her.

"He's well? He's getting married this summer, I think Mother is happy to have him out of the house." Mavis laughed with a shake of her head. She stood up and gathered her things. "I will see you in class tomorrow. It was nice to see you, Ken," Mavis smiled at him.

"I'll walk you to the door," Ken stated. Mavis smiled and nodded in agreement. Saying goodbye to Rilla with a quick hug before walking towards the front door.

"Is Rilla all right?" Mavis whispered as she shrugged on her coat. Ken frowned and looked back towards the kitchen. "She barely talks about what happened in Montreal, but something happened?"

"I'm not the only one seeing it then?" Ken asked.

"She's been tired and on edge," Mavis nodded.

"Any pointers?" Ken asked.

"Talk to her, and when all else fails maybe empathize with stories about the war?" Mavis told him quickly. "

Ken nodded as the doorbell rang. "Have a good night." He told her and said a quick hello to her brother Allen before shutting the door.

He walked back to the kitchen to find Rilla emptying the teapot and rinsing it out. "I picked up some roast beef from the deli, and some of those buns that you like from the bakery."
"Are you not going to eat?" Ken asked her.

"I'm not that hungry. I think I may take a bath and turn in early," Rilla told him.

"You didn't sleep well last night," Ken stated. His voice filled with concern. "You haven't slept a full night when before Montreal."

"I'll be fine," Rilla brushed him off.

"You never told me exactly what happened there," Ken pointed out.

"I told you," Rilla found herself objecting

"You gave me the water down version," Ken gave her a look. "You can back exhausted with a bruise on your face and nothing but a story that you would tell a five-year-old. Nothing happened did it?"

"You're jumping to silly things," Rilla said with a hurried shake of her head. How could she tell him that when she shut her eyes that she still saw the eyes that stared down at that day? She could only understand why it had taken Lillian so long to have the courage to leave. It felt like pure evil.

Ken sighed let it go. He turned around and he heard the soft footsteps of Rilla going up the stairs. A few minutes he heard the bathtub filling with hot water.

Mavis's words echoing in his mind. Empathize. Use his own experience to show her that he knows what it's like. He knew Rilla mentioned here and there about the effects of war, using him as an example at times on certain papers. Never his name, of course, but sometimes he knew just by the sort of questions she would ask randomly.

She was already in bed, with the top portion of her hair rolled and pinned into its pin curls. The bottom was still damp and bound into a long braid. She curled up next to him the moment he got into the bed in her sleep. He kissed her head and reached to turn off the lamp beside the bed.

"Rilla, Rills?" Ken whispered into the dark as he felt Rilla thrash in her sleep. "Wake up sweetheart," he murmured as he tried to gently shake her. "It's nothing more than a nightmare. You're home."

He watched her eyelids flutter for a moment before she quieted down. He helped her sit up and reached over to his bedside table for the glass of water that was there. "Drink slowly, it will help calm you down."

Rilla only nodded as she clutched the glass with both hands, sipping slowly.

"You know I understand what it like right? To have something burned into your mind that it's all you see when you close your eyes." Ken said quietly after a moment.

"I keep seeing his eyes," Rilla finally admitted to him. "The way he looked at me when I protected Amelie. It was bone-chilling."

"Sometimes we don't know how much things affect us until we come out of it." Ken explained as he combed through the strands of her hair that had fallen out of its braid.

"Ken I was only in his presence for an hour tops, Lillian lived with him for years. I'm still afraid that this isn't over and now it's just going to turn into something wore." Rilla admitted.
"You don't have to worry, he won't bother anyone anymore," Ken tried to reassure her kissing the top of her head. "Over time it will fade and you won't think of it as much, maybe you will even forget about it."

"Then help me forget about it," Rilla whispered as she moved against him. "At least for tonight?"

Ken was grinning as he ushered Rilla into the car. "Where are we going?" Rilla asked him.

"You will see," Ken told her as he tucked the woollen blanket around her to protect from the chilly March weather. He turned on the engine and let it warm for a minute before he backed out of the driveway. He drove down the street she knew fairly well after so many years being in Kingsport. Finally, he stopped in front of a large building with a sign that said sold on it.

"Is this?" She turned to him.

"It is, the future home of the East coast division of Ford Magazine," Ken nodded with a smile. "I got the keys yesterday." He helped her out of the car. "This will be the main entrance and the lobby." He explained as he opened the doors with the key in his hand.

"This is much bigger than the Chronicle," Rilla said in awe.

"Well, it will be much more than the Chronicle," Ken grinned as he led her up the small flight stairs. "Writers and editors for politics, sports, career advice will be on this floor. General male audience topics," Ken went one. "Are you all right with stairs?" He asked her. Rilla nodded as he led her up the next flight of stairs to a more bright and airy floor filled with light.

"I think this would make a lovely women department floor. Along with any photography if needed," Ken told her.

"What about the other papers? Aren't they worried about you taking their writers?" Rilla asked him as she looked around. "How are you even still working at the Chronicle while doing all of this?"

"We have contracts, we have promised to not poach any other writers. Thankfully the magazine is bi-monthly and is much more than local news and comings and goings." Ken admitted. "Though any writers coming to us is fair game. We plan on hiring 12 writers, split equally between men and women to fill the departments."

"And where is your office?" Rilla asked him looking around the place.

"Ahh it will be this way," Ken took her hand and walked her over to the large windows that looked out to the harbour. He led her down the hallway which brought them down to the top of the building. "The offices will be up here, this will be mine," he stated as he opened the door.

It was large and spacious, with a large window that overlooked the street. It was bright with sunlight and dark wood. There was still a dusty old deck in the middle of the room.

"Where will printing be?" Rilla asked him as she looked out the window.

"The basement," Ken answered as he wrapped his arms around her. Pressing a kiss into the bare spot of her neck. "I'll leave Keith in charge when we're away. He can finish setting things up and when we come back from England it will be full throttle."

"So Keith is coming into the company?" Rilla asked him.
"He is," Ken nodded. "Rebecca asked us over for dinner sometime." He told her as brushed her hair from her neck and kissed it once more.

"I will phone her and set up something," Rilla replied. "What are you doing?"

"What does it seem like I'm doing?" Ken grinned.

"I am not doing that here, in a dusty room," Rilla gave him a look.

"You said that about the kitchen once," Ken smirked.

"It's not yet April," Rilla reminded him

"Which is only three weeks away isn't it?" Ken told her grinning. He then took a step back from her and looked out the window. Rilla hummed and shook her head.

"You are incorrigible," Rilla told him.

"But you love me anyway?" Ken teased her. He was just about to kiss her again when they heard a rustle near them.

"If that is a rat," Rilla started with a squeak.

"Stay here for a moment," Ken told her with a laugh and went over and looked within the open space of the empty desk. "Rilla comes here," he called out softly. "It's nothing frightening, I promise," he added on. Watching until Rilla walked over to him still hesitant.

"It looks awfully young, I wonder where its mother went," Ken explained. Rilla peered under the desk to see a tiny grey kitten that was as furry as big. It barely looked old enough to be away from its mother. It stretched out it tiny paws and let out a mewling cry realizing it was alone and most likely hungry.

"Oh!" Rilla gasped. "Poor little thing," she cooed as Ken unwrapped his scarf. Carefully he picked up and wrapped the kitten in the wool.

"There that should be a tad warmer for you." He spoke to the kitten. "Let's see if we can find your mama?" He asked it. They wandered the building looking in various rooms. Looking for any sign of any more kittens or the mother.

"We can't just leave it here, what if gets hungry," Rilla frowned as she held the kitten. "Or something bigger finds it?"

Ken chuckled. "For someone so worried about being a mother, you do it naturally well."

"Caring a kitten is a whole lot easier than caring for an infant." Rilla gave him a look but took the wrapped up kitten and gave it a small cuddle.

"Whatever will you name her?" Lillian asked as she both sat on the floor playing with the kitten. Who was gleefully attacking a feather they have tied on a piece of old yarn. She had arrived that evening on the train. She looked refreshed as if she finally managed to let a few things go. While she had told them that Amelie put her in contact with more of her sibling in the week they had together.

"I don't know," Rilla admitted. "The last kitten I named had a split personality," she laughed at the old cat. "I'll take any suggestions," she told Lillian.
"We could name her after greek goddesses?" Lillian thought for a moment. "Hera, Persephone?"

"What about Athena?" Ken chipped in looking over his newspaper. "Or Artemis?"

"I do enjoy Artemis," Rilla pondered before answering. "Plus if she turns into a he, it will be more gender-neutral of a name."

She remembered the last misfortunate named cat. The one who ended up having a surprise litter of kittens to everyone's surprise.

"Ahh old Jack Frost," Ken chuckled remembering the cat from his childhood. "Well, Artemis, I think you have to lovely ladies at your beck and call." He slid from the car and on the floor with the two ladies.

"How are you doing?" Lillian changed the subject looking at Rilla. "I know all too well just how he can get into your head."

"I'll be all right, things are settling," Rilla blushed. "I have to ask though, that little boy. His eyes?" Rilla alluded to her curiosity wonder just who the boy's father was.

"I am not certain, but there is a possibility," Lillian admitted with a frown. "Eric seven I believe, but Yannick did have a brother who died in the war. She's married though, they fight often enough but it was like Yannick and me."

Rilla nodded and let the subject fall to the side. "When you are you meeting Timothy and his father this week?"

"On Tuesday, we can officially start the process. Your parents have graciously offered to let me stay with them on the Island. So I can be closer to Amelie once everything goes through." Lillian explained.

"Is Susan still completely in the dark?" Rilla asked her. Knowing Shirley had kept a lot of things from her.

"I think she suspects something is up, but she is too polite to ask about them to my face," Lillian frowned. "Shirley says once everything is done and finalized he'll come clean to her."

"Makes sense," Rilla nodded. "Do you think you'll stay out here now?" Rilla asked her.

"It will depend on Shirley and his career I suppose," Lillian told her truthfully. "So I have you heard anything about what to wear for convocation?" She artfully changed the subject.

"We'll find out this week sometime at the assembly," Rilla told her with a laugh. "I heard generally we wear white, but being married I'm not sure is allowed or not."

"Well, do let me know we can work together and make something." Lillian smiled as she returned her focus on to the kitten who head-butted her hand.

"I will keep that in mind," Rilla told her. "I can't believe there is only a month left."

"I know it's here somewhere?" Rilla muttered as she rifled through an old trunk. "It has to be here."

"What are you even looking for?" Ken asked from the doorway.

"A dress, I knew I had to wear white for convocation," Rilla explained. "Except this year somehow someone decided to have a theme for the ball afterwards. So now I have to wear something of
historical nature or inspired? I wore plenty of white back in my teen years. I know I have a dress or two still floating about."

"So you are looking for one?" Ken asked.

"I am," Rilla nodded. "I just hope it still fits," she stated as she flipped through the trunk. "aha!" She pulled up an old white georgette gown.

"That looks oddly familiar," Ken mused as he looked over the gown.

"Because it was the dress I wore when you kissed me for the first time," Rilla grinned at him. "I'm sure Mother would have more at Ingleside but there is no point in getting her to mail them to me. I think I am still the same size, the hem might be on the shorter side but I think I will be able to pull it off."

"Don't you need a corset to go with that?" Ken gave a small smile.

"Which brings me to this," Rilla sighed as she unrolled her old long line corset. Ivory with tiny rosebuds scattered over the top in light blue. A large band of lace at the top with a blue ribbon threaded through that could be tied into a bow.

"Oh let me see that," Ken grinned and bounced over to her. "It's so light."

"Of course, it's not the Victorian era," Rilla laughed. "Though I didn't need much support, I just wore one because it was proper."

"Yet you complain about when you have to wear a girdle at times?" Ken shook his head chuckling to himself. "Well, you better try it on. Do you need help?"

"I've dressed myself my entire life," Rilla gave him a silly look. "But if you wish to help you are more than welcome to."

"Only if I can undress you afterwards," Ken grinned cheekily. Rilla shook her head and headed to the bedroom. "I don't even know if I even have the right undergarments for this," Rilla told him.

"Well, we do live with a seamstress," Ken reminded her as he watched her strip down to her underwear. Leaving her step-in on she loosened the long string of the corset until she deemed it opened enough. She looked in the mirror as she pulled it around herself. Hooking the busk together like she always had. She nodded to Ken and walked him through tightening the laces until she said it was tight enough.

The ridge sitting just sitting at the bottom of her breasts. The coutil fabric forming her body into curves that she didn't have when she had been fifteen. She reached for her slip and pulled it over her head; making quick work of the few buttons and ribbons that held it together.

"Heavens," Ken muttered to himself as he watched her pull on the white georgette dress. "It's like being transported back in time."

"Is it really that strange?" Rilla asked as she looked in the mirror. Doing up small hooks and buttons until it was all done up

"You look older, but you haven't changed all that much," Ken said in awe. "Sit down," he told her as he raced out of the room. Rilla could only assume he went for his camera, and she was proved right when he came back with it in hand. "Unpin your hair for me?" he requested as he opened up the camera. "I know you have a similar one in an album, I want to see the comparison later." He
explained.

Rilla shook her head with a laugh and silently posed for him. "Come here you goof," she told him as she pulled in for a kiss. "Now I remember just how you managed to get all those photos of me when we were engaged."

"And how is that?" Ken asked with a crooked smile.

"Hmm, something about looking rather handsome behind a camera," Rilla with a low voice. A voice she knew he loved. She looked at him demurely as she teased him, working the hooks of her dress. "The look of concentration on your face. It's very…seductive?" Rilla trailed off.

They fell into their bed, stumbling over each other with laughter. The dress lay forgotten on the floor. As they made use of the lazy Friday afternoon where they had a house to themselves. The stack of mail lay forgotten on the table. Including rather thick envelopes from three universities that she had applied to.

Well, I hope you have enjoyed this. I did finally change the summary to this story as well. A friend told me 92 thousand words is really no longer a snippet! So I came up with a new one!

As always I do love to hear your thoughts on these chapters.

Tina
Thank you all for the reviews and follow's! As always they are very much appreciated.

Much anticipated, at least on my end. Graduation!

It was a sea of white dresses, perfumes as the entire graduating classes filled the gymnasium. Rilla glanced around trying to spot her classmates in the line ups to get their caps and gowns.

"Rilla!" She heard her name being called. "Over here," she heard Mavis she turned until she finally spotted her friend.

"So white is was?" Mavis chuckled and looked her over.

"Apparently being called Mrs. Kenneth Ford is good enough for them," Rilla shrugged. "I still don't know why they insisted on two different dress codes." She ran a hand over her white dress that was covered in white lace and embroidery. Light airy chiffon flowed around her. "I will just pass it along to Amelie, she would get some use out of it. No use of letting a dress collect dust for just one afternoon. Plus she was in aww over it this morning while I was dressing."

"You do realize you have a closet full of dresses you rarely wear?" Mavis gave her a deadpanned look of I don't believe you.

"Those dresses have their uses, and plenty of them will be coming to England with me." Rilla objected. "I can't help I enjoy pretty things."

"So your family came?"

"Yes, with Amelie, she wanted to see Lillian," Rilla nodded. "Plus she will stay when we go away next week." She explained leaving off the fact that Shirley would be there as well.

"Hows all the building going?" Mavis asked after hearing about all the unexpected repairs. It came as a surprise after purchasing the building.

"Well, they had to put all new plumbing in, and new electrical. Apparently, when it rained the other night they found out they needed a new roof as well. It put them well behind schedule, but I suppose it works to our advantage." Rilla explained. "We'll be only gone three weeks, and by the time we come back it should be up to code and ready to be painted and decorated." Rilla explained as she signed for her cap and gown when they reached the table.

"It's fine that Ken leaves during such a time?" Mavis asked.

"While Ken knows a few things about cars. Building codes along with construction is something beyond his knowledge. He's more of an underfoot when he's there. Keith and Shirley who is also helping oversee the process will keep watch. They will ensure that things are done right." Rilla explained shrugging. "Ken has repeatedly asked and they assured him numerous times to go. In their words, he's essentially useless to them besides writing cheques."

Mavis nodded as they were all called to line up.

"So have you decided?" She whispered to Rilla
"Queen's University in Ontario, at the end given the courses and credits I already have. It will be just supplementary courses to fill in my credits. A lot of reading and writing papers essentially."
She explained.

"We shall have to keep in touch," Mavis told her. "I shall miss our time between classes and having you in my classes."

"You are always welcome to visit," Rilla told her warmly. "Never feel uninvited."

The ceremony was long and warm as they sat on the well-manicured lawn of Redmond College. One by one, classmates and friends were called up to the stage. Some waving to family, others smiling at the flashes went off from a camera. White shoes and skirt peeped out from the black graduation robes.

She watched as Mavis was called up on stage, not long after her name was called.

At the end of the ceremony, her family was waiting for her. Ken holding a bouquet of roses, while her father smiled at her and pulled her into a hug.

"I never thought I'd see the day where you would be graduating. Not after you refused to go to Queens," Gilbert kissed the top of her head. "I am so proud of you Rilla."

"We both are," Anne joined in as she pulled her daughter into a hug. "Congratulations sweetheart!"

"I'm thankful that you have come," Rilla told her parents before turning to Ken. "Thank you for all your patience."

"Seeing you happy is worth it all," Ken replied as he squeezed her hand. Not wanting to kiss her in front of so many people. He passed her flowers which she breathed in with delight.

"Shall we head to the reception?" Anne spoke up? "Then we can head home and you can get ready for the graduates gala tonight?" Rilla nodded and fell into step next to Shirley and Lillian who were walking closely together; but still far enough to look proper. Amelie who was wearing a light yellow dress that was made of dotted Swiss with a low waist. She looked younger than she had in Montreal with her hair half down and white stockinged legs.

"Do you think there will be cake?" Amelie asked quietly.

Rilla laughed. "I'm sure that there will be," she replied to Amelie. "Maybe even ice cream? How is school going?"

"It's been fine, Miss Blythe, I mean Di is very helpful and keeps the subjects interesting," Amelie told her.

"Ameilie is a fine student and Di thinks she will be all set come fall to start grade nine," Anne boasted. "It nice to have a young one in the house again. She even makes her bed without being told in the mornings." Anne teased lightly as she smiled at Rilla.

"Shirley was the worst out of all of us," Rilla objected. "How he managed to strip the bed in his sleep as he did." She heard Lillian clear her throat trying not to laugh at Rilla's comment.

"I wasn't that bad," Shirley grunted. "Plus at least I looked normal when I slept."

"And here I was told that my button eyes were sweet," Rilla feigned a pained chest.
"Children," Gilbert said sternly. "Need I remind you to be nice to each other."

"I see the Merediths, I am going to go say hello," Shirley excused himself as he took Lillian's arm.

"And we will go look for sweets," Rilla told Amelie, elbowing Ken who chuckled at her need for sweets. His hand grazing the small of Rilla's back. A way for him to let her know he was next to her. They spent the next hour mingling. Rilla introducing her professors to her parents; whom many remembered from their own days at school.

"Anne Shirley?"

"It's Anne Blythe now, but yes," Anne spoke clearly as she turned to the older man beside her. "Royal Gardner?"

"Blythe?" He repeated looking towards Gilbert who came to stand next to Anne.

"Mr. Gardner, what a wonderful surprise," Gilbert held out his hand. "Do you have children graduating?"

"Yes, my daughter graduated today Mr. Blythe," Royal told them.

"Oh, Gilbert is a doctor now." Anne corrected him.

"Dr. Blythe," Royal corrected himself. "I didn't hear any Blythes walk across the stage today?"

"Our youngest is married, the majority of a flock are married" Anne stated.

"How many children do you have? My wife had three daughters," Royal answered.

"Seven in total, but only five are living. We lost one as an infant and Walter was killed in action," Gilbert spoke up.

"My condolences," Royal bowed his head to them but did not seem truly empathetic about it.

"Rilla darling coming to say hello to an old college classmate." Anne called out to her daughter who was approaching with a plate full of cake.

"Ford? No connection to the Ford Publishing who is opening up here?" Roy asked him curiously. Looking at the obvious age difference between Rilla and Ken.

"The one and only," Ken confirmed. "It's a slow process but it is coming along."

"Seems like your daughter has done well for herself," Royal commented straightening up.

"All of our children have done us proud. The Fords are family friends and our children grew up together." Gilbert elaborated to ensure that there was no misunderstanding about his youngest’s marriage.

"Papa? Who are you talking to? Mama is asking for photos," A young woman's voice called out.

"I ran into some old classmates from my college years, Annabelle?" Roy turned to her daughter who was wearing an elaborate white gown. Rilla looked it over, where hers was soft and understated. Annabelle who she'd seen around on campus was over the top.
"Rilla," Annabelle greeted her schoolmate.

"Annabelle," Rilla said with a forced smiled. "Your gown is outstanding."

"Thank you, we got it in Paris, along with my wedding dress." She said with an air of snobbishness in her voice.

"Well, she shouldn't keep your mother waiting." Royal cleared his throat. "It was good to see you, Anne," he spoke before waiting a moment. "Gilbert," with that he walked away with his daughter.

"Mom who was that?" Rilla asked.

"Remember how I told you once that I had a suitor before your father who I turned down?" Anne whispered. "Well, that was him. I'm surprised by all the convocations we went to here. That this is the first time we have run into him."

"Lucky I suppose?" Rilla shrugged. "He seemed to remember you fairly well, I think he was surprised that you married Dad."

"He pretty much eluded that you did what your mother turned down," Gilbert told her. "Other words you married him for his money."

"Sadly this is nothing I haven't heard," Rilla sighed and picked up her plate of cake. Sighing once more she put it down. "Let's go home? We have better cake at home."

It was a quiet afternoon, a quick nap for Rilla before she went through the motions doing her hair. Adding a wide ribbon to her crown as she pinned it back. She sighed as she looked at her corset before wrapping it around herself. She paused in the mirror looking at herself, running her hands over the curve of her hips and around her stomach.

"You almost ready?" Ken told her as he appeared in the doorway.

"Ken! We have the company shut the door!" Rilla exclaimed trying to cover herself.

"Everyone is downstairs," Ken told her but closed the door as she asked. "I was just coming up to find my cufflinks."

"They are on the dresser," Rilla told him as she buttons her petticoat slip that Lillian had made rather easy for her. "And I am almost ready," Rilla told him as she reached for the slip of her dress before the final layer of her dress. "There see," she hooked the last hook and turned to her husband.

"Yes, and how beautiful you are," Ken grinned as he gave her his arm and escorted her down the stairs.

"Shirley!" Rilla exclaimed as they entered the kitchen. Shocked to see Shirley already halfway through the tin of fudge she had stored away.

"What?" Shirley asked, mouth full of chocolate. "It was for me wasn't it?"

"Doesn't mean you have to eat it all in one sitting," Rilla shook her head at him. "I really don't understand him at times," she looked towards Lillian. Lillian laughed and reached for the tin of sweets.

"He ate a pound of that Susan made as well," Amelie tattled on him, making him grin sheepishly.
"I'm trying to gain some weight I lost while recuperating?" Shirley shrugged an excuse.

"You have gained plenty back," Lillian gave him a look. "Though how is Susan?" Lillian asked looking towards Amelie.

"She's fine," Shirley spoke over Amelie.

"She opinionated," Amelie said louder. "She goes on about things, wondering if you and Shirley will get married. Then, of course, it's where you will get married. The type of cake which Shirley refuses to also tell her that you dislike fruitcake."

"Shirley," Lillian groaned. "Surely telling her I don't like fruitcake is not a crime or that frightening to you."

"It is a crime to Susan," Rilla told her teasingly.

"Isn't it time for you to go?" Shirley looked at the clock in the kitchen.

"Soon," Anne spoke as she walked into the room. "But first photos first, your father is waiting in the parlour."

"It's a living room," Rilla corrected her with a laugh. "Well, darling shall we get our portrait taken?"

"Of course," Ken smiled.

"Do you think there will be dances on the island?" Amelie asked following them.

"I'm sure there will be in summer," Rilla looked back to the young girl. "There is generally one or two down at the lighthouse, as well as the hall in Glen."

"Did you go to them?" Amelie asked.

"I went to one at the lighthouse, when I was fifteen," Rilla told her. "It was a bittersweet night," she sighed as she squeezed Ken's arm.

"What Rilla means is that they declared war that night," Ken answered for her. "What started as an enchanting evening turned into something much more—?" Ken paused thinking of the right word to use. "Inauspicious," Ken spoke.

Amelie just looked at him.

"He's a writer, what he means is that the war changed our lives. No one thought it would continue as it did." Rilla explained. "The whole tone of the evening changed from a single sentence."

Amelie nodded. "Well, I wish I could go to a dance tonight," She said rather dreamily.

"You well one day, though you seemed too grown-up when we met. It is nice to see you be so relaxed" Rilla stated with a smile.

"She is a joy to have at Ingleside," Anne said smiling. "It's nice to feel needed as a mother again. It's been so long that any of you have needed me in such a way."

"All right, let's get some photo's done," Gilbert broke up the conversation. Rilla and Ken took their places. Rilla sitting in the old wingback chair with Ken beside it. Another classic pose near the fireplace.
The entire ball was a mishmash of dresses, some adding pops of colours. Some forgoing the white altogether wearing dresses that their grandmothers would have worn. Even dance cards a thing of the past. As dances now were pick and choose your partners by song. Allowing the music to inspire you, as it changed song to song. From the slow waltz to the present day of jazz.

In the end, the entire night was full of gayety. Dancing and laughing with classmates until the clock chimed midnight. Women searching for their shoes that had long been kicked off for comfort. Men straightening their ties as they gathered their checked jackets.

Graduation day was over, the gentleman walked their ladies home. Cabs were hailed, whispers of speakeasies were heard for those who wished to party more.

Rilla rested her head on Ken's shoulder. "I don't want to go home, can we go out to the harbour?"

"It's late," Ken frowned. "I'll take you to the harbour tomorrow, it's not a place to be at night," Ken shook his head. "But I do have a plan," he told her as he pulled into one of the hotels they had downtown. "With the house being full and all," he told her. "I thought we could have some privacy tonight."

Rilla looked at him with wide eyes but nodded. How could she turn down a night with no house guests? The clerk looked them over, eyeing their rings as Ken checked them into the hotel.

"My parents know we're not coming home?" Rilla asked him.

"As awkward as it was to tell them, yes," Ken admitted which made Rilla turn red. The bellboy unlocked their door and handed them the key. The bag that Ken had artfully packed for them placed on the baggage rack. Ken tipped the boy before locking the door and turning to his wife. "On the bright side we don't have to worry about others hearing," he grinned and kissed her.

Clothing strewn about as undressed each other. Stockings rolled down one by one, followed by looks that sent her heart racing. Or maybe it was the fact that something she had been so reliant on was still hidden away in a drawer at their home.

She nodded her head to him when he gave a questioning look. Reassuring him, and maybe even herself that she was ready for this. She thought being married would have made her ready to be a mother, but it never happened. Maybe she would never feel ready? That it was just something that she had to do to show herself that her fears were nothing to fear.

Her parents said nothing as they returned home the next morning. Rilla blushing as she poured her coffee. Ignoring the look Shirley gave her until Lillian gave him a threatening look.

"How was the dance?" Amelie asked them. "Was it everything you thought it would be? Was there pretty gowns?"

"It was very nice, all the dresses were very pretty," Rilla told her as she stirred her oatmeal. "What do we have planned on your last day here?" She looked towards her pants.

