A Child’s First Sorrow
By Andreas Munch

Little Lotte thought of everything and nothing
Like a butterfly she flew about in the gold of the sun.
In her golden curls she wore the crown of spring,
And her gaze was like the heavens, so bright blue and clear.

She charmed her mother and was faithful to her doll,
She took care of her clothes and her red shoes,
But above them all she loved a little bird,
Which her father had captured on the snow last Christmas.

It sat by the window, freezing, in the winter's cold and wind
And pleadingly it looked into the warm room within.
Then her father put out grain to tempt it to come in
And Lotte gently put it towards her warming cheek.

And Lotte was so happy, she alone was allowed
To care for and to comfort the little guest from the forest.
She brought the bird its food and kissed it to sleep,
Soon it learned to eat from her red lips

It knew her voice and her light step
And thanked its friend with many a lively song.
At the end it sat sad and silent in its cage.
It heard spring calling from the green forest

Then it spread it wings and wanted to fly away;
But little Lotte smiled - alas, she didn’t understand.
She closed the cage securely, she gave it water and seed;
But the bird only wanted freedom.

One morning she ran early to the bird with food
And laughed loudly on the way and was so delighted;

But, when she came to the cage, she forgot her song.
The dear bird lay outstretched on the bottom, stiff and long.

She took it out carefully and kissed it so tenderly;
But it remained cold and lifeless, - it was not a joke,
Its head sank back. In its eye death lay.
Horrified she let it fall and stared silently at it.

And, as she stood there silent, she became so strange.
Before her clear eyes a fog grew,
The sweet childhood blush faded from her cheeks
And slowly from her heart a dark pain rose.

She could not know what this pain was,
But sorrow had written its first tune in her heart
And marked its image deep on her soft features.
No longer did it disappear with her last tear.

She thought of her mother, but not as lightly as before
And thus new worlds dawned behind the black veil of grief,
Like a look at the sea from the dark fortress of the coast
So the possibilities of life are revealed by the child's first sorrow.