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A haunting love story set in the Channel Islands and New Zealand in the 19th century.

William, whose hypnotic, masculine presence made two women adore him... of Marianne, moody, passionate, brilliant, by whom William was both fascinated and repelled... of Marguerite, Marianne's beautiful sister whom William wanted with all his heart.

They had both loved him for years. Now they were waiting for him to return from his journeys and claim his bride.

Green Dolphin Street Details

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Author : Elizabeth Goudge

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From Reader Review Green Dolphin Street for online ebook

Karyl says

As soon as Marianne sets her eyes on William Ozanne, after his father finally returns to his birthplace, she also sets her cap for him. From that very moment she realizes that she is meant for him, and that she would mold him into exactly the man she wants him to be. However, her sister Marguerite falls in love with him as well, a pure, giving love that asks for nothing in return. After emigrating to New Zealand to make a new life for himself as an adult, he writes home to ask his love to join him in the New World -- except he mixes up the names of the sisters. What follows is a hard look of what it means to give up everything to make someone else happy, and how one can find peace and happiness in return. And finally at the end, the one who had thought she had lost it all years and years ago, and had been living a lie all this time, realizes instead that she's been given an incredible gift -- and it is the making of her.

This book is very long, true. There were parts that dragged a bit, but I think it was necessary to fully flesh out each and every character. There are so many people, and each one is a completely three-dimensional character, not simply cameos that flash upon the scene and are as quickly gone again. The writing is a little high-flown and romantic, but for me it gave the book an almost soft-focus feeling as I read it.

Beautiful book, and one definitely worth sticking with.

Jane says

A long time ago, when I made the transition from junior to senior member of the library, my mother steered me towards a number of authors whose books she loved and that she thought I might love too. I read some of them then, I read some of them later, but it was years before I began to read Elizabeth Goudge, who I knew was a particular favourite.

Her books didn't appeal to me at all back in the day, and when their author fell out of fashion and her books disappeared from the library shelves I forgot all about her. I can't remember how or where I found her again, but I'm very pleased that I did.

I'm also pleased that I didn't read her all those years ago, because I think that the qualities that make her an interesting writer are better appreciated with a little age and experience, with an awareness that life is short and may take unexpected and difficult turns.

I always liked the look of 'Green Dolphin Country', but because it was such a very big book I picked up others first. This year though, when I was looking for a book to read on Elizabeth Goudge's birthday, I decided that its time had come; and I had a lovely few days caught up with the story, the characters, the world, through nearly half a century.

The story opens on one of the Channel Islands - the author has given the fictional name of St. Pierre - in the middle of the 19th century. Two very different sisters were growing up there. Marianne was sixteen, she was dark and lacking in beauty, she had a passionate temper and she was bright and curious about everything the world had to offer. Too bright and too curious for the age and the place where she lived. Eleven year-old Marguerite was fair and pretty, she was vivacious, she loved her life, her home and her family, and she

wanted nothing more than happiness for the people she loved and the world around her.

The courses of both their lives begin to change when a newly widowed doctor and his thirteen year-old son, William, come home to the island. Marianne is quick to see something happening, to investigate and to make friends; Marguerite follows a little more cautiously, and makes an equally good but quite different impression.

Marianne plans to win William as her own; but it is clear to everyone except her that he sees her as a friend - maybe the sibling he never had - and that Marguerite is the girl he loves - and will always love - above all others. She isn't a fool by any means. Knowing that she wasn't a beauty and that she couldn't match the feminine ideal of her time Marianne set about becoming the most chic, the most witty of her social circle and she succeeded; she just couldn't understand that there were some things that she could never change, that never could be changed.

William joined that Royal Navy, and he tried to secure his future with Marguerite before he sailed away, but circumstances - and a little manipulation from Marianne - resulted in him leaving before he had said many of the things he had intended to say. When he was ashore in the Far East William was tricked and robbed and couldn't reach his ship before it sailed. That meant that he was AWOL from the Navy, and that he would be arrested if he travelled back home. He was extremely lucky to meet someone he knew, and to be offered the chance travel to a small colony in New Zealand to build a new life.

Over the course of the next few years William established himself, and then he was able to write home to ask the girl he loved to sail across the world to be his bride. He was tired, he had been drinking, he had a great deal to say, and somehow he wrote the name Marianne when he had written to write Marguerite

It sounds improbable, but this twist in the tale was inspired by a real-life story in which exactly the same thing happened!

