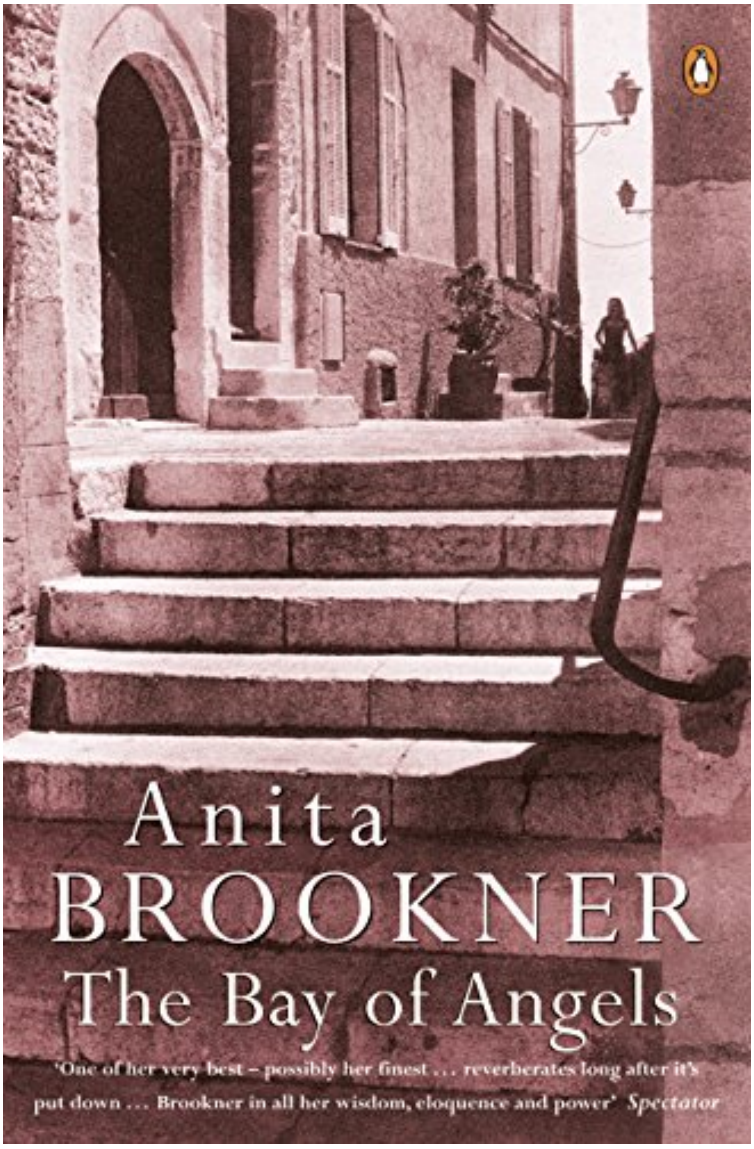
The Bay Of Angels



Par Anita Brookner
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[Download] The Bay Of Angels

Par Anita Brookner : The Bay Of Angels before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Bay Of Angels:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur'Within a few weeks, it seemed, the fixed points of my existence had revealed themselves to be untrustworthy.'Zo is delighted when her widowed mother maries Simon, a generous older man who owns a villa in Nice. However, the long enchanted visits to France she enjoys come to an abrupt end when Simon suffers a bad fall. Zo and her mother, finding themselves surounded by well-meaning strangers, must learn how and how not to trust appearances . . .ExtraitI read the Blue Fairy Book, the Yellow Fairy Book, and the stories of Hans Andersen, the Brothers Grimm, and Charles Perrault. None of this was groundwork for success in worldly terms, for I was led to think, and indeed was minded to think, of the redeeming situation or presence which would put to rights the hardships and dilemmas under which the characters, and I myself, had been labouring. More dangerously, it seemed to me that I need make no

decisions on my own behalf, for destiny or fate would always have the matter in hand. Although I was too sensible, even as a child, to believe in a fairy godmother I accepted as part of natures plan that after a lifetime of sweeping the kitchen floor I would go to the ball, that the slipper would fit, and that I would marry the prince. Even the cruel ordeals undergone by the little match girl, or by Hansel and Gretel, would be reversed by that same principle of inevitable justice which oversaw all activities, which guided some even if it defeated others. I knew that some humans were favouredby whom? by the gods? (this evidence was undeniable)but I was willing to believe in the redeeming feature, the redeeming presence that would justify all of ones vain striving, would dispel ones disappointments, would in some mysterious way present one with a solution in which one would have no part, so that all one had to do was to wait, in a condition of sinless passivity, for the transformation that would surely take place.This strikes me now as extremely dangerous, yet parts of this doctrine seemed overwhelmingly persuasive, principally because there were no stratagems to be undertaken. One had simply to exist, in a state of dreamy indirection, for the plot to work itself out. This was a moral obligation on the part of the plot: there would be no place for calculation, for scheming, for the sort of behaviour I was to observe in the few people we knew and which I found menacing. This philosophy, the philosophy of the fairy tale, had, I thought, created my mother, whose strange loneliness was surely only a prelude to some drastic change of fortune in which she need play no active part. I therefore accepted as normal that she should spend her days sitting and reading, engaging in minimal outdoor activity, for surely these were the virtuous prerequisites for vindication of some sort, for a triumph which would confound the sceptics, whom I was also able to recognize. She was a widow; I was hardly aware of the lack of a father, for I accepted that the road to validation was in essence one of solitude, and rather than engage in some productive occupation I preferred my mother to wait for the solution to her situation to be presented as none of her own volition.I was thus aware of her unhappiness but able to bear it, with the help of the knowledge and indeed wisdom I had culled from my reading. As a child I did not perceive her longings, which had been cruelly cut short by my fathers premature death. Nor was I much interested in him, for he belonged to prehistory; I had no image of him other than as a face bending over me, and a photograph of a slim young man in an academic gown. Even the photograph conformed to my belief, for it showed someone who was not quite grown up, and therefore a fit companion for my mother who was not quite grown up either, a woman in embryo whose maturity was still far off. This made me comfortable with my own position, a fit descendant of a couple on the verge of existence who were merely undergoing some form of trial and who were surely approaching some beneficent outcome which would make even my fathers death assume acceptable proportions. He had died, and my mother had survived his death. Her unhappiness, I was confident, would be overturned, as any term of trial must be. It sometimes seemed to me that my fathers disappearance had merely prepared the way for a story very much like the ones I was so fond of reading. I was not then aware of the universal desire for a happy ending: I would not have understood such an abstraction. But I did know, or was convinced, that our story would have a happy ending, not realizing that there is no proper ending in human affections until time provides an ending to which all must submit.The fact that we were of the same species (even my absent father contributed his very real silence to our own relative silence) merely emphasized the gulf that existed between ourselves and the harsher world outside our flat in Edith Grove. At least I assumed that it was harsher: how could it not be? When my mother walked soundlessly from one room to another, sat reading in the quiet afternoons, or carefully watered the plants on our little balcony, I was not aware of any lack or discrepancy in our lives, or not until some outward agency disrupted our slow peaceful rhythm. Our street was nearly silent, almost abandoned by the late morning: I could be trusted to make my own way to school. After I had done my homework in the evening I would take up my position at the window. I liked to watch the lights go on in other houses, as if preparing for a wayfarers return. My reading had conditioned me to think in terms of wayfarers, so that footsteps on the pavement gave me an agreeable sensation that the stories contained enough authenticity to justify the fact that I still read them.No visit disturbed our evenings, nor did we wish for any. It was only at the weekends, when my mother said, Better put your books away. The girls are coming, that I resigned myself to a lesson in reality which would be instructive but largely unwelcome. I feared this lesson on my mothers behalf; I knew instinctively that her good manners were inadequate protection against the sentimental tactlessness of our visitors, who surely thought their presence something of a comfort to my mother and even to myself. They mean well, said my mother. They are good women. But we both knew that this was a lame excuse.The girls, as opposed to the boys (their husbands, twin brothers in the hotel business), were as devoted as two sisters might have been, although they were not related. Rather it was my mother and

I who were related to them, through my great-grandfather, who had married twice and had raised two separate families, one eventually resulting in my father and the other in the boys, who did not accompany their wives on these visits, although they might have done, on some vague grounds of consanguinity. What family feeling there was seemed to be in the gift of the girls, Millicent and Nancy, who faithfully kept up with my mother, whether through charity or genuine interest. It seemed to intrigue, even to excite them, that a woman of my mothers age could live without the presence of a man; they regarded her with pity, with anxiety, but also with curiosity, as if in her place they would have gone mad. They had little self-control, were obtuse, and kind, but also avid. Neither had children. Their days seemed, to hear their anecdotes, full of activity: shopping, maintenance, which was of a high order, visits, and then back home to the boys for dinner and an evening of bridge, at which they would complain incessantly, their beautiful complacency fracturing slightly to reveal a perhaps unguessed-at discontent.Despite their physical perfection, which impressed and unselfishly delighted my mother, they were women whose very real innocence was but one feature of their glossy appearance, nurtured solemnly, and thus providing a fit basis for compliments. Drawn together by the accident of their marriages, they remained devoted to each other by virtue of an extraordinary similarity of temperament. They were sensuous, but not sensual, felt relieved that neither one of them was entirely satisfied by her husbands company, took refuge in material comfort and busy social arrangements. Marriage was no less than their right; it was also their alibi, protecting them from any form of censure, and may have been entered into precisely for that reason. My mother was well aware of this, as they may not have been; I deduced this from her kindness, which had something protective about it, as if they needed to be sheltered from certain realizations. I accepted them as a fact of nature. Their anxiety, unusual in very handsome women, was directed towards my mother, for whom they felt genuinely sorry. Their visits were mercy visits, in the sense that there are mercy killings, with the same admixture of motives.I disliked them because they interrupted our peaceful lives, with their incessant suggestions as to how my mother might improve her solitary condition. I disliked them because these suggestions made no provision for myself. She was urged to, in their words, socialize, and offered the occasional invitation to their parties, which she attended with a martyrs stoicism. I was also aware that they discussed her, deriving some comfort from her sadness, her obvious inactivity. I could see that they meant well, since their visits were occasions of lavish generosity: boxes of cakes were produced, a beautiful pineapple, and cartons of strawberries brought up from the car by Millicents driver; at the same time I was puzzled that their real kindness gave them no legitimization in my eyes. My favourite myths did not apply to them, for I could not in all conscience see them as the Ugly Sisters. I simply perceived that they had not waited, and therefore had not been rewarded, as my mother would surely be rewarded. It is not impossible that they perceived this as well.You both look splendid, said my mother with a smile. This fact at least was incontrovertible. The girls habitually looked splendid since most of their time was devoted to that end. Millicent in particular was immaculate; her beautifully manicured hand frequently patted the upward sweep of her imposing coiffure, which was cared for every day by a local hairdresser who had no objection to sending one of his juniors to the house in Bedford Gardens to brush away any imperfections that the early morning might have wrought. Millicent was the younger of the two, plump, wide-eyed, expectant. Nancy, by contrast, was tough, imperious, a heavy smoker, granted seniority by virtue of having lived abroad, in various of the brothers hotels, mainly in the region between Nice and the Italian border. I saw that she could be relied upon to look after Millicent, but that neither of them would look after my mother. Once, when some malaise or illness had kept my mother at home, they had sent a deputy, poor Margaret, who had been adopted as a child by Nancys parents and who performed the valuable function of looking after both girls. She lived in a flat in Nancys house, which was conveniently situated in the same street as that occupied by Millicent and her husband, Eddie. I disliked Margaret even more than the girls, since I sensed that she was willing to break out, could hardly be constrained, in fact, and conformed to others plans for her only because she was too lazy, or perhaps too fearful, to strike out on her own. In this she differed from my mother, who, though passive, had not altogether forgone courage, as I, and perhaps the girls, were obliged to recognize.If only youd learn to play bridge, lamented Millie, to which Nancy rejoined, Leave her alone. How do you know she hasnt got a secret life?This was taken as a risqu remark, although it would have been quite in order for my mother to take a lover (I thought a suitor), in which case they would have been shocked, and even disappointed. They did not suggest that she get a job. In the 1950s it was thought quite reasonable for women to stay at home and live a peaceful semi-detached semi-suburban life. The great awakening, which was supposed to benefit my generation, had not yet taken place. My father had left a little money, the remains of a legacy, which was supplemented by a small annual cheque

from some investments: we lived frugally but decently, unlike the girls, who served mainly as showcases for their husbands success. This too was thought quite normal at the time, although they seemed to me idle and pampered. Their discontent, which they would furiously have denied, came from purposelessness. In any event, although enjoying the spectacle of their prosperity, I preferred the propriety of our own circumstances, which seemed to fit in with the preordained plan which I knew from my early reading. I did not know, nor, I think, did my mother, that circumstances can be changed, or at least given a helping hand. There seemed to be something natural, even unavoidable, about our lives, which may be why they were so peaceful. Any dissent, any criticism, came from the girls, fascinated as they were by our unmanned condition. Our function was to set their own lives on course, to bring their many advantages into relief. My mother played her part. I merely looked on.What eyes that child has, said Nancy. Has she nothing to do?She reads a lot, said my mother. We both do. Zo, have you thanked the girls for the strawberries?It was true that I read a lot, but by now I had graduated to adult reading. Dickens had my full attention, for surely in those novels he was telling the same story of travail and triumph. The additional benefit, apart from the eccentric characters, with their eccentric names, was that many of these travails were undertaken by young men of peerless disposition. This was welcome proof that such life experiences were universal, and, more important, could be, and usually were, brought about while suffering an initial handicapwicked stepparents, an indigent familywhich the heroes (for David Copperfield and Nicholas Nickleby were undoubted heroes) could circumvent with little more than their own blamelessness to guide them. This struck me as entirely beautiful, and convinced me that one must emulate their efforts, that one must never be discouraged by the unhelpfulness of others. Not that I had ever experienced such an obstacle at close quarters: what I took for wickedness was in fact worldliness, as my mother explained to me. The unapologetic presence of our visitors, their peculiar blend of restlessness and complacency, which was discordant, was essentially harmless, though it occasionally sought relief in imprecations, in disapproval of others, principally of my mother and myself. I sawin Nancys hoarse smokers laugh, in Millicents delicate hand smoothing her haira quality that was alien to our own lives, faintly undesirable. Sometimes my mothers eyes had a look of tiredness, and she was obliged to turn her head away for a brief moment, as suggestions for improvement, or rather self-improvement, came her way. These visits, which I now see were undertaken for more merciful reasons than mere curiosity, were in essence a form of female solidarity before that condition had been politicized. They were concerned for any woman living on her own, with only a child for company. At the same time they were fearful that such ivory-tower isolation might be catching. They wanted my mother to be reinstated in society for their sakes as much as for her own. They genuinely pitied a woman who had no status, but they also translated this lack of status as failure in the worlds terms.What distinguished my mother was a form of guilelessness which they had, perhaps regretfully, laid aside. This was what I saw: they had exchanged one condition for another, and may not have been entirely compensated. My mother was their crusade: they also usefully saw her as a pupil. When they rose to leave, the frowns disappeared from their faces, the concern evaporated, and their embraces were genuine. They were glad to get back to their own orbit, with its comprehensible distractions, glad to have done their social duty, even if the results were so sadly lacking. My mother, shaking cushions after their departure, would be more silent than usual, and I somehow knew I should not intrude on her thoughts. I reflected that Nancy and Millie were characters, no less and no more, and that any confrontationbut none had taken place, nor would take placewould be unequal. My mother was bound to succeed, for she was untainted by the worlds corruption and thus qualified for remission from further ordeals. This was slightly less affirmative than my previous beliefs. I comforted myself that even David Copperfield had had moments of downheartedness.On the whole I was happy. I liked my school, I liked my friends; I liked the shabby charm of our flat, from which a light shone out in winter to guide me home. I liked our silent streets, the big windows of the houses in which artists had once lived: I liked its emanations of the nineteenth century. The only difference was that I no longer thought in terms of wayfarers; such people had now become neighbours, or, once I was out of their orbit, pedestrians. That we were somewhat on the margin of things did not disturb me, although the girls, making their way by car from Kensington, complained of the distance, as if they had been obliged to cross a frontier, or to go back in time. It is true that our surroundings were a little mournful, perhaps unnaturally so to those habitual shoppers. I, on the other hand, cherished them as a place of safety. The streetlamp that shone outside my bedroom window I accepted as a benevolent gesture on behalf of the town council, the man who swept the leaves in autumn as a guardian of our decency. I was hardly aware of the sound of cars, for fewer people drove then. Even footfalls sounded discreet and distant, and the clang of an iron gate was sometimes

the only sound in the long afternoons.This struck me as an ideal state of affairs. But as I grew older I began to be aware that my mother was less happy than I was. Her eyes had a distant look, and she turned her head slowly when I spoke to her, as if she had momentarily forgotten that I was there. She was still a young woman but she was slightly careworn, as if her thoughts were a burden to her. She was also more silent, nursing what I later came to understand as grief. She was entirely lucid, had devoted her life without complaint to a child who may not have been rewarding (but I did not think that then), and by dint of suppressing almost every healthy impulse had maintained both her composure and her dignity. Hence her silences, her very slight withdrawal from myself. Her survival depended on a control which had not previously been in default. For the first time I began to wish that my father had lived, but selfishly, as young people do, in order to leave me free. I knew, with my increasingly adult perceptions, that it was not in my gift to deal with such a deficit, that my mothers loneliness was acute, that regrets, long buried, had begun their insidious journey to full consciousness . . . My mother was a good woman, too good to give way to self-pity. This austerity of behaviour denied her close friends. I think she exchanged only the most obvious pleasantries with our neighbours, keeping her most painful thoughts fiercely to herself. To voice even one of them would have constituted a danger.Her sadness, I thought, was brought on by the knowledge that lifes opportunities had definitively passed her by, and also by virtue of the fact that the redeeming feature, or presence, had not manifested itself. She was thus cast into the category of the unwanted, the unsought. I perceived this on certain lightless afternoons, when there was no joyous voice to greet me when I returned from a friends house, from noisy friendly normality. I perceived it, no doubt correctly, but it burdened me. I wanted no part of her passivity. I was young and not notably unfeeling, but I did not want to be a partner in anyones regrets. Had I been of an age to understand the full implications of this dereliction I should have resented it strenuously. As it was I began to see some virtue in the girls remonstrances, though in truth they had little but themselves to offer by way of compensation for her solitude. Therefore, when I put my key in the door one afternoon and heard Millies festive voice exclaiming, Now, Im counting on you, Anne. Therell only be a few people. Nice people. I know youll like them, I was inclined to add my own encouragements to hers.My mother murmured something placatory.Nonsense, said Nancy. You have to make a bit of an effort in this life if you want to get anywhere. And as far as I can make out youre not getting anywhere.Six-thirty, said Millie. Ill send the car for you.After that it would have been difficult to back down.My mothers expression, after they had left, was bemused, resigned, even cynical. I took it as a good sign that she went into her bedroom and opened her creaking wardrobe door. Everything in our flat creaked, a sound I found friendly. Now I saw, perhaps for the first time, that it was rather gloomy, that my mothers room was in perpetual shadow, too conducive to nostalgia, to introspection. On her dressing-table was the photograph of the young man in the academic gown whom I did not remember. His face was steadfast, obedient, not quite up to the task of growing up, certainly not of growing old. I regretted his absence, as I had not done when still a child, with my mother to myself. Now I had her to myself, but was no longer a child, was beginning to feel a hunger for wider experiences, for a life outside the home, even one as well ordered as ours. Perhaps precisely for that reason.Do I look all right? asked my mother, on that next Friday evening.I thought she looked beautiful, in her simple blue dress and jacket. She was plainly agitated, and had it not been for the car being sent would have thankfully abandoned the whole adventure. When Tom, Millies driver, rang the bell, we were both in a state of high concern. It was almost a relief when she left, and I was thankful for the hour or two I could spend on my own before her return. I thought of her among those nice people and hoped painfully, not that she was enjoying herselfthat would have been too much to expectbut that she was not feeling too lonely. For a woman as shy as my mother social occasions on which she was unaccompanied were a nightmare. That was why Millies pressing invitations, offered, or rather insisted upon for entirely defensible reasons, were, more often than not, gratefully refused.But she had not refused this one, and it was at Millies party, on that Friday evening, that she met her second husband, my stepfather-to-be, and thus changed both our lives.2My mothers fate having been settled according to the archaic principles of natural justice, and the conditions for her redemption having thus been met, I was now free to cast off on my own. I was sixteen, nearly seventeen, and the timing was providential. I had no doubt that we should all be entirely happy. I loved Simon, who, at our first meeting, embraced me with Jewish cordiality, making no distinction between my mother and myself. It was my first contact with genuine expansiveness and I warmed to it. Standing in our flat in Edith Grove he revealed its shabbiness, and thus deducted much of its charm. He was a big man, who seemed to smile all the time, delighted to have found a woman as unspoilt as my mother. He later told us that he too had had to be prevailed upon to attend that epochal party, for, although naturally

gregarious, he was aware of the lack of a companion in these most public of circumstances. He was a widower, who, since the death of his wife, had devoted his life to business, or rather to business interests, as he termed them. He exuded a pleasant air of health and viability, which did something to mitigate the fact that he was rather old: he was self-conscious about his age, which he dismissed as nearly the wrong side of seventy, but he was so obviously fit, and so benignly energetic, that I soon overlooked this fact.I knew that he could be relied upon to take care of my mother, which seemed to me our prime concern. By this stage I knew, or suspected, that she had money worries: the tenancy of our flat had only another year to run, and after that we should have to move into more restricted quarters or take out a loan from the bank. Both were problematic, but the problem was solved by the fact that Simon occupied two floors of a large house in Onslow Square, into which he was anxious to transfer my mother as soon as possible. He also possessed a house in France, which I thought much more interesting. Over dinner our fates were swiftly settled. My mother would live in Onslow Square and I would stay on in Edith Grove until the lease ran out, after which Simon would buy me a flat of my own. Look on it as a wedding present, he smiled. Theres no reason why you shouldnt share in my good fortune. This easy generosity was very difficult to resist. Besides, none of us had a desire to live under the same roof. My mother thought it would be unfair on me, even indelicate, to live at close quarters to a late marriage, particularly between two people of different ages, and Simon was naturally fastidious, anxious to hide the evidence of his yearsmy advanced years, he jokedfrom critical eyes. As for myself I had no desire to see his pills in the bathroom, to witness his laundry arrangements, or be present at his intimate life with my mother. This, I thought, should be kept as secret as possible.Something in me shied away from the thought of his making love to her, for this was the flaw in the arrangement. Later I understood this as a primal scene, the kind infants fantasize, or even register, as taking place between their parents. If my mother had met someone more like herself, or even like the young man in the photographmodest, trusting, steadfastI should have had no further qualms. It was just that Simon, so obviously a good man, was foreign to our way of life, our settled habits. His bulk filled our flat whenever he visited us, as did the smell of his cologne. I could not quite get used to his habit of humming under his breath, or his restlessness, which might just have been an expression of his insistent physicality. He had the good taste to make no allusions to what was to come when my mother would live with him. As far as I was concerned he was a sort of Santa Claus, a provider, to whom giving was second nature.I felt a deep relief on my mothers behalf and also on my own; I should now be able to begin my David Copperfield progress towards my own apotheosis. I never ceased to feel this with regard to Simon: he was a facilitator, an enabler, and the unlikely outcome of his attending a party, a tiresome social engagement to which he had not looked forward, and which he intended to leave early, was, I thought, beneficial in the way that only unexpected rewards are beneficial. He was, quite literally, our gift from the gods.Whether my mother thought this or not was another matter. I was old enough to understand that she was preoccupied with the business of having to find another flat for us both, and perhaps tired of pretending that she was entirely satisfied with her way of life. Perhaps the example of those visitors, the girls, with their talk of holidays, had made more of an impression on her than she was willing to concede. She did not envy them their entertainments, but she did envy their security, and even their unthinking acceptance of their husbands indulgence. Although sincerely shocked by their entirely natural delight in this state of affairs, she was made wistful by the presents that the chauffeur brought up from the car, wishing that she had it in her gift to endow others in the same manner. The fact that these presents always consisted of things to eat merely reinforced the impression that some fundamental discrepancy existed between the sort of woman she was and all the others, who had made a better job of marriage and extracted from it satisfactions that were almost edible, certainly tangible. I now see that even the most saintly of women can ponder the difference, and although we both deplored these giftsthe cakes, the strawberrieswe were forced to admit that we enjoyed them. Only we enjoyed them rather thoughtfully, as they made their incongruous appearance on our dinner-table. Some days our evening meal consisted almost entirely of these offerings, and I firmly believe that the sight of a chocolate clair on my plate, in lieu of something more sensible, made her reflect that this would not do, that none of this was appropriate, and that if it were too late for her to start again the same need not necessarily be true for myself.To do the girls justice they were both delighted. I must remember to thank them, laughed my mother. But she was almost serious. She thought herself inadequate in the light of such good fortune, and needed stronger personalities to maintain her resolve. The girls fretful attention was now directed towards my mothers appearance: the car arrived punctually to bear them all off for an afternoon of shopping, and she would return home with bags from Harrods and Harvey Nichols, complaining of a splitting headache. I

detested the clothes the girls made her buy, or had thrust on her as presents, and so did Simon. Well find something in France, he said, his big hand pushing aside a silvery skirt which had no place in my mothers life. You can leave all this stuff here, or give it away.They meant well, said my mother.Of course they did. Their intentions were of the best. But they wanted you to look like themselves.And to be like themselves, said my mother to me after he had left. And I dont think I can be.He loves you for your own sake, I said stoutly.Yes, he does. He does seem to. Isnt that extraordinary?I suspected that the girls had tried to indoctrinate my mother in the ways of acquisition, paying no attention to the fact that appropriation was foreign to her nature. They may have been sincerely shocked by her attitude of modest dependency, for she almost at once, and instinctively, began to behave like a wife to Simon, thus once again earning the disapproval of the girls and furnishing them with an agreeable subject of conversation. They hated, with some reason, her life of lowered expectations, and always had, fearing the comparison. Her celibacy had been abhorrent to them, and now that this was at an end they found it difficult to come to terms with the fact of her brighter eyes, her more frequent smiles, even her rare but now occasional laughter. Feelings were disguised, but not entirely successfully. I began to dislike the girls, and was grateful that their patronage would be no longer needed. They had never had any time for me, nor I for them. I foresaw that we should shortly be separated by circumstances and was secretly relieved.Now that I am so much older I see that this new opportunity was not one to be missed, but embraced perhaps a little less than wholeheartedly. This was not first love, which my mother must have experienced for my father, however remote that must now have seemed. This was a prudent arrangement which had been entered upon almost by accident and which was to retain an air of absentmindedness, of not quite willed satisfaction. It was providential: all seemed to agree on that point. If it gave my mother any joy it was a joy she expected to reveal itself in the longer term, when she got used to her new life and was able to take a fuller part in it, when she would come to accept her new dignity (but never to exploit it), and when she learned to be as expansive as her new husband, a task for which she was singularly ill prepared.I shied away from the prospect of my mothers physical life, for I was as contained as she was. Simon had perfected the agreeable business of kissing us both, with the same obvious affection, in the short interval my mother spent in our flat, with me, before moving into Onslow Square. Of course I missed her, but as Simon insisted that I see her every day I did not mind too badly. This was helped by the fact that I felt more at home in our old flat than in Onslow Square, and also because I had a great deal of studying to do, for I was soon to go to university. My prolonged childhood seemed to have ended rather abruptly, and I felt unsettled by this: at the same time I recognized the fact that it was over and that in future I should have to rely on my friends for company. I was momentarily in demand, as newly fortunate people are, and the fact of having my own flat added to my prestige. Simon made me an allowance, but told me not toRevue de presseOne of her very best. . . . A pure delight to read. San Francisco ChronicleAn unusually beautiful and heartbreaking book. Detroit Free PressBrookners wit glows like a kind of background radiation that charges everything here. . . . She has never been more clearsighted, more compellingly brilliant. The Christian Science MonitorA wise story about competing impulses and the trade-offs we make to accommodate them. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution