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SF PERUSALS

ARCADIA

A Play

by Tom Stoppard

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

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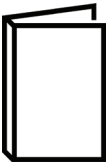
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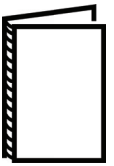
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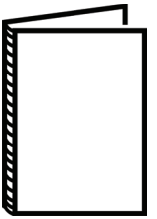
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Stoppard's most recent play, *The Hard Problem*, opened at the National Theatre last year. He wrote his first play, *Enter a Free Man*, whilst working as a journalist in Bristol. His plays include *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, *After Magritte*, *Jumpers*, *Travesties*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (a play for actors and orchestra written with André Previn), *Night and Day*, *The Real Thing*, *Hapgood*, *Arcadia*, *Indian Ink*, *The Invention Of Love*, *The Coast Of Utopia*, *Rock'n'Roll*, *Dogg's Our Pett*, *New-Found-Land*, *Dogg's Hamlet* and *Cahoot's Macbeth*. Adaptations include *Tango*, *Undiscovered Country*, *On The Razzle*, *Rough Crossing* and *Dalliance*. Translations include *The Seagull*, *Henry IV*, *Ivanov* and *The Cherry Orchard, The House Of Bernarda Alba* and *Largo Desolato*. He has written eight Evening Standard award-winning plays and five of his plays have won Tony awards.

Radio plays include *Darkside* (set to Pink Floyd's album, *The Dark Side of the Moon*), *On 'Dover Beach'*, *If You're Glad, I'll Be Frank*, *Albert's Bridge* (Italia Prize Winner), *M Is For Moon Among Other Things*, *The Dissolution Of Dominic Boot*, *Where Are They Now*?, *Artist Descending A Staircase*, *The Dog It Was That Died* and *In The Native State*.

Television adaptations include *Parade's End (BBC/HBO)*, *A Walk On The Water* (from Enter A Free Man), *Three Men In A Boat* and *The Dog It Was That Died*. Original television screenplays include *Another Moon Called Earth*, *A Separate Peace*, *Neutral Ground*, *Teeth* and *Professional Foul*, which won awards from BAFTA, the Broadcasting Press Guild and Squaring The Circle. He adapted his television dramatisation of Jerome K Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* for BBC Radio.

Screenplays include *Anna Karenina*, *Despair*, *The Romantic Englishwoman*, *The Human Factor*, *Brazil*, *Empire Of The Sun*, *The Russia House*, *Billy Bathgate*, *Poodle Springs*, and *Shakespeare In Love* (with Marc Norman), which won him an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, a Golden Globe and the Broadcast Film Critics and American Guild Awards for Best Screenplay 1998. He directed and wrote the screenplay for the film of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, which won the Prix d'Or at the Venice Film Festival 1990 for Best Film.

Tom Stoppard is a CBE and was knighted in 1997.

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ARCADIA

First presented at the Lyttelton Theatre, Royal National Theatre, on 13th April 1993, with the following cast of characters:

THOMASINA COVERLY	Emma Fielding
SEPTIMUS HODGE	Rufus Sewell
JELLABY	Allan Mitchell
EZRA CHATER	Derek Hutchinson
RICHARD NOAKES	Sidney Livingstone
LADY CROOM	Harriet Walter
CAPTAIN BRICE, RN	Graham Sinclair
HANNAH JARVIS	Felicity Kendal
CHLOË COVERLY	Harriet Harrison
BERNARD NIGHTINGALE	Bill Nighy
VALENTINE COVERLY	Samuel West
GUS COVERLY **AUGUSTUS COVERLY**	Timothy Matthew

Directed by Trevor Nunn
Designed by Mark Thompson
Lighting by Paul Pyant
Music by Jeremy Sams

CHARACTERS

THOMASINA COVERLY, aged thirteen, later sixteen
SEPTIMUS HODGE, her tutor, aged twenty-two, later twenty-five
JELLABY, a butler, middle-aged
EZRA CHATER, a poet, aged thirty-one
RICHARD NOAKES, a landscape architect, middle-aged
LADY CROOM, middle thirties
CAPTAIN BRICE, RN, middle thirties
HANNAH JARVIS, an author, late thirties
CHLOË COVERLY, aged eighteen
BERNARD NIGHTINGALE, a don, late thirties
VALENTINE COVERLY, aged twenty-five to thirty
GUS COVERLY, aged fifteen
AUGUSTUS COVERLY, aged fifteen

ACT I

Scene One

A room on the garden front of a very large country house in Derbyshire in April 1809.

