

# In A Garden

A Comedy in Three Acts

With an Introduction by  
Arthur Hopkins

Philip Barry  
1924

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# ***In a Garden***

*A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS*

*BY*

*PHILIP BARRY*

*With an Introduction by*  
*ARTHUR HOPKINS*

*NEW YORK*

*George H. Doran Company*

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IN A GARDEN

—A—

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*TO*  
*ARTHUR HOPKINS*

# INTRODUCTION

Whatever our intentions there seem to have been previous plans to defeat them. Anxious as we are to be ourselves, other expressions, inadvertent and unanticipated, interpose.

None of these obstacles are intentionally unfriendly, deadly as they may be.

We are born with dreams and wishes. The processes of group assimilation bring compromise and adjustment, probably not for our good or the good of anyone else but for peace, the costliest of all compromises.

But no matter how much we give in or give way there is always a certain residue of ourselves that refuses to be a part of the capitulation and it is this residue that in later life goads and taunts us.

So it was with Lissa. She never really capitulated. A great part of her despised the generally accepted scheme. This part of her floated far above man's surrender and astigmatism. This part of her lived in skies where earthly facts became fallacies.

Adrian lived on a plane where facts were indisputable and in spite of his love for Lissa his greatest wish was to bind her to his plane.

And so we come to the conflict of people living in different worlds, talking to each other in strange languages, languages that even love cannot interpret. Here is the sad impasse.

People will not let others be what they are. They must convert them to terms of their own equations. They insist upon a common denominator. They will not learn that God expresses Himself in many ways and that all His ways are God.

It is a truly fine picture of juxtaposed planes that Philip Barry has drawn and those of us who know his work will always be grateful.

ARTHUR HOPKINS.

*Cast of First Production*

“IN A GARDEN” was first produced by Arthur Hopkins at the Plymouth Theatre, New York City, on November 16, 1925. It was directed by Arthur Hopkins, the settings were designed by Robert Edmond Jones, and the cast was as follows:

ADRIAN TERRY	<i>Frank Conroy</i>
LISSA TERRY	<i>Laurette Taylor</i>
ROGER COMPTON	<i>Ferdinand Gottschalk</i>
NORRIE BLISS	<i>Louis Calhern</i>
MISS MABIE	<i>Marie Bruce</i>
FREDERIC	<i>Cecil Clovelly</i>

## *Characters*

*Adrian Terry*

*Lissa Terry*

*Roger Compton*

*Norrie Bliss*

*Miss Mabie*

*Frederic*

## *Action and Scene*

The action of the play takes place in New York City in  
the Spring of 1925.

The three acts take place in the same setting: the library  
of Adrian Terry's house.

# *IN A GARDEN: ACT ONE*

# *In a Garden*

## ACT ONE

The library is on the second floor of Adrian Terry's house in Sutton Place, New York.

It is a handsome room, in proportion, in decoration, in furnishings. The main entrance is from the hall, at back. Down right there is a door, leading into Adrian's study. At left, an arch leads into the dining-room. Down right double windows open upon a small balcony admitting sunlight in a volume, over the blue walls and ceiling. Through these windows a portion of a tree is visible against the sky, the house being situated in a section of New York where gardens still exist. Amongst the other furniture in the room, is a writing table.

It is late April, 1925. About five-thirty in the afternoon.

MISS MABIE is seated at the desk, clipping press-notices from a pile of newspapers, and marking them. She is about 38, slight and plain. She wears nose-glasses, and is rather severely dressed.

ROGER COMPTON enters from the hall. He is a gusty little man of 50, partially bald. He appears at the moment to be upset about something.

*Compton*

Where is he?

*Miss Mabie*

Mr. Terry?

*Compton*

Yes. Of course.—When's he coming in?

*Miss Mabie*

Directly the matinee was over, he said.

*(She glances at her watch)*

*Compton*

Humph! A wonder he'd go to it.

*Miss Mabie*

Wouldn't you want to see your first few performances?

*Compton*

You know what I mean. (*A silence*) I got that note, Miss Mabie.

*Miss Mabie*

I imagined that was what brought you.

*Compton*

Any other man, and I'd say he was talking for effect.

*Miss Mabie*

Not Mr. Terry. He means it, well enough.

*Compton*

And if there are bridges to be burned, he'll burn the last stick in 'em, eh? Well, I won't stand for it!

*Miss Mabie*

I presume it's his privilege to stop writing when he likes.

*Compton*

Privilege, my eye! He's made himself public property now. He's got no more privileges than I have.—Miss Mabie, I'm fond of Terry.

*Miss Mabie*

I know that, Mr. Compton.

*Compton*

I got him his first production. When I was a best-seller he was my ewe lamb.—What are you laughing at?

*Miss Mabie*

I'm not laughing.

*Compton*

(*Shouting*) My ewe lamb he was and my ewe lamb he is!—I don't care if he's seven feet tall! And now—just as he's doing the work *I* hoped to do, and couldn't—he quits. (*He turns on her sharply*) You don't want him to, do you?

*Miss Mabie*

I do want him to be happy.

(COMPTON *seats himself, disgustedly*)

*Compton*

Home and fireside, eh? Joy and rapture. Man and wife.

*Miss Mabie*

I think if you had lived with those two for seven years, as I have, you'd—

*Compton*

I'd nothing of the sort!

*Miss Mabie*

It's—such *complete* happiness.

*Compton*

Just let me tell you something that's true of any artist worthy of the name: when he's completely happy, he doesn't work—and when he isn't working, he isn't happy—and when he isn't one or the other, he *dies*.

(MISS MABIE *laughs nervously*)

*Miss Mabie*

That's very bright, I'm sure.

(COMPTON *leans back in his chair, proud of himself*)

*Compton*

I know Adrian better than anyone in this world does—including his wife. By "dies" I mean dies spiritually. How'd you like that to happen?

*Miss Mabie*

Oh, I shouldn't.

(COMPTON *leans forward again, confidingly*)

*Compton*

Ready to go to any lengths to save him? *I am!*

*Miss Mabie*

I don't see anything to be done.

*Compton*

You realize what his main gift is, don't you?

*Miss Mabie*

Why—his knowledge of people, I suppose.

*Compton*

He knows no more about people than I do. That's his pet delusion. Listen: Terry's god is perfection—the god of the mountains—and Terry's gift is the gift of making mountains out of molehills. Well—this guest they're expecting—Norrie Bliss—has he come yet?

*Miss Mabie*

His train isn't due until five-something—why?

*Compton*

*(With relish)* I'm just a hack novelist, Miss Mabie—but I believe I can hack a molehill out of Bliss—if I'm driven to it.

*(MISS MABIE rises)*

*Miss Mabie*

I don't know quite what you're getting at, but——

*Compton*

Oh, don't worry! It's not dangerous—*(He chuckles)*—unless Terry makes it so.  
*(ADRIAN TERRY enters from the hall. He is 40, tall and of youthful figure, with a face uncommonly fine and sensitive, for the strength of the features)*

*Adrian*

Hello, Roger!

*(MISS MABIE goes out, into the study. ADRIAN goes to COMPTON and*

*offers him his hand. COMPTON turns from him stiffly, without taking it. ADRIAN laughs)*

I do love to see you with your blood up. Go on now—ruffle your neck feathers.  
(COMPTON glowers at him)

*Compton*

Look here, Adrian—how long is it you've been writing?

*Adrian*

Fifteen—sixteen years.

(COMPTON whistles at the ceiling)

*Compton*

Good Lord, the cheek of the man!

*Adrian*

Why "cheek" particularly?

*Compton*

You think you *can* stop? Stop for good? Just by saying so?

*Adrian*

I know it. I have.

*Compton*

You're a dramatist to the soles of your shoes.

*Adrian*

Then let's say I've just put on my slippers—my dancing slippers.

(*He does a brief dance step*)

*Compton*

Don't *do* that! (*Then more calmly*) There's no one to replace you, Adrian.

*Adrian*

Keep on, and I'll begin to feel really important.

*Compton*

Damn it! Do you realize the strides you've been making here lately? Do you

realize that you may have it in you to turn out stuff that will *live*?

*Adrian*

(*Wearily*) Oh, Lord! (*Then*) That's sweet of you, dear Roger—but as I told you in my note, I prefer to live myself. I'm forty, you know.

(*He seats himself*)

*Compton*

What's forty to a writer?

*Adrian*

Exactly what it is to a plumber: half of eighty. I find I'm in love with life, Roger—so much so that the mere reflection of it no longer satisfies me. I want the original—undiluted—all I have left of it—all I can get of it.

*Compton*

So “Back to Nature,” I suppose.

*Adrian*

Yes—in a way.

*Compton*

My God, of all places to go.

*Adrian*

Won't you join me? Natural Man A. Natural Man B.

*Compton*

(*Shouting*) There isn't a natural man in existence!—Not out of prison, or an asylum.

*Adrian*

Come to see me on visiting-days.

*Compton*

Different from the rest of the world, aren't you?—Something very special.

*Adrian*

In one particular, yes. One important particular.

*Compton*

What?

*Adrian*

My wife.

*Compton*

What's your wife got to do with it?

*Adrian*

What *hasn't* she! (*A pause, then he continues, with some diffidence*) You see, Lissa and I aren't like the usual pair. There—there's never been anyone else for either of us.

*Compton*

(*Without a smile*) Ha-ha.

*Adrian*

For either of us! (*He closes his eyes sharply*) What that means! (*Then laughs shortly, to cover this display of emotion*) It means perfection, Roger—in just about the faultiest of all human relationships. Rather a good starting point to the—uh—larger life, don't you think?

*Compton*

You make me sick.

*Adrian*

Let's hope Lissa is not similarly affected. I'm to tell her today. (*Reflectively*) But do you know, I think Lissa is the one person who'll entirely understand what I'm driving at.

*Compton*

*Sweet matrimony.—I seem to have missed something.*

*Adrian*

Indeed you have!

*Compton*

Just as I thought. You're too blasted, rotten happy.

*Adrian*

*I am happy!*

*Compton*

Well, it's your finish, understand?

(*ADRIAN gaily kisses his hand to the air. COMPTON'S voice rises*)

*Compton*

The end! At forty!—Of money, health, success, and a happy marriage.  
(*Shouting*) Above all, of a happy marriage!

*Adrian*

Tsch-tsch—Very grave.

*Compton*

Yes, by George! If there's one person in this world who needs a good, stiff dose of misery, it's you, you damned bluebird.

*Adrian*

I enjoy your ranting, Roger, but I'm afraid it's no use.

*Compton*

If I had one good fresh idea for a play to draw under your nose——

*Adrian*

I shouldn't even sniff.

*Compton*

Or a wrench of some sort to throw into these joyful works of yours——

*Adrian*

They'd withstand it. Really, I'm afraid it's no use.

(*A pause*)

*Compton*

All right. You won't hear another peep from me.

*Adrian*

Thanks.—Then you're fit to dine with us tomorrow. Can you? The Forellis are coming.

*Compton*

Sorry. Got an engagement.

*Adrian*

Can't get out of it?

(LISSA TERRY *enters from the hall.* ADRIAN and COMPTON *rise*)

*Compton*

Not possibly.

(LISSA *has just come in from the street, with a box of flowers under her arm. She wears a smartly-made dress of some soft material, a hat and a light fur-neckpiece. She carries her gloves and a handbag. LISSA is 28, a shade above medium height, slim and youthful. In every line of her there is breeding and distinction which serve, in a measure, to temper the beauty of her face*)

*Adrian*

Hello *Lissa*!

*Lissa*

Hello *Adrian*! And, as I live, little Roger!—How are you?

*Compton*

Splendid, thanks. I needn't ask about you.

*Lissa*

It's glorious out.

*Adrian*

How was the concert?

*Lissa*

I didn't go. I just stayed in the park. It was four before I knew it. (*She sniffs the air*) Heavens, how stuffy. Two writers must have been talking shop here. The air's

full of phrases. (*She goes to the windows and opens them wide*) No sign of Norrie yet?

*Adrian*

William phoned he'd missed him at the station.

*Lissa*

A taxi won't hurt him. (*She opens the flowerbox and holds it under ADRIAN'S nose*) I got these for his room. Aren't they nice?

*Adrian*

Aren't they! (*She turns to go*) Oh, Lissa——

*Lissa*

Yes?

*Adrian*

Come back after I get rid of this pest, will you? I've some news for you.

*Lissa*

What about?

*Adrian*

Me.

*Lissa*

Tell me now!

*Adrian*

Too long a story.

*Lissa*

As soon as I get my hat off, then.

(*She goes out. COMPTON affects a casual air*)

*Compton*

Bliss hasn't arrived yet, eh?

*Adrian*

He's due today, from the coast.

*Compton*

I used to know Norris Bliss. Why's he leaving China? Giving up the diplomatic service?

*Adrian*

I don't think so. Just changing posts, I presume.

*Compton*

Good friend of yours?

*Adrian*

I know him very slightly. Why?

*Compton*

I know him very well. (*A pause. He blows a gust of cigarette smoke at the ceiling*)—Though I've met him only once.

*Adrian*

Bared his soul in one interview, eh?

*Compton*

Without knowing it, he did.—I don't think much of Bliss, Adrian. (*He rises. MISS MABIE comes in from the study, seats herself at the desk and continues to clip and arrange press-notices*) I've got some telephoning to do. Do you mind if I do it here?

*Adrian*

Wait a minute. What's the matter with Bliss?

*Compton*

Oh, nothing, nothing at all!

*Adrian*

Come on!

*Compton*

Maybe I'm stressing a single impression too much, but—well, isn't it you who

say “Given one good characterizing incident about a man, and you have the man?”

*Adrian*

It sounds like me.

*Compton*

Well, *he* gave me one, right enough.

*Adrian*

What was it?

*Compton*

I don't like to say anything that——

*Adrian*

Come on! I won't publish it.

*(A brief pause)*

*Compton*

He was at Gregory Kendall's place in Katonah, one day several years ago. I motored over from Croton to take tea with Greg. Ever been there?

*Adrian*

No. I think not.

*Compton*

He's got a little walled garden tucked away in a corner of the orchard. (*He glances at the room about him*) It's no bigger than this room. Marvellous little affair. His daughter had some young girls with her—all about the débutante age—well-mannered, full of inhibitions—quite unlike the present breed.

*Adrian*

I was going to say.

*Compton*

Still, for all their reserve, they seemed to me to be rather combustible. When they'd left, I got talking about 'em to Kendall and Bliss. (*He glances sideways at MISS MABIE*) I contended that if the primmest of the lot were left alone in that garden with a man, a moon, and perhaps a little distant music——

*Adrian*

—The combustion would take place.

