



The Women in Black (Text Classics)

Madeleine St John

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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

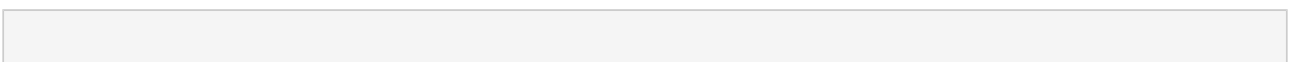
'An exceptional writer. Those of us who knew her at Sydney University back in the late 1950s are still trying to forgive ourselves that we never guessed what she would become.' Clive James

'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*



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