



Janet McNeill  
Belfast Writer  
(1907-1994)

**Janet McNeill Bibliography:**

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*Switch On - Switch Off and other plays: with a foreword and suggestions for school use by Eric Dare* Six one-act plays for use in Schools or by Dramatic Societies with practical notes by Eric Dare (London: Faber & Faber, 1968)

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**Libretti**

*Finn and the Black Haor*: a children's opera in two acts (London: Novello, c. 1962)

*Finn and the Black Hag*: a children's opera in two acts (London: Novello, c 1962)

Composed by Raymond Warren

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Virago Modern Classics

Janet McNeill

Tea at Four O'Clock





THE  
**GLASS  
SHORE**

Short Stories by  
**Women Writers from  
the North of Ireland**

Edited by **SINÉAD GLEESON**

## The Girls

His neighbour on the right stirred her coffee and laid the spoon in the saucer. 'All summer,' she continued, 'postcard after postcard with pictures of Norwegian fjords and glaciers, incredibly blue and impersonal, like blind men's eyes, if you know what I mean. They're camping, of course. Modern youngsters are marvellous, don't you think, Mr Armitage?'

He said, 'They certainly make the headlines.' Her eyesight must be better than his; he hadn't been able to see across the knives and forks to decipher her place-card. In any case, her married name would have meant as little to him as his surname evidently did to her.

'You can't help remembering them when they were small and took hold of your hand as soon as you went through the gate,' she said. 'I mean, it doesn't make any difference, but you can't help remembering.' She lowered her green-caked eyelids. 'Of course they mature so much earlier nowadays,' she said, and in case she had admitted any hint of sourness, added gaily, 'Bless them!'

'My wife and I have no family,' he said, and she looked at him in the way that women always looked when he said this. Accusation? Curiosity? Pity? He wasn't sure. Was this Joan he wondered, or Phyllis, Beatrice or Judith? More than likely she was one of the hockey team whose flat virgin faces looked out



*The Glass Shore*

from the photograph that Alice had hung on the bedroom wall the day they came home from their honeymoon. 'Do we have to have them there?' And Alice said, 'The girls? Oh, John, of course!'

The sight of her cross-stitched nightdress-case lying on the bed startled and pleased him, and he didn't argue. She had embroidered it, she told him, in the Upper Fifth. Miss Finch had been wild because she hadn't matched the colours properly.

Whichever of the girls the lady on his right was, she now turned her attention to her other neighbour, presenting him with an oblique view of her chin and solid bosom. He was in disgrace. Since the soup, he had accompanied her through a detailed history of her children, almost from their conception, as if since he was attending the Reunion Luncheon as a husband, it followed that he must also be a father. Now she knew her confidences had been misplaced; he should have told her earlier that he and his wife were childless. She had been deceived.

The lady on his left, one of the senior Old Girls and certainly not in the photograph of Alice's hockey team, had been working through an agenda with her other neighbour since they took their places, and was still fiercely engaged. Alice was seated across the table from him, two places to the right. In spite of her attachment to the photograph, this was the first of these functions she had attended – his work, she protested, the journey to Ireland, the Dahlia Show: in any case, what would be the point? It wasn't as if she had kept up with any of them since she sent to each the first matinee coat. Even Christmas cards had long since dwindled.

Unexpectedly, she had decided this year to come, shrugging his surprise and the Dahlia Show aside. It would be amusing; they would make an autumn holiday of it, would stay a night or two at the hotel where the lunch was to be held, in the town that had been their home. It was arranged.

### *The Girls*

He looked at her now with the double eye of critic and husband, hoping she wasn't sorry she had come, making a private appraisal of her public face. She looked different from her companions and younger than she did in London. This was probably because she was wearing on her head that wisp of black lace and velvet, whereas the other women were formally and magnificently haired. Below the netted threads her hair blazed, the colour unaltered since it had lain in plaits on the shoulders of her gym tunic. She wasn't joining in the conversation, but sipped her coffee as if she was wholly absorbed in making a judgment on it. Then she put her cup down briskly and began to talk.

He turned his ear to listen. Alice was never much of a talker, not in public, nor would he have thought of her as a name-dropper. Names fell from her now like leaves in Vallombrosa. It was blatant, but she was doing well. Even those names her listeners might not recognise were made to sound significant. Names of his colleagues in the television world occurred frequently.

