

# WHEN CALLS THE HEART

Janette Oke



BETHANYHOUSE

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

*When Calls the Heart*  
Copyright © 1983  
Janette Oke

Cover by Dan Thornberg

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Published by Bethany House Publishers  
11400 Hampshire Avenue South  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438

Bethany House Publishers is a division of  
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

---

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Oke, Janette, 1935 -  
When calls the heart.

I. Title.

PR9199.3.038W5 1983 813'54

ISBN 0—87123611-7 (pbk.)

82-24451

ISBN 0—87123885-3 (large print)

CIP

---

To my oldest sister,  
Elizabeth Margaret (Betty) Cox,  
for having the patience  
to let me “pull the needle,”  
and for many other reasons.

JANETTE OKE was born in Champion, Alberta, to a Canadian prairie farmer and his wife, and she grew up in a large family full of laughter and love. She is a graduate of Mountain View Bible College in Alberta, where she met her husband, Edward, and they were married in May of 1957. After pastoring churches in Indiana and Canada, the Okes spent some years in Calgary, where Edward served in several positions on college faculties while Janette continued her writing. She has written forty-eight novels for adults and another sixteen for children, and her book sales total nearly thirty million copies.

The Okes have three sons and one daughter, all married, and are enjoying their fifteen grandchildren. Edward and Janette are active in their local church and make their home near Didsbury, Alberta.

# Preface

I would like to supply my readers with a few facts concerning the North West Mounted Police. The Force was founded in 1873 as an answer to the problem of illicit liquor trade and lawlessness in the West. It has been said that the Mountie was dressed in a red coat to readily set him apart from the U.S. Cavalry. The Mountie's job was to make peace with the Indians, not to defeat them; and many of the Indian tribes which he had to deal with had already had run-ins with the troops from south of the border. Whether for this reason, or some other, the scarlet tunic soon became distinctive, and set apart the man who was wearing it.

The uniform and the name both evolved. The title of *Royal* North West Mounted Police was granted by King Edward VII in 1904, in recognition of the Force's contribution to Canada. In 1920, the name was changed to *Royal Canadian* Mounted Police. Eventually, the red coat was adopted as the dress uniform of the Force, and a more practical brown coat was chosen for regular duty, because, said Superintendent Steele, it was "almost impossible for even a neat and tidy man to keep the red coat clean for three months on the trail." The hat also changed from the original pill-box, through various shapes and designs, to the Stetson that was approved in 1901.

It was the Yukon Gold Rush of 1895 that first brought the Mounties into the Far North. By 1898 there were twelve officers and 254 sergeants and constables in the Yukon. The Mounted Police by then were using a new form of transportation—the dog team. With the use of their huskies, they policed hundreds of square miles of snow-covered territory. Trappers, traders and Indian villages were scattered throughout their areas of patrol.

Although I try not to be *too* sentimental when I think of the Mounties and their part in the development of the Canadian West, to me, they are a living symbol of my Canadian home-land. To the people of the Lacombe area, may I assure you that among the names of Spruceville, Blackfalds, Brookfield, Turville and Iowalta; Woody Nook, Jones Valley, Canyon and Eclipse; Eureka, Spring Valley, Arbor Dale and Blindman; Central, West Branch, Birch Lake and Lincoln; Milton, Mt. Grove, Sunny Crest and Morningside; Gull Lake, Lakeside and Fairview; you will find no Pine Springs. Nor will you find a historic character that matches Pearlíe's pa in the town of Lacombe itself. All of the characters in the story are fictional, with no intended likenesses to anyone either living or dead.

May I also assure you that having grown up in the Hoadley area and having spent my early school years in the little one-room school at Harmonien, I have a great deal of love for and many fond memories of rural Alberta community life.

