

# THE SECRET GARDEN

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A full-length drama by  
Isabella Russell-Ides

Based upon the book by  
Frances Hodgson Burnett

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARY LENNOX, a 14-year-old English girl, residing in India at the top of the play. When the Indian cholera epidemic takes her parents and her Ayah, Mary Lennox begins her lonely journey to England. This is the story of her struggle to overcome a girlhood riddled with privilege and neglect and to make a home for herself in the unwelcoming, gothic manor, Misselthwaite.

MRS. MEDLOCK, a Yorkshire matron, with a relentless need for control and order. She is menacing, long winded and often, inadvertently droll. Like her name, she is in emotional lockdown.

THE ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*), a dancer, dressed in red: she/he is a magical presence, leading Mary to the key that opens the garden gate. The robin has been waiting for the right person to unearth the buried secrets and release Misselthwaite from the dark shadows of the past. Robin knows Mary is that person.

COLIN CRAVEN, a 15-year-old English boy. Colin is a prisoner of a long-held belief that he has a fatal illness and will die before adulthood. He is over-indulged to compensate for an absent father.

MARTHA, a 16-year-old Yorkshire girl from a poor family, a maid at the manor. She is sympathetic, high spirited and by default fills the role of mother to the "orphans" in her charge.

DICKON, a fourteen-year-old Yorkshire tomgirl; Martha's sister. She is nature's untamable wild-child. Dickon can be a boy by substituting a few words (brother/sister, he/she) and an alternate speech on page 24 as indicated in script.

LORD ARCHIBALD CRAVEN, Master of Misselthwaite, father of Colin. His manner is forbidding. He still grieves the loss of his wife, Lady Lillian. Mary Lennox is the theatrical counterpoint to Archibald's inability to overcome grief.

BEN WEATHERSTAFF, an eccentric, superstitious Yorkshire gardener who speaks his mind unbidden. Surprisingly, knows his Shakespeare and holds his own against the youth in the battle of quotations. He will join the amateur theatrical in the garden.

*Smaller Parts:*

These characters appear in only one or two scenes and can be doubled with the major roles, as indicated.

SOLDIER OF THE BRITISH RAJ, rescues Mary from cholera epidemic in Colonial India. Act I, Scene 1: can be doubled with Colin.

EMILY, a 12-year-old Yorkshire girl, Martha's timid sister. Can be doubled with Vrindamali and play one of the urchins.

CAMELLIA, Mary's mother, glimpsed in cameos and a flashback. She is always seated at her dressing table, facing mirror, dressed in pastel as if attending a ball. She is a ghostly presence. She appears in early scenes and one "memory" scene. Can be doubled with Mrs. Medlock. Act I, Scene 1 and Act 2, Scene 1.

CAMELLIA'S SERVANT, in India, optional. (M or F, can be doubled with Dickon) If a she, dressed in sari. If a he, wears Kurti. Act I, Scene 1.

TWO MALE INDIAN SERVANTS, in Kurtis in colonial India. Can be doubled with Ben and Archibald. Also could be changed to females in saris. Act I, Scene 1.

TWO STREET URCHINS, can be doubled with Vrindamali/Emily and Colin/Soldier. Act I, Scene 2.

THE AYAH, a young mother. Mary Lennox's nanny in India. Can be doubled with Martha. Act I, Scene 1.

VRINDAMALI, the Ayah's 12-year-old daughter. Can be doubled with Emily/Urchin.

ROBINETTES, TREES, FAIRIES, the cast may be expanded to include dancing robins and/or trees; Act I, Scene 4. Fairies/butterflies may be added; Act II, Scene 7.

Optional additional Thackeray siblings may also be added in final scene as either "audience" for the play within the play, extra fairies; or the siblings might be musicians playing flute, fiddle, small pipes or squeeze-box, bringing country flavors to the Shakespearean theatrical in the moonlit garden.

9 core players with doubling: 4 females, 3 males, 2 either.

17 roles for expanded cast: 8 females, 4 males; 5 either.

Cast may be further expanded with robins, trees and fairies.

## SETTING

The body of the play takes place at Misselthwaite Manor, a 600-year-old estate, and its surrounding gardens in Yorkshire, England, Early 1900s. Early scenes take place in India, a dock in England, and Traveling.

### ACT I

Scene 1: India.

Scene 2: Traveling, various.

Scene 3: Mary's Bedroom night and morning.

Scene 4: Grounds and Secret Garden, dead winter.

Scene 5: Archibald's Study.

Scene 6: Archibald's Study.

## ACT II

Scene 1: Colin's Bedroom, winter.

Scene 2: Colin's Bedroom, later that afternoon.

Scene 3: Hallway, moments later.

Scene 4: The Garden, still winter.

Scene 5: Mary's Bedroom, six month's later: summer.

Scene 6: At the manor gate.

Scene 7: The Secret Garden, a moonlit midsummer evening.

## SET SUGGESTIONS

Let the same backdrop serve for the finale (moonrise Misselthwaite) as the opening scene (sunset India), exchanging giant sun for giant moon against blue sky with pink to red-hued horizon.

## THE YORK ROSE TREE

The York Rose Tree is the living symbol of Yorkshire. These white blooms dominate the garden in the final scene. To streamline set changes, the garden is seen only in two seasons: winter by day and a moonlit summer evening. A shimmering white can predominate in both seasons: snow in winter; white roses by moonlight, in summer.

## INNOVATIONS/SYNOPSIS

In this fresh re-imagining of *The Secret Garden*, Mary Lennox is 14 (not 10) when we first meet her in India. Like the original, she is afflicted by the potent combination of privilege and neglect. Then a tragic cholera epidemic makes her an orphan and radically alters her destiny.

In England, she is met by the formidable Mrs. Medlock and enters the unwelcoming doors at Misselthwaite, a 600-year-old

manor, riddled with dark secrets. Mary's absent uncle, Lord Archibald Craven, is himself a dark mystery. The secrets began to unravel when Mary encounters his son, the 15-year-old Colin Craven, hidden away in a garret, a virtual prisoner of the past.

Another theatrical invention is a dancing red robin, who leads Mary into the light, and gives her the key to a secret garden. In that forbidden garden, Mary and Colin discover the redemptive grace of nature. With the help of an enchanting robin, a tomgirl named Dickon, a trusty maid, and a crafty old gardener, the two cousins ultimately penetrate the cold heart of Lord Craven.

A Shakespearean "play within a play" takes place in the final scene. The conceit is that Mary, Colin and cohorts have cobbled together their favorite bits of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Misselthwaite version mirrors the emotional currents of the young authors. Lord Archibald Craven watches this performance unobserved, stunned to see his formerly crippled son restored to health. As Archibald rises to applaud the company, it becomes clear that happiness has returned to Misselthwaite.

*"She never remembered seeing familiarly anything but the dark faces of her Ayah and the other native servants, and as they always obeyed her and gave her own way in everything, because the Mem Sahib [her mother] would be angry if she was disturbed by her crying, by the time she was six years old she was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived."* - Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*.



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ACT I

SCENE 1

*(India. Indian sitar music. Lights up on MARY LENNOX. She stands alone on a small platform.)*

**MARY:** My name is Mary Lennox. I live a privileged life in India, under the rule of the British Raj. My father is a diplomat and my mother's salon is attended by all the best people.

*(Lights up on CAMELLIA, Mary's mother. She is at her dressing table, pinning Camellias in her hair. Her back is always to Mary. Camellia can be behind a scrim, or on a platform. She is outside the main staging area.)*

Everyone agrees that she is the belle of every ball. Mother always says, next year, I shall attend my first ball. I have more servants than I can count.

*(Mary claps hands. Camellia rings bell. Swirling Indian music. Four servants enter Mary's space: the AYAH and VRINDAMALI flank Mary, the MALE SERVANTS slightly behind. CAMELLIA's SERVANT enters and attends Camellia's toilette.)*

Sun is up. Time for breakfast! I shall have jasmine tea and currant jam and toast.

**INDIAN CHORUS OF SERVANTS:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** I wish to bathe my hands first.

**INDIAN CHORUS:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

*(Indian Male Servants #1 & #2 simultaneously hand trays to Ayah and Vrindamali, the Ayah's tray holds damp towel, Vrindamali's tray, a dry towel.)*

**MARY:** (*Wiping hands with damp towel:*) It is a perfect world. At every hour the sun is rising somewhere on the British Empire.

(*Mary drops the dry towel.*)

Vrindamali. My towel.

**VRINDAMALI:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** Bring my velvet slippers.

**INDIAN CHORUS:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

(*Male servants bustle about.*)

**MARY:** Where are my slippers!?

(*Everyone freezes.*)

**VRINDAMALI:** On your feet, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** (*Looks down, sees slippers on her feet:*) Oh. Button my sleeves.

**INDIAN CHORUS:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

(*The Ayah & Vrindamali button her sleeves.*)

**MARY:** Vrindamali, you never play with me anymore, now that you've started helping your mama. Do you like being my servant?

**AYAH:** Vrindamali. Vrindamali, answer.

**VRINDAMALI:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** I have ordered a new dress for my doll, Anastasia. It is a stunning silk ball gown—with gold and silver threads. Tonight when the orchestra plays, I shall sneak out of my bedroom, wrapped in one my Ayah's saris. Then, I will hide behind the palms and dance all night long with Anastasia, my doll.

**INDIAN CHORUS:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** Oh, hush. You were not meant to hear that.

**INDIAN CHORUS:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** Ayah, will you let me borrow your blue Sari? You will say yes, won't you, please? The one with the gold threads? Leave it by my bed tonight.

**AYAH:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**VRINDAMALI:** But Mama-ji, it is your very best Sari!

**AYAH:** Hush, Vrindamali.

*(Ayah clutches stomach, cries out.)*

**VRINDAMALI:** Mama?

**AYAH:** Hush, Vrindamali.

*(Ayah composes herself, one of the servants can come to her aid. Camellia attempts to stand, bends with stomach cramp, cries out. Falls back in her chair. Servant pats her brow with handkerchief.)*

**MARY:** Mother promised to have tea with me this morning. Instead she sent a note, begging off. The only person who ever really speaks to me is my tutor. I can read Shakespeare and recite one thousand lines of verse. My tutor says I am the most intellectual girl in all the Empire.

**INDIAN CHORUS:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** Find my parasol. I'm going out.

**AYAH:** No, Missy Sahib. There is a scourge in the city. The air is dangerous.

**MARY:** Fine. I'm staying in.

**INDIAN CHORUS:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** STOP SAYING THAT! Will everyone please just leave me alone.

*(Sitar riff. Servants exit. Simultaneously Camellia staggers off stage. Lights out on Camellia's dressing table)*

Governess says I must learn to keep my temper. But servants can be such a trial. That's what Mother says. It's always one thing or another. Wouldn't you just know it? They've had to postpone the ball. Everyone here is out of sorts. Even Mother has taken to her bed.

*(Vrindamali enters.)*

**VRINDAMALI:** Here is Mama's sari.

**MARY:** Thank you, Vrindamali. Now, you may dress Anastasia in her new ball gown.

**VRINDAMALI:** Yes, Missy Sahib.

**MARY:** Both Anastasia and I are sorely disappointed about the canceled ball. We are each other's only consolation. But I've had a splendid idea. Tonight, I will put a record on the phonograph and we will have the best make-believe ball ever.

*(Male Indian Servants #1 & #2 enter and whisper to Vrindamali.)*

**VRINDAMALI:** *(Heart rending cry:)* Mama!! Mama!!

*(She runs off. Male servants follow her.)*

MAMA!!

**MARY:** Vrindamali, come back. You've taken my doll. Ayah! Ayah?

*(Mary claps hands. There is no response.)*

Where is everyone? What has happened to my servants?

*(Softer, scared now, she picks up her Ayah's Sari.)*

Ayah? Ayah?

*(Slow bang of funeral drum as the set darkens. Mary sits on her platform, weeps. SITAR RIFF. Lights dim. As Mary weeps she dishevels her hair and smears "dirt" on her face, so that when she looks up, she appears disoriented. She goes to her mother's dressing table, rings bell.)*

What dream is this?

*(She drinks water from bowl. Lights brighten. A BRITISH COLONIAL SOLDIER enters holding a cloth over his mouth and nose. The soldier is shocked to find Mary because everyone has either fled or is dead.)*

**SOLDIER:** Mercy on my soul. Who can it be? A child lives in the house of the dead. Bless me. Who are you?

**MARY:** *(Stands, disheveled, shaken, but stoic, in a state of shock:)* My name is Mary Lennox. I live a privileged life in India, under the rule of the British Raj. My father is a diplomat and my mother's salon is attended by all the best people.

**SOLDIER:** Miss, I'm sorry – do you not know?

**MARY:** Did you bring water?

**SOLDIER:** No, Miss. Sorry, Miss.

**MARY:** I'm dying of thirst. I've called and called and called – and no one comes.

**SOLDIER:** There is no one left to come. You can't stay here. You must come with me.

**MARY:** At night I see red fires from the window. Voices cry in the dark. I call out. There is no answer. I've searched the rooms.

**SOLDIER:** They were taken by the sickness. Oh dear, Miss, do you not know? There's been a contagion – the cholera has

killed everyone. This house is under quarantine. Everyone has fled or is –

**MARY:** Everyone?

**SOLDIER:** Everyone.

**MARY:** Everyone can't have gone. Who will fetch my breakfast? They can't have gone. Who will button my sleeves?

*(Mary faints. Soldier catches her.)*

**SOLDIER:** Oh, dear girl.

*(Lights out.)*

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SCENE 2

*(At a dock in England. Sound of a steam boat. Mary sits on a large black chest. There are TWO STREET URCHINS loitering about. A bench can be used as the train, then as the carriage.)*

**URCHIN #1:** Hey, miss. Are yah alright? Looks like yah've been forgot.

**URCHIN #2:** Give us a nicker then, Miss? We'll call yah a carriage.

**URCHIN #1:** 'Tis a fine cape ye've got—musta cost a pretty penny.

*(MRS. MEDLOCK enters.)*

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Shoo. Shoo. Go on with you.

*(Urchins back off a bit.)*

Mary?

**MARY:** My name is Mary Lennox. Are you the servant sent to fetch me?

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Welcome to England, Mary Lennox. Welcome to civilization. I am Mrs. Medlock, and since you are not in India anymore and I am a proper English woman, you will address me as such.

**MARY:** As you wish, Mrs. Proper-English-Woman. Might I inquire, then, where it is you are taking me?

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Well. I never. I am not taking you anywheres. We are traveling together, to your Uncle's house in Yorkshire. *(To Urchins:)* You there. See here, we'll need help with this chest.

*(Street Urchins hold their palms up. Mrs. Medlock places a coin in each palm. If played on a proscenium stage, curtain can close here, the remainder of scene can play out on stage lip and Mary's*

*bedroom can be set up for Scene 3.)*

Come along then, Mary Lennox, let us board this train.

