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SF PERUSALS

The Chalk Garden

A Play

by Enid Bagnold

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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ISBN 978-0-573-60689-2 Printed in U.S.A. **#309**

The Author would like to call attention to the fact that a great deal of the play is written in a special cadence: it is for this reason that the stresses in the lines are particularly marked. The same reason applies to the pause-mark so often placed within the line.

By the Lord Chamberlain's wish, and in all places within his jurisdiction, the word "violated" on page 24, Act One, must be played as "ravished," though it should remain "violated" on the printed page.

Also by
ENID BAGNOLD

Plays: Lottie Dundass
National Velvet
Poor Judas
Gertie

Poetry: Sailing Ships

Prose: A Diary Without Dates
The Happy Foreigner
Serena Blandish: or the Difficulty of Getting Married
Alice, and Thomas and Jane
National Velvet
The Squire
The Loved and Envied
The Girl's Journey *(reprint)*
Translation—Alexander of Asia (Princesse Marthe Bibesco)

DEDICATION

To HAROLD FREEDMAN—friend and agent of thirty years through whose endless patience all plans eventually mature—*you* were the spring that released the Dynamo.

Gratefully,
E. B.
(Rottingdean: May 1956.)

FOREWORD

THE CHALK GARDEN owes its New York production (and therefore its outer life) to the devotion of IRENE MAYER SELZNICK.

In America "producer" is the word for the Management. In this case it is difficult to limit Mrs. Selznick's dynamic activity by a word. For two years she lived with one end—to put on this play. She flew, she cabled, she battled. She "cast." In casting she would have ransacked the Shades.

More imperious than I on my behalf she was filled towards the play with an unfaltering magnificence of loyalty.

These few lines are written with my deep thanks and affection.

ENID BAGNOLD

Rottingdean,
May 1956.

THE CHALK GARDEN

STORY OF THE PLAY

(2 males; 7 females)

A woman applies as a governess to a household of position in the country in England. She is interviewed by her employer, an old, over-powering, once-beautiful ex-hostess of London society. She is engaged (without references) to look after the granddaughter, whose mother has married again, and who leads her grandmother by the nose and exploits her caprices and her leaning towards Freudian explanations. The grandmother gardens—feverishly and ignorantly—as an escape from old age. The manservant is a classless, ageless man, unhandy with life but with a "passion for the Right." He in turn is exploited by the grandmother and the granddaughter. Over the premises, unseen and chained by a stroke upstairs, there broods the evil influence and faded grandeur of the butler who has known all the magnificence of his employer's life in London.

The Applicant—the "governess"—has done a life-sentence for murder and has only recently come out of prison. This fact swells like a mushroom cloud all through the play, and the cloud develops flames within it when the judge who once sentenced her comes to lunch.

THE CHALK GARDEN was first presented by Irene Mayer Selznick at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York City, 26th October 1955, with the following cast:

MISS MADRIGAL (First Applicant)	Siobhan McKenna
MAITLAND	Fritz Weaver
SECOND APPLICANT	Georgia Harvey
LAUREL	Betsy von Furstenberg
THIRD APPLICANT	Eva Leonard-Boyne
MRS. ST. MAUGHAM	Gladys Cooper
NURSE	Marie Paxton
OLIVIA	Marian Seldes
THE JUDGE	Percy Waram

The Play directed by
ALBERT MARRE
with Setting and Costumes by
CECIL BEATON

It was presented in London, co-inciding with the run in New York, by H. M. Tennent Ltd., at the Haymarket Theatre on 11th April 1956, with the following cast:

MISS MADRIGAL (First Applicant)	Dame Peggy Ashcroft
MAITLAND	George Rose
SECOND APPLICANT	Ruth Lodge
LAUREL	Judith Stott
THIRD APPLICANT	Phyllis Relph
MRS. ST. MAUGHAM	Dame Edith Evans
NURSE	Mavis Walker
OLIVIA	Rachel Gurney
THE JUDGE	Felix Aylmer

The Play directed by
SIR JOHN GIELGUD
with Setting by
REECE PEMBERTON

TIME: *The present.*

PLACE: *A room in a manor house, Sussex, England.*

ACT ONE

A day in June.

ACT TWO

Two months later.

ACT THREE

Twenty minutes later.

The Chalk Garden

ACT ONE

TIME: *The present.*

PLACE: *A room in one of those Manor Houses which border a Village Green in a village in Sussex. The soil is lime and chalk. The village is by the sea.*

From one high window in the room, preferably downstage Left, the personages on the stage can see, when standing up, the life that goes on on the Village Green.

Back stage there is a wide French window, standing open, that gives on to the garden. On stage Left is a door leading to the main part of the house. A corridor (much grander than the room seen in the Set) leads presumably to the front door, to dust-sheeted entertaining rooms, and a curving staircase leads to the rooms upstairs. Farther upstage Left is a baize door leading to MAITLAND'S *pantry.*

A small door opens downstage Right to show a narrow flight of stairs leading to Pinkbell's bedroom. If another door to the garden would be useful it is placed downstage Right.

Beyond the open French window a bosky, belillied garden runs slightly uphill. A June gale blows. The room has a look of vigour and culture. The furniture is partly inherited, partly bought in MRS. ST. MAUGHAM'S *young days. It is probably Regency,*

but the owner of this house does not tie herself to anything. She has lived through many moods, and is a jackdaw for the Curious and Strange. The only object necessarily described is her work-table back stage, running the length of the windows. It is a rough table, rather high and long. Under it lie in disorder baskets, garden trugs, a saw, two long-handled grass-cutters, a tin of Abol, a sack of John Innes potting soil, a log basket full of raffia, and rubber clogs, etc. On top of the table are strewn scissors, string, gardening books, flower catalogues, gardening gloves, a small watering can for vases in the room, a trowel, etc.

Beneath the high window that looks out on the Village Green is a round table that can be used in Act Two as a dining table. There is also somewhere in the room another small table, or light card table, which can be used in Act Two for LAUREL *and* MISS MADRIGAL. *It should be noted however that the furniture in the room is that of a sitting room and is merely adapted for purposes of meals. The sideboard, for instance, should really be a side table of some sort, or a commode,—an improvisation.*

ON CURTAIN UP *there are four chairs in a row, facing towards Stage Right. Three are empty. Over the back of the Downstage one is draped a small ragged feather boa as though it had slipped from someone's shoulder.* MISS MADRIGAL *sits on the Upstage chair. She is an enigmatical, contained woman, neat and non-committal in dress—with fine eyes, and she has the still look of an eagle at rest upon a rock.*

AS THE CURTAIN RISES, MAITLAND *opens the front door (leaves it open) and shows in a rapid* LITTLE LADY *(the next applicant). She comes in quickly, like a bird over a lawn, going behind Left chairs to below them.*

LITTLE LADY. *(A-flutter)* Good morning. May one sit? (MADRIGAL *does not answer.* MAITLAND *nods and exits up Right to garden.* LITTLE LADY *sits, leaving a chair vacant between herself and* MISS MADRIGAL. *She takes off her gloves, and places them with her bag on this vacant chair. She hides her hands; it is a trick of hers.)*

Lovely, blowy weather— Are you too here for the interview?

