

morning he tiptoes downstairs to look at the clock. Maata is very late coming. It is five o'clock. She goes straight to Philip. His room is in dark. He is practising. The violin case on the bed is like a tiny coffin. They comfort the loneliness in each other, she sitting at the table by the window, Philip on the bed. They grow very peaceful and quiet. He lights the gas for her to look at the shell he found when he was tidying up. They stand close together. Her hands shake. She holds it and turns it over. They look up at each other. He puts his arm round her shoulder. They smile timidly and kiss. He puts his arms round her and she lays her hand upon his cheek and gazes at him. He says '*I worship* you, girl' and she nods and says breathlessly 'I too. I too.' 'Maata—do you love me?' Still with that mysterious smile she says 'Of course I do.' Hal interrupts. They tell the delighted family. Only Maisie bursts into tears and rushes to her room. 'I can't understand Maisie' said Philip, puzzled. 'Oh well, it will be a great change for her' said the mother. 'But why, Mum? How?' 'Oh well, least said spoils the broth, my son. You'll understand some day.' They have a merry dinner with Kola and stout. Mrs Close gets very confidential. Hal too. 'Wait till you see the old ghost's big toe, Maata'. The family leave them the dining room. They turn the gas low and lie down on the little green sofa, their bodies touching.

CHAPTER XIII Rhoda spends the night with her mother. 'I never seem to see you at all. You are always out or creeping about the staircase like a thief. What about that friend of yours? Why hasn't she been to see me? Why can't you be like other girls?' She spends a dreadful night. When the mother sleeps she creeps into the drawing room and pulls up the blind and sees the night clear with stars. Life seems empty and horrible. She cries out for Maata. The moon comes through the window. She lies flat on her back with her arms wide and stares up at the big round moon. I wish I was a spirit. Why have I got this body? I would like to be a spirit and watch near my darling. Maata you are not happy—some danger is near you. Maata what are you doing now? I shall draw some more money tomorrow and buy her that black scarf with moonstones. This moon is like me—so white and cold. Maata will wrap us round her little breast, in the black night of her scarf.

CHAPTER XIV She was at the Bank before it opened, and with Maata before ten, Maata was dressing, leaning forward to tie her shoes. 'I've something to tell you. You'll be surprised. I'm going to marry Philip'. Rhoda is opposite a mirror. She watches herself. 'Oh when was it arranged?' 'Late last evening'. Rhoda: 'I knew'. Maata is intensely annoyed. 'How could you *know*?' They walk together to the Closets. But something has happened. 'No, I won't come in.