*(A bench may serve as "train": Urchins place trunk behind bench, exit.)*

Grab up your carryall, young lady. I'll not be lifting it for you. It's Misselthwaite Manor we're headed; your Uncle's estate, that is. And I am the head housekeeper. Mrs. Medlock, or Madame, if you prefer.

*(Sound of a TRAIN WHISTLE.)*

**MARY:** I had a grand house in India.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Did you, then? But nothing like Misselthwaite, I'll warrant. It's six hundred years old and it's—oh, on the edge of the great moor, and there's near a hundred rooms to it, though most of them's shut up and locked tight. And don't you go poking about in any of them that's locked.

**MARY:** If a room is kept faithfully locked, then how shall I possibly look into it?

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Aye, for shame. You'll not be shirty with me, Mistress. It's unbecoming. *(Deep breath:)* So, I was saying—we've a much admired park at Misselthwaite and gardens to ramble in, excepting one, that is. But there's moors and skies enough for a fairy kingdom, there is. So, what do you think of that?

**MARY:** Nothing.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** I'm sorry. What did you say?

**MARY:** I said nothing. I think nothing of it.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** I see there's no conversing with you. You must have been raised on spoilt milk, Mistress Mary, to turn



out such a prickly sour puss. But you'll not tempt me into becoming a scold.

**MARY:** Then pray, be silent.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** As you wish. Silent as the grave.

*(Pause. Mary sits rock still, occasionally scowling, while Mrs. Medlock fusses, feeds herself, knits, and primps during the following monologue. She is all fuss and pomp, scratching the inside of her boot with a knitting needle, daintily dabbing mouth with hanky. Her grammar varies. She aspires to sound upper crust, but often fails.)*

I wouldn't have us get off on the wrong foot, by my life I wouldn't. I mean, of course, your tragical situation must be taken into account. And I do, take it into account. *(Pause.)* You and your Uncle Archibald Craven should get on famously. Glum as you please. The first time he ever smiled was on the day he met your aunt, the late Lady Lillian. Pretty as picture, that one. None of us thought she'd have the likes him, lord or no. But she give him her yes right off and fair lit up the place with her pretty ways. Well, let me tell you, all smiles stopped, when death done her in. Pick up your bag, girl. They've sent a carriage to meet us at the station.

*(Sound of HORSE HOOVES.)*

**MARY:** Did Aunt Lilly die of cholera?

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Good gracious, no!

**MARY:** Then how did she die?

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** We never speak of it. Here, into the carriage you go. Look here, Mary, you must not ask impertinent questions. Your uncle forbids any talk of that dreadful business. Not another word. I may have spoken out of turn. I'll not be a gossip, not I.

*(Mary and Mrs. Medlock are now in a horse drawn carriage. Mrs. Medlock takes up her knitting. Mary dozes.)*

He's has a crooked back, your uncle does – did you know that? You needn't expect to see much of Lord Craven, because ten to one you won't. He's in London now, and will probably go on to Paris for the spring. Lord Craven comes to us of a winter night – blows in like a chill wind, unannounced and departs soon thereafter. Likes the frost, that one does. Hates the moor – except in its winter rags.

**MARY:** What is a moor?

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Well, upon my word. Just look out the carriage window and you shall see the great moor flying by. Like an ocean, it is. It's a wildish place, where nothing grows but heather and gorse and broom, and nothing lives but wild sheep. It is mostly a vast and dreary nothing, so think nothing of it.

**MARY:** I don't like it.

*(The travelers have arrived at Misselthwaite.)*

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** No surprise there. Well, like it or not, here we are.

*(Mrs. Medlock and Mary stand, exit "carriage." Dancing ROBIN enters and menaces Mrs. Medlock with red scarf.)*

Oh there's that pesky robin. Shoo. Shoo.

*(Robin exits.)*

*(Curtain opens: Mary's bedroom. BEN WEATHERSTAFF enters, hoists and carries Mary's trunk, sets it at foot of Mary's bed. Mrs. Medlock and Mary follow Ben into Bedroom. Ben exits. Or, if no curtain, stage hands set "bedroom" during following monologue. Martha can be "dusting" and arranging pillows.)*

This will be your room, Mary. Mind you keep to it. In fact, until you and I are on a better footing, I believe I'll keep the door locked. I'm certain there will be nothing to your liking at Misselthwaite, in any case. And as for your first supper at Misselthwaite, you shall have—nothing. And what with your sour disposition, that Mistress Mary, is certain to suit the likes of you.

*(Mrs. Medlock exits.)*

**MARY:** My name is Mary Lennox. I live on a dreary moor and I have no one. *(A LOUD WAIL is heard, could be Colin, could be the wind:)* What was that?

*(Lights out.)*

**SCENE 3**

*(Mary's bedroom, morning. MARTHA enters carrying a breakfast tray.)*

**MARY:** You're late.

**MARTHA:** Pardon, Miss?

**MARY:** I've been waiting nearly an hour to get up.

**MARTHA:** Laws Lass, then get yourself right up. Robin's up, soon as the sun's up.

**MARY:** Aren't you going to help me?

**MARTHA:** Help you get out of bed? Don't tease.

**MARY:** I'm not.

**MARTHA:** What, you're not sick then, are you?

**MARY:** No, but I do need my shoes if I am going to get up.

**MARTHA:** Why they're right there, in front of your nose.

**MARY:** Aren't you going to put them on me?

**MARTHA:** My word, Miss. Whatever can you mean?

**MARY:** I thought I was being quite plain. I was speaking of my shoes. Please put them on my feet.

**MARTHA:** It don't seem right, Miss.

**MARY:** But I can't be expected to do it myself. My Ayah always dressed me.

**MARTHA:** Your what?

**MARY:** My Ayah. My Indian servant. She took care of me and made sure I had everything I wanted, exactly how and when I wanted. I bossed her about as I pleased and she bossed the other servants as she pleased and we all got on

famously.

**MARTHA:** Tis strange tale you be tellin' and me not knowin' nothing about India and the far off. Still, it's a stretch you being a near grown girl and to think your own mother let this odd business go on. It beggars belief, it does.

**MARY:** What do you know about it?

**MARTHA:** What was your mum thinking—raising you so helpless-like? *(Pause.)* Oh. Sorry. Forgive me, I—I didn't mean to insult your poor dead mum then, did I?

**MARY:** It doesn't matter.

**MARTHA:** Miss?

**MARY:** I don't suppose she's insulted. I wouldn't know. I hardly knew her.

**MARTHA:** She was your mum. Of course, you knew her.

**MARY:** She was very pretty. I remember that. I loved to watch, when the servants dressed her up for parties. She was like a great doll.

**MARTHA:** Oh, Lass. The servants dressed your mum, did they? Ya wouldn't be pullin' poor Martha's leg, now would ya? Well, me mum's never been to a grand party. Too busy, I suppose, minding her 12 unruly babies and loving every bit of it and complaining the whole whiles. Martha, she'd say to me when I was but a wee thing, you got to take care of theyselven. *(Hands Mary her shoes:)* Now, you can practice puttin' on your own shoes, for lord's sake; like a right proper English girl.

**MARY:** *(Putting on shoes:)* You talk funny.

**MARTHA:** I talk Yorkshire. I suppose to you it might sound a fair piece of odd. Now, come eat up your breakfast.

**MARY:** What is this?

**MARTHA:** Porridge, Miss.

**MARY:** It's horrid. Who was crying last night?

**MARTHA:** Why, no one. Aye, no Lass, there was not no cryin'. Ya musta heard the wind, wuthering about the house. It's quite a wild wind round these parts most all through the wintertime.

