

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Merritt Anne and the Mighty Oak

By

LAURA KING

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.
--

©MMXXIV by
LAURA KING

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(MERRITT ANNE AND THE MIGHTY OAK)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-323-7

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

Merritt Anne and the Mighty Oak was developed at Write Now 2019 (Tempe, Ariz.) and Purple Crayon Players' 11th Annual PLAYground Festival of Fresh Work in 2019 (Evanston, Ill.). The play premiered at Theatre Macon (Macon, Ga.) in March 2021.

CAST:

MERRITT ANNE.....Remelie Heide
WYATT Ty Niederkorn

PRODUCTION:

Artistic DirectorRichard Frazier-Sostillio
Director Laura King

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Jenny Millinger (artistic director at Write Now), the entire Purple Crayon Players' team of 2019, Gloria Bond Clunie and Nicole B. Adkins for their help in developing this play.

This play is dedicated to Merritt Anne Nicely.

Merritt Anne and the Mighty Oak

CHARACTERS

MERRITT ANNE: A 12-year-old girl. Adventurous and full of life.

WYATT: A 10-year-old boy. Cautious but eager for adventure. Merritt Anne's cousin.

MINISTER: A recorded voice.

SETTING: An open field under a large oak tree by a river.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Recordings are needed of the minister's voice and the songs "I Am a Poor Wayfarin' Stranger" and "I've Got Peace Like a River." An up-tempo version of "I've Got Peace Like a River" can be used for the curtain call and the audience invited to sing along.

*Just as quickly as a tadpole becomes a frog,
a child becomes an adult.*

Merritt Anne and the Mighty Oak

(A time before today.

As the house lights go out, the hymn “I Am a Poor Wayfaring Stranger” is heard. As the stage lights slowly come up, WYATT is standing under a large oak tree facing outward. One of his hands is clenched. A distance in front of him is a river. As he stares straight ahead, the voice of the MINISTER is heard over the hymn.)

MINISTER (*V.O.*). We therefore commit this body to the ground. Earth to earth. Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust.

(WYATT unclenches his hand, releasing a handful of dirt into the unseen open grave in front of him.)

MINISTER (*cont'd, V.O.*). Amen. Go in peace.

(As the hymn fades out, WYATT turns to watch the imaginary mourners exit. A giggle is heard from the oak tree as MERRITT ANNE jumps to the ground, startling WYATT.)

MERRITT ANNE. Finally!

WYATT. You scared me!

MERRITT ANNE. Sorry, kid.

WYATT. Don't call me kid. You know I hate that.

MERRITT ANNE. That's why I do it.

WYATT. You're only two years older than me.

MERRITT ANNE. It's a big two years.

WYATT. Why were you hiding? You should have been here.

MERRITT ANNE. Ugh. I hate funerals.

WYATT. You're not supposed to like them.

MERRITT ANNE. I don't know why grownups have to carry on like they do.

WYATT. Because they're sad.

MERRITT ANNE. Funerals make it worse. Talking about ashes and dust. Throwing dirt on the coffin. Singing songs about poor me, poor sinner, poor mourners. Why can't they sing something catchy?

WYATT. It's like church. You gotta sing a church song.

MERRITT ANNE. When I go, I don't want people crying. I want them singing something peppy.

WYATT. Like "Ding Dong the Witch Is Dead"?

MERRITT ANNE. No, like "Down by the Riverside" or "O, Mary, Don't You Weep."

(MERRITT ANNE parades around singing "O, Mary, Don't You Weep.")

WYATT. It's a funeral, Merritt Anne! Everybody's gonna be weeping.

MERRITT ANNE. Then you be sure to sing loud because I wanna go with something catchy ringing in my ears.

WYATT. I'll play you off with my kazoo.

(WYATT pulls a kazoo out of his pocket and toots the first verse to "O, Mary, Don't You Weep" while MERRITT ANNE dances.)

MERRITT ANNE. Now you're getting it. I'll return the favor when you go.

WYATT. I don't ever wanna go.

MERRITT ANNE. We all gotta go sometime, kid.

WYATT. Why?

MERRITT ANNE. Because ... I don't know. Because our number is up.

WYATT. Like it's your turn at the meat counter at the Giant Mart?

MERRITT ANNE. Yeah. Like God has called your number at the great deli counter in the sky.

WYATT (*laughing*). I'll give up meat then.

MERRITT ANNE. Won't do you any good. When it's your turn, it's your turn.

WYATT. I hope my turn doesn't come until I'm really old and gray and all tired out.

MERRITT ANNE. That's how it should be.

WYATT. Then that's how we'll do it.

MERRITT ANNE. What?

WYATT. We won't go until we're very, very old.

MERRITT ANNE. I always wanted to live to be a hundred.

WYATT. When you hit a hundred, I'll be ninety-eight. That should be enough time.

MERRITT ANNE. Whatever you say, Wyatt.

WYATT. And let's go at the same time.

MERRITT ANNE. How are we gonna manage that?

WYATT. We make a pact.

MERRITT ANNE. A suicide pact?

WYATT. No! You always go too far.

MERRITT ANNE. What then?

WYATT. A death pact.

MERRITT ANNE (*sarcastically*). Oh, *just* a death pact.

WYATT. It'll be like Mimi and Pop. He only lasted a day after her.

MERRITT ANNE. So, we don't have to time it to the minute.

WYATT. A couple of days, give or take.

MERRITT ANNE. I'm not sure going together will work.

WYATT. We do everything together.

MERRITT ANNE. As much as your mama hates it.

WYATT. She thinks you're a bad influence.

MERRITT ANNE (*imitating WYATT's mother*). "Wyatt, if Merritt Anne jumps off a bridge, you don't have to jump in after her."

WYATT. She's not wrong.

MERRITT ANNE. I thought we did everything together.

WYATT. You're right. So, we'll promise to stick around as long as the other one needs us?

MERRITT ANNE. Should it be a blood pact?

WYATT. Too far!

MERRITT ANNE. You never could handle the sight of blood.

WYATT. Just give me your pinky.

(WYATT and MERRITT ANNE lock pinkies. A breeze blows through the tree.)

WYATT & MERRITT ANNE. From north to south.

From east to west.

We'll stick together.

Until we rest.

WYATT. That should do it.

MERRITT ANNE. Until your mother gets ahold of you.

WYATT. I should go back.

MERRITT ANNE. I thought we were sticking together.

WYATT. Everyone's coming over to our house. You better come too.

MERRITT ANNE. I'm not going back there.

WYATT. We have to.

MERRITT ANNE. What for?

WYATT. Mama's a mess.

MERRITT ANNE. What else is new? That woman cries when she runs out of toilet paper. Let your daddy deal with her.

WYATT. He doesn't know what to say.

MERRITT ANNE. He can say what he always says, *(Mimicking WYATT's father.)* "Stay strong, honey. This too shall pass."

WYATT. That's better than Uncle Graham. He hardly talks at all anymore.

MERRITT ANNE. He was always more of a grunter anyway.

(MERRITT ANNE and WYATT grunt at each other and giggle.)

WYATT. What about Aunt Margaret?

MERRITT ANNE. She always says, *(Mimicking her mother.)*

"God doesn't give you more than you can handle."

WYATT. But they might need me.

MERRITT ANNE. Come with me instead.

WYATT. I can't.

MERRITT ANNE. Just for a little while.

WYATT. Where?

MERRITT ANNE. On a cousin adventure! Come on!

WYATT. Your adventures always get me into trouble.