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# The Wedding at Poplar Point

L. M. Montgomery

First published *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, May 13, 1936.  
Story adapted into *Anne of Windy Poplars*, Chapters 15 and 16.

*The Second of a New Series of "Anne" Stories*

*EDITOR'S NOTE.—This is the second of a new series of "Anne" stories by L. M. Montgomery, the famous author of "Anne of Green Gables," "Anne of the Island," "Anne of Avonlea," "Anne's House of Dreams," "Rainbow Valley," "Rilla of Ingleside" and others that were the "best sellers" of their day. These stories are new. They will not be published in book form until the autumn, so that readers of the Family Herald and Weekly Star will be the first to enjoy them.*

Sally Nelson had asked Anne Shirley to be her bridesmaid and the wedding was to be at Poplar Point, the summer home of Dr. Nelson. Anne went down to Poplar Point the evening before the wedding day, as the Nelsons were having a dinner party for some family friends and guests arriving by the boat train. The big, rambling house was built among poplars on a long point with the bay on both sides. Anne liked it the moment she saw it. And on this June evening it was bubbling over with young life and excitement, the laughter of girls, the greetings of old friends, carriages coming and going, children running everywhere, wedding gifts arriving, everyone in the delightful turmoil of a wedding, while Dr. Nelson's black cats, who rejoiced in the names of Barnabas and Saul, sat on the railing of the veranda, like two imperturbable black sphinxes.

Sally detached herself from a mob and whisked Anne upstairs.

"We've saved the north gable room for you. Of course you'll have to share it with at least three others. There's a frightful riot here. Father's having a tent put up for the boys down among the poplars and later on we can have cots up up in the glassed-in porch at the back. We can put some of the children in the hay-loft of course. Oh, Anne, I'm so excited. It's really no end of fun getting married. The loveliest gifts have come. This is your bed. Mamie Gray and Dot Frazer and Sis Palmer have the others. But, oh Anne, Aunt Mouser is here! She just came a few minutes ago and we're simply horror-stricken. Of course we had to invite her but we never thought of her coming before tomorrow."

"Who in the world is Aunt Mouser?"

"Dad's aunt . . . Mrs. James Kennedy. Oh, of course, she's really Aunt Grace, but Tommy nicknamed her Aunt Mouser, because she's always mousing round, pouncing on things we don't want her to find out. There's no escaping her. She gets up the first in the morning for fear of missing something, and she's the last to go to bed at night. But that isn't the worst. If there's a wrong thing to say she's certain to say it, and she's never learned that there are questions that mustn't be asked. Dad calls her speeches, 'Aunt Mouser's felicities.' I know she'll spoil the dinner. Here she comes now."

The door opened and Aunt Mouser came in . . . a fat, brown, pop-eyed little woman, moving in an atmosphere of moth-balls and wearing a chronically worried expression. Except for the expression she did really look a good deal like a hunting pussy cat.

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"So you're the Miss Shirley I've heard so much of. You ain't a bit like a Miss Shirley I once knew. She had such beautiful eyes. Well, Sally, so you're to be

married at last. Poor Nora is the only one left. Well, your mother is lucky to be rid of five of you. Eight years ago I said to her, ‘Jane,’ sez I, ‘do you think you’ll ever be able to get all those six girls married off?’ Well, a man’s nothing but a trouble, as I sees it and of all the uncertain things marriage is the uncertainest but what else is there for women in this world? That’s what I’ve just been saying to poor Nora? ‘Mark my word, Nora,’ I sez to her, ‘there isn’t much fun in being an old maid. What’s Jim Wilcox thinking of,’ I sez to her.”

“Oh, Aunt Grace, I wish you hadn’t. Nora and Jim had some sort of a quarrel last January and he’s never been round since.”

“I believe in saying what I think. Things is better aired. I’d heard of that quarrel. That’s why I asked her about him. ‘It’s only right you should know they say he is driving Eleanor Pringle,’ I told her. She got red and mad and flounced off. What’s Vera Johnson doing here? She ain’t a relation.”

“Vera is a friend of mine, Aunt Grace. She is going to play the wedding march.”