**MARY:** I heard crying.

**MARTHA:** And I'm telling yah, that was the wind. Now dress up and eat up and go out explorin', why don't ya? Oot on the moor. That'll be a treat for ya. I'll not be locking the door.

**MARY:** Out? Why ever would I go out on a day like this? Besides, I've no one to hold my parasol to shield me from the sun.

**MARTHA:** Not much sun at this time o'year. And what sun there is, is good for ya, girl. It'll put some color in those pale cheeks of yours and give you stomach for your tea.

**MARY:** But who will go out with me?

**MARTHA:** You'll go by yourself. Oh the long face. I warrant you'll see me sister, Dickon. She's a strange one—wild as the moor itself. Dickon converses with the critters, she does.

**MARY:** My mother had a caged songbird, once—in India.

**MARTHA:** There's a red robin that Dickon's befriended of late.

**MARY:** I saw that robin!

**MARTHA:** It flies about and follows Dickon everywhere, that robin does.

**MARY:** I once saw a cobra rise up from a basket under the

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power of an Indian mesmer. The mesmer played a magic flute and the cobra's head swayed back and forth.

**MARTHA:** Oh that'd be just like our Dickon, to pull some trick like 'at. Be off then, oot of doors. But Mary, fair warnin'—one of the gardens is locked up, that'd be the white rose garden. Steer clear of that one. No one has been in it for nigh on 15 years.

**MARY:** Why not?

**MARTHA:** Master Craven, your uncle, had it shut up when his wife, Mistress Lillian, died so sudden like. There was a key and some folks say that—

*(Servant bell rings.)*

**MARY:** Say what?

**MARTHA:** Oh. There's Mrs. Medlock ringing me bell, I must be off, then.

*(Martha exits.)*

**MARY:** *(Calling after Martha:)* Come back here! I didn't give you leave. *(To herself:)* What a strange servant. Well, she needn't worry about their silly secret garden. I'm not going out by myself. I hate this place!

*(The Robin enters dancing.)*

Oh my word. The robin. A red robin. Are you Dickon's robin? Oh please, talk to me. My, you're beautiful.

*(The Robin dances, circles Mary.)*

Stop. Stop, you're making me dizzy.

*(Robin exits.)*

Wait, wait please! I must get dressed. There's no one here to dress me. Oh, dash it all.

*(Mary opens chest, pulls out her Ayah's blue Sari.)*

The blue Sari! Poor Vrindamali. How odd—we're both orphans, and worlds apart. It happened so fast. You ran off with my doll and then—I don't want to remember! And I won't. Vindramali, I'll make you a sacred promise. I won't cry for you and don't you dare cry for me.

*(Lights out.)*



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SCENE 4

*(Same day. Outside the Manor, Ben Weatherstaff is gardening. The Robin dances, just past him. Mary enters. The Robin flees.)*

**MARY:** Come back, come back! Please come back, you lovely bird! *(Noticing Ben:)* Hallo. You're not Dickon.

**BEN:** No I'm not. Such a bright lass, knowing exactly who it is I'm not.

**MARY:** Who are you? No one mentioned you.

**BEN:** I'm Ben Weatherstaff, clearly not worth a mention. 'Tis a roomy place what sits beneath notice and it suits me fine, it does. I reckon you'd be the highfalutin girl from India.

**MARY:** My name is Mary Lennox. I'm looking for the red robin. She keeps flying off. What are you planting?

**BEN:** Cabbages and such like. I keep the kitchen gardens.

**MARY:** Where does that path lead?

**BEN:** Past the Pippin orchard. Your Ribston Pippin makes a fine goose sauce.

**MARY:** There's a wall—

**BEN:** That wall's nothin' to you, Miss.

**MARY:** But that's the direction the bird flew off. She went right over that wall.

**BEN:** That's a private matter of the bird then, Miss. 'Tis none of my business and none of yourn.

**MARY:** But surely there's a door? Or a gate. Someway in.

**BEN:** What need does a flying creature have of a door? Or a gate. Look here—

*(Ben whistles and the Robin enters.)*

**MARY:** Your whistle is like a mesmer's flute. You're a magician!

**BEN:** No Miss, not I. Ben Weatherstaff makes no truck with magic. I'm a gardener, plain and simple. And robin is a robin plain and simple, what likes a little whistle and a gardener plain and simple. Do'st tha' not know? She's a robin redbreast. And they're the friendliest, most curious birds on the moor. Her mother turned her out o' the nest I 'spect and I 'spect she was lonely, wasn't she? So she come round and found 'ol Ben Weatherstaff.

**MARY:** I'm lonely.

**BEN:** Everyone's lonely, girl. I'm lonely mysel' except when Robin comes round. Not many likes me ways. I reckon' she's the only friend I've got.

**MARY:** Well, you've got more than me. I've never had a true friend. I never thought of that before. Sometimes I only know a thing when I say out loud. I've only had servants and Vrindamali before she became my servant. And a porcelain doll, a carved monkey and a clay elephant.

**BEN:** Aye then, yer robin would be an improvement, I'll warrant.

**MARY:** *(To the Robin:)* Would you make friends with me? Would you, please? I can't whistle but I can recite Shakespeare.

**BEN:** Oh now you be talkin' to the critters like Dickon. She's a great one for conversing with the wild things. *(To Robin:)* Robin, would you care for a wee bit 'o Shakespeare, this morning? I myself know a fair bit o' the bard.

**MARY:** Do you know Dickon?

**BEN:** The very blackberries and heather-bells knows her.

**MARY:** Maybe Dickon knows the gate to the garden. Maybe if Dickon can talk to the birds and blackberries and such, she can talk the gate off its hinges.

**BEN:** (*Abrupt change of mood:*) Now that's enough talk of gates and gardens!

*(The Robin flies off.)*

Don't be meddlesome. Curiosity spells trouble. Best yah keep it on a leash, Lass. We've had trouble enough 'round here. I'm off, then. I've work needs doing.

*(Ben exits, the Robin re-enters.)*

**MARY:** (*To the Robin:*) You do know where it is, don't you? Can you show me the gate?

*(Robin dances, leads Mary on a brief merry chase, then turns and hands Mary an old, rusty, oversized key.)*

What in the world? It's a key! Good Robin, you gave me the key. Why did you choose me?

*(DICKON enters.)*

Alright then, keep your secret but I'll tell you mine. You are my first real friend.

*(Robin flies to Dickon. Mary turns, sees Dickon.)*

**DICKON:** Hallo.

**MARY:** You were spying on me.

**DICKON:** You must be the highfalutin' girl.

**MARY:** I'll thank you not to call me that. My name is Mary Lennox.

**DICKON:** Well, Mary Lennox, what've you got hid behind your back?

**MARY:** Nothing. What're you doing here?

**DICKON:** Nothing. Like what you got hid behind your back. (*Imitating Ben Weatherstaff:*) Curiosity spells trouble. Best yah keep it on a leash, Lass.

**MARY:** You were spying on me!

**DICKON:** My name is Dickon.

**MARY:** I know that. (*She curtseys:*) Pleased to meet you, Dickon.

**DICKON [Female]:** You're a right proper girl, you are; but not me. I'd have druther been born a boy but nobody bothered to ask Dickon's counsel in the matter. I've made me peace with it but I'll not be a maid, nor cook, nor nurse. I'll be a gardener like Ben Weatherstaff, I will.

