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KEEP CALM AND READ SHORT STORIES

Навчально-методичний посібник

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SHORT STORIES

A short story is one of the most popular forms of literature. Even though it is a fiction, a product of the author’s imagination, you may become interested in reading it because it deals with people, places, actions, and events that seem to familiar. At other times it may stir your imagination because it deals with the fantastic – or unusual. Whatever your reason for enjoying a particular short, you will find that because it is short, you can usually read it in one sitting.

A short story is made up of elements: plot, character, setting, point of view, and theme. The plot is the sequence of events in the story. The characters are the people, and sometimes the animals, that play a role in the story. The setting is where and when the events take place. Often the plot, characters, and setting work together to reveal a theme, or insight into life.

Adventure stories, mysteries, science-fiction, animal-tales – these are just a few of the varied types of short stories that authors write. In this paper you will encounter many of these types, and you will learn strategies to help you understand and appreciate short stories more thoroughly.

"Risk! Risk anything! Care no more for the opinion of others ...
Do the hardest thing on earth for you.
Act for yourself. Face the truth."

Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923) is remembered for her short stories and poems. Considered a modernist, Katherine Mansfield wrote several short story collections with some of her most popular stories being The Garden Party, A Dill Pickle, Mr and Mrs Dove, and The Fly. Some consider her one of the best short story writers of all time. In this lesson, we will learn about Katherine Mansfield's life and her career.

Katherine Mansfield was born in Wellington, New Zealand in 1888. Mansfield was the middle child, with two older and two younger siblings. As a teenager, she had a few stories published in her high school's magazine.

In 1903, she and her sisters were enrolled at the Queen's College in London, England. Katherine perfected her cello skills and worked as an editor for the school's newspaper.

While she finished her education, she traveled across Europe, and in 1906, she went home to New Zealand for several years before returning to London. In London, she had an affair with a man named Garnet Trowell, and she became pregnant; however, she then married George Charles Bowden. Garnet's family did not approve of their relationship and her mother was furious with her, so Katherine was sent to a spa in Germany. During her stay, she miscarried, and when returned to London again in 1910, she had completely changed.

In 1910, Katherine Mansfield began writing more regularly, and her work was being published. Editor John Middleton Murry rejected a story she sent into the magazine Rhythm, so she sent him her story The Woman at the Store, which he accepted. Katherine Mansfield and John Murry engaged in a romantic relationship after the submission of this story. The two were married in 1918, just after Katherine's divorce from Bowden was finalized. During this time, Mansfield published several stories, including How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped, A Dill Pickle, and Millie. Due to her continuous affairs with other men and women, her relationship with Murry was very unstable, and they continuously separated and reunited, although they never divorced.

Mansfield's health began to decline just as her work started receiving international attention. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1917. Despite her health, she published two major collections, Bliss in 1920, and The Garden Party in 1922.

During her writing career, Mansfield was incredibly inspired by the works of Oscar Wilde and Anton Chekhov. Her many friends included Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence, both of whom helped her get published. At the height of her career, she was considered a modernist, a writer during this time period who went against traditional literary traditions.

Literary modernism was a literary movement that reacted to the industrialization of the world. Writers in this movement moved away from romantic ideals in favor of sparse details, first person point of view, stream of consciousness, and a close look at the harsh realities of the world. Many of Mansfield's short stories, including the ones briefly covered in this lesson, follow these principles.

Even before she died at the age of thirty-four Katherine Mansfield had achieved a reputation as one of the most talented writers

of the modern short story in English. From 1910 publications in periodicals like the New Age through the five volumes of stories published before her death, Mansfield was recognized as innovative, accessible, and psychologically acute, one of the pioneers of the avant-garde in the creation of the short story.

Her *language* was clear and precise; her emotion and reaction to experience carefully distilled and resonant. Her use of *image and symbol* were sharp, suggestive, and new without seeming forced or written to some preconceived formula. Her *themes* were various: the difficulties and ambivalences of families and sexuality, the fragility and vulnerability of relationships, the complexities and insensitivities of the rising middle classes, the social consequences of war, and overwhelmingly the attempt to extract whatever beauty and vitality one can from mundane and increasingly difficult experience.

A CUP OF TEA

Rosemary Fell was not exactly beautiful. No, you couldn't have called her beautiful. Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces... But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces? She was young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and her parties were the most delicious mixture of the really important people and... artists – quaint creatures, discoveries of hers, some of them too terrifying for words, but others quite presentable and amusing.

Rosemary had been married two years. She had a duck of a boy. No, not Peter – Michael. And her husband absolutely adored her. They were rich, really rich, not just comfortably well off, which is odious and stuffy and sounds like one's grandparents. But if Rosemary wanted to shop she would go to Paris as you and I would go to Bond Street. If she wanted to buy flowers, the car pulled up at that perfect shop in Regent Street, and Rosemary inside the shop just gazed in her dazzled, rather exotic way, and said: "I want those and those and those. Give me four bunches of those. And that jar of roses. Yes, I'll have all the roses in the jar. No, no lilac. I hate lilac. It's got no shape." The attendant bowed and put the lilac out of sight, as though this was only too true; lilac was dreadfully shapeless. "Give me those stumpy little tulips. Those red and white ones." And she was followed to the car by a thin shop-girl staggering under an immense white paper armful that looked like a baby in long clothes....

One winter afternoon she had been buying something in a little antique shop in Curzon Street. It was a shop she liked. For one thing, one usually had it to oneself. And then the man who kept it was ridiculously fond of serving her. He beamed whenever she came in. He clasped his hands; he was so gratified he could scarcely speak.

Flattery, of course. All the same, there was something... "You see, madam," he would explain in his low respectful tones, "I love my things. I would rather not part with them than sell them to someone who does not appreciate them, who has not that fine feeling which is so rare..." And, breathing deeply, he unrolled a tiny square of blue velvet and pressed it on the glass counter with his pale finger-tips. Today it was a little box. He

had been keeping it for her. He had shown it to nobody as yet. An exquisite little enamel box with a glaze so fine it looked as though it had been baked in cream. On the lid a minute creature stood under a flowery tree, and a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck. Her hat, really no bigger than a geranium petal, hung from a branch; it had green ribbons. And there was a pink cloud like a watchful cherub floating above their heads.

Rosemary took her hands out of her long gloves. She always took off her gloves to examine such things. Yes, she liked it very much. She loved it; it was a great duck. She must have it. And, turning the creamy box, opening and shutting it, she couldn't help noticing how charming her hands were against the blue velvet. The shopman, in some dim cavern of his mind, may have dared to think so too. For he took a pencil, leant over the counter, and his pale, bloodless fingers crept timidly towards those rosy, flashing ones, as he murmured gently: "If I may venture to point out to madam, the flowers on the little lady's bodice."

"Charming!" Rosemary admired the flowers. But what was the price? For a moment the shopman did not seem to hear. Then a murmur reached her.

"Twenty eight guineas, madam."

"Twenty-eight guineas." Rosemary gave no sign. She laid the little box down; she buttoned her gloves again. Twenty-eight guineas. Even if one is rich...

She looked vague. She stared at a plump tea-kettle like a plump hen above the shopman's head, and her voice was dreamy as she answered: "Well, keep it for me – will you? I'll..."

But the shopman had already bowed as though keeping it for her was all any human being could ask. He would be willing, of course, to keep it for her for ever.

The discreet door shut with a click. She was outside on the step, gazing at the winter afternoon. Rain was falling, and with the rain it seemed the dark came too, spinning down like ashes. There was a cold bitter taste in the air, and the newlighted lamps looked sad. Sad were the lights in the houses opposite. Dimly they burned as if regretting something. And people hurried by, hidden under their hateful umbrellas. Rosemary felt a strange pang. She pressed her muff against her breast; she wished she had the little box, too, to cling to.

Of course the car was there. She'd only to cross the pavement. But still she waited. There are moments, horrible moments in life, when one emerges from shelter and looks out, and it's awful. One oughtn't to give way to them. One ought to go home and have an extraspecial tea. But at the very instant of thinking that, a young girl, thin, dark, shadowy – where had she come from? - was standing at Rosemary's elbow and a voice like a sigh, almost like a sob, breathed: "Madam, may I speak to you a moment?"

"Speak to me?" Rosemary turned. She saw a little battered creature with enormous eyes, someone quite young, no older than herself, who clutched at her coat-collar with reddened hands, and shivered as though she had just come out of the water. "M-madam, stammered the voice. Would you let me have the price of a cup of tea?"

"A cup of tea?" There was something simple, sincere in that voice; it wasn't in the least the voice of a beggar. "Then have you no money at all?" asked Rosemary.

"None, madam," came the answer.

"How extraordinary!" Rosemary peered through the dusk and the girl gazed back at her. How more than extraordinary! And suddenly it seemed to Rosemary such an adventure. It was

like something out of a novel by Dostoevsky, this meeting in the dusk. Supposing she took the girl home? Supposing she did do one of those things she was always reading about or seeing on the stage, what would happen? It would be thrilling. And she heard herself saying afterwards to the amazement of her friends: “I simply took her home with me,” as she stepped forward and said to that dim person beside her: “Come home to tea with me.”The girl drew back startled. She even stopped shivering for a moment.

Rosemary put out a hand and touched her arm. “I mean it,” she said, smiling. And she felt how simple and kind her smile was. “Why won't you? Do. Come home with me now in my car and have tea.”

“You – you don't mean it, madam,” said the girl, and there was pain in her voice.

“But I do,” cried Rosemary. “I want you to. To please me. Come along.”

The girl put her fingers to her lips and her eyes devoured Rosemary. “You're – you're not taking me to the police station?” she stammered.

“The police station!” Rosemary laughed out. “Why should I be so cruel? No, I only want to make you warm and to hear - anything you care to tell me.” Hungry people are easily led. The footman held the door of the car open, and a moment later they were skimming through the dusk.

“There!” said Rosemary. She had a feeling of triumph as she slipped her hand through the velvet strap. She could have said, “Now I've got you,” as she gazed at the little captive she had netted. But of course she meant it kindly. Oh, more than kindly. She was going to prove to this girl that – wonderful things did happen in life, that – fairy godmothers were real, that - rich people had

hearts, and that women were sisters. She turned impulsively, saying'. “Don't be frightened.

After all, why shouldn't you come back with me? We’re both women. If I’m the more fortunate, you ought to expect...”

But happily at that moment, for she didn't know how the sentence was going to end, the car stopped. The bell was rung, the door opened, and with a charming, protecting, almost embracing movement, Rosemary drew the other into the hall. Warmth, softness, light, a sweet scent, all those things so familiar to her she never even thought about them, she watched that other receive. It was fascinating. She was like the rich little girl in her nursery with all the cupboards to open, all the boxes to unpack. “Come, come upstairs,” said Rosemary, longing to begin to be generous.

“Come up to my room.” And, besides, she wanted to spare this poor little thing from being stared at by the servants; she decided as they mounted the stairs she would not even ring to Jeanne, but take off her things by herself. The great things were to be natural! And “There!” cried Rosemary again, as they reached her beautiful big bedroom with the curtains drawn, the fire leaping on her wonderful lacquer furniture, her gold cushions and the primrose and blue rugs. The girl stood just inside the door; she seemed dazed. But Rosemary didn't mind that.

“Come and sit down,” she cried, dragging her big chair up to the fire. Come and get warm. You look so dreadfully cold”.

“I daren’t, madam,” said the girl, and she edged backwards.

“Oh, please,” – Rosemary ran forward – “you mustn’t be frightened, you mustn’t, really. Sit down, when I’ve taken off my things we shall go into the next room and have tea and be cozy. Why are you afraid?" And gently she half pushed the thin figure into its deep cradle.

But there was no answer. The girl stayed just as she had been put, with her hands by her sides and her mouth slightly open. To be quite sincere, she looked rather stupid. But Rosemary wouldn't acknowledge it. She leant over her, saying: “Won't you take off your hat? Your pretty hair is all wet. And one is so much more comfortable without a hat, isn't one?”

There was a whisper that sounded like “Very good, madam,” and the crushed hat was taken off. “And let me help you off with your coat, too,” said Rosemary. The girl stood up. But she held on to the chair with one hand and let Rosemary pull. It was quite an effort. The other scarcely helped her at all. She seemed to stagger like a child, and the thought came and went through Rosemary’s mind, that if people wanted helping they must respond a little, just a little, otherwise it became very difficult indeed. And what was she to do with the coat now? She left it on the floor, and the hat too. She was just going to take a cigarette off the mantelpiece when the girl said quickly, but so lightly and strangely: “I’m very sorry, madam, but I’m going to faint. I shall go off, madam, if I don't have something.”

“Good heavens, how thoughtless I am!” Rosemary rushed to the bell. “Tea! Tea at once! And some brandy immediately!” The maid was gone again, but the girl almost cried out: “No, I don't want no brandy. I never drink brandy. It’s a cup of tea I want, madam.” And she burst into tears. It was a terrible and fascinating moment. Rosemary knelt beside her chair. “Don’t cry, poor little thing,” she said. “Don't cry.” And she gave the other her lace handkerchief. She really was touched beyond words. She put her arm round those thin, bird-like shoulders.

Now at last the other forgot to be shy, forgot everything except that they were both women, and gasped out: “I can’t go on no longer like this. I can’t bear it. I can’t bear it. I shall do away with myself. I can’t bear no more.”

“You shan’t have to. I’ll look after you. Don’t cry any more. Don’t you see what a good thing it was that you met me? We’ll have tea and you’ll tell me everything. And I shall arrange something. I promise. Do stop crying. It’s so exhausting. Please!”

The other did stop just in time for Rosemary to get up before the tea came.

She had the table placed between them. She plied the poor little creature with everything, all the sandwiches, all the bread and butter, and every time her cup was empty she filled it with tea, cream and sugar. People always said sugar was so nourishing.

As for herself she didn’t eat; she smoked and looked away tactfully so that the other should not be shy. And really the effect of that slight meal was marvelous. When the tea-table was carried away a new being, a light, frail creature with tangled hair, dark lips, deep, lighted eyes, lay back in the big chair in a kind of sweet languor, looking at the blaze. Rosemary lit a fresh cigarette; it was time to begin.

“And when did you have your last meal?” she asked softly. But at that moment the door-handle turned. “Rosemary, may I come in?” It was Philip. “Of course.” He came in. “Oh, I'm so sorry,” he said, and stopped and stared. “It's quite all right,” said Rosemary, smiling. “This is my friend, Miss _”

“Smith, madam,” said the languid figure, who was strangely still and unafraid. “Smith,” said Rosemary. “We are going to have a little talk.”

“Oh yes,” said Philip. “Quite,” and his eye caught sight of the coat and hat on the floor. He came over to the fire and turned his back to it. “It's a beastly afternoon,” he said curiously, still looking at that listless figure, looking at its hands and boots, and then at Rosemary again.

“Yes, isn't it?” said Rosemary enthusiastically. “Vile.” Philip smiled his charming smile. “As a matter of fact,” said he, “I wanted you to come into the library for a moment. Would you? Will Miss Smith excuse us?”

