

Class- ix  
Subject - English  
Date - 04.09.21  
Name- Atoshi Sharma

## THE LITTLE GIRL

(Explanation)

Author – Katherine Mansfield

1. TO the little girl he was a figure to be feared and avoided. Every morning before going to work he came into her room and gave her a casual kiss, to which she responded with "Goodbye, Father". And oh, there was a glad sense of relief when she heard the noise of the carriage growing fainter and fainter down the long road!

### Word Meaning

Figure Person

To be feared To be afraid of

Avoid To keep away

Responded Replied, Answered

Glad Happy

Sense Feeling

Relief Easiness

Carriage Vehicle

Growing Becoming

Fainter Weaker, Lesser

The author is describing feeling of a small girl. The little girl was afraid of this person and she did not to meet him. She wanted to remain away from him. The person was her father. She did not want to meet him often. Every morning father used to go out of the house to work. Before going for work he used to come to the room of the little girl and give her a kiss. She used to say goodbye to her father. She felt happy and relaxed when sound of his his vehicle become lesser and lesser.

Author wants to say that the little girl was afraid of his father. She became tense because of his presence. She felt relaxed when father was away.

In the evening when he came home she stood near the staircase and heard his loud voice in the hall. "Bring my tea into the drawing-room... Hasn't the paper come yet? Mother, go and see if my paper's out there — and bring me my slippers."

Father used to come back home in the evening. He would sit in the drawing-room. The little girl used to stand near the staircase. She would hear voices of her father. Father would ask for tea.

He used to enquire if the paper had come. She would request mother of the little girl to check if the paper was lying outside. He would also ask to bring his slippers.

2. “Kezia,” Mother would call to her, “if you’re a good girl you can come down and take off father’s boots.” Slowly the girl would slip down the stairs, more slowly still across the hall, and push open the drawing-room door.

#### Word Meaning

Take off          Remove  
Slip down        Climb down slowly

Kezia is name of the little girl. Her mother would call her to come to the drawing room. Mother used to say that if Kezia is a good girl she would climb down and remove shoes of father. Kezia would slowly climb down the staircase. Very slowly she would cross the hall and open the door of the drawing room.by pushing it.

By that time he had his spectacles on and looked at her over them in a way that was terrifying to the little girl.

“Well, Kezia, hurry up and pull off these boots and take them outside. Have you been a good girl today?”

“I d-d-don’t know, Father.”

“You d-d-don’t know? If you stutter like that Mother will have to take you to the doctor.”

#### Word Meaning

Spectacles      Reading glass  
Terrifying        Fearful, Causing fear  
Stutter Stammer

Before Kezia reached near her father, he would put on his spectacles. He would look at Kezia from above his spectacle. Kezia used to get afraid by that style of his father. The father used to ask Kezia to quickly remove his boots and take these outside.

Then father would ask her if she had been a good girl throughout the day. [This probably means if Kezia had obeyed her mother and did not do any mischief.] Kezia used to reply that she did not know about it.While replying she used to stammer. Father would copy her style. He would further say that if Kezia continued to stammer, he mother might take her to a doctor for consultation.

3. She never stuttered with other people — had quite given it up — but only with Father, because then she was trying so hard to say the words properly.

“What’s the matter? What are you looking so wretched about? Mother, I wish you taught this child not to appear on the brink of suicide... Here, Kezia, carry my teacup back to the table carefully.”

### Word Meaning

Given it up      Stopped the habit  
Wretched      Bad, Terrible, Sad  
On the brink of      About to do something

She had stopped the habit of stammering while talking to other people. Kezia stammered only when she was talking to her father. This was because she used to make excessive try to be careful while speaking to her father.

Her father would further ask why Kezia was looking so sad that day. He used to advise her mother to look happy. He used to compare her looks with that a child who was about to commit suicide.

Then he would ask Kezia to carefully take his teacup back to the table.

He was so big — his hands and his neck, especially his mouth when he yawned. Thinking about him alone was like thinking about a giant.

### Word Meaning

Especially      Particularly  
Giant      Very big, Huge

Kezia was a little girl. So her father looked very big to her. Particularly his mouth opened very wide when he yawned. Whenever Kezia thought about her father, she thought that he was a huge person.

4. On Sunday afternoons Grandmother sent her down to the drawing-room to have a “nice talk with Father and Mother”. But the little girl always found Mother reading and Father stretched out on the sofa, his handkerchief on his face, his feet on one of the best cushions, sleeping soundly and snoring.