**DICKON [Male]:** You're a right proper girl, you are. I'm not one for fine manners or fancy ways. I'll not be tamed nor made a clerk with ink stains on me cuff. Nor wear shoes in summer, nor give up me ain'ts and cain'ts. I'll be a gardener like Ben Weatherstaff, I will.

**MARY:** Can you keep a secret?

**DICKON:** Aye, for certain.

**MARY:** Give me a reason to trust you.

**DICKON:** If thay was a missel thrush and showed me where thay nest was, does tha' think I'd tell anyone?

**MARY:** No, I suppose not.

**DICKON:** Then thay secret is safe as a missel thrush. And that's very safe indeed.

**MARY:** Okay, then. Look at this.

**DICKON:** Lemme see. Give it here. Aye. 'Tis a rare treasure,

indeed. 'Tis the key to Mistress Lillian's rose garden, I'll warrant.

**MARY:** Do you know about it?

**DICKON:** Folks round here, all us, know the story of Lady Lillian Craven – how she died – and what all.

**MARY:** How did she die?

**DICKON:** They say, the bough broke and down she come, just like the nursery rhyme. And when Lord Craven locked the garden gate, he locked up his heart, tight as a drum. I wouldn't like to say what ye might unlock wif that key.

**MARY:** Lord Craven is my uncle, I might ask him.

**DICKON:** He's a dark mystery, Lord Craven is. Might be best to ask Robin.

*(The wind picks up. Indian chimes/sitars are heard.)*

**MARY:** You ask then. They say you have a magic way with the animals.

**DICKON:** Don't know that it's magic. Just happens. Mistress Robin, I'd like a word with yah. You've guarded the secret all these many years and held it close. If you think us worthy, might be it's time to let the secret go.

**MARY:** Well said, Dickon!

*(Robin dances, spinning across stage, holding a red gate, with large black keyhole. A chorus line of dancing TREES is possible here, creating the "winter" garden, or actors carrying paintings of trees on foam-core board that can be "flipped" later for garden in bloom.)*

**DICKON:** Well danced, Robin!

*(Robin stops. Mary inserts the key into the "door.")*

*(Robin swings it open. The garden is dead from winter cold and neglect. Mary and Dickon "enter.")*

**MARY:** It is so still.

**DICKON:** And wondrous strange.

**MARY:** Give me your hand.

**DICKON:** Tis beautiful.

**MARY:** It's bleak.

**DICKON:** O just you wait. When nature shakes out her green come spring, this garden will fairly sing—each nest brimful of chirpin' fledglings, each fledgling aching to try out new wings. Can't you see it?

**MARY:** No, I can't. This is a ghostly place.

**DICKON:** Why Mary, this garden is as wick as you or me.

**MARY:** Wick? What's that?

**DICKON:** A garden that's wick has green life underneath the dead wood just biding time, waiting.

**MARY:** Waiting for what?

**DICKON:** A bit of sun and rain. And likely this garden remembers that it once had a gardener.

**MARY:** I've been forbidden. Warned thrice. But dash it all, in my life the worst has already happened. I'll not be afraid of Lord Craven.

**DICKON:** Mary, Robin give you the key for a reason. If we give it a good go, come summer there's bound to be fountains o' roses.

**MARY:** *(Twirling about:)* Fountains of roses. Fountains of roses!

**DICKON:** (*Laughs:*) See there. You're getting a bit wick yourself, just thinking about it.

**MARY:** Dickon, I like you! I can see that you're wick. Any minute now, you're bound to grow branches and burst out green leaves. Then all the missel thrushes in the world will want to build nests in your hair!

**DICKON:** And I think tha' art the strangest bird I ever met and tha's including meself.

**MARY:** (*Tries to speak Yorkshire:*) Does tha' like the highfalutin' lass, then?

**DICKON:** Aye, that I does. I like thee wonderful, and so does Robin.

**MARY:** That's two then, that's two friends for me!

*(Lights out.)*

**SCENE 5**

*(Archibald Craven's Study. Martha is asleep in Lord Craven's chair. EMILY is polishing a silver tray. Mrs. Medlock enters.)*

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Martha!

**MARTHA:** Yes, Mrs. Medlock.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** You've only one day off each month. Is this meant to be your appointed day off for the month of January?

**MARTHA:** No, Mrs. Medlock.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Then I suggest you stop behaving as if it were. Lord Craven won't stand for malingering and neither will I. Who is that?

**MARTHA:** It's me sister, Emily.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** I'll not be wastin' wages another lazy Thackeray.

**MARTHA:** No, Mrs. Medlock.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** I am head of this household and I do the hiring and firing.

**MARTHA:** Yes, Mrs. Medlock, it's just that last night was so difficult. And I thought—

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** I'm not paying you to think, Martha.

**EMILY:** Would you like tea, Mrs. Medlock.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Why thank you dear, I would. Three sugars.

*(Emily exits.)*

**MARTHA:** I was up all night. He's older now. He's so—

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Shh, you know the orders.



**MARTHA:** There's no one to hear us. Oh, but Mary hears the crying. And Mary asks about the crying, and I hate lying. I've grown fond of the girl. And even me odd sister, Dickon, is coming round to the notion of liking humans again. Something about Mary. She's such a bonny lass.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Bonny? You've certainly got a peculiar idea of bonny.

**MARTHA:** Oh Mrs. Medlock, that's cause you're only seeing the Mary come from India. Aye that girl was a trial. But pardon my saying so, ma'am, since she come here she's been blooming like a Yorkshire rose, what with running out of doors and eating Cook's good meals.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Well, all that is about to end.

**MARTHA:** How so?

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Lord Craven has returned to Misselthwaite and has asked to see her. I wrote ahead to inform him of Mary's unsuitable nature and made a few helpful suggestions as to how she might be improved. A strict governess would have her in hand in no time.

**MARTHA:** T'would be a pity. She's just comin' round. She's a good lass, she is.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** The only change in Mary since her arrival is the addition of unruliness to rudeness. Once Lord Craven meets his Mary Lennox he'll sign off an order to hire a governess, believe you me. And that's an order I'll happily follow to the letter.

**MARTHA:** That would be a mistake Mrs. Medlock, pardon my saying so, but that would be a grave mistake.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** You're forgetting your place Martha. I am shocked. I dare say – some of Mary's impertinence has rubbed

off on you.

**MARTHA:** No, Madame.

**MRS MEDLOCK:** Perhaps I should recommend Lord Craven remove Mary Lennox altogether and send her off to a convent school. And I certainly shall recommend boarding her out, if I pick up any inkling that my orders are being contradicted.

**MARTHA:** I'll not contradict thee, not I, not never.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** See that you don't. Heaven forbid impertinence should spread like influenza among all the servants.

**MARTHA:** I beg pardon. I misspoke myself. Tis not me place to question the good sense of me betters.

*(Emily enters with tea.)*

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Now there's a sweet girl.

*(Colin's loud wail is heard. To Emily:)*

You did not hear that!

**EMILY:** *(Still holding cup of tea:)* No, Mrs. Medlock. I did not.

**MRS MEDLOCK:** Where is my laudanum?

*(Colin wails.)*

That infernal wailing would drive a saint to the deuces. Martha, go find Mary and bring her to Mr. Craven's study, and mind she doesn't dawdle. The master won't have it—

*(Mrs. Medlock exits.)*

**MARTHA:** And neither will I.

*(Colin wails.)*

**EMILY:** Who is it, wails so pitifully?

**MARTHA:** Don't ask.

*(ARCHIBALD CRAVEN enters.)*

Lord Craven. Pardon me Sir, we was just leaving. The good lass fixed yah a nice hot cuppa.

