

The Secret Garden

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Settings

The main settings of note are Cooper's room and the secret garden. There are other spaces (for example, the wider garden) as fits the story being told but these do not need to be visually represented.

The secret garden exists both in the character's real world and in the story they tell. We need to know it is a real, physical space, and there should be a sense of discovery, of stepping into it, when the young people find it, but we do not need to see 'a secret garden' in a naturalistic sense.

Where specific props are required, as anchors for the young audience, these are noted in orange.

Characters

Cooper	Shreya Patel/ Ellen Carnazza
Lennox	Wambui Hardcastle/ Ellen Carnazza
Dylan	Lauren Waine/ Ellen Carnazza
Beth	Sarah Boulter/ Michael Blair
Martha	Zoe Lambert/ Michael Blair

The role of Mr Craven is taken up by the various characters (***indicated in italic, bold***) as they tell the story but never appears as himself.

Notes

/ indicates an interruption or quick response

// indicates two or more characters speaking at once

- indicates where a sentence is stopped by the speaker

... indicates where a thought drifts away

PROLOGUE

As the audience enter, the cast are playing/singing She's Wild.

All: She's as wild as the wind that howls through the night
 'Cause all of her anger is built up inside
 And the world seems against her, she scowls doesn't smile
 And you won't break her spirit, try as you might

Ooh, ooh, for her spirit is strong
Ooh, ooh and her heart it is fierce
She's small but she's mighty
And by god, she's fearless

As wild as the wind, and the rain and the sea
Her temper like frost that takes hold of the leaves
On the surface as hard as the summer dried soil
With the roots of a girl, soon to unfold

Ooh, ooh, for her spirit is strong
Ooh, ooh and her heart it is fierce
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[Repeat if required]

SCENE 1

The story begins in the present, with an acknowledgement of the audience and the shared experience about to unfold. Once the majority of the audience are settled, Martha begins.

MUSIC: All characters have their instruments to hand, improvising in the key of D, switching to Am when indicated.

Martha: Everyone in? Hello, hi! Look at you all! I'm pleased as punch to see all these new faces. It's usually just a few of 'wer these days. Haven't seen it this busy since Mrs Craven... Well, we'll get to that. I'm getting ahead of myself.

Dylan: Mam, get on with it!

Martha: Alright. That's my Dylan. Apple of my eye, star of my /world

Dylan: /Mamm...

Beth: There's not many instruments among 'em, Martha.

Martha: In a fine fettle as always then... Beth carries on like this every single time. But she warms up, don't worry.

Lennox: Once we get into it.

Dylan: The story

Martha: That's what you're here for, right? A story and a sing-along. A chance to look back and remember?

Cooper: We love stories. And this one especially.

Martha: We've told this tale many times before, the tale of Lennox/ landing

Lennox: /That's me

Martha: Landing in our midst, unaware she would discover a secret and a magical place that / was

Lennox: /We need to explain/ about

Martha: /I'm getting to it! I was setting the scene. Creating the poetry, the/ mystery

Cooper: /Dad's not here tonight.

Lennox: My Uncle
Beth: Mr Craven.
Dylan: So, we'll just fill his bits in.
Lennox: We're very good

MUSIC: Improvisation introduces Am – D pattern

Martha: As I was saying! It was early spring, when the world is slowly thawing, when glimmers of light begin to sparkle, and small green shoots fight to push out from the cold/ dark, soil

Dylan: /Mum!

Martha: What

Dylan: You forgot (*Dylan nods towards the audience*)

Martha: Of course! How could I? See, like Cooper said, we're storytellers, musicians, keepers of tales. But all storytellers need something very important to be able to weave their magic. No story is complete with/out

Dylan: /An audience

Lennox: That's you

Martha: We've told this story in one way or another a thousand times. But we've never told it this way, because we've never told it with you. There's always a beginning

Beth: And Martha always forgets half of it

Martha: But what happens after that, well, let's see.

Pause. They take up positions.

All: She's as wild as the wind that howls through the night
'Cause all of her anger is built up inside
And the world seems against her, she scowls doesn't smile
And you won't break her spirit, try as you might

Ooh, ooh, for her spirit is strong

Ooh, ooh and her heart it is fierce

She's small but she's mighty

And by god, she's fearless

As wild as the wind, and the rain and the sea

Her temper like frost that takes hold of the leaves

On the surface as hard as the summer dried soil

With the roots of a girl, soon to unfold

MUSIC: At the end of the song, music pauses for a little while Martha and Beth move centre stage

Martha: The room's made up. Is she here yet?

Beth: She'd best keep away from them bulbs I just planted, or I'll be telling her. Remind me why we're getting lumped with her?

Dylan becomes Mr Craven

Cooper: So now she's my Dad, see?

Beth: It won't always be Dylan playing him

Lennox: Could be any one of us

Cooper: But you'll get the hang of it.

Dylan: *She's coming up for a holiday. That's all. Just for a little while, help my parents out.*

Martha: Been excluded you know? Twice! Can you/ imagine

Dylan: */Yes, thanks Martha.*

Cooper: What's she/ like?

Dylan: */I'll only be away for a few days. Ring if there's any trouble. But you'll be fine*

Martha: We always are

Dylan: *And I'm sure she's not as bad as all that.*

Cooper: What did she /do

Dylan: */And it's past your bedtime, young lady*

Cooper: Dylan's still/ up

Dylan: ***/That's different. Come on, you can meet her in the morning.***

Martha: Night love. And safe travels Mr Craven.

Cooper moves away but is still watching/listening to the scene from her room. Dylan 'takes off' Mr C.

Martha: I don't know why he feels the need to make a big announcement. He's never here. Not really. Just shuts himself away in his office. Appears at mealtimes now and again. Or drops a bombshell like that and then going away with work. Very convenient.

Beth: So, yet again, it's us that have to sort everything out. Pick up the pieces.

Martha: It's Cooper I feel sorry for.

Cooper: I don't/ need

Martha: /Anyway, it's me that keeps things together. Looks after the bairn when he can't.

Cooper: I can/ look

Martha: /You bury your head in the soil. You spend more time with them plants than people, so what does it matter to you if there's another body?

Beth: She'll be trampling everywhere and getting her nose into my garden.

Lennox: I wasn't that bad. Yeah, alright okay. *[Takes a breath]* I hate it, I hate it, I hate it! It's the middle of *nowhere* with a bunch of *(Lennox does exaggerated quotation marks)* "family" I've never met. Is anyone going to actually tell me how long I'm going to be in this dump? I bet you don't even have WiFi. There's no phone signal, I tried. All you can see out of the window is green. There's literally nothing here.

Martha: *[to the audience]* And that was how it started. Lennox arriving like a fox in the hen house, turning up out of nowhere. We had a routine before Lennox came. We got on, kept out of each other's ways, and we knew where we stood.

Beth: Kept to ourselves, more or less

Martha: But boy did she shake things up around here!

I'll take your bag, Lennox. Dylan will show you your room.

Lennox: You another cousin I don't know about?

Dylan: No/ I'm

Martha: /We're as good as family, just not actually related. We live in the cottage behind the fields. Your Uncle gets busy sometimes, so I help him out, look after Cooper, /the house.

Lennox: /Where is Cooper?

Martha: In bed.

Lennox: Already? What is she, like 5?

Martha: Keep your voice down. She's only down the hall, you'll wake her up.

Cooper: Like I couldn't hear it all anyway. I already knew we wouldn't get on.

Beth moves away. Noodles She's Wild.

Martha: The next morning, even the sun came out to meet Lennox. It was one of those days when the sky fools you into thinking that summers on its way but the cold air wraps around you, pulling you right back into winter.

They take up new positions. Lennox and Dylan are simultaneously avoiding each other and checking one another out.

Martha: *(To Lennox)* Look, it's lovely and sunny out. Why don't you play outside for a bit, and I can get your stuff unpacked?

Lennox: Outside?

Martha: Yes.

Lennox: Do you know how old I am?

Martha: Yes

Lennox: 12.

Dylan: Same as me

Lennox: I don't *play outside*. You make me sound like a child.

Martha: I'm definitely older than 12 and I still play.

Lennox: You what? Well I don't.

Martha: I play with my Dylan all the time/

Dylan: /Not really, not like/

Martha: /Making up stories, going on adventures, / and then

Lennox: /I don't want to play. And I don't want to go outside. And I don't want to be here. I want to go home!

Martha: [*To the audience*] I told you she'd got a temper, didn't I?

Lennox: Where's Cooper?

Martha: In her room. Resting.

Lennox: [*To Dylan*] So, what do you actually do around here? When you're not *playing*?

Dylan: I don't know why she said that. I don't

Martha: Dylan can you check Cooper's had her tablets? And if she wants any breakfast? Mr Craven's left/ already

Dylan: /Yes Mum

Dylan exits. Beth enters.