(The DOORBELL rings.)

As I came in I saw a lady going out. In a temper.

(THE THIRD LADY—*whose beauty is decayed—sails in from the hall. She carries a parasol, wears a chiffon scarf on her head.)*

MAITLAND. *(Returning up Right)* Who let you in?

THIRD LADY. The front door stood wide open—so humane. *(Going down Left Centre. To other* TWO APPLICANTS) Good morning! How do you do?

MAITLAND. Have you a letter? *(Right of chair to front of sofa.)*

THIRD LADY. *(Facing him)* I wouldn't have come, dear, if I hadn't had a letter. *(Waves it at him)* Are you the butler?

MAITLAND. I am the manservant.

THIRD LADY. A world of difference! *(Letter in bag, scarf off.)* In my days it was thought common to wear a white coat. A relic of our occupation in India. Now over. In those days only worn in Cheltenham. *(Turning towards* APPLICANTS.)

MAITLAND. Will you sit down please.

THIRD LADY. *(To above table)* In those days—in the Hill Stations, I was thought to have extra-ordinary charm! *(Turning suddenly to him)* Is this a house where there are gentlemen?

MAITLAND. *(Stiffly)* I am not to give information.

THIRD LADY. *(Puts scarf on back of chair)* But you have only to nod. *(Fingering things on the Centre table)*

—gardening gloves— Nicotine for wood lice— Is your lady going up in the world? Or coming down? One has to be so careful.

MAITLAND. *(Outraged)* Mrs. St. Maugham has a house in Belgrave Square!

THIRD LADY. But you are left in the country, I suppose, when she goes up for the Season?

MAITLAND. *(Shortly)* Madam is past the Seasons. Take a chair, please.

THIRD LADY. Where are the entertaining rooms?

MAITLAND. They are under dust sheets.

THIRD LADY. *(Takes scarf and turns to* APPLICANTS) Not that I am applying for the post, you know—not really!

LITTLE LADY. *(Gasping)* Not applying?

THIRD LADY. I came— *(Behind chairs)* I came to have a peep! *(Improvising)* So nostalgic— *(On to second step.)*

MAITLAND. *(Crossing over Left)* Where are you off to?

THIRD LADY. *(Thrusting sunshade into his hand. Tying the chiffon scarf round her hair. Mockingly)* Such a wind out. So rough and rude in summer—

MAITLAND. But you're not going!

THIRD LADY. *(Teasing him. But it is the truth)* I could not *think* of staying in a house—where there is not even a nephew! *(Takes sunshade back.)*

MAITLAND. *(On to second step)* But what shall I tell *her?*

THIRD LADY. *(With ancient mischief)* —that people who advertise—are never quite of one's world! *(She goes by the front door.)*

(MAITLAND *exits to pantry.*

The girl, LAUREL, *comes down the stairs or in from garden, according to Set. She is sixteen, dressed in blue jeans, blue slippers and a white jumper. She is wearing a large diamenté necklace, a pearl bangle, and a wide sash of pink silk round her waist. She carries a long pearl necklace.)*

LAUREL. *(With insolent calm. On second step)* My grandmother had a hundred and seven answers. *(Silence. Comes down Centre)* I mean to her advertisement for someone to look after me.

LITTLE LADY. *(Rising, propitiatory, puts out a nervous hand)* You are the young lady—who requires a companion? *(Her poor, nervous hand steals out.)*

LAUREL. I never shake hands. It's so animal.

(LITTLE LADY *sinks back.)*

(Towards sofa—ties sash in a bow) So one of you has come to look after me? We were expecting four applicants —the ones my grandmother selected from the letters. *(Turns)* So now there are only two to choose from. *(Centre again. To the* LITTLE LADY) What are your qualifications?

LITTLE LADY. *(Anxious, leaning forward)* Frobel-trained. Long ago. But Frobel-trained. *(Almost in a whisper)* And patience.

LAUREL. Would you have patience with me?

LITTLE LADY. I am so fond of young people.

LAUREL. I set fire to things. I am not allowed alone, except in the garden. *(Turns away. Sits armchair.)*

LITTLE LADY. *(Carrying on bravely)* Such lovely weather for the garden. *(Rises. Crosses to above table)* The advertisement said "with handicraft." I am clever with my fingers. I am fond of making pretty things. *(Coy)* Now—can you make a lampshade?

LAUREL. All the lampshades here are made already.

LITTLE LADY. *(Confidential)* Will you tell me, dear, of what does the family consist?

LAUREL. Of my grandmother. Of me. And Maitland. *(Pointing to ceiling)* And the terrible old man upstairs. And his hospital nurse.

LITTLE LADY. *(Horrified)* Your—grandfather?

LAUREL. Mr. Pinkbell was always the butler. Now he has a stroke.

LITTLE LADY. *(Glancing to the pantry)* Who was that then?

LAUREL. That was Maitland. He wears a grocer's coat.

You get them for a guinea. Mr. Pinkbell, of course, used to wear a black one and have a footman.

LITTLE LADY. But is there no one else?

LAUREL. Oh we are rich! *(Rises. Crosses down stage to behind Left chairs)* If we have only one servant it is part of my grandmother's newest theory about life. She says true devotion is only to be got when a man is worked to death and has no rival. *(Fingers feather boa distastefully)* Maitland plays games with me so he has his hands full.

LITTLE LADY. *(To front of Left chairs)* But have you no mother?

LAUREL. *(Leans against window table)* My mother married again. She married for love.

(LITTLE LADY *sits third chair.)*

It has given me an adolescent repugnance to her. My case is practically in Freud. My grandmother will explain it to you. *(Leans against wall above window.)*

LITTLE LADY. And where is your father?

LAUREL. My father shot himself when I was twelve. I was in the room. *(Steps in behind* MADRIGAL) And what are *your* qualifications?

MADRIGAL. I prefer to wait for your grandmother.

LAUREL. *(Interested in this answer)* Are you Scotch?

