

Celebrating Katherine Mansfield

Two Plays based on Stories by *Katherine Mansfield*

Adapted for Stage by *Kevin Boon*

At the

Bay

And

The Garden Party

The plays may be presented consecutively using the same cast or as separate One Act plays.

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At the Bay

A Dramatisation of *Katherine Mansfield's* story

By *Kevin Boon*

Setting: The situations where the play is set include: *The Beach at Crescent Bay, the Lawn, Dining Room and a Bedroom at the Burnell's Beach-house.*

I have designed the play so that it could be performed in a variety of situations – at a beach or park, in a hall or restaurant, or in a conventional theatre. Therefore I have adopted a minimalist approach. All that is required is a wall facing the audience, some simple furnishings including a bed, table and chairs and a small variety of props as described in each scene.

It would be beneficial if a stage or platform could be provided as the 'stage.' The raised area would represent the beach, the Lawn and the various interiors, while the space in front represents the 'sea' If there are no access doors to the 'stage,' a changing tent similar to those used at beaches could be set-up. A slightly raised area could also be provided for the Narrator. Of course if the play is to be staged in a conventional theatre, the Designer and Director are welcome to take advantage of any equipment or innovations that are available to them.

Characters: The story involves a total of thirteen characters, including five children. I have taken a minimalist approach and cast the play with eight actors (5 female and 3 male). However, if it suits a particular director to employ a larger cast or to include children, they are welcome to do so.

1 Linda Burnell / Narrator (1): Approximately 30. Neat short hair-style.

2 Stanley Burnell: Red hair and beard, about 40. May also perform voices off.

3 Jonathan Trout: Approaching 40. Rather seedy, with slightly greying hair.

4 Harry Kember: About 30 - a smoother more sleazy type.

5 Beryl: About 20, slimmer and younger than Linda. Attractive chestnut hair.

6 Grannie Burnell: An older lady with grey hair in some form of hair-net.

7 Mrs Harry Kember: Approaching middle age, rather matronly.

8 Kezia: A girl of 8 or 9 - but could be played by a petite older actress.

Note: The ages given are only approximations and there is scope for younger or older performers to play the parts. There is also scope for further doubling up or including additional performers if necessary.

Authors note: I have endeavoured to employ the descriptive readings and dialogue directly from Katherine Mansfield's original story wherever possible.

This edition of the play is designed for readings and only involves 6 scenes

Scene I: The sand dune and beach at 'The Bay'. *The Narrator walks on stage and begins reading:*

Narrator: Very early morning. The sun had not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay is almost hidden under the white sea mist. A heavy dew has fallen. The grass is blue. Big drops hang on the bushes and just do not fall. The silvery fluffy toi-tois are limp on their long stalks and the marigolds and the pinks in the bungalow gardens are bowed to the earth with wetness. It looks as though the sea has beaten up softly in the darkness, as though one immense wave has come rippling, rippling – how far? Perhaps if you had woken in the middle of the night you could have seen a fish flicking in at the window, and gone again...

Ah-Aah! Sounds the sleepy sea. And from the bush there comes the sound of little streams flowing, quickly, lightly, slipping between the smooth stones, gushing into ferny basins and out again; and there is the splashing of big drops on large leaves, and something else- what is it? – a faint stirring and shaking, the snapping of a twig and then, silence, as if someone is listening.

A few moments later the back door of one of the bungalows opens and a figure in a broad-striped bathing-suit runs down the paddock, (*Stanley emerges and acts out the scene as the narrator reads*) He clears the stile, staggers down the sandy hillock and races for dear life over the cold, wet pebbles. Splish-splash! The water bubbles around his legs as Stanley Burnell wades out, exulting.

Stanley: (*To himself*) First man in as usual! (*He swoops down to souse his head and neck*).

Jonathan: (*'Swims' on from left - arm action only*)
Hail brother! All hail, Thou Mighty One! (*raises one arm*).

Stanley: (*To himself, as he looks up in disgust*)
Great Scott! Damnation take it; Jonathan Trout - in before me!

Jonathan: (*Cheerfully swimming closer*) Glorious morning?

Stanley: (*Rather tersely*) Yes, very fine. (*Aside*) Why the dickens doesn't the fellow stick to his part of the sea? Why should he come barging over to this exact spot? (*He dives and strikes out for stage left*).

Jonathan: (*Keeping pace with him*) I had an extraordinary dream last night!

Stanley: (*To the audience*) What's the matter with the man? This mania for conversation – and it's always the same – some piffle about a dream he's had; or some cranky idea he's got hold of, or some rot he's been reading. *He turns on his back – kicking his legs energetically.*

Jonathan: (*Joining him*) I dreamed I was hanging over a terrifically high cliff shouting to someone below.

Stanley: (*To himself*) Yes, probably me! (*Stops kicking*) Look here, Trout, I'm in rather a hurry this morning!

Jonathan: You're what! (*He slips under and comes up gasping*).

Stanley: All mean is, I've no time to – to fool about. I want to get this over. I'm in a hurry. I've work to do this morning – you see?

Jonathan: (*Swims away- but calls back over his shoulder*) Pass friend! (*Exits*).

Stanley: (*He swims back to shore*) Curse the fellow! He's ruined my bathe! What an impractical idiot that man is. (*He pounds off up the beach to exit*)

Jonathan: (*Swims back on stage and rests for a while, waving his arms gently.*) It's curious, but in spite of everything I'm rather fond of Stanley Burnell. True I have a fiendish desire to tease him sometimes, to poke fun at him, but at bottom I'm sorry for the fellow. There's something pathetic in his determination to make a 'job' of everything. I can't help feeling he'll be caught out one day, and then what an almighty cropper he'll come!