"Some shopping and this and that," Anne told her as she buttered her toast. "Your father is going to pick up some medical supplies for his office."

Rilla nodded and took a bite of her breakfast. "So I made my decision last week." She told the table. "Come August, I will be enrolled in the correspondence course. That way I can finish my credits to receive my B.A in three semesters or however long it takes."
"Which school did you decided on?" Gilbert asked over his coffee cup.

"Queen's University," Rilla told them. "For plenty of reasons that don't matter much to you. But I am happy with my choice."

"Not Dalhousie?" Anne's brow furrowed. She was sure it would have been that school. She was still unsure if Rilla could juggle school and possible motherhood. It would be different than her days looking after Little Jims in many ways.

"Dalhousie didn't accept me," Rilla told them truthfully. "But that is all right. Queens is much more prestigious than Dalhousie and should one day I wish to go to medical school. It will look better on my application. But for now I want to relax, and spend some time on the Island when I can."

"You know you are welcome anytime," Gilbert told her.

Rilla smiled and looked towards Ken who was drinking his coffee. A glint in his eye as he watched her, a permanent tilt of a smile on his lips. "Either way, today is the beginning of a new adventure," Rilla spoke. "Whether we are ready for it or not?"

Thank you all for reading! I hope you all enjoyed it and the small bits of Shirley and Lillian in there. I don't think I can truly not ever write about them again. I do enjoy writing them!

Tina
The telephone rang at Ingleside late at night, not unusual at any means. The entire household was used to the telephone ringing. None one was expecting that call they had received, not when they had been expecting them to set sail in two days.

"Dad?" Shirley said into the phone.

"Shirley, is everything all right? Your mother and I were about to head to bed," Gilbert told him as he looked at the clock beside the telephone.

"Ken just took Rilla to the hospital, she had been sick since convocation. A small cold she kept saying, brushing it off. He's still there, I ran back to grab a few things for him. The doctor diagnosed her with diphtheria, according to him its the eighth case in the past week that he had seen."

"Diphtheria?" Gilbert repeated as he turned and heard his wife on the stairs.

"He went up to check on her and found her burning up. Then he heard her wheezing each time she took a breath," Shirley explained. "We've been all been given the antitoxin and we're told to be on the lookout for any symptoms. Lillian said she had it as a child, and Ken as well. I wanted to let you know, to watch out for your communities. If Kingsport has come down with it, it could make it to the island from all the coming and goings of the ports nearby." Shirley told him.

"Of course, I will keep an eye out for it, who is attending Rilla?" Gilbert asked him. "Keep an eye on Amelie, she'll be more susceptible to it being young."

"Of course and I'll telegram you the details, I'm not entirely sure," Shirley admitted through the receiver. "Ken's beside himself, frankly I don't remember Rilla ever being particularly sick ever in her life. Walter had Typhoid, we had the measles at one point. But this—," Shirley cut himself off.

"Rilla is strong," Gilbert tried to reassure his son, and even himself. Diphtheria was no easy disease, too many complications that they couldn't control. "Keep me informed please."

"Of course," Shirley said and they hung up.

Gilbert looked over at Anne who was now sitting on the stairs. He sat down next to her holding her hand in the process as the other rain through he grey curls. He knew she had pieced it together.

"Do you have the antitoxin?" Anne asked him.

"I do, a fair amount of it," Gilbert told her. "I should ring Jem," he said but made no move to get up.

Is there anything that was then watching a loved one suffer? Watching them struggle to breathe? In all the drama Ken barely remembered to send a telegram to England. To inform his friend of the change of plans. To not worry when they didn't arrive. In return, he was sent wishes to get well soon and to take care of his wife. That anytime he wished to visit he would be welcome.

Work was set aside, forgotten more than anything by him. Sitting in the white room of the hospital. Praying for some sort of the change in the illness, for the fever to break. Instead, her breath was shallow as she struggled. She struggled to swallow the tepid glasses of water. She
struggled over lukewarm gruel.

She would look at him through glassy feverish eyes. Her long hair braided and tied off securely with a small rubber band. Something he would do each morning after they suggested they cut it to make it more manageable.

"Go home, get some rest, Mr. Ford, visiting hours are over for the night," the nurse shook him on the shoulder. "We'll watch her for the rest of the night. We don't want you to be sick as well."

Ken nodded as he stood up stiffly. Looking back towards his wife, he stepped forward and grasped her pale hand. He bent over her, smoothing her hair from her face lovingly. "I'll see you in the morning," he whispered before kissing her forehead gently.

"How is she?" Lillian asked as Ken sank into a chair at the kitchen table.

"The same," he said simply. "Where's the others?"

"Shirley is tinkering with something in the garage out back," Lillian told him. "Amelie is reading in my room, are you hungry?"

"If I say no are you still going to force me to eat?" Ken asked her with a small laugh.

"Probably," Lillian smirked and went over to the pot on the stove and stirred it. "Chicken and dumplings?"

"You had me at the dumplings," Ken leaned back in his chair. "I can get it though, have you eaten?"

"I did, with Amelie and Shirley," Lillian nodded. "And I don't mind."

"I know, but I never want to make you feel like you have to earn your keep around here," Ken told her. Though he would admit he would have been going crazy if he was alone at such a time. "How did your meeting with Timothy go?" He asked her as he stood up and stretched and walked stiffly to the icebox. Opening the door took out the bottle of milk and accepted the glass that Lillian offered him.

"Good, I had a meeting with one of the justices today. He's still waiting on hearing from Yannick's chosen attorney. Justice Ritchie seems to have a fair judgement with many of these cases from what Mr. Allard tells me."

"So how long do you think it will be?" Ken asked as he set his glass on the table and took the offered bowl of food.

"It's hard to say, it's only been two months," Lillian told him truthfully. "But Timothy says we have an excellent case. So I can only be hopeful."

Ken nodded, curious what Shirley and she would do if they didn't grant the divorce. Leave entirely?

"How's Rilla?" Amelie's small voice asked from the kitchen archway.

"The same," Ken turned to look at her. "How are you feeling?"

"Pretty good, we went out of the harbour today. Lily and Shirley make me speak French when I'm out with them." Amelie made a face.
"Oui, car c'est votre patrimoine et vous devriez le parler," Lillian told her with a short glance.

"The ability to speak French is good to have," Ken told her. "I used it fairly often during the business."

"See even Ken agrees with me," Lillian told her sister. "It will do you good to relearn some of it."

"Rilla doesn't speak French," Amelie pointed out.

"Rilla grew up in an English speaking house, and an English speaking school." Ken pointed out. "They didn't have a French teacher majority of the time so it wasn't taught regularity."

"Even so. Rilla does make an effort to ask me how to say things in French when nothing is pressing going on." Lillian told her sister one hand on her hip and her other holding a wooden spoon.

"Je vais au lit," Amelie rolled eyes but yawned. "J'ai une femme qui a mal," she sighed before blushing remember that Ken could understand her. She watched him for a moment, realizing that he was most likely pretending to not hear her.

Lillian softened slightly. "Je vais vous apporter une bouteille d'eau," She watched her sister nod and retreat up the stairs. "Teenagers," She said out loud and shook her head.

"Well, between you and Shirley who I remember being a rather a serious child. I think you two ever have children you'll be all right." Ken told her.

"Thank you, maybe one day we shall see." Lillian murmured as she turned and turned on the element for the kettle. She never would admit she had thought of the same thing in her dreams.

"Come on Rilla, cooperate for us," Ken whispered in her ear.

"No," she said hoarsely groaning in pain as she got out one syllable. She shook her head in a fevered daze, clutching at him.

"Mrs. Ford please we just want to wash off some of the fevers sweat." One nurse said softly. "You're husband will be just outside the door," The nurse told her, which only made Rilla shake her head more.

"Can I help?" Ken asked. "I am her husband, it's not like it would be inappropriate?" He asked them. They looked at each other for a moment before nodding. One went to a cupboard and handed him a dressing gown to cover his slacks and dress shirt.

"We have a bath waiting across the hall, it will help cool her off," the nurse told him. "The water will appear cold to you but it's just above body temperature for her."

Ken nodded. "I can carry her," he told them as he carefully arranged himself and whispered in her ear. She took a moment to understand but wrapped her arms around his neck. Letting her head fall to his shoulder as he lifted her. The nurses fixed her nightgown before leading him to the small washroom.

"It's just us," he whispered. "They are getting towels ready," he explained as he sat her down on a wooden stool. He made a quick work of the braid and combed it out until it was tangle-free. "Arms up." He smiled at her as weakly did as he asked. He watched as she quickly covered herself until he held out his hand to hold onto. She took it and let guide her into the shallow built-in tub. He pulled the stool over and took the clean washcloth and dunked it into the water. Slowly he washed over
her upper body. Filling the pitcher beside him and rinsed off her body before he repeated wetting
down her hair. Reaching for the bottle of shampoo that he had brought with him he lathered her
hair up. The smell of coconut hitting his senses. Coconut shampoo it was things he noticed after
they had married.

"Tilt your head back darling," Ken said softly as he rinses the shampoo from her hair. Her cheeks
were still flushed as she began to shiver in the warm water. "Okay, let's get you dried and back in
bed."

She had fallen asleep by the time he had towel-dried her hair and braided it once more. Dressed in a
light nightgown while the other was hanging too dry after being washed out.

"Do get some fresh air and something to eat," The nurse told him gently. "She'll be asleep for a
while, you are no use to her if you get sick as well."

"I know," Ken sighed. "I just—," he started.

"I know," the nurse said sympathetically. "She's doing well and responding to the antitoxin. You're
doing all that you can to help keep her comfortable."

Her throat felt on fire, it was hard to swallow hard to breathe at times if she laid a certain way. She
was in a constant wave of sleep and painful consciousness. She always could tell what time of day
it was if Ken was there. He was always there during the daytime, brushing her hair, reading her
parts of Jane Eyre. Other times when he was feeling sentimental he would read her the Secret
Garden with a soft low voice.

He was always alert, at her side in a moment rubbing her back when she coughed. Rubbing her
back as she panicked as she lost her breath from the force it took to cough. Then she would fall
back on the bed, exhausted from the sickness that took over her body. She lost all sense of days and
time.

Wasn't there something they were going to do?

Everything was in such a daze she couldn't remember anymore. How many had she been here?
What was she sick with? She didn't even remember being brought to the hospital. It was a hospital
that she was sure of?

Other times Lillian and Shirley voices would drift from the hallway. Hushed tones as they talked to
Ken. Sometimes they would pop in for a moment when she was lucid enough to shrug when they
asked how she was doing. They never stayed long, but the lines of worry never left their faces
when they said goodbye to her.

She's long given up trying to speak more than necessary. It felt like millions of knives stabbing at
her throat. She was warm, she was cold, that boiling. Her throat was raw but it was hard to swallow
the cool water they offered her. Other times it was warm broth, water porridge and maple syrup.
Tea and honey to try and soothe her aching throat, but even that was torture to her.

Other times she remembered him brushing out her hair. Letting the natural curls fluff out before he
braided it. Sometimes he did one braid, other times he did one on each side. Much like the first
photograph her mother had taken when she celebrated a year at green gables.

What she didn't remember was being delirious. How she was gasping for air as she held knocked
over the pitcher beside her bed. Nurses rushing in as they called for the doctor. Quickly sedating
her as they scraped the thick grey membrane that covered her throat in a quick attempt to allow her
to breathe. She didn't see Ken's anguished look as he came back for evening visiting hours. She didn't see him sink the floor.

It was all painful daze.

"You may want to bring some flowers today," one of the nurses told Ken as he arrived shortly after breakfast.

"What?"

"She's doing much better." The nurse told him. "Some flowers would brighten up her day."

"Is the doctor around?" Ken asked wanting to know what happened. Torn between running back for flowers, or staying to find the doctor. The nurse took pity on him and went for the doctor.

"Ahh, Mr. Ford, right on time." The Doctor came through a set of doors that Ken knew to be his office. "Mrs. Ford is alert and her fever broke sometime last night. She's still not talking but after what happened a few nights ago it is to be expected. Her throat will be sore for a while, but the membrane is receding. I believe that with plenty of rest and time she will make a full recovery."

"Of course, when can she come home?" Ken asked him.

"We'll keep her here for another few days to ensure she doesn't relapse. But I don't see why if everything stays on the positive that she can't go home by the weekend?" The doctor told him smiling.

Rilla smiled weakly at him when he entered her room. He stopped for a moment before taking one hand behind his back to showing the bouquet he had found for her. She took them gingerly. Sighing as she breathing in the faint aroma of the carnations that he gave her. He took in her a tray on unfinished breakfast still sat beside her. While on her lap held a small slate, with shaking writing she asked him how he was?

"I'm okay, we're all okay," Ken told her. "Your parents send their love and prayers. Shirley has been keeping them up to date with everything." He explained. "Did they explain why you are here?" He asked her.

Rilla nodded and wrote slowly. Diphtheria, When can I come home?

"A few more days and then you can come rest at home." He told her as he squeezed her hand. "You need to be a little more strength before that."

"They think they figured out how you contracted it," Ken told her. "Little Melanie came down with around the same time as you. You were helping the children after church. She sneezed in your face as you were helping her button shoes that had come undone."

Is she okay?

"She's fighting through it," Ken told her. Not wanting to tell her that the little girls were struggling for her life. Rilla had age and strength on her side, little girls did not.

What day is it? Rilla wrote under her last question.

"June 2nd," Ken told her. Watching her eyes widen at his admittance. "I know the trip," he guessed her next question. "You've been sick for almost two weeks, and the boat has long set sail. I sent
them a telegram explaining and they sent their wishes to get better soon. As well as letting us know that we are welcome to come anytime. But first, we need you to get healthy again." He watched Rilla nod. Taking note of how her eyes showing sadness about missing the trip. "We'll go as soon as I can leave for a few weeks and not have to worry about the company." He promised her. "Not sure when that will be but I will take you there one day."

Rilla nodded and looked over at the book at her table.

"Would you like me to read to you for a while?" Ken asked her. She nodded shyly as she settled into her pillows.

As promised Rilla was cleared to go home to recuperate by the weekend. Once it was seen that she could get up and walk short distances without the aid of another. Dressed simply in a simple wrapper gown to go home in. She sat in the wheelchair that would usher her out of the hospital.

"Recovery can last more than three weeks, you may feel weaker than usual for the time being. Don't overwork yourself, your husband says you have family staying with you. Allow them to help you. I know women like to control the household, but let others run the ship until you are one hundred percent ready." The Doctor told her sternly.

"Of course," Rilla spoke. Her voice still hoarse but at least she could speak without much pain.

"I will also advise that martial activities are set aside for two or three months. Becoming pregnant during recovery will only hinder and prolong a full recovery." He gave them both a look like he took their childless marriage like it was less a choice then it had been.

"Of course," Ken spoke up for both of them. "It makes complete sense," he nodded to the doctor.

"Very well, I want to see you within a week for a check-up Mrs. Ford, but you are free to go." The doctor tipped his head to her before leaving the room.

"Let go home?" Ken asked her with a smile, and Rilla nodded back. Happy to be out of the hospital, out into the fresh air as she waited for him to bring the car around.

The house was quiet but excited that she was home again. Lillian had washed and had the bed freshly made for her. Amelie had left a stack of magazines for her to flip through on her bedside table.

"I'm glad you all right," Shirley told from the doorway as Lillian fussed about the bed. Making sure that everything was set up for her. "When you're up for it mom would like you to call, but not until you're able to talk comfortably of course. Until then, maybe write her a letter to let her know that you are on the mend?"

Rilla nodded. Partially surprised her mother wasn't there to greet her. But it would have made little sense for her to come when she had been in the hospital for two weeks. She was sure that her mother would have been calling daily.

"You a bunch of letters and get-well cards," Amelie told her giving her the envelopes. Nan and Jerry, Di, Jem and Faith, they had all sent wishes to get better soon. While she had a note from Mavis, even Marianne. They had a call scheduled before Rilla was supposed to leave for England. She must have been told when she had called and sent a pretty card with painted watercolour flowers.

Rilla smiled and nodded her head to say thank you to Amelie. She yawned which alerted the guest
to give the convalescence her rest.

"What would you like to do first?" Ken asked her as the others left.

"A proper relaxing bath?" She asked wanting to feel clean once more. "A proper kiss from you? I am no longer contagious according to the doctor?" She told him speaking carefully to not stress her voice any more than necessary.

Ken laughed. "Okay no more talking, and yes it's a miracle that I never came down with it. I had it as a child maybe that helped me?" He told her before kissing her sweetly on the lips for the first time in weeks. "I will be back, lilac oil?"

Rilla nodded to him as she which so the glass of water that someone had left out for her. She looked around her bedroom happy to be home.

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French translations.

"You should be proud of your heritage and know-how to speak it,"

"I'm going to bed, I have lady aches,"

"I will bring you a hot water bottle."

There was a large Diptheria outbreak in the 1920s a rather deadly disease to children and the elderly. In the early 1920s, the antitoxin was created and was a great help in curing the disease. Then by the 1930s, the vaccine was created for it as well which saved many children from the disease.

This was a detour I wasn't planning writing but it happened and I went with it. All while having my own health scare with my partner, after urging him to go to the doctor. And we live in Canada its not like we have to worry about medical bills! After four days I finally convinced him to go and we were told if he had waited one more day he would have been in the hospital. So I have been playing nursemaid to him. Health scares are frightening that is for sure.

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As always I do enjoy your thoughts on these chapters. Don't be shy, I don't bite. I may talk your head off but don't bite!
Chapter 29

Artemis sat curled up next to her, growing larger with each passing week. She poked her pink nose into Rilla's white hand, licking her with a scraping of a feline tongue. She smiled down at the grey kitten, running her hand over the small folded down ears lovingly. A small white paw patted her hand playfully.

"I missed you too," Rilla said quietly as the kitten crept up closer to her shoulder. She looked to her table, at the stack of letters that had come today. The house was quiet except for the sound of the sewing machine. That told Rilla that Lillian was working as Amelie had left for the Island the previous week. While Shirley was helping Ken who went to check on the progress of the renovations.

Her voice was still hoarse and her body still weak, but she managed to creep around the top house. She was thinner than she had ever been, it was the first thing she noticed when she finally looked in a mirror. Her nightwear hung off her shoulders, her eyes sunken in. Ken assured her that she would gain it back, that she still looked beautiful. In the end he was mainly glad that she was alive. That she was home and recovering from a sickness she could only vaguely remember.

At night Ken helped her down the stairs as sat in the living room on the chaise. Catching up on his own work that had been pushed to the side during her illness. Most nights they turned on the new radio Ken had bought and had shipped from Toronto. Radio, such a thing it was. The Island had its own station now and had various shows in the evening. Along with local news, and even national. Who knew you could know what was happening in Toronto? Winnipeg, even Vancouver hours after it happened.

Dearest Rilla

I am glad that you are on the mend when I had that you were ill the time I called I was beside myself. It was refreshing to hear that you are on the mend and regaining your strength.

Papa is health is declining with each passing month. The doctors believe he will only have a few more months left. We have been slowly getting things into order and prepared, as I am of age I don't worry so much about what will happen. The house in my name now, but I am thinking about selling it. Go out into the world and maybe travel? Maybe even go to college or get my teaching license? As you see I have no idea what to do, but I am sure I will figure it out! I am grateful that I have the money from my mother's inheritance and father's estate to allow me to do what I wish.

Maybe once Father is at peace and you have some spare time that we can find time to visit each other as we have planned. Maybe not in winter this time, but only time will tell when I will be able to leave this city.

All the news about your brother and his sweetheart is looking up, they must be so elated that it is nearly over. At least hopefully over, I can only imagine what it is like for them but they are making it work and holding out hope for a brighter future.

Speaking on futures and brighter futures! It must be so wonderful to be finished with school and able to work toward more at a leisurely pace. I know you are weary about starting a family but I do believe that you will make a wonderful mother. You are patient when it comes to dealing with problems and issues. I never told you about on my visit that I had seen you calm Ken down in the middle of the night. It showed me you in a whole other light that night. You care so much but you never lose your sensibilities. You can work your way to an outcome that you find manageable.
Something I can only assume to be an asset as a parent to remain calm and collected during trying times?

I will finish this letter up, rest up and don't overtax yourself. Enjoy your recovery, let Ken spoil you. Don't rush getting up and about too fast, diphtheria will take the toll out of you.

Love Marianne.

Rilla smiled and placed the letter aside and gave Artemis lazy scratch behind her ears. She was glad that Marianne was not hiding away from her future. That she saw the light at the end of the tunnel when it came to her father's health. It would still hurt, she would still mourn him of course. Except it would be different, it wouldn't be sudden.

"Well, look who is up and resting," she looked up at what could only be one person, but it surprised her nonetheless.

"Jem," She looked up as she fixed her light silk dressing gown. "What are you doing here?"

"I had to come for a conference and told Mom and Dad that I would look in on you," Jem explains. "Lillian let me in."

"Oh, I didn't even hear you knock on the door," Rilla told him.

"Lillian saw me from the window," Jem told her as he looked around his little sister's bedroom. "So can I sit?" He asked with a smile.

"You can at your discretion," Rilla teased him with her hoarse voice.

"I'm going to ignore that," Jem gave her a look. "So how are you doing? Your brother is asking and not a doctor." Jem asked her, clarifying so she wouldn't feel the need to tell him everything.

"I'm all right," Rilla told him. "Still a way to go but every day is better than the last."

"You had everyone rather worried Rilla," Jem told her. "Actually I have something for you, I ran into Mrs. Anderson and Jimmy in Glen and mentioned that I was coming here. This is for you." He handed over a letter to her with messy childish writing.

Rilla reached out hastily to grab it. She always tried to keep in contact with the boy. She even managed to set up a visit where Jimmy could come out to Kingsport for a week that was set up for August. When she had told him in a letter that she wasn't sure if she would make it to the island that summer. It was Jimmy who had asked to visit her one day. Which prompted Mrs. Anderson writing her asking if she would enjoy a visit if they could manage the fare. In reply, Rilla told them she would gladly accept a visit and offered to pay the fare herself if he could come.

Dear Willa

Please get better soon! I don't want to miss you this summer. I am looking forward to it, I've never been off the Island and can't wait to go on the fairy! Please say you'll be better by August!

Also, we got a tele phone! R6-55

Jimmy

"How did he find out?" Rilla looked up at Jem.

"I don't think he knows how sick you were, but mom mentioned it to the ladies at church most
likely. Which is most likely how the word got back to the Andersons," Jem told her. "Everyone was praying for you essentially."

"You make it sound like I was dying," Rilla rolled her eyes at him. But the sober look on his face told her something that Ken had not quite told her.

"Either Shirley was who relaying messages was downplaying it. I don't know but Ken was rightfully out of his mind when Dad spoke to him a couple of times. According to some of the nurses I know he wouldn't leave your side unless forced to. They teased him at first but when they realized that you wouldn't cooperate without him near you. They welcomed his presence." Jem explained to her. "Either way you were much sicker than you realize. Thank heavens that you ended up in the hospital before that trip. You wouldn't have made it to England Rilla you have to know that?"

Rilla found herself nodding with the realization of Jem's words.

"But you pulled through, hair and all," Jem told her with a tease. "Just like the rest of us once upon a time. Mom wanted to come, but dad told her that it be better for her to stay in glen until you were cleared. Then Nan needed her again, and of course, there had been a handful of cases on the island so dad has been busy." Jem told her. "Faith has been keeping a close eye on Ceci and herself as well, but I think they will be okay."

"Again?" Rilla asked Jem with a frown. Alluding to Nan, and Jem only nodded with a clear of his throat. "How far along is Faith?" Rilla asked him curiously.

"Is it that obvious?" Jem asked her raising an eyebrow of how Rilla could pick it out.

Rilla shrugged her shoulder and coughed in the process. Faith had written about being tired and unwell a few months ago. But nothing was ever confirmed.

"Sixteen weeks give or take," Jem told her. "Not everyone knows just yet especially given Nan at this time. But it is getting harder to hide, so the news will come out eventually"

Rilla nodded. "Congratulations," she told him meaning it.

"Don't congratulate me, Faith has to do all the work," Jem shook his head. "How about you and Ford? With you being done school?"

"I'm not done with school," Rilla told him truthfully. "But there has been an agreement of sorts," Rilla told him truthfully. "However we shall see, as we were told by the doctor to avoid such things until I am fully recovered."

"Which is a sign of a good physician; which I am glad you have," Jem told her sincerely. "But what do you mean not being done with school?"

Rilla sighed. "I'm taking a few courses by correspondence, thats all." She told him. "Something to do while Ken's at work I suppose for the time being. I'm not sure if I know how to be a housewife and clean all day?" Rilla joked.

"You aren't going to help at the office or even the paper?" Jem asked.

"Of course not, writing gossip columns aren't my thing," Rilla responded.

"No, but advice for women could be your thing," Jem pointed out.
"I'm not a writer Jem, nor am I qualified to give anyone any sort of advice on how to be a housewife." Rilla gave him a look before coughing.

"All right, I think it is time you rest and I take my leave," Jem told her. "But you are right about the housewife thing." he grinned at her and bent down and kissed her cheek in a brotherly fashion. "Rest up, then maybe we can convince that husband of yours to let you come to the Island. You know a relaxing rehabilitation for a week or two for some fresh air?"

Rilla shook her head at him and hugged him weakly hearing the floor creak in the hallway.

"She's not going anywhere until the doctor allows it," Ken told the siblings. "But we can discuss it once he does," Ken told Jem before turning to Rilla. "If you do you will have to stay with your parents. I won't be able to take more than two days off at a time right now."

Rilla nodded before looking between the two men and swung her legs off the bed. She stopped them with a wave of her hand as she stood up slowly as she saw them jump to assist her. "I need to use the ladies room, I can make it that far. The doctor said steady short distances are best."

"Of course," Ken nodded to her but still watched her carefully. "I didn't know you were in town Blythe?" He turned to his brother in law.

"I'm here for a conference, I figured I could bring back some good news to the family about Rilla," Jem told him.

"Of course, how is the family?" Ken asked as he rearranged the pillows on the bed and fixed the blanket. Ignoring Jem's amused look while he waited for his wife to come back from her call of nature.

"Faith is good, Ceci is precocious and into everything," Jem grinned before sobering. "I should warn you, I didn't realize that Rilla didn't know about how sick she was."

"I was planning on telling her, I just haven't found the right moment you know?" Ken sighed. Jem nodded, he was used to relaying such news to people. He was a doctor, after all, Ken was just a husband. "Is Shirley around? Or did he go back to the apartment?"

"He's downstairs with Lillian. He generally has dinner with us before going back to the flat," Ken told him as he turned as he heard the bathroom open. "Staying upstairs or down?"

"I'm not sure, are you staying for lunch?" Rilla looked towards her eldest brother.

"Unfortunately I have plans with a colleague of mine in an hour," Jem told her looking at his watch. "I was just popping in to say hello to you."

"Well, then I don't have to change." Rilla smiled happily, but her eyes showed just how tired she already was. Even from from the passive afternoon she had.

"Do you wish to nap time before tea? Maybe afterward we can work on the puzzle for a little bit before bringing you back upstairs?" Ken asked her with concern.

Rilla only nodded, knowing it would be no use to argue with him. "Thank you for coming," She looked towards Jem. "Ken will see you out won't you?" She turned to her husband.

"Of course," Ken nodded

Jem gently pulled his sister into a hug and kissed the top of her head. Something else he rarely ever
did, except maybe to the twins who he had been closer to growing up. Though brushes with grave illnesses tend to bring out a side of people you don't always expect.

