



The Women in Black: Text Classics

By Madeleine St John

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The Women in Black: Text Classics By Madeleine St John

Written by a superb novelist of contemporary manners, *The Women in Black* is a fairytale which illuminates the extraordinariness of ordinary lives.

The women in black are run off their feet, what with the Christmas rush and the summer sales that follow. But it's Sydney in the 1950s, and there's still just enough time left on a hot and frantic day to dream and scheme...By the time the last marked-down frock has been sold, most of the staff of the Ladies' Cocktail section at F. G. Goode's have been launched into slightly different careers.

With the lightest touch and the most tender of comic instincts, Madeleine St John conjures a vanished summer of innocence. *The Women in Black*, introduced by Bruce Beresford, is a great novel, a lost Australian classic.

Madeleine St John was born in Sydney in 1941. She studied Arts at Sydney University, where her contemporaries included Bruce Beresford, Germaine Greer, Clive James and Robert Hughes. In 1993, St John published her first novel, *The Women in Black*, the only book she set in Australia. Her third novel, *The Essence of the Thing* (1997), was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

Bruce Beresford is one of Australia's best known film and opera directors. His films include *The Getting of Wisdom*, *Driving Miss Daisy* and *Breaker Morant*.

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'Seductive, hilarious, brilliantly observed, this novel shimmers with wit and tenderness.' Helen Garner

'An exceptional writer. Those of us who knew her at Sydney University back in the late 1950s are still trying to forgive ourselves that we never guessed what she would become.' Clive James

'A knockout - ironic, sharp, alive, and then you're stopped in your tracks by the warmth of her insights.' Joan London

'A little gem...shot through with old-fashioned innocence and sly humour.' *Vogue*

'A highly sophisticated work, full of funny, sharp and subtle observations...a

small masterpiece.' *Sunday Times*(UK)

'There is something special about...*The Women in Black*. St John's tone is...a joy: brisk, perfectly managed and, in its disdain for clutter, oddly life-affirming. She casts an airy spell with the deftness of her prose, which moves gracefully, swiftly and with perfect manners...[St John] conjures a Sydney on the cusp of modern promise; a place where her characters can meet the future with a bright face and step out of the past like an old dress, where limits can be lightly shaken off.'

Delia Falconer, *Australian*

'An excellent read.' *Starts at 60*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Although its title suggests mystery and allure, this wry debut instead focuses on the loneliness and ennui of three department store employees. These women, identically attired in black dresses that serve as uniforms, work in the Ladies' Frocks Department at Goode's, a store in Sydney, Australia. Each suffers from long-standing unhappiness revolving one way or another around the opposite sex: Patty is married to "a bastard of the standard-issue variety, neither cruel nor violent, merely insensitive and inarticulate"; Fay has tired of wild parties and longs to settle down with a decent man; Lisa--who keeps her given name, Lesley, secret from the Goode's set--is an intellectually brilliant but mousy teenager whose father believes that women shouldn't attend college. During the frenzied Christmas shopping season, each saleswoman indirectly confronts her problem and attains contentment. Meanwhile, a subplot concerning several glamorous Eastern European emigres adds a certain underground charm. St . John writes in a mannerly, witty style and in spite of her characters' stereotypical girlishness (i.e., shallow infatuations with pretty "frocks" and "eligible bachelors"), an essentially lighthearted tone sustains this tale.

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About the Author

No Bio

No Bio

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Lacey:

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always try and and must have the extra time or they will get lot of stress from both daily life and work. So , whenever we ask do people have time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not really a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity do you have when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is The Women in Black: Text Classics.

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