(*An enormous wave rolls him over*) That was a beauty! This is the way to live – carelessly, recklessly, spending one-self. To take things easy, not to fight against the ebb and flow of life, to give way to it – that is what's needed. It's this tension that's all wrong. (*He raises his arms and lets the next large wave hurl him towards the beach*). To live - to live! (*He cries, as he wades ashore – but then he begins to shiver*) Damn that Stanley Burnell – Now I've stayed in too long! (*Exit*)

End of Scene 1

Scene 2: *The Dining Room of the Burnell's Beach House: Beryl and Kezia are sitting on the far side of the table. There is an empty chair at the end).*

Narrator: In the Living Room of the Burnell's summer Cottage, the sea sounded faintly through the wide-open window. The sun streamed in upon the yellow-varnished walls and the bare floor. Everything on the table flashed and glittered.

Stanley: *(Wearing suit, rushes on stage)* I've just got twenty-five minutes! You might go and see if the porridge is ready, Beryl?

Beryl: Mother's just gone for it. *(She pours him a cup of tea)* Tea Stanley?

Stanley: Thanks Beryl. *(Astonished voice)* Hallo! You've forgotten the sugar...

Beryl: *(Passing it to him)* Oh, sorry.

Stanley: *(Glancing at her sharply)* Nothing wrong, is there?

Beryl: *(Looking up and smiling at him)* No, nothing. Why, should there be?

Stanley: Oh, no reason at all, as far as I know. It's just that you don't usually forget the sugar.

Granny: *(Enters from stage left carrying a bowl of porridge. Carefully places the porridge in front of him).* Good morning, Stanley.

Stanley: *(Spoon suspended in the air)* Good morning, Mother. How's the boy?

Granny: Splendid! He only woke up once last night. What a perfect morning. *(She gazes out the window admiring the view)*

Stanley: I say, Mother, you wouldn't mind cutting me a slice of that bread, I've only got twelve and a half minutes before the coach arrives. *(As she cuts the bread)* Has anyone given my shoes to the servant girl?

Granny: Yes, I'll get them for you Stanley. *(She hurries off stage)*

Beryl: *(Despairingly)* Oh Kezia! Why are you such a messy child?

Kezia: *(Surprised)* Me, Aunt Beryl? But I've only dug a channel down my

porridge, filled it and eaten the banks away – but I do that every morning.

Beryl: Why can't you eat your food properly, like Isabel and Lottie?

Kezia: But Lottie always makes a floating island?

Granny: *(Returns with a pair of black shoes that she places near Stanley's feet).*

Stanley: *(Putting on his shoes)* Beryl, if you've finished, I wish you'd cut down to the gate and stop the coach. *(Although she hasn't finished she exits)*
Kezia, run into your mother and ask her where my bowler hat has been put. *(Looking about)* Wait a minute – have you children seen my walking stick?

Kezia: *(From off Stage)* No father –I haven't seen it.

Stanley: *(Pointing to one of the corners)* But I put it here. I remember distinctly putting it in that corner. Now, who's had it? That stick has to be found. I don't suppose Alice has been using it to poke the kitchen fire, by any chance?

Granny: Oh no, Stanley I'm sure she hasn't.

Stanley: *(To a member of the audience)* You haven't seen my stick have you?
I know I left it here.

Stanley: H-mm. *(He goes to the bedroom door –calls through to Linda)*
Linda! Most extraordinary thing. I can't keep a single possession to myself. They've made off with my stick now!

Linda: *(Rather drowsy voice from within)* Stick dear? What stick?

Stanley: *(To himself)* Good Lord, Linda's vagueness on these occasions just cannot be real.

Beryl: *(Calling at the back door)* Coach! Coach, Stanley!

Stanley: *(Waving an arm at the off-stage Linda)* No time to say good-bye, Linda!
(snatching up his bowler hat he dashes after Beryl).

Beryl: *(After a brief pause, voice off stage calls cheerfully)* Good-bye, Stanley!

Stanley: *(Rather gruffly)* Good-bye. *(Sound of horse's hooves retreating).*

Beryl: *(Arriving back triumphantly)* He's gone!

Lynda: *(Calling from the bedroom)* Beryl! Has Stanley gone?

Beryl: *(Joyously)* Gone!

Granny: *(Coming out of the bedroom carrying the baby)* Gone?

Beryl: Gone! Why don't you have another cup of tea, Mother. It's still hot.

Granny: No, thank you, child. *(She celebrates by holding the baby up, saying)*
A-goose-a-goose-a-gah!

End of Scene 2

Scene 3 *The Beach, a short time later.*

Narrator: As the Morning lengthened whole parties appeared over the sand-hills and came down to the beach to bathe. It was understood that at eleven o'clock the women and children of the summer colony had the sea to themselves. First the women undressed, pulled on their bathing dresses and covered their heads in hideous caps, like sponge bags; then the children were unbuttoned. The beach was strewn with little heaps of clothes and shoes; the big summer hats, with stones on them to keep them from blowing away, looked like immense shells.

*Granny and Beryl come down onto the beach, carrying a basket
A towel and a rug.*

Granny: (*Puts down her basket and spreads the rug*) This looks a good spot. We should be able to keep an eye on the girls from here. (*she sits*).

Beryl: (*Not joining her*) Yes, I'm sure it will be fine. Here, Mother, keep these for me, will you? (*She drops a small purse and a gold chain Granny's basket*)

Granny: (*Looking up surprised*) But aren't you going to bathe here?

Beryl: (*Picking up her bag*) No-o. I'm undressing further along. I'm going to bathe with Mrs Harry Kember!

Granny: (*Disapprovingly*) Oh, I see. Well, in that case I think I'll move down nearer to the girls.

Beryl: That's a good idea. I shan't be too long. (*As she hurries off towards stage right she mutters to herself*) Poor Mother. I don't think she approves of Mrs Harry Kember. But then, she's old. Oh what a joy it is to be young!

Granny: (*As she folds her rug and gathers her basket she shares her thoughts*) Beryl would do well to keep away from that Mrs Harry Kember. She has quite a reputation among the women at the Bay. She is the only one who smokes. She smokes incessantly, and when she's not smoking or playing bridge, she spends the rest of her time lying in the sun. The women at the bay think she's fast, very fast, with her lack of vanity, her slang and the way she treats men as if she was one of them. And

as for the rumours about her husband – Well! (*Exits stage left*).
A short time later Mrs Harry Kember enters wrapt in a towel and carrying a rug. Her ample figure is encased in a traditional bathing suit. She spreads her rug and lies on the beach. Beryl approaches still musing about Mrs Harry Kember.

Beryl: I don't care what Mother says. I **like** Mrs Harry Kember. She's interesting. She dares to be different. I feel I can learn from her. How on earth did she get her husband for example? He must be at least ten years younger - and so incredibly handsome! He looks like a model from an American magazine, rather than a man. Black hair, dark blue eyes, a slow sleepy smile, a fine tennis player, a perfect dancer - its such a mystery...
(She is so lost in her thoughts that she almost stumbles over Mrs Harry Kember) Oh, there you are!

Mrs H.K. You look very pleased with yourself this morning!

Beryl: Well, it's such a lovely day, isn't it?

Mrs H.K. (*Getting awkwardly to her feet*) Are you ready to go in?

Beryl: Oh, not quite. I've yet to change. (*She stands and begins unbuttoning her sundress*).

Mrs H.K. (*Admiringly*) Mercy on us, what a little beauty you are!

Beryl: (*Flattered, but coy*) Oh, Don't!

Mrs H.K. My dear – why not? And you don't wear stays, do you? (*She reaches out to touch Beryl's waist*).

Beryl: (*Stepping away*) Never! (*She declares with more pride than modesty*).

Mrs H.K. Lucky little creature!

Beryl: (*She removes her sundress. Her bathing suit is beneath*).

Mrs H.K. Don't mind me, my dear. Why be shy? I shan't be shocked like those ninnies further down the beach (*Glances in their direction*).

Beryl: Oh, I never get undressed in front of anyone.

Mrs H.K. What a waste! It really is a sin for you to wear clothes, my dear. Somebody's got to tell you, some day. Lets go in over there. I think I can see a warm patch. (*As they move off at stage left*). I believe in pretty girls having a good time. Why not? Don't you make any mistake, my dear. Enjoy yourself while you can! (*They exit stage left*).

End of Scene 3

End of Morning – Short break if desired.

Scene4: The Narrator: (*This time possibly Jonathan Trout*) reads:

The tide is out; lazily flops the warm sea. The sun beats down, beats down hot and fiery on the fine sand, baking the grey and blue and black white-veined pebbles. It sucks up little drops of water that lye in the hollows of the curved shells; it bleaches the pink convolvulus that thread through and through the sand-hills. Nothing seems to move, except the small sand-hoppers. Pit-pit-pit! They are never still. In the bungalows of the summer colony the green blinds are drawn. Over the verandas, on the paddock, flung over the fences, are exhausted looking bathing-dresses and rough striped towels. Each back window seemed to have a pair of sandals on the sill and some lumps of rock or a collection of paua shells. In the little Bedroom that they share, Kezia and her grandmother are taking their siesta together.

Kezia lies on the bed. She is wearing pyjamas. The old woman, in a white ruffled dressing gown, sits in a chair, knitting.

Kezia: What are you looking at, my Grandma? Why do you keep stopping and staring at the wall? Tell me, Grandma.

Granny: (*Sighs*) I was thinking of your Uncle William, Darling.

Kezia: My Australian Uncle William?

Granny: Yes, of course.

Kezia: The one I never saw?

Granny: That was the one.

Kezia: Well, what happened to him?

Granny: He went to the mines, and he got sunstroke there, and he died.

Kezia: (*Blinks*) Does it make you sad to think about him, Grandma?

Granny: (*Considers*) Does it make me sad? To look back; to stare down the years, to look after them as a woman does after they are out of sight. Does it make me sad? No, Kezia.

Kezia: But why, Grandma? (*She lifts one bare arm and begins to draw things in the air*). Why did Uncle William have to die? He wasn't old, was he?

Granny: (*Begins counting stiches in threes*). Oh, It just happened. (*She says in an absorbed voice*).

Kezia: Does everybody have to die, Grandma?

Granny: Everybody!

Kezia: ME? (*Sounds fearfully incredulous*).

Granny: Some day, my darling.

Kezia: But, Grandma!. (*Kezia waved her left leg*). What if I just won't?

Granny: (*Sighs and draws a thread from the ball*). We're not asked, Kezia. (*She says sadly*). It happens to all of us sooner or later.

Kezia: (*Lays still thinking this over*). But I don't want to die. It would mean I would have to leave here, leave everywhere - forever! Leave my Grandma? (*She rolled over quickly*). Grandma!

Granny: What, my pet!

Kezia: You're not to die!

Granny: Ah, Kezia, (*She looks up and smiled and shakes her head*) don't let's talk about it.

Kezia: But you're not to. You wouldn't leave me. You couldn't not be there. Promise me you won't ever do it, grandma... (*The old woman goes on knitting*). Promise me! Say never! (*But still her grandma remains silent*).

Kezia: (*Rolls off the bed, moves behind her grandmothers chair and begins blowing down her neck*). Say never...Say never... say never - (*She begins to tickle her Grandma*).

Grannie: Kezia! (*She drops her knitting and begins to tickle Kezia*).

Kezia: (*Gurgles*) Say never, say never, say never...

Granny: (*Stopping*) Come that's enough, my squirrel! That's enough my wild pony! (*She sets her cap straight*).

Narrator: And both of them had forgotten what the "never" was all about.

