

The Secret Garden

By Francis Hodgson

Adapted by C.M. Chavers

(A British accent is suggested for use throughout)

Eight year old Mary Lenox had lived in India since she was two years old, with her wealthy father and frivolous mother. Mary was accustomed to being waited on by many servants while she was neglected by pre-occupied parents. Then the black plague had struck, killing all of the servants and finally both of her parents. Soon she found herself back in England, a country she did not remember, going to be the ward of one of her father's wealthy friends, Sir Archibald Craven. Her first encounter with her guardian, was three weeks after her arrival at Mistlethwaite Manor, and a day after she had found the key to a mysteriously locked garden. We see Mary now entering the library, where she is to meet the Master, Archibald Craven.

- Arch: Don't be afraid. Come closer, child. I won't hurt you. ---You're too thin!
- Mary: I'm getting fatter.
- Arch: You resemble your father. I only met him once when we were boys, but I remember him. I envied him because he was on his way to Harrow, and I was too ill to go away to school. ---ill. I have always been ill.
- Mary: I'm sorry.
- Arch: Yes. ---You find my hump back repulsive, don't you?
- Mary: You look different from other people, but not repulsive.
- Arch: If we met in the dark, would you scream and run away?
- Mary: I might. But it would only be because it's the first time.
- Arch: Your honesty is rare.Are you happy here?
- Mary: I like India better.
- Arch: This is a sad house for a child. Is there anything that you need or want?
- Mary: Please, ...could I have a bit of earth, to make a garden? I love gardens.
- Arch: (moved to tears) There was once someone ...someone very dear to me...who loved gardens too. -Take your...bit of earth...wherever you please. Go now. ...Leave me!

Though strange in his words, the Master had given his word, and now Mary felt right about restoring the neglected garden. She met a lad named Dicken, and he became the friend she had never known. Dicken had a way with all living things and taught Mary many things about nature while they tended the garden together.

Mary: Dicken, do you know why this garden was locked and neglected? It must have been beautiful once.

Dicken: Aye. It was. It had fountains and curtains of roses, and they'll come again in the spring. It was the most beautiful garden at Mistlethwaite. But it's also the most sad.

Mary: The most sad? Why?

Dicken: Tis said that the Mistress of Mistlethwaite died in the garden many years ago.

Mary: Master Craven's wife?

Dicken: Aye. This be her garden. She spent many hours here every day. Tis said she'd sit in a large branch and read her books. Then one day, she was sittin' there, and the branch give out beneath her...and she died that very night from the fall. Master Craven locked up the garden from that day on and no one's been inside since, 'til you found the key and opened it.

Mary: Do you think it wrong of me, Dicken?

Dicken: Nay. It was meant to be. The good Lord knew that the garden you, and you needed this garden. You're changed Mary. Since you've been tending the garden, you're not as hard or cold as you used to be. You've learned to love and care for things, and that's good.

It was good! But one thing was still a mystery. Mary was awakened every night by sounds of wailing and crying. After a few weeks, she had had enough and set out to find the source of all the noise. What she found was a little boy, in a large, third floor room, crying mournfully. When the children saw each other, they both were quite startled. The boy spoke first.

Collin: Are....are you aghost?

Mary: No. I thought you were. I'm Mary Lenox. I came here from India so Mr. Archibald could be my guardian. ---See, ---touch me. If I'm a ghost your hand will go right through mine.

Collin: You feel real.

Mary: I am real! Who are you?

Collin: Collin Craven. My father is the Master of Mistlethwaite Manor.

Mary: Your father? Why didn't someone tell me he had a son?

- Collin:** Because no one is allowed to talk about me. I won't have it! Neither will my father.
- Mary:** But why?
- Collin:** Because I'm going to have a hump on my back like he has.
- Mary:** Oh, that's why you cry all the time! Do you ever go out of this room?
- Collin:** No. If people look at me, I have a fit and get a fever.
- Mary:** I'm looking at you and you're not having a fit.
- Collin:** I might!
- Mary:** Well, you can save yourself the trouble. Now that I know you are human, and not a spirit or ghost, I'm going back to bed.
- Collin:** You'll stay! I've no one to talk to except my nurse, and she is away on holiday. You said you came from India. I want to know about India.
- Mary:** You can read about India in books.
- Collin:** Reading makes my head ache.
- Mary:** If I were your father, I'd make you read so you could learn about things.
- Collin:** No one can make me do anything, because I'm sick. And I probably won't live to grow up.
- Mary:** Do you want to live?
- Collin:** Not if I'm going to have a hump on my back like my father.
- Mary:** You're the cryingest boy I've ever seen. I'm going back to bed.
- Collin:** You'll stay until I say you can go.
- Mary:** You can't make me stay if I don't want to.
- Collin:** Yes, I can. Everyone has to do what I say because I'm going to die.
- Mary:** People who talk about dying are boring. I'm going.
- Collin:** You may go now! But you will come again tomorrow.
- Mary:** I might,...if I don't have anything else to do.

Mary did come back, but not because she wanted to. Collin was throwing a terrible fit the very next morning, and the nurse begged Mary to go and calm him.