MADRIGAL. I was born in Barbados.

LAUREL. Where do you live?

MADRIGAL. In my room.

LAUREL. How do you take to me?

MADRIGAL. You are not what I am used to.

LAUREL. I am fond of painting. Can you paint?

MADRIGAL. What I cannot do is to wait much longer.

LAUREL. *(Going to door up Centre)* Oh, she'll come! Grandloo will come! She is working in the garden. She's a great gardener, but nothing grows for her.

(A LADY *is seen at the front door. She rings the bell, and* MAITLAND *comes out to answer it.* LAUREL *has come down Right of* MADRIGAL.)

Do wait. You may be the one we are looking for.

MAITLAND. *(Comes hurrying to the chair for the*

feather boa. As he picks it up, he sees LAUREL) She says she left this behind. *(To* LAUREL, *who runs to door up Right)* What are you doing wearing Madam's necklaces? *(He follows her)* Off with them! You've been upstairs and I thought I'd left you happy in the garden.

(She takes off the necklaces and gives them to him—hiding the bangle behind her.)

Out you go! I've got a bonfire laid at the top there! You shall light it when I get a minute.

(LAUREL *puts the bangle in his hand and goes out.* MAITLAND *runs to the front door with the boa. Hands it back to the unseen caller.)*

LITTLE LADY. *(To* MADRIGAL) Do you think it's all true?

MADRIGAL. *(Indifferently)* I should think it unlikely.

(MAITLAND *returns and puts jewels in cigar box on up stage table.)*

LITTLE LADY. *(Rises. Below chairs to behind* MADRIGAL) For the interview—when the interview—ought we to be together?

MAITLAND. *(Turns, cigar box in hand)* One of you ladies can wait in the drawing room. It's dust-sheeted, but there's a chair. *(Puts box under Centre table, then takes gloves and nicotine to up stage table.)*

LITTLE LADY. One must be fair! Let it be me! This lady—

(As she reaches over for her handbag, MADRIGAL *picks hers up, putting it on her lap.)*

(Tone changing after precaution) —was before me. *(She goes into the hall. Much commoner)* When you're ready, you just call, dear! *(She makes for the drawing room, then turns and goes quickly out by the front door.)*

(Neither MAITLAND *nor* MADRIGAL *has been watching her.)*

MAITLAND. *(Turning from up stage table, looking Right)* Whew!

MADRIGAL. She's a little light-fingered.

MAITLAND. *(Looking on Centre table)* That one? Oh!

MADRIGAL. No more than a box of matches or the tatler.

MAITLAND. Do you know her?

MADRIGAL. No. But I have met those hands before. Many times.

MAITLAND. Met her hands? *(Goes into the hall)* She's gone! Out of the front door. *(Takes bowl of flowers from hall table.)*

MADRIGAL. They were none of them solid applicants.

MAITLAND. *(Behind her)* But they wrote to Madam!

MADRIGAL. It's how they spend their days. They answer advertisements.

MAITLAND. *(Puts bowl on window table. Picks up writing-pad)* Not meaning to take the job!

MADRIGAL. *(Absently)* They are always in two minds. It makes a change for them— *(At her own words she goes a bit off track)* —and then too she has a garden.

MAITLAND. It's you who have two minds, it seems! *(Eyeing her anxiously)* Don't you be flitting! *(Crossing down stage to desk)* If there's nobody here—after all the advertising—who do you think's going to get the brunt!

MADRIGAL. *(To herself)* I cannot hope to be acceptable —at the first undertaking.

MAITLAND. *(Pad on desk. Picks up four letters)* You don't need to worry! Madam's up a tree! Today's the deadline.

MADRIGAL. *(Prim and yet nervous)* There's an urgency?

MAITLAND. *(Crosses above chair to her)* Madam's mad for the child! She's got her daughter coming. A shy lady. A nice one. But there's wheels within wheels. If you ask me—Madam's afraid she'll take the child. *(Letters on table.)*

MADRIGAL. The child's outlandish!

MAITLAND. Only what *Madam* makes her. I can explain

her! Nurse and Nanny I bin to her! *(Crosses down stage to door down Right.)*

MADRIGAL. In a house like this—would I be suitable?

MAITLAND. She'll take you! Madam loves the unusual! *(Opens door)* It's a middle class failing—she says—to run away from the unusual! *(Puts things on stairs.)*

VOICE. *(From offstage Right in the garden)* Maitland! *(Coming nearer)* Maitland!

MAITLAND. Madam! *(Closes door. Up to Right end of up stage table.)*

(MRS. ST. MAUGHM *is seen coming from the garden. She is pushing a wicker garden trolley loaded with gardening tools.)*

VOICE. Maitland! *(Head through Left half of window)* Are my teeth on the table? My bottom teeth—

MAITLAND. *(Searching)* There's nothing.

VOICE. Then I must have left them in the greenhouse. *(She moves on with trolley and disappears.)*

MAITLAND. *(Going out to her)* Here! Wait, Madam—Here they are—wrapped in a handkerchief!

(MAITLAND *gives her the handkerchief and returns, followed by* MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *She is an old, overpowering, once beautiful, ex-hostess of London society.)*

(Re-entering) There's a dentist taken the empty house by the church. He might make you comfortable!

(MADRIGAL *rises.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Right of* MAITLAND. *Takes gloves off)* I've tried all the dentists! You can't fit false teeth to a woman of character. *(Gloves on up stage table. Hat off)* As one gets older and older, the appearance becomes such a bore. *(She sees* MADRIGAL) Good morning. *(Displeased—to* MAITLAND) But I expected four applicants!

MAITLAND. Four came. Three have gone.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. And one wrote me such a good letter! Gone?

MAITLAND. But I've kept this one.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(To* MADRIGAL) Shall we sit? *(Gives* MAITLAND *her hat)* You can go, Maitland.

(MADRIGAL *crosses down stage to sofa and sits.* MAITLAND *exits to pantry.)*

(With a sudden and alarming charm) Now what questions do total strangers put to one another? *(Sits armchair.)*

MADRIGAL. *(Colourlessly)* The name is Madrigal.

(MRS. ST. MAUGHAM *takes spectacles from apron pocket and selects the "Madrigal" letter from the table.)*

I am the daughter of the late Ronald Bentham Madrigal, Rajputuna Hussars, Indian Army. He was the son of General Bentham Madrigal—the Honourable East India Company.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. No, no! That you can't be! The Honourable East India Company was dissolved in 1860! I'm an expert! My great-grandfather was Tarr Bethune, Governor of Madras, tried for corruption in 1859 and found guilty!