*Compton*

The combustion would take place. And whereas it wouldn't matter so much to the girl at the time, it might get to matter a lot later on, when she found herself married to someone else.

*Adrian*

Why so?

*Compton*

Well, as I said to Bliss, "Every wife is at heart another man's mistress"—The man who just happened to be on hand when first romance came to flower in her.

*Adrian*

That's an amusing observation.

*Compton*

And a true one.

*Adrian*

No. Not quite.

*Compton*

Well, I won't argue with you whether it's "Every wife" or "Most wives." The point is, how Bliss took it. He got up, stretched himself, and announced that he'd bear that in mind at the dance there that night—some fancy-dress thing. Inasmuch as next day he was off to hell-and-gone some place for a number of years, it might be a comforting thought to know he'd left a potential mistress behind him. "For future reference," he said.

*Adrian*

Literally?

*Compton*

Exact words. Kendall laughed, and told him the garden would be open. *I* thought it was the remark of a young bounder.

*Adrian*

You think it places him, eh?

*Compton*

If he went through with it, he offered some perfect child one of my literary concepts as a genuine, original emotion of his own.

*Adrian*

(*Gravelly*) In fact, stole your stuff. (*With a gesture*) Bounder, liar, thief.

*Compton*

Don't you think that's enough?

*Adrian*

Well—I'd call it a fairly complete characterization.

*Compton*

And I believe he did go through with it. He'd been looking at one of those girls as if he'd like to eat her up. I heard the next day from someone who'd been at the dance, that the two of 'em disappeared together during the evening and were gone for more than an hour. It worried me. The girl worried me.

*Adrian*

It probably spun itself out for her, like any other young affair.

*Compton*

Hadn't the chance. He was off the next day to China. He left it cut off short intentionally—in cold blood—"for future reference."

*Adrian*

Oh, I see—a romance without an outcome. (*A thoughtful pause*) Memories like that do grow in. The heart never tires of imagined possibilities, does it?—It tires only of possibilities realized.—Rather fascinating, you know—rather fascinating—

*Compton*

You see what that one little episode might become.

*Adrian*

Yes—and you’d better grab it, Roger. You haven’t had a first-rate idea in years. Throw the whole story to the husband—*he’s* your man. If he——

*Compton*

(*Lowly, to MISS MABIE*) Take this down, will you?

(*MISS MABIE puts the scrap-book aside and prepares to take down ADRIAN’S observations*)

*Adrian*

—Of course he’s *bound* to find out that this—flaw exists in an otherwise perfect relationship between him and his wife. And naturally he’ll have to do something about it.

*Compton*

Oh?—What, for instance?

*Adrian*

That depends entirely upon the kind of person you make him.

*Compton*

Well—say he’s a man of taste—subtlety—ingenuity—ingenious as hell.

*Adrian*

“Taste”—then no stormy scenes—no fireworks. “Subtlety”—then he’d see the necessity of at once giving that thwarted romance the outcome it lacks.

“Ingenuity”—“ingenuity”—(*Then suddenly, excitedly*)—Then, in order to do it, he’d contrive somehow to put those two back into their original setting—not the identical garden, of course—that would make them both suspicious and self-conscious—but one to suggest it—strongly—(*He rises, with a triumphant gesture*)—There you are!

*Compton*

No I’m not. I’m still here.

*Adrian*

The roots of that memory lie deep in a certain garden—(*He begins to walk about*)—Your husband’s problem is how to kill the memory—painlessly, and with taste. (*A pause*) His solution is to turn back the clock—cause history to live itself

over again, but this time with an outcome—an actual outcome which must inevitably dislodge, supplant that whole glamorous host of imagined outcomes which his wife’s fancy has conjured. Fancy gives way to fact every time——

*Compton*

(*With another glance to MISS MABIE*) Ummmm—so it does.

*Adrian*

And incidentally, your husband is aware that romantic incidents don’t bear repeating—that *if* repeated, the memory dies.

*Compton*

Clever fellow, isn’t he?

*Adrian*

I took him at your valuation. Where’s the particular brilliance required to foresee how known people will act in a known situation?

*Compton*

You honestly believe you can foresee?

*Adrian*

Of course. Every move they’ll make. Well—he knows his wife—naturally. And he knows the other man as—among other pretty things—a liar. All right: back with the two of them into their setting. Leave them alone there. The setting stimulates the liar’s instinct to repeat a successful lie. Whether or not the woman sees through a deception the girl failed to, that roving ghost of a memory will be laid, a sick love will have been made whole. (*A moment—then with intense feeling*) It’s high comedy, Roger. That’s no novel. *That* lives! (*COMPTON can no longer restrain his laughter*) Oh, confound you!

*Compton*

What did I tell you?—Mad, crazy in love with a new idea—just as you’ve given up writing forever.

*Adrian*

It’s not my idea, you fool.

*Compton*

I give it to you. Take it.

*Adrian*

Thanks. I don't want it.

*Compton*

Don't want it! You're lusting for it. (*He rises and extends his hands, in a broad gesture*) There—I make you a present. Better let this be a lesson, young fellow—Your nose for a situation doesn't grow shorter in a day, you know.

*Adrian*

Get out! I'm tired of you.

*Compton*

And you can't whip off your dramatic instinct like a coat, either. (*He chuckles to himself*) Oh, I have hopes of you now!

*Adrian*

You needn't have.

*Compton*

We'll see! We'll see.—Where's that telephone?

*Adrian*

In the study. And look over my note-books. The third shelf. I will them to you.

*Compton*

(*Going toward the study*) Thanks—I wouldn't deprive you. Tomorrow you'd be wishing 'em back.

(*He goes out into the study. ADRIAN lights a cigarette and turns to MISS MABIE. They look at each other for a moment without speaking. Then:)*

*Adrian*

Miss Mabie, there's one thing I shan't be able to stand—and that's that constant look of condemnation—reproach—whatever it is.

*Miss Mabie*

I'm sorry. I wasn't aware that I——

*Adrian*

I am an exceedingly happy man these days, and I won't have my spirits dampened by people reading me lectures—or *looking* me lectures.

*(She makes a helpless gesture with her pad and pencil)*

*Miss Mabie*

*(Faltering)* I—I thought——

*Adrian*

No—nor outwitting me into doing something I don't want to do, either.

*Miss Mabie*

I understand. But I—I thought if it was really a good idea, I thought it was a pity not to—perhaps to—*(She smiles uncertainly)*—make a gift of it to some one of your writing friends, who—*(Starts to rise from the desk)*—But I see that you——

*Adrian*

Just a moment—*(She reseats herself)*—You've got the central idea outlined already, haven't you?

*Miss Mabie*

I—don't know.

*(She prepares to take his dictation)*

*Adrian*

There are three sides to it. First—first—now wait a minute——

*(He thinks, deeply. MISS MABIE watches him intently. LISSA enters from the hall, unnoticed by either of them. She watches them quietly for a moment. Then ADRIAN continues to MISS MABIE)*

Yes!—"Every wife, in her heart, is another man's mistress."

*Lissa*

What's all this I hear?

*Adrian*

A brilliant idea: "Every wife, in her heart, is another man's mistress."

*(LISSA laughs)*

*Lissa*

More than brilliant. But how so?

(MISS MABIE *examines her notes*)

*Miss Mabie*

(*Quoting*) “The man who happened to be on hand when first romance came to flower in her.”

*Lissa*

Dear, dear.—Who’s going to write the music?

*Adrian*

But seriously, what do you think of it?

*Lissa*

Just what I think of most glib sayings that begin “Every woman”—“Any man.” Amusing, perhaps—but true? (*She laughs and shrugs*) Oh, no.

*Adrian*

They don’t impress you, eh?

*Lissa*

Why should they?—“Send a telegram to ‘any man’ of forty, saying ‘Flee. All is discovered.’ Ten to one he’ll flee.”—Only he won’t. “‘Most men’ lead lives of quiet desperation.” Only they don’t. “‘Every wife’ is at heart another man’s mistress.” Only she isn’t.

*Adrian*

(*Smiling*) Of course one always excepts those present.

*Lissa*

My name is Lissa Legion. Plays are plays, my dear—and life’s life. Don’t try to mix them. They won’t. People are too unexpected.

(*She goes toward the hall door*)

*Adrian*

Don’t go.

*Lissa*

I don't want to disturb you.

*Adrian*

But you're not! That's all for today, Miss Mabie.

*Miss Mabie*

I—I'll type what we've got so far.

*(She goes out into the study)*

*Lissa*

Then you *were* at something.

*Adrian*

No. That is—*(He hesitates a moment. Then, with emphasis:)*—No. I was not. *(He goes to her)* Are you prepared for a striking bit of information?

*Lissa*

Save it a moment—*(She puts her arms about him, and her head upon his breast)*—Let me stay just here for awhile. *(After a moment she lifts her head, smiling)* Now——

*Adrian*

What is it, Lissa?

*Lissa*

The old trouble: feeling over-civilized, as you call it.

*Adrian*

Poor darling.—What would you like to do?

*Lissa*

If you're just beginning a new play, I suppose there's no chance of our getting away for awhile.

*Adrian*

But of course there is!

*Lissa*

No, never mind. I'm all right.

*Adrian*

I'm not beginning a new one.

*Lissa*

Really?

*Adrian*

Really.

*Lissa*

Then——

*Adrian*

Anything.

*Lissa*

South Carolina. Some place in the woods, there. Spring doesn't come fast enough for me. I want to go meet it.

*Adrian*

Then meet it, you shall.

*Lissa*

Oh, I should love it! Thanks—thanks . . . (*She clings to him for an instant, and then leaves him*) If you're just pampering me!

*Adrian*

I'm not, though.—Dear—you haven't been really unhappy?

*Lissa*

Have I seemed it?

*Adrian*

No.—But now——

*Lissa*

It's just that I came around through the garden. It isn't fixed yet, but you can feel something under your feet—moving—straining—pushing. . . . (*Breathlessly*) Lovely. . . . (*She laughs, lightly*) Spring fever. Years ago, at school, the nuns gave

us brimstone for it. So you may give me hell, if you like.

*Adrian*

I don't like.

*Lissa*

Oh, *bless* the boy! I feel better already.

*Adrian*

I feel like a young colt just turned into pasture.

*(He does a dignified gambol. LISSA looks on, amusedly. He wheels about suddenly, takes her shoulders in his hands, and demands:)*

Ask me "Whence the great joy," why don't you?

*Lissa*

My sprightly one—whence the great joy?

*Adrian*

I've retired!

*(LISSA'S expression of amusement at once leaves her face. She exclaims:)*

*Lissa*

Adrian!

*Adrian*

For good and all!—I've written my last play! My last anything! No more! Not another line!

*(He flings himself into a large chair, and sits there, smiling contentedly up at her. She takes his head between her hands and gazes searchingly into his eyes)*

I mean just that.

*Lissa*

Adrian—*why* . . . ?

*Adrian*

To do something I've never had time for—*live*, my dear!

*(She shakes his head back and forth between her hands)*

*Lissa*

How did you come to it?

*Adrian*

Direct—by the strongest conviction a man ever had. *(Suddenly her knees give way. She sinks down upon one corner of the chair and buries her head in his breast)* Why, Lissa——

*Lissa*

Oh—I can't tell you! You don't know how I've wished for it—how I've longed!

*Adrian*

Why, darling—I'd no idea——

*Lissa*

'Drian, it's been so awful. I've—prayed with my whole heart to believe as you did—books, plays, pictures—more than life itself—greater, finer, you'd say. But I couldn't. It's not in me to. Then—I got feeling I must have a blind spot somewhere, because you were so sure of it. Then I—lately—you know, I've been braving it out. . . .

*Adrian*

You've been right. It's I who've been——

*Lissa*

No. Things just—struck you differently. Ah, but *now* they don't—they don't, do they, Adrian?

*Adrian*

Still a little uncertain, are you?

*Lissa*

I've seen you so long—watching people—drawing them out—finding “situations” where there weren't any situations at all—*using* everything, everybody—cutting them up and putting the pieces together again. You went to such lengths with it. . . .

*Adrian*

Don't, Lissa——

*Lissa*

Things I loved most—I've seen that awful look of—appraisal come in your eyes. Things people said—I've watched you repeating them over in your mind, so you wouldn't lose them, before you got them down. "What's he do it for?" I'd say—"What's it all about? Isn't he content to let things be? What's he *do* it for?"

*Adrian*

Wait, Lissa——

*Lissa*

I've even seen myself, dressed up in another person—walking across the stage in your plays—though I don't think you suspected for a moment, who it was.—I've seen that sharp, intent look come—even when you—were with me—alone . . .

*Adrian*

Oh, no—no, that couldn't be.

*Lissa*

It *has* been. (*A pause*) Dear, dear Adrian—it's all past?

*Adrian*

Completely—absolutely.  
(*A pause*)

*Lissa*

A splendid wife I've been! A real help!

*Adrian*

Lissa, do you want me to go to my room and shoot myself? (*She shakes her head, and contrives to smile*) Well, then——

*Lissa*

But it's just been because I felt so strongly the other way. Life's such a precious thing. I'd rather you worked with your hands. I'd rather you did anything, than keep worrying it, that way—trying to hitch it to something—when everything else should hitch to it.

*Adrian*

I know. I know, dear.

*Lissa*

You see, I'm a little crazy: I don't care anything at all for what they call "accomplishment."—I think I'd love you—adore you—if you drove a canal barge

---

*Adrian*

Let's!

*Lissa*

Or just sat the whole day in a meadow, counting your fingers. (*He laughs. She laughs with him*) Rather a pleasant thing, marriage.

*Adrian*

Not for everyone! But has it occurred to you *why* ours is perfect—really perfect?

*Lissa*

There isn't any reason. Don't go looking for reasons, now.

*Adrian*

I needn't look! I've got it!—Because, my dear, by a heavenly piece of luck, there's never been anyone else for either of us. There's not one corner of our hearts, where we aren't. Perfection like this—it makes everything else rattle like—like an empty—

(*He gropes for the right word, frowning*)

*Lissa*

Never mind the word. Words aren't of any account any more. Oh, what a lark we're off on! Adrian—*promise* me you won't make phrases about the trees. . . .

*Adrian*

I'll be too occupied carving our initials on them.

*Lissa*

If you would—and mean it!

*Adrian*

Darling, I shall blush furiously when I hold your hand. (LISSA *extends it to him*)  
No—I'm too shy.

