

The JOYS *of* LOVE

The JOYS *of* LOVE

Madeleine L'Engle

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

NEW YORK

Copyright © 2008 by Crosswicks, Ltd.

All rights reserved

Distributed in Canada by Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.

Printed in the United States of America

Designed by Robbin Gourley

First edition, 2008

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

www.fsgkidsbooks.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

L'Engle, Madeleine.

The joys of love / Madeleine L'Engle.— 1st ed.

p. cm.

Summary: After graduating from college in 1946, Elizabeth Jerrold pursues her dream of becoming a stage actress, landing a position as an apprentice in a summer theater company where she hones her acting skills and falls in love with an aspiring director.

ISBN-13: 978-0-374-33870-1

ISBN-10: 0-374-33870-1

[1. Theater—Fiction. 2. Acting—Fiction. 3. Love—Fiction. 4. Apprentices—Fiction. 5. Orphans—Fiction.] I. Title.

PZ7 .L5398]o 2008

[Fic]—dc22

2007014331

INTRODUCTION

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I read *The Joys of Love*. It was 1978 and I was ten, curled up on the couch, listening to the tap-tapping of my grandmother's typewriter keys, and reading—no, devouring—her unpublished manuscript about summer theatre in the 1940s. My nine-year-old sister, Charlotte, was on the opposite end of the couch, eagerly waiting for me to pass the next page to her. We were honored that Gran thought we were mature enough to read this novel, and we had promised to be quiet so that she could write. We had a history of spending time with her while she was working, whether it was at her home, Crosswicks, in northwestern Connecticut, or in the Cathedral Library at St. John the Divine in New York City, where she was the librarian and writer-in-residence. My grandmother lovingly referred to her office above the garage at Crosswicks as an “ivory tower,” one in which she could harness her wild, abundant imagination through the craft of writing. In

1978 she used a gigantic typewriter, atop a big desk with piles of paper everywhere. Large windows overlooked green fields and the peak of Mohawk Mountain. Crosswicks was a magical place for us, having served as much of the setting for her best-known work, *A Wrinkle in Time*.

Sitting and reading *The Joys of Love*, I was thrown back into the world of the 1940s, and through the character of Elizabeth I felt able to catch a glimpse of my grandmother as a very young woman. She became more than the woman who made the best hot fudge sundaes and liked cats and dogs, more than the writer of my favorite books. She inhabited this character, Elizabeth, and reading the manuscript made me feel closer to her than ever before.

After we finished, Charlotte and I grew restless, daring to break the sanctity of quiet.

“Gran, we’re so mad that this was never published!” rose the cry.

“Well, my darlings, then this can be just for you two to share, a special book just for you.” We loved that idea then, to have a literal piece of my grandmother that nobody else could have. We had begun to realize how famous she was and how generous she was with that fame, and we could get a little jealous!

Gran had struggled as a writer until the early 1960s, when *Meet the Austins* and *A Wrinkle in Time* were published and she won the Newbery Medal for the latter. She had had a modicum of success with her first novel, *The Small Rain*, published in 1945, but after a lukewarm reception to her second novel, *Ilsa*, she had a terrible time getting her novels published, suffering

rejection after rejection. She was able to publish *And Both Were Young*, but then *Camilla*, *Meet the Austins*, and *Wrinkle* made the rounds of countless publishing houses before being accepted. Publishers did not know how to classify her. Her spirit suffered badly with those rejections, but she never stopped writing, never stopped trying. Hers remains a legacy of discipline and dogged persistence. She has always said that being published doesn't make you a writer—writing does.

After Farrar, Straus and Giroux took a chance on *Wrinkle*, she who couldn't be classified was in a class by herself, and enjoyed an immensely successful writing career, which opened the way to speaking and teaching around the world. By the time Charlotte and I were born, her professional, public persona as Madeleine L'Engle had been firmly established. We loved her both as our grandmother and as Madeleine L'Engle. We didn't have to share our grandmother, but we certainly had to share Madeleine L'Engle, and having *The Joys of Love* to ourselves became a delicious secret!