MADRIGAL. *(Calmly)* My grandfather had my father at the age of seventy-five.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Admitting the point)* That might make it possible. What experience have you?

MADRIGAL. I have small private means. I have not taken such a post before.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Why do you apply to me?

MADRIGAL. The advertisement tempted me. I have been —somewhat alone.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. You will be able, I suppose, to give me references?

MADRIGAL. *(Coldly)* That will be difficult.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. What?

MADRIGAL. In fact impossible.

(The door Right opens and a hospital NURSE *in full uni-*

form comes into the room. She carries a breakfast tray.)

NURSE. *(Stiff, reproachful)* We've been ringing, Mrs. St. Maugham.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. I heard nothing!

NURSE. *(Taking tray, behind sofa, to up stage table. Acid)* Our breakfast tray was late again.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. One can't have everything!

NURSE. Mr. Pinkbell says one should have a great deal more. *(She exits, flouncing.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. One of his cross mornings. Ask *me* questions, Miss Madrigal.

MADRIGAL. Does one have a room to oneself?

(MAITLAND *enters. Takes tray from up stage table.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Life without a room to oneself is a barbarity. Luncheon here with me and my granddaughter. Your evening meal served in your room on a tray—

MAITLAND. *(Stopping on way out)* That can't be done!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Automatically)* Ma'am.

MAITLAND. *(As automatically)* Ma'am.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. And why can't it?

(TELEPHONE rings off Left.)

MAITLAND. *(Left of her)* Because I shall be busy serving at Madam's table.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. I hear the telephone.

(MAITLAND *exits.)*

Now—now—Miss Madrigal! We are so continuously interrupted— Are you Church of England?

MADRIGAL. *(Whose mind is only on the telephone)* My religion is private. I should tell you—in case you should ask me to—I don't answer the telephone.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Immediately interested)* For what reason?

MADRIGAL. I prefer not to. *(As though realizing by* MRS.

ST. MAUGHAM'S *attitude that more explanation is needed)* It disturbs me to join two worlds.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Which—?

MADRIGAL. The outside . . . and the inside one.

MAITLAND. *(Returning)* They want you to open the village Summer Festival.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Are they holding on?

MAITLAND. They are.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Ask them what attendance they can insure? Last time I opened something there was nobody there.

MAITLAND. Madam is so unpopular.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. How do you know?

MAITLAND. I hear it on all sides.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. They tell you that when I send you down to the post. Give me my engagement book. *(Spectacles out.)*

MAITLAND. That's last year's.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Give it me all the same. The dates are not so different. Have you lived in a village, Miss Madrigal?

(MAITLAND, *now Right of her, hands her the book.)*

MADRIGAL. *(Mumbling)* No, Mrs. St. Maugham—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Vaguely leafs through book)* All the graces of life here go unvalued. In a village one is down to the bones of things. When I was at my height—though I lived here—I never knew them! They were waiting for my old age like wolves it seems! Tell them I won't open it. *(Hands book back.)*

(MAITLAND *returns it to desk and exits to pantry.)* Ah—where were we? My advertisement asks for handicraft. What handicraft do you suggest?

MADRIGAL. I have ornamented a chapel.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. With your needle?

MADRIGAL. With my brush. I have painted a twining plant on the altar candles.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Immediately interested)* But—

as the candles burnt down the painting must have melted away!

MADRIGAL. *That* was the beauty of *it!* Is this a quiet house?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Absolutely.

(Wild SCREAMS are heard off stage up the garden. MAITLAND *bursts in, rushes through to the garden.)*

MAITLAND. That child again— *(Disappears up Right.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Calm)* My daughter's child. My granddaughter. She's so fond of screaming.

MADRIGAL. While I was waiting a young girl passed through the room.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. That was she! She lives with me. Did she say anything?

MADRIGAL. *(Colourless)* Nothing of consequence.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Not the suicide of her father?

MADRIGAL. I think she mentioned it!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Delighted)* Oh Laurel—to make a drama—! He died—poor man—of his liver!

MADRIGAL. *(As though it were a foible)* She does not care for the truth?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. No. But I encourage her. She loves a small limelight! One must be tender with her. Alas, he died when she was three. Rich and a fine estate. Four Van Dykes and unique Sheraton furniture. *(Bitterly)* Her mother's one success— *(Rises. To Left of table)* But why speak of it! She married again.

MADRIGAL. And where *is* her mother?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. She follows the drum—as they say—in Arabia. Stationed abroad is the term, but I dislike military language. She is coming by ship—I am expecting her.

MADRIGAL. *(Rising)* Would you sooner postpone—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(To her)* But she does not come here!—I should be your employer.

MADRIGAL. *(Cautiously)* She *is* coming?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. In front of the child—we don't mention it. She is coming.

(MADRIGAL *sits again.)*

One does not know why, though I shrewdly suspect it. *(Pauses, looks at miniature on the table)* I have an unworldly daughter. She was always crying out after being simple. That's hard to understand. It seems such a waste, with all the chances of life, to want to be simple. Privilege and power make selfish people—but gay ones— *(Breaks off)* Forgive me, Miss Madrigal, for being personal. *(Miniature back)* But irritation is like a rash on the heart! *(Sits again.)*

MADRIGAL. *(To change the subject)* The child—is she fond of her stepfather?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Indifferent)* I never asked. His rank is Colonel. My grand-daughter has developed an interesting mother-hatred, which is clearly explained in Freud. You have had experience? You feel competent to deal with such things?

MADRIGAL. *(Dreamily)* For the worse—or the better—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. You seem absent in mind!

MADRIGAL. *(Pulling herself together again)* Not in mind—but in manner. *(Pursily)* The child is naturally alienated—that a sexlife has broken out again in her mother.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. You put it well. Exactly. The child was frenzied.

(The house PHONE rings.)

When nothing would stop the wedding—she ran from the hotel into the dark—

(Second RING.)

MADRIGAL. There seems to be a bell ringing.

(PHONE stop.)

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Getting up and talking as she crosses Right to house telephone)* —and by some extra-

ordinary carelessness she was violated in Hyde Park at the age of twelve. It has upset her nerves. We are waiting as it were for calmer weather. *(Picking up house telephone)* You want me, Pinkbell? One moment— *(Hand over phone)* Of course we put it less strongly to her mother. Apart from certain fixations connected with fire, she is a charming intelligent girl. I should value your impressions. *(Into phone)* What's that! *(Listens)* I did. I ordered it. The Extract of Humus—for the seed boxes. *(Listening)* It should have come. I'll ring. I'll ring and ask him. *(Is about to put the receiver from her but is recalled by the VOICE)* I know! I know! But one can't get perfection, Pinkbell! *(Replaces receiver on hook. To herself)* Oh . . . isn't jealousy terrible! *(Moving above chair.)*

MADRIGAL. *(With surprising force)* Yes.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. You made me jump. He's my butler. Forty years my butler. Now he's had a stroke but he keeps his finger on things. *(Rings handbell. Keeps bell.)*

MADRIGAL. He carries on at death's door.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. His standards rule this house.

