Tess of the d'Urbervilles

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS HARDY

Thomas Hardy was raised in a small, rural village in Dorset. His father was a stonemason and his mother educated Hardy until age eight. His family was too poor to pay for university, so Hardy became an architect's apprentice until he decided to focus on writing. His stories are generally set in the Dorset area. In 1874 he married Emma Gifford, and her death in 1912 had a profound effect on him. In 1914 he married his secretary, Florence Dugdale. Hardy's first few novels were unsuccessful, and even his later works were controversial and often censored. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* drew such an outcry for their sexual frankness and social criticism that Hardy stopped writing fiction, focusing instead on his poetry. He is best known for *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*. He died in 1928, at the age of eighty-seven.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is set in England in the first part of the Long Depression (1873-1879), so in general life is especially hard for the poor characters of the book. English society was also going through some major changes during this time. Most important for the novel are the shift from an agricultural to an industrial culture, which is emphasized in the novel as a tension between nature and modernity, and the decline of the old aristocracy. Old names like "d'Urberville" didn't mean much in terms of power anymore, except as status symbols that could be purchased by the newly wealthy, like the Stokes. The sexual morality of the day was also very conservative, a fact that made *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented* seem that much more shocking to Hardy's critics.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Hardy is considered a Victorian Realist like George Eliot, the author of *Middlemarch*, but he was also influenced by the Romantic poetry of William Wordsworth and the social critiques of Charles Dickens, author of *Oliver Twist* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. Hardy's style prefigures Modernist works like Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and his writing influenced D. H. Lawrence, especially his books *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*
- **When Written:** 1887-1891
- **Where Written:** Dorchester, England
- **When Published:** 1891
- **Literary Period:** Victorian Realism
- **Genre:** Realist Fiction
- **Setting:** Southwest England, the fictional county of Wessex
- **Climax:** Tess murders Alec and flees with Angel
- **Antagonist:** Alec d'Urberville, society in general
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient, but generally follows Tess

EXTRA CREDIT

Wessex. Hardy named his fictional "Wessex County" after the Anglo-Saxon kingdom that existed in southwest England in medieval times. Since his resurrection of the name, it has become a popular modern term to describe the region, and there is now even a Wessex Regionalist political party.

Graphic. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was first published in a serialized, censored version in the illustrated newspaper *The Graphic*. No other publishers would take it because of the novel's sexual themes.

PLOT SUMMARY

Tess Durbeyfield lives in the rural village of Marlott in southwest England. She first appears performing the May-Day dance, where she exchanges a meaningful glance with a young man named Angel Clare. Tess's family is very poor, but her father learns that he is descended from the d'Urbervilles, one of the oldest, noblest families in England. Although the d'Urbervilles have no wealth or power anymore, the Durbeyfields feel that this will improve their fortunes. When Tess mistakenly causes the death of **Prince**, the family's horse, she feels guilty enough to try and "claim kin" from some wealthy d'Urbervilles nearby, unaware that they aren't actually related.

Alec, the libertine son of old, blind, Mrs. d'Urberville, becomes infatuated with Tess and repeatedly tries to seduce her, but she rebuffs his advances. He gives her a job tending the fowls, and Tess feels that she can't refuse for her family's sake. One night after a dance in the local town Alec tricks Tess into accepting a ride home with him. He gets lost in the woods and leaves to find the path. When he returns he finds Tess asleep, and he rapes her.

Tess then returns to Marlott, and later gives birth to Alec's child. She avoids the other townspeople out of shame. Her baby

soon gets sick, and Tess worries about his soul. She baptizes him herself, and names him Sorrow before he dies.

After a while Tess gets worn down by her community's judgment and decides to look for work elsewhere. She becomes a milkmaid at Talbothays dairy farm, and enjoys a time of contentment. She befriends three other girls, Izz, Retty, and Marian, and discovers that the man from the May-Day dance, Angel Clare, is also working there. He is the son of a parson, but is at Talbothays to learn about farming methods. All four women soon fall in love with him, but he chooses Tess and they begin a period of courtship. Angel asks her to marry him, but Tess refuses, feeling that she is not worthy of marriage. She is afraid to tell him the details of her past.

Angel returns home briefly and finds that his brothers, who are becoming parsons or deans, have grown more narrow-minded and disapproving. Strengthened in his convictions, he goes back and renews his proposal to Tess. She finally accepts, but is in constant turmoil. On their wedding night Angel admits that he had an affair with a woman in London, so Tess feels able to tell the truth about Alec. Angel is shocked and unforgiving, and he becomes distraught thinking of what his family and society would say if they found out. He gives Tess some money and leaves to clear his mind. He decides to seek his fortunes in **Brazil**, and asks Tess to not follow him.

Tess's money soon runs out and she feels ever more guilty and depressed. She works at a bleak starveacre farm with Marian, who has started drinking since Angel rejected her. Tess randomly meets Alec d'Urberville again, but now he has become an evangelical preacher, converted by Angel's father. When he sees Tess he becomes enamored once more, and quickly gives up Christianity to try and seduce her. Tess goes home to care for her mother, but soon afterward her father dies. The family is then evicted, and Alec offers to help them if Tess will return to him.

Meanwhile Angel, who has grown sick in Brazil, decides to come home and forgive Tess. When he finally finds her she is in a fancy boardinghouse, and she says it is too late for her, she has relented to Alec. Angel leaves, stricken, and Tess argues with Alec, ultimately stabbing him to death. Tess and Angel then escape together, with Angel unsure if Tess actually committed murder.

They hide in an empty mansion and have a few happy days, but then move on. One night they stop at Stonehenge, and Tess falls asleep on a monolith. At dawn the police arrest her. Later Angel and Tess's sister, Liza-Lu, hold hands and watch the black flag, the sign that Tess has been executed.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Tess Durbeyfield – The protagonist of the novel, an attractive young woman from the rural village of Marlott. Her family is poor, but she has been educated and seems to stand out from other girls. She has a discerning intelligence and independent spirit, and is very loyal to her family and Angel. Her misfortunes are hardly ever of her own doing, but her innocence, naivety, and unrealistic ideals sometimes increase her suffering. She is also a very tempting figure for the men of the novel, often to her detriment. Throughout the book she is portrayed as a symbol of rural innocence, closeness to Nature, and ancient paganism, but ultimately the author's sympathy is for Tess as an individual woman, not just as a representative ideal.

Alec d'Urberville – The principle antagonist of the novel, the handsome, libertine son of the wealthy d'Urberville-Stokes. He is fickle and impetuous by nature, but his infatuation with Tess seems more lasting than his feelings for other girls. His rape of Tess is the beginning of her misfortunes and the tragic undercurrent of the entire novel. Alec briefly takes up religion and becomes a preacher, but he discards his faith when he sees Tess again.

Angel Clare – The intelligent, idealistic son of the parson James Clare. He rejects his father's and brothers' profession to instead study agriculture, and remains skeptical of religion. Tess, Izz, Retty, and Marian all fall in love with him at Talbothays, but he chooses Tess. He loves an idealized, "child of nature" version of Tess, however, and is shocked to learn about her past sexual experiences (even if they were done to her rather than of her own volition). Angel cares more than he would like about the approval of his family and society, and he rejects Tess despite his own sexual transgressions in his past.

John Durbeyfield – Tess's father, a peddler with a bad heart condition and a love of alcohol. The novel begins with Durbeyfield learning that he is the last descendent of the ancient d'Urberville family. The news immediately goes to his head and he acts entitled for the rest of the book. He hopes to profit from his ancestry, and sends Tess off to connect with the wealthy d'Urberville-Stokes, which leads to her many misfortunes.

Joan Durbeyfield – Tess's mother, a housewife with many children and responsibilities. She loves to sing and is very superstitious, often consulting her book the *Compleat Fortune-Teller*. She likes to make matches for Tess and first proposes the visit to the d'Urberville-Stokes. Joan maintains a sense of cheerful fatalism throughout the novel and takes her family's many misfortunes in stride.

Izz Huett – One of the Talbothays dairymaids who befriends Tess and falls in love with Angel. She is heartbroken when Angel rejects her, but never grows bitter towards Tess. When Angel is leaving for **Brazil** he briefly asks Izz to accompany him. Later she and Marian write him a letter appealing on Tess's behalf.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Reverend James Clare – Angel's father, a parson with a very strict moral code and intense religious fervor. He can be severe but is also extremely charitable, especially towards hopeless cases, and he manages to convert even Alec d'Urberville with his patience and fortitude.

Marian – Another of the Talbothays women who loves Angel. Marian responds to his rejection by turning to alcohol. She later gets Tess her job at Flintcomb-Ash.

Retty Priddle – The third of Tess's Talbothays friends. Retty is also descended from an ancient, noble family, but they, like the d'Urbervilles, have lost all power and wealth. Retty reacts to Angel's rejection by attempting suicide and then leaving the farm.

Mrs. Clare – Angel's mother, a pious woman who is also concerned with upholding social conventions.

Eliza Louisa Durbeyfield – "Liza-Lu," Tess's younger sister. Tess describes her to Angel as "all the best of me without the bad of me" and asks him to marry her once she is dead.

Abraham Durbeyfield – Tess's inquisitive younger brother. She sends him to fetch their parents from Rolliver's, and later asks him to accompany her on her trip to the Casterbridge market.

Mrs. d'Urberville – Alec's mother, a blind, eccentric old woman who owns a huge estate but spends most of her time tending to her birds. She disapproves of her son's behavior but cannot control him.

Sorrow – Tess's baby from Alec. He only lives a few weeks, and Tess has to baptize and bury him herself.

Felix Clare – One of Angel's brothers, the curate of a nearby town who follows all the latest fashions in dress and doctrine.

Cuthbert Clare – Angel's other brother, a Fellow and Dean of Cambridge University, also unoriginal in his beliefs.

Mercy Chant – The pious woman that the Clares hope Angel will marry. Cuthbert ends up marrying her instead.

Dairyman Richard Crick – The master-dairyman of Talbothays farm. A kind employer who is fond of telling rambling, humorous stories.

Farmer Groby – A man who makes a reference to Tess's past and is struck by Angel. Later he employs Tess at Flintcomb-Ash, but remains an antagonistic character.

Car Darch – "The Queen of Spades," a girl from Trantridge who was one of Alec's favorites before Tess.

Parson Tringham – The man who first discovers that the Durbeyfields are related to the d'Urbervilles. His revelation to John Durbeyfield on the road begins the plot of the novel.

Mrs. Brooks – Landlady of "The Herons" boarding house, who spies on Tess and Alec arguing and then raises the alarm when she sees a bloodstain spreading across her ceiling.

Mrs. Crick – Dairyman Crick's wife, who makes Angel sit at a separate table from the rest of the workers because of his gentility.

Jack Dollop – An acquaintance of Dairyman Crick's and a character in his stories, whose escapades relate coincidentally with Tess's life.

Jonathon – a worker at Talbothays.

Simon Stoke – The ancestor of Alec d'Urberville, who generated the family's wealth as a merchant and changed the family name from Stoke to d'Urberville (somewhat randomly picking d'Urberville) as a way to give his new-money wealth a sense of old-money history.

Hope – A younger sister of Tess.

Modesty – A younger sister of Tess.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

INJUSTICE AND FATE

The cruel hand of fate hangs over all the characters and actions of the novel, as Tess Durbeyfield's story is basically defined by the bad things that happen to her. Thomas Hardy himself, as the author of the novel, obviously causes the many unfair coincidences and plot twists that beset Tess, but as narrator he also manages to appear as her only advocate against an unjust world. Tess's hardships are described as mere sport for the "President of the Immortals," which contrasts with the Christian idea of a God who has a benevolent plan for everyone, and connects with the notes of paganism throughout the novel. Hardy points out and emphasizes the multiple unhappy coincidences that take place, like Tess overhearing Angel's brothers instead of meeting his father. The novel basically keeps asking the age-old question "why do bad things happen to good people?" Hardy even muses over the possibility that Tess's sufferings are a punishment for her ancestors' crimes, or else that some murderous strain is in her blood, foreshadowed by the **d'Urberville coach**.

The "justice" meted out by the society around Tess is just as cruel as the "President of the Immortals." Both her community and Angel condemn Tess for her rape, which was not her sin but Alec's. She is seen as someone to be criticized and cast aside because of a terrible thing done *to* her, rather than something she did herself. Her final execution emphasizes the feeling that society, circumstance, and some external force, whether Thomas Hardy or a god, have been working against her the whole time.

NATURE AND MODERNITY

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is set in both a time and place of societal transition from the agricultural to the industrial. The rural English towns and farm women often represent Hardy's idea of Nature, while machines and upper class men are associated with the modernizing forces of industrialization. Many of the descriptions and situations of the novel focus on the way that the characters and society are being separated from a more ancient lifestyle, "the ache of modernity" that Hardy felt as a loss of innocence.

The plot sets Tess, who is associated with purity, fertility, unfallen Eve (i.e. Eve as she was in the Garden of Eden), and innocent paganism against the judgmental world of contemporary society. The farming machines are described with ominous imagery that contrasts sharply with the Eden-like Froom Valley. Alec and Angel, who are both well-educated and ranked socially higher than Tess, act as despoiling and condemning influences upon her rural innocence. **Prince** the farm horse is gored to death by a modern mail cart, and the dairy workers have to water down the milk so the townspeople can drink it without getting sick. The feeling throughout is of nostalgia for an idealized past; a kind of innocence that has been lost along with the coming of the modern age.

SOCIAL CRITICISM

As in many of his other works, Thomas Hardy used *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as a vessel for his criticisms of English Victorian society of the late 19th century. The novel's largest critique is aimed at the sexual double standard, with all the extremities and misfortunes of Tess's life highlighting the unfairness of her treatment. Society condemns her as an unclean woman because she was raped, while Angel's premarital affair is barely mentioned. Angel himself rejects Tess largely based on what his community and family would think if they discovered her past. Hardy saw many of the conventions of the Victorian age as oppressive to the individual, and to women in particular, and in Tess's case the arbitrary rules of society literally ruin her life.