The big eyes were raised to him, but Rosemary answered for her: “Of course

she will.” And they went out of the room together. “I say,” said Philip, when they were alone. “Explain. Who is she? What does it all mean?”

Rosemary, laughing, leaned against the door and said: “I picked her up in Curzon Street. Really. She’s a real pick-up. She asked me for the price of a cup of

tea, and I brought her home with me.”

“But what on earth are you going to do with her?” cried Philip. “Be nice to her,” said Rosemary quickly. “Be frightfully nice to her. Look after her. I don’t know how. We haven’t talked yet. But show her – treat her – make her feel – “My darling girl,” said Philip, “you’re quite mad, you know. It simply can’t be done.”

“I knew you’d say that,” retorted Rosemary. Why not? I want to. Isn’t that a reason? And besides, one’s always reading about these things. I decided – “But,” said Philip slowly, and he cut the end of a cigar, “she’s so astonishingly pretty.”

“Pretty?” Rosemary was so surprised that she blushed. “Do you think so? I - I hadn’t thought about it.”

“Good Lord!” Philip struck a match. “She’s absolutely lovely. Look again, my child. I was bowled over when I came into your room just now. However... I think you’re making a ghastly mistake. Sorry, darling, if I'm crude and all that. But let me know if Miss Smith is going to dine with us in time for me to look up The Milliner’s Gazette.”

“You absurd creature!” said Rosemary, and she went out of the library, but not back to her bedroom. She went to her writing-room and sat down at her desk. Pretty! Absolutely lovely! Bowled over! Her heart beat like a heavy bell. Pretty! Lovely! She drew her check-book towards her. But no, checks would be no use, of course. She opened a drawer and took out five pound notes, looked at them, put two back, and holding the three squeezed in her hand, she went back to her bedroom. Half an hour later Philip was still in the library, when Rosemary came in.

“I only wanted to tell you,” said she, and she leaned against the door again and looked at him with her dazzled exotic gaze, “Miss Smith won't dine with us tonight.” Philip put down the paper. “Oh, what’s happened? Previous engagement?” Rosemary came over and sat down on his knee. “She insisted on going,” said she, “so I gave the poor little thing a present of money. I couldn’t keep her against her will, could I?” she added softly.

Rosemary had just done her hair, darkened her eyes a little and put on her pearls. She put up her hands and touched Philip's cheeks.

“Do you like me?” said she, and her tone, sweet, husky, troubled him.

“I like you awfully,” he said, and he held her tighter. “Kiss me.” There was a pause.

Then Rosemary said dreamily: “I saw a fascinating little box to-day. It cost twenty-eight guineas. May I have it?” Philip jumped her on his knee. “You may, little wasteful one,” said he. But that was not really what Rosemary wanted to say. “Philip,” she whispered, and she pressed his head against her bosom, “am I pretty?”

ACTIVE VOCABULARY

- **well off** – wealthy;
- **To gaze** – to look long and steadily;
- **stumpy** – short and thick;
- **To stagger** – to walk or move unsteadily;
- **immense** – very large;
- **gratify** – give pleasure;
- **To beam** – send out light and warmth; smile happily and cheerful-bringing;
- **flattery** – insincere praise;
- **To lean** (leant, leant) – to be or put in a sloping position;
- **timid** – shy, easily frightened;
- **To creep** (crept, crept) – move along with the body close to the ground;
- **enormous** – very great;
- **To shiver** – to tremble;
- **To startle** – to give a shock of surprise; cause to move or jump;
- **To kneel** (knelt, knelt) – go down on the kness;
- **To ply** – to keep sb constantly supplied with (food and drink);
- **To nourish** – to keep alive and well with food; make well and strong;
- **beastly** – nasty, very, unpleasant; to blush – become red (in the face) from shame or confusion;
- **crude** – not having grace, taste or refinement;
- **husky** – with a dry and almost whispering voice; big and strong;
- **a bodice** – a piece of women's underwear that fits tightly to the body above the waist, worn in the past;

VOCABULARY WORK

1. **Give the Ukrainian translation of the following words and word-combinations.**

Pavement, a poor creature, enormous eyes, to shiver from cold, nourishing food, a slight figure, a beastly afternoon, to blush, husky voice, previous engagement, crude.

2. **Add the synonyms to the following words, explaining the shades of meaning.**

- See_____
- Big_____
- Little_____
- Wealthy_____
- Beautiful_____
- Shy_____
- Well-dressed_____
- Enjoy_____
- Delightful_____
- Shiver_____
- Frail-looking_____

3. The author uses a lot of adverbs of manner in the story. Write the adjectives from which the given words were formed.

Adjective	Adverb	Ukrainian equivalent
	exactly	
	extremely	
	amazingly	
	absolutely	
	dreadfully	
	scarcely	
	deeply	
	timidly	
	gently	
	newly	
	easily	
	kindly	
	impulsively	
	happily	
	slightly	
	quickly	
	immediately	
	tactfully	
	simply	
	awfully	
	dreamily	

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

1. Reproduce two characters – Rosemary Fell and Miss Smith – using the evidence of the story to support each point you make.

2. Comment on the words: *"The great thing is to be natural"*

3. Comment on the words: *"Beauty is a harmonious combination of outward appearance and high moral qualities"*

4. If you had a chance to be the author of the story, would you change the plot, the final outcome of the story?

5. Write a short composition on the following topics:

- *Beauty is a harmonious combination of outward appearance and high moral qualities*
- *How to help others*
- *Appearances are often deceiving*
- *All that glitters is not gold (W. Shakespeare)*

HER FIRST BALL

EXACTLY when the ball began Leila would have found it hard to say. Perhaps her first real partner was the cab. It did not matter that she shared the cab with the Sheridan girls and their brother. She sat back in her own little corner of it, and the bolster on which her hand rested felt like the sleeve of an unknown young man's dress suit; and away they bowled, past waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and trees.

"Have you really never been to a ball before, Leila? But, my child, how too weird – "cried the Sheridan girls.

"Our nearest neighbour was fifteen miles," said Leila softly, gently opening and shutting her fan.

Oh dear, how hard it was to be indifferent like the others! She tried not to smile too much; she tried not to care. But every single thing was so new and exciting ... Meg's tuberoses, Jose's long loop of amber, Laura's little dark head, pushing above her white fur like a flower through snow. She would remember for ever. It even gave her a pang to see her cousin Laurie throw away the wisps of tissue paper he pulled from the fastenings of his new gloves. She would like to have kept those wisps as a keepsake, as a remembrance. Laurie leaned forward and put his hand on Laura's knee.

"Look here, darling," he said. "The third and the ninth as usual. Twig?"

Oh, how marvellous to have a brother! In her excitement Leila felt that if there had been time, if it hadn't been impossible, she

couldn't have helped crying because she was an only child and no brother had ever said "Twig?" to her; no sister would ever say, as Meg said to Jose that moment,

"I've never known your hair go up more successfully than it has to-night!"

But, of course, there was no time. They were at the drill hall already; there were cabs in front of them and cabs behind. The road was bright on either side with moving fan-like lights, and on the pavement gay couples seemed to float through the air; little satin shoes chased each other like birds.

"Hold on to me, Leila; you'll get lost," said Laura.

"Come on, girls, let's make a dash for it," said Laurie.

Leila put two fingers on Laura's pink velvet cloak, and they were somehow lifted past the big golden lantern, carried along the passage, and pushed into the little room marked "Ladies." Here the crowd was so great there was hardly space to take off their things; the noise was deafening. Two benches on either side were stacked high with wraps. Two old women in white aprons ran up and down tossing fresh armfuls. And everybody was pressing forward trying to get at the little dressing-table and mirror at the far end.

A great quivering jet of gas lighted the ladies' room. It couldn't wait; it was dancing already. When the door opened again and there came a burst of tuning from the drill hall, it leaped almost to the ceiling.

Dark girls, fair girls were patting their hair, tying ribbons again, tucking handkerchiefs down the fronts of their bodices, smoothing marble-white gloves. And because they were all laughing it seemed to Leila that they were all lovely.

"Aren't there any invisible hair-pins?" cried a voice. "How most extraordinary! I can't see a single invisible hair-pin."

"Powder my back, there's a darling," cried someone else.

"But I must have a needle and cotton. I've torn simply miles and miles of the frill," wailed a third.

Then, "Pass them along, pass them along!" The straw basket of programmes was tossed from arm to arm. Darling little pink-and-silver programmes, with pink pencils and fluffy tassels. Leila's fingers shook as she took one out of the basket. She wanted to ask someone,

"Am I meant to have one too?" but she had just time to read: "Waltz 3. *Two, Two in a Canoe.* Polka 4. *Making the Feathers Fly,"* when Meg cried, "Ready, Leila?" and they pressed their way through the crush in the passage towards the big double doors of the drill hall.

Dancing had not begun yet, but the band had stopped tuning, and the noise was so great it seemed that when it did begin to play it would never be heard. Leila, pressing close to Meg, looking over Meg's shoulder, felt that even the little quivering coloured flags strung across the ceiling were talking. She quite forgot to be shy; she forgot how in the middle of dressing she had sat down on the bed with one shoe off and one shoe on and begged her mother to ring up her cousins and say she couldn't go after all. And the rush of longing she had had to be sitting on the veranda of their forsaken up-country home, listening to the baby owls crying "More pork" in the moonlight, was changed to a rush of joy so sweet that it was hard to bear alone. She clutched her fan, and, gazing at the gleaming, golden floor, the azaleas, the lanterns, the stage at one end with its red carpet and gilt chairs and the band in a corner, she thought breathlessly, "How heavenly; how simply heavenly!"

All the girls stood grouped together at one side of the doors, the men at the other, and the chaperones in dark dresses, smiling

rather foolishly, walked with little careful steps over the polished floor towards the stage.

"This is my little country cousin Leila. Be nice to her. Find her partners; she's under my wing," said Meg, going up to one girl after another.

Strange faces smiled at Leila – sweetly, vaguely. Strange voices answered,

"Of course, my dear." But Leila felt the girls didn't really see her. They were looking towards the men. Why didn't the men begin? What were they waiting for? There they stood, smoothing their gloves, patting their glossy hair and smiling among themselves. Then, quite suddenly, as if they had only just made up their minds that that was what they had to do, the men came gliding over the parquet. There was a joyful flutter among the girls. A tall, fair man flew up to Meg, seized her programme, scribbled something; Meg passed him on to Leila.

"May I have the pleasure?" He ducked and smiled. There came a dark man wearing an eyeglass, then cousin Laurie with a friend, and Laura with a little freckled fellow whose tie was crooked. Then quite an old man–fat, with a big bald patch on his head–took her programme and murmured, "Let me see, let me see!" And he was a long time comparing his programme, which looked black with names, with hers. It seemed to give him so much trouble that Leila was ashamed.

"Oh, please don't bother," she said eagerly. But instead of replying the fat man wrote something, glanced at her again.

"Do I remember this bright little face?" he said softly.

"Is it known to me of yore?" At that moment the band began playing; the fat man disappeared. He was tossed away on a great wave of music that came flying over the gleaming floor, breaking the groups up into couples, scattering them, sending them spinning...

Leila had learned to dance at boarding school. Every Saturday afternoon the boarders were hurried off to a little corrugated iron mission hall where Miss Eccles (of London) held her "select" classes. But the difference between that dusty-smelling hall-with calico texts on the walls, the poor, terrified little woman in a brown velvet toque with rabbit's ears thumping the cold piano, Miss Eccles poking the girls' feet with her long white wand – and this was so tremendous that Leila was sure if her partner didn't come and she had to listen to that marvellous music and to watch the others sliding, gliding over the golden floor, she would die at least, or faint, or lift her arms and fly out of one of those dark windows that showed the stars.

"Ours, I think –" Someone bowed, smiled, and offered her his arm; she hadn't to die after all. Someone's hand pressed her waist, and she floated away like a flower that is tossed into a pool.

"Quite a good floor, isn't it?" drawled a faint voice close to her ear.

"I think it's most beautifully slippery," said Leila.

"Pardon!" The faint voice sounded surprised. Leila said it again. And there was a tiny pause before the voice echoed,

"Oh, quite!" and she was swung round again.

He steered so beautifully. That was the great difference between dancing with girls and men, Leila decided. Girls banged into each other and stamped on each other's feet; the girl who was gentleman always clutched you so.

The azaleas were separate flowers no longer; they were pink and white flags streaming by.

"Were you at the Bells' last week?" the voice came again. It sounded tired. Leila wondered whether she ought to ask him if he would like to stop.

"No, this is my first dance," said she.

Her partner gave a little gasping laugh.

"Oh, I say," he protested.

"Yes, it is really the first dance I've ever been to.

"Leila was most fervent. It was such a relief to be able to tell somebody. "You see, I've lived in the country all my life up till now..."

At that moment the music stopped and they went to sit on two chairs against the wall. Leila tucked her pink satin feet under and fanned herself, while she blissfully watched the other couples passing and disappearing through the swing doors.

"Enjoying yourself, Leila?" asked Jose, nodding her golden head.

Laura passed and gave her the faintest little wink; it made Leila wonder for a moment whether she was quite grown up after all. Certainly her partner did not say very much. He coughed, tucked his handkerchief away, pulled down his waistcoat, took a minute thread off his sleeve. But it didn't matter. Almost immediately the band started and her second partner seemed to spring from the ceiling.

"Floor's not bad," said the new voice. Did one always begin with the floor? And then, "Were you at the Neaves' on Tuesday?"

And again Leila explained. Perhaps it was a little strange that her partners were not more interested. For it was thrilling. Her first ball! She was only at the beginning of everything. It seemed to her that she had never known what the night was like before. Up till now it had been dark, silent, beautiful very often – oh yes – but mournful somehow. Solemn. And now it would never be like that again – it had opened dazzling bright.

"Care for an ice?" said her partner. And they went through the swing doors, down the passage, to the supper-room. Her cheeks

burned, she was fearfully thirsty. How sweet the ices looked on little glass plates and how cold the frosted spoon was, iced too! And when they came back to the hall there was the fat man waiting for her by the door. It gave her quite a shock again to see how old he was; he ought to have been on the stage with the fathers and mothers. And when Leila compared him with her other partners he looked shabby. His waistcoat was creased, there was a button off his glove, his coat looked as if it was dusty with French chalk.

"Come along, little lady," said the fat man. He scarcely troubled to clasp her, and they moved away so gently, it was more like walking than dancing. But he said not a word about the floor. "Your first dance, isn't it?" he murmured.

"How did you know?"

"Ah," said the fat man, "that's what it is to be old!" He wheezed faintly as he steered her past an awkward couple. "You see, I've been doing this kind of thing for the last thirty years."

"Thirty years?" cried Leila. Twelve years before she was born!

"It hardly bears thinking about, does it?" said the fat man gloomily. Leila looked at his bald head, and she felt quite sorry for him.

"I think it's marvellous to be still going on," she said kindly.

"Kind little lady," said the fat man, and he pressed her a little closer and hummed a bar of the waltz.

"Of course," he said, "you can't hope to last anything like as long as that. No-o," said the fat man, "long before that you'll be sitting up there on the stage, looking on, in your nice black velvet. And these pretty arms will have turned into little short fat ones, and you'll beat time with such a different kind of fan – a black bony one." The fat man seemed to shudder.

"And you'll smile away like the poor old dears up there, and point to your daughter, and tell the elderly lady next to you how some dreadful man tried to kiss her at the club ball. And your heart will ache, ache" – The fat man squeezed her closer still, as if he really was sorry for that poor heart – because no one wants to kiss you now. And you'll say how unpleasant these polished floors are to walk on, how dangerous they are. Eh, Mademoiselle Twinkletoes?" said the fat man softly.

Leila gave a light little laugh, but she did not feel like laughing. Was it – could it all be true? It sounded terribly true. Was this first ball only the beginning of her last ball, after all? At that the music seemed to change; it sounded sad, sad; it rose upon a great sigh. Oh, how quickly things changed! Why didn't happiness last forever? For ever wasn't a bit too long.

"I want to stop," she said in a breathless voice. The fat man led her to the door.

"No," she said, "I won't go outside. I won't sit down. I'll just stand here, thank you." She leaned against the wall, tapping with her foot, pulling up her gloves and trying to smile. But deep inside her a little girl threw her pinafore over her head and sobbed. Why had he spoiled it all?

"I say, you know," said the fat man, "you mustn't take me seriously, little lady."

"As if I should!" said Leila, tossing her small dark head and sucking her underlip...

Again the couples paraded. The swing doors opened and shut. Now new music was given out by the bandmaster. But Leila didn't want to dance any more. She wanted to be home, or sitting on the veranda listening to those baby owls. When she looked through the dark windows at the stars they had long beams like wings.

But presently a soft, melting, ravishing tune began, and a young man with curly hair bowed before her. She would have to dance, out of politeness, until she could find Meg. Very stiffly she walked into the middle; very haughtily she put her hand on his sleeve. But in one minute, in one turn, her feet glided, glided. The lights, the azaleas, the dresses, the pink faces, the velvet chairs, all became one beautiful flying wheel. And when her next partner bumped her into the fat man and he said, "Pardon," she smiled at him more radiantly than ever. She didn't even recognise him again.

ACTIVE VOCABULARY

- **To bolster** – to support something, or make something stronger;
- **Tissue paper** – light, thin paper used for wrapping things, esp. things inside packages;
- **Tissue** – soft paper that is used for cleaning, especially your nose, and is thrown away after use, or a small rectangular piece of this;
- **Fastening** – a device on a window, door, box, etc. for keeping it closed;
- **To twig** – to suddenly realize something;
- **A twig** – a small, thin branch of a tree or bush, esp. one removed from the tree or bush and without any leaves;
- **A dash** – the act of running somewhere very quickly; to hit with great force, esp. causing damage;
- **To dash smb's hopes** – to destroy someone's hopes;
- **A lantern** – a lamp;
- **Stacked** – covered or filled with a large amount of things; US slang (of a woman) having large breasts. This sense is considered offensive by many women;

- **To toss** – to throw something carelessly; to impulse, to push;
- **To quiver** – to shake slightly, often because of strong emotion;
- **To leap** – to make a large jump or sudden movement, usually from one place to another;
- **To pat** – to touch someone or something gently and usually repeatedly with the hand flat; a pat answer or remark has been previously prepared, so that it is said quickly and without any real thought;
- **A frill** – a long, narrow strip of cloth with folds along one side that is sewn along the edge of a piece of clothing or material for decoration;
- **Tassels** – a group of short threads or ropes held together at one end, used as a hanging decoration on hats, curtains, furniture, etc.
- **A chaperon** – an older person who is present at a social event to encourage correct behavior;
- **Eagerly** – in a way that shows that you want to do or have something very much, especially something interesting or enjoyable;
- **To gleam** – run swiftly, wave, glimpse, appear and vanish suddenly; to produce or reflect a small, bright light; when eyes gleam, they shine in a way that expresses a particular emotion;
- **Calico** – a heavy plain cloth made from cotton;
- **A toque** – a tall white hat with folds in the top part, worn by chefs;
- **To thump** – to hit something and cause a noise;
- **Drowling** – a slow way of speaking in which the vowel sounds are made longer and words are not separated clearly;
- **To gasp** – to take a short, quick breath through the mouth, especially because of surprise, pain, or shock;

• **Fervent** – used to describe beliefs that are strongly and sincerely felt or people who have strong and sincere beliefs; impassioned;

• **A wheez** – a joke, jest, repartee, gag;

• **To shudder** – to shake suddenly with very small movements because of a very unpleasant thought or feeling;

• **To ravish** – to force a woman to have sex against her wishes; to give great pleasure to someone;

• **To sob** – to cry noisily, taking in deep breaths;

• **To steer** – to take someone or something or make someone or something go in the direction in which you want him, her, or it;

VOCABULARY WORK

1. Give synonyms to the following words:

• **To bolster** _____

• **To twig** _____

• **A lantern** _____

• **To quiver** _____

• **To gleam** _____

• **To thump** _____

• **Fervent** _____

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

1. Do you remember your first formal dance?

2. What is the main theme in the story?

3. Describe all the male characters in the story.

4. In "Her First Ball" by Katherine Mansfield we have the theme of experience, youth, independence, reliance and gender. Comment on these concepts?

5. There is also some symbolism in the story which is worth noting. Comment on.

6. Highlight Leila's traits of character?

7. Comment on the quotation from text: *"Oh, how quickly things changed! Why didn't happiness last forever? For ever wasn't a bit too long."*

8. "Oh dear, how hard it was to be indifferent like the others! She tried not to smile too much; she tried not to care. But every single thing was new and exciting." – Leila attends function where she feels socially out of place. Give your opinion on this.

HONEYMOON

AND when they came out of the lace shop there was their own driver and the cab they called their own cab waiting for them under a plane tree. What luck! Wasn't it luck? Fanny pressed her husband's arm. These things seemed always to be happening to them ever since they came abroad. Didn't he think so too ? But George stood on the pavement edge, lifted his stick, and gave a loud: "Hi!"

Fanny sometimes felt a little uncomfortable about the way George summoned cabs, but the drivers didn't seem to mind, so

it must have been all right. Fat, good-natured, and smiling, they stuffed away the little newspaper they were reading, whipped the cotton cover off the horse, and were ready to obey.

"I say," George said as he helped Fanny in, "suppose we go and have tea at the place where the lobsters grow. Would you like to?"

"Most awfully," said Fanny, fervently, as she leaned back wondering why the way George put things made them sound so very nice.

"R-right, *bien.*" He was beside her.

"Allay" he cried gaily, and off they went.

Off they went, spanking along lightly, under the green and gold shade of the plane trees, through the small streets that smelled of lemons and fresh coffee, past the fountain square where women, with water-pots lifted, stopped talking to gaze after them, round the corner past the café, with its pink and white umbrellas, green tables, and blue siphons, and so to the sea front. There a wind, light, warm, came flowing over the boundless sea. It touched George, and Fanny it seemed to linger over while they gazed at the dazzling water. And George said,

"Jolly, isn't it?" And Fanny, looking dreamy, said, as she said at least twenty times a day since they came abroad : "Isn't it extraordinary to think that here we are quite alone, away from everybody, with nobody to tell us to go home, or to order us about except ourselves?"

George had long since given up answering "Extraordinary!" As a rule he merely kissed her. But now he caught hold of her hand, stuffed it into his pocket, pressed her fingers, and said, "I used to keep a white mouse in my pocket when I was a kid."

"Did you ?" said Fanny, who was intensely interested in everything George had ever done. "Were you very fond of white mice ?"

"Fairly," said George, without conviction. He was looking at something, bobbing out there beyond the bathing steps. Suddenly he almost jumped in his seat.

"Fanny!" he cried.

"There's a chap out there bathing. Do you see? I'd no idea people had begun. I've been missing it all these days." George glared at the reddened face, the reddened arm, as though he could not look away.

"At any rate," he muttered, "wild horses won't keep me from going in tomorrow morning."

Fanny's heart sank. She had heard for years of the frightful dangers of the Mediterranean. It was an absolute death-trap. Beautiful, treacherous Mediterranean. There it lay curled before them, its white, silky paws touching the stones and gone again.

... But she'd made up her mind long before she was married that never would she be the kind of woman who interfered with her husband's pleasures, so all she said was, airily, "I suppose one has to be very up in the currents, doesn't one?"

"Oh, I don't know," said George. "People talk an awful lot of rot about the danger."

But now they were passing a high wall on the land side, covered with flowering heliotrope, and Fanny's little nose lifted. "Oh George," she breathed. "The smell! The most divine..."

"Topping villa," said George. "Look, you can see it through the palms."

"Isn't it rather large?" said Fanny, who somehow could not look at any villa except as a possible habitation for herself and George.

"Well, you'd need a crowd of people if you stayed there long," replied George." Deadly, otherwise. I say, it is ripping. I wonder who it belongs to." And he prodded the driver in the back.

The lazy, smiling driver, who had no idea, replied, as he always did on these occasions, that it was the property of a wealthy Spanish family.

"Masses of Spaniards on this coast," commented George, leaning back again, and they were silent until, as they rounded a bend, the big, bone-white hotel-restaurant came into view. Before it there was a small terrace built up against the sea, planted with umbrella palms, set out with tables, and at their approach, from the terrace, from the hotel, waiters came running to receive, to welcome Fanny and George, to cut them off from any possible kind of escape.

"Outside?"

Oh, but of course they would sit outside. The sleek manager, who was marvellously like a fish in a frock coat, skimmed forward.

"Dis way, sir. Dis way, sir. I have a very nice little table," he gasped. "Just the little table for you, sir, over in de corner. Dis way."

So George, looking most dreadfully bored, and Fanny, trying to look as though she'd spent years of life threading her way through strangers, followed after.

"Here you are, sir. Here you will be very nice," coaxed the manager, taking the vase off the table, and putting it down again as if it were a fresh little bouquet out of the air. But George refused to sit down immediately. He saw through these fellows; he wasn't going to be done. These chaps were always out to rush you. So he put his hands in his pockets, and said to Fanny, very calmly, "This all right for you? Anywhere else you'd prefer? How about over there?" And he nodded to a table right over the other side.

What it was to be a man of the world! Fanny admired him deeply, but all she wanted to do was to sit down and look like everybody else.

"I – I like this," said she.

"Right," said George, hastily, and he sat down almost before Fanny, and said quickly, "Tea for two and chocolate éclairs."

"Very good, sir," said the manager, and his mouth opened and shut as though he was ready for another dive under the water. "You will not 'ave toasts to start with ? We 'ave very nice toasts, sir."

"No," said George, shortly. "You don't want toast, do you, Fanny ?"

"Oh, no, thank you, George," said Fanny, praying the manager would go.

"Or perhaps de lady might like to look at de live lobsters in de tank while de tea is coming ? "And he grimaced and smirked and flicked his serviette like a fin.

George's face grew stony. He said "No" again, and Fanny bent over the table, unbuttoning her gloves. When she looked up the man was gone. George took off his hat, tossed it on to a chair, and pressed back his hair.

"Thank God," said he, "that chap's gone. These foreign fellows bore me stiff. The only way to get rid of them is simply to shut up as you saw I did. Thank Heaven!" sighed George again, with so much emotion that if it hadn't been ridiculous Fanny might have imagined that he had been as frightened of the manager as she. As it was she felt a rush of love for George. His hands were on the table, brown, large hands that she knew so well. She longed to take one of them and squeeze it hard. But, to her astonishment, George did just that thing. Leaning across the table, he put his hand over hers, and said, without looking at her, "Fanny, darling Fanny!"

"Oh, George!" It was in that heavenly moment that Fanny heard a *twing-twing-tootle-tootle*, and a light strumming. There's going to be music, she thought, but the music didn't matter just then. Nothing mattered except love. Faintly smiling she gazed into that faintly smiling face, and the feeling was so blissful that she

felt inclined to say to George, “Let us stay here – where we are – at this little table. It’s perfect, and the sea is perfect. Let us stay.” But instead her eyes grew serious.

“Darling,” said Fanny. ‘I want to ask you something fearfully important. Promise me you’ll answer. Promise.”

“I promise,” said George, too solemn to be quite as serious as she.

“It’s this.” Fanny paused a moment, looked down, looked up again. “Do you feel,” she said, softly, “that you really know me now? But really, really know *me*?”

It was too much for George. Know his Fanny? He gave a broad, childish grin. “I should jolly well think I do,” he said, emphatically. “Why, what’s up?”

Fanny felt he hadn’t quite understood. She went on quickly : “What I mean is this. So often people, even when they love each other, don’t seem to – It’s so hard to say – know each other perfectly. They don’t seem to want to. And I think that’s awful. They misunderstand each other about the most important things of all.” Fanny looked horrified. “George, we couldn’t do that, could we? We never could.”

“Couldn’t be done,” laughed George, and he was just going to tell her how much he liked her little nose, when the waiter arrived with the tea and the band struck up. It was a flute, a guitar, and a violin, and it played so gaily that Fanny felt if she wasn't careful even the cups and saucers might grow little wings and fly away. George absorbed three chocolate éclairs, Fanny two.

The funny-tasting tea – “Lobster in the kettle,” shouted George above the music was nice all the same, and when the tray was pushed aside and George was smoking, Fanny felt bold enough to look at the other people. But it was the band grouped under one of the dark trees that fascinated her most. The fat man stroking the guitar was like a picture. The dark man playing the

flute kept raising his eyebrows as though he was astonished at the sounds that came from it. The fiddler was in shadow.

The music stopped as suddenly as it had begun. It was then she noticed a tall old man with white hair standing beside the musicians. Strange she hadn’t noticed him before. He wore a very high, glazed collar, a coat green at the seams, and shamefully shabby button boots. Was he another manager? He did not look like a manager, and yet he stood there gazing over the tables as though thinking of something different and far away from all this. Who could he be?

Presently, as Fanny watched him, he touched the points of his collar with his fingers, coughed slightly, and half-turned to the band. It began to play again. Something boisterous, reckless, full of fire, full of passion, was tossed into the air, was tossed to that quiet figure, which clasped its hands, and still with that far-away look, began to sing.

“Good Lord!” said George. It seemed that everybody was equally astonished. Even the little children eating ices stared, with their spoons in the air... Nothing was heard except a thin, faint voice, the memory of a voice singing something in Spanish. It wavered, beat on, touched the high notes, fell again, seemed to implore, to entreat, to beg for something, and then the tune changed, and it was resigned, it bowed down, it knew it was denied.

Almost before the end a little child gave a squeak of laughter, but everybody was smiling – except Fanny and George. Is life like this too? thought Fanny. There are people like this. There is suffering. And she looked at that gorgeous sea, lapping the land as though it loved it, and the sky, bright with the brightness before evening. Had she and George the right to be so happy? Wasn’t it cruel? There must be something else in life which made all these things possible. What was it? She turned to George.

But George had been feeling differently from Fanny. The poor old boy's voice was funny in a way, but, God, how it made you realise what a terrific thing it was to be at the beginning of everything, as they were, he and Fanny! George, too, gazed at the bright, breathing water, and his lips opened as if he could drink it. How fine it was! There was nothing like the sea for making a chap feel fit. And there sat Fanny, his Fanny, leaning forward, breathing so gently.

"Fanny!" George called to her.

As she turned to him something in her soft, wondering look made George feel that for two pins he would jump over the table and carry her off.

"I say," said George, rapidly, "let's go, shall we? Let's go back to the hotel. Come. Do, Fanny darling. Let's go now."

The band began to play. "Oh, God!" almost groaned George. "Let's go before the old codger begins squawking again."

And a moment later they were gone.

ACTIVE VOCABULARY

• **Fervently** – ardently, in a way that shows that your beliefs are strong and sincerely felt;

• **To linger** – to take longer than usual to leave or disappear;

• **Dazzling** – extremely attractive or exciting;

• **Merely** – used to emphasize that you mean exactly what you are saying and nothing more;

• **To bob** – to move up and down quickly and gently, especially on the surface of water;

• **A chap** – (informal, old-fashioned) man;

• **To glare** – to look at someone angrily and without moving your eyes; to shine too brightly;

• **To mutter** – to speak quietly and in a low voice that is not easy to hear, often when you are worried or complaining about something;

• **Treacherous** – if the ground or sea is treacherous, it is extremely dangerous, especially because of bad weather conditions;

• **To make up your mind** – to decide;

• **To rot** – to decay;

• **To prod** – to push something or someone with your finger or with a pointed object; to encourage someone to take action, especially when they are being slow or unwilling;

• **A spaniard** – a person from Spain;

• **Sleek** – (especially of hair, clothes, or shapes) smooth, shiny, and lying close to the body, and therefore looking well cared for; not untidy and with no parts sticking out;

• **To skim** – to move quickly just above a surface without touching it;

• **To gasp** – to take a short, quick breath through the mouth, especially because of surprise, pain, or shock;

• **To coax** – to persuade someone gently to do something or go somewhere, by being kind and patient, or by appearing to be; to flatter;

• **To grimace** – to make an expression of pain or disgust in which the muscles of the face are tightened and the face looks twisted;

• **To smirk** – to smile in a way that expresses satisfaction or pleasure about having done something, or knowing something that is not known by someone else;

• **To toss** – to throw something carelessly;

• **To strum** – to play a guitar or similar instrument by moving the fingers lightly across all of the strings;

• **A fiddler** – a violin player;

• **Reckless(adj)** – doing something dangerous and not worrying about the risks and the possible results;

• **To entreat** – to try very hard to persuade someone to do something;

• **A codger** – an old man, especially one who is strange or humorous in some way;

• **To squawk** – to make an unpleasantly loud, sharp noise; yelling, screaming;

• **To groan** – a deep, long sound showing great pain or unhappiness.

VOCABULARY WORK

1. Give synonyms to the following words:

• **To convince** _____

• **To decide** _____

• **To scream** _____

• **Ardently** _____

• **To moan** _____

• **Exciting** _____

• **Beautifu** _____

• **To look** _____

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

1. Describe the nature in the following story.

2. What is the role of old man in the ending?

3. Comment on the Fanny's mood. Is she happy in marriage? Support your answer with concrete facts from the story.

4. Pay attention to George's behaviour and treatment of others and compare this with his wife's feelings. What horrifies Fanny and what brings her joy? What does George feel strongly about and what will bring him happiness?

5. In many ways Fanny does not have a voice in the story with the lead being taken at all times by George. Comment on.

6. In Honeymoon by Katherine Mansfield we have the theme of love, happiness, doubt, selfishness and control. Comment on the concept of Selfishness and Control.

THE DOLL'S HOUSE

When dear old Mrs. Hay went back to town after staying with the Burnells she sent the children a doll's house. It was so big that the carter and Pat carried it into the courtyard, and there it stayed, propped up on two wooden boxes beside the feed-room door. No harm could come to it; it was summer. And perhaps the smell of paint would have gone off by the time it had to be taken in. For, really, the smell of paint coming from that doll's house ("Sweet of old Mrs. Hay, of course; most sweet and generous!") – but the smell of paint was quite enough to make any one seriously ill, in Aunt Beryl's opinion. Even before the sacking was taken off. And when it was...

There stood the doll's house, a dark, oily, spinach green, picked out with bright yellow. Its two solid little chimneys, glued on to the roof, were painted red and white, and the door, gleaming with yellow varnish, was like a little slab of toffee. Four windows, real windows, were divided into panes by a broad streak of green. There was actually a tiny porch, too, painted yellow, with big lumps of congealed paint hanging along the edge.

But perfect, perfect little house! Who could possibly mind the smell? It was part of the joy, part of the newness.

"Open it quickly, some one!"

The hook at the side was stuck fast. Pat pried it open with his penknife, and the whole house front swung back, and – there you were, gazing at one and the same moment into the drawing room and dining room, the kitchen and two bedrooms. That is the way for a house to open!

Why don't all houses open like that? How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hat stand and two umbrellas! That is – Isn't it? – what you long to know about a house when you put your hand on the knocker. Perhaps it is the way God opens houses at dead of night when he is taking a quiet turn with an angel...

"O-oh!" The Burnell children sounded as though they were in despair. It was too marvelous; it was too much for them. They had never seen anything like it in their lives. All the rooms were papered. There were pictures on the walls, painted on the paper, with gold frames complete. Red carpet covered all the floors except the kitchen; red plush chairs in the drawing room, green in the dining room; tables, beds with real bedclothes, a cradle, a stove, a dresser with tiny plates and one big jug. But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp. It stood in the middle of the dining room table, an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe. It was even filled all ready for lighting, though, of course, you couldn't light it. But there was something inside that looked like oil, and that moved when you shook it.

The father and mother dolls, who sprawled very stiff as though they had fainted in the drawing room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll's house. They didn't look as though they belonged. But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, "I live here." The lamp was real.

***

Burnell children could hardly walk to school fast enough the next morning. They burned to tell everybody, to describe, to – well – to boast about their doll's house before the school bell rang. "I'm to tell," said Isabel, "because I'm the eldest. And you two can join in after. But I'm to tell first."

There was nothing to answer. Isabel was bossy, but she was always right, and Lottie and Kezia knew too well the powers that went with being eldest. They brushed through the thick buttercups at the road edge and said nothing.

"And I'm to choose who's to come and see it first. Mother said I might."

For it had been arranged that while the doll's house stood in the courtyard they might ask the girls at school, two at a time, to come and look. Not to stay to tea, of course, or to come traipsing through the house. But just to stand quietly in the courtyard while Isabel pointed out the beauties, and Lottie and Kezia looked pleased...

But hurry as they might, by the time they had reached the tarred palings of the boys' playground the bell had begun to

jangle. They only just had time to whip off their hats and fall into line before the roll was called. Never mind. Isabel tried to make up for it by looking very important and mysterious and by whispering behind her hand to the girls near her, "Got something to tell you at playtime."

Playtime came and Isabel was surrounded. The girls of her class nearly fought to put their arms around her, to walk away with her, to beam flatteringly, to be her special friend. She held quite a court under the huge pine trees at the side of the playground. Nudging, giggling together, the little girls pressed up close. And the only two who stayed outside the ring were the two who were always outside, the little Kelveys. They knew better than to come anywhere near the Burnells.

For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none. It was the only school for miles. And the consequence was all the children in the neighborhood, the Judge's little girls, the doctor's daughters, the storekeeper's children, the milkman's, were forced to mix together. Not to speak of there being an equal number of rude, rough little boys as well. But the line had to be drawn somewhere. It was drawn at the Kelveys. Many of the children, including the Burnells, were not allowed even to speak to them. They walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air, and as they set the fashion in all matters of behavior, the Kelveys were shunned by everybody. Even the teacher had a special voice for them, and a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey came up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers.

They were the daughters of a spry, hardworking little washerwoman, who went about from house to house by the day. This was awful enough. But where was Mr. Kelvey? Nobody knew

for certain. But everybody said he was in prison. So they were the daughters of a washerwoman and a jailbird. Very nice company for other people's children! And they looked it. Why Mrs. Kelvey made them so conspicuous was hard to understand. The truth was they were dressed in "bits" given to her by the people for whom she worked. Lil, for instance, who was a stout, plain child, with big freckles, came to school in a dress made from a green art-serge tablecloth of the Burnells', with red plush sleeves from the Logans' curtains. Her hat, perched on top of her high forehead, was a grown-up woman's hat, once the property of Miss Lecky, the postmistress. It was turned up at the back and trimmed with a large scarlet quill. What a little guy she looked! It was impossible not to laugh. And her little sister, our Else, wore a long white dress, rather like a nightgown, and a pair of little boy's boots. But whatever our Else wore she would have looked strange. She was a tiny wishbone of a child, with cropped hair and enormous solemn eyes – a little white owl. Nobody had ever seen her smile; she scarcely ever spoke. She went through life holding on to Lil, with a piece of Lil's skirt screwed up in her hand. Where Lil went our Else followed. In the playground, on the road going to and from school, there was Lil marching in front and our Else holding on behind. Only when she wanted anything, or when she was out of breath, our Else gave Lil a tug, a twitch, and Lil stopped and turned around. The Kelveys never failed to understand each other.

Now they hovered at the edge; you couldn't stop them listening. When the little girls turned round and sneered, Lil, as usual, gave her silly, shamefaced smile, but our Else only looked.

And Isabel's voice, so very proud, went on telling. The carpet made a great sensation, but so did the beds with real bedclothes, and the stove with an oven door.

When she finished Kezia broke in. “You’ve forgotten the lamp, Isabel.”

“Oh, yes,” said Isabel, “and there’s a teeny little lamp, all made of yellow glass, with a white globe that stands on the dining room table. You couldn’t tell it from a real one.”

“The lamp’s best of all,” cried Kezia. She thought Isabel wasn’t making half enough of the little lamp. But nobody paid attention. Isabel was choosing the two who were to come back with them that afternoon and see it. She chose Emmie Cole and Lena Logan. But when the others knew they were all to have a chance, they couldn’t be nice enough to Isabel. One by one they put their arms round Isabel’s waist and walked her off. They had something to whisper to her, a secret. “Isabel’s my friend.”

Only the little Kelveys moved away forgotten; there was nothing more for them to hear.

***

Days passed, and as more children saw the doll’s house, the fame of it spread. It became the one subject, the rage. The one question was, “Have you seen Burnells’ doll’s house? Oh, ain’t it lovely!” “Haven’t you seen it? Oh, I say!” Even the dinner hour was given up to talking about it. The little girls sat under the pines eating their thick mutton sandwiches and big slabs of johnny cake spread with butter. While always, as near as they could get, sat the Kelveys, our Else holding on to Lil, listening too, while they chewed their jam sandwiches out of a newspaper soaked with large red blobs... “Mother,” said Kezia, “can’t I ask the Kelveys just once?” “Certainly not, Kezia.” “But why not?” “Run away, Kezia; you know quite well why not.”

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At last everybody had seen it except them. On that day the subject rather flagged. It was the dinner hour. The children stood together under the pine trees, and suddenly, as they looked at the Kelveys eating out of their paper, always by themselves, always listening, they wanted to be horrid to them. Emmie Cole started the whisper. “Lil Kelvey’s going to be a servant when she grows up.” “O-oh, how awful!” said Isabel Burnell, and she made eyes at Emmie. Emmie swallowed in a very meaning way and nodded to Isabel as she’d seen her mother do on those occasions. “It’s true – it’s true – it’s true,” she said. Then Lena Logan’s little eyes snapped. “Shall I ask her?” she whispered. “Bet you don’t,” said Jessie May. “I’m not frightened,” said Lena. Suddenly she gave a little squeal and danced in front of the other girls. “Watch! Watch me! Watch me now!” said Lena. And sliding, gliding, dragging one foot, giggling behind her hand, Lena went over to the Kelveys. Lil looked up from her dinner. She wrapped the rest quickly away. Our Else stopped chewing. What was coming now? “Is it true you’re going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?” shrilled Lena.

Dead silence. But instead of answering, Lil only gave her silly, shamefaced smile. She didn’t seem to mind the question at all. What a sell for Lena! The girls began to titter. Lena couldn’t stand that. She put her hands on her hips; she shot forward. “Yah, yer father’s in prison!” she hissed, spitefully. This was such a marvelous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy. Someone found a long rope, and they began skipping. And never did they skip so high, run in and out so fast, or do such daring things as on that morning. In the afternoon Pat called for the Burnell children with the buggy and they drove home. There were visitors. Isa-

bel and Lottie, who liked visitors, went upstairs to change their pinafores. But Kezia thieved out at the back. Nobody was about; she began to swing on the big white gates of the courtyard.

Presently, looking along the road, she saw two little dots. They grew bigger, they were coming towards her. Now she could see that one was in front and one close behind. Now she could see that they were the Kelveys. Kezia stopped swinging. She slipped off the gate as if she was going to run away. Then she hesitated. The Kelveys came nearer, and beside them walked their shadows, very long, stretching right across the road with their heads in the buttercups. Kezia clambered back on the gate; she had made up her mind; she swung out. "Hullo," she said to the passing Kelveys. They were so astounded that they stopped. Lil gave her silly smile. Our Else stared.

"You can come and see our doll's house if you want to," said Kezia, and she dragged one toe on the ground. But at that Lil turned red and shook her head quickly.

"Why not?" asked Kezia. Lil gasped, then she said,

"Your ma told our ma you wasn't to speak to us."

"Oh well," said Kezia. She didn't know what to reply.

"It doesn't matter. You can come and see our doll's house all the same. Come on. Nobody's looking." But Lil shook her head still harder.

"Don't you want to?" asked Kezia. Suddenly there was a twitch, a tug at Lil's skirt. She turned round. Our Else was looking at her with big, imploring eyes; she was frowning; she wanted to go. For a moment Lil looked at our Else very doubtfully. But then our Else twitched her skirt again. She started forward. Kezia led the way. Like two little stray cats they followed across the courtyard to where the doll's house stood. g "There it is," said Kezia. There was a pause. Lil breathed loudly, almost

snorted; our Else was still as a stone. "I'll open it for you," said Kezia kindly. She undid the hook and they looked inside. "There's the drawing room and the dining room, and that's the – "Kezia!" Oh, what a start they gave! "Kezia!" It was Aunt Beryl's voice.

They turned round. At the back door stood Aunt Beryl, staring as if she couldn't believe what she saw. "How dare you ask the little Kelveys into the courtyard?" said her cold, furious voice. "You know as well as I do, you're not allowed to talk to them. Run away, children, run away at once. And don't come back again," said Aunt Beryl. And she stepped into the yard and shooed them out as if they were chickens. "Off you go immediately!" she called, cold and proud.

They did not need telling twice. Burning with shame, shrinking together, Lil huddling along like her mother, our Else dazed, somehow they crossed the big courtyard and squeezed through the white gate.