When Charlotte and I uncovered that old copy of *The Joys of Love* two years ago, we looked at each other and smiled, remembering how much we had loved reading it over and over again, and how much it had shaped us. I know it inspired me to read Chekhov and become an acting junkie, practicing the same monologue from *The Seagull* that Elizabeth does, and using it when I auditioned for a theatre camp when I was a teenager. Now, thirty years later, our "secret" is out, and we couldn't be happier to share with everybody this sweet novel about coming of age at a summer theatre.

The first incarnation of *The Joys of Love* was written in 1942

as a short story called “Summer at the Sea.” In that first version, Elizabeth was as close to an autobiographical portrait as you could get. Madeleine had spent two summers doing theatre in Nantucket, and the setting for *The Joys of Love* is also at the ocean. Elizabeth was primarily a writer, as was Madeleine. (In this penultimate version, Elizabeth is an actress.) Madeleine describes herself as “tall, gawky, [and] myopic” in *Two-Part Invention*, as is Elizabeth. Madeleine’s own father died when she was a teenager, and she describes Elizabeth repressing her grief, just as she had done. Madeleine’s mother had been nervous about Madeleine pursuing a theatrical life, although to a lesser degree than Elizabeth’s Aunt Harriet. Elizabeth, like Madeleine, went to Smith College and is impossibly well-read, able to quote Shakespeare, Chekhov, and others at the drop of a hat. Madeleine was also starstruck by an older, established actress, as Elizabeth is. In fact, Madeleine’s idol, Eva Le Gallienne, was the prototype for Valborg Andersen.

In 1941 Gran graduated from Smith College and left that world of cozy intellectualism for Greenwich Village, in New York City. Imagine a hunger and passion for the writing life that drives you beyond all other things. My grandmother was tenacious, loyal, and fierce. Believing the theatre could be her best training ground as a writer, she worked selling war bond certificates in the theatres so she could see all the plays of the day for free. She took acting classes, and wrote several plays that she would workshop with friends. Perhaps this is why she has a keen knack for dialogue, enforcing the dictum for good writing: show, don’t tell.

She wrote an early play with Eva Le Gallienne in mind for

the title role, then spent a tremendous amount of energy trying to get the script to her—she even befriended the stage manager of the theatre Miss Le Gallienne was working in! Her persistence got her noticed, even though the script was never used. (The script ended up becoming *Ilsa*.) She was given a chance to audition as an apprentice for Miss Le Gallienne’s company. She wrote her own monologue, culled from the letters of Katherine Mansfield, and, standing out from the other young hopefuls, was given the job. How she thrilled to be earning her own living in the theatre, being paid the Equity minimum of sixty-five dollars a week, all the while understudying various roles and playing some small parts herself.

And she constantly wrote. I don’t know of anybody else who supported their writing career by working in the theatre.

Eventually, she met my grandfather, the actor Hugh Franklin, in that company’s production of *The Cherry Orchard*, in which she was an understudy. My grandmother turned to writing full-time after she married him in 1946. Life in the theatre can be unpredictable, and my grandparents felt they needed more stability to raise a family. They had bought a summer house in Connecticut the year after they married; in 1950, they decided to live there year-round. They settled into Crosswicks, and my grandfather ran a country store.

It was during those years that Gran had the hardest time getting her work published. She picked up “Summer at the Sea” again that first summer, and it became *The Joys of Love*. She had also been hard at work on *Camilla*, which her agent loved and sent out again and again, only to have it rejected. It was hard for Gran to feel this near constant sting of rejection. While

Camilla was classifiable at the time as a young adult novel, her agent felt that *The Joys of Love* was not. The agent suggested that my grandmother rewrite it with some more adult themes, to be sold as a serial to a magazine. But Gran wasn't happy with the idea; she felt that *The Joys of Love* was much fresher as a young adult novel. Thus Gran put *The Joys of Love* away and moved on to writing new novels, plays, and poems. *Camilla* was eventually published and compared to J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. I know my grandmother would be thrilled that after all these years *The Joys of Love* will finally find its audience.

