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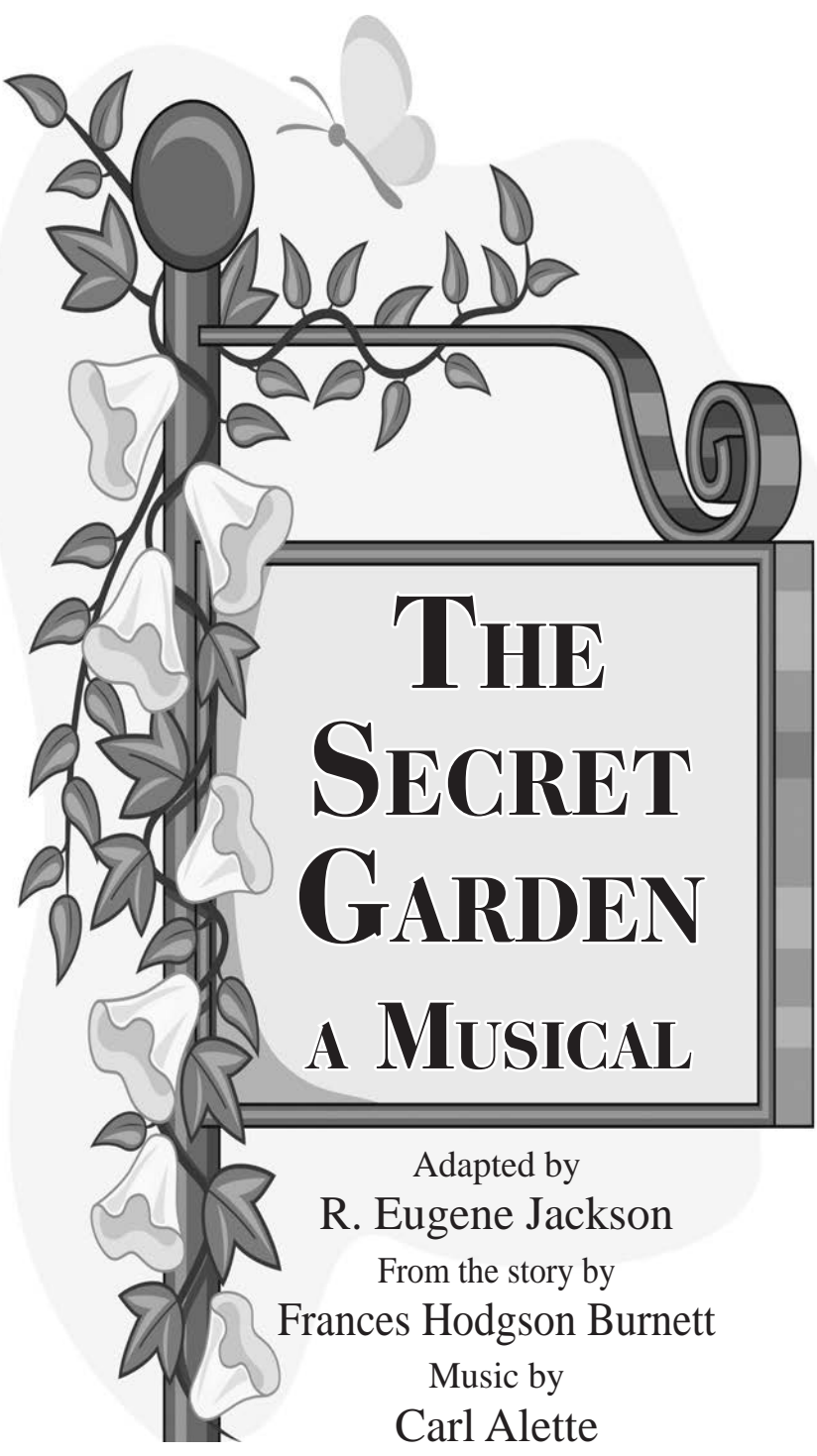
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## **Family Plays**



**THE  
SECRET  
GARDEN  
A MUSICAL**

Adapted by  
R. Eugene Jackson  
From the story by  
Frances Hodgson Burnett  
Music by  
Carl Alette

