***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 28***

### ***An Unfortunate Lily Maid***

***Summary:***

* Anne and her friends are trying to act out Tennyson's poem "Lancelot and Elaine," which involves a dead Elaine floating to Camelot. Anne's friends nominate her to be the dead girl because she won't be scared floating on a flat down a river. They push the flat into the river and run to a lower spot where they will meet her, pretending to be King Arthur and Guinevere.
* The only problem is the flat is leaking. Anne climbs onto a pile of tree trunks before the flat sinks. The tree trunks are slippery…and in the middle of the water. Anne is stuck.
* Meanwhile, Anne's friends see the flat sink and freak out. They run to get help, but think that Anne has already drowned.
* Anne's holding on with her arms and wrists, which are getting cramped. They almost give way, then who comes rowing under the bridge but Gilbert Blythe?
* Gilbert helps Anne into his boat and rows her onto the landing. He tells her that he's sorry for making fun of her hair long ago, and asks if they can be friends.
* Anne's as cold as ice. She refuses, and Gilbert leaves angry.
* Anne's friends find her and are very relieved. Marilla is less relieved and more annoyed. But Anne points out that each of her mishaps have helped her learn something, and this one has cured her of being romantic.
* Matthew tells Anne not to give up *all*of her romance.

***Synopsis:***

Anne's Idlewild being no more (Mr. Bell having cut down the patch of birch trees), Anne gives leave to her childhood playhouse and conspires with Diana, Ruby Gillis and Jane Andrews to dramatize Tennyson's Elaine. Anne reluctantly agrees to the role of Elaine, who is to be cast on a flat from a landing under the bridge, onto a bank at a curve in the river. Guinevere, King Arthur and Lancelot proceed to the bank to receive the lily maid Elaine. Meanwhile, the flat, having been punctured by a stake is quickly taking on water. Anne, grasping the situation at hand, determines to climb onto one of the bridge piles as she passes in the flat, and in doing so strands herself on the slimy pile. Supposing the worst, she is soon rescued by Gilbert Blythe passing by in a borrowed dory. She begrudgingly accepts his help. Gilbert proposes to Anne that they form a friendship. Anne scorns Gilbert's apology, still nursing the hurt of that long ago insult of "carrots." Anne later proclaims herself cured of her predilection for romance. Matthew bids her to keep a little of it; a little being a good thing.

Anne recounts her tribulations since arriving at Green Gables as trials to cure her of her natural shortcomings. The Haunted Woods curing her of her imagination, the liniment cake of carelessness, dying her hair of vanity, and the lily maid of Camelot of her romantic notions. The big girl of thirteen going on fourteen feels her way through the maturation process into young adulthood, but Matthew encourages her to hold onto some of the little girl inside her.

***Significance:***Anne, Diana, Ruby, and Jane enact a scene from a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson in which the corpse of a character named Elaine is sent down a river in a barge. Though Anne does not look like Elaine, who has golden hair, she gets the part because none of the other girls want to drift down the pond alone in Mr. Barry’s little boat. The girls recite romantic farewells and send Anne’s unmoving body down the pond. For a few minutes, Anne revels in the romance of the situation, but she then feels water at her back. The boat has a leak, but Anne remains calm and prays for God to bring the boat close to one of the bridge piles (poles running vertically from the bridge to the bottom of the river) so she can grab on and wait for help. The girls see the boat sink, and, thinking that Anne has sunk with it, they run screaming for help. Anne is able to get to a bridge pile, however, where she hangs on and waits uncomfortably for help.

Just when Anne begins to think she cannot hold on any longer, Gilbert Blythe rows up and rescues her. After depositing her safely on the bank, he makes a friendly overture, apologizing again for calling her “Carrots” when they first met and complimenting the auburn color her hair has become. For a moment, Anne hesitates and considers befriending her sworn enemy. But she then recalls her humiliation during the “Carrots” incident and declares she will never become friends with him. Gilbert storms off. Meanwhile, Diana and Jane cannot find any adults to help and have become frantic. Ruby, always inclined toward hysteria, grieves at the Barry house. When Diana and Jane return to the pond, they are relieved that Anne is safe and thrilled by the romance of her rescue by Gilbert. Anne, however, orders Jane never to say the word “romantic” again.