# Contents

1. Elizabeth . . . . .	11
2. The First Step . . . . .	21
3. On the Way . . . . .	27
4. Calgary . . . . .	32
5. Family . . . . .	38
6. Introductions . . . . .	43
7. Mr. Higgins' Plan . . . . .	55
8. The New School . . . . .	63
9. The Wilderness . . . . .	73
10. Lars . . . . .	79
11. The Petersons . . . . .	84
12. Trip to Town . . . . .	89
13. Saturday . . . . .	94
14. Sunday . . . . .	97
15. School Begins . . . . .	103
16. Joint Tenants . . . . .	108
17. Sunday Service . . . . .	115
18. Letters . . . . .	118
19. The Living Mouse Trap . . . . .	123

20. A Visitor . . . . .	127
21. Pupils . . . . .	132
22. The School Stove . . . . .	137
23. Plans . . . . .	144
24. Napoleon . . . . .	154
25. The Box Social . . . . .	158
26. Andy . . . . .	166
27. School Break . . . . .	168
28. Dee . . . . .	177
29. Return to School . . . . .	183
30. Christmas Concert . . . . .	192
31. Christmas Eve . . . . .	198
32. Christmas Day . . . . .	206
33. The Confession . . . . .	212
34. Return to Pine Springs . . . . .	218
35. Spring . . . . .	221
36. School Ends . . . . .	228



## Chapter One

# Elizabeth

It came as a great surprise to me. Oh, not the letter itself. We were all used to the arrival of letters from brother Jonathan. They came quite regularly and always caused a small stir in our household. No, it wasn't the letter, but rather what it contained that caught me completely off guard. And Mother's response to it was even more astounding.

The day, April 12, 1910, had started out like every other day. I arose early, had a quiet prayer time in my room, cared for my grooming, breakfasted with the family, and left at 8:00 to walk the eleven blocks to the school where I taught. I had made it a habit to be there early so that I would have plenty of time to make my morning preparations before the students arrived. I was usually the first teacher to make an appearance, but I rather enjoyed the early morning quietness of the other-wise noisy building.

As I walked along on that delightful spring morning, the world appeared especially beautiful and alive. For some reason, the flower-scented air and the song of the birds caused me to take a rare look at my inner self.

*And how are you this delightful spring morning?* I asked myself.

*Why, I am just fine, thank you,* I silently answered, and then almost blushed as I quickly looked around for fear that someone might be able to read my thoughts. It wasn't like me to talk to myself—even inwardly, especially when walking along this public, maple-sheltered street. But no one shared the sidewalk with me at the moment so the self-dialogue continued.

*Are you now? And what is it that makes your day so glorious—your step so feather-light?*

*The morning; life itself; the very fragrance of the air I breathe.*

*'Tis nice—but, then, you have always been a soul who took pleasure in just being alive. I do declare that you would be happy and contented anywhere on God's green earth.*

*No—not really. Not really.*

The sudden turn of the conversation and the switch of my emotion surprised me. There was a strange and unfamiliar stirring deep within me. A restlessness was there, begging me to give it proper notice. I tried to push it back into a recessed corner of my being, but it elbowed its way forward.

*You're always doing that!* it hotly declared. *Whenever I try to raise my head, you push me down, shove me back. Why are you so afraid to confront me?*

*Afraid?*

*Yes, afraid.*

*I'm not afraid. It's just that I believe—I've been taught—that one ought to be content with what one has, especially if one has been as blessed as I. It is a shame—no, a sin—to feel discontented while enjoying all of the good things that life—and Papa—have showered upon me.*

*Aye, t'would be a sin to disregard one's blessings. I should never wish you to do so. But perhaps, just perhaps, it would quiet your soul if you'd look fairly and squarely at what makes the empty little longing tug at you now and then.*

It was a challenge; and though I still felt fearful, and perhaps not

a little guilty, I decided that I must take a look at this inner longing if the voice was ever to be stilled.

I was born Elizabeth Marie Thatcher on June 3, 1891, the third daughter to Ephraim and Elizabeth Thatcher. My father was a merchantman in the city of Toronto and had done very well for himself and his family. In fact, we were considered part of the upper class, and I was used to all of the material benefits that came with such a station. My father's marriage to my mother was the second one for her. She had first been married to a captain in the King's service. To this union had been born a son, my half brother, Jonathan. Mother's first husband had been killed when Jonathan was but three years old; Mother therefore had returned to her own father's house, bringing her small son with her.

