

The Peddler

Charlotte Mew (1869-1928)

Lend me, a little while, the key
That locks your heavy heart, and I'll give you back –
Rarer than books and ribbons and bright beads to see,
This little Key of Dreams out of my pack.

The road, the road, beyond men's bolted doors,
There shall I walk and you go free of me,
For yours lies North across the moors,
And mine South. To what sea?

How if we stopped and let our solemn selves go by,
While my gay ghost caught and kissed yours, as ghosts don't do,
And by the wayside this forgotten you and I
Sat, and were twenty-two?

Give me the key that locks your tired eyes,
And I will lend you this one from my pack,
Brighter than coloured beads and painted books that make men wise:
Take it. No, give it back!