

a Penguin Book

3/-

# Within and Without

John Harvey



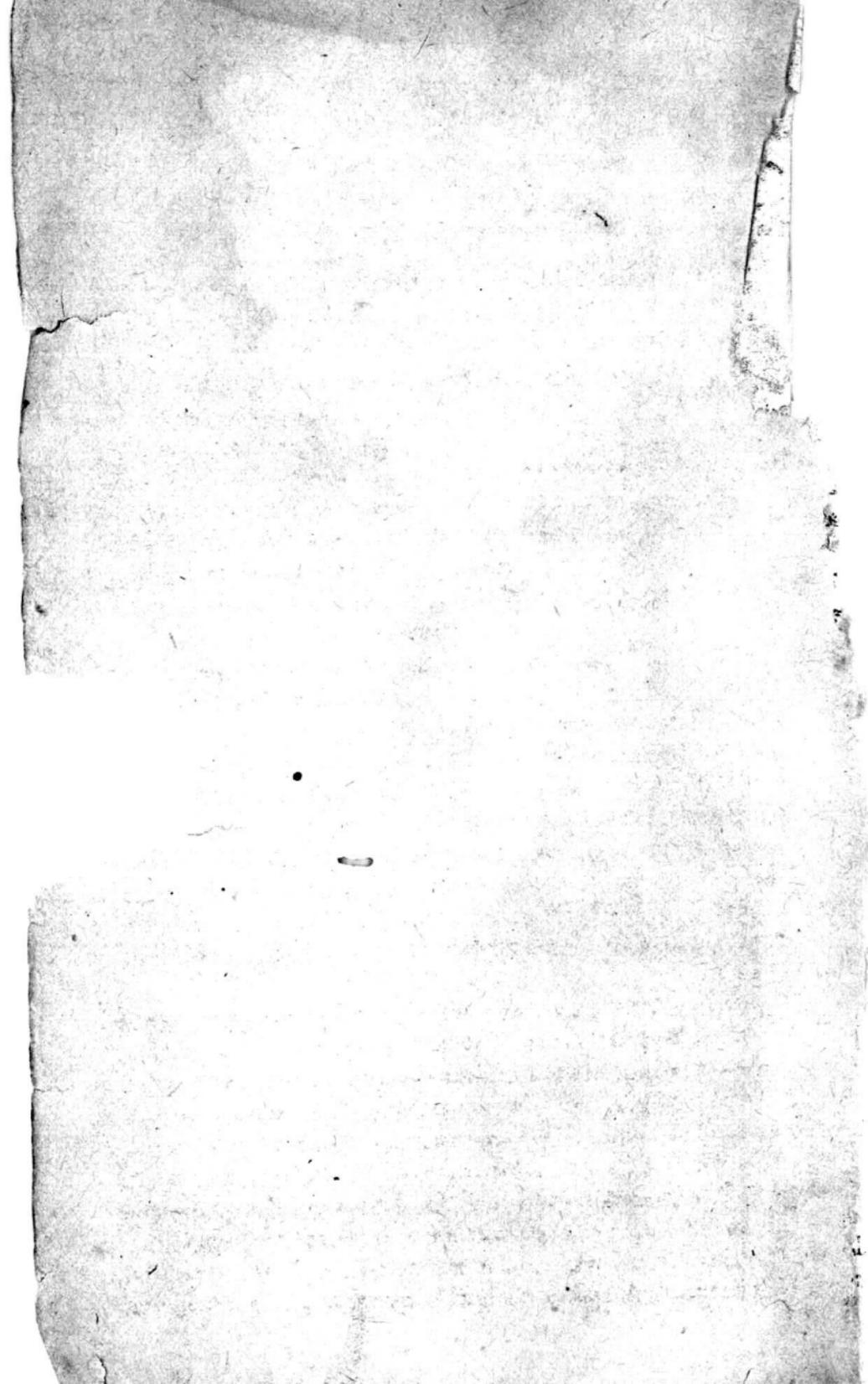
a Penguin Book

3/-

# Within and Without

John Harvey





*Contents*

---

**BOOK ONE**

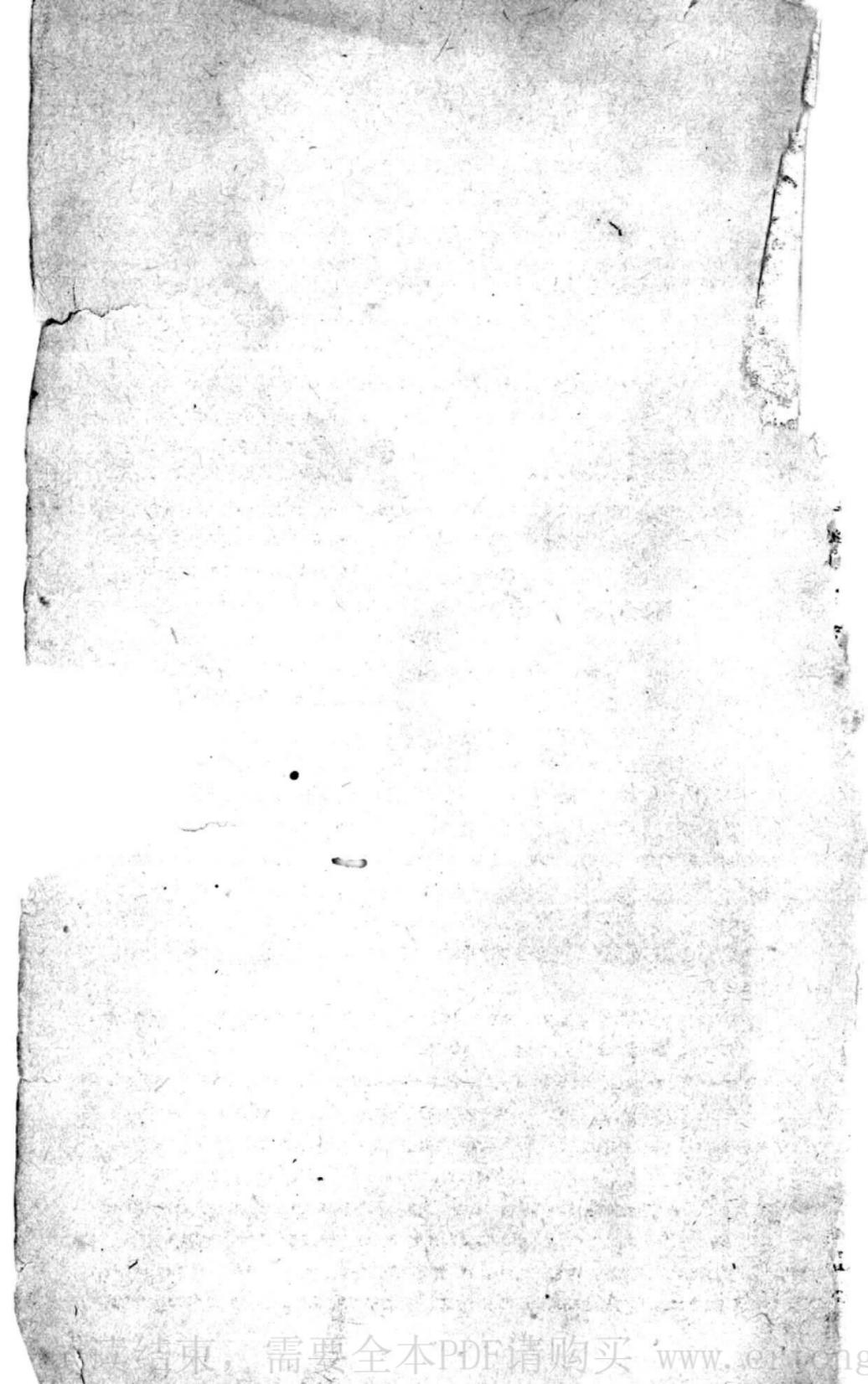
**9**

**BOOK TWO**

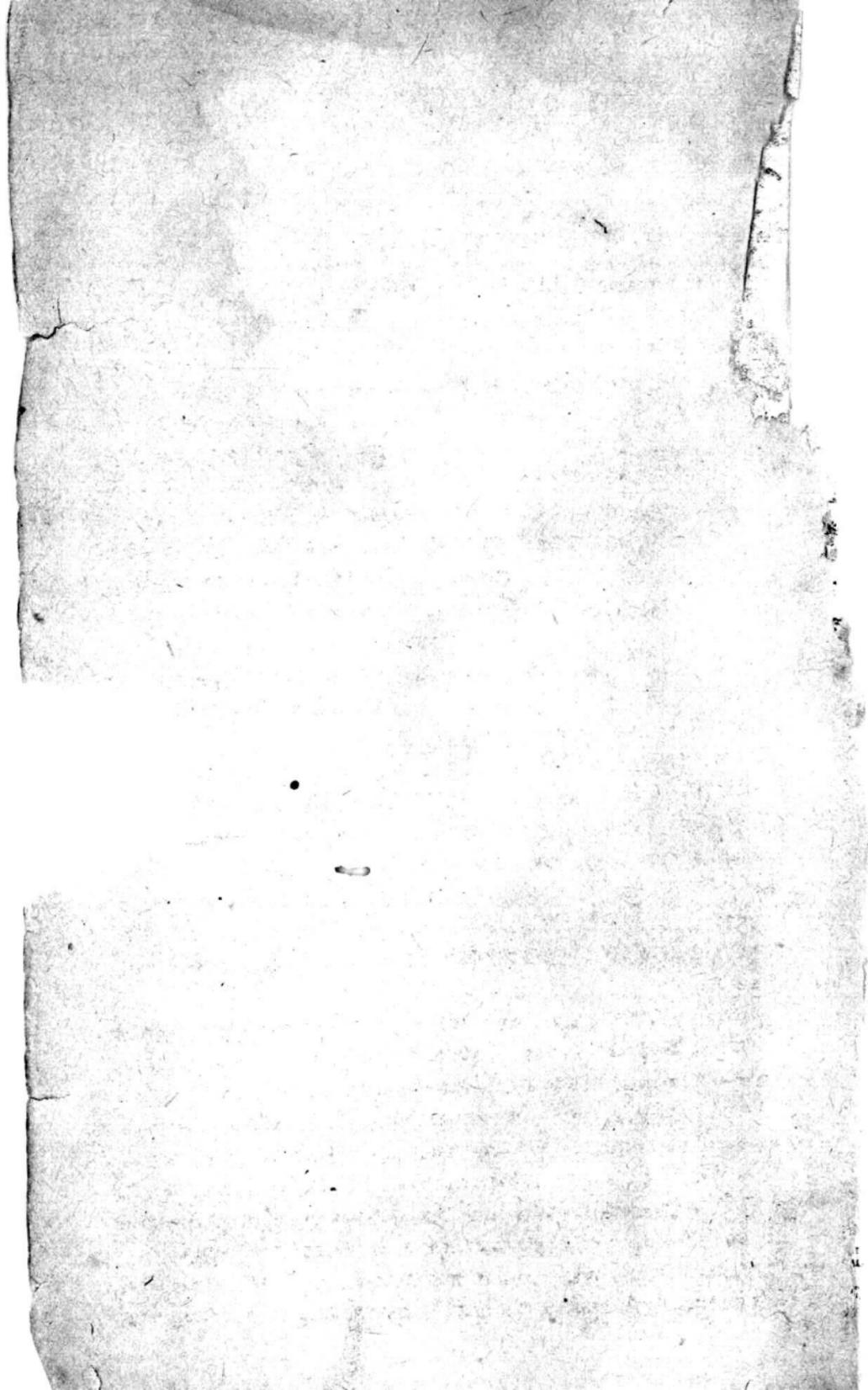
**63**

**BOOK THREE**

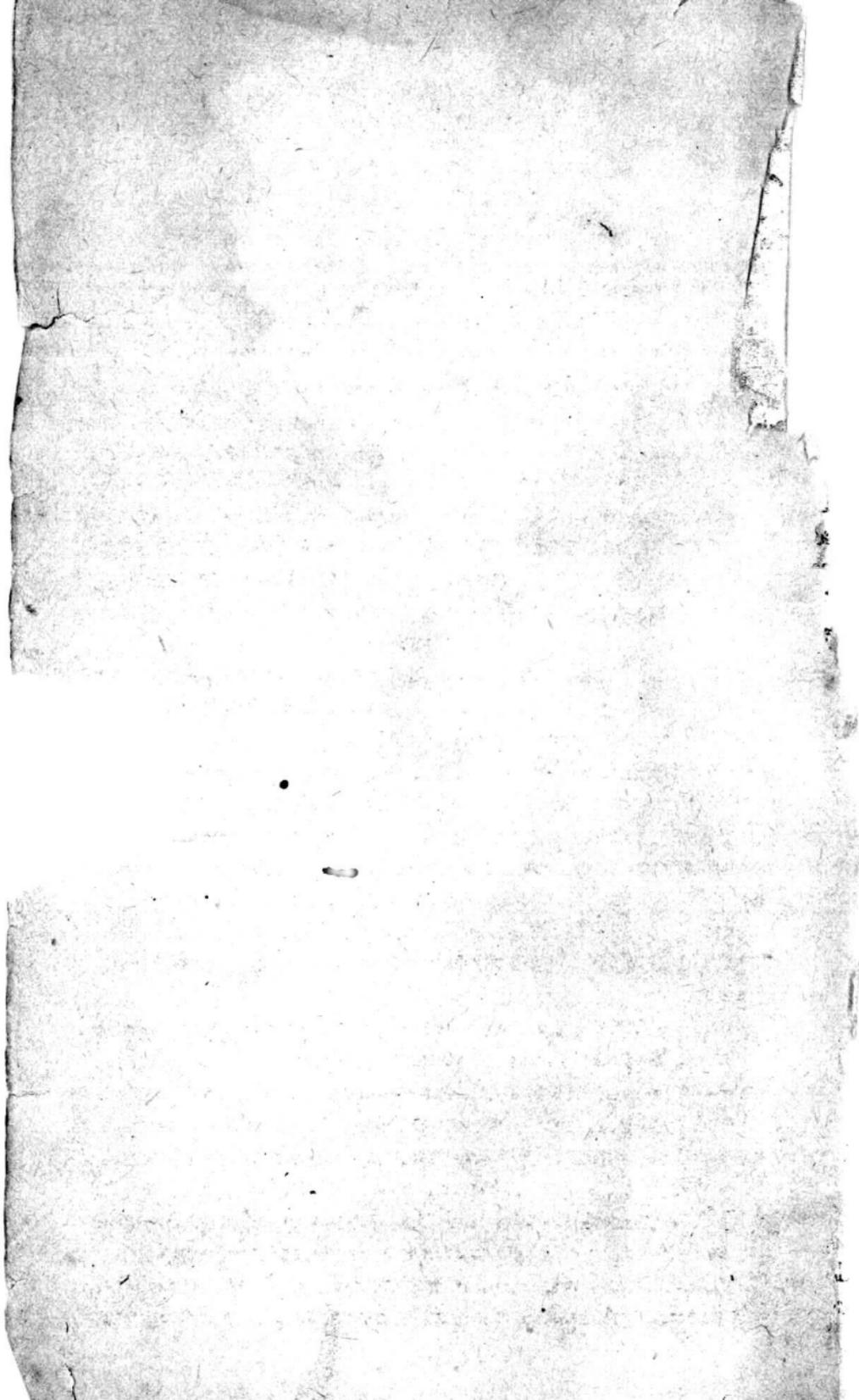
**III**



TO ELENA



**BOOK ONE**



## Chapter I

THE day seemed no different from other days. In the morning I got up early to go down to the art school. I would be drawing in the life class all day, and I was happy that the hours would be taken care of. I am always optimistic in the mornings, it is only in the afternoon and towards the evening that I seem to get a feeling of being trapped. I had felt very trapped the evening before, I don't know why, and I seemed to have passed the night only half asleep. The curtains of my room let in a lot of light, and I think that kept waking me up. The top of my pillow felt cold and shiny, whenever I moved my head to find a new place. But cold in the way that seems to tell you to stop fooling yourself it is still night, and sleep is the thing you've got to do, because it's day, cold, hard, bright day, and things have to be faced. Once I decided to get up and make some coffee, I immediately felt much better and eager for work.

In the bus I remembered about the car, and I thought it might insure having a good day if I took it with me. It was my father's car, but he let me use it whenever I liked, because lately he had a better car from his business, with a chauffeur, and it was easier for him to use that. In fact, I was now paying the licence, and the insurance, so I really counted it as mine. The bus passed near their flat, and I got off and walked down to the mews where it was garaged.