*(Martha pushes a resistant Emily forwards.)*

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Is this our Mary Lennox?

**MARTHA:** Not hardly, Sir, no. 'Tis no one, Sir. We'll be off then.

*(Martha exits with Emily. Mary enters.)*

**MARY:** Uncle Archibald, I mean Lord Craven.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Ah, there you are. Come, sit.

*(She doesn't.)*

Are you faring well?

**MARY:** Yes, quite.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Do they take good care of you?

**MARY:** Yes. They do, Sir, thank you.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Don't thank me. I had altogether forgotten you. Mrs. Medlock is quite possibly right—I should send you to a good school, where you won't be so easily overlooked.

**MARY:** No. I mean no, Sir. I mean, thank you, Sir. No.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Excuse me?

**MARY:** Excuse me, Sir. I mean, please Sir.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** I'm not a monster. There's no need to sputter. Well? Out with it. Say what you like.

**MARY:** I don't want to be sent off. I like it here.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Indeed.

**MARY:** Sometimes I don't know a thing, until I say it out loud. So you see, I didn't know it until just now when I said it—but, I do like here. I do. I go outdoors. I run on the moor. I've got friends. Two.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** That many?

**MARY:** Yes two. A Robin and a girl named Dickon. And there's something that wants me here at Misselthwaite. I'm needed here. I'm a—necessary person.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Indeed.

**MARY:** Yes. I am. There's a garden here that needs tending. May I care for it, Sir? I made a promise, a very serious promise, to a little piece of earth. You seem very rich, Sir. Could you allow me a little piece of earth?

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** So you like our dreary moors?

**MARY:** I do. I mean, no.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** You don't like our dreary moors.

**MARY:** No, I do like your dreary moors. I like them wonderful. I mean, there not really dreary, Sir.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** You remind me of someone I once knew. She loved the moors and kept a garden. No one has been happy in this house for nigh on 15 years. We are a gloomy lot. But, perhaps with your youthful enthusiasms, Mary Lennox, you will bring spring back to Misselthwaite. Yes, you shall stay here and you shall have your little piece of earth.

**MARY:** Thank you, Sir!

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** I'm leaving tonight, for Paris, then

Italy. I won't be back until the autumn.

**MARY:** The autumn, Sir?

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Yes, I find I can only make myself like Misselthwaite in winter. I find spring unbearable. And summer unspeakable. Too many roses, too many lilies. Too many memories rise unbidden. For better or worse, I find the chill winds of winter more welcoming. So there you have it. I prefer cold comfort. There's one more matter.

**MARY:** Yes, Sir.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** You've not made a good impression on Mrs. Medlock.

**MARY:** No, Sir.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** A well-run household is imperative, if we are to preserve order. Make sure you mind Mrs. Medlock in all things.

**MARY:** Yes, Sir.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Despite how I may seem, or look, or what you may have heard, I want you to be happy here. There is some consolation in knowing that someone is happy. Good luck on your project. Go on, then.

**MARY:** Thank you, Sir.

*(She curtsies and starts to leave, then stops.)*

And Sir?

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Yes?

**MARY:** I want you to be happy too, Sir. I mean, if possible, Sir.

**ARCHIBALD CRAVEN:** Indeed. Mary Lennox.

*(Blackout. End of Act I.)*

**ACT II****SCENE 1**

*(Manor Interior, Colin's Bedroom. Martha and Mrs. Medlock lean over a sleeping figure in the dark. They carry [electric] candles. Sound of WIND.)*

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** At last. He's asleep.

*(Martha and Mrs. Medlock tiptoe out. Sound of footsteps, creaky doors open and shut. Mary appears in semi-dark, holding a candle. Sound of moaning wind.)*

**MARY:** *(Addressing the darkness:)* Who cries out in the dark? Martha says you are naught but the wind wuthering about the house.

*(The sound of DOOR SLAMMED, WIND.)*

Hallo? Hallo?

*(COLIN lights candle, sits up. Colin and Mary scream when they see each other.)*

**COLIN:** Are you a ghost?

**MARY:** No. Are you a ghost?

**COLIN:** Of course not. Who are you, then? And what are you doing in here?

**MARY:** My name is Mary Lennox. I live here. At Misselthwaite. Lord Craven is my uncle. And I have a quarrel with you, whoever you are.

**COLIN:** You can't have a quarrel with me. I don't know you and I don't choose to know you. Archibald Craven is not your uncle. He is my father. I am Colin Craven and you are the most irritating, presumptuous ghost I've ever met.

**MARY:** Do you often meet ghosts?

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*(Mary tickles him with a peacock feather.)*

**COLIN:** Stop that! I won't be tickled. What was that for?

**MARY:** To prove you're not a ghost. And neither am I. Here.  
*(Hands over peacock feather:)* You can tickle me too.

**COLIN:** Don't be ridiculous.

**MARY:** Me, ridiculous? What about you? How you wail and carry on like a banshee in the night. Look at all this medicine. Oh. Laudanum. Mrs. Medlock takes laudanum.

**COLIN:** It's meant to soothe me but sometimes it gives me the night terrors. Some nights when I'm bored, I just take another spoonful. Other nights I just feel so sick that I want to scream and scream until everyone else feels as sick and sorry as I do.

**MARY:** When you cry out in the night, I dream that I am back in India and everyone is dying of the cholera. You don't look sick.

**COLIN:** But I am. Everyone has told me so all my life. I must stay in bed and stay inside and stay calm so that I don't grow a hump on my back like my father. But it doesn't matter if I do get a hump because I am going to die. And sooner, rather than later.

**MARY:** Who says so?

**COLIN:** Everyone.

**MARY:** Who's everyone?

**COLIN:** The servants. The doctors. I hear all the whispers. My own father believes it.

**MARY:** I don't.

**COLIN:** I'm not certain you're qualified to have an opinion about my health.

**MARY:** You can't catch a crooked spine. And you've not got the cholera. It does not linger. It takes everyone quickly and at once and the cries die out and there is nothing left but silence and a soldier to carry you off.

**COLIN:** What a strange girl you are.

**MARY:** And you, are like Sher Khan. The tiger who has missed his prey, then goes off wailing into the night, feeling sorry for himself.

**COLIN:** *The Jungle Book*. You know your Kipling!

**MARY:** Of course I do. I've had tutors. Back in India. The very best. I cut my teeth on Rudyard Kipling.

**COLIN:** I know Shakespeare.

**MARY:** Do you then? Do you believe in magic?

**COLIN:** You mean, like Prospero calling down the lightening in *The Tempest*? Or, Oberon chastising Titania with a wicked spell?

**MARY:** No. I mean the real magic: the wick, not the wicked. Natural magic—the garden kind that breaks out green from a brown seed and turns the world all colors in the spring. This place needs light. Let me draw the drapes.

**COLIN:** No.

**MARY:** You're sure to go all dry and deadwood if you keep yourself in the dark. It's near morning, the sun's about to come up and say hallo.

**COLIN:** I like the dark.

*(Mary opens drape.)*

Stop that!

**MARY:** See there. Already you look a little less like a ghost.



**COLIN:** You look a little less ghostly yourself.

**MARY:** England can be so grey. In India the sun rules and fills the gardens with a golden light. Huge red hibiscus, in great clay pots, splash color in all the corners of the courtyard.

