Evelyn, the mother of Small Henry, succumbed to a kidney disease and died hours after he was born.

The doctor from Pambula was there, and the Reverend Colin Edwards was sent for when death was imminent.

George Herbert, an uncle of the newborn, rode to St Jude’s rectory in Wyndham to rouse Edwards from sleep. He helped harness Edwards’s surprised and shivering horse to his sulky, then cantered off, the ring of hoofs on the dustless, winter road emphasizing the quiet, rather than disturbing it.

Edwards followed at a slower pace. He tried to utilize the time composing a suitable prayer, but barely got his brain working when Honeysuckle came in sight.

The doctor’s car moved off before Edwards pulled the sulky up, which suited both drivers, the doctor feeling responsibility for the death, the minister social inferiority for not owning a car. They were happier avoiding an encounter.

Inside the house there was little activity, except for the Herbert girls, Enid and Una, in the clothes they wore to evensong eight hours earlier, moving lamps and bringing in tea. Their bodies apologized when they lapsed into normal, brisk movement. The lamp wicks were lowered, dimming the room, so that only white clothes stood out.

The newly widowed Henry, the child’s father, stood drooping at the window near the fireplace.
His father, Jack, was in a straight-backed chair, his easy one empty, a token of mourning.

Henry’s older brothers, Alex and George, were on the couch sharing a private shame that their main regret was the approach of daybreak and no sleep possible before framework began.

Violet, their aunt, the wife of Jack’s brother Edgar, having brought the child into the world, was still on watch by his basket. He was still now and sleeping, having shown then he was alive by swimming motions with his arms and legs, as if he did not believe himself yet free of the waters of his mother’s womb, and unlike her he had no intention of drowning.

As soon as he decently could Edwards left, pacing his horse quite swiftly for him, feeling the room clinging to his back.

He felt free of it only when he unharnessed the horse under the big gum, both of them dimly shaped in the reluctant dawn. He slapped the horse’s rump to acknowledge the errand done. The horse took two or three steps as its acknowledgment.

The scene at Honeysuckle returned to him when he was between his hairy blankets, the sheets pushed to the foot of the bed by his agitated feet.

The funeral! His first! He had seen little of the girl, turning on those rare occasions in embarrassment from the great egg shape that made a shelf for her hands. Gods, you have designed things in the strangest way. Our Father which art in heaven, he prayed in hasty repentance.

He punched a hollow in his pillow for his head and turned over, away from a corner of the room where a girl’s slim shape had cut itself into the shadows.

He shut his eyes, but it returned. The blouse it wore had dark spots on white. Or was it all white with fine pleats gently stretched where the buttons ran from neck to waist?

Miss Enid was in the spots, I think, he said to himself, giving the pillow another punch. He remembered one of them in the kitchen, tumbling loaves of bread from tins onto
the table, a face absorbed in the task, sorrow left in the living room.

They’re making use of this extra time, he remembered thinking, wondering if they were grateful for it. Eyes and ears constantly bent towards the kitchen, he heard a rush of water from an emptied dish onto a plant outside the back door.

That would be Miss Enid, he thought, pleased with his observation. She was the gardener. Put me to sleep, Lord. Sunday service is only a few hours away. (I will see them both!) Lord, put such foolishness out of my mind. Better that I think of the dead girl.

He would be expected to say something from the pulpit. The pews, more full than usual, would be eager for it. He might not say anything to nark them! (Lord, forgive this wicked turn of mind.) Our sister has departed this life. A gentle soul.

He supposed she was gentle. At seventeen she would scarcely be any other way. He thought she looked trapped, like a large grey uncomplaining rabbit with round, watery eyes, and two teeth in front constantly pinning down her bottom lip. Her hair was gingerish, pulled back from her face, as if she wanted to emphasize its skimpiness.

Enid and Una had erect heads, crowned with brown hair, one more abundant that the other. Which? Go to sleep!

Tomorrow I will have all this nonsense out of my head. I promise You.
But no.

Una sat in the Herbert pew given to the church, and he knew she was twisting her hands in her lap by the movement of her arms near her shoulders, although he couldn't see past the second button of her black jacket (he marvelled that she and others had so quickly found black clothes to wear) due to the Robertsons in the next pew tending towards obesity.

He had a foolish fear in his head that he would not reach the door in time to shake her hand, and when he did he assumed a severe expression he didn't intend. To chase it away he asked about the baby, wishing too late that he had used the word ‘child’.

‘With Aunt Violet,’ Una whispered, and he was aware only then of Violet Herbert missing from the Herbert pew. He watched Una's back go down the wooden steps, and had to jerk his eyes away when he saw a question on a rotund Robertson stomach.

No one need ever know, he said to himself, shaking hands with an energy that surprised those in his grip. Bravely unconcerned he lifted his chin at the sound of the Herbert’s motor starting up but allowed himself a brief glance that way, rewarding himself with the knowledge that Una was a good inch taller than her sister and had a straighter back.

It had been his practice on fine Sunday afternoons these past few weeks to put on his wide brimmed clerical hat, tuck his Bible under his arm and take a long walk.
It was both good exercise and a means of exploring the district. He varied the direction, although his choice was limited to the way to Candelo and Pambula and two or three turn-offs, some no more than cart wheel tracks.

Last Sunday he had gone Honeysuckle way.

‘Under the circumstances …’ he murmured, giving the Burragate turn-off an apologetic look as he strode past it. He walked with his head down to save the wind catching the underneath of his hat and blowing it away into the Hickeys's paddocks, bare and still like lakes rising one on top of the other until they reached the house sitting among fruit trees on top of the ridge. A Hickey was riding by the fence next to the road and Edwards bobbed his head so that his hat brim bounced a couple of times. That was good enough. The Hickeys were Catholics.

Honeysuckle came up on his right. It sat an elderly lady surveying her surroundings. Refined though she was, she smoked a pipe, but it was a gentle dreamy smoke drifting away to rest on the barns and dairy well back from the house. She wore a bright skirt spread to one side, quite gay for her age, hinting at a reluctance to let go of her youth. The honeysuckle vine, which gave the farm its name, was piled thickly along the fence separating the house from the orchard. The old lady's colourful skirt was on the other side. This was Enid's garden.

Her mother, Nellie, when she was alive, had kept the honeysuckle trimmed and planted violets in clumps by the steps and lilies and other bulbs by the edge of the verandah, and found this enough to manage.

Enid at eighteen had coaxed Jack to fence a generous area on the kitchen side of the house, taking in some orange and lemon tress. Her garden, colourful and ordered all the year round, often caused buggies and cars to stop and spill out gaping occupants to spread against the wire admiring, until a driver strode away annoyed at the delay and honked a horn or rattled reins.
Enid’s heart thumped with pride on these occasions, glad she had won the battle with Jack to have wire not palings, although he continued for some time to complain about the cost.

Edwards smelled something now heady and sweet, unaware that it was wallflowers spread at the base of rose bushes so the bushes appeared to rise from the centre of thick brown and gold patterned bed quilts.

While he smelled and looked at the shut face of the house, a curtain fell back into place at a window on the side nearest the orchard. He paused long enough to admire a stretch of fruit trees, so still against a light grey sky he wondered if they were dead until he saw bumps like tiny breasts along the bare limbs. His face warm, he went up the steps and knocked on the door.

Henry opened it. He was in the process of rolling a cigarette and went on quite expertly with the job using one hand while he held the door with the other. Henry had round grey watery eyes rather like those of his late wife. Edwards looked into them for tears. There were none but a spark that said Henry was by no means done with life.

‘Yep,’ he said using a slang term he had brought from the city with the new wife six months earlier. ‘Nothing to keep me here now.’

Edwards glanced towards the hallway leading off a corner of the room, where behind one of the closed bedroom doors he suspected the young wife’s body to be. He listened in the creaking silence for something that might say she approved or disapproved his plan.

Perhaps Henry listened too. He looked down at the cigarette between fingers resting on a knee.

Edwards raised his head and listened for the child, then realized Violet would have him. Her house was quite close to the rectory. It came as a shock to Edwards that he actually had a new neighbour. His spirits lifted at the thought and this surprised him too.
They remained uplifted for at that moment Una came in with a tray of tea and cake cut with slices overlapping each other, yellow and tender, breathing freshness. Here was Una! She’s come! It might have been Enid, or neither might have appeared, but Una was here. He looked with gratification at the open door which gave her to him. The tea she poured was tan, and the cups were decorated with pale pink flowers. The pink matched Una’s cheeks and the tea her tannish eyes unlike any other coloured eyes he had seen. Even sipping his tea and looking into the liquid he kept seeing Una’s eyes, which were no longer around for she had slipped away with a jug of roses from the table. Would he not see her again during the visit? The disappointment turned the cake dry in his throat. But she returned to put the roses back, having removed one or two limp ones and given the others fresh water.

‘Your roses are beautiful, Miss Herbert,’ he said.
‘They’re Enid’s,’ she said.
‘I’m sorry, I should be saying Miss Una.’

He laid his cup on its saucer as she went out, thinking it best that he did not look after her.

‘Yep,’ Henry said. ‘Nothing to keep me here now.’

I will leave before I hate this man, Edwards thought, standing up. He asked Henry to thank Miss Una for the tea, so happy at saying her name aloud twice in ten minutes that he was walking rapidly up the road before he realized it.

The four-mile walk to the rectory took Edwards to tea time, for the evening meal was never called dinner in those parts, most families eating largely at midday.

He threw off his hat and coat, made up the fire in the kitchen stove and put the kettle on. Often he made tea without the kettle boiling, it took such an interminable time, and then he would sit over it bluish with leaves floating about and drink it with a pained expression as if doing penance for a wrongdoing.

He decided now to walk outside, thinking this might have the effect of boiling the water faster. But outside there was no
garden, just rough grass with a track worn between the back door of the house and the back porch of the church. He surveyed it miserably, thinking of the Honeysuckle garden. Then he went inside and looked through his window at the darkening sky above Violet Herbert’s home where the small baby was, and wondered at it looking the same.

The baby reminded him of the funeral tomorrow. Good, he thought before he had time to stop himself. Then in repentance he dropped on his knees by a chair to pray and was there when Wilfred Watts arrived with a can of fresh milk.

Wilfred jumped in fright when he saw the big soles of Edwards’s boots just inside the kitchen door, causing some milk to splash on the doorstep. Wilfred, who was eleven and the son of Mrs Watts who cooked and cleaned two days a week at the rectory, stared at the running milk and clutched the can hard in the crook of his arm as if to avoid a further spill. Edwards flung a cup of water on the step and both of them watched the milk turn pale blue and gather dirt as it raced away to trickle into the grass. Edwards took the can and emptied the milk into a saucepan, his only jug being half full of soured stuff from the last delivery.

He set the chair firmly against the wall to dispel any thoughts Wilfred might have of a resumption of the prayer.

‘Somebody died,’ Wilfred said, accepting the rinsed out can.

‘Yes, my boy,’ Edwards said, thinking not of the dead girl, but the alive and lively Una.

‘Mum said the Herbert girls’ll be glad,’ Wilfred said.

He tapped the can against a knobbly knee while he shared this reflection.

‘Well, death is said to be a happy state,’ Edwards said.

Wilfred steadied the swinging can. ‘Why do people bawl then?’ he asked.

Edwards remembered a shadowy girl’s shape at the kitchen dresser with half a back visible from the living room. A head
bowed briefly while a handkerchief was tucked into a cuff. Yes, Una had wept.

‘God blesses those who weep,’ Edwards said.

Wilfred, embarrassed to hear God mentioned in conversation this way, stared at his bare sprawled feet, the cracked soles beginning to invade the uppers with brown threads like rough darning.

Edwards sat sideways on his chair.
‘Come to church and you’ll understand,’ he said. ‘Perhaps.’
‘One day Mum’ll get us all new boots,’ Wilfred said, trying to push his feet deeper into the grass.
‘God wouldn’t worry about the boots,’ Edwards said.
‘The people would, though,’ Wilfred said.
As if there were no argument against this, Wilfred spun the can a couple of times then turned and sped off home.
After tea at Honeysuckle, Enid made a wreath of wallflowers and daisies and laid it in a tub of water on the washhouse floor. There it rocked about, hitting the sides of the tub as if there was something disturbing it. Enid stayed until it was still, holding a lighted candle and the edges of her blouse together at the neck. Cecil Grant, the undertaker from Bega (who had an eye on Enid), had brought a coffin late the previous night. Cecil, his rumbling hearse and the girl’s body would pass the night at the Wyndham hotel, the cost included in the funeral charges. The wreath had the effect of returning the body to Honeysuckle just as Enid had it thankfully out of the way. She felt now she should leave the candle burning in the wash house. Oh what foolishness, she said to herself, shutting the door with a brisk little click. It may well burn the house down and bring us more trouble.

She went to the bedroom she shared with Una, passing the kitchen, which was settling itself for the night under the heavy smells of food cooked for the meal when the funeral was over.

The bedroom was once Jack and Nellie’s, Jack taking a smaller room when both girls finished their education at boarding school and Nellie by that time dead several years. It was a show-room at Honeysuckle, up a step from the living room and on a level of its own. It had been Nellie’s sanctuary, furnished with mahogany pieces shining like dark brown silk. There were two chintz-covered chairs, thick hooked rugs on the floor and a
double bed with a handsome crocheted quilt and pillow shams. Enid kept it immaculate, constantly straightening the clothes in the wardrobe, and wiping out the jug and basin on the marble washstand after every use. Lately she had emptied a drawer in the dressing table for the creams and powders Una had taken to using, to save a clutter and spillage on the unblemished surface. Enid saw three of Una in the dressing table mirrors for she now had a dress spread on the bed intended for the funeral. It was a black moire silk, plain except for a pale blue piping at the high neck and wrists of the long tight sleeves. She touched the trimming as if willing it to disappear. Enid glanced at it while she removed the pillow shams and turned the quilt back.

‘Perhaps it could be unpicked,’ Enid said. She sewed but did not have Una’s talent with the needle.

‘Tonight? Sunday!’ Una said with round scandalized eyes. ‘Mother would die!’

Not Mother, Enid thought, taking out the black dress she wore to the last Bega races, thankfully untrimmed except for a large pale apricot floppy cotton rose which she now unpinned from a lapel.

‘Wear your black suit then,’ Enid said, receiving her answer from Una’s face. Wear the same dress two days in a row? With him to see!

‘I finished the wreath,’ Enid said. ‘There were more flowers than for Mother’s. But I made it smaller.’

Una approved but both faces were washed briefly with shame at the discrimination.

Una put her nightgown on, full below the bust with lace and tucks. She went to the mirror and brushed and coiled her hair.

Enid in bed blew out the lamp so there was only a fluttering candle on the dressing table to turn Una into a bride.
Violet’s dream of turning her house into a hospital was reinforced when she took Small Henry home. His wailing through Sunday afternoon and a greater part of the night did not worry her too much. It was rather like an orchestra playing in its rightful setting.

It worried Ned a great deal. He had lost an eye in the Great War and had a glass one in its place, and he turned both, one ahead of the other, on the white bundle Violet carried about, then looked through a door or window as if directing her to take it there.

This is a good way of breaking him into the idea, Violet said to herself, binding a screaming Small Henry into a napkin large enough for a young calf.

Violet was a nurse when she married Ned, giving him that name in preference to Edgar, and being a woman of authority, the family followed suit.

Since she and Ned remained childless, she continued to take cases, or home confinements in Wyndham and nearby.

Lately there had been a dwindling of numbers, due to slightly improved roads and a growing trend to travel to Bega or Pambula to private hospitals there.

Here there were certain disadvantages of which Violet was well aware.

Few timed their trips to arrive with the imminent birth. Most went days or even weeks in advance, enjoying for a while the
luxury of sleeping late and meals in bed. Then husbands at home
with an added workload, and reluctant relatives caring for other
children, soured on the arrangements. The women grew heavy
with guilt as well as their unborn children, as hours stretched
into days and they watched the arrival of other patients, moaning
in labour as they staggered up the hospital steps.

How they envied them, longing for their own pains to start,
turning their cheating bodies in shame, even from the lowly
maid who brought their food. Many tearfully begged to be taken
home, adding to the trauma by returning almost immediately,
narrowly escaping giving birth in the hired car or family buggy.

Violet's scheme was to turn her two front rooms, one a sitting
room and the other the bedroom she and Ned shared, into wards
for a maximum of six cases. One of the other smaller rooms also
opening off the hall would be the labour ward, and the opposite
one would take most of the sitting room furniture and double as
a waiting room. She and Ned could make a room for themselves
at the end of the front verandah, already partly closed in and
presently sheltering some broken furniture and empty tea chests
that held their wedding china while Ned was at war.

The tea chests (and Violet) were housed at Honeysuckle
while Ned was away. Violet had her uses there, nursing Nellie
through her last illness, then sharing the housework with Enid
and later Una when both left boarding school. She was restless
without nursing work, for there were few confinements with the
men away at war. She tried the patience of Enid, who as young
as eighteen was eager to be in full control of the Honeysuckle
household. Violet constantly gave advice on cooking and
cleaning, although she was slapdash in most culinary skills. She
criticized Enid's plans for her garden, causing Enid to go behind
the locked door of her bedroom to write to a Sydney nursery
for seeds and seedlings, and make sketches of beds and borders.
Violet talked at length about enlisting as a nurse and following
Ned to England and later to France. (Enid often wished she
would, but was too well brought up by Nellie to say so.) It was soon too late anyway, for Ned’s eye was shot out and he was invalided home before the war ended.

Violet and Ned named their cottage Albert Lane after the site of that skirmish with the Germans. It was the first built in Wyndham in many years and was Violet’s idea, she being passionately opposed to their moving onto Ned’s farm, Halloween, where there were suitable share farmers named Hoopers. Let them stay and Ned go there and potter about as the mood took him. A new house was just the thing to rehabilitate him. It was directly opposite the new war memorial too, of which Violet was greatly in favour (then) although part of Wyndham opposed it. Save the money, many said, and rename the public hall, which was next door, the Wyndham War Memorial Hall. Violet threatened to give a piece of her tongue to the source of this proposal, and Ned’s good eye watered liberally and his glass one took on a drowned look as well. His hands, growing pale and weak looking, clutched at his knees, for he was either on the kitchen couch or a verandah chair, as if the hands were shouting the words working inside his throat.

But when the pink and grey marble monument was finally up, enclosed with a metal chain suspended from smaller pillars, Violet had less enthusiasm for it than Ned. He would sit on the verandah recounting the opposition to it, now blamed on Eric Power, who in Ned’s few trembling words had never heard the crack of a bullet, or lived for weeks on end in wet and rancid clothes, but was most of the time at home in a feather bed, the fruits of which were ten children, considered by Eric to be the superior war effort.

By this time Violet was ready to defend Eric. Sitting near Ned, sewing a dress, biting at a thread impatiently and trying to decide whether to carry on or bundle it up and take it to Una to fix, she informed him, not for the first time, that Eric Power had tried to enlist but was discovered to have flat feet.
Violet kept fowls and ducks in pens not far from the back door. She had in the beginning a modest dream of killing and cleaning the poultry with Ned’s help and sending it off for sale to guest houses in the seaside towns of Pambula and Merimbula. She was enthused by the arrival of new life, yellow and tender and fluffy.

But the ducks grew old and scruffy, and the pens dry and brown like the sad-eyed occupants, and Ned seemed to wither too, standing staring at them through the sagging wire. After a while, the squawking, perhaps reminding him of French farmhouses at the other Albert Lane, sent him scurrying into the bush where he would remain for hours.

In the early days when the Herberts were pioneers of Wyndham, an old Herbert woman named Phoebe had been found dead in a hollow tree after she had been missing for weeks. Violet, fearing a similar fate for Ned, would stand on the edge of the bush, only her beating heart breaking the silence.

Later she grew less patient and less fearful, talking aloud to her angry footsteps in the otherwise silent house, saying he could finish up like old Phoebe for all she cared.

But she was not yet brave enough to openly announce her plans about the hospital, warning Enid and Una, who were in her confidence, not to say anything in front of the ‘boys’ in case word got back to Ned.

‘He’ll come round in the end,’ Violet said on this particular occasion, about two months before the birth of Small Henry, visiting Honeysuckle and gossiping with Enid and Una in the living room.

The annual Wyndham picnic races had been held the week before, so the projected hospital had to be shared with that major event as a talking point. Priority was given to the food tent operated by Wyndham’s meanest woman, Mrs Ena Grant, wife of the Wyndham storekeeper.

Una flung away the petticoat she was sewing and pantomimed, with exaggerated movements of her slender body and
long arms, Mrs Grant removing portions of food from plates filled by other helpers. Then Una became the helpers and put the food back, and Mrs Grant removed it again, and after a while Una’s body became a flurry of movement and her head rapidly swung from left to right in pursuit of her opposition, until she was jerking and spinning like a mechanical toy.

Enid with twitching lips got up and straightened the tablecloth after Una had flung herself back in her chair, and Violet used the inside hem of the dress she was altering to wipe the tears of laughter from her eyes.