***Critical Study(Ch25-28):***

To some extent, Matthew and Marilla reverse the characteristics traditionally associated with men and women. Matthew goes to great trouble to get Anne a new, fashionable dress, exhibiting almost womanly qualities. Whereas Marilla thinks fashion silly, Matthew understands that Anne’s dowdy dresses probably embarrass her; he sees the importance of fitting into one’s peer group. Whereas Marilla is reserved and does not believe in spoiling children, exhibiting almost manly qualities, Matthew easily expresses his affection for Anne and welcomes every opportunity to dote on her.

Anne’s approach to writing, which she describes in Chapter 26, reflects Montgomery’s own approach. Anne writes romantic stories about ladies named Cordelia and Geraldine who fall in love and meet tragic ends. She explains to Marilla that the stories all have morals: the good people are rewarded and the bad people are punished. Similarly, Montgomery makes moral judgments about Anne’s behavior. Montgomery does not divide the world into good and bad people, but she does reward Anne’s strengths and punish her faults. Anne’s mistakes never result in tragedy, but she meets with difficulties that are tragic in her perspective.

At the end of Chapter 28, Anne reflects on all of her mistakes. She realizes that each mistake has taught her an important lesson and that, taken together, the mistakes and lessons have made her a better person. After taking Marilla’s brooch, for example, she learns not to play with things that don’t belong to her. After running panicked through the woods, she learns to keep her imagination in check. After making cake with liniment, she learns to take care while cooking. After dyeing her hair, she learns to curb her vanity. Anne’s faults and quirky traits, which Marilla and Mrs. Rachel enumerate at the beginning of Anne’s stay, disappear with every mistake, chapter by chapter.

Although Anne’s desire to rid herself of faults shows her maturation, she has not yet perfected herself. For example, she resolves to be modest after her vanity results in green hair, but her vanity over her hair makes her simmer afresh over a years-old insult and causes her to reject Gilbert’s offer of friendship. Gilbert’s rescue teaches Anne yet another lesson that demonstrates that she still has room to mature: real-life romance does not yet suit her. Although the boat episode has all the markings of the kind of fictional romance Anne loves—danger, a woman in distress, a last-minute rescue by a handsome man—Anne finds the event awkward, embarrassing, and irritating rather than charming and romantic.

***Analysis:***

Anne, Diana, and a few friends from school are playing by a pond a few months later. Anne’s hair has grown out into beautiful auburn curls all over her head. The girls are assigning roles to act out a poem they read recently in class. Anne is assigned to be the main character, Elaine. In the poem, Elaine dies and is sent out to sea in a little boat, so Anne gets into Diana’s father’s little boat used for shooting ducks. The girls cover the interior of the boat with Diana’s mother’s shawl, to represent a pall, and give Anne a scarf to represent a coverlet. As the other girls push the boat out to float downstream, it scrapes against a stake sticking up underwater.

The other girls run downstream to meet Anne as she floats by, but Anne realizes after a few minutes that the boat is filling up with water. Anne prays that the boat will pass close to one of the poles holding up a bridge, and indeed it does. She jumps out of the boat onto the pole, but now, she cannot get up onto the bridge. The boat drifts a little further downstream and then sinks, which leads Anne’s friends to think she has drowned. They run to get adults to help, while Anne still clings to the bridge pole.

Anne sees a small boat coming toward her; to her surprise, it is Gilbert. He offers for her to get into his boat and she accepts, though she remains cold and disdainful of him. Anne gets out of the boat and thanks Gilbert formally; he apologizes for making fun of her years before and asks if they can be friends. Anne looks at Gilbert’s shy and eager expression and hesitates, but then tells him coldly that she will never be his friend. Gilbert’s expression turns to anger; he gets in his boat and rows away.

As Anne sees Gilbert row away, she feels regret at how she acted and almost starts to cry. As she walks up the path back to town, she runs into two of her friends who couldn’t find the Barrys or the Cuthberts to help them. They are greatly relieved that Anne is alive, and they find her story about Gilbert very romantic. When Anne tells Marilla about what happened, Marilla is frustrated, but Anne says that each mistake she makes teaches her something. Anne says that this mistake has cured her of being too romantic, but when Marilla leaves the room, Matthew tells Anne not to give up all her romance.  
Anne and her friends have gathered at the Barrys' pond to act out the story of Elaine, "The Lily Maid of Astolat," a poem by Tennyson they studied at school during the winter. It's a highly romantic poem, but no one wants to play Elaine—Anne because she thinks red hair is unsuitable for a heroine, and the other girls because they're afraid: acting the part requires floating across the pond on a barge.