Marianne travelled to New Zealand with no idea at all that she was not expected; Marguerite was left at home struggling to understand what had happened; and William waited with no idea at all he had sent for the wrong girl.

That is just the beginning of a wonderfully rich tale of love and adventure in times and places where the world was undergoing great change. I had worried that it would be a tale of a great love lost, but of course in Elizabeth Goudge's hands it was much more than that: it was a story that illustrated that the journey to grace so often begins by accepting that we may not be able to have what we want most and by finding strength to do what we must.

There are lessons about loyalty and friendship, about the depth and complexity of marriage, about the human spirit in the darkest and happiest of times, and the emotional and spiritual lives of the characters at the centre of the story were illuminated so very well.

Marianne is at the centre of the story, and she a very difficult character to like. Her spirit is wonderful, but she was manipulative, she could see no point of view but her own, and there were some lessons that it seemed she could never quite learn. I couldn't ever say that I liked her, but I could understand who she was and why she spoke and acted as she did, and I believed in her; as I did in William and Marguerite.

There is a wonderful supporting cast whose stories are woven around the stories of those three, and that did much to make the world in this book live and breathe.

Elizabeth Goudge wrote that she never travelled to New Zealand, and that she researched as much as she could and imagined the rest. I suspect that she imagined too much, that many of the pictures she has drawn were not true to life, but for the purposes of her story I think that they work.

She wrote so beautifully. I loved the descriptive prose that drew me so close to her characters and allowed me to see the places they saw and the world that they live in so very clearly. It also served to control the pace, to allow time to absorb the human emotions that are the lifeblood of this book. It is a big book but I find myself wishing that it could have been bigger, that I could have stayed longer and seen more. I would have liked rather more time with Marguerite, though I do understand why New Zealand was the main focus of the story.

I couldn't see how there could be a right ending, but there was, and it was so utterly right – emotionally and spiritually – that there was a smile on my face and there were tears in my eyes.

Abigail Hartman says

I came away from this novel...vaguely confused. In some ways I enjoyed it very much, and in others I was left with a sensation of, "Ha ha, wait, what?" Therefore, the thing to do is clearly to take a page out of Cait's playbook and make lists (and anyway, lists are more fun to read).

Thumbs-up!

1. Despite the fact that there was so much of it that I did, admittedly, skim through a few paragraphs here and there, the descriptions are beautiful. Whether talking about the Channel island or New Zealand, or England or China, Goudge paints the landscape through the eyes of the characters and makes it its own character in the novel -- one of the most important characters, in fact. And it's breathtaking.
2. The story arcs are fantastic. I almost never read books that follow the protagonist(s) from childhood to old age -- they always sound a bit dull, honestly -- but I was fascinated by the evolution of the very different physical and yet very similar spiritual lives of Marianne, Marguerite, and William. (Marianne's totally not pleasant, but she's still, in my opinion, the most interesting and engaging character. William annoyed me.) One of the aspects of the story I admired most was Goudge's awesome use of repetition: I love the way she "recycles" the same phrase or even paragraph to emphasize the connections between different characters.
3. It's engaging. Again, a story that follows three characters through almost their whole lives doesn't *sound* particularly great to me, but while *Green Dolphin Street* is a) pretty long and b) heavy on descriptive passages and c) more about spiritual journeys than catastrophes and dramatic events (there are catastrophes and dramatic events, they're just not the focus, in my opinion), it still pulled me in. I wanted to keep reading; I wanted to know how the characters' struggles and relationships would or would not be resolved. Many of their trials rang true with me, and I was invested in their stories. **The lumber-business bits in New Zealand were the best.**

Thumbs...down? Sideways?

1. "You probably found the theology confusing because it was confused." This is a book suffused with a mystical/pietistic perspective on life, and while much of it is quite beautiful and has elements of truth, I honestly felt that the core message was unrealistic and unbiblical. I could have misunderstood it, but that was

the sensation I took away. Christ is mentioned a few times in His role as suffering Savior, but He was not, as I saw it, central to the salvation of the characters. Indeed, the characters seemed to be "saved" through their relationships with other characters -- either the giving or receiving of some kind of "sacrificial love." In one case a character even (view spoiler) God Himself often seemed to be nothing more personal than a mysterious force in the background. Of course, in large measure the novel seems to be allegorical, but the message struck a wrong note. **Sacrificial love toward one another is important, but ultimately we don't save ourselves by giving up everything for another person.** *Green Dolphin Street* seemed to me to go far astray on this point.