"Rest up and get better Rilla," Jem told her before going down the stairs. She listened as Jem briefly said hello to Shirley and Lillian. Another few minutes the front door was opened and shut. She heard Ken's familiar footsteps on the stairs once more. She still sitting on the edge of the bed when he came in. Rubbing in lotion on her hands and arms with her robe tossed aside, revealing her thin shoulders.

The ceiling fan whirling around as the day hit the peak of the heat.

"Is there anything you wish for dinner tonight?" Ken asked her sitting down beside her.

"Anything is fine, but something light probably." Rilla told him honestly. "what will you do this afternoon?"

"I have some work to do, so I'll be in the study," Ken told her. "If you need anything just let us know."

"I will," Rilla told him as she moved slowly to bring herself fully on the bed. "I'm not sure I will be able to sleep with the heat, but I will lie here and just rest."

"Which is also acceptable," Ken grinned. "I'm glad your voice is coming back." He kissed her forehead.

Each passing day Rilla found herself growing stronger. After spending almost two weeks inside resting she finally felt more like herself. It was another week making it the first week of July before she ventured outside the porch. Walking down the small driveway to marvel at the new mailbox that Ken has installed. Door to door the mail was the newest thing to come to Kingsport.

"Look at you out and about," her neighbour to the left commented as she laden with bags from errands.

"Hello, Mrs. Orwell! Yes, it is quite nice to be outside," Rilla smiled as she pulled the light cardigan around her. "I am trying to let persuade Ken to allow me to go to church soon, but we shall see."

"Well, dear you gave him quite a scare," the older lady replied. "But the ladies at the church group will be happy that you will be back soon."

"How is little Melanie?" Rilla asked for the first time since coming home.

"She's recovering at home, though her family hasn't said much." Mrs. Orwell told her truthfully. "But I have to go put these away," she motioned to her groceries. "It was nice to see you out today Mrs. Ford."

"Of course, have a good afternoon," Rilla nodded. She basked in the sunlight a few another moment more. Looking at her modest home, nothing like the Fords in Toronto she smiled to herself.

She was lying across the chaise when Ken had come home from inspecting the building. Covered in dust and what appears to be paint. He kissed her sweetly before he ran upstairs to shower. She watched him retreat upstairs as she waited for the radio show to begin. She was addicted to the story
like any other woman she knew. It was the latest thing to gossip about when they popped in for a
short visit. Now that the word was put out that she accepting small visits.

It was long after Ken came home, Shirley arrived. Freshly showered and changed into a pair of
clean grey trousers. Paired with loose-fitting shirt that was striped with blue.

"Lillian in the back?" Shirley asked as he poked his head in the living room.

"She is, and hello to you too," Rilla rolled her eyes at his lack of greeting, but her voiced was
teasing.

"Sorry," Shirley sighed. "She just had an important meeting today and I want to know." He explained.

"Oh, just go on!" Rilla waved him off and watched him head to the back of the house. After a
general greeting, she heard them pick up in French rather naturally as they usually do. It was
something Rilla realized had nothing to do with being rude, but just their way.

"Le tribunal a-t-il encore fixé une date?" She heard Shirley ask Lillian.

"Oui, la semaine prochaine. Shirley, et si ça n'arrive pas? Que ferons-nous?" Lillian replied. Her
voice laced with worry, but Rilla was sure her facial expression matched it.

"Alors nous continuons comme nous l'avons fait?" Shirley tried to reassure her. Rilla could only
guess that they were speaking about the divorce and it's possible outcomes?

"Ce n'est pas juste, surtout pour toi, et si tu trouves quelqu'un d'autre?" Lillian stressed to him.

"Je ne trouverai jamais d'autre Lily. Je choisis ça, nous choisissons de faire ça ensemble. Je ne te
quitterai jamais, je t'aime." Shirley stressed with a quiet voice that meant he was telling her
something that meant a lot to him. She smiled as the room went quiet.

"I'm going to get some iced tea, do you want some?" Ken asked walking into the room looking
around for the others as he fixed his freshly washed hair.

"Shh, and don't disturb them," Rilla whispered hushing him. Ken shook his head chuckling and sat
down next to her. Letting her rest her head on his lap as he stroked her curls with one hand. The
other tracing over her waist as the radio started the familiar music of their evening show. He look
down at her with a simple look, but that look always made her heart skip a beat.

French Translations

"Has the court set up a date yet?"

"Oui, next week. Shirley, what if it doesn't happen? What will we do?"

"Then we continue on as we have?"

"That isn't fair, especially to you, what if you find someone else?"

"I will never find another Lily. I choose this, we choose to do this together. I'm not leaving you
ever, I love you."

I'll say a quick Merry Christmas, Happy Hannukah to everyone at the end of this chapter. I hope
everyone has a lovely holiday and a new year!

If your feeling particularly kind this season, leave me a comment and your thoughts about this chapter!

Thank you all for the follows and reviews from the previous chapter!

Tina
"Watch me Rilla!" Jimmy called out as she sat on the beach as he ran and kicked the ball to Ken. Ken who had his pants rolled up around his knees with a casual linen henley shirt. Dressed in a colourful swimsuit as they spent the weekend afternoon at the seaside.

Rilla laughed as she held onto her floppy hat. One that protected her from the sun as the little boy ran and kicked the ball around between Ken and Shirley.

"He is précieux," Lillian smiled from her spot on the large blanket.

"I hope he hasn't been too much in your way?" Rilla asked her worried about the boy was creating havoc with all his energy.

"Oh Non, he is delightful!" Lillian laughed as she watched Shirley fall into the sand. Clearly pretending to be hurt as the young boy tackled his legs.

"Are you nervous?" Rilla looked over to the woman who she considered to be a treasured friend. A kindred spirit if she remembers her mother's word for that someone who was just meant to be in your life.

Lillian nodded but said nothing as she watched Shirley pick up the boy and pretend to toss him into the ocean. It was only days away now. The final decision by the judge after three hearings of evidence. Along with back and forth between the lawyer that was appointed by the prison.

"I am sure that it will be ruled in your favour. How could any judge not look at what you have gone through and not allow you freedom?" Rilla hugged her with one arm and rubbed her shoulder lightly.

"Aren't they having fun?" Lillian laughed as they watched Jimmy jump on Shirley. He was a lot more fun than had he been year ago Jimmy said over dinner one night. Shirley back during the war had been serious and quiet. Jimmy wasn't afraid of him, he lived with him but he never played with the boy as he did now.

"How are you feeling? "Lillian asked Rilla.

"I am good, I haven't napped in two weeks," Rilla said after a moment. Knowing that they were still worried over her health. It was the end of August, almost two months since she had come from the hospital. "I know Ken was worried about me over exhausting myself, but he's been good. I do miss him a great deal. School kept me busy that it was easy to not think about it at times. Then when I did I wondered if it's healthy for me to keep doing this? But then I see him and his smile and how can I truly let go of him?" Rilla sighed.

Lillian nodded. "He's pretty good at speaking Francais, he mimics Shirley when he hears us speak."

"He was always a fast learner, even his spelling is coming along," Rilla told her rather proudly.

"Maybe one day you can send him to that fancy academy school?" Lillian suggested. "Prepare him for university or college?"

"Possibly, Queens is slowly being phased out with the addition of the new high schools on the island. The normal school is now in the talks of being merged with Prince Edward University now." Rilla explained. "Shall we go join them for a bit?" Rilla asked looking at the blue water.
"I suppose we shouldn't let them all have the fun?" Lillian laughed as she maneuvered herself so she could stand easily. "Swim cap?" She asked as she passed one along to Rilla. It took a moment to carefully to place her hair into the cap. Trying to cover the majority of her curls. Her knit suit that bared her legs and even her shoulders was a bright blue with white strips. Nautical and Ken had given her a long look when she had tried it on the previous week. They joined the boys as they tested out the cool ocean water in the last days of August.

It was little after four when they decided to head back to the house. Towelling and brushing off the sand from there bodies they all piled into the car.

'Can we have ice cream again tonight?' Jimmy asked tiredly from his spot between the ladies in the back of the car.

"We had ice cream yesterday," Rilla laughed. "Aren't you tired of it yet?"

"How can anyone be tired of ice cream?" Jimmy looked up at her.

"The lad does have a point," Shirley chuckled from the front seat.

"Oui, and if you eat anymore, I will have to let out your trousers again," Lillian teased him with a poke on his shoulder. "Je ne sais pas si je peux?"

"C'est bas ma chérie," Shirley retorted but grinned as he looked over her shoulder.

"We can have ice cream tomorrow," Rilla told him. "Tonight is bath night and early to beds, you are practically falling asleep right now.

The next day Rilla took Jimmy to Point Pleasant Park. Allowing Shirley and Lillian quiet to prepare for their day. Rilla had offered to come but Lillian only shook her head. It was something she wished to do alone.

Timothy and his father who were both suited up came just as Rilla was ushering Jimmy out the door. "Good luck today," she told them.

"Thank you, Mrs. Ford," Mr. Allard Sr tipped his hat to her.

"Hello, Mister!" Jimmy chirped. "Goodbye!" He added when Rilla told him to hurry up.

"Mrs. Gagnon. Please step up to the bench please," The Judge called out her name as he straightened a stack of papers on his desk.

Lillian who was dressed demurely in a navy blue dress that was simple and modest. Her blond her pinned at the back of her neck as her hat sat on her head in aid of a hatpin. She nervously approached the bench. Despite meeting the judge on multiple occasions this was the final time.

This was the final verdict.

"After much consideration of the evidence that has been given. Of your spouse's character that has been presented to me and what you have asked for. I hereby grant you the dissolution of your marriage. It is times such as these I am reminded that even judicial separation is not always the best. That dissolving a marriage sometimes is when cases such as these." 

"Thank Your Honour," Lillian said as she clutched her handbag. It was over.

It was truly over.
"I will have copies of the decree of Divorce ready for you after a short recess. Given his imprisonment and your rejection of support. I gather you have planned for your future?"

"Yes, Your Honour I have a job as a seamstress and plan to open my own shop in time. Whatever support I would be given from Mr. Gagnon is only tainted with bad memories and shady deals."

"Then I wish you all the best, and that if you should feel the need to remarry, that you choose wisely." He smiled as he knew that she had someone waiting outside. Waiting for this moment as much as she had been.

"Of course, Your Honour," Lillian bowed her head to him before walking back to her seat. The court was closed soon after. Another fifteen minutes of waiting outside the judge's office before being called in.

Another five minutes before she walked out of the courthouse.

11:15 am she had checked her watch. 11:15 am and she was free.

She was thanking Mr. Allard for everything, telling him that she and Shirley would make their way back.

"One more thing, I was speaking to a contact within the church. He says given your age at the time of your marriage and your family using you to pay a debt. You have grounds for an annulment. I know you weren't married within the church, but consider yourself of faith." Mr. Allard told her. "If this something you wish to try for, you will have to represent yourself. I just wished for you to know that it is something you have a right to try for."

"Thank you, I will consider it and talk to Shirley about it. But truthfully he is not converting to mine, nor I am not converting to his. I do not think it will bother us or myself if they consider my marriage to Shirley invalid. It will be in the eyes of the law and that is enough for us." Lillian explained to him. "All I wanted was to be free of him, in one way or another. You have given me that with all your help. I don't think I will ever be able to repay your kindness for taking my case."

"If my daughter was in your situation I would hope that someone would help her." Mr. Allard told her. "I believe someone is waiting for you, come along Timothy we should go save Una from your mother."

Lillian bid them both goodbye with brief hug to show her gratitude. She turned taking a deep breath looking towards Shirley in the park. Across from the courthouse, pacing back and forth near a large tree. She held a large envelope in her hands. He looked up at her bracing himself for whatever was to come.

She couldn't speak, all she could do just smile, nod her head, cry all at once. Choking back a sob as he embraced her as he spun her around.

The rest of the day was spent with the shedding of tears from the good news, toasting to the happy future of the couple. Shirley promising to take her ring shopping the first chance they have. Even when Lillian tells him she doesn't need an engagement ring or anything special. Jimmy doesn't quite understand why the women are crying, but he enjoys the cake that appeared on the kitchen table. Eating enough until he crashed from the sugar.

"Its weird Rilla, I miss you when I don't see you, but at the same time I miss my family when I'm with you." Jimmy had told her the night before.
"All that means is that you have many people who love you, and who you love back," Rilla explained to him.

"You won't ever forget about me will you?" He looked up at her from his spot on the bed.

"Never in a million years," Rilla told him, trying not to cry as she did. She kissed his golden curls and patted the blankets. "I will always love you, now get some sleep, we need to get up early in the morning."

"Goodnight, Rilla," Jimmy yawned as he held on to his bear. It was already past his bedtime. Spending most of the evening playings in the backyard burning off steam with Ken. Kicking around the football into the makeshift goal post.

"Good night Jimmy," Rilla said as she quietly shut the door and crossed the hallway. She found Ken sitting shirtless in their bed, reading his book. Hair from a quick shower, she smiled as she sat down at her vanity as she unpinned her hair, and ran a comb through it.

"Are you sure you can come with us?" Rilla asked him.

"Yes, everything is ready to go for when I come back. A few days off before opening will be refreshing for everyone as it is labour day weekend. Jimmy will get home just in time for school and we have a little holiday at the house of dreams." Ken told her. "Everyone is prepared and ready for the grand opening. I even set aside some funds to give them extra holiday pay to make it an extra-long weekend for them."

Rilla nodded as she rolled her hair up into its pin curls. "I have my dress all ready for opening day. Just as well the tea luncheon is set up for the lunch hour." Rilla told him.

"Trying to win over my employees already?" Ken chuckled.

"Of course not, but it is the proper thing to do as the wife of the Editor in Chief," Rilla smiled at him. "At least that is what I hear anyway. Act and be supportive even when your husband overworks himself and misses dinner every other night?"

"I will never miss dinner, because I generally cook it when it's just the two of us," Ken remind her with a grin. Rilla stuck out her tongue in her mirror at him as she rubbed her facial cream into her face and down her neck.

"Lillian must be so relieved, Shirley is over the moon," Rilla sighed with contentment.

"I think they are both looking forward to their future. It will be strange to have the house to ourselves when everything is settled." Ken said quietly as he watched Rilla undress and step into her long nightgown.

"Shirley was looking at transferring one of the universities here. I think Montreal has too many ghosts for them. He's asked to rent the apartment from us after they get married which I think will be soon. Just for the school year until they can find something more permanent or where he finds a job."

"Of course," Ken told her. "It is yours, after all, now let's settle on the train is at 6 am if we want to make most of our weekend on the island."

"I know what time we leave darling," Rilla rolled her eyes at him as she got into the bed.
The journey to the island was uneventful as it was exciting, as it was sad. Rilla looked over the railing into the ocean as she held onto Jimmy who was excited to be on the ferry once more. Ken sat reading the baby behind them, occasionally looking up and smiling at the pair. Trains and boats, simple things that made the little boy forget that he was going back home.

"I hope he wasn't much trouble?" Adeline Anderson asked as they met at the Glen train station.

"Oh he was wonderful," Rilla told her. "We have a blast, I do apologize if he speaks random French words. Shirley's fiancé is from Montreal and has been staying with us,"

"Oh! Don't worry about it," Adeline waved it off. "I know a few words myself from school in England. But I see your parents, I shall let you say goodbye," She smiled as she let go of her stepson's hands.

Rilla smiled and sank down, crouching so she was eye level with Jimmy. "Be good and do your homework during school."

"When will I see you again?" Jimmy asked quietly.

"Christmas most likely," Rilla told him truthfully. "Thanksgiving if we can make it, but you'll be busy with school, it won't feel long at all."

"Okay," Jimmy nodded his golden head.

"Now be good for your parents and don't pick on your sister," Rilla told him.

"All she does is cry," Jimmy wrinkled his nose.

"All you did was cry at one point as well," Rilla tweaked his nose and hugged him. "Are you going to give the others a hug as well." Rilla turned to wear Ken was standing off to the side with Shirley and Lillian who stood with her parents.

Jimmy nodded and raced over to the tall man he had grown accustomed over the past few years. "Au revoir Ken!" He jumped in his spot and held out his hand like a little businessman as Ken had taught him

"Au revoir, mon ami," Ken grinned and shook the tyke's hand. "Getting good with the firmness," he commented before the boy walked over to Shirley.

"Next time can we build an aeroplane?" Jimmy asked Shirley. "À bientôt?"

"Oui, petit garçon," Lillian smiled and bent down to hug him. "À bientôt, we will see you soon."

"I'll have a model ready to build for the next time I see you," Shirley told him.

Rilla watched Mrs. Anderson leave with Jimmy as she turned to her parents who both took turns hugging her.

"You still look rather pale," Anne patted her cheek.

"I'm always pale," Rilla shook her head. "Mother, I am well you do not need to worry."

"I'm your mother, it is my job to worry over you," Anne clucked her tongue. "How has she been really Kenneth?"

"Clean bill of health from the doctor, Anne," Ken supplied the answer that his mother in law was
"That is good to hear, and I am glad that you are here," Gilbert told him clapping his hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Even just for the weekend," he turned and kissed his daughter on the forehead.

The drive back to the Ingleside was filled with news and chit chat. By the time they pulled up to the whitewashed house, everyone was laughing. Amelie was waiting on the front porch waving at them as they all step out of the car.

"Lily!" She raced down the steps as she saw her sister, rushing to hug her. "I want to know everything!"

Lillian looked toward Shirley who nodded as the girls walked up the stairs. His parents had been already told the good news. Now it was just Susan who had gone to visit a friend in the next town over. Not knowing that he was coming along with Rilla and Ken, but she would be back the next day.

Dinner was a cheerful setting where they caught up on the news that hadn't been told in letters or phone calls. It was late when Rilla and Ken finally stumbled into the old house of dreams. Climbing up the stairs after setting the basket for breakfast on the table for the morning like many couples before them.

Ken watched her as she undid the hooks of her dress as he pulled unbutton his shirt. She smiled at him when she glanced over her shoulder before tossed her dress to the side. She quickly made work of her garters before hopping onto the bed as she held her leg out to him.

"What are you doing?" Ken asked amused but rolled down the stocking without complaint from where he stood.

"What does it look like I'm doing? I just thought, having the cottage to ourselves…alone for the first time in a long while." Rilla grinned as she lifted the other for him. This time she felt him slide his hand over the smoothness of her leg. She let him toss them into the nearby chair.

"Rilla," Ken warned her quietly. "You know what the doctor said."

"He told us not to get pregnant," Rilla said cheekily smiling at him. As she playfully pushed aside on of the straps of her brassiere. "I miss you," she leaned forward to kiss him. "And I think you miss me too?" Looking down before raising an eyebrow, when she let her foot trail up his thigh.

"You are incorrigible miss," Ken growled

"It's Mrs," Rilla corrected him and silenced him with a kiss. She mused as she ran her finger down his chest to the waistband of his pants.

"I'm not risking your health," Ken stared down at her, knowing he was losing the battle quickly.

"I'm not asking you too, I had other things in mind, but I did pack old trusty just in case," Rilla smirked. "But if you're that worried?" Rilla straightened up. "I will go have a bath and leave you to deal with that."

"Oh no you don't," Ken trapped her leaning forward holding her hands away from him in the process. In the end, it was gentle reassurance that of her whispers to him that did him in. Her body still felt foreign to him after weeks of recovery. New curves appeared as she gained weight during
her recovery, he never felt before.

He didn't think he could ever forget the feeling of her trailing kisses that went down his chest. The way her hair hid her face when she reached the waistband of his shorts. How her hazel eyes shone a touch greener in those moments when she brave enough to look at him.

In the end, they were wrapped around each other, basking in the after glory.

"Are you sure this was all right?" Ken asked her concerned despite the calmness on his face.

"Oh You were more than all right," Rilla patted him with a lazy giggle.

"You know what I meant," Ken gave her a look that she couldn't see.

"Stop thinking so much," Rilla curled into him. "If you worried and someone asks at the next appointment, say I seduced you," she patted him once more.

"You did," Ken reminded her.

"See you have nothing to worry about, you were an absolute gentleman until I went all wanton on you," Rilla yawned. "Now stop worrying, I'm perfectly fine, everything is fine."

Ingleside was in full swing the next day. Rilla and Lillian at taken Amelie into town to find some school appropriate shoes. Starting Wednesday she would be going to the high school in town. She had made a few friends with the local girls Rilla remembered at children. It made her feel old knowing they were suddenly old enough for high school.

At Ingleside, Shirley hid away when Susan came home during the morning. Humming as she set aside her purchases, he watched her from his spot at the back door, waiting for her to notice him. It didn't take long and it is accompanied by a shriek.

"Your father didn't tell me you were coming!" She threw her hands up in the air as she saw him. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I wanted to surprise you," Shirley shrug and hugged the shorter woman. "I have something to tell you."

"Oh! Bless my soul, you finally asked that girl to marry you?" She guessed. "Dear, you don't need to look so afraid. Clearly, it was going to happen at some point, I already have a new dress picked out. Oh, I can see the church already filled with flowers" She rambled on.

"Susan, there won't be a church wedding," Shirley told her.

"You haven't asked her?" Susan's brow furrowed.

"No, I have, but Lillian she doesn't want to be married in a church. She wouldn't be allowed to marry in our church," Shirley spoke carefully. "Susan, Lillian is Catholic," Shirley told her. "She doesn't want to give up her faith and nor should she have to."

"Oh fiddle-sticks, Mr. Meredith will do anything we ask of him." Susan waved him off. "Though really a Catholic Shirley, I thought you had more sense. But she seems nice enough, backwards in their ways of things those papists. All those candles and wine, pretending to drink of the blood of Jesus. Those statues they worship, even their churches are ungodly with their ornamentation. It's just not right Shirley! I've seen it their little girls dressed up as brides to God, lining up to eat the
"Susan you can't say things like that," Shirley sighed running his hand through his curls. "We all believe in God, we all believe in the bible. Sure the prayers are different, but it doesn't mean we are lower or higher than any other religion. That woman has been through so much. Yet it has been her faith that has kept her alive despite the hypocrisy of the whole situation! I won't even go into how they treated her."

"Shirley, what are you saying?" Susan asked

"The reason Lillian and I couldn't get married before because she was married. It was her ex-husband who put me in the hospital in the springtime. She's been living with Rilla and Ken in Kingsport trying to get a divorce on the grounds of cruelty. It was granted this week."

"You're marrying a catholic divorcée," She repeated a blank look on her face. "Is that even allowed? Don't they think marriage is forever? Is she even going to consider this a real marriage?

"Of course she is! We didn't fight for two whole bloody years if this was something we did not want this," Shirley interjected.

"Watch your mouth Shirley, you know well enough we don't tolerate that language here," Susan scolded him. "What about your family, what it will look like to the town. You're marrying someone who isn't even—,"

"I don't give a shit what the town thinks, or this family. Faith and Jem eloped for God's sake, Rilla and Ken were sneaking around for months. It never bothered you then! So I will walk out of here you even dare to finish that sentence!" Shirley straightened up warning her for probably the first time in his life.

"This is the exact reason why I never said anything, why I had everyone keep it from you. I tell you I have found the woman I love, who I want to marry, who wants to be my wife! A woman who has been to hell and back! You can't look past your own prejudices enough to even wonder or care about what she went through? Because if you knew it would make you sick to your stomach! If you had any idea you would think differently of her." Shirley slammed his fist on the old wooden table. He made it to the door of the kitchen before turning.

"And just so you know, Lillian doesn't like fruitcake. So you can rest your conscience about helping or even attending a wedding that you obviously don't support."

He made it to the stairs when he saw her sitting on the stairs with bags around her. He knew well enough you could easily hear whatever was happening in the kitchen. Shirley sank down next to her without saying a word at first. Wrapping his arm around her.

"Please don't listen to anything she said, she doesn't know any better. I don't want to make excuses for her, but she really doesn't." Shirley sighed, the floor creaked near them. The door to nearest them which was his father's study opened. Gilbert looked at him with a solemn nod before a questioning look to Shirley who only shrugged. While Anne came out behind her husband laid a comforting caress on her son's face.

"Everything will be all right in the end. Tomorrow is always fresh with no mistakes in it. She will realize the errors of her thinking." Anne spoke quietly.

"Whatever you wish to do, we will be there," Gilbert said quietly with smiling gently to Lillian. "We look forward to calling you our daughter." He added. "I am glad that it all came together if
there is anything we can do to help just let us know." Knowing that the lawyer must have eaten up any of her savings and he knew that Shirley had been helping with the cost as well. "Both of you," he said.

"Do you think I should have told her sooner?" Shirley asked.

"You did what you thought was right," Gilbert told his son. "That is all you could do, I suggest you go out and enjoy the evening. The fish and chip shop is open until eight tonight if you wish to skip dinner."

"Your sister and Ken have gone out to the house of dreams for the night as well," Anne told him. "So don't worry about missing dinner."

Shirley looked over to Lillian who just nodded.

"But first I have something for you," Anne told them and motioned for them to follow her. They followed her into the cozy bedroom his parents shared. Littered with photographs of him and siblings from their childhood. Aunt Marilla and other relatives he had only heard about in stories." He watched his mother go over to her jewellery box and pull out two gold rings and pass them to his father.

"These were my parents," Gilbert told them. "They weathered many trials and separations. But ultimately they are a symbol of strength my parent's marriage had. I think they should belong to you." He offered them to Shirley who looked at him in disbelief. "If you want them of course," he added to take off the pressure.

"Thank you," Shirley stammered and looked towards Lillian. They had barely discussed anything beyond actually getting married in a non-hypothetical way. "If it is all right with you?"

"I would be honoured," Lillian told him before looking towards the older couple. "Thank you for everything."

Thank you all for the lovely reviews!

Julie: Thank you! I have read the last three books so much in the past year! But I am glad that my story has inspired you to read it again!

Historical notes.

Canada really did not like Catholics in the early 20th century. Something as a catholic I didn't know really! Writing Susan was interesting and I hope I did all right. She is an enigma and very opinionated in the books( and about the catholic church in ROI as well!).

That said, I was raised Catholic and i looked back on the strange things of my faith that others poke fun at with help my fellow writers I converse with regularly. So thank you! Oz, Alinya, McFishie for helping feel confident about this!

I do look forward to your thoughts on this chapter, which came out close to 5000 words. I am back to work this week after two weeks vacation, but I am sure I will keep up the schedule of updating twice a month!

Tina
French Translations.

I'm not sure that I can?

That is low my darling-
"Oh Thank you!" The woman exclaimed as Rilla stopped to pick up the lost items.

"Where are you going?" Rilla asked looking around.

"Just to the Veterans hall, we're having an afternoon tea with some of the wives and I am running late." The woman explained.

"Veterans hall?" Rilla brow furrowed. How out of the loop was she?

"The community centre," She explained. "We are the Great War Veterans Association. Us wives, daughters, sisters gather about once a week. We are trying to plan a masquerade for Halloween. Something for the adults to do after the children are done with their festivities. But in all, we are the families of the veterans who try to bring forth a community. One that helps each other while promoting remembrance of what our men fought for."

"My brothers and husband fought in the war," Rilla told her. "I had no idea, no idea that you have built such a thing,"

"Well come along, introduce yourself. Share your own story of how the war changed your life," the woman told her. "Of course if you are not busy." She added.

"I was just out for a stroll," Rilla looked at her dainty wristwatch. "I am Rilla Ford," she said finally introducing herself.