'So I said to Leonard – Leonard Styles, you know – how do you grow those quite amazing roses?' That was as much as she had found to say to Leonard Styles when confronted with him for a few seconds at a sherry party – 'Your roses are lovely' – before someone else had snapped him up. Now she made it sound like a stroll through a scented garden, blue fingers of evening lying on the grass.

'Estelle Leyland – we bump into each other sometimes when I go to have my hair done.' She thought she had heard Estelle's voice once in the cubicle next to hers, but though she hung about afterwards, she wasn't able to positively identify Estelle.

Alice looked up and saw him. She knew from the surprise on his face that he had been listening. Instead of the shy look she usually gave him when their eyes met in public, she threw

*The Glass Shore*

him now a cocky challenge – 'Doing all right, don't you think?' and in a voice loud enough for him to hear without effort, she spoke of the Head of Programmes as if he had been a favourite uncle.

It hit him then why she was doing it. Pops and Protests, O Levels, and Menstrual Sluggishness: these were the topics she was offered. She chose her own. That thing on her head was a flag of freedom flown to celebrate her escape from provincial convention, to point out her difference before anyone else pointed it out.

Her small spurt of display ended abruptly, as it had begun, and had earned her no response. As soon as she had finished her neighbours returned to their discussion of Streaming in Schools, Teenage Sex and What Was the Church Doing Anyway? Her lower lip had thickened, her face forbade him to look at her and offer any kind of comfort.

Someone at the top table was tapping for attention. He disciplined himself to listen to the speeches.

'The speeches weren't up to much, were they?' she said later in their bedroom in the hotel. She was sitting at the dressing table in conference with three reflections of herself. He stood at the bay window feeling the coolness of the glass against his hands. Outside, the pale curve of the beach was deserted, the tide was low, pools already threw back light to the sky.

'That militant woman who spoke first—' he said.

'Mabel? You know she was terrible. She used to be Head Prefect. She was always terrible. I've told you how terrible she used to be.'

'She was the best of the bunch.'

'Which wasn't saying much.'

'How was Phyllis?' He picked a name at random, hoping to steer her into some nostalgic schoolgirl chatter.

'Phyllis? Well, you tell me how she was!'

*The Girls*

'What do you mean?'

'You were sitting next to her.'

'Was I? Was that Phyllis?'

'Surely you knew! On your right.'

'Look, I only met Phyllis once, and that was all of fifteen years ago, for five seconds, milling about in a conducted party at a stately home - anyway, she hadn't a clue who I was.'

Alice frowned. 'She should have had.'

'Oh come off it,' he said, though he agreed with her. 'Hardly over here.'

'Phyllis never could remember names - she cheated like mad in exams. Anyway, why be so interested?'

He pointed out, 'She was your friend - you're the one to be interested.'

'Tell me then - how was she?'

'Busy?'

'Good works? She thirsted after good works.'

'No,' he said. 'Children.'

He could have dodged it but he was angry with her for being so sour about the girls, her friends. What had they come for? He had been ready to smile at sentimental reunions; now he felt he was on the inside of the photograph, making a claim for affection.

She said, 'Ring down to the desk, will you, and ask them to send up some China tea with lemon.' When he had done this, she said, 'I'm glad we're in one of these big front rooms, anyway. We never really thought we'd be staying here, did we? Years ago, I mean. Do you remember looking in through the revolving doors when we were on our way to the half-crown dances at the pier?'

He said, 'I remember. I kept a cardboard calendar in my locker and speared the days out with my penknife from half-term.'

She wriggled her feet free of her shoes. 'This carpet, it must have cost a packet. When people say, 'Of course young folk mature so much earlier these days', it makes me want to laugh.'

*The Glass Shore*

He remembered Alice on her bicycle, hair like a flag, turning the corner of the lane from her parents' house, then lighting down beside him, all movement suddenly arrested, and the passionate innocence of the first moments, only their breath meeting across their passive hands. 'You're late.'

'I couldn't get away any sooner, John. She made me swear to God I would do my piano practice. How English you've got - more English than ever.'

'I have not.'

'You have so.'

And gradually Alice became Alice.

Now he heard rain on the window and turned. Large single drops studded the glass. The sparse necklace of lights was already lit along the promenade, though it was only mid-afternoon. The dying season was making the most of itself.

'Phyllis should have known,' she said. Usually Alice wore his success modestly, the way she wore her fur stole; now she seemed inclined to brandish it like a banner.

He said, 'I'll take a walk. Why don't you go down to the lounge and meet up with some of them and get all the craic?'

'Listening to the returning native!' she mocked. 'You wouldn't have said "craic" in London.'

'Why don't you, anyway?'

'Maybe I will when I've had my tea.'

With the arrival of the tray he made his escape. The rain had lifted. He enjoyed walking across the beach, steering a course through the tracks the seagulls had made, treading so that each imprint was sharp. All the nostalgia he had expected to experience vicariously through Alice he now exploited in himself. He went quickly and was ready for the bank of shingle at the far end, remembering how his feet would slide in it.

The man was unfastening the chains on the swings; he had put up the notice beside the roundabout. No one would come, not on an afternoon like this at the thin end of the

### *The Girls*

summer. The horses and ostriches on their barley-sugar poles leapt bravely, but they would have no riders today. From the shelter a few rug-wrapped regulars turned their heads to watch the stranger.

He reached the road and started to climb, pausing only for a moment when he came to the gate. They had cut the shrubbery and made a lawn for clock gold; no vestige remained of that aromatic, unmapped jungle. A lettered board hung on chains above the door: 'Sea Crest Guest House'. Sauce bottles showed through the window; an unhurried gnome fished.

The church was unchanged, the churchyard tidier than he remembered it, smelling of lawn mowings. It would have suited his mood to find the grave deep in drenched and seeded grasses, but it looked tame and seemly, an upright stone, a rectangle of granite chippings surrounded by the flat marble plinth where the words 'TO THE GLORY OF GOD' were carved. The rain had filled the letters, making each 'O' into a small rock pool. Four O's, four pools.

He took the marbles out of his pocket and polished them against his sleeve, then crouched and took aim. Flicked from his thumb, they fell accurately into place one after another, rattled for a moment and lay still while the rock pools spouted. The coloured cores in the glass embellished the letters. Satisfied, he gouged the marbles out and put them in his pocket, then came down the hill again. He could hear the thin bouncing runc from the roundabout. So there had been riders for the horses after all.

Three riders - two shrimps of boys and Alice. The children leaned forward on their horses' necks, intent on a winning post. Alice had chosen an ostrich and sat upright. The velvet bow on her head fluttered; she rose and fell smoothly. There was a half-smile on her face; her knees, exposed below the tightened skirt, shone large and pale. Four times she passed by him. The fourth time she passed, she saw him and waved.

*The Glass Shore*

When the ride was over she dismounted, smoothed her skirt and came to him. 'Oh, John – years and years since I've had such fun!' She laid her cheek on his; he fancied she smelt of toffee and ink. 'Come on,' she urged. 'Try it – why not?'

He paid the man, helped Alice to mount and chose an adjacent ostrich for himself.

'Good thing no one saw us,' she said when it was over. 'I suppose we were silly.' They walked back across the sand, hands clasped and swinging like children. The tide was coming in again, all the runnels widening. Ahead of them the hotel was dark and enormous, decorated with lighted windows. 'What have you been doing with yourself?' she asked. 'Go on – tell!'

He told her then about the gravestone and the marbles, the day long ago when he stood there fidgeting about in his pockets, sick with the misery and nuisance of dying while his father discussed with the clergyman the arrangements for his grandmother's funeral. Then his father's shadow fell across the stone. 'What's that you have there, John?' He held out his open palm. 'Only marbles, Dad.' 'Show us here.' His father took the marbles and sent them flying into their sockets with satisfying precision. There had been late slanting sunlight, the colours in the glass shone.

'I always kept those marbles,' he said to Alice.

'They were in the box with your cufflinks.'

Without any need to explain the rite, they had arrived at a new kind of intimacy.

'What did you do after I went out?' he asked her.

'I went down to the lounge like you said. Everyone was there, talking. Everyone, John! It was splendid, just like old times, such fun! I expect I talked too much,' she added, waiting for him to contradict her.

'And did you?'

'You are miserable,' she laughed. 'Anyway, they know now who you are.'

*The Girls*

He dismissed a pang that they should have had to be told and said, 'They do, do they?'

'Several of them said they'd wondered if it could be and had decided it couldn't. They're longing to meet you. Before dinner, I said -- drinks. I'll wear the yellow.'

Her gaiety was infectious. Why pretend he wasn't looking forward to the evening? With Alice in this mood it could be fun. Life incognito hadn't been as amusing as he'd expected.

As they approached the hotel a car that had been waiting at the entrance drove past them, gathering speed.

Alice cried, 'Look! It's Phyllis!'

'Is it? Are you sure?'