2. Sometimes the characters left me doing the "huh what?" thing. Like, Tai Haruru. He was a fascinating figure and his story arc, too, was interesting; however, I thought from his first introduction that he was much older than William and Marianne. Thus (view spoiler)

There are more likes than dislikes, then. It's just that the dislikes were very large ones, not just minor points that appeared here and there but could be dismissed; the spiritual message covered the whole of the story, and while it had some biblical points, I was ultimately uncomfortable with where it went.

Jan says

4.5 Stars (maybe even 5)

Even though I've heard great things about Elizabeth Goudge for years, this is the first book of hers that I've read. But it won't be the last - I plan to read more soon. She's a great story teller and wordsmith, and even though one character infuriated me at times, I loved this book.

Favorite quotes:

"It's not what you expected" he asked softly and mockingly. "Freedom? Scope? Satisfaction of love and ambition? You thought that here you'd have them all, eh? Life's much the same, my dear, wherever you live it."

"Huddled under the last of the trees, the forest with its darkness and dangers behind them, they stood and looked out at the fair prospect as Christian and Hopeful, worn by their travels, must have looked out over that valley where ran the river of the water of life."

"The sea was turquoise blue, spread all over with diamond-crested ripples, and the sky overhead was blue, too, with small clouds like pink sea shells sailing along on it because it was so early in the morning."

"Marianne had restricted the acreage of looking glass in her daughter's room lest vanity be encouraged, but in her own she saw her reflection at every turn.... It was very necessary that one should, at her age, she considered. When a woman is fifty-six years old and for twenty-four years has endured the rigors of pioneering in a new country, she is no longer in any danger of vanity when she looks in the glass, but she needs to see herself from every angle if her façade of dignity is to be equally impressive to the beholder whether he beholds from north, south, east, or west."

"... for he understood now that love is not love at all until it has paid the price."

Lisa says

This book was referred to me by my dear college roomie Diane, who was killed in an auto accident this past January. She happened to randomly mention it in one of our few Facebook exchanges. I decided to request it from the library and received a 1944 edition (possible 1st edition). It was a very interesting read. Although a fictional storyline it is based on the true experience of a man in the 1800's, writing to the father of his childhood sweetheart, asking that she be allowed to join him as wife in a new country, but he accidentally writes her sister's name, and it is the "wrong" sister who is sent. This is *not* a Hallmark movie story - it delves into character development, personality flaws and conflicts, romantic love, wrought love, etc. Much of the second half of the book was set in mid-century New Zealand, as it was being developed by euro-settlers, with some related, violent clashes in the storyline. It was often slow, but I found it thought-provoking. Perhaps I chose and finished it mainly because of Di's recommendation, but I'm glad I chose something off my literary beaten path.

Jane Jago says

Not my favourite Elizabeth Goudge. But still

Lisa says

I love this book mostly for the beauty. Things like tiny, colored shells in a hidden beach-cave with gulls flying over head. The book opens with the mother coaching her two girls who are lying on boards, so marvelous! It's awesome that the book is inspired by a story of two sisters who meet on a rock and kiss, something like that. The contrast between the sisters is amazing to recall, and the way the author created them to be SO real. You could dig and dig and Marguerite would be pure Marguerite, and Marianne would be pure Marianne, all the way to the end. We KNOW them.

I've often thought of the ending as "mature." (view spoiler)

Marguerite ...

"It always gave her quite a shock to see herself in the glass nowadays, for during the last year she had grown quite suddenly to look like a woman. Gone now was the round, fat little Marguerite of the past. She had grown tall and slender, one of those naturally graceful women whose every movement cannot help being one of beauty. Her small head was proudly poised on her long neck, her clear skin flushed with health and tanned by the sun, her hair a riotous mop of natural curls, her eyes ever bluer than they had been in her childhood. Her complete naturalness and her un-self-conscious delight in life shone from her like sunshine. 'Why!' she ejaculated in astonishment, 'I do believe I'm beautiful!'

'Very conceited of you to say so,' said Marianne tartly, thrusting a dainty little foot out of bed.

'Why?' asked Marguerite. 'It's not to my credit if I'm beautiful. The credit is God's, and I like to give credit where it is due.'

'Now you're being irreverent,' said Marianne, feeling for her bedroom slippers.

'Not at all,' said Marguerite. 'I'm being grateful. Thank you, God, for making me beautiful. I give a lot of pleasure.'

And she pirouetted round the room, a whirling pillar of blue and white and gold."

Karen says

This is my all time favorite book. Good luck finding a copy, though. It is out of print. I checked it out from the Orem Library but it has since gone missing. I bought a used copy off of Amazon.

Interesting fact--this book was made into a movie in the 40s, I think, staring Donna Read, Lana Turner, Van Heflen. It has some early cinematographic attempts at portraying an earthquake. It is reasonable good.

I read it first in the 90s but reread it about a year ago. Still as good as I remember it. Don't expect a quick and easy read. The characters are complex and it covers a long period of time.

Basic plot is of two sisters, both in love with one man. He favors the younger sister but when alone and drunk in New Zealand, he writes a letter asking the older sister to come to New Zealand and marry him. (Their names were similar.) Now what does he do? Read the book and find out.

Christy says

In your typical love story, girl meets boy and they fall in love, but some obstacle springs up, such as a misunderstanding, or another woman. Eventually the obstacle is overcome, however, and they declare their love and live happily ever after. But what if things don't work out that way? What if the boy hopelessly botches things and accidentally marries the wrong girl? Can it still be a love story? *Green Dolphin Street* is tender, funny, wrenching, and vivid, and it will weave its exquisite spell on you while it challenges and enriches your understanding of real love.

Rachanalski Srodzinski says

This book is an absolute gem. I have read it COUNTLESS times and each time I read it again I fall into the world in its pages and find it hard to come out on the last page. The characters make you fall in love with them, or hate them... this sounds like a fairly generic statement but rarely do I feel anything when reading a book, this one was most certainly an exception. Marianne, marguerite ... so much could be said about them, I feel that the emotions of the characters was expressed PERFECTLY. This book stays beside my bed, its hard to find these days and it is one of my prized possessions.

Deborah Pickstone says

What a bizarre and unfortunate mistake to make! Elizabeth Goudge is always a lovely read despite being not exactly modern and unfashionably nice! I forgave her for all errors about NZ - she made it clear she had never been here.

Bridget Blanton says

I am a fan of Elizabeth Goudge, but this is not my favorite book ... While she still writes so beautifully throughout the novel, I grew tired of Marianne's obsession with the object of her desire. On the one hand, Marianne is presented as intelligent and independent yet, she seems to focus almost all of her energy on the man she loves; at the cost of happiness for people she supposedly loves. Yes, it's a well developed, classic love triangle/tragedy and for that Goudge is to be applauded, but still, it just grew tiresome for me. The focal point of the novel, page after page, is Marianne and her obsession. I was trudging through the book ... I ended up putting it aside a few times to pick up something else... not a good sign... However, I remain a fan of Miss Goudge - she is a remarkable writer.

Terry says

This book introduced me to Elizabeth Goudge. After reading the book, I scoured the library for more by the same author . I was lucky enough to have a mother who also loved reading, and she purchased others. Through Miss Goudge, I so very much! She introduced me to a world I didn't know existed, and I've been a bit of an Anglophile ever since!

Goudge's books are notably Christian in outlook, containing such themes as sacrifice, conversion, discipline, healing, and growth through suffering. Her novels, whether realistic, fantasy, or historical, interweave legend and myth and reflect her spirituality and her deep love of England. Whether written for adults or children, the same qualities pervade Miss Goudge's work and are the source of its appeal to readers of all ages, but most especially girls and women.

English bungalows and cottages, English gardens (especially if they are Secret), tea in the late afternoons, and "proper" ways of being, doing and saying. The beauty of her word painted pictures in my head of that other life, and through the characters in every book, it rubbed off! I was 12, then 13, 14 and 15 -- now at 60, I still prefer her created world.

She said, in 1960, "As this world becomes increasingly ugly, callous and materialistic it needs to be reminded that the old fairy stories are rooted in truth, that imagination is of value, that happy endings do, in fact, occur, and that the blue spring mist that makes an ugly street look beautiful is just as real a thing as the street itself."

