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ENGLISH

CHAPTER 6: AMANDA



AMANDA

~Summary~

-by Robin Klein

Stanza- 1

Don't bite your nails, Amanda!
Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!
Stop that slouching and sit up straight,
Amanda!

Explanation: In the above lines, Amanda is getting instructed, most probably by her parents for biting nails and sitting lazily with her shoulders bent. The tone of instructions here is not a friendly one and thus fails to make any sense to Amanda. The poet here, focusses on the aspects related to the upbringing of a child (girl) and how parents go to any limit to bring proper sense to their child. Amanda is thus, getting trained for the society she is a part of. The pressure of making oneself presentable to the society triumphs over every other behaviour and manners. The last phrase or word 'Amanda!' is used with an exclamation mark which shows the irritation and frustration of the parent.

Stanza- 2

There is a languid,
emerald sea,
where the sole inhabitant is me
a mermaid,
drifting blissfully.

Explanation: It is to be noted that the above lines are given within brackets. Brackets are used to provide more meaning to the phrase. Here the poet uses it to present the imagination of the little girl, the free-flow of pure thoughts. Amanda uses her imagination as an escape point from day-to-day commands of her parents. She feels suffocated in the real world and thus finds peace in her very own created world where there are no restraints. She imagines herself to be a joyful mermaid sailing without any confines alongside soft waves of the green sea. This world of Amanda is free and contained in itself and her happiness doesn't require any other human being. For a child, mermaid is a symbol of freedom and wonder.

Stanza- 3

Did you finish your homework, Amanda?
Did you tidy your room, Amanda?
I thought I told you to clean your shoes,
Amanda!

Explanation: Amanda is now being asked about whether she has finished her homework, or tidied up her room and also whether she has cleaned her shoes. This set of instructions marks a shift from the instructions given in Stanza 1. Now Amanda is being coached about the things that are related to her surroundings. The pattern of instructions explains that how every aspect of her is related to questioning and proper guidance. She is being disciplined for every little thing, making her lose of her freedom. Her innocence is eventually getting lost with passage of time. The way these instructions are delivered points out the regular nature of these lessons. Her name being called again with an exclamation mark shows that the parents seem to be losing their cool and are troubled.

Stanza- 4

I am an orphan, roaming the street.
I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.
The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.

Explanation: In this stanza, we once again see Amanda's reaction to her mother's harsh words. Amanda withdraws into another imaginary world. The very first line is awfully depressing where Amanda imagines herself to be an orphan suggesting how much frustrated she is with continuous questioning of her parents specially her mother. She has no shoes on her feet and instead she is getting them even dirtier by making designs on the dusty ground with them. However, she makes no sound while making these dusty designs. She cherishes the silence as well as the freedom to do as she likes that world of her imagination. Her love for silence is as a result of the shouting and yelling of her parents.

Stanza- 5

Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!
Remember your acne, Amanda!
Will you please look at me when I'm speaking
to you, Amanda!

Explanation: The set of instructions provided here indicate how much essential it is for Amanda to understand the value of external beauty, and steps to be taken to preserve it from a very tender age. Amanda is stopped by her parents from eating a chocolate as previously that had caused her acne. Here, we see how a child is made conscious of a natural experience such as acne. However, Amanda is still lost in her own thoughts and doesn't care enough to look up to her scolding parents. This carelessness further angers the parents and they ask for her attention when she is being scolded. The role of appearance in the society is given more significance than the basic values and creativity.

Stanza- 6

I am Rapunzel, I have not a care;
life in a tower is tranquil and rare;

I'll certainly never let down my bright hair!

Explanation: Amanda is still lost in her own dreams. She pictures herself to be the long golden-haired Rapunzel who lived in a castle and had no care about anything. Amanda imagines that the life of Rapunzel must have been very peaceful and fantastic in the tower. But she wishes to evade the fate that was met out to Rapunzel as she is unwilling to let her hair down. Amanda doesn't want her peace to be disturbed anyhow. She seeks a life which is away from any other human form. We can see here how the presence of her parents and their inhuman behaviour had made her against any human connection. Hence, she only wanted to live by herself as the presence of another being in her life would require her to act in a certain way. Amanda wanted to live as a free and happy person.

Stanza- 7

Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!
You're always so moody, Amanda!
Anyone would think that I nagged at
you, Amanda!

Explanation: The parents keep instructing Amanda on the dos and don'ts, but Amanda remains lost in her own dreams. The parents believe that Amanda is not reacting because she is annoyed. Amanda's behaviour has made her parents look bad and they are worried about their image. They are concerned about how society will perceive them if their child always remains in a foul mood. They want to prove themselves as responsible parents who manage to balance out what the child wants and what the society expects out of Amanda. However, they have already failed in their efforts.

Conclusion of Amanda

This poem conveys the moral that children need to be allowed more freedom. Excessive nagging may make them disobedient and hence they may develop a type of dislike for real life.