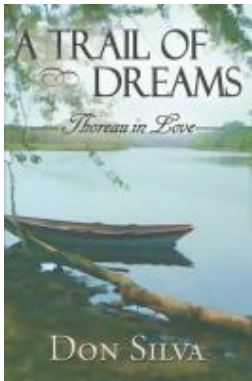


The background of the cover is a soft, painterly landscape. It depicts a calm body of water, likely a lake or a wide river, with a small wooden boat resting on the shore in the foreground. The boat is dark, possibly green or brown, and is partially obscured by a large, weathered log that lies across the water's edge. The water reflects the sky and the surrounding greenery. In the distance, there are rolling hills and more trees under a pale, hazy sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative, evoking the natural world that Thoreau wrote about.

A TRAIL OF  
DREAMS

— *Thoreau in Love* —

DON SILVA



*In **A Trail of Dreams**, Thoreau in Love, set in 1837 in the idyllic village of Concord, Massachusetts, Henry David Thoreau struggles to escape the domination of his mother and find love while staying true to his dreams. Will Lucy Brown, the older woman, be his soul-mate? Or, will it be Ellen Sewall, the young girl, Mary Russell, the governess, or Margaret Fuller, the feminist? Will "lightning strike" with a stranger? Who will be Thoreau's true love?*

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# **A Trail of Dreams**

**Thoreau in Love**

## **A Trail of Dreams: Thoreau in Love**

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, and incidents are historic and are used fictionally. Any resemblance to living persons, actual business establishments, events, and locales is entirely coincidental.

The author is indebted to teachers, scholars, critics, and editors of the works and life of Henry Thoreau. Without them and their works, this book could not have been written. He recognizes the Princeton edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau* and its editors in their long, diligent efforts in publishing Thoreau's journals.

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First Edition

1837

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From the stagecoach, Lucy Brown gazed at the Great Meadow with its red-winged blackbirds, pairs of wood ducks, flocks of geese, herons and gulls. The April sunlight illuminated the stone walls and pastures and reflected off the river. The valley gave her a feeling of happiness. Shrub oak, juniper, cedar and brambles grew along the fields. The coach moved by pine woods and, swamps thick with maple and spruce. Houses and barns appeared and Concord village, the tall church spire and a square of Georgian houses with great chimneys, elm trees and buttonwoods.

Lucy peered at the columns and arcade of the Middlesex Hotel. Concord village was more rural than Plymouth, settled and quiet. It was for sister Lidian she traveled sixty miles. Last year, she put up with Jane and Maria Thoreau on the square. This time, she agreed to stay with their sister-in-law Cynthia at Parkman house, newly opened to boarders. She'd meet Cynthia's daughter Helen, home from teaching.

Cynthia stood in Shattuck's arcade. Than waiting for the morning coach, she wanted to be baking cookies for Henry. A tall slender woman with blonde hair, aged 50, she wore her gray dress adorned with an embroidered white collar and bow. The coach's horn blew. The station house burst into activity. Villagers gathered. The office clerk carried a mail pouch out to the porch. From the stable, the hostler brought fresh horses. The Boston stagecoach rumbled into the square and pulled up. Obadiah Kendall, the sleepy-eyed driver, handed down a

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valise and Oliver Goodrich, the stationmaster, set it on the ground. The coach door opened and into the sunlight stepped a dark haired woman, aged 39, in a traveling dress with velvet jacket and carrying a parasol. She waited while the stationmaster fetched her valise.

Cynthia waved. She'd have a companion and news from the Emersons. Lucy smiled. They shook hands.

"Welcome, you'll have a pleasant visit," said Cynthia.

They walked across the square and by the Middlesex Hotel.

"How're Sophia and Helen?"

"Helen's at home with a sore throat. Sophia's in good health."

"And Prudence and Mrs. Ward?" asked Lucy. Prudence, and her mother, Prudence Bird Ward, longtime friends of the family, began boarding with Mrs. Thoreau, earlier in the year.

"They're jaunty and never miss church."

"How're your sons?" asked Lucy.

"John's teaching school. Henry finishes college in June," she said. "I've scraped and saved and borrowed. My father received his degree from Harvard, taught school, preached. Poor health sent him to New Hampshire where he read law, and served at the bar. I expect much of my Henry. Sophia's happy, Henry is coming home."

"How's Mr. Thoreau?"

"He's fine. You'll see him at supper."