Nowadays, the house would be called a stately home. The upstage wall is mainly tall, shapely, uncurtained windows, one or more of which work as doors. Nothing much need be said or seen of the exterior beyond. We come to learn that the house stands in the typical English park of the time. Perhaps we see an indication of this, perhaps only light and air and sky.

The room looks bare despite the large table which occupies the centre of it. The table, the straight-backed chairs and, the only other item of furniture, the architect's stand or reading stand, would all be collectable pieces now but here, on an uncarpeted wood floor, they have no more pretension than a schoolroom, which is indeed the main use of this room at this time. What elegance there is, is architectural, and nothing is impressive but the scale. There is a door in each of the side walls. These are closed, but one of the french windows is open to a bright but sunless morning.

There are two people, each busy with books and paper and pen and ink, separately occupied. The pupil is **THOMASINA COVERLY***, aged 13. The tutor is* **SEPTIMUS HODGE***, aged 22. Each has an open book. Hers is a slim mathematics primer. His is a handsome thick quarto, brand new, a vanity production, with little tapes to tie*

when the book is closed. His loose papers, etc., are kept in a stiff-backed portfolio which also ties up with tapes.

SEPTIMUS *has a tortoise which is sleepy enough to serve as a paperweight. Elsewhere on the table there is an old-fashioned theodolite and also some other books stacked up.*

THOMASINA Septimus, what is carnal embrace?

SEPTIMUS Carnal embrace is the practice of throwing one's arms around a side of beef.

THOMASINA Is that all?

SEPTIMUS No…a shoulder of mutton, a haunch of venison well hugged, an embrace of grouse…*caro, carnis*; feminine; flesh.

THOMASINA Is it a sin?

SEPTIMUS Not necessarily, my lady, but when carnal embrace is sinful it is a sin of the flesh, QED. We had *caro* in our Gallic Wars – "The Britons live on milk and meat" – *"lacte et carne vivunt"*. I am sorry that the seed fell on stony ground.

THOMASINA That was the sin of Onan, wasn't it, Septimus?

SEPTIMUS Yes. He was giving his brother's wife a Latin lesson and she was hardly the wiser after it than before. I thought you were finding a proof for Fermat's last theorem.

THOMASINA It is very difficult, Septimus. You will have to show me how.

SEPTIMUS If I knew how, there would be no need to ask *you*. Fermat's last theorem has kept people busy for a hundred and fifty years, and I hoped it would keep *you* busy long enough for me to read Mr Chater's poem in praise of love with only the distraction of its own absurdities.

THOMASINA Our Mr Chater has written a poem?

SEPTIMUS He believes he has written a poem, yes. I can see that there might be more carnality in your algebra than in Mr Chater's "Couch of Eros".

THOMASINA Oh, it was not my algebra. I heard Jellaby telling Cook that Mrs Chater was discovered in carnal embrace in the gazebo.

SEPTIMUS *(after a pause)* Really? With whom, did Jellaby happen to say?

THOMASINA *considers this with a puzzled frown.*

THOMASINA What do you mean, with whom?

SEPTIMUS With what? Exactly so. The idea is absurd. Where did this story come from?

THOMASINA Mr Noakes.

SEPTIMUS Mr Noakes!

THOMASINA Papa's landskip gardener. He was taking bearings in the garden when he saw – through his spyglass – Mrs Chater in the gazebo in carnal embrace.

SEPTIMUS And do you mean to tell me that Mr Noakes told the butler?

THOMASINA No. Mr Noakes told Mr Chater. Jellaby was told by the groom, who overheard Mr Noakes telling Mr Chater, in the stable yard.

SEPTIMUS Mr Chater being engaged in closing the stable door.

THOMASINA What do you mean, Septimus?

SEPTIMUS So, thus far, the only people who know about this are Mr Noakes the landskip gardener, the groom, the butler, the cook and, of course, Mrs Chater's husband, the poet.

