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FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

Reader and singer take their places. Gardenia is behind scenes.

READER:

It was early in spring. The sun was shining and the earth was coming awake after its winter asleep. Gardenia was in her garden looking for signs of life. She loved her garden with its many varieties of beautiful flowers. This year she decided she would try to find some new species--- some that she had never planted before. If only the seed catalogue would come. There was the postman now. She would see if perchance the catalogue had come today. Singing happily she left the garden and entered the house.

The READER is seated. The SOLOIST sings one verse of "The Flowers That Bloom in the Spring". GARDENIA enters as music is sung. She picks up the mail and glances through it. There is the seed catalogue. She takes it eagerly and sits in her chair studying its pages carefully.

READER:

At last: That precious catalogue has arrived. Now let's see-- something new; something different. The cosmos and the marigold looked so attractive, but no--she had those. Here were some new snap-dragons, maybe they would be different. OH, NO: Here was what she really was looking for: In big letters all over the page she read these words, "Plant a Friendship Garden this year. Have a surprise: Even the most ardent gardener will be delighted with these lovely varieties. Watch them grow, see their brilliant colors at the height of summer." On and on went the advertisement, but Gardenia was sold already. Out came the order blank. A garden of friendship: Just think: She would order five packets of Friendship seeds and see what they would bring forth. She sealed the letter and hastened to the post office with it, singing happily as she went.

The READER is seated. The SOLOIST sings the following song, "Bringing in the Sheaves" (1st verse) as Gardenia with letter in hand leaves the room.

READER: (continues as GARDENIA enters to look at mail and find the seeds.)

Time passed. The seeds arrived. How happy GARDENIA was as she opened the parcel: Her seeds of friendship. Who ever thought of such an idea: Think--if she planted only these five packets how many seeds she would have at the end of the season--that is if she tended the garden carefully. "That is just like life", mused GARDENIA. "If we plant the seeds of friendship and then care for them, there will be enough and more for all those about us. And then if they in turn will sow, in time beautiful friendships will be scattered all over the earth. No more wars, no more distress, no more worries, for true friends are those who never forsake us, no matter what we do." She was reminded of a song she had learned as a small child in Sunday School and she sang it softly as she went out into her garden to plant her friendship seeds.

The READER is seated.

The SOLOSIST sings softly one verse of "I Would Be True." (1st verse)
Exit GARDENIA.

READER:

Summer arrived in all its brightness. The seeds of friendship grew and grew and now the first one was beginning to burst its bud. GARDENIA could hardly wait until the blossom opened so that she might see its color. Then one morning early she was rewarded. There was the bloom from the first packet of seeds: "How lovely, how lovely!" exclaimed GARDENIA. "It is the color of the sky when all the clouds have vanished. Its petals are like thin filmy veils and the leaves like swords. The sword and the veil--now where have I heard that before? I wish I knew the name of this beautiful flower." Suddenly it occurred to GARDENIA that in her eagerness to order the seeds, she had not finished reading the page in the catalogue. Carefully she picked the flower and brought it into her home.

Enter GARDENIA: She acts out the script as the Reader continues:

Then she took out her catalogue again to see if she could identify her flower. Yes, here it was. The flower's name was Fidelity. "How appropriate for this blue blossom, and how appropriate too, in a friendship garden, for in real life no friendship could flourish without fidelity." GARDENIA placed the flower carefully in a vase and went about her work.

The READER is seated. GARDENIA holds the flower in her hand while the 2nd verse of "I Would Be True." are sung, then places it in the vase and retires.

READER:

The next morning as GARDENIA was watering her garden she discovered a bright yellow flower gaily nodding its head in the breeze. Another seed come to life! "It reminds me of a sheaf of golden grain," mused GARDENIA. "Now I wonder what this is called. Back to the catalogue we go."

Enter GARDENIA: She goes to the table and scans the catalogue as the reader continues:

"Well, I never! Your name, lovely flower, is Constancy. It just suits you too. And you surely belong in a Friendship garden for where would friendship be without Constancy. It wouldn't be at all, to my way of thinking."

READER is seated. GARDENIA holds the flower as the song "Sweet Little Buttercup" is sung and leaves as the last lines are sung (By SOLOIST)

READER:

"I declare," exclaimed GARDENIA the following morning. "One-a-day brand, is it?" as she found the third packet of seeds in bloom. "My, you're regal and stately. You remind me of a Queen. Where are your crowns and sceptors? Such gorgeous white robes you wear!. Now don't tell me your name, let me guess. They must be Purity or perhaps Loyalty. We'll soon find out. Good old seed catalogue knows everything. I'll take one of you along with me so the rest of you may know if my guess is right."

Enter GARDENIA who goes to the catalogue again as the reading continues.

READER:

Well, what do you know. Right twice! The regal bloom in the packet of Friendship seeds is known as the Purity flower, though it is also called Loyalty. How nice. A Queen should be pure and loyal and so should a friend. If a friend isn't loyal she isn't a friend at all. And if we do not have purity in thought and deed, we will be very poor friends to others.

READER is seated, GARDENIA leaves as song (1st verse) "In the Garden" is sung by SOLOIST.

READER:

As usual GARDENIA was out early to visit her garden. Today another precious bud would bloom. But no, there were no new flowers today. What she had expected to produce a bloom remained green as a Fern. She walked away disappointed. At noon she came again and still she saw only the green. "I will wait until evening," she said, hopefully. "Just a green fern," she thought. "How disappointing!" As she was about to leave she heard the voice of a neighbor singing sweetly.

READER is seated. SOLOIST sings the second verse of "In The Garden."

READER:

GARDENIA stood very still. It was as if an inner voice had spoken to her. "How stupid I am!" she exclaimed at the close of the song. "How little faith I have. The green is a symbol of everlasting life and hope--and I stood gazing upon it twice today without seeing it. Green is Faith. And my friendship garden has this faith. We all must have it if we would have friendships.

The lights are lowered slowly. GARDENIA enters with her fern and stands by the table as the last verse of "In the Garden" is sung. She reverently places the green in the vase. As the chorus is sung, she leaves the room. At the close of the song the lights are brightened.

READER:

"Today," said Gardenia as she went to her garden, "I will have more faith. Only one more surprise in the friendship garden. How wonderful it has all been." There bobbing brightly up and down were rows of brilliant red blossoms. GARDENIA was delighted. "Why, they look just like cups--and they are filled with dew. How hospitable you are, dear flowers, offering me refreshments the very first time I come to see you. And I know your names too. You are Love and Charity. For by now I have found out that no garden of friendship can be complete without you. You give the final touch to the garden. Flowers of Fidelity, Constancy, Loyalty and Love surrounded by the magnificent robe of Faith. How carefully I shall tend you that you may produce an abundance of seeds. Just having you for myself would be too selfish. I must share you with my friends."

All summer the friendship garden thrived. In the early fall the plants began to rest and the seeds were formed. GARDENIA carefully gathered them all that not one might be lost. She placed them in attractive little packets and tied them up with bright ribbons, took them to her many friends that they too might share with her these seeds of Friendship which would again blossom into fragrant and beautiful flowers.

The READER is seated. GARDENIA enters with the basket of seeds. She passes these to all Chapter guests as the musician plays appropriate music. GARDENIA then leaves the room.