# THE SECRET GARDEN

## A MUSICAL

**Musical. Book and lyrics by R. Eugene Jackson. Music by Carl Alette. Based on the story by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Cast: 5m., 4w., extras.** Mary Lennox is left an orphan when her mother and father die of cholera in India. When she arrives in England to live with her reclusive uncle, Archibald Craven, he will have nothing to do with her. Mary finds Misselthwaite Manor dark, gloomy and secretive. Mrs. Medlock, the head housekeeper, is very stern and disapproves of Mary's unattractive attitude. Martha, a teenage housekeeper, tries to befriend the spoiled little girl. Initially unpleasant, sour and demanding, Mary soon discovers a walled and locked secret garden where the flowers and shrubs have not been tended for many years. The garden had been sealed by Mr. Craven 10 years earlier when his wife died falling from a tree. Along with a newfound friend, Dickon, Mary replants and weeds, nourishing the garden back to health as she herself becomes less sour and more pleasant. Besides Dickon, Mary becomes friends with Martha, the gardener, Ben Weatherstaff, and a robin that lives in the secret garden. Having heard a distant crying in the huge manor, Mary searches through the hallways and rooms until she finds Colin, Mr. Craven's weak and sickly—and hidden—son. She discovers that he has been bedridden for all of his 10 years because he has been told he has a humped back and will soon die. Mr. Craven's cousin, Dr. Craven, secretly hopes Colin will die because the doctor is next in line to inherit the estate. Even Colin's father will have nothing to do with him, fearing that he will lose his son as he lost his wife. Mary dismisses Colin's claims of illness, telling him of the wonderful life on the moors—and eventually of her secret garden. Encouraged, he visits the garden in his wheelchair, keeping secret his whereabouts from all others. Over several months, Mary's spirits soar and Colin's illnesses diminish as he gains new strength and happiness. The children watch the garden flourish—as they themselves do the same—and eventually Craven arrives home from his world travels to marvel at the improvements of the garden, of Colin and of Mary. When Mary opened the door to the garden, she also unlocked a bright and exciting new life for herself and others. *Set: English manor. Time: 1910. Costumes: period clothing. Shadowy "things" carry props and sing backup. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Piano-vocal score available. Vocal score available Demo/accompaniment CD available. Code: SX5.*

## Family Plays

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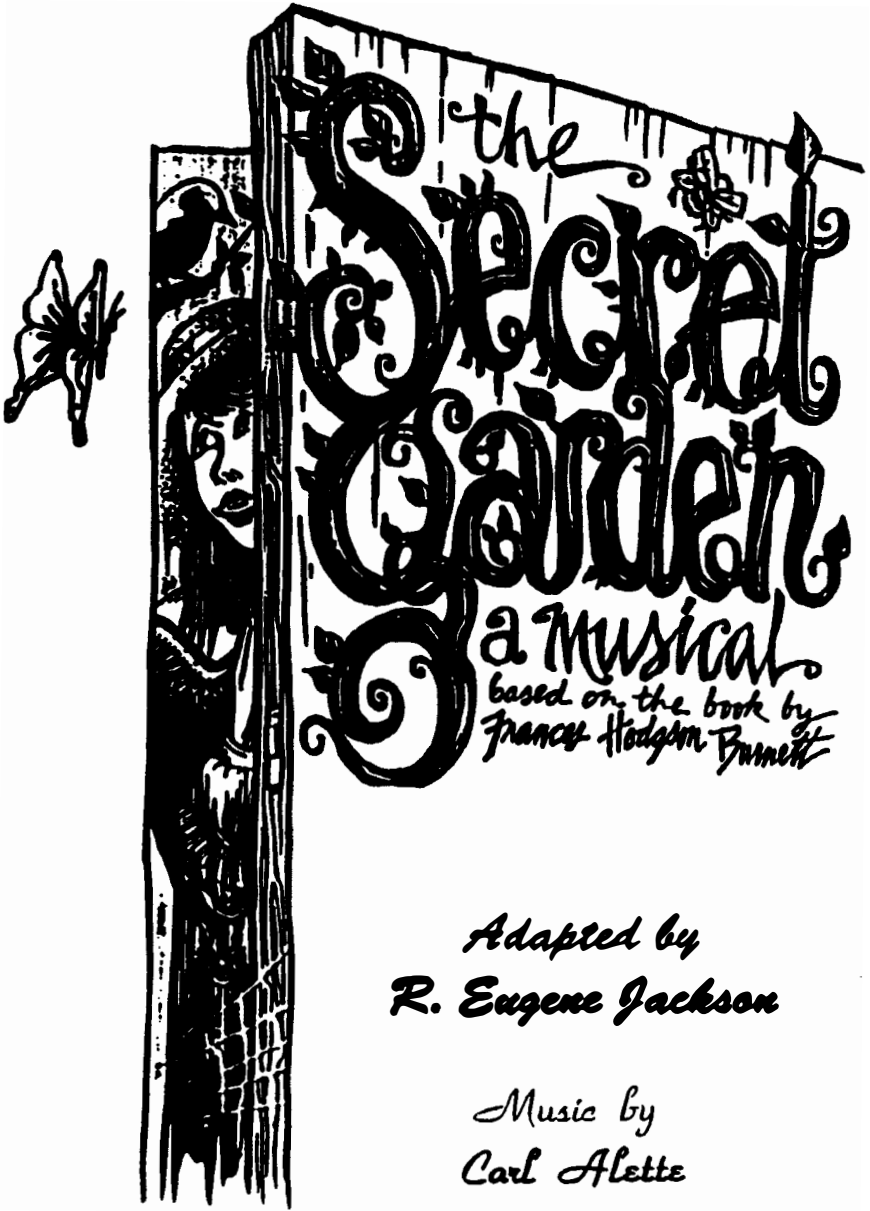
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The Secret Garden