(*They laugh. Then suddenly LISSA becomes very grave*)

*Lissa*

Listen, you Adrian Terry: I don't mind your plays—plays are all right. I shouldn't  
a bit mind your writing them—I'd even like it——

(*She hesitates*)

*Adrian*

If——?

*Lissa*

If they wouldn't creep into our real life and—and infect it!

*Adrian*

“Infect”—what a ghastly word.

*Lissa*

And what a ghastly thing! (*Then, in a rush.:*) Oh, make *them* hitch, too! Let life  
come first! Life—and then—then all the plays you like. Just so long as you keep the  
two in their right order!

*Adrian*

(*Smiling*) I think, for awhile, we'd better concentrate on the one.

*Lissa*

*I think so! I think we had! (She leans up and kisses him impulsively) There!—*  
Now *I must* see that Norrie's room's ready. I shan't be a minute.

(LISSA *goes out into the hall. After a moment FREDERIC enters from the*  
*dining-room, sees that ADRIAN is alone and turns to go out again*)

*Adrian*

What is it, Frederic?

*Frederic*

I was looking for Madam, Sir.—Mrs. Forelli telephoned to say that they

regretted very much they would not be able to dine here tomorrow, as expected.

*Adrian*

The Forellis can't come?

*Frederic*

No, sir. Their youngest child is ill.

(COMPTON *enters from the study and picks up his hat and stick*)

*Adrian*

Oh, too bad.—I'll tell Mrs. Terry.

*Frederic*

If you will, sir.

(*He goes out into the dining-room. COMPTON takes a book from a small table and reads the title:*)

*Compton*

"Bramblebush Grapes," by Roger Compton. (*He flings the book into a corner*)  
Trash!

(ADRIAN *laughs. COMPTON turns on him*)

*Compton*

All my stuff's trash. But I go on!—And then a man like you—Oh, you fool, you!

(ADRIAN *does a single pirouette*)

*Adrian*

A happy fool.

*Compton*

Damn your happiness! (ADRIAN *laughs. COMPTON'S face sets*) I've a good mind to

---

*Adrian*

You've a good mind to write books with. I've a better one, to live with.

*Compton*

Completely domesticated, eh?—Go curl up on your hearth-rug—tabby-cat!

(*He stalks to the hall-doorway*)

*Adrian*

'Mind your blood-pressure, Roger. These fits of spleen affect your work.—  
Learn from me: happiness—contentment.

(COMPTON *wheels about and confronts him*)

*Compton*

Perhaps you'll be interested to know that the girl Bliss took into Kendall's garden that night was one Lissa Gay—later to become the wife of one Adrian Terry, professional bluebird! Now! Get happy over that!

(*In an instant he is gone. ADRIAN stands looking after him without moving. Then he laughs, but unconvincingly. LISSA enters from the hall*)

*Lissa*

Who was that, going downstairs?

*Adrian*

Roger Compton.

*Lissa*

Oh—I thought for a moment it might be Norrie.—Imagine thinking Roger was Norrie!

(*A pause*)

*Adrian*

How about leaving for the South on Monday, Lissa?

*Lissa*

Sunday!—But we don't know how long Norrie's staying. 'Drian—what on earth made you ask him?

*Adrian*

I thought you'd want me to. He's your friend, not mine.

*Lissa*

I hate meeting people again, after so long. Not meeting them so much, as having to be under the same roof with them.—What's the matter?

*Adrian*

Nothing. Why?

*Lissa*

I thought there might be a smudge on my nose.

*Adrian*

What's he like, anyway?

*Lissa*

Norrie?—I don't know, now. Rather a sweet boy, then. Thin, with red cheeks. Young. Fresh as a daisy. Fearfully—natural. I think he was the most natural person I've ever known.

*Adrian*

Afraid he'll have changed?

*Lissa*

Well—yes. Yes, I am.

*Adrian*

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight years.

*Lissa*

—Of the diplomatic. Pan in a morning-coat. Pan with an oyster-fork.

*Adrian*

He wore a leopard-skin, and ate with his fingers?

*Lissa*

I prattle in metaphor, my dear—once your favorite language. His dress and manners were perfect. Pan was inside them.

*Adrian*

Still is, perhaps.

*Lissa*

I doubt it.—And I know nothing whatever about the Situation in the Near East, and I don't care a rap whether the Door to China is open or closed.

(ADRIAN gives the following questions rapidly, concisely)

*Adrian*

Do you know his family?

*Lissa*

Slightly.

*Adrian*

A large one?

*Lissa*

He's the only child, I believe.

*Adrian*

Where did he go to school?

*Lissa*

I've forgotten.

*Adrian*

College?

*Lissa*

I think it was Harvard.

*Adrian*

How old is he?

*Lissa*

About thirty, I suppose.

*Adrian*

Clever? Amusing?

*Lissa*

Only so-so.

*Adrian*

Money?

*Lissa*

Enough, I expect.

*Adrian*

Sporting, I presume.—Play tennis? Golf? Polo?

*(She frowns at him, puzzled, then laughs)*

*Lissa*

Religion? Politics? Size of collar?—As a matter of fact, I know very little about him. It's the silliest thing in the world, having him here, really it is. I wish you'd been less hospitable.

*Adrian*

The cable came—you were in Baltimore. It sounded as if he wanted to be asked, and had, in decency, to be answered.

*Lissa*

Not before consulting my exceedingly important wishes.

*Adrian*

I thought I was merely anticipating them.

*Lissa*

That, my dear man, is a thing you've got to learn: that you can't anticipate anyone's.

*Adrian*

Not those of a person I know as I do you?

*Lissa*

And how do you know me?

*Adrian*

Seven years' worth.

*Lissa*

It's not enough. What about the twenty before?

*Adrian*

I could give you a complete history of each—from birth, in the first, with a silver spoon in your mouth, to début in the twentieth, with two orchestras.

*Lissa*

And just what does my history prove?

*Adrian*

Well—here you are. . . .

*Lissa*

Knowing the—process of manufacture, you can foretell the product.

*Adrian*

Why, yes.

*Lissa*

Am I it, Adrian?

*(They look at each other fixedly)*

*Adrian*

*(Finally)* You're Lissa—my wife—and I love you. I love you, Lissa.

*(She laughs)*

*Lissa*

There—that's better. Your first lesson—learned late, my dear!

*Adrian*

But you're different!

*Lissa*

So is everyone! That's the next lesson.

*(FREDERIC enters)*

*Frederic*

Mr. Bliss, sir.

*Lissa*

Yes. Send him here. *(FREDERIC goes out. For a moment LISSA stands, thinking)*

*silently*) What I *can't* make out, is why he came at all on such an invitation. Well, anyway—*(She goes to ADRIAN, puts her arms around him, and kisses him impulsively)*—Good-bye, for a few days.

*Adrian*

What on earth!

*Lissa*

*(Gravely)* We are no longer man and wife. We are host and hostess. *(ADRIAN laughs. LISSA assumes the manner of a hardened hostess)* I think the Chinese treaty with Syria was a mere political manoeuvre to force the Cornish fishermen into Biarritz.

*Adrian*

Hush, darling!

*Lissa*

*But*—can Article Seven, Paragraph Three, reduce the consumption of barley-water in the White House? Tell me *that*?

*(NORRIE BLISS enters from the hall. He is thirty, well-built, well-dressed. Handsome, perhaps, but his charm lies principally in the impression he gives of a fresh and youthful vitality. He carries a flat package, wrapped in tissue-paper, which he drops upon the desk. He goes at once to LISSA, and takes her hand, eagerly)*

*Bliss*

Lissa! This is good!

*Lissa*

Dear Norrie. Isn't it?—You know Adrian, of course.

*Adrian*

Yes, indeed.

*(He and BLISS shake hands)*

*Bliss*

*(To them both)* You're so nice to take me in, this way.

*Adrian*

The greatest pleasure, having you.

*Bliss*

(*To LISSA*) You got the hint in my cable admirably. After two weeks on the sea and another in a train, I couldn't endure the thought of a hotel—not even for two days.

*Adrian*

You must be worn out.

*Lissa*

Surely you'll be here more than two days?

(*She seats herself in a chair by the table*)

*Bliss*

Washington the day after tomorrow. Then straight to Maine.

*Lissa*

Maine? So early?

*Bliss*

I can scarcely wait.

*Lissa*

(*To ADRIAN*) The diplomatist speaks!

*Bliss*

Do let me make all the faux pas I like. I'm so sick of not making them. (*He seats himself facing LISSA*) I've bought a farm in Maine—rather an enormous farm. Part of it's thick wood—virgin-forest, very nearly.—You might say flapper-forest.

*Lissa*

A pretty distinction.

*Adrian*

Very.

(*LISSA points to the package*)

*Lissa*

What's that?

*Bliss*

*(Mysteriously)* Shhhh! *(To ADRIAN)* Part's on the sea. I figure on spending some eight months of the year there.

*Adrian*

But what about your—career?

*Bliss*

I am on the point of changing careers. Hence the détour, by way of Washington—with resignation in hand.

*(LISSA picks up the package and feels it)*

*Adrian*

Going back to Nature, eh?

*Bliss*

Back to Nature.

*Adrian*

That's interesting.—I'm doing the same thing.

*Bliss*

We'd best form a club. *(To LISSA)* Put that down. *(LISSA, with the air of a child caught in a guilty act, replaces the package. BLISS to ADRIAN:)* The United Sons of Nature.

*(LISSA sits gazing at the package in fascination. He moves it behind the chair, out of the range of her vision)*

*Lissa*

Who cares what it is?

*Adrian*

I've a friend who claims there's not a really natural man at large.

*Bliss*

Send him to me: If he's plump, and I'm hungry, I'll have him for dinner.

*Lissa*

—If it isn't a present.

*Adrian*

Don't notice her.

(BLISS *gazes at her*)

*Bliss*

You'd have to be blind, I think.

(*A pause, which becomes a trifle awkward. Then.:*)

*Lissa*

—And if it isn't, then what is it? (BLISS *merely smiles*) You fiend, you—what is that thing?

*Bliss*

Since you ask, a little gift for my hostess.

*Lissa*

What?

*Bliss*

For the sake of Auld Lang Syne. (ADRIAN *glances at him quickly*) Three guesses.

*Lissa*

Auld Lang Syne?—A set of bagpipes.

*Bliss*

Perhaps "Sweet Memory's Sake" is better.

(ADRIAN'S *smile becomes fixed*)

*Lissa*

You give that here! (*She snatches the package and tears it open, disclosing a white Chinese shawl, of beautiful and striking pattern. She exclaims with joy, then suddenly becomes grave, hugs it to her, and looks over it, to* BLISS) Norrie!

(BLISS *affects to cover a yawn*)

*Bliss*

The merest trifle.

(LISSA *thrusts it toward* ADRIAN)

*Adrian*

Beautiful. Simply beautiful.

*Lissa*

(*To* BLISS) Oh—thanks. . . . (*With a quick gesture, she whips the shawl out of its folds and about her shoulders*) I'll wear it to the theatre tonight.

(*She busies herself arranging the shawl more evenly about her*)

*Adrian*

It's the second night of my latest—I should say “last” opus. The first real audience, you know. I hope it won't bore you.

*Bliss*

On the contrary, I should love to see it.

(LISSA *presents herself to them with the shawl now perfectly arranged*)

*Lissa*

There! Who'll buy my violets?

*Bliss*

You lovely, lovely thing. You know, you haven't changed a particle.

*Lissa*

Isn't he nice, Adrian?

(ADRIAN *smiles. She turns again to* BLISS)

Did he expect a kind of—dried apricot?

*Bliss*

At least.

*Lissa*

Or perhaps I was pictured as—more ample. (*She goes to the window*) Did I hobble across your mind's eye with a stick? Or did I roll, balloon-wise?—Look—we have a view—(*She draws aside the window-curtains. BLISS goes to her side*)

—Heavenly, over here, isn't it?—The East River, in case you don't know.—And you don't find many gardens like *that* in New York!

*Bliss*

No—I should say you don't. (*Their backs are to ADRIAN. He stares at them fixedly*) What's that—that little shoot of green, there?

*Lissa*

Where?—I don't see——

*Adrian*

Dear—isn't it tomorrow the Forellis are dining here?

*Lissa*

Thursday, yes. (*To BLISS*) Where——?

*Adrian*

It's the first of May. That's a great day for Florentines.

(*LISSA turns absently, after a pause*)

*Lissa*

Oh, so it is. "Primavera," or something. . . . (*To BLISS*) I don't see——  
(*He points*)

*Adrian*

Suppose you let me plan a miniature fiesta for them to celebrate it.

*Lissa*

Do!

*Adrian*

Also to commemorate the return of us three truant-children of Nature to our Mother.

*Lissa*

(*Still absently*) Of course!

*Adrian*

All I ask—(*He looks about him*)—is permission to do as I like with this room.

All right?

*Lissa*

Gladly! We'll be—*(She counts on her fingers)*—six. *(To BLISS)* Adrian's particularly good at fiestas. *(She smiles at ADRIAN)* He was born a celebrator. *(Again she looks out the window)* Where do you see any green, Norrie——  
*(BLISS points once more)*

*Bliss*

There beside the path—to the left.

*Lissa*

Oh! It's the first one! It is! And an hour ago there wasn't a sign of it! *(She leans a little way out the window)* Hello, you crocus——  
*(BLISS turns to ADRIAN)*

*Bliss*

The crocus is plainly a piece of old bottle.

*Lissa*

*(In high spirits)* Come on! Let's go look! *(She goes to the hall door, speaking over her shoulder to BLISS:)* If it is, I'll grind it up and put it in your tea. *(To ADRIAN)* And forget what I said about going to meet the Spring. It's here already! It's arrived! Come!

*(ADRIAN manages to laugh)*

*Adrian*

I'll follow in a moment.

*(LISSA leaves her shawl on a chair by the door and goes out, BLISS after her. ADRIAN stands gazing into space, his presentiment taking a stronger and stronger hold upon him. A moment, then he goes toward the door, where he is brought up short by the sight of the shawl upon the chair. Suddenly his eyes begin to glint and his mouth hardens. He rings for FREDERIC, goes to the desk, seats himself, and calls sharply in the direction of the study)*

*Adrian*

Miss Mabie! *(She appears in the doorway. From now until the end of the*

*Act, ADRIAN speaks rapidly, and with a kind of hard, dry precision)* What's Prendergast's address?

*Miss Mabie*

Prendergast, the agent?

*Adrian*

No, no!—Prendergast, in Philadelphia. His house.

