

Meeting Colin

Middle view *Soft clouds*

In the middle of the night Mary woke up. Heavy rain had started falling again, and the wind was blowing violently round the walls of the old house. Suddenly she heard crying again. This time she decided to discover who it was. She left her room, and in the darkness followed the crying sound, round corners and through doors, up and down stairs, to the other side of the big house. At last she found the right room. She pushed the door open and went in.

It was a big room with beautiful old furniture and pictures. In the large bed was a boy, who looked tired and cross, with a thin, white, tearful face. He stared at Mary.

'Who are you?' he whispered. 'Are you a dream?'



'careful,' because when you were born the garden door was locked and the key was buried. And I know that was ten years ago.'

Colin sat up in bed and looked very interested. 'What door? Who locked it? Where's the key? I want to see it. I'll make the servants tell me where it is. They'll take me there and you can come too.'

'Oh, please! Don't – don't do that!' cried Mary.

Colin stared at her. 'Don't you want to see it?'

'Yes, but if you make them open the door, it will never be a secret again. You see, if only we know about it, if we – if we can find the key, we can go and play there every day. We can help the garden come alive again. And no one will know about it – except us!'

'I see,' said Colin slowly. 'Yes, I'd like that. It'll be our secret. I've never had a secret before.'

'And perhaps,' added Mary cleverly, 'we can find a boy to push you in your wheelchair, if you can't walk, and we can go there together without any other people. You'll feel better outside, I know I do.'

'I'd like that,' he said dreamily. 'I think I'd like fresh air, in a secret garden.'

Then Mary told him about the moor, and Dickon, and Ben Weatherstaff, and the robin, and Colin listened to it all with great interest. He began to smile and look much happier.

'I like having you here,' he said. 'You must come and see me every day. But I'm tired now.'

Meeting Colin

'I'll sing you a song. My servant Kamala used to do that in India,' said Mary, and very soon Colin was asleep.
The next afternoon Mary visited Colin again, and he seemed very pleased to see her. He had sent his nurse away and had told nobody about Mary's visit. Mary had not told anybody either. They read some of his books together, and told each other stories. They were enjoying themselves and laughing loudly when suddenly the door opened. Dr Craven and Mrs Medlock came in. They almost fell over in surprise.

'What's happening here?' asked Dr Craven.

Colin sat up straight. To Mary he looked just like an Indian prince. 'This is my cousin, Mary Lennox,' he said calmly. 'I like her. She must visit me often.'

'Oh, I'm sorry, sir,' said poor Mrs Medlock to the doctor.



To Mary he looked just like an Indian prince.

The Name & The Hair Colin Craven Meeting Colin

W. C. Gaskin

'No, I'm not. I'm Mary Lennox, Mr Craven's my uncle.' 'He's my father,' said the boy. 'I'm Colin Craven.'

'No one ever told me he had a son!' said Mary, very surprised.

'Well, no one ever told me you'd come to live here. I'm ill, you see. I don't want people to see me and talk about me. If I live, I may have a crooked back like my father, but I'll probably die.'

'What a strange house this is!' said Mary. 'So many secrets! Does your father come and see you often?'

'Not often. He doesn't like seeing me because it makes him remember my mother. She died when I was born, so he almost hates me, I think.'

'Why do you say you're going to die?' asked Mary.

'I've always been ill. I've nearly died several times, and my back's never been strong. My doctor feels sure that I'm going to die. But he's my father's cousin, and very poor, so he'd like me to die. Then he'd get all the money when my father dies. He gives me medicine and tells me to rest. We had a grand doctor from London once, who told me to go out in the fresh air and try to get well. But I hate fresh air. And another thing, all the servants have to do what I want, because if I'm angry, I become ill.'

Mary thought she liked this boy, although he seemed so strange. He asked her lots of questions, and she told him all about her life in India.

'How old are you?' he asked suddenly.

'I'm ten, and so are you,' replied Mary, forgetting to be

'That's good news.' There was a big smile on Dickon's honest face. 'We all knew he was ill.'

