

The Window



Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added.

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to ward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch. Since he cannot keep this feeling separate from that, but must let what is actually at hand, since to such people even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallise and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests, James Ramsay, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores, endowed the picture of a refrigerator, as his mother spoke, with the heavenly bliss. It was fringed with joy. The wheelbarrow, the lawnmower, the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rucks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling—all these were so coloured and dis-

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- this miniature in medias res - the first words an answer to "question we don't hear"
 - ↳ and beginning on Yes, or Yes, if - affirmation + qualification
 - ↳ the novel's travel toward the pure affirmation of Lily's closing triumph ^{the exhaustion}
- "To that great clan which cannot keep this feeling separate from that" - all of us, if by degrees? The other clan of the unromantically/fully present? If it exists
- From "since he belonged" to "It was fringed with joy": one of the divine one-two (sister) punches in literature, the labyrinthine turn of the first finding their resolution in the great declaration of the next
- "coloured and distinguished" - ^{always a hint of reality, always} ^{distinction}
- "his private code, his secret language" - And she has? Her words do convey - joy - to him. Shared
- "Thought he appeared... So that his mother" - this shift from the space of his consciousness to hers, the moment transfixed by her prophetic sense of his adult years that later ^{uncompromising severity}
- Still innocent/ironic? Both mother and son as silent judges ^{"Frowning slightly" - already worldly-wise}
- All of this cogitation given space & substance ^{between the plainest of dialogues - "Yes, of course" - "But it won't be"}

tinguished in his mind that he had already his private code, his secret language, though he appeared the image of stark and uncompromising severity, with his high forehead and his fierce blue eyes, impeccably candid and pure, frowning slightly at the sight of human frailty, so that his mother, watching him guide his scissors neatly round the refrigerator, imagined him all red and ermine on the Bench or directing a stern and momentous enterprise in some crisis of public affairs.

"But," said his father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, "it won't be fine."

Had there been an axe handy, or a poker, any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence; standing, as now, lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgement. What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all of his own children, who, sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising; and the passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail barks founder in darkness (here Mr. Ramsay would straighten his back and narrow his little blue eyes upon the horizon), one that needs, above all, courage, truth, and the power to endure.

"But it may be fine—I expect it will be fine," said Mrs. Ramsay, making some little twist of the reddish-brown stocking she was knitting, impatiently. If she

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the many thoughts

- Across the whole novel, not a word from a child?
- "lean as a knife" - so there is an axe (of sorts)
↳ M.R.'s childishness, "grinning sarcastically"
- That paratitential less as a way of locating the thought in James - we know this - and more as a means of announcing Woolf's stepping out of that perspective, again mid-sentence
- "It was always [morally] true"
- Second paratitential: ^{deeply} even dry disillusioning as performance, a fidelity to inborn character rather than some unassailable true outward fact
- "the passage to that fabled land": The blurred suggestion: we get there. Enchantment and, suddenly, sympathy, from MR as much as our narrator

Least of all his own children who, sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising; and the passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail barks founder in darkness (here Mr. Ramsay would straighten his back and narrow his little blue eyes upon the horizon), one that needs, above all, courage, truth, and the power to endure."

↳ And, Mrs. R says by that "little twist", the plausible fable of compassion