

A surprise for the Cuthberts Matthew Cuthbert lived with his sister Marilla on their farm on Prince Edward Island in Canada. Their farmhouse, Green Gables, was just outside the little village of Avonlea. "But I've come for a boy! The children's home is sending us one of their orphan boys. We're going to adopt him, you see, and he's going to help me with the farm work." Everybody in Avonlea knew that the Cuthberts were quiet people who worked very hard on their farm. "Well, perhaps the children's home didn't have any boys, so they sent you a girl," answered the station-master carelessly. anne-of-green-gables-9 Matthew turned shyly to speak to the child. "Are you Mr Cuthbert of Green Gables?" "My parents died when I was a baby, you know, and for the last three years I've had to work for my food. I've lived with three different families and looked after their children. So I've always been poor, and I haven't got any nice dresses! But I just imagine that I'm wearing the most beautiful blue dress, and a big hat with flowers on, and blue shoes, and then I'm happy! Do you imagine things sometimes?" The trees were full of sweet-smelling, snowy-white flowers. When they arrived at Green Gables, Marilla came to the door to meet them. "Well, no, it isn't, but it's a very beautiful name, isn't it? I like to imagine my name is Cordelia, because my real name is Anne Shirley – and that's not a very interesting name, is it?" Marilla shook her head. "But perhaps she needs us," Matthew replied, surprisingly quickly for him. Matthew was nearly sixty and had a long brown beard. anne-of-green-gables-7 One afternoon Matthew drove the horse and cart to the station. "Yes," the man replied. "And there's a passenger who's waiting for you. A little girl." She was about eleven, with long red hair in two plaits. Her face was small, white and thin, with a lot of freckles, and she had large grey-green eyes. she asked excitedly in a high, sweet voice. "I'm very happy to come and live with you, and belong to you. I've never belonged to anyone, you see. The people at the children's home were very kind, but it's not very exciting to live in a place like that, is it?" But he couldn't just leave her at the station. Marilla could explain the mistake to her. He was a quiet, shy man, and he didn't like talking himself. anne-of-green-gables-10 They were now driving past some very old apple trees next to the road. "Aren't the trees beautiful?" Matthew smiled at her. "The children's home has made a mistake," he said unhappily, "and sent a girl, not a boy." "Now, now, don't cry," said Marilla kindly. "Well, you can stay here, just for tonight," said Marilla. anne-of-green-gables-12 The child stopped crying. "Matthew Cuthbert, are you telling me that you want to keep her?" "She's had a very unhappy life up to now, Marilla. She can help you in the house. I can get a boy from the village to help me on the farm. What do you think?" Marilla thought for a long time. "Be as good and kind to her as you can, Marilla. I think she needs a lot of love." His sister was five years younger. They were both tall and thin, with dark hair. "Has the five-thirty train arrived yet?" he asked the station-master. "A little girl?" asked Matthew. "Here she is." She was wearing an old brown hat and a dress which was too small for her. Matthew felt sorry for the child. How could he tell her that it was all a mistake? He decided to take her home with him. He was surprised that he enjoyed the journey home. But today, he only had to listen, because the little girl talked and talked and talked. She told him all about herself while they drove along. "Well, I ... I ... not often," said Matthew. The little girl looked at them. she said happily. "But am I talking too much? Please tell me. I can stop if necessary, you know." "You go on talking," he answered. "I like listening to you." But when she saw the little girl, she cried in surprise, "Matthew, who's that? Where's the boy?" The child was listening carefully. Suddenly she put her head in her hands and began to cry. "Oh – oh! You don't want me

because I'm not a boy!" "Don't you understand? Oh! This is the worst thing that's happened to me in all my life!" "Now, what's your name?" "Will you please call me Cordelia?" she asked. "Call you Cordelia? Is that your name?" "The child has too much imagination," she thought. "She's a nice little thing, you know." "Well, she's clever, and interesting, and --" "But we don't need a girl!" "All right," she said in the end, "I agree. The poor child can stay