"Adele Hunter," she said with a curt nod of her covered head. "My Barney was in the infantry, what about yours?"

"Uhh, Ken was a captain. I truly don't know much more," Rilla frowned. "He was never one to talk much about it."

"They never do," Adele said with a laugh and a shake of her head. "Your brothers?"

"Jem was a Lieutenant, and now a doctor. Walter, he died during the Somme and Shirley went into the air force. He's now becoming an engineer." Rilla told her smiling sadly at the memory of Walter.

"Did you just move here? I don't think I've seen you around," Adele asked as they rounded the corner.

"No, we've been living here for the past three years," Rilla told her. "We lived near Redmond until this past year. We just bought a house in the South End," she quickly opened the door for the other woman.

"Everyone, this is my saviour of the day Mrs. Ford!" She announced as one of the other ladies came retrieved the box from her friend. "Rilla is Elizabeth Brown, Caroline Thompson, Laura Stanley, and Mabel White."

"Ford, that name sound familiar?" One of the others commented, who Rilla pick out to be Laura who seemed to be in her thirties.

"Her husband runs the new magazine," another says. She looks familiar enough and when seeing
her face I recognize her from the church. "Hello dear, you must be finished with school if you are out and about on such an afternoon?"

"I am, I graduated last spring, Mrs. Thompson," Rilla agreed with her. "Truthfully I am not sure what to do with so much time."

"You were in school?" Another lady asked intrigued Rilla knew as Mabel.

"Yes, I studied applied sciences, intro psychology and social sciences mainly," Rilla explained. "I am continuing through correspondence to achieve a B.A, I only need a few more credits."

"Why did you go into that? They allowed a woman to join Psychology?" An older woman named Elizabeth asked.

"There were two of us ladies in the class and it wasn't always nice. But we managed, Why did I go into it?" Rilla tried to explain simply as she took off her long coat and took a seat. Tea was quickly served to her. "After the war, my husband, he didn't cope well. It was a way for me to understand and try to help him heal." Rilla explained. "I am sure you all know from personal experience how frustrating it could be? To not be able to truly help them or not knowing how to help them?"

The ladies all looked at each other and nodded.

"They call it to shell shock, it comes from traumatic experiences they faced during the war. At first, it could be devastating to them, then they learned to just ignore in away. They were at war, they were climatized to their actions. Their main goal was to stay alive and attack the enemy," Rilla explained. "When they finally came home, whether from injuries or when the war ended. All those things? Those memories they buried they can and still come alive and they still don't know how to process properly. While society prefers to pretend the war is in the past, thats it's not polite to ask questions. Our men are still suffering from the effects of war. Seeing their comrades die beside them. Killing men who were just like them who spoke another language."

"I know plenty of men were outraged when they prohibition came into effect here." One woman with light brown hair.

"It's a way to forget for them, drinking, smoking," Rilla agreed with her.

"We generally meet twice a week if we can, if you wish to join us you're more than welcome to. Do you have a telephone?" Adele asked her.

"I do," Rilla nodded as she scribbled her telephone number on a piece of paper. "My brothers Fiancé lives with us at the moment as they work out their wedding so if I don't pick up it is most likely her."

"Of course, she is always welcome as well if she wishes. Though I am surely preparing a wedding has her time cut short." Adele told her.

"Oh it will be a fairly small wedding on the island most likely," Rilla told them. "I will tell Ken about the dance though. I am sure I can persuade him in some way or form to come, it's not like he has to wear a uniform or anything."

"Oh goodness no, but a costume is required for a masquerade though," Adele reminded her.

"Of course, I am sure I can figure something out for him," Rilla told her before bidding them goodbye.
"Oh, that looks so pretty!" Rilla exclaimed as she walked through the women's department. Her heels clicking on the hardwood floors as she walked daintily along. Her long coat, button low at the waist where the long line of fur on the lapel started. She had been told the Ken was wandering around the building.

"Thank you, Mrs. Ford!" The woman flushed as she fixed the arrangement before stepping back. Rilla watched take another look before stepping toward the camera. "Do you want to try on the hat? I think I would look lovely with your coat?"

"Oh no, I don't want to interrupt your work, Ethel," Rilla shook her head to the young woman who had a head of dark hair. "I just stopped by to drop something off for Ken," she explained holding up the canvas bag she was holding.

"He's in the darkroom," Ethel smiled to her.

Rilla nodded and walked into the small hallway that had been built on the back wall. She knocked on the door gently. She heard him call out one moment, and shuffle around before he opened the door.

"You forgot your lunch," She smiled at him.

"I did, you didn't have to bring it all the way down here though. I thought you were working on your papers today?" Ken asked her.

"I needed to get some air," Rilla explained to him. "When I realized you left your lunch I jumped on the tram so it was a win-win for me."

"You are bored," Ken corrected her.

"I am not bored," She gave him a look as they walked down to his office.

"You are, it's the first fall that you aren't going to school, the house is clean and Lillian busier than ever." Ken grinned at her. "It's fine, you are still adjusting." He kissed her temple after he shut the door to his office.

"I'm not bored," Rilla shook her head refusing to let him know that he was right.

"Is Susan still pretending as nothing happened?" Ken asked her as he cut up the apple in the bag.

"She's still refusing to even acknowledge the wedding, it can be awkward according to Amelie." Rilla sighed. "But Shirley is adamant on just riding it out and not make a fuss about the situation. But he's not also there either which doesn't help."

"What do your parents say or think?" Ken asked her looking over his ledger.

"It's complicated, they see Susan as part of the family. It doesn't matter that she's paid or not, she's still one of the family. Dad has tried to talk to her but hasn't gotten anywhere with her." Rilla told him. "I think she's waiting for Shirley to apologize and he won't because he didn't do anything wrong." Rilla explained to him.

"But I did come here for a reason," Rilla told her. "I met a group of ladies today by accident and they invited us to a masquerade." She explained.

"Oh I didn't know there was in the works," Ken looked up from his ledger.
"It hasn't been advertised yet, but it's by the Great War Veterans Association," Rilla told him carefully. Unsure of his response to the organization who was putting it on.

"I have heard of them," Ken said after a moment. "They generally put together the armistice ceremonies each year." He told her.

"Yes, that is what the ladies said," Rilla told nodded her head. "They are a nice group of ladies if you don't object to me being apart of the group." She asked him nervously.

"Rilla you don't need my permission to have friends or join groups." Ken sighed, hating how worried she was to just tell him about the group. "Just don't go volunteering me for things if you do spend more time with them." He told warned her gently.

"I would never," Rilla rushed to set his mind at ease. She opened her mouth to say something else when someone knocked on his door.

"Pardon me, but Mr. Ford I don't mean to disturb, but you needed down in editing," A young woman told them.

"It's all right Violet," Ken stood up. "I'll see you at home later?" He turned to his wife.

"Of course," Rilla nodded her head in agreement walking to the door with him with her coat over her arm. "That is a very pretty dress." She told the young girl with a smile who she learned was only eighteen and working to save up to go to college next yet.

"My mother made it," Violet blushed at the compliment. "Someday I hope to have one like yours," she said bravely.

"Yours is just as nice" Rilla corrected her. "I could never wear such a colour, I am always jealous of those who can wear such pinks."

"Violet, will you walk Mrs. Ford to the door?" Ken spoke up behind them.

"Of course, Mr. Ford! Mr. Garrison is looking for you in layout," Violet told him and waited as Rilla shrugged on her jacket.

"How do you like it here?" Rilla asked the younger girl.

"I enjoy it very much, I just run between floors and help with little things here and there," Violet explained. "How long have you and Mr. Ford been married?" She asked curiously. "If I may ask.'

"Oh! Little over two years," Rilla laughed. "Any boys in your life?" She smiled and when Violet blushed and shook her head. "There will be time, and they will come around. I will see you around."

Rilla bid her goodbye before stepping back out into the cool fall weather. She sighed and looked up at the sky

Over the next few days, she began to piece together what she wanted for a costume and Ken as well. With Lillian's help she found her dress in a booklet they found at the dressmakers. She bought yards of netting and a floaty tarlatan and finally a couple of yards of soft chiffon.

With Lillian's help helped they adjusted a pattern to suit Rilla's idea. Drawn out on brown paper on the living room floor. they carefully cut it out. The gown would be moonlight blue that shimmered
over a full petticoat skirt. A Girdle of silver, that matched the glittering silver stars she would eventually sew on to the dress. While for Ken they planned on sewing fair amount metallic stars and glass beads onto an older tux jacket that she had found. Matching her dress as best as she could between splitting her sewing and her course work. It wasn't perfect, but she was proud of her work.

She had spent a large part of an afternoon with Lillian with boxes of dye. Swatching colours mixtures until they found the perfect blue to dye the light chiffon she had bought.

"I never thought of dying the fabric to get the colour I wanted," Rilla told her honestly. "I remember mother dying a few things over the years though. Though I think they lied about not staining hands," Rilla laughed as she looked at her blue hands.

"It will wear off in a few washes," Lillian told her as she stirred the large pot they brought from the basement that steamed from the hot water. "It's almost ready I think."

"Are you and surely going to come?" Rilla asked her looking into the pot.

"I believe so," Lillian told her with a smirk. "I may have gotten him to dress up as a harlequin."

"Are you serious?" Rilla exclaimed not willing to believe her. "How in the world did you do that?"

"I asked," Lillian shrugged but smiled.

"How is he liking Dalhousie?" Rilla asked her.

"He doesn't mind it, but we are closer now, we're thinking getting married on over Christmas Holidays," Lillian let out for the first time. "Gives us time to plan a small ceremony and relax before he finishes his last semester."

"I'm truly glad that everything worked out for you," Rilla told her quietly. "and Amelie as well, I think Di enjoys having her around."

"Why does it smell like vinegar?" Ken walked into the Kitchen with a wrinkled nose. "Why are your hands blue?"

"We're dying some fabric, vinegar is to help set the colour in the silk and tulle" Rilled explained. "We didn't expect you until later, everything all right at the magazine?"

"Oh yes, I just thought of something and wanted to give it to one of the departments," Ken explained. "I will leave you two ladies to do your thing have no fear." He chuckled and quickly kissed the top of his wife's head.

When he came home again later the house was quiet and smelling fresh and clean from the windows being open. The closer to the kitchen, he smelled dinner cooking faintly in the air.

"You cooked," Ken stepped into the Kitchen as he arrived home from work.

"I did, it's just pasta even I can make pasta." Rilla gave him a look and gave him a welcome kiss home as she took off her apron. "It's just us tonight, Lillian and Shirley are off somewhere for dinner."

Ken nodded and looked around, papers and file folders were stacked on the table. Telling him that she had been working on something that afternoon. He quickly made his way upstairs, changing out of his suit and hanging it up. The soft afghans spread out on the bed, things were changing once more with Rilla at home more. More than she had ever been, and Lillian making plans with
Shirley was often out for the evening. Little things they bought on shopping trips, doilies that
she crocheted. It made their home feel that much homier.

She had dinner on the table when he came back downstairs. Her schoolwork banished to the hutch
in the corner. The table simply set with the floral china they received from their wedding. She
smiled at him as turned to him, her hair taken from the pins from earlier today lying down her
back. Her simple green house dress, completed her look.

"How was your day?" She asked him as she wrapped her tea towel around the handles of the
corning wear. Ready to bring it to the table, Ken quickly grabbed the small salad she had made.

"It was good, how did your fabric turn out?" He asked her. "How did the doctors go this morning?"
He asked her.

"Right as rain," Rilla smiled "I was told that the small cough is nothing to worry about. Among
other things," she gave him a demure look. "He gave me a clean bill of health and said if we
wished to we could resume any sort of actives that we had before I was ill. To do so at our own
discretion."

"Did he?" Ken looked up as he handed her the breadbasket. He pondered something for a moment
but didn't say anything. They went on through their night, as Rilla folded the laundry she brought
in from the clothesline. Ken went over his calendar for the next day. By eight o'clock Rilla was
crocheting and Ken was listening to the news on the radio.

"You are still all right with this decision?" Ken asked as he rubbed her stockinged leg that was on
his lap.

Rilla nodded after a moment, setting down her crochet. "I liked having Jimmy here with us. If it
will mean having that again on a permanent basis. It might be nice." She said softly. "I just hope
that everything goes smoothly."

"All we can do is pray for a healthy baby," Ken told her. "Is that what you're worried about?"

"How can I not be?" Rilla looked at him. "My parents lost Joy hours after she was born. Nan has
had two miscarriages, so much can go wrong. I'm always going to worry about it, that's not
something I can change."

Ken frowned and moved so she could be closer to her. She closed her eyes as he traced over the
side of her face with fingers. "Only if you are sure?"

"The least I can do is try Ken, I have to try. I can't run away from everything that scares me. If I
have learned anything in the past year is that burying my worries doesn't work. I know there is a
difference in being afraid of the what if's and not wanting something." Rilla tried to explain to him
as she left herself nuzzle his hand softly.

"I don't remember being sick, but sometimes I felt like something was telling me to stay here. I still
don't even know if it was real or if I was dreaming. I just remember some child climbing on to my
bed asking if I wanted their teddy bear." Rilla admitted.

"As far as I know, no children ever snuck into your room," Ken told her with a smile.

"She had your dark hair," Rilla said quietly, as she reached out to touch the dark hair that escaped
the pomade. "Eyes greener than my hazel. I stared at her. I must have either woken up or blinked,
because when I opened my eyes. There was no one there, but I could hear a faint giggle float in my
room. Now I wonder, I wonder what can be? Can she be real one day?"
"Anything is possible," Ken answered. Now he himself was thinking of what Rilla described to him. "Did she have a name?"

Rilla only shook her head. "I never thought much about names, all I know, there was enough Gilberts growing up in Glen." Rilled cracked a wry smile. "And I refuse to name a child after myself." She told him with a curt nod of her head. "Actually any name in my family is off-limits. I don't want to be that sort of a family that keeps reusing the same names over and over again."

"I think I can agree to that," Ken chuckled. "You know for someone who is so unsure of herself, you definitely have your conditions."

"I'm a woman, and you know what they say about women. We constantly change our minds," Rilla teased him as she poked with to foot. "Though I will probably need some reassurance from time to time. A reminder to not let my worries get the better of me." She told him quietly.

"I'll tell you every day, morning and night," Ken kissed her pulling her close. They relaxed, relishing in each other. Not even hearing the front door open.

"You do realize your neighbours can see you necking? And frankly, I don't like seeing it either!" Shirley called out as he ushered Lillian into the house.

"Then get your own place, Blythe!" Ken called out.

"Trust me I'm working on it!" Shirley replied, and you could hear Lillian swat her glove on his arm at his antics.

"Who wants tea?" Rilla sighed and untangled herself from her husband who pouted at her. "Don't look at me like that, you knew that was all you were getting tonight?" Rilla gave him a look.

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So I had a small bit of fun with this one with the dress and dying of fabric. I didn't realize until this week that Rit and Tintex dye has been around for over a hundred years. I am a dyer at work and its fun to know a little bit of history.

I hope that you, my lovely readers are doing well and thank you for all the reviews previous and if you are new to the story don't be shy!
"Susan," Shirley brow furrowed in confusion as he opened the door. He hadn't been expecting anyone as Lillian was helping Rilla get ready for the Masquerade.

"I was not expecting you," he let her into the small apartment.

"So this is the Kingsport commune?" Susan said looking around the place.

"Most of us have lived here for various amounts of time," Shirley agreed as he watched her set down a basket on the table. "You didn't say that you would be coming?"

"Would you have replied if I did?" Susan countered back as she searched for the teapot.

"What are you doing here?" Shirley finally asked.

"I wanted to apologize," Susan sighed. "I should have never let myself go off as I did. The more I heard from your mother and father, the more I realize just how wrong I have been." She said quietly.

"How much have they told you?" Shirley stood leaning against the counter.

"They told me about Montreal. They wouldn't give me exact details saying it's not their place to tell Lillian's story but your dear mother mentioned that he had been cruel. Cruel to the point that had lost children because of him," Susan explained. "But they explained what happened in Montreal and what he did to you, and even Rilla."

"It's not entirely your fault, I should have told you from the start. I just was afraid, knowing your thoughts on Catholics and adding divorce into that as well. For that, I am sorry as well." Shirley admitted to her. "What's in the basket? Where are you staying tonight?"

Susan looked at him and opened the latch of the basket that sat on the table. Taking out a lightly covered cake covered in white frosting.

"Vanilla sponge cake with strawberry preserves for a filling. Along with buttercream frosting," Susan explained. "I've perfected the recipe over the last few weeks. It will be dense enough to hold a tier or two, yet still, be light and fluffy to be enjoyed." She explained. "It appears to be the new sort of wedding cake. I have a room at the hotel near the train station."

"You should say here tonight, the spare room is clean, it hasn't been aired out but it should be clean," Shirley told her. "Lillian is supposed to come over so we can go out for some dinner, have you ever had Chinese food?" He asked her. "It's good, and the Fong's are a nice family."

"Chinese food?" Susan looked up at him.

"It's quite good," Shirley told her. "We lived off it for a while when we lived in Chinatown," he told her.

"When you lived in Chinatown?" Susan looked at him. "Young man do I need to drag you to church?"

"She lived upstairs with my landlady," Shirley explained. "Not that it helped all the times he still terrorized her."
"How did she come to be there?" Susan asked him.

"When he found me in a pool of my blood in his small kitchen," Lillian said quietly as she came through the door. "I found myself at the hands of Yannick when he had been in a foul mood, I had gone to Shirley for help." She explained, leaving off the part she had lost a child at that time. "What is this?" She asked noticing the cake on the table.

"Shirley told me that you prefer a white cake than fruitcake." Susan stated simply as she was still processing what Lillian admitted, in the end, she sat down in the chair. "I don't know what to say, the usual apologetics and sympathy do not seem right."

"You don't need to say anything," Lillian told her passing her a glass of water. "It's in the past and I don't have to worry about him now. Shirley and I just want to look forward to our future and not dwell on the past."

"What are your ideas for the wedding?" Susan asked curiously.

"Most likely the Ingleside parlour on new years ever," Shirley spoke up. "We have the local Justice of the Peace, willing to come by in the afternoon to marry us."

"Just the same, Mr. Meredith agreed to say a small blessing prayer for us," Lillian told her. "It's the best of both worlds and as we are two different people of different faiths. It makes sense to honour both."

"What about your children?" Susan asked rather confused at the arrangement.

"If we have children, we will figure that out as we go along," Shirley smiled at the thought as he looked at his fiancée. "Maybe they will be brought up to cherish both and they can choose when they are older?"

"That doesn't right," Susan murmured. "Poor child would be confused." And Shirley frowned afraid of where this could go.

"We have more than enough time to work out details." Lillian interjected trying to smooth out something before it began. "It's not something that Shirley and I worry about. Why don't we go out for dinner and we can tell you more of our plans? When we come back I can prepare the spare room for you and we can all have a piece of cake?"

"That does sound nice," Susan nodded and agreed. While Shirley went over to Lillian and squeezed her hand for a quick thank you that also showed in his eyes.

In the next weeks went by quickly as Shirley and Lillian made their plans. Whispers in the night when sudden flurries made it hard to leave. Is was one thing Shirley was glad about that his sister cared nothing about proprietary. At least when it came to him and Lillian she seemed not to care. He could only assume she would feel much different when it came to her future children.

It was Christmas when they travelled to the Island. They were tucked away in the quaint home of Jem and Faith, who was staying over at the Manse with Cecelia for the night. It wasn't large like Ingleside, but it was larger than the house that Jem had been born in.

"Now seriously Shirl, I'm not joking. Don't lose yourself first round." Jem told him leaning forward with his hands on his knees. The den was dim and the fire was slowly dying. Jem had brought out a flask of amber liquid from one of his many trips to nova scotia. Being a doctor did have its advantages even in the middle of temperance.
"Jem, if you're trying to give me bedroom advice. I suggest you stop." Shirley rolled his eyes at his brother. "I'm sure whenever it happens it will be fine, but that's still up to Lillian. I'm not marrying her to get up her skirts. Or in your case, I believe you eloped because you got up Faith's skirt."

"We eloped because—" Jem went red in the ear. "It doesn't even matter! We just wanted to be married," he corrected himself once more.

"So you ran off and eloped without a word?" Shirley explained to his brother like he was a child.

"Either way, can we just change the subject?" Jerry spoke up from his chair. "Faith is my sister and unless you wish to hear about Nan."

"Oh god please no," Jem and Shirley spat out in unison as Jerry grinned to himself as he sipped his cider.

"But seriously don't blow it early," Jem said rehashing topic as Shirley groaned. "Aren't I right Ford?" He called out to his brother in law.

"I am not answering that," Ken stated as he walked into the room from having a smoke out on the porch.

"Oh come on, I remember your Amsterdam stories," Jem ribbed him.

"Which was over a decade ago and before I was married. I will not disrespect my wife in that way to consider talking about that trip." Ken told him pointedly. "Plus, your sister is far more adventurous than any of those women." He grinned as Jem and Shirley made a face.

"Argh, must say things like that," Jem wrinkled his nose in disgust.

"Your the ones constantly asking when we'll have children," Ken smirked. " and by the sounds of this conversation I would say you are all drunk."

Jem only grinned, "It's not a bachelor party without some sort of flask. I would offer it, but I have a feeling you would decline and my sister would be at my throat if you came home reeking. So here have a cigar," he offered him one.

"I'll stick to my cigarettes," Ken told him leaning back into his chair. He was never truly sure how much Jem knew about his first year after the war. Along with the months leading up to his marriage to Rilla. All he knew that Jem kept the flask away from him. Though he was sure If Rilla knew what Jem had been planning she probably would have had some choice words for him.

It was nearing midnight when the Ken made his way home. Finding Rilla waiting up for him in one of the quilted housecoats to fend off the cold.

"You stink," She wrinkled her nose he bent to kiss her.

"I know, Jem had cigars," Ken explained. "I will go bath quickly and air out my clothes. Go to bed, no use waiting up for me."

"It's fine, I rather awake at the moment," Rilla shook her head.

"Join me then?" Ken asked her.

"I never say no to that," Rilla laughed lightly as she let Ken pull her up from the couch. Shutting off the lights and making sure the door was locked they walked up the stairs.
They waited for the tub to fill slightly before settling in the clawfoot tub.

"When do your parents get in again?" Rilla asked him. Leslie and Owen were joining them this Christmas on the Island.

"They caught the evening train, so they will be here tomorrow morning," Ken thought for a moment. Skimming over her arm with his finger, disappearing down into the water.

Rilla nodded, "I'll prepare one of the rooms for them." She laid back against him closing her eyes. "Do you think it will take long?"

"Hmm?" Ken hummed his reply.

"To have a child?" Rilla asked him. "Do you think it will take long?"

"It will take however long it will take," Ken opened one eye and tilted his head.

"I know, I just thought. I don't know it would be different?" Rilla admitted.

"Rilla we've barely had time alone" Ken reminded her. "It's only been two months."

"I know," Rilla sighed. "I know I am overthinking this. Goodness, I go from worrying about getting pregnant. To worrying that it will take forever to get pregnant."

"Just means you are looking forward to it?" Ken mused with a smile.

"Or I just want to get it done and over with?" Rilla poked his leg. "Probably more than the latter, I saw Faith today who despite is happy beyond belief is just waiting for it to be over."

"Isn't she due any day now?" Ken questioned.

"Yes, she is just hoping that she makes it through the wedding without stealing Shirley's thunder." Rilla nodded. "Granted Shirley wouldn't care one bit, but Faith would feel awful about it."

"That water is getting cold," Ken noted. "We should dry off and head to bed,"

Rilla nodded as she shimmied away from him and pulled herself up on the arms of the tub to get out first. Reaching for the towels warming on the radiators near them, handing Ken one when he rose as well.

They made quick work of drying off and burying themselves underneath the covers in their bed.

Ingleside was in full swing as the preparations for Christmas and the small wedding. It was scrubbed down and polished until Susan was satisfied. While winter ferns and mistletoe were hanging from banisters and archways. The Christmas tree was up in the front window. Ken drove into town to pick up his parents, who arrived with a large trunk full of presents. Anne and Leslie joyfully embraced talking quickly about the travels and the family.

It was Christmas, it was joyful as they all met up after Christmas morning church. Exchanging gifts and cards at Ingleside which would fit them all. Christmas dinner at Ingleside, boxing day lunch at the Manse was how things went now a day.

"I think it's finally safe to say, and it being Christmas and all" Nan started with a smile. "We are expecting this spring," she spilled her secret.
"I knew it!" Di exclaimed. "I knew you looked different."

"And here I thought I was hiding it fairly well," Nan asked her twin looking down over her loose waisted gown.

"I just knew," Di shrugged. "I am so happy for you."

"We all are," Anne said as she pulled her daughter into a hug. Gilbert gruffly shook Jerry's hand in congratulations. "To think in a few years we will have a house full of grandbabies to spoil."

"Are you sure you wish to join this crazy family?" Shirley whispered into Lillian's ear as they sat on the floor. Cecelia was playing with her new doll with Lillian animatedly.

"Je n'ai jamais été aussi sûr de quoi que ce soit dans ma vie," Lillian looked up at him smiling and kissed his cheek quickly. Blushing as Shirley kissed her on the lips.

"Eww kiss," Ceci stuck out of her tongue at them causing them to both laughs.

"You look beautiful," Rilla stated as Lillian twirled in the cream coloured dress. Panels of soft lace swished around the silk of the skirt, while the sheer caplet sleeves floated. "Are you sure you don't want a veil? I have mine somewhere around here I believe or my mother does?"

"No, I have my new hat while will do," Lillian shook her head. They managed to persuade her to treat this less like a second wedding, but Lillian still insisted on cream instead of ivory. A hat with a short veil, instead of one of those long trailing ones.

"Well, everyone is happy that this is happening," Rilla tells her who was dressed in a lilac purple dress. A colour she would have rarely chosen for herself, but Lillian always had an eye for colour and clothing. "And to have another wedding here. It means something great to my family, our family," Rilla told her honestly.

"Are we almost ready?" Amelie poked her head into the room. Dressed in a similar dress as Rilla, but here had a touch more innocent sewn into hers. "The groom is starting to pace through the floor."

"We'll be down in a moment," Rilla told her as she smiled at Amelie.

"Are you ready?" Rilla asked Lillian as she carefully swiped the lipstick over her friend's lips.

"Of course, and I can only assume that you and Ken are looking forward to an empty house?" Lillian replied once Rilla stepped back from her. Capping the bullet and placing it in her handbag.

"And what will I do with my time then?" Rilla joked. Thinking about the last packet of schoolwork she mailed out before Christmas. "I'm partway ready to ask Ken to help out of the office until I have more things to fill up my time with."

"Give it time, it's only been a few months." Lillian patted her arm.

"Oh I am not worried," Rilla shook her head. "But this day about you," Rilla told her. "I will go find Ken and let Shirley know you are on your way down?"

Lillian nodded and watched Rilla leave before turning to the mirror one final time.

"Cette fois, c'est pour toujours, c'est un homme bon." She said to herself closing her eyes for a small prayer before picking up the bouquet that was lying on the bed.
Shirley met her at the bottom of the stairs, offering his hand to Lillian to escort her into the parlour. Dressed in a simple dark grey wool suit and a fresh hair cut and shave as he beamed at her.

The family as gathered waiting for them. Jem who was holding Ceci who was dressed in a pink dress as Faith sat in a chair holding her round stomach. Nan and Jerry were speaking with Di who had a rather handsome young man with her. The Doctor and Mrs. Blythe, Anne and Gilbert that told her many times to call them by their names. Now even mother or father if she wished. Susan sat in her usual wingback chair in her best dress and hair neatly done.

The Merediths with Bruce were happily chatting to the Fords who sat on another small love seat. They decided to stay for the wedding when they heard it would be on New years eve. Owen wanted to see the new division of the magazine, and Leslie to visit her own family made it an easy decision.

Rilla and Amelie stood near the fireplace with Ken across from them.

The local judge was waiting for them, already knowing what the couple wanted for a small ceremony.

"We are gathered here today—." He started, he had seen plenty of makeshift, second, third marriages in his years. But there was something in today that made him smile to himself. He was used to tears at a wedding, but there was not a dry eye at Ingleside from any woman in the room. This had been a long time coming.

Mr. Meredith took his place as he opened a bible that was in his hands. "When Lillian asked me to bless this union, I was honoured. Two people with different backgrounds. Knowing that respect for each other and their faiths will have more meaning than any other marriage. 'Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, It is never rude and never seeks its advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love never comes to an end'"

A family meal that was held in the formal dining with the table extended to its full amount, even then it was a tight fit.

"To Lillian and Shirley! They all toasted with a bottle of champagne that Owen had brought from Toronto. Taken from his seller for the special occasion as they cleared away the dinner plates. A large white cake sat in the corner, covered in greenhouse flowers.

By nine in the evening, the bride and groom drove off. Heading towards on the seaside hotels that were nearby. One Lillian had seen from a distance and revelled in its beauty.

"Shirley, non?' She looked at him.

"Pensiez-Vous que nous aurions une lune de miel chez mes parents? Shirley said with a grin as he paid the driver and helped out his bride. The bellboy collecting their bags as they went to check-in.

"Mr. Blythe, if you would sign here," the concierge instructed as Shirley checked them in. "Please ring for breakfast in the morning, or if you wish breakfast runs in the sunroom from 7 am until 9.
Lunch is 12 pm until 2 pm and Dinner begins seating at 4:30 pm."

"Thank you," Shirley nodded as he signed his name with a flourish.

"Congratulations," The man told them with a nod of his head as he handed over a set of keys. "We have the seaside view suit prepared for you if you need anything just call the main desk."

Shirley nodded and ushered his bride up towards the stairs. Neither of them spoke as they reached their door. The bellhop discretely already placed their luggage in the room. Allowing them privacy upon entered.

"Tu es si belle," Shirley told her, letting out his breath as he kicked the door shut. "Êtes-Vous sûr?"

"Je suis sûr que c'est toi et moi et si quelqu'un devrait être nerveux, ce devrait être toi," Lillian teased him.

"Je sais, je ne veux pas que tu te sentes sous pression."

"Je sais et je t'aime pour ça, mais ça fait deux ans et même si je ne sais pas vraiment comment je peux réagir. Je me dois d'essayer au moins avec quelqu'un que j'aime" Lillian caressed the side of his face.

Shirley nodded and lead her further into the room,

Translations

"I have never been so sure of anything in my life,"

"This time is forever, he is a good man."

"You expected to spend our honeymoon at my parents?"

"You are so beautiful,"

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure it's you and me and if someone should be nervous, it should be you,"

"I know, I just don't want you to feel pressured."

"I know and I love you for that, but its been two years and while I don't truly know how I may react, I owe it to myself to at least try with someone that I love.,"

So this chapter ended up being a fair amount of Shirley and Lily. I hope everyone like it though, I do enjoy writing them. Thank you to the people who have taken the time to review. You do make my day when I read your comments.

My apologies for the extra week it took to get this out. Work has been crazy, and I have been battling a few things as well. Depression sucks, but we should never be ashamed of knowing when we need help.

I hope everyone is well and that your life is going well.

Tina.
Hello! It's been a busy few weeks here, working overtime. Dealing with a sick manchild, now I am sick but me being sick means I can just relax and actually finish things off when I call in sick at work.

Thank you for all the lovely reviews and follow's. Everyone is amazing and lovely.

Blythe Apartment, early January.

"Lily! Lily!" Shirley raced up into the apartment. He grabbed her swiftly twirling her into the air as she shrieked from the suddenness.

"Shirley, Que diable?" She questioned him when he set her down.

"What if I told you that we have been given a chance of a lifetime?" He spoke rapidly in English.

Lillian tilted her head unsure of what husband was going on about. "Shouldn't you be in class?"

"It was cancelled, but I was talking to the director in his office. He said they are looking for engineers to help rebuild Paris. He knows that I can speak French when needed. He said he can arrange for me to sit my exam early maybe at midterms? We can start fresh Lily. Paris Lily! Paris, think of it! All the wonder and sights. No one knowing our history, we can just be to husband and wife. Happily in love, and no one will question or care!"

"Paris?" Lillian looked at him mouth agape, pronouncing it the French way. "But your family?"

"My family will understand," Shirley reassured her. "I have to pass the exam first through."

"You will pass with colours flying," Lillian told him wrapping her arms around him.

"I am so sorry, time ran away with me this morning," Rilla exclaimed as she flung off her coat and found her seat at the table. It was a rather cool Wednesday afternoon in mid-February that day. Rilla peeled off her leather gloves and adjusted her stocking for a moment before straightening herself in her seat.

"Don't fret dear," one of the older women smiled at her and passed her a cup of tea. "You are barely late."

"Did I miss anything?" Rilla asked.

"Nothing at all we were merely going about our mornings," Caroline told her. "So why did yours run away with you?"

"Well, I tried to make breakfast, and I burned the oatmeal and almost set the toast on fire. I was working on a paper about Feminine Psychology and my typewriter ribbon went dull." Rilla sighed.

"You are not much of a cook are you?" Adele chuckled. "Reminds me of my newlywed days."

"I can make simple things, I'm fairly better at baking for some reason. I tend to lose focus which tends to make things go awry." Rilla told him truthfully. "Ken helps out frequently, but probably because he wants to eat something editable." Rilla finished off with a laugh. "but anyway what is
on the agenda today?"

"Well, we have the bake sale and craft show coming up," Adele asked. "I spoke to the parks department about your idea about the fair Rilla as well. They are on board with it, we can reach out to various farmers to see if they can help create a petting zoo as well."

"Of course, are we all set for the Cabaret Saturday?" Rilla asked, talking about the latest weekend event. A night of various artists reciting, playing, singing for charity. It reminded Rilla of her Junior Red concerts the most.

"We are," Laura spoke up. "We just have to decorate the hall in the afternoon. While the bakery and cafe will be along with the light fare for the night that they gave us at cost."

"So we will meet at 1 pm to decorate and refrigerate the food, break at 3:30 so we can all be ready," Caroline stated to the ladies. "Back here for 7 pm, to open doors and mingle until the show starts?"

"Sounds like a plan, now let's have some of this cake," Mabel plunked down a cake on the table and everyone laughed.

"So how is married life?" Rilla smirked as she sipped her tea. "Everything you imagined? Not that I want to know because he's my brother of course." She added to ensure she didn't hear anything she didn't want to know.

Lillian laughed as she leaned back into her chair that was in the Ford's living room. "Marriage is nice, it's nice to not have to worry but also nicer to not to have to worry about boundaries."

"I am glad," Rilla smiled. "You both deserve it, truly you do."

"How are you and Ken without us invading your privacy?" Lillian asked with a knowing smile.

"He works a fair bit, but we are good," Rilla replied before continuing after a moment. "It was strange the first days back and it just is the two of us once again, but time cures that easily. I have a large paper to write over the next few weeks, and some events to help plan. Though I am sure it must be nice to have your own space once more."

"It is lovely, but I do understand how you feel Rilla. It's an adjustment when things change." Lillian responded. "Living with someone new is always strange in the beginning, even when you are in love."

"Those first few weeks are always the strangest. How you go from technically not allowed to be alone with a man, to just living with one. Not that Ken and I followed suit in that." Rilla blushed.

"Whatever do you mean?" Lillian looked up rather shocked.

"Oh I am sure you have heard my brothers mention it a time or two," Rilla brow furrowed and when Lillian shook her head. Rilla shrugged and nodded her head.

"All right, well after the war, before we were married. It was a rough year, I was in my first year of school and Ken was on the island. We were unsure of what we were doing or what we wanted really. He was both having a hard time and one day he showed up at school after catching the early train and ferry over. I just remember not wanting him to leave, I was lonely in the apartment and lonely in general. I needed him as much as he needed me. Much like Shirley and you, Ken and I still had our boundaries. We possibly tested our resolves may be a bit too much. We spent a fair
amount of time sneaking around. Finally, there was a catalyst and we had to decide what we wanted for our relationship. What we wanted for ourselves," Rilla rattled off quietly in the small corner of the tea shop blushing.

"Well, now I understand why you never questioned Shirley or me," Lillian smiled over her teacup.

"Did you know that Ken never actually proposed to me?" Rilla told her with a coy smile. "He left to go protect our country, leaving me with the request to not kiss anyone else. Then when he came home we were just together and then we just decided to get married."

"Are you serious? Even Shirley proposed. Granted he knew the answer but he still wanted to have that moment to tell our children one day." Lillian's mouth gaped for a moment before she closed it.

Rilla smiled and shrugged. "I'm not angry over it, it worked for us. He still bought me a ring and everything. So children?" Rilla raised her eyebrows with a knowing look. "Babies on the horizon?"

"We shall see," Lillian gave her a knowing look. "No news just yet, but we are happy as we are at the moment. We are in no rush and just wish to enjoy this time together."

"Sometimes I find myself worrying, I laughed and cried over the past week. I spent so two years afraid of getting pregnant, and now that I am in a place where I am all right with the idea. It's not as easy as I thought it would be," Rilla admitted. "The irony of being so paranoid when I probably could have relaxed. Especially I had realized that it wouldn't that be simple of a task?"

"At least you can see the humour in the situation," Lillian pointed out. "But even so, you never know it can only once, or a multiple tries." Lillian pointed out. Like she knew for her own experiences.

"It must be something strange for you this time around?" Rilla asked without thinking.

"A little, but Shirley is a fine and caring man," Lillian blushed. "But it is nice to not have to worry. In the beginning, I thought being pregnant would mean he might be well for lack of a better word. Nicer to me and he was at times until he wasn't. At least this time it can be a happy occasion and most importantly wanted."

"I marvel at your ability to just move forward." Rilla murmured.

"It hasn't always been this way, and I suppose telling it over and over to lawyers and then to the judge. It's less personal than what it was before," Lillian said after a moment. "Or maybe I try not to let it define who I am because I am not her anymore."

"That is truly one way to look at it, sometimes I feel like such a hypocrite. Studying what I study yet, I struggle with my anxieties." Rilla told her honestly wrapping her hands around her teacup.

"Everyone struggles, you told me that yourself," Lillian reminded her.

"I know, Ken tells me the same thing it's just hard at times. Though since you are here, I still don't completely understand how you got Mr. Meredith to read from your bible. Not his bible, your own catholic bible."

"We had some interesting conversations," Lillian shrugged brushing it off. "There are differences, but at the end of the day, we both look to something larger than us. But how about we look at your dress that needs work and sees what can be done."

"Maybe at some point, we will be letting out our clothing and making little bonnets for each
"Why don't you fill in?" Ken asked her from his spot on the chesterfield as Rilla hung up the telephone. He had caught on to the snippets of the conversation that she was having. Someone had called to say they couldn't make it and now they were trying to find someone to fill in for the event.

"Pardon?" Rilla looked up at him confused.

"Sing a song?" Ken said to clear up the confusion. "We have a lovely voice."

"I am sure there are plenty better singers than myself," Rilla flushed and waved him off. Though it was worrying that one of their acts had called in sick last moment.

"I'm serious Rill, I remember you writing about the concerts you put on for the Reds." Ken reminded her.

"That was a different time, and just because I can carry a tune. Doesn't mean I should sing in front of a crowd. ' Rilla argued back as she sank down next to him. Her hair still wrapped up in a scarf that kept her pin curls hidden. "Either way, I am dreadfully out of practice and have had no time to even rehearse."

"It was just a suggestion," Ken stated as he wrapped his arm around her. "When do we have to be ready?"

"7 o'clock," Rilla reminded him, "but I can't have you messing up my hair."

"Here I thought you wanted children," Ken said lowly against her neck.

"You are enjoying that excuse aren't you?" Rilla poked him the chest as he grinned sheepishly at her.

"Hmm, it's the best advice I have come across. The more love making you do, the greater your chances." Ken returned to kissing down her neck as his hands pulled found the hem of her sweater. "and I promise to not mess up your hair," he added as a murmur.

"You are horribly incorrigible," Rilla poked him once more.

"Incorrigible would be suggesting to use the chaise lounge in the way you once promised me when I bought it for you." Ken smirked at nipped at her neck making her squeak something about love bites showing. "But you are right, we shouldn't." He told her pulling away, which only made her growl and pull at his tie.

"And they say women are teases." Was her response.

They made it to the event on time and much to Rilla's relief hair perfectly set. She was dressed in a green and bronze lace gown with green stockings that have trailing patterns of vines and flowers. Green her colour of choice for any party dress she had bought or made. While Ken looked smart in a black suit and green tie. His hair slicked back and his cufflinks twinkled in the electric lights of the hall.
"We still don't have a set for Miss Bridges," Adele hustled over to Rilla. "Mr. Ford it is good to see you," she added. "I tried phoning to see if you found anyone after I called but they said the phone was off the hook."

Rilla blushed, "Sorry our cat knocked it over and we didn't realize," she told a white lie. "So no one can fill in?"

"Unfortunately not," Adele sighed, "I suppose it will be a shorter night than expected."

Rilla glanced at Ken in the corner of her eye. "Do you any sheet music here?"

"Yes, of course! Why?" Adele looked at her puzzled.

"I will cover for the set," Rilla told her after a deep breath. "I am just hoping they have what I know?" Rilla explained as they made their way over to the stage where there was a piano bench full of sheet music.

Rilla sifted through it carefully until she found what she was looking for.

"Till we meet again, and let me call you sweetheart," Adele read the title. "Oh wonderful, why did you never mention you sing?"

"I rarely do. I am far from a professional, but Ken seems to think that I should at least save us from the embarrassment of not having a full show. Though I'm sure my embarrassment will be much more," Rilla told her with a dry laugh.

"Well, there is a backroom you can quickly practice in," Adele patted her own.

Rilla nodded, wondering what in the world did she just volunteer herself for as led Ken to the back room.

"You will be fine," Ken whispered and quickly kissed her temple as she sat down at the piano. Testing out a few keys, as she read through the music before stumbling through it. Her soprano voice floated through the air. Clear and bright and much more confident than her playing.

"Well, it safe to say it's good that I don't have to play," she joked as she let the piano fade away.

"But your voice is beautiful, and as you said you don't have to play." Ken teased her lovingly as he hummed the top line of the song.

The rest of the evening went off seamlessly before Rilla calmly took the stage. Sitting on the edge of a stool as the band played the familiar intro. Her performance was far from perfect, but it added to the atmosphere. How her gaze was on one man who leaned against a pillar with a soft smile on his face.

"You have a lovely wife Captain Ford," one of the many patrons told Ken.

"It's just Ford now," Ken said through gritted teeth. Thank you though, she is lovely that is for sure." He added reminding himself that he was doing this for Rilla.

"Of course, my apologies," the gentleman apologized. "I'm Denis Stanley, Laura's husband."

"Of course, it's nice to see you again," Ken nodded. "Do you often come to these things?"

"I live by the mode of happy wife, happy life," Denis chuckled.

"We spent some time in London and training together at some point I believe," Denis told him.

"Of course," Ken nodded. Thankfully he knew most men didn't take offence when they weren't recognized. It was hard to recall everyone, and if they weren't in your unit and knee-deep in the mud beside you. "What do you do for a living?"

"Oh, I own Stanley's hardware since my father passed away," Denis said quickly as he saw the ladies approach him all giggly. "If this wasn't a dry event I would say you ladies had far too much punch."

Ken merely nodded and held out his hand to his wife. "You were brilliant," he whispered into her ear.

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"I was thinking," Ken spoke up from his chair one Sunday afternoon in early March

"Well, that is never a good thing," Rilla stated as she looked up for her journal.

"Very funny," Ken chuckled. "I was thinking, that we should look into hiring someone. Someone to come in and either clean, cook occasionally."

"Is my cooking that bad," Rilla asked him dryly.

"No, I just think for the future, when we have children. It might be good to have someone we trust around to help out?" Ken explained.

"So you want Susan?" Rilla raised an eyebrow.

"Not necessarily, we don't need anyone to live in with us, but just someone in general," Ken explained. "I am sure that we can find someone to come in a few days a week at this point."

"Are you trying to buy me, friends?" Rilla teased him. "Because I do have friends."

"Of course not, but one day we may need extra help and it is nice to have someone we know and trust," Ken reassured her. "I am just thinking out loud about the future."

"It makes sense," Rilla said after a moment. "While I am sure my mother would come to Kingsport to be with me during labour. But even she will go back home eventually," Rilla told him. "So just an occasional helper might be good to have."

"I will place an advertisement then," Ken smiled at her. "It will be your choice, of course, you would be the one interacting with her most of the time."

Rilla nodded, still puzzled what a woman would help with.

"Can we afford it?" She asked out of nowhere, which made Ken look up puzzled. "I know the magazine is only just breaking even, if at all some months."

"We will be fine," Ken smiled to reassure her. "We aren't losing money, and each month is a little better than before. It will take time before we make an actual profit, but all in good time."

Rilla nodded, Ken knew their finances more than she did at this point. While she still kept up the household budget and made sure things were paid on time. Ken was the one who signed the bank drafts or made sure she had enough for the week. Children cost a lot, she knew that from caring for
Jimmy. While their groceries dropped now that Shirley and Lillian were married. Children would add a lot to their budget.

"Well, I am going to go set the table," Rilla stated as she looked at the clock. "The newlyweds should be here soon enough." Ken stood catching her before she could leave the room. Pulling her into his arms and holding her there.

"I have a wonderful feeling about this." He murmured and they stood like that for a moment before the doorbell rang. "I'll get it," he told her. Rilla only nodded watching him for a moment before walking to the kitchen.

"So what news do you have?" Rilla asked as she sat down at the table where Shirley and Lillian were seated. A roast chicken sat in the middle, along with potatoes and steamed winter vegetables. She was almost afraid to ask the newlyweds who were all smiles.

"Well, my new professor at school brought something up to me." Shirley began as he absentmindedly caressed Lillian's hand. "He was impressed with my work so far this year, and well. I was given a chance to take my exams early. With the knowledge that if I passed I would be recruited for a company that is looking for engineers."

"That's wonderful!" Rilla exclaimed. "I can only assume that you passed if you are telling us?"

"I did, but the real kicker of the whole thing," Shirley said smiling as he squeezed Lillian's hand and grinned at her. "The job is in Paris, we're moving to Paris or will be at some point. Everything is still being worked out and we won't leave until after Easter most likely."

"Congratulations," Ken stood up and clapped Shirley on the back as he went over to the icebox. "Don't have much in ways of celebration, but I do have some Canada Dry ginger ale."

"Sounds good to me," Shirley assured him.

"Paris," Rilla spoke out loud. "I suppose I shouldn't be too surprised, you lived in Montreal. Do mom and dad know yet?"

"We called them this afternoon. I think mom is rather jealous she loved Paris when they went years ago." Shirley laughed.

"I'm rather jealous," Rilla corrected him. "Sometimes it feels like we will never get to Europe," she sighed. "That trip would have been much more fun than being sick."

"Yes, but be thankful you weren't on the boat then," Shirley pointed out. It was something Rilla already knew and was thankful for but still rolled her eyes at his reminder.

"I promise we will get there eventually. Even if we have to bring children," Ken squeezed her shoulder, from where is one arm rested behind her chair.

"Or we can leave them with my parents," Rilla pointed out.

"Yes, but where is the fun in that? Some of my favourite memories are travelling with my parents." Ken grinned before turning his attention back to the other couple. "This is amazing though for both of you. I was young when I saw Paris, but I remember mom taking us to Notre Dame and it was a sight to see."

"That is one plan," Shirley agreed looking at Lillian who nodded and smiled. "It will be bittersweet to leave, but I think it will be good for us."
"Oui, it will a new adventure for us," Lillian agreed. "New adventures are happening all around us it seems."

Well there you go, I hope everyone enjoys this one. I may have been slightly tipsy while writing parts of this haha!

I look forwards to your comments as usual.

Tina.
Welcome to social distancing day six. This means loads of time for writing because I am not working at the moment because I work in the arts and all of our Ballet performances have been cancelled now. It's going to be rough, but we will survive!

I hope everyone is doing well, and that you are all surviving this strange time we are living in.

Thank you for all the reviews and follows, kudos, etc.

Stay safe!

Tina.

"Hello come in," Rilla greets as she opened the side door. It was a rather mild spring day and the flowers of the garden were beginning to poke through the soil. "You could have used the front door, we rarely use this one." She told the woman.

"Oh, I'm sorry it's a force of habit," the lady flushed and stepped inside the bright sunny kitchen. "Should I take off my shoes Mrs. Ford? I brought slippers?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter," Rilla waved nonchalantly at the offer. "Would you like some tea?" She motioned towards the teapot that was on the table and the fine floral china cups. "Here let me take your jacket, hat?" She asked but the woman shook her head.

"I have all my references with me." She offered to hold out a folder.

"I'll leave those for later," Rilla told her. "I want to know about you, what brought you to our advertisement Mrs. Clarke?" Handing her a cup of tea in the process, "Milk or sugar?"

"Oh milk please," Mrs. Clarke said still confused at the whole welcome so far. "Are you sure this is all right? Your husband won't come home and be angry?"

"What is there to be angry about? I am interviewing for a housekeeper?" Rilla gave her a puzzled look. "I am treating you like any other applicant. If we were to employ you, it is essential that we can get along? Have tea occasionally might happen should we need to go through any sort of agenda?"

"Have tea together?"

"Of course, that is what Mother always did with Susan," Rilla explained simply. "So tell me about yourself? Do you live far?"

"In the north end of the city," Mrs. Clarke says after a moment. "I am a widow, my husband passed away from the Spanish flu. We had no children, I live with my brother and his wife. I know how to read and write. My previous employer moved away so I have been finding odd jobs to support myself."

Rilla nodded. "I'm sorry about your husband, my parents tried to hide the extent of the flu from me, but it was truly devastating. It is just a few days a week, to begin with, it may lead to more later down the road possibly. Depending on how our lives change, we are a bit on the peculiar side I should warn you."
"Your life if your life," Mrs. Clarke told her. "It is not any of my business."

"I suppose it is," Rilla agreed. "This is what pay will look like weekly, or bi-weekly whichever you prefer essentially." She slid over the paper of numbers that Ken had given her.

"This is too much," Mrs. Clarke shook her head.

"What do you mean? It is what we are offering?" Rilla frowned looking at the amount. "It's on par with the research that we did what the agency gave for fair wages."

"For someone who is not coloured, it is fine pay," Mrs. Clarke flushed once more.

"Well, all I can say is that this is what we have budgeted for, and it makes no difference what colour your skin is. I will be truthful, I have had no contact with Africaville. Growing up on the island, while I have seen all walks of life being a daughter of a doctor. I have no issues with negro's and neither does my husband. He's hired a few for the printing room and deliveries at the publishing house."

"Mrs. Ford," Mrs. Clarke stammered.

"The name is Rilla," Rilla smiled and stood up and rummaged through the cookie jar. "I'm not the best baker, but they are edible." She offered them up.

"Gloria," Mrs. Clarke said with a smile. "And I am sure you are better than you think," Gloria told her.

"I am helpless. I am sure the reason why my husband suggested getting some help. Was to not worry about my cooking more then he should have to. " Rilla laughed.

"Do you wish for help?" Gloria asked. Knowing if a wife didn't want help, the job would most likely not last.

"I see his way of thinking. I am still working through school, and some days I do forget the time. Along with working with the GWVA, if we add children into the mix at some point, help around the house will be needed." Rilla explained. "Not that we are looking for a nanny," Rilla told her. "Just someone to help with the everyday little things that sometimes can be forgotten. Possibly the occasional childminding, but having raised a war baby, it will be far and few."

"Of course, I am assuming your family is not near?"

"My mother and father are on the island, with the majority of my siblings," Rilla told her. "While my in-laws are in Toronto. Do you have any requirements, availabilities?"

"So a fair distance for sure," Gloria nodded. "I do attend church on Sundays, of course, other than that I am free since my other employers moved away."

"Of course, don't we all," Rilla nodded her head. "I think we will get along well I think. You seem to be what my mother calls a kindred spirit. I will read over these quickly," Rilla tapped the folder.

"Is it all right if I use the washroom?"

"Of course! Just down the hall first door to the right." Rilla smiled as Gloria shed her jacket for the first time and left her gloves and purse on the table.

She scanned through the letters and noted the telephone numbers. A good sign and she noted some
of the things were from rather well off families. Underneath each one she gave a reason why she left the employee. All were reasonable explanations of seasonal work during the summer or moving away."

"I propose we start with weekdays. Monday, Wednesday and Fridays, half day on Saturday when needed?" Rilla stated as she finished reading. "Oh you aren't allergic to cats, are you? Artemis is around here somewhere and just want to make sure?"

"Cats are fine, and everything sounds agreeable. Do we need to wait for Mr. Ford's approval?" Gloria asked calmly.

"I am sure that he will agree. He met with the matron at the agency that we advertised with and left the final decision up to me," Rilla told her. "He trusts my judgement, he left this up to me after all. He should be home soon enough, he said he would stop by before heading out to take some photographs. If you wish to meet him before making your choice?"

"Are you happy with your choice?" Ken asked as they got ready for bed.

"I believe I am. Mrs. Clarke seems like a fair-minded woman. Are you all right with my choice?" Rilla asked him.

"It makes no difference to me," Ken shrugged as he unbuttoned his shirt.

"She was shocked by what we would pay her," Rilla told him as she turned to face from her vanity. "Do negro's make less than well, white people?"

"It is very common practice yes," Ken said after a moment.

"Do you do it at the magazine?" Rilla asked him and watched him for a moment. "I would have to check with the accountant to be truthful," Ken told her frowning. "I don't believe I pay them less, my uncle from when I spoke to him about it said all men in a department receive the same wage. Regardless of colour, the same with the women that he employs."

"But he does pay women less," Rilla stated, women were always paid less. It was a fact of life.

"Oh, I mean to tell you that the premier is allowing an interview for the magazine. He is coming in to see the new publishing house that I set up. I thought it would be nice if you could be there as well?" Ken asked told her.

"Name the time and place and don't complain if I buy a new dress," Rilla teased him. "After all, I did vote for him." She said proudly.

"You are so proud to be able to vote," Ken chuckled amused at her delight.

"Well, of course, I am!" Rilla repeated the same words she told him once before. "All the suffragettes that made it possible. Even Susan agrees that women have a right to vote!"

"Yes and if Susan believes it, it must be true," Ken teased her. "Though you know I am more than accepting women having the vote. You live in this country too, why shouldn't you?"

"How did I get so lucky to marry a man like you?" Rilla smiled and stood up, her lace kimono trailing behind her as she stood in front of him.

"Well, you waited four years, and still decided to keep me around afterwards," Ken said impishly.
"I figured that I wasn't going to find another to do that."

"Oh you behave," Rilla poked him playfully. "Or I will find the most expensive dress I can find."

