

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-84-832-3836-3 – Parties and Presents
Katherine Mansfield
Excerpt
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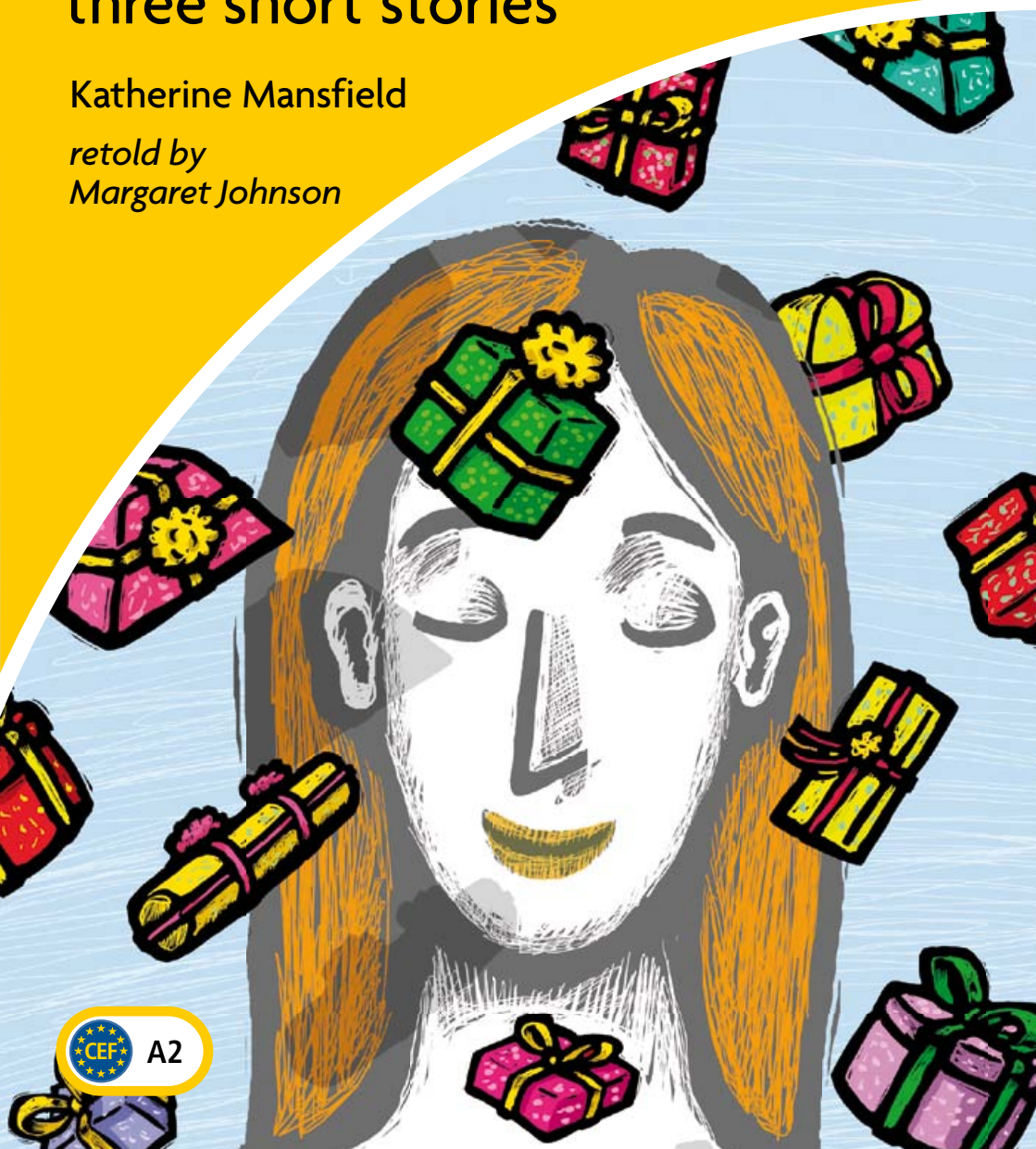
CAMBRIDGE



Parties and Presents: three short stories

Katherine Mansfield

*retold by
Margaret Johnson*



A2

Contents

The Garden Party	4
Her First Ball	32
The Doll’s House	48

BEFORE YOU READ

- 1 Look at the pictures in the book.
- 1 Who are the main people in the first story?
.....
- 2 Where do the people go in the second story?
.....
- 3 What do the people play with in the third story?
.....

