

And then, after six years, she saw him again. He was seated at one of those little bamboo tables decorated with a Japanese vase of paper daffodils<sup>1</sup>. There was a tall plate of fruit in front of him, and very carefully, in a way she recognized immediately as his 'special' way, he was peeling an orange.

He must have felt that shock of recognition in her for he looked up and met her eyes. Incredible! He didn't know her! She smiled; he frowned. She came towards him. He closed his eyes an instant, but opening them his face lit up as though he had struck a match in a dark room. He laid down the orange and pushed back his chair, and she took her little warm hand out of her muff and gave it to him.

Vera! he exclaimed. 'How strange. Really, for a moment I didn't know you. Won't you sit down? You've had lunch? Won't you have some coffee?'

She hesitated, but of course she meant to.

'Yes, I'd like some coffee.' And she sat down opposite him.

'You've changed. You've changed very much,' he said, staring at her with that eager, lighted look. 'You look so well. I've never seen you look so well before.'

'Really?' She raised her veil and unbuttoned her high fur collar. 'I don't feel very well. I can't bear this weather, you know.'

'Ah, no. You hate the cold...'

'Loathe it.' She shuddered. 'And the worst of it is that the older one grows...'

He interrupted her. 'Excuse me,' and tapped on the table for the waitress. 'Please bring some coffee and cream.' To her : 'You are sure you won't eat anything? Some fruit, perhaps. The fruit here is very good.'

'No, thanks. Nothing.'

'Then that's settled.' And smiling just a hint too broadly he took up the orange again, 'You were saying - the older one grows --

'The colder,' she laughed. But she was thinking how well she remembered that trick of his - the trick of interrupting her - and of how it used to exasperate her six years ago. She used to feel then as though he, quite suddenly, in the middle of what she was saying, put his hand over her lips, turned from her, attended to something different, and then took his hand away, and with just the same slightly too broad smile, gave her his attention again... Now we are ready. That is settled.

'The colder!' He echoed her words, laughing too. 'Ah, ah. You still say the same things. And there is another thing about you that is not changed at all - your beautiful voice - your beautiful way of speaking.' Now he was very grave; he leaned towards her, and she smelled the warm, stinging scent of the orange peel. 'You have only to say one word and I would know your voice among all other voices. I don't know what it is - I've often wondered - that makes your voice such a - haunting memory. ... Do you remember that first afternoon we spent together at Kew Gardens? You were so surprised because I did not know the names of any flowers. I am still just as ignorant for all your telling me. But whenever it is very fine and warm, and I see some bright colours - it's awfully strange - I hear your voice saying: "Geranium, marigold<sup>2</sup> and verbena<sup>3</sup>. And I feel those three words are all I recall of some forgotten, heavenly language . You remember that afternoon ?'

'Oh, yes, very well.' She drew along, soft breath, as though the paper daffodils between them were almost too sweet to bear. Yet, what had remained in her mind of that particular afternoon was an absurd scene over the tea table. A great many people taking tea in a Chinese pagoda, and he behaving like a maniac about the wasps - waving them away, flapping at them with his straw hat, serious and infuriated out of all proportion to the occasion. How delighted the sniggering tea drinkers had been. And how she had suffered.

But now, as he spoke, that memory faded. His was the truer. Yes, it had been a wonderful afternoon, full of geranium and marigold and verbena, and - warm sunshine. Her thoughts lingered over the last two words as though she sang them.

In the warmth, as it were, another memory unfolded. She saw herself sitting on a lawn. He lay beside her, and suddenly, after a long silence, he rolled over and put his head in her lap.

'I wish,' he said, in a low, troubled voice,

*A Dill Pickle*, Bliss and other stories, Katherine Mansfield,  
(Penguin Books, 1967) First published 1920

<sup>1</sup>daffodils (l. 2) =jonquilles

<sup>2</sup>marigold (l. 39) = souci

<sup>3</sup>verbena (l. 39) = verveine.

## I. COMPREHENSION / EXPRESSION

1. What kind of place do the characters meet in? Find 2 quotes from the text.

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2. What season of the year is it? Find 2 quotes from the text.

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3. In your own words explain who the main characters are. (20 words)

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4. 'And then, after six years, she saw him again.' (l. 1)

a) On that particular day did they meet by chance? (20 words)

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b) Using elements from the text, compare their reactions. (50 words)

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5. With quotations from the text show that both characters have not really changed much. Write a paragraph giving three details for each character.

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6. Compare the two characters' memories of the first afternoon they spent together. (40 words)

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7. (l. 47 - l. 49) What is Vera's final perception of that encounter? (40 words)

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8. Choose one of the following essays. (250 words)

1. l. 52 'I wish,' he said, in a low, troubled voice, ... Continue the story.
2. Imagine why the two characters had not met for so long.
3. The language of flowers and the language of love: how is such a link made explicit in the passage ?

## II - TRADUCTION

Translate from line 36 to line 46

*'... Do you remember that first afternoon we spent together at Kew Gardens? You were so surprised because I did not know the names of any flowers. I am still just as ignorant for all your telling me. But whenever it is very fine and warm, and I see some bright colours - it's awfully strange - I hear your voice saying: "Geranium, marigold, and verbena". And I feel those three words are all ! recall of some forgotten, heavenly language . . . You remember that afternoon ?'*

*'Oh, yes, very well.' She drew a long, soft breath, as though the paper daffodils between them were almost too sweet to bear. Yet, what had remained in her mind of that particular afternoon was an absurd scene over the tea table. A great many people taking tea in a Chinese pagoda, and he behaving like a maniac about the wasps - waving them away, flapping at them with his straw hat, serious and infuriated out of all proportion to the occasion. How delighted the sniggering tea drinkers had been. And how she had suffered.'*