"You have your usual amount to spend on a dress," Ken responded. "No more, but less if possible, though Rilla you buy anymore I will have to build you a new closet. I don't want to do that, I'm pretty certain your family thinks I spoil enough."

"I haven't bought a new dress in a year," Rilla reminded him.

"No, you just made them with Lillian," Ken gave her a look. "Which still counts takes up space in the closet."

"You do realize that this will be the last year I will be able to wear such pretty things? This figure is never going to look as good as it does after children," Rilla reminded him.

"Then I will just have to buy you some corselets," Ken grinned cheekily at her. "But for now, I can use a reminder?"

"You know if you take a picture it lasts longer?" Rilla said without thinking, and when she did she bit her lip and hide her gaze as her cheeks burned bright.

Ken raised an eyebrow, his voice lowering in his chest. "Is that an invitation my dear, because you know I will never turn that down?"

"Shirley?" Lillian asked. "Are you awake?"

"If I wasn't, I am now," he grumbled and turned over and face her yawning. "What is it mon, Cheri?"

"If I told you that we may need more bedrooms in Paris, is that still possible?" Lillian whispered.

"I'm pretty sure we can find something for your sister," Shirley yawned.

"Has she said anything to you?" Lillian frowned. Amelie had been quiet when they told her the news. She was happy for her sister but at the same time, she had pulled away, thinking that she wasn't wanted."

"No, but I thought maybe she had said something to you?" Shirley brow furrowed.

"Not yet, I didn't think how it might affect her," Lillian sighed. "I keep trying to talk to her, but she just doesn't say a word."

"She knows you love her," Shirley kissed her hair tiredly.

"Still, we may need another room," Lillian told him, alluding to what she originally woke him up for.

"Lily?" Shirley sat up half-hazard and looked down at her, piecing it together.

"I don't know for sure, but I think—," Lillian started before she found herself being kissed.

"Whatever happens, though I didn't think," Shirley rambled off. Lillian laughed lightly.

"Generally when men and women play about in bed. Babies will eventually happen," Lillian
teased him.

"You know what I meant," Shirley nudged her and pulled her close to him. "I'm happy though, and if you aren't and it takes a while longer. I'm fine with that too, heck if we have to find some child to adopt one day that will fine too."

"I am so excited, but at the same time it's so bittersweet to leave everyone," Lillian admitted to him.

"It doesn't have to be forever, we can always come back if we don't like Paris," Shirley reminded him. "Or if my French does not cut it for my job," he joked.

"What exactly is your job?" Lillian asked him, as they were both awake.

"I'll be working for a company this helping rebuild some of the more destroyed areas of France. It's based in Paris, with some travel here and there to places surrounding. I will be dealing with buildings, new railways, roads. Though I do hear that the company also has a mechanical division which also interests me."

"Also If I am, no matter how happy you are," Lillian warned him. "You can't say a word for at least three months."

"Why not?" Shirley frowned.

"Because a lot can happen in the first trimester. It's easier to keep it private should something happen." Lillian told him.

"That does make sense," Shirley nodded. "I will keep it to myself then, though I am sure me grinning like a fool will raise some questions."

"I don't think you will be questioned too much, it's generally the ladies who deal with it the most." Lillian patted his arm and yawned. "Je'taime."

"I love you too," Shirley responded smiling.

"Mom?" Rilla asked as she laid her head against her mother's shoulder. They were in the sunny parlour of Ingleside for Easter. The last family holiday they may have for a long while. Ken had gone fishing with the other men. While Lillian and had gone over with the twins and Amelie to see Walter Blythe the second. Something that had stung more then what she had thought would. As much as she loved Walter, she never once considered naming a child for him. It was still too raw, too real when she looked around the table at holidays. Walter would be remembered in other ways. Of course, her siblings didn't quite feel that same way.

"What is it, dearest?" Anne asked

"Were you ever afraid to have kids, you know before you had us?" Rilla asked.

"I had normal worries like any expectant mother, but I was never afraid. I wanted to be a mother," Anne said after a quiet moment.

"But what about Joy? How did you ever move on?" Rilla asked looking for some sort of reassurance.

"Joy was a tragedy, that will always be in my heart. I swore I would never be happy again," Anne
said quietly. "Days and weeks went by, summer turned into fall. I was smiling again, laughing even and then I woke up one day with the same familiar sickness. I cried and yelled at your father. How could God be so cruel, I wasn't ready for this to happen all over again? I don't even your father was ready for it, we both so nervous. I cried during labour that I couldn't do this again, then even before the nurse got there. Your father placed Jem on my chest, all red and angry, and it was like a glass shattering within us. Your father was tickled pink, as he ran to tell your Aunt Marilla who was only just awakening."

"I was talking to Mavis who is doing brilliantly. She asked me rather straightforwardly but kindly I will add. If my obsessing over the time it's taking to get pregnant; is me trying to mask just how afraid I am? The sad part is I don't even know if she right or not?"

"I know now what it did to you to give up Jimmy, and I will never forgive myself for letting it happen as it did. But it is a completely different situation now. Plus you have worked wonderfully through all those things bothering you." Anne reassured her. "Answer me, without thinking. Just say whatever comes to your mind first. Do you want a baby? Not just to make Ken happy, or to be a fulfilled woman in society, or to just fit in more."

"I have come to think warmly about the idea," Rilla said quietly. "I think it would be nice." She added not wanting to share what she had told Ken about the little girl she dreamed about while sick.

"I can't tell you it will be all be easy times, all sunshine and flowers. You raised a baby already you know how much work they can be. All I can suggest is to stop worrying. You are allowed to change your mind. You are allowed to change how you feel about certain things, while still feeling afraid."

"Am I?"

"Of course you are, but don't pretend. Does Ken know that your struggling?"

"Sort of?" Rilla sighed. "He knows that I'm still worried, that I may need reassurance, but he so happy that I don't he realizes all of the time."

"Well, all I can suggest is to remind him, and to read a book," Anne told her kissing her adult daughter's hair.

"Read a book?" Rilla looked up at her mother.

"Yes, stop worrying, stop jumping at every chance. Relax, read a book," Anne repeated as they heard the door open. The women of the family still gushing over the newest member of the family who was safely in his mother's arms. Ceci was giggling and was running past her aunts as soon as someone got her coat off. While she saw Amelie storm up the stairs with a defeated Lillian.

"Rilla there you are, are you feeling more rested?" Faith asked.

"I am," Rilla straightened up. "How you are?"

"I am surviving, Ceci please don't bother the cat!" She called out to the toddler was who was trying to climb on the chair to the new cat of Ingleside. "Do you want to hold him?" She turned back to Rilla

"Maybe later," Rilla told her. "He seems pretty comfortable with you."

"You do realize that you will have to hold your babies one day?" Di teased her as she looked over
Faith's shoulder and made a face at the three-month-old.

"Leave her be," Nan told her twin. "Rilla can do what she wants."

"I am fully aware of what babies need, and what I will have to do." Rilla interrupted them. "It comes down to the fact that the only children I will probably ever be comfortable with, well be my own. Which is perfectly acceptable," she added.

"I don't want you to leave," Amelie said quietly.

"We've told you plenty of times that you are more than welcome to come with us," Lillian told her sister.

"I don't want to interrupt your life," Amelie stared out the window of her small room at Ingleside.

"You aren't an interruption, we are more than happy to have you with us. For you to see Paris, the world. If you don't like it, you can always come back here. Mrs. Blythe well always love to have you." Lillian told her sister. "You're going to be sixteen next year, and imagine being in the same city as the Eiffel tower! All the french pastries and the Paris Opera Ballet! Though I will let you in on a small secret because I don't want to lead you on." Lillian said quietly before leaning in and whispers. A moment later all you heard was Amelie's shriek. That made the ladies downstairs raise an eyebrow.

"I guess she's moving to Paris?" Di said smiling. "Which I suppose will come at a good time, as I decided to not renew my contract at the high school this year."

"Why in the world not?" Anne looked at her daughter rather shocked.

"Well, I ran into someone a little while ago," Di said blushing. "We've been corresponding and seeing each other whenever possible."

"Oh, who is he?" Nan said excitedly as she sat next to her sister, her hands folding around her growing stomach.

"Jack Wright," Di grinned.

"Jack Wright?" Anne said bewildered. "As in the Wrights of Lone Willow farm? The boy who used to tease you, girls, to no end when you were in Avonlea? Jack Wright, Diana Barry's son?"

"Do we know any other Jack Wright?" Di smirked. "It just happened out of nowhere, we corresponded during the war, and then his letters just stopped. Apparently, we both thought we both stopped writing to each other or scared each other off."

"Are you saying you are engaged to Jack Wright?" Anne shook her head. "After two almost three months of talking to each other again? What happened to the nice young man who you introduced us to at Christmas?"

"Adam was bland, too bland," Di waved off her old beau. "Things aren't official yet, but we have talked about it. I am sure that you will get a phone call from Aunt Diana at some point this weekend." She told her mother as the telephone rang unexpectedly. "Well, I am going to go make some tea!" She said gallantly and skipped out of the room.

Rilla looked at her mother, who looked at Nan, who looked at Faith who looked back at Anne.
"I'm trying to picture Gilbert's reaction to all of this?" Anne responded which prompted everything to laugh at.
Chapter 35

Hello...what is barely been over a week since the last update...Physical distancing rocks!

All said. Life is quiet here, but my little home is doing good. Thank you all for the lovely comments the past week!

"Look at you!" Marianne embraced her friend as she found Rilla waiting for her near baggage claim. It was an early May morning when the two women embraced.

"Look at you!" Rilla exclaimed as she took in her friend's short hair. "You cut your hair!" She looked over the dark waves that were cut into a short bob.

"I did! I felt like I needed to do something after he finally passed. So off went the hair!" Marianne explained.

"It must have been hard," Rilla nodded. "Grief is always hard, even when it is expected."

"He's in a better place, he held on for one last holiday," Marianne nodded. "It was quaint and we talked about mother and what she used to be like. He's with her again which he shall enjoy."

"As it should be," Rilla agreed. "Though I don't know how much I have changed. Still have the hair, still wear similar clothing."

"You just seem so content, and robust," Marianne looked her over.

"Well, I am content and robust," Rilla laughed. "Ken wishes he could have been here, but of course duty calls when you are the boss."

"Of course, I take no offence to him not being here." Marianne laughed as she found her trunk and both Rilla and her picked up and end. "I brought some souvenirs from Toronto for you."

"Oh! Let's get going then, I have a cab waiting for us," Rilla told her.

"So your brother and sister and law have set off?" Marianne asked, remembering their last letter.

"They did, Amelie has decided to go spend the summer with them. She will return in the fall most likely. Though most of us believe that she will fall in love with Paris and stay but we shall see." Rilla explained. "It was a tearful goodbye but we shall see them at some point."

"I'm sure that you will," Marianne agreed.

"So this is the new place, it is adorable," Marianne exclaimed. "Have you taken up gardening yet?" She looked at Rilla who shrugged guiltily.

"It makes the house homelier," Rilla defended herself, "Come along, oh I should warn that I do have a housekeeper. Mrs. Clarke," she said. "She said she would prepare your room, so everything should be ready for you. If you need anything she knows where it can be found."

"Of course," Marianne gave a curt nod.

"I shall warn you," Rilla said before opening the door. "Mrs. Clarke is from Jamaica," she said quietly.
"Well, look at you, being all wealthy," Marianne teased her friend. "I went to school with several negro's who were middle-class families in Toronto. We weren't exactly friends, but they were classmates."

"Well, she should have some brunch ready for us," Rilla told her as she opened the front door. "Mrs. Ford is that you?"

"It is Gloria, I am back," Rilla called out as she saw the older lady step out from the kitchen. "I will pot the coffee pot on for you then," Gloria smiled. "Do you need help with any bags?"

"We are fine to thank you," Rilla smiled. "This way Mary," she told her friend. "I gave you the downstairs bedroom, I hope that is all right, but you have the own water closet next to it. I will show you the bathroom upstairs later on the tour."

"So what happened to the apartment?" Marianne asked as Rilla showed her the downstairs guest bedroom.

"We are most likely going to sell it. Now that Shirley and Lillian are in Paris." Rilla explained as she set one of the bags on the bed. "Do you wish to freshen up before having a bite to eat?"

Marianne nodded and Rilla showed her the stack of towels that were in the corner on an old washstand. Before she left the room closing the door behind her. She made quick work of checking over the front room and headed through the dining room into the kitchen. Fresh muffins and scones were waiting on the counter.

"Is there anything else you wish for today's lists of groceries?" Gloria asked looking over the list.

"I think that is it if you notice anything missing from the pantry feel welcome to add it," Rilla told her. Picking up the platter of good to bring to the table, while Gloria followed with the service of coffee.

"So what are the plans for this trip?" Marianne asked as she sank into her chair.

"Well, since it is spring and warmer out and you are here for longer. Ken wants to go to some fishing village. Which has a lighthouse that Ken wants for some photographs for an article? I thought we may join him, see the coastline and enjoy the sights. I've never been down that way so it may be fun to do?" Rilla asked.

"Is it far?" Marianne asked.

"It's about 44 kilometres. No trains, so we drive down the old roads that bring up to the area," Rilla told her. "It won't take too long to drive to the area."

"Sounds wonderful," Marianne told her with a smile drinking from her coffee cup.

"But today, we can relax. You can catch up on some rest if you need it, or we can go out for a walk. Later this week we can give you a tour of the magazine and the building. It has come together." Rilla told her as she spotted the grey furry tale that was underneath the sidebar of the dining room. She pointed to the tale to Marianne with a smile.

"Is that Artemis?" Marianne asked as she sank from the chair onto the floor. "Why hello there," She spoke to the cat in a childlike voice. "Aren't you pretty? I have something for you?" She said rummaging through the pocket of her skirt and pulled out a tiny fabric mouse. She waved it around
until Artemis caught sight out and scrambled for playfully.

"So are you really baking for the bake sale?" Marianne asked. Meaning the one that Rilla was helping organize at the GWVA. Rilla smiled and sank down on the floor to play with the cat next to her friend.

"I am, granted Mrs. Clarke will help me but I am sure that it will be fine. I am looking forward to bringing you for two." Rilla told her. "But I am sure that you are looking forward to not having to bear my cooking again?"

"Well, I won't lie, it did make the trip much more exciting," Marianne teased her. Rilla laughed and shook her head.

Rilla beamed as she waved to her friends who were all under the tents. Children were running around, sneaking cookies whenever possible.

"Laura!" She waved happily.

It was a Friday afternoon, a Friday of a long weekend. Which meant the children had gotten off early from school for the holiday. As it was Victoria Day on Monday.

"Rilla!" Laura waved back. "You must be Marianne," she held out her hand. "It's nice to meet you and thank you for joining us today."

"Thank you for having me," Marianne smiled. "It's quite a turnout," she looked around at crowds of people. Children were running around with painted faces. While the men all hoovering around the animals or automobiles.

"I know it is nothing like what Toronto has," Rilla told her. "But for us, it is quite an achievement. Kingsport has been growing like wild, we grow any closer we might as well become part of Halifax!"

"That will be an interesting day!" Caroline cut in as she held a pie in her hands. "I hope you brought your aprons?" She looked over Rilla and Marianne's dresses tutting as she did.

"Of course, we did," Rilla laughed holding up the basket, and another bag that contained their aprons.

"We have brownies, cookies, butter tarts," Marianne told them. "Oh and something called pineapple upside-down cake!"

Laura and Caroline, and a few others looked at her strangely.

"My housekeeper Mrs. Clarke helped us make it," Rilla explained. "It is quite delicious."

"Well, we will put it along with the other cakes," Mabel stated hesitantly. Rilla looked towards Marianne unsure of what to do. Who only shrugged in response, what can one do?

"So which ones are yours?" Rilla asked looking at the playing children that Laura was focused on.

"Lizzy is the one in pink, and David is well, the one covered in mud already," Laura sighed.

"My siblings and I would constantly be covered in grass and mud stains," Rilla admitted. "Whoever did our laundry, I pity them now."
"Thank goodness for service," Laura agreed. "Well, let us try and sell some baked goods?"

Ken came by still dressed in his suit from the office. "Looks like quite a turnout?" He observed as he kissed Rilla lightly.

"It is," Rilla agreed. "All the men are fawning over the cars and the horses," she told him.

"Hint taken," he chuckled. "Anything good here though before I take my leave."

"I saved you a couple of butter tarts at him, but I think you will like Mabel's maple fudge," Rilla told him. "10 cents a pound," she told him with a grin.

Ken shook his head but handed over the dime and took his paper-wrapped fudge. "Ladies," he gave them all a nod and went to find the other men.

"Your husband is so handsome," One of the teenage daughters of Adele said dreamily.

"Delia!" Adele exclaimed.

"What it's true," Delia shrugged at her mother.

Rilla laughed. "Ken is very handsome."

"What happened to his face though? Was it from the war, scars are so dashing," Delia went on with another dreamy sigh.

"Yes, it was from the war, and while I can agree," Rilla wrapped her arm around the younger girl. "However scars often carry memories and not all memories can be happy. So remember that when gushing over scars?"

"Delia, do go help with your brother please," Adele called out and the young girl sighed and went to where her brother was. "Children," Adele shook her head.

"So it seems," Rilla nodded. Looking out at the young kids running about.

"You best get a move on with them," Caroline chipped in.

"My mother was twenty-six when she had her first," Rilla retorted. It was not the first time some of the older ladies prodded her about the subject.

"Leave her be," Laura came to her defence, giving Rilla a small sympathetic look. "The stork comes when it wants to come. We all know that?" She looked at the women who flushed slightly.

"Why don't you and Marianne go enjoy some of the afternoon? Everything is pretty much sold," she motioned to the table. All that was left was a few partial cakes and half of the pineapple cake that Rilla had brought.

Rilla nodded and went to find her friend. She found Marianne who was drinking lemonade as she watched the kid goats hop around in the pen they were in.

"Let's go sit for a while?" Rilla told her, hooking her arm into her friends while holding the basket of their lunch with the other. Marianne nodded as they walked around until they found a shaded area. They settled under the tree that had sunlight filtering through here and there.

"How did Ken get that scar?" Marianne asked when Rilla and she sat on a blanket during their much-needed break.
Rilla snorted as she laughed. "If I told you, he would never forgive me."

"Why would I never forgive you?" Ken asked sneaking up behind them.

"I was asking Rilla about your scar. Delia thinks it's dashing and you weren't married to Rilla she would probably be following you around like a puppy.." Marianne filled him with a grin.

"The scar came from my own stupidity and a story I made Rilla to never repeat," Ken said firmly looking at his wife. "And have I gotten old enough that I know have teenagers thinking I have dashing?"

"Well, you are turning 30 at the end of the month," Rilla teased him.

"Which means you are what? Twenty-four this year?" Ken asked with a grin, knowing she didn't like that she was getting closer to a quarter of a century.

"Oh hush you," Rilla swatted at his shoe, looking up under the large sun hat that was protecting her from the sun.

"Rilla Ford!" Both Rilla and Ken turned to see Carl Meredith standing near them. "I was not expecting to run into you this fine day!"

"Likewise!" Rilla stood her and embraced her old childhood friend. "This is my friend Marianne, she is visiting from Toronto."

"Nice to meet you," Carl said with a nod of his head. "How are you, Ken?"

"Doing all right," Ken told him. "Last time we heard you were out in the Rockies."

"Yes, the families don't know I am surprising them with a visit. I was just picking up a few things and saw the fair going on in the park." Carl explained.

"And you run into us!" Rilla laughed. "Well, your family will be excited to see you. You missed Shirley leaving by two weeks sadly."

"I heard that he went and got himself married and moved to Paris," Carl nodded. "Mind if I sit with you for a while?"

"Of course not!" Rilla told him, looking at the others who all nodded their eyes.

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They woke early the next morning, Ken making a quick breakfast as the ladies got dressed. Brownie cameras and another portrait style on a tripod was loaded up in the car. Along with the picnic basket that Mrs. Clarke had made for them. The extra tank was filled with gasoline and tucked away. Finally, the ladies piled into the car as Ken double checked under the hood before slamming it closed. They had told Carl about the trip, and the idea of a new area full of bugs and wildlife intrigued him. They ended up inviting him along, allowing Marianne to not be the third wheel.

The roads were bumpy, as the trio chatted about the scenery as they drove leisurely. It took them just under an hour to reach their destination.

"Oh, Ken!" Rilla scrambled out of the car, followed closely by Marianne and Carl. "It's breathtaking!"

"You grew up in Glen," Ken chuckled with a shake of his head.
"But I grew up with that coastline, this is brand-new!" Rilla exclaimed. Her dress rippled in the wind, her hats elastic being tested by the wind the shore created.

They trekked around the small village and down to the point. Taking photos here and there, wherever they could or fancied. Carl spent his time looking for various small creatures and insects. Ken took multiple of the ladies until Marianne told him to go Rilla and she would take a photo of them. She smiled as she looked into the lens of the camera box. The light blue cotton dress, Ken's casual trousers and polo it made a very nice photo.

They settled at the shore, spread out slightly. Carl was pointing out various insects and flowers to Marianne. Who was with was listening with interest. "You have a-," he pointed to a caterpillar on her lavender dress. Flushing as he reached for it.

"Oh!" Marianna gasped and turned to him. "Please?"

"There you go," he said more to the caterpillar than to Marianne as he placed it on a nearby tree. "

"Thank you," Marianne told him.

"My sister often complained about them staining their dresses," Carl explained. "I have learned to be on the lookout for such things."

"Nice to know that some cares, also nice not to be the third wheel," She giggled. "Those two are very much in their little world at the moment." Marianne pointed to their friends.

"They are happy," Carl nodded. "Do you want a photo with the lighthouse?" He asked holding up the camera.

"Please," Marianne nodded. "Shall I take yours next?" She asked him. Carl nodded and just as they were finishing up they heard Rilla called out.

They all settled near the lighthouse. The picnic basket unpacked and the quilt spread out on the grass as they all settle down and lounged. Picking at sandwiches and fruits that had been packed.

"Peggy's Cove, they say it was named after a shipwreck. The story goes the only survivor had been a woman named Margaret," Ken told them as they ate their lunch. "Peggy's Point is down at the lighthouse."

"What is this about?" Rilla asked him as they sat on the old quilt next to her husband. Carl was sitting next to Marianne glancing over so often at her with a bashful look on his face.

"Articles about the hidden gem's in Nova Scotia," Ken told them. "While Cape Breton is beautiful. Most people don't know this place exists." Ken explains.

"How did you find out about this place?" Carl asked.

"One of my writer's mother was born out here," Ken replied. "He told me how to get here and where to go."

"You said you are from Toronto?" Carl asked Marianne. "Do you enjoy nature?"

"Yes, I met Rilla a few years back when she was visiting and we kept in touch," Marianne told him. "As for nature, I did enjoy the parks near my old home, the lake. It was hard for me to get out of the city to see anything more. Rilla is going to take me to the Island on Tuesday for the rest of the week. I've never been anywhere with so much green, it's refreshing."
"You're coming to the Island?" Carl looked over to Rilla and Ken.

"Just Marianne and I, Ken has to work," Rilla explained. "Just for a couple of days, we'll be at Ingleside with my parents."

"I will see you on the train and ferry most likely then," Carl told the women. "

"Do you want a ride to the station?" Rilla asked? "I can only imagine that you have a trunk full of heavens knows what."

"Oh no, I'll be fine I right new it anyway," Carl shook his head. "I am a research assistant for the conservation of Canada. I work with them and they pay for my schooling." He explained to Marianne.

"How long has it been since you've been home?" Marianne asked Carl.

"Well, two years?" Carl said running through his golden-brown hair as he thought about it.

"You haven't seen Ceci since she was an infant," Ken stated.

"I haven't, and now there is Walter Jr," Carl nodded his head. "They are my niece and nephew," he explained to Marianne.

"Rilla has mentioned them occasionally in letters," Marianne replied taking a drink of her water. "You must be excited to see and meet them?"

"I am," Carl nodded. "Seems like Di and I are the odd ones out now between the family."

"Oh, Di is practically engaged to Jack Wright," Rilla filled him in.

"You are joking?" Carl's mouth dropped. "I am the now officially the lonely bachelor!"

"I'll let you in on a secret Carl, women are expensive, stay single." Ken joked as he guarded himself against his wife's wrath. Wrapping his arms around her laughing as she tried to poke him.
"Welcome to Ingleside, come in, come in," Anne said cheerfully as she greeted Marianne. "Hello sweetheart," She added for Rilla kissing her cheek in a motherly way. "How was the trip?"

"Uneventful thankfully," Rilla replied.

"Thank you for having me Mrs. Blythe," Marianne spoke up as she looked around the house that Rilla grew up in. "Dr. Blythe," she added as he came up behind them with two of their bags.

"We always enjoy showing up the island to mainlanders," Anne responded. "As it is we have heard so much about you over the years, it feels like you have already been here."

"Where do I put these?" Gilbert asked.

"Upstairs, twins room," Anne said off-handedly. "I hope you don't mind sharing a room, but the two beds are in there."

"None at all," Rilla and Marianne reassured her. "Come I will show you around the house and then freshen up from the trip. Supper is at the usual time?"

"As always," Anne nodded as the telephone rang. "Excuse me," she said more to Marianne than her daughter as she went from the telephone.

"We'll head upstairs," Rilla told her as she turned towards the staircase. "There is a staircase at the other end of the house as well, that goes into the kitchen." She explained. Marianne nodded and followed her friend.

"We girls all slept in this room at one point, but by the time I got older. They were off at queens, I took over the boys room with Jimmy," Rilla explained. "This is the bathroom, the lock sticks occasionally, but just give it a jiggle," Rilla went on. "My parent's room, and our room," Rilla let her through the last door, one that overlooked the garden with its window.

"You have a lot of photos in the house," Marianne commented as they went back down the stairs.

"Yeah, we like our photographs," Rilla agreed. "That is Nan and Di, she pointed to her sisters in a portrait that was taken before the war. That is me in the middle of them. Di has lighter hair, which is red. Nan has dark brown. That is Jem, Walter and Shirley." She looked at the similar one of her brothers. My parent's wedding portrait." She said going over the photos.

"Nan is the one that is due soon?" Marianne asked.

"Yes, I think in the next two weeks, so any time really," Rilla nodded. "Sitting room and dining room" Rilla stopped at the bottom of the stairs. "The sunroom, mom loves this room for sewing in the afternoon." Rilla opened the door to the airy window filled the room that overlooked the harbour.

Rilla then led her down the hall. "Dad's office," she pointed to a closed door. Before turning into the large kitchen, "Susan must be out in the yard somewhere," Rilla told her. "The pantry is down that small hallway and next to that is Susan's room." Marianne nodded as she followed Rilla back into the sitting room. Looking around she took notice of more photos. Engagements, weddings, grandchildren were proudly on display.
"It is breathtaking out here, it feels like an entirely different world." Marianne breathed in the ocean air. The cliffs they had climbed, ones Rilla roamed during her childhood with her siblings. In the distance, you could see the lighthouse. Which prompted Rilla to recall her first harbour dance. Describing that fateful night in which the war began for them.

"It is," Rilla agreed. "Can you see why I would never want to move far from here?"

"For the first time, maybe a little," Marianne agreed. "But Toronto is nice as well."

"It is, though Carl seemed rather taken with you." Rilla changed the subject and grinned when her friend blushed.