Finally, Anne agrees to take the part. She lies down on the bottom of the rowboat and closes her eyes while her friends drape the "barge" in black. A yellow scarf is arranged over Anne's still form, and she holds an iris because no lilies were available. Quoting from the poem, the girls give Anne her send-off, then run down to the lower headland, where they'll pretend to be King Arthur and his two companions in Camelot when the rowboat fetches up against the bank.

As Anne floats along, her eyes closed, she suddenly becomes aware the boat has sprung a bad leak. The oars are back at the landing, and the boat will sink long before it reaches the girls awaiting it. Anne gives "one gasping little scream," then gathers her wits. She knows there's only one way she can save herself: if the boat floats close enough to one of the bridge piles, maybe she can grab the pile and pull herself out. The boat does bump up against a pile, and Anne manages to haul herself out. She clings to the pile as the boat floats away. Now what will she do? Meanwhile the other girls have seen the boat sink and assume Anne is inside. Shrieking, they rush off for help.

Anne waits and waits, her arms becoming tired and sore. Just as she thinks she can't stand the pain any longer, Gilbert Blythe rows up to the bridge. Quickly he rows over to Anne. Miserable and furious, Anne allows him to help her into the boat. As briefly as possible, she tells him what has happened and asks him to row her to the landing. There she hops out onshore.

But Gilbert stops her: "Anne, look here ... Can't we be good friends?" He's sorry he made fun of her hair so long ago. Besides he thinks her hair is pretty now. Anne's heart gives "a quick, queer little beat." But two years ago Gilbert humiliated her in front of the whole school. She's still too bitter to forgive him. Coldly and emphatically she tells him no. Now Gilbert angrily responds, "I'll never ask you to be friends again, [Anne Shirley](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/character-analysis/#Anne_Shirley)." He jumps back into his skiff, grabs the oars, and rows away as fast as he can. Head high, Anne stalks away.

Very soon she meets Diana and Jane, who are frantic with relief at the sight of her. When Anne explains what has happened, Jane coos at how romantic the scene must have been. She's certain Anne will "speak to him after this." "Of course I won't," retorts Anne. She never wants to hear the word *romantic* again. And she has a feeling they won't be allowed to row on the pond from now on.

It seems Anne can't swim, for she never considers that option. The other girls also must be unable to swim since they rush off without wondering whether they might be able to rescue her themselves. It shows how much freedom children are allowed at this period. It is hard to imagine modern parents allowing their children near water if none of them could swim!

Anne ends up in a perilous position, and it's genuinely romantic that Gilbert shows up at just the right moment. At least it would be romantic if Anne could see it that way. Her rage isn't the only funny part in the chapter. [Montgomery](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/author/) perfectly captures the way girls talk when they're playing a "pretending" game. There's much more narration than action, and the girls weave passages from "Elaine" into their dialogue to hilarious effect: for example, "Now she's all ready," said Jane. "We must kiss her quiet brows."

At this stage in their lives, Anne and the other girls are enthralled with melodrama—readers will recall the kinds of things they write in their story club. Dramatic accounts of romance and rescue are all they read, and "Elaine" is exactly the kind of poem they love. From Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* it is the story of an innocent young girl who falls in love with Lancelot and dies of grief when he doesn't love her in return. Her body is draped in black, placed on a barge, and sent off on the river, eventually floating to a spot where King Arthur, Lancelot, and Queen Guinevere find it. Poor Anne! If Lancelot could have rescued her, everything would have been perfect. Having the rescuer be Gilbert ruins everything.

It's noteworthy Anne says she's finished with romance in this chapter. She has seen for herself the gap between reality and her ideas of romance. Perhaps she and her friends will play "pretending" games a little longer, but the world of imaginative play is almost over for Anne. Two chapters after this one, she'll be a young woman who would never think of drifting away in a boat while pretending to be dead.