Cynthia shooed the hens off the stoop and led Lucy down the hallway and set Lucy's valise and hatbox on the stairs.

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“How long will you stay?” asked Cynthia.

“I would, into autumn.”

“Stay as long as you wish. Henry arrives tomorrow.”

“Sophia and Helen always speak of him,” said Lucy.

“Whenever I need him, he flees to the woods.”

“I’m glad to see you.”

Cynthia said, “When you’re settled, come down for a cup of tea. I’m writing invitations to my sing on Sunday. Will you join us?”

“Yes, I want to meet everyone.”

Lucy carried her valise up the stairs and set it on the bed in the front room. She looked out on the square. After the highway, the tree-lined street was peaceful.

Cynthia at her kitchen table took up her straight pen and resumed writing invitations.

‘Come and join us Sunday for a sing and tea with short bread. If it agrees with you, please arrive between two and three. Cynthia Thoreau.’

By the time she finished, Lucy appeared in a blue dress with figured bodice and large bow, light-colored stockings, dainty slippers. She had bright eyes and a lean face and spoke in the clipped accent of Boston, coastal, rapid, odd words. She hugged Cynthia and sat at the kitchen table.

Lucy asked, “Is Henry, friendly?”

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“He’s interested in folks. He enjoys himself.”

“I’ve thought of you. How’re things?”

“Fine, Henry has an offer, teaching in the center school.”

Lucy said, “You’ll have him home.”

“I wish he’d others. Times are hard. The New York banks won’t give specie. There’re no jobs. Henry dislikes making pencils.”

“I can’t wait to meet him. Will he stay long?”

Cynthia said, “A few days and he’ll return to college.”

“Will he sing Sunday?” asked Lucy.

“Yes, sings like an angel.”

“Will John?”

“He’ll arrive Saturday. I want him home. If Helen feels better she may attend the Female Temperance Society. Sophia will go. I hope you’ll attend. Prudence and her mother are members.”

“I may. Folks in Plymouth don’t discuss temperance.”

“Pay no mind. Drinking is wrong. Families deserve our sympathy.”

“May I help Sunday?” asked Lucy.

“You can pour tea.”

Lucy unpacked. Concord would be lively. She’d miss Winslow house with its gardens and the sea. Downstairs, Cynthia nowhere in



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“What do you teach Mr. Thoreau?”

“I drill Latin and Greek, mathematics, and composition on Saturday mornings. My brother John teaches English grammar, spelling, arithmetic and drawing. We take the students out for natural history.”

“I approve of students doing things. The more they learn about the world the better.”

Henry said, “You’re welcome to visit Mr. Alcott. You may speak with Judge Hoar, Mr. Brooks or Mr. Keyes.”

Emerson said, “I’m a referee. It’s excellent.”

Money for schooling was difficult for families. When they required students to sign for a full term, the number of students fell and Henry and John faced a school with few students. John’s health grew worse. Henry couldn’t teach school without him.

He said to Lucy, “What am I to do? Must I close the school?”

“I’ll speak with Mr. Emerson.”

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Henry went sailing. These grassy meadows move when the wind blows over them and wild faces appear and they are alive to him with the eye not only to see them but also look with sympathy.

The river winds from the southwest toward the northeast through the Great Meadows and the peaceful village and on toward the Atlantic Ocean where the fresh meets the salt water and the gulls’ cries rise above the waves.

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This spring day above Sherman's Bridge, a stepped mast with a lone white sail carries a dory over the broad expanse of the flood gliding over water-covered meadows and tacking northwest toward hills with farmhouses, and barns and haystacks shining in the sunlight.

The waves agitated by the wind blow spray over the bow and into the face of the silhouetted figure at the tiller. Ducks uneasy at the approach of the craft rise with a clatter, and fly into the wind and circle round to observe the sailboat. Ducks swim in the river, paddling, and wary at the approach of the silent, bird-like sail, fly off.

Gulls wheel overhead, muskrats swim away, and mice and moles on the shore run and conceal themselves at the sound of the prow pushing through the river.

The sailor wears a slouch hat pulled down on his head with his torso covered in a faded sand-colored jacket and pantaloons of corduroy in the same color and soft worn leather boots. His eyes scan the budded trees and the cloud formations and the playful feathering of the wind on the gentle surface of Meadow River.

He angles downstream along the levels called Lee Farm and across the great curve of the river and under the leaning hemlocks toward Egg Rock where the north branch enters the stream. Spires of last year's pip-grass warn him of Cranberry Island where he's gone a-ground before and he steers away from the shallows into the deeper water.