"Wicked, disobedient little girl!" said Aunt Beryl bitterly to Kezia, and she slammed the doll's house to. The afternoon had been awful. A letter had come from Willie Brent, a terrifying, threatening letter, saying if she did not meet him that evening in Pulman's Bush, he'd come to the front door and ask the reason why! But now that she had frightened those little rats of Kelvey's and given Kezia a good scolding, her heart felt lighter. That ghastly pressure was gone. She went back to the house humming.

When the Kelveys were well out of sight of the Burnells', they sat down to rest on a big red drainpipe by the side of the road. Lil's cheeks were still burning; she took off the hat with the quill and held it on her knee. Dreamily they looked over the hay paddocks, past the creek, to the group of wattles6 where

Logan's cows stood waiting to be milked. What were their thoughts? Presently our Else nudged up close to her sister. But now she had forgotten the cross lady. She put out a finger and stroked her sister's quill; she smiled her rare smile. "I seen the little lamp," she said, softly. Then both were silent once more.

ACTIVE VOCABULARY

- **To titter** – to laugh nervously, often at something that you feel you should not be laughing at;
- **To prop sb up** – to lift and give support to something by putting something under it;
- **A streak** – a long, thin mark that is easily noticed because it is very different from the area surrounding it;
- **A porch** – a covered structure in front of the entrance to a building;
- **To congeal** – to change from a liquid or soft state to a thick or solid state;
- **To pry** – to try to find out private facts about a person;
- **To swing (swung, swung)** – to move easily without interruption backwards and forwards or from one side to the other, especially from a fixed point, or to cause something or someone to do this;
- **Plush** – expensive, comfortable, and of high quality;
- **Sprawled** – lying or sitting with your arms and legs spread out carelessly and untidily;
- **A buttercup** – a small, bright yellow wild flower;
- **To traipse** – to walk from one place to another, often feeling tired or bored;

- **To nudge** – to push something or someone gently, especially to push someone to attract the person's attention;
- **To shun** – to avoid something; to ignore someone and not speak to that person because you cannot accept their behaviour, beliefs, etc.;
- **Spry** – (especially of older people) active and able to move quickly and energetically;
- **Conspicuous** – very noticeable or attracting attention, often in a way that is not wanted;
- **A freckle** – a small, pale brown spot on the skin, usually on the face, especially of a person with pale skin;
- **Trimmed** – if clothes and other things made of cloth are trimmed, they are decorated, especially around the edges;
- **A porcupine** – an animal with a covering of long, sharp quills (stiff hairs like needles);
- **To screw-up** – a situation in which you do something badly or make a big mistake;
- **To twitch** – to make a sudden small movement with a part of the body, usually without intending to;
- **To sneer** – to talk about or look at someone or something in an unkind way that shows you do not respect or approve of him, her, or it;
- **To nod** – to move your head down and then up, sometimes several times, especially to show agreement, approval, or greeting, or to show something by doing this;
- **To squeal** – to make a long, very high sound or cry;
- **To giggle** – to laugh repeatedly in a quiet but uncontrolled way, often at something silly or rude or when you are nervous;
- **Shrill** – having a loud and high sound that is unpleasant or painful to listen to;

• **Spitefully** – in a way that shows you want to annoy, upset, or hurt another person, because you feel angry towards them;

• **To skip** – to move lightly and quickly, making a small jump after each step;

• **A buggy** – pram, carriage, baby carriage;

• **A pinafore** – apron; a piece of clothing worn by women over the front of other clothes to keep them clean while cooking or doing other work in the house;

• **To swing (swung, swung)** – fluctuation, hesitation, wobble, wave;

• **To slip off** – to quickly take off a piece of clothing;

• **A gasp** – asthma, suffocation;

• **A tug** – a tracker;

• **Frowning** – gloomy, overcast;

• **Stray** – astray, lose oneself, wander;

• **A hook** – a curved device used for catching or holding things, especially one attached to a surface for hanging things on;

• **Wicked** – immoral, sinned, evil;

• **Disobedient** – naughty, unruly;

• **To scold** – to swear, to speak to someone angrily because you disapprove of their behaviour;

• **Ghastly** – terrible, horrible;

• **A paddock** – a small field where animals, especially horses, are kept.

VOCABULARY WORK

1. Choose the right-hand column the correct definition for each word in the left-hand column.

Words	Definitions
1. to giggle **2. to nod** **3. to sneer** **4. conspicuous** **5. to swing** **6. to screw-up** **7. to pry** **8. a freckle** **9. disobedient** **10. ghastly** **11. a paddock**	a. a small, pale brown spot on the skin, usually on the face, especially of a person with pale skin; b. a small field where animals, especially horses, are kept; c. terrible, horrible; d. to try to find out private facts about a person; e. naughty, unruly; f. a situation in which you do something badly or make a big mistake; g. fluctuation, hesitation, wobble, wave; h. very noticeable or attracting attention, often in a way that is not wanted; i. to talk about or look at someone or something in an unkind way that shows you do not respect or approve of him, her, or it; j. to move your head down and then up, sometimes several times, especially to show agreement, approval, or greeting, or to show something by doing this; k. to laugh repeatedly in a quiet but uncontrolled way, often at something silly or rude or when you are nervous.

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

1. Describe the doll's house that the Burnells receive.

2. Under what conditions are the girls' friends allowed to see the doll's house?

3. Why are the Burnells not allowed to speak to the Kelveys?

4. Why does Else smile at the end of the story?

5. Draw Conclusions About Theme. Think about the story's theme, or main message. What does the story reveal about popularity? Use evidence to support your conclusion.

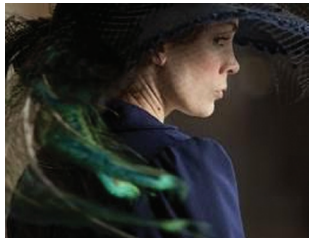
6. Connect Writing "The Doll's House," Mansfield painted a picture of traditional New Zealand society. Despite the different location and time period, how are the characters, events, and ideas presented in the story relevant to your own experiences? Review the chart you completed as you read. Support your answer with information from the chart and the story.

7. Aunt Beryl forbids Kezia to play with the Kelveys. How would you respond if you were in Kezia's position?

8. "The notion that human beings adopt masks and present themselves to their fellows under assumed personalities," wrote one biographer, "was one of (Mansfield's) literary obsessions." How does this comment apply to the story? Cite specific examples to support your answer.

9. What makes someone POPULAR? What are some positive ways to achieve popularity?

BLISS



Although Bertha Young was thirty she still had moments like this when she wanted to run instead of walk, to take dancing steps on and off the pavement, to bowl a hoop, to throw something up in the air and catch it again, or to stand still and laugh at – nothing – at nothing, simply.

What can you do if you are thirty and, turning the corner of your own street, you are overcome, suddenly by a feeling of bliss – absolute bliss! – as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun and it burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle, into every finger and toe? ...

Oh, is there no way you can express it without being "drunk and disorderly"? How idiotic civilisation is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?

"No, that about the fiddle is not quite what I mean," she thought, running up the steps and feeling in her bag for the key – she'd forgotten it, as usual – and rattling the letter-box. "It's not what I mean, because – Thank you, Mary" – she went into the hall. "Is nurse back?"

"Yes, M'm."

"And has the fruit come?"

"Yes, M'm. Everything's come."

"Bring the fruit up to the dining-room, will you? I'll arrange it before I go upstairs."

It was dusky in the dining-room and quite chilly. But all the same Bertha threw off her coat; she could not bear the tight clasp of it another moment, and the cold air fell on her arms.

But in her bosom there was still that bright glowing place – that shower of little sparks coming from it. It was almost unbearable. She hardly dared to breathe for fear of fanning it higher, and yet she breathed deeply, deeply. She hardly dared to look into the cold mirror – but she did look, and it gave her back a woman, radiant, with smiling, trembling lips, with big, dark eyes and an air of listening, waiting for something ... divine to happen ... that she knew must happen ... infallibly.

Mary brought in the fruit on a tray and with it a glass bowl, and a blue dish, very lovely, with a strange sheen on it as though it had been dipped in milk.

"Shall I turn on the light, M'm?"

"No, thank you. I can see quite well."

There were tangerines and apples stained with strawberry pink. Some yellow pears, smooth as silk, some white grapes covered with a silver bloom and a big cluster of purple ones. These last she had bought to tone in with the new dining-room carpet. Yes, that did sound rather far-fetched and absurd, but it was really why she had bought them. She had thought in the shop: "I must have some purple ones to bring the carpet up to the table." And it had seemed quite sense at the time.

When she had finished with them and had made two pyramids of these bright round shapes, she stood away from the table to get the effect - and it really was most curious. For the dark table seemed to melt into the dusky light and the glass dish and the blue bowl to float in the air. This, of course, in her present mood, was so incredibly beautiful ... She began to laugh.

"No, no. I'm getting hysterical." And she seized her bag and coat and ran upstairs to the nursery.

Nurse sat at a low table giving Little B her supper after her bath. The baby had on a white flannel gown and a blue woollen

jacket, and her dark, fine hair was brushed up into a funny little peak. She looked up when she saw her mother and began to jump.

"Now, my lovely, eat it up like a good girl," said nurse, setting her lips in a way that Bertha knew, and that meant she had come into the nursery at another wrong moment.

"Has she been good, Nanny?"

"She's been a little sweet all the afternoon," whispered Nanny. "We went to the park and I sat down on a chair and took her out of the pram and a big dog came along and put its head on my knee and she clutched its ear, tugged it. Oh, you should have seen her."

Bertha wanted to ask if it wasn't rather dangerous to let her clutch at a strange dog's ear. But she did not dare to. She stood watching them, her hands by her side, like the poor little girl in front of the rich girl with the doll.

The baby looked up at her again, stared, and then smiled so charmingly that Bertha couldn't help crying:

"Oh, Nanny, do let me finish giving her her supper while you put the bath things away.

"Well, M'm, she oughtn't to be changed hands while she's eating," said Nanny, still whispering. "It unsettles her; it's very likely to upset her."

How absurd it was. Why have a baby if it has to be kept – not in a case like a rare, rare fiddle - but in another woman's arms?

"Oh, I must!" said she.

Very offended, Nanny handed her over.

"Now, don't excite her after her supper. You know you do, M'm. And I have such a time with her after!"

Thank heaven! Nanny went out of the room with the bath towels.

"Now I've got you to myself, my little precious," said Bertha, as the baby leaned against her.

She ate delightfully, holding up her lips for the spoon and then waving her hands. Sometimes she wouldn't let the spoon go; and sometimes, just as Bertha had filled it, she waved it away to the four winds.

When the soup was finished Bertha turned round to the fire. "You're nice – you're very nice!" said she, kissing her warm baby. "I'm fond of you. I like you."

And indeed, she loved Little B so much - her neck as she bent forward, her exquisite toes as they shone transparent in the fire-light – that all her feeling of bliss came back again, and again she didn't know how to express it – what to do with it.

"You're wanted on the telephone," said Nanny, coming back in triumph and seizing her Little B.

Down she flew. It was Harry.

"Oh, is that you, Ber? Look here. I'll be late. I'll take a taxi and come along as quickly as I can, but get dinner put back ten minutes - will you? All right?"

"Yes, perfectly. Oh, Harry!"

"Yes?"

What had she to say? She'd nothing to say. She only wanted to get in touch with him for a moment. She couldn't absurdly cry: "Hasn't it been a divine day!"

"What is it?" rapped out the little voice.

"Nothing. Entendu," said Bertha, and hung up the receiver, thinking how much more than idiotic civilisation was.

They had people coming to dinner. The Norman Knights - a very sound couple – he was about to start a theatre, and she was awfully keen on interior decoration, a young man, Eddie Warren, who had just published a little book of poems and whom everybody was asking to dine, and a "find" of Bertha's called Pearl Fulton. What Miss Fulton did, Bertha didn't know. They had met

at the club and Bertha had fallen in love with her, as she always did fall in love with beautiful women who had something strange about them.

The provoking thing was that, though they had been about together and met a number of times and really talked, Bertha couldn't make her out. Up to a certain point Miss Fulton was rarely, wonderfully frank, but the certain point was there, and beyond that she would not go.

Was there anything beyond it? Harry said "No." Voted her dullish, and "cold like all blonde women, with a touch, perhaps, of anaemia of the brain." But Bertha wouldn't agree with him; not yet, at any rate.

"No, the way she has of sitting with her head a little on one side, and smiling, has something behind it, Harry, and I must find out what that something is." "Most likely it's a good stomach," answered Harry.

He made a point of catching Bertha's heels with replies of that kind ... "liver frozen, my dear girl," or "pure flatulence," or "kidney disease," ... and so on. For some strange reason Bertha liked this, and almost admired it in him very much.

She went into the drawing-room and lighted the fire; then, picking up the cushions, one by one, that Mary had disposed so carefully, she threw them back on to the chairs and the couches. That made all the difference; the room came alive at once. As she was about to throw the last one she surprised herself by suddenly hugging it to her, passionately, passionately. But it did not put out the fire in her bosom. Oh, on the contrary!

The windows of the drawing-room opened on to a balcony overlooking the garden. At the far end, against the wall, there was a tall, slender pear tree in fullest, richest bloom; it stood perfect, as though becalmed against the jade-green sky. Bertha couldn't help

feeling, even from this distance, that it had not a single bud or a faded petal. Down below, in the garden beds, the red and yellow tulips, heavy with flowers, seemed to lean upon the dusk. A grey cat, dragging its belly, crept across the lawn, and a black one, its shadow, trailed after. The sight of them, so intent and so quick, gave Bertha a curious shiver.

"What creepy things cats are!" she stammered, and she turned away from the window and began walking up and down ...

How strong the jonquils smelled in the warm room. Too strong? Oh, no. And yet, as though overcome, she flung down on a couch and pressed her hands to her eyes.

"I'm too happy – too happy!" she murmured.

And she seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life.

Really – really – she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. They didn't have to worry about money. They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden. And friends – modern, thrilling friends, writers and painters and poets or people keen on social questions - just the kind of friends they wanted. And then there were books, and there was music, and she had found a wonderful little dressmaker, and they were going abroad in the summer, and their new cook made the most superb omelettes ...

"I'm absurd. Absurd!" She sat up; but she felt quite dizzy, quite drunk. It must have been the spring.

Yes, it was the spring. Now she was so tired she could not drag herself upstairs to dress.

A white dress, a string of jade beads, green shoes and stockings. It wasn't intentional. She had thought of this scheme hours before she stood at the drawing-room window.

Her petals rustled softly into the hall, and she kissed Mrs. Norman Knight, who was taking off the most amusing orange coat with a procession of black monkeys round the hem and up the fronts.

"... Why! Why! Why is the middle-class so stodgy - so utterly without a sense of humour! My dear, it's only by a fluke that I am here at all - Norman being the protective fluke. For my darling monkeys so upset the train that it rose to a man and simply ate me with its eyes. Didn't laugh – wasn't amused – that I should have loved. No, just stared - and bored me through and through."