It is also no coincidence that Gran picked up writing *The Joys of Love* the same year she and my grandfather moved away from New York. I see it now as her love letter to the theatrical world, expressing her ambivalence about giving that world up. In *The Joys of Love*, Elizabeth talks to Ben about her own ambivalence:

“I’ve always thought about the theatre like a Christmas tree, all shining and bright with beautiful ornaments. But now it seems like a Christmas tree with the tinsel all tarnished and the colored balls all fallen off and broken. That’s a corny way of saying it, but you know what I mean.”

“Sure, I know what you mean, Liz. And it’s both ways . . . Some of the ornaments fall and break and some stay clear and bright. Some of the tinsel gets tarnished and some stays shining and beautiful like the night before Christmas. Nothing’s ever all one way. You

know that. It's all mixed up and you've just got to find the part that's right for you."

Ultimately, my grandparents were able to find the part that was right for them, selling the store after ten years in Connecticut and returning to New York, where my grandfather resumed his working life as an actor, and my grandmother's writing blossomed into an extraordinary career. Her body of work is astounding.

Her legacy is not limited to her books, but encompasses her fierceness of spirit: her love, her discipline, her belief in herself, and her creative generosity in lifting up the world.

As *The Joys of Love* is an early work, I hope that readers will catch that same glimpse of my grandmother in Elizabeth that I did—vibrant, vulnerable, and yearning for love and all that life has to offer—and feel inspired.

—Léna Roy

Act I
FRIDAY

THE SUMMER THEATRE was on a pier that jutted off from the boardwalk over the sand. Sometimes when there was a storm and the tide was unusually high the actors could hear the soft swish of water underneath the stage; and the assistant stage manager, one of whose duties was to sweep the stage, was always in a rage at the sand which blew up between the floorboards and through the canvas floorcloth so that ten minutes after he had swept there would be a soft white dust over everything.

On the warm summer nights after the curtain had come down on the evening's performance, the actors would hurry out of costume and makeup and stroll down the boardwalk, stopping for ice cream or Cokes, or drifting into town where there were restaurants and nightclubs. The apprentices, who served as ushers, would walk along in their bright summer evening clothes, and in the ice cream parlors would talk loudly of the evening's performance and of the problems of acting,

so that everybody would know that they belonged to the theatre.

Sometimes, if Elizabeth had received a tip, she would go with the other apprentices; sometimes she would walk into town to a midnight movie with Ben Walton, the assistant stage manager, who was also an apprentice actor; but usually she stayed backstage, doing odd jobs for any of the professional actors who needed anything, waiting for a word or a gesture from Kurt Canitz.

Kurt Canitz was the director at the theatre, but occasionally he would take a role that appealed to him and then he would have Elizabeth cue him. When he grew tired of that, he would say, "I'm sick of working. Come and talk with me, Elizabeth." And then he would take her to the restaurant in his hotel, the Ambassador, and talk to her for hours about the theatre, about the productions he had directed on Broadway, about Elizabeth's own talent as an actress.

I have never lived before, Elizabeth thought. Until this summer I did not know what it was to be alive.

One Friday night in the beginning of August, Kurt, his face smeared with greasepaint and cold cream, said, "Elizabeth, I want to talk to you. Go wait for me on the old boardwalk."

The old boardwalk was about a hundred feet closer to the ocean than the regular boardwalk. It had long ago been washed away and consisted now of perhaps a dozen barnacled piles sticking haphazardly up out of the sand.

Elizabeth climbed onto one of the piles and sat facing the

ocean. She had on the full long yellow dirndl skirt and peasant blouse she had worn for ushering, and the sand had come in through her sandals and settled between her toes. The tide was coming in and small, precocious waves crept closer and closer to her. From farther down the beach came the sound of two recorders playing a duet, and the delicate notes of an old English madrigal floated up to her, so faint and so blown by the wind that the music seemed to be part of the night, one with the lapping of the small waves against the piles, the roar of the breakers muted in the quiet night, rather than a sound produced by two human beings blowing into wooden pipes. Behind her and up the boardwalk Elizabeth could still hear voices from the theatre, stragglers from the audience standing around on the boardwalk talking, members of the company coming out of the stage door and discussing plans for the evening.