“Oh, she is, is she? Well, all I hope is she won’t make a mistake and play the Dead March instead, like Mrs. Tom Scott did at Dora Best’s wedding last week. Such a bad omen. I dunno where you’re going to put all the mob of people you’ve got here for the night. Some of us will have to sleep on the clothesline, I reckon.”

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“Oh, we’ll find a place for everyone, Aunt Grace.”

“Well, Sally, all I hope is you won’t change your mind at the last moment like Helen Summers did. It clutters things up so. Your father is in terrible high spirits. I s’pose he’s thankful to get another of you off his hands. I never was one to go looking for trouble but I hope it isn’t the forerunner of a stroke. I’ve seen it happen that way.”

“Oh, dad’s fine, Aunt Mouser. He’s just a bit excited.”

“Ah, you’re too young, Sally, to know all the things that can happen. Your mother tells me the ceremony is at high noon tomorrow. The fashions in weddings are changing like everything else and not for the better. When I was married it was in the evening and my father laid in twenty gallons of liquor for the wedding. Ah dear me, times ain’t what they used to be. What’s the matter with Mercy Daniels, Sally? I met her on the stairs. Her complexion has got terrible muddy.”

“‘The quality of mercy is not strained,’” giggled Sally, wriggling into her dinner dress.

“Don’t quote the Bible flippantly,” rebuked Aunt Mouser. “You must excuse her, Miss Shirley. She just ain’t used to getting married. Well, all I hope is the groom won’t have a hunted look like so many of them do. I s’pose they do feel that way

but they needn't show it so plain. And I hope he won't forget the ring. Upton Hardy did. Him and Flora had to be married with a ring off one of the curtain poles. I'll be taking another look at the wedding presents. You've got a lot of nice things, I hope that it won't be so hard to keep the handles of them spoons polished as I think it is."

Dinner that night in the big glassed-in porch was a gay affair. Chinese lanterns had been hung all about it, shedding mellow tinted lights on the pretty dresses and glossy heads. Barnabas and Saul sat like ebony statues on the broad arms of the doctor's chair, where he fed them tidbits alternately.

"Just about as bad as Peter Pringle," said Aunt Mouser. "He has his dog sit at the table with a chair and napkin of his own. Well, sooner or later there'll be a judgment."

It was a large party, for all the married Nelson girls and their husbands were there, besides ushers and bridesmaids, and it was a merry one, in spite of Aunt Mouser's "felicities" . . . or perhaps because of them. Nobody took Aunt Mouser very seriously. She was evidently a joke among the young fry. When she said, on being introduced to Gordon Hill, the prospective groom, "Well, well, you ain't a bit like I expected. I always thought Sally would pick out a tall, handsome man," ripples of laughter ran through the porch. Gordon Hill, who was a trifle on the short side and called no more than "pleasant-faced" by his best friends, knew he would never hear the last of it.

When she said to Dot Fraser, "Well, well, a new dress every time I see you! All I hope is your father's purse will be able to stand it for a few years yet," Dot could, of course, have boiled her in oil but some of the other girls found it amusing. And when Aunt Mouser mournfully remarked, apropos of the wedding dinner, "All I hope is everybody will get back her teaspoons. Five were missing after Gertie Paul's wedding. They never turned up." Mrs. Nelson, who had borrowed three dozen, and the sisters-in-law she had borrowed them from all, looked harried, but Dr. Nelson haw-hawed cheerfully. "We'll make everyone turn out their pockets before they go, Aunt Grace."

"Ah, you may laugh, Samuel, but it's no joking matter to have a thing like that happen in the family. Someone must have them teaspoons. I never go anywhere but I keep my eyes open for them. I'd know them wherever I saw them, though it's twenty-eight years ago. Poor Nora was just a baby then. Twenty-eight years! Ah, Nora, you're getting on, though in this light you don't show your age so much."

Nora did not join in the laugh that followed. She looked as if she might flash lightning at any moment. In her daffodil dress, with pearls in her dark hair, she made Anne think of a black moth. Nora Nelson had magnificent black hair, heavy black

brows and velvety red cheeks. Her nose was beginning to look a trifle hawk-like and she had never been pretty but Anne felt an odd attraction to her in spite of her sulky, smouldering expression.