MADRIGAL. *(Absently)* You must be fond of him.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Alas no. *(Below chair)* He trains Maitland—but now Maitland won't go near him. But I shall overcome it. *(Sits.)* He's so good with the garden. *(Rings bell again, over back of chair.)*

MADRIGAL. Maitland?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Pinkbell. He directs mine from his window. All butlers dream of gardening. *(Puts bell on table)* We spoke of references. Who will speak for you?

MADRIGAL. *(In her sing-song voice)* No one will speak for me— Extract of Humus is too rich for summer bienials.

(MAITLAND *enters up Centre from garden. To Left of* MRS. ST. MAUGHAM.)

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Has a bag of humus been delivered at the back door?

MAITLAND. There's a sack there.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. When did it come?

MAITLAND. Days ago.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. And you walk by it and ignore it! How do you know someone hasn't sent me a brace of pheasants! Mr. Pinkbell says you must report and at once everything that comes to the back door.

MAITLAND. *(Suddenly, reaching his limit) I won't take orders from the old bastard!*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Am I to have trouble with you, Maitland?

MAITLAND. *(Breaking)* Oh, if I could please and be sure of myself!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Quiet, menacing)* Maitland—

MAITLAND. Oh, if things would go smoothly!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *Maitland! (With deliberation and distinctness)* Bring me the Crême de Menthe and two glasses.

(MAITLAND'S *chest fills with emotion. He seems about to burst. He obeys and rushes out through his door.* *(Fanning her face with handkerchief)* Touch and go! How frail is authority. What were you saying?

MADRIGAL. When?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. About humus and summer biennials.

MADRIGAL. *(Tonelessly, sleepwalkingly)* Don't pep up the soil before birth. It leads them on to expect—what life won't give them.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Leaning forward)* Speak louder!

MADRIGAL. *(With awkward and unstable loudness)* What life won't give them.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Suddenly reminded)* What was that plant you painted on the candles?

MADRIGAL. *(With inner pleasure, as though she were eating a sweet)* Lapagaria. Sub-tropical. With waxy umbels.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Lady Dorchester had it in her wedding bouquet after the Battle of the Marne! I had forgotten it! Could I grow it in my greenhouse?

MADRIGAL. *(By rote)* It needs the early actinic rays.

Exclude the sun again at midday. Counteract the high lime-content in your soil with potash.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Where did you learn about such things?

MADRIGAL. I was put in charge of—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. What?

MADRIGAL. — A garden.

MAITLAND. *(Enters, carrying everything most correctly—liqueur bottle, two small glasses, silver tray, and even a clean napkin over his arm. Sets down tray. Then, straightening himself)* I wish to give my notice.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Eyes like steel)* If I take it you will not get it back again.

MAITLAND. I am prepared for that.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Terrible)* Are you?

MAITLAND. *(Immediately broken)* You know I can't stand criticism! Every time a word's said against me a month's work is undone!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. We all make mistakes.

MAITLAND. *(Passionately)* But nothing should be said about them! Praise is the only thing that brings to life again a man that's been destroyed! But oh if I leave—what will you do without me!

(Another SCREAM is heard from the garden.)

—and what will the child do! *(Runs off into the garden up Right.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Smiling in triumph)* Do you know the secret of authority, Miss Madrigal? Changes of mood. The inexplicable. The thunder, the lightning, and the sudden sun. He won't leave me! Will you have a Crême de Menthe?

MADRIGAL. *(Stiffly)* I never touch alcohol.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Filling glass)* Certainly he makes scenes. But I like them. He has been a prisoner.

MADRIGAL. *(Pause)* A prisoner!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Five years. Now that there are no subject races, one must be served by the mad, the sick, and those who can't take their place in the outside world —and served I must be. *(Drinks.)*

(LAUREL *rushes in from the garden and stands looking out of the garden door up Right.)*

(Sees LAUREL) Laurel!

LAUREL. *(Not turning)* One moment, Grandloo. One moment, darling— I'm watching the bonfire— I must see it die— *(To Left of chair)* I put salt on it to turn the flame blue. Blocks of it.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Takes* LAUREL'S *hand)* Who told you to put salt on it?

LAURA. The old bastard, Mr. Pinkbell.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Not now, my darling. Superlatives only between ourselves!

LAUREL. *(Looking at Left chairs)* Where are the others?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *This* is Miss Madrigal!

LAUREL. Have you settled everything? *(To* MISS MADRIGAL) Do you understand all about me?

MADRIGAL. Not yet.

LAUREL. Oh can't we have the interview together? Shall I go and fetch the book that explains me?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Not so fast. Externalize! Externalize, my darling! She has quaint self-delusions. You mustn't mind them—

(MAITLAND *enters, with jacket over arm, from garden and with a black look at* LAUREL *exits through his door.)*

LAUREL. *(Behind chair)* —but you mustn't cross them! *(Looks at* MAITLAND *over left shoulder.)*

MADRIGAL. Are you an only child?

LAUREL. I am Delilah's daughter!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Laura has a poltergeist! Stones fall in the bedrooms, and words leap and change colour in her mouth like fishes! I too at her age—

LAUREL. Wit often skips a generation!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. She is my parchment sheet on which I write! I hope she will remember my life and times! There seems no one else to do it—

LAUREL. *I* am your little immortality.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(To herself—with reality)* Those

who eat too big a meal of life—get no monument. You see how light my finger lies on her! The child's a flower. She grows in liberty!

MADRIGAL. Weeds grow as easily.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. As I was saying—

LAUREL. —before the interruption.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Freedom is Captain here! Calm is its Lieutenant!

NURSE. *(Rushes in down Right. Leaves door open)* The madonna lilies have blown over!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Rises)* Great heavens! This mule of a garden. Maitland!—He was to order the bamboos and he forgot them!—Are they all down?

NURSE. *(With triumph)* All. And not for want of warnings! *(Exits.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Oh my lilies! My lilies! One waits a year for them!— *(Exiting fast into the garden.)*

(LAUREL *follows to Centre door.* MADRIGAL *to up Right door.)*

MAITLAND. *(Enters with two clean towels and a pair of shoes)* What was that I heard?

