don't work out, I shall simply move on and you may keep my payment in full.
ROSE. But that would be unfair to you, Lady Bramble.
LOTTY. But things will work out, Lady Bramble. You'll see. I'm quite sure we're all going to be the very best of friends. Better than friends! Sisters!
CAROLINE. *(Warily.)* Yes. Well, let's start then by not calling me Lady Bramble. Mother is Lady Bramble. Call me Lady Caroline.
LOTTY. *(Beaming.)* Lady Caroline!
CAROLINE. Well. *(She lifts her hand in a graceful salute.) All'Italia! (Lotty and Rose stare, perplexed. Caroline explains.)* To Italy. *(Lotty smiles and lifts her hand, fumbling enthusiastically.)*
LOTTY. *All'Italia! (They look at Rose. She frowns, considers, lifts a fist with stiff reluctance. Thunder.)*

Scene 6

Rain. The home of Mrs. Graves. A table, three chairs, a coat rack with coats and umbrellas. Lotty and Rose are seated, silent. Mrs. Graves paces imperiously. She is heavily dressed, highly proper, and walks with the aid of a stick.

MRS. GRAVES. If we are to spend the whole of a month together, I consider it preferable that certain ground rules be spelled out sooner rather than later. I do not approve of modern language, behavior or thinking. I find informal idioms of speech unacceptable, and will not tolerate them. I take breakfast promptly at seven in the morning, luncheon at noon, tea at half past four, and dinner at quarter to eight. I like nuts. I am not interested in idle conversation. My only desire is to sit quietly and remember.
ROSE. Yes, well …
MRS. GRAVES. *(Not listening, sitting down to a bowl of nuts.)* Although I have great fondness for the Italian seaside, I have no fondness whatsoever for those native customs so many find charming. I would expect such behavior to remain outside of our retreat.
LOTTY. Yes, I'm sure …
MRS. GRAVES. Now to which of you does the castle belong?

LOTTY. Oh, to none of us, Mrs. Graves. We haven't even seen it. It was advertised. Mrs. Arnott and I have rented it.
MRS. GRAVES. *(Appalled.)* Rented?! How do you know it isn't a dilapidation?
ROSE. We've corresponded with the owner, a Mr. Antony Wilding. It appears to be most agreeable.
LOTTY. There's a private beach, and olive groves, and bushels and bushels of wisteria. *(Mrs. Graves thinks, cracks open a nut.)*
MRS. GRAVES. I am very fond of wisteria. The house at Box Hill was covered with it. I remember once my father and I …
LOTTY. Your father lived at Box Hill, Mrs. Graves?
MRS. GRAVES. Of course not. George Meredith lived at Box Hill. The writer. My father often took me there on invitation.
ROSE. You knew George Meredith, Mrs. Graves?
MRS. GRAVES. My father traveled among all the great men. *(She rises, points her stick at unseen portraits.)* Carlyle. Arnold. Tennyson.
LOTTY. Tennyson, Rose. Imagine!
MRS. GRAVES. As I was saying …
LOTTY. *(Pointing.)* Is that a photograph of Tennyson, Mrs. Graves?
MRS. GRAVES. No. That is a photograph of Mr. Clayton Graves, my late husband. A sizable difference, I assure you. *(Raises her stick. Lotty and Rose flinch.) That* is Tennyson. And I am the young girl with the pigtail. Which, I might add, gave the great one no small delight. He would often tell my father …
LOTTY. *(Excitedly.)* Did you know Keats, Mrs. Graves?
ROSE. Lotty! *(Mrs. Graves freezes.)*
MRS. GRAVES. Keats?!
LOTTY. Yes. John Keats. The poet.
MRS. GRAVES. I am well aware … *(Frigidly.)* I did not know Keats, Mrs. Wilton.
LOTTY. Oh.
MRS. GRAVES. And if that is the direction in which you are heading, I regret to inform you that I was also unacquainted with Shakespeare.
LOTTY. Of course. The immortals seem so alive, don't they? One forgets sometimes that they are dead.
MRS. GRAVES. Many for quite some time.
LOTTY. It was just that I thought I saw Keats the other day.
ROSE. Lotty!
MRS. GRAVES. Saw Keats?!
LOTTY. Yes. Crossing the street in Hampstead, in front of his house.