THOMASINA And Arthur who was cleaning the silver, and the bootboy. And now you.

SEPTIMUS Of course. What else did he say?

THOMASINA Mr Noakes?

SEPTIMUS No, not Mr Noakes. Jellaby. You heard Jellaby telling the cook.

THOMASINA Cook hushed him almost as soon as he started. Jellaby did not see that I was being allowed to finish yesterday's upstairs' rabbit pie before I came to my lesson. I think you have not been candid with me, Septimus. A gazebo is not, after all, a meat larder.

SEPTIMUS I never said my definition was complete.

THOMASINA Is carnal embrace kissing?

SEPTIMUS Yes.

THOMASINA And throwing one's arms around Mrs Chater?

SEPTIMUS Yes. Now, Fermat's last theorem—

THOMASINA I thought as much. I hope you are ashamed.

SEPTIMUS I, my lady?

THOMASINA If *you* do not teach me the true meaning of things, who will?

SEPTIMUS Ah. Yes, I am ashamed. Carnal embrace is sexual congress, which is the insertion of the male genital organ into the female genital organ for purposes of procreation and pleasure. Fermat's last theorem, by contrast, asserts that when x, y and z are whole numbers each raised to power of n, the sum of the first two can never equal the third when n is greater than 2.

Pause.

THOMASINA Eurghhh!

SEPTIMUS Nevertheless, that is the theorem.

THOMASINA It is disgusting and incomprehensible. Now when I am grown to practise it myself I shall never do so without thinking of you.

SEPTIMUS Thank you very much, my lady. Was Mrs Chater down this morning?

THOMASINA No. Tell me more about sexual congress.

SEPTIMUS There is nothing more to be said about sexual congress.

THOMASINA Is it the same as love?

SEPTIMUS Oh no, it is much nicer than that.

One of the side doors leads to the music room. It is the other side door which now opens to admit **JELLABY**, *the butler.*

I am teaching, Jellaby.

JELLABY Beg your pardon, Mr Hodge, Mr Chater said it was urgent you receive his letter.

SEPTIMUS Oh very well. *(He takes the letter)* Thank you. *(And to dismiss* **JELLABY***)* Thank you.

JELLABY *(holding his ground)* Mr Chater asked me to bring him your answer.

SEPTIMUS My answer? *(He opens the letter. There is no envelope as such, but there is a "cover" which, folded and sealed, does the same service. He tosses the cover negligently aside and reads)* Well, my answer is that as is my custom and my duty to his lordship I am engaged until a quarter to twelve in the education of his daughter. When I am done, and if Mr Chater is still there, I will be happy to wait upon him in – *(He checks the letter)* – in the gunroom.

JELLABY I will tell him so, thank you sir.

SEPTIMUS *folds the letter and places it between the pages of "The Couch of Eros".*

THOMASINA What is for dinner, Jellaby?

JELLABY Boiled ham and cabbages, my lady, and a rice pudding.

THOMASINA Oh, goody.

JELLABY *leaves.*

SEPTIMUS Well, so much for Mr Noakes. He puts himself forward as a gentleman, a philosopher of the picturesque, a visionary who can move mountains and cause lakes, but in the scheme of the garden he is as the serpent.

THOMASINA When you stir your rice pudding, Septimus, the spoonful of jam spreads itself round making red trails like the picture of a meteor in my astronomical atlas. But if you stir backwards, the jam will not come together again. Indeed, the pudding does not notice and continues to turn pink just as before. Do you think this is odd?

SEPTIMUS No.

THOMASINA Well, I do. You cannot stir things apart.

SEPTIMUS No more you can, time must needs run backward, and since it will not, we must stir our way onward mixing as we go, disorder out of disorder into disorder until pink is complete, unchanging and unchangeable, and we are done with it for ever. This is known as free will or self-determination. *(He picks up the tortoise and moves it a few inches as though it had strayed, on top of some loose papers, and admonishes it)* Sit!

THOMASINA Septimus, do you think God is a Newtonian?

SEPTIMUS An Etonian? Almost certainly, I'm afraid. We must ask your brother to make it his first enquiry.

