The Secret Garden

by pixiespirits

Summary

(Basically just the Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett with the boys and a few changes)

This timeless classic is a poignant tale of Harry, a lonely orphaned boy sent to a mansion at the edge of a vast lonely moor. At first, he is frightened by this gloomy place until he meets a local boy, Niall, who's earned the trust of the moor's wild animals, the invalid Louis, an unhappy boy terrified of life, and a mysterious, abandoned garden...

Notes

this is honestly pretty much just the secret garden with a dialogue changes and a few character changes.
When Harold Styles was sent to Malik Manor to live with his uncle everybody said he was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too. He had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin dark curls and a sour expression. Her hair was brown and her face was yellow because he had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another. His father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself, and his mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with people.

She had not wanted a little boy at all, and when Harry was born she handed him over to the care of an nursemaid, who was made to understand that if she wished to please her, she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. So when he was a sickly, fretful, ugly, little baby he was kept out of the way, and when he became a sickly, fretful, toddling thing he was kept out of the way also.

He never remembered seeing familiarly anything but the dark faces of his nursemaid and the other native servants, and as they always obeyed him and gave him his way in everything, because the his mother would be angry if she was disturbed by his crying. By the time he was six years old he was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived.

The young English governess who came to teach him to read and write disliked him so much that he gave up her place in three months, and when other governesses came to try to fill it they always went away in a shorter time than the first one. So if Harry had not chosen to really want to know how to read books he would never have learned his letters at all.

One frightfully hot morning, when he was about nine years old, he awakened feeling very cross, and he became crosser still when he saw that the servant who stood by her bedside was not his nursemaid.

"Why did you come?" He said to the strange woman. "I will not let you stay. Send my nursemaid to me."

The woman looked frightened, but she only stammered that the nursemaid could not come and when Harry threw himself into a passion and whined and cried, she looked only more frightened and repeated that it was not possible for the nursemaid to come.

There was something mysterious in the air that morning. Nothing was done in its regular order and several of the native servants seemed missing, while those whom Harry saw slunk or hurried about with ashy and scared faces. But no one would tell him anything and his nursemaid did not come. He was actually left alone as the morning went on, and at last he
wandered out into the garden and began to play by herself under a tree near the veranda.

He pretended that he was making a flower-bed, and he stuck big scarlet hibiscus blossoms into little heaps of earth, all the time growing more and more angry and muttering to himself the things he would say and the names he would call the servant when she returned.

"Pig! Pig! Daughter of Pigs!" he grumbled, because to call a native a pig is the worst insult of all.

He was grinding his teeth and saying this over and over again when he heard his mother come out on the veranda with someone. She was with a fair young man and they stood talking together in low, strange voices. Harry knew the young man who looked like a boy. He had heard that he was a very young officer who had just come from England. The child stared at him, but he stared mostly at his mother. He always did this when he had a chance to see her, because Mistress Styles --Harry used to call her that oftener than anything else-- was such a tall, slim, pretty person and wore such lovely clothes. Her hair was like curly silk and she had a delicate little nose which seemed to be disdaining things, and she had large laughing eyes. All her clothes were thin and floating, and Harry said they were "full of lace." They looked fuller of lace than ever this morning, but her eyes were not laughing at all. They were large and scared and lifted imploringly to the fair boy officer's face.

"Is it so very bad? Oh, is it?" Harry heard her say.

"Awfully," the young man answered in a trembling voice. "Awfully, Mrs. Styles. You ought to have gone to the hills two weeks ago."

Mistress Styles wrung her hands. "Oh, I know I ought!" She cried. "I only stayed to go to that silly dinner party. What a fool I was!"

At that very moment such a loud sound of wailing broke out from the servants' quarters that he clutched the young man's arm, and Harry stood shivering from head to foot. The wailing grew wilder and wilder.

"What is it? What is it?" She gasped.

"Someone has died," answered the boy officer. "You did not say it had broken out among your servants."
"I did not know!" the Mistress Styles cried. "Come with me! Come with me!" And she turned and ran into the house.

