



**Matilda
Windsor**
is coming home

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Published by Inspired Quill: May 2021

First Edition

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TW: This book contains mentions of rape and themes of mental trauma.

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Contact the author through her website:

annegoodwin.weebly.com

Chief Editor: Sara-Jayne Slack

Cover Design: Valeria Aguilera

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Paperback ISBN: 978-1-913117-05-4

eBook ISBN: 978-1-913117-06-1

PDF Edition

Inspired Quill Publishing, UK

Business Reg. No. 7592847

www.inspired-quill.com

Praise for *Sugar & Snails*

An absorbing, clever and heartening debut novel.

– Alison Moore,
author of Booker-shortlisted *The Lighthouse*

Fiction delivered by a writer who knows not only how to craft her words but also what those words should be communicating.

– Dr Suzanne Conboy-Hill in *The Psychologist*

I loved this book. Sugar and Snails is beautifully written and a truly impressive debut by Anne Goodwin. It reminded me a little of Claire Messud's The Woman Upstairs. The character of Di, at first frustrating, grows more endearing as you begin to understand her. Her friend Venus and lover Simon are well-drawn; there as foils to Di's story. A beautiful and gripping read.

– Fleur Smithwick,
author of *How to make a Friend*

Sugar and Snails is a brave and bold emotional roller-coaster of a read. Anne Goodwin's prose is at once sensitive, invigorating and inspired. I was hooked from the start and in bits by the end. Very much to be recommended.

– Rebecca Root,
'The Queen's Gambit' actor

Praise for *Underneath*

A dark and disturbing tale of a man who appears ordinary on the surface, but is deeply damaged. Clever and chilling; [Underneath] is a story that will stay with you long after you've finished reading.

– Sanjida Kay,
author of *Bone by Bone*

[Underneath] is a compelling, insightful and brave novel of doomed, twisted romance driven by a sustained and unsettling voice.

– Ashley Stokes,
author of *The Syllabus of Errors*

It's a quiet novel that gradually unpicks the past to discover what lies behind the protagonist's façade. Obviously drawing on her experience as a clinical psychologist, Anne Goodwin takes what could have been a dry case study and builds it into a compelling read.

– Mary Mayfield,
Our Book Reviews

Intelligent, insightful writing which takes you beneath the surface of life in many, many ways.

– Pamela Robertson,
Books, Life and Everything

Praise for *Becoming Someone*

This is a varied collection which shows you different aspects of identity and what gives an individual a sense of self. You can dip into it or pick a story to read and can be sure that there will be a thought-provoking look at what it is to 'be'. In short: Powerful writing which examines what makes a person.

– Books, Life and Everything

Anne Goodwin has such an observant eye for human motivation and behaviour.

– Literary Flits

I loved the way the author was willing to play around and try different techniques, including one story in second person. Highly recommended.

– Dorothy Winsor, bestselling author of *The Wysman*

To call these stories 'psychological studies' might not be quite accurate, but it's close ... All of them share Anne Goodwin's perceptive, sympathetic insights.

– Our Book Reviews Online

For the survivors, and those who provide support along the way.

WHEN YOU FIND me, you will want to hear my story. Or the part of my story that tells of you. Until then, I turn it around in my mind to prevent it fading. When we meet, it will sing.

As a lass, I was full of stories. They kept Mother entertained after we snuffed out the light. Stories of a dazzling future with no thought of fathers, husbands, brothers or sons.

Yours begins one night when Mother's betrayal stole my appetite for fiction. "I'm sorry, Matilda, but I can't come with you on Saturday. Mr Windsor needs me at the shop."

"You should have said you had a *prior engagement*." That's what she'd tell *me* if I was tempted to break *my* word when something nicer came along. But what could be nicer than hearing me recite? The shiny buttons and spools of thread and silken ribbon in Windsor's Haberdashery would seem drab against her daughter's red rosette.

"Grow up, Matilda. A child half your age would accept that if *I* don't work, *you* don't eat."