My father met my mother at a Christmas dinner given by mutual friends. She had just officially come out of mourning, though she found it difficult to wrap up her grief and lay it aside with her mourning garments. I often wondered just what appealed most to my father, the beauty of the young widow or her obvious need for someone to love and care for her. At any rate, he wooed and won her, and they were married the following November.

The next year my oldest sister, Margaret, was born. Ruthie then followed two years later. Mother lost a baby boy between Ruthie and me, and it nearly broke her heart. I think now that she was disappointed that I wasn't a son, but for some reason I was the one whom she chose to bear her name. Julie arrived two years after me. Then, two and a half years later, much to Mother's delight, another son was born, our baby brother, Matthew. I can't blame Mother for spoiling Matthew, for I know full well that we shared in it equally. From the time that he arrived, we all pampered and fussed over him.

Our home lacked nothing. Papa provided well for us, and Mother spent hours making sure that her girls would grow into ladies. Together my parents assumed the responsibility for our spiritual nurturing and, within the proper boundaries, we were encouraged to be ourselves.

Margaret was the nesting one of the family. She married at eighteen and was perfectly content to give herself completely to making a happy home for her solicitor husband and their little family. Ruth was the musical one, and she was encouraged to develop her talent as a pianist under the tutorship of the finest teachers available. When she met a young and promising violinist in New York and decided that she would rather be his accompanist than a soloist, my parents gave her their blessing.

I was known as the practical one, the one who could always be counted on. It was I whom Mother called if ever there was a calamity or problem when Papa wasn't home, relying on what she referred to as my "cool head" and "quick thinking." Even at an early age I knew that she often depended upon me.

I guess it was my practical side that made me prepare for independence, and with that in mind I took my training to be a teacher. I knew Mother thought that a lady, attractive and pleasant as she had raised me to be, had no need for a career; after all, a suitable marriage was available by just nodding my pretty head at some suitor. But she held her tongue and even encouraged me in my pursuit.

I loved children and entered the classroom with confidence and pleasure. I enjoyed my third-graders immensely.

My sister Julie was our flighty one, the adventure-seeker, the romantic. I loved her dearly, but I often despaired of her silliness. She was dainty and pretty, so she had no trouble getting plenty of male attention; but somehow it never seemed to be enough for her. I prayed daily for Julie.

Matthew! I suppose that I was the only one in the family to feel, at least very often, concern for Matthew. I could see what we all had done to him with our spoiling, and I wondered if we had gone too far. Now a teenager, he was too dear to be made to suffer because of the over-attention of a careless family. He and I often had little private times together when I tried to explain to him the responsibilities of the adult world. At first I felt that my subtle approach was beyond his

understanding, but then I began to see a consciousness of the meaning of my words breaking through. He became less demanding, and began to assert himself in the proper sense, to stand independently. I nurtured hope that we hadn't ruined him after all. He was showing a strength of character that manifested itself in love and concern for others. Our Matt was going to make something of himself in spite of us.

My morning reverie was interrupted by the particularly sweet song of a robin. He seemed so happy as he perched on a limb high over my head, and my heart broke away from its review of my family to sing its own little song to accompany him.

*Well, I thought when our song had ended, the restlessness does not come because I do not appreciate the benefits that God has given me, nor does it come because I do not love my family.* Some of the feeling of guilt began to drain away from me. I felt much better having honestly discovered these facts.

*So . . . I went on, Why am I feeling restless? What is wrong with me? Nothing is wrong, the inner me replied. As you said, you are not unappreciative nor uncaring. Yet it is true that you are restless. That does not prove that you are lacking, It is just time to move on, that's all.*

*To move on?* I was as incredulous as if the answer had come from a total stranger.

*Certainly. What do you think brings the robin back each spring? It is not that he no longer has his nest nor his food supply. He just knows that it is time to move on.*

*But to move on WHERE? How?*

*You'll know when the time comes.*

*But I'm not sure that I want -*

*Hush.*

I had never even considered "moving on" before. I was very much a "home person." I wasn't even especially taken with the idea of marriage. Oh, I supposed that somewhere, someday, there would be someone, but I certainly had no intention of going out looking for him, nor had I been very impressed with any of the young men who had come

looking for me. On more than one occasion I had excused myself and happily turned them over to Julie. She also seemed pleased with the arrangement; but the feelings of the young men involved, I must shamefully confess, concerned me very little.