After that, appalling things happened, and the mysteriousness of the morning was explained to Harry. The cholera had broken out in its most fatal form and people were dying like flies. His nursemaid had been taken ill in the night, and it was because she had just died that the servants had wailed in the huts. Before the next day three other servants were dead and others had run away in terror. There was panic on every side, and dying people in all the bungalows.

During the confusion and bewilderment of the second day Harry hid himself in the nursery and was forgotten by everyone. Nobody thought of him, nobody wanted him, and strange things happened of which he knew nothing. Harry alternately cried and slept through the hours. He only knew that people were ill and that she heard mysterious and frightening sounds.

Once he crept into the dining-room and found it empty, though a partly finished meal was on the table and chairs and plates looked as if they had been hastily pushed back when the diners rose suddenly for some reason. The child ate some fruit and biscuits, and being thirsty he drank a glass of wine which stood nearly filled. It was sweet, but he did not know how strong it was. Very soon it made him intensely drowsy, and he went back to her nursery and shut himself in again, frightened by cries he heard in the huts and by the hurrying sound of feet. The wine made him so sleepy that he could scarcely keep his eyes open and he lay down on his bed and knew nothing more for a long time.

Many things happened during the hours in which he slept so heavily, but he was not disturbed by the wails and the sound of things being carried in and out of the bungalow.

When he awakened he lay and stared at the wall. The house was perfectly still. He had never known it to be so silent before. He heard neither voices nor footsteps, and wondered if everybody had got well of the cholera and all the trouble was over. He wondered also who would take care of him now his nursemaid was dead.

There would be a new nursemaid, and perhaps she would know some new stories. Harry had been rather tired of the old ones. He did not cry because his nurse had died. He was not an affectionate child and had never cared much for any one. The noise and hurrying about and wailing over the cholera had frightened him, and she had been angry because no one seemed to remember that he was alive. Everyone was too panic-stricken to think of a little boy no one was fond of. When people had the cholera it seemed that they remembered nothing but themselves. But if everyone had got well again, surely someone would remember and come to look for him.

But no one came, and as he lay waiting the house seemed to grow more and more
silent. He heard something rustling on the matting and when he looked down he saw a little snake gliding along and watching him with eyes like jewels. He was not frightened, because he was a harmless little thing who would not hurt him and he seemed in a hurry to get out of the room. He slipped under the door as he watched him.

"How odd and quiet it is," he muttered to himself. "It sounds as if there were no one in the house but me and the snake."

Almost the next minute he heard footsteps in the compound, and then on the veranda. They were men's footsteps, and the men entered the bungalow and talked in low voices. No one went to meet or speak to them and they seemed to open doors and look into rooms.

"What desolation!" He heard one voice say. "That pretty, pretty woman! I suppose the child, too. I heard there was a child, though no one ever saw him."

Harry was standing in the middle of the nursery when they opened the door a few minutes later. He looked an ugly, cross, little thing and was frowning because he was beginning to be hungry and feel disgracefully neglected. The first man who came in was a large officer he had once seen talking to her father. He looked tired and troubled, but when he saw him he was so startled that he almost jumped back.

"Barney!" he cried out. "There is a child here! A child alone! In a place like this! Mercy on us, who is he?"

"I am Harold Styles" the little boy said, drawing himself up stiffly. He thought the man was very rude to call his father's bungalow "A place like this!"

"I fell asleep when everyone had the cholera and I have only just woken up. Why does nobody come?"

"It is the child no one ever saw!" exclaimed the man, turning to his companions. "He has actually been forgotten!"

"Why was I forgotten?" Harry said, stamping his foot. "Why does nobody come?"

The young man whose name was Barney looked at him very sadly. Harry even thought he saw him wink his eyes as if to wink tears away.
"Poor little boy!" he said. "There is nobody left to come."