"But the cream of it was," said Norman, pressing a large tortoiseshell-rimmed monocle into his eye, "you don't mind me telling this, Face, do you?" (In their home and among their friends they called each other Face and Mug.) "The cream of it was when she, being full fed, turned to the woman beside her and said: "Haven't you ever seen a monkey before?"

"Oh, yes!" Mrs. Norman Knight joined in the laughter. "Wasn't that too absolutely creamy?"

And a funnier thing still was that now her coat was off she did look like a very intelligent monkey who had even made that yellow silk dress out of scraped banana skins. And her amber earrings: they were like little dangling nuts.

"This is a sad, sad fall!" said Mug, pausing in front of Little B's perambulator. "When the perambulator comes into the hall and he waved the rest of the quotation away.

The bell rang. It was lean, pale Eddie Warren (as usual) in a state of acute distress.

"It is the right house, isn't it?" he pleaded.

"Oh, I think so – I hope so," said Bertha brightly.

"I have had such a dreadful experience with a taxi-man; he was most sinister. I couldn't get him to stop. The more I knocked

and called the faster he went. And in the moonlight this bizarre figure with the flattened head crouching over the little wheel ...” He shuddered, taking off an immense white silk scarf. Bertha noticed that his socks were white, too – most charming.

“But how dreadful!” she cried.

“Yes, it really was,” said Eddie, following her into the drawing-room. “I saw myself driving through Eternity in a timeless taxi.”

He knew the Norman Knights. In fact, he was going to write a play for N.K. when the theatre scheme came off.

“Well, Warren, how’s the play?” said Norman Knight, dropping his monocle and giving his eye a moment in which to rise to the surface before it was screwed down again.

And Mrs. Norman Knight: “Oh, Mr. Warren, what happy socks?”

“I am so glad you like them,” said he, staring at his feet. “They seem to have got so much whiter since the moon rose.” And he turned his lean sorrowful young face to Bertha. “There is a moon, you know.”

She wanted to cry: “I am sure there is – often – often!”

He really was a most attractive person. But so was Face, crouched before the fire in her banana skins, and so was Mug, smoking a cigarette and saying as he flicked the ash: “Why doth the bridegroom tarry?”

“There he is, now.”

Bang went the front door open and shut. Harry shouted: “Hullo, you people. Down in five minutes.” And they heard him swarm up the stairs. Bertha couldn’t help smiling; she knew how he loved doing things at high pressure. What, after all, did an extra five minutes matter? But he would pretend to himself that they mattered beyond measure. And then he would make a great point of coming into the drawing-room, extravagantly cool and collected.

Harry had such a zest for life. Oh, how she appreciated it in him. And his passion for fighting – for seeking in everything that came up against him another test of his power and of his courage - that, too, she understood. Even when it made him just occasionally, to other people, who didn’t know him well, a little ridiculous perhaps ... For there were moments when he rushed into battle where no battle was ... She talked and laughed and positively forgot until he had come in (just as she had imagined) that Pearl Fulton had not turned up.

“I wonder if Miss Fulton has forgotten?”

“I expect so,” said Harry. “Is she on the phone?”

“Ah! There’s a taxi, now.” And Bertha smiled with that little air of proprietorship that she always assumed while her women finds were new and mysterious. “She lives in taxis.”

“She’ll run to fat if she does,” said Harry coolly, ringing the bell for dinner. “Frightful danger for blonde women.”

“Harry – don’t!” warned Bertha, laughing up at him.

Came another tiny moment, while they waited, laughing and talking, just a trifle too much at their ease, a trifle too unaware. And then Miss Fulton, all in silver, with a silver fillet binding her pale blonde hair, came in smiling, her head a little on one side.

“Am I late?”

“No, not at all,” said Bertha. “Come along.” And she took her arm and they moved into the dining-room.

What was there in the touch of that cool arm that could fan – start blazing – the fire of bliss that Bertha did not know what to do with?

Miss Fulton did not look at her; but then she seldom did look at people directly. Her heavy eyelids lay upon her eyes and the strange half-smile came and went upon her lips as though she lived by listening rather than seeing. But Bertha knew, suddenly,

as if the longest, most intimate look had passed between them – as if they had said to each other: “You too?” – that Pearl Fulton, stirring the beautiful red soup in the grey plate, was feeling just what she was feeling.

And the others? Face and Mug, Eddie and Harry, their spoons rising and falling – dabbing their lips with their napkins, crumbling bread, fiddling with the forks and glasses and talking.

“I met her at the Alpha show – the weirdest little person. She’d not only cut off her hair, but she seemed to have taken a dreadfully good snip off her legs and arms and her neck and her poor little nose as well.”

“Isn’t she very liee with Michael Oat?"

“The man who wrote Love in False Teeth?”

“He wants to write a play for me. One act. One man. Decides to commit suicide. Gives all the reasons why he should and why he shouldn’t. And just as he has made up his mind either to do it or not to do it – curtain. Not half a bad idea.”

“What’s he going to call it – ‘Stomach Trouble’?”

“I think I’ve come across the same idea in a little French review, quite unknown in England.”

No, they didn’t share it. They were dears – dears – and she loved having them there, at her table, and giving them delicious food and wine. In fact, she longed to tell them how delightful they were, and what a decorative group they made, how they seemed to set one another off and how they reminded her of a play by Tchekof!

Harry was enjoying his dinner. It was part of his - well, not his nature, exactly, and certainly not his pose – his – something or other – to talk about food and to glory in his “shameless passion for the white flash of the lobster” and “the green of pistachio ices – green and cold like the eyelids of Egyptian dancers.”

When he looked up at her and said: “Bertha, this is a very admirable soufflee! “ she almost could have wept with child-like pleasure.

Oh, why did she feel so tender towards the whole world tonight? Everything was good – was right. All that happened seemed to fill again her brimming cup of bliss.

And still, in the back of her mind, there was the pear tree. It would be silver now, in the light of poor dear Eddie’s moon, silver as Miss Fulton, who sat there turning a tangerine in her slender fingers that were so pale a light seemed to come from them.

What she simply couldn't make out – what was miraculous – was how she should have guessed Miss Fulton’s mood so exactly and so instantly. For she never doubted for a moment that she was right, and yet what had she to go on? Less than nothing.

“I believe this does happen very, very rarely between women. Never between men,” thought Bertha. “But while I am making the coffee in the drawing-room perhaps she will ‘give a sign’.

What she meant by that she did not know, and what would happen after that she could not imagine.

While she thought like this she saw herself talking and laughing. She had to talk because of her desire to laugh.

“I must laugh or die.”

But when she noticed Face’s funny little habit of tucking something down the front of her bodice – as if she kept a tiny, secret hoard of nuts there, too – Bertha had to dig her nails into her hands – so as not to laugh too much.

It was over at last. And: “Come and see my new coffee machine,” said Bertha.

“We only have a new coffee machine once a fortnight," said Harry. Face took her arm this time; Miss Fulton bent her head and followed after.

The fire had died down in the drawing-room to a red, flickering "nest of baby phoenixes," said Face.

"Don't turn up the light for a moment. It is so lovely." And down she crouched by the fire again. She was always cold ... "without her little red flannel jacket, of course," thought Bertha.

At that moment Miss Fulton "gave the sign."

"Have you a garden?" said the cool, sleepy voice.

This was so exquisite on her part that all Bertha could do was to obey. She crossed the room, pulled the curtains apart, and opened those long windows.

"There!" she breathed.

And the two women stood side by side looking at the slender, flowering tree. Although it was so still it seemed, like the flame of a candle, to stretch up, to point, to quiver in the bright air, to grow taller and taller as they gazed – almost to touch the rim of the round, silver moon.

How long did they stand there? Both, as it were, caught in that circle of unearthly light, understanding each other perfectly, creatures of another world, and wondering what they were to do in this one with all this blissful treasure that burned in their bosoms and dropped, in silver flowers, from their hair and hands?

For ever – for a moment? And did Miss Fulton murmur: "Yes. Just that." Or did Bertha dream it?

Then the light was snapped on and Face made the coffee and Harry said: "My dear Mrs. Knight, don't ask me about my baby. I never see her. I shan't feel the slightest interest in her until she has a lover," and Mug took his eye out of the conservatory for a moment and then put it under glass again and Eddie Warren drank his coffee and set down the cup with a face of anguish as though he had drunk and seen the spider.

"What I want to do is to give the young men a show. I believe London is simply teeming with first-chop, unwritten plays. What I want to say to 'em is: "Here's the theatre. Fire ahead."

"You know, my dear, I am going to decorate a room for the Jacob Nathans. Oh, I am so tempted to do a fried-fish scheme, with the backs of the chairs shaped like frying-pans and lovely chip potatoes embroidered all over the curtains."

"The trouble with our young writing men is that they are still too romantic. You can't put out to sea without being seasick and wanting a basin. Well, why won't they have the courage of those basins?"

"A dreadful poem about a girl who was violated by a beggar without a nose in a little wood ..."

Miss Fulton sank into the lowest, deepest chair and Harry handed round the cigarettes.

From the way he stood in front of her shaking the silver box and saying abruptly: "Egyptian? Turkish? Virginian? They're all mixed up," Bertha realised that she not only bored him; he really disliked her. And she decided from the way Miss Fulton said: "No, thank you, I won't smoke," that she felt it, too, and was hurt.

"Oh, Harry, don't dislike her. You are quite wrong about her. She's wonderful, wonderful. And, besides, how can you feel so differently about someone who means so much to me. I shall try to tell you when we are in bed tonight what has been happening. What she and I have shared."

At those last words something strange and almost terrifying darted into Bertha's mind. And this something blind and smiling whispered to her: "Soon these people will go. The house will be quiet – quiet. The lights will be out. And you and he will be alone together in the dark room – the warm bed ...

She jumped up from her chair and ran over to the piano.

"What a pity someone does not play!" she cried. "What a pity somebody does not play."

For the first time in her life Bertha Young desired her husband. Oh, she'd loved him – she'd been in love with him, of course, in every other way, but just not in that way. And equally, of course, she'd understood that he was different. They'd discussed it so often. It had worried her dreadfully at first to find that she was so cold, but after a time it had not seemed to matter. They were so frank with each other – such good pals. That was the best of being modern.

But now – ardently! ardently! The word ached in her ardent body! Was this what that feeling of bliss had been leading up to? But then, then – "My dear," said Mrs. Norman Knight, "you know our shame. We are the victims of time and train. We live in Hampstead. It's been so nice."

"I'll come with you into the hall," said Bertha. "I loved having you. But you must not miss the last train. That's so awful, isn't it?"

"Have a whisky, Knight, before you go?" called Harry.

"No, thanks, old chap."

Bertha squeezed his hand for that as she shook it.

"Good night, good-bye," she cried from the top step, feeling that this self of hers was taking leave of them for ever.

When she got back into the drawing-room the others were on the move.

"... Then you can come part of the way in my taxi."

"I shall be so thankful not to have to face another drive alone after my dreadful experience."

"You can get a taxi at the rank just at the end of the street. You won't have to walk more than a few yards."

"That's a comfort. I'll go and put on my coat."

Miss Fulton moved towards the hall and Bertha was following when Harry almost pushed past.

"Let me help you."

Bertha knew that he was repenting his rudeness – she let him go. What a boy he was in some ways – so impulsive – so simple.

And Eddie and she were left by the fire.

"I wonder if you have seen Bilks' new poem called Table d'Hote," said Eddie softly. "It's so wonderful. In the last Anthology. Have you got a copy? I'd so like to show it to you. It begins with an incredibly beautiful line: "Why Must it Always be Tomato Soup?"

"Yes," said Bertha. And she moved noiselessly to a table opposite the drawing-room door and Eddie glided noiselessly after her. She picked up the little book and gave it to him; they had not made a sound.

While he looked it up she turned her head towards the hall. And she saw ... Harry with Miss Fulton's coat in his arms and Miss Fulton with her back turned to him and her head bent. He tossed the coat away, put his hands on her shoulders and turned her violently to him. His lips said: "I adore you," and Miss Fulton laid her moonbeam fingers on his cheeks and smiled her sleepy smile. Harry's nostrils quivered; his lips curled back in a hideous grin while he whispered: "Tomorrow," and with her eyelids Miss Fulton said: "Yes."

"Here it is," said Eddie. "Why Must it Always be Tomato Soup?' It's so deeply true, don't you feel? Tomato soup is so dreadfully eternal."

"If you prefer," said Harry's voice, very loud, from the hall, "I can phone you a cab to come to the door."

"Oh, no. It's not necessary," said Miss Fulton, and she came up to Bertha and gave her the slender fingers to hold.

"Good-bye. Thank you so much."

"Good-bye," said Bertha.

Miss Fulton held her hand a moment longer.

"Your lovely pear tree!" she murmured.

And then she was gone, with Eddie following, like the black cat following the grey cat.

"I'll shut up shop," said Harry, extravagantly cool and collected.

"Your lovely pear tree – pear tree – pear tree!"

Bertha simply ran over to the long windows.

"Oh, what is going to happen now?" she cried.

But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still.

ACTIVE VOCABULARY

- **To glow** – to produce a continuous light and sometimes heat; to look attractive because you are happy or healthy, especially with eyes that are shining;
- **Radiant** – obviously very happy, or very beautiful;
- **Infallibly** – without a hitch, unmistakably;
- **Sheen** – shine, splendor, glitter, radiance, polish;
- **Far-fetched** – unnatural, very unlikely to be true, and difficult to believe;
- **Exquisite** – delicate, refined, dainty, subtle, thin;
- **To make smb out** – to see, hear, or understand something or someone with difficulty, to find (to know) the length of a person's foot;
- **Jade** – nephrite, nephritis, jade, nephrite, greenstone;
- **A bud** – a small part of a plant, that develops into a flower or leaf;
- **A jonquil** – narcissus; a flower with yellow petals;

- **A petal** – flower's leaf;
- **Creepy** – strange or unnatural and making you feel frightened;
- **To stammer** – to speak or say something with unusual pauses or repeated sounds, either because of speech problems or because of fear or nervousness;
- **Stodgy** – boring, dull, uninspired, heavy;
- **Utterly** – extremely, absolutely, totally, highly, vastly;
- **A fluke** – by accident, accidentally;
- **To dangle** – to hang loosely;
- **A perambulator** – a wagon, a buggy; a baby carriage;
- **Acute** – sharp, keen;
- **A shudder** – trembling;
- **To crouch** – to bend your knees and lower yourself so that you are close to the ground and leaning forward slightly;
- **Proprietorship** – ownership;
- **A trifle** – a small thing; nothing, nonsense;
- **Anquish** – melancholy, depression;
- **Firstchop** – premium;
- **Ardently** – hot, fervently, heatedly, passionately, eagerly;
- **To repent** – to regret, be sorry;

VOCABULARY WORK

Give synonyms to the following words:

- **To look**_____

- **Beautiful**_____

- **To tremble**_____

- **Ardently**_____
- **A pal**_____
- **Radiant**_____
- **Say, tell…**_____
- **A trifle**_____
- **Far-fetched**_____
- **Exquisite**_____

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

1. Reproduce the main characters of the story (Bertha and Harry).
2. Characterize the Bertha's emotional condition that prevailed her over the whole story.
3. Describe Bertha's garden? Is it relevant for her? Why?
4. Observe the behaviour of Bertha's husband, Harry, at dinner ?
5. Comment on the following quotation: "Creating a satisfying reading experience in a small space takes a particular skill, and Mansfield has it all: the visual, the conversational and the thing unsaid."
6. If you had a chance to be the author of the story, would you change the plot, the atmosphere, the characters? Why? In what way? Support your answer?