And now I was to “move on”?

The uneasiness within me changed to a new feeling—fear. Being a practical person and knowing full well that I wasn’t prepared to deal with these new attitudes at the present, I pushed them out of my mind, entered the sedate brick school building and my third-grade classroom, and deliberately set myself to concentrating on the spelling exercise for the first class of the morning. Robert Ackley was still having problems. I had tried everything that I knew to help him. What could I possibly try next?

I went through the entire day with a seriousness and intent unfamiliar even to me. Never before had I put myself so totally into my lessons, to make them interesting and understandable. At the end of the day I was exhausted, so I decided to clean the blackboards and go home. Usually I spent an hour or so in preparation for the next day’s lessons, but I just didn’t feel up to it this time. I hurriedly dusted off the erasers, shoved some lesson books into my bag, securely fastened the classroom door behind me, and left the three-story building.

The walk home refreshed me somewhat; I even saw the robin with whom I had sung a duet that morning! I felt more like myself as I climbed our front steps and let myself in. Mother was in the small sunroom pouring tea that Martha, our maid, had brought. She didn’t even seem surprised to see me home early.

“Lay aside your hat and join me,” she called. I detected excitement in her voice.

I placed my light shawl and hat on the hall table and took a chair opposite Mother. I felt I could use a cup of strong, hot tea.

“I got a letter from Jonathan,” Mother announced as she handed me my cup.

I assumed then that her excitement was due to Jonathan's letter, or the news that it contained.

Jonathan was still special to Mother. Being her firstborn and only child from her first marriage, he was also her first love in many ways. Julie had on occasion suggested that Mother loved Jonathan more than the rest of us. I tried to convince Julie that Mother did not love him *more*—just differently.

I often thought how difficult it must have been for her to give him up, to let him go. Jonathan had been just nineteen when he decided that he must go west. I was only four years old at the time and too young to really understand it all, but I had been aware after he left that something was different about our home, about Mother, though she tried hard not to let it affect the rest of us. Three months after Jonathan had left, baby Matthew had arrived, and Mother's world had taken on new meaning. Yet not even Matt had taken Jonathan's place in her heart.

And now Mother sat opposite me, calmly serving tea, though I could tell that she felt anything but calm. Whatever the news in Jonathan's letter, I sensed that Mother was excited rather than concerned, so her tenseness did not frighten me.

"How is he?" I asked, choosing to let Mother pick her own time and words for revealing her excitement.

"Oh, just fine. The family is well. Mary is feeling fine. She is due soon now. Jonathan's lumber business is growing. He had to hire another clerk last month."

It all sounded good. I was happy for this older brother whom I barely remembered, yet somehow I felt that Mother's present mood did not stem from any of the facts that she had so hurriedly stated. I mumbled a polite response about being glad for Jonathan's good fortune and sipped my tea. I did wish that Mother would get to the point.

Mother didn't even lift her cup; instead, she reached into the bosom of her gown and removed Jonathan's recent letter. We were

all used to her doing that. Whenever a letter from Jonathan arrived, she would read it through a number of times and then tuck it in the front of her dress. She carried it around with her for days and would pull it forth and reread it whenever time allowed.

She carefully unfolded it now. But rather than pass it to me as she normally did, she began to hurriedly read aloud. She passed quickly through Jonathan's greetings as though she was anxious to get to the real heart of the letter. As I continued to sip my tea, I could hear the excitement growing in her voice. She suddenly slowed down, and I knew that she intended for me to hear and understand every word.

“‘There is no end to opportunities here in the West. I know several men who came out with nothing and who now have great homes and flourishing businesses. All that one needs is determination, stamina and a bit of horse sense.’”

*Surely Mother isn't contemplating urging Papa to move West* was the foolish thought that popped into my mind. Mother read on.