Lennox: What's he like?

Beth: Who?

Lennox: My uncle.

Beth: Well...

Lennox: My grandparents never talk about him.

Beth: There's plenty round here no-one talks about.

Lennox: Like what?

Martha: Never mind her. He's a good man, deep down. I think he's just forgotten how to smile.

Lennox: Why doesn't someone tell him to cheer up? I would.

Martha laughs

MUSIC: Improvisation around Mr Craven motif

Martha: You would, wouldn't you? He used to be one of the happiest people I knew but it was hard, losing his wife when Cooper was so young.

Beth: We did try and help, where we could.

Martha: But eventually people move on and he... well he didn't, so he got left behind.

Lennox: Oh. Right.

Martha: Sometimes when people are sad, or lonely, it can seem like there's a wall around them. Not many folks understand that.

Lennox: Well great. I mean this sounds like it's going to be a brilliant holiday. What with all that death and everything. You all sound like a right barrel of laughs.

Martha: There's more to their story than the ending, you know. Your aunt and uncle were very much in love, always singing and dancing, in the house, in the garden, everywhere they went. And they say had their own secret garden.

Beth: Stop talking rubbish! You'll fill her head with ideas.

Lennox: Is it true?

Beth: Of course not. Martha's full of make believe.

Martha: Their own special place, hidden away. So romantic. Imagine finding it after all that time, after it's been locked up, forgotten and hidden away for years.

[To the audience] That'll give her something to put her energy into, wouldn't you say?

Lennox is considering this.

Lennox: That's a stupid story.

Martha: Suit yourself. Look, if you're not going outside, you can help me and Beth set up for band practice this afternoon. Get yourself ready for a proper Northumbrian welcome young lady.

Lennox: Here? Band practice here

Martha: Yes! Only...

Martha and Beth exchange a look

Lennox: What?

Martha: Don't tell your uncle

Lennox: Why?

Beth: There's no singing or music in the house when he's home.

Martha: It's just his way - it's too tied up for him, with too many memories.

Beth: *There's to be no more music sessions in the house. No more parties, playing music until all hours. It's not right. Not after everything that's happened*

Martha: There was a time when he'd be leading the whole thing, clapping and singing, he's got the most beautiful voice [*She pauses, remembering*]. But since Mrs Craven passed away. Well, it's too painful for him. And we've got to respect that

Lennox: Except you're not are you? 'Cause you're still going to do it.

Beth: She's got a point.

Martha: We probably shouldn't Lennox. But it's a part of us. You know, when you've been working hard all week, it doesn't feel right just going home, the silence of the day hanging in the air like that. It's in our blood.

Musicians begin noodling.

Lennox: You're not going to... sing? Now?

Dylan reappears.

Martha: We've got to get warmed up! It's very catchy this one. You'll soon pick it up. And Dylan will help, won't you Dyl?

Dylan: It's just a few/ repeat

Lennox: /I am NOT singing

Dylan begins to sing, Martha and Beth join in.

Dylan: And we sing and we dance

(Acapella) Whene'er we get chance

Like we've done since forever

'Cause it holds us together

M,B & D: Harmonise, sing in time

(Acapella) Count the bars with our feet,

The day we grow silent,

Is the day we are beat,

(Music) So, come and join us now,

Let's make this moment count

Raise the roof, shake the windows

Let everybody hear us

And the music it's spreads

And the sound it is glorious.

And we sing and we dance

Whene'er we get chance

Lennox: This is SO cringey

Martha and Beth play another loop underneath the next exchange. Dylan has lost confidence. Martha looks over and smiles occasionally, thinking they're getting on.

Dylan: We always sing

Lennox: With your Mum?

Dylan: Ye-, well with everyone. Not just Mum. Everyone sings or plays

Lennox: Well, I don't.

Dylan: You can borrow/ my

Lennox: /And I don't want to. It's so embarrassing.

Dylan: Is it?

Martha: You teaching her the words Dyl?

Dylan: (*Unsure*) //Yeah

Lennox: //No. And what about Cooper? What does she do?

Dylan: She can play too, and sing, she's got a beautiful voice. She doesn't just sing a song, she tells the story of it. But then she loves stories. I bet she'd love to join in but she's...

Lennox: What?

Dylan: Sick

Lennox: I'm not surprised. I feel sick listening to this.

Dylan: It's not like that, it's... it doesn't matter, you won't/ under

Lennox: /Is there... something wrong with her?

Dylan: No. Forget it.

Lennox: I want to meet her.

Dylan: I don't think that's a /good idea

Martha: /Are you going to join in or not?

Lennox: Dylan was just saying she could give me a tour of the house.

Dylan: I- was I?

Lennox: She can teach me some of the words while we go. So, I can join in. Next time.

Martha: Good idea. Did Cooper want food?

Dylan: She said she's not/ hungry

Martha: /Take her something anyway.

Dylan: She doesn't/ want

Martha: /It'll do her good

Lennox: Of course, we will.

Martha: [*To audience*] See? I knew they'd get along just fine.

SCENE 2

Cooper's bedroom. Cooper has a book in her hand and more on a pile next to her.

Cooper is 'down the hall' so Martha and Beth could be noodling/practising and the sound carrying?

Lennox: So. You're my cousin then?

Cooper shifts her focus momentarily.

Cooper: What are you doing here?

Dylan: I've got your breakfast.

Cooper: I said I didn't want any!

Lennox: That's a bit rude!

Dylan: //It's fine

Cooper: //Who asked you?

Lennox: Wow. Is this some kind of library or what? Just when I thought it couldn't get anymore boring...

Cooper: Can you just go? I'm in the middle/ of

Lennox: /What? Can't tear yourself away from the page? What is it, humpty dumpty? Twinkle twinkle?

Cooper: You know that's a song, right? Not a story? And no, if you must know, it's a collection of Greek Myths

Lennox: Er, right. *(Mimes a yawn)*

Cooper: Sorry, I forgot you don't go to school, do you. You probably can't even read

Lennox: Are you saying I'm thick?

Cooper: I'm saying that you wouldn't understand.

Lennox: Because I've got better things to do than read?

Cooper: Books are brilliant. Like windows into other worlds. Full of magic and adventure. Do you have any idea how many places I've been? How many people I've met? By reading?

Lennox: You haven't actually though. In reality, you're just in your room, with books for mates/ instead

Dylan: /Lennox, we should get/ back

Lennox: /Fine, go back to Mummy. I'm staying here.

Cooper: You are NOT!

Lennox: That's not fair. You've got a TV. Budge over so I can watch something. I want to ask you two summat anyway, about something Dylan's/ Mam said

Cooper: I don't care what you want to ask. //Not interested.

Dylan: //What did she say?

Cooper: Dylan. We're not helping *her*.

Lennox: /Help! I don't need help. What's wrong with you anyway?

Dylan: You can't /say

Cooper: /You! That's what's wrong. Just get out!

Lennox: Why are you in bed? Dylan said you were sick.

Cooper: Dylan!

Lennox: You don't *look* ill

Cooper: [*To Dylan*] Why did you bring her here?

Dylan: I didn't, she, Mum said

Lennox: [*Imitating*] Mum said

Cooper: Don't speak to her like that!

Lennox: You can't tell me what/ to do

Cooper: /You're in my room, in my house. You do as I say

Lennox: Make me

Cooper: I could get you sent home, just like that!

Lennox: I wish you would!

Cooper: No one wants you here. No one wants you anywhere.

Lennox: Because *your* dad's around so much, guess he doesn't want you neither. No wonder you hide in your stupid stories.

Dylan: She can't help// being

Lennox: //Shut up

Cooper: //Shut up. Stop shouting at Dylan!

Dylan: Will you both. Just. Be. Quiet.

Lennox and Cooper look at Dylan.

Dylan: Mum will wonder where we are

Cooper: Take the plate back. I don't want it.

Lennox: You do what you like but I'm not going back to listen to that noise.

I've got my own *adventures* to get on with and it's not in a stupid

book!

Lennox exits

Cooper: What is she on about?

Dylan: We might have found out if you weren't so mean!

Cooper: Me?

Dylan: Yes!

Cooper: Oh, shut up Dyl.

SCENE 3

Outside, a quiet, desolate garden. It is March and not much is flowering yet. There are a couple of piles of gardening tools and pots. Lennox surveys it all, huddling tight into her coat.

Lennox: I don't need them, any of them. I'll show them who's thick. All these years and they've never found it. But I will.

Beth enters, carrying some pots, and a trowel. Lennox kicks a bag of compost absent minded.

Beth: Hey!

Lennox jumps

Beth: What do you think you're doing?

Lennox: Nothing.