LAUREL. *(In Centre doorway)* The calm of Grandloo.

MAITLAND. *(Puts things on floor)* But what's happened?

MADRIGAL. There's been an accident in the garden.

MAITLAND. Fire!

LAUREL. *(To front of Left chairs)* Wind. You didn't stake the lilies!

MAITLAND. *(Frantic, rushing to the door to look out)* Oh are they down! The nurse told me and I forgot! *(Left of armchair)* How the old bastard will be crowing!

MADRIGAL. *(Up Right of armchair. Primly)* Stake in May.

MAITLAND. They weren't full grown in May!

MADRIGAL. They should have been.

MAITLAND. *(Fiercely)* Is that a criticism?

MADRIGAL. *(Quietly)* So you are the gardener here as well?

MAITLAND. *(Excited)* I'm everything! I'm the kingpin and the pivot and the manservant and the maidservant and the go-between, *(Turning on* LAUREL) and the fire-extinguisher!

LAUREL. Prisoner Six Five Seven Four!

MAITLAND. *(Jumping to attention)* Sir!

LAUREL. Carry your bed-area and about turn! Through the corridor second door on the left and into your cell! March!

MAITLAND. *(Marches to* LAUREL, *starts to salute, but can't quite make it)* I'm all to pieces. I can't play it.

LAUREL. *(Sitting third chair Left. To* MADRIGAL, *in mock-tragic tones)* He was five long years in prison, Miss Madrigal.

MADRIGAL. *(Politely)* Was it your first conviction?

MAITLAND. Conviction! It was for my ideals! I was a Conscientious Objector.

MADRIGAL. *(Prim)* And didn't you find it trying?

MAITLAND. She says "Trying!" Five years! Five long years! Given one chance to live and five years taken from it! An ant among a thousand ants—and taking orders from ants!

MADRIGAL. If it upsets you better not recall it.

MAITLAND. Not recall it! It's stamped on my skin and at the back of my eyes! It's in my legs when I walk up and down! In my heart that sticks with fright when *she* gets angry!

MADRIGAL. *(Sententious)* But since you felt you had right on your side!

MAITLAND. *(Moves* MADRIGAL'S *macintosh on to her bag, then picks up first two chairs)* "Right on my side!" *That* didn't uphold me! *(To her with the chairs)* I went in there because I wouldn't take a life but before I came out I would have killed a warder! *(Takes chairs to hall —one behind curtain—other to Left of stairs.)*

MADRIGAL. *(Platitudinously)* All acts become possible.

MAITLAND. *(Over shoulder)* What can *you* know of life?

MADRIGAL. True, it's been sheltered.

LAUREL. *(Left of table, pours out a crême de menthe)* All our lives are sheltered.

MAITLAND. *(Turns and sees* LAUREL) Don't do that! She'll be furious! *(Rushes to her.)*

LAUREL. *(Tossing it down her throat before* MAITLAND *can reach her)* Not with me. I'm not responsible. *(Goes above* MADRIGAL *to behind sofa.)*

MAITLAND. *(To* MADRIGAL) You'll witness, Miss. I didn't touch it! I have to be on the ready for injustice in life!

LAUREL. *(Going below sofa)* From me? From your little Laurel? How touchy you are! *(Sits Centre of sofa.)*

MAITLAND. I have soft ground and hard ground to my feelings. You should mind where you step! *(To Left chairs.)*

LAUREL. *(Mock concern)* Have you taken your luminol?

MAITLAND. *(Putting* MADRIGAL'S *bag close to up stage chair and macintosh over back of chair)* That's it! That's it! Even a child knows a man must take a sedative. But coming from you, Laurel—

LAUREL. *Miss* Laurel. I am a victim and you ought to love me.

MAITLAND. *(To Centre. Angrily)* I do love you—like the poor mother who ought by rights and reasons to take a stick to you. *(Crosses to stairs. Picks up towels and shoes.)*

LAUREL. What do you expect of me? A child that's been forsaken by its mother!

MAITLAND. That's as may be! That's as those think it to be! I was found in a field but I don't make a fuss about it! *(Rushes upstairs.)*

LAUREL. *(Soapily)* Poor Maitland likes the Right—even when the Right is wrong.

MADRIGAL. *(Platitudinous)* He has your interests at heart.

LAUREL. *(With interest)* Are you a hospital nurse?

MADRIGAL. Why do you ask?

LAUREL. You have that unmeaning way of saying things.

MADRIGAL. *(After a second's pause and with a little formal manner of adapting herself)* Now that we are alone —am I to call you Laurel?

LAUREL. *(Moves down stage on sofa)* It's my name.

MADRIGAL. *(Sitting beside her)* And what are you interested in—Laurel? I mean—apart from yourself?

LAUREL. What I don't like—is to be questioned.

MADRIGAL. I agree with you.

LAUREL. But I don't like to be agreed with—just in case I might argue! And I don't like to be read aloud to unless I suggest it! But if read aloud to—*I don't like emphasis!* And every morning I don't like *"Good* morning" said! I can see for myself what sort of a day it is!

MADRIGAL. You sound as if you had lady-companions before. How did you get rid of them?

LAUREL. I tell Pinkbell.

MADRIGAL. He tells your grandmother. My mind works more slowly than yours. But it was going that way.

LAUREL. You see she loves to advertise! She loves what comes out of it. It's like dredging in the sea, she says—so much comes up in the net!

MADRIGAL. I—for instance?

LAUREL. Why not?

MADRIGAL. Doesn't she take a chance—that way?

LAUREL. No, she says you get more out of life by *hap*-hazard. By the way, if you want to get on with my grandmother—you must notice her eccentricity.

MADRIGAL. She is fond of that?

LAUREL. She adores it! Oh, the tales I let her tell me when I am in the mood!

MADRIGAL. *(Pause)* Does she love you?

LAUREL. She would like to! *(Confidentially)* She *thinks* she does!—But I am only her remorse.

MADRIGAL. You try your foot upon the ice, don't you?

LAUREL. I find you wonderfully odd Why do you come here?

MADRIGAL. I have to do something with my life—

LAUREL. What life have you been used to?

MADRIGAL. *(Softly)* Regularity. Punctuality. Early rising—

LAUREL. It sounds like a prison!

MADRIGAL. —and what are *you* used to?

LAUREL. Doing what I like. *(Rises behind sofa)* Have you been told *why* I am peculiar?

MADRIGAL. Something was said about it.