The Doll's House

When old Mrs Hay went back to town after staying with the Burnells, she sent the Burnell girls, Isabel, Lottie and Kezia, a doll's house. It was very big, so Pat helped to carry it into the garden.

'It's summer,' said Aunt Beryl. 'It will be all right out there.'

Aunt Beryl was worried about the strong smell of paint¹⁶ that was coming from the doll's house.

'The smell could make someone ill,' she thought. 'Of course it was very nice of Mrs Hay to send it to the girls, but the smell really is awful! I hope the smell will go away before the doll's house needs to come into the house in the autumn.'

So there was the doll's house out in the garden – a dark green colour. The two chimneys on the roof were red and white, and the door was brown. There were four glass windows and there was a small porch at the front of the house. The girls thought it was a lovely house – lovely! The smell wasn't important to them!

'Open it quickly, someone!' Isabel said.

Pat tried to open the house, but he couldn't. He had to get his knife and use it on the side of the house. But then all the front of the house opened and you could see all the rooms: the sitting room and the dining room, the kitchen and the two bedrooms. The girls loved seeing inside all the rooms at the same time.

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‘Oh ...’ they said, looking and looking. They were so happy with the house, they didn’t know what to say. It was just so wonderful. There was colour on all the walls. And pictures. There was red carpet on all the floors, except the kitchen. There were red chairs in the sitting room, and green in the dining room. There were tables, beds, a stove for cooking food on and even some small plates.

Kezia was the youngest of the girls. She liked the lamp best. She *really* liked the lamp. It was on the table in the dining room and it was beautiful. The father and mother dolls were downstairs in the sitting room, and their two little children were asleep upstairs. The dolls were really too big for the doll’s house. They didn’t look right. But the lamp was right. To Kezia, the lamp was real, not a toy.



The Burnell girls hurried to school the next morning. They wanted to tell everybody about the doll's house before school started.

'I'll tell everyone,' said Isabel. 'Because I'm the oldest. Then you two can talk about it. But I'm telling everyone first.' Lottie and Kezia didn't argue. There was nothing to say. Isabel *was* the oldest.

'I'm also going to choose who comes to see it first,' Isabel continued importantly. 'Mother said I could.'

Mother said that while the doll's house was in the garden, the girls could ask some girls from school to come and see it.

'They can come two at a time,' Mother told them, 'Not to stay for tea or come into the house, but just to stand quietly in the garden and look at the doll's house.'

The girls walked quickly, but it wasn't quick enough. When they got to school, class was about to start. There was only time to take their hats off and stand in line. Isabel looked very important and said behind her hand to the girls near her, 'I've got something to tell you at playtime.'

At playtime everyone wanted to be near Isabel. They all wanted to smile at her, to walk with her or put their arms around her. Isabel felt very important. Everyone was waiting to hear what she had to say. The only girls who didn't go close were the little Kelveys. They knew Isabel and the other girls never wanted *them* to go near.

Mr and Mrs Burnell didn't really think the school was good enough for their girls, but it was the only school for miles. Everyone went there – the doctor's daughters, the shopkeeper's daughters, even the milkman's girls. But Mr and Mrs Burnell didn't want their daughters to speak to

everybody. They certainly didn't want them to speak to the Kelveys. Isabel, Lottie and Kezia walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air. And because the Burnell girls did this, then so did everybody else. Even the teacher had a special voice for the Kelveys. When Lil Kelvey gave the teacher some flowers from the country, she said, 'Thank you.' But she smiled a special smile at everyone. The smile said, 'Look at these poor flowers!'

