

slight pale little woman. She had been delicate and ailing before her marriage and she never could forget it. Margaret and she looked after the babies – and Mr Wilberforce, a tall grey bearded man, with prominent blue eyes, large ungainly hands, and inclining to stoutness. He was a general merchant, director of several companies, chairman of several societies, thoroughly commonplace and commercial. The greater part of his life had been spent in New Zealand, and all the children had been born there.

Juliet was the odd man out of the family – the ugly duckling. She had lived in a world of her own, created her own people, read anything and everything which came to hand, was possessed with a violent temper, and completely lacked placidity. She was dominated by her moods which swept through her and in number were legion. She had been as yet, utterly idle at school, drifted through her classes, picked up a quantity of heterogeneous knowledge – and all the pleading and protestations of her teachers could not induce her to learn that which did not appeal to her. She criticised everybody and everything with which she came into contact, and wrapped herself in a fierce white reserve. 'I have four passions' she once wrote in an old diary, 'Nature, people, Mystery, and – the fourth no man can number.' Of late she had quarrelled frequently with the entire family, through pure lack of anything definite to occupy her thoughts. She had no defined path ahead, no goal to reach, and she felt compelled to vent her energy upon somebody – and that somebody was her family.

The large bedroom where she sat looked very dim and dark. There was a small fire in the grate, and a big rocking chair before it, but these were the two positive luxuries which the room boasted of. Pictures were conspicuous by their absence, and all these little familiar things which make the sum total of so many girls' bedrooms found no place here. A long unvarnished bookshelf was nailed above the bed, and a most miscellaneous collection of volumes found a resting place there. A glass of red roses stood on the dressing table, and all her party clothes were carefully laid out on a chair. She dressed very deliberately in her white muslin frock – open at the neck and showing her full round throat – and tied her broad silk sash. Her hair hung in two great braids, unadorned with combs or ribbons. She put up her hands and patted the smooth heavy folds. Juliet's hands were as distinctive as any part of her. They were large, and exquisitely modelled. The fingers were not very long, and blunted at the tops, but no amount of work could change their beauty. She gesticulated a great deal, and had a habit of sitting always nursing one knee, her fingers interlocked.

Before leaving her room she crossed over to the window. Outside a great pine tree was outlined against the night sky, and the sea, stretching far in the distance, called to her 'Juliet, Juliet'. 'O night' she cried,