'He's afraid he'll have a crooked back like his father. I think that's what's making him ill.'

'Perhaps we can bring him here and let him rest under the trees. That'll do him good. That's what we'll do.'

They had a lot of gardening and [planning to do and Mary did not have time to visit Colin that day]. When she came back to the house in the evening, Martha told her that the servants had had trouble with Colin.

'He's been very bad-tempered all afternoon with all of us, because you didn't come, miss.'

'Well, I was busy. He'll have to learn not to be so selfish,' replied Mary coldly. She forgot how selfish *she* had been when she was ill in India. 'I'll go and see him now.'

When she went into his room, he was lying in bed, looking tired. He did not turn to look at her.

'What's the matter with you?' she asked crossly.
'My back aches and my head hurts. Why didn't you come this afternoon?'

'I was working in the garden with Dickon.'

'I won't let that boy come to the garden if you stay with him instead of talking to me!'

Mary suddenly became very angry. 'If you send Dickon away, I'll never come into this room again!'

'You'll have to, if I say so. I'll make the servants bring you in here.'

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'I don't know how she discovered him. I told the servants to
keep it a secret.'

'Don't be stupid, Medlock,' said the Indian prince coldly.

'Nobody told her. She heard me crying and found me

herself. Bring our tea up now.'

'I'm afraid you're getting too hot and excited, my boy,'
said Dr Craven. 'That's not good for you. Don't forget
you're ill.'

'I want to forget!' said Colin. 'I'll be angry if Mary
doesn't visit me! She makes me feel better.'

Dr Craven did not look happy when he left the room.

'What a change in the boy, sir!' said the housekeeper.
'He's usually so disagreeable with all of us. He really seems
to like that strange little girl. And he does look better.' Dr

Craven had to agree. After / lots of sounds

6 Colin is afraid

Because it rained all the next week, Mary went to talk to Colin every day instead of visiting the garden. But she woke early one morning to see the sun shining into her room, and she ran out to the secret garden at once. She did not even wait to have her breakfast. It was beautifully sunny and warm, and a thousand more shoots were pushing their way out of the ground. Dickon was already there, digging

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'There's nothing wrong
with your back!' she said at
last. 'Nothing at all! It's as
straight as mine!'

Only Colin knew how
important those crossly
spoken, childish words were.
All his life he had been afraid
to ask about his back, and his
terrible fear had made him ill.
Now an angry little girl told
him his back was straight,
and he believed her. He was
no longer afraid.

They were both calmer now. He gave Mary his hand. 'I
think – I'm almost sure I will live, if we can go out in the
garden together sometimes. I'm very tired now. Will you
stay with me until I go to sleep?'

The servants went out very quietly.

'I'll tell you all about the secret garden,' whispered Mary.
'I think it's full of roses and beautiful flowers. Birds like
making their nests there because it's so quiet and safe. And
perhaps our robin . . .'

But Colin was already asleep.

The next day Mary met Dickon as usual in the secret
garden, and told him about Colin. Mary loved Dickon's
Yorkshire dialect and was trying to learn it herself. She
spoke a little now.



'Get out of the room at once!' Colin shouted.

back!' The door banged shut behind her.

When she reached her own room, she had decided never to tell him her great secret. 'He can stay in his room and die if he wants!' she thought. But soon she began to remember how ill he had been, and how frightened he was, frightened that one day his back would become as crooked as his father's. 'Perhaps . . . perhaps I'll go back and see him tomorrow!'

That night she was woken by the most terrible screams that she had ever heard. Servants were opening and shutting doors and running about.

Colin is afraid

'We mun get poor Colin out here in th' sunshine – an' we munnot lose no time about it!'

Dickon laughed. 'Well done! I didn't know you could speak Yorkshire! You're right. We must bring Colin to the garden as soon as we can.'

So that afternoon she went to see Colin.

'I'm sorry I said I'd send Dickon away,' he said. 'I hated you when you said he was like an angel!'