Lights or curtain. End of Scene 4

Scene 5: *A Patch of lawn. Linda Burnell is reclining in a large cane chair with a book in her lap. Her baby boy sleeps in a basinet nearby.*

Narrator: (Beryl) In her summer chair, under the manuka tree, Linda dreams the afternoon away. In his basinet beside her is the boy. Sound asleep he lies, his head turned away from his mother. In her cane chair, Linda feels so light she feels like a leaf. If only she had time to look at the flowers long enough to enjoy their novelty and beauty. But as soon as she pauses to admire them, along comes life and sweeps her away...
Now she dreams she is sitting on the veranda of her Tasmanian home, leaning against her father's knee. And he promises her...

Father: (*Male voice off stage*) As soon as you and I are old enough, Linny, we'll cut off somewhere, we'll escape - just the two of us together. I have a fancy I'd like to sail up a river in China...

Narrator: Linda saw the river, very wide, covered with little rafts and boats. She saw the yellow hats of the boatmen, and heard their thin voices call...

Linda: (*In Her dream*) Yes Papa! Isn't it wonderful...

Narrator: But just then a very broad young man, with bright ginger hair, walks past their house. (*Stanley quickly passes front stage*).

Father: (*Teasing voice*) Ahh! there's Linny's new Beau!

Linda: (*In her sleep*) Oh, Papa, fancy **me** being married to Stanley Burnell! Well, I **am** married to him, and what is more I **love** him. Not the Stanley whom everyone sees, not the everyday one; but the timid, sensitive Stanley, who kneels down every night to say his prayers and who longs to be good. Trouble is I see **my** Stanley so seldom. There are glimpses, moments, breathing spaces of calm; but the rest of the time it's like living in a house that is in a habit of catching fire, or a ship that is wrecked every day. And it is always Stanley in the thick of the danger. My whole time is spent in rescuing him, calming him down and listening to his story.

Narrator: And what was left of her time was spent in dread of having children. That was her real grudge against life. That's the question she asked and asked, and listened in vain for the answer. It was all very well for people to say it was the common lot of women to bare children: She, for one, could prove

that wrong. She was broken, made weak, her courage gone, through childbearing. And what made it doubly hard was that she did not love her children! As to the boy, thank heavens her mother took care of him; She hardly ever held him in her arms. (*Linda glances down at the baby*)

Baby: (*Boy's voice off stage*) I'm here! Why don't you like me?

Linda: (*Trying to sound cold*) Don't like babies!

Baby: (*Disbelievingly*) Don't like babies? Don't like **me**?

Linda: (*Drops off her chair onto the grass beside him*) Why do you keep smiling? If you knew what I was thinking, you wouldn't be smiling.

Narrator: But the boy just goes on smiling...

Linda picks up a book and begins reading. Jonathan Trout enters. He is whistling and at first does not notice her.

Linda: (*Putting down her book*) Hallo, Jonathan!

Jonathan: (*Whips off his hat, presses it against his chest, drops on one knee and and kisses Linda's hand*). Greetings, my Fair One! Greetings, my Celestial Peach Blossom! Where are the other noble dames?

Linda: Beryl's out playing bridge and mother is baking... Have you come to borrow something, Jonathan?

Jonathan: (*In no way disconcerted*) Just a little love, just a little kindness. (*He stretches out in front of her with hands behind his head*).

Linda: And so you go back to the office on Monday, do you, Jonathan?

Jonathan: On Monday the cage door opens, and clangs closed upon the victim for another eleven months and a week!

Linda: It must be awful, Jonathan.

Jonathan: Would ye have me laugh, my fair sister? Would ye have me weep?

Linda: (*Vaguely*) I suppose one gets used to it. One gets used to anything...

Jonathan: Does one? Hmm, I wonder how it's done. I've never managed it. (*He falls silent for a time*).

Linda: How attractive Jonathan is. It seems strange he is only an ordinary clerk. Stanley earns twice as much as he does. What's the matter with Jonathan? He has no ambition - that must be it. And yet he seems so talented. He loves music. He spends every spare penny on books. He's always full of new ideas, schemes and plans. But nothing ever comes of them...

Jonathan: (*Propping himself up on one elbow*) It seems to me just as infernal to have to go to the office on Monday as it always has done and always will do. To spend the best years of one's life sitting on a stool from nine to five, scratching in somebody's ledger. It's a queer use for one to make of one's one and only life, isn't it? (*He looks up at Linda but she has no answer*). Tell me, what is the difference between my life and that of

an ordinary prisoner? The only difference that I can see is that I put myself in jail and nobody's ever going to let me out. I'm like an insect that's flown into a prison of its own accord...

Linda: (*Sympathetically*) But if you feel like that, Jonathan, why don't you...

Jonathan: (*Interrupting her*) Ah! There you have me. Why indeed? Why don't I fly out the same window or door that I came in?

Jonathan: (*Going on before she can answer*) I'm like that insect. I keep banging and flopping and crawling up the pane. Why don't I leave the office? It's not as though I'm tremendously tied - although I do have two boys - I could cut off to sea, or get a job up country... (*Change tone*) Its because I'm weak, no stamina, no anchor, no guiding principal... (*Quoting more cheerfully*).

*Would you hear my story?
How it doth unfold...*

Linda: But is it too late - even now, Jonathan?

Jonathan: Too old, I am becoming old. Look at this. (*He draws attention to a grey Patch of hair*).

Linda: (*Surprised*) Why, Jonathan, you're going grey!

Jonathan: (*Getting to his feet*) All my secrets are revealed. (*More Cheerfully*) Now I must go and seek the heirs to my fame and fortune...(Exit)

Linda resumes her book. A little later t the sound of a coach is heard. It stops and after a murmuring of voices it clip-clops into the distance. Stanley hurries on stage. Linda rushes to meet him.