*Miss Mabie*

“Cottonwood,” Villa Nova.

*(ADRIAN notes the address)*

*Adrian*

And will you please call Mr. Kendall—Gregory Kendall. Something East Seventy-something. Ask him if he has any photographs of his small garden in Katonah. If so, I should like to borrow them for a day or two.

*(He begins to write a note. MISS MABIE goes into the study. FREDERIC enters from the hall)*

*Frederic*

Yes, sir?

*Adrian*

*(As he writes and addresses the note)* Frederic—we want to make dinner tomorrow something of an occasion—to celebrate May Day. Go to the florist—order plenty of Spring flowers—not all daffodils and hyacinth—some mimosa—wild flowers, if he can get them—and greens, lacey ferns, maidenhair—lots of it. I'm having some flat-scenery sent from the theatre. If it's possible, this room is to be transformed into—into a kind of walled-garden.

*Frederic*

*(Nodding)* And how many shall you be for dinner?

*Adrian*

Set six places.

*Frederic*

You remember that Mr. and Mrs. Forelli are not coming——

*Adrian*

Yes—but there may be others.—If, by any chance, there should not, if we should be only three, say, or—or even two—everything's to proceed just the same. You understand?

*Frederic*

Yes, Sir.

(*ADRIAN stamps the note and gives it to him. MISS MABIE re-enters, in her hat and coat*)

*Adrian*

(*To FREDERIC*) It's possible that I may be called away by telegram at the last moment.—This is to go immediately. I want it in Philadelphia by morning.

(*FREDERIC bows and goes out*)

*Miss Mabie*

Mr. Kendall has the photographs, and will be very glad to lend you them. Shall I ——?

*Adrian*

No. I'll send for them, later.—We're having a May Day party, Miss Mabie. I wish, in the morning, you'd go to the Library and dig out all the data you can on the various Spring festivals—the Primavera, the Planting, the Seed-Festivals, and the like——

*Miss Mabie*

Very well. (*ADRIAN goes to the window. She hesitates. Then:*) I—I suppose now that you've—left your profession, I shan't be needed any more.

*Adrian*

Nonsense! We couldn't think of parting with you. In a month you'll be quite as indispensable to Mrs. Terry as you've been to me.

*Miss Mabie*

I am not a social secretary, Mr. Terry.

(*ADRIAN is looking intently down into the garden*)

*Adrian*

What's that?—But I didn't say——

*Miss Mabie*

I shall stay only as long as I can be of service to you—and your work—and your happiness.

*(She goes to the door)*

*Adrian*

But I tell you——

*Miss Mabie*

*(From the door)* Good-night, Mr. Terry.

*(ADRIAN looks at her; sees that she means what she says, and shrugs)*

*Adrian*

Good-night.

*(She goes out. ADRIAN turns again to the window)*

CURTAIN

***IN A GARDEN: ACT TWO***



## ACT TWO

The Library, with the aid of flat-scenery, trellises, a carpet of grass and a profusion of flowers, greens, shrubs and leafy screens, has been transformed into something stealthily approaching the likeness of an old walled-garden.

It is desirable that the scene should undergo several changes in the course of the Act, these changes being regulated entirely by the lighting: at first, with some little daylight still coming from the windows, it is obviously a stage “exterior,” of a kind of sinister artificiality; the “struts” that hold the gray garden-walls in place are plainly visible, and the walls, doorways, ceiling and windows of the surrounding Library may be seen almost as before. Later, with the dimming of the outside light, it begins gradually to take on more of the intended illusion. When the “moonlight” is first inadvertently turned on by Lissa, the effect should be one of enchantment, greenish, unnatural, owing to the mixture of the moonlight with the little remaining daylight from the windows. Toward the end of the Act, when it is entirely dark outside and ADRIAN again turns on the moonlight, the effect should be nearer—though never quite—that of an actual garden flooded with Spring moonlight.

The furniture has been replaced by a few stone benches, a large jar or two, and a stone table. On pedestals against the trellis at the back are four little stone figures, representing the Four Seasons. A library-lamp has been left upon a table, behind a screen of greens against the trellis.

It is about seven o'clock the following evening. ADRIAN is arranging the last bit of vine upon the trellis at Back. FREDERIC is gathering stray pieces into a box.

*Adrian*

That ought to do, I think.

(FREDERIC carries the box to the dining-room doorway)

*Frederic*

Will you look at the table, Sir?

(ADRIAN goes and looks into the dining-room)

*Adrian*

Oh, yes—it's much better without the cloth. Too many candles, though. Two are enough.

*Frederic*

For six people, Sir?

*Adrian*

Two candles—there will be light from here. Besides, as I told you, we may not be six.—Where is Mrs. Terry?

*Frederic*

I think she is dressing. Shall I——?

*Adrian*

No, I don't need her. Has Mr. Bliss come in yet?

*Frederic*

I haven't heard him.

*Adrian*

Let me know when he does. (*FREDERIC goes out into the dining-room. ADRIAN advances into the Library. MISS MABIE appears in the hall doorway, wearing her hat and carrying a portfolio. She stops in surprise, at the change in the room*)  
Lissa! You mustn't—Oh, it's you, Miss Mabie. Come in—come in—it's all right.

*Miss Mabie*

(*In admiration*) Really, Mr. Terry, really!

*Adrian*

I was afraid you were—I didn't want Mrs. Terry or—the others to see it till this evening.

*Miss Mabie*

But however did you manage it?

*Adrian*

I've had a pair of stagehands working since noon and an electrician since three.

It's what's left of the flier Roseman took in Romeo and Juliet. Like it?

*Miss Mabie*

Ye-es.—Of course it does look a trifle stagey.

*Adrian*

Now.—But our particular brand of moonlight makes palm-trees out of feather-dusters.

*Miss Mabie*

Moonlight?

(ADRIAN *points to the ceiling downstage*)

*Adrian*

Along there. Blue border.

*Miss Mabie*

Where? I don't—Ah yes! The trellis hides it.

*Adrian*

Extraordinary, what a difference it makes. A touch on that button and the library becomes a walled-garden under the Spring moon.

*Miss Mabie*

Fascinating! Let me see——

(ADRIAN *goes to the hall doorway and presses the switch button.*  
*Nothing happens*)

*Adrian*

What the devil!—Oh, of course: the electrician's gone to change the fuse. He'll be back shortly, I expect.

*Miss Mabie*

It's all very pretty—very pretty, indeed.—But the little statues—and the mimosa—*they* weren't in the photographs.

*Adrian*

I didn't want an exact copy.—Mail the photographs back to Mr. Kendall, will you?

*Miss Mabie*

—And shall I put yesterday's notes in the post for Mr. Compton?

*Adrian*

Better hold them a day or so. Something else may occur to me.

*Miss Mabie*

If—if I may say so——

*Adrian*

Say so? Say all you like! Say what?

*Miss Mabie*

I—I hope something else *does* occur.

*Adrian*

Oh? Why——

*Miss Mabie*

Because—as it stands—it seems to me you're putting the—idea ahead of the characters.

*Adrian*

It's the merest outline.

*Miss Mabie*

I realize that. But if the husband—I hope you'll excuse me, Mr. Terry——

*Adrian*

Go ahead.

*Miss Mabie*

If he—turns the clock back as you suggested, I think he'd run into complications—in the characters themselves, I mean.

*Adrian*

He'll take those into account.

*Miss Mabie*

Can he, though?

*Adrian*

I believe so. He knows people.

*Miss Mabie*

But—but they might get out of his hands.

*Adrian*

No more than *my* characters—whom *I* know—get out of mine.

*Miss Mabie*

Still—(*She regards him intently*)—Aren't you feeling well, Mr. Terry?

*Adrian*

I?—perfectly!

*Miss Mabie*

You look worn out.

*Adrian*

I was up rather late again. A night's sleep is all I need.

(*FREDERIC enters with a telegram. MISS MABIE extracts a sheaf of pencilled notes from her portfolio*)

*Miss Mabie*

I've collected quite a lot of information on the celebration of Spring Festivals in various countries.

*Adrian*

Thanks. Thanks very much.

*Frederic*

A telegram, Sir.

(*ADRIAN takes it. FREDERIC turns to go*)

*Adrian*

Just a minute. (*To MISS MABIE*) I'd—uh—I'd like to have it all typed before dinner. Have you time?

*Miss Mabie*

Yes, indeed. Two carbons?

*Adrian*

One's enough. (*She goes into the study.* ADRIAN *gives the telegram back to* FREDERIC) I don't want to be bothered now. Bring this back to me before dinner.

*Frederic*

I'll leave it here, Sir.

(*He places it on the table*)

*Adrian*

No! Take it!—Bring it in before dinner—just before.

*Frederic*

But——

*Adrian*

Take it!

*Frederic*

I beg pardon, Sir.

(*He goes into the dining-room with the telegram.* ADRIAN *is left alone.* He shakes his head impatiently, glances at his watch, then busies himself adjusting the properties of the setting. After a moment, LISSA, in evening dress, the shawl about her shoulders, enters from the hall. She is in rare good spirits)

*Lissa*

Oh—how nice! My dear, it's quite lovely. . . .

*Adrian*

You wretch.

*Lissa*

Why?

*Adrian*

You weren't to see it yet.

*Lissa*

Never mind—I couldn't be more impressed. (*She looks about her, amused*) It's enchanting, 'Drian. Anything might happen here——

*Adrian*

Think so?

*Lissa*

Anything.—Pity you've given up writing, isn't it? (*He turns away, without answering*) Is it too early to joke about that?

*Adrian*

Lissa——

*Lissa*

Adrian?

*Adrian*

Of course it's all settled that I *have* given it up——  
(*She looks at him, oddly*)

*Lissa*

Yes.

(*A pause*)

*Adrian*

Why "yes"—just like that?

*Lissa*

Like what? (*A deep breath*) Oh, this is lovely—lovely. . . .

*Adrian*

As if you didn't mean "yes" at all——

*Lissa*

Curious, then, that I shouldn't have said "no." Why! It's mimosa! (*She breaks off a twig, smells it, and fastens it upon her dress*) Well—"now that it's all

settled”—what——?

*Adrian*

You don't want us—just living along haphazard, without rhyme or reason, do you?

*Lissa*

I might like a little rhyme at times. I can always manage without reason. Ouch! I stuck myself.

*Adrian*

Darling, I'm serious. Can't you see I want to talk to you?

*Lissa*

I'm not far——

*Adrian*

I've got a great plan for you and me.

*(A pause)*

*Lissa*

I've had a number of plans made for me, in my lifetime.

*Adrian*

Why does your voice do that?

*Lissa*

Do what?

*Adrian*

Go—suddenly tired, that way.

*Lissa*

I didn't know it did.—Adrian, what is it you're trying to persuade yourself of?

*Adrian*

*Persuade myself?*

*Lissa*

Yes—or justify yourself in?

*Adrian*

I *thought* I was merely telling you a plan I had.

*Lissa*

Very well: I'm listening.

*Adrian*

Well—our everyday existence, as we plan to lead it now—happy as it will be, there's bound to be waste in it, isn't there?

*Lissa*

I don't know what you mean by "waste."

*Adrian*

Days at a time, when nothing in particular happens. Whole weeks that drop out of it. Flat stretches—repetition—confusion—all for need of something to tie to. That's what we lack, Lissa,—something to tie to. (*With emphasis*) Some guiding idea.

*Lissa*

(*After a moment*) Oh? Such as?

*Adrian*

Well—something to make life an actual, true adventure—in place of the usual—uh—Cook's tour into age. (*He rolls the phrase upon his tongue*) The usual, uneventful Cook's tour into age.

*Lissa*

Yes—it *is* a good phrase.—Don't beat about the phrase-bush, 'Drian.—Just—tell me the plan.

*Adrian*

I've a feeling you're not with me.

*Lissa*

What makes you think so?

*Adrian*

I know something about audiences. (*She averts her head, suddenly*) There you go again! Why do you do that with your head? What does it mean? Is it that you're —?

*Lissa*

(*Suddenly and sharply*) Adrian, I— (*A brief pause. Then, calmly*) I'm waiting so patiently to hear this—idea that's to guide my life.

*Adrian*

It's simplicity itself. First, look on life always with an artist's eye, get an angle—an *angle*—and keep to it. Then take the everyday material as any fine artist does—and arrange—select—condense——

*Lissa*

I'm sorry, but I'm afraid that for me, life's got to be taken whole. I can't imagine it otherwise. It's—just the feel of it I love so—the unexpectedness. . . .

*Adrian*

But my dear—there need be nothing unexpected in this world! *You* know that!

*Lissa*

No, I don't.

*Adrian*

Then it's time you did. Because I assure you, there's cause and effect wherever you look—a basic reason for everything.

*Lissa*

Why is it birds fly, 'Drian—instead of walking soberly along the ground?

*Adrian*

Because a pterodactyl once climbed a tree, that's why.

*Lissa*

You're not really going to *tell* me!

*Adrian*

—Fell down, and climbed it again. Then, through a gradual evolution lasting for

---

*Lissa*

I don't want to hear!

*Adrian*

Dig deep enough into anything, and you'll come on a substratum of unconscious motive. You can't escape that.

*Lissa*

I can escape digging.

*Adrian*

But *Lissa*—not one instant exists without its point, its significance. It's merely the consciousness of the point, the significance, that I'm pleading. "Life lived as fine literature—high comedy"—*There's* our guiding idea! High comedy—with ourselves as dramatists and characters too—directors and scene-shifters—actors and audience—yes!—audience, as well!

*Lissa*

And you believe things *can* be got at that way?

*Adrian*

Why not?—We apply to life what we've learned in the theatre: there's a great metamorphosis: each minute thing we see, or do, or hear, or feel—it will take on color and flavor—become vital, electric——

*Lissa*

But things do have color, for me. Things *are*—very vital to me.

*Adrian*

But they must contribute something—express something—relate somehow to the *idea*—the idea at the source!—And the scope of it—think! There's no limit—no horizon! The whole world—life itself—*everything* is transformed!

(*A pause. LISSA looks fearfully about her, at the setting*)

*Lissa*

And this—is this part of it? Our—starting-place, maybe?

(ADRIAN *laughs*)

*Adrian*

Oh now come, dear. You're——

*Lissa*

And yesterday I thought—(*Suddenly*)—I'm scared, Adrian.

*Adrian*

Of what?

*Lissa*

(*In a breath*) I don't know! I'm scared!