Beth: Because it looked like you were kicking my compost.

Lennox: Wasn't.

Beth: Well, it looked like it. This is my garden and my pots and plants and if I catch you kicking them again, you'll be in trouble.

Lennox: It's not much of a garden, though, is it? There's no flowers. And the trees are dead. And it's cold.

Beth: The trees are dead are they? Then what are those tiny buds on the branches?

Lennox: Where?

Beth: There.

Beth pulls some seeds out of a pocket. Lennox comes closer to look.

Lennox: What are they?

Beth: Carrots

Lennox: They're not carrots.

Beth: They're not carrots... yet. But they will be. And these [*Beth pulls out more packets of seeds, laying them on the ground*] will be beetroots, and lettuce and broad beans.

Lennox: Why don't you just buy them? Or don't you have supermarkets here?

Beth: Buy them? You don't know what you're missing. Nothing tastes as good as when you've grown it yourself.

Beth begins to carefully plant the seeds into the soil of one of the pots. Lennox is looking around.

Lennox: You spend a lot of time out here?

Beth: Every day

Lennox: So you really *know* it.

Beth: Uh-huh

Lennox: Which is your *favourite* bit?

Beth: *(suspiciously)* Hard to say. Why all the questions?

Lennox: I'm just, you know, taking an interest. You really like the garden, don't you?

Beth: *[Pointedly]* I like the peace and quiet

Lennox picks something up or looks at something trying to look interested.

Lennox: How long you been coming here?

Beth: It feels like forever. I can't remember a time I didn't have this place really. It was Mrs Craven's idea.

Lennox: Mrs Craven? You knew her?

Beth: Everyone knew her. She had a way of knowing what people needed and bringing the best out of them. She knew I needed the garden before I even knew what gardening was. And that was that. You're not the only one/ who

Lennox: /If you knew her and you know this garden you *must* know where their secret garden was? Martha said/ no-one uses it

Beth: /Leave it

Lennox: I wonder if /it's

Beth: /Mr Craven wouldn't want you poking around. Just leave it be. I'm in this garden every day, rain or shine. You don't think I'd know about it?

Lennox who scuffs the floor, looking around. Then, birdsong, Beth begins humming the refrain to 'Mr Robin'. Lennox wants to listen but is embarrassed by the singing. Doesn't want to lose face.

MUSIC: Musical interpretation of Mr Robin accompanies the script at this point

Lennox: A bird!

Beth: A robin. Dylan's robin.

Lennox: A pet?

Beth: *(laughing)* No! But he does follow her around.

Lennox tries to hum Robin Song. Beth helps her out.

Beth: Are you going to make yourself useful or what? Take this. [*hands Lennox a trowel. Lennox takes it*] You need each of them pots filled with compost up to about here [*Indicates a height in the pot*]

During this section, Lennox fills the pots but is trying to do it very delicately and almost at a distance as she is scared of getting dirt on her clothes.

Lennox: What's in this? [*the compost*]

Beth: Dead plants, kitchen scraps

Lennox: Like old food? [*She wrinkles her nose*]

Beth: Exactly. Stuff that people would just throw out, turned into something that helps the garden grow. We collect it all and put it in the composter, that big thing there, you see? Dylan loves spinning that/ and

Lennox: /Little Miss goodie two shoes.

Beth: You could take a leaf out of her book. Look at that (*points*)

Lennox: What?

Beth: That's her wildlife garden, that patch over there. Doesn't look like much does it? But she's made it a safe haven for all sorts of creatures.

Lennox: She spends lots of time out here?

Beth: Every weekend and most evenings. That girl probably knows the garden better than me, been coming since she was just a bairn on Martha's hip.

Martha enters

Martha: Well now, what have we here? Not a Lennox? Out in the wild? Are you lost?

Lennox: Very funny

Martha: It's good to see you/ outside playing.

Lennox: /Don't say playing.

Martha: Jinx! Ha!

Lennox: You're obsessed!

Martha: I just want you to enjoy your childhood – best days of your life you know?

Beth: Not for everyone Martha.

Martha: Ah, well, yes. Right tearaway was our Beth

Beth: You're not the only one who didn't get on with school. I couldn't learn inside, sat at a desk all day. Everything was too loud, too busy, the words jumping around everywhere or disappearing

Lennox: You get that too?

MUSIC: Very gentle musical improvisation around the Secret Garden refrain

Beth: It's why I love the garden. It's like an outside classroom all of my own, learning my way. I know every plant, shrub, flower. Better than any periodic table.

Lennox: I dunno about that. The outside bit. I'd rather be inside. In the warm.

Martha: You know, lots of people, me included, think that nature is healing,
a force for good.

Lennox: Right...

Beth: Gets into your bones

Martha: And your soul. Turns your mood around. When there's just you
and nature there's no need for anything else, to try to be anywhere
else.

Lennox: What? Catching a cold cos it's freezing, drowning in the rain,
fighting off birds of prey/

Martha: /Birds of prey?!

Lennox: Well, a robin.

Martha: Ah, you met Mr Robin!

Martha begins humming Robin song

Lennox: Not you as well?

Beth: You should try. You've got the lungs on you for sure.

Martha and Beth sing

M & B: Mr Robin, Mr Robin, you're such a charmer
Come say hello and show us your garden
We'll follow you round while you show off with pride
And when we have secrets, to you we'll confide

Lennox: *[In a whisper]* He's singing!

Lennox tries to hum along to the song though she is very self-conscious.

M & B: Your voice when you sing is a beauty to hear
The world seems much brighter, when you are near

M, B & L: Your voice when you sing is a beauty to hear
The world seems much brighter, when you are near

Beth: See? You just need to be gentle. Birds, animals, they have strong
senses and they're always looking out for danger.

Martha: Loud noises, sudden movement. People having a tantrum...

Lennox: Martha....?

Martha: Yes Lennox

Lennox: Do you think...

Beth: Spit it out.

Lennox: Can Dylan come over tomorrow? To... play?

Martha raises an eyebrow

Martha: I'm sure she'd love that.

Beth & Martha busy themselves. Lennox moves away following Mr Robin.

Lennox: *[Speaks/sings]* Your voice when you sing is a beauty to hear
The world seems much brighter, when you are near
Do you know about the secret garden? I bet you do. You know
everything. I bet you can see it when you fly over, can't you?
Well, I've got a plan to find it too.

Mr Robin chirps and hops. Flies away.

Lennox: Hey come back! I was talking to you!

SCENE 4

MUSIC: Improvisation around She's Wild

Martha: That's the thing about Lennox. She starts things in motion, makes things happen. When she sets her mind to something, when she wants something, when she finds the thing to put all of that energy of hers into... well, there's no getting in her way then!

Beth and Martha begin to hum She's Wild under the beginning of this exchange, then fade. Cooper's room.

Lennox: Your Mum said you were in here.

Dylan: She said you wanted to hang out

Lennox: It was her idea.

Dylan shrugs

Lennox: Shall we go outside?

Cooper: Dylan's with *me*

Lennox: Well... you come too then

Pause

Cooper: No.

Lennox: Right. Well I asked. Your choice. Come on Dylan.

Cooper: Stay here Dylan.

Dylan is torn.

Lennox: Fine! We'll just... sit. Here.

Lennox goes to sit on the bed but catches Cooper/sits on a foot or something.

MUSIC: improvisation pauses at this point

Cooper: Ow!

Lennox: Give over, I barely touched you

An awkward pause

Cooper: What did you do then?

Lennox: When?

Cooper: At school. Go on Dylan.

Dylan: (*Falters*) Mum said you were excluded, from school?
Lennox: Two. Two schools.
Cooper: Well then..?
Lennox: I'll tell you that if you tell me something.
Cooper: What?
Lennox: Not you! Dylan. Beth said you knew the garden better than her.
Dylan: (*Proud*) Did she?
Lennox: Or something like that and I want to know where the secret garden
 is. Where Mr and Mrs Craven/ used
Dylan: /*Mum* been telling you her stories, has she?
Lennox: They're not stories. Unless your Mum's a liar?
Dylan: No. Course not. Telling stories and lying are *not* the same thing.
Lennox: It is if you don't tell people they're stories. So?

Pause while Dylan considers

Dylan: Cooper?
Cooper: I'm not telling *her*.
Dylan: Cooper's/ been
Cooper: /*Stop* it!
Dylan: But what if it is real? What if Mum isn't just telling a story. What
 if...
Lennox: Hello? What are you talking about?
Dylan: When Mum used to tell that stor- tell me about the garden – she
 said that after Cooper was born, they took her in too. Like a
 magical den for the three of them.

Lennox turns to look at Cooper.

Dylan: And Cooper's dreamt about it.
Lennox: Tell us then!
Dylan: Maybe now's not, she's not feeling /very well
Lennox: /*It's just talking*. Come on.