'Well, he's a funny kind of angel, but he understands wild animals better than anyone.' Suddenly, Mary knew that this was the right moment to tell him. She caught hold of his hands. 'Colin, this is important. Can you keep a secret?'

'Yes – yes!' he whispered excitedly. 'What is it?'

'We've found the door into the secret garden!'

'Oh Mary! Will I live long enough to see it?'

'Of course you will! Don't be stupid!' said Mary crossly. But it was a very natural thing to say, and they both laughed.

Colin told Mrs Medlock and the doctor that he wanted to go out in his wheelchair. At first the doctor was worried the boy would get too tired, but when he heard that Dickon would push the wheelchair, he agreed.

'Dickon's a sensible boy,' he told Colin. 'But don't forget—'

'I've told you, I *want* to forget that I'm ill,' said Colin in his prince's voice. 'Don't you understand? It's because my cousin makes me forget that I feel better when I'm with her.'

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Colin is afraid

'It's Colin!' thought Mary. 'He'll go on screaming until he makes himself really ill! How selfish he is! Somebody should stop him!'

Just then Martha ran into the room. 'We don't know what to do!' she cried. 'He likes you, miss! Come and see if you can make him calmer, please!'

'Well, I'm very cross with him,' said Mary, and jumped out of bed. 'I'm going to stop him!'

'That's right,' said Martha. 'He needs someone like you, to argue with. It'll give him something new to think about.'

Mary ran into Colin's room, right up to his bed.

'Stop screaming!' she shouted furiously. 'Stop at once! I hate you! Everybody hates you! You'll die if you go on screaming like this, and I hope you will!'

The screams stopped immediately. This was the first time that anyone had spoken so angrily to Colin, and he was shocked. But he went on crying quietly to himself.

'My back's becoming crooked, I can feel it! I know I'm going to die!' Large tears ran down his face.

'Don't be stupid!' cried Mary. 'There's nothing the matter with your horrid back! Martha, come here and help me look at his back!'

Martha and Mrs Medlock were standing at the door, staring at Mary, their mouths half open. They both looked very frightened. Martha came forward to help, and Miss Mary looked carefully at Colin's thin white back, up and down. Her face was serious and angry at the same time. The room was very quiet.

Colin is afraid

you. I won't look at you. I'll stare at the floor!'

'You selfish girl!' cried Colin.

'You're more selfish than I am. You're the most selfish boy I've ever met!'

'I'm not as selfish as your fine Dickon! He keeps you playing outside when he knows I'm ill and alone!'

Mary had never been so furious. 'Dickon is nicer than any other boy in the world! He's like an angel!'

'An angel! Don't make me laugh! He's just a poor country boy, with holes in his shoes!'

'He's a thousand times better than you are!'

Colin had never argued with anyone like himself in his life, and in fact it was good for him. But now he was beginning to feel sorry for himself.

'I'm always ill,' he said, and started to cry. 'I'm sure my back is a bit crooked. And I'm going to die!'

'No, you're not!' said Mary crossly.

Colin opened his eyes very wide. Nobody had said that to him before. He was angry, but a bit pleased at the same time. 'What do you mean? You know I'm going to die! Everybody says I'm going to die!'

'I don't believe it!' said Mary in her most disagreeable voice. 'You just say that to make people feel sorry for you. You're too horrid to die!'

Colin forgot about his painful back and sat up in bed. 'Get out of the room at once!' he shouted, and threw a book at her.

'I'm going,' Mary shouted in reply, 'and I won't come



Colin is afraid

hard, with the crow and a young fox beside him.

'Have you seen the robin?' he asked Mary. The little bird was flying ~~busily~~ backwards and ~~forwards~~ as fast as he could, carrying pieces of dry grass.

'He's building a nest!' whispered Mary. They watched the robin for a moment. Then Mary said,

'I must tell you something. You probably know about Colin Craven, don't you? Well, I've met him, and I'm going to help him to get better.'