*Adapted by  
R. Eugene Jackson*

*Music by  
Carl Alette*

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311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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## ABOUT THE PLAY

Mary Lennox is left an orphan when her mother and father die of cholera in India. When she arrives in England to live with her reclusive uncle, Archibald Craven, he will have nothing to do with her. Mary finds Misselthwaite Manor dark, gloomy—and secretive. Mrs. Medlock, the head housekeeper, is very stern and disapproves of Mary's unattractive attitude. Martha, a teenaged housekeeper, tries to befriend the spoiled little girl.

Initially unpleasant, sour, and demanding, Mary soon discovers a walled and locked secret garden where the flowers and shrubs have not been tended for many years. The garden had been sealed by Mr. Craven ten years earlier when his wife died falling from a tree. Along with a new-found friend, Dickon, Mary replants, weeds, and nourishes the garden back to health as she herself becomes less sour and more pleasant. Besides Dickon, Mary becomes friends with Martha, the gardener Ben Weatherstaff, and a robin that lives in the secret garden.

Having heard a distant crying in the huge manor, Mary searches through the hallways and rooms until she finds Colin, Mr. Craven's weak and sickly—and hidden—son. She discovers that he has been bedridden for all of his ten years because he has been told he has a humped back and will soon die. Mr. Craven's cousin, Dr. Craven, secretly hopes Colin will die because the doctor is next in line to inherit his brother's estate. Even Colin's father will have nothing to do with him, fearing that he will lose his son as he had lost his wife. Mary dismisses Colin's claims of illness, telling him of the wonderful life on the moors—and eventually of her secret garden. Encouraged, he visits the garden in his wheelchair, keeping secret his whereabouts from all others.

Over several months, Mary's spirits soar and Colin's illnesses diminish as he gains new strength and happiness. The children watch the garden flourish—as they themselves do the same—and eventually Craven arrives home from his world travels to marvel at the improvements of the garden, of Colin, and of Mary.

When Mary opened the door to the garden, she also unlocked a bright and exciting new life for herself and others.

This dramatization of Frances Hodgson Burnett's famous story moves smoothly because of Eugene Jackson's unique ability to eliminate awkward pauses for scene changes. Playing time is 75 to 90 minutes.

## THE SECRET GARDEN

*Cast of Characters*  
(In order of appearance)

MARY LENNOX, a young orphan

MRS. SARAH ANN MEDLOCK, the head housekeeper

MR. ARCHIBALD CRAVEN, Mary's uncle

DR. CRAVEN, Mr. Craven's cousin

MARTHA SOWERBY, a teenaged housekeeper

ROBIN, a bird (a puppet or an actor)

BEN WEATHERSTAFF, a gardner

DICKON SOWERBY, Martha's young brother

COLIN CRAVEN, a sickly boy, Mr. Craven's son

NURSE, Colin's personal nurse

PITCHER, Mr. Craven's personal servant (may be played by a Thing)

\* THINGS, shapeless, moving things that play a variety of roles, including candleholders, bushes, scene changers, furniture, chorus, and other characters

**TIME:** 1910

**PLACE:** Misselthwaite Manor, Yorkshire, England

\*These actors are totally covered in flexible black bags (for interior scenes) and green camouflage bags (for the garden scenes) so that they appear as indistinct globs. These THINGS must have use of their hands and legs. See *Costumes and Make-Up* on page 49.