Stanley: (*Lifting her off her feet in a fond embrace*) Forgive me, darling, please forgive me. (*He puts her down and raises her chin to look at her face*).

Linda: (*Puzzled*) Forgive you, darling? But whatever for?

Stanley: (*Amazed*) Good Lord! You can't have forgotten. I've thought of nothing else all day. I made up my mind to dash out and telegraph you, but then I thought the telegram might not reach you before I did. I've been in torturers all day, Linda!

Linda: (*Concerned*) But Stanley, what must I forgive you for?

Stanley: (*Very wounded*) Linda! Didn't you realise? You must have realised - I went away without saying good-bye to you this morning? I can't imagine how I could have done such a thing - my confounded temper I suppose. But, (*He takes her in his arms again*) I've suffered enough already today!

Linda: What's that you've got in your hand? (*She disengages and looks*) Oh, new gloves... Let me see them. (*Taking one*).

Stanley: (*A little guilty*) Oh, just a cheep pair of wash-leather ones. I noticed Bell was wearing some in the coach this morning, so, as I was passing

the shop, I dashed in and got myself a pair. (*He glances at her*)
What are you smiling at? You don't think it was wrong of me, do you?

Linda: (*Trying one on*) On the cont-rary, darling, I think it was most sensible of you.

Stanley: Well, I was thinking of you the whole time when I bought them!

Linda: (*Taking his arm*) Come along, darling, let's go inside. It's getting late.

Stanley: (*Amazed*) Aren't you forgetting something Linda?

Linda: (*Vaguely*) Forgetting something?

Stanley: (*Rather crossly*) We can't leave 'Son and Heir' to sleep on the lawn all night, can we? (*He picks up the basinet*).

Linda: Of course not darling. (*Arm-in-arm they leave the stage*).

End of Scene 5

Scene 6: Beryl's Bedroom later that evening.

Beryl: (*Thinking out loud*) Why does one feel so different at night? Why is it so exciting to be awake when everyone else is asleep? It is very late! And yet every moment I feel more and more wide-awake, as though slowly, almost with every breath, I am waking into a new wonderful, far more exciting world than the daylight one. (*She sits on her bed*) I'm not very fond of my room by day. But now – suddenly it's dear to me. It's a darling little funny room. It's mine! Oh the joy of owning things! Mine - my own! My very own, forever?
(*She jumps off the bed and runs to the window and kneels, with her elbows on the sill as she looks out.*)
What a beautiful night? The garden, every bush, every leaf, every white paling, even the stars are conspirators. The moon is so bright that the flowers are as bright as day. But somehow the bush seems sad. When I am by myself and think about life, it always seems sad. It's lonely living by myself. Of course there are relations, friends – heaps of them; but I want someone to find the Beryl that none of them know – “Take me away my love. Let us live a life all new, all ours.”
(*She goes to look at her moonlit image in the mirror*)
I couldn't be left on the shelf. Other people perhaps, but not me...

Woman: (*Voice off*) Beryl Fairfield, not married? That lovely, fascinating girl!

Male 1: (*Voice off*) Do you remember Beryl Fairfield?

Male 2: (*Voice off*) Remember her! As if I could forget her! It was one summer at the Bay that I saw her. She was standing on the beach in a blue – no pink - muslin frock, holding a big cream straw hat, with the wind blowing through her beautiful chestnut hair... But that was years ago now!

Male1: (*Voice off*) She's still as lovely as ever – more so if anything.

(*Beryl smiles, goes back to the window and looks out.*
Harry Kember enters from stage left and stands gazing up at her.)

Beryl: There's someone there! There's a man standing by the gate!
Who could it be? It's Harry Kember!

H.K.: (*Soft gentle voice*) Good evening Mrs Beryl.

Beryl: (*Startled*) Good evening.

H.K.: It's a beautiful evening, isn't it? Won't you come for a little walk with me?

Beryl: Go for a walk – at this time of the night? I couldn't. Everybody's in bed.

H.K.: What does everybody matter? Do come! It's **such** a fine night...

Mrs H.K. (*Mocking voice from off stage*) Oh, go on! Don't be a prude, my dear. you enjoy yourself while you're young. That's my advice.

(*In a sudden rash moment Beryl steps out the window and crosses the lawn to meet him*).

H.K.: That's right. Here you are - You're not frightened are you?

Beryl: (*With false courage*) Not in the least.

H.K.: (*Reaching over the gate to take her hand*) Come on then, we'll just go as far as that big fuchsia bush; come along.

Beryl: (*Pulling her hand away*) No! I really don't want to go!

H.K.: (*Trying to embrace her*) Oh, don't be silly, there's nothing to be afraid of.

Beryl: (*Shrugging free*) Take your hands off me - you vile creature!
she sprints across the lawn and returns to her room and bed).

H.K.: (*Angrily*) Cold little devil! (*calling after her*) Why, in God's name, did you come out then? (*He exits stage left*)

Narrator: Nobody answered him. A cloud, small and serene floated across the moon. In that moment of darkness the sea sounded deep and troubled. Then the cloud sailed away, and the sound of the sea became a vague murmur, as though it wakened from a dark dream. All was still...

End of play.

The Garden Party

By Katherine Mansfield

A dramatisation of Katherine Mansfield's story by Kevin Boon

Special edition: This is a minimalist script for readings and performances using a cast of 6 and a bare stage or floor space, with the ability to make entries and exits from a single door. Scene changes from the Garden to the Lobby, from the street to the cottage and vice versa, are achieved by characters exiting through that door and re-entering, after a brief interval for the next scene. Directors with resources available are welcome to add characters and staging elements, or seek the 'full cast' script.