Elizabeth raised her head as a voice called, “Elizabeth Jerrold, is that you?”

She tried to keep the disappointment that it wasn’t Kurt out of her voice as she called back, “Hi, Ben, where are you off to?”

Ben dropped off the boardwalk and clambered up onto the pile next to Elizabeth. “Hey, the tide’s coming in.”

“I know it is.”

He turned and tried to look at her face, which was only a pale shadow in the starlight. “Come on down the boardwalk to Lukie’s and have a hamburger with me.”

“I’m broke.”

“I’ll treat you,” Ben said, still trying to read her expression.

“I can’t.” She put her head down on her knees.

“Waiting for Canitz?” There was a trace of anger in Ben’s voice.

She nodded.

“Listen, Elizabeth,” he said, “maybe I’m the last person to speak to you about this, but I’ve been around and I just want to tell you you’re riding for a fall.”

“Anything else you wanted to say?” Elizabeth asked him.

“Nope. Where do you suppose Jane and John Peter dug up those recorders? That melancholy stuff they’re playing’s bad for my mood. My gosh, the divine Sarah Courtmont stank tonight, didn’t she? She blew her lines twice.” Ben reached down the length of his immensely long, immensely thin legs, took off one of his shoes, and shook out the sand, almost losing his balance and toppling off the pile. “I don’t know why that dame thinks she can act,” he muttered as he managed to put the shoe back on without falling.

“I’m not a big fan of hers either, but most of the kids think she’s magnificent,” Elizabeth said, looking surreptitiously at the luminous hands of her watch. It was almost midnight.

“What a dump this is,” Ben said. “What made you come here anyhow, Liz?”

“It was the only place I could get a scholarship.”

“Scholarship, my eye,” Ben snorted. “You’re paying J. P. Price twenty bucks a week for room and board, aren’t you?”

“Yes.” Elizabeth looked at her watch again. Barely a minute had passed. And Kurt had not come.

“I swore I’d never be an apprentice,” Ben said. “So J. P. Price offers me room and board in exchange for being assistant stage

manager and all I am is an apprentice who works harder, that's all. And we're so much better than the professional company and the stars—I mean you and me and Jane and John Peter—that's the worst of it. I've never seen such a bunch of second-string hams in my life." He pulled off his other shoe. "There's more sand in my shoes than on the beach."

"What about Valborg Andersen?" Elizabeth asked, reaching out to steady Ben as he struggled to tie his shoelaces. "Don't you think she's good?"

"Now there's an actress," Ben admitted. "I am enjoying watching her rehearse, so I guess it's worth the rest of the summer just to see that, but I don't think she should be doing *Macbeth*. Her Lady Macbeth stinks."

Elizabeth scratched a mosquito bite on one of her long sun-tanned legs—her legs, though less skinny, were almost as long as Ben's—and looked at her watch again. Then she turned around and looked back across the boardwalk at the theatre. Now the last of the audience had dispersed and the building was dark, except for a light in J. P. Price's office. She couldn't see the back where the dressing rooms were. Perhaps Kurt was still talking to someone in one of them. "I guess Miss Andersen knows what she's doing," she told Ben.

"You're so wrong," Ben said. "It's just the great ones like Andersen who *don't* know what they're doing."

"Okay. You've been around and I haven't, so I can't argue with you," Elizabeth agreed, infuriated, "but you are lucky that you get to watch Miss Andersen rehearse. All the apprentices wish they could watch the professionals and the stars rehearse, but Mr. Price won't allow it." Elizabeth then laughed and said,

“When I saw Price about coming here I told him I’d played Lady Macbeth at school and he told me he wasn’t planning to produce *Macbeth*. I can hardly wait to see it on Monday.”

“I bet you pray to that big picture of Valborg Andersen you have on your bureau,” Ben said.

“If I’d lived a few thousand years ago when graven images were still permitted, I probably would,” Elizabeth admitted.

From the direction of the theatre they heard a voice, too blown by the wind to identify, calling, “Hoo-oo, Liz Jerrold!”