Shirley Jackson (1919–1965) was born in San Francisco and was graduated from Syracuse University. Jackson was married and had four children.

As a writer, she produced mainly two types of stories – spine-tingling tales of supernatural events and hilarious stories about family life. She once said that she wrote because "It's the only chance I get tosit down" and because it gave her an excuse not to clean her closets.

In writing a short story, the author chooses the character through whose eyes he or she wants to see the story. Point of view is the way an author chooses to see and tell story. One point of view an author may use is first-person narrative. In a first-person, a character tells a story, referring to himself or herself as "I", and presenting only what he or she knows about events. "Charles" is a first-person narrative, told by Laurie's mother. You learn at the same time as she does about the events in Laurie's kindergarten class.

As you read "Charles", look for all details the mother learns about Charles. Think about why the author may have decided to tell her story using first-person narrative point of view.

CHARLES

The day my son Laurie started kindergarten he renounced corduroy overalls with bibs and began wearing blue jeans with

a belt; I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery-school tot replaced by a long-trousered, swaggering character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave good-bye to me.

He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his cap on the floor, and the voice suddenly become raucous shouting, "Isn't anybody here?"

At lunch he spoke insolently to his father, spilled his baby sister's milk, and remarked that his teacher said we were not to take the name of the Lord in vain.

"How was school today?" I asked, elaborately casual.

"All right," he said.

"Did you learn anything?" his father asked.

Laurie regarded his father coldly. "I didn't learn nothing," he said.

"Anything," I said. "Didn't learn anything."

"The teacher spanked a boy, though," Laurie said, addressing his bread and butter. "For being fresh," he added, with his mouth full.

"What did he do?" I asked. "Who was it?"

Laurie thought. "It was Charles," he said. "He was fresh. The teacher spanked him and made him stand in a corner. He was awfully fresh."

"What did he do?" I asked again, but Laurie slid off his chair, took a cookie, and left, while his father was still saying, "See here, young man."

The next day Laurie remarked at lunch, as soon as he sat down, "Well, Charles was bad again today." He grinned enormously and said, "Today Charles hit the teacher."

"Good heavens," I said, mindful of the Lord's name, "I suppose he got spanked again?"

"He sure did," Laurie said. "Look up," he said to his father.

"What?" his father said, looking up.

"Look down," Laurie said. "Look at my thumb. Gee, you're dumb." He began to laugh insanely.

"Why did Charles hit the teacher?" I asked quickly.

"Because she tried to make him color with red crayons," Laurie said. "Charles wanted to color with green crayons so he hit the teacher and she spanked him and said nobody play with Charles but everybody did."

The third day – it was Wednesday of the first week – Charles bounced a see-saw on to the head of a little girl and made her bleed, and the teacher made him stay inside all during recess. Thursday Charles had to stand in a corner during story-time because he kept pounding his feet on the floor. Friday Charles was deprived of blackboard privileges because he threw chalk.

On Saturday I remarked to my husband, "Do you think kindergarten is too unsettling for Laurie? All this toughness, and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like such a bad influence."

"It'll be all right," my husband said reassuringly. "Bound to be people like Charles in the world. Might as well meet them now as later."

On Monday Laurie came home late, full of news. "Charles," he shouted as he came up the hill; I was waiting anxiously on the front steps. "Charles," Laurie yelled all the way up the hill, "Charles was bad again."

"Come right in," I said, as soon as he came close enough. "Lunch is waiting." "You know what Charles did?" he demand-

ed, following me through the door. "Charles yelled so in school they sent a boy in from first grade to tell the teacher she had to make Charles keep quiet, and so Charles had to stay after school. And so all the children stayed to watch him."

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He just sat there," Laurie said, climbing into his chair at the table. "Hi, Pop, y'old dust mop."

"Charles had to stay after school today," I told my husband. "Everyone stayed with him."

"What does this Charles look like?" my husband asked Laurie. "What's his other name?"

"He's bigger than me," Laurie said. "And he doesn't have any rubbers and he doesn't ever wear a jacket."

Monday night was the first Parent-Teachers meeting, and only the fact that the baby had a cold kept me from going; I wanted passionately to meet Charles's mother. On Tuesday Laurie remarked suddenly, "Our teacher had a friend come to see her in school today."

"Charles's mother?" my husband and I asked simultaneously.

"Naaah," Laurie said scornfully. "It was a man who came and made us do exercises, we had to touch our toes. Look." He climbed down from his chair and squatted down and touched his toes. "Like this," he said. He got solemnly back into his chair and said, picking up his fork, "Charles didn't even do exercises."

"That's fine," I said heartily. "Didn't Charles want to do exercises?"

"Naaah," Laurie said. "Charles was so fresh to the teacher's friend he wasn't let do exercises."

"Fresh again?" I said.

"He kicked the teacher's friend," Laurie said. "The teacher's friend told Charles to touch his toes like I just did and Charles kicked him."

"What are they going to do about Charles, do you suppose?" Laurie's father asked him.

Laurie shrugged elaborately. "Throw him out of school, I guess," he said. Wednesday and Thursday were routine; Charles yelled during story hour and hit a boy in the stomach and made him cry. On Friday Charles stayed after school again and so did all the other children.

With the third week of kindergarten Charles was an institution in our family; the baby was being a Charles when she cried all afternoon; Laurie did a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it through the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled the telephone, ashtray, and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, after the first minute, "Looks like Charles."

During the third and fourth weeks it looked like a reformation in Charles; Laurie reported grimly at lunch on Thursday of the third week, "Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple."

"What?" I said, and my husband added warily, "You mean Charles?"

"Charles," Laurie said. "He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterward and the teacher said he was her helper."

"What happened?" I asked incredulously.

"He was her helper, that's all," Laurie said, and shrugged.

"Can this be true, about Charles?" I asked my husband that night. "Can something like this happen?"

"Wait and see," my husband said cynically.3 "When you've got a Charles to deal with, this may mean he's only plotting." He seemed to be wrong. For over a week Charles was the teacher's helper; each day he handed things out and he picked things up; no one had to stay after school.

"The PTA meeting's next week again," I told my husband one evening. "I'm going to find Charles's mother there."

"Ask her what happened to Charles," my husband said. "I'd like to know."

"I'd like to know myself," I said.

On Friday of that week things were back to normal. "You know what Charles did today?" Laurie demanded at the lunch table, in a voice slightly awed. "He told a little girl to say a word and she said it and the teacher washed her mouth out with soap and Charles laughed."

"What word?" his father asked unwisely, and Laurie said, "I'll have to whisper it to you, it's so bad." He got down off his chair and went around to his father. His father bent his head down and Laurie whispered joyfully. His father's eyes widened.

"Did Charles tell the little girl to say that?" he asked respectfully.

"She said it twice," Laurie said. "Charles told her to say it twice."

"What happened to Charles?" my husband asked.

"Nothing," Laurie said. "He was passing out the crayons."

Monday morning Charles abandoned the little girl and said the evil word himself three or four times, getting his mouth washed out with soap each time. He also threw chalk.

My husband came to the door with me that evening as I set

out for the PTA meeting. "Invite her over for a cup of tea after the meeting," he said. "I want to get a look at her."

"If only she's there," I said prayerfully. "She'll be there," my husband said. "I don't see how they could hold a PTA meeting without Charles's mother."

At the meeting I sat restlessly, scanning each comfortable matronly face, trying to determine which one hid the secret of Charles. None of them looked to me haggard enough. No one stood up in the meeting and apologized for the way her son had been acting. No one mentioned Charles.

After the meeting I identified and sought out Laurie's kindergarten teacher. She had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of chocolate cake; I had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of marshmallow cake. We maneuvered up to one another cautiously, and smiled.

"I've been so anxious to meet you," I said. "I'm Laurie's mother."

"We're all so interested in Laurie," she said.

"Well, he certainly likes kindergarten," I said. "He talks about it all the time."

"We had a little trouble adjusting, the first week or so," she said primly, "but now he's a fine little helper. With occasional lapses, of course."

"Laurie usually adjusts very quickly," I said. "I suppose this time it's Charles's influence."

"Charles?"

"Yes," I said, laughing, "you must have your hands full in that kindergarten, with Charles."

"Charles?" she said. "We don't have any Charles in the kindergarten."

ACTIVE VOCABULARY

Raucous – boisterous, disorderly, loud and unpleasant;

Cinically – with disbelief as to sincerity of people's intentions or actions;

Maneuvered – moved in a planned way;

To swagger – to walk or behave in a way that shows that you are very confident and think that you are important;

Insolently – in a rude way that does not show respect;

To be fresh – being too confident and showing a lack of respect;

To yell – to shout something or make a loud noise, usually when you are angry, in pain, or excited;

Scornfully – in a way that shows you have no respect for someone or something and think they are stupid;

Grimly – in a way that is without hope;

Incredulously – in a way that shows you do not want or are unable to believe something;

Awed (adj) – feeling great respect, sometimes mixed with fear or surprise;

Haggard (adj) – looking ill or tired, exhausted, often with dark skin under the eyes;

Matronly (adj) – a matronly woman, usually one who is not young, is fat and does not dress in a fashionable way;

Primly (adv) – in a very formal and correct way;

VOCABULARY WORK

The author uses a lot of adverbs and adjectives in this story. Fill in the blanks in the following table. Mind the difference between these notions thoroughly.

Adjective	Adverb	Ukrainian equivalent
	insolently	
	simultaneously	
	elaborately	
	incredulously	
haggard		
raucous		
	awfully	
	enormously	
	reassuringly	
anxiously		
	passionately	
	scornfully	
	solemnly	
	slightly	
	joyfully	
	respectfully	
	prayerfully	
	restlessly	
	primly	
	grimly	
	cautiously	

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

What does Laurie's mother learn when she goes to the PTA meeting?

Why do you think Laurie invented Charles?

Imagine you were Laurie's parent. What would you do about Laurie's behavior?

Make a list of several questions you might want to ask the parents of Laurie if you were his kindergarten teacher. Write your own episode from the point of view of Laurie's teacher.

Toni Cade Bambara (1939–1995) – was a civil rights activist, writer, teacher, and filmmaker. She was born in 1939 in Harlem, New York. At the age of six, she changed her name to Toni, and in 1970 she added the surname Bambara after finding it among her great-grandmother's belongings. A critic has said that Bambara writes of "black women at the edge of a new awareness", who create their own choices about the kinds of women they will be." Bambara's fiction, which is set in the rural South as well as the urban North, is written in black street dialect and presents sharply drawn characters whom she portrayed with affection.

THE RAYMOND'S RUN

I don't have much work to do around the house like some girls. My mother does that. And I don't have to earn my pocket money by hustling; George runs errands for the big boys and sells Christmas cards. And anything else that's got to get done, my father does. All I have to do in life is mind my brother Raymond, which is enough.

Sometimes I slip and say my little brother Raymond. But as any fool can see he's much bigger and he's older too. But a lot of people call him my little brother cause he needs looking after cause he's not quite right. And a lot of smart mouths got lots to say about that too, especially when George was minding him. But now, if anybody has anything to say to Raymond, anything

to say about his big head, they have to come by me. And I don't play the dozens or believe in standing around with somebody in my face doing a lot of talking. I much rather just knock you down and take my chances even if I am a little girl with skinny arms and a squeaky voice, which is how I got the name Squeaky. And if things get too rough, I run. And as anybody can tell you, I'm the fastest thing on two feet.

There is no track meet that I don't win the first place medal. I used to win the twenty-yard dash when I was a little kid in kindergarten. Nowadays, it's the fifty-yard dash. And tomorrow I'm subject to run the quarter-meter relay all by myself and come in first, second, and third. The big kids call me Mercury cause I'm the swiftest thing in the neighborhood. Everybody knows that – except two people who know better, my father and me.

He can beat me to Amsterdam Avenue with me having a two fire hydrant headstart and him running with his hands in his pockets and whistling. But that's private information. Cause can you imagine some thirty-five-year-old man stuffing himself into PAL shorts to race little kids? So as far as everyone's concerned, I'm the fastest and that goes for Gretchen, too, who has put out the tale that she is going to win the first-place medal this year. Ridiculous. In the second place, she's got short legs. In the third place, she's got freckles. In the first place, no one can beat me and that's all there is to it.

I'm standing on the corner admiring the weather and about to take a stroll down Broadway so I can practice my breathing exercises, and I've got Raymond walking on the inside close to the buildings, cause he's subject to fits of fantasy and starts thinking he's a circus performer and that the curb is a tightrope strung high in the air. And sometimes after a rain he likes to step down off his tightrope right into the gutter and slosh around

getting his shoes and cuffs wet. Then I get hit when I get home. Or sometimes if you don't watch him he'll dash across traffic to the island in the middle of Broadway and give the pigeons a fit. Then I have to go behind him apologizing to all the old people sitting around trying to get some sun and getting all upset with the pigeons fluttering around them, scattering their newspapers and upsetting the waxpaper lunches in their laps. So I keep Raymond on the inside of me, and he plays like he's driving a stage coach which is O.K. by me so long as he doesn't run me over or interrupt my breathing exercises, which I have to do on account of I'm serious about my running, and I don't care who knows it.

Now some people like to act like things come easy to them, won't let on that they practice. Not me. I'll high-prance down 34th Street like a rodeo pony to keep my knees strong even if it does get my mother uptight so that she walks ahead like she's not with me, don't know me, is all by herself on a shopping trip, and I am somebody else's crazy child.

Now you take Cynthia Procter for instance. She's just the opposite. If there's a test tomorrow, she'll say something like, "Oh, I guess I'll play handball this afternoon and watch television tonight," just to let you know she ain't thinking about the test. Or like last week when she won the spelling bee for the millionth time, "A good thing you got 'receive,' Squeaky, cause I would have got it wrong. I completely forgot about the spelling bee." And she'll clutch the lace on her blouse like it was a narrow escape. Oh, brother.

But of course when I pass her house on my early morning trots around the block, she is practicing the scales on the piano over and over and over and over. Then in music class she always lets herself get bumped around so she falls accidentally on purpose onto the piano stool and is so surprised to find herself

sitting there that she decides just for fun to try out the ole keys. And what do you know – Chopin's waltzes just spring out of her fingertips and she's the most surprised thing in the world. A regular prodigy. I could kill people like that.