Even the title of the novel challenges convention. Because it was traditional at the time to see Tess as an "impure woman," the title's addendum "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented" immediately reveals the author as his protagonist's defender against condemnation. By delving so deeply into Tess's sympathetic interior life and the intricate history of her misfortunes, Hardy makes society's disapproval of her seem that much more unjust.

There is also a satirical thread running through the novel's social commentary. The emphasis on ancient names is played to absurdity with John Durbeyfield's sudden pretensions upon learning of his ancestry, and the newly rich Stoke family adding "d'Urberville" to their name just to seem more magnificent.

PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Thomas Hardy struggled with his own religious beliefs, and that struggle comes through in his work. He idealized the paganism of the past but was also attached to his family's Christianity, and generally he accepted some sort of supernatural being that controlled fate. Tess herself is usually portrayed as an embodiment of that pagan innocence, a sort of English Nature goddess. She first appears performing the fertility ritual of May-Day, then bedecked in flowers from Alec, whistling to Mrs. d'Urberville's birds, and mercifully killing the wounded pheasants. Angel describes her as a "new-sprung child of nature" and compares her to mythical women like Eve, Artemis, and Demeter. There is another side of Tess's "divinity" as well, however: the role of sacrificial victim, which is a figure associated with both paganism and Christianity. Like Jesus, Tess is punished for the sins of another, assuming the weight of guilt for Alec's crime. When the police finally come to arrest her for murder, she is lying asleep at Stonehenge like a sacrifice on an altar. Stonehenge was thought at Hardy's time to be a heathen temple.

The Christian end of the spectrum is particularly associated with the Clare family and Alec d'Urberville. Each character seems to have a different form and expression of faith, and Hardy critiques them all with empathy from his own religious wrestling. Most of his respect goes to the intense but charitable Mr. Clare, while Alec's conversion is depicted more as a product of his fickle thrill-seeking than any deep emotion, and the conformist Clare brothers are mocked for blindly following every fashionable doctrine. Angel's skepticism and Tess's vague beliefs take the most prominence, and neither moves much past Hardy's own state of doubt.

WOMEN

Hardy muses a lot about Tess's status as a woman and the various roles women assume in society. Tess often plays the part of a passive victim, falling asleep and inadvertently killing **Prince**, falling asleep before her rape, and falling asleep at Stonehenge where she is arrested. She and many of the other female characters also act as symbols of fertility, nature, and purity. They are linked with the lushness of Talbothays and the bleakness of Flintomb-Ash, as well the fertility ritual of May-Day. Hardy also places a lot of emphasis on the power of men over women, in terms of both society and strength. Alec obviously dominates Tess in many terrible ways, but Angel also wields power over the women at the dairy, driving Retty and Marian to a suicide attempt and alcoholism. Tess finally assumes the role of an active agent in her own life when she writes angrily to Angel, and her final murder of Alec takes it to the extreme, underscoring Hardy's critique of the oppression of women in Victorian society. Tess is only able to actively change her life and escape her male

oppressor by murdering him, which then leads to her own execution. There is no place for a woman in her position to escape.

But while Tess and the other female characters represent many things in the novel, Hardy ultimately celebrates the individual woman over a symbolic whole. Tess is not an "everywoman" or a symbol of fertility, passivity, or oppression, but a unique individual. Angel's relationship with Tess shows this tension between idealized image and living reality. He falls in love with *his* version of Tess, which is the Nature goddess and symbol of innocence, but when the real Tess reveals her troubled humanity and becomes truly alive for him, Angel rejects her. For Hardy, however, Tess remains both a symbol of many things and an individual soul, and it is because of this that she is so successful and sympathetic as a character.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

PRINCE THE HORSE

Prince is the Durbeyfield family horse, and their principal means of livelihood. When Tess accidentally causes his death, she feels guilty enough to go work for the d'Urbervilles, which begins the action of the story. Prince acts as a symbol of the d'Urberville family, in that he has a noble name but is reduced to menial labor to survive. His death is also a symbol of the theme of Nature versus modernity, as Prince the rural horse is gored to death by a modern mail cart. The death by stabbing and his blood spreading over Tess's white dress foreshadows Alec's murder as well.

SEAL AND SPOON

The seal and the spoon with the d'Urberville crest are the only things the Durbeyfields have left from their noble heritage. The smallness and uselessness of the items is a symbol of how the d'Urberville name means nothing anymore in terms of real wealth or influence. Tess thinks angrily of them as essentially causing her misfortunes by proving her kinship to the wealthy d'Urbervilles. They are also associated with the old tombs of the d'Urberville knights, which again seem grand but are in effect worthless, full of nothing but the dead.

BRAZIL

Brazil, where Angel goes to seek his fortunes after rejecting Tess, is a symbol of Angel's idealized vision of the world. Brazil is an exotic, far-off fantasy land to the 19th century English characters, and Angel thinks of it as an unspoiled place to practice his agricultural skills. When he actually gets there, however, he becomes sick and weak, and all his farming endeavors fail. Angel's experience in Brazil is symbolic of his relationship with Tess; it is romanticized and idealized, but then the stark reality appears and destroys his fantasy.

THE D'URBERVILLE COACH

The d'Urberville coach is an old legend of the family which Angel mentions and Alec later explains to Tess. It concerns some ancient d'Urberville who abducted a beautiful woman and then inadvertently killed her when she tried to escape his coach. Whenever a d'Urberville hears the sound of an invisible coach it is supposed to be a bad omen, or even to forebode that murder is about to be committed. The coach is a symbol of foreshadowing and the theme of fate that looms over all the characters in the novel. Tess cannot escape the cruel things that happen to her, no matter how "pure" she remains at heart. The coach also symbolizes the ancient idea of being punished for one's ancestors. This is pointed out by the narrator when the Durbeyfields are evicted from their home, perhaps because of the many houses the old d'Urbervilles had taken from peasants. Tess's murder of Alec is also associated with this legend, as the symbol of the fateful coach implies both that she is the woman capture in Alec's "coach" and that, as a d'Urberville she always had an inescapable murderous strain in her blood.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* published in 2003.

Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ Don't you really know, Durbeyfield, that you are the lineal representative of the ancient and knightly family of the d'Urbervilles, who derive their descent from Sir Pagan d'Urberville, that renowned knight who came from Normandy with William the Conqueror, as appears by Battle Abbey Roll?

Related Characters: Parson Tringham (speaker), John Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 7-8

Explanation and Analysis

In the first chapter of the novel, a religious figure, Parson Tringham, gives John Durbeyfield the information that sets the remainder of the novel in motion. Parson Tringham believes that John and his family are descendants of the famed d'Urberville family, one of the oldest and most prestigious in the area. The d'Urbervilles have something more important than money: they have history and cultural capital, the respect and elite status that come with having lived in England for hundreds of years.

It just so happens that the Parson's remarks will eventually mislead the Durbeyfields--Tess Durbeyfield will go to a nearby family of d'Urbervilles, unaware that they've just adopted the surname to *seem* prestigious. In a different kind of book, the Parson's speech would set in a motion a kind of Victorian "Cinderella story," in which John and his family rise to the top of society by reclaiming their family connection. But in this novel (as is common in Hardy's work), such a quest only leads to doom. John's family wants to rise in society, but they won't do so by the strength of their name.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ The forests have departed, but some old customs of their shades remain. Many, however, linger only in a metamorphosed or disguised form. The May-Day dance, for instance, was to be discerned on the afternoon under notice, in the guise of the club revel, or “club-walking,” as it was there called.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Hardy introduces us to an old English custom--the May-Day dance. Mayday is one of the oldest English holidays, dating back to pre-Christian times--it's often seen as a celebration of fertility and feminine life force. In Tess's world, the literal forests have been cut back, and the pagans were long since driven out or converted, but the people continue to celebrate May-Day, albeit in a much different form. This suggests that even in the modern era, people hold onto some of their cultural roots--and that nature and paganism can never totally be snuffed out.

The passage further suggests a connection between England's ancestral past and its present. England looks much different than it did centuries ago--factories instead of forests--but through its culture, certain aspects of the "merry old" ways survive. It's women like Tess, we'll see, who really preserve England's past in their very existence.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ Well, Tess ought to go to this other member of our family. She'd be sure to win the lady – Tess would; and likely enough ‘twould lead to some noble gentleman marrying her. In short, I know it.

Related Characters: Joan Durbeyfield (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield, Mrs. d'Urberville

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Joan Durbeyfield, Tess's mother, suggests that the family send Tess to the d'Urbervilles in search of work, Joan is sure that Tess, with her charm and vitality, will be able to convince the d'Urberville family that she's one of them, and might even be able to succeed in marrying one of them, ensuring the survival and prosperity of her own family for years to come.

Joan's plan is implausible for a number of reasons--and yet it tells us a lot about her personality, and about English society. There's no indication that a marriage to one of the supposed d'Urbervilles would be profitable in any literal sense, since the *real*d'Urbervilles have no money, and indeed have all died off (as we later learn). The practical Joan also seems more concerned with the ascendance of her own family than with her daughter's personal happiness, though she has the best of intentions; in a way, she's to blame for Tess's misfortune in the coming years. Another layer of irony is that the supposedly old and prestigious d'Urbervilles that Tess will eventually meet aren't really d'Urbervilles at all--they've just adopted the surname to seem more impressive. And thus Tess slips into her tragic fate because of a case of mistaken identity.

❝ The morning mail-cart, with its two noiseless wheels, speeding along these lanes like an arrow, as it always did, had driven into her slow and unlighted equipage. The pointed shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword, and from the wound his life's blood was spouting in a stream, and falling with a hiss into the road. In her despair Tess sprang forward and put her hand upon the hole, with the only result that she became splashed from face to skirt with the crimson drops.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 33

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tess's family horse, Prince, is killed by the shaft of a mail-cart--a highly symbolic tableau. Prince is a symbol of the "old England"--the England of forests, May-Day, nature, etc. The mail-cart, on the other hand, represents industrialization in all its aspects: its insensitivity to people and animals, its cruel efficiency, etc. Thus, for the cart to kill Tess's horse symbolizes the rise of industrialization during the period when the novel is set. Furthermore, the highly sexualized language of the passage might be said to represent the terrors of sex and masculinity. Tess is a young, virginal girl, unaccustomed to interactions with men. Here, the mail-cart seems like a hyper-masculinized figure, piercing the horse with its phallic shaft. Tess sees the horse's death as a nightmarish spectacle, perhaps foreshadowing her later experience with sexuality as violence.

Chapter 5 Quotes

He watched her pretty and unconscious munching through the skeins of smoke that pervaded the tent, and Tess Durbeyfield did not divine, as she innocently looked down at the roses in her bosom, that there behind the blue narcotic haze was potentially the “tragic mischief” of her drama – one who stood to be the blood-red ray in the spectrum of her young life.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield, Alec d'Urberville

Related Themes:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tess is introduced to Alec d'Urberville, one of the main characters of the novel--and, perhaps more than anyone else, the architect of Tess's undoing. Tess sits in a tent with Alec, who's contemplating kissing her. Alec and Tess are equally ignorant of the events their meeting will set in motion: because of their encounter in the tent, Tess's life will be ruined forever.

The tableau described in the passage is notable for contrasting the virginal, natural innocence of Tess's appearance ("roses in her bosom") with Alec's more mature and "modern" tendencies, perhaps symbolized by the "narcotic" smoke in his tent. Alec is like poison for Tess, corrupting her innocence. The passage is also a great example of the narrator's sad, fated tone: he knows exactly what's going to happen to Tess, yet he's powerless to stop it.

Chapter 8 Quotes

He was inexorable, and she sat still, and d'Urberville gave her the kiss of mastery.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield, Alec d'Urberville

Related Themes:

Page Number: 56

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Alec "seduces" Tess. Alec is a confident, spoiled young man, used to getting what he wants. He thinks of Tess as a weak, poor, unsure girl--an easy conquest, particularly because both her gender and her class prevent her from achieving any kind of agency against the wealthy male Alec. Hardy conveys Alec's social power and intimidating persona with phrases like "inexorable" and "kiss of mastery."

The kiss of mastery that Alec delivers to Tess might as well be a death-blow, since it prefigures the act of rape to come. Alec will impregnate Tess, setting in motion the events of the novel and eventually leading to Tess's arrest and death. There's a sense of fated-ness to the entire scene: one moment of kissing between Tess and Alec will lead to a lifetime of tragedy.

“It was to be.” There lay the pity of it. An immeasurable social chasm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her mother's door to try her fortune at Trantridge poultry-farm.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

In this climactic chapter, Alec rapes Tess. The narrator sadly

tries to understand how such a horrible tragedy could have happened--where was it written that a young, innocent girl like Tess would have her life ruined by a man like Alec? The narrator tries to find an explanation, but eventually settles on a fatalistic non-explanation, epitomized by the country people's phrase, "It was to be."

The novel traffics in fate, never more overtly than in this scene: there's a strong sense that everything that happens to Tess has been planned, as if by some indifferent god. Like a Greek tragedy, the universe seems to be punishing Tess for trying to rise above her station by marrying a d'Urberville. And yet even here, Tess is punished unjustly, since it was her family who forced her to go to the d'Urbervilles. There seems to be no justice in the universe, just an indifferent, meaningless fate--and perhaps that's Hardy's point.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ She did not look like Sissy to them now, but as a being large, towering, and awful – a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 95

Explanation and Analysis

Months have now passed since Alec raped Tess. Tess has given birth to a child, and now the child is dying. She decides to baptize him, hoping to save him from Hell if he should die. In this scene Tess baptizes the child herself, having been refused by her father (who was supposed to summon a parson), and in the candlelight she seems to truly assume the role of a priestess or divine figure. Her younger siblings watch her, and Tess appears suddenly transfigured, as if becoming a kind of god, a being wholly different from themselves.