It was in that strange and sudden way that Harry found out that he had neither father nor mother left; that they had died and been carried away in the night, and that the few native servants who had not died also had left the house as quickly as they could get out of it, none of them even remembering that there was a Mistress Styles. That was why the place was so quiet. It was true that there was no one in the bungalow but himself and the little rustling snake.
Chapter 2

Harry had liked to look at his mother from a distance and he had thought she was very pretty, but as he knew very little of her he could scarcely have been expected to love her or to miss her very much when she was gone. He did not miss her at all, in fact, and as he was a self-absorbed child he gave her entire thought to herself, as he had always done. If he had been older he would no doubt have been very anxious at being left alone in the world, but he was very young, and as he had always been taken care of, he supposed he always would be. What he thought was that he would like to know if he was going to nice people, who would be polite to him and give him his way as his nursemaid and the other native servants had done.

He knew that he was not going to stay at the English clergyman's house where he was taken at first. He did not want to stay. The English clergyman was poor and he had five children nearly all the same age and they wore shabby clothes and were always quarreling and snatching toys from each other. Harry hated their untidy bungalow and was so disagreeable to them that after the first day or two nobody would play with him. By the second day they had given him a nickname which made her furious.

It was Basil who thought of it first. Basil was a little boy with impudent blue eyes and a turned-up nose, and Harry hated him. He was playing by herself under a tree, just as he had been playing the day the cholera broke out. He was making heaps of earth and paths for a garden and Basil came and stood near to watch him. Presently he got rather interested and suddenly made a suggestion.

"Why don't you put a heap of stones there and pretend it is a rockery?" He said. "There in the middle," and he leaned over him to point.

"Go away!" cried Harry. "I don't want to! Go away!"

For a moment Basil looked angry, and then he began to tease. He was always teasing his sisters. He danced round and round him and made faces and sang and laughed.

"Mister Harry, quite contrary,  
How does your garden grow?  
With silver bells, and cockle shells,  
And marigolds all in a row."

He sang it until the other children heard and laughed, too; and the crosser Harry got, the more they sang "Mister Harry, quite contrary"; and after that as long as he stayed with them they called him "Mister Harry Quite Contrary" when they spoke of him to each other, and often when they spoke to him.

"You are going to be sent home," Basil said to him, "at the end of the week. And we're glad of it."
"I am glad of it, too," answered Harry. "Where is home?"

"He doesn't know where home is!" said Basil, with seven-year-old scorn. "It's England, of course. Our grandmama lives there and our sister Mabel was sent to her last year. You are not going to your grandmama. You have none. You are going to your uncle. His name is Mr. Zayn Malik."

"I don't know anything about him," snapped Harry.

"I know you don't," Basil answered. "You don't know anything. Riches like you never do. I heard father and mother talking about him. He lives in a great, big, desolate old house in the country and no one goes near him. He's so cross he won't let them, and they wouldn't come if he would let them. He's a hunchback, and he's horrid."

"I don't believe you," said Harry; and he turned his back and stuck his fingers in his ears, because he would not listen any more.

But he thought over it a great deal afterward; and when Mrs. Crawford told him that night that he was going to sail away to England in a few days and go to her uncle, Mr. Malik who lived at Malik Manor, he looked so stony and stubbornly uninterested that they did not know what to think about him. They tried to be kind to him, but he only turned her face away when Mrs. Crawford attempted to kiss him, and held himself stiffly when Mr. Crawford patted him shoulder.

"He is such a plain child," Mrs. Crawford said pityingly, afterward. "And his mother was such a pretty creature. He had a very pretty manner, too, and Harry has the most unattractive ways I ever saw in a child. The children call her 'Mister Harry Quite Contrary,' and though it's naughty of them, one can't help understanding it."

"Perhaps if his mother had carried her pretty face and her pretty manners oftener into the nursery Harry might have learned some pretty ways too. It is very sad, now the poor beautiful thing is gone, to remember that many people never even knew that she had a child at all."