They had a dance after dinner but at ten Nora had disappeared. Anne was a little tired of the noise and merriment. She slipped through the hall to a back door that opened almost on the bay and flitted down a flight of rocky steps to the shore. How divine the cool salt air was after the sultry evening! How exquisite the silver patterns of moonlight on the bay!

Nora Nelson was hunched up in the grim black shadow of a rock by the water's edge, looking more like a thundercloud than ever.

"May I sit with you for a while?" asked Anne. "I'm a little tired of dancing . . . and it's a shame to miss this wonderful night. I envy you with the whole harbor for a back-yard like this."

"What would you feel like at a time like this if you had no beau?" asked Nora abruptly and sullenly. "Or any likelihood of one," she added, still more sullenly.

"I think it must be your own fault if you haven't," said Anne, sitting down beside her.

"You're saying that to be polite, of course. You needn't. You know as well as I do I'm not a girl men are likely to fall in love with . . . I'm 'the plain Miss Nelson.' It isn't my fault I haven't anybody. And I just couldn't stand it in there any longer. I had to come down here and just let myself be unhappy. I'm tired of smiling and being agreeable to everyone and pretending not to care when they give me digs about not being married. I'm not going to pretend any longer. I do care. I care horribly. I'm the only one of the Nelson girls left. Five of us are married or will be tomorrow. You heard Aunt Mouser casting my age up to me at the dinner table. And I heard her tell mother before dinner that I had 'aged quite a bit' since last summer. Of course I have. I'm twenty-eight. In twelve more years I'll be forty. How does anyone endure life at forty, Anne, if she hasn't got any roots of her own by that time?"

"I wouldn't mind what a foolish old woman said."

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"Oh, wouldn't you! You haven't a nose like mine. I'll be as beaky as Aunt Mouser in ten more years. And I suppose you wouldn't care if you'd waited years . . . years! . . . for a man to propose and he wouldn't!"

"Oh, yes, I think I would care about that."

"Well, that's my predicament exactly. Oh, I know you've heard of Jim Wilcox and me. He's always been hanging around me . . . but he's never said anything about getting married."



“Do you care for him?”

“Of course I care. I’ve always pretended I didn’t, but I’ve told you I’m through with pretending. And he’s never been near me since last January. We had a fight . . . but we’ve had hundreds of fights. He always came back before . . . but he hasn’t come this time . . . and he never will. He doesn’t want to. Look at his house across the bay, shining in the moonlight. I suppose he’s there . . . and I’m here . . . and all the harbor between us. That’s the way it always will be. It’s . . . it’s terrible. And I can’t do a thing.”

“If you sent for him wouldn’t he come back?”

“Send for him! Do you think I’d do that? I’d die first. If he wants to come there’s nothing to prevent his coming. If he does not I don’t want him to. Yes, I do! I do! I love Jim . . . and I want to get married. I want to have a home of my own and be ‘Mrs.’ and shut Aunt Mouser’s mouth. If she calls me ‘poor Nora’ again I’ll throw a scuttle at her. But after all she only says what everybody thinks. Mother has despaired long ago of my ever marrying so she leaves me alone but the rest nag me. I hate Sally . . . of course I’m dreadful . . . but I hate her! She’s getting a nice husband and a lovely home. It isn’t fair she should have everything and I nothing. I suppose you think I’m awful . . . not that I care what you think!”

“I think you’re very tired after all these weeks of preparation and strain, and that things which were always hard have just become too hard all at once.”

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“You understand . . . oh, yes, I always knew you would. I’ve wanted to be friends with you, Anne Shirley. I like the way you laugh. I’ve always wished I could laugh like that. I’m not as sulky as I look . . . it’s these eyebrows. I really think they’re what scare the men away. I never had a real girl friend in my life. Of course I always had Jim. We’ve been friends ever since we were kids. Why, I used to put a light up there in that attic window whenever I wanted him over particularly and he’d sail across at once. Catch me doing that now! We went everywhere together. No other boy ever had a chance . . . not that anyone wanted it perhaps. And now it’s all over. He just got tired of me and was glad of the excuse of a quarrel to get free. Oh, won’t I hate you tomorrow because I told you this!”

