

Sun and Moon

Katherine Mansfield was one of the most talented modern English short story writers. She was born in New Zealand in an English family. New Zealand's most prestigious short story competition is named after Katherine Mansfield.

Sun and Moon

'Sun and Moon' was written in 1918. It could be considered as a classic children's short story. In a symbolic way, it shows how precious childhood can be damaged by harsh social reality.

Title of the story

Sun and Moon are the main characters of the story. The story moves in the perception of Sun. The two siblings Sun and Moon are complete foils of characters. Sun is the brother, probably elder. Moon is the sister. As the Sun brightens the world, the brother Sun throws light on the happenings of the house. The story revolves around the character Sun. As the moon in the sky only reflects the light, the sister reflects the moods and actions of the other characters.

Party in the house

The house prepares itself to host an extravagant dinner. The siblings Sun and Moon are neglected by the parents, who are busily involved in the arrangements for the dinner. The mother is checking everything with an occasional phone calls to the father. She also gets ready with the help at Annie. "out of my way, Children" are the words she would spare for (shout at) her children.

Preparations on the way

The dinner room is decked (decorated) with a big piano in a corner, flower pots and gold chairs for the concert. The cook Minnie was helped by another cook. Both of them together prepare eye-pleasingly garnished delicious food items like Blac Mange, ice-pudding house, almond fingers et cetera.

The dining room was darkened with blinds. It was artificially lit with red rose lights. The entire room was decorated with various rosy patterns. The cutlery shone and sparkled.

The children's role in the party

Sun and Moon were taken care of by the nurse. She dressed up the children in the nursery. Sun was wearing a white shirt with red and white daisies. It was braced with breeches. He

was wearing white socks and red shoes. He looked Russian in that costume. Moon threw tantrums while getting ready. But in pristine white dress and drawer and white shoes, she looked like a cherub printed on a powder puff. The children were allowed to play games that would not spoil their make-up. They were taken to the party room.

Sun did not have high opinion of the guests except one man, who talked to him about dogs. The guests were unmindful of the children's feelings. Moon was happy to receive the guest's attention through her childish tantrums. Even the nurse was in a hurry to get back to the party.

Sun and Moon – Foils of Character

Both the siblings Sun and Moon are complete foils of characters. As the Sun radiates heat and unapproachable, the boy Sun is serious. A very few guests who could not get at Moon kissed Sun. A skinny, old lady, with dentures rapped him on the head with a comment "Such a serious poppet".

As Moon is known for cool radiance and people's delight, the girl Moon is the centre of attraction. The nurse praises and pampers Moon with words "Lamb, Cherub".

The vanity of the adults

The party and the decorations and preparations for the dinner show the ostentatious (showy) nature of the parents. The next morning, the parents were happy about the success of the dinner. Moon was elated to taste the nut, decorated as the handle of the ice-pudding house. But Sun could not endure the vanity of the entire wastage. The child in him wakes up. He wailed loudly on his way to his nursery. The angry father instructed Sun to go back to the nursery.

Conclusion

Sun and Moon is a short story which talks about the vanity and showy culture of an upper-class family, the confused feelings of Sun, his identity crisis in the ostentatious household, and Moon's childish activities. It also brings out how the posh culture leads to mere wastage and its hostility towards children.