'It is! It is! Wave, John!' She prodded him. They waved. The woman in the car was seeing nothing and made no acknowledgement. 'How odd! Phyllis was crazy to be introduced. I didn't think she was leaving till tomorrow.'

As soon as they went into the lounge his practised ear detected the tragic key. People were standing about in little knots, talk was guarded. Alice didn't notice. 'There's someone over there I simply must talk to!' she declared, heading across the room.

He heard the news at the bar. There had been a telephone message from Norway. Crazy youngsters, what made them do it? As if they needed to prove something. The mother of the boy had left immediately. These things happened, they could happen to anyone.

Not quite anyone. As he came through the lounge again, looking for Alice, they said, 'I think your wife went upstairs, Mr Armitage,' not really seeing him.

Alice was in the bedroom when he reached it. She was sitting at the dressing table but hadn't turned on the light.

'I don't think I'll go down to dinner after all, John.'

'Oh surely—'

'You know it wouldn't be any good,' she cried irritably, because her evening had been spoiled. She snapped on the





**THE  
MAIDEN  
DINOSAUR**

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JANET  
Mc NEILL

## CHAPTER SEVEN

"I simply can't think why ever you asked me to come with you," Addie cried, "I mean - me?"

The late afternoon traffic in the centre of the city was building up, and Sarah's mind was on her driving; in any case she had already explained the reasons for her choice to Addie four times over the past ten days, and was now beginning to find it difficult to justify it to herself.

"I told you. They asked me to suggest someone. A three-way interview is easier, so they seem to think."

"But - me!"

"We're old friends, you know my work, and you are a writer yourself."

"Not that anyone has noticed."

Addie was wearing rather an absurd hat, like a helmet with bows back and front. There were pink patches on her cheeks and she sat well forward in the car bouncing unnecessarily. The beast, who was in the back seat, breathed warmly down Sarah's neck. "You could have asked Helen."

Not Helen. Writing and loving are two forms of intimacy that do not mix, and Helen's imperceptiveness about her work was a fault that needed to be cunningly by-passed. Addie, who wasn't loved, could make mistakes, could misunderstand, and be forgiven.

"I am torn between terror and exultation," Addie said. "To think that our faces will shine from the corner of every sitting-room in Belfast -"

"They won't. There's horse-racing on the other programme."

"The more selective sitting-rooms," Addie amended. Sarah found Addie's relish depressing. She had already

begun to wish that she had not agreed to this television interview on her work. But the beast, parading, had persuaded her.

"I wonder why they suddenly decided to invite you, Sarah," Addie pursued with brisk unwelcome candour, "it's ages since you've been on, isn't it, and it was always on sound before."

"The bottom of the barrel, obviously. It's a series, they have to keep it going. Is that a new hat, Addie?"

"An old one, I've done things to it. One feels one should make some effort, don't you think?"

Sarah had made none. She wound one of the windows down, declaring that the car was stuffy. "You'll have to take it off, anyway, you know."

"Who do you suppose it will be? A father figure, or one of those beautiful and languid young men?"

"Probably Charles."

"Charles who?"

"I never remember."

Addie clasped her hands. "I think I'd better go home. I'm sorry, Sarah, it was awfully sweet of you to ask me and I do appreciate it, but I am physically incapable of addressing a perfect stranger as Charles. It's not me personally, it's my generation, like butter-knives and calling the lavatory the toilet and eating in the kitchen."

"You needn't say Charles. You can just skip it."

"What is he like in the flesh?"

"Very charming and harmless. We will go in in a cold sweat and come away in a golden glow."

"I don't feel in the mood to be charmed. I wish you hadn't asked me after all. Oh, dear."

Gloomily they negotiated the next traffic lights. "I curl up and die," Addie moaned. "Sometimes I feel that people like us have no right to cumber the earth any longer, do you ever feel that way? And yet we've as much right to our three score years and ten as anybody else."

She babbled gently about the fish pie she had left in the

oven for Gerald and whether he would remember to turn on the heat at the right time.

"The trouble with us," she said, "is that it is widely assumed that we have Never Really Lived. We've only been born and stayed alive for fifty years and been through two World Wars and the Troubles and seen our country split in two. How much do you remember about the Troubles, Sarah?"

"Coming home from school we had to lie down in the tram because of the shooting, I remember that."