LAUREL. If you come here we'll talk for hours and hours about it! I'll tell you everything! And why I hate my mother!

MADRIGAL. I too hated my mother. I should say it was my stepmother.

LAUREL. Oh, that's just an ordinary hatred. Mine is more special.

MADRIGAL. The dangerous thing about hate is that it seems so reasonable.

LAUREL. Maitland won't let me say so, but my mother is Jezebel! She is so overloaded with sex that it sparkles! She is golden and striped—like something in the jungle!

MADRIGAL. You sound proud of her. Does she never come here?

LAUREL. *(Below armchair)* To see me? Never! She's too busy with love! Just now she's in Arabia with her para*mour! (Sits.)*

MADRIGAL. With her—?

LAUREL. If you pin me down he is my stepfather! Have you read Hamlet? It tipped my mind and turned me against my mother.

MADRIGAL. Does she know you feel discarded?

LAUREL. I don't. I left her! *(Pause)* The night before she married—she forgot to say goodnight to me— Does that sound a very little thing?

MADRIGAL. *(With sudden passion)* Oh no! It lights up everything.

LAUREL. *(Looking at her)* Are you talking of you? Or of me!

MADRIGAL. *(Her hand on breast)* When one feels strongly—it is always of me!

LAUREL. Oh, if you are not a spy sent by my mother, I shall enjoy you! Do you know about crime? Maitland and I share a crime library. Bit by bit we are collecting the Notable Trial Series.

MADRIGAL. *(Low)* Don't you like detective stories better?

LAUREL. No, we like real murder! The trials. We act the parts!

MADRIGAL. *(Faintly)* Which—trials have you got?

LAUREL. So far—only Mrs. Maybrick, Lizzie Borden, Dr. Crippen. But Maitland likes the murder*esses* better. He's half in love with them. Oh, if you come here—

MADRIGAL. Here!— *(Rises with gloves and handbag. Crosses Left Centre.)*

LAUREL. —couldn't we act them together? *(Gets no answer)* Maitland is so slow I make him read the prisoner. *(Rises. Passes below her to below Left chairs)* Why does the prisoner have so little to say? *(Waits)* —do you think?

(Pause—no answer.)

What a habit you have—haven't you—of not answering.

MADRIGAL. I made an answer.

LAUREL. Only to yourself, I think.

(MRS. ST. MAUGHAM *enters up Right. She carries a sheaf of Madonna lilies—some with broken stems.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. All gone!—All— Oh—when things are killed in my garden it upsets me—as when I read every day in the newspaper that my friends die! *(Comes Right of armchair to below it.)*

(MADRIGAL *does not move, remains facing down Left.)*

LAUREL. I should have thought as one got older one found death more natural. *(Sits lower of Left chairs.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Natural! It's as though the gods

went rook-shooting when one was walking confident in the park of the world! and there are pangs and shots, and one may be for me! Natural!

MADRIGAL. *(Takes her macintosh and bag and goes towards the hall. As she goes)* That is why a garden is a good lesson—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. What?

MADRIGAL. *(Turns at step)* —so much dies in it. And so often. *(Up on second step.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. It's not a lesson I look for! Laurel, take Miss Madrigal into the garden.

(LAUREL *to hall below* MADRIGAL.)

MADRIGAL. I think I must be going.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Below chair to Centre)* I want you to see the garden.

MADRIGAL. *(Nervous)* I'll write— I'll let you know—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. There is nothing to know yet!

MADRIGAL. I'd better not waste your time.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. And that great bag— *(Takes it)* No one will touch it here! *(She puts bag on up stage table.)*

(LAUREL *and* MADRIGAL *exit into garden, but* LAUREL *darts back.)*

LAUREL. *(Conspiratorially)* Grandloo—psst!—What do you think?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. I never allow myself to think. I have another method.

LAUREL. But—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. And while you are in the garden, listen to her! She knows her subject.

LAUREL. But shall you take her?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Certainly not! But before she goes I want her opinion on the garden. *(Vanishes through* MAITLAND'S *door with lilies.)*

(LAUREL *exits to garden. Although the front door is open,* OLIVIA *rings the bell.* MAITLAND *comes downstairs. He carries a broom.)*

OLIVIA. *(Entering hall)* I didn't telephone, Maitland. *(Into the room)* I thought it better just to come. How is my mother?

(One is just aware that she is pregnant. She wears light travelling clothes, as from the East.)

MAITLAND. *(Leans broom against banisters)* She has the health of— *(Grasping for the unexplainable in Madam's health)* —something in Nature!

OLIVIA. And my daughter?

MAITLAND. They're as thick as thieves, Madam.

OLIVIA. Could you look for my mother—

MAITLAND. Madam was here. *(Takes broom and exits to pantry, calling)* Madam!

(OLIVIA *moves to Right end of up stage table and puts her handbag on it.* MADRIGAL *enters quickly from the garden, making for her macintosh on chair in hall.)*

OLIVIA. *(As she enters)* Who are you?

MADRIGAL. *(Not looking at her)* It makes no difference. *(Takes macintosh and goes up stage for bag. Suddenly pausing)* Perhaps I should tell you—the field is free for you— *(She does not pick up her bag.)*

OLIVIA. To see the child?

MADRIGAL. You have to see the grandmother first!

OLIVIA. *(Pause)* Yes.

MADRIGAL. Looking at you I wouldn't come here if there is any other post open to you.

OLIVIA. Why?

MADRIGAL. Because the child will make hay of you!

OLIVIA. She *has* made hay of me!

MADRIGAL. Are you the mother?

OLIVIA. Yes. *(Looks towards up Right door)* Is she out there?

MADRIGAL. Yes.

OLIVIA. Please—go out—keep her there!

MADRIGAL. But I am a stranger.

OLIVIA. I know but sometimes one speaks the truth to a stranger. I'm not supposed to see her. First I must see my mother. *(Steps close to her)* Please, go out—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(From off stage)* Olivia!

OLIVIA. Please!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Off stage)* Olivia!

(MADRIGAL *slips into garden.)*

(MRS. ST. MAUGHAM *enters from* MAITLAND'S *door. To* MAITLAND, *who has followed her into the hall)* Maitland —light a bonfire!

(He rushes off up Centre into the garden.)

Olivia! So soon! But you're safe—that's all that matters!

OLIVIA. Mother!—

(They embrace.)

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Oh—let me look at you! How brown you are! You look like an Arab. *(Brings her down stage)* How is the desert, darling? I can almost *see* the sand in your hair.

(OLIVIA *sits armchair.* MRS. ST. MAUGHAM *on sofa.)*

OLIVIA. Mother—how's the child?