Hardy often portrays Tess as a kind of "pagan goddess," or a symbol of innocence and nature, and yet he also contrasts this idea with her individual humanity and personhood. What makes Tess such a fascinating character is that she is both very human and somehow otherworldly or symbolic.

Chapter 18 Quotes

❝ What a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that milkmaid is!

Related Characters: Angel Clare (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, we see how Angel Clare sees Tess. He's met Tess before, but it's only here that he really starts to notice her. Although Tess has already had her child and become a soberer, more mature young woman, Angel thinks of her as "fresh and virginal"--he's blind to Tess's past, and assumes that she's entirely innocent. Indeed, he sees her more as an idea or symbol than as a real person.

Angel's interest in Tess suggests a couple things: first, that instead of worshipping a Christian God, he's attracted to a more pagan, mysterious Nature-God, as embodied by Tess. Second, it's crucial to notice that Angel can't see Tess's inner tragedy: although she's already been raped and given birth to a child, Angel doesn't know about it. The reader's knowledge of Tess's past versus Angel's ignorance, creates an ironic tension that's central to the fated, inevitable tone of the novel: we just know that Angel's going to find out about Tess sooner or later.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ He was surprised to find this young woman – who though but a milkmaid had just that touch of rarity about her which might make her the envied of her housemates – shaping such sad imaginings. She was expressing in her own native phrases… feelings which might almost have been called those of the age – the ache of modernism.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield, Angel Clare

Related Themes:

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

As Angel gets to know Tess better, he comes to realize that she isn't as simple as he'd assumed. Here, Tess tells Angel something about her experience: when she's outside, she has no fears, but indoors, she's frightened. Moreover, she often feels depressed and thinks that the future is fated to be tragic or meaningless. Angel is amazed that Tess can be so pensive and melancholy--he'd thought of her as the stereotypical, cheerful milkmaid.

The passage is very important insofar as it ties Tess's feeling to the overall trends in British society. Tess embraces wide open spaces--the natural vistas that industrialization is gradually destroying. By contrast, she's afraid when she's inside, because closed doors symbolize the claustrophobic "looming" of civilization. Note also that it's Angel, not Tess, who phrases her melancholy as the "ache of modernism." It's Tess who feels the ache, but Angel who articulates it, and ties it in with general social trends. Angel assumes that he is more intelligent and experienced than Tess, but she actually *feels*what he can only observe.

❝ Because what's the use of learning that I am one of a long row only – finding out that there is set down in some old book somebody just like me, and to know that I shall only act her part; making me sad, that's all.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

Here Tess is again talking with Angel Clare about her situation. Tess admits that she feels ignorant and stupid compared to the educated Angel, and Angel tries to comfort Tess by offering to teach her history. Tess demurs, however, and explains that she tries to avoid history altogether: there's no comfort for her in knowing that she comes from a "long line" of ancestors. To accept such an idea would be to accept that, some time in the past, there was a person just like her, whose destiny Tess is just replaying. Furthermore, learning more about the past just makes her feel like her own fate is predetermined and unchangeable.

The passage is counterintuitive because Tess, the embodiment of both the life-force of the English natural world and the lost history of ancient aristocracy, often seemed to symbolize England's nostalgic past. And yet Tess doesn't like to think of herself as a "symbol" of anything: she heroically struggles to be free of fate and destiny (even as it becomes increasingly clear to us that she's fated to have a short, tragic life). The passage also reminds us that Tess doesn't care at all about her ancestry or her relationship to the d'Urbervilles--which makes the fact that her family forced her to visit the d'Urbervilles and claim kinship all the more tragic.

Chapter 24 Quotes

❝ Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Froom Vale, at the season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fermentation, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield, Angel Clare

Related Themes:

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Hardy describes the yearly rituals of harvesting and fermenting. The people of the countryside are picking their crops and fermenting them to produce alcohol and other products. It is, in short, a season of growing and maturation. By the same token, Hardy argues, Tess and Angel's feelings for one another are growing stronger and more lively--it's inevitable, in such a time, that they'd ultimately give in to their desire for one another.

The passage uses extremely vivid, sexual language--"oozing," "warm," "hiss," etc.--to convey the extent of Tess and Angel's growing romance. The narrator again creates a sense of fatedness, suggesting that Tess and Angle have no choice but to fall in love. And yet here, the fatedness that the narrator conveys seems cheerier and more optimistic, rather than tragic. If Tess and Angel's relationship only existed within the world of the fertile Froom Vale (apart from the darkness of the Chase and the d'Urberville's world) all might have ended happily, but because of external forces and Tess's own past, the positive power of nature and love is tragically corrupted.

Chapter 31 Quotes

❝ Distinction does not consist in the facile use of a contemptible set of conventions, but in being numbered among those who are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report – as you are, my Tess.

Related Characters: Angel Clare (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Angel and Tess are contemplating their possible future together. Angel is enamored with Tess, and

yet Tess insists that she's no match for an educated, intelligent man like Angel. Angel tries to reassure Tess by saying that her natural beauty and instinct is far superior to any training or social convention. In other words, Tess might lack certain manners or knowledge of the rules, but manners and rules are overrated, anyway. (He also assumes that her claims of being less moral than he is are just the qualms of the truly innocent.)

Angel's comments illustrate his free-thinking tendencies, and also his rather condescending view of Tess and life in general. Although he was raised in a severe, religious household, Angel has come to doubt religion altogether. He doesn't have much respect for people who learn the rules; he's more attracted to those like Tess who embody a natural purity and "life force" within them (or at least Angel thinks they do). Angel's beliefs are, perhaps, typical of 19th century Romantics who distrusted order and convention and favored instinct--and thus Hardy acknowledges the power of this worldview while also critiquing it as naive and sometimes dehumanizing.

Chapter 32 Quotes

"I don't quite feel easy," she said to herself. "All this good fortune may be scourged out of me afterwards by a lot of ill. That's how Heaven mostly does."

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 205

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tess--preparing for a life with Angel Clare--expresses her reluctance to live with Angel. Tess loves Angel, but she senses that her past will come back to haunt her, and that she's not fated to be happy. As she explains here, she thinks that her happiness and good fortune now will eventually give way to even greater sadness and misery later on. In other words, what goes up must come down.

Tess's view of fate is harsh and pessimistic--she seems to think that "Heaven," or fate, generally tends to punish people more than it rewards them. She thinks in the terms of a Greek tragedy, with the protagonist's glory causing his downfall by the end of the play. And she's right, at least within the world of the novel (and much of Hardy's work). Tess seems to sense her fate--she seems to intuit that she isn't ever destined for lasting happiness.

Chapter 33 Quotes

"O my love, why do I love you so!" she whispered there alone; "for she you love is not my real self, but one in my image; the one I might have been!"

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 214

Explanation and Analysis

As Tess and Angel prepare to settle down together, Tess worries that her past will destroy her relationship with Angel. Tess loves Angel, but she's frightened that Angel doesn't really love her at all--instead, he loves an idealized version of her. Angel thinks of Tess as a beautiful, virginal girl, full of melancholy, lovely thoughts. Tess, however, knows that she's not as innocent or pure as Angel thinks her to be.

By modern standards, it's fair to say that Tess has been overcome with socially-imposed guilt and self-hatred. Alec is responsible for raping her and ruining her life, but Tess (and all of society around her) despises herself for havingbeen raped by Alec. She assumes that she is "impure," and that if Angel knew the truth, he would reject her (as indeed he does). While Tess seems to be referring specifically to her past with Alec here, she is also more broadly accurate concerning Angel's tendencies to idealize and condescend towards her. He loves her, but also doesn't really know her--he loves her as a kind of "nature goddess" who embodies natural purity, innocence, and pagan wisdom.

Chapter 35 Quotes

"I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you."
"But who?"
"Another woman in your shape."

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield, Angel Clare (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 229

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tess has revealed to Angel that she had a child (we're not told what, exactly, she tells Angel about her experience with Alec, but we know that Angel knows a lot

more about Tess's past than he did before). Angel is disturbed by what he's learned. He's shocked that Tess isn't a virgin (even though he himself has just confessed that he's not a virgin either), and he's surprised that Tess could have kept such a piece of information from him for so long. Angel sums up his feelings by exactly echoing what Tess feared in the previous two chapters: he claims that he doesn't really know Tess at all; he's been in love with an idealized, false version of her.

Angel's claims are harsh but perhaps well-founded. He has idealized Tess by imagining her to be pure and innocent--he hasn't really thought of her as a human being at all. Instead, he's thought of her as a Romantic ideal, to be worshipped but not respected as a person. Thus his rejection of her is cruel and sexist (as he assumes that she has no right or reason to reject him in turn for consensually sleeping with someone else out of wedlock), but it is also somewhat "just" in that it finally reveals the truth about their relationship--that Tess has truly loved Angel for who he is, but that Angel has only loved Tess for who he imagines her to be.

❝ Here was I thinking you a new-sprung child of nature; there were you, the belated seedling of an effete aristocracy!

Related Characters: Angel Clare (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 232

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage we see the limits of Angel's love for Tess, and his character in general. Angel has thought of Tess in the most idealistic terms imaginable: he's thought of her as a sweet, innocent "nature goddess," totally separate from both sexual experience and the corruption of England's aristocratic past. Now that he knows the truth about Tess, however, he sees that his "ideal" was a fiction all along (something we had already recognized, obviously). Furthermore, Angel reveals the extent of his hypocrisy and shallowness, as he allows his academic ideals to overcome basic compassion and humanity. He's not only mad that Tess isn't a virgin--he also doesn't like that Tess is tied to the d'Urbervilles, a wealthy, aristocratic family that represents everything Angel hates.

Once again, we see Angel punishing Tess for things beyond her control. She didn't ask to be born a d'Urberville or to be raped by Alec, but Angel nonetheless judges her for her connection to Alec and for her d'Urberville heritage. Just as before, Angel isn't really judging Tess as a human being at all; he just "analyzes" her in social terms. Angel struggles to see Tess for who she really is; he's so accustomed to thinking in terms of class and nature that his impressions of women are almost always distorted.

Chapter 40 Quotes

❝ Because nobody could love 'ee more than Tess did! ...She would have laid down her life for 'ee. I could do no more.

Related Characters: Izz Huett (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield, Angel Clare

Related Themes:

Page Number: 270

Explanation and Analysis

In his anger, disappointment, and despair Angel has spontaneously decided to travel to Brazil, and as he leaves he impulsively asks a local woman named Izz Huett (who was a friend of Tess's, and who also had strong feelings for Angel) to come with him. Angel asks Izz if she loves him more than Tess, but Izz--despite her love for Angel, and her crushing disappointment that he chose Tess--cannot affirm this falsehood. She confesses that Tess loved Angel purely and absolutely: Tess would gladly have sacrificed her life for Angel.

The passage shows Izz's loyalty to Tess, in spite of the fact that they're "competing" for Angel's affections. Furthermore, Izz's Biblical choice of phrasing ("laid down her life") suggests the religious, even Christian, quality of Tess's personality. Like Christ, Tess is willing to sacrifice herself for the good of other people--in other words, she's as generous and selfless as Angel is selfish.

Chapter 45 Quotes

❝ This was once a Holy Cross. Relics are not in my creed; but I fear you at moments – far more than you need fear me at present; and to lessen my fear, put your hand upon that stone hand, and swear that you will never tempt me – by your charms or ways.

Related Characters: Alec d'Urberville (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 311

Explanation and Analysis

Here Tess accidentally encounters Alec, years after their last encounter. After this initial encounter, Alec and Tess walk to a mysterious place that is at once both pagan and Christian. They arrive at "Cross-in-Hand," a stone which has been in the wilderness for ages, but which supposedly used to hold a Christian cross. Alec asks Tess to put her hand on the stone and swear that she'll never "tempt" him again.

The passage is important because it shows the depths of Alec's hypocrisy. Even though it was Alec who raped Tess, Alec clearly blames Tess for "tempting" him to rape her. (This echoes society's cruel, sexist stance on the incident as well.) The pagan/Christian symbolism of the scene reinforces Tess's mystic status in the novel (and in the minds of the two main male characters): she's both a Christ-figure and a pagan nature-goddess, an innocent martyr and victim of the sins of others.

Chapter 47 Quotes

What a grand revenge you have taken! I saw you innocent, and I deceived you. Four years after, you find me a Christian enthusiast; you then work upon me, perhaps to my complete perdition!

Related Characters: Alec d'Urberville (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 329

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Tess meets with Alec once again. Alec has briefly converted to Christianity and worked as a preacher, but when he reunites with Tess, he gives up religion altogether so he can pursue her again. Outrageously, Alec blames Tess for tempting him away from Christianity: he blames her for taking her "revenge" on him.

Alec, the most hypocritical character in the novel, is a weak, spoiled man, without the drive or principle to focus on any religion or ideology other than his own desires. And yet instead of blaming himself for his lust and laziness, he takes out his anger on Tess herself, again simultaneously idealizing and dehumanizing her. On an individual level, we easily see how cruel, unjust, and absurd Alec is being, and this allows Hardy to show how equally cruel, unjust, and absurd is society's condemnation of Tess.

Whip me, crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim – that's the law!

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield (speaker), Alec d'Urberville

Related Themes:

Page Number: 332

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Tess is both active and passive--rebelling against her victimization and accepting it. Tess has met with Alec, who accuses her of tempting him away from the clergy and seducing him. Furious with Alec's hypocrisy, Tess slaps him, and then--seeing the fury in Alec's face--dares Alec to beat her and treat her like a "victim." Her outburst shows that she's fully aware of both Alec's sinfulness and of his power to get away with being sinful: she recognizes that he treats other people like objects, to be enjoyed and then discarded--and no one condemns him for it, because he's wealthy and male.

In the past, Tess has shown signs of blaming herself for her own misfortune. (This is understandable, as it's how society as a whole views her condition.) And yet in her despair Tess seems to have reached greater clarity, as she bitterly and sarcastically suggests that Alec is responsible for her downfall, but because of her fate there's nothing she can do about it. In such a way, the passage foreshadows the end of the novel, in which Tess will truly take justice into her own hands.

Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man's wife you are mine!

Related Characters: Alec d'Urberville (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 332

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Alec d'Urberville again asserts his dominance over Tess. Alec has raped Tess before, and here, he shouts to Tess that he'll "master" her again. As he did years before, Alec again tries to get Tess to love him voluntarily, and when she won't, he abuses his power over and tries to force her to become "his."

Alec is complex and human, yet also the most villainous character in the novel. On one level, he's the very embodiment of England's new social elite--heartless and entitled, insensitive to nature and innocent joy, and generally obsessed with power and "mastery." Alec speaks as if he has control over his own destiny and the destiny of other people, and his class and gender support him in this--but he's also deluded, as there is still one last way Tess can wrest his power away from him (even if it means her own death as well).

Chapter 52 Quotes

❝ The old order changeth. The little finger of the sham d'Urbervilles can do more for you than the whole dynasty of the real underneath...

Related Characters: Alec d'Urberville (speaker), Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:

Page Number: 364

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tess discovers Alec d'Urberville among the tombs of her ancient d'Urberville ancestors. Alec points out that his own family isn't actually related to the d'Urbervilles at all: they've just taken the name to give themselves more social prestige. But although Alec is a "sham d'Urberville," he actually has more money and social control than the real d'Urbervilles, who long ago lost their fortune and died off.

The passage conveys the changing order of the world. The old noble families of England are dying out, Hardy suggests, to be replaced by "new money" families that merely pretend to be old and prestigious. The social changes that make such pretensions possible include industrialization: the Industrial Revolution created a new class of wealthy businessmen without any ancestral connection to Britain's past. Because they had no such connection, they simply made one up. Thus, Alec's observations symbolize the changing economic landscape of his country. Yet Hardy doesn't idealize the landed aristocracy of the past--he merely shows how money and power continue to corrupt even in this new, supposedly more democratic age. The fact the Alec has money (and is a man) is enough to ensure that he has almost total control over Tess.

❝ "It is as it should be," she murmured. "Angel, I am almost glad – yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough; and now I shall not live for you to despise me!"

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield (speaker), Angel Clare

Related Themes:

Page Number: 396

Explanation and Analysis

Tess has murdered Alec and fled with Angel, but Angel hasn't yet been entirely sure that Tess really committed the crime she's confessed to. In this scene, Tess falls asleep at Stonehenge, as Alec watches the monument become surrounded by policemen. Tess wakes with the sun, and sadly tells Angel that she's glad that she'll be punished for her crime. As she explains, all happiness is fleeting. Even if she'd found a way to live with Angel again and start a normal life with him, her happiness would eventually have given way to tragedy, somehow--he surely would have come to "despise" her.

Tess's speech indicates that she's finally given in to the power of destiny. Previously, Tess tried to carve out freedom for herself, but in the end, she seems to accept that she has no real control over her own life. Tess's happiness--a happiness deeply rooted in the glory of nature and the outdoors--is doomed to die (just as England's natural beauty is doomed to be replaced with factories). One could say that Tess embodies the Romantic ideal, the principle that all glory and happiness is fleeting, even if the struggle to achieve such happiness is heroic. Tess has briefly and gloriously (if violently) asserted her will and humanity by killing her rapist and oppressor, but social and divine forces eventually catch up with her, and she cannot escape her tragic fate.

Chapter 59 Quotes

❝ "Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess. And the d'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing.

Related Characters: Tess Durbeyfield

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 398

Explanation and Analysis

As the novel comes to an end, Hardy it as his most ironic and scathing. Hardy describes how Tess is executed for the crime of murdering Alec d'Urberville--an act of asserting her agency and humanity over her rapist and oppressor. Instead of receiving sympathy, or society examining its own flaws (which drove her to such a fate), Tess is treated as a villain and a criminal. Hardy here gives us a sense for the cosmic scope of Tess's tragedy; a cruel god or meaningless fate (the vague "President of the Immortals") has been toying with her, and now she's finally gotten her punishment, a punishment we know she didn't really deserve.

The final sentence of the passage conveys the sublime indifference of the universe. The d'Urberville family has been shown to symbolize the glory of England's ancestral past. And yet here, Hardy suggests the impotence of all human tradition--what was once all-important seems utterly meaningless in the modern era, and is powerless to save Tess from destruction or affect the present at all. The dominance of modernity over the past is finally clear: the power of the d'Urbervilles, alongside England's pagan, natural beauty, is gone.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

On his way home from haggling, a peddler named John Durbeyfield meets Parson Tringham, who surprises Durbeyfield by addressing him as "Sir John." The parson then reveals his recent discovery that the Durbeyfields are descended from the ancient, knightly d'Urberville family, which has since fallen from prominence and gone extinct. Durbeyfield is flattered and amazed by this information. After the parson leaves, Durbeyfield boasts to a boy from town about his lineage and sends for a carriage to take him the rest of the way home.

This offhand revelation about the d'Urberville name is the impetus for the rest of action of the book. Durbeyfield's excitement and feeling of entitlement over a name with no real wealth or power behind it begins Hardy's satire of English Victorian society, starting with the emphasis on ancient names, but also commenting on how the mighty have fallen in modern times.

CHAPTER 2

In the small English village of Marlott, which lies in the fertile, pastoral Vale of Blakemore, the women are performing the May-Day "clubwalk," a tradition descended from a pagan fertility ritual. Tess Durbeyfield, a beautiful, fresh-looking girl, is one of the walkers. She sees her father riding by in a carriage, drunk and rambling about his family's vault. The other women make fun of him, but Tess comes to his defense.

The description of the village and valley shows a part of society that is more in tune with Nature and seems to exist in a pre-industrial era. Tess herself is first revealed at the fertility ritual of May-Day, which begins her portrayal as a Nature goddess, and the rural women as symbols of pagan innocence.

When the women reach the village green they begin to dance. They are watched by three Clare brothers, Angel, Cuthbert, and Felix, who are students and members of a higher social class. The two older brothers scorn the ritual and the rural town and soon continue on their way, but Angel can't resist joining in the dance. He chooses a partner other than Tess, and she is quietly disappointed. Eventually he has to leave with his brothers. As he departs, Angel turns back, sees Tess, and wishes briefly he had chosen her as his dance partner instead.

The scorn of Cuthbert and Felix is a symptom of their middle-class separation from rural life and the natural, pre-Christian innocence of the Marlott women. Angel's shared glance with Tess foreshadows much of what is to come, especially the fact that his spontaneous action has such a lasting effect on her spirits.

CHAPTER 3

Tess leaves the dance and returns to her small, sparse home. She finds her mother, Joan Durbeyfield, doing housework and singing. She surprises Tess with two pieces of news: John Durbeyfield has been diagnosed with a potentially fatal heart condition, and their family is descended from the lordly d'Urbervilles. Tess's father is at Rolliver's pub "getting up his strength," but probably celebrating his newfound pedigree. Joan has been consulting the *Compleat Fortune-Teller*, a book of old superstitions, and she asks Tess to return it to the outhouse because she is afraid of keeping it inside overnight. Tess guesses that Joan has been asking about their ancestry.

The satire of the Durbeyfields/d'Urbervilles continues with the rest of the family celebrating a name with no real meaning or advantages attached to it. John Durbeyfield's bad diagnosis is a reminder to Tess that his days are numbered, and introduces the theme of inevitable doom. Joan's faith in the fortune-telling book is a sign of both the pagan superstitions and belief in the power of fate that still lives in the Vale of Blakemore.

Joan goes off to fetch her husband, and Tess is left with her siblings, of whom she is the oldest. Four years younger is Liza-Lu, then Abraham, Hope, Modesty, and an unnamed three-year-old and baby. The narrator wonders if they would have chosen to be born into such a poor household. It starts to get late and Joan still hasn't returned. The narrator speculates that she is lingering at the bar with her husband to take a break from her duties as a mother. At Rolliver's she can pretend she is young and free of responsibility again.

The narrator's musings about the fate of the Durbeyfield children continues the theme of an inevitable destiny that the characters are born into, rather than choosing for themselves. Joan's pleasure at Rolliver's helps to humanize a sometimes farcical family.

It gets even later and Tess sends Abraham to retrieve their parents. After another half hour no one has returned from Rolliver's, so Tess starts up the dark and winding path to find them.

The description of the twisting road to Rolliver's builds a sense of foreboding for Tess's future.

CHAPTER 4

Rolliver's doesn't have a liquor license, so its patrons have to either drink outside or in a bedroom upstairs. Joan Durbeyfield finds her husband and tells him her plan to profit from their newfound ancestry. There is a family of wealthy d'Urbervilles nearby, and Joan wants to send Tess to "claim kin" and ask for work, but she also hopes that a wealthy gentleman will end up marrying Tess. She says that the *Compleat Fortune-Teller* confirmed it. John worries that "queer" Tess might not like the plan.

This is the first mention of the wealthy d'Urberville branch who are soon to take a major role in the plot. The discovery of why Joan had been consulting her fortune-telling book, combined with her plan for Tess's marriage, emphasizes the theme of fate and makes Tess's future seem unavoidable.

Tess shows up and her appearance alone makes them get ready to leave. She and Joan walk John home, all three weaving back and forth. He did not drink very much but his bad health increases the alcohol's effects. Tess worries that he won't be able to deliver the beehives to the Casterbridge market the next day, because they have to start at two in the morning and it's already eleven. After two hours of sleep Joan wakes Tess and admits that John can't make the trip. Tess is too ashamed to ask someone from town to go, so she agrees to do it if Abraham accompanies her.

Another mention of Durbeyfield's bad health is a reminder of unhappy fate. Tess's worries about the beehive delivery emphasizes the poverty of the family, and her pride in not asking for help is similar to her father's. The family's farcical walk home and their constant financial concerns contrast starkly with the Durbeyfields' new delusions of grandeur.

They hitch up **Prince** the horse, who is as old and rickety as their cart. Abraham is still half-asleep. Once he starts waking up he quickly reveals Joan's plan to marry Tess off to a gentleman. Tess gets impatient with her family's new preoccupation with the d'Urberville name. Abraham asks if the stars are all worlds just like theirs, and if some are "blighted" and some are "sound." Tess says they live on a blighted star, and that is why their lives are so hard.

When Tess hears of her mother's plan, it is in some ways a prophecy of her future. Abraham's questions about the blighted stars reinforce the theme and bring up the idea that one's fate is preordained by circumstance or destiny, and cannot be escaped.

Tess falls into a reverie and starts to think of her father's newfound vanity and hopes for social ascension, and she imagines an unpleasant gentleman suitor mocking her and her family. She falls asleep. She is then awakened suddenly to find that **Prince** has been gored to death by the shaft of the swift and silent morning mail-cart. Tess, despairing, puts her hand on his wound and the blood splashes her face and white dress.

Tess's dream is vaguely prophetic, and her falling asleep before a tragedy is the beginning of her role as the woman as passive victim. The death of Prince is the start of Tess's misfortunes, and his bloody death both foreshadows her later crime and symbolizes a blow to the idea of Nature, as the farm horse is killed by the sleek modern mail-cart.

The mail-cart man complains that Tess was on the wrong side of the path, and says that he has to go on and deliver the mail. Tess is left behind, and she watches **Prince**'s blood congeal and feels extremely guilty for his death. She is ashamed that the day before she had danced and been happy, when today she has committed such a blunder. She wakes up Abraham and he asks if this happened because they live on a blighted star.

The pool of Prince's blood foreshadows the bloody ceiling at the novel's climax. Tess feeling guilty for something that was only partly her fault begins a recurring plot point, and Abraham's question seems to affirm the preordained injustice of fate.

Another farmer hitches up to their cart and delivers the beehives, and that evening a wagon comes by to bring **Prince**'s body back to Marlott. Tess returns to find her parents already know what happened. They aren't angry, but it is out of indifference rather than kindness. Tess blames herself. When no one will buy Prince's body for more than a few shillings, Durbeyfield proudly invokes his heritage and vows to keep Prince by his side. They bury him the next morning, Durbeyfield working harder than he has all month, and the children weep. Prince was the family's means of income, so everyone is worried and Tess sees herself as a murderer.

Durbeyfield's pride is a defense against the hard economic realities his family faces. The sad burial of the nobly-named animal is symbolic of how far the once-great d'Urbervilles have fallen, and how an ancient name doesn't mean anything anymore in their modern world. Tess regarding herself as a murderer is more foreshadowing.

CHAPTER 5

The family is in bad economic straits now, but Durbeyfield is still too lazy to work much. Joan fatalistically downplays the disaster and proposes her plan to Tess. Tess protests at first, but feels so guilty about **Prince**'s death that she agrees to see Mrs. d'Urberville. She warns her mother to not think of marrying her off, though.

Prince's death and Tess's own ideals set her along the inevitable path of her destiny, despite her protests. The economic woes of the once aristocratic family are again emphasized, and seem almost a force of fate itself, pushing her forward. And poverty is often a condition from which people can't escape, leading them to disaster.

Tess sets out the next morning for the village of Trantridge. As she walks she turns back and looks at the Vale of Blakemore, and feels that she is leaving her childhood behind. She has always been the parental figure in the family, even to her mother, so she feels she is once again shouldering the burdens of the Durbeyfields and taking care of them.

Tess's rural homeland is a symbol of the old agricultural society, and her journey into the harsh world beyond represents the new woes of modernity. Her role as the bearer of burdens hints at the theme of Tess as sacrificial victim.

The d'Urberville mansion of the Slopes lies on the edge of an ancient, primeval forest called The Chase, but the estate itself looks very modern and well-kept. The narrator reveals that these d'Urbervilles are not d'Urbervilles at all, but Stokes. The now-deceased Simon Stoke procured his wealth as a merchant, and when he settled in the area he somewhat randomly picked "d'Urberville" as an old and venerable name to make his family seem more respectable. The Durbeyfields are sadly unaware of this, however.