**COLIN:** You've been to India. I've never been anywhere.

**MARY:** Well, I can't take you to India but there's a magic garden right here at Misselthwaite.

**COLIN:** I've never heard of such a place at Misselthwaite.

**MARY:** It's a secret garden and that's a good measure of the fun. The garden belongs to me and Dickon and a robin. A magic robin. Prospero's Ariel doesn't compare to our red robin.

**COLIN:** I want to see it.

**MARY:** Then you shall.

**COLIN:** How so? I've not been outdoors in years. I can't walk.

**MARY:** Are you certain?

**COLIN:** Of course, I'm certain.

**MARY:** Well, that's an obstacle; but not necessarily a deterrent. What's behind this drape?

**COLIN:** A portrait painting. Go ahead and look, if you must. You'll do as you like, anyway. It's my mother.

**MARY:** I wish I had a painting of my mother. She's dead, you know.

**COLIN:** So is mine.

**MARY:** Why ever do you keep her portrait covered up?

**COLIN:** Because she's beautiful. And I'm not. And she's

smiling and I never do. And it feels like she's mocking me. And they say I killed her.

**MARY:** No! That can't be right. (*Removes drape from painting:*) Oh my word! Aunt Lillian. She and my mother—they could be twins. No, you can't have killed her. They say the bough broke.

**COLIN:** And down she fell and later that night she died—giving birth to me. A pathetic story. I was born early and malformed.

**MARY:** So you never knew her. I'm so sorry. Be glad you have a father, then. I have neither.

**COLIN:** He's not much of a father. I may as well have none. He looks in on me when he thinks I'm asleep. I have my mother's eyes. And he can't bear to look at me.

**MARY:** Your eyes are beautiful. It's odd—when I try to remember Mother's face, it's like looking in a foggy mirror. And when I think of my Ayah the fog clears. That's pathetic, don't you think? To remember a servant and not your own mother. (*Beat.*) But this portrait is so like. It brings her back, as if Mother were right here—seated at her dressing table. I can almost hear the ghostly orchestra rehearsing in the ballroom.

*(Lights up on Camilla seated at her dressing table, pinning Camellias in her hair.)*

Mother loved to dance. She had so many beautiful gowns. I used to sneak into her room and study her reflection in the looking glass. I loved to see our faces in the mirror, side by side. Sometimes she'd let me try on one of her pretty jewels. "Stop chattering at me like a monkey. Come, give us a kiss." And I would go and kiss the air, next to her cheek.

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(FUNERAL DRUM.)

She was always getting ready to leave.

(*Camellia exits.*)

After everyone died, I went back to the looking glass to see if I could make her appear. There was a camellia dying in a bowl of water. I was so thirsty, I drank the water.

(*Lights out on ghost dresser.*)

Her name was Camellia. She loved to pin flowers in her hair.

**COLIN:** They say my mother loved flowers. I am told she was especially fond the white Yorkshire rose.

**MARY:** Roses. I have a confession. The Secret Garden. It's your mother's garden.

**COLIN:** Then I must see it! But I'm stuck here, stuck in this stupid bed.

**MARY:** We'll figure out a way. I'll ask Dickon. She's wonderfully clever about things.

**COLIN:** Don't go. Not just yet.

**MARY:** I'll be back quick as you like.

**COLIN:** I already miss you, Mary Lennox. I don't want to watch you walk away.

**MARY:** Shut your eyes, then; and I will chant over you like my Ayah chanted over me, when I was a child in India. Go ahead, then, close your eyes. (*Chants:*)

Om Shri Maha Lakshmi

Jai Maha Kali

Jai Saraswati

Jai Jhoola MaJi

MaJi MaJi NamaHAH

*(Colin falls asleep.)*

I am Mary Lennox and I have three friends. Three friends and a memory. Someone did love me, once upon a time in India. Forgive me, Ayah. I was so full of myself, I forgot to think of you.

*(Lights out.)*

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**SCENE 2**

*(Colin's bedroom. Later that afternoon. Colin is literally roaring angry. Mrs. Medlock and Martha are frantic.)*

**COLIN:** Arrrrgrrrr.

*(Mrs. Medlock screams. Colin throws his pillow at Mrs. Medlock.)*

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Martha, do something!

*(Mrs. Medlock throws pillow at Martha.)*

**MARTHA:** Aye. Please Master Colin, please don't agitate yourself so. You've got yourself worked into as a fine fit as ever I seen.

*(Martha gingerly places pillow at foot of his bed.)*

**COLIN:** Arrrrgrrrr.

**MARTHA:** Oh for Lord's sake. You're like to scare the living daylights outta poor Martha.

**COLIN:** I don't want you! I want Mary!

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** What did he say?

**COLIN:** I want Mary. NOW!

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Who told him about Mary Lennox?

**MARTHA:** Wasn't me, honest, it wasn't.

**COLIN:** NOW!

**MARTHA:** Aye, Master Colin. I'll go get the girl. Oh pardon, Mrs. Medlock, I wouldn't forget me place, for the life of me I wouldn't, but it might be best to fetch her. Don't you think?

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Just get out here!

*(Martha exits.)*

There Master Colin. Now, you can stop this nonsense. I won't have it. I won't. I'm going to bring you your pillow and you better behave like a proper young gentleman.

*(She approaches. He roars. She screams. Mary enters in a fury with Martha following.)*

**MARY:** You stop this immediately!

*(Colin continues yelling over all protests.)*

You stop! You stop right now. Stop.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Get her out of here. Out. Out. Out.

**MARTHA:** Please. Please. Everyone, please.

**MARY:** STOP! *(To Colin:)* I despise you! You'll spoil everything. I wish everyone would run out of the house and let you scream yourself to death! Everyone in India really did die. And they screamed and they wailed and they carried the dead bodies out and burned them and they wailed some more and I can't stand it!

*(Silence.)*

**COLIN:** You said you would come back and I woke up and you weren't here.

**MARY:** That's pathetic.

**COLIN:** When you didn't come, I felt the lump on my back start growing.

**MARY:** You did not. Don't you dare lie to me. There is nothing wrong with your back! You are not dying!

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Mary, get out of here! Now!

**MARY:** I know what death looks like. Colin knows nothing about it.

**COLIN:** My mother died.

**MARY:** But you're not dying.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** That's enough. ENOUGH. These morbid subjects are not to be spoken of. I have my orders. Mary Lennox, go back to your room. This is England. We are civilization. We are bound by rules. Our trains run like clockwork. We are a people of precision and order. And it is tea time.

**COLIN:** (*Quiet authority:*) I want Mary to stay.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Colin Craven, I must insist—

**COLIN:** No, Mrs. Medlock, I must insist. Mary is my cousin and you are my housekeeper. This is England. There is a certain order to things. So I suggest that you do as I ask or I shall write to my father and make complaint.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Aye, so that way goes the game. Of course, Master Colin. Heaven forbid I should fail you in my duties. You do need your rest, Master Colin. Your father would wish it. Your health has always been my primary concern. I have devoted myself, all these many years, to your care. You mustn't forget how sick you really are.

**COLIN:** But I do want to forget it. Mary makes me want to forget it. She makes me want to live. So, until my father returns, I am master here and I say that Mary stays and has tea with me and that tomorrow Mary shall have tea with me and the that day after tomorrow—well, I shall let you know what I decide about the day after tomorrow when it arrives. You are dismissed, Mrs. Medlock.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Dismissed?