As a side note, Montgomery never explains why the pond has a current. Exactly where Anne is being swept away is not clear. But Anne's beloved brooks would be too shallow for this adventure, and Montgomery hasn't written a river into the story—so the Barrys' pond it must be.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley), [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry), [Jane Andrews](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters), and [Ruby Gillis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) are planning to reenact a scene from Tennyson’s Idylls of the King. The others talk Anne into being Elaine since, despite her [red hair](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/symbols/red-hair), Anne is the only one who isn’t afraid to float on the pond. The girls are gathered beside the pond at Orchard Slope. Last term they’d studied Tennyson’s poem in school, and they’ve discovered that if [Mr. Barry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters)’s little dory boat is pushed off from the dock, the current will carry it under the bridge until it’s beached on a headland further down. Anne assigns Ruby and Jane their roles in the drama and then lies in the boat under a black shawl, a flower clutched in her folded hands.

***Analysis Part 1:***

In Arthurian legend, Elaine dies of a broken heart (Sir Lancelot doesn’t love her back) and is floated to Camelot on a barge. Though Anne and her friends still enjoy elements of make-believe play, their games have matured a bit as they act out the literature they’re studying at school.

***Summary Part 2:***

In character, the girls take turns kissing [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) farewell, then they push the dory off from the dock. It scrapes over a stake in the ground, but they don’t notice; they just wait for the current to catch the boat, then run off to meet it on the headland below. Anne, meanwhile, enjoys the romantic scenario. But all of a sudden, she realizes the dory is leaking; a hole has been torn in its bottom. The boat is going to sink, and Anne has no means of steering. She later tells [Mrs. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-allan) that she prayed desperately that God would let the boat drift against the bridge pilings so she could climb out. Sure enough, the boat bumps against one of the pilings, and Anne scrambles out. But now she’s stranded on the piling; there’s enough of a ledge for her to cling to, but she can’t climb up or down.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Anne’s imagination goes awry once more, as she and her friends didn’t foresee a disaster like this one. Presumably she can’t swim very well, so she finds herself helpless as the old boat takes on water.

***Summary Part 3:***Down at the headland, [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry), [Ruby](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters), and [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) don’t know what’s happened. When they see the dory sinking in the distance, they think Anne has drowned and run screaming through the woods for help. In their panic, they don’t even glance toward the bridge, where [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) still clings desperately. Just as Anne’s imagination is running away with her and she fears her fate, someone rows underneath the bridge—it’s [Gilbert Blythe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/gilbert-blythe). Amazed, he pulls his boat against the pilings and helps her down. Anne is furious, but she has no choice but to accept his help. Refusing to look at Gilbert, she explains what happened and asks him to return her to the dock.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Just as Anne fears dropping into the water and drowning, she’s rescued by the last person she would have hoped to see in this moment—her longtime nemesis. The indignity of her position is made worse by the necessity of accepting Gilbert’s help; she has no other choice.

***Summary Part 4:***Before she can scramble out, [Gilbert](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/gilbert-blythe) touches [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley)’s arm. He asks if they can be friends—he didn’t mean to upset her with his joke about her hair (which he now thinks is pretty). Anne hesitates for a brief moment. Gilbert’s shy, eager look makes her heart skip a beat—something she’s never felt before. But then she replays the “carrots” joke in her mind and feels a fresh wave of resentment. She hates Gilbert and will never forgive him. She tells him she’ll never be his friend, and he angrily rows away. Anne feels a twinge of regret and an odd impulse to cry.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Despite Anne’s determined hatred, Gilbert has remained fond of Anne all these years and now extends an offer of friendship. For the first time, Anne softens somewhat toward this—yet it only takes a moment’s recollection of her humiliation two years ago for her to renew her hatred. But afterward she feels regret, showing that Anne’s feelings toward Gilbert are conflicted, and that there’s beginning to be the faintest suggestion of romance between them.

***Summary Part 5:***Further up the path, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) meets the rest of the girls and explains how she was rescued. They think [Gilbert](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/gilbert-blythe)’s rescue was “romantic,” but Anne never wants to hear that word again. That night (after having a good cry in private), Anne tells [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) that after this, she believes she might become “sensible” after all. Every mistake she makes cures her of a particular shortcoming. Today’s has cured her of romance. Marilla hopes so, but [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) gently encourages her to “keep a little of it.”

***Analysis Part 5:***

Just as the hair dye incident supposedly cured Anne of vanity, this incident cures her of her remaining romance—or so she tells herself. More than anything, she’s embarrassed and perplexed over her reaction to Gilbert. But Matthew, ever one to see the best in Anne, encourages her not to give up what makes her unique—such things need to mature, not be cut out of one’s personality.