

and anger that he decided never to speak again from that day forth. And in the end he died of melancholy. I have almost the same feeling when I try to find words with which to bring Mansfield to life. But I would rather risk profaning the sacred than die a wretched death like that honest gentleman. She was dressed in a similar fashion to her friend Miss B. She too had on a pair of shiny patent leather shoes and bright green stockings. She wore a burgundy velvet skirt and a pale yellow silk blouse, with elbow-length sleeves, and a string of fine pearls around her bare neck. She had black hair, cut short like Miss B's. But the way her hair was combed was something I had never before seen in Europe or America. I suspected that she was intentionally imitating the Chinese style, for her hair was pitch black and straight, and cut in a neat fringe at the front. It was extraordinarily well combed. Though I could not hope to do it justice in words, I felt that hers was the most beautiful hair I had ever seen.

As for her features, I would never be able to describe a thousandth part of their crystalline beauty. Before her you felt yourself in the presence of one of nature's masterpieces: an alpine lake bathed in autumnal moonlight; a sunset swathed in roseate clouds; or a clear, star-studded night sky of the southern seas. Or she was like a masterpiece of art: one of Beethoven's symphonies, or Wagner's operas, or a sculpture by Michelangelo, or a painting by Whistler or Corot. There is something about such beauty that is complete, pure, perfect, irreducible, ineffable. It is as if you have been granted a direct insight into the creator's will, a most intense experience, bringing with it a feeling of infinite joy. It cleanses the soul to be in the presence of a truly great personality. Mansfield's features seemed to me like the purest Indian jade, her gaze alive with spiritual revelation, her manner gentle as a spring breeze. She gave me a sense of what I can only call total beauty. She was like crystal. You could not but marvel at the flawless purity of her spirit. The brightly coloured clothes she was wearing might have aroused some trifling criticism had they been worn by someone else. But on her it looked so becoming, like green leaves, the peony's indispensable complement. H. M. Tomlinson, a good friend of hers, once compared her transcendent beauty to that of the pristine snow on the Alps. I think it a wonderful comparison. He said,

She has been called a beautiful woman. That is hardly the word. Beauty, as we commonly understand it, is attractive. Katherine Mansfield's beauty was attractive, but it was also unearthly and a little chilling, like the remoteness of Alpine snow. The sun is on it, and it is lovely in a world of its own, but that world is not ours. Her pallor was of ivory and there was something of exquisite Chinese refinement in the delicacy of her features, her broad face, her dark eyes, the straight thick fringe, and her air of quiet solicitude. And her figure was so fragile that a man beside her felt his own sound breathing to be too evident and coarse for proximity to the still light of that wax taper, a pale star sacramental to what was unknown.<sup>7</sup>