The Kelveys were the daughters of the washerwoman who went from house to house every day, washing people's dirty clothes. This was bad enough. But where was Mr Kelvey? Everyone said he was in prison¹⁷. The Kelveys were the daughters of a washerwoman and a man who was in prison! And they looked it. They wore things that people gave to Mrs Kelvey – things they didn't want any more.

For example, Lil Kelvey came to school in a dress made from the Burnells' old green tablecloth. She looked so funny! You had to laugh. Her little sister, Else, with her long white dress, looked like she was going to bed! *And* she wore boys' boots. But Else *did* make you smile with her short hair and her big eyes. She never spoke. She just went everywhere with Lil and held onto her sister's dress. That day at playtime, the Kelvey girls weren't standing quite so close to Isabel as the other girls. But they did listen. They didn't move when some of the girls turned to look at them in an unfriendly way.

Isabel's voice was loud as she told them all about the doll's house. She talked about the carpets, the beds and the stove.

When she stopped talking, Kezia spoke up. 'You forgot the lamp, Isabel,' she said.

'Oh, yes,' said Isabel, 'There's a really small lamp on the

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dining room table, all made of yellow and white glass. It looks real.’

‘The lamp’s the best thing!’ Kezia said. But nobody was listening. Isabel was choosing which two girls to invite back with them that afternoon to see the doll’s house. She chose Emmie Cole and Lena Logan. But the other girls were still being very nice to Isabel. They wanted to see the doll’s house another day. The Kelveys moved away.

Days passed. All the girls at school were talking about the doll’s house. Everyone was saying, ‘Have you seen the Burnells’ doll’s house? Oh, isn’t it lovely?’ They talked about it every dinnertime as they ate their sandwiches. And every

dinnertime, the Kelvey girls listened. The Kelvey girls ate their sandwiches out of old newspaper. The other girls had meat in their sandwiches – the Kelveys had jam¹⁸.

Kezia felt a little sorry for them.

‘Mother,’ said Kezia one day, ‘can I ask the Kelveys to come and see the house? Just once?’

Her mother looked at her. ‘No, Kezia!’

Kezia didn’t understand why her mother was looking angry. ‘But why not?’ she said. ‘They’re the only girls from school who haven’t come.’

‘Go away, Kezia,’ said her mother. ‘You know why they can’t come.’

The weeks passed, and now the girls at school didn’t talk about the doll’s house so often at dinnertime. The doll’s house wasn’t new to them now. But they didn’t really know what else to talk about. One day they looked at the Kelveys, eating their sandwiches out of newspaper. They were always alone – just the two sisters – no one else. And they were always listening. The girls wanted to be unkind to them.

Emmie Cole started it. ‘Lil Kelvey’s going to be a servant when she leaves school,’ she said.

‘Ooh, how awful!’ said Isabel Burnell, and she looked at Emmie.

‘It’s true, it’s true,’ said Emmie.

‘I’ll go and ask her,’ said Lena Logan.

‘You can’t!’ said Jessie May.

‘I’m not afraid!’ said Lena. ‘Watch! Watch me! Watch me now!’ And she went over to the Kelveys.

Lil looked up from her dinner. Else stopped eating. What was coming now?

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‘You’re going to be a servant when you leave school, aren’t you, Lil Kelvey?’ asked Lena in a high voice.

Lil didn’t answer. She just smiled. The girls who were watching began to laugh.

Lena was angry. She put her face close to Lil’s. ‘Your father’s in prison!’ she said unkindly.



The girls couldn't believe what Lena was saying. It was a really bad thing to say! But it was exciting too, and they all ran away to play, shouting and laughing.

In the afternoon Pat came for the Burnell girls and they drove home. There were visitors. Isabel and Lottie liked visitors, and they went upstairs to change their clothes. But Kezia went quietly out of the back door into the garden. Looking out along the road, she saw two small children. As they got nearer, she saw they were the Kelveys – Lil in front and Else close behind.

Kezia started to run away. Then she stopped. The Kelveys came nearer. Kezia decided to speak to them.

'Hello,' she said.

The Kelveys stopped. They couldn't believe Kezia was speaking to them. Lil smiled. Else just looked.

