

do you wonder. I cried instinctively, like a baby—a very young baby who's been [?] too short a time with you to be left alone yet. But I promise and promise Maata, it won't happen again.' 'What do you suppose I was doing in the diningroom' she said. 'Making mother talk about you. I was worse than a crying baby. I was a starving one. And never make promises to me, Sweetheart. I refuse to take them. I have no need of such things.'

On Primrose Hill there were many lovers, wandering aimlessly through the tousled grass, or sitting on little benches, pressed against the trees. Curious the silence of these people. The children were silent too. It was like walking into the middle of a service, thought Maata, and felt ashamed, as though she and Philip had arrived a little too late and were disturbing the others. But the others did not appear disturbed—they were as indifferent as the trees. She and Philip found a little place against some railings and looked out over London. Mist floated over the streets and houses. The lights shone silver with fanlike wings—it was almost perfectly unreal. 'These people are ghosts. There is only you and me' whispered Philip. 'And that city—nothing but a mirage from which they have floated—flung up on the tide of it and plain for us to see just for one moment, and then drawn back again. . . . Don't you hear the mirage wave?' 'Oh yes, I hear it. I like it. What friendly ghosts, little brother.' 'They wouldn't be if they knew we were here. They'd come upon us, darkly powerful. Don't be afraid. That is only a ruse of mine to get your other hand as well. Do you suppose I dare to kiss you?' 'You have to, it's part of the service' she laughed.

On the way home she had a beautiful idea. They found a little grocer's shop still open and bought a bottle of stout for mother, some [?] for Hal and themselves. The light still burned in the dining room but Mr Close was not there. His work was put away. Hal lay full length on the green sofa. Mrs Close poked viciously at the little dusty fire. She raised her head as they came in and looked up—rather glumly. But Maata produced the stout bottle. Philip took some glasses from the table. It was impossible to resist the gaiety of the two children. Mrs Close and Hal who had been talking 'money worries' drew up to the table. 'What a colour you've got from the air' said Mrs Close, holding the glass to Philip. 'That's enough my boy, don't fill it too full. I only want a sip.' 'The *air*—I like that' said Hal drinking out of the bottle. 'Look at old Philip's hand shaking. You've been giving that hand too much exercise, my lad. Which side does she walk on? Don't pour any out for me—I'll have the bottle.' 'No you won't' cried Maata. 'Fair does my child. There are only two bottles of [?] between the three of us!' 'Oh mum aren't they *prigs*. Here have I been sitting at that cold cold piano playing for hours and hours—to them—and now