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**Your commentary should be focused on *negation*.**

As the drive descended to the valley so the trees came in upon us, great beeches with lovely smooth white stems, lifting their myriad branches to one another, and other trees, trees I could not name, coming close, so close that I could touch them with my hands. On we went, over a little  
5 bridge that spanned a narrow stream, and still this drive that was no drive twisted and turned like an enchanted ribbon through the dark and silent woods, penetrating even deeper to the very heart surely of the forest itself, and still there was no clearing, no space to hold a house.

The length of it began to nag at my nerves; it must be this turn, I  
10 thought, or round that further bend; but as I leaned forward in my seat I was forever disappointed, there was no house, no field, no broad and friendly garden, nothing but the silence and deep woods. The lodge gates were a memory, and the high road something belonging to another time, another world.

15 Suddenly I saw a clearing in the dark drive ahead, and a patch of sky, and in a moment the dark trees had thinned, the nameless shrubs had disappeared, and on either side of us was a wall of color, bloodred, reaching far above our heads. We were among the rhododendrons. There was something bewildering, even shocking, about the suddenness of  
20 their discovery. The woods had not prepared me for them. They startled me with their crimson faces, massed one upon the other in incredible profusion, showing no leaf, no twig, nothing but the slaughterous red, luscious and fantastic, unlike any rhododendron plant I had seen before.

I glanced at Maxim. He was smiling. 'Like them?' he said.

25 I told him 'Yes,' a little breathlessly, uncertain whether I was speaking the truth or not, for to me a rhododendron was a homely, domestic thing, strictly conventional, mauve or pink in color, standing one beside the other in a neat round bed. And these were monsters, rearing to the sky, massed like a battalion, too beautiful I thought, too powerful; they were  
30 not plants at all.

We were not far from the house now, I saw the drive broaden to the sweep I had expected, and with the bloodred wall still flanking us on

either side, we turned the last corner, and so came to Manderley. Yes, there it was, the Manderley I had expected, the Manderley of my picture  
35 postcard long ago. A thing of grace and beauty, exquisite and faultless, lovelier even than I had ever dreamed, built in its hollow of smooth grassland and mossy lawns, the terraces sloping to the gardens, and the gardens to the sea. As we drove up to the wide stone steps and stopped before the open door, I saw through one of the mullioned windows that  
40 the hall was full of people, and I heard Maxim swear under his breath. 'Damn that woman,' he said; 'she knows perfectly well I did not want this sort of thing,' and he put on the brakes with a jerk.

'What's the matter?' I said. 'Who are all those people?'

'I'm afraid you will have to face it now,' he said, in irritation.

45 'Mrs. Danvers has collected the whole damned staff in the house and on the estate to welcome us. It's all right, you won't have to say anything, I'll do it all.'

I fumbled for the handle of the door, feeling slightly sick, and cold now too from the long drive, and as I fumbled with the catch the butler came  
50 down the steps, followed by a footman, and he opened the door for me.

He was old, he had a kind face, and I smiled up at him, holding out my hand, but I don't think he could have seen, for he took the rug instead, and my small dressing-case, and turned to Maxim, helping me from the car at the same time.

55 'Well, here we are, Frith,' said Maxim, taking off his gloves. 'It was raining when we left London. You don't seem to have had it here. Everyone well?'

'Yes, sir, thank you, sir. No, we have had a dry month on the whole. Glad to see you home, and hope you have been keeping well. And Madam  
60 too.'

'Yes, we are both well, thank you, Frith. Rather tired from the drive, and wanting our tea. I didn't expect this business.'