THOMASINA No, Septimus, a Newtonian. Septimus! Am I the first person to have thought of this?

SEPTIMUS No.

THOMASINA I have not said yet.

SEPTIMUS "If everything from the furthest planet to the smallest atom of our brain acts according to Newton's law of motion, what becomes of free will?"

THOMASINA No.

SEPTIMUS God's will.

THOMASINA No.

SEPTIMUS Sin.

THOMASINA *(derisively)* No!

SEPTIMUS Very well.

THOMASINA If you could stop every atom in its position and direction, and if your mind could comprehend all the actions thus suspended, then if you were really, *really* good at algebra you could write the formula for all the future; and although nobody can be so clever as to do it, the formula must exist just as if one could.

SEPTIMUS *(after a pause)* Yes. *(Pause)* Yes, as far as I know, you are the first person to have thought of this. *(Pause. With an effort)* In the margin of his copy of "Arithmetica", Fermat wrote that he had discovered a wonderful proof of his theorem but, the margin being too narrow for his purpose, did not have room to write it down. The note was found after his death, and from that day to this—

THOMASINA Oh! I see now! The answer is perfectly obvious.

SEPTIMUS This time you may have overreached yourself.

The door is opened, somewhat violently. **CHATER** *enters.*

Mr Chater! Perhaps my message miscarried. I will be at liberty at a quarter to twelve, if that is convenient.

CHATER It is not convenient, sir. My business will not wait.

SEPTIMUS Then I suppose you have Lord Croom's opinion that your business is more important than his daughter's lesson.

CHATER I do not, but, if you like, I will ask his lordship to settle the point.

SEPTIMUS *(after a pause)* My lady, take Fermat into the music room. There will be an extra spoonful of jam if you find his proof.

THOMASINA There is no proof, Septimus. The thing that is perfectly obvious is that the note in the margin was a joke to make you all mad.

THOMASINA *leaves.*

SEPTIMUS Now, sir, what is this business that cannot wait?

CHATER I think you know it, sir. You have insulted my wife.

SEPTIMUS Insulted her? That would deny my nature, my conduct, and the admiration in which I hold Mrs Chater.

CHATER I have heard of your admiration, sir! You insulted my wife in the gazebo yesterday evening!

SEPTIMUS You are mistaken. I made love to your wife in the gazebo. She asked me to meet her there, I have her note somewhere, I dare say I could find it for you, and if someone is putting it about that I did not turn up, by God, sir, it is a slander.

CHATER You damned lecher! You would drag down a lady's reputation to make a refuge for your cowardice. It will not do! I am calling you out!

SEPTIMUS Chater! Chater, Chater, Chater! My dear friend!

CHATER You dare to call me that. I demand satisfaction!

SEPTIMUS Mrs Chater demanded satisfaction and now you are demanding satisfaction. I cannot spend my time day and night satisfying the demands of the Chater family. As for your wife's reputation, it stands where it ever stood.

CHATER You blackguard!

SEPTIMUS I assure you. Mrs Chater is charming and spirited, with a pleasing voice and a dainty step, she is the epitome of all the qualities society applauds in her sex – and yet her chief renown is for a readiness that keeps her in a state of

tropical humidity as would grow orchids in her drawers in January.

CHATER Damn you, Hodge, I will not listen to this! Will you fight or not?

SEPTIMUS *(definitively)* Not! There are no more than two or three poets of the first rank now living, and I will not shoot one of them dead over a perpendicular poke in a gazebo with a woman whose reputation could not be adequately defended with a platoon of musketry deployed by rota.

CHATER Ha! You say so! Who are the others? In your opinion? – no – no! – this goes very ill, Hodge. I will not be flattered out of my course. You say so, do you?

SEPTIMUS I do. And I would say the same to Milton were he not already dead. Not the part about his wife, of course—

CHATER But among the living? Mr Southey?

SEPTIMUS Southey I would have shot on sight.

CHATER *(shaking his head sadly)* Yes, he has fallen off. I admired "Thalaba" *quite*, but "Madoc", *(he chuckles)* oh dear me! —but we are straying from the business here – you took advantage of Mrs Chater, and if that were not bad enough, it appears every stableboy and scullery maid on the strength—

SEPTIMUS Damn me! Have you not listened to a word I said?