Elizabeth twisted around on her pile, cupped her hands to her mouth, and called back, “Hoo-oo!”

“Telephone!” the voice said.

“Okay,” Elizabeth yelled, disappointed once again that it wasn’t Kurt. She jumped off her pile, landing lightly in the wet sand. A wave licked at her sandals. “Now, who on earth would be telephoning *me*?” she asked Ben, and a vague feeling of unease spread over her. “If Kurt comes, tell him I’ll be right back, will you please?” she added.

“Sorry, toots,” Ben said, scrambling down from his pile. “The gaseous activity of my stomach will not be denied. I’m going down the boardwalk for some food.”

Elizabeth crossed the sand to the boardwalk, pulled herself up, and stood, a tall slender shadow in the darkness, looking down at Ben.

“Give me a hand,” Ben said plaintively. “You know I am not athletic.”

Elizabeth extended a hand, which Ben clutched as he managed to clamber up beside her, panting. “It’s the awful life I

lead, turning night into day, as my dear grandmother would say. Come down later to Lukie's and tell me who the call is from."

"Maybe," Elizabeth said, and turned and ran toward the theatre.

In the office Mr. Price was putting away some papers. "Call operator twenty-three," he told her, "and put out the lights and lock up when you're through."

"Okay, Mr. Price."

"And be in the box office at nine tomorrow morning, will you, Elizabeth?"

"I'll miss my classes—" Elizabeth started, then stopped. "Okay, Mr. Price."

"Good night, darling," Mr. Price said with automatic affection, and left.

Elizabeth picked up the telephone and asked for operator twenty-three.

"You have a call from Jordan, Virginia, Miss Jerrold," the operator told her, and Elizabeth's heart began to beat with apprehension. If the call was from Jordan, it meant that it must be from her aunt with whom she had lived since her father's death, and Aunt Harriet Jerrold would not call except for bad news. Elizabeth heard the telephone ringing and she could imagine it ringing in the dark, narrow hall of the house in Jordan. It's after midnight, she thought. Why on earth would Aunt Harriet be calling me at this time of night?

The phone kept ringing, and after a while the operator said, "There doesn't seem to be any answer, Miss Jerrold. I've

been trying to get you since eight o'clock this evening and either the line was busy or you couldn't be reached. Do you think I should try again in twenty minutes?"

"No," Elizabeth said, "it's too late now. I'd better call in the morning. Shall I ask for you?"

"I won't be on in the morning, but ask for operator nineteen and she'll take care of you."

"All right. Thanks." Elizabeth hung up and a sick feeling of apprehension settled in the pit of her stomach. She looked around the small office, starkly painted white. On the wall was a calendar, opened to the month of August, 1946, showing the schedule for the rest of the summer. Most summer-stock theatres did a play a week, and this theatre was no exception. There are four more plays to learn from, Elizabeth thought wistfully. Next to the calendar was the box office window.

Elizabeth reached up to the neat cubbyholes to touch one of the stacks of pink and blue and green tickets which she would be selling the next morning. Under the green money box was a large mimeographed seating plan of the theatre, and on this she would mark off all the tickets she sold. She rather enjoyed sitting on the high stool by the ticket window and chatting with the people who would be seeing the play that night or later on in the week; she had come to know several who returned each week, and tried to always give them the choicest seats. I love everything about this place, she thought. Ben can say anything he likes about it, but I've loved every minute of this summer so far.

"Liz!" a voice called. "Are you there?"

"I'm here," Elizabeth called back.

After a moment Jane Gardiner's slight figure appeared in the doorway. Ben had been in the theatre since he was a child, only taking a break for college at his father's insistence, but it was Jane, fresh out of drama school, who seemed to have the wisdom the rest of them lacked. Elizabeth always felt tall and clumsy beside her, though Jane said that Elizabeth was a Viking, and she herself the product of a decadent civilization.

"Ben told me you had a long distance call," Jane said, "so I thought I'd come over and make sure it wasn't bad news."