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Stung)* Ask for *me*—ask for *me*, Olivia!

OLIVIA. I do, I would, but you ran in like a girl, and not a day older. As I came in—the standards dripping with roses. Oh the English flowers after the East!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Let me tell you before we talk—

OLIVIA. —before we quarrel!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. No—not this time! I was going to say—that I've missed you. If I'd known you were coming I'd have driven up to see you. Whatever—and in your condition—made you rush down here without a word!

OLIVIA. I flew. I got here this morning.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Like one of those crickets that leap from a distance and fall at one's feet! How do you do it?

OLIVIA. *(Gloves off)* By breakfasting in Baghdad and dining in Kuffra and taking a taxi in England. We're on a Course. I wrote. Two months at Aldershot.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Aldershot! Oh—who would have thought you would have taken on that look—so quickly —of the Colonel's Lady! What is it they call it—Reveille? How are the bugles at dawn, Olivia?

OLIVIA. We don't live in a camp.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. I feel sure you said you did!

OLIVIA. Never mind the camp. I want to talk to you.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. But why down here the very second you arrive—and without warning!

OLIVIA. Mother, I've come about Laurel—don't put me off any longer.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(To distract from main issue)* Did you wear that scarf—on purpose to annoy me! What you wear is a language to me!

OLIVIA. *(Indignant)* That's an old battle—and an old method!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. When I've *told* you—in letter after letter.

OLIVIA. It's time I saw for myself, Mother! For nine years I shut the world out for her—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Rises)* Nine years of widowhood—might have been spent better! *(Above chair to Left of it)* I asked you *not* to come—but you *come!* I asked you to warn me—and you ignore it! And how can you wear beige with your skin that colour!

OLIVIA. Does it never become possible to talk as one grown woman to another!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. The gap's lessening! After fifty I haven't grown much wiser! *(Turns up Centre)* —but at least I know what the world has to have—though one cannot pass anything on! When I count my ambitions and what you have made of them!

OLIVIA. I did what you wanted—!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. But *how* you resisted me! I was burning for you to cut ice in the world—yet you had to be *driven* out to gaiety! I had to beat you into beauty! You had to be lit—as one lights a lantern! Decked—like a May-tree—

OLIVIA. Oh, can't we be three minutes together—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Down stage again)* Even your wedding dress you wore like wrapping paper! And where is it now—the success to which I pushed you? Laurel might have been a child, these four years, playing in a high walled park— *(Sits upper chair Left.)*

OLIVIA. —and I might have been a widow, with deer gazing at me! But life isn't like that! You had for me the standards of another age. The standards of—Pinkbell.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Shy, plain, obstinate, silent. But I won. I married you.

OLIVIA. *(Rises. To her)* But you won't meet the man *I* married—the man *I* love!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Love can be had any day! Success is far harder.

OLIVIA. You say that off the top of your head—where you wore your tiara!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. So you have found a tongue to speak with!

OLIVIA. I have found many things—and learned others. I have been warmed and praised and made to speak. Things come late to me. Love came late to me. Laurel was born in a kind of strange virginity. To have a child doesn't always make a mother. And you won't give up the image of me! Coltish—inept, dropping the china—picking up the pieces—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. It was I who picked up the pieces, Olivia.

OLIVIA. *(Passionately) I know. But I'm without her.*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. You are going to have another child!

OLIVIA. This child's the Unknown! Laurel's my daughter!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Who came to me—? *(Rises)* Who

ran to me—as an asylum from her mother! *(Crosses below her to armchair.)*

OLIVIA. *(Desperately)* Oh—you find such words to change things! You talk as if I were a light woman!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Sits)* No, you are not light. You have never been a light woman. You are a dark, a mute woman. If there was lightness in you it was I who lent it to you! And all that I did—gone!

OLIVIA. *(Steps to her)* Mother! Of a thousand thousand rows between you and me—and this not, I know, the last one—be on my side! Oh—for once be on my side! Help me.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. To what?

OLIVIA. Help me to find her! Help me to take her back!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Take her back! *(Lighting on an idea)* What, now?—Just now! When I've found such a companion for her! A woman of the highest character! Of vast experience! I have put myself out endlessly to find her!

OLIVIA. She can help you to prepare her. When I come back for her—

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. You mean before the baby's born? That will be an odd moment—won't it—to come for her!

OLIVIA. *(Passionately)* No! It's *why* I want her! Before I love the baby! *(Crossing to sofa)* I can't sleep! I can't rest. I seem to myself to have abandoned her! *(Sits. Faces down stage.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. To her own grandmother! I am not a baby-farmer or a head-mistress or the matron of an orphanage—

OLIVIA. *(Turns on sofa)* But she'll be a woman! And I'll never have known her!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. It suited you when you first married that I should have her. Laurel came to me of her own free will and I have turned my old age into a nursery for her.

OLIVIA. *(With indignation)* And God has given you a second chance to be a mother!

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Rises)* Olivia!—Oh, there is no

one who puts me in a passion like you do! *(Crossing over to Left chairs with indignation.)*

OLIVIA. *(Rises)* And no one who knows you so well. And knows today is hopeless—

MADRIGAL. *(Enters from the garden up Centre on a high wave of indignation—matching the crescendo of the other two. Menacing—accusing—pulling on a glove)* Mrs. St. Maugham—there must be some *mistake! This* is a chalk garden! Who has tried to grow rhododendrons in a *chalk garden?*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. *(Taken aback)* Rhododendrons? We put them in last autumn. But they're unhappy! *(Sits. Picks up catalogue.)*

MADRIGAL. *(Magnificent, stern)* They are *dying.* They are in pure lime. Not so much as a little leaf-mould! There is no evidence of palliation! *(To upstage table for bag.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. Wait—wait— Where are you going?

MADRIGAL. *(Over her shoulder—going)* They could have had compost! But the compost-heap is stone-cold! Nothing in the world has been done for them.

(A gay SCREAM is heard from the garden.)

OLIVIA. *(To up Right. Looks towards garden. To* MADRIGAL) Is that Laurel? She's screaming. What's the matter?

MADRIGAL. *(Scornful)* There is nothing the matter! She is dancing round the bonfire with the manservant.

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. I should have told you—this is Miss Madrigal. *(Opening catalogue)* Not so fast! I want to ask you—the bergamot—and the gunnera—

(OLIVIA *takes handbag from up stage table.)*

MADRIGAL. —won't thrive on chalk. *(Turns away to first step.)*

MRS. ST. MAUGHAM. There's an east slope I can grow nothing on.

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