CHATER I have heard you, sir, and I will not deny I welcome your regard, God knows one is little appreciated if one stands outside the coterie of hacks and placemen who surround Jeffrey and the "Edinburgh"—

SEPTIMUS My dear Chater, they judge a poet by the seating plan of Lord Holland's table!

CHATER By heaven, you are right! And I would very much like to know the name of the scoundrel who slandered my verse drama "The Maid of Turkey" in the "Piccadilly Recreation", too!

SEPTIMUS "The Maid of Turkey"! I have it by my bedside! When I cannot sleep I take up "The Maid of Turkey" like an old friend!

CHATER *(gratified)* There you are! And the scoundrel wrote he would not give it to his dog for dinner were it covered in bread sauce and stuffed with chestnuts. When Mrs Chater read that, she wept, sir, and would not give herself to me for a fortnight – which recalls me to my purpose—

SEPTIMUS The new poem, however, will make your name perpetual—

CHATER Whether it do or not—

SEPTIMUS It is not a question, sir. No coterie can oppose the acclamation of the reading public. "The Couch of Eros" will take the town.

CHATER Is that your estimation?

SEPTIMUS It is my intent.

CHATER Is it, is it? Well, well! I do not understand you.

SEPTIMUS You see I have an early copy – sent to me for review. I say review, but I speak of an extensive appreciation of your gifts and your rightful place in English literature.

CHATER Well, I must say. That is certainly... You have written it?

SEPTIMUS *(crisply)* Not yet.

CHATER Ah. And how long does...?

SEPTIMUS To be done right, it first requires a careful re-reading of your book, of both your books, several readings, together with outlying works for an exhibition of deference or disdain as the case merits. I make notes, of course, I order my thoughts, and finally, when all is ready and I am *calm in my mind*...

CHATER *(shrewdly)* Did Mrs Chater know of this before she – before you—

SEPTIMUS I think she very likely did.

CHATER *(triumphantly)* There is nothing that woman would not do for me! Now you have an insight to her character. Yes, by God, she is a wife to me, sir!

SEPTIMUS For that alone, I would not make her a widow.

CHATER Captain Brice once made the same observation!

SEPTIMUS Captain Brice did?

CHATER Mr Hodge, allow me to inscribe your copy in happy anticipation. Lady Thomasina's pen will serve us.

SEPTIMUS Your connection with Lord and Lady Croom you owe to your fighting her ladyship's brother?

CHATER No! It was all nonsense, sir – a canard! But a fortunate mistake, sir. It brought me the patronage of a captain of His Majesty's Navy and the brother of a countess. I do not think Mr Walter Scott can say as much, and here I am, a respected guest at Sidley Park.

SEPTIMUS Well, sir, you can say you have received satisfaction.

CHATER *is already inscribing the book, using the pen and ink-pot on the table.*

NOAKES *enters through the door used by* **CHATER**. *He carries rolled-up plans.*

CHATER, *inscribing, ignores* **NOAKES**. **NOAKES** *on seeing the occupants, panics.*

NOAKES Oh!

SEPTIMUS Ah, Mr Noakes! —my muddy-mettled rascal! Where's your spyglass?

NOAKES I beg your leave – I thought her ladyship – excuse me—

He is beating an embarrassed retreat when he becomes rooted by **CHATER***'s voice.* **CHATER** *reads his inscription in ringing tones.*

CHATER "To my friend Septimus Hodge, who stood up and gave his best on behalf of the Author – Ezra Chater, at Sidley Park, Derbyshire, April 10th, 1809." *(Giving the book to* **SEPTIMUS***)* There, sir – something to show your grandchildren!

SEPTIMUS This is more than I deserve, this is handsome, what do you say, Noakes?

They are interrupted by the appearance, outside the windows, of **LADY CROOM** *and* **CAPTAIN EDWARD BRICE, RN**. *Her first words arrive through the open door.*

LADY CROOM Oh, no! Not the gazebo!

She enters, followed by Brice who carries a leatherbound sketch book.

Mr Noakes! What is this I hear?

BRICE Not only the gazebo, but the boat-house, the Chinese bridge, the shrubbery—

CHATER By God, sir! Not possible!