	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4
<i>Narrator (Mr Burnell)</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Kezia</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Workman</i>	+	<i>Godbers Man</i>	<i>Guest</i>	<i>Body</i>
<i>Mrs B.</i>	+	+	+	<i>Em</i>
<i>Leslie</i>	+		+	+
<i>Mr B.</i>			+	
<i>Sadie</i>		+	<i>Guest</i>	<i>Em's sister</i>

Settings

Scene I: *The Lawn at the Burnell's Residence.* A bare stage: A wall represents the house the floor (possibly bathed in green light) represents the lawn. Some shrubs and Garden furniture may also be provided.

Scene 2: *The Hall or Lobby of the Burnell's Residence.* Lighting change to brown

on floor. The shrubs and garden furniture, if employed, are replaced by a dresser with clock and telephone, on one side and a two-seater at back.

Scene 3: *The Lawn at the Burnell's Residence, As for scene one but with additional table, chairs and parasols if desired.*

Scene 4: *The Street and interior of the cottage.* A Spotlights is used to pick out Kezia as she makes her way along the 'street' at front of stage. After she meets Em's sister they go off stage and re-enter the interior of the cottage. In the meantime the garden furniture has been replaced by a chair with Em seated, head in hands. A bed with the 'body' is wheeled on to the far end of stage. This area is blacked out when Kezia goes to meet Leslie.

The Garden Party

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Scene 1 The lawn at the Burnell's residence. The house forms the back wall. There is a door or entry point at stage left. Only a bare stage is required but the stage floor may be flooded with green lighting. Shrubs may also be added.

Narrator: (Comes on stage carrying his script) **The weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm,**
the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it sometimes is in every summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling that they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everyone is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds had come out in a single night: Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the Marquee: (Exit)

A workman enters, carrying poles and tools. He knocks and steps back.

Kezia: (Answers door wearing a dressing gown with her hair wrapped in a towel, calls up to her mother.) **Mother! Mother! The workmen have arrived to put up the Marquee. Where do you want it put?**

Mrs B: (Calling from off stage) **My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I'm your mother. Treat me as a guest..**

Kezia: **But mother, I cannot possibly supervise the men. I've just washed my hair – and I haven't finished my coffee!**

Mrs B: **Well, Kezia, you *will* have to do it - after all you're the artistic one.**

Kezia: (Nervously approaches the workmen. Then, with a show of false confidence)
Good Morning. Have you come to put up the marquee?

Man: **That's right, Miss. Where would you like it put?**

Kezia: (Pointing) **Well, what about on the lily-lawn down there? Would that do?**

Man: (After a pause) **Hmmm, I don't fancy it. Not conspicuous enough... You see, with a thing like a marquee you want to put it somewhere where it hits you bang, slap in the eye... if you follow me?**

Kezia: (A little disconcerted) **Well, In a corner of the tennis court then - but the band's going to be there...**

Man: (Enthusiastically) **You're going to have a band?**

Kezia: **Well, only a very small one.**

Man: (Pointing in a different direction) **Look here, Miss, that's the place. Against those trees over there. That'll do fine.**

Kezia: **Oh, all right then. I was just going to suggest there.**

As the workman exits, Kezia watches them depart and muses to herself...
How extraordinarily nice workmen are. Why can't I have workmen friends, rather than the silly boys I danced with at the Sunday night supper? I could get on much better with men like them. It's all the fault of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for my part I don't feel them. Not one atom... (Her musings are interrupted)

Leslie: (Coming on stage) **Kezia, Kezia, where are you? Telephone, Kezia!**

Kezia: (Skimming over to him) **Com-ing!**

Leslie: (Surreptitiously handing her a jacket). **I say, Kezia, you wouldn't mind having a squiz at my coat before this afternoon: See if it wants pressing?**

Kezia: **Oh, just for you.** (Gives him an affectionate hug) **I do love parties, don't you Bogie.**

Leslie: **Ra-ther. Now dash off to the telephone, old girl!** (Kezia and Leslie Exit).

Lights or curtain (if available).

End of Scene 1

Scene 2 The Lobby of the Burnell's residence. There is a dresser on one side of stage, with a phone and a clock on it, and possibly a two-seater at the back.

Kezia: (Enters and picks up an old fashioned telephone) **Hu - low, yes, Kitty! Isn't it a perfect morning? Come for lunch. It will only be scraps - spare sandwiches and cakes. That's wonderful.** (Her Mother's voice is heard calling to her) **One moment**

hold the line. Mothers calling something. (Calling Back) What, mother? Can't hear.

Mrs B: (Louder voice off) Tell her to wear that sweet little hat she had on last Sunday.

Kezia: Mother says you're to wear that sweet little hat you had on last Sunday. Good, one o'clock then. Bye - bye. (She hangs up and begins a stretching exercise).
The Doorbell peals and a man's voice is heard mumbling.

Sadie: (Voice) I'm sure I don't know where they're to go. Waite here and I'll ask Miss Burnell.

Kezia: (Calling) What is it, Sadie?

Sadie: (Entering) It's the florist, Miss Burnell. He has several trays of Lilies. He wants to know where to put them.

Kezia: Several trays of lilies? Who could have ordered so many? It must be some mistake.

Mrs B: (Entering suddenly) No it wasn't a mistake. I ordered them. Won't they be lovely? I was passing the shop yesterday and I saw them in the window. I thought, for once in my life I will have enough Canna lilies. The garden Party will be a good excuse...

Kezia: (Giving her an affectionate hug) But mother, I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere!

Mrs B: My darling child, you wouldn't want a logical mother, would you? Sadie, tell the florist to bank them up on both sides of the porch.

Sadie: Yes Mrs. Maam. (Exit).

Mrs B: Don't you agree Kezia?

Kezia: I do indeed, Mother!

Sadie: (Returning) Mrs Burnell, now Cook wants to know if you've got the flags ready for the sandwiches?