"And we've been bombed of course, and worked our feet to the bone at the Canteen. But we have never been assaulted or ill-used or used violence ourselves or been hungry or lived in a mental institution or a Borstal or been immoral or suffered from perversions other than those induced by our upbringing. I don't see how either of us could be expected to write. Apart from the difficulty of the vocabulary, gentility keeps breaking through."

Sarah laughed and felt better.

"All this about our narrow and restrictive upbringing," Addie went on, "I was happy. I doted on religion. I very nearly saw visions, only that would have been awkward for Daddy, wouldn't it, the Worshipful Brothers wouldn't have liked it. Do you remember how Maurice used to bring his cigarette cards to Sunday School? And I loved my Mother very much, up to the day she died. I'm sure that's psychologically very sinister. And Daddy - well, he was kind but I always knew he was common. Think how much better I'd be writing if he hadn't insisted on making a lady out of me. I used to despise him for being pleased if any of his customers spoke to him at Prize Givings and School Concerts! Your father always did, bless him."

"Oh, dear - here we are." They parked the car and entered the building. A girl at a desk took their names and a lift bore them upwards like votive offerings, feeling faintly sick. He was a young, pale, faintly troubled man, but he seemed

glad to see them. Thick carpets, arm-chairs, ashtrays and glasses of water lay about for their encouragement.

"We need to establish some kind of a shape," he said, "not that we actually want to rehearse, if you know what I mean. The whole thing is to keep it informal and easy. Forget about the mike, forget about the cameras. You're just here to have a chat. But first we need to find a *shape*."

They discussed a shape with feverish and barren politeness. Sarah wished there was a window somewhere. The beast had gone home. It seemed unlikely that she had ever written a single significant line of poetry. Addie had taken off her hat and it lay on a chair. Her flattened hair reduced her face to a mouse's proportions.

They decided jocularly that they should use each others' Christian name and surname, no prefixes. He was Charles McKenna. Addie became Adelaide Pruitt. The idea seemed to depress her.

"And remember we want to keep it light and lively, so come in on each other, take up points that need to be clarified, interrupt me if you want to."

Heavily nervous they agreed and were carried off to the make-up room.

Sarah lay back and resigned her face to a delicious girl in a nylon overall, and carefully ignored the mirror. Addie in the next chair made occasional squeaks. Charles appeared and chatted to the nymph in charge while he ran an electric razor over his cheeks. So that is what a man looks like while he is shaving. Sarah was fascinated. The whole proceedings had taken on an unlikely intimacy. The nymph in nylon left them for a moment.

Addie sat up in her chair, blue-lipped and orange-lipped, her eyebrows unfamiliarly enriched.

"Sarah, you look priceless! Turn round a bit, I want to see you properly. My dear, you are just like one of the Roman Emperors, magnificent and a little debauched, I forget which one it is. I look like a tart, don't tell me!"

They giggled into the mirror at their fantastic reflections. "Quite happy, I see; well, that's nice!" the nymph said encouragingly, coming back when they didn't expect her, "that's the way it ought to be." They lay back rigid and silent while she dabbed and patted again, and at last she released them.

"Sarah Vincent and her friend and fellow-writer, Adelaide Pratt," the interviewer declared when they were through the sound barrier and the blue monitor screens at which they must not look flickered tantalisingly. "We know Sarah Vincent, of course, for the considerable volume of poetry she has produced very consistently over the past fifteen years or so. Sarah Vincent, perhaps you would tell us a little about how you first commenced to write?"

Sarah Vincent dutifully explained that she had always been interested in writing, had done a little at school, and had found particular pleasure in translating some of the Odes of Horace into English verse. Adelaide Pratt betrayed signs of the liveliest interest and Charles McKenna received the news as if it affected him deeply.

"Horace goes easily into English," Sarah enlarged, "there's an affinity of mood. 'O Four Bananias!'"

"O, really." Charles McKenna leant forward to flick the crease of his trouser leg. "I suppose most of us would regard you largely as a pastoral poet." He misquoted two bad lines from one of her early poems. "Has it been exclusively the Irish landscape that has influenced your work?"

It would be no use telling him of her modest travelling in Europe and Asia since Papa's death. It would take too long, it would spoil the shape. In any case he would assume she had absorbed nothing. His compunctive eye had already reared her in a Belfast drawing-room and sent her to take her holidays in Irish bogland under a Paul Henry cloud.

"I suppose so," she consented humbly.

The saga progressed, growing more and more undisturbed by elaboration. Sarah's confidence ebbed as the

young man's glory flowered. Her comments on her work became increasingly banal. "Work in miniature, perhaps one might say," the young man smiled, making it sound like needlework.

This was where the beast should have made his entrance, but there was no sign of him. Beasts in the Province are private animals, secretly cossetted. One requires a licence from London or America to justify a public parade.

Out of the corner of her eye Sarah saw that Addie was restive and therefore dangerous. It was a danger signal she knew. There had been a History mistress once, greenly self-confident and with a thin English voice and a curious opinion of Ireland. Addie did a lot of private homework on the famine and the English atrocities and became very vocal in class. The mistress left after a couple of terms.

"I wonder, Sarah Vincent, whether you might feel that your upbringing and environment here have, so to speak, been a restrictive element in your work?"

The old, old question, the question with which they finally win. Ah, poor young man, for the thin end of a second he had admitted the full flavour of condescension into his voice. These provincial poetesses, these circumspect minds, these canaries pecking lightly at life. As Sarah heaved Addie fluttered her blue lids and leant forward, becoming suddenly matey and co-operative.

"I think, Sarah, Charles means do we feel ourselves deprived by having had comfortable and happy childhoods and only a literary acquaintance with broths and dry-closets. Isn't that what you have in mind, Charles?"

Charles began to sweat under his orange powder. 'It's an interesting point,' Addie went on, "I'm so glad you mentioned it."

"Perhaps, Sarah Vincent - " Charles prompted desperately, but Addie beat him to it.

"Our parents loved us instead of trying to understand us,



it seems one has to choose. Which would you prefer, Charles, to be loved or understood?"

His eyes distended.

"And as for the other," Addie remarked, "I wish you could have seen the Establishment in our house. The size of a drawing-room, twelve feet high, all in pitch-pine and a marble floor. And everything that could be brass was brass. Miles and miles of pipes - full of mystery. One felt like Moses striking water from the rock."

Somewhere at the edge of their stiff eyelids a man in a hairy jersey was rotating his arm as they had been told he would to signal that time was almost up. Gratefully the interviewer expressed thanks to Sarah Vincent and Adelaide Pratt and tied a few random threads of thought in a firm knot.

"If you scold me," Addie said in the car going home - the first time she had spoken, "if you say one single little word I will burst into tears, I'm warning you."

"It was terribly funny, Addie."

"Oh golly, wasn't it?" Addie stretched her feet out, wiggling her toes. "Sarah we can't go straight home after that. Not at once."

They went to an Hotel where sometimes they had attended literary dinners and sat in the Lounge Bar among the homing commercials, nursing gin and lemon and smiling at each other. Addie had put her hat on again, a little crookedly.

"Tell me I was marvellous, Sarah. I was. Just as long as I can make this drink last I was marvellous. If I'd thought of it sooner I could have done it much better."

"If you'd thought of it sooner you wouldn't have had the nerve to do it at all."

"I expect you're right. I wouldn't have missed it for worlds."

"Neither would I. You're washing away your beautiful orange mouth with your gin."

"A fitting end. I think I will wear my eyelids at school tomorrow if I can make them last."

100

The thought of school crept coldly into the edges of their minds. In defence they drained their glasses and ordered a second gin.

"What about Gerald?"

"He'll be all right. Is Helen expecting you?"

Addie was always curious about Helen, curious and careful. And critical, of course. It was what she didn't say more than what she said. She was only making this straightforward inquiry now because the sudden warmth between them prompted her to admit the relationship. But already a coolness had set in, the evening's lark was nearly over and it grew more difficult every moment to justify it. In any case a florid commercial, across his drink, had noticed Addie and misinterpreted her complexion. Sarah perspired, anticipating what might happen if Addie in her present mood caught his winking eye.

"Or perhaps George will be calling on her. He comes a lot, doesn't he?"

"A good deal," Sarah said. The glory retreated a little further. "Home, Addie. Come on."

There were school prefect undertones in her voice and Addie rose obediently and took a few moments to straighten her hat and discover whether two gins had done anything to her.

They drove home in silence, separated in mind, each needing privacy to make the difficult transition from one world to the other and unable to compare notes on their progress in case the other had reached a different stage and what was left of sympathy between them snapped at once.

When the car was put away they walked round to the front of the house in silence. The air was cool, but welcome. There was evidence of a moon in the upper sky but the late spring dusk around them seemed dense and deeply blue. Where there should have been shadows under the trees whose branches already were thickened with buds there was pale light from a tide of daffodils that lay like lazy milk. A dowager-

101