I like cars and the mews was full of them, early in the morning, all being washed by men with hosepipes. A lot of chauffeurs stood around, adjusting their peaked caps. I can't stand chauffeurs and until my father got one, I tended to despise people who had them. Our car was an American Chevrolet, about five years old, with a canvas roof. It had been used a lot, and done fifty thousand miles, but that's not much for an American car, and it was still very good. I got it out of the garage, and drove the rest of the way to the art school. As I went past the front entrance, I hoped some girl I knew might see me, but

there wasn't anybody, and I went past and parked it in a little street at the back of the building, and then walked round. There was the usual crowd of students milling about inside, in the hall, mostly girls wearing duffel coats and trousers, and a few men in big pullovers and corduroys. Some of the girls were very pretty, but they were usually so young, that I could never tell if it was the end of a beautiful childhood, or the start of proper sex-appeal.

I bought paper at the shop downstairs, and went up to the life room on the top floor. I was full of the intention to work very hard, and do several dull factual drawings. I wanted to draw, over and over again, certain things, so that I would not have to worry about them any more. This was what the life class meant for me; a silent personal struggle for dexterity. The real thing I was doing in my own studio was abstract work, a kind of action painting, but I still felt this drawing from the nude was a good thing. Of course the teachers were useless, but they left you alone. The difficulty was, that if you did not make a special effort, the warm room and the plain flabby models and the general uninspiring atmosphere could make you waste time in the life class easier than anywhere else.

I took a chair at the back, in amongst the old chianti bottles and the dirty old casts of feet they go on using for still life, and sat down to wait for the model. At one time I had waited hoping for a thrill, but now I felt more like a medical student waiting for the stiffs to be brought in.

When the model came out, she was the usual one for Wednesdays, and she wore her usual faded dressing-gown. By this time the room was full up with students. She climbed on to the throne and took off her dressing-gown and hung it over the screen. She was unbearably genteel. She did everything in a refined sort of way, as if she was curling her finger to hold a cup of tea. This does not suit a person who is stark naked. She was very white and hairy in front. Simansky, who was taking the class, contemplated her in silence, and she looked back at him, as if her body did not belong to her, but instead her face was just a piece of pure intelligence wanting to know what to do with it. He then carefully arranged her in a pose which looked like every other pose. He was deadly serious and sincere.

The young girl students admired him very much which I found absolutely baffling. When finished, he turned away, wearing a secret sort of smile which was meant to tell us that though we might think it was the same old pose, we were quite wrong; on the contrary, there was something very special about it, some interesting passage, which only a real artist would discover and bring out.

I was just beginning to work, when the swing door into the studio burst open, and a girl walked in across the front. She came in stifling a laugh, as though she'd been talking happily to someone outside the door, and made a face when she saw us all so solemnly started. She went straight across the room in front to where someone had been keeping a place for her. I watched her as she went across, with a rapid shuffling walk in flat sandals. Over in the corner I heard excited whispers, and I couldn't see her any more behind a whole lot of easels. Then there came a crash as she must have upset someone's drawing-board when she sat down. That made me laugh because I could easily imagine what part of her anatomy she must have done that with. She was the sort of girl who made one think instantly of those things. After the crash and the clatter, several people said 'Shh' loudly and everyone looked in that direction. I wanted to get up and look because I couldn't see a thing. Then there was some female whisperings, and then it quietened down. I began to draw again, but it was like a man walking across a ploughed field. All the time, I was waiting for someone to move an easel, and when they did, I could see her. She wore a cardigan and blue trousers. She had lots of whisky-coloured hair down to her shoulders. Her skin was smooth and polished looking. From where I was, her nose was tucked back behind the line of her cheek. She sat on her stool with a hollow in her back. What else? I can't remember what I took in then. Afterwards I found her hair was lighter than I thought. It seemed to change colour. She felt my eyes on her and looked round. Her eyebrows looped up round her forehead and came down to a broad, snub nose. She had a wild and imperious look, like a buffalo or something. In fact the hair grew off her forehead rather like a buffalo's horns. She stared at me for a moment and then went back to her drawing.

We drew interminably, and then suddenly, before the time for the break, she got up with another girl, and they both went across the front together and went out.

'Who's that?' I asked the person next to me.

'Oh, Sue Morley,' I was told, as though anything could be expected of Sue Morley. I did not feel like asking any more then, because I thought we should see her again when the break was over. A moment later the model was putting on her dressing-gown and lighting a cigarette. I got up with everyone else, but instead of going down for coffee, hung about on the landing and the stairs. I did not admit to myself why I was doing this, but it was in case this girl might come back alone into the life class, and then it would be easy for me to say something and to talk to her. I hung about all through the break, but she never turned up. All the other students streamed back after a bit, and I stayed outside until the last one was in, but she wasn't with them. After this, it was a struggle to concentrate at all on my drawing.

At lunch time, I went out quickly and down to the main hall, and I waited about there, reading the notices, and keeping an eye on everybody coming out, but still I never saw her. It was funny because if she was in another class she still ought to have shown up in the hall at some moment. I had a bite in the canteen, and then took the car, and drove it about in the streets for half an hour till we started again in the afternoon. Driving the big Chev in the traffic calmed me down. I made a mental note always to take the car and drive it about when I was bored or worried.

The end of the day was just the same. I did not stay till the last because I felt foolish hanging about in the hall all the time, so when most of the other students had gone, I left too, feeling empty and dissatisfied.

Instead of going home to my own studio which was in a terrible confusion, I thought I would go round to my parents' flat. I did not particularly want to meet them, but to relax in pleasant surroundings. They had an extremely comfortable flat which seemed to rest my soul. Since moving to a flat of my own, I had occasionally found myself missing this ambience. I drove straight off there, feeling certain that the disturbing image of

this girl would not worry me so much when I was in those deep armchairs. I had a key and let myself in, hoping that they would be out. It was too early for my parents to be in. It was about five o'clock and I thought I would get myself a drink and read a glossy magazine. Unfortunately the maid was in, and she went through the hall as I was closing the door. She insisted on making me some tea which is not my drink at all, so that it was rather difficult for me to ask her to bring in the tray of drinks at the same time.

I went into the drawing-room and sank down on the sofa to wait for the tea. I felt completely exhausted. It was a charming room with fresh flowers on the tables under the pictures, and whole sheaves of the latest glossies lying about to read. I began to go through them, congratulating myself on having thought of coming here. I kept thinking about the girl called Sue Morley, and found I was subconsciously searching for likenesses to her among the model girls in the fashion plates. Every time I thought of her, I had an empty unhappy feeling. I felt the trapped sensation was coming on again. I felt I ought to be doing something about her. This was the sort of feeling that came on very strongly whenever I was not actually doing anything. The reason I had come here was to chase away this feeling. But all the same, I was still very nervous and jumpy.

The maid brought in the tea with potted-meat sandwiches and chocolate cake. I was hungry and I ate them all quickly. I was just finishing the sandwiches when I heard the rattle of a key in the lock, and a minute later, my mother came in.

She was carrying several parcels, and had just been to the hairdresser by the smell of shampoo, and a certain flush about the face. She was an extremely beautiful woman, dark and thin and elegant. She had moved into middle age getting almost more beautiful as she went on, becoming more thin and more elegant, and her hair still black as anything. She had an aquiline nose and large, tragic eyes. You would never guess that she was forty-five. She greeted me by kissing me on the cheek with a loud exclamation, and then flung her parcels in a chair, and sat down in the other sofa, glancing round the room to see everything was all right.

'I heard such a funny thing at the hairdresser's today,' she

said, starting to talk gaily at once. 'I know it will amuse you. Just when I got my hair out of the drier, the telephone rang in the shop, and it was for a woman who was in the chair next to me, they brought it over for her to take it, and she started talking. I was just thinking what a fool the woman must be to give the number of her hairdresser to anyone, I always think it's the one moment of the day when nobody can get at you, when I started hearing what she was talking about. She was half in and half out of the drier and was shouting like mad, like one does when one gets out of that thing, and you could hear every word. She was telling a photographer for God's sake to hurry up and photograph her dead cat because she couldn't spare the space in the refrigerator any more. The most fantastic conversation! And apparently she'd been trying to get him all day - this special photographer of dead cats! And that's why she'd left her number. Can you beat it, darling?'

'What did the cat die of?' I asked.

'She didn't say that. It must have just died. If it was an accident or anything nasty she wouldn't have wanted to photograph it.'

