

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES
by Peter DeLaurier

ADAPTED FROM THE NOVEL
BY LUCY MAUD MONTGOMERY

ACT I

Scene 1

(Music. June. Early evening, three locations. Bright River train station. Lights up on ANNE sitting expectantly on a bench clutching her carpetbag. Then, lights up on MARILLA in the kitchen at Green Gables setting the table and placing a third chair. She exits. Lights down on kitchen. Distant train whistle and sound of horse and buggy approaching. Lights up on MATTHEW driving the buggy. He tips his hat shyly to a lady he passes. He arrives at the station. Music out.)

MATTHEW. Whoa.

(Buggy stops. Mare whinnies. MATTHEW speaks to the mare.)

Oh, just stay quiet now.

(Pats mare. Notices ANNE waiting on the platform. She watches him.)

Oh.

(MOODY enters. MATTHEW tries to be invisible as he slips past ANNE to approach him.)

Well, now. Hello Moody. Is your father here?

MOODY. No, sir, Mr. Cuthbert. He left me to close up.

MATTHEW. Will the 5:30 train from Charlottetown be along soon?

MOODY. That was the 6:00 just left. But there was a passenger on the 5:30 dropped off for you.

MATTHEW. Ah.

MOODY. She's sitting out there on the bench.

MATTHEW. She?

MOODY. Yes, sir. *(Imitating:)* "There's more scope for imagination there."

MATTHEW. I'm not expecting a girl. It's a boy I've come for.

MOODY. Guess there's some mistake. Mrs. Spencer came off the train with that girl. Said you and your sister would be along for her presently.

MATTHEW. But...

MOODY. Sorry, Mr. Cuthbert. She's the only orphan we've got.

MATTHEW. I don't understand.

MOODY. My Dad says I've got to close up. *(He begins to exit.)* Maybe you should ask the girl. *(He is gone.)*

MATTHEW. Oh... *(Realizing MOODY is gone:)* Oh... *("I wish Marilla was here.")*

(He walks slowly toward ANNE who has been watching him all the time. As he gets close, she rises briskly and extends her hand to him.)

ANNE. I suppose you are Mr. Matthew Cuthbert of Green Gables?

(She waits just half a beat, then relaxes her hand but still keeps it available:)

I'm very glad to see you. I was beginning to be afraid you weren't coming for me and I was just starting to imagine all the things that might have happened to prevent you. I had made up my mind that if you couldn't come for me tonight I'd stay all night in that big wild cherry tree down the track. I wouldn't be a bit afraid.

(She makes her hand available to be taken again, MATTHEW shakes her hand, awkwardly.)

MATTHEW. Sorry I was late. The buggy is just over here. Give me your bag.

ANNE. Oh, I can carry it. It isn't heavy. I've got all my worldly goods in it, but it isn't heavy.

(They climb into the buggy.)

Mrs. Spencer said it was an eight-mile drive. *(Again she waits for him for half a beat.)* Mrs. Spencer said probably Miss Cuthbert would come with you.

MATTHEW. Marilla's back home getting things ready for the... Oh...

ANNE. Oh.

(Waits for more. None is forthcoming. MATTHEW clicks to the mare and they drive off at a trot. As they drive, the lights play over them with occasional, varied shapes of tree shadows in the early evening light.)

Oh, Mr. Cuthbert! It's wonderful that I'm going to live with you and your sister and belong to you.

(MATTHEW is discomfited.)

I've never belonged to anybody—not really. I don't suppose you ever were an orphan in an asylum. But it's worse than anything you could imagine.

(MATTHEW looks over at her.)

Mrs. Spencer said it was wicked of me to talk like that. It's so easy to be wicked without knowing it, isn't it?

(MATTHEW looks over at her.)

There is so little scope for the imagination in an asylum. I used to lie awake at nights and try to imagine. I guess that's why I'm so thin—I am dreadful thin, ain't I? *(Little joke:)* There isn't a pick on my bones.

(MATTHEW looks over at her, smiles a little.)

I do love to imagine I'm nice and plump, with dimples in my elbows. *(She looks about.)* Oh, Prince Edward Island is the bloomiest place! I just love it already. I'm so glad I'm going to live here. But those red roads are so funny. I asked Mrs. Spencer what made the roads red and she said she didn't know and for pity's sake not to ask her any more questions. She said I must have asked her a thousand already. But how are you going to find out about things if you don't ask questions? And what *does* make the roads red?

MATTHEW. Well now, I dunno. I never thought about it.

ANNE. Isn't it splendid to think of all the things there are to find out about? But am I talking too much? People are always telling me I do. Would you rather I didn't talk? If you say so I'll stop. I *can* stop when I make up my mind to it, although it *is* difficult.

MATTHEW. Oh, well... No. You can talk as much as you like. I don't mind.

ANNE. Oh, I'm so glad. I know you and I are going to get along fine.

(She takes his arm. He is surprised that he enjoys it. They drive for just a moment in silence quietly taking one another in.)

Just now I feel pretty near perfectly happy. I can't feel exactly perfectly happy because—well, what color would you call this?

(She sticks one of her braids in front of MATTHEW's face.)

MATTHEW. Well... It's red, ain't it?

ANNE. *(Sighing heavily and letting the braid drop:)* Yes, it's red. Now you see why I can't be perfectly happy. Nobody could who has red hair. I can imagine away the other things—the freckles and the green eyes and my skinniness. But I *cannot* imagine that red hair away. It will be my lifelong sorrow.