# THE SECRET GARDEN

## *Original Cast*

MARY LENNOX .....	Angela Gore-Hickey
MRS. SARAH ANN MEDLOCK .....	Laura Hamilton
MR. ARCHIBALD CRAVEN .....	Doug Prentice
DR. CRAVEN .....	Chris Williamson
MARTHA SOWERBY .....	Edy Replogle
BEN WEATHERSTAFF .....	Charles Blackledge
ROBIN, a bird (puppeteer) .....	Shelly Lyn Sproles
DICKON SOWERBY .....	Christopher Pritchett
COLIN CRAVEN .....	Diane Williams
NURSE .....	Dana Hylton
THINGS .....	Trina Andreason, Marjorie Bohanon Rhonda Bright, Angela Burgess Christy Horne, Shelly Lyn Sproles Donna Watson
ADDITIONAL VOICES .....	Myra Barginear, Terrell Roberts

This University of South Alabama production, directed and costumed by **Rebecca F. Britton**, premiered at the USA Wright Complex Auditorium. Musical direction and additional musical arrangements by **David Ellis**. Scenery, lighting design, and technical direction by **Lyle B. Miller**.

## *Technical Staff*

Stage Manager .....	Jason Clements
Scene Shop Foreman .....	Chris Hughes
Scenery Crew .....	Leigh Ann Dean, Laura Hickey Dana Hylton, Terrell Roberts Shelly Lyn Sproles, Ray Wyatt
Costume Shop Manager .....	David B. Thompson
Wardrobe Master .....	Michael Strickler
Costume Crew .....	Myra Barginear, Kenzie Kelly Slon Nelson, Michael Strickler Diane Williams
Program/Poster Art Work .....	Robert A. Plant
Business Manager .....	Sue Ellen Gerrells
Office Assistant .....	Sondra Sellers

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A piano/vocal score, demonstration/accompaniment tape, and video tape are available from the publisher.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

*Properties*

Small clothes bag—MARY

Candles—THINGS

Food tray—THINGS

Heavy wool sweater—MARTHA

Warm scarf—MARTHA

Robin (puppet or stuffed bird on a fishing pole and line)—THING [or ACTOR may play the Robin]

Spade, fork, hoe, trowel (garden tools)—BEN, DICKON, MARY, AND COLIN

Empty plate (on tray)—THING

Dirty, rusty key—MARY

Brown paper sack containing packets of flower seeds—DICKON

Pocketknife—DICKON

Brush—MARTHA

Wheelchair—COLIN

Pillows—COLIN

Blanket—COLIN

*Costumes and Make-Up*

Early twentieth century costumes are preferable, but the time of the play can be moved forward or backward. Stage directions in the script give suggestions for costumes.

The only special costumes are those of the Things. Although they are supposedly invisible, they perform an important function in keeping the play moving rapidly and smoothly. To give the impression of invisibility they should be covered in flexible black bags for interior scenes and green or camouflage bags for garden scenes so that they appear as indistinct globs. The original production used Lycra spandex material which worked well with scrim-covered holes for the face. The THINGS must have use of their hands and feet, and all or some of them sing backup to the soloists. The video tape of *The Secret Garden*, available from the publisher, I. E. Clark, Inc., shows how the Things function. (Note: If the things hold real candles, be sure their costumes have been fireproofed.)

### *Lighting and Special Effects*

The use of area lighting facilitates the movement from scene to scene. Furniture can be moved on and off unused areas while the area is blacked out. A gradual, subtle brightening of the stage as the play progresses will enforce the change in mood from the sombre, gloomy beginning to the happy ending.

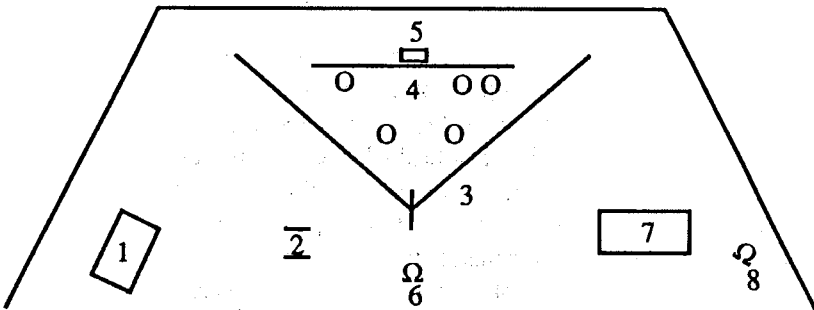
### *Sound Effects*

**Bird whistle:** The original production used live whistling by the Thing holding the Robin. A bird-call whistle can also be effective. **Howling wind** was made in the premiere by rolling a piece of canvas over a rotating wooden drum.

### *Music*

Carl Alette's original score helps carry the plot forward. Available from the publisher, in addition to the piano/vocal score, is a demonstration/accompaniment tape. The demonstration side of the tape contains music with vocals, serving as a means of perusing the songs. The accompaniment side contains music only, for use at rehearsals and performances, if desired. The music on the tape was played on an electronic keyboard, giving the impression of a small orchestra.