"I believe she scarcely ever looked at him," sighed Mrs. Crawford. "When his nursemaid was dead, there was no one to give a thought to the little thing. Think of the servants running away and leaving him all alone in that deserted bungalow. Colonel McGrew said he nearly jumped out of his skin when he opened the door and found her standing by himself in the middle of the room."

Harry made the long voyage to England under the care of an officer's wife, who was taking her children to leave them in a boarding-school. She was very much absorbed in her own little boy and girl, and was rather glad to hand the child over to the woman Mr. Zayn Malik sent to meet Harry in London.
The woman was his housekeeper at Malik Manor, and her name was Mrs. Medlock. She was a stout woman, with very red cheeks and sharp black eyes. She wore a very purple dress, a black silk mantle with jet fringe on it and a black bonnet with purple velvet flowers which stuck up and trembled when she moved her head. Harry did not like her at all, but as he very seldom liked people. There was nothing remarkable in that; besides which it was very evident Mrs. Medlock did not think much of him.

"My word! he's a plain little piece of goods!" she said. "And we'd heard that her mother was a beauty. She hasn't handed much of it down, has she, ma'am?"

"Perhaps he will improve as he grows older," the officer's wife said good-naturedly. "If he were not so sallow and had a nicer expression, his features are rather good. Children alter so much."

"He'll have to alter a good deal," answered Mrs. Medlock. "And, there's nothing likely to improve children at Malik's, f you ask me!"

They thought Harry was not listening because he was standing a little apart from them at the window of the private hotel they had gone to. He was watching the passing buses and cabs and people, but he heard quite well and was made very curious about his uncle and the place he lived in. What sort of a place was it, and what would he be like? What was a hunchback? He had never seen one. Perhaps there were none in India.

Since he had been living in other people's houses and had had no nursemaid he had begun to feel lonely and to think odd thoughts which were new to him. He had begun to wonder why he had never seemed to belong to anyone even when his father and mother had been alive. Other children seemed to belong to their fathers and mothers, but he had never seemed to really be anyone's little boy. He had had servants, and food and clothes, but no one had taken any notice of him. He did not know that this was because he was a disagreeable child; but then, of course, he did not know he was disagreeable. He often thought that other people were, but he did not know that he was so himself.

He thought Mrs. Medlock the most disagreeable person he had ever seen, with her common, highly colored face and her common fine bonnet. When the next day they set out on their journey to England, he walked through the station to the railway carriage with his head up and trying to keep as far away from her as he could,. He did not want to seem to belong to her. It would have made him angry to think people imagined he was her child.

But Mrs. Medlock was not in the least disturbed by him and his thoughts. She was the kind of woman who would "stand no nonsense from young ones." At least, that is what she would have said if she had been asked. She had not wanted to go to London just when her sister Maria's daughter was going to be married, but she had a comfortable, well paid place as housekeeper at Malik Manor and the only way in which she could keep it was to do at once what Mr. Zayn Malik told her to do. She never dared even to ask a question.
"Captain Styles and his wife died of the cholera," Mr. Malik had said in his short, cold way. "Captain Styles was my wife's brother and I am their son's guardian. The child is to be brought here. You must go to London and bring him yourself."

So she packed her small trunk and made the journey.

Harry sat in his corner of the railway carriage and looked plain and fretful. He had nothing to read or to look at, so he had folded his thin little hands in his lap. Her jacket made him look yellower than ever, and her limp brown curls straggled from under his black hat.

"A more spoiled looking young one I've ever seen in my life," Mrs. Medlock thought. She had never seen a child who sat so still without doing anything; and at last she got tired of watching her and began to talk in a brisk, hard voice.

"I suppose I may as well tell you something about where you are going to," she said. "Do you know anything about your uncle?"

"No," said Harry.

"Never heard your father and mother talk about him?"

"No," Harry said frowning. He frowned because he remembered that his father and mother had never talked to him about anything in particular. Certainly they had never told him things.