*Adrian*

Lissa—really—you've no cause to——

*Lissa*

No! Let's not talk any more of it! Not now. Later, perhaps, but not now—no—no—(*She glances about her again, endeavoring to compose herself*) The Forellis will adore it, won't they?

*Adrian*

But you've plainly misunderstood me. What I meant was——

*Lissa*

Big Tony, particularly. Can't you see his face shine?

*Adrian*

Lissa, I want you to understand that my——

*Lissa*

You've been so clever with it. How well you do things! How *finished* everything you do, is. (*He gestures helplessly, beaten. She glances into the dining-room*) I've never seen such a table. Bianca will eat too much again.

*Adrian*

(*After a pause*) The Forellis can't come.

*Lissa*

Can't *come*? At this hour?

*Adrian*

Bianca phoned that little Tony's ill.

*Lissa*

Oh, the poor darling. I must stop by with something tomorrow.—And poor you —after all your pretty plans.

*Adrian*

You and Bliss and I will have to celebrate by ourselves.

*Lissa*

We might get some others to fill in.

*Adrian*

“At *this* hour”?

*Lissa*

I'll telephone the Remsens——

*Adrian*

Haven't they sailed?

*Lissa*

Peter Farrell and Zöe——

*Adrian*

Oh no, dear—not for this sort of thing. Let's have it to ourselves. What time is it, anyway?

*Lissa*

Seven-thirty, nearly. . . .

*(He starts toward the hall)*

*Adrian*

I'd better step.—But there's another surprise. Don't touch anything, will you?

*Lissa*

(*Dully*) No, I won't touch anything.

(*At the door, he turns*)

*Adrian*

Lissa—*why* is it that you——?

(*She looks directly into his eyes, and shakes her head, slowly. Then.:*)

*Lissa*

You'd better dress, don't you think?

(*ADRIAN returns from the hall-doorway and goes out into the dining-room instead. LISSA is left alone. For one instant, she presses her fingers hard against her temples. Then she begins to tour the room, arranging little things here and there in an attempt to stay the disillusionment which is pressing in upon her. BLISS enters from the hall, dressed for dinner. He stops short at the sight of the room*)

*Bliss*

Well, I'll be——! (*LISSA exclaims. He takes a deep breath*) Hasn't it got a nice smell!

*Lissa*

But you weren't supposed to come in yet!

*Bliss*

I don't move on cues.

*Lissa*

Can you be surprised twice?

*Bliss*

Of tener.

*Lissa*

There's a bench, if you like.

*Bliss*

The ground's softer.

*(He seats himself upon the floor, facing her. The daylight from the window has now dimmed considerably)*

*Lissa*

This is perfect high comedy atmosphere, I'll have you know. We must lend ourselves to it. *(She hands him an imaginary cup)* Won't you have some tea?

*Bliss*

*(Affectedly)* Thanks, so much.

*Lissa*

*(More affectedly)* Nine lumps, or twenty-one?—One gives tea to so many people in the course of a season, one forgets what one would remember—if you know what I mean.

*Bliss*

No sugar. Salt.

*Lissa*

Salt.

*Bliss*

Salt.

*(She smiles sweetly and gives it to him. They pretend to drink their tea)*

*Lissa*

They say dear Lady Vi is seen much, of late, in the company of that Italian.

*Bliss*

Let us trust she does not lose too much in translation.

*(LISSA laughs, archly)*

*Lissa*

And to what discreet indiscretions have *you* devoted yourself today?

*Bliss*

I've been Spring-shopping.

*Lissa*

Ah?—For what——?

*Bliss*

Farm tractors.

*Lissa*

Did you find some nice ones?

*Bliss*

I compromised on an apple-green necktie, with dots.

*Lissa*

I'm so glad you're finding our city agreeable. (*Softly*) Comedy, my friend, comedy. . . .

*Bliss*

New York is lovely in Spring.

*Lissa*

Streets full of people, in their gay attire—Comedy, high comedy. . . .

*Bliss*

Spring is the time.

*Lissa*

Spring's the time.

*Bliss*

Hot Springs.

*Lissa*

Hot Springs eternal——

*Bliss*

——in the Golden West.

*Lissa*

South, though.

*Bliss*

Doesn't matter.

*Lissa*

Better than Winter, Spring.

*Bliss*

Better than Summer.

*Lissa*

Better than Autumn.

*Bliss*

Better than all.

*Lissa*

Spring is the time!

*Bliss*

For all good men——

*Lissa*

——to come to the aid of—(*She falters*)—of——  
(*She cannot go on*)

*Bliss*

(*With spirit*) As we go marching through Georgia.

(*LISSA sits staring at her handkerchief*)

*Lissa*

(*Recovering*) There's a hole in the bottom of the sea——

*Bliss*

Good, in everything.

(*She shows him her handkerchief*)

*Lissa*

Look——my initials upside down are the same as right-side-up.

*Bliss*

Amazing!

*Lissa*

True, though.

*Bliss*

I dressed in ten minutes, in the hope of a moment with you before the others came.

*Lissa*

Which might account for my dressing early, too.

*Bliss*

*(Starting forward)* You darling!

*Lissa*

I think you're spilling your tea.

*(A brief pause)*

*Bliss*

Haven't you had enough of it, Lissa?

*Lissa*

*(Wearily)* More than.

*Bliss*

Then let's not.

*Lissa*

Let's never. *(He tosses his imaginary tea-cup to one side. She tosses hers to the other, then glances about her)* But you like this—arrangement?

*Bliss*

Reminds me of some place—don't quite know what. Do you?

*Lissa*

I like it well enough.

*Bliss*

Don't like anything, much, h'm——?

*Lissa*

Oh yes!—A thousand things.

*Bliss*

What things?

*Lissa*

Oh—my own things—simple things.

*Bliss*

Name ten.

*Lissa*

Would you really like to know?

*Bliss*

I really should.

*(She regards him thoughtfully for a moment, then begins to count them off on her fingers)*

*Lissa*

Then—ships—and shoes, too—if they're slippers, instead. Sealing-wax, of course—heavenly stuff. Kings, but not cabbages. Pine-woods. Alligator pears. Old tombstones, and small, fresh yellow ducks. Not chickens. Chickens are less charming. Blue larkspur. Altars. Ten——

*Bliss*

Ten more!

*Lissa*

Folk-songs, if they're unintelligible. Sulphur-matches. Quiet pools. Picket fences. The red-brown of old cows' eyes. Crystal. Rhubarb for breakfast. Milk bottles jangling at dawn. Great, sodden bumble-bees. Waking up. Laughter. The footprints dreams leave . . . *(She throws out her hands)* More than a thousand! Many, many more! *(A pause. Then, lowly)* But no one knows why I like them—myself least of

all. And they don't contribute to anything—express anything—relate to anything.—  
People say that they must though.

*Bliss*

Not I!

*Lissa*

You don't? (*BLISS shakes his head. Suddenly she leans forward with lowered brows and points her finger at him*) But what about the substratum of unconscious motive? You can't get away from *that*, can you?

*Bliss*

I can get away from whatever I like.

*Lissa*

But my dear man! Basic reasons!—For such things as—as the flight of birds, say.—You actually insist that the fact of their originally being—uh—pterodactyls, who happened to live in trees—you actually insist that that means nothing at all to you?

*Bliss*

They could have been lavender giraffes, with long magenta tails. They could have lived in old cabooses under the sea, so long as they fly, fly, keep flying.

*Lissa*

(*In a whisper*) It's miraculous.—You're a singular man, Norrie—one feels like a child, with you. That's—an almost forgotten joy, for me. (*She averts her head*) There flows the sea, there fly the birds, here live I. (*She bends her head, and, with her little finger, begins to trace the fine lines in her palm. Her words are like a low chant*) Oh, grasshoppers hop, and field-mouses mouse, and Wise Ones write books on isms, whys and wherefores. But people live, and love, and die, and the same old world keeps turning just the same, same, same, same. . . . (*She clasps her hands at the nape of her neck and gazes up at the ceiling. The room is now almost dark*) Stars. I wish I had a star. Or a baby. But I shan't ever have either. Sad, isn't it?

*Bliss*

Lissa, do you want to break my heart?

*Lissa*

Is it you, Norrie?—I can scarcely see. . . . *(A moment, then she leans over and pats his cheek with two fingers. He catches her hand, and kisses it. Slowly she draws it away from him)* Dear Norrie—let me be nice to you. I think I've waited a long time, to be nice to you.

*Bliss*

This garden——

*Lissa*

Tell me about your farm.

*(A pause. Then BLISS begins, in a brave endeavor to be matter-of-fact)*

*Bliss*

Four hundred acres in all—counting the timberland.

*Lissa*

Woods?

*Bliss*

Plenty of them.

*Lissa*

Near the sea, you said.

*Bliss*

A few hundred yards of rocky coast.

*Lissa*

Ahhh——

*Bliss*

It was my uncle's. The house is nearly a hundred years old. The plumbing is five.

*Lissa*

Hundred?

*Bliss*

Years.

*Lissa*

The real heavenly mansion.  
(BLISS *laughs*)

*Bliss*

The rooms are few, and spacious. The sun rises and sets in them. There are a thousand-odd books in the library.

*Lissa*

The books—interest you?

*Bliss*

Not much. But I think my uncle chose the bindings for their colors.

*Lissa*

The dear!

*Bliss*

Near the rhubarb-patch, ducks—yellow ducks—are forever being hatched. Cows are everywhere, each with two red-brown eyes. Up the road a way, there's an old, overgrown graveyard, containing, as graveyards do, tombstones. You go down a gravel path to the garden, where the air is sweet with foxglove, cinnamon-pinks, larkspur—blue. I shan't grow cabbages, but I shall keep bees.

*Lissa*

(*Her face shining*) Bumble-bees! Big fellows!

*Bliss*

Over beyond the pool, where I learned to swim, you climb a steep rock to the watch-tower, where you see the ships pass, on their way to somewhere——

*Lissa*

Mmmmm——

*Bliss*

In the pine-woods, magic dwells. At night the sea is a filagree of silver, through the trees. . . .

(LISSA *looks at him, oddly*)

*Lissa*

What a charming way to put it.

*Bliss*

Pine needles cover the ground like—like—

*Lissa*

—like pine needles, Norrie. (*A pause*) There are to be no bushes there?

*Bliss*

Bushes?

*Lissa*

To beat about.

(*BLISS turns away from her, and rises*)

*Bliss*

I'm sorry, if I've sounded like—a real-estate agent.

*Lissa*

It's just that I prefer things themselves to—phrases about them. (*A brief pause*)  
Tell me what you *want* of your farm?

*Bliss*

My soul's salvation, merely.

*Lissa*

(*Softly*) Ah—that's good!—Just living there—quite without plans—it does sound heavenly.

(*In a moment he is at her side, bending above her*)

*Bliss*

Lissa! If only—

(*She rises*)

*Lissa*

(*Quickly*) Yes—you must ask us to visit, sometime. We'd love it, I'm sure.

(BLISS *gestures helplessly. Perplexed, he again surveys the scene about him*)

*Bliss*

(*Murmuring*) I don't know what's got into me.

*Lissa*

(*Continuing*) That is, if we can somehow fit it into our plans. Our *plan* rather—(BLISS *is still puzzling over the scene*)—People are so kind, the way they relieve me of responsibility. You've no idea of the happy life I lead. There's rhyme to it—and reason, too! So—ordered. So well-arranged.

*Bliss*

But I'd have thought you——

*Lissa*

——didn't like plans? I give you my word, I've had scarcely a moment without them, since birth.

*Bliss*

And you *like* it?

*Lissa*

Shouldn't I?—Think of the comfort of knowing that everything must fall into place, just so. That the unexpected simply doesn't exist. One day to another: certain things happen to you—pleasant, agreeable things. You needn't lift a finger. But should you chance to, it's all right—you find that lifted fingers have been allowed for, in the plans. Marvellous!—All happens, as it's been ordained to happen, by whoever it is who's in charge at the time—a kind nurse, a governess, a teacher, an aunt—a more than kind husband!

*Bliss*

Wicked—wicked——

*Lissa*

On the contrary! Why, I live in the happiest sphere imaginable: just this side of reality. Reality itself is too harsh a climate: I'd shrivel. *My* place is in literature, fine literature, where every word, every move, every feeling even, must square with the

guiding idea.

*Bliss*

What on earth are you talking about?

*Lissa*

Don't be rude. Rudeness withers me. I'm too delicate. I can't stand it. Let me explain, merely, why my life is so happy. (*Her voice rises*) Look at me, Norrie. You think you see a person, here—body and soul? Don't deceive yourself. You've read me somewhere. Better!—You've seen me act "Lissa Terry."—I'm a character, drawn with such *masterly* skill. None of your human confusion in *my* make-up—I do nothing without point, significance—there's an *idea* behind me!

*Bliss*

What *are* you saying, Lissa?

*Lissa*

Something I've been taught.—And when I move about—(*She moves away from him*)—so—well, *that's* according to plan, too!

*Bliss*

It's this place—this house. I tell you there's something funny about it.

*Lissa*

Look! (*Very deliberately she picks up a vase and puts it down again*) You'd think I did that myself, wouldn't you?—And for no reason at all. Yes, so I did—But I assure you I was meant to do it, and then to think and say I did it by myself. It relates—oh, it relates!

*Bliss*

Don't, Lissa. It's uncanny, really.

*Lissa*

Simple cause and effect, uncanny? (*She looks at him, penetratingly*) You—how do you know *you're* not imagined, as well? (*She stiffens, suddenly, and gasps*) If you are! (*She sinks down upon the bench*) People I'm forever meeting—places I'm forever going—they've an awful way of suddenly seeming part of the fiction—like dreaming, and knowing it! (*She covers her face*) If you knew the

horrible feeling it is. . . .

*Bliss*

*(After a moment)* I think I do. I think it's just that, I've been feeling here.

*Lissa*

No. It's nothing but nerves. You've caught mine.

*Bliss*

*(Indicating the room)* Look about you, Lissa. *(She looks about her, apprehensively)* Does it—recall anything to you?

*Lissa*

No. But—but—*(Her voice trails off)*—it—seems I've—been here before. . . .

*Bliss*

I've the same sensation. It's odd, you know. It's damned odd. *(He frowns, murmuring)* Where? Where?

*Lissa*

*(Almost in a whisper)* It's dark here. *Are* we in this room, Norrie. I mean—*actually?*—Able to think, put words together, say what we want?—Or are we just—imagined, *fixed*, for all time—making the same set gestures, speaking the same set lines—as we have in other performances?—As we shall in more to come. . . . *(Thoughtfully, with a very slow movement, BLISS leans over, picks up a stray flower from the floor, puts it in a stone jar beside the bench, and rises. The effect is similar to that of a slow-motion moving-picture. LISSA watches him in growing horror)* Don't—don't!