My favs: "Gentian Hills" and an all time great: "The Scent of Water"

Luisa Knight says

It's been a week since I finished this book, and even now, I'm still unsure of how to go about writing this review. My thoughts are not concrete. I continue to find myself mulling over all the intricacies of the characters, and pondering the heavy questions they themselves pondered over. I waiver between liking the story and liking it immensely. It's moving, thought-provoking and invokes self-reflection.

This book has strong character portraits, with the caste often asking deep spiritual and philosophical questions about God, having a relationship with God, religion, love, salvation, merit, worth, even

martyrdom. The plot's main premise is the caste's querying pursuits for salvation, love and peace. Though the conclusions drawn should be taken with a grain of salt, and some I disagree with entirely, the philosophical questions stressed in the story are good ones and worth a little mental floss. And the questions will by no means shatter your faith; they are more for soul-searching. Readers will more likely than not take away these two things: I do not want to be Marianne; not in thought or action, or in attitude, so I'll be careful to watch my personality tendencies and keep them in check and inline. I do not want to make Marguerite's one mistake.

Regarding Goudge's style: she's a literary genius. It reads smoothly and beautifully due to her exquisite word texture. I can not say enough on this score! There are lush descriptions of places, people and ideas; areas which she dwells in often, lulling the plot. And Goudge, at least with this work, nailed the art of characterization. I have not read such vividly "real" people in quite some time.

If you decide to read this book, don't read the descriptions and don't read the introductory pages in the book - go right to the first chapter. In my opinion, they give too much away. I would have liked the shock of not knowing ahead of time where the story was going. So for a quick synopsis:

When Marianne LePatourel meets William Ozanne in the 1830s on an island in the English Channel, she sets her heart on him. However, her sister Marguerite falls in love with him too. And so begins this sweeping novel that takes the characters on dramatic adventures from childhood through old age, on land and at sea, and from the Channel Islands to China to the New Zealand frontier.

Cleanliness:

Profanity

Mild Obscenities & Substitutions - 82 Incidents: d*mned, d*mn, h*ll, d*mnably

Religious Profanities - 49 Incidents: God, god-d*mned, Lord, Good Gracious, mercy of heaven, God bless my soul, heaven knows, my goodness, Faith, thank God, in the name of God, Mother of God, for goodness sake, for heaven's sake, for God's sake, God knows, good God, God help him. (By gad, begod, begorra are used numerous times throughout the book.)

Scatological Terms - 9 Incidents: bl**dy

Derogatory Terms - 14 Incidents: n*gg*rs, *ss, Ch*nk, J*p

Conversation Topics - 5 Incidents: This book has strong character portraits, with the caste often asking deep spiritual and philosophical questions about God, having a relationship with God, religion, love, salvation, merit, worth, martyrdom; as well as showing the caste's querying pursuits for redemption, love and peace by various means. Mentions alcohol throughout the book. At one time a main character is an alcoholic. Various men smoke throughout the book and mentions snuff.

Mentions sailor and Maori tattoos often. There is some discussion about the Maori customs of cannibalism, cutting, suicides if a spouse died, head shrinking, spirits, and there is a scene with a faked seance.

For a full cleanliness report, which includes Sexual Content, visit my website. I have hundreds of other detailed reports too, and I also have Clean Guides (downloadable PDFs) which enable you to clean up your book before reading it! Visit my website: The Book Radar.

bup says

~~Well, I haven't finished this. I can't right now, and I may never. Too painful.~~

Baby, I finished the book, and I'm sorry you weren't here with me for the ending. It ended as well as it began, but, like real life, with some sadness picked up along the journey that we have to carry with us.

I want to trumpet as much as I can the greatness of this book. Truly a forgotten classic. At times I thought I was reading Dickens. I don't know why this book isn't huge. You can see by the ratings it's good - having an average rating above 4 is no easy feat on goodreads.

I'm not sure I want to tell you much about the book - it was wonderful for me not knowing anything about it except a recommendation that it was good, and letting it sell me on itself.

It's a period piece - set in the 1830's (written in the 1940's) in the British Empire, and it's the story of a few lives that intertwine. Sounds staid, but isn't.

Please seek it out and enjoy it.