(MATTHEW considers her sorrow. They turn a corner. Music. Lights play across them the pattern of a hundred thousand apple blossoms.)

Oh, Mr. Cuthbert! Oh, Mr. Cuthbert!! Oh, Mr. Cuthbert!!!

(ANNE is silenced by their beauty. For a beat we simply hear the mare's hoof beats, the evening birds and watch ANNE watch the splendor of spring in her new home. MATTHEW shyly watches her take it in. ANNE whispers as she comes out of her reverie.)

Oh, Mr. Cuthbert. What is this place?

MATTHEW. What do you mean?

ANNE. This...this white place!

MATTHEW. Now, you must mean the Avenue. Crazy fella planted all these apple trees along the road years ago. It is a kind of pretty place, though.

ANNE. Pretty? Oh, *beautiful* doesn't even go far enough. Oh, it's wonderful—wonderful. It's the first thing I ever saw that couldn't be improved upon by imagination. It just satisfies me here.

(She puts a hand on her heart. Music out. The lights return to normal.)

"The Avenue." *(Makes a face:)* No, I shall always call it the "White Way of Delight." *(Puts hand on her heart as before:)* I've never had a home.

(MATTHEW looks at her.)

Not really, since I can remember. Oh, isn't that pretty!

MATTHEW. That's Barry's pond.

ANNE. Oh, I don't like that name either. I shall call it—let me see—

(She shivers. MATTHEW reacts.)

Oooh! "The Lake of Shining Waters." When I hit on a name that suits exactly it gives me a thrill. Do things ever give you a thrill?

MATTHEW. Hmmm. Well now, yes. It always kind of gives me a thrill like that to see them ugly white grubs that spade up in the cucumber beds. *(Shivers like she did.)* Oooh! I hate the look of them.

ANNE. Oh, I don't think that can be exactly the same kind of a thrill. Why do other people call it Barry's pond?

MATTHEW. I reckon because Mr. Barry lives up there in that house.

ANNE. Oh. Does Mr. Barry have any little girls? Well, not so very little either—about my size.

MATTHEW. He's got one about twelve. Her name is Diana.

ANNE. Oh! What a perfectly lovely name!

MATTHEW. Well now, I dunno.

ANNE. *(She stands up and waves back:)* Good night, dear Lake of Shining Waters.

MATTHEW. We're pretty near home now. That's Green Gables over—

ANNE. (*Hiding her eyes from his pointing:*) Oh, don't tell me. Let me guess. I'm sure I'll guess right.

(*She opens them and looks around at several possible houses. Picks one.*)

That's it, isn't it?

MATTHEW. (*Delighted:*) Well now, you've guessed it!

ANNE. Just as soon as I saw it I felt it was home.

(*They trot on. She leans her head on MATTHEW's shoulder. With growing unease, he watches her in her dream. They turn into the yard.*)

MATTHEW. Whoa.

(*Buggy stops. Mare whinnies.*)

Well... Here we are.

(*Music tag. They get out. ANNE regards the house, then takes her carpetbag and follows him into the kitchen. Sharp sound—tea kettle, maybe? —and light shift exterior to interior as MARILLA enters to meet them and stops short in amazement.*)

Scene 2

MARILLA. Matthew Cuthbert, who's that? Where's the boy?

MATTHEW. There wasn't any boy. There was only...*her*.

MARILLA. There *must* have been a boy! We sent word to Mrs. Spencer to bring a *boy*.

MATTHEW. Well, she didn't. She brought *her*. I had to bring her home, Marilla, no matter where the mistake had come in.

MARILLA. Well, this is a pretty piece of business!

(*They both turn to look at ANNE who has been watching them through this. She suddenly drops her carpetbag.*)

ANNE. You don't want me! You don't want me because I'm not a boy! Oh, I should have known. Nobody ever did want me.

(*She falls on the floor, lies across a rug and cries.*)

MARILLA. Well, there's no need to cry so about it.

ANNE. Yes, there *is* need! Oh, this is the most *tragic* thing that ever happened to me!

MARILLA. Well, don't cry any more. We're not going to turn you out-of-doors tonight. You'll have to stay here until we investigate this affair. What's your name?

(ANNE gets to her knees.)

ANNE. Could you please call me Cordelia?

MARILLA. *Call* you Cordelia? Is that your name?

ANNE. No-o-o, it's not exactly my name, but I would love to be called Cordelia.

MARILLA. I don't know what on earth you mean. If Cordelia isn't your name, what is?

ANNE. Anne Shirley. Oh, but, please call me Cordelia. It can't matter much to you what you call me if I'm only going to be here a little while.

MARILLA. Fiddlesticks! Anne is a real good plain sensible name.

ANNE. (*Disappointed. Standing and moving to MARILLA:*) Ohhh. If you have to call me Anne please call me Anne spelled with an E.

MARILLA. What difference does it make how it's spelled?

ANNE. Oh, it makes *such* a difference. It *looks* so much nicer. If you won't call me Cordelia, please, *please* call me Anne with an E.

MARILLA. Very well, then, Anne with an E, can you tell us how this mistake happened? Were there no boys at the asylum?

ANNE. Oh, yes. But Mrs. Spencer said *distinctly* that you wanted a girl about twelve years old. I couldn't sleep all last night for joy. (*To MATTHEW:*) Oh, why didn't you leave me at the station? If I hadn't