“‘I have given a great deal of thought to my family lately. It would be so good to have one of my own here. I miss you all so much. Especially you, Mother, but you know that.

“‘It's easy to think of the West as a man's land, and so it is; but there are plenty of opportunities here for women as well. And I might add that we in the West realize that if we are to grow strong, we need fine young women to make homes for our men and ensure proper families for our future.’”

I must have grimaced some as I thought, *What a cold, calculating way to look at marriage*. But Mother continued without interruption—I had missed a few words.

“‘. . . so I thought of Elizabeth.’”

Confusing thoughts exploded in my mind. *Elizabeth? Me? Me WHAT? Is he suggesting that I go bargain-hunting for some western shopkeeper or backwoods rancher for a husband? Not me! Never! Never!* I felt that I would rather die first.

The blood had drained from my face as I started to rise from my



chair. “Never,” I whispered to myself. But Mother had paid no attention to my soft gasp and hurried on.

“Teachers are sorely needed here. Many mothers in country areas still must tutor their children. But these women have little time and no training. We are anxious to change all of that. We want our next generations to be well educated, because in the future we hope to pick the leaders of our new province from among our own.

“You say that Elizabeth is a fine teacher and a sensible young woman—and I am sure that she is. I talked today with a school superintendent whom I know. He is short of teachers, and some of those that he does have, he would replace if he could. He says that if Elizabeth is willing to come west, he would gratefully give her a position, and, as I said before, it would be so good to have someone from my family here.’ ”

Stunned, I watched Mother’s eyes continue on down the page, but she was reading silently now. I got the impression that I was temporarily forgotten and that her thoughts were with her beloved son Jonathan somewhere out West.

I was glad for those few moments to compose myself before I had to meet her eyes again. Jonathan was actually proposing that I go west. For what? Before he had suggested the teaching opportunities, he had written that they needed young women to “ensure proper families.” Well, I in no way intended to help them do that. Definitely not!

I hoped that Mother wouldn’t be too hard on Jonathan when she replied to the letter. I knew that he had meant well, though he must have known that our mother would never agree to a daughter of hers, on the pretense of teaching, going off to the wilds to find herself a man. *Even if that isn’t Jonathan’s intent at all, I reasoned, and he is simply looking for more teachers, I have a perfectly good teaching position right where I am.*

Mother finished reading Jonathan’s rather lengthy letter and again tucked it in her bosom. Her tea had grown cold, but she absently reached for her cup and sipped from it with a far-away look in her

eyes. I was on the verge of, “Look, Mother, don’t let it upset you. Jonathan meant well, but you needn’t fear. I have no intention of taking it seriously, . . .” when she lifted her eyes from her cup and looked directly at me. I expected a mild reprimand of Jonathan, but instead she said simply, “Well?” She smiled at me, and I could easily detect eagerness in her voice.

I was startled and flustered.

“Well?” I questioned back, wondering just what she meant. I couldn’t understand Mother’s rather extraordinary reaction to Jonathan’s preposterous proposal. *Is she actually thinking that I would even give the matter consideration? How CAN she? Surely she must see that it is totally . . .* And then in a flash it came to me. I was to be Mother’s love-offering to Jonathan, his “piece-of-the-family” presented to him over the miles. Somehow my going west to be with him would bring comfort to my mother’s heart.

I loved her. She was a dear mother. Never would I wish to hurt her. I didn’t dare bluntly blurt out that the whole idea was outlandish and that Jonathan had been foolish even to suggest it. With Mother sitting there before me, the “well” still lingering in her gaze, I couldn’t say no. But could I say yes? Definitely not. But I could say maybe, until I had taken time to think this whole thing through, to sort it out in my mind, and to plan some way I could get out of it without hurting my mother.

“Well—it’s—it’s such a surprise. I’d—I’d never thought of the possibility of leaving—of going . . .”

My mind fumbled about for words but found none to still the look of concern creeping into Mother’s eyes. I willed my confused mind into control and hurried on.

“It sounds—interesting—very interesting.” I tried to put some sparkle into my voice, but it was difficult when I could hardly get the words past my tight throat.