“Why?”

“We always hate people who surprise our secrets, I suppose,” said Nora drearily. “But I don’t care . . . I don’t care for anything. Oh, Anne Shirley, I’m so miserable. Just let me have a good cry on your shoulder. I’ve got to smile and look happy all day tomorrow. Sally thinks it’s because I’m superstitious that I wouldn’t be one of her bridesmaids . . . I’d been twice before . . . but it isn’t. I just couldn’t

endure to stand there and hear her saying ‘I will’ and know I’d never have a chance of saying it for Jim. I’d have broken down and howled like a dog. I want to be a bride . . . and have a trousseau . . . and monogrammed linen . . . and lovely presents . . . even Aunt Mouser’s butter-dish. She gives a butter dish to every bride . . . an awful thing with a top like the dome of St. Peter’s. We could have had it on the breakfast table just to make fun of. Anne, I think I’m going crazy.”

The dance was over when the girls went back to the house. People were being stowed away for the night. Tommy Nelson was taking Barnabas and Saul to the barn. Aunt Mouser was still sitting on a sofa, thinking of all the dreadful things she hoped wouldn’t happen on the morrow.

“I hope nobody will get up and give a reason why they shouldn’t be joined together. That happened at Tillie Hatfield’s wedding.”

“No such good luck for Gordon as that,” said the best man.

Aunt Mouser fixed him with a stony brown eye. “Young man, marriage isn’t exactly a joke.”

“You bet it isn’t,” said the unrepentant. “Hello, Nora, when are we going to have a chance to dance at your wedding?”

Nora did not answer verbally. She went close up to him and deliberately slapped him first on one side of the face and then on the other. The slaps were not make-believe ones. Then she went upstairs without looking behind her.

“That girl,” said Aunt Mouser, “is overwrought.”

The forenoon of the next day passed in a whirl of last-minute things. Anne, shrouded in one of Mrs. Nelson’s aprons, spent it in the kitchen helping Nora make salads. Nora was all pickles, evidently repenting, as she had foretold, her confidences of the night before.

“We’ll be all tired out for a month,” she snapped, “and father can’t really afford all this splurge. But Sally was set on having what she calls a ‘pretty wedding’ and father gave in. He’s always spoiled her.”

“Spite and jealousy,” said Aunt Mouser, suddenly popping her head out of the pantry where she was driving Mrs. Nelson frantic with her hopings against hope.

“She’s right,” said Nora bitterly to Anne. “Quite right. I am spiteful and jealous. I hate the very look of happy people. But all the same I’m not sorry I slapped Jud Taylor’s face last night. I’m only sorry I didn’t tweak his nose into the bargain. Well, that finishes the salads. They do look pretty. I love fussing things up when I’m normal. Oh, after all, I hope everything will go off nicely for Sally’s sake. I suppose I do love her underneath everything, though just now I feel as if I hated everyone and Jim Wilcox most of all.”

“All I hope is the groom won’t be missing just before the ceremony,” floated out from the pantry in Aunt Mouser’s lugubrious tones. “Austin Creed was. He just forgot he was to be married. The Creeds was always forgetful but I call that carrying it too far.”

The two girls looked at each other and laughed. Nora’s whole face changed when she laughed . . . lightened . . . glowed . . . rippled.

By noon everything was in immaculate readiness and everybody dressed.

“You look wonderful, Nora,” said Anne. “That smoke-blue chiffon and that picture hat bring out the gloss of your hair and the blue of your eyes.”

“There’s nobody to care how I look,” said Nora bitterly. “Well, watch me grin, Anne. I mustn’t be the death’s head at the feast, I suppose. I have to play the Wedding March after all . . . Vera’s got a terrible headache. I feel more like playing the Dead March, as Aunt Mouser foreboded.”

Mrs. Nelson was crying because Sally looked so lovely in her wedding dress.