### Word Meaning

Sleeping soundly      In deep sleep  
Nice talk      Friendly talk

In the afternoon of every Sunday, Grandmother of Kezia used to send Kezia to the ground floor. Grandmother thought that Kezia would have a friendly talk with her parents. [Probably Kezia lived in a room on first floor. She shared that room with her grandmother]

But when Kezia came to drawing room, her mother would be reading something. While her father would be lying on the sofa. He would put his handkerchief on face. His feet

used to be on one of the best cushions of their house. He would be in a deep sleep and snoring. So Kezia could not have any discussion with her parents in afternoons of Sunday.

She sat on a stool, gravely watched him until he woke and stretched, and asked the time — then looked at her.

“Don’t stare so, Kezia. You look like a little brown owl.”

### Word Meaning

Gravely      Seriously Sadly.

In the drawing room Kezia would sit on a stool. She would seriously and continuously look at his father. After waking up father would stretch himself a bit. He would ask the time and then look at Kezia. She would advise Kezia to not to stare at him, He would insult or tease Kezia by saying that she looked like an owl.

One day, when she was kept indoors with a cold, her grandmother told her that father’s birthday was next week, and suggested she should make him a pin-cushion for a gift out of a beautiful piece of yellow silk.

### Word Meaning

Kept indoors    Was asked to remain in the house.

One day Kezia was suffering from cold. She was not allowed to go out of the house on that day. That day her grandmother told Kezia that birthday of his father was next week. She suggested that Kezia should make a pin-cushion for his father. She should use yellow coloured silk cloth for making the cushion. Grandmother thought that it would be a beautiful gift for father of Kezia.

5. Laboriously, with a double cotton, the little girl stitched three sides. But what to fill it with? That was the question. The grandmother was out in the garden, and she wandered into Mother’s bedroom to look for scraps.

### Word Meaning

Laboriously    With lot of effort

Wandered into    Walked into

Look for      To search

Scrap    Waste material, Unrequired material

Kezia made lot of efforts to make the cushion. She used two layer cloth to make the cushion. She stitched three side of the cushion. Now she needed to fill it up with something. She did not know what she should do. Her grandmother had gone out of the house to a garden. She went into the bedroom of her mother. She was searching for some waste material to fill in the cushion.

On the bed-table she discovered a great many sheets of fine paper, gathered them up, tore them into tiny pieces, and stuffed her case, then sewed up the fourth side.

#### Word Meaning

Discovered Found

Gathered Collected

Tiny Very small

Stuffed Filled

Sewed Stitched

On the table which was kept near the bed, she found lot of papers. She thought that those were not required by anyone. So she collected those. She tore those papers into small pieces. She used those pieces to fill the cushion. After that she stitched the fourth side of the cushion. Now the cushion was ready.

That night there was a hue and cry in the house. Father's great speech for the Port Authority had been lost. Rooms were searched; servants questioned. Finally Mother came into Kezia's room.

#### Word Meaning

Hue and cry Uproar, Shouting.

Great speech Important speech.

That night there was lot of shouting and uproar in the houses. Father had written a speech. He was to give that speech at the Port Authority. Papers on which that speech was written could not be found. All the rooms were searched to find those papers. Servants were asked if they had seen those papers. At last Mother came into the room of Kezia.

"Kezia, I suppose you didn't see some papers on a table in our room?"

"Oh yes," she said, "I tore them up for my surprise."

"What!" screamed Mother. "Come straight down to the dining-room this instant."

#### Word Meaning

Screamed Shouted

This instant Immediately, At once.

Mother asked Kezia if she had seen some papers on the table of their room. Kezia replied that she had seen those paper. She tore those papers to make the surprise gift of Father. Mother shouting with anger and surprise. Mother ordered Kezia to immediately come down to the dining room.

6. And she was dragged down to where Father was pacing to and fro, hands behind his back.  
“Well?” he said sharply.  
Mother explained.  
He stopped and stared at the child.

#### Word Meaning

Dragged      Pulled

Pacing Walking, Walking quickly

To and fro      From one point to other and back

Sharply      Harshly, Angrily.

While Kezia was walking towards ground floor, she was also pulled to walk quickly. There, Father was walking from one end to the other and back. He had kept his hands on his back. He angrily asked what had happened. Mother explained everything to him. [Mother explained why Kezia had torn those papers.]

“Did you do that?”  
“N-n-no”, she whispered.  
“Mother, go up to her room and fetch down the damned thing — see that the child’s put to bed this instant.”

#### Word Meaning

Whispered      Spoke in low voice, Murmured

Fetch      Bring

Damn      The word damn is used to curse a thing or a situation

Put to bed      Be ordered to sleep.

Father asked Kezia if she had torn those papers. Because of fear she spoke in very low voice that she had not done it. Father asked Mother to take Kezia to her room. He also asked to bring that surprise gift. Owing to his anger, Father cursed the gift. He advised Mother that Kezia should now sleep.