BRICE Mr Noakes will have it so.

SEPTIMUS Mr Noakes, this is monstrous!

LADY CROOM I am glad to hear it from *you*, Mr Hodge.

THOMASINA *opens the door from the music room.*

THOMASINA May I return now?

SEPTIMUS *(attempting to close the door)* Not just yet—

LADY CROOM Yes, let her stay. A lesson in folly is worth two in wisdom.

BRICE *takes the sketch book to the reading stand, where he lays it open. The sketch book is the work of* **MR NOAKES**, *who is obviously an admirer of Humphry Repton's "Red Books". The pages, drawn in watercolours, show "before" and "after" views of the landscape, and the pages are cunningly cut to allow the latter to be*

superimposed over portions of the former, though Repton did it the other way round.

BRICE Is Sidley Park to be an Englishman's garden or the haunt of Corsican brigands?

SEPTIMUS Let us not hyperbolize, sir.

BRICE It is rape, sir!

NOAKES *(defending himself)* It is the modern style.

CHATER *(under the same misapprehension as* **SEPTIMUS***)* Regrettable, of course, but so it is.

THOMASINA *has gone to examine the sketch book.*

LADY CROOM Mr Chater, you show too much submission. Mr Hodge, I appeal to you.

SEPTIMUS Madam, I regret the gazebo, I sincerely regret the gazebo – and the boat-house up to a point – but the Chinese bridge, fantasy! —and the shrubbery I reject with contempt! Mr Chater! —would you take the word of a jumped-up jobbing gardener who sees carnal embrace in every nook and cranny of the landskip!

THOMASINA Septimus, they are not speaking of carnal embrace, are you, Mama?

LADY CROOM Certainly not. What do you know of carnal embrace?

THOMASINA Everything, thanks to Septimus. In my opinion, Mr Noakes's scheme for the garden is perfect. It is a Salvator!

LADY CROOM What does she mean?

NOAKES *(answering the wrong question)* Salvator Rosa, your ladyship, the painter. He is indeed the very exemplar of the picturesque style.

BRICE Hodge, what is this?

SEPTIMUS She speaks from innocence not from experience.

BRICE You call it innocence? Has he ruined you, child?

Pause.

SEPTIMUS Answer your uncle!

THOMASINA *(to* **SEPTIMUS***)* How is a ruined child different from a ruined castle?

SEPTIMUS On such questions I defer to Mr Noakes.

NOAKES *(out of his depth)* A ruined castle is picturesque, certainly.

SEPTIMUS That is the main difference. *(To* **BRICE***)* I teach the classical authors. If I do not elucidate their meaning, who will?

BRICE As her tutor you have a duty to keep her in ignorance.

LADY CROOM Do not dabble in paradox, Edward, it puts you in danger of fortuitous wit. Thomasina, wait in your bedroom.

THOMASINA *(retiring)* Yes, Mama. I did not intend to get you into trouble, Septimus. I am very sorry for it. It is plain that there are some things a girl is allowed to understand, and these include the whole of algebra, but there are others, such as embracing a side of beef, that must be kept from her until she is old enough to have a carcass of her own.

LADY CROOM One moment.

BRICE What is she talking about?

LADY CROOM Meat.

BRICE Meat?

LADY CROOM Thomasina, you had better remain. Your knowledge of the picturesque obviously exceeds anything the rest of us can offer. Mr Hodge, ignorance should be like an empty vessel waiting to be filled at the well of truth – not a cabinet of vulgar curios. Mr Noakes – now at last it is your turn –

NOAKES Thank you, your ladyship—

LADY CROOM Your drawing is a very wonderful transformation. I would not have recognized my own garden but for your ingenious book – is it not? —look! Here is the Park as it appears to us now, and here as it might be when Mr Noakes has done with it. Where there is the familiar pastoral refinement of an Englishman's garden, here is an eruption of gloomy forest and towering crag, of ruins where there was never a house, of water dashing against rocks where there was neither spring nor a stone I could not throw the length of a cricket pitch. My hyacinth dell is become a haunt for hobgoblins, my Chinese bridge, which I am assured is superior to the one at Kew, and for all I know at Peking, is usurped by a fallen obelisk overgrown with briars—

NOAKES *(bleating)* Lord Little has one very similar—

LADY CROOM I cannot relieve Lord Little's misfortunes by adding to my own. Pray, what is this rustic hovel that presumes to superpose itself on my gazebo?

