

(A)I was slow in starting to live at all. It wasn't my fault. If there had ever been any kindness I would not have suffered from a delayed maturity. If so much apprehension had not been instilled into me, I shouldn't have been terrified to leave my solitary unwanted childhood (B)in case something still worse was waiting ahead. However, there was no kindness. (C)The nearest approach to it was being allowed to sit on the back seats of the big cars my mother drove about in with her different admirers. This was in fact no kindness at all. I was taken along (D)to lend an air of respectability. The two in front never looked round or paid the slightest attention to me, and I took no notice of them. I sat for hours and hours and for hundreds of miles, inventing endless fantasies at the back of large and expensive cars.

The frightful slowness of a child's time. The interminable years of inferiority and struggling to win a kind word that is never spoken. The torment of self-accusation, (E)thinking one must be to blame. The bitterness of longed-for affection bestowed on indifferent strangers. What future could have been worse? What could have been done to me to make me afraid to grow up out of such a childhood?

Later on, when I saw things (F)more in proportion, I was always afraid of falling back into that ghastly black isolation of an uncomprehending, solitary, over-sensitive child, the worst fate I could imagine.

My mother disliked and despised me for being a girl. From her I got the idea that men were a superior breed, the free, the fortunate, the splendid, the strong. My small adolescent adventures and timid experiments confirmed this. All heroes were (G)automatically masculine. Men were kinder than women; (H)they could afford to be. They were also fierce, unpredictable, dangerous animals; one had to be constantly on (I) against them.

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