*Bliss*

Don't what? *(Without answering, she turns away and shuts her eyes. BLISS shakes himself)* Come on—let's get out of it.

*Lissa*

You *do* hear me—you do see me, don't you, Norrie? *You* wouldn't be fooled. I *am* real to you!

*Bliss*

(*Nervously*) Of course. Of course!

*Lissa*

(*The chill striking deeper*) I've never felt it so horribly before. I can almost feel the tug of each separate string, making me jump this way, that way. (*Her voice sinks, awesomely*) Are we all like that? Is that what's meant, do you suppose, when we're called "God's creatures"? Is it—just that not all of us *feel* the strings, as I do?

*Bliss*

(*Moving toward the door*) Come on, will you?

*Lissa*

(*Rising*) I won't have it! I won't! Strings, are they? Well, I'll break them! (*She circles the room, touching things here and there*) There—there! I'll move too fast for them—I'll tangle them up—snap them! There, Guiding Idea, was I meant to tear that flower to bits? Where's the motive for that? What on earth does *that* mean?

(*She is close to hysteria. BLISS watches her in alarm*)

*Bliss*

Lissa—please,—please, dear——

*Lissa*

Watch! Every night about now, Frederic comes and turns on the lights. Like clockwork—on cue, you'd think! But tonight, *I shall!* See? (*She goes swiftly toward the hall door*) A little out of gear now, aren't you, Pretty Plans? Well, however pretty you are, I'll destroy you, see? *I'll* make my plans! (*She presses the electric button. From its hidden source, the "moonlight" comes on, flooding the room with a greenish, eerie light, mixed, as it is, with the little remaining light from the window. LISSA exclaims in terror*) Agh! (*Her hand flies to her mouth, and she backs away from the doorway toward BLISS, in whose eyes recognition of the scene is now dawning. LISSA'S shoulder touches him. Suddenly she turns and buries herself in his arms, shaking with fright*) What is it? What is it?

*Bliss*

Do you know where we are?

(*Slowly she raises her head and glances fearfully about her*)

*Lissa*

(*Barely audibly*) Tell me—what it is. . . .

*Bliss*

It's very much like Kendall's garden.

*Lissa*

(*Puzzled*) "Kendall's"—? (*Again she looks about her, then clings to him in fear*) How? How?

*Bliss*

Do you recall ever telling anyone?

*Lissa*

Nobody.—And I'm sure no one knew.

*Bliss*

Not—your husband, by any chance?

*Lissa*

(*Shaking her head*) No way possible. What—was there to tell?

*Bliss*

I kissed you, Lissa.

*Lissa*

I know—but I was Columbine. At costume parties I was always Columbine. It was as though things were happening not to me at all, to someone else. I thought I was acting. Now I think—*this* makes me think—(*The words come trooping out, as through a door suddenly opened*)—it was the one time in my whole life I wasn't! (*Her voice rises*) My illusion—it *was real!* I want my illusion back!

*Bliss*

Dear—

(*Her grasp tightens upon his arms, holding him from taking her in them*)

*Lissa*

Now I see!—Norrie—this likeness—it’s a sign—to show me that one night there in that garden as the one living thing in my life—the one thing ever, that happened without plan! A sign! (*She throws her hand up, hailing it*) Oh—welcome, Sign, welcome!

*Bliss*

(*With difficulty*) But Lissa—let me tell you——

*Lissa*

Wait—while I can still see so clearly! (*A brief pause*) That garden-door—it led through to life. I left my life in that garden.

*Bliss*

Come back to it. Come, dear——

*Lissa*

Everything since—shadows, unreality. *Is it still there—my life? Would it be real, Norrie?*

*Bliss*

I promise you it will be real.

*Lissa*

—Just to be something more than this queer kind of phantom. Just to *feel* things again—(*She looks at him searchingly*)—Do you think you love me?

(*BLISS’S face works. He smiles, spasmodically*)

*Bliss*

I think I do.

(*LISSA averts her head*)

*Lissa*

I don’t know yet, whether I——

*Bliss*

Let that wait. You come in whatever capacity you wish, you know.

*Lissa*

That’s like you. Thanks. (*She ponders*) Adrian—I love Adrian’s heart—but his

mind—it's swallowed it up—and me with it, nearly. Adrian. Adrian. Oh, it isn't so easy!

*Bliss*

*(Very matter-of-fact)* I'll leave for Washington at eight in the morning, and get the Federal back, tomorrow night. There'll be a drawing-room on it for you, through to Boston—in your name, at the window.

*(A pause)*

*Lissa*

*(Slowly, fearfully)* Tonight—I could tell you all a story about what happened once to a girl and a boy on a Spring night in a garden. After I'd gone, he'd think back, and know who they were. Then he'd—just apply some rule of human conduct. He has one already for it—"Every wife—every wife, at heart"—oh, *poor* man! Poor Adrian, with his false little rules. *(She pauses, thoughtfully)* Adrian—you—myself—which, Norrie? Oh, pray that something may show me quickly!

*Bliss*

Then it isn't all settled?

*(LISSA shakes her head)*

*Lissa*

No.—But look for me the next morning. Boston. The South Station.

*Bliss*

Is there another telephone downstairs?

*Lissa*

In the coat-room, off the hall.

*Bliss*

I'll get the porter at the club to make reservations. *(He goes to the hall-doorway)* This off?

*Lissa*

Will you?

*(BLISS touches the button beside the door, extinguishing the moonlight and leaving the room in almost total darkness. For a moment,*

LISSA is left alone, huddled upon one of the stone benches. MISS MABIE enters from the study, and looks at her silently. Then she clears her throat)

*Miss Mabie*

Hasn't—? (*Simultaneously, LISSA exclaims in fright and rises*)—It's only Miss Mabie.

*Lissa*

I didn't hear you come in.

*Miss Mabie*

—Hasn't Mr. Terry done wonderful things with this simple room?

*Lissa*

(*Wearily*) Indeed he has.

(MISS MABIE sighs)

*Miss Mabie*

Art. Pure art——

*Lissa*

Oh, I'm sick to death of art.

(*A pause. Then.*)

*Miss Mabie*

I've always rather felt you—belonged more to the earth.

*Lissa*

(*Softly*) The blessed earth. Glory be to grass growing. Glory be to the earth.

(MISS MABIE goes to her and rests her hand upon her shoulder)

*Miss Mabie*

Amen, my dear. (*In a quick movement LISSA turns and buries her head in MISS MABIE'S breast*) There—there—never mind, dear. (*She strokes her head as she would that of a forlorn little child*)

*Lissa*

Oh, why didn't you let me know I had someone so near me? I've needed

someone so.

*Miss Mabie*

There, dear—we know it now.

*Lissa*

*(With difficulty)* Adrian—he——

*Miss Mabie*

It all comes of living so long with people he's made for himself.

*Lissa*

*We're* his characters, too. He knows every move. There's no mystery in us.

*Miss Mabie*

He shall see that there is. We shall make him acknowledge it.

*Lissa*

I've tried.

*(A pause)*

*Miss Mabie*

Then *I* shall try. *(She laughs nervously)* The solved and simple Miss Mabie must break from her pigeonhole.

*(LISSA lifts her head and looks at her, finding hope)*

*Lissa*

Oh, God bless you.

*(She kisses her and turns away. ADRIAN enters from the hall, dressed for dinner)*

*Adrian*

Still here, Lissa?

*Lissa*

Still here.

*Adrian*

Dark, isn't it?

*Lissa*

Yes.

(*ADRIAN goes to the table behind the screen*)

*Adrian*

I wonder what's keeping Bliss. He wasn't in his room. (*He lights the lamp on the table*) We cut off everything but this.

(*FREDERIC enters from the hall, with the telegram*)

*Frederic*

The telegram, sir.

(*ADRIAN opens the telegram, as FREDERIC methodically turns to press the electric switch-button beside the door*)

*Adrian*

Hold on! That doesn't work, now.

*Frederic*

To be sure. I remember you said. Beg pardon, sir.

(*He goes into the dining-room. ADRIAN reads the telegram*)

*Adrian*

Oh, confound it!

*Lissa*

What is it?

*Adrian*

From Prendergast. He says it's imperative that I meet him in Philadelphia tonight.

(*He gives the telegram to LISSA. MISS MABIE is watching him*)

*Lissa*

Telephone him, and say it's impossible.

*Adrian*

Prendergast doesn't make demands like that without reason. I'd best try for the Eight O'clock. Will you call the car for me, Miss Mabie?

(MISS M<sub>ABIE</sub> goes into the study)

*Lissa*

Adrian! Dinner!

*Adrian*

Four-and-twenty blackbirds—and now there are two. I'll be back to-morrow, early. You and Bliss enjoy my party. If the table rocks, it's my spirit making its presence known.

(L<sub>ISSA</sub> regards him intently)

*Lissa*

I don't like the way things fall out.

*Adrian*

Fall out? (*She moves toward the hall-door*)

*Lissa*

I don't like it at all.

*Adrian*

Lissa—(*She turns. For a moment they regard each other without speaking. Then:*)—What is it, dear?

*Lissa*

I don't think I can live your way, Adrian—your high comedy way. I'd die by inches. I've begun to die already.

*Adrian*

Why, Lissa—darling—you——

*Lissa*

Something's taken hold of me. I feel—possessed by something. I—(*She looks about her, in terror*) Oh—it's a crazy thing!

(*She goes swiftly to the hall-door, and out. ADRIAN takes a step after her*)

*Adrian*

Lissa——

*(He stops himself. MISS MABIE re-enters from the study, carrying a few pages of type-written notes, which she places upon the desk. In some way, she is coming through her dimness, her hesitancy, into a steadily growing assurance)*

*Miss Mabie*

The Spring Festival notes. I've quoted rather freely.—William wasn't at the garage. I called a taxi.

*Adrian*

Thanks. I'd better get my coat on. *(He goes to the door. MISS MABIE follows him with her eyes. He switches on the moonlight)* Good-night, Miss Mabie. I shall be back by to-morrow evening, at the latest.

*Miss Mabie*

—And will you be going off to Boston right away, with Mrs. Terry?

*Adrian*

Boston?

*Miss Mabie*

As I was calling the garage—wasn't it you on the downstairs' telephone? Ordering a drawing-room on the Federal?

*Adrian*

Not I, no.

*Miss Mabie*

Then I must have been on a crossed wire. Queer, though—I was sure I heard you say that the tickets were to be held at the window in Mrs. Terry's name.

*(ADRIAN turns from the door and slowly re-enters the room)*

*Adrian*

You—you were mistaken.

*Miss Mabie*

Apparently. *(A pause)* Mr. Terry——

*Adrian*

What?

*Miss Mabie*

I don't think I'd go away to-night if I were you.

*Adrian*

*(Harshly)* Why not?

*Miss Mabie*

I—just don't think I should. I shouldn't dare.

*(A pause—then.)*

*Adrian*

*(To himself)* Complications—complications.

*Miss Mabie*

Why not try introducing another character, Mr. Terry? *(He looks at her intently)* Or better still, bring up a minor figure—one who's been in from the beginning? That's helped you before, to—to solve unforeseen difficulties.

*(For an instant she reverts to her former uncertain self, avoids his gaze, and begins fumbling at her notes. FREDERIC comes in from the dining-room, with a tray containing a cocktail-shaker and six glasses. BLISS enters from the hall)*

*Bliss*

Lord! Isn't this marvellous!

*(FREDERIC fills the glasses)*

*Adrian*

Like it?—Oh—my secretary, Miss Mabie—Mr. Bliss. *(To FREDERIC)* I'll serve them.

*Miss Mabie*

How do you do?

*Bliss*

How do you do. *(To ADRIAN)* Extraordinary, really. How on earth did you contrive such a realistic effect?

*Adrian*

A little remnant from an old career.

(LISSA *re-enters from the hall*)

*Lissa*

Your taxi is here. Ah—moonlight—

*Adrian*

I'm not going. I think the morning will do as well.

*Lissa*

You sent word? I'm so glad. Give the man something, Frederic. But perhaps you'll take him, Miss Mabie? It's quite late.

(*A brief pause. Then MISS MABIE rallies*)

*Miss Mabie*

Mr. Terry has asked me to stay and dine with you.

(*ADRIAN stares, then busies himself with the cocktails. MISS MABIE nervously fingers her notes*)

*Lissa*

And you will, of course! We should love having you. (*Indicating the notes*) Is that all about the great feast?—You must teach us the ways in which we should go.

(*FREDERIC goes out into the hall. LISSA takes a glass from ADRIAN and gives it to MISS MABIE. She then takes one herself. ADRIAN gives one to BLISS, who swallows it in a gulp*)

*Miss Mabie*

I find that the—uh—customs in the tropical countries are—uh—well, uncivilized, to say the least.

*Lissa*

I don't doubt it for a minute.

*Bliss*

(*Simultaneously*) Tell us more!

*Adrian*

As usual in such things, the less the longitude, the greater the latitude. (*To BLISS*)  
Let me give you a little more.

*Bliss*

(*Holding his glass*) Thanks.—Nothing so useful in an artificial existence, for bringing one back to Nature.

*Miss Mabie*

I wonder if that is true?

*Bliss*

I assure you it is.

*Miss Mabie*

They say it gives one courage, as well.

(*ADRIAN refills BLISS'S glass. MISS MABIE finishes hers in one swallow, and watches the shaker. BLISS laughs, somewhat embarrassedly, and says:*)

*Bliss*

I haven't said anything about your play last night. I'm afraid you cut things a little too fine for me. I'm not keen on hair-splitting.

*Adrian*

Aren't you? (*He holds the shaker out to MISS MABIE*) Miss Mabie? (*She extends her glass quickly. He refills it, then turns again to BLISS, smiling*) Perhaps you prefer heart-breaking? (*BLISS'S face changes. LISSA glances quickly at ADRIAN, then replaces her empty glass upon the tray and goes to the window. MISS MABIE, glass in hand, reads over her notes*) I grant you, it's usually more successful—as drama.

*Lissa*

(*Looking out the window*) I've never known a more perfect night. (*She lifts her hands, palms upward, weighing the air*) The air feels like feathers. (*She opens the window wide, and returns to the others*) Come—shall we? (*She moves toward the dining-room*)

*Miss Mabie*

*(Quoting from her notes)*

“ . . . The peasants would flock down from the neighboring hills, to the spot where the fiesta was to take place. Mother Nature smiles upon the antics of her children. All through the flower-strewn day, there is dancing and dalliance. The finest native wines are lavishly poured into vast bowls, from which they are as freely quaffed. . . .”