Elizabeth shook her head. "The operator said she had a call from Jordan for me and that she'd been trying to get me all evening. But when she rang just now, there wasn't any answer. It must have been Aunt Harriet. And Aunt Harriet never answers the phone after ten o'clock. If anybody called to tell her the house was on fire, it could just burn down if it depended on her answering the phone. I do hope she isn't ill or something."

"Probably just wants to talk to you," Jane said.

"Not Aunt Harriet. It's bound to be something bad or she wouldn't call." Elizabeth frowned and tried to imagine what particular bad thing might be responsible for the call.

"Now, don't go brooding, Liz," Jane told her severely. "John Peter says you worry too much about things, and he's right."

Elizabeth sat down in Mr. Price's swivel chair. "Aunt Harriet hated having me come here this summer. She'd do anything in the world to get me back. She thinks, as I believe I have told you before, that the theatre is an invention of Satan."

"What gets me," Jane said, sitting on a corner of the desk and resting her delicate feet on the edge of the big tin waste-

paper basket, “is if she hates the theatre so, why did she let you come here in the first place? She gives you the twenty a week room and board, doesn’t she?”

“I wouldn’t be here otherwise.” Elizabeth picked up a glass paperweight that had a snowman in it, and shook it to set up a cloud of snowflakes falling inside. She watched it intently. “Father didn’t have a penny when he died. Teachers don’t make much money, as you know, and Father didn’t even teach in a university—he taught at a boys’ school—and he didn’t have any sense about money anyhow. Aunt Harriet took me because it was her Christian duty, and not because she wanted me. Please, Jane, if you ever see me doing anything because it’s my Christian duty, stop me.”

“You aren’t apt to,” Jane said. “You’re too good a Christian.”

Elizabeth smiled at her, then looked at the snow that was still falling, very gently now, inside the glass globe. “It was kind of a bet. Aunt Harriet doesn’t make bets, of course, but that’s what it was.”

“What was the bet?” Jane asked, upsetting the wastepaper basket and spilling papers all over the floor. “Darn,” she said, and got down on her hands and knees to clean up the mess. It always amazed Elizabeth that in positions that would make anybody else look awkward, Jane still managed to be graceful.

“She said that if I’d major in chemistry at Smith instead of dramatic arts, and if I graduated with honors, she’d let me go to a summer theatre.” Elizabeth, too, was now down on her hands and knees, helping Jane cram papers back into the basket. “I guess she thought if I majored in chemistry I might forget about the theatre. Well, I didn’t forget about the theatre

and it was kind of a challenge, so I just managed to squeak through with honors, no magna or summa cum laude, just plain cum laude, but anyhow it was honors and she hadn't specified. She made a fuss and tried to get out of it but I'd already got my scholarship here so I threw a scene about her word being no good and how hard I'd worked and how little twenty dollars is to her and all that. I was really stinking, Jane. I feel terribly ashamed whenever I think about it. But I had to do it, and no matter how guilty I feel I know I'd do it again."

"Yes, I know," Jane said, sitting down on the floor and leaning back against the wall. "I've never seen anyone look more determined than you did last spring in Price's office."

That day in Mr. Price's office in New York, Elizabeth thought now, had been the turning point of her whole life. If it had not been for that day last spring, none of the summer—working in the theatre, getting to know Kurt, beginning a completely new life—would have been possible.

Even then she had been aware of it. Sitting in the anteroom of Mr. Price's office, she had thought, How strange to know that the whole course of my life can be changed today in this dingy office.

But it was true. It was so frighteningly true that her hands had felt cold with fear and her heart had beat so fast that for a moment she was afraid that she might faint in the hot stuffiness of the little room. Although it was an unseasonably hot April day, steam hissed in the radiator, and there was no window in the anteroom. Even the office door to the main hallway was closed.

Excerpt from THE JOYS OF LOVE by Madeleine L'Engle. Copyright © 2008 by Madeleine L'Engle. Published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC, in 2008. All rights reserved. Visitors to this web site are warned that this work is protected under copyright laws and reproduction is strictly prohibited. Permission to reproduce the material in any manner or medium must be secured from Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC.