

**PRAISE FOR *THE LITTLE HOUSE*  
*ON EVERYWHERE STREET***

“A scrumptious time-travel adventure written with elegance and charm.”

– Adam Roberts, author of *By Light Alone* and *Jack Class*

# THE LITTLE HOUSE ON EVERYWHERE STREET

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For Donna, Ellie and Maisie, my fine, fine fellow travellers!

~ SONNET CLV ~

Who can'st escape the ~~mortal~~l claimes of Time  
And see his debt from Deaths ~~~~~ struck?  
Who mightst by wit alone and conceald ~~time~~  
Evade his ~~~~and all ill fortun'd lucke?  
Alas, none, my friend. Nay, nere the long-liv'd  
Phaenix, nor the red-man'd ~~~~~ mightst pay  
That ~~~~~ and yet survive  
To breath Gods sweet air for ~~~~~ day.  
But one way be knowne to cloake thy bright page  
From ~~~~long seeing eie: obfuscate all!  
Crosse out thy trackes, erase thee from the ~~~,  
Be ye not found when the ~~~~~ doth call.  
~~~~~Forsake love, and be as one forsook,  
Strike out, or ~~else~~ by Times red pen be struck.

WS 1603



# 1

One of the many strange things about the little house on Everywhere Street was that it wasn't very little. Not at all. In fact, it was deceptively large. Everyone said so, especially once they had explored the upper floors, of which there appeared to be several too many, for a house that size, that is. From the outside it seemed that there should be only three floors at most. Or four, counting the basement. But visitors frequently ran out of puff on the West Staircase and found themselves wondering exactly how far they had climbed. Mr Redmayne, who occupied the house with his wife and three children, when asked, always remarked that he had not the slightest idea how many floors there were, never having counted them all. And his guests always took him to be joking, as they knew him to be that sort of a man. However, on this matter he was being quite serious. Count the floors? When on Earth would he find time to do that? And why? At this point Mr Redmayne's wife, Gloriana, would usually intervene and request that her husband should desist from his cruel teasing at once and, after quite artfully changing the subject, take the unfortunate guest by the arm and lead them back down the East Staircase, which only confused them all the more.

Why should a house so apparently, well, *thin-seeming*, at least from the outside, have *two* staircases? And how could it accommodate them both within its narrow architecture? Mrs Redmayne, who was very beautiful and European to boot, possibly French or Romanian, depending, would laugh as if their guest had made the cleverest joke she had ever had the good fortune to hear and treat them to several delicious scones from her kitchen, a confection whipped up only that morning by her own fair and highly skilled hand, in accordance with an ancient Cornish recipe. With hot tea. And cream. Mrs Redmayne was

very fond of a traditional cream tea and her enthusiasm for this, like all her famous enthusiasms, was highly infectious.

At which point, any lingering confusion over the number of floors or staircases would be quite forgotten. Afterwards, if pressed, everyone would agree, vaguely, that the house was exceptionally roomy, for its size. On the *inside*. Yes. Remarkably so. And that would be that.

But none of this was by any means the strangest thing about the house. Not at all.

The three children, George, Felice, and Emile, loved the house and believed they knew everything about it, all of its secrets, but they were wrong. Their knowledge was limited, for what was thought to be good reason, for their own protection. But lessons must be learned, even hard lessons, by children and over-protective parents alike. And, happily, their errors in this area are the occasion for this tale. All actions have consequences, Mr Redmayne will remark toward its close. Unpicking them can prove very messy, very messy indeed, not to mention downright dangerous. For everyone. But if you must do it, you'll want to do it right. And to do that you must go right back to the beginning, the very beginning, and start over.

And so, that's exactly what we will do...

The little house on Everywhere Street had stood in its present location in New York since 1900. *That*, from Mr Redmayne's perspective, was a very complex statement, very complex indeed, far more complex than it might appear at first examination, especially to the lay mind. But no less true for all that. In fact, all things considered, he postulated one evening, quite pleased with himself, it surely satisfied all the necessary conditions for a true statement. Mr Redmayne was a philosopher and spent the most inordinate amount of time looking as though he was doing nothing at all. But really he was thinking very hard.

"If you say so, dear," replied his wife. "Do eat up your spinach, won't you? It will be quite cold before you know it."

Mr Redmayne looked surprised. "Spinach, you say?"

"Yes, dear. On your plate. We're eating dinner, remember? With the children."

The three children giggled and Mr Redmayne's face was once again a picture of surprise.

"Sorry, I was miles away," he said sheepishly. "Spinach. Yes, so I see."

Mrs Redmayne's culinary repertoire included a stunning number of spinach-based dishes, all of which her children—and to some extent her husband, it must be said—thoroughly detested, as one. On this matter, at least, they were united.