*(She finishes her cocktail and goes toward the dining-room, followed by ADRIAN and BLISS)*

*Adrian*

I see I should have ordered bowls for the champagne.

*Miss Mabie*

A detail—disregard it.—“By evening, the celebrants have paired off into couples. The warm air is charged with romance. . . . Some gaily, some with hushed whispers, steal forth from the company to nearby olive-groves . . .” (*LISSA has now gone into the dining-room. The curtain begins to descend*) “ . . . There, beneath the moon, troths are plighted, and other ceremonies take place, the—uh—nature of which is fully discussed in Salini’s ‘La Fiesta d’Amore.’ Suffice it to say, that for years, both Church and State have directed their combined wits toward the discouragement of such pagan ritualism, in a thus-far vain endeavor to bring about its—(*The Curtain falls*)—discontinuance.”

CURTAIN

***IN A GARDEN: ACT THREE***



## ACT THREE

The scene is the same. An hour later. Dinner is over. ADRIAN and BLISS are seated by the stone table, Right Center, upon which there is a coffee-service and a carafé of brandy, with two small glasses. LISSA has just come in from the hall, and is going to join them.

*Lissa*

Really, Adrian, I'm a little worried about Miss Mabie.

*Adrian*

My dear, it's impossible. I know her like a book.

*Lissa*

But people do take queer turns at times, don't they? (*To BLISS, as she seats herself*) That's what Adrian finds so difficult to admit.

*Adrian*

But I tell you I know her! Inside out!

*Lissa*

Tagged and pigeonholed—yes. Still, for all that, she might be a different woman, mightn't she? Do acknowledge that.

*Adrian*

Not at all. We're merely seeing her for the first time in another capacity.

*Bliss*

It appears that she's more than reached it. How long is it you've had her?

*Adrian*

Since nineteen-eighteen.

*Lissa*

And now—honestly—have you the remotest idea what she's going to do or say next? Oh *admit* you haven't, Adrian!

*Adrian*

Of course I have!

*Bliss*

Attribute it to the moon. If tides change on account of it, why shouldn't people? (*He squints upward*) This one's particularly tricky. When Lissa first turned it on this afternoon, all of a sudden I thought——

*Adrian*

(*Frowning*) When Lissa turned it on——?

*Bliss*

I mean, when——

*Adrian*

(*To LISSA*) Did you light it?

*Lissa*

By accident. I didn't realize——

*Adrian*

And you were here?

*Bliss*

Yes. Just——happened in, you know.

*Lissa*

But I made him promise to be surprised again, so as not to disappoint you.

*Adrian*

Oh, that didn't matter. But——uh——it must have given you a start, eh?

*Bliss*

It did, a little——both of us. As I was saying, all at once I had a vision of another garden like it——one I'd seen some time ago. . . .

*Adrian*

(*With studied casualness*) Yes?——Where?

*Bliss*

I couldn't quite remember.—And they must be rather rare, you know. (*He leans forward looking directly into ADRIAN'S eyes*) Perhaps, if you'd tell me where it is that the original exists, I might——

*Adrian*

As a matter of fact, one could hardly say it does exist. It's—uh—more or less a composite of—uh—of—uh—(*He looks toward the hallway, and exclaims, softly*) What in the world!

(*MISS MABIE enters from the hall. She has discarded her nose-glasses and wears a flower in her hair, which has been most becomingly re-dressed. Long earrings hang from her ears. About her shoulders, enveloping nearly her entire figure, is LISSA'S Chinese shawl. Her nose has been powdered, and there is a touch of rouge upon her lips and cheeks. Her eyes are dancing. She is, indeed, like another woman. BLISS smiles. ADRIAN gazes at her in astonishment, LISSA, in genuine admiration, as she pauses at the doorway to pluck two jonquils from the decorations*)

*Miss Mabie*

(*To LISSA*) I felt my everyday costume hardly fitting for so gay an occasion. Your maid insisted upon re-arranging my hair. Her own earrings, these—and your shawl. I hope you don't mind, my dear?

*Lissa*

Mind?—I'm delighted. You look charming.

(*MISS MABIE smiles her thanks and seats herself. LISSA begins to pour the coffee*)

*Miss Mabie*

Now, then!—We were saying?

(*ADRIAN fills a brandy-glass for BLISS*)

*Lissa*

How do you take your coffee?

*Miss Mabie*

(*Smiling*) I don't.

Lissa

You——?

Miss Mabie

It keeps me awake. (*She reaches for the brandy glass*) This for me?—Thank you—(*ADRIAN smiles perfunctorily and fills the other glass. MISS MABIE takes a sip from hers*)—It is more than good. What is it?

Adrian

Brandy.—Rather strong, I'm afraid.

(*MISS MABIE takes a swallow*)

Miss Mabie

(*Beaming*) Not at all. On the contrary.

(*She puts the glass down for a moment, picks up the jonquils and smells them*)

Adrian

(*To BLISS*) I'll ring for another glass——

Bliss

None for me, thanks. I don't want to spoil the champagne.

Miss Mabie

It doesn't spoil it. On the contrary.

(*BLISS smiles and shakes his head. MISS MABIE, with a jonquil in either hand, brings the flowers together as if they were kissing*)

Miss Mabie

Look: Isn't it sweet?

(*She does it again, cooing over them*)

Lissa

Pretty things, indeed it is.

Bliss

The language of the flowers.

(*MISS MABIE tosses the flowers over her shoulder, laughs merrily, picks*

*up her glass again, and settles herself)*

*Miss Mabie*

Er—we were saying?  
*(A brief pause)*

*Bliss*

I was asking Mr. Terry where he got the idea for this—arrangement.

*Miss Mabie*

*(Quickly)* It is modelled upon a similar garden attached to a little pension on the Riviera. *(ADRIAN stares at her)* I hope I'm not giving away secrets?

*Adrian*

No indeed. But I wasn't aware that I—that is, it must have been an unconscious

---

*Miss Mabie*

*(To BLISS)* In Cannes, to be exact. I recognized it instantly—didn't I, Mr. Terry?—The little statues—and the mimosa—the old walls. You see, it was there that Mr. Terry—Captain Terry, then—first engaged me. He was convalescing from his wound. The moment he got notice of his discharge, he advertised for a competent secretary, didn't you, Mr. Terry?

*Adrian*

The very moment.

*Miss Mabie*

In a Nice paper. I was in Nice with Potter, of "The American." A horrid man. So I applied. We began work at once, on Mr. Terry's first romantic play, "Frankincense."

*Adrian*

First, and only.

*Miss Mabie*

More's the pity. *(A sigh)* It was perfect soil for the growth of a romance. We used to walk for hours in that garden, talking it out—while pale threads of the

Mediterranean moon wove their way through the very warp and woof of our story.

*Bliss*

Woof, woof.

*Miss Mabie*

I beg your pardon?

*Bliss*

I said, “woof.”

*Miss Mabie*

Is that amusing?—It was March then, but March there is like our May. . . .  
(*Suddenly*) Mr. Bliss—you are close to the Government: what possibility do you think there is for legislation elevating May Day to the eminence of a national holiday?

*Bliss*

Somehow, I can’t see the present Administration exciting themselves over it.

*Miss Mabie*

We need it so! We really do! In its very nature, it throbs with life, warmth, gaiety. I think Adam and Eve were created on May Day.

*Adrian*

A pretty thought.

*Lissa*

Very.

*Adrian*

You’re sure you won’t take coffee?

(*MISS MABIE raises her brandy-glass*)

*Miss Mabie*

This will do very nicely.—How *good* it would be for everyone, once a year, to give himself over to the simple, eternal emotions. Such prigs, people are—such impossible prigs! (*Her voice lowers*) You know, I believe one reason that May Day is left for the children, is the adult consciousness of the significance of the May Pole. (*She leans forward confidingly*) I presume you all know the origin of the May

Pole?

(BLISS *is the only one to laugh*)

*Lissa*

(*Hastily*) Yes, yes—I believe we do.

*Adrian*

Quaint, isn't it?

*Bliss*

(*Simultaneously*) You simply could not persuade the average Congressman to take hold of a ribbon and dance round the May Pole.

*Miss Mabie*

Then the more fools they. To me, symbols are symbols—and being symbols, inalienably divorced from their origins. (*She closes her eyes*) I see village greens transformed into little Arcadys; village butchers and bakers, into Colins and Strephons; their wives and daughters into Chloes and Phyllises. Round the May-Pole—round and round—(ADRIAN *quietly moves the decanter out of her reach*)—Why—it makes one positively dizzy!

(*She opens her eyes, stares, and blinks several times*)

*Bliss*

Make them go the other way. That helps sometimes.

(MISS MABIE *closes her eyes for a moment, then opens them again and beams upon him*)

*Miss Mabie*

Thank you.

(*She wanders to the back of the room, fingering the decorations lovingly*)

*Lissa*

(*Softly to ADRIAN*) Well? Admit it now?

*Adrian*

If I'd been at all interested, I might easily have foreseen the whole thing.

(*Lissa rises abruptly; she has done her best. This is final*)

*Miss Mabie*

Lovely—lovely . . . a perfect setting, really perfect.

*Lissa*

*(To ADRIAN, in a clear voice, without hesitation)*

Speaking of settings, I've an incident to tell you from life. This puts me in mind of it. I think it belongs in a play. . . .

*Adrian*

Oh?—What is it?

*Lissa*

Something that happened to——

*(She stops, as FREDERIC enters from the hall)*

*Frederic*

Mr. Compton, Sir.

*(He stands aside to let COMPTON enter, then goes out)*

*Compton*

Hello. Hello. Hello. *(To LISSA, as he crosses to her and shakes her hand)* I managed to slip away early. You don't mind my dropping in without notice this way?

*Lissa*

Hello, Roger—it's extraordinarily nice of you to. Oh—uh—this is Mr. Bliss—Mr. Compton——

*Compton*

*(Deliberately)* It seems to me we've met.

*Bliss*

*(Not remembering for the moment)* Oh yes—yes, of course!

*(COMPTON looks about him in wonder, then sharply at ADRIAN, who looks away)*

*Compton*

*(To LISSA)* I should say Adrian's outdone himself this time.

*Lissa*

Pretty, isn't it? (*With a gesture toward the tray*) Coffee? Cognac? Both?

*Compton*

Just this, if I may——

(*He takes a lump of sugar, seats himself and begins nibbling it*)

*Lissa*

I was telling Adrian an incident that might be useful in his new play.

*Adrian*

My new play?

*Lissa*

Yes—the one about wives and mistresses. (*To COMPTON*) Would you mind hearing it?

*Compton*

Should enjoy it very much.

*Adrian*

What is it, dear?

*Lissa*

Something that once actually happened to a boy and a girl in a moonlit garden.— Rather a curious thing, and with—a rather curious significance, I think. (*A pause*) The girl, from what I gathered, was the product of an exceedingly careful system. Its whole end and purpose was to make her a social success—that's what the women in her family had always seemed best suited for. So she was taught to act the part till it became second nature. In those days the training was somewhat stricter.

*Compton*

Before the war?

*Lissa*

Just.—Instinct, impulse, natural inclination, everything that was herself, went under. Upon it, another self was gradually—deposited. By the time she was nineteen, it was working admirably—automatically, even. In fact, for long stretches at a time, she completely forgot that the surface she'd acquired didn't go all the way

through.

*Miss Mabie*

By then, perhaps it did.

*Lissa*

No—not as it turned out. This incident—(*She hesitates a moment, then continues:*)—In spite of the fact that it was May, there was still another ball to go to—a costume-ball, somewhere in the country. She'd be Columbine, again. Incidentally, she was always at her best, in costume. With everyone else about her acting, her own acting became more real.

*Miss Mabie*

Does that follow?—I should think——

*Lissa*

In her case, it did. (*A brief pause*) Well, in the midst of it, a boy came up to her, a boy she knew, well, slightly—and rather liked. He said: "Let's get out of this heat." Out they went. For awhile they just wandered about, glad enough to be cool. Then they happened on a kind of hidden path, and followed it to its end, where they found a little green door, let into a high stone wall. On the other side was a tiny garden, that neither of them had any idea was there. It smelled damp, and sweet. The moon was shining. They sat for a long time, scarcely breathing. Then they began to dance—there was a stretch of clipped grass, smooth as could be, between the flower-beds. The music carried all the way from the house. They danced and they danced and they danced, long after the music had stopped. She had the queer feeling that all this was happening to someone else . . . she didn't know whom . . . Columbine, maybe.—Finally, they were just standing there, hushed and still, as if some spring inside had simply run down. Then she felt herself being kissed. In that instant, everything suddenly left her. She didn't know anything, didn't feel anything but that it was beautiful beyond belief to be alive. (*A pause*) But when they got back to the house, things were—just the same again. After all, it was only Columbine who had been kissed. *She'd* merely been looking on.

(*A pause. COMPTON is watching BLISS, who is looking at his hands. Finally ADRIAN speaks, with difficulty managing to keep his voice steady:*)

*Adrian*

Yes. Yes, very interesting.—And its—significance?

*Lissa*

It was the only important thing that had ever happened to her without reason, without plan. Some day, something might make her see, that it wasn't Columbine, nor yet that other person they'd taught her to be—but *herself*—oh, at last!—with the one thing in her life that was genuinely, truly her own.

*(There is a long pause, punctuated by the sound of a cigarette being tapped down upon BLISS'S case. ADRIAN goes to the table behind the screen, lights the library-lamp, then switches off the moonlight. The artificiality of the scene is once more made apparent. He turns to MISS MABIE and COMPTON)*

*Adrian*

It—how does it strike you?

*Compton*

*(Still watching BLISS)* Very pretty, very pretty indeed.

*Miss Mabie*

But a little literary, don't you think?

*Compton*

Um. More than a little.

*Lissa*

As it happens, it's true.

*Compton*

That, unfortunately, doesn't matter.

*Miss Mabie*

As it stands, it's not life, but literature.

*Lissa*

“Literature”!—I tell you——

*Compton*

*(To BLISS)* In fact, I think I've already read it somewhere.

*Miss Mabie*

Strange—I feel that too. (*She ponders*) Where was it?

*Lissa*

You couldn't have. It's true! It happened!

*Miss Mabie*

Are you sure of your source?

*Lissa*

Entirely!

