

Envy

By Mary Lamb

This rose-tree is not made to bear
The violet blue, nor lily fair,
Nor the sweet mignonet:
And if this tree were discontent,
Or wished to change its natural bent,
It all in vain would fret.

And should it fret, you would suppose
It ne'er had seen its own red rose,
Nor after gentle shower
Had ever smelled its rose's scent,
Or it could ne'er be discontent
With its own pretty flower.

Like such a blind and senseless tree
As I've imagined this to be,
All envious persons are:
With care and culture all may find
Some pretty flower in their own mind,
Some talent that is rare.



British Poet and anthologist Mary Lamb worked as a seamstress for 10 years to support her ailing family. She suffered from bipolar disorder and, during an episode in 1796, killed her mother with a kitchen knife. Her younger brother Charles, a poet and essayist who worked for the East India Company, agreed to serve as Mary's caretaker rather than consign her to lifelong institutionalization. Despite her illness, the siblings developed a collaborative writing relationship and produced many well-known collections of poetry and prose for children. The books they wrote together were published anonymously or under Charles's name in order to shield Mary from unwanted publicity.

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