- Collin:** (screaming hysterically) I want Mary!!!!
- Mary:** Collin!! Stop it this instant!
- Collin:** You said you'd come!
- Mary:** I said I might! And might is only maybe!.....But now that I'm here, I might as well stay. Hmph!
- Collin:** Are you trying to see the lump on my back?
- Mary:** Oh, bother your lump! I was just thinking how different you are from Dicken.
- Collin:** Dicken?

Mary: He's Martha's brother. If she wasn't so scared of you, she probably would have told you about him. Dicken is...well... he's not like anyone in the world. He can charm animals...and birds. He talks to them, and they talk back!

Collin: Wow! That's magic!

Mary: Uh huh! Dicken's my friend. The first friend I ever had.

Collin: Then... then I shall order him to be my friend too.

Mary: You really don't know anything, do you? You can't order someone to be your friend. They have to want to be.

That day, Mary and Dicken worked long hours in the secret garden. Of course, Collin was furious that Mary did not spend the day with him; he knew nothing of the garden, but he did know that Mary rudely neglected him.

Collin: Where were you all day? I waited and waited! If you don't come, I'll have you dragged here! You're mean and selfish!

Mary: You're the one who's selfish! All you think about is feeling sorry for yourself!

Collin: You'd feel sorry too if you had a lump on your back and you were going to die!

Mary: Can I feel the lump?

Collin: I...suppose.. if you want.

Mary: Let me see. ---There's no lump. You've just got a knobby spine like I have. So if you ever talk about lumps again, I'm going to laugh.

Collin: I'm going to die!

Mary: You only say things like that to get attention. Well, it won't work with me. In fact, I was going to tell you something special – a secret – but now I'm not! Goodbye!

Collin: Mary, please....please stay with me.

Mary: Well, ... since you said please. I've never heard you say that before.

Collin: You were going to tell me a secret? I promise to be good if you'll tell me please. Will you?

Mary: Oh... all right. Though you don't deserve to be told. I have found a secret garden, right here at Mistlethwaite Manor! It was hidden behind great stone walls and a locked door. A bird showed me where to find

Mary: the key. It was lying on the ground under a tree just outside the door of the garden. And when I opened the door, it was magical!

Collin: Was it beautiful?

Mary: Oh, no! It was very ugly and unkempt. Thorns and thistles were everywhere, and everything was gray and brown.

Collin: But why was it magical?

Mary: I don't know,...but it was. I think for the first time I had found a place that actually needed me, and wanted me. The wind whispered to me, "This secret garden is your place." I asked your father for a bit of earth, and he told me to take any piece of land I pleased. So, it is mine now. Dicken has helped me discover the different flowers in the garden, and do you know what will bloom in the spring? Fountains and curtains of roses!

Collin: Roses! Oh how beautiful! Fountains and curtains of roses! Do you think I could ever see the secret garden? It sounds heavenly.

Mary: Of course, if you like.

Collin: Mary, I have a secret for you too. My fatherMy father hates me!

Mary: Collin! You mustn't say that!

Collin: It's true! He travels all the time so he doesn't have to be near me. When he's home, he only comes to look at me when he thinks I'm asleep. He thinks I'm ugly, and I'm going to have a lump on my back like he has.

Mary: But you don't!

Collin: I know. But he still hates me. You see, ...my mother died giving birth to me. I'm sickly because the doctor said I was born too early.

Mary: So that's it! Collin, your mother fell from a branch in a tree – a tree in the secret garden. You see, it was her garden. She must have been carrying you when she fell, and that caused you to be born too soon.

Collin: I killed her.

Mary: No you didn't. It was an accident. No one is to blame. No one!

Collin: Oh, if only I could show my father that I'm strong and healthy; then he would be proud of me. Mary..... I want to learn to walk!

Mary: Really?

Collin: You'll have to help me until my muscles are stronger. But if we practice every day, maybe when my father returns, I will be able to walk to him on my own.

That summer, Mary and Dicken helped Collin learn to walk again. They practiced every day within the walls of the secret garden. In June, the garden was in full bloom, with fountains and curtains of roses, just as Dicken had said. It was a magical summer in a magical garden. And one day, while the children played there, Archibald Craven, himself, stood in the doorway staring in disbelief. Collin saw his father and slowly, but with great determination, he walked to him. Archibald Craven clutched his only son to his breast, and together, they washed away the years of bitter turmoil and regret, with sweet tears of joy.

After schooling, and then the first World War, the garden was entered once more. A grown-up Mary touched each rose petal, recalling the sweet memories that they held.

Mary: Oh, Collin, Dicken. I've missed you.

Collin: And I've missed you, Mary Lenox.

Mary: Collin? Collin, I thought you were still in the hospital with ...

Collin: Do you think I'd let a small bit of shrapnel stop me from meeting you here?

Mary: Oh Collin, it's just as I remembered it. Except..

Collin: Dicken. I know. But they say he died in a forest. And that is good, for he was surrounded by living things, the things he loved.

Mary: Sweet Dicken. I'll miss him still.

Collin: And I. ---Mary, ...when I was at Oxford, I asked you to marry me. When I was in France, I wrote you and asked you again. Why did you never give me an answer?

Mary: I wanted you to ask me here, in our garden.

Collin: Of course. I should have known. Then, will you marry me, Mary Lenox?

And the rest, ...is no secret!

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