I turned my back on her. She reached for my hand, but I slid it between my pillow and my cheek. She didn't try a second time. Didn't shepherd me through "The Lady of Shalott". Didn't beg for the next instalment of the saga of the girl from The Marsh who

becomes a famous doctor. Soon, soft whistling signalled she'd dropped off.

Awake in the dark, while Mother slept, a hollow feeling swept over me. As if Mother preferred Mr Windsor's dreams to mine.

Chapter 1

October 1989

THE CUSHION SIGHS, squashed by a body sinking into the seat beside her. Matty scrunches her already-closed eyes. She does not care for distractions when she has a recital to prepare. And, never able to anticipate *when* she might be called on to deliver her lines, her day spools out as one continuous rehearsal. Matty's burden weighs heavily upon her, but she bears it with grace.

A whiff of lavender, but this is not her mother. Matty has been deceived before. The breath is too loud, too erratic. A smoker's lungs. Matty tilts her head away. Unmoored from the monologue, she is obliged to return, silently, to the start.

Hands folded in her lap, she conjures her mother behind closed eyelids. Mouthing the words from alongside the orchestra pit, her features contorted to magnify the shapes of the vowels. Matty smiles inwardly, as confidence courses through her bloodstream. Although she can reel off the words as readily as her name, her mother's prompting spells the difference between fourth place with nothing to show for it and a silken rosette.

“Matty!”

It cannot be anything important: her stomach signals it is too soon after luncheon for afternoon tea. Poetry pattering in her brain, she clenches her lips as if forming knots in party balloons.

“Matty, they’ll be here shortly!”

Swallowing her vexation, Matty opens her eyes. A maid has a cardboard box in her arms and a small brown suitcase by her feet. “Are you leaving us, dear?”

The maid laughs, baring her teeth, which are in tiptop condition, remarkably so given the lack of affordable dentistry for the lower ranks. “No, but you are. They’ll be coming any minute from Tuke House.”

“Tuke House?” Matty knows of the Palladium and the Royal Albert Hall. She knows of the Folies Bergère, despite its salacious reputation. She has never heard of Tuke House. “Thank you, dear, but the current arrangements are tickety-boo.”

As the maid flashes her teeth again, Matty studies her maw for a wink of precious metal. The prince gave her mother a pair of gold molars to match her wedding band, but when Matty’s were due for renewal she’d made do with plastic.

“We packed your things this morning, remember?” Dipping into the box, the maid parades the bric-a-brac piece by piece: a chunky book with a crucifix on the cover; a crumpled brown-paper bag of chewies; a conker; a poorly-composed photograph of a boy balancing the Eiffel Tower on his head. Is this one of her mother’s parlour games?

“You’re going up in the world, Matty Osborne.” Intent on memorising the contents of the box, Matty failed to notice the housekeeper encroaching. “Seems you’re too good for us now.”

I am? The housekeeper is never uncertain. Never wrong. If *she* thinks Matty is leaving, it would be unwise to contradict her.

Fishing in her pocket, Matty produces a palmful of coins. “Will this do for the taxicab?”

“Save your coppers for jelly babies,” says the housekeeper. “It’s a five-minute hop to Tuke House. You know, the annexe where the sanatorium used to be?”

“We went for a visit yesterday,” says the maid. “Found your bed in the dormitory and had a cuppa in the lounge.”

The memory roasts her cheeks. The butler, whose coarse accent and casual apparel led her to mistake him for a hall boy or porter, addled her further by asking how she took her tea. As if there were any alternative to *the way it comes!* Yet beneath that unfortunate incident lies a pleasanter proposition, if she can locate it. Matty shuts her eyes.

When she opens them, the answer appears before her. “Good afternoon, Ms Osborne,” says the circus girl. “May I escort you to your new abode?”

From her plume of pink hair to her patterned harem pants, the circus girl is as cheery as a rainbow scuttling a storm. How was this bohemian character recruited to a country house? Matty will shower her with honours to prevent Bertram Mills and his cronies luring her back to the Big Top. She springs to her feet.

