

Random Thoughts in a May Garden

James Saunders

David and Sophie, a middle-aged couple with grown-up children, have recently bought an old house with a rambling garden. While moving in they come across an old, torn family photograph, the remains of which shows two little girls. While the couple are entertaining friends, philosophising on the meaning of life and the inevitable passage of time, we hear the voices of the little girls, Katie and Anne, speaking from the past. Katie is only about 11, the younger of the two, but an observant, mature-thinking child. She is sitting quite still.

Time: The present, although the photograph is set in Victorian times.

KATIE. I think there's a fly on the back of my hand. Walking. I can't look down. I can't even flap my hand or swat it or I shall come out blurred and I'll get the blame for spoiling the photograph. 'Anne sat still, see how still Anne sat, why couldn't you sit still like everyone else?' Well, I can. I don't want to be called Katie fidget whenever they show it to anyone. I can just imagine, how awful. I'd go through the whole of my life with it. The perfect photograph in memory of the wedding of *dear* Emily – where is she now, why isn't she in the photograph, it's her wedding? – only there in the corner *little* Katie all blurred. 'What a fidget, Katie fidget, she always was a fidgety child.' I wonder if Georgie will fidget. They've sat Georgie on the other side. He was standing behind me, he put his bony chin on my shoulder-blade and moved it about, it hurt, I told him to get off. I'd have shrugged my shoulder up only I was afraid he'd bite his tongue. That was considerate of me, only I'm afraid

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nobody will know . . . I wonder if I'll ever get credit for it, in Heaven, perhaps. And anyway, if he'd cried, I'd have got the blame, because I'm older and should know better. Anne never gets the blame if she upsets *me*. I'm pig in the middle. One day I shall be grown up. I shall be as old as Anne, and then as old as Emily and get married, and then as old as my mother with children and then as old as Granny Burridge, and then I shall die like Grandad Burridge and Granny Filkins. And Bertie. I'm eleven. Bertie would be thirteen. Anyway I didn't want Georgie's monkey face next to mine, he always looks funny in photographs. Georgie had to go to the other side to balance the picture. I suppose otherwise it would fall over or something. Silly way of putting it, balance, balance is for weight not pictures. He'll probably crack the lens. . . . Georgie spilt something down his front, I don't know what it was, my mother was ages trying to get it off so that it wouldn't show in the photograph. It would be more typical if it did. I hope this fly shows, but I don't suppose it will. My hands are folded, one on the other as I've been taught. I'm wearing a large hat. I'm looking, looking, looking at the camera. This picture will last for ever. But I shall die.