Mother relaxed some, and her eyes began to shine again. It was a moment before I realized that they were bright with unshed tears.

I felt almost panicky. I *couldn't* disappoint her—at least not at the moment. I tried to swallow away the lump in my throat and forced a smile as I put down the fragile china cup.

“It’s—well—I’ll—I’ll do some thinking about it and we’ll—well, we’ll see. . . .”

Mother reached out and touched my hand. The tears spilled a bit from her eyes, wetting her dark lashes and dropping onto her cheeks.

“Beth,” she said, “there is no one whom I would rather send to Jonathan than you.”

I was touched, but frightened. I swallowed hard again, attempted another smile and rose from my chair. After a light kiss on Mother’s forehead, I excused myself. I had to get away, alone, where I could think. My whole world was spinning around, and I felt that if I didn’t soon get control of things, I would end up hurling off somewhere into space.

I was willing to *consider* being Jonathan’s love-package-from-home, for Mother’s sake. Yes, I was even willing to consider teaching out West. But as for marrying some uncouth, unkempt man out of the frontier, *there* I drew a definite, solid line. Never!

Later that evening, Papa knocked quietly at my door. I had been trying to read in bed, a luxury that I normally enjoyed, but somehow Jane Austen’s young women had failed to intrigue me.

He walked to my window and stood looking out at the quietness of the city. The street lamps flickered softly against the gathering darkness. I waited for him to speak; but when he said nothing, I laid aside my book, pushed myself up to a sitting position, and asked softly, “You’ve talked to Mother?”

He cleared his throat and turned from the window. He still didn’t speak—just nodded his head.

“And what do you think?” I asked, secretly hoping that he would exclaim that the whole, idea was outrageous and unthinkable. He didn’t.

“Well -,” he said, pulling up a chair beside my bed, “at first it was a bit of a shock. But after I thought it through for a while, I began to understand why your mother is rather excited about the whole thing. I guess it could be an adventure for you, Elizabeth, and, it would seem, not too risky a one.”

“Then you think I should—”

“Consider it? Yes, consider it. Go? Not necessarily. Only you will be able to decide that. You know that you are loved and wanted here, but should you want this—this new experience, we will not hold you back.”

“I don’t know, Papa. It’s all so—so new. I don’t know what to think about it.”

“Elizabeth, we trust you to make the right decision, *for you*. Your mother and I have agreed to abide by it. Whatever you decide, we want it to be what *you* feel you should do. Your mother, as much as she would love to see you go to Jonathan, does not want you to feel pressured to do so if it’s not what you want. She asked me to tell you that, Elizabeth. She is afraid that your loyalty and desire to please her might lead you to go for her sake. That’s not enough reason to make such a life-changing decision, Elizabeth.”

“Oh, Papa! Right now I’m all butterflies. I never dreamed—”

“Don’t hurry, my dear. Such a decision needs much careful thinking and praying. Your mother and I will be standing behind you.”

“Thank you, Papa.”

He kissed my forehead and squeezed my hand.

“Whatever you decide . . .,” he whispered as he left my room.

I didn’t pick up Jane Austen’s book again. I knew that now for certain I couldn’t concentrate on the words. So I pulled the chain to put out the lamp and punched my pillows into what I hoped would be a sleep-inducing position. With the covers tucked carefully about me, I settled down for the night. It didn’t work. It was a long time until I was able to fall asleep.

## Chapter Two

# The First Step

The next few days were full of soul searching. I was so preoccupied that I sometimes wondered if I were actually teaching my students. They didn't seem to notice any difference in me, so I guess that I was at least going through the proper motions.

As she promised, Mother didn't press me; but I could sense that she was anxiously waiting for my decision. I knew that she was praying too. I did hope that she truly was leaving it to the Father's will and not merely pleading for Him to "send me forth."