### *The Set*



1. Mary's bed. Several Things may represent a table and other furniture as desired. The bed may be struck during a blackout and brought back on for Scene 4.
2. Entrance to garden (2 Things holding a trellis).

3. Stone wall covered with vines. The two sections slide sideways or fold out to become part of the garden.
4. The secret garden, with dead trees and shrubs (Things may hold limbs and branches to represent the trees and shrubs).
5. Ladder
6. Chair (brought on for Scene 8) representing Mr. Craven's study. The chair may also be used in Scene 10. It should be struck at the end of Scene 10.
7. Colin's bed (brought on for Scene 9, then struck)
8. Wheelchair

This set is designed for rapid but smooth scene changes, using the Things and blackouts to set up and strike the two beds and the chair. The stone wall may be made up of folding screens, or of panels on wagons which can be rolled aside, becoming extensions of the upstage garden wall. The hidden gate may be a practical door in one panel or simply the space between panels. When the wall is moved away, the downstage planes may be considered part of the garden so that action need not be confined to the upstage areas. The transformation of the secret garden from a dead, unkempt area in Scene 6 to a beautiful panorama of flowers and shrubs in Scene 13 should be breathtaking.

# THE SECRET GARDEN

## Music No 1: OVERTURE

### Scene One

*[As the OVERTURE ends, a small area in a dark room in Misselthwaite Manor is illuminated. MARY LENNOX, a ten-year-old waif, defiantly and with a sour look on her face stands Center. She wears traveling clothes—including a coat—and carries a small clothes bag. Next to her stands the rigidly proper Mrs. Medlock, the head housekeeper, also in traveling clothes. At the edge of the light and partially in the darkness stand MR. ARCHIBALD CRAVEN, a stoop-shouldered, somber, and distant man in his early forties, and DR. CRAVEN, his nervous cousin of about the same age. Unnoticed by them—and by the audience—are several black-clad THINGS, actors in stretchable black bags so that they may move but are unrecognizable as people (See notes at the end of the script for a better description). They lie in still lumps just out of the light, or hold candles representing the room's illumination]*

MRS. MEDLOCK. *[A business-like, no-nonsense person]* This is the girl, Mr. Craven—Mary Lennox. A little thin, if you ask me. And pale as the moon. Still, that's not my concern.

MR. CRAVEN. *[With a certain tiredness]* Take her to her room. I don't want to see her. *[Pause]* I'm leaving for London in the morning. *[Exits]*

MRS. MEDLOCK. Very well, Mr. Craven. *[More or less to herself]* So long as I know what's expected of me, I can manage.

DR. CRAVEN. *[Sternly]* What's expected of you, Mrs. Medlock, is that you make sure he's not disturbed by this dreary child. And that he doesn't see what he doesn't want to see. *[Crosses to Mary and frowns at her]* I'll look in on her from time to time. To check her health.

MRS. MEDLOCK. Yes, Dr. Craven. *[DR. CRAVEN exits]*

MARY. *[Sourly]* I don't like them. I don't like them at all.

MRS. MEDLOCK. *[As a reproach]* Mr. Craven is your uncle, miss, and quite gracious to take you in—since the deaths of your mother and father.

MARY. I don't care. I still don't like him. Or this place either.

MRS. MEDLOCK. Misselthwaite Manor? It's big and old and drab—and has its mysterious ways. But you'll get used to it.

MARY. I don't want to get used to it. Do you hear me? I don't!

MRS. MEDLOCK. *[Glaring at her]* Well! You haven't much choice, have you? *[Pause]* Wait here. I'll see if your rooms are ready. *[Looks down her nose at Mary and exits]*

*[MARY looks about her, her face turning from defiance to sadness. Ignored by MARY, the THINGS stand and sing backup to Music No. 2. (Note: In most songs where the THINGS sing backup, they are optional. The songs sound fine, though less full, using only the soloists)]*

### Music No. 2: WHAT DO I DO NOW?

MARY. *[Sings]*

My knees are shaking—  
I cannot hold them still;  
My hands are sweating—  
I think I might be ill.  
As I stand in this room  
Under a shadow of gloom  
I'm wond'ring: What do  
I do now?

What do I say now  
And to whom do I say it?  
What do I play now  
And with whom do I play  
it?  
Daddy, I miss you.  
Mommy, let me kiss you  
No, I can't;

THINGS. *[Sing backup]*

Oooo . . .  
Oooo . . .  
Oooo . . .  
Oooo . . .  
Oooo . . .  
Oooo . . .  
Oooo . . .  
Oooo . . .

