



There Was a Child Once (1912)

By Katherine Mansfield

There was a child once.
He came to play in my garden;
He was quite pale and silent.
Only when he smiled I knew everything about him,
I knew what he had in his pockets,
And I knew the feel of his hands in my hands
And the most intimate tones of his voice.
I led him down each secret path,
Showing him the hiding-place of all my treasures.
I let him play with them, every one,
I put my singing thoughts in a little silver cage
And gave them to him to keep...
It was very dark in the garden
But never dark enough for us. On tiptoe we walked
among the deepest shades;
We bathed in the shadow pools beneath the trees,
Pretending we were under the sea.
Once--near the boundary of the garden--
We heard steps passing along the World-road;
O how frightened we were!
I whispered: "Have you ever walked along that road?"
He nodded, and we shook the tears from our eyes....

There was a child once.
He came--quite alone--to play in my garden;
He was pale and silent.
When we met we kissed each other,
But when he went away, we did not even wave.

