

## **Sun and Moon by Katherine Mansfield**

In Sun and Moon by Katherine Mansfield we have the theme of perfection, alienation, happiness, appearance, control, freedom and discontent. Taken from her Bliss and Other Stories collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and after reading the story the reader realises that Mansfield may be exploring the theme of perfection. Both Sun and Moon live in a world that appears to be perfect. At least in the eyes of their parents. The party has been a success and both children have been introduced to the visitors who have come to the party. It is as though Sun and Moon's parents want to portray an image of a happy family. However things are not what they may seem to be. Sun in particular is discontent throughout the story and does not feel as though he is a part of the occasion. He cannot be happy for his parents because he knows that he is being hidden away along with Moon. The whole affair that is the party is an occasion for adults and it is possible that Mansfield is highlighting the gap that exists between both children and adults. In reality there is no place at the party for either Sun or Moon and though Moon does not appear to mind this. It is possible that Sun on the other hand is fully conscious of the fact that he is being ostracised or left out. It is as though both children are being alienated due to their youth.

Kitty's relationship with her children is also interesting. If anything both Sun and Moon appear to be a hindrance to her. Even after the party is over Kitty does not wish to take the children from their bed. Which may leave some critics thinking that Kitty may be somewhat selfish. It would cost her nothing to allow the children get out of bed and come down stairs yet she is against it. The fact that Sun and Moon's father insists that they come down to the party after it is over may also be important as in many ways he is exerting control over Kitty. Which may be the point that Mansfield is attempting to make. Society at the time would have been male dominated and Sun and Moon's father's approach to Kitty suggests that things are not different in their marriage. He has absolute control just as Kitty has absolute control over the children.

Throughout the story Sun and Moon are controlled by their mother. While she is getting ready for the party she does not wish to see them and similarly when the party is over she has no real interest in bringing either child down stairs. It is as though both Sun and Moon live very structured lives which may leave some readers to suspect that Kitty is trying to contain both children and not necessarily allow them the freedom that one should give to children. The only sense of freedom that Sun and Moon have in the story is when Minnie allows them to watch her preparing the food for the party. Though it is noticeable that Sun does not show much interest. If anything he is suspicious as to why Minnie is being so nice to him. This could be important as Minnie's normal attitude to the children could be similar to Kitty's. They are an obstacle that she does not need around her. However due to the elation she feels about the party she is prepared to alter her opinion for the occasion. Of the two children Moon is also the most excited. She is also the more innocent of the two which could suggest that she is not as fully aware of how things happen in the house when compared to Sun.

The end of the story is interesting as Sun and Moon's father is obviously drunk when he brings the children down to the ice pudding. If anything he is oblivious to the discontent that Sun may be feeling. Having been forced to go to bed early and miss the excitement of the party. Moon on the other hand is excited particularly because she is able to eat the nut from the door of the ice pudding. Something which triggers an outburst from Sun. This too could be important as Sun may feel as though the ice pudding should have been left as it was. Instead it has been spoiled by Moon. At least in Sun's eyes. The reader suspecting that Sun may have viewed the ice pudding to be perfect as it was unlike the environment he is growing up in. Sun's father's reaction is also interesting as he immediately scolds Sun for sobbing. Something that leaves the reader suspecting that on appearance Sun and Moon may have a picture perfect life with their parents but the reality is very different. Though Sun is still a child he is not being allowed the freedom to be a child nor do either of his parent's make inquiries as to why Sun might be sobbing. If anything appearance is more important to Sun and Moon's parents. They want the appearance of a perfect family but the reality is one of their children (Sun) is very unhappy with the life he lives.