*Compton*

Then it must be one of those things that can't help seeming to be out of a novel.

*Lissa*

Everything else in her life—but not that!

*Miss Mabie*

It appears we differ. Now to me it seems too pat, too considered.

*Compton*

Yes. There's a sort of a deliberation about it.

(*BLISS goes to the other side of the room and stands looking at them*)

*Miss Mabie*

A kind of self-consciousness.

*Compton*

The psychology shows through.

*Miss Mabie*

And the application is so obvious.

*Bliss*

Here are the lungs. This is the spleen. A bundle of nerves here. Perhaps we can make them twitch. (*All look at him*) Tableau: "A Lesson in Anatomy." (*He returns to his place and seats himself again*) If it isn't a corpse you've got, you can make it one, can't you? Go ahead——

*Lissa*

No, no—it's too horrible.

*Adrian*

My dear——

*(She turns from him)*

*Compton*

*(To BLISS)* To be a corpse, a thing must have lived. This never did.

*Miss Mabie*

But the characters might *bring* it to life! *(To ADRIAN, excitedly:)* Just the thing! Perfect! Exactly what you and Mr. Compton want! *(To LISSA)* Oh yes—yes, it *is* good.—Romance first coming to flower——

*Lissa*

Reality!

*Miss Mabie*

*(Indulgently)* For Mr. Terry's purposes, my dear—*(To ADRIAN)*—And you see?—Just the right taint of literature. We've all felt it. *(To LISSA)* Later on she married another man?

*Lissa*

Yes.

*Miss Mabie*

And you wanted to show what it was, that might have caused this particular wife to become another man's mistress, at heart?

*Lissa*

Perhaps not merely at heart.

*(There is a pause)*

*Miss Mabie*

Yes.—Well, Mr. Terry's plan requires that there be something false in the very beginnings of this disturbing memory.

*Adrian*

Miss Mabie!

*Lissa*

*(Simultaneously)* But how interesting! Do let her tell us.

*(She turns to MISS MABIE)*

*Miss Mabie*

For a number of years everything went smoothly. They were happy. Then one day her—*(She loads the word with scorn)*—her “cavalier” returned. They met. He saw that she was even more desirable than before.—And he claimed her.

*(COMPTON is watching BLISS like a hawk)*

*Lissa*

And did she acknowledge the claim?

*Miss Mabie*

Did she, Mr. Terry?

*Adrian*

I don't know. Lissa—won't another time do as well?

*Lissa*

I'm afraid not.

*(Again she turns inquiringly to MISS MABIE)*

*Miss Mabie*

The point is that something she wasn't aware of had occurred in the meantime.

*Bliss*

Now we're getting it!

*Miss Mabie*

*(To BLISS)* Her husband has learned of the existence of this memory, which she cherishes as—*(To LISSA)*—How did you put it?—“As the one real thing in her life—the one thing ever, that had happened without plan”——?

*Lissa*

*(Nodding briefly)* That will do.

*Miss Mabie*

He learns that of all things *it* was perhaps the most deliberately planned.

*Bliss*

Hah! (*Suddenly, with a bitter laugh, he throws back his head and thrusts his arms up toward the ceiling. As suddenly, he is facing MISS MABIE again, smiling ironically*) This is marvellous.

(LISSA *glances at him, but he will not look at her*)

*Miss Mabie*

The man was following to the letter a chapter in a novel which aimed to demonstrate—(*To COMPTON*)—*falsely* to demonstrate—(*To BLISS*)—that every wife is another man's mistress—and why.

*Bliss*

“A novel?”—But that's not quite right, is it?

*Compton*

It will serve, don't you think?

*Bliss*

No!

(LISSA'S *alarm grows. She looks from one to another, and finally back to BLISS*)

*Lissa*

Why not?

*Bliss*

(*His eyes fixed on MISS MABIE*) Wait a minute. (*To MISS MABIE*)—And what did this seventh son of a husband do then?

*Miss Mabie*

Well—uh—(*She glances nervously at ADRIAN, who sits with his head bent, knotting his watch-chain*) Well—uh—he realized the man's unworthiness—

*Bliss*

Tsch!—In what? Taste?

(COMPTON *stirs uneasily, his anger growing.* MISS MABIE'S *voice rises*)

*Miss Mabie*

Certainly in *taste!* (*A pause.* BLISS *gestures for her to proceed.* *After a moment she does so, more calmly*) And he knew that her remembrance of the affair was the one mar on a perfect relationship: his wife loved him dearly; the other was a—kind of sickness.

*Bliss*

So desperate remedies, before it proved fatal, eh?

*Miss Mabie*

For her sake, as well as his own, he determined to blot the memory out. The question was “how?”—And the answer: “Romantic incidents don’t bear repeating.”

*Lissa*

Indeed.

*Adrian*

(*Agonized*) Lissa!

*Lissa*

Please!—You wouldn’t have me lose the thread?

(ADRIAN *sinks back and sits with his chin resting upon his hand, his eyes closed*)

*Miss Mabie*

(*To LISSA*) He knew these two people well: his wife—as his wife; the man, from that one act, as——

*Compton*

(*To BLISS*)—As the lying bounder he was.

(BLISS *takes a deep breath and holds it*)

*Miss Mabie*

(*Nodding*) So by placing the two alone once more in the same, or a similar situation, he thought he could foresee the means whereby——

*Bliss*

(*Rising*) Of course.

(*ADRIAN rises also. The two men confront each other*)

*Miss Mabie*

—Whereby his wife would be—

*Lissa*

—Cured of her sickness. Most ingenious, most.

(*ADRIAN moves toward the hall*)

*Miss Mabie*

He discovered, however, that he loved her too much to submit her to such a scheme.

(*ADRIAN is about to go out*)

*Lissa*

Adrian! (*He turns*) I wish you would wait, please. (*He waits near the door, his back to them. LISSA, to MISS MABIE*)—Or perhaps he lost faith in his foresight—faith, maybe, in his ability to make tight little rules about people.

*Miss Mabie*

I think it was love.

*Lissa*

Even so, all the arrangements had been made, hadn't they? His situation was there, begging to be taken advantage of. (*ADRIAN moves quickly toward the door. She rises*) Adrian! (*He halts*) I ask you to wait. (*He does so*) So now what?

*Miss Mabie*

We don't know. You see, that—uh—it—uh—brings us to an impasse. We've got no ending.

*Lissa*

It may end itself.

*Miss Mabie*

(*Eagerly*) You think so? The right way?

*Compton*

It's bound to. There'll be something else to show him up just as well.

*Lissa*

Him?—Which him?

*Bliss*

The “bounder,” of course. (*To COMPTON*) But do you think you've got enough of him?

*Compton*

How d'you mean?

*Bliss*

That one act of his.

*Compton*

It's enough. Complete characterization in itself.

*Bliss*

Oh?—Then, after a glance at you, one may say: “He's gone dry. He's got the soul of a snuff-box.” (*COMPTON brings himself to his feet*) Or, after a ten-minute talk with Terry: “His brain alone lives. His heart and body drag from it, dead. The man's a clock.”

*Compton*

Look here!

*Miss Mabie*

Really, Mr. Bliss——

*Bliss*

(*To MISS MABIE*) Or, that after a glass or two of wine, you talk incessantly: “The woman's a sot.”

*Adrian*

Actually, this is——

*Bliss*

—In unspeakable taste! Yes, I mean it to be. Now with taste out of the way,

perhaps we can talk like living beings, instead of the polite concoctions manufactured by you and Compton for your adoring public.

*Compton*

Bliss——!

*Bliss*

Compton, if you had accredited instances of my committing every sin on the calendar, you wouldn't have *me*. Is that understood? (*COMPTON is unable to answer. BLISS turns to LISSA*) Lissa, you may have gathered from all this literary plot-hatching, that what happened to us that night wasn't quite as spontaneous as you thought it. (*LISSA gestures helplessly*) True—it wasn't. The idea for it, however, came, not from a novel, but from a novelist. (*He indicates COMPTON, scornfully*) This one. He was there the afternoon of the party, wagging his wise tongue to Kendall and me on the susceptibility of the feminine heart, be it ever so protected. The garden in moonlight would do it, he said: Also, he coined that pretty slogan: "Every wife another man's mistress."—I was twenty-two, and not hard to impress. In addition, I was desperately lonely at the prospect of a long exile, to begin the next day. I wanted to be loved: I never had been, nor had I ever. I set out deliberately to follow his formula.

*Lissa*

You—(*She turns away*)—This isn't necessary. Comedy, this is comedy.

*Bliss*

If you don't mind too much, I'd rather. (*A pause. MISS MABIE goes out into the study. COMPTON into the hall. BLISS continues:*) You know what happened. I needn't tell you that whatever plan I had went sky-high in an instant. Afterwards, when I'd think that I ever *had* a plan, I'd feel—I'd feel sick. I got the news of your wedding, and it was awful. I told myself "Serves you right"—and tried to get over you. But it was no go. Before long, I realized that it never would be. But I worked over myself, and when I felt I was well enough in hand, I came back.

*Adrian*

Yes.—Yes, you did—didn't you?

*Bliss*

I wanted to know one thing: whether or not Lissa was happy. The only way of

finding out, was to be here with you both. If she was—all right. If she wasn't—(LISSA goes away from them. ADRIAN follows her with his eyes, his suffering plainly apparent) I didn't know until tonight, when this clever setting of yours suddenly cut through all the pretty appearances. I doubt if *she* knew, until then. So, whatever you get, you've yourself to thank for it.

(An exclamation is wrung from ADRIAN)

*Lissa*

Norrie!

*Adrian*

No, dear—I shall want you to be just as candid.

(LISSA glances about her, at the room)

*Lissa*

(Half to herself) But—then it wasn't a sign this afternoon. That night—in the garden—it didn't—just happen. No. Plans—always plans.

*Bliss*

(Suddenly) Lissa, I love you. Will you come with me?

*Lissa*

(After a moment) By every—by all the—cold reasoning I can do—I'd—I would. I believe in you, utterly. But—just for now, I—don't *feel* anything—

*Bliss*

Perhaps—later on—

*Lissa*

I don't know.

*Bliss*

(With difficulty) Whenever—. If ever—

*Lissa*

Yes. Yes. . . . Good-bye— (She takes his hand in hers) My sweet Norrie, good-bye.

(She raises his hand to her lips and kisses it. For an instant he looks

*at her, all his longing in his eyes. Then he turns sharply, and goes out into the hall. After a moment, LISSA turns to ADRIAN. He finds something in her eyes that makes him cry out with pain)*

*Adrian*

No! No!

*Lissa*

Good-bye, Adrian.

*Adrian*

Lissa!

*Lissa*

Good-bye, my dear.

*Adrian*

Our life together—it was so perfect I couldn't bear for even a breath to touch it.

*Lissa*

So you raised a wind, to blow it away.

*Adrian*

It was—because I loved you—all of it! You *must know* that.

*Lissa*

I know I have reason, and a free will. I know I live and breathe. Yet—people close to me—keep pulling me this way, that way, every which way. I—don't think I want to be close to anyone, for awhile.

*Adrian*

Lissa—Lissa——

*Lissa*

You—your first instinct was to put me through my paces, as if I were a creature of your mind, without will, without hope, but to go through the motions of a life you'd created for me.

*Adrian*

Of course I see what you mean. But——

*Lissa*

*(In sudden fury)* Do you? And do you see it's not good to do that with me?  
*(She shuts her eyes and huddles herself in her arms)* I do—I do!—Oh, shame on you, Adrian, shame!—I'm a woman you say you love—I'm not to be done that with—you can't *do* that with people, Adrian. That's God's province. For you, it's—it's blasphemy.

*Adrian*

If only you could understand how—how I merely wanted—how I wanted only

——  
*(He cannot go on)*

*Lissa*

Never mind. I'll—be going, in the morning. I'd rather you wouldn't—see me off. I don't know where I shall be—but somewhere—a *person*—living—*(She takes a long, deep breath)* Actually!

*Adrian*

Something will bring you back to me. *(She shakes her head. ADRIAN cries out in despair)*——How I wanted only to spare you!

*Lissa*

You'd no right to spare me.—And there *was* no problem, was there?—Not till you'd made it one. Even then it was my problem, wasn't it? *(With emphasis)* My problem.—But without so much as a by-your-leave, you made my problem your own. And then—then the great thing was to handle it with style, taste, distinction. *(She gazes about her at the setting)* Look at this—the detail of it! This clever, clever, weak, weak thing. *(Her voice changes)* When you'd merely to take my shoulders in your hands and say: “Look here, you Lissa—I'm scared.—You love me *wholly!* Understand?” But—*(Again she glances at the setting)*—style—taste—and the rest doesn't matter—the rest will come. Oh, *taste*—above all things!

*Adrian*

I—can't plead with you.

*(A brief pause. She looks at him intently)*

*Lissa*

I wonder what would happen if, even now, you should take me in your arms—  
and *keep* me from going. . . .

*(He averts his head, wretchedly)*

*Adrian*

You know I couldn't do that.

*Lissa*

No—it isn't in character, is it? *(A pause)* Not quite—in good taste.—I leave you  
your taste, Adrian. *(He winces, as if she had struck him)* Oh, I must make you  
see. You *must* see! *(A moment. Then she leans up and kisses him, gently)* Good-  
bye, my dear. Thanks for many things.

*(Turns, and is gone. ADRIAN stands rigid, staring after her. Then he  
calls:)*

*Adrian*

Lissa!

*(There is no response. He gropes for something against which to  
steady himself. His hand falls upon the flimsy arch of the garden-  
trellis, which shakes beneath it. MISS MABIE pauses in the hall-  
doorway, on her way from the study to the stairs. She has  
discarded the shawl and wears her hat and coat)*

*Miss Mabie*

Mr. Terry—*(His grasp upon the trellis tightens)*—If I hadn't, she'd have gone  
with him.

*Adrian*

She's going—

*Miss Mabie*

—But alone. *(He gestures, helplessly)* And there's the chance she may love you.  
If she does, she can't help but come back. *(Her voice rises)* Oh, surely—after all  
these happy years—surely you, of all people, know *her* well enough to—

*(ADRIAN lifts his head. His words come as a despairing cry:)*

*Adrian*

I know no one!

*(He sinks down upon the bench, hopeless, forsaken. For a moment she regards him compassionately, then speaks softly:)*

*Miss Mabie*

Remember that.

*(She goes out. He is alone, staring miserably at the grass-carpet, digging at it with his heel)*

CURTAIN



# TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *In a Garden* by Philip Barry]