“Now, now, don’t be sentimental, Jane,” said Aunt Mouser. “You’ve still got one daughter left and likely to have her from all accounts. Well, well, I hope nobody will drop dead like old Uncle Cromwell did at Roberta Pringle’s wedding, right in the middle of the ceremony. The bride spent two weeks in bed from shock.”

With this inspiring send-off the bridal party went downstairs to the strains of Nora’s Wedding March somewhat stormily played and Sally and Gordon were married without anyone dropping dead or losing the wedding ring. It was a pretty wedding and even Aunt Mouser gave up worrying about the universe for a few moments. Nora continued to glower from the piano stool but when the ceremony was completed she went up to Sally and gave her a fierce hug, wedding veil and all.

“So that’s finished,” said Nora drearily when the dinner was over and the bridal party and most of the guests had gone. “We must clear up the mess, I suppose. There’s a lot of young fry waiting for the boat train and some staying over Sunday. They’re going to wind up by a bonfire on the shore and a moonlight rock dance. You can imagine how much I feel like moonlight dancing. I want to go to bed and cry.”

“I’ll help you clean up,” said Anne, “and then we’ll have a cup of tea. . .”

“Anne Shirley, do you think a cup of tea a panacea for everything! Never mind, I don’t want to be horrid but I suppose it’s my native disposition. I hate the thought of this shore dance more than the wedding. Jim always used to be at our shore dances.”

By moonrise everyone was keen for the shore dance. Already the boys had a huge bonfire of driftwood ablaze on the point and the waters of the harbour were creaming and glimmering in the moonlight. Anne was expecting to enjoy herself

hugely but a glimpse of Nora's face as the latter went down the rock steps, carrying a basket of sandwiches for the revellers gave her pause. "She's so unhappy. If there was anything I could do!"

An idea popped into Anne's head. She had always been a prey to impulse. She darted into the kitchen, snatched up a little hand lamp alight there and sped up the back stairs and then to the attic. She set the light in the dormer window that looked out across the harbour, the trees hid it from the shore dancers.

"He may see it and come. I suppose Nora will be furious with me but that won't matter so much if he only comes."

Jim Wilcox did not come. Anne gave up looking for him after awhile and forgot him in the merriment of the evening. Nora had disappeared and Aunt Mouser had gone to bed. It was eleven o'clock when the revelry ceased and the tired moonlighters yawned their way upstairs. Anne was so sleepy she never thought of the light in the attic. But at two o'clock Aunt Mouser crept into the room and flashed a candle in the girls' faces.

"Goodness, what's the matter?" gasped Dot Fraser, sitting up in bed.

"Sh. . . sh," warned Aunt Mouser, her eyes nearly popping out of her head. "I think there's someone in the house. I know there is. Listen to that noise."

"Sounds like a cat mewing," giggled Dot.

"Nothing of the sort," said Aunt Mouser severely. "I know there is a cat mewing somewhere but that is not what wakened me. It was a bump . . . a loud distinct bump. There's burglars in this house. I'm going to call Samuel."

Aunt Mouser disappeared. The girls looked at each other.

"Do you suppose . . . all the wedding presents are down there in the library?" said Dot.

"I'm going to get up anyhow," said Anne.

The girls got their kimonos and slipped out into the hall. Aunt Mouser was coming along it, followed by Dr. Nelson in dressing gown and slippers. Mrs. Nelson, who couldn't find her kimono, was sticking a terrified face out of her door.

"Oh, Samuel, don't take any risks. If it's burglars they may shoot. . . ."

"Nonsense, I don't believe there's anyone," said the doctor. "I tell you I heard a bump," quavered Aunt Mouser.

A couple of boys, Jud Taylor among them, joined the party. They crept cautiously down the stairs, headed by the doctor, and Aunt Mouser, candle in one hand and poker in the other, brought up the rear. There were undoubtedly noises in the library. The doctor opened the door and walked in.

Barnabas, who had contrived to be overlooked in the library when Saul was

taken to the barn, was sitting on the back of the chesterfield, blinking amused eyes. Nora and a young man were standing in the middle of the room, dimly lighted by a flickering candle. The young man had his arms around Nora and was holding a large white handkerchief to her face.