"He was nice," Marianne agreed. "Interesting, he could tell me so much about everything in nature. I can imagine that he would as many pets as allowed."

Rilla laughed. "He often bought mice and bugs to bed, his brother refused to share the bed with him growing up."

"I am sure that he has grown out of such things now." Marianne laughed. "He was nice though, and handsome."

"Carl has grown into his looks," Rilla agreed. "We can go over to the manse tomorrow if you wish?"

"Let him visit with his family," Marianne shook her head. "We are two very different people, he going back out west and I have to figure out what I shall do with my life."

"What are you doing here?" Rilla asked as she saw Nan sitting in the sitting room with her mother.

"I am allowed out," Nan rolled her eyes. "Jerry is just running some errands today and I didn't feel like being home alone," Nan explained with a sigh as if it wasn't the first time she heard such comments.

"Of course you are, but are you actively trying to have Jem or Dad deliver your child?" Rilla asked raising an eyebrow.

"Both are fine doctors, at this point, I don't care who delivers the child. I just want it out of me," Nan sighed. "I am just glad it is not twins."

"I will never know if you and Di being twins was a fluke or somewhere down on my side of the family." Anne mused.

"Where is Di this week?" Rilla asked as she curled up into the chair and motioned for Marianne to do that same.

"In Avonlea," Nan told her. "Also my sister has appalling manners, I am Nan," she sent a look to her sister. "You must be Marianne."

"Indeed, it is nice to meet you," Marianne agreed with a nod of her head. "You are married to Carl's brother?" She asked.

"I am, I heard that Carl ran into you while in Kingsport," Nan told them.

"We did," Rilla confirmed. "We had a lovely day with him, did we not Mary?"

"He was saying that same thing, something about going to the coast," Nan explained. "I saw him
this morning before I came over with Jerry."

"Peggy's Cove," Rilla supplied as an answer. "Ken was working on an article. It's a short drive out of the city. Carl came with us, I think he got some photos," Rilla turned and smiled knowingly at Marianne.

"So he said," Nan hummed as she shifted in her seat. "Are you seeing Jimmy while you're here?"

"I am, he's excited as usual. I call every other week lately, I think the novelty of a sibling has worn off." Rilla laughed. "We plan on going to the ice cream parlour and candy shop. Thank by the way, for what you said at easter."

Nan tilted her head in confusion.

"About Di making comments about me not wanting to hold the baby," Rilla explained.

"Least I could do," Nan told her. "Di can be overbearing, I am hoping that she mellows out when she and Jack finally get married."

"Nan!" Anne exclaimed thinking her daughter just insinuated something about her sister.

"What? I just said that marriage may mellow her out," Nan said innocently. "Do you have any beau's back in Toronto?" Nan turned to look at Marianne.

"Not for many years" Marianne admitted. "Between my father needing to be cared for. It didn't leave much time for finding someone to be with. Few dates here and there when I managed, but no man generally wishes to wait as they would have had to."

"What happened to your father?" Anne asked. "I'm sorry, wife of a doctor, if it's too personal please ignore me."

"He's been in and out of a wheelchair for the majority of my life. Some sort of accident that he never talked about much. We had a trained nurse and he managed to work and run his business as I was growing up. I was going off to college, when he started to just forget things, how mother wasn't around. It was strange before his illness he never spoke of her. She died when I was a toddler, but then suddenly he was speaking of her like it was all yesterday. Always asking where she was, the worse he got the more he spoke and asked for her. I suppose I could have got married, left home, but something didn't feel right. We were all that we had left and my aunt who came to stay with us during the war to help out which was a blessing." Marianne explained. "He's in a better place now, and I am tasked with figuring out what I want to truly do for the first time."

"It is never easy, losing a parent. I grew up never knowing mine which had its own hardships. Then Matthew died and I cried so long and hard. He brought me home, he was the one never minding my mindless chatter." Anne said softly in a comforting voice. Turning when she saw Nan pulling herself up.

"Just heading to the bathroom," She waved them off before they could ask her anything.

"I do not miss those days," Anne murmured and shook her head. "Tea?" She turned to the other girls.

'I feel like I just saw you!" Jimmy skipped beside Rilla and Marianne who was amused by the young boy that followed Rilla like a puppy.
"Well, I was here last month," Rilla laughed as they walked into town. Jimmy had come over for Easter lunch. She ruffled his golden hair lovingly.

"I know, I just don't get to see you that often, do you think I can come to visit you again? Maybe longer than last time?" Jimmy asked.

"That is up to your parents," Rilla told him. "But I will ask if they will allow it. Though won't you miss your family?"

"All Willow does is cry," Jimmy shrugged. "When people come over, they only care about her now."

"Babies do tend to steal the spotlight," Rilla nodded sympathetically.

"Do you know what you're going to get?" Marianne asked the young boy, she had heard so much about the boy. She could still feel the connection the two had, she finally understood why it had torn Rilla apart.

"Chocolate ice cream!" Jimmy jumps up in the air as they reached the drugstore that had an attached soda shop and ice cream parlour.

"We keep running into each other," Rilla and Marianne turned at the sound of Carl Meredith's voice.

"So it seems," Rilla agreed. "What are you doing in town?"

"Running to pick up some things for Rosemary," Carl told them. "I can only assume you are headed for ice cream?"

"We are," Marianne spoke up. "Would your company?" She asked rather boldly looking towards Rilla who nodded her head. "That way Rilla and Jimmy could have some time alone?"

"We can stop by the dunes, I think the book I ordered and sent here should be here as well. It's about wildlife I was telling you when we were at the cove" Carl offered. "I can drop you back off to Ingleside later?"

Marianne looked back at Rilla who smiled at her. "That would be nice," she told him with a nod of her head. "Do you mind if I let you and Rilla have some alone time?" She asked Jimmy.

"Don't you want ice cream?" He asked her instead.

"I can get ice cream another day," Marianne told him.

"Are you going to get married?" Jimmy asked curiously. "That's what I hear at school when boys and girls spend time together, it means they are going to get married."

"Not quite," Marianne laughed. "Mr. Meredith and I are just friends, I am sure you have friends who are girls at school."

"Girls are gross," Jimmy made a face.

"You'll change your mind in a few years," Carl told him with a grin.

"Rilla is a girl," Marianne pointed out.

"Rilla is old though," Jimmy started innocently. "Can we go get ice cream now?"
"I don't know, I was just called old," Rilla teased him. "Go have fun you two," She told her friends.

"So how are you enjoying the island?" Carl asked as they headed towards the dunes after a quick trip to the general store.

"It's beautiful, the Blythes are gracious hosts," Marianne told him. "Was your family surprised?"

"They were," Carl confirmed.

"How long are you here for?" Marianne asked him curiously.

"A few weeks, not entirely sure," Carl told her truthfully. "I am awaiting news from a university about a study that they are putting together. The university is in Toronto, but the study is elsewhere."

"Well, if you do end up in Toronto, you should look me up," Marianne told him shyly.

"I'll keep that in mind," Carl replied. "I was wondering though if you would like to keep in contact. Correspond with each other?"

"That would be nice," Marianne agreed. "Life is very much up in the air, I am lucky to be age though and make my own decisions."

"What do you want to do?" Carl asked her earnestly.

"I'm not sure, my aunt thinks I should just find someone to marry," She sighed. "I may travel, I have a cousin in Winnipeg, maybe go see the West coast San Fransisco is supposed to be wonderful?"

"Do you want to get married?" Carl asked after a moment.

"I don't object to the idea, but love is a curious thing wouldn't you say?" Marianne replied boldly.

"I observe love in many forms," Carl replied. "Did you know that barn owl, while monogamous creatures. If they don't have enough owlets, they will separate. The interesting fact is that they won't see other owls until a length of time until it's final."

"So they are practical and considerate souls" Marianne laughed. "What else do you know?"

"Otters hold hands while sleeping in the river so they don't drift apart," Carl grinned. "Male penguins are said to give shiny rocks to potential spouses, in act of courtship. Cows have best friends."

"You are a walking encyclopedia aren't you?" Marianne teased.

"If you listen closely, goats can have accents," Carl grinned at her.

"Now that is a fib," Marianne gave him a look.

"I'm serious though, I have heard it," Carl told her earnestly, grinning sheepishly at her. "But yes romantic love is a curious thing." He said looking out into the water.

"Willa, I was telling dad about this place. I remember it being this enchanted valley but I don't know where it is."
"I used to take you down to an old valley behind Ingleside when you were young," Rilla looked down at him. Marvelling on how tall he was getting. "I am surprised you remember the place, my siblings called it's Rainbow Valley."

"Do you think we can go?" Jimmy asked.

"I don't see why not," Rilla smiled. "Though I think I ate too much ice cream." She rubbed her stomach. She didn't remember ever getting a stomach ache from ice cream.

"You barely ate any," Jimmy frowned.

"Well, I must be getting old," Rilla teased him. Frowning as she felt her stomach flip for the third time since living the store. She only prayed she could make it home before she got sick, as she picked up her pace. "Come along," she instructed him.

She called out to her parents when she arrived and found the house quiet. She told Jimmy to wait on the stairs as she went into her father's office. Ginger would settle her stomach, and she knew her father had candied ginger somewhere. Or even some Pepto Bismol to cure her stomach ache. She found some ginger and chewed on that for a moment, hoping it would help her.

"Come along," Rilla urged leading him around the house. She grasped his hand before going down the old path that brought them to Rainbow Valley. She took a deep breath of the moist woody smell of the valley.

She watched him run around, passing her new blooms of flowers when he found them. Relishing in the warmth of the afternoon sun as she watched him.

She was being carried when Rilla opened her eyes confused.

"What?" She muttered, her arm was stinging and when she tried to see why she heard her father speak up

"Stay still, you landed on your arm. I need to clean it," Her father told her.

Finally, he deposited her onto the examining table of his office. "You were out with Jimmy, according to him you suddenly stood up to go to him and you just crumpled. You fell on your arm and bounced your head on the ground." He told her as he collected the necessary items to clean up her arm.

"Is Jimmy all right?" Rilla asked. "When did you get home?"

"We just arrived when Jimmy came running up the house crying, saying that you fainted," Gilbert told her. "He'll be okay, your mother is feeding cookies as we speak. Though now I have some questions. Has this happened before?" He asked as he prodded her arm, she winced once or twice when he found a tender spot. He then tossed the bloody rag in the basin of water to soak. He sponged over the peroxide causing her to hiss as it hit her scrapes.

"What is that!" She said through her teeth.

"Hydrogen Peroxide, new antiseptic compound," Gilbert told her. "Thought you didn't answer my question," he reminded her that she wasn't off the hook.

"No," Rilla told him. "I was fine, then we went for ice cream and I suddenly felt ill. I found some ginger to calm my stomach. I just remember being overly warm. We were sitting down and I had
an idea and stood up quickly and my vision just swarmed."

He nodded and grabbed his blood pressure cuff and wrapping it around her arm. Motioning for her to be silent as he took it. "Well, you'll have a bruise or two, Your wrist might be sore for a day or two from falling on it as you did. Your blood pressure is a little low, which could account for the fainting. You haven't been eating much at meals," Gilbert told her, letting her know that he had noticed.

"Certain smells have been stronger lately," Rilla admitted as he helped her sit up. He smiled at her before plucking a leaf from her hair for her. "But I've been feeling relatively fine, a touch more tired but Marianne and I have been across the city most days. If I ever feel ill it's during the afternoon or evening and not the morning"

"Any other out of the normal things happen, any new aches or pains," He asked.

"Nothing out of the ordinary," Rilla blushed. Sure she was spilling out of her brassieres and they felt too tight to the point she had bought new ones. She kept telling herself that she had gained weight from all teacakes she eats during the week.

"Rilla," Her father gave her a look. "You fainted, your appetite is lower than usual, your sense of smell is heightened?"

"I don't want to get our hopes up," Rilla she said quietly. "If I don't think about it, we can't be disappointed."

"How many days?" Gilbert's face softened as he sat down in front of her. He heard second hand from his wife about how Rilla had been feeling. Especially when she was surrounded by brides who seemed to come back expecting.

"Ten," Rilla said quietly and watched her father nod his head

"Ten is fair few, over a week," Gilbert stated. "Answer me this, and maybe I can help you?"

Rilla only nodded.

"Your last cycle, was it normal? Was it lighter or early?" She shook her head as a negative he nodded and stood up grabbing his calendar. Doing quick math in his head. "Six weeks sound plausible?" She nodded again to him and at the point, her mother knocked on the door.

"Is everything all right?" Anne asked when her husband beckoned her in. "We don't have to drive to the hospital or anything?"

"She'll be fine, just some dehydration from the heat. She's all bandaged up now." Gilbert laid the calendar on the desk behind him. Patient confidentiality existed even within families. It was her news to tell after all, but it felt strange to say it out loud before she even told her husband. It was strange that her father knew before her husband. Even if he was a doctor, and it happened because she fainted.

"Let's get you some water, and some fresh clothing then?" Anne asked her daughter. "Reassure the tyke that you are alive and well?" Rilla nodded and slowly.

"Give it a few more days, but from what you told me the probability is high." He told her quietly "I do suggest going to the doctor in Kingsport for a more definite diagnosis."
Well, it's the beginning of a new beginning for these two! Ken and Rilla I mean of course! Though I do enjoy the response Carl got the last chapter!

Thank you all for the reviews and comments. I'm not sure how long this once a week chapter will be, but considering I think I am off work until July because of COVID...I might just finish this story before then!

Tina
The dessert plates were placed off to the side as Rilla nervously pushed the box towards him. She had wrapped it with striped paper, tied a box expertly around it before hiding it away so he couldn't find it. She had spent the week crocheting little booties and bonnet in a buttery yellow. All between managing her ever-growing nausea from him, and she was pretty sure he had no idea.

"It feels rather light," Ken grinned shaking the box. "A new tie?"

"Just open it," Rilla urged him.

Ken smiled and peeled away the paper and opened the box, which was filled with tissue paper. He pulled the first thing he felt, which hung around his index finger. He stared at them for a good moment. Looking at her with his mouth hanging open. He tried to piece together words as he looked at her and then the booties, over and over again. In the end, he stood up, pulling her close to him. She wouldn't tell anyone that they both cried that night.

Tears of joy, she would always remember how quickly his hand found its way to her stomach.

"How far along?" He asked.

"Seven weeks," Rilla told him.

"That's almost two months!" Ken sat up.

"It's calculated from my last period, not the day we conceived," Rilla explained. "but if it helps, that would make it about five weeks."

"How long have you known?" He asked her. "Your fall!"

"I suspected before going to Ingleside," Rilla told him truthfully. "I did fall in a rainbow valley but not because I was clumsy. I fainted in front of Jimmy, who ran to get my dad."

"So your father knows?" Ken murmured.

"He helped hammer out a few details. He told me to make an appointment in Kingsport." Rilla nodded. "Mother I don't think suspects anything."

"You're errand that you did on Wednesday?" Ken asked her. She had popped in at the office to say hello that day.

Rilla nodded. "I wanted to be sure before I said anything to you. Everything seems to be fine, he gave me a mid to late January due date."

"January, a winter baby," Ken smiled, "This is the best gift anyone has ever given me."

"I'm sorry it took so long," Rilla said quietly.

"Never say that, what's eight months?" Ken reassured her. "For all we know, it could have been me." He reminds her. "I can't wait to tell my parents." He mused.

"Just parents though," Rilla stressed. "Until things pass a certain mark, or I begin to show."

"Of course," Ken agreed solemnly but still had a huge grin on his face.
They were still on cloud nine as they climbed into bed that night. He grinned as wiggled down on the bed kneeling with her legs between his. Fiddling with the step in she wore for a moment. He managed to undo it and push it upwards until he could see the pale skin of her stomach. "You don't know me yet, but I'm your daddy," Ken said holding her hips in his hand as he leaned in to kiss just below her navel.

"Come back here, you silly man," Rilla laughed, as he crawled over her trying to kiss her.

"Is this okay?" Ken sat back suddenly.

"Completely, just watch the bubs. They are overly sensitive" Rilla warned him, which made him cock his head to look at them.

"Watch the tits got it, wait," Ken said as he took a closer look at them. "They're bigger!" He exclaimed.

"That fact that you haven't noticed is surprising," Rilla informed him with a laughed as he wrapped her arms around his neck.

Their life was changing, early next year it would be entirely different. She knew what it took, but the whole family dynamic would change.

She had sent her last packet at the beginning of May. Now come June they had sent her standings and achieved credits. Notes and what courses they might want to look into the next semester. She could fit another semester before the baby came.

Then came the phone calls to their parents, Ken beaming as he listened to his mother. Who was telling him about Persis who has taken to motherhood like any society woman? A nanny to do all the hard work.

"Actually Mom, we called for a reason," Ken told her.

"Are you coming for a visit?" Leslie asked.

"I doubt that," Owen said beside her. "He's still in the first year of setting up shop."

"Of course," Leslie concurred as well. "Maybe Christmas though?"

"I don't think Christmas is going to work either, but if you want to come out and stay for a few weeks. It might be worth your while," Ken told them. "I believe the stork will be arriving mid to late January."

"I suppose we can come again like last year," Leslie hummed. "I don't think we have been invited anywhere. Persis says Winnipeg in winter is never where anyone wants to be."

"Leslie, did you even listen to our son?" Owen spoke up.

"Of course! Christmas and New Years with them in Kingsport." Leslie told her husband who was still laughing. "But a month-long visit? Ken, surely the stork—oh my heavens the stork!"

Ken laughed has it finally sunk in for his mother, which Rilla added into as she listened in.

"Oh my dear how are you doing well I hope? How far?" Leslie rattled off.

"Almost eight weeks, so it is still early," Rilla told her. "I am doing all right I suppose. It's no walk in the park."
"It never is, eight weeks, yes still quite early to tell beyond the family." Leslie agreed with her. "Oh a grandbaby, have you told your parents yet?"

"They weren't home when we called, so later tonight," Rilla told her.

"Oh, this is so exciting, of course, if you want us out there we will plan our holiday around that time. Can't have you skipping all over the country in those last few weeks. If you have any questions, you can always write, call whenever. I know your mother and father will be resourceful for you, but if you have any questions I am here."

"I will remember that," Rilla told her sincerely.

It was later that night when the telephone rang, Rilla looked up from her spot on the chaise when Ken went to answer it. "Give me one moment, she's in the living room," Ken said as he dragged the phone cords over to her spot.

"I heard that you called," Anne spoke into the receiver.

"I did," Rilla confirmed as she moved her legs so that Ken could sit down next to her. "Is dad around?"

"He's out at the moment," Anne told her. "But we have some news to relay Nan had her baby early yesterday morning."

"Did she?" Rilla asked rather happily. She knew Nan had been counting down the days. "What did she have?"

"A little girl, Geraldine Roseanne" Anne told her proudly. "Nan did wonderfully, not too long of labour."

"Geraldine is very pretty of a name. Along with Roseanne, very much an ode to yours and Rosemary," Rilla stated. "Though they can't call her Gerri, that would be too confusing. I wonder what her nickname will be"

"I am not entirely sure, but I am tickled pink about her name," Anne pondered for a moment. "I suppose we will find out soon enough. But I can assume you called with a purpose?"

"Yes, I did. I did call with a purpose" Rilla stated, slightly rambling as she did. She snuggled into Ken, who wrapped his arm around her. She didn't think it would be this nerve-wracking, after all, it's not like her mother would be surprised. She knew they had been trying. Maybe go the Christmas route as Ken did? "Well, umm." Rilla bit her lip, chewing on it for a moment. She was about to speak when she heard the sound of the door opening.

"Oh look your father just walked in," Anne stated into the receiver. "Darling, Rilla is on the phone!" She called out.

"I'll be right there," she heard her father replied back. She could hear her mother ask her father how his appointment went, as she waited for him to wash his hands upon arriving home.

Rilla looked up at Ken, brow furrowed. "I don't know what to say," she covered the receiver. "You made it sound so easy!" She whispered to Ken.

"Your father already knows," Ken pointed out quietly.
"That doesn't help much," Rilla stressed as she heard her mother uncover the phone.

"Hello Rilla," she heard her father speak up into the receiver.

"Hi Dad," Rilla said taking a deep breath. "I hope you had a good day." She told him.

"Well everyone is alive and well, your Mother told you the news?" Gilbert asked her.

"She did," Rilla assured him. "Happy news, actually some happy news is why I am calling," She began. "Mom, I was wondering if you still have that trunk full of baby clothing up in the attic that you were saving."

"I knew it!" Her mother exclaimed to her father. "I knew you hiding something from me Gilbert."
Rilla looked up at Ken who chuckled and kissed her hair at his mother in law antics.

"Mom!" Rilla raised her voice. "Don't go blaming him, you know he can't talk about patients."

"Right, I'm sorry, oh this is lovely news." Anne gushed. "Of course I will find whatever I had stored away for you."

"Congratulations to you both, I can hear Ken next you chuckling over my wife," Gil told spoke. "Ken, be prepared for an interesting few months."

"I can only imagine, but promise to be beside her every step of the way," Ken spoke up. "We are over the moon, we want you and my parents to be the first too officially know."

"It's very sweet of you," Anne told them. "Oh more grandbabies, do we have an idea of the due date?"

"Mid-to-Late January," Rilla told her mother. "Still very early." She added on but she knew her parents wouldn't say a word.

"Of course, call if you ever need anything sweetheart. Questions, doctors know a bit, but nothing will compare to a woman's knowledge." Anne told her. A small dig at her husband career.

"Of course," Rilla agreed as she looked up at Ken and kissed the bottom of his jaw. "But we should let you go, shouldn't hold the telephone at Ingleside."

"Call if you need anything," Gilbert told them both gruffly.

"We love you both," Anne added.

"Love you as well," Rilla said for both of them. She reached down and hung up the receiver before leaning back into Ken one more.

It was like a turning of the tide. How she went from feeling somewhat ill and managing her days to unable to eat. Ken had left for work as Mrs. Clarke set upon tidying the kitchen from breakfast. It happened so gradually that she couldn't remember not feeling sick. By the second week, she sat at the table after she said goodbye to Ken. She looked at Mrs. Clarke for a moment before speaking up.

"I just want you to know, though I am sure you have picked up on it already," Rilla rambled on. "I'm expecting. If I randomly run toward the bathroom, it is not your cooking, I just seem to be sensitive to everything lately." Rilla told her.
"Don't worry Mrs. Ford, your secret is safe with me," Gloria told her with a nod of her head. "But I will keep too plainer recipes for you to see if that will help you."

Rilla smiled and looked at the clock. "I think I am going to go lie down if the telephone rings. Please just take a message."

"Of course," Mrs. Clarke nodded her head. "I do plan on washing the floors today, so it shouldn't be loud for you."

Rilla just nodded and slowly stood up and trudged her way upstairs. Still, in her nightgown and robe, she planted herself into her bed. She had never felt so tired in her life, except maybe when she had been sick. On her nightstand was every book Rilla could find about preparing for motherhood. They told her that the sickness would eventually fade away. It was only a few weeks, after all, another month or so. Then she would enter the second trimester when everything grew, changed overnight. It told her to eat small meals, protein, drink milk, rest when she felt unwell.

Ken had a constant look of worry on his face when he left for work, or in the evenings. Talking quietly to Mrs. Clarke about how Rilla faired that day. Worrying about when Mrs. Clarke had her days off. Who couldn't adjust her hours to work more until her sister found help with the children during the summer?

He never felt more frustrated with the doctor when they went to make sure Rilla was healthy. Only to have the doctor pat her hand sympathetically and said it would soon pass. It was all part of pregnancy, a woman's plight for eating the apple. It was all part of a healthy pregnancy, and she was only nearing ten weeks.

It was a particularly bad day when she heard the front door open. Had Ken come home early? Did he forget something?

Instead, she heard the footsteps, which stopped at the bathroom door.

"What are you doing here?" She looked up from her spot on the floor confused at why her mother was in her house.

"Ken called me yesterday," Anne told her as she lowered herself nearer to her daughter. "Don't give me that look, he's been worried. He says you're often sick and I remember those days."

"Often sick?" Rilla groaned hoarsely. "I'm sick twelve hours of the day. I've tried every trick in the book and I end up here."

"It's never fun, I know but it will be worth it." Anne patted her leg.

"How did you get here?" Rilla asked. "It's the morning."

"It's nearing 2 o'clock," Anne told her. "He called yesterday from the office. I caught the first train to the ferry." She repeated herself to her daughter.

"But Nan!" Rilla said as she brought herself up into a sitting position. Ultimately regretting her decision as she scrambled for the toilet. She took a small comfort that her mother held her hair back for her.

"Nan and little Geraldine are safe and sound. Rosemary has been going over and she has plenty of help." Anne told her. "You and the other hand, need me more. So why are you alone today?"

"It's Gloria's day off," Rilla shrugged taking the glass of water her mother handed her. Ken had
voiced his worry leaving her home alone days previous. She had sent him on his way as she munched on a piece of dry toast. "Dad's not here is he?"

"No, he had patients he couldn't leave," Anne told her. "Not that he would be much help, he's like any other doctor in this aspect. While they try to be helpful, they never truly understand what it is like. There is not much even he can do even for his family."

"Was it ever this bad for you?"

"I had my moments," Anne said thinking back. She always would say that her labour with tougher than any pregnancy she ever had, but Rilla didn't need to hear that. "Why don't we put on some clean clothes, we can go sit out on the veranda and have some tea?"

Rilla took a moment, judging her bodily reaction to standing up before nodding. She brushed her teeth quietly and rinsed out her mouth. She held onto her mother as she slowly made it across the hall. Her mother went through her closet finding a simple house dress. Rilla quietly untied her robe and let her mother pull on the dress over her head. Slippers were put on her feet and her hair brushed and braided. Sitting for another moment before they carefully went down the stairs.

They were enjoying the sunshine when Ken came up the driveway. "Anne, I see you arrived," he kissed her cheek as a son would.

"Indeed," Anne nodded her head as Ken sat down next to his wife. Pale as she nibbled on soda crackers and ginger ale.

"How are we doing today?" He asked quietly.

"Same as usual," Rilla told him quietly. "Sick, dizzy, tired."

"The doctor says it will pass soon enough," Ken tried to encourage her. "Do you think you can manage anything tonight? I can make you some peanut butter toast again?" Rilla merely nodded. Peanut butter the few things she could stomach in small amounts. "We have some leftover chicken, I can pull together a chicken pie for us?" He looked towards his mother in law. "Gloria left some crust in the icebox for us."

"How about you sit with Rilla and I throw together dinner for us," Anne told him. "Don't look at me like that Rilla. I can make a pot pie."

"It's fine Anne, you just got here. Relax and rest." Ken told her as he stood up and caressed Rilla's slim shoulder.

Dinner was a quiet affair, Rilla munching lightly on her toast while the others at their pot pie.

"Nan and Jerry asked me to send this along," Anne told them as she passed over the birth announcement. The baby favoured Nan, but had jet black hair. Underneath someone had written Geraldine Roseanne Meredith in cursive letters.

"She looks like Nan, that is for sure," Kenneth commented. "A bit of Jerry I suppose."

"Babies change a great deal," Anne told him. "Until their hair fully grew in and their eye colours changed. Nan and Di were almost identical. Rilla on the other hand pretty much looks the same. Slightly darker hair, but she has always been a good mix of Gilbert and me." Anne smiled at daughter.

"I—," Rilla started before she stood up quickly and dashed to the nearest bathroom.
"I'll go check on her," Anne started.