NOAKES That is the hermitage, madam.

LADY CROOM The hermitage? I am bewildered.

BRICE It is all irregular, Mr Noakes.

NOAKES It is, sir. Irregularity is one of the chiefest principles of the picturesque style—

LADY CROOM But Sidley Park is already a picture, and a most amiable picture too. The slopes are green and gentle. The trees are companionably grouped at intervals that show them to advantage. The rill is a serpentine ribbon unwound from the lake peaceably contained by meadows on which the right amount of sheep are tastefully arranged – in short, it is nature as God intended, and I can say with the painter, *"Et in Arcadia ego*!" "Here I am in Arcadia", Thomasina.

THOMASINA Yes, Mama, if you would have it so.

LADY CROOM Is she correcting my taste or my translation?

THOMASINA Neither are beyond correction, Mama, but it was your geography caused the doubt.

LADY CROOM Something has occurred with the girl since I saw her last, and surely that was yesterday. How old are you this morning?

THOMASINA Thirteen years and ten months, Mama.

LADY CROOM Thirteen years and ten months. She is not due to be pert for six months at the earliest, or to have notions of taste for much longer. Mr Hodge, I hold you accountable. Mr Noakes, back to you.

NOAKES Thank you, my—

LADY CROOM You have been reading too many novels by Mrs Radcliffe, that is my opinion. This is a garden for "The Castle of Otranto" or "The Mysteries of Udolpho"—

CHATER "The Castle of Otranto", my lady, is by Horace Walpole.

NOAKES *(thrilled)* Mr Walpole the gardener?!

LADY CROOM Mr Chater, you are a welcome guest at Sidley Park but while you are one, "The Castle of Otranto" was written by whomsoever I say it was, otherwise what is the point of being a guest or having one?

The distant popping of guns is heard.

Well, the guns have reached the brow – I will speak to his lordship on the subject, and we will see by and by – *(She stands looking out)* Ah! —your friend has got down a pigeon, Mr Hodge. *(Calling out)* Bravo, sir!

SEPTIMUS The pigeon, I am sure, fell to your husband or to your son, your ladyship – my schoolfriend was never a sportsman.

BRICE *(looking out)* Yes, to Augustus! —bravo, lad!

LADY CROOM *(outside)* Well, come along! Where are my troops?

LADY CROOM *goes.* **BRICE, NOAKES** *and* **CHATER** *obediently follow her,* **CHATER** *making a detour to shake* **SEPTIMUS***'s hand fervently.*

CHATER My dear Mr Hodge!

CHATER *leaves also.*

The guns are heard again, a little closer.

THOMASINA Pop, pop, pop... I have grown up in the sound of guns like the child of a siege. Pigeons and rooks in the close season, grouse on the heights from August, and the pheasants to follow—partridge, snipe, woodcock, and teal – pop – pop – pop, and the culling of the herd. Papa has no need of the recording angel, his life is written in the game book.

SEPTIMUS A calendar of slaughter. "Even in Arcadia, there am I!"

THOMASINA Oh, phooey to Death! *(She dips a pen and takes it to the reading stand)* I will put in a hermit, for what is a hermitage without a hermit? Are you in love with my mother, Septimus?

SEPTIMUS You must not be cleverer than your elders. It is not polite.

THOMASINA Am I cleverer?

SEPTIMUS Yes. Much.

THOMASINA Well, I am sorry, Septimus. *(She pauses in her drawing and produces a small envelope from her pocket)* Mrs Chater came to the music room with a note for you. She said it was of scant importance, and that therefore I should carry it to you with the utmost safety, urgency and discretion. Does carnal embrace addle the brain?

SEPTIMUS *(taking the letter)* Invariably. Thank you. That is enough education for today.

THOMASINA There. I have made him like the Baptist in the wilderness.

SEPTIMUS How picturesque.

LADY CROOM *(offstage, calling distantly)* Thomasina!