Cooper: I am here you know? I can speak for myself?

Lennox: Speak then. Come on, you must be bored out your head in here all the time. What do you even *do*?

Cooper: Read. Daydream. Imagine all the things going on outside.

Lennox: Well, this time you don't need to imagine. You can help me with what you *know*.

Dylan: You?

Lennox: Well, not just me! Think about it. If we can find it, no-one else uses it, it would be a space just for – us.

Cooper: Us? Right. And you two will have a great time, and I'll still be stuck in here.

Lennox: You can come too. We'll all be there.

Cooper: I doubt it. Dad'll have a heart attack if he thinks I'm off wandering around the garden. *Unsupervised*.

Lennox: Is there anything you're allowed to do?

Cooper: No. Not really. Don't go outside. Rest but do your exercises. Keep warm but let the fresh air in. Take all of your tablets. Make sure you eat enough. And drink enough. Got to keep your blood sugar up. And your blood pressure down.

Lennox: I'm exhausted just listening to it.

Cooper: Exactly. It's not as easy for me.

Dylan: Are you okay Cooper? Shall we go?

Cooper: No! Stay... if you want

Lennox: Just tell us what you can remember.

Pause as Cooper considers her options. What she's sharing feels personal, but she doesn't want them to leave. Things have started changing since Lennox arrived and Cooper wants to be a part of it.

MUSIC: Improvisation around the Secret Garden theme song

Cooper: I used to dream about it all the time when I was little. Especially just after Mum died. Our garden, the three of us in there together. Then it happened again. The night you arrived Lennox. I heard everything that was going on, all the *fuss* you were making. I was drifting in and out of sleep and then suddenly, I was there, right there in the garden. It was so vivid. I didn't want to leave. I tried to hold on to it, to stay asleep. But I couldn't.

Lennox: Right. And where/ was

Dylan: /What was it like? In your dream?

Cooper: Beautiful. And peaceful. I could hear all of the birds, and everything was so colourful, but soft. It was like... floating on a soft squishy pillow, like nothing mattered. And Mum was right there, with me and Dad

Dylan: That's how you know she's still with you

Cooper: Do you/ think?

Lennox: /It was just a dream

Dylan: Lennox!

Lennox: Maybe you did make it up. Or Martha did. Unless you can tell us where it is.

Cooper: Why should I?

Lennox: Because then we'd know you're not a liar, and you can see what it's really like. With us.

Cooper: I don't know. I'm not sure I should/ be

Lennox: /Let's go now.

Cooper: //I can't

Dylan: //We can't

Lennox: No-one's around.

Cooper: I will. But not today.

Lennox: Come on, just for a little while. Look it's lovely out.

Dylan: We shouldn't/ push

Lennox grabs a blanket

Lennox: /Put this over your shoulders, that'll keep you warm. Come on.

Lennox puts her arm out. Cooper takes it and pulls herself out of bed. She is unsteady on her feet.

Dylan: I don't think this is a good idea

Cooper: I/

Lennox: /She's fine. There's nothing wrong with her.

Cooper stumbles

Lennox: You're not trying.

Cooper: You don't get it. My brain's not connected to my body so I can't just *go*. Just like that.

Dylan: It's alright

Cooper: It's not though, is it? I read and I daydream because that's all there is. I disappear into stories, in my head, in books, where I can be someone else, be somewhere else. Because here, no-one cares.

Dylan: Is that what you/ think?

Lennox: /I know that feeling. Come on! This is our chance to do something for ourselves. I bet you'll feel better outside.

Cooper: People only come in here to tell me what to do or what not to do. Or to talk about my health, my medication. They decide I should have a day in the garden or that they should take me into village. They never ask me, what I want or what I think. They just assume they know better.

Lennox: My grandparents are exactly the same.

Cooper: They never say, 'Cooper, what would *you* like to do today? Would you *like* to go out tomorrow?' Give me the chance to think about it, decide for myself. And when we do go out, when *they* decide I

should go out, I can feel everyone staring, and I hate it! I just know they're talking about me or Mum. They make me feel like a freak. And I feel so hot, and like I can't breathe and...

Cooper is tiring herself out emotionally

Dylan: Are you okay? Shall I get Mum?

Cooper: And Dad. He doesn't see me. Not really. I'm just a problem.

Dylan: That's not/ what

Cooper: /It is! He never talks to me about Mum, never spends time with me, properly. Why else would he shut himself away working if it isn't to get away from me?

Dylan: It's okay. Calm down...

Cooper: No! I won't calm down. I'm sick of being told to calm down, rest up. No-one ever listens! Why can't I be angry too? Everyone else is.

Dylan: Ssshh! Someone will hear

Cooper: Good! I want them to hear me!

Dylan: And then the door flew open

Beth (as Mr Craven) and Martha enter

**Beth: What's going on here? What have you done?
You're flushed. Have you got a headache? Do you feel sick?**

Cooper: No it's/ not

Beth: /I should have known you'd cause trouble

Lennox: //I didn't

Cooper: //It wasn't

Beth: Now look what's happened. Let's get you back in bed for a bit. I'll open the window. I turn my back for one minute...

Lennox: 3 days actually. That he was away.

Dylan: You didn't say that though

Lennox: No

Beth: **Lennox, this is your fault.**

Lennox: That's /not

Beth: **/You're all grounded until I say otherwise. And Dylan I expected more from you so no time in the garden, either.**

Dylan: //No!

Lennox: //That's not fair!

Beth: **Go to your rooms.**

Cooper: I'm okay Dad. Really. It's okay.

Everyone moves away.

Lennox: I'd forgotten that bit. Tried to forget it. I really didn't mean to..

Cooper: Don't worry, it's part of the story.

Dylan: We have to think about the bad bits sometimes, to remember that we need to do better. And to feel proud when we get it right.

Lennox: Yeah. I guess.

Dylan: Come on, let's keep going.

SCENE 5

The garden.

MUSIC: Improvisation around the Secret Garden and musical interpretation of the Robin when required.

Lennox: Okay. Here's me, as me, looking sad.

Cooper: In a mood!

Lennox: It hadn't exactly been a good week. I come here, knowing no-one, trying my best just to get along with everyone and make friends/ 'cause

Beth coughs

Lennox: This is my bit? Trying to make friends 'cause all of mine, and I had loads, were all back home and all anyone does here is shout at me. And I did know, that I'd pushed Cooper too far. And I felt awful. But it wasn't like I did it on purpose. I didn't know how things were, I've never... And now we're all grounded so we can't even speak so if no-one's helping me, I'll do it myself. Find it, keep it, just for me. It must be round here somewhere.

Mr Robin chirps

Lennox: I bet they think I won't. Can't. Cooper's right about that. Adults love to say 'no' and 'you can't'. But I can and I will. On. My. Own. Like I always do.

Mr Robin chirps again

Lennox: Mr Robin! You're not grounded! You can help. Oh, how did it go? Mr Robin, robin, show me round the garden... Something about secrets – and I've got one of those! Umm.

She begins singing very quietly and self-consciously

Lennox: Mr Robin, Mr Robin, you're such a charmer
Please could you show me the way to the garden?

Lennox doesn't notice Dylan enter

Dylan: That's not how it goes.

Lennox: Where did you come/ from

Dylan: /I heard singing. Was Mr Robin/ here

Lennox: /I wasn't singing. And he's not *yours* you know.

Dylan: *(Laughing, good-natured)* Of course he isn't. He's a wild bird. Birds, animals, nature. They don't belong to anyone, do they? Even this garden. I know Beth would like to think it's hers... but we're just looking after it for a while until someone else needs it.

Lennox: I hadn't thought about it like that. What are you doing here anyway? You're grounded you know.

Dylan: So are you!

Lennox: Yeah, but that's not my Mum who's spotted us.

Dylan looks behind her in a panic before realising Lennox is winding her up

Lennox: Your face

Dylan: Alright! Some of us are new to this whole rule-breaking thing, okay?

Lennox: That's true. Good job you have an expert to show you the way.

Dylan: Now you mention it... I need your help

Lennox: Yes?

Dylan: We need to get Cooper into the garden without anyone/ noticing

Lennox: /No

Dylan: Why not?

Lennox: I just don't want to, you know...

Dylan: No. I don't know.

Lennox: What if Cooper, what if she, if I hurt her ...

Dylan: Oh Lennox. You didn't mean to/ hurt

Lennox: /Of course not!

Dylan: I used to be scared too, not of Cooper, but of saying or doing the wrong thing but...

Lennox: Yeah?

Dylan: Well, doing nothing is worse, isn't it? It's better to try, even if we get it wrong

Lennox: You think she'll want to see us, me, again?

Dylan: Yes. You know the things Cooper said, she's never told me any of that before. I think it's important. She wanted us to know how she feels. And we're going to show her that we were listening. By sneaking her out.

Lennox: Okay

Dylan: You'll help?

Lennox: I'll help. I'm impressed at this new Dylan. Who knew/ you

Dylan: It was/n't

Lennox: /It suits you.

Dylan: Does it? Right. Well I, yeah, I thought

Lennox: Where's your Mum?

Dylan: Mam- oh she's in the village

Lennox: The raven?

Dylan: Eh?

Lennox: Mr Craven, Raven. Dark, brooding, you know? Code name

Dylan: Right. Mr-, Raven's in... the nest? Deep in work. Raven work.

Lennox: Gotcha.

Dylan: What about Mam?

Lennox: You said she was/ in

Dylan: /No. A code name!

Lennox: Right, yeah... um... Martha... Mam...

Dylan: Mouth! Well, she's always talking!

Lennox laughs

Lennox: That's Raven and Mouth accounted for, what about...

Dylan: Plant... Trees... Beech! She's like a beech tree! Queen of the trees like a queen of the garden. And the leaf buds are the same colour as Beth's hair, like little sharp/ things

Lennox: /Sharp? That sounds more like it. Are they old and gnarly too?

Dylan laughs

Dylan: They can be.

Lennox: So where is she? Beech?

Dylan: She was working on the front when I came past. We'll just have to hope she stays there.

Lennox: In that case... We are go go go!

Then run around the space, coming to a stop in Cooper's room.

Cooper: Finally! Took you long enough

Lennox: We've come to- wait how did you know we were coming?

Cooper: I asked Dylan to get you

Lennox: Did you? Did you? Dylan you said this was your/ idea

Dylan: /I never actually said that

Cooper: You really think Dyl would have decided to break the rules?

Lennox: Mmm good point.

Dylan: I could've!

Lennox: So you're the criminal mastermind behind this operation?

Cooper: Someone needs help finding this garden

Lennox: And someone else needs help getting out

Cooper shrugs

Cooper: Looks like we can help each other then?

Dylan: Yes!

Lennox: And someone else needs a lesson in living dangerously.

Cooper: Too right. What's the plan then?

Lennox: We're going to find the garden! Unless... if you're too tired then/ we can

Cooper: /Okay. First things first. I'll tell you if I'm tired, right? Because I'm sick of people asking me. What does it even mean, 'are you tired?'. Like I'm always tired, but it doesn't always mean I don't want to do something.

Lennox: We need a better word

Cooper: For tired?

Dylan: A code word!

Lennox: For if you need to, want to stop, anytime. Like...

Dylan: //Cabbages!

Lennox: //Abort

Pause

Lennox: //Cabbages

Dylan: //Abort

Pause

Dylan: Let's go with abort. Sounds professional. Spy-like.

Lennox: You need an arm?

Cooper: That's okay. Lennox, grab my bag will you? It's got my meds and a blanket. Dyl, you go first and check the coast is clear.

Dylan looks.

Dylan: All clear.

They creep out.

SCENE 6

The garden.

MUSIC: Scene begins without music - except for the first chord given to make sure Dylan finds the first note of 'She's Wild' melody.

Lennox: Right. We haven't got long. We don't know when Mouth will be back

Dylan: Or if Beech will move location

Lennox: So, we'll have to work quick. Cooper, can you remember anything? About how you got to it? Where it was?

Cooper: It was so long ago. If this was a story, there'd be a clue. A trail of breadcrumbs, a night star to follow, a white rabbit.

Dylan: If only. Why don't we sing, while we look?

Lennox: You go ahead but count me out.

Dylan: She's as wild as the wind that howls through the night
'Cause all of her anger is built up inside

Cooper joins in: And the world seems against her, she scowls doesn't smile
And you won't break her spirit, try as you might

Lennox: Where'd you two learn to sing like that anyway?

Dylan: You don't learn, not really. You just... do it

Cooper: I don't. Not anymore

Lennox: But you're so good! Both of you

Dylan: Go on Lennox, give it a go. What's the worst that can happen?

Cooper: We'll do it together. That's how I started, with Mum and Dad. And why I stopped, I guess. Because he did.

Lennox: Okay then.

Dylan: Yes! *(Over the top)* A one, a two a one, two three four!

All: She's as wild as the wind that howls through the night
'Cause all of her anger is built up inside
And the world seems against her, she scowls doesn't smile

And you won't break her spirit, try as you might

MUSIC: Pauses

Cooper holds the last note too long on purpose, warbling, over performing

Cooper: It feels good, doesn't it?

Dylan: The best!

Lennox: Do you ever feel like that?

Cooper: What?

Lennox: The words in the song. All of her anger is built up inside. Like sometimes, you can feel it bubbling up and you don't know how to say, to tell someone, how it feels.

Cooper: And then someone says 'calm down'

Dylan: Or 'don't get upset'

Lennox: Yes! And you want to tell them, that you can't help it, like there's just all of this emotion inside but it doesn't make any sense. Like it's not you? Maybe I'm just *wild*...

Dylan: Wild? I've seen baby moles wilder than you.

(singing in the same key) She's as wild as the wind and she moans
all night

'Cause she'd never seen grass and it gave her a fright!

Cooper laughs. Search for garden throughout.

Cooper: And she hates getting wet, or too cold from outside

She'd rather be spending all her time online

Lennox Looks at Dylan

Lennox: She's as wild as the foxes, prowls around outside

Can't talk to humans but friends with the mice

Cooper: Her Mam was her best friend, 'til we led her astray

Now she's on our side, we've shown her the way

Dylan: Hmm... what about Cooper?

Lennox: She's as wild as us both, though her Dad doesn't know

Dylan: Her heads full of books, nothing she doesn't know
Lennox: She's as grumpy as me, but a softie inside
Dylan: She's the biggest risk taker, to come along for the ride

MUSIC: accompanies script from here

We're as wild as the wind that howls through the night
But whatever happens, we're by each other's side
As long as we have each other, we'll be alright
And you won't break our spirit, try as you might

Ooh, ooh, for our spirits are strong
Ooh, ooh and our hearts they are fierce
We're small but we're mighty
And by god, we're fearless

Lennox: Well, fearless or not, we haven't found it.
Dylan: And we're gunna have to go back soon, before anyone looks for us
Cooper: Maybe it was just a story
Lennox: You don't believe that do you Cooper? You remember!
Cooper: Well, maybe they were just dreams.
Lennox: I don't buy that for a second!
Cooper: I'm knackered.
Lennox; I am not going to do this solo. Cooper, do you need to go back?
Because if we need to – abort the mission, that's really fine. We'll
come with you and sit outside your door until you're rested,
however long that takes, then we're all coming back here together.
Dylan: You really mean that, don't you?
Lennox: Yes!
Cooper: I'm okay. For a bit.

Pause

Cooper: Clues. We're missing something. What are we *not* seeing?

Mr Robin appears/chirps

Dylan: Hello Mr Robin. We could use your help.

Pause

Dylan: Cooper, when did your Mum... How old were you?

Cooper: It's okay. You can say died you know. I was 5.

Dylan: So that's... 7 years ago?

Lennox: Why?

Dylan: It's just, see those trees over there? They're not native, see, they don't fit with the rest, they've been *planted* and they're young compared to the rest of the garden, you can tell by the height they are...

Cooper: You think they could have been/

Lennox: /planted after/ they

Cooper: /To hide/

Lennox: /The garden?

Dylan: Yes!

More chirping from Mr Robin

Dylan: He looks like he's dancing on the spot

Lennox: What is that? That he's stood on?

Cooper: Not a white rabbit after all, a robin

Lennox: You what?

Cooper: The robin is our breadcrumbs, our night star, just like the fairy tales

Mr Robin drops a key

Dylan: A flippin key! Thank you Mr Robin!

Cooper: I remember! Mum always made a big show of opening the door with that key! It has to be near here!

MUSIC: Secret Garden music begins.

Cooper: The ivy,
Dylan: Behind the trees,
Lennox: It looks like
Cooper: In the gap
Dylan: Something wood/en
Cooper: /A wooden door, that's right, behind the ivy/
Dylan: /We've found it! The secret garden.
Lennox: It was here all along.

They all look at each other

Martha: And so it was. Together, they found what had been hidden and locked away. And there's no going back, once you've found a place, once you've seen it with your own eyes.

Beth: I planted them trees myself you know. To protect it. Mrs Craven's garden, her memory. I didn't want anyone messing with that

Martha: And you weren't the only one. Mr Craven locked the door before you planted the trees. Locked away the garden and locked away a little piece of himself. But you can't keep things locked up, it's not right. And now, the door had been opened again. And the magic started to creep out, to curl itself around us all, though we didn't know it then.

Beth: I had a bumper crop of pears that spring you know? And my strawberries. Went wild, shooting out tendrils left right and centre.

Martha: And I felt it too. Not in the garden, not like you. It was music for me. Earworms getting stuck in my head, my fingers crying out to play and make music. And a tune I couldn't quite grasp but I knew it was there, just out of reach...

MUSIC: Acapella (tenor/alto from backing singers) - "Come with me, come to the garden, Come with me, come let it speak, Come with me, come to the garden, Come with me, come let it speak"

SCENE 7

The secret garden – magic, joy and jubilation.

MUSIC: The Secret Garden song, beginning with gentle flute interspersed with dialogue

Cooper: I can't believe we did it!

Dylan: This is actually it!

Lennox: The secret garden!

Cooper: And it's all

Together: Ours!

Dylan: Fruit trees! Apples and... plums!

Cooper: And, wow, those old nests, there must be loads of babies here in spring!

Lennox: Even more than in your nature garden, Dyl?

Dylan: Tons, more.

Cooper: I bet there are animals no one has seen for a million years! Like....

Dylan: Pterodactyls and dodos and... and

Cooper: Griffins!

Lennox: They're not/ real

Dylan: /Yes! Definitely. DEFINITELY! Look at all these buds and shoots. It's about to explode into colour. I can't believe we found it!

MUSIC: Music reaches part B, with the chords F – G repeated

Lennox: Look at that tree.

Cooper: All wizened and twisty.

Dylan: I bet elves live in there.

Lennox: Elves? How old are you, Dyl?

Cooper: I bet they do too, go have a look!

Lennox: Come on, you come too.

Cooper: I don't know, I think I might just have a sit down. All that excitement, I feel a bit...

Dylan: Abort?

Cooper: No. Not yet. I just need a minute

Dylan: Here!

Lennox: We can make you a nest.
(Cooper laughs. They all gently make her comfortable. They go to sit down with her)

Cooper: What are you doing? Go! Scope it out. Tell me, everything!
She lies back and closes her eyes.

Lennox: There's so/ much

Dylan: /Where do we/ start

Lennox: /There! Look at that!

Dylan: A tree!

Cooper: I'm gunna need more than that!

Lennox: It's... twisty, old

Dylan: Like a tree from a faraway kingdom. And it's got, there's some ropes attached, to a piece of... wood?

Lennox: It looks like a swing

Cooper: For Mum. I bet it was for my mum.

Lennox: We could mend, that. Couldn't we, Dyl?

Dylan: Course.

Cooper: Now, what about the elves?

Lennox: Really? Elves?

Cooper: I'm in charge. You're my eyes.

Lennox: I'm not/ really

Dylan: /I can see a tiny door, and if I just brush this moss out of the way, here, help me Lennox.

Lennox: Do I really...

Dylan & Cooper: YES!

Dylan: Oh Cooper, there's a tiny door handle and a tiny letterbox. This is definitely where they live.

Cooper: What else?
(Dylan dashes to another bit of the garden)

Dylan: Oh, wow! In this crumbly bit of a wall, there's an old wasps nest.

Lennox: A nest? But it's... it's like paper!

Dylan: Of course it is. The fairies make it, out of spider webs. And the wasps, they are the warriors for the elves.

MUSIC: The acapella part 'Come with me into the garden' begins softly

Lennox: *(Feeling silly, trying)* They...

Cooper: Yes, go on...

Lennox: They take them on missions, and to... choir practice!

Cooper: Choir practice?!

(Lennox goes quiet and embarrassed)

Lennox: This is stupid. I/ don't

Dylan: /Definitely choir practice, can't you hear them singing now?

Cooper: I can hear them!

Dylan: And these shoots popping through, they're an agility course for rats.

Lennox: And bats.

Cooper: And cats!

Lennox: They'd have to be small cats.

Dylan: In hats!

Lennox: You're ridiculous!

Dylan: I know.

All sit down together, next to Cooper

Lennox: It really is incredible, isn't it?

Dylan: How long do you think it's been like this?

Cooper: Since mum died, I guess.

Lennox: Do you miss her? Sorry, silly question.

Cooper: Yes. Well, not her, I can't remember her so much even though I try. The thought of her being here though, I miss that loads. And how dad would have been, if she was still here.

Lennox: I don't really remember my Mum either, she didn't, she's not dead just, not around

Cooper: Dad's sister? My...

Lennox: Auntie

Cooper: I've never, I don't even know her name. Dad said she was, you know, off the rails a bit.

Lennox: Wild. Like me.

Dylan: Wild can be lovely you know? Nature's wild and that's the most beautiful, powerful thing there is. Like sea storms and blazing sunshine.

Lennox: I like that. Maybe I'm just blazing.

Cooper: Blazing Lennox!

Dylan: And it's better than being boring. Which everyone thinks I am.

Cooper: //We don't!

Lennox: //You're not!

Dylan: It's just Mam, sorry, I know I should be, I love her, don't get me wrong. And I know I'm lucky to, you know...

Cooper: //It's okay

Lennox: //Don't worry

Dylan; It's just...

Cooper: She likes to tell you what to do.

Dylan: No, that's not! She just...

Lennox: Yes?

Dylan: ... likes to tell me what to do. She treats me like a child, all of the time. Until I met you two, I never thought about having, friends,

of my own, it was just always me and Mam. And I'd like to see, sometimes, what I can do by myself, you know?

Cooper: I know.

Pause

Lennox: Susan. My Mum's name.

Cooper: Aunty Susan

Lennox: Come to think of it, why does everyone call your Dad Mr Craven? What's his name?

Dylan: Guess!

Lennox: Mmm... Bob? Steve? No wait, something grand for the lord of the manor, Ernest? Bartholomew? Hypoculus!

Cooper: That's not a name!

Lennox: It is now! Well?

Cooper: //Keith

Dylan: //Keith

They burst out laughing.

They settle and contemplate the garden. Maybe there is music.

Dylan: Maybe we could make it nice again

Cooper: For Mum?

Lennox: Yes!

Cooper: I'd like that.

Dylan: You doing okay?

Cooper: I feel a bit... I'll be fine.

Lennox: You said twenty minutes and we need to listen to you.

Cooper: I don't want to spoil it.

Dylan: *You* need to listen to you! You're not spoiling anything.

Lennox: The garden's not going anywhere, we can come back anytime now.

Cooper: To make it beautiful.

Lennox: To make it ours.

Dylan: Our secret. Spit on it!

Lennox: Ugh, what, gross! Can't we just shake?

Dylan: 'Spose so.

SCENE 8

Cooper's room. Cooper is curled up in bed. Dylan sits on the end of her bed and Lennox stands looking out of the window.

MUSIC: This scene is accompanied by piano only, interpreting the script beginning with a high arpeggio riff to mimic the rain*

**Or acoustic guitar if piano not an option*

Lennox: I can't believe it's raining! How long has it been like, not raining, and then today of all days. It's sooooo unfair, that we're stuck in here!

Cooper & Dylan laugh

Lennox: What?

Cooper: Stuck?

Dylan: Inside?

Lennox laughs too

Lennox: Yeah, alright. I'm a changed girl!

Cooper: Dylan, your mum's rubbing off on her. She'll be 'playing' soon, too!

Dylan: Huh!

Lennox and Cooper exchange a look.

Lennox: Tell us a story Cooper, seeing as we're not going anywhere anytime soon.

Cooper: Okay. Let me think of something, one I haven't told you yet. Dylan, you haven't played your keyboard for ages. Play us a tune while I think.

Lennox: I didn't know you played keyboard too!

Dylan: I'm just learning, trying, it's sort of a secret from Mam

Lennox: How did you get it then?

Dylan: Saving up a lot of pocket money.

Cooper: Wheeled it all the way from the village in a wheelbarrow – you should've seen her, bright red in the face!

Dylan: I thought I was going to die! And I've stashed it here, so that, so I can learn it. Myself.

Dylan noodles with new toy throughout.

MUSIC: Piano improvisation in key of D, broken chords played relaxed

Cooper: Right, I've got one. Once upon a time...

Lennox: Of course!

Cooper: There were three friends. Lenny, Coop and Dyl. And they lived in a magical kingdom, in a faraway land

Dylan: Together

Cooper: Together. But then one day -

Martha pops head round door.

Martha: I thought I heard music!

Lennox: Mouth incoming!

Martha: Are we having a party? Everyone invited?

*Martha dances in with a **plate of scones**, Lennox and Cooper laugh, Dylan sulks.*

Martha: What's so funny? I've brought you scones and tea. Fresh out the oven.

Cooper: Thanks, Martha but/

Martha: /Hey, Dyl, what you got/ there?

Dylan: /It's Cooper's. She's teaching me.

