

## The Garden Party

The weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, and the sky without a cloud. The blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the daisy plants had seemed to shine. As for the roses, hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee. "Where do you want the marquee put, mother?"

"My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest."

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green towel, with a dark, wet curl stamped on each cheek. "You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one," she said. Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread and butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors and, besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried sticks covered with rolls of canvas, and they had big tool bags slung on their backs. "Good morning," said Laura, copying her mother's voice. It sounded so unusual that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, "Oh—er—have you come—is it about the marquee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow. He shifted his tool bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's about it."

"Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!" a voice cried from the house.

"Coming!" Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch, desperate to know what was so urgent.

## Questions

1. The author describes the weather as 'ideal'. In your own words can you explain what ideal means?

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2. What jobs had the gardener been doing since dawn?

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3. Find and copy the name of two flowers from the garden.

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4. Why could Meg not go and supervise the men with the marquee?

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5. 'Away Laura flew...' Why do you think the author used 'flew' instead of 'walked'?

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6. Who do you think was on the phone for Laura and why?

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7. Would you like to have a garden party? Explain your answer.

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8.

Using the text to help you, draw a picture of the scene in the garden.