“He’s chloroforming her,” shrieked Aunt Mouser, letting the poker fall with a tremendous crash.

The young man turned, dropped the handkerchief and looked foolish. Yet he was rather a nice-looking young man with crinkly russet eyes and crinkly red-brown hair. Nora snatched up the handkerchief and applied it to her face.

“Jim Wilcox, what does this mean?” demanded the doctor sternly.

“I don’t know what it means,” said Jim Wilcox sulkily. “All I know is Nora signalled for me. I didn’t see the light till I came home at one from a Masonic banquet. And I sailed right over.”

“I didn’t signal for you,” stormed Nora. “For goodness’ sake don’t look like that, father. I wasn’t asleep . . . I was sitting at my window . . . I hadn’t undressed . . . and I saw a man coming up from the shore. I knew it was Jim so I ran down. And I . . . I ran into the library door and it made my nose bleed. He’s just been trying to stop it.”

“I jumped in at the window and knocked over that bench . . .”

“I told you I heard a bump,” said Aunt Mouser . . .

“And now Nora says she didn’t signal for me, so I’ll just relieve you of my unwelcome presence with apologies to all concerned.”

“It’s really too bad to have disturbed your night’s rest and brought you all the way over the bay on a wild-goose chase,” said Nora as icily as possible consistent with hunting for a bloodless spot on Jim’s handkerchief. “Wild goose chase is right,” said the doctor.

“You’d better try a door-key down your back,” said Aunt Mouser.

“It was I who put the light in the window,” said Anne shame-facedly, “and then I forgot . . .”

“You dared!” cried Nora. “I’ll never forgive you!”

“Have you all gone crazy?” said the doctor irritably. “What’s all this fuss about anyway? Put that window down, Jim . . . there’s a wind blowing in fit to chill you to the bone. Nora, hang your head back and your nose will stop bleeding.”

Nora was shedding tears of rage and shame. Mingled with the blood on her face they made her a fearsome sight. Jim Wilcox looked as if he wished the floor would open and drop him in the cellar.

“Well,” said Aunt Mouser belligerently, “all you can do now is to marry her, Jim

Wilcox. She'll never get a husband when it gets round that she was found here with you at two o'clock at night." "Marry her!" cried Jim in exasperation. "I've wanted all my life to marry her . . . never wanted any other girl."

"Then why didn't you say so long ago?" cried Nora whirling about to face him.

"Say so! You've snubbed me and frozen me and jeered at me for years. You've gone out of your way times without number to show me how you despised me. I didn't think it was the least use to ask you to marry me. And last January you said . . ."

"You goaded me into saying it . . . you . . ."

"I goaded you! I like that. You picked a quarrel with me just to get rid of me . . ."

"I didn't . . . I . . . you . . ."

"And yet I was fool enough to tear over here in the dead of night because I thought you'd put our old signal in the attic window and wanted me. Ask you to marry me! Well, I'll do it now and have done with it and you can have the fun of turning me down before all this gang. Nora Editha Nelson, will you marry me?"

"Oh, won't I . . . won't I!" cried Nora so shamelessly that even Barnabas blushed for her.

Jim gave her one incredulous look . . . then sprang at her. Perhaps her nose had stopped bleeding . . . perhaps it hadn't. It didn't matter.

"I think you've all forgotten this is the Sabbath morning," said Aunt Mouser, who had just remembered it herself. "I could do with a cup of tea if anyone would make it. I ain't used to demonstrations like this. All I hope is poor Nora has really landed him at last. At least, she has witnesses."

They went to the kitchen and Mrs. Wilson came down and made them a pot of tea . . . all but Jim and Nora who remained closeted in the library with Barnabas for chaperone. Anne did not see Nora until next morning.

"I owe this to you, Anne. If you hadn't put that light . . . though just for two and a half minutes last night I could have chewed your ears off . . ."

But the last word was Aunt Mouser's.

"Well, all I hope is it won't be a case of marrying in haste and repenting at leisure," she said.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *The Wedding at Poplar Point* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]