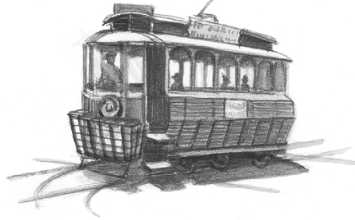


# CHAPTER

# 1



*Emily feels the ground give way, feels herself falling down with the bridge and the streetcar, down, down into the Gorge. Water rushes in, pulling her deeper. As she struggles, Alice grabs hold of her arm and won't let go.*

*Then she sees Florence floating by, pulling a girl by the hand—not up to the surface but down to the bottom. Florence smiles and says, “Look who I’m taking with me.”*

*Emily looks and sees her own face staring back at her. The eyes are glazed with horror. The mouth is fixed in a scream . . .*

Emily woke up sharply, the sound of the scream still ringing in her ears.

Within seconds, her mother was at her side, drawing her close. “There, there, Emily,” she murmured. “It’s all right.”

“No, it’s not.” Emily choked back a sob. “Florence didn’t move back to England. She drowned and I drowned and Alice . . .”

“No, dear. It’s only a dream.” Mother tucked her in and kissed her. “Go back to sleep. You’ll get over your nightmares in time. You’ll see.”

But when? she wondered. And how?



When Emily awoke again in the morning, the questions were still on her mind. So too was the memory of the disaster that triggered the nightmares—the collapse of the bridge that sent an

overcrowded streetcar, on which she and her friends were passengers, plunging into the waters of the Gorge.

It was now New Year's Day, 1897. Nearly eight months had passed since the disaster at Point Ellice Bridge, but the fear Emily had felt that day was still with her. During the summer, her nightmares had been so frequent and her cries so alarming that they'd consistently woken up the household. In the fall they had seemed to ease off, much to everyone's relief. But with the coming of winter and the approach of the new year, they were back again.

Emily thought she knew why. And, as the day progressed, she grew more and more anxious.

"Do we *have* to go to the Walshes' for dinner?" she kept asking. "Why can't we stay here?"

Try as she might, she could not convince her parents to change their plans. And that afternoon she found herself on a streetcar bound for the scene of the disaster.

Emily hadn't been near the Gorge since that terrible day. She'd almost gone in August, to her

friend George Walsh's birthday party, but a stomach ache had kept her at home. The thought of going there now made her shudder.

Her younger sister Jane noticed her discomfort and patted her hand. "Don't be scared," she said.

"And don't worry," little Amelia said seriously.

"Your sisters are right," said Father. "It's a brand-new year. Let's put all our worries and fears behind us. What do you say?" He squeezed her shoulder as the streetcar drew up to the new Point Ellice Bridge and stopped to let them off. "Chin up! We'll cross each bridge as we come to it."

Emily dutifully stuck out her chin. At least she didn't have to cross *this* bridge—not today, anyway.

As the streetcar clanged its bell and went on its way, rolling onto the bridge, she turned quickly, refusing to look at the churning waters of the Gorge.

On the short walk to the Walshes' they passed another reminder of the tragedy—the home where Emily had been taken after her rescue. She

hastened her step as the unwelcome memories began to flood in. The lawn, the bodies, the cries of anguish . . .

“Don’t think about it,” Mother said, as if reading Emily’s mind. She gave her a reassuring hug.

It wasn’t long before they reached the Walshes’ house, where a large crowd had gathered to welcome in the new year.

George grabbed Emily’s hand and tugged her away to his room. “Wait till you see my Christmas presents,” he said.

“We want to see, too!” Jane followed, with Amelia at her heels.

He showed them his croquet set, complete with candle sockets attached to the wickets so they could play at night, and a new archery set.

“Are these arrows really—ouch!” cried Amelia.

“Yes, they’re sharp!” Emily scolded. “You’re not supposed to touch.”

George laughed. “We can shoot arrows the next time you come.”

“I’d rather play croquet,” said Emily.

“I’ve got a new board game, too,” said George.  
“Do you want to play?”

Soon all four were happily involved in a game of Snakes and Ladders.

As the afternoon wore on, and the guests were called to sit down for a festive dinner, Emily couldn’t help but think back to the previous year, when the celebration had been at her house. That was when she’d first met George. What a trouble-maker he’d been then. To think that only a few months later, he would save her life!

During dinner there was the usual boring talk among the grown-ups, with a lot of big words Emily didn’t understand. Last year she’d overheard Father talking about an economic slump and tough times ahead. His words had proved to be true. Now he was saying that 1897 could mark a turnaround for the province.

The other guests agreed, voicing their opinions about the new parliament buildings, the booming mining industry in the interior, the construction of new railway lines . . .

Emily stifled a yawn.

Across the table, George was trying to make her and her sisters laugh, first by waggling his eyebrows, then by wiggling his ears. Jane looked back at him, cross-eyed. Amelia stuck out her tongue. Emily had to put her napkin to her mouth to hold in the giggles.

The end of the meal brought on the usual toasts, beginning, as always, with one to Queen Victoria. “The Queen!” Mr. Walsh said. “In the year of her Diamond Jubilee. Sixty glorious years on the throne.”

Everyone stood up, raised his glass, and repeated, “The Queen! On her Diamond Jubilee!”

There was a buzz of excitement as they discussed the celebrations being planned to mark the occasion, not only in Victoria but throughout the entire British Empire.

“The 24th of May won’t be nearly so grand this year,” someone said. “All the stops are being pulled out for the Jubilee in June.”

“From what I’ve heard,” a newcomer to Victoria remarked, “the 24th of May wasn’t so grand last year. Wasn’t it just out here, on the Gorge—?”

“Don’t!” Emily burst out without thinking.

A heavy silence fell over the room.

“Oh, dear,” the man said. “I am sorry.”

Mr. Walsh cleared his throat. “Another toast is in order. To the memory of those who lost their lives in the disaster. To those who mourn their loss. And to those who survived.”

“And to Emily,” George said earnestly. He raised his glass in her direction and the others followed suit.

Emily blushed to the tips of her ears. It was the first time she’d ever been toasted.



That night, as the girls were lying in bed, Amelia asked, “What’s a *diamond jubilee*? Is it like a necklace?”

“It’s *jubilee*,” Emily corrected. “And it’s not jewellery, it’s a celebration. Queen Victoria’s been the Queen for sixty years, and that’s why it’s called ‘diamond.’ When she was Queen for fifty years, it was the Golden Jubilee.”

“What happened at the *golden jubilee*?”

“Amelia, it’s *jubilee*! And I don’t remember. I was only a year old.”

“Queen Victoria’s been the Queen for a long time,” said Jane. “Even before Mother and Father were born.”

“Listen, Em,” Amelia piped up. “I know another *jubilee*.”

“*Jubilee!*”

“It’s your birthday—on January 28. You’ll be eleven. You’ll be too old to have nightmares.”

Emily could only hope that she was right.