What . . .

Say  
Now  
Say  
What . . .  
Play

Whom . . . Play  
Daddy, I miss you . . .  
Mommy, let me kiss you . . .  
No . . .

you're gone.	Gone . . .
I'm all alone . . .	Alone
I'm all alone . . .	Alone
I'm all alone . . .	Alone
What do I do now?	

*[Following the song, MARY stares forward as her LIGHT fades out. The THINGS disappear into the darkness]*

### Scene Two

*[The LIGHT fades up on Mary's bedroom. Present are MRS. MEDLOCK and MARTHA, a pleasant and smiling teenaged servant with a Yorkshire accent. The THINGS may represent a candelabra, a dressing table, a closet, a table for the tray of food]*

MRS. MEDLOCK. *[Sternly]* Her mother was a pretty creature until the cholera took her. But Miss Mary's such a plain child and has the most unattractive ways I've ever seen.

MARTHA. *[Good-naturedly]* Why is that, Mrs. Medlock?

MRS. MEDLOCK. Her mother never spent any time with her. If she had, the child might have learned her pretty ways and manner. Many people never even knew she had a child.

MARTHA. 'Tis very sad.

MRS. MEDLOCK. The children in India called her "Mistress Mary Quite Contrary."

MARTHA. How cruel!

MRS. MEDLOCK. But understandable.

MARTHA. Perhaps she'll improve as she gets older.

MRS. MEDLOCK. Humph! There's nothing likely to improve children here at Misselthwaite, if you ask me.

MARTHA. My brothers an' sisters live only a short distance from here, an' they thrive. So will Mary.

*[MARY steps boldly into the light]*

MRS. MEDLOCK. *[Glances at Mary]* Well, Martha, she's all yours. I have better things to do. *[Turns her nose up again and exits]*



MARY. [*Looks around as MARTHA stares at her*] It's a gloomy place.

MARTHA. [*Brightly as she dusts or makes the bed or unpacks Mary's bag*] The house is six hundred years old, an' it's on the edge of the moor, an' there's near a hundred rooms in it, though most o' them's shut up an' locked. An' there's a big park 'round it an' gardens an' trees. What does tha' think about it?

MARY. It doesn't matter what I think.

MARTHA. You're right enough there. It doesn't. You're being kept here because Mr. Craven was your Aunt Lilly's husband. An' he's not goin' to trouble himself about you, that's sure and certain. He never troubles himself about no one.

MARY. Why is he so sad?

MARTHA. He's got a crooked back. That set him wrong. He was a sour young man an' got no good of all his money an' big place until he was married.

MARY. That old grump was married?

MARTHA. She was a sweet, pretty thing an' he'd have walked the world over for her. Nobody thought she'd marry him, but she did. She sure did. When she died . . .

MARY. Died?

MARTHA. Aye. An' it made him stranger than ever. He cares about nobody. He won't see people. Most of the time he goes away, an' when he's at Misselthwaite, he shuts himself up in the West Wing an' won't let anyone but Pitcher—his personal servant—see him.

MARY. I saw him.

MARTHA. You mustn't expect to see him any more. An' you mustn't expect that there'll be people to talk to you. You'll have to play and look after yourself. You'll be told what rooms you can go into and what rooms you're to keep out of. There's gardens enough. But when you're in the house, don't go wanderin' an' pokin' about. Mr. Craven won't have it.

MARY. [*Petulantly*] I shall not want to go poking about.

MARTHA. Good. This room and the next are where you'll live. An' you must keep to them. Don't forget that.

MARY. Are you going to be my servant?

MARTHA. [*Unsure how to answer*] I'm Mrs. Medlock's servant. And she's Mr. Craven's. But I'm to do the housemaid's work up here an' wait on you a bit. But tha' won't need much waitin' on.

MARY. Who's going to dress me?

MARTHA. *[Surprised]* Canna' tha' dress thyself?

MARY. *[Certainly not!]* No. I never did in my life. My Ayah dressed me, of course.

MARTHA. Your what?

MARY. My Ayah. My nana. My nurse—in India.

MARTHA. Well, it's time tha' should learn. Tha' cannot begin younger. It'll do thee good to wait on thyself a bit.

MARY. *[Angrily]* I won't wait on myself. You must do it. Undress me. *[Regally holds her arms straight out right and left]*

MARTHA. I will not undress thee.

MARY. You must obey me! Obey me at once!

MARTHA. Am I hearin' this truly?

MARY. You won't undress me? *[Approaches Martha and spits her words out]* Why, you . . . you daughter of a pig!

MARTHA. *[With a mild temper]* Who are you callin' names? That's not the way for a young lady to talk.

MARY. *[Angrier still]* Undress me, or . . . or I'll slap you! *[Takes a swing at MARTHA, who stops her hand in mid-flight. The two GIRLS glare at each other for a few seconds. Gradually, MARY lets her hand fall away]* You must let me slap you.

MARTHA. Oh, no, I mustn't. Why does thee wish to slap me?

MARY. It was the custom.

MARTHA. To strike thy servant? In India?

MARY. If she disobeyed.

MARTHA. This is not India. *[Pause]* Since tha' has not dressed thyself, I will help—this time. *[Helps her take her coat, hat, and gloves off during the following. Speaks in a lighter mood]* There's twelve of us in my family. My brother Dickon, he's twelve years old, and he's got a young pony he calls his own.

MARY. *[Trying not to seem interested]* Where did he get it?

MARTHA. He found it on the moor with its mother when it was a little one, an' he began to make friends with it an' give it bits of bread. Dickon's a kind lad an' animals like him.

MARY. Can I see him?

MARTHA. Well, I don't know. 'Tis a long walk to our cottage.

MARY. *[Demandingly]* I *will* see him! *[MARTHA glares at her. She partially relents]* I would *like* to see him.

MARTHA. [*Indicates a table with a tray on it. (Perhaps one of the THINGS holds the tray)*] I brought thee some food.

MARY. I don't want it.

MARTHA. Tha' doesn't want thy porridge?

MARY. No.

MARTHA. Tha' doesn't know how good it is. I can put a bit o' sugar on it.

MARY. I don't want it.

MARTHA. Ah! I can't abide to see good victuals go to waste. If my brothers an' sisters was at this table they'd clean it bare in five minutes.

MARY. Why?

MARTHA. Why? Because they scarce ever had their stomachs full in their lives.

MARY. [*Reflects*] I don't know what it is to be hungry.

MARTHA. Well, it would do thee good to try it. I can see that plain enough. [*Hands Mary a heavy wool sweater*] Well, you wrap up warm an' run out an' play you. It'll do you good an' give you some stomach for your meat.

MARY. Out? Why should I go out on a day like this?

MARTHA. Well, if tha' doesn't go out, tha'lt have to stay in, an' what has tha' got to do?

MARY. [*As she allows MARTHA to slip the sweater over her head*] Who will go with me?

MARTHA. [*Glares again at her*] You'll go by yourself. You'll have to learn to play like other children does when they haven't brothers and sisters. Our Dickon goes off on the moor by himself and plays for hours. [*Hands her a warm scarf*]

MARY. [*Sourly*] I hate the moors.

MARTHA. [*Points off*] If tha' goes 'round that way tha'll come to the gardens. There's lots of flowers in the summertime, but there's nothin' blooming now. [*MARY puts the scarf around her neck and starts out*] Oh, but one of the gardens is locked up. No one has been in it for ten years.

MARY. Why?

MARTHA. Mr. Craven had it shut when his wife died so sudden. He won't let no one go inside. It was her garden. He locked th' door, an' dug a hole an' buried the key. [*A BELL rings*] Oh, that's Mrs. Medlock's bell. I must run. [*Exits*]

MARY. [*To herself*] A hidden garden? I wonder what it would look

like after all these years? Are all the flowers dead—like I feel right now?  
*[Moves outdoors. She shivers slightly. The ROBIN chirps in the distance]*  
 What is that sound? *[Goes toward it]*

*[The THINGS, now black as before, or green to blend in with or be part of the shrubbery, hold up a trellis or arch of greenery for her to pass through to indicate she is now in the garden area. Then they blend into the background or exit. Other THINGS may represent shrubbery]*

### Scene Three

*[Outdoors, in front of the secret garden; a few minutes later. Upstage is an eight-foot tall brick wall covered with greenery and partially hidden by small trees and shrubs.]*

*The ROBIN appears and flies around Mary chirping all the while. (The ROBIN is a puppet that is operated by one of the black-dressed THINGS. Or it may be played by an actor dressed as the bird, or by a stuffed bird on a fishing pole and line.) MARY is momentarily pleased by the bird]*

MARY. A bird! What a cute little bird! *[The ROBIN disappears offstage]* Oh, don't go, little bird. Don't go.

*[MARY is startled by the entrance of BEN WEATHERSTAFF, a surly old gardner who wears a cap and carries a spade over his shoulder. His movement is hampered by rheumatism. He smiles and begins to whistle like the Robin]*

MARY. What are you doing?

BEN. Whistlin' for my little friend. Here. Let me show you.

