

burst into the room. She could not forgive herself for her foolish action in giving him the duplicate key to her flat — it was so lacking in dignity, it looked so bad, even though she knew it meant nothing — She clasped her hands convulsively. What could she do — how could she make Guy go — ~~What~~ It was strongly evident that her husband would not leave her, to get him away from their room she must ~~suggest~~ go with him. This must be done. How! Suddenly a thought seized her & the relief that it brought lighted her face with what ~~he~~ Guy interpreted as love. Moving quickly to the window she lifted the blind, & moonlight flooded the room & killed the firelight: “Guy, it is moonlight again, just as it was that happy night — ~~Why not take me for a~~ let us walk for awhile” & her voice was full of trembling persuasion. “Do you want to Judith, [”] he said, [”]let us go — Life is too short for you and me to quarrel. Run and get on your coat & hat.[”] Swiftly she left the room, ran along the passage. She was standing in front of the mirror — buttoning her jacket when — was it fancy — it could not be reality — she heard the front door open & close, steps across the hall, then her husband’s voice — loud and commanding — “You Cecil Macdowell.”

She stood motionless, helpless, listening intensely for further sounds. ~~from the~~ The painful ~~thumping~~ throbbing at her temples suggested some long forgotten melody which repeated & repeated itself maddeningly. But there came no sound from the sitting room. Then suddenly the door opened, the two men came out — talking excitedly, her husband paused to put on a coat & hat & the next moment — the hall door had clicked behind them & she was alone!

Commentary

‘The Unexpected Must Happen’ appears in Notebook 2 held at the Alexander Turnbull Library along with Mansfield’s notes of her 1907 Urewera journey.⁵ The notebook also contains Mansfield’s reading notes from 1908, a poem beginning ‘This is Angelica / Fallen from Heaven’, and assorted vignettes and narratives, most notably ‘Leves Amores’ (known as ‘The Thistle Hotel’).

‘The Unexpected Must Happen’ dates from the early months of 1908 and provides insight into Mansfield’s increasing command of the art of invention. She writes in this notebook, in January 1908, a warning to those who would read all of her early work autobiographically, ‘I have the brain and also the inventive faculty! What else is needed?’⁶

‘The Unexpected Must Happen’ reveals the young Mansfield’s talent for heightened imagination; she would have been just twenty, writing about adult relationships she could not have experienced yet except through books.⁷ It also stands as an unwitting, oblique exercise for the later mature story *Bliss*.

In the large design, both stories depend for their effect on a reversal of expectation. They employ the theme of illusion and reality, clarified,