I wavered—which was unusual for me. One moment I would think of all those that I loved: my family, my students, my church friends; and I would inwardly cry out, "I can't go, I just can't!" The next instant I would think of that part of my family in the West. Something invisible was drawing me to the older brother whom I had never really known. I also thought of all those children without a teacher, and I knew that they, too, wished to learn. I even considered the great adventure that this new opportunity held, and I would find

myself reasoning, *Why not? Maybe this is the answer to the restlessness within me. Maybe I should go. . . .*

Back and forth my feelings swung, like the pendulum on our grandfather clock.

After considerable debate and prayer and thought, I felt directed to Joshua 1:9: “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

I repeated the passage out loud and felt my anxieties relax into peace. I would go.

Mother was almost beside herself with joy and excitement when I told her. Julie begged to go with me. I loved Julie and I was sure that there would be many times in the future when I would wish for her company; but the thought of trying to watch over a girl like Julie, in a land filled with men looking for brides, fairly made me shiver. I was glad when Papa and Mother promptly told her no.

Another month, and the school year came to a close. I waved good-bye to the last pupil, packed up all my books and teaching aids, and closed the door of the classroom carefully behind me for the last time. Blinking back some tears, I said good-bye to my fellow teachers and walked away from the school without looking back.

I had let Mother tell Jonathan about my decision, and he seemed overjoyed that I actually was coming. He even wrote a letter to *me*, telling me so directly. His and Mother’s excitement seemed to be contagious, and my desire to see my brother was growing daily.

Jonathan had passed the word to the school superintendent, and he, too, hurried a letter off to me. Mr. Higgins (the name somehow suited my mental image of him) assured me that he was pleased to hear that I would be coming west; and, his letter stated, he would give care and consideration in assigning me to the school that he felt was right for me, and he would be most anxious to meet me upon my arrival.

The days, filled with shopping, packing and finally shipping my belongings, passed quickly.

Jonathan had said that anything I could spare should be shipped early. The freight cars had a tendency to get shuttled aside at times and often took longer for the trip than the passenger cars. I secretly wondered if Jonathan wasn't using this as a ploy, reasoning that the shipped-ahead trunks would be a measure of insurance against a girl who at the last moment might wish to change her mind.

It could have happened, too. When the day arrived that Papa and I took my trunks to the freight station and I presented my belongings to the man behind the counter, the realization fully hit me that I was taking a giant step into the unknown. Somewhat dazed, I watched my trunks being weighed and ticketed and finally carted away from the checking desk on a hand-pulled wagon. In those trunks were my books, bedding, personal effects, and almost my entire wardrobe. It seemed to me that a large part of my life was being routinely trundled away. For a moment fear again tightened my throat, and I had an impulse to dash out and gather those trunks back to myself and hurry back to the familiar comfort of my own home and room. Instead, I turned quickly and almost stumbled out of the building. Papa had to break into full stride in order to catch up to me.

"Well, that's cared for," I said in a whispery voice, trying to intimate that I was glad to scratch one more task from my awesome list. I think that Papa saw through my bluff. He answered me heartily but completely off the subject. "Saw a delightful little hat in that smart little shop beside Eatons. I thought at the time it was just made for you. Shall we go and take a look at it?"

Some men despise being seen in a lady's shop. My father was not one of them. Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that he had four daughters and an attractive wife. Papa loved to see his women dressed prettily and took pleasure in helping us to choose nice things. Besides, he was well aware of the fact that a new hat was often good

medicine for feminine woes—especially when the difficulty was no more serious than a butterfly stomach.

I smiled at him, appreciative of his sensitivity. Who would pamper me when I was away from Papa? I took his arm and together we headed for the little shop.

Papa was right. The hat did suit me well; the emerald-green velvet looked just right with my dark gold hair and hazel eyes. I liked it immediately and was glad that he had spotted it. In fact, I decided right then and there that I would wear it upon my arrival in Calgary. It would give me a measure of confidence, and I had a feeling I would need all of it that I could get.

As we rumbled home in our motor car, I again thought of what a thoughtful man I had for a father. I reached over and placed my hand on the arm of his well-cut suit. I would miss him. I used my handkerchief to wipe some tears from my eyes, murmuring something about the wind in my face. There was still a week before I would board the train. I didn't need to get soft and sentimental yet.