### Music No. 3: THE BIRD SONG

BEN. *[Sings]*

Whistle like the Robin . . .

*[Whistles a line]*

Whistle like the Robin . . .

*[Whistles a line]*

Whistle . . .

*[Whistles]*

Like the Robin . . .

*[A short whistle]*

And he may come to you. *[Coaxes Mary in non-singing voice]*

Go ahead. Try it.

MARY. I don't think I can.

BEN. Try. *[Sings]*

Whistle like the Robin . . .

*[MARY tries to whistle a line, but cannot]*

Whistle like the Robin . . .

*[MARY tries again but fails]*

Whistle . . .

*[MARY tries once more]*

Like the Robin . . .

*[She tries a short one]*

And he may come to you.

*[The ROBIN reappears]*

BEN. *[Sings]*

He always comes when I call him

*[ROBIN whistles obligato]*

My fine feathered guest;

He's the friendliest, curiouset bird alive

He's a meddlin' Robin Red-Breast.

*[Spoken with the music under for one verse. To the Bird]* Where has tha' been, tha' cheeky little beggar? I've not seen thee for awhile.

MARY. Will he always come when you call him?

BEN. Aye, that he will.

MARY. And he's a robin?

BEN. Aye. They're almost as friendly as dogs, if you know how to get on with 'em. Try again. *[Sings]*

Whistle like the Robin . . .

*[MARY almost does it]*

Whistle like the Robin . . .

*[MARY does!]*

Whistle . . .

*[MARY does again]*

Like the Robin . . .

*[MARY does]*

BEN/MARY. *[Sing together]*

And he may come to you/me.

*[The ROBIN lands on MARY's outstretched hand]*

BEN/MARY. *[In harmony]*

He always comes when I call him . . .

*[ROBIN whistles obligato]*

My fine feathered guest;

BEN. *[Singing]* He's the friendliest . . .

MARY. *[Singing]* Curious—est . . .

BEN/MARY. *[Sing together]*

Bird alive.

He's a meddlin' Robin Red-Breast;

*[They ad-lib noisy whistles]*

*[ROBIN flies and chatters loudly and noisily. Then he stops and they sing]*

BEN/MARY. *[Sing together]*

Whistle . . .

*[ROBIN whistles]*

Like the Robin . . .

*[ROBIN whistles]*

And he may come to you.

*[BEN and MARY whistle and the ROBIN whistles and settles near them]*

BEN. I've knowed him ever since he was a fledgling. He come out of th' nest in th' other garden an' when first he flew over th' wall, he was too weak to fly back for a few days, an' we got friendly. When he went over th' wall again, th' rest of th' brood was gone an' he was lonely an' he come back to me.

MARY. Look. He's pecking around and looking at us. He knows we're talking about him.

BEN. He's a conceited one, he is. He likes to hear folk talk about him. An' curious. He's always comin' to see what I'm plantin'. He knows ever' thin' that goes on.

MARY. Where did the rest of the brood fly to?

BEN. There's no knowin'. But this one, left alone, he's lonely, he is.

MARY. [*Suddenly sad*] I'm lonely.

BEN. [*After a pause*] Art tha' the little wench from India?

MARY. Yes.

BEN. Then no wonder tha'rt lonely. [*Digs in the dirt*]

MARY. What's your name?

BEN. Ben Weatherstaff. [*Pause*] I'm lonely myself. Except when he's with me. [*Indicates the Bird*] He's the only friend I've got.

MARY. I have no friends at all. I never had. My Ayah didn't like me, and I never played with anyone.

BEN. Tha' and me are a good bit alike. We was wove out of the same cloth. We're neither of us good lookin' an' we're both of us as sour as we look. We've got the same nasty tempers, both of us, I'll warrant.

MARY. [*Upset*] Nasty tempers? [*The ROBIN flies to a branch (which may be a THING's arm) near Mary and begins to chirp*] What did he do that for?

BEN. He's made up his mind to make friends with thee. Dang me if he hasn't took a fancy to thee.

MARY. Tome? [*Softly to the Bird*] Would you make friends with me? Would you?

BEN. Why, tha' said that as nice an' human as if tha' was a real child instead of a sharp old woman. Tha' said it almost like Dickon talks to his wild things on th' moor.

MARY. Do you know Dickon?

BEN. Everybody knows him. Dickon's wanderin' about everywhere.

*[The ROBIN flaps his wings and flies off]*

MARY. Oh! Where's he going? Where's he going?

BEN. Back into th' garden.

MARY. This garden? [*Points upstage*]

BEN. He lives there—among the rose trees.