Mrs B: (Dreamily) The flags for the sandwiches? Aah, let me see... Now, Kezia! You'll have to help me write the flags. Sadie, tell cook I'll have them ready in ten minutes – and Sadie, try to pacify Cook when you go into the kitchen, I'm terrified of her this morning.

Sadie: I'll do my best Maam. (Exit)

Mrs B: Kezia, be a pet and bring me the envelope with the labels.
I left it on the dresser over there. (Kezia goes to look)

Kezia: It's not here, Mother!

Mrs B. (Beginning to panic) Not there! Not there! But it *must* be there. I distinctly remember

putting it there. One of you girls must have moved it...

Kezia: (Coming back with an envelope) **It's all right, I've found it. It was behind the clock.**

Mrs B: (Taking the envelope and removing a list) **Here, I'll call them out to you, and you write them out.** (Kezia takes the envelope to the dresser. Mrs B. peers at the list).
Now there's cream-cheese and lemon-curd - have you got that?

Kezia: (After a pause) **Yes, mother.**

Mrs B: (Peering) **And what's this? It looks like Egg and Oil? What a horrible combination!**

Kezia: (Coming back on stage and gently taking the list from her). **Olive, Mother, egg and olive. I'll finish them of for you. You must have so much to do.**

Mrs B: (Preparing to Exit) **Well, I do rather. How many kinds of sandwiches are we having?**

Kezia: **Fifteen.**

Mrs B: **Fifteen! Goodness Gracious!** (As she exits). **You'll give the flags to Cook, wont you?**

Kezia: **Yes, Mother.** (Kezia remains in the room working on the list).

Sadie: (Rushing in) **Miss Burnell, the Godbers Man has arrived.**

Kezia: **Oh! Wonderful! No one in the world makes cream puffs like Godbers...**

Sadie: (Rather frantic) **But he's brought some terrible news, Miss. - A man's been killed!**

Kezia: **A man, Killed! Where? How? When?**

Godber: (Enters, wearing white overalls) **Yes, it's true Miss, I'm afraid.**

Kezia: **But, where did it happen?**

Godber: **Well, you know those little cottages just below here Miss?**

Narrator: **Know them? Of course she knew them. The little cottages were in a narrow lane**

at the bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between.

They were the greatest possible eyesore and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were mean little dwellings painted a chocolate brown.

In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato

cans. The very smoke coming from their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags

and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plums that curled from the Burnell's

chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler and a man

whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed.

Kezia: (Impatiently) **But, how was the man killed?**

Godber: (Unhurried) **Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott – a carter. 'is horse shied at a traction-engine that was going past this morning. He was thrown
And landed on the back of his head...**

Kezia: (Horrified) ... **and killed?**

Godber: **Dead when they picked 'im up. They were taking 'is body home when I came up 'ere... They say he left a wife and five little ones.** (Exit followed by Sadie).

Kezia: (Calling up stairs urgently) **Mother! Mother! Come quickly. Something terrible has happened!**

Mrs B: (Bustles on looking very anxious holding a large sunhat) **Good Heavens, child! What is it? – You haven't spoiled those sandwich labels, have you?**

Kezia: **No, Mother. But a man's been killed!**

Mrs B: (Appalled) **Not in the garden! I hope...**

Kezia: **No, no!**

Mrs B. (With a sigh of relief) **Oh, what a fright you gave me!**

Kezia: **But listen Mother. A man who lives across the road was killed when he was thrown
from his cart. We won't be able to have the Garden Party - with the band and everybody arriving, will we Mother? They're nearly neighbours...**

Mrs B: (Rather amused) **My dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident that we've heard about it. If someone had died there normally we would still be having
our party, wouldn't we?**

Kezia: (Doubtfully) **I suppose so. But won't it be terribly heartless of us?**

Mrs B: (Becoming a little annoyed) **Now you *are* becoming ridiculous, Kezia. People like that
don't expect sacrifices from us. And it wouldn't be very sympathetic to spoil the Garden
Party for everyone else, would it?** Kezia still looks doubtful. But her mother takes the hat she has been carrying and puts it on her head. **This hat is yours.**

It's made for you. It's much too young for me. Now finish those sandwich labels and take them through to Cook, or there really *will* be a calamity! (They exit).

Curtain or lights.

Scene 3 The Burnell's lawn. As for scene one, but with addition of a table and chairs.

All available cast are milling about, the sound of the band is in the background and a waiter zips across the stage carrying a tray of drinks.

Narrator: **The people came in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted on the Burnell's garden for this one afternoon, on their way to – where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who are all happy, to press hands, press cheeks, to smile into their eyes.**

Kezia: Enters, wearing her sun-dress and a Panama hat, greets two of the Guests.
Ah, I'm so glad you were able to make it. Isn't the weather divine...

Guest 1: **Darling Kezia, how well you look!**

Guest 2: **What a becoming hat, child!**

Guest 1: **You look quite Spanish Kezia. I've never seen you look so striking!**

Kezia: (Glowing) **Have you had some tea? Won't you try an ice? The passion fruit ices are really rather special.** (Calling to her Father): **Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?**

Narrator: **The perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.**
(Kezia and her mother farewelled the last of the guests.)

Guest 1: **Never a more delightful garden-party...** (Exit)

Mrs B: (Waving) **I'm so glad you were able to come.**

Guest 2: **Kezia, you looked simply divine.** (Exit)

Kezia: **Oh, You're much too kind.**

Mrs B: (When they are out of ear shot) **All over, all over, thank heavens!**

Kezia: **But mother, what a wonderful success?**

Mrs B: **Yes, it has been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties? Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted.**

In the meantime Mr B. and Lesley have slumped in two of the chairs around the garden table, which holds plates of sandwiches and cupcakes.