‘You should take it on,’ Violet said to Enid, as she had been saying for the past two or three years, referring to the operation of the food tent.

What followed each picnic races was equally predictable.

A few days after the event the workers gathered for their meeting, ranged on a wooden plank in the public hall, sharing the Herbert women’s view that Ena Grant should be removed permanently from the food tent. They waited for Ena’s arrival, stern of expression and resolute of mind.

‘If anyone feels they can do a better job, they have only to speak up!’ Ena said, opening the exercise book containing her figures, one damaged in transit from the warehouse, but charged to the committee at full price.

No one spoke up although Enid, proud of her skill for management, wanted to. But leaders of charity work in Wyndham were matrons or established spinsters, and Enid at twenty-one might have been verging on spinsterhood but was not yet ready to draw attention to it.

Now Violet, Enid and Una each lifted their chins, like birds anticipating a scattering of seed, something with a taste they knew and favoured.

The food tent! Who gave what and who cunningly covered their donation to take it home untouched? Who dodged the job of stoking the fire under the tins boiling the water for tea, and
spent their time flirting with the men leaning on the counter between races?

But there was no time for a burst of words from lips hastily moistened for an easy passage. At that moment Henry’s wife drifted into the room, light and ghost-like in spite of her bulk. She took a straight-backed chair near the piano, folding her hands one above the other on her thighs and looked down on them past her stomach under the stretched cloth of her dress.

She had not been included in the outing to the races, but left to drift about the big, cool, empty house where she did no more than wipe a few dishes left by the washing-up dish, not putting them away in their rightful places, and Enid, clicking her tongue at the sight of them, felt immediate remorse, for the isolated, misshapen heap reminded her of the girl herself.

Enid felt remorse again now at the sight of the girl’s misshapen body in her unsuitable dress, and wished she and Una had made her something loose and full to wear. Nellie, if she had lived, would have insisted, in spite of the shame and embarrassment the hurried marriage brought. It was hardly worthwhile now, a waste of good material, and Enid shrewdly suspected the birth was closer than the date given.

The conversation stopped, the expressions on the faces of the Herbert women slipped into a coolness, not quite a frown, not totally a lost smile, but features rearranged as in a school-room when a loved lesson is over, and the next one is of a more perplexing kind.

Violet, deciding she would do no more to her dress, jabbed the needle through the cotton on the reel and rolled both together on her lap.

She stroked quite gently for Violet at the blue and white spotted muslin.

‘Where would you rather be confined?’ she said, and the girl started at being addressed, certain as usual that she would
not be capable of answering a question from a Herbert woman, whatever it was.

‘Confined at home or in hospital?’ Violet said, now at liberty to frown as deeply as she wanted to.

‘Aunt Violet is thinking of making her house in Wyndham into a small hospital,’ Enid said quite kindly as she saw the terror in the girl’s eyes at the ordeal ahead.

‘Not immediately,’ Enid said in answer to the wild look the girl sent around the room.

Violet stood and stuffed her sewing into a basket and flung it over a stout arm. Small hospital indeed! And not immediately! But she had time only to pout in Enid’s direction, for there was the rumble of the mail car in the distance and she had to be on the roadside to hail it for a ride home. She tossed her head huffily to the Honeysuckle doorway filled with Enid and Una as she climbed into the car.

Henry’s young wife went off too before Enid and Una had left the doorway. She took the same vague direction Henry had taken earlier, on the pretext of looking at steers in a far paddock. She came upon him prodding with a stick at the edge of a dam and when he saw her with the side of his face, he dropped the stick and picked up some stones and sent them skimming across the water.

‘Watch this one,’ he said as the girl dropped onto a log, grateful that her presence was known to him. The child thudded and tumbled inside her and she steadied it with one hand and put the other on the space beside her, wishing for him to come and join her. But he turned from the dam after a while and picked up his coat from a stump, checking that his tobacco had not fallen from a pocket and, putting the coat on, lowered his head and walked rapidly off.

She thought he might be having a game with her, that he might turn and run back, but he went on, growing smaller as he went over the first rise, and she saw only his head bobbing
in the hollow as if swimming, and he sailed up the next hill like someone clinging to the crest of a wave. The grass all around him was like a sea too, a whitish waving sea soon to swallow him completely.

She put her hand on her stomach for comfort.

‘He will be different when the baby comes,’ she whispered. ‘I know he will.’