“Hi there, Matty.” Even here, in the ladies’ quarters, the butler is informally attired, in a handyman’s blue jeans and a school gym shirt. “Haven’t you any outdoor shoes?”

Matty checks her feet, colourfully shod in tartan slippers with a red faux-fur trim. What need has *she* for outdoor shoes? The man must be a communist, bent on bamboozling her with his rhetoric.

“Shoes?” says the housekeeper. “She’s not scaling Scafell Pike.” Nevertheless, she urges Matty to resume her seat. Then, after directing the maid to open the suitcase, she kneels on the floor to exchange Matty’s slippers for leather shoes the colour of the conker,

albeit with less of a shine. Matty *must* have been promoted for the housekeeper to fasten her shoelaces like a shop-girl in Browne's.

Helping her to her feet, the housekeeper whispers a warning, "Don't get too comfy, mind. You'll be back in two shakes of a cuddy's tail."

Matty feels something stir below her breastbone as her gaze flits between the housekeeper and the circus girl. A snip of rebellion wizened with neglect. As the feeling blooms, it comes through to Matty that her mother would not appoint this person to the position of housekeeper. She has been duped by her imperial bearing and midnight-blue dress. She should have detected something foxy in the thickly pancaked makeup. One cannot trust a person who prepares her face for the stage but never deigns to recite.

Matty links arms with the circus girl. She is leaving for a more appreciative audience. No, she will not be coming back.

LUMBERING DOWN THE tiled corridor with a batty septuagenarian on one side and a hefty bag on the other, Janice's muscles zinged. Neither the pallor of the barley-water walls nor the pong of industrial-strength cleaning fluid could diminish her delight, barely a month into the job, at having made a difference. While outwardly a sober – if flamboyantly clad – professional regulating her pace to the patient's crawl, inside Janice was a child skipping hand-in-hand with her playmate.

Shuffling along the spine of the Victorian building, Matty displayed no interest in the landmarks Janice was still learning to navigate. To the left, the doors to the continuing-care wards, rescued from anonymity by signboards strung from the ceiling; to the right, entrances to departments supporting, or parasitic upon, the business of warehousing society's estranged. Farther along,

Market Square, with the patients' bank and small shop where they could spend their pittance, was a pauper's theme park, tarted up like an olde worlde confectioner's. Then the corridor leading to the boardroom and the main entrance, with the switchboard operator's cubicle in the teak-panelled lobby and the staircase to the offices of those who came to work in suits. They passed the primped-up canteen where, on the other side of reinforced glass, domestics in mustard-coloured tunics ministered to an ashtray in the centre of a table.

A few steps ahead, Clive Musgrove, the nurse in charge of Tuke House, stopped at a door immediately beyond the stairway to the sewing room, and set down Matty's case and cardboard box to grasp the handle. Since the door opened outwards, he exited first, holding it for the women to go through. He nodded to Matty, "You'll be glad you wore your shoes."

Across the cobbled courtyard, Tuke's rear windows glowed. As the door to the main building crashed behind them, Matty stalled, juggling Janice's arm. "Okay, Matty?"

"Come on," said Clive. "You must be dying for a cup of tea."

Matty wouldn't budge. Although mild for October, the late afternoon sun couldn't stretch beyond the middle of the courtyard and Matty shivered in her flimsy dress and cardigan. Clive should've insisted she wear a coat. If she possessed one. "What's bothering you, Matty?" asked Janice.

"Will he find me?"

Despite her shabby presentation, she spoke like the Queen Mother, with clipped vowels and a tone scraped clean of opinion or capacity to offend. They didn't know enough about her to guess who *he* might be, and whether she *wanted* or *feared* being found. When Janice delved further, Matty simply smiled.

"Have you got a fancy man?" said Clive.

Janice bristled, but his teasing roused Matty from her torpor. With a girlish giggle, she shambled forward.

While proceeding at the pace of a tortoise, Janice's expectations hared ahead. *He* might be the crux of Matty's rehabilitation. The bridge to who she would have been if the institution hadn't squandered five decades of her life.