Kezia: (Joining them) **Have some sandwiches, Daddy dear. I wrote all the flags for them.**

Mr B: **Thanks!** (Stanley Burnell takes a bite and the sandwich is gone). **I don't suppose you've heard about that beastly accident that happened today?.**

Mrs B: (Holding up her hand) **My dear, we did. It nearly ruined the party. Kezia even insisted that we should put our party off.**

Kezia: **Oh, Mother!!**

Mr B: **Well it was a rather horrible affair all the same. The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and left a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say. An awkward silence falls.**

Mrs B: (Has a brilliant idea) **Look at all those sandwiches and cakes, all uneaten, all going to wast. I know! Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all prepared. (Jumps up). Kezia! Get me the big basket from the stairs cupboard.**

Kezia: **But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?**

Mrs B: **Of course! What's the matter with you today? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic.**

Kezia: **Oh well, if you're sure it will be all right.. (She runs off for the basket).**

Mrs B: **Did you see the dress that Gladys Bell was wearing? It was positively frightful!**

Leslie: **And that hat!**

Mr B: (Helping himself to another sandwich) **I couldn't help noticing that old Bell is developing a quite a corporation.**

Leslie: **But father I thought I heard you tell Mr Samuel Joseph you were planing to develop a corporation.**

Mr B: **Ah, my boy. That will be a very different kind of corporation to old Bell's (He Indicates a large pot).**

Leslie : **I thought the band was rather good.**

Mr B: **Much too loud.**

Mrs B: **Isabel was disappointed that nobody asked her to sing.**

Kezia: (Returning with a large basket) **I took all of the left over sandwiches and cakes from the other table.**

Mrs B: (Tipping the remaining sandwiches and cakes into the basket) **And these too – they're far too much of a temptation here.**

Kezia: **But Mother, how will we deliver them to the poor woman?**

Mrs B: **Take them yourself, darling. Run down just as you are. But, wait, take some arum lilies. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies.**

Leslie: **But they might ruin her frock, Mother?**

Mrs B: **So they might; Just in time; only the basket, then. And, Kezia!. (Following her)
Don't on any account ...**

Kezia: **What, mother?**

Mrs B: **No, better not put such ideas into your head! Nothing, Run along now.**

Lights or curtain End of Scene 3 (Actors vacate stage for brief scene change)

Scene 4: As the Narrator reads, a spot illuminates Kezia as she nervously crosses the darkening stage.

Narrator: **It was growing dusk as Kezia shut their garden gate. A big dog ran by like a shadow.**

The road gleamed white, down in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade.

How quiet it seemed that afternoon. Kezia was going down the hill to somewhere

where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realise it. She stopped a minute. And it

seemed to her that, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter (Sound effects) and the smell

of crushed grass was somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was:

Kezia: (To herself) **Yes it was a most successful party.**

Narrator: (As Kezia crosses the stage in the opposite direction) **Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men in tweed caps**

hurried by. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across a window.

Kezia: (To herself) **I wished I had put on a coat. How my frock shines! And this big hat - if**

only it was another hat! Are people looking at me? They must be. It was a mistake

to have come; I knew all along it was a mistake. Should I go back, even now? No,

too late. This is the house. It must be. (As she knocks) Please help me, God!

(To herself) **I'll just leave the basket and go.**

But the door opens. A little woman in black appears from the gloom.

Kezia: **I-i-is this Mrs Scott's house?**

Woman: **It is, my lass**

Kezia: (Nervously) **Are you Mrs Scott?**

Woman: (Wheedling Voice) **Walk in, please Miss.**

Kezia: **Oh, No. I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket that Mother sent**

—

(But automatically she follows her off stage. Almost immediately they re-enter what has now become the interior of the cottage).

Woman: **Step this way, please Miss.** (A spot lights up a woman sitting in a chair holding her head in her hands).

Woman: **Em, Em! It's a young lady** (She turns to Kezia). **I'm 'er sister, you see. You'll excuse 'er, won't you, Miss?**

Kezia: **Oh, but of course! Please, please don't disturb her. I – I only wanted to leave –**

The woman looks up. She cannot understand why Kezia is there.

Woman: **It's all right, my dear "I'll thank the young lady. You'll excuse 'er, Miss, I'm sure.**

The woman turns to go. Kezia puts down the basket and follows her to the area with the bed and the body of the man beneath a sheet.

Woman: (As she draws the sheet) **You'd like a look at 'im, wouldn't you Miss? Don't be afraid, my lass. 'e looks a picture, doesn't he? There's nothing to show.**

Kezia: **There lay a young man, fast asleep – sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was**

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it

far, far away. So remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under eyelids. He was given up to his dreams. What did garden-parties and baskets lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel come to the lane. Happy...happy...all is well, said the sleeping face. This is as should be. I am content. But all the same I had to cry, and I couldn't leave without saying something: -

Kezia: (Mumbles) **Please forgive my hat!** (She turns and hurries off stage).

Narrator: **This time Kezia did not wait for Em's sister. She found her way to the door, and down**

the path and past all those dark people.

(As Kezia comes back on stage) **At the corner of the lane she met her brother.**

Leslie: (Stepping out of the shadow). **Is that you Kezia?**

Kezia: (Startled but relieved) **Oh, it's you Bogie. Thank God!**

Leslie: **Mother was getting anxious about you. Was it all right?**

Kezia: **Yes, quite!** (She takes his arm and presses up against him). **Oh, Bogey!**

Leslie: **I say, you're not crying, are you?**

Kezia: (Shaking her head. She is).

Leslie: (Putting his arm round her shoulder). **Don't cry. Was it *really* awful?**

Kezia: (Sobbing) **No. No, it was marvellous! But, Bogey -** (She stops and looks up at him). **Isn't life...** (She stammers) **Bogie, isn't life...**

Narrator: **But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.**

Leslie: **Yes, isn't it, darling?** (And arm in arm they walk from the stage).

Lights.

End of Play.