

## Marguerite's Garden, excerpt

She was on all fours, pounding the ground, screaming, "*HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME!*" she cried, "*How could you do this to me?*" when Adrian came upon her.

He had decided to drop by for a visit, even after the argument with his brother, and he still had the invitation to deliver. He had placed a rush order on Wednesday night, and had the invitations by Friday night, dropping them in the mail yesterday morning. He had held on to Marguerite's, planning to deliver it personally.

Adrian had tried calling ahead from his car, but there had been no answer. And when he got to the house, there was no answer at the door either. Taking a chance – remembering the last time there had been no answer at this door – he tried the knob, and it was indeed open. He made a mental note to talk to Maggie about this very bad habit.

The house was as silent as a tomb. He called out Marguerite's name to no avail, but he knew... rather, he felt she was there... somewhere.

Stepping onto the back patio, he felt like he was stepping into another world. It was quiet and cool, comfortably so for late September. He had been back there before, but he didn't recall its being so peaceful, neat, and clean. *Probably because it was over-run with people at the time.*

There were plants everywhere – hanging and in pots, at different points around the patio, growing up lattices and around beams that supported the cover and shaded the area – and looking at the rest of the backyard, he realized, for the first time, that the lot had to be several acres! He assumed Marguerite tended it herself since she had never mentioned having a professional gardener. Maggie had told him that she enjoyed gardening but he never really understood. Enjoyed was an *understatement*.

He finally heard the rhythmic sound of digging/slicing and moved toward it, leaving the shade of the patio and turning right, following the path of red concrete pavers to the large vegetable garden. It, too,

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was beautiful and orderly, but what he saw alarmed him, Marguerite was destroying a large section of her garden!

His first instinct was to rush up and stop the destruction, but then, he held back when she cried out, finally stopping herself. She was sobbing and panting from all her effort, looking around at what she had done. Then she crumbled to the ground crying all the harder. Adrian didn't think there could be anything good about such anguish, and he moved slowly toward the huddled form. "Marguerite?" asking softly.

She immediately gasped in shock, trying to stifle a sob, she thought she had been alone. She couldn't acknowledge him until she felt a little more under control.

"*Marguerite?*" he called a little louder, thinking she didn't hear him the first time. "It's me... Adrian."

"Go *away!*" she cried hoarsely.

Adrian's insides jumped at the vehemence in her voice, and he tried to remember if he had done anything to offend her.

This was *Marguerite's* garden! This was *her* world, and if she wanted to cry here, she could cry here, and if she wanted to laugh, she would laugh here. If she wanted to strip naked and scream, she was going to *strip naked and scream!*

But then, Adrian wouldn't know this, he hadn't been there at the family argument. She thought her family would have taken the hint when she left them in the house fighting but, Nooo, they followed her into her garden, bringing the stupid argument with them! At the display of her temper, the bone of contention was miraculously forgotten – they had never seen her so angry. She put them all out of her garden!

From that day, the garden officially became Marguerite's domain, everyone trod carefully and respectfully upon entering, even William Tolliver. "Please leave me alone!" she spoke more gently, but forcefully, without looking at him.

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Adrian knew that she wanted to be alone, but *he* didn't think that was good for her. He looked over toward the back of the lot while he thought about what to do. There was an orchard back there, *Does Marguerite tend this, too?* He didn't think it a good question to ask at the moment. "You have a beautiful garden, Maggie. I think I'll go exploring," and he walked off, toward the trees! Adrian's *subtle* way of saying he wasn't leaving, but he would give her time alone.

Marguerite was dumbfounded! *Who the hell does he think he is?* She asked herself, trying to figure him out, wiping her tears and nose on her sleeve. She was so angry and so eager to give him a piece of her mind, she stepped on the hem of her dress and fell back to the ground, ripping the seam at her waist, "*Shit!*" she hissed, getting even more frustrated, and angry. She saw that he had gone in the direction of the orchard and was marching right behind him. As she was stomping towards him, she tried to calm herself down...

*Now, Marguerite... he's just concerned about you. Try to understand...* But she didn't *feel* like understanding! *Why am I the one that always has to understand... Huh???*

The closer Adrian got to the orchard the more awed he became – there were so many trees. There was a cleared area right before the orchard, and there was a pile of lumber plopped down, right in the middle of it. He continued past it, intending to ask Maggie about it later.

The conversation he had had with his brother had come back to him while he was out there, and after a glimpse at Maggie's suffering, he knew that Jonathan had been right. So, along with his promise to Jo, to not hurt Marguerite, Adrian promised himself that he wouldn't use her.

He was peering up a tree when she came upon him. Adrian had seen her marching up out of the corner of his eye, and when he looked at her, the sun playing against her back made her cotton sundress transparent – she was absolutely naked beneath. *Dear God...* he thought in some awe, watching her stand before him, just vibrating with anger, *She's so beautiful! How can I not have her?*

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Marguerite couldn't see what he was looking at past his sunglasses, nor did she even notice that his mouth was slightly ajar. She only knew that he was infringing on *her* privacy, and in *her* garden... *uninvited!*

As his eyes moved up her body, he realized her dress was bunched in her right hand at her waist, and he wondered, *What did she do to her dress?* When his eyes finally landed on her face, he saw absolute indignation. She was so angry and trying to control it. He wanted to smile at her effort, but didn't. "Is this an apple tree?"

"Yes."

"Are they all apple?"

"No..." Marguerite wanted to rail at him but, for some reason, she couldn't. "If you look at the leaves you will see that they're all different." She told herself that he was trying to be nice, so she tried to be nice, too. "I have some peaches over there..." she pointed without enthusiasm, "and apricots over there. There are others, too."

"Wow!" he was impressed. "You spend a lot of time out here, don't you?"

"I guess so."

"I've tried reaching you several times during the week, and yesterday. Were you out here all of that time?"

"Probably... most of it anyway."

"You really should get a cordless phone." Adrian raised her hackles again in *2 seconds flat* as he proceeded to tell her what else she really needed to do. "And you should really keep your door locked while back here! "Why, anyone could walk right in and..."

"Look here! I don't need a son – I already have one!"

"And I don't need a mother, one is quite enough!" he snapped back, offended by her lack of appreciation for his concern for her.

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Marguerite was stunned, and flustered. She wasn't sure how to respond to this supremely arrogant man, leaning smugly against *her* tree!

"But I thought you might need a friend!"

Marguerite, for some reason, felt the one properly chastened, when it should have been the other way around. She admitted to herself that she had misplaced her anger, making Adrian the target because he happened to be there, but something in all of this wasn't right! Thinking was such a task around him. "I'm sorry," she said quietly before turning on her heels and stalking angrily away.

Adrian again suppressed his wild urge to giggle, thinking, *Serves her right! Let her be the disconcerted one for once!*

"So... Maggie!" he called after her, *taunting* her.

"Marguerite, dammit... *Call me Marguerite!*" she yelled back.

"OK, OK... Marguerite," Adrian wondered what put her in such a snit. "Are we still friends?"