I stay up all night studying the words for the spelling bee. And you can see me any time of day practicing running. I never walk if I can trot, and shame on Raymond if he can't keep up. But of course he does, cause if he hangs back someone's liable to walk up to him and get smart, or take his allowance from him, or ask him where he got that great big pumpkin head. People are so stupid sometimes.

So I'm strolling down Broadway breathing out and breathing in on counts of seven, which is my lucky number, and here comes Gretchen and her sidekicks: Mary Louise, who used to be a friend of mine when she first moved to Harlem from Baltimore and got beat up by everybody till I took up for her on account of her mother and my mother used to sing in the same choir when they were young girls, but people ain't grateful, so now she hangs out with the new girl Gretchen and talks about me like a dog; and Rosie, who is as fat as I am skinny and has a big mouth where Raymond is concerned and is too stupid to know that there is not a big deal of difference between herself and Raymond and that she can't afford to throw stones. So they are steady coming up Broadway and I see right away that it's going to be one of those Dodge City scenes cause the street ain't that big and they're close to the buildings just as we are. First I think I'll step into the candy store and look over the new comics and let them pass. But that's chicken and I've got a reputation to consider. So then I think I'll just walk straight on through them or even over them if necessary. But as they get to me, they slow down. I'm ready to fight, cause like I said I don't feature a whole

lot of chit-chat, I much prefer to just knock you down right from the jump and save everybody a lotta precious time.

"You signing up for the May Day races?" smiles Mary Louise, only it's not a smile at all.

A dumb question like that doesn't deserve an answer. Besides, there's just me and Gretchen standing there really, so no use wasting my breath talking to shadows.

"I don't think you're going to win this time," says Rosie, trying to signify with her hands on her hips all salty, completely forgetting that I have whupped her behind many times for less salt than that.

"I always win cause I'm the best," I say straight at Gretchen who is, as far as I'm concerned, the only one talking in this ventriloquist-dummy routine.

Gretchen smiles, but it's not a smile, and I'm thinking that girls never really smile at each other because they don't know how and don't want to know how and there's probably no one to teach us how, cause grown-up girls don't know either. Then they all look at Raymond who has just brought his mule team to a standstill. And they're about to see what trouble they can get into through him.

"What grade you in now, Raymond?"

"You got anything to say to my brother, you say it to me, Mary Louise Williams of Raggedy Town, Baltimore."

"What are you, his mother?" sasses Rosie.

"That's right, Fatso. And the next word out of anybody and I'll be their mother too." So they just stand there and Gretchen shifts from one leg to the other and so do they. Then Gretchen puts her hands on her hips and is about to say something with her freckle-face self but doesn't. Then she walks around me looking me up and down but keeps walking up Broadway, and her side-

kicks follow her. So me and Raymond smile at each other and he says, "Gidyap" to his team and I continue with my breathing exercises, strolling down Broadway toward the ice man on 145th with not a care in the world cause I am Miss Quick silver herself.

I take my time getting to the park on May Day because the track meet is the last thing on the program. The biggest thing on the program is the May Pole dancing, which I can do without, thank you, even if my mother thinks it's a shame I don't take part and act like a girl for a change. You'd think my mother'd be grateful not to have to make me a white organdy dress with a big satin sash and buy me new white baby-doll shoes that can't be taken out of the box till the big day. You'd think she'd be glad her daughter ain't out there prancing around a May Pole getting the new clothes all dirty and sweaty and trying to act like a fairy or a flower or whatever you're supposed to be when you should be trying to be yourself, whatever that is, which is, as far as I am concerned, a poor Black girl who really can't afford to buy shoes and a new dress you only wear once a lifetime cause it won't fit next year.

I was once a strawberry in a Hansel and Gretel pageant when I was in nursery school and didn't have no better sense than to dance on tiptoe with my arms in a circle over my head doing umbrella steps and being a perfect fool just so my mother and father could come dressed up and clap. You'd think they'd know better than to encourage that kind of nonsense. I am not a strawberry. I do not dance on my toes. I run. That is what I am all about. So I always come late to the May Day program, just in time to get my number pinned on and lay in the grass till they announce the fifty-yard dash.

I put Raymond in the little swings, which is a tight squeeze this year and will be impossible next year. Then I look around

for Mr. Pearson, who pins the numbers on. I'm really looking for Gretchen, if you want to know the truth, but she's not around. The park is jam-packed. Parents in hats and corsages and breast-pocket handkerchiefs peeking up. Kids in white dresses and light-blue suits. The parkees unfolding chairs and chasing the rowdy kids from Lenox as if they had no right to be there. The big guys with their caps on backwards, leaning against the fence swirling the basketballs on the tips of their fingers, waiting for all these crazy people to clear out the park so they can play. Most of the kids in my class are carrying bass drums and glock-enspiels and flutes. You'd think they'd put in a few bongos or something for real like that.

Then here comes Mr. Pearson with his clipboard and his cards and pencils and whistles and safety pins and 50 million other things he's always dropping all over the place with his clumsy self. He sticks out in a crowd because he's on stilts. We used to call him Jack and the Beanstalk to get him mad. But I'm the only one that can outrun him and get away, and I'm too grown for that silliness now. "Well, Squeaky," he says, check-ing my name off the list and handing me number seven and two pins. And I'm thinking he's got no right to call me Squeaky, if I can't call him Beanstalk.

"Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker," I correct him and tell him to write it down on his board.

"Well, Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker, going to give some-one else a break this year?" I squint at him real hard to see if he is seriously thinking I should lose the race on purpose just to give someone else a break.

"Only six girls running this time," he continues, shaking his head sadly like it's my fault all of New York didn't turn out in sneakers. "That new girl should give you a run for your money."

He looks around the park for Gretchen like a periscope in a submarine movie. “Wouldn’t it be a nice gesture if you were... to ahhh...”

I give him such a look he couldn’t finish putting that idea into words. Grownups got a lot of nerve sometimes. I pin number seven to myself and stomp away, I’m so burnt. And I go straight for the track and stretch out on the grass while the band winds up with “Oh, the Monkey Wrapped His Tail Around the Flag Pole,” which my teacher calls by some other name. The man on the loudspeaker is calling everyone over to the track and I’m on my back looking at the sky, trying to pretend I’m in the country, but I can’t, because even grass in the city feels hard as sidewalk, and there’s just no pretending you are anywhere but in a “concrete jungle” as my grandfather says.

The twenty-yard dash takes all of two minutes cause most of the little kids don’t know no better than to run off the track or run the wrong way or run smack into the fence and fall down and cry. One little kid, though, has got the good sense to run straight for the white ribbon up ahead so he wins. Then the second-graders line up for the thirty-yard dash and I don’t even bother to turn my head to watch cause Raphael Perez always wins. He wins before he even begins by psyching the runners, telling them they’re going to trip on their shoelaces and fall on their faces or lose their shorts or something, which he doesn’t really have to do since he is very fast, almost as fast as I am. After that is the forty-yard dash which I used to run when I was in first grade. Raymond is hollering from the swings cause he knows I’m about to do my thing cause the man on the loudspeaker has just announced the fifty-yard dash, although he might just as well be giving a recipe for angel food cake cause you can hardly make out what he’s saying for the static. I get up and slip off my

sweat pants and then I see Gretchen standing at the starting line, kicking her legs out like a pro. Then as I get into place I see that ole Raymond is on line on the other side of the fence, bending down with his fingers on the ground just like he knew what he was doing. I was going to yell at him but then I didn’t. It burns up your energy to holler.

Every time, just before I take off in a race, I always feel like I’m in a dream, the kind of dream you have when you’re sick with fever and feel all hot and weightless. I dream I’m flying over a sandy beach in the early morning sun, kissing the leaves of the trees as I fly by. And there’s always the smell of apples, just like in the country when I was little and used to think I was a choo-choo train, running through the fields of corn and chugging up the hill to the orchard. And all the time I’m dreaming this, I get lighter and lighter until I’m flying over the beach again, getting blown through the sky like a feather that weighs nothing at all. But once I spread my fingers in the dirt and crouch over the Get on Your Mark, the dream goes and I am solid again and am telling myself, Squeaky you must win, you must win, you are the fastest thing in the world, you can even beat your father up Amsterdam if you really try.

And then I feel my weight coming back just behind my knees then down to my feet then into the earth and the pistol shot explodes in my blood and I am off and weightless again, flying past the other runners, my arms pumping up and down and the whole world is quiet except for the crunch as I zoom over the gravel in the track. I glance to my left and there is no one. To the right, a blurred Gretchen, who’s got her chin jutting out as if it would win the race all by itself. And on the other side of the fence is Raymond with his arms down to his side and the palms tucked up behind him, running in his very own style,

and it's the first time I ever saw that and I almost stop to watch my brother Raymond on his first run. But the white ribbon is bouncing toward me and I tear past it, racing into the distance till my feet with a mind of their own start digging up footfuls of dirt and brake me short. Then all the kids standing on the side pile on me, banging me on the back and slapping my head with their May Day programs, for I have won again and everybody on 151st Street can walk tall for another year.

"In first place..." the man on the loudspeaker is clear as a bell now. But then he pauses and the loudspeaker starts to whine. Then static. And I lean down to catch my breath and here comes Gretchen walking back, for she's overshot the finish line too, huffing and puffing with her hands on her hips taking it slow, breathing in steady time like a real pro and I sort of like her a little for the first time. "In first place..." and then three or four voices get all mixed up on the loudspeaker and I dig my sneaker into the grass and stare at Gretchen who's staring back, we both wondering just who did win. I can hear old Beanstalk arguing with the man on the loudspeaker and then a few others running their mouths about what the stopwatches say.

Then I hear Raymond yanking at the fence to call me and I wave to shush him, but he keeps rattling the fence like a gorilla in a cage like in them gorilla movies, but then like a dancer or something he starts climbing up nice and easy but very fast. And it occurs to me, watching how smoothly he climbs hand over hand and remembering how he looked running with his arms down to his side and with the wind pulling his mouth back and his teeth showing and all, it occurred to me that Raymond would make a very fine runner. Doesn't he always keep up with me on my trots? And he surely knows how to breathe in counts of seven cause he's always doing it at the dinner

table, which drives my brother George up the wall. And I'm smiling to beat the band cause if I've lost this race, or if me and Gretchen tied, or even if I've won, I can always retire as a runner and begin a whole new career as a coach with Raymond as my champion. After all, with a little more study I can beat Cynthia and her phony self at the spelling bee. And if I bugged my mother, I could get piano lessons and become a star. And I have a big rep as the baddest thing around. And I've got a roomful of ribbons and medals and awards. But what has Raymond got to call his own?

So I stand there with my new plans, laughing out loud by this time as Raymond jumps down from the fence and runs over with his teeth showing and his arms down to the side, which no one before him has quite mastered as a running style. And by the time he comes over I'm jumping up and down so glad to see him–my brother Raymond, a great runner in the family tradition. But of course everyone thinks I'm jumping up and down because the men on the loudspeaker have finally gotten themselves together and compared notes and are announcing, "In first place–Miss Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker." (Dig that.) "In second place–Miss Gretchen P. Lewis." And I look over at Gretchen wondering what the "P" stands for. And I smile. Cause she's good, no doubt about it. Maybe she'd like to help me coach Raymond; she obviously is serious about running, as any fool can see. And she nods to congratulate me and then she smiles. And I smile. We stand there with this big smile of respect between us. It's about as real a smile as girls can do for each other, considering we don't practice real smiling every day, you know, cause maybe we too busy being flowers or fairies or strawberries instead of something honest and worthy of respect ... you know... like being people.

ACTIVE VOCABULARY

An errrand – mission, message, charge;

Swift – fast, quickly, quick, swift, prompt;

Scattering – spread, distribution;

To prance – to walk in an energetic way and with more movement than necessary;

Ole – an informal way of saying and writing "old";

Liable – having (legal) responsibility for something or someone;

To whup – utterly defeat or dominate (an opponent or rival);

Ventriloquist's dummy – a toy in the shape of a small person that ventriloquists operate, so that it seems to be alive;

A sidekick – friend, mate, lover, chum;

A pageant – a competition for young women in which they are judged on their beauty and other qualities;

To peek – to look, especially for a short time or while trying to avoid being seen;

Rowdy (adj) – noisy and possibly violent;

Bongos – one of a pair of small drums that are played with the hands;

To outrun – to move faster or further than someone or something;

To stomp – to walk with intentionally heavy steps, especially as a way of showing that you are annoyed; to treat someone or something badly, or to defeat him, her, or it;

A jungle – a situation in which it is difficult to succeed because a lot of people are competing against each other;

To holler – a situation in which it is difficult to succeed because a lot of people are competing against each other;

Blurred – vague, blurred, diffuse, indistinct; unable to see, to observe;

To pile – (of a group of people) to move together, especially in an uncontrolled way;

To huff and puff – to breathe loudly, usually after physical exercise; to complain loudly and express disapproval;

To yank – to pull something forcefully with a quick movement;

To keep up – (phrasal verb) to stay level or equal with someone or something; support, maintain, endorse, sustain;

To bug – to annoy or worry someone;

VOCABULARY WORK

1. Choose the right-hand column the correct definition for each word in the left-hand column.

Words	Definitions
Swift	A short journey either to take a message or to take or collect something
A sidekick	to walk in an energetic way and with more movement than necessary
A pageant	A friend
rowdy	diffuse, indistinct; unable to see, to observe
To whup	to walk with intentionally heavy steps, especially as a way of showing that you are annoyed

To holler	utterly defeat or dominate (an opponent or rival)
To bug	a situation in which it is difficult to succeed because a lot of people are competing against each other
To prance	to annoy or worry someone
To stomp	fast, quickly
Blurred	noisy and possibly violent
An errand	a competition for young women in which they are judged on their beauty and other qualities

2. Give synonyms to the following words:

Blurred_____

Pal_____

A competition_____

To annoy_____

A sidekick_____

Chuggingт up_____

Swift_____

To take a look_____

To endorse_____

To take a walk_____

3. Answer each question to show your understanding of the vocabulary words.

• Is a **sidekick** likely to be a friend or someone you just met?

• If you were **to clutch** something, would you be tossing it away or holding it close?

• Which would you expect a sports **prodigy** to be – clumsy or talented?

• When are you more likely **to crouch** – picking a flower from the garden or reaching for a glass in the cabinet?

• If a person is **liable** to do something, does that mean it's likely or unlikely to happen?

• What's more important in a **relay** race – one good runner or a team effort?

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

1. What makes you respect other people?

2. Squeaky suggests that it is difficult for girls in our society to be "something honest and worthy of respect." Explain why you agree or disagree with her opinion.

3. How did Squeaky gain her name? Why is she always called Mercury? Why does she refer to herself as “Miss Quicksilver”?

4. What does Squeaky realize about herself at the end of the race? What does she realize about Raymond?

5. Write about the race from Squeaky’s point of view. For example, during the race she coached Raymond’s first race.

6. Jot down a list of things you’ve been willing to work for. Choose a favo(u)rite and write a short paragraph telling what motivates you.

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Навчальне видання

І.С. КАЗИМІР

KEEP CALM AND READ SHORT STORIES

Навчально-методичний посібник

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