"Sit, I'll go," Ken stood up. "Finish dinner, don't wait for us."

"If you are sure?" She asked him. This was the reason she was here after all.

"Eat," Ken smiled at her before leaving the kitchen to follow his wife.

"Rilla's resting upstairs," Ken told her as he found her doing the dishes when he came back.

"When you told me she was ill, I didn't expect it to be this bad," Anne told him truthfully. "How long has this been going on?"

"The past two weeks, it's only gradually gotten worse," Ken said leaning against the counter, with the dishtowel in his hand, wiped the plate dry that she passed him.

"I'm going to call Gilbert and ask him if he knows of anything that can potentially help," Anne told him.

"Of course, the phone is in the living room." He told her. "Thank you for coming."

"Any time Kenneth," Anne smiled at him. "I've been there for all of my girls during these times."

"I had Mrs. Clarke set up the spare room for you," Ken told her. "It looks over the small side garden."

"Thank you, Kenneth, you have grown into a fine man," Anne told him.

"Well, I did just turn thirty" Ken point out with a grin.

"Oh, hush don't remind me of how old I am getting," Anne tutted him as she rang out the dishrag and hung it to dry.

"You must be Mrs. Clarke," Anne said cheerfully as she sat in the kitchen as the housekeeper came through the side door. Drinking a cup of tea in the morning sunlight as there were footsteps above them.

"Pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Blythe," Gloria let it roll off her tongue in her accent. "Do we know how Mrs. Ford is feeling this morning?"

"Same as usual, from what Kenneth told me," Anne told her. "Goes to bed feeling ill, wakes up feeling ill."

Mrs. Clarke nodded sympathetically as she set up to make some breakfast. "Is there anything that you wish for breakfast?"

"Anything you usually make for them is fine," Anne told her. "I was speaking to my husband who is a doctor. He mentioned that bright colourful fruit may help Rilla, do you know if the grocers have any bananas?"

"The grocers near the dock generally have the freshest fruit," Mrs. Clarke told her. "I can get one of my nieces who live nearby to pick up some and run some over for us?"

"Is that possible?" Anne asked.
"My brother has a telephone in his shop, he can relay the message. They know where I work," Mrs. Clarke explained.

"Of course, anything is worth a try at this point," Anne told her. "I'll grab my purse."

"Why do you need your purse?" Ken asked coming into the kitchen with his shirt sleeves still undone, and collarless.

"Mrs. Blythe was asking about banana's, I was telling her that I can get Trudy to bring some over." Mrs. Clarke told him.

"When I was speaking to Gilbert, he mentioned that sometimes the vitamins in fruit. Especially banana's can be beneficial to help nausea," Anne explained.

"Here then," Ken said digging into his pocket and placing some coins on the counter. "That should be enough, and for her trouble. Rilla is going to stay in bed for the morning, she munching on crackers at the moment."

"Breakfast on the go?" Mrs. Clarke asked him.

"Please if you can, you don't mind if I head off early?" He turned to Anne.

"Go, we'll hold down the fort," Anne told him. "If anything changes we will call." She told him.

"The telephone number to my office is by the phone, call anytime," Ken told her. "I'll tell Margaret, that if you call to just put your through."

"How kind of you Kenneth?" Anne teased him.

"Mrs. Blythe is eggs and toast all right for breakfast?" Mrs. Clarke looked at her.

"Sounds wonderful," Anne told her, which Mrs. Clarke nodded too. "Come here Ken, I'll button your collar for you," Anne told him as he fiddled with his starched collar.

Meanwhile in Paris

"Shirley, où vas-to?" Lillian asked as he held onto her arm, Amelie in tow holding onto a camera. Which looked like the direction of the one and the only place they had already visited before? Shirley, voici Notre Dame. Pourquoi sommes nous ici?

"It's a surprise Lily," Shirley grinned as he skipped up the steps. Dressed in one of his nicer suits. Amelie had suggested wearing one of her prettier dresses for photo's of course. One that that still miraculously fit her.

He held her hand as they walked inside. A postulate smiling at them, "Le père vous attend," she told them.

"Shirley qu'est-ce qui se passe? Lillian asked him.

He said nothing as he passed her clipped newspaper, dated last May 17th, 1923 in Montreal. The headline said all that was needed to know.

Notorious Montreal Gangster, Yannick Gagnon hanged after being found guilty for killing a guard after trying to escape.
"I know what it would mean to you, to be married in a church," Shirley said quietly. "We're in this together, forever and always. Plus maybe this little one can be baptized now. I mean we won't tell Susan that, but what she doesn't know won't hurt her," Shirley cracked a small joke. Their leaving made his relationship with the woman even more strained. She wrote of course, but things would never be the same.

In the end the happy couple stood in front of the altar. Stained glass windows in the background holding hands. A long robed priest holding a bible in his hands, long robes that spoke with a stoic face. Shirley refused to tell her how he managed it, but she assumed a few white lies. Of course their marriage certificate from earlier in the year helped greatly. Along with some fairly good French on his part. It was funny how they spoke tended to speak their own mix of French and English, even while living in France.

A photograph made its way to Ingleside and Kingsport with the date written on the back of it

Except on the Ingleside one they added.

*P.S expected arrival in October, possibly near Halloween.*

Translations.

Shirley where are we going,

Shirley, this is Notre dame. Why are we here?

Shirley, what is going on?

Quarantine/social distancing Day- I don't know anymore. Re learned how to ride a bike, and learned how aggravating paint by number are to do. I also found out it's impossible to make a new corset without making a proper period matching Chemise.

Side note. I know its practically impossible to get married at Notre Dame, but let's just go with it! It was a moment that was too romantic to change.

Hope everyone is well! Thank you all for the kind reviews, you are all amazing. Stay safe out there!

Tina.
Chapter 38-Interlude #1

This is a small story of Marianne and Carl. It has little meaning to the main story, but I wrote it anyway because it wouldn't leave me alone.

These won't be frequent, it will be more random and depends on the main story of how these will go.

Interlude #1

July 1923

"Mary?" Carl asked as they sat on a bench in one of the many green spaces of Toronto. A quiet park with few people wandering so close to noon.

"Hmm yes," Marianne replied as she rested her head on his shoulder.

"Do you want me to go?" Carl asked her.

"What do you mean?" Marianne asked him.

"I don't have to go on this trip," Carl stated. "I can stay here, we can explore this more?" He squeezed her hand as he caressed the back of it. He had left the Island early, excusing himself on the premise of putting some affairs in order. So he could be ready for his expedition. He had sent a telegraph to her, mentioning his arrival time. not expecting her to be there when he stepped off the train. For some reason, they were both drawn to something, something they couldn't figure out. So they sought to figure it out, Carl renting a room, and spending his spare hours of the day with Marianne. Hours exploring the city, eating from street carts. They visited the university's library to look up books about insects and wildlife..

Yet with each passing day, it was weighing down on him. Wondering if it would last, was it right to ask so much of her. Infatuation, he'd been infatuated before. It never ended well, reminding himself of his penance. His punishment for thinking such things when he got carried away with his thoughts.

"As much as I would love that," Marianne started. "You need to go, I don't want you to back out of your contract. I don't want you to regret not going."

"How about you? You won't resent me for leaving?" Carl asked her.

"It's six months," Marianne told him. "I can survive six months on letters. I am sure even a preacher's son can make my heart swoon in the written word."

"Mary?" Carl asked once more

"Hmm yes," Marianne replied.

"I need to tell you something," Carl said quietly. "I don't want to lead you on, I don't want to lie to
"What is it?" Mary asked him.

"I'm twenty-five and haven't thought about settling down. I've always found myself somewhat confused." He said quietly.

"Everyone confused at some point in time," Marianne told him trying to reassure him.

"It's not that," Carl told her. "You are so pretty," he said under his breath. Even with his one eye, he could see that plain as day.

"Thank you," Marianne blushed, her dark hair shimmering in the sunlight.

"It's been a while since I felt this way about a woman," Carl said carefully. "I thought for a while maybe I wasn't into fairer sex at all," Carl stated.

"Is that why you stay away from your family?" Marianne asked him and he nodded.

"It's easier to live with myself if I don't have to be a preacher's son," Carl admitted. "Look if you think this is too much to swallow, too strange. I understand, I just didn't want to leave here without telling you the truth. You can ignore my letter when I reach the badlands." Carl told her.

"Were any of those feelings, acted upon?" Marianne asked after a short silence. Her voice unsteady with all the thoughts going through her mind. She knew that men and even women could be backwards as such. Hiding away in the shadows, like tortured souls.

"There was someone in college once, we were drunk when I kissed—," he trailed off on the pronouns. "I don't think they remembered and ever since then, well I asked for forgiveness for my sins ever since."

"You are extremely brave and I can admire your honesty," Marianne told him. Men were thrown in prison daily for the same reason he just admitted. Yet he was being honest and baring his soul to her. "If we're speaking from the heart, then maybe you should know something about my past." She told him quietly.

"Only if you wish to tell me," Carl told her, not wanting to pressure her. To him, there was no need to level the playing field. He didn't tell her, wanting to know her skeletons that hung in her closet.

"You told me your secret, I should be able to tell you mine," Marianne shook her head. "You see when I was fifteen, I only had my father around. I grew into womanhood without much knowledge of many things," she told him starting off her own story. "I was naive and silly, I had this infatuation with this neighbourhood boy. When he left for war, he asked for something to remember me by, promising to come back and marry me." She paused for a moment.

"I was foolish for believing him. I got in trouble and didn't know what to do, so I wrote my Aunt who was furious with me. In the end, she found me a doctor, the most humiliating, painful experience of my life. I look back and wonder how I am even alive. I don't even know if hindered any chance of children and I may never, I'm not sure if I want to know." She told him truthfully.

"You had a—," Carl said not even able to say the word. "Why not just give the baby up?" How many whispers he heard of young girls had he seen put up babies for adoption. Leaving them at churches or orphanages?

"I didn't have a choice, my aunt thought it was best. Easier to hide?" Marianne explained quietly.
"After the whole ordeal, she stayed with us saying I needed a motherly influence in my life. Papa never thought twice about it, and she never told him, but she always reminded me of my sins. I took years for her to alone me out of the house without a chaperone, and by years I mean until I came of age. So you can see, at the end of the day, we all sin," Marianne told him.

"If we still feel the same in six months," Carl began. "When I come back to Toronto, we can decide how we want things to go. Though I do have one request," he asked her.

"What is that?" Marianne asked him.

"Can I kiss you?" He asked nervously and chewed his lip as he waited for her response.

Is it totally accurate that Carl would out himself? Most likely not but battling for two days as I wrote this. Then rewrote it with another plot, to only go back to this one. I told myself I have to go with my gut.

Then I tried to level the playing field, a secret for a secret? Is it need, most likely not, but I felt that Marianne needed to sure that he could trust with such information.

Who is the man Carl kissed? We may never know, but you can put anyone you want in that box haha.

Tina
"You look positively green," Nan stated as she looked at her sister opened the door. It was a fair bit of opposites happening. Nan was neatly put together. Dressed in sensible, but pretty dress and her hair was done up. While in her arms was an infant that was dressed in a frilly gown, that happily looked around in her mother's arms. While Rilla was still in her housecoat and slippers with a braid in her hair.

"What are you doing here?" Rilla asked confused as she wrapped her housecoat around her.

"I called last week and said Jerry and I would be in town and you told me to stop by?" Nan raised an eyebrow. "But if you are not feeling well—,"

"It will pass," Rilla sighed and held open the door. "Life doesn't stop because I'm sick all the time. Just have to make do when I am feeling well."

"Has it been that bad?" Nan asked sitting down as she repositioned her daughter on her lap. Smiling as Rilla watched in some strange new fascination as the baby looked at her auntie. "Do you want to say hello to your Auntie Rilla?" She said in a high voice, voices that all mothers make even when the baby talk is discouraged.

"She is very beautiful," Rilla commented.

"Thank you," Nan beamed. "She did so well on her first ferry across the channel and her first train ride. She had a big day yesterday. Didn't we Deen?"

"Is that what we are calling her? Deena?" Rilla asked, still starring at the infant who was starring back at her. Would her own have dark hair like Ken?

"It is, two Jerry's would be much too confusing," Nan laughed nodding her head. "Though how have you been. Mother coming here to see you. It made me wonder and when she came back and evaded any questions anyone asked. I could only assume, much like Faith and Di." Nan said to her.

"So the woman of the family know?" Rilla concluded. "Well, the exhaustion, the sickness, the soreness, It's not exactly a walk in the park." Rilla shrugged, "I am sure you know all about it."

"I don't think I ever felt how you look," Nan shook her head. "Are you doing any better?"

"I've been improving, but I mostly live off bananas, peanut butter and crackers. Mrs. Clarke makes a fair amount of ginger of tea." Rilla explained to her sister. "Some of the ladies stopped by a few times with a basket and to check-in. At this points the worst kept secret. Mostly since I can't keep it a secret when I'm this ill, because if I try they think I am dying or something." Rilla sighed. "I just try to invade their questions at this point."

"Do you want some tea?" I'm sorry, I'm a terrible hostess these days?" Rilla offered.

"I'm fine right now," Nan shook her head. "Though, may I use your bathroom?"

Rilla nodded and looked around for a moment. "Down the hall to your right…Pass her to me," She
sighed when Nan realized she had nowhere to set her down safely. "I promise not to be sick on her." She joked half-heartedly as Nan passed over the infant.

Rilla cradled the infant carefully. "You're extremely lucky you are cute," she told the infant. Who looked up at her with big dark curious eyes, with a tongue poking out of her rosebud mouth.

"Then again, your mother was considered a beauty of Glen while in school. Though remember, pretty is as pretty does," She said spoke to the infant in a serious tone. "One day when you're older you are going to realize that you belong to one crazy large family. Though, if you're lucky someone will show you were your grandfather hides the lollipops in his office."

"It will be a long while before she eating any sort of sugar," Nan commented as she came back in the room.

"So what brings you to Kingsport?" Rilla asked as Nan sat down. Ultimately deciding that until her sister gave back her child, she wouldn't ask.

"Jerry wanted to draw up a will with everything changing," Nan explained. "He's meeting Tim at the office."

"How is Una?" Rilla asked she hadn't seen much of her old friend. She had been recovering when they had gotten married. Rilla felt awful but has sent a nice gift in their place when she recovered. There was no offence taken, of course, she had been deathly ill after all. They occasionally ran into each other. It was hard not in Kingsport while shopping or running errands but it was quick hello, nice to see you. I hope you are well, far gone from the tea parties and cake they used to have.

"She's good," Nan told her. "She's counting down days," Nan smiled.

"I heard through the grapevine that she was expecting," Rilla said quietly. "We don't see each other much truthfully."

"It's all right to grow apart," Nan told her kindly as she saw her sister's face go pale. She quickly reached for the baby so Rilla could race for the washroom.

She came back a few minutes later, looking paler than before. "I should know better," Rilla sighed. "The more I try to ignore it the worse it becomes." She sat down on the couch with a groaning sigh. "I'm sorry I'm not much company."

"It's all right," Nan reassured her. "It's not like you can help such things."

"Mrs. Ford, are you all right?" Mrs. Clarke asked coming into the living room, "I was outside tending to some of the laundries.

"I am all right," Rilla reassured her, "Nan, this is Mrs. Clarke, Gloria this is my sister Nan." Rilla introduced them.

"Can get you any refreshments?" Mrs. Clarke went straight into business mode, while she admired the infant from away. "She is precious." She stated before busting out of the room to gather a try for them.

"Thank you," Nan blushed. "I think some water perhaps?" Nan told her with a smile as Deena opened her mouth let out a small grunting cry.

"Hungry?" Rilla asked, and Nan nodded. "Ken's not home for a while, so nurse away without feeling awkward. Plus it's not like I haven't seen your breasts before, we shared a room before."
"They aren't exactly the same anymore," Nan laughed as she settled her daughter into nursing.
"Thank you," she smiled to Mrs. Clarke who put a glass of cool water on a coaster next to her.
Along with a plate of arrowroot cookies and some ginger tea that had been iced.

"I used to complain about needing improvement, but it's not what it's cracked up to be I've learned.
I had to let out some of my dresses just so they would lie normally on me." Rilla curled herself up
on her chaise. "Ken likes them, but it's not like he's allowed to touch them anyway most of the
time. Who wants to start anything when you can vomit at a moment's notice."

Nan snorted in an unladylike way. "It might turn around," Nan told her slyly.

"I don't see that happening any time soon," Rilla told her as she reached for a biscuit and nibbled
on it. "So how was it?" Rilla asked her curiously. "Mom said that it wasn't long and wouldn't say
much more, and it's not something I would ask in a letter. When I wrote to you knowing that you
wouldn't be near the telephone for the first week or on the telephone."

"Mom is a wonderful help when it comes to pregnancy," Nan started. "When it comes to labour
she tends to glaze over the details. Rosemary gave me more knowledge than mom believes it or
not."

Rilla's eyes widened as she nodded her head at the revelation. She nibbled on her biscuit as her
sister continued.

"Labour is everything the name suggests. Long, tiring, painful," Nan told her. "But she was worth
every minute of it," Nan said.

"I wonder why Mother doesn't say much about it?" Rilla mused.

"Well, you know about Joy," Nan said quietly and Rilla nodded. "Mom never had an easy time
with labour. I think part of it is not wanting to remember, and possibly being able to remember.
Jem and Walter came easily for her, but Di and I, I think at one point they chloroformed her to just
give her some rest." Nan explained the small amount her mother had told her. "Di and I were too
young to remember Shirley being born, even then much like your birth we were sent off to
Avonlea. Jem and Walter were at Green Gables, Di and I spent our days with Aunt Diana and Dora.
I learned later on that we were there for weeks as mom recovered from it.

"Jem told me that before," Rilla said quietly. "He said he was angry that I had been born after
mom's episode with Shirley."

"We didn't understand truly, we knew the stork was coming and that we were going to go have
another visit in Avonlea. But Jem was older, he would remember or know more than the rest of
us." Nan explained. "Then were sent home expectedly early. Much to our delight. Di and I were so
happy to have a sister," Nan smiled as she looked down at her daughter lovingly for a moment.

Rilla smiled and waiting patiently for her sister to continue.

"In essence, labour will rid you any modesty. The nurses did a fair amount of the work. Faith was
there, I think if it was legal. She could have been a midwife since she's the one that practically
delivered Deena." Nan went one. "The doctor was in and out for most the night, he was the one
who stitched me up when it was all said and done. "Mother though, once in the moment of it all.
She's someone you want with you during that time." Nan told her. "I don't think I would have
gotten through it all without her."

Rilla's face went white in her head she knew the mechanics of it. How a baby and her body were
two different sizes, but stitches! "Stitches?"

"You asked," Nan laughed at her sister's face. "Really, in the end, it will all be worth it. Read enough so you know that you are prepared, but don't overthink it. Our bodies know what to do, do forget that."

Rilla nodded. "It's all rather frightening sometimes." She admitted. "All the uncertainties of it?"

"You'll be all right," Nan told her. "Things have changed drastically in the thirty-plus years since mom and dad had Joy. Are you planning on labouring in the hospital?" Nan asked her.

"We're not entirely sure, Ken thinks it might be best," Rilla told her sister. "I think I'd rather be here at home if I can be." She said as she tried to suppress a yawn.

"If you need a nap, I will join you?" Nan told her earnestly as she fixed her blouse. Next, she grabbed the flannel blanket beside her so she could burp her daughter.

"Then I think it's settled," Rilla told her. "We can make use of the spare bedroom. "Sleep when the baby sleeps," she recalled her old Morgan book.

"A sound piece of advice." Nan agreed as she got up slowly and paced for a moment as she waited for her daughter to pass whatever wind she had in her. After a quick nappy change that they left soaking in a pail that Gloria found for them.

It was after they settled into the guest bed. Rilla remembered those nights when Jimmy would cry until she left him to sleep in her bed. Though unlike him who like to babble, this one seemed to be content to just drift off in her swaddling. Both Rilla and Nan laid on top of the blankets. It was too warm of a day to bother with any sort of covering. They talked quietly until others drifted off to sleep.

Ken had run into Jerry on his way from work, and when they couldn't find the women they went to check the back yard.

"The ladies are resting," Mrs. Clarke told them as she folded the curtains that she had washed in the basket.

Ken thanked her and led Jerry to the small spare room that was off the kitchen and smiled and let Jerry look in. Two women sprawled out on the bed, the baby between them happily cooing and trying to eat her feet.

Jerry carefully scooped up his daughter and left the women to sleep a little longer. He sniffed her and wrinkled his nose. "I think someone needs a nappy change," he commented as he went for the bag that Nan had packed.

"Do you need help?" Mrs. Clarke asked hovering in the doorway of the kitchen.

"Just a warm cloth if you can?" He asked her, and a few minutes later the baby was freshly changed. "I'm not sure how long we have until she gets hungry again, do you want to hold her?" Jerry asked Ken.

"Of course," Ken accepted the offer. "I'm going to need all the practice I can get," he said not thinking about his words. Jerry raised an eyebrow but said nothing. Anne had been rather tight-lipped about her time in Kingsport, but if one looked at the whole picture. It was rather a dead give away.
"She likes you," Jerry commented as he watched Ken bounce on his lightly around the room. "I mean she enjoys women more than anyone else, but she's not screaming bloody murder being held by you."

"There a story behind that?" Ken asked chuckling as he made a face at the infant.

"She does not like Jem for some reason," Jerry grinned. "We like to joke its the hair, or his beard he refuses to shave. You're good with her," Jerry told him.

"Thank you," Ken told him. "Oh! Do you like that?" He asked the small squeak that came from the infant. "Do you want some music? Do you want to dance?" He asked as he freed one hand and turned on the radio. "Is that what you wanted?" He said in a sing-song voice.

"Heavens forbid, you have a daughter of your own," Jerry told him chuckling. "She will have you wrapped around her finger."

"If she is anything like Rilla, most likely. I may need a larger house for all her clothing." Ken said agreed with him.

Rilla woke up to the sound of the radio, she bolted up confused. "The baby!" She exclaimed. "Nan!

"Jerry has her," Nan muttered in her half-sleep. "He came in not long ago, I thought we could have another moment of sleep."

"You have always been the smart one," Rilla mumbled pushing back her hair. "I am going to sneak upstairs and put on a fresh dress if Jerry is here," Rilla told her.

"All right then," Nan waved her off. "I'm going to get up in a minute and freshen up"

Rilla nodded and carefully crept down the hall and up the staircase. She fixed her hair and changed into a simple loose dress. She was still pale, and tired looking and at sixteen weeks She was just beginning to notice the slight curve of her stomach. One that was still easily hidden underneath her loose dress. Yet it seemed much more pronounced this afternoon, making her feel even more out of touch with her body. It wasn't just hers anymore, she was sharing it. The nurses told her it wouldn't be much longer to feel it moving around. The quickening, they called it.

The men didn't see her leaning in the archway of the living room. Watching with a small smile as Ken pretended to dance with his niece. He would make a wonderful father, there was little doubt in that.

"You are looking very well today," Ken said when he noticed her.

"Well, naps do wonders for a not so good morning," Rilla told him. He nodded, happy that things have been slowly easing for her, but given what the doctor told them. She may have good days and bad days up until she had the baby.

"Hello Jerry," Rilla greeted him, kissing him on the cheek lightly.

"Hello Rilla," Jerry smiled. "Nan is just freshening up in the bathroom," he told her as she settled down in her chair.

"Where are you staying tonight?" Ken asked.
"We have a hotel next to the train station, we're going to catch the early train tomorrow morning," Jerry explained.

"You could have stayed here," Ken told him as he passed the infant back to her father as she began to fuss.

"We could have, but this one doesn't sleep much," Jerry explained. "It is much easier than imposing on the generosity of you two. Plus they have cots for the little one as well."

"Well, you are always welcome," Rilla told him. "Will you stay for dinner at least? I believe Mrs. Clarke was making chicken and accompaniments?" She asked as Nan came into the living room and took the fussing baby from her husband.

"As long as we aren't imposing?" Nan told them as she settled her the infant and draped the receiving blanket over her one shoulder.

"You're not," Ken told them, "I will let Gloria know about our plans. We told her when you called last week, she said she would be prepared."

"So have you heard from Carl lately?" Rilla asked Jerry as Ken walked away.

"We got a letter short while ago, he's out west again," Jerry told her. "Out in the badlands. I believe he spent a few weeks in Toronto."

Rilla nodded, Marianne had written that Carl had been in Toronto. She didn't say much other then they had spent some more time together. By the time Rilla had received the next letter, he had caught the train out west once more. Rilla was curious but didn't push for information.

"I worry about him," Nan spoke up. "Faith does too, he seemed to like your friend but he has no interest at all in settling down. I mean there was the rumour once that he was a bit more backwards when it came to the laws attraction."

"They just met, give them some time to get to know each other." Jerry shook his head at the old rumour. "Just because he's more interested in work, doesn't mean he's pansy."

"Wait, a what?" Rilla brow crinkled, looking at Ken who was now standing in the archway that leads to the dining room. Trying to confirm what they were saying, she had heard that term before. Ken just nodded. A preacher's son, more interesting bugs and wildlife than women? It would be something that would be whispered in the corners of Redmond.

"All I know is Marianne isn't rushing into things. She's free to do whatever she wishes for the first time since her father died. The last thing we need them to do is to pressure into something because society thinks they're old." Rilla told them trying to defend Carl and Marianne.

"Of course dear," Ken said with a jovial smile passing her a biscuit. Arm sneaking around the back of her waist and came to rest on the side of her stomach.

"So when are you planning on telling people?" Nan finally asked them.

"Maybe Thanksgiving?" Rilla said looking towards Ken and shrugging. "Easier to make it known once, then to have to make endless telephone calls or write letters to everyone. Though it's not like I'll be able to hide it then."

"Sounds practical. Holidays are always good for such things when enough time has passed." Nan agreed with her. "I won't say a word so don't worry."
Nan and Jerry left shortly after dessert, kissing her sister goodbye she whispered congratulations in her ear. It was an evening snack of milk and bananas when Rilla began yawning. "Off to bed for you," Ken told her with a kiss on her temple.

"It's barely eight," Rilla looked at the grandfather clock.

"I know and you're half asleep," Ken pointed up. "Come, I'll lie with you for a bit before I finish my work."

Rilla sighed and let him pull her up from her seat and walk her down the hall. Up the stairs. They stopped to brush their teeth and Rilla washed her face as Ken found her a fresh nightgown. She undressed slowly. Rolling off her stockings and pulled off her brassiere from under her camisole.

She walked over to the mirror once more and looked at her reflection. "I think it bigger," she told as she came up behind her. "Look at it," she said turning to the side slightly.

"It's beautiful," Ken said kissing her neck, letting his hand roam over the burgeoning bump. "You're beautiful."

"I look exhausted," Rilla laughed lightly at him.

"Still beautiful to me," Ken repeated with another kiss watching her in the mirror. "I never thought I could love you anymore then I do, but yet each day I see it growing more, it makes my heart grow with it."

Rilla smiled leaning into him, what was there to be worried about when Ken seemed to be over the moon all the time.

Also huge thank you to everyone who reading and reviewing. It makes these days much more fun and passable. I hope everyone is doing well and surviving this strange time we are in. Up here in Canada, we're doing alright where I am, and so far looks like we flattened the curve. But only time will tell.

I hope everyone stays safe and if you ever needing some to talk to. My PM's are always open, nothing is more important than having some sort of normalcy right now.

Tina.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!