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The Little Girl Summary

"**The Little Girl**" is a story by Katherine Mansfield that explores the complex relationship between a young girl named Kezia and her father. Kezia lives with her mother, father, and grandmother. She is afraid of her father, who appears harsh and critical to her, causing her to stutter in his presence. Kezia feels relieved when he leaves for work and finds her parents indifferent towards her, despite her grandmother's efforts to encourage her to interact with them.

One day, Kezia's grandmother suggests she make a pincushion as a birthday gift for her father. Kezia sews three sides of the pincushion and stuffs it with torn pieces of paper she finds on her mother's bedside table. Unknowingly, she uses important papers containing her father's speech for the Port Authority. When her father discovers this, he punishes her by beating her palms with a ruler, despite her sincere apology. Hurt and confused, Kezia questions the purpose of fathers.

Later, Kezia observes Mr. McDonald playing joyfully with his children, which makes her realize that not all fathers are cruel; some are loving and caring. Her perception of her own father changes when, during a night when her mother is hospitalized, her father comforts her after a nightmare. He cares for her tenderly, showing his love in his own way. Kezia understands that her father works hard to provide for the family and is often too tired to play with her, leading to a new appreciation of him.

Key Words

- **Stuttered:** Spoke with involuntary pauses or repetitions.
- **Indifferent:** Showing no interest or concern.
- **Casing:** A covering or outer layer for something.
- **Nightmare:** A terrifying or unpleasant dream.

Practice Set

Level 1 – Easy

- Who is Kezia afraid of and why?
- What did Kezia use to stuff the pincushion?

Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain why Kezia's father punished her despite her apology.
- How did Kezia's view of fathers change after seeing Mr. McDonald?

Level 3 – Challenging

- Describe the change in Kezia's relationship with her father after her nightmare.
- Discuss the theme of misunderstanding and reconciliation in the story.

Answer Key

- Kezia is afraid of her father because he appears harsh, rude, and critical to her.
- She used torn pieces of her father's important speech papers to stuff the pincushion.
- Her father was angry because the papers were important, and despite her apology, he punished her to show his displeasure.
- Seeing Mr. McDonald playing lovingly with his children made Kezia realize that not all fathers are cruel; some are caring and affectionate.
- After her nightmare, Kezia's father comforted her tenderly, leading her to understand his love and care, changing her fear into affection.

- The story shows how misunderstandings can create distance in relationships, but love and care can lead to reconciliation and deeper understanding.

Quick Reference

- Kezia's fear of her father stems from his strict behavior.
- The pincushion incident is central to the conflict.
- Mr. McDonald represents a loving father figure.
- The story ends with Kezia's realization of her father's love.

Glossary

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