**COLIN:** Dismissed.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** As you wish, Master Colin.

*(She exits.)*

**COLIN:** Martha, prepare tea.

**MARTHA:** Aye.

**MARY:** Well aren't you the young Rajah, prince of all-he-sees, giving out commands.

**COLIN:** Yes. And I rather like it.

**MARY:** I don't. I don't take commands from my friends.

**COLIN:** Are we friends?

**MARY:** Well, yes, we are. I thought it was understood.

**COLIN:** Will you stay for tea, then? *(Pause.)* Please.

**MARY:** Yes, thank you.

**COLIN:** And tomorrow would you ask Dickon if she would help me out to the garden? *(Pause.)* Please.

**MARY:** Yes.

**COLIN:** Thank you.

**MARY:** You're welcome.

**COLIN:** Will you show me the magic, Mary? Will you make it all wick?

**MARY:** I mean to try.

**MARTHA:** I believe I've already seen the magic. Indeed. So many pleases and thank-yous and by-your-leaves.

**MARY:** I've an idea. Oh Colin, we can read Shakespeare together, to pass the time and while away the hour. Tea and biscuits and Shakespeare. And then, come summer, we might put on a play! We can combine all our favorite Shakespeare bits.



**COLIN:** Capital idea! I know a place. Are you reading my mind?

**MARY:** Yes. By moonlight. Oh let's do *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. One of the fairy scenes. Martha, you could be a fairy.

**MARTHA:** Not me. Not never. I cain't read Shakespeare. O Lass, I'd make a muddle of it. It's me sister loves foolery. Ask Dickon. Oh, and Emily is by. You might ask her.

**MARY:** I shall. Colin, I've made a determination. You and I—we will be merry and commit outrageous acts of foolery, come heaven or high water.

**COLIN:** Count me in.

*(Mary exits, lights out on Colin's room.)*

**SCENE 3**

*(Mrs. Medlock is waiting for Mary outside Colin's room.)*

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Well, Mistress Mary Quite Contrary.

**MARY:** My name is Mary Lennox!

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Was I or was I not perfectly clear that you were NOT to go to wandering about the manor, opening doors meant to stay closed?

**MARY:** I heard the crying. It was frightening and heartbreaking.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Was I or was I not clear? Answer the question.

**MARY:** You were clear.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** I don't know what passes for good behavior in India, but in Yorkshire, young ladies, even rude, impertinent, contrary ones like yourself abide by the rules of the house in which they reside.

**MARY:** Yes, Ma'am.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** You've got Colin worked up into such a state that he now harbors a veritable fog of false hopes. He's positively feverish. It won't do. A foggy mind is susceptible to a veritable contagion of delusional expectations. He cannot be allowed to believe he is well. Especially, when he so very clearly is not well.

**MARY:** But he will get well!

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Oh, are you a doctor now? Doctor Mary, Quite Contrary?

*(She pulls on Mary's ear.)*

**MARY:** Stop that!

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** You are too old for make believe. Colin will not be turned out a healthy lad because you wish him to be so.

**MARY:** He is wick, if I say so. And I say so.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** You are a meddlesome, worthless, little wench. I am done with you, done with you upsetting the order that I have strived so hard to establish in this uneasy house. May I remind you that I am the head housekeeper here and I post the mail. Oh, Master Colin can threaten all he likes but one letter to Lord Craven from me, and I could have Martha dismissed.

**MARY:** You wouldn't.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** I might just, if you push me.

**MARY:** But Martha's good as gold.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Lord Craven told you to obey me in all things, did he not?

**MARY:** Yes, Ma'am. He did, Ma'am.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Do you like Martha?

**MARY:** Yes, I consider her a friend. Her family depends on her salary here.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Do you like the gardener, Ben Weatherstaff?

**MARY:** I like him, some. Yes, Ma'am. I do.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** Do you like it when Dickon visits you on the moor?

**MARY:** Very much. You know I do.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** How would you feel if Martha and Ben were sent away?

**MARY:** No, you mustn't.

**MRS. MEDLOCK:** And if Dickon were forbidden to visit Misselthwaite? How would that suit Mistress Mary? Am I understood?

**MARY:** Yes. We do understand each other, Mrs. Medlock. You've made yourself quite plain.

*(Lights out.)*

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SCENE 4

*(Inside the secret garden: still winter. Colin sits in a makeshift wheelchair; [the chair need not be mobile, but it must look as if Dickon cobbled it together] Mary and Dickon are attending Colin.)*

**DICKON:** I'm right proud of that chair, I am.

**MARY:** You should be. The chair is brilliant.

**COLIN:** I can't believe I'm sitting here in her garden. Breathing the chill air that's supposed to kill me.

**MARY:** You'd better not die on us. Leastwise, not until we see your mother's roses bloom. Tell me, how do you feel?

**COLIN:** Like I'm in a dream.

**DICKON:** 'Tis no dream, Master. 'Tis the Yorkshire spring coming. You can smell it in the air. Soon the snowdrops and narcissus will be breaking out. They're always first.

**MARY:** Let's imagine springtime. Lord Colin, tell me please— *(Sings, or quotes from the old English Folk tune, "English Country Garden":)* How many kinds of sweet flowers grow in a Yorkshire country garden?

**COLIN:** Lady Lennox, *(Sings or quotes:)* I tell you now of some that I know, those I miss you'll kindly pardon: Daffodils. Heart's ease. And Phlox. Meadowsweet. Lady smocks—

**MARY:** Gentian. Lupin. And Hollyhocks.

**DICKON:** There's more.

**MARY:** Roses. Foxgloves.

**DICKON:** Snowdrops!

**COLIN:** And don't forget—

**ALL:** Forget-me-nots!

**DICKON:** Here's Robin.

*(Robin dances across.)*

**MARY:** *(Quotes or sings:)* There is joy in the spring, when Robin starts to sing in a Yorkshire country garden. I can't wait!

**DICKON:** But it's the roses that will be first rate come summer, isn't that so, Robin? Now the stems are wick but when the sun comes high, the green-gloved buds will bust open Yorkshire white.

**MARY:** Colin, it's time. You've got to try.

**COLIN:** I know.

*(Colin bows head against staff, Dickon has carved for him.)*

**MARY:** We went to a lot of trouble to get you out here. And we're still risking the wrath of Mrs. Medusa. One look from her and we'll all be turned to stone statues.

*(They pose as statues – laugh.)*

**COLIN:** Dickon, do you believe I can walk?

**DICKON:** Aye, that I do. Now lean on the staff I carved for yah.

**COLIN:** Here goes.

*(Unsteady but Colin manages to stand, somewhat bent. Ben enters.)*

**BEN:** What's all this?

*(Colin falls back into his wheelchair.)*

**MARY:** Ben Weatherstaff!

**BEN:** Mary Lennox, Mary Lennox, I knew thee was bad news! If they wast a child o' mine I'd give thee a hiding with a

branch of yonder tree, I would. Tell me this, on all this broad plain, why have ye planted a garden in the one spot that's forbidden ye?

**MARY:** (*Teasing:*) Why, it was you, Ben Weatherstaff, introduced me to Robin. So I blame you. And it was Robin showed me the way to the garden! So I blame Robin.

**BEN:** Fie on thee, then, Mary Lennox – blamin' thay badness on the robin.

**COLIN:** Mr. Weatherstaff, do you know who I am?

**BEN:** Aye, that I do, wi' thay mother's eyes starin' out o' thay face. Thay art Master Colin, the poor dying child.

**COLIN:** I am not poor. I am not dying. And I'm not a child.

**BEN:** Hasn't thay got crooked legs, then?

**COLIN:** No!

*(Colin stands.)*

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