The Chase acts as a symbol of ancient Nature and pagan powers, while the history of the d'Urberville-Stokes offers a sharp critique on society's emphasis on old, respectable names, and the inherent valuelessness of those names themselves. The unhappy coincidence of the Stokes choosing the d'Urberville name instead of another to burnish their reputation is also pointed out.

Tess is approached by the bold, handsome Alec d'Urberville. He tries to flirt with Tess but she rebuffs him shyly. She wants to meet Mrs. d'Urberville, but Alec says she is unwell and cannot see her. Eventually Tess explains her purpose to Alec, describing her family's crest-inscribed **seal and spoon** as proofs that they are true d'Urbervilles. Alec lies and says that he has the same family crest.

Alec appears as the novel's antagonist, a figure of corruption set against Tess's female innocence and modesty. The seal and spoon are brought up as symbols of the essentially worthless inheritance left to the Durbeyfields by their ancestors.

Alec convinces Tess to linger with him until her ride home returns. He shows her the grounds and tries to feed her a strawberry. She protests but relents. Alec keeps feeding Tess berries and adorning her with flowers as they walk, and she feels overwhelmed.

Alec begins his disastrous attempted seduction. Tess covered in flowers offers a picture of her as an innocent child of Nature, or a sort of pagan fertility goddess.

They sit to have lunch and Alec watches Tess. She looks more mature than she is, and her appearance fascinates Alec. It is hinted that he is to be the "tragic mischief" of her story. Tess blurts out her guilt over Prince's death, and Alec promises to find a place for her on their estate. He says for Tess to not call herself d'Urberville in front of his mother.

Tess is presented as an unintentionally seductive figure, her beauty making her the innocent object of men's lust. Alec's tragic role in her fate is prophesied, and his appeal that she not mention her name highlights both their differences in social standing and the fact that he doesn't want her to know for as long as possible that he isn't actually a d'Urberville.

Tess turns to go and Alec considers kissing her, but refrains. The narrator laments the cruel chance of these two meeting at this precise time. Nature hardly ever offers happy coincidences, but instead prefers disasters and tragic destinies. Alec goes back to his tent and laughs, pleased with the situation.

The narrator fully introduces the theme of injustice and fate, and laments the tragic story that is about to unfold for Tess. She is trapped by the circumstance of this meeting, and cannot escape her future. Alec, meanwhile, likes being in control—a typically masculine way of being.

CHAPTER 6

Tess feels dazed as she rides away from Trantridge. Another passenger comments on her appearance, and she remembers that she is covered in flowers. She tries to remove most of them, and the thorn of a rose pricks her chin, which she considers a bad omen. She spends the night in Shaston and goes home the next day.

Tess bedecked in roses offers another image of her as a fertility goddess or a symbol of Nature. Tess still has some of her mother's superstitions, and can't help but give weight to bad omens.

Tess enters the house to find her mother triumphant. They have already received a letter asking Tess to come look after the birds at the d'Urberville estate. She will be paid well and the family is gleeful with the news. Tess feels uncomfortable, however, and doesn't wish to return to the Slopes, but she won't explain why.

Tess is going to look after the birds, which is again a position related to the natural world. Her employment seems like a stroke of good fortune to the family, but Tess's encounter with Alec forebodes future unhappiness.

A week later Tess returns home from job searching to find the family rejoicing again. Alec d'Urberville has ridden by and asked in person if Tess would come manage the fowls. Joan exclaims over his handsomeness and the diamond ring on his finger. John thinks that Alec wants to marry Tess to improve his own bloodline. Tess is again reluctant and wishes she had met with Mrs. d'Urberville instead.

Alec's reappearance confirms his interest in Tess and that she cannot escape his role in her destiny. The family's delight over his wealth, combined with Durbeyfield's vanity, show the farcical disparity between the two families, and the idea of respectable names versus real wealth. It also shows how the family relies on Tess to support them, whether through work or, hopefully, marriage to a rich man.

After thinking again of **Prince**'s death and being teased by her younger siblings, Tess finally agrees to go. She warns her mother that she only wants to earn money, not get married. She writes to the d'Urbervilles and receives a response, but notices that Mrs. d'Urberville's handwriting seems masculine. Joan is offended that they are only sending a cart for Tess instead of a carriage. Once she has made her decision Tess feels less restless, and she can accept that fate does not want her to become a schoolteacher as she had once hoped.

It is finally Tess's own guilt and selflessness that lead her to accept her fate and go to the other d'Urbervilles. Here again she acts as a religious figure, sacrificing her future for her family's well-being. She imagines that she has decided her path now and so is more at peace, although she cannot know the misfortunes to come.

CHAPTER 7

Tess prepares to leave for the Slopes and allows her mother to dress her up. Tess looks older than she actually is, and Joan is delighted with her appearance and the effect she imagines it will have on Alec. Tess says goodbye to her father, who takes a break from his nap to say he will sell his title to Alec. He starts by asking for one thousand pounds, but beats himself down to twenty. Tess leaves with her mother and sisters, full of emotion.

The description of Tess's appearance shows her as a physically desirable woman who is still an innocent girl at heart. Durbeyfield's comical goodbye satirizes both his delusions of grandeur and his poor understanding of money, although there is also a tragic note because of his many young children.

The family goes to wait for the cart to Trantridge, all of them looking innocent and beautiful. The cart appears and Tess says goodbye and walks up the hill. Joan watches the cart approach and sees with delight that it is driven by Alec d'Urberville. Tess hesitates to go with him, but then strengthens her resolve and leaves. The children and Joan start to cry.

The Durbeyfield family appears as an image of agricultural innocence and a purer past. We are suddenly given Joan's point of view at the point when Tess truly accepts her fate and gets onto the wagon with Alec, putting herself in some way under his control. Joan seems to cry both from sadness at seeing her daughter leave but also perhaps joy at what she thinks will lead to her daughter's marriage to a wealthy man.

That night as they are lying in bed, Joan voices her misgivings to her husband. She says she wishes she had found out if Alec was a good man or not before letting Tess go with him. But then Joan consoles herself that if Tess plays her "trump card," her beautiful face, then Alec is sure to marry her.

Even Joan, who pushed this plan so hard, has doubts now, but in the end she trusts that fate will work itself out. She keeps believing that "what will be will be," but for Joan that is an optimistic idea. Joan also sees beauty as a strength for Tess, but in many ways Tess's beauty functions as a kind of weakness, attracting predatory men.

CHAPTER 8

Tess and Alec ride away from the green Vale and into the gray unknown. Alec drives recklessly and Tess is still wary since **Prince**'s death, so she asks him to slow down. He responds by teasing her with stories that his horse has already killed one man. Alec goes downhill at a terrifying gallop, and Tess clings to his arm. He asks her to hold onto his waist instead, as he is using the reins. When they reach the bottom Tess lets go and gets angry when she realizes how he has tricked her.

They leave behind the agricultural past and drive into the troubles of the modern age. Alec uses his natural recklessness to his advantage, but he does not yet understand just how inexperienced and modest Tess really is. They come from two different worlds, and he cannot comprehend her innocence.

They start to go down another hill but this time Tess won't hold onto Alec. Instead he asks if he can kiss her. When she refuses he makes the horse go faster, and finally she agrees, looking like a frightened animal. Alec slows the cart and tries to kiss her, but she unconsciously avoids him again. He curses and Tess starts to cry, pleading that she doesn't want to be kissed. Alec gives her "the kiss of mastery" anyway.

"The kiss of mastery" prefigures the terrible act to come—Alec's rape of Tess—and shows Tess as a victim of male dominance. Tess is portrayed as an animal being teased by a cruel human, and so again stands as an image for the purer natural world.

Unconsciously Tess wipes her cheek with her handkerchief, which makes Alec angry. He insists that she has undone the kiss, and he must have another one. At that moment Tess's hat blows off, and she makes him stop the cart. Once she retrieves her hat she refuses to get back on, saying that she will walk the rest of the way. Alec realizes she has tricked him and starts to curse at her.

That the kiss can be "undone" resonates tragically with Alec's later assault, which leaves permanent damage. By leaving the cart Tess is able to achieve some agency in the situation and retain her dignity, even though it means walking for miles.

Tess yells an insult back at Alec and his anger suddenly dissolves. He tries to convince her to get back on the cart but she will not, even though now he feels ashamed and would not have tried any more seduction. Tess wishes she could return home, but reminds herself that she is doing this for her family. Finally the Slopes and the poultry-farm appear in the distance.

Alec's fickle nature is revealed in his swift emotional shifts. Tess continues her proud walk apart from Alec's cart, innocently asserting her independence from his wealthy male authority. Her trials have begun now, so she is fully acting as a sacrificial figure for her family's benefit.

CHAPTER 9

The chickens Tess is supposed to care for live in a cottage that was once someone's home but is now overgrown with ivy. She works for a while and is then told to bring the birds to Mrs. d'Urberville. Tess learns for the first time that Mrs. d'Urberville is blind, and again feels uneasy.

Tess's job as a caretaker of birds fits with her image as both a symbol of the natural world and a pagan Nature goddess. Mrs. d'Urberville's blindness means that she too is probably helpless to control Alec.

Mrs. d'Urberville is waiting in an armchair, and she speaks to Tess but makes no mention of the d'Urberville name. She takes each fowl in her lap and checks it over with her hands. They go through all of the chickens in the cottage, and the process reminds Tess of a religious Confirmation ceremony, in which Mrs. d'Urberville is the bishop, Tess is the parson, and the fowls are the children being presented.

Relating the odd ceremony of the chickens to a religious rite explicitly brings up the theme of Paganism and Christianity. Tess's frame of reference is a Christian ceremony, but the fact that it is taking place with birds recalls a religion more in touch with nature.

Mrs. d'Urberville asks Tess if she can whistle, and Tess admits that she can. Mrs. d'Urberville asks her to whistle songs to the bullfinches every day. The maid mentions that Alec has been whistling to them lately, and Mrs. d'Urberville reacts negatively to his name. Tess has not yet noticed that there was no mention of her kinship, but she now sees that the mother and son d'Urberville do not get along.

Tess whistling to the bullfinches is another example of her oneness with the natural world, and the beginning of her association with bird imagery. Mrs. d'Urberville's reaction to Alec's name seems to confirm the suspicion that she disapproves of his actions but has little control over them.

Tess feels better the next morning and starts to practice her whistling. Alec suddenly appears, complimenting her beauty and sarcastically calling her "Cousin." He offers to help her, and avoids her refusal by promising to stay on the other side of the fence. Tess laughs and blushes but finally manages to produce a clear note. Alec says that Tess is a "temptation as never before fell to mortal man," but that he won't try to seduce her again. He warns that his mother is a strange woman, and tells Tess if she has any trouble to come to him.

Alec again draws attention to the disparity of power in their interactions. When he calls Tess a "temptation" it again frames her in religious terms, but also places her in an unwilling and passive role. She does not intend to be a temptation, but he sees her as such and holds it against her. This foreshadows her later forced "sins."

Tess begins to adjust to her position and to Alec's presence. He teases her carefully and she gradually becomes less shy, but Alec is also in an extra position of power because Tess is basically his employee. Whistling to the bullfinches becomes a pleasurable job, and Tess can practice songs she learned from her mother. The birds share the same room as Mrs. d'Urberville. One day Tess is whistling and suspects that Alec is watching her from behind the bed curtains. Since then she always checks the curtains, but Alec does not try this scheme again.

The circumstances of society, wealth, and gender all work in Alec's favor against Tess. She is essentially powerless, and must rely totally on his whims and good humor. Yet she still manages to stay hopeful in her innocence, and is able to take pleasure in working with the birds.

CHAPTER 10

The people of Trantridge love to drink, and go every Saturday to get drunk in nearby Chaseborough. Tess avoids going for a while, but she finally agrees and then has a good time, finding the other women comical and refreshing. She keeps going back, sometimes alone, but always returns in the safety of a group. One night she starts out later than usual and then encounters Alec at a street corner. Tess tells him she is just waiting to leave. He says they will meet again, and walks away.

The drunk and rowdy women of Trantridge contrast with the innocent, superstitious women of Marlott. Almost all the set-up of this scene, and the first mysterious encounter with Alec, serve as foreshadowing for the events to come. The emphasis on traveling home in a group will also come back to haunt Tess.

Tess finds all the villagers at an eerie outdoor dance, lit by hazy candles in an outhouse. The atmosphere is smoky and the dancing figures appear unreal or mythical. When they leave the haze they seem to transform back into common village-folk. Tess asks if any are leaving and a bystander says the dance is almost over.

The dance seems like a sort of bacchanal, or pagan orgy, with the ordinary folk becoming larger-than-life or somehow inhuman. This is an aspect of ancient paganism that is not associated with the pure and innocent Tess, and it makes her uncomfortable.

The dance keeps going for a while, and Tess is too afraid to walk home alone. A man asks her to dance but she refuses. People start pairing off and then falling together into the dirt. Tess hears a laugh behind her and meets Alec again. She explains her situation and he offers to take her home, but she still distrusts him and refuses. Alec's presence makes the dancers begin to recollect themselves and head home, however, so Tess starts to walk with them.

The dance grows even wilder and more primal, and Alec's enjoyment of it highlights his own essentially bestial nature. The atmosphere is now quite foreboding, and the feeling is that something bad is about to happen.

Tess observes that many of her companions are staggering drunkenly, and the experience reminds her unpleasantly of her father. She sees that one of the women is Car Darch, the "Queen of Spades," who was recently a favorite of Alec's. They come to a gate and Car goes first with her heavy basket on her head. The rest of the group notices something dark trickling down her back, and they realize that it is treacle from a smashed jar in the basket. Everyone laughs as Car rolls around on the ground, trying to clean herself off.

The dark trickle down the Queen of Spades' back is reminiscent of blood, and though this then turns into a slightly comic scene, the initial shock lingers, and the tone remains ominous. The fact that Car is a recently discarded favorite of Alec's says a lot about his nature and the unhappiness that awaits Tess.

Tess can't help joining in the laughter, and Car hears her and becomes enraged, as she was already jealous of Tess for Alec's attentions. Tess apologizes while Car strips off her bodice and prepares to attack. Tess magnanimously refuses to fight, but accidentally insults the whole group. All the other women start yelling at her as well, and Tess feels guilty and angry. She tries to escape the crowd, but at that moment Alec appears on his horse and demands to know what the trouble is, although he has already overheard enough. He offers Tess a ride home and a means of escaping the situation.

Car Darch appears here as a foil for Tess, violent and passionate against Tess's modesty and innocence, and shows a type of woman not yet seen in the novel. This scene is another example of a situation where Tess is condemned for something that was only barely her fault. In this case the anger of the others seems to do with their jealousy of her beauty and the attention she gets from Alec—attention she doesn't even want.

Tess feels so distressed that she accepts Alec's offer, although at almost any other moment she would have refused. The other women watch them ride off, laughing at the trouble Tess has now landed herself in. They start walking again, and the dew and their misty breath seems like halos around their heads.

The fact that only at this precise moment Alec happens to arrive emphasizes the injustice of Tess's fate. This is perhaps the unhappiest coincidence of her story, and the mockery of the other women once Tess has accepted Alec's offer to take her home only heightens the apprehension.

CHAPTER 11

Alec and Tess ride away, and Tess starts to feel uncomfortable. Alec asks why she is not more grateful to him and avoids his kisses, and Tess admits that she does not love him. He asks if he has offended her with every flirtation, and she does not deny it. They keep riding and the sleepy, distracted Tess does not notice that they passed the road to Trantridge long before. She has been awake since five and it is now one the next morning. She starts to lean against Alec and he puts his arms around her. This immediately makes her pull away again.

Tess and Alec finally speak plainly to each other, and Tess's true modesty and innocence are made clear to Alec. He begins to realize that his flirtations are not working. Tess falling asleep recalls her reverie before Prince's death, and her taking on again of the role of the sleeping victim of catastrophe.

Alec gets angry at her constant distrust and invokes his superiority over her, calling Tess a "mere chit." Then he compliments her again, and convinces her to let him put his arm around her. A long time passes and Tess finally realizes that they should be home by now. She asks where they are and Alec dodges the question. Then he confesses that they are in The Chase, "the oldest wood in England," and that he has been prolonging their ride.

Alec angrily reminds her of his power over her, both as a stronger man and as her wealthy employer. Faced with the inevitable, Tess must submit a little. The setting of the dark Chase builds up even more the sense of foreboding, and the feeling that they are among ancient powers that do not care about human happiness.

Tess grows angry again and pulls away. She demands that he let her walk home, but Alec says they are miles from Trantridge and the forest is foggy. Alec lets her dismount but he offers to find the path home while she waits with the horse, as even he is a bit lost. He steals a kiss and ties up the horse. He makes a nest of dead leaves for Tess, and mentions that he has bought a new horse for Durbeyfield and some toys for Tess's siblings. Tess is grateful but conflicted, and when she realizes the depth of Alec's passion for her she starts to cry.

Tess tries to assert her independence again, but now the situation has become impossible, and she must depend on Alec. He mentions her family as a reminder of yet another form of control he wields over Tess, as her ideals keep her bound to sacrifice herself for her family's well-being. The reality of her situation finally hits her in a heartbreaking way.

Alec tries to comfort her and wraps her in his overcoat. Then he goes off into the wood. Tess starts to fall asleep. Alec takes his time but gets his bearings, and then goes back for Tess. The moon has gone down and The Chase is black and foggy. Alec stumbles over Tess in the dark, and sees that she is asleep with tears on her face. She appears as a pale shape against the blackness. He presses his cheek against hers.

Tess falls asleep and again becomes the passive victim. The primeval powers of The Chase take over in the night, and Tess is presented as a figure of tragic innocence, light set against the dark. This is the last action described of the rape scene, and even this was too explicit for critics and many readers at the time of the novel's publication.

The dark ancient trees are all around, and birds and rabbits, but the narrator wonders where Tess's guardian angel is this night. He wonders if the god of her faith is distracted, and why such female innocence should be doomed to violation in this way, and why these injustices happen so often. The narrator hypothesizes that probably many d'Urberville knights had been even more cruel towards peasant girls of their day, and perhaps Tess is being punished for this. But he admits that humans find this kind of justice unsatisfying, and finally he retreats to the saying of the rural folk, "It was to be." There is no good explanation, but after this she is to be a different woman altogether.

Hardy invokes Nature as Tess's element, but her pagan purity is defenseless against the cruelty of modern man and unjust fate. His meditation on why bad things happen to good people leads to no satisfying answer, just the fatalism of the simple townspeople, as all possible explanations seem unfair. Tess is a "Pure Woman Faithfully Presented," and her rape is not her own sin but something unfairly enacted upon her. The language of this scene emphasizes that fact in the face of society's criticism.

CHAPTER 12

The section begins a few weeks after the scene at The Chase. Tess is walking the twenty miles back home to Marlott, carrying a heavy basket but looking like her burden is an emotional one instead. She climbs the hill that Alec had ridden so recklessly down four months before, and sees the beautiful, familiar Vale of Blakemore. She can hardly bear to look at it, as her view of life has been so corrupted since she last left. Alec approaches her from behind and wonders why she slipped away so stealthily. He offers to drive her the rest of the way, and she passively accepts. She is not afraid of him anymore.

Tess is a new woman now, one no longer innocent and naïve but broken by the harsh world. It hurts her to even look at Marlott, the site of her old self, the symbol of agricultural purity. She does not fear Alec anymore because he can't do anything worse to her than he already has, so in a way she has achieved a new strength through her tribulations.

They drive the rest of the way making small talk, and Tess sits "like a puppet" replying shortly. When she sees Marlott she starts to cry a little, and says she wishes she had never been born. Alec downplays her sorrow and asks why she came to Trantridge if she did not love him. Tess says she did not understand his intentions. Alec says "that's what every woman says," and Tess flies into a rage, threatening to strike him for his insensitivity.

Tess has been reduced in her humanity by Alec's continued dominance, but finally her independent spirit flares up again and she takes control briefly within her anger. This flare-up is foreshadowing for her later, more dangerous act of rage against Alec's blithe cruelty.

Alec laughs and admits he has done wrong, but he wants to make amends by giving Tess money. Tess scorns the offer and refuses to take anything from him, lest she should be his "creature." Alec confesses he is "a bad fellow," but says he was born bad and can't help it. He offers again that if Tess finds herself in a time of need she should call on him. Tess gets out of the cart and passively lets Alec kiss her goodbye, admitting hollowly that he has mastered her. She looks away at distant trees as he kisses her.

The way Alec talks about the rape only makes it seem more horrible, as if his money and flippant apologies could undo it. Alec claims it is fate that he should be bad, but he was the one with the agency in the deed. Tess gazes out at Nature as he kisses her, but her old, familiar world gives her no comfort now.

Alec laments that Tess will never love him, and Tess affirms it. Alec sighs and downplays her melancholy, complimenting her beauty again and asking her to return to him someday. Tess says she will never return, and Alec rides away. The sun and the season seem to mourn with Tess as she walks.

Tess is able to retain a little dignity still by refusing to give in to Alec when she is awake. She again symbolizes Nature as all her surroundings seem to grieve alongside her.

A man approaches Tess from behind and they converse. He is religious, and spends his Sundays painting Bible quotes on fences. Tess watches him paint "THY, DAMNATION, SLUMBERETH, NOT" and feels that the words accuse her personally. She asks about what if the sin was not of your own making, and man says he is not sure. He says he has even more crushing quotes that would be good for "dangerous young females" like Tess to see. He wants her to read his next one, which is going to be about adultery, but Tess refuses and walks on. As she leaves the man shouts that she should speak to a Reverend Clare if she wants explanations for her theological questions. Tess doesn't believe that God would say such things.

This begins Tess's unfair condemnation by Christianity and English Victorian society. She asks the question that seems to hold her destiny: what if the sin was not hers, but inflicted upon her? It makes no difference to the world, for now she is a "fallen women," and Hardy's tragic critique of the sexual double standard and the hypocrisy of society begins. Tess believes in a simpler, purer religion that is not this kind of harsh Christianity, but an innate and innocent faith. Angel's father is first mentioned here as well.

The sight of her house makes Tess's heart ache. Her mother greets her excitedly until she hears what has happened. Tess also reveals that they were not actually related to those d'Urbervilles. Joan gets angry that Tess didn't get Alec to marry her, and guilts her with the family's hardships. Tess had never even considered marriage, and Alec never mentioned it. Joan continues to berate her for not being more careful until Tess breaks down and weeps. Joan had never warned her about the dangers of men, and she had no experience in the matter. Joan feels bad, but says they must "make the best of it."

Joan blames Tess for not holding up her end of the plan, despite the many sacrifices Tess has already made for her family. Even her mother did not realize the extent of Tess's innocence. Tess is able to retain at least a little dignity by showing no regret for not getting married. Joan quickly jumps to a similar conclusion that the narrator reached, the simple fatalism of the rural townspeople.

CHAPTER 13

The people of Marlott hear about Tess's return, and many of her old friends come by to visit her, as fascinating rumors about Alec's nature have reached even Blakemore. Joan is able to satisfy her pride by implying a "dashing flirtation" to the visitors. After a while Tess cheers up a little, but the next morning is again lonely and depressing. She sees her fate as inexorable and unsympathetic, and often wishes she was dead.

The envious reception and Joan's boasting are especially tragic compared to the reality of Tess's situation. Once the first hopeful night wears away, she is left alone and friendless in a condemning, unsympathetic society, and there is no escape from this fate.

After a few weeks Tess goes back to church, as she likes the singing and chanting. She tries to stay unnoticed, and so goes early and sits in the back. But soon the churchgoers start to look back at her and whisper, and after that Tess does not go to church anymore. She stays in her room most of the time, or walks alone at dusk, shunning other humans. She seems to become a natural part of the gray, bleak scenery, and the weather reflects her emotions.

Tess likes the singing and chanting most, and these have the most in common with ancient pagan religions. This is the first concrete example of people judging Tess negatively for her rape. She learns to avoid people and return to the natural world, where she is most at home. Nature seems to reflect her sadness now as it reflected her purity before.

The narrator points out the unfairness of Tess's plight; she feels herself as guilty, but it is really another who is guilty. She feels like an intruder among the animals, but really she is as innocent as they are. It is not Tess that is in the wrong, but society. To the natural world she has committed no sin.

This is Hardy's explicit critique of the unfairness of Victorian society and the modern world. Tess is still in accord with nature and morality; it is only the arbitrary rules of society that she has broken.

CHAPTER 14

It is August, and the sun looks like an ancient god. Illuminated are the red arms of a reaping-machine in a field of corn. The machine starts to tick and then three horses move forward, and the machine revolves. The animals in the cornfield retreat before it, but their refuge gets smaller and smaller and doom inevitably finds them. In the wake of the machine women bind up the corn, and they seem an integrated part of nature.

Hardy first invokes the ancient sun-worshipping religions, and compares that with the ominous industrial reaping machine. It emotionlessly kills the creatures of the field and its turning arms are those of inexorable fate. Again the rural women are portrayed as being at one with Nature.

One woman is described in particular, as she has the most beautiful figure, but a bonnet is pulled low over her face and she never seeks attention. She binds corn monotonously, and at last her beautiful face is revealed as that of Tess. Much time has passed and she has changed. She is now working the land in the Vale of Blakemore.

We are reintroduced to Tess, as she has changed so much from the innocent girl of the novel's start. She is again representing the older world of agriculture and simple nature, and is placed next to the industrial machine to emphasize the contrast.

After breakfast they go back to work, but now Tess glances off at the hills until a group of children arrive. The oldest girl carries an infant in her arms. When Tess finally takes a break the girl, who is Liza-Lu, brings the baby to her and Tess nurses it. The other workers look away politely.

Hardy breaks the news of Tess's child slowly, avoiding dramatics. Alec's rape could never be undone emotionally, but now his child acts as a physical proof for all society to see and condemn.

Tess holds her child indifferently for a while, but then suddenly kisses it fiercely. The other women discuss her seemingly conflicted feelings, and the rumors of "a sobbing one night last year in The Chase," and they lament that this should happen to the prettiest girl.

Most everyone knows what happened by now, and Tess cannot avoid her past in Marlott. She has unwillingly taken on the role of a mother, and her actions toward the child show her inner turmoil—both anger and love.

After many months of regret, Tess had finally decided this week to go out into the fields and work. She tries to put the past behind her and take comfort in the beauty of nature, which no longer reflects her pain. It has been so long that her community has mostly forgotten about her scandal, or hardly gives it a thought, but to Tess it is still constant suffering. Yet her suffering only comes from the expectations of convention, and no longer from her inner emotions.

Tess is once more among Nature where she belongs. Hardy emphasizes again the arbitrary rules of society that condemn her. If she was going by her own moral compass, she would not be suffering as greatly as she is now. It is the judgment of others, which Tess even emphasizes in her own mind, that cause her pain now.

Tess works until evening and then is cheered by her lively female companions. But when she returns she finds that her baby is sick. The child is technically an "offence against society," but Tess forgets all that in her desire to save his life.

The child is perhaps doomed from the start because of its unhappy birth. Despite all of society's judgment, Tess instinctively assumes the role of mother when her child is ill.

The child gets rapidly worse and Tess despairs that he hasn't been baptized. She has accepted that she might go to Hell, but she cannot let her child die unsaved. She asks her father to send for a parson, but Durbeyfield is feeling especially proud of his heritage and scornful of Tess's shame, so he refuses.

It is now revealed how much Tess has thought about her own damnation. She accepts that she is bound for Hell—thereby accepting society's unfair condemnation of her—but selflessly wants to save the baby. Even her own father is affected by the general condemnation of Tess.

The child gets worse, and Tess feverishly imagines him being tortured in Hell. She decides to baptize him herself, hoping it will be "just the same" as a parson. She fills the washing-stand with water and her siblings gather around, awed. She takes up the child and her sister holds open the Prayer-Book.

This act makes sense as the last desperate hope of a young girl, but Tess also now begins to assume her position as a religious figure, appearing like a priestess as she acts out her own version of a baptism.

In the candlelight Tess is transformed into an "immaculate," "regal" figure in white. She names the child "Sorrow" after a Biblical phrase, and she sprinkles water on his head, and they pray, and the children say "Amen." Then Tess recites the thanksgiving words, and so sincere is her faith that her face appears transfigured and purified. To her siblings she doesn't look like Tess anymore, but "a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common."

Tess fully becomes a priestess or goddess here, some holy figure between paganism and Christianity, and even the children can see the change in her. Tess does not need a parson to perform this rite, as she has been purified by Nature and the sincerity of her own faith.

The next morning Sorrow dies, and the siblings cry but Tess remains serene, feeling that if God won't accept her child then he is not a God she wants to believe in. Tess then wants to give Sorrow a Christian burial, so she goes to a parson. She asks if her baptism was the same as if he had done it, and the parson is impressed with her dignity and takes pity on her, and says (untruthfully) that it was. But then he refuses to let the baby be buried in the churchyard, until again Tess convinces him with her sympathetic pleas.

Tess is still filled with the calm dignity of assuming her religious role, and so is able to make independent and potentially blasphemous decisions for herself. The parson is also affected by her state, and he goes against the technicalities of his religious position and acts as a sympathetic man. Hardy clearly values the spirit over the letter of the law.

That night Tess buries her child by lantern-light, having bribed the sexton to get into the churchyard, and she constructs a small cross and lays flowers on the grave. It is a makeshift memorial, but made complete by her maternal love.

Tess has found this religious role as a strength within herself, and here she completes her own version of the Christian burial, acting in the face of society's condemnation.

CHAPTER 15

The narrator muses on Tess's plight. She has finally found maturity, but her path to it has rendered her crippled for a life in society. She would be right to be angry at God for placing her in such a harsh situation. Tess spends the winter doing housework and making clothes out of Alec's old gifts.

Again Hardy as narrator complains about the injustice of Tess's fate. He acts as her only advocate against an unfair god or destiny, and an unnecessarily judgmental world.

Tess muses on the important dates in her life, and realizes that she cannot know the last important date, the day of her death. With such thoughts she grows into a "complex woman," with a tragic and wise demeanor. She has remained so aloof for so long that most of her community has forgotten about her scandal, but Tess still feels uncomfortable in Marlott. She thinks she could be happy somewhere else where she could escape the past, though, and that far away she could somehow regain her chastity.

Tess joins in the narrator's musings and puts her life in perspective. She knows the day of her death is inevitable, as were perhaps the misfortunes that have already befallen her. Society's judgment of her is ingrained within Tess as much as it exists in the external community, so she will not be free until she can forgive herself as well as physically escape.

Tess waits a long time for an opportunity, until in May she gets a letter that a milkmaid is needed at a dairy called Talbothays, many miles away. Tess resolves to no longer dream of d'Urbervilles and castles, but to accept her role as a worker. She cannot help but be intrigued by Talbothays proximity to the ancient d'Urberville estates, though. The thought of being in her ancestral land seems like a good omen, and gives her hope for the future.

Despite the bad things that have happened to her, Tess can't help feeling optimistic when the future means Spring and a place far from her troubles. She has grown from an innocent girl to a complicated woman, and found great fortitude in her trials, but Tess still has enough youth to feel hopeful.

CHAPTER 16

It is more than three years since The Chase, and Tess leaves her home once again. She looks back at her house and can't help regret leaving it. Her family will soon move on with their lives without her. Tess has decided that the young children might be hurt by her example if she had remained.

Tess is moving for her own well-being, but in another way sacrificing herself for her family again. They will be freer without her presence bringing shame into the house.

After a while Tess accepts a ride from a farmer who finds her attractive. She walks the rest of the way on foot. She has never been to this area before, but she already feels "akin to the landscape." Tess can see the distant place where the tombs of the d'Urbervilles lie, but she has no respect for them anymore, as they in some way caused her misfortunes and left her only a **seal and spoon**.

Tess begins to reconnect with Nature in her new environment. The d'Urberville tombs are just as worthless as the seal and spoon, and their dark images contrast with the bright natural beauty all around.

At last Tess reaches the Valley of the Great Dairies, which is much larger and more fertile than her homeland. Cows are everywhere she can see. There is a clear river like the "River of Life," and the air is light, sunny, and full of birdsong. Tess feels hopeful.

"The River of Life" again introduces religious imagery, and Tess's natural purity reacts positively to the outdoor environment. She finds joy in the agricultural world.

The universal desire to be happy has finally reached Tess. She is still only twenty, and so her spirits can rise above her dark past. She starts to sing a Christian chant, but then feels guilty. The narrator muses that her rhapsodic song is probably more pagan than Christian, as Tess is a women more in touch with Nature than God, but she only knows how to express her sentiments in the Church's language.

Here Hardy begins to explain the theme of paganism and Christianity. Tess is technically a Christian, and she believes the religion she has been taught, but the purer nature of her faith and her affinity with the outdoors are more in the spirit of the ancient pagan religions of the land.

Tess descends into the vale, still full of the joyful energy of her surroundings. She looks around at the green fields and a heron lands nearby and watches her. Then Tess hears the call for milking-time, and she follows a herd of cows into a dairy farm. As the cows wait to be milked everything about the place shines brilliantly and overflows with fertility.

Again birds, in this case the heron, are associated with Tess (like Mrs. d'Urberville's bullfinches and chickens), and she naturally follows the cows home. The language describing the animals and landscape emphasizes the tone of joyful natural abundance.

CHAPTER 17

The men and dairymaids all rush out and start to milk the cows. Richard Crick, the master-dairyman, is slightly better dressed than the rest, and Tess seeks him out. He greets her kindly and mentions the old d'Urberville race from the area, but Tess changes the subject. He asks about her milking skills and then she gets right to work.

Despite her hopefulness and totally new surroundings, Tess is immediately reminded of the past. She can never truly escape it, as it is tied also to her future.

Tess drinks a little milk as she works, which surprises Dairyman Crick, whose stomach can't handle it. It is a large farm, and some cows are harder to milk than others. They work in silence, and then some of the workers complain of less milk than usual. They speculate about Tess's arrival and various folk superstitions, but then decide to sing to comfort the cows.

Tess is more in accord with Nature than even the dairy farmer, whose stomach can't digest the raw milk. Tess is where she belongs now, outside, among animals, and singing.

After many verses a worker and the dairyman address an unseen male milker as “sir,” asking him to play his harp. Crick tells a story about a man who had to play his fiddle to keep a bull from goring him, and finally perform a Christmas song so the bull would kneel and he could escape. The unseen milker remarks on the fascination of the story in a detached, curious manner.

There is a build-up to introducing this character that shows he will be important to the story. His comments about Crick's tale show him to be of a different class, and not at home among the rural superstitions and legends.

Tess becomes intrigued by the man, though she still can't see him behind his cow. The dairyman gives him tips on milking. Finally the man stands, and Tess sees that he has a different look from the rest of the workers. Tess also recalls that she has seen him before, at that May-Day clubwalk long ago when he did not dance with her.

Again Tess's past jumps out at her again, but this time it is an innocent past, before she knew she was a d'Urberville. There is still hope that she can recapture that time in this agricultural setting.

Remembering the past upsets Tess for a while, and she fears the man knows her story and will recognize her. He has matured and grown more handsome and thoughtful since they last met, and is well-dressed under his work clothes. She can tell he is inexperienced at milking. Meanwhile many of the other dairymaids comment on Tess's beauty.

The man differs from the rest of the workers in both his manner and attire, as he is from a higher social class. He wants to join the agricultural aspect of society but is both not naturally a part of it and still inexperienced.

Tess is one of only a few girls who sleep and eat at the farm. She goes to bed and tries to sleep, but another girl keeps talking, and eventually reveals some information about the mysterious man; his name is Angel Clare, he is a parson's son, and he is at Talbothays to learn one of the many aspects of farming. His father is Reverend Clare, whose name Tess recognizes as the earnest preacher. All of his sons except Angel are becoming parsons as well.

There is already a small coincidence with the mention of Reverend Clare, whom the quote-painting man recommended. It is noted that Angel has broken away from his family's tradition and is studying farming instead.

CHAPTER 18

Angel is the youngest son of Reverend Clare, and the only one without a University degree, despite being the brightest. One day his father found that Angel was reading philosophy books, which made the Reverend indignant. Then Angel declared that he did not intend to become a parson. He had great affection for the Church, but could not make himself believe, and so could not properly take the oaths.

Angel is revealed as a man trying to be independent from his family and society, and this manifests itself in rejecting his father's religion. His disbelief in Christianity is entirely intellectual, and he lacks Tess's instinctual nature.

Reverend Clare was shocked and grieved at this news, and finally decided that if Angel was not going to serve God he had no need of a Cambridge education. Angel accepted this, and then began a long period of trying out different studies and occupations. He went to London and had a short affair with an older woman, but escaped and ultimately decided his temperament favored the rural life and intellectual freedom. He chose to become a farmer in America, the colonies, or England, and he began his apprenticeship of agriculture's many branches, and so ended up living and working at Talbothays.

Reverend Clare cannot even conceive of his son disbelieving, so deep is his own faith. Hardy portrays his sincere convictions positively, in a similar way to Tess's instincts. Angel's path from the city and the intellect to the country and farming predicts his relationship with Tess, although he is not yet at home in the agricultural world, and still an outsider among the rural folk.

Angel stays in the largest room in the attic, and at first he liked to read and strum his harp in the evenings, but soon came to enjoy eating with the rest of the workers downstairs. His preconceived image of the farm-worker, characterized by newspapers as “Hodge,” was destroyed by the unique realities of each person, who were as varied in intelligence, experience, and personality as any group.

Angel's tendency to idealize and stereotype foreshadows the appearance of his later faults. He is able to accept the farm workers as unique individuals after a while, however. This relates to Hardy's emphasis on regarding Tess as a person rather than just a symbol or ideal.

Clare then begins to enjoy his outdoors work more, and feels more liberated in Nature than among books. He starts to grow familiar with the seasons, the weather, and the landscape.

Angel finds some of the life and freedom in Nature that Hardy has been celebrating through Tess's character.

Angel usually sits apart from the mess table, and the churn turns on the other side, pulled by a horse. For a few days Angel has been occupied with reading, so he hasn't noticed Tess's appearance yet. Then one day he is imagining a piece of music and notices a new, flute-like voice from the table. Tess is talking about how she can look at the stars and feel her soul leaving her body. When the attention turns to her she blushes and diverts it.

It is notable that Tess remembers their brief meeting but Angel does not, and also that his intellectual pursuits distract him from first noticing her. Tess unwillingly reveals some of her complex religious depth and her troubled soul, which seems out of place among the other table conversation.

Angel keeps watching Tess, and remarks to himself what an innocent "daughter of Nature" she seems. Then she suddenly feels familiar to him, and he thinks he has seen her before. Angel does not give it much thought, but it is enough to make him keep noticing Tess among the other women.

Here Angel begins his idealization of Tess as a pure, mythical Nature symbol. He knows he has met her before, but cannot remember the details like Tess can, which foreshadows how his soon-forgotten whims will affect her.

CHAPTER 19

Certain cows prefer certain milkers, so Dairyman Crick regularly rotates them in case a worker left and a cow refused to give milk. Tess has her favorite cows, but takes them as the rotation delivers. Soon she keeps getting her favorite cows, however, and then notices that Angel is in charge of arranging the rotation. They talk coyly and Tess implies that she might not always be around to milk the cows, but she feels ashamed of her words afterward.

Angel first shows his interest in Tess through this subtle and roundabout way, which contrasts sharply with Alec's bold flirtations. The women and their relationships with the cows again symbolize rural innocence and a connection with Nature.

One evening Tess is in the garden, enjoying the silence, when she hears Angel playing the harp. She is transfixed "like a fascinated bird," though in reality his playing is clumsy. She approaches him slowly, keeping hidden behind a hedge.

Tess is compared to an animal, specifically a bird, continuing the series of images. She seems even more pristine in this situation, enchanted by human music.

Tess sneaks through the edge of the garden, which is full of wet grass and infested with colorful, foul-smelling weeds, and plants and snails stain her arms. She loses herself in the music and starts to cry. Angel stops and then comes around the fence, and Tess unsuccessfully tries to sneak away.

The vivid description of the garden again associates Tess with fertility and abundance. Here she appears fully as a Nature-girl, sneaking through weeds and smeared with dirt.

Angel asks Tess what she is afraid of, and she says she has no fears when outside, but indoors she has fears of life in general. Angel is surprised at her sorrow, and asks her to confide in him. Tess describes her depression and sense of the gloomy future, and Angel is again shocked that she has such pessimistic feelings, what he calls "the ache of modernism."

Angel has his ideal of Tess and here she starts to break it, though he keeps being surprised when she does. Her actual trouble is a purer, rawer one than Angel's personal "ache of modernism," which is linked with his education, maleness, and higher social status.

Angel muses that it is strange that Tess should have these ideas at such a young age, although they are actually ancient troubles. Tess finds it strange that a man in such a good position as Angel should be depressed. He is an outsider at Talbothays, but only by his own choice, and he has money and education. They are both puzzled and intrigued by each other.

The disparities of their class and past experiences are emphasized in the nature of their sorrows. For now, though, this difference is intriguing to both, as each idealizes the other; Tess as Nature, Angel as Intellect.

They slowly learn more of each other. Tess first regards Angel as a pure intelligence, and she feels inferior. One day she laments that she knows so little in comparison to him, and Angel offers to teach her. First he proposes a history lesson, but Tess says she avoids history. To her it is like learning that she is only one in a long line of similar lives, and her fate is predestined by her ancestors, and nothing is unique about her actions or experiences.

Tess's wise, pessimistic views on history show her maturity and how her past has affected her. She already understands the power of fate and being punished unfairly. She also hints at the idea that her place in this society is a predetermined role which she must act out, a role that was inflicted upon her, not chosen.

Angel is again surprised, as he has had similarly troubled thoughts. He leaves and Tess stands peeling flowers, finally throwing them all to the ground. She is embarrassed by her conversation, and feels that Angel must think her stupid. She wonders if he would be impressed by her d'Urberville ancestry.

Tess is associated with plant imagery again. She is embarrassed by the same musings that intrigue Angel. Angel can pursue negative thoughts at his leisure, while Tess has no choice in the matter.

Tess asks the dairyman if Angel respects old families, and Crick warns her that Angel hates the idea of them. He feels that their descendants are inferior, as they had their greatness used up early. The family of another dairymaid, Retty Priddle, used to own lots of land in the area, and Angel scorned her for it. Tess is glad she asked, and realizes that it is her "supposed untraditional newness" that interests Angel.

Angel's ideas reflect some of the narrator's earlier musings, that people can be punished for their ancestors, or that bloodlines carry inherent traits within them. Retty is another example of a once-great family laid low, and the changing social order. Tess realizes how she is being idealized by Angel.

CHAPTER 20

Time goes on, and new birds and plants appear. The dairy workers are happy and content, at the level above neediness but below stifling high society. Tess and Angel remain in a state of limbo, but it is inevitable that they will come together soon. Tess is the happiest she has ever been. Both she and Angel enjoy their state of pleasant attraction without complicated commitments. Angel imagines that his preoccupation with her is merely philosophical.

Birds and plants are again associated with the state of the women at the dairy, and Hardy portrays the workers as a sort of social ideal. Fate now seems to be working in Tess's favor. Angel is again idealizing Tess and trying to treat her as part of his agricultural study, but he cannot repress his true feelings.

Tess and Angel meet often, as they both rise earlier than the other workers. When they are alone in the gray dawn they seem like the first people on earth, like Adam and Eve. Tess seems to Angel to take on a mythical significance and an unearthly beauty. He imagines her as Mary Magdalene, or the "visionary essence of woman." He teasingly calls her Artemis or Demeter, but she wants to be called Tess. Then the sun rises and she seems to lose her divinity.

Here the image of Tess and Angel as Adam and Eve is first revealed. Tess now becomes to Angel not just a symbol of Nature, but a mythical or religious figure. She takes on the archetype of pure Woman for him. For her part, Tess wants to be treated as an individual, not a symbol of a generalized whole.

On these early mornings herons approach them, and Tess and Angel watch the fog cover the fields. Drops of dew cling to Tess's face and she gains a fantastical beauty that fades later in the day, in the heat of the sun and the everyday talk and activity of the farm.

Birds again appear, here as good omens. Tess is still an unreal figure to Angel, and as such easier for him to love. Her midday self is less goddess-like, but has more of the true, human Tess.

CHAPTER 21

One morning the butter churn is not working right, and no butter will come. All the workers gather around. Dairyman Crick complains that are no good "conjurers" left who could fix it if it breaks. Mrs. Crick proposes that someone is in love, making the machine not work.

This is another example of folk-superstitions, but the nature of it seems to implicate Angel and Tess's relationship. Also the idea that love could break a machine is similar to Hardy's theme of modernity versus Nature.

Crick tells a story of a man, Jack Dollop, who had courted and "deceived" a young woman, and then one day her mother showed up to attack him. Dollop hid in the butterchurn while the old woman raged about and the young woman cried. Finally the old woman found him and turned the butterchurn with Dollop inside until he agreed to marry her daughter. Tess is struck by this story, which was intended to be comedic, and Crick asks concernedly about her. She says she will feel better outside. At that moment the churn starts to work again.

The story is humorous to the rest of the workers, who have never had Tess's sad experiences. The weeping girl is only a side character in the tale, but Tess strongly relates to her. This is perhaps one of her "indoor fears," and she can only feel better by going back outside. It is also notable that when Tess loses her vitality the machine regains its own.

Tess is depressed all afternoon at the thought that none of her companions saw the sadness in the story. The sun seems ugly to her now, and a sparrow's voice "machine-made." That night she goes first to bed of all her roommates, but wakes up when they enter.

The other women are actually more of Angel's pure ideal than Tess. Even Nature brings her no comfort now, and just seems like another aspect of the harsh modern world.

Her roommates Retty Priddle, Marian, and Izz Huett stand by the window and watch someone in the garden. Soon they start to tease each other about being in love, and at last they all admit that they are, and reveal that Angel is the object of their devotion. Then Marian says that their love is in vain, because Angel likes Tess best. Izz declares that he won't marry Tess or any of them, but someone of his own social class. All three start to cry and eventually fall asleep.

This infatuation is first portrayed as innocent and foolish, but the women's tears at the end start to show how deep it really runs. Their final admission that Angel is from a different society altogether, and none of them have a chance with him, seems to make their rural world hopelessly small.

Tess lies awake, upset. She knows that Angel prefers her, and that he had even asked Mrs. Crick about hypothetically marrying a farm-woman, but Tess feels unworthy of marrying anyone because of her past. She feels guilty for drawing his attention from the other, "purer" girls of Talbothays.

Tess can't help following Angel's line of thinking and associating all the dairymaids with purity and Nature, but now she feels excluded from that symbolic community by her past troubles.

CHAPTER 22

The next morning Dairyman Crick is upset because a customer had complained of the butter's taste. They try it, and Crick decides that it is a garlic plant in the meadow. All the workers form a line and walk slowly across the fields, looking for garlic shoots. Tess and Angel walk side by side, but speak perfunctorily.

The uniform line of farm workers is reminiscent of the generalized stereotype of "Hodge," or that of simple rural folk following blindly along with their heads down.

Tess and Angel break from the line, and Tess tries to turn his attention to Izz and Retty, as she has decided they are more worthy of marrying Angel than she. She compliments their beauty and agricultural skills, and the fact that they blush when he looks at them. After that she makes herself avoid Angel, and tries to give her three friends every opportunity to be near him. She realizes that all the dairymaids love him, and it is admirable that he shows such self-restraint.

Tess again shows her self-sacrificing spirit, denying herself joy because she feels she is unworthy of it. Angel's restraint in taking advantage of the women's affections is a pleasant contrast to Alec's aggressiveness in pursuing whatever pleasure he wants.

CHAPTER 23

It is Sunday morning, and Tess, Izz, Retty, and Marian have decided to go to the church a few miles away. It is Tess's first time away from Talbothays since she got there. It stormed the night before, and the river is high but the air is clear. Soon they come to a part of the road that is flooded, and they can't wade through it in their nice Sunday clothes.

It is telling that Tess hasn't left the farm since she got there, as it has become her whole world now, a comfort against outside society and strangers who might recognize her.

Angel comes wading around the corner, dressed in his work clothes. He now prefers the outdoors to church, and today is checking on the flood's damage to the hay. He had seen the girls from far away and hurried to help them, particularly Tess. The four of them look very pretty clinging to the bank, with flies and butterflies trapped inside their dresses.

Angel is in some ways Hardy's experiment of an upper-class intellectual trying to get back to his roots in Nature. The girls with insects trapped in their church dresses is an interesting image of the forces of Nature and Christian convention fighting within them.

Angel offers to carry them one by one through the pool, but he avoids looking at Tess. All of them blush at his offer, and he starts with Marian. Izz builds up the moment before he comes for her, and when he gets Retty he finally looks at Tess. He returns for her and she is ashamed of her excitement.

Here Hardy presents the women as helpless objects of beauty, waiting for a man to carry them across the water. This is a very conservative image and contrasts with his usual scenes.

Angel starts to carry her, and compares her to Rachel from the Bible. Tess tries to compliment the other women, but Angel admits he carried them only to get to her. He exclaims her name and they both blush, but Angel realizes he is in a position of power and goes no further. He walks slowly to prolong their time.

This "rescue" is a contrast to Alec's. Angel realizes Tess is at a disadvantage in clinging to him, and he does not abuse his power. Again he compares Tess to a religious figure, this time Rachel (Jacob's favorite of the two sisters he married. Yet in some ways Angel will come to see Tess as the other sister, Leah, when he feels that Tess has tricked him into marriage just as Jacob was tricked).

The others watch Tess, and then Marian blurts out that Angel likes Tess best. Their good moods have vanished, but they do not blame Tess, as they have the fatalism of their people and accept things as they are. Tess realizes then that she loves Angel as well.

The other dairymaids have a similar mindset to Joan Durbeyfield – what will be will be. They are able to accept that Tess has "beat" them without hating her.

Tess declares that she would refuse Angel if he asked her to marry, but she also doesn't think he will marry any of them. The other women decide to befriend Tess again, but they are deeply upset and suffer with emotions that "cruel Nature" has thrust upon them. They can see the logical futility of their passion, considering their social class, but they can't help it.

Hardy criticizes the arbitrary rules of society that make Angel "unavailable" to the dairymaids, while their emotions are pure and in accord with Nature. Tess again tries to suppress her passion as a kind of sacrifice for Angel's and her friends' sake.

That night the four discuss Angel again, and say his family has picked out a doctor's daughter for him to marry. They talk and weep late into the night. Tess then gives up hopes of marriage. She knows Angel has chosen her above the rest, but compared to them she is inferior in the "eyes of propriety."

The mention of Angel's other possible wife makes Tess realize that he still cares for social conventions, and it is basically impossible that he should marry Tess because of both her class and her past.

CHAPTER 24

It is the season of fertility and "oozing fatness" in Froom Valley, and it seems inevitable that passion should grow there. It is very hot outside, and the warmth echoes Angel's feelings. All the workers, birds, and cows constantly seek shade or breeze.

Hardy again associates fertility and abundance with Tess, and here with her and Angel's passion. Her happy times coincide with the vitality of Nature.

One afternoon Tess starts milking one of her favorite cows, with her head resting meditatively in profile. Angel watches her, and her face is "lovable" to him, no longer otherworldly but real and vital, and her lips impossibly beautiful. Tess then realizes he is watching her but does not change her position. Angel is overcome by passion, all his prudent logic disappears, and he embraces her.

In one sense Tess is becoming more of a unique person for Angel and less of an ideal, but in many ways he has just exchanged the ideal of essential female/goddess for innocent maid/pure child of Nature.

Tess is surprised, but accepts his action with "unreflecting inevitableness" and gives a cry of joy. Angel again almost kisses her, but then apologizes for not asking Tess's permission, and declares his devotion to her.

Tess accepts her fate yet again, but this time it is one she actually desires. Angel contrasts with Alec in the chasteness and hesitation of his advances.

The cow grows restless and Tess moves to save the milk. They sit together and Tess starts to cry. Angel worries that he has been too forward and taken advantage of her innocence. Crick comes by again, but now something has changed between Angel and Tess, something impractical but leading to a new perspective and future for them both.

Tess grieves her unavoidable situation in a society that would condemn her love and good fortune. A wall has been broken between her and Angel, and their destinies are now inexorably bound together.

CHAPTER 25

That evening Angel is still restless, so he goes outside. He is surprised by his own burst of passion, and wonders how they should act before others now. He had planned to come to Talbothays for a brief episode of education and observation, but now the outside world has become dull to him and the farm is transformed by Tess's personality into a wonderful, abundant, homelike place.

Tess brings out Angel's more liberated inner nature, but his repressed conventionality quickly returns. Tess has the power to affect Angel's mindset and seemingly the entire environment, although it may be that she is just perfectly aligned with Nature instead.

Even apart from Tess the dairy has become important to Angel. He realizes that his experiences here are as important as elsewhere, and that Tess is not a doll for his temporary pleasure but a human with her own "precious life." This life is her only chance in this world, a chance given her by an "unsympathetic First Cause," so Angel must be careful in dealing with it.

Angel has many wise and admirable observations here that contrast with Alec's carelessness. It seems that he shares Hardy's idea of a compassionless God or predestined fate.

Angel realizes he should probably avoid Tess for a while, but the thought is repulsive to him. He decides to go home and ask his family and acquaintances if it doesn't make sense for a farmer to have a farm-woman for a wife.

Angel is constantly trying to reign in his emotions, and his return home symbolizes the importance he places on the opinions of others, despite what his inner nature feels.

At breakfast the four women discover that Angel is gone, and they try to hide their despair. Dairyman Crick blithely discusses his eventual leaving, and guesses that Angel has about four months left at Talbothays.

The date is set at which everything will change again, so they have something to both hope for and despair of. The dairyman is humorously blind to his workers' passions.

At that time Angel is riding home to Emminster with some pudding and mead from Mrs. Crick. He watches the road and thinks about his potential future with Tess, and what his family and community would think if he married her.

Angel tries to reconcile his innate, natural love for Tess with the opinions of society and his family. In his passion, such reconciliation still seems possible.

Angel passes by his father's church and sees some school-girls, and among them is Mercy Chant, the pious woman his parents want him to marry. Angel thinks of the fertile valley and Tess, and tries to avoid Mercy.

Mercy is herself a unique woman, but the story is Tess's, so here she represents the upper-class properness and repression, and contrasts with wild, natural Tess.

Angel has come home on an impulse without warning his family, and he arrives at breakfast. Both his brothers, Felix and Cuthbert, are home from their respective positions. Their father, Reverend Clare, is an "honest, God-fearing man." He is one of a dying breed of clergymen who is extreme and conservative in his views but wins everyone's admiration for his sincerity and fervency.

Reverend Clare gets the most respect among the Christians Hardy portrays, but it is his sincerity and passion that are portrayed positively more than the specifics of his religious beliefs. His whole nature leans in this one way, and he remains true to it despite the fashions of the church and society.

Angel imagines his father uncomprehending and condemning of the "aesthetic, sensuous, pagan pleasure in natural life and lush womanhood" that Angel has lately enjoyed. Clare cannot accept his son's skepticism, but his heart is so kind that he feels and acts no differently towards Angel.

Angel admits the pagan nature of his current rural life, and contrasts it with his father's austerity. The Reverend's kindness makes his harsh religious beliefs