'You can come and see our doll's house if you want to,' said Kezia.

But Lil's face turned red. 'Oh, no,' she said.

'Why not?' asked Kezia.

Lil's face was still red. 'You can't speak to us,' she said. 'Your mother doesn't want you to. Our mum told us.'

'Oh, well,' said Kezia. 'You can come anyway. No one's looking.'

'No,' said Lil.

'Don't you want to?' asked Kezia.

Else pulled on Lil's skirt. Lil turned to look at her sister. Else's eyes were very big. She really wanted to go. When Else pulled her skirt again, Lil started to walk. Kezia went in front, and the two Kelvey girls came behind her like two little lost cats.

'There it is,' said Kezia when they got to the doll's house.

Lil and Else looked and looked.

‘I’ll open it for you,’ Kezia said kindly.

She opened it. ‘There’s the sitting room and the dining room, and that’s the—’

‘Kezia! Kezia!’ It was Aunt Beryl’s voice.

All three girls turned round. Aunt Beryl was standing at the back door. She looked very angry.

‘Kezia!’ she said again. ‘Why are the little Kelveys in the garden? You know your mother doesn’t allow you to talk to them! Run away, children. Run away! And don’t come back again!’



The Kelvey girls hurried away across the garden and through the white gate.

‘You bad girl!’ Aunt Beryl shouted angrily at Kezia, and she closed the front of the doll’s house loudly. Aunt Beryl wasn’t having a good afternoon. Everything was going wrong, and now this.

‘I feel better now I’ve shouted at Kezia and those little Kelveys,’ she thought, and she went back into the house singing softly.

When the Kelveys were a long way from the Burnells’ house, they sat down to rest by the side of the road. Lil’s face was still hot. She took off her hat. The two girls sat and looked out over the grass at the cows by the river.

Else moved closer to her sister. She wasn’t thinking about the cows, or the angry woman. She smiled.

‘I saw the little lamp,’ she said softly.

Then they were both quiet again.

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ACTIVITIES PAGES 48–53

1 Match the two parts of the sentences.

- 1 Aunt Beryl puts the doll's house in the garden ☒ c
- 2 The Burnell girls think that the doll's house ☐
- 3 Kezia really likes ☐
- 4 Nobody speaks to the Kelvey girls at school ☐
- 5 At school the Kelvey girls wear ☐
- 6 All the girls stand close to Isabel and listen to the story except for ☐
 - a clothes that other people give them.
 - b because they're poor.
 - ~~c~~ because she doesn't like the smell.
 - d the Kelvey girls.
 - e the lamp.
 - f is beautiful.

2 Underline the correct words in each sentence.

- 1 The doll's house is in the garden / inside the house.
- 2 Lottie and Kezia / Isabel will tell everybody first at school about the doll's house.
- 3 Isabel / Mrs Burnell is going to choose who comes to see the doll's house first.
- 4 Mrs and Mrs Burnell like / don't like the school.
- 5 The school has only rich / rich and poor girls.
- 6 Mrs and Mrs Burnell want / don't want their daughters to speak to the Kelvey girls.
- 7 The Kelvey girls' mother is a washerwoman / is in prison.
- 8 Isabel forgets to talk about the lamp / the carpets, the beds and the stove.

ACTIVITIES PAGES 54–59

3 Complete the sentences with the names in the box.

Kezia The Kelvey girls (x3) Else One of the girls

- 1 The Kelvey girls have jam sandwiches at dinner time.
- 2 are the only girls from school who haven't come to see the doll's house.
- 3 says terrible things to the Kelveys at dinnertime.
- 4 speaks to the Kelvey girls.
- 5 wants to see the doll's house.
- 6 run from the Burnell garden.

4 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why does Kezia feel sorry for the Kelvey girls at dinnertime?
.....
- 2 Why doesn't Mrs Burnell want the Kelvey girls to come and see the house?
.....
- 3 List two things Lena tells Lil Kelvey.
.....
- 4 Who tells the Kelvey girls to leave the garden?
.....

LOOKING BACK

5 Check your answers to *Before you read* on page 3.