He sails along the shore where houses back against the river and drops his sail gliding into bulrushes and eelgrass and muddy bank. He steps out, and hauls the boat ashore and fastens its chain to the wild apple tree, its buds about to bloom.

He picks his fowling piece out of the boat and settles it in the crook of his arm. There's a path through the old orchard and along the garden and the wall to the highway, and he walks along the path and out to the highway and at about a half mile, he turns toward the barn. The rooster

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crows a warning as he enters the yard. The cats scatter and hide. He steps onto the stoop and opens the backdoor. Up attic, he sets the gun on the bureau and at his makeshift table opens his journal and writes:

Hundreds of ducks in the river—blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, merganser, whistlers, black ducks, wood ducks, osprey—

The fields – what men might write if they put pen to paper—what they have written on the earth—clearing land, burning stumps, scratching the soil, harrowing, ploughing, subsoiling, over and over erasing away their works—some flitting moments in nature are future and beyond time, young, divine and never die.

He listened to the breeze through the buttonwood tree.

“Henry, Henry, where are you?” Mother’s voice rises through the house.

He set the pen in its tray and closed his journal. “I’m up attic,” he yelled.

“The order is ready. Office closes at seven. Come, carry it off.”

“Yes, mother.”

He went down. Mother stood at the table, cutting pies.

“The river was wild. The sky was intense blue. Spring’s arrived. Birds, ducks, and muskrats, know.”

“Father’ll be pleased these pencils were sent. Mr. Emerson called. He wishes to see you.”

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“Did Sophia read my scribbling to Lucy?”

“Yes, and something in your journal reminded Lucy of Mr. Emerson’s *Nature*.”

Henry went in the ell and picked up boxes filled with packets of pencils and carried them to the stoop. He set them in his wheelbarrow. The elms over the road were in leaf. The gold robin was singing in the elm. He pushed the barrow to the freight office, and carried the cartons of pencils into the shop and set them on the counter.

Mr. Shattuck said, “Give your mother my regards. I’ll be in church on Sunday.”

“Three boxes for Little & Brown, Boston,” Henry said. “Will they go on the seven o’ clock?”

“You’re in time,” said Mr. Shattuck.

“Mother will pay the freight.”

“I saw your sail. Were there ducks?”

“Hundreds, they were more beautiful than I’ve ever seen. You come along.”

“I’d enjoy it. Keeping the office, ties me down. One of these days, I’ll take a holiday.”

“Are there newspapers?”

“Your aunts called.”

Henry said, “You keep dreaming. Take a day and after class, we can sail.”

“Much obliged, Henry,” Mr. Shattuck said.

Henry thought he was as much of a dreamer as Mr. Shattuck was. He enjoyed sailing. He remained dissatisfied. He wanted to write more than entries in a journal. He must write poems, like Mr. Emerson and discover life.

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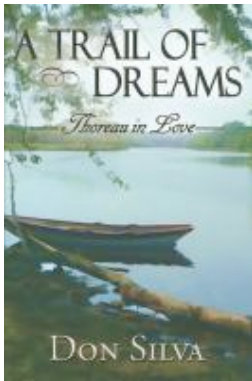
Lucy and Lidian’s cousin Mary Russell joined them for the summer. He met her in the barn where she and Lidian were planning a class room for Wallie and little Ellen. She was much older than he was and while growing up in Plymouth she studied art and music.

“I’ve heard of you,” Mary said. “You taught Wallie to make a whistle and shoot a popgun.”

“He has the skills with wood. The school needs a bench and desks,” said Lidian.

He worked in Mr. Emerson’s yellow barn and built the school furniture for Mary Russell.

At supper, Aunt Prudence held up a letter. Ellen would visit in July without her mother. Henry remembered Ellen sitting on the swing in the side yard. John pushed her and she swung higher until the toes of her boots touched the leaves. In his dream, she sat on the garden bench and whispered in John’s ear. With Sophia at the piano, she sang *The Keel Row*. He’d not written her. Winter and spring, he’d been teaching. John wrote to Ellen. What John found to write about was a mystery. Henry taught in the morning from nine to noon and in the afternoon from one to three-thirty. He walked in the woods early. At school, the boys climbed the roof and set a board over the chimney. The smoke poured into the room and recess began. He and John took students into the woods and showed them flowers and birds. Martha Bartlett was



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