THOMASINA *runs off into the garden, cheerfully, an uncomplicated girl.*

SEPTIMUS *opens* **MRS CHATER***'s note. He crumples the envelope and throws it away. He reads the note, folds it and inserts it into the pages of "The Couch of Eros".*

Scene Two

The lights come up on the same room, on the same sort of morning, in the present day, as is instantly clear from the appearance of **HANNAH JARVIS***; and from nothing else.*

Something needs to be said about this. The action of the play shuttles back and forth between the early nineteenth century and the present day, always in this same room. Both periods must share the state of the room, without the additions and subtractions which would normally be expected. The general appearance of the room should offend neither period. In the case of props – books, paper, flowers, etc., there is no absolute need to remove the evidence of one period to make way for another. However, books, etc., used in both periods should exist in both old and new versions. The landscape outside, we are told, has undergone changes. Again, what we see should neither change nor contradict.

On the above principle, the ink and pens etc., of the first scene can remain. Books and papers associated with **HANNAH***'s research, in Scene Two, can have been on the table from the beginning of the play. And so on. During the course of the play the table collects this and that, and where an object from one scene would be an anachronism in another (say a coffee mug) it is simply deemed to have become invisible. By the end of the play the table has collected an inventory of objects.*

HANNAH *is leafing through the pages of* **MR NOAKES***'s sketch book. Also to hand, opened and closed, are a number of small volumes – like diaries (these turn out to be* **LADY CROOM***'s "garden books"). After a few moments,* **HANNAH** *takes the sketch book to the windows, comparing the view with what has been drawn, and then she replaces the sketch book on the reading stand.*

She wears nothing frivolous. Her shoes are suitable for the garden, which is where she goes now after picking up the theodolite from the table.

The room is empty for a few moments.

One of the other doors opens to admit **CHLOË** *and* **BERNARD**. *She is the daughter of the house and is dressed casually.* **BERNARD**, *the visitor, wears a suit and tie. His tendency is to dress flamboyantly, but he has damped it down for the occasion, slightly. A peacock-coloured display handkerchief boils over in his breast pocket. He carries a capacious leather bag which serves as a briefcase.*

CHLOË Oh! Well, she *was* here...

BERNARD Ah...the french window...

CHLOË Yes. Hang on.

CHLOË *steps out through the garden door and disappears from view.*

BERNARD *hangs on.*

The second door opens and **VALENTINE** *looks in.*

VALENTINE Sod.

VALENTINE *goes out again, closing the door.* **CHLOË** *returns, carrying a pair of rubber boots. She comes in and sits down and starts exchanging her shoes for the boots, while she talks.*

CHLOË The best thing is, you wait here, save you tramping around. She spends a good deal of time in the garden, as you may imagine.

BERNARD Yes. Why?

CHLOË Well, she's writing a history of the garden, didn't you know?

BERNARD No, I knew she was working on the Croom papers but...

CHLOË Well, it's not exactly a history of the garden either. I'll let Hannah explain it. The trench you nearly drove into is all to do with it. I was going to say make yourself comfortable but that's hardly possible, everything's been cleared out, it's *en route* to the nearest lavatory.

BERNARD Everything is?

CHLOË No, this room is. They drew the line at chemical "Ladies".

BERNARD Yes, I see. Did you say Hannah?

CHLOË Hannah, yes. Will you be all right? *(She stands up wearing the boots)* I won't be... *(But she has lost him)* Mr Nightingale?

BERNARD *(waking up)* Yes. Thank you. Miss Jarvis is Hannah Jarvis the author?

CHLOË Yes. Have you read her book?

BERNARD Oh, yes. Yes.

CHLOË I bet she's in the hermitage, can't see from here with the marquee...

BERNARD Are you having a garden party?

CHLOË A dance for the district, our annual dressing up and general drunkenness. The wrinklies won't have it in the house, there was a teapot we once had to bag back from Christie's in the nick of time, so anything that can be destroyed, stolen or vomited on has been tactfully removed; tactlessly, I should say— *(She is about to leave)*

BERNARD Um – look – would you tell her – would you mind not mentioning my name just yet?

CHLOË Oh. All right.

BERNARD *(smiling)* More fun to surprise her. Would you mind?

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