'I suppose not,' I said.

'People really are quite extraordinary.'

'I can imagine feeling like that about a cat.'

'You can? I can't. Anyway, it's nice to see you! No art school today?'

'Yes, I've just come back. I thought I'd look in on my way.'

'I'm so glad, darling. I feel I haven't seen you for ages. How's the studio?'

'All right,' I said. I have a horror of anyone knowing my movements or thoughts. My mother was very sensitive to changes of mood in people near her. I hoped I was not betraying my inner disquiet, but she must have felt something because she now said:

'You look rather thoughtful. Things going all right?'

'Yes,' I said.

'How's the painting going?'

'Okay,' I said. She gave me a quick smile, as though she knew what hell everything was, and understood.

'We've got to go out for a drink this evening, but not till quite

late. Stay and talk to me till then. I feel wonderfully relaxed and rested after my hair-do. You are coming to have dinner with us tomorrow, aren't you?' 到吃

'Yes, I told you I was. What will we have for dinner?'

'I haven't thought yet; there'll be some other people too, you know. Why so obsessed with food? Don't you feed yourself properly?' 到吃

I wanted to make it plain that I didn't care if there were going to be other people or not. For me it was simply the food which mattered.

'If there are other people,' I said, 'I expect they'll be so high-powered I won't have very much to say. So I shall have to eat. It's nice therefore to know what I'm going to have.'

'Why on earth won't you have very much to say?' demanded my mother. 'As it happens they aren't a bit high-powered. Do be nice to people for once, instead of being such an absolute bear.'

There was a note of pleading in her voice; perhaps I was overdoing it. But it was how I felt. I felt low and dissatisfied, only to be comforted by things, not by people. Except for that girl at the art school. I went on thinking about her.

'I shall be perfectly nice,' I said. 'All I'm saying is that I probably won't take a prominent part in the conversation, that's all.'

'I can't think why you have to be so beastly to our friends always.'

'I'm not being beastly,' I said.

'Anyway, it's only the Pitmans who are coming, and Bridget. And there may be another couple.'

'You've asked Bridget?' I said. I was dismayed. Bridget was a girl I seemed to have known all my life, and did not like. At first, I had thought she was just a fool, but she had grown up very smart and tough, and alarmed me.

'What's the matter with the poor girl?'

'We don't like each other much. I haven't seen her for ages. I think she's a bloody girl.'

'It'll be a change if someone's bloody to you for once,' my mother said with a short laugh. 'You really are impossible, Mark. Anyway, I've asked her and she's coming. So that's that.'

She's always asking about you whenever I see her. You simply must behave properly to her.'

'She only asks about me for something to say to you.'

'She doesn't. She really wants to know. Anyway, you like Cynthia, so what's the matter with Bridget?'

'Cynthia doesn't compete.'

There was a silence. My mother looked at me and I tried to avoid her gaze. I wished I had the strength of mind to get up and go.

'Do you ever see a soul in that studio?' she asked. She believed my difficult behaviour was the result of not seeing anybody. 'Everybody keeps asking me what's happened to you - are you away or something. I don't know what to tell them.'

'What do you tell them?'

'I just say the truth. I say you've got a studio of your own now, and you're working very hard studying art.'

'And what do they say?'

'Well, they're *interested*! Can't you understand it's very *interesting*, all that?'

'No, I can't see it's interesting, except to me.'

'Well, tell me, who do you see?'

'I see a lot of people, but you wouldn't like them,' I said. 'In any case, I don't attach importance to people much. The important thing for me is to paint.'

'Most painters thought there were other things as well.'

'*Il faut avoir une femme*, as Rodin said,' I said.

'I see,' said my mother. She lit herself a cigarette. I expect she was thinking it might be worse. I made an effort to think what she must think of me, but it was too much of an effort. I felt my own childhood was a myth, myself a hollow paper-lantern without a light. If I can't understand myself, in fact am full of self-contempt, how can I have sympathy or understanding for her? I felt I needed a little flame somewhere, but I couldn't find it. Unless possibly Sue Morley.

'What happened to all those nice girls you used to know before you went into the army?'

'Who are you thinking of?'

'Tess Fenton, for instance.'

'Tess Fenton's got married. And how on earth can you think