Martha: /Room for a little one?

Lennox: We were just/

Martha: /You should've said, I could teach you! I used to be a devil on the keys you know. We could borrow it for you to play at band, couldn't we Cooper?

Dylan: Mam, I just want to have a go/ on my own

MUSIC: Piano becomes more discordant

Martha: /Now, if you just press, ah, yes, I thought, so, what you want to do is/

Dylan: /I'm managing fine by myself/
Martha: /Course you are, pet, but what you want to be doing is/
Dylan: /I really just want to have a/
Martha: Now see gang, if Dylan just gets her scales right, we'll all be able to have a go at/
Dylan: /Mam! Listen!
Martha: (*Embarrassed laughing*) Oh! What's got into you? You turning into a diva? I was just/ teaching everyone
Dylan: /Just don't! Mam! It's not Cooper's. It's mine. I saved for it and I bought it and I can teach/ myself
Martha: /I thought you wanted an accordion?
Dylan: That's what *you* wanted.
Martha: So you lied to me? Now that's not very nice/ is it?
Dylan: /You taking over isn't very nice, you're always taking over, can you just leave us alone? We're busy.

Dylan hammers the keys to cover Martha's words

Martha: I didn't raise you to talk like that! I think you owe me an apology.

Beth enters as Mr Craven with a plate of two scones, butter and jam

MUSIC: Piano improvisation reflects Mr Craven's song, with the note g, f#, d played descending to a Dm chord

Beth: **Oh! I thought, what's going on?**

Martha: We were just/

Dylan: /Mam was just leaving

Martha: Dylan!

Beth: **I bought scones, for, I thought, we could...**

Martha: (*Snapping*) They've already got some. Though I don't know why I/ bothered.

Beth: **/You know loud noise is no good for Cooper.**

Cooper: Oh, dad! We/ were

Beth: ***/It'll give her a headache.***

Martha: I know the feeling. Anyway, two scones aren't going to go very far are they?

Beth: ***Well, I didn't expect the whole house to be here!***

Martha: Don't worry. We're going.

Dylan: Mam!

Beth: ***I think you should all go. Have you forgotten what happened/ last time?***

Lennox: /And what do you want Cooper? Would you like us to stay?

Beth: ***Less of your attitude young lady.***

Cooper: Not now, Lennox.

Lennox: But!

Cooper shakes head.

Cooper: *(Quietly)* Abort

Beth: ***Go and tidy your room. I've seen what a state it is.***

Martha: And you, need to come home right now. You've got homework to do.

MUSIC: Piano pauses

Dylan and Martha leave. Martha goes to take Dylan's hand – shrugs her off. Lennox gives Cooper a quick hug – first one – and follows.

There is an awkward silence.

Cooper: Did you need something?

Beth: ***/No /I***

Cooper: /Oh, I /thought

Beth: ***/I thought we could, you know***

Cooper: Could?

Beth: ***Well I just, I thought we could... scones***

Cooper: Oh! Right. Thanks. They look/ nice

Beth: ***/Well Martha made them. I didn't know you'd already... I just thought we could...***

Cooper: Yes!

There is an awkward pause.

Beth: *(Gesturing to the keyboard) **Where's that come from?***

Cooper: Its Dylan's. She's learning/ to

Beth: ***/Well we'll have to get it moved out of here so she's not making a racket when you're trying to rest. What were you doing anyway?***

Cooper: Just hanging out. We were making up stories. Like we used to, you remember? With Mum.

Beth: ***Right.***

Pause

Cooper: Dad, what's Lennox's Mum like? Aunty Susan?

Beth: ***Trouble. Just like her daughter. Which is why I'd rather you/ didn't***

Cooper: /She's not like that! She's... nice. You should get to know her. She's my friend. Her and Dylan, they're... it's nice. Having friends.

Beth: ***We'll see. I know you think I -. I know it's not easy, not being around people your own age. But you're not well. You must understand...***

Cooper: I just, it's...

Beth: ***You should get some rest before tea.***

Cooper: Yes Dad.

[Pause]

Cooper: Will you tell me a story?

Beth: ***Now?***

Cooper: Like you used to?

Beth: ***Okay. But close your eyes. Try and get some sleep.***

Cooper rolls over, snuggles down.

MUSIC: Piano begins playing arpeggio chords around D – Bm – G – A, with the acoustic guitar accompanying

Beth: ***Right. Well. Once upon a time... there was a princess who lived in the tower of a beautiful old castle in a faraway land.***

He pauses. Watches Cooper breathing. Decides she's asleep.

Beth: ***And there was fire-breathing dragon. Who flew around the castle roaring until the princess became too scared to leave. But really the dragon was also scared. And he didn't know how... to get her out. To set her free.***

MUSIC: Piano and acoustic guitar continue for another 4-8 bars to let the story breathe

SCENE 9

Dylan, Lennox and Cooper in the secret garden - the passage of time is suggested before dialogue begins.

Cooper: Can you believe there was a time we didn't have this?

Lennox: And didn't know each other?

Dylan: And a time when you two hated each other?

Cooper: No!

Lennox: We did like.

They laugh.

Lennox: It's my favourite thing in the world. Just lying here with you two and daydreaming.

Cooper: You've stolen my thing!

Lennox: You don't own daydreaming! It's like, Dyl, what was that thing you said about the robin, when we hung out the first time, do you remember?

Dylan: That you can't own nature.

Lennox: That was it. Same with daydreaming.

Cooper: And stories.

Dylan: And music.

Lennox: Come to think of it... you said that we just look after it for a while, before someone else gets to enjoy it.

Dylan: There's nature all around, isn't there? It belongs to all of us.

Lennox: Like the garden?

Dylan: Well yeah, it belongs to us. You, me and Coop.

Lennox: What if it wasn't just you, me and Coop.

Cooper: What you on about?

Lennox: Imagine if everyone was here. If your Mum and/

Dylan: /No. No way. She'll ruin it.

Lennox: And your Dad.

Cooper: Wait, are you...?

Lennox: I think we should tell. Everyone.

Cooper: //Everyone?

Dylan: //You what?!

Lennox: We've made it so beautiful.

Dylan: Yeah. For us! You just said it was your favourite thing, being here, us three. It won't be like that it, come on Cooper, you get it, don't you?

Cooper: It *is* nice to have somewhere I can just be myself.

Lennox: But what about your Dad? Don't you want him to have the garden too? And to see who you are here?

Dylan: That's not fair! What about me?

Lennox: You can't hide from your Mum forever.

Dylan: Why not? If she'd wanted it, she could have found it herself. But she didn't. We did. The *secret* garden. The clue's in its name!

Lennox: I'm fed up of sneaking around. I don't like lying, don't look at me like that Cooper, it's just...

Dylan: Well?

Lennox: Y'know, everyone thinks I'm so much trouble. But look what we've done. This place is magical. Wouldn't it be nice to show them? What we can do? And doesn't it make you feel... different... being here? Maybe they could do with that too.

Cooper: She's right.

Dylan: Not you too!

Cooper: Look at us before we found the garden. Couldn't say a word to each other without arguing, and now...

Dylan: We're arguing again!

Lennox: I think it will change things. It's magic, isn't it? There's something that just, I don't know, makes you breathe and see things/

Dylan: /like elves/
Lennox: /not quite what I meant. I just think, maybe, if we shared it, if we brought them in here to see what we see, and to see how amazing it is, then maybe everyone would stop shouting at each/ other
Cooper: /and get along.
Lennox: Wouldn't you like that, Dyl? You could show your Mum what you've done. You're the one who knew what to plant where, how to make it so nice.
Cooper: And I could show Dad. Remind him how things used to be.
Lennox: I think they need this.
Dylan: (*quietly*) Okay
Lennox: Yeah?
Dylan: Yeah.
Dylan: But if we're going to do it, we're going to do it *my* way.
Lennox: Alright bossy boots!
Dylan: Agreed?
Cooper: Agreed!
Lennox: Fine. But I'm not spitting on it.

SCENE 10

Night-time in the secret garden.

Lennox: Did it have to be at night-time?

Dylan: Yes! I told you – it looks so beautiful like this.

Cooper: I dreamt about it again last night. But how it is now. Not how it was.

Dylan: Good! We're not trying to make it *that* garden, we're making our garden, making it better. A new start.

Cooper: How do you know they'll come?

Dylan: They will (*looks at her watch*). Oh sugar. Maybe this was a bad idea, maybe we/ should

Lennox: /Don't get cold feet now

Dylan: I should be at band practice. That's how I know Mam will be looking for me. But maybe I should have/ told

Lennox: /Too late!

Cooper: It's okay, she'll understand.

Pause

Cooper: Can I tell you something?

Lennox: Of course! Is it a story?

Cooper: No. Not this time.

Dylan: Go on then.

Cooper: Last night. I couldn't sleep. I was just, happy. My bedroom didn't feel like such a prison anymore. Because I'm not just in there on my own. In limbo. I've got you two now, and adventures of my own. And even when I'm too tired to come out, I know it's still here, and I close my eyes and imagine. I was lying there, thinking about how much has happened. With my eyes closed. And Dad came in. He thought I was asleep. And he sat with me. It felt like ages. And then...

Dylan: What?

Cooper: He kissed me on the head. I don't think he's ever done that before.

Lennox: Never?

Cooper: It was about this time, I think. So he might come in again, and realise I'm gone too.

Lennox: Well, no one ever comes to check on me

Dylan: Your most important people are here already, with you.

Cooper: Besides, they'll realise how quiet it is

Dylan: How peaceful

Lennox: Oi! How are they going to find us anyway? Given that no-one's been here for years

Dylan: Like this (*Fairy lights are turned on*)
They begin to sing, play, Come With Me into the garden. Softly at first, getting louder. They invite the audience to join in.
Beth and Martha burst in.

Martha: Dyl! Oh Dyl, you're okay! I've been so worried.
Dylan and Martha embrace

Beth: I can't believe it, after all these years...

Martha: You weren't at band practice. You never miss a band/ practice

Dylan: /I'm sorry Mam/I

Martha: /Are you okay? Is/ everything okay?

Lennox: //She's fine

Dylan: //Everything's... great. Better than great.

Beth: Would you look at this place? I feel like I'm dreaming

Cooper: Isn't it magic?
Cooper and Lennox point things out to Beth while Dylan and Martha have a moment.

Martha: As long as you're okay. Don't ever do that to me again!

Dylan: I'm sorry, about, everything. I just, you know, I wanted

Martha: Something of your own

Dylan: Yes. How did you...?

Martha: Let me tell you a little secret. I wanted something once, all of my own, that was just for me and no-one else.

Dylan: What happened?

Martha: I got it. I got you. And you were the most brilliant thing that ever happened to me.

Dylan: Mam...

Martha: But sometimes you have to let the thing most precious to you go, just a little bit. Share it with the world so they can all see how wonderful it is.

Dylan: Really?

Martha: Of course! Look at you. I couldn't be more proud of you.

Beth: I knew you were up to something. You think I didn't notice all the things missing out of my shed? The plants you were starting off in your wildlife patch that disappeared, the... oh my gosh the roses! Look at the roses. I could never get 'em to take like that, it must be...

Dylan: Magic?

Cooper: Mum?

Lennox: Us!

Beth gets a bit teary

Cooper: Are you okay?

Beth: It's... I can just see your Mam, so clearly and your Dad right beside her. As always. I hadn't been here long, still getting me whereabouts. And I wandered in here, by mistake, and there she was and he was, and you just a bump in her belly. And she just says come in, join us. Mr Craven pouring us a drink like I was one of the family. Nothing was ever... everything was for everyone.

They could see things were better shared. It was their garden but not because they pushed people out but 'cause we gave them the space, 'cause we all knew somehow that they gave so much of themselves to everyone else.

Cooper: Dad? Sorry, you're including my Dad in this?

Beth: Your Dad was, they were playing music, that's right, he was singing to your Mum with that voice of his. And after I came in, they just carried on. He was laughing and joking, pulling your Mum and me up for a dance and the garden was so full of life

Pause. Martha turns into Mr Craven.

Martha: ***What in the name/ of***

Cooper: /Dad! You came! That means that you do/ kiss me goodnight

Martha: ***/How... You weren't in bed, you weren't, what on earth have you done?***

Cooper: Don't you like it/ we

Martha: ***I've been so worried, I thought something/ had***

Cooper: /I'm fine Dad. I'm okay.

Martha: ***This was our place. It was meant to be kept safe, away from...***

Cooper: Me? It was mine too, remember.

Martha: ***I haven't been in here since...***

Cooper: Are you angry?

Martha: ***Angry? No, I'm just, I can't believe it looks like this, can't believe we're all here. I'm not angry, I'm just, I don't know, it's just you, and being here, and all the memories I've... and everyone, and***

Lennox: Is it like lots of emotions bubbling up inside?

Dylan: And you can't find the words to explain?

Martha/Mr Craven begins to laugh at their earnestness and the absurdness of the whole situation.

Martha: **Yes. Yes, it's exactly like that.**

A release. They all laugh and then subside. Martha/Mr Craven looks at Cooper

Martha: **You know, I can't remember the last time I heard you laugh**

Lennox: Cooper?

Dylan: She's always laughing?

Cooper: I am now.

Beth: It's been a while since we've heard it from you too.

Martha hands Beth the mic, and she becomes Mr Craven

Beth: **Oh Cooper. I've made such a mess of all this. Why have I been so/ stupid**

Cooper: /It's okay.

Beth: **It's not okay. Not at all. I thought. When your Mum died, I couldn't bear the thought of anything happening to you. I felt like I owed it to her, to you to keep you safe, to protect you.**

Martha: You can't wrap them in cotton wool or keep them young forever, much as you might want to. You've got to let them make their own mistakes.

Beth: **You know when your Mum...**

Cooper: Go on. You've got to say it.

Beth: **When your Mum died. You had so many questions. All the time. When's she coming back? What's happened? Why/**

Cooper: I'm sorry, I/ didn't

Beth: **/No! You mustn't be sorry. Not at all.**

Martha: Never apologise for asking questions. It's how we learn about the world and ourselves. /We

Beth: ***/But I didn't know how to, what to say. I should have had all the answers and I didn't.***

Lennox: That's stupid -. Sorry

Beth: ***You're right Lennox. It was.***

Cooper: No-one can know all of the answers to everything Dad.

Lennox: Your head would explode.

Beth: ***I was just so scared of getting it wrong. And then you got so ill. And the thing I could do, the thing I knew how to do was to work, and make schedules, and keep things calm, ordered. I thought if I could just keep everything going it would be okay. But I should have ben there for you. And I wasn't.***

Cooper: But you can be, now. Can't you? We can work out the answers, together, learn together. I'm already working stuff out. I've made friends, proper friends.

Lennox: Who's that then?

Cooper: That's Lennox. You might know her? She's really rude and loud.

Lennox: Nah!

Cooper: But also loyal and brave.

Lennox: Sounds more like it.

Cooper: And Dylan

Lennox: Who is the kindest, best gardener nature person I know – sorry Beth, you're very good too – and who would do anything for anyone

Dylan: And Cooper who is funny and smart, and tells the best stories

Cooper: And who both accepted me for me. I *am* funny and smart. And grumpy too. I don't want to be the same as everyone else. I'm ill. Not invisible. They didn't ask me to change, to be someone I'm not. They changed the things around me so I could just be me.

Beth: ***And you are perfect.***

Cooper: You mean that?

Beth: ***Of course I do. I'm sorry you didn't know that already.***

Martha: I can't believe the garden was coming back to life, right under our noses. That you three were cultivating it, nurturing it, all this time without us knowing

Beth: ***You three? You've done all of this? Together?***

Martha: Eee... You've even mended the swing

Beth: ***Her swing?***

Cooper: Was that really// Mum's?

Beth: ***//Mum's. She would love this.***

Cooper: And you?

Beth: ***I love it, just like I love you.***

Cooper: I love you too Dad.

Beth shrugs off Mr Craven and becomes Beth again.

Martha: You know, I can just picture her now, smiling, looking at us all together in here. It's just what she would've wanted.

Beth: Come on then, who's going to show us round?

Dylan: And that's how it happened.

Lennox: Maybe.

Dylan: How the garden was found and opened up and allowed to live again. Just like us.

Cooper: And this isn't the end of the story. Because the best stories never really end. So this is just the end of a chapter and the beginning of a new one.

Lennox: Sometimes, even if you don't know what's going to happen

Cooper: And you don't have all the answers

Martha: Or any of them

Dylan: You have to try.

Cooper: You make friends
Lennox: And ask questions
Beth: And figure things out as you go
All: Together
Lennox: Like we came together to tell you this story.
Beth: That was told because of you, for you and with you.
Dylan: We've never told it this way before, we never could, without you.
Martha: Spending your precious time here with us.
Lennox: And it ends,
Dylan: like it always does,
Cooper: with music.
All: And we sing and we dance
Whene'er we get chance
Like we've done since forever
'Cause it holds us together
Harmonise, sing in time
Count the bars with our feet
The day we grow silent,
Is the day we are beat,
So, come and join us now,
Let's make this moment count
Raise the roof, shake the windows
Let everybody hear us
And the music it's spreads
And the sound it is glorious.
And we sing and we dance
Whene'er we get chance

The cast encourage the audience to clap and join in with the singing.