Mr Redmayne, with noticeable reluctance, took a first bite. Then, he laid down his fork on his plate while he ate, a habit that his wife found "very American." Usually her tone made it clear that this was not any kind of endorsement of the practice. Indeed, Mrs Redmayne suspected that left to his own devices her husband might all too readily take to beating his knife and fork on the table as if they were drumsticks, much like George

Washington, whose table manners were known to be generally deplorable.

On this occasion, however, she merely looked at her spouse most disapprovingly but said nothing.

Mr Redmayne went on in any case, quite oblivious. "See, the thing is, a fellow I know asked me the question and, well, I wasn't entirely sure how to reply. Not without telling an untruth. A lie. So, I was thinking it over."

He left it there. All four pairs of eyes were fixed upon him, clearly expecting more.

Mr Redmayne took another portion of pistou creamed spinach bake onto his fork.

The four exchanged glances. Mrs Redmayne took charge.

"What question, darling? This fellow, what did he ask you? We're all waiting."

"What?" Mr Redmayne looked around at the four expectant faces.

"Yeah, Pops, what was the question? Don't leave us hanging."

This last was from Emile, the youngest and by far the most impetuous of the three.

Mr Redmayne looked at Emile as though he had never seen him before in his life.

Once again, he laid down his fork while he chewed. "Well, he comes up to me, this fellow I know, and he says, as if all very chummily, 'So, Redmayne, how old's this fabulous house of yours, then?' And I say, 'What?' And he says, 'Your house, the one everybody talks about, it's just off the park, there, isn't it?' I say, 'Yes, it is,' not seeing the relevance. 'Well, okay,' he goes on, 'how long's it been there, would you say?' That's all."

"And what *did* you say, dear? In response."

"All that I could say. I told him I'd have to think about it."

The children groaned, as one. "Really?" cried Felice, quite exasperated. "Papa!"

Why her father couldn't learn to tell a simple lie once in a while was a source of constant frustration to her. She managed

it all the time without the slightest problem. Surely he could too?

Most indignant, she turned to her mother. “Mais vraiment, Maman, est-ce que ça le tuerait de ne pas dire la vérité, pour une seule fois? Surtout à propos de quelque chose de si important—pour nous tous!”

But Mrs Redmayne merely smiled at her daughter, albeit in a kindly, knowing way.

“Tu connais bien ton père, ma chérie! La vérité est primordiale pour lui. C’est une des choses que j’aime le plus en lui.”

Now the two boys groaned, and this time Mr Redmayne elected to intervene.

“English, *English!* Come on, you two. You *know* the rules—and it is the *house’s* rule after all. English everywhere, all the time. Otherwise who knows what might happen? Chaos, most like. And, yes, Felice, it *might* kill me to tell a lie, even just one time, you never know. Consequences, all of our actions have consequences, dearheart, no matter how trivial they might seem at the time. Now, this fellow”—Mr Redmayne paused to note that his daughter had reddened and appeared suitably abashed—“he asked me a question and I wanted to answer it as truthfully as I could, as difficult as that is under the circumstances. So, what could I say? That the house has *more* than one location? That wouldn’t quite be true, despite appearances. That the house is where it is, always, and the locations find the house? Strictly speaking, that would be the most true of all. But I can’t tell him that, obviously. He’d think me quite mad. And so might I, for saying it. No, what I can say—without fear of a lie or contradiction—is that the house could be found in its present location here in New York since 5:27 a.m. on Sunday, 25th March, 1900. *That* is a true statement. Not the whole truth, I admit, but true enough.”

“Really, must you be quite so absolutely precise, darling, on the matter of the time? You know, that might only lead to more questions. Possibly the year itself would suffice? Just a suggestion. And who is this darned fellow of yours anyway? Why is

he so interested in our lovely house, do you think? You don't imagine that he suspects something, do you? I should hate to have to move again, not with Georgie doing rather so very well just now in school. I'm not sure I could face all the upheaval, you know, coming so soon after the last time."

"No, no, nothing like that, I'm sure. Just some fellow I chat to at the library now and then. Watkins, that's the chap's name. Yes. Works there, I think. Wears a hat." Mr Redmayne risked a glance at his eldest son, George. "No, dear, I'm quite sure. No need to worry. He's only a librarian, after all. What harm could he possibly do? *Fine* us?"

Mr Redmayne laughed out loud. No one else joined in, but he didn't mind that. He always enjoyed his own jokes far more than anyone else did. That was approval enough for him.

George coughed a tense little cough. "Well, Pops, some librarians have been known to take an interest in matters of historical public record. You know, events, maps, dates, and such—all that sort of thing. Your friend at the library could be looking us up right now, trying to pinpoint the house, the street even, on some turn of the century survey thing or other. It's possible."

"That would be daft, wouldn't it? He's not likely to find us on any map, is he?"

"Exactly, Eric, darling," said Mrs Redmayne. "That's quite possibly the problem."

"Oh, I see," said Mr Redmayne, a little abashed himself now. "I *see*. Well, yes, quite."

And there being nothing else to do about it, he tried another forkful of spinach, which, as his wife had so accurately predicted, had now turned rather cold. Indeed. Quite chilled. Very.