7. Crying too much to explain, she lay in the shadowed room watching the evening light make a sad little pattern on the floor.  
Then Father came into the room with a ruler in his hands.  
“I am going to beat you for this,” he said.

#### Word Meaning

Shadowed      Dark, Without light.

Kezia was continuously crying. Therefore she was not able to explain to her parents why she had torn those papers. She was lying on her bed. The lights were switched off so her room was dark. It was evening time. Small amount of light that was coming into the room had made some pattern on the floor. Even those patterns looked sad to her. [Meaning that Kezia was very sad]

Then father entered the room. He was having a ruler in his hand. Father told that he would beat Kezia for the mistake she had committed.

“Oh, no, no”, she screamed, hiding under the bedclothes.

He pulled them aside.

“Sit up,” he ordered, “and hold out your hands. You must be taught once and for all not to touch what does not belong to you.”

#### Word Meaning

Bedclothes    Bedsheets and other sheets to cover oneself

Once and for all    Permanently.

Kezia shouted ‘No, no’. She hid herself under the sheets that were on the bed. Father pulled the sheets away. He ordered Kezia to sit in the bed. He asked her to hold out her little soft hands. He further told that it was necessary to teach a permanent lesson to Kezia. After that she will always remember not to touch anything which did not belong to her.

“But it was for your b-b-birthday.”

Down came the ruler on her little, pink palms.

Kezia told her father that she was making a gift for his birthday. But Father did not listen to her. He brought the ruler down. Father hit on little pink coloured palms of Kezia with the ruler.

8. Hours later, when Grandmother had wrapped her in a shawl and rocked her in the rocking-chair, the child clung to her soft body.

“What did God make fathers for?” she sobbed.

#### Word Meaning

Wrapped    Covered

Rocked    Moved gently

Rocking chair    A chair built on two curved pieces so that it can move.

After that beating, grandmother of Kezia covered her in a shawl. Grandmother had put Kezia in a rocking chair and rocked her in the chair. She had covered Kezia in a shawl. Even after many hours of the incident Kezia was sobbing. She asked her grandmother why God created father. She wanted to say if God had created Father to beat his children. She was deeply hurt.

“Here’s a clean hanky, darling. Blow your nose. Go to sleep, pet; you’ll forget all about it in the morning.

I tried to explain to Father but he was too upset to listen tonight.”

#### Word Meaning

Hanky    Handkerchief

Blow nose    Clean nostrils by blowing air out of nostrils.

Grandmother gave a clean handkerchief to Kezia. She advised Kezia to clean her nostrils by blowing her nose into the hanky. Grandmother advised Kezia to sleep. Grandmother told Kezia that by the morning she would forget about the incident. Grandmother had tried to explain to Father that he should not have beaten Kezia. But Father was very angry that night.

But the child never forgot. Next time she saw him she quickly put both hands behind her back and a red colour flew into her cheeks.

But the little girl could never forget the incident. Every time she saw her father, she used to put her hands behind her back. Her cheeks used to become pink because of fear.

9. The Macdonalds lived next door. They had five children. Looking through a gap in the fence the little girl saw them playing 'tag' in the evening. The father with the baby, Mao, on his shoulders, two little girls hanging on to his coat pockets ran round and round the flower-beds, shaking with laughter. Once she saw the boys turn the hose on him—and he tried to catch them laughing all the time.

### Word Meaning

Macdonalds    Family of Mr. Macdonald

Next door     A house adjacent to one's house

Tag          A type of outdoor game

Turn hose on him     Spray water on him with a pipe.

All the time    Throughout , Every time

Family of Mr. Macdonald lived in the house which was adjacent to house of Kezia. They had five children. Through a gap in the boundary wall of her house Kezia looked into their house. They all were playing 'tag'. The youngest baby, Mao, was sitting on the shoulder of Mr. Macdonald. His two small daughters had caught his coat pockets. They all were running around in their garden. They were laughing. On one occasion the boys sprayed water on their father through a hose pipe. Mr. Macdonald was laughing all the time.

Then it was she decided there were different sorts of fathers.

Suddenly, one day, Mother became ill, and she and Grandmother went to hospital.

After seeing these activities, Kezia understood that all fathers were not alike. They had different behaviours. One day, all of a sudden, Mother of Kezia became sick. So Mother and Grandmother went to hospital.

The little girl was left alone in the house with Alice, the cook. That was all right in the daytime, but while Alice was putting her to bed she grew suddenly afraid.

