What Memory Keeps: Telling the Story of L.M. Montgomery's Life

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What will my memory hold onto at the end of my life? This question gives me instant perspective—a way to sift the worries that matter out from a mental sandbox filled with the everyday variety.

This was a question I kept asking as I sat down to write the life story of one of my most treasured authors, L.M. Montgomery, in my debut novel *After Anne*. I decided which parts of the constellation of Maud's life to tell based on what I thought might have stayed with her at the end of her life.

Reflecting on this question for myself as well as for Maud, it's not necessarily the highs but the lows—the personal tragedies—that can burn brightest in memory. They are what we all most dread, and they are the chisels that carve us.

Some of my most painful memories have changed my life. I lost my younger brother and daily childhood companion Ben suddenly in 2014. At the time, I was caught up with the day-to-day efforts of my corporate law job, talking about writing novels one day. I walked out of a yoga class on a November evening, picked up my phone to listen to a message, and life changed. Ben had started having seizures, and, soon after that, he was on life support. We had no time to say goodbye.

Losing Ben was the worst pain I've felt. But with unexpected life events come the raw, pounding realizations that move us to change as well. No one can count on a long life, as much as we like to. The summer after losing Ben, I decided to stop talking about writing and to start writing.

Maud experienced the tragedy of a loss out of order when her closest friend and cousin Frede—nine years her junior—died of influenza in her prime. How this loss shaped Maud is a question *After Anne* explores in layers. So, too, with untimely losses of both of Maud's parents, and the mental illness of some of those closest to her.

We are all one personal tragedy away from being a different version of ourselves. We could wake up tomorrow, and the world could look entirely different. In the dark days after losing Ben, all I could feel was a deep sense of unfairness. In learning about Maud's life and the repeated blows she suffered, I spent days overcome with the same emotions.

But when I put myself in Maud's shoes at the end of her life, I started to view things in a new way. I could see how the depth of her writing and her person could not be separated from what she'd been through. As Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote, "Beautiful people do not just happen" (Kübler-Ross 96).

Maud is a woman who became different versions of herself in a single lifetime. She faced her share of tragedy. But her life was far from a portrait of sorrow and gloom. Through all the blows that life dealt her, she continued

to feel deeply and capture her insights in novels, hundreds of short stories and poems, and her illuminating journals. The years I spent immersed in Maud's story gave me tremendous respect for her strength of character, which was chiselled, as many of ours are, from life's hardest edges.

Bio: Logan is the *USA Today* bestselling author of *After Anne* (HarperCollins 2023). Logan also writes a Substack newsletter called *The Creative Sort*, which explores the internal sort we go through when deciding whether and what to create. After graduating from Pomona College and Harvard Law School, Logan clerked for three federal judges, spent six years in Big Law, and served for three years as an Assistant United States Attorney. She now specializes in brief writing at a boutique law firm. Logan lives in Denver with her husband, daughter, and the cranky old man of the house, a Russian Blue cat named Taggart.

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Work Cited

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