"Humph," muttered Mrs. Medlock, staring at his odd, unresponsive little face. She did not say any more for a few moments and then she began again.

"I suppose you might as well be told something--to prepare you. You are going to a strange place."

Harry said nothing at all, and Mrs. Medlock looked rather discomfited by his apparent indifference, but, after taking a breath, she went on.

"It's a grand, big place in a gloomy way, and Mr. Malik's proud of it in his way, and that's gloomy enough, too. The house is six hundred years old and it's on the edge of the moor, and there's near a hundred rooms in it, though most of them are shut up and locked. There's pictures and fine, old furniture and things that's been there for ages, and there's a big park round it and gardens and trees with branches trailing to the ground--some of them." She paused and took another breath. "But there's nothing else," she ended suddenly.

Harry had begun to listen in spite of himself. It all sounded so unlike India, and anything new rather attracted him. But he did not intend to look as if he were interested. That was one of his unhappy, disagreeable ways. So he sat still.
"Well," said Mrs. Medlock. "What do you think of it?"

"Nothing," he answered. "I know nothing about such places."

That made Mrs. Medlock laugh a short sort of laugh.

"Eh!" she said, "you are like an old man. Don't you care?"

"It doesn't matter" said Harry, "whether I care or not."

"You are right enough there," said Mrs. Medlock. "It doesn't. What you're to be kept at Malik Manor for I don't know, unless because it's the easiest way. He's not going to trouble himself about you, that's sure and certain. He never troubles himself about anyone."

She stopped herself as if she had just remembered something in time.

"He was a sour young man and got no good of all his money and big place till he was married."

Harry's eyes turned toward her in spite of his intention not to seem to care. He had never thought of the hunchback's being married and he was surprised. Mrs. Medlock saw this, and as she was a talkative woman, she continued with more interest. This was one way of passing some of the time, at any rate.

"She was a sweet, pretty thing and he'd have walked the world over to get her a blade of grass she wanted. Nobody thought she'd marry him, but she did, and people said she married him for his money. But she didn't...She didn't." She sighed, "when she died."

Harry gave a little involuntary jump.

"Oh! She died?" He exclaimed, quite without meaning to. He had just remembered a French fairy story he had once read called "Riquet a la Houpp." It had been about a poor hunchback and a beautiful princess and it had made him suddenly sorry for Mr. Zayn Malik.

"Yes, she died," Mrs. Medlock answered. "And it made him stranger than ever. He cares about nobody. He won't see people. Most of the time he goes away, and when he is at Malik Manor he shuts himself up in the West Wing and won't let anyone but Pitcher see him. Pitcher's an old fellow, but he took care of him when he was a child and he knows his ways."

It sounded like something in a book and it did not make Harry feel cheerful. A house with a hundred rooms, nearly all shut up and with their doors locked--a house on the edge of a
moor--whatsoever a moor was--sounded dreary. A man with a crooked back who shut himself up also! He stared out of the window with his lips pinched together, and it seemed quite natural that the rain should have begun to pour down in gray slanting lines and splash and stream down the window-panes. If the pretty wife had been alive she might have made things cheerful by being something like her own mother and by running in and out and going to parties as she had done in frocks "full of lace." But she was not there any more.

"You needn't expect to see him, because ten to one you won't," said Mrs. Medlock. "And you mustn't expect that there will be people to talk to you. You'll have to play about and look after yourself. You'll be told what rooms you can go into and what rooms you're to keep out of. There's gardens enough. But when you're in the house don't go wandering and poking about. Mr. Malik won't have it."

"I won't not want to go poking about," said sour little Harry and just as suddenly as he had begun to be rather sorry for Mr. Zayn Malik, he began to cease to be sorry and to think he was unpleasant enough to deserve all that had happened to him.

And he turned his face toward the streaming panes of the window of the railway carriage and gazed out at the gray rain-storm which looked as if it would go on forever and ever. He watched it so long and steadily that the grayness grew heavier and heavier before his eyes and he fell asleep.

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