Now Kezia was alone in the house. Only their cook, whose name was Alice, was at house. During daytime Kezia was not afraid. In the evening, Alice requested Kezia to go to sleep. That time, suddenly Kezia was afraid.

10. "What'll I do if I have a nightmare?" she asked.  
"I often have nightmares and then Grannie takes me into her bed—I can't stay in the dark—it all gets 'whispery'..."

#### Word Meaning

Nightmare     A frightening dream  
Grannie        Grandmother  
Whispery      Full of whispers, As if someone is speaking.

Kezia asked Alice what she should do if she had a frightening dream. She further told that many times she has such dreams. During such situations, Kezia goes to her Grandmother. They sleep together. Kezia told that she could not stay alone in the dark. She feels as if someone is speaking in a low voice.

"You just go to sleep, child," said Alice, pulling off her socks, "and don't you scream and wake your poor Pa."

Alice advised that Kezia should now sleep. He removed her socks. He further advised that she should not shout otherwise her father will get disturbed.

But the same old nightmare came — the butcher with a knife and a rope, who came nearer and nearer, smiling that dreadful smile, while she could not move, could only stand still, crying out, "Grandma! Grandma!" She woke shivering to see Father beside her bed, a candle in his hand.  
"What's the matter?" he said.

#### Word Meaning

Butcher        One who sells meat  
Dreadful      Frightening,  
Beside Near  
What's the matter     What happened.

But the same old fearful dream came to Kezia. A meat seller was having a big knife and a rope with him. He was coming nearer and nearer to Kezia. He had a frightening smile. Kezia was not able to move. She was standing still and shouted to call her Grandmother. Kezia woke up from this fearful dream. She was shivering. When she opened her eyes he saw that her father was standing near her bed. He was having a candle in his hand. He asked Kezia what had happened.

11. "Oh, a butcher — a knife — I want Grannie." He blew out the candle, bent down and caught up the child in his arms, carrying her along the passage to the big bedroom. A newspaper was on the bed. He put away the paper, then carefully tucked up the child.

#### Word Meaning

Put away      Removed

Tucked up      Covered with sheets or blankets.

Kezia told him that she had seen a butcher with a knife in her dreams. She wanted to be with her Grandmother. Father blew off the candle. He lifted Kezia in his arms. He carried her through the passage to his bedroom. This was a big bedroom. A newspaper was lying on the bed. He removed the newspaper. And carefully laid the little girl on the bed. He nicely covered the child using a sheet or a blanket.

He lay down beside her. Half asleep still, still with the butcher's smile all about her it seemed, she crept close to him, snuggled her head under his arm, held tightly to his shirt.

Then the dark did not matter; she lay still.

"Here, rub your feet against my legs and get them warm," said Father.

#### Word Meaning

Half asleep      Feeling very sleepy but awake also

Butcher's smile all about her      Still thinking about the smile of butcher

Crept      Moved slowly.

Snuggled      Moved in a comfortable situation.

Father also slept on the same bed near Kezia. The little girl Kezia was still feeling very sleepy. She imagined about the smile of the butcher. She was actually afraid of her nightmare. So she moved closer to Father. She put her head under the arm of her father. Now she was feeling comfortable. She was not afraid. The darkness of the night did not bother her. Father could feel that Kezia's feet were cold because of fear. So he advised Kezia to rub her feet with his feet. This was her feet would become warm.

12. Tired out, he slept before the little girl. A funny feeling came over her. Poor Father, not so big, after all — and with no one to look after him. He was harder than Grandmother, but it was a nice hardness.

#### Word Meaning

Look after      To take care of.

Father was very tired. So he fell asleep before the little girls could sleep. A funny thought came to the mind of Kezia. She thought that Father was really not getting help from anyone. He was

not as small as Kezia was but still not very big. Nobody ever took care of him. His body was not as soft as that of Grandmother. But Kezia felt comfortable.

And every day he had to work and was too tired to be a Mr. Macdonald... She had torn up all his beautiful writing... She stirred suddenly, and sighed.  
“What’s the matter?” asked her father. “Another dream?”  
“Oh,” said the little girl, “my head’s on your heart. I can hear it going. What a big heart you’ve got, Father dear.”

Word Meaning

Stirred Moved

Sighed Took a deep breath

Hear it going Hear its movements

Have a big heart Being generous, Being helpful.

Kezia thought that everyday Father had to go to work to earn livelihood for the family. When he returned he was very tired. It was not possible for him to play like Mr. Macdonald does. And she had torn her beautiful speech. Suddenly she move a bit and took deep breath. Father asked her if she had any problem or she was having one more dream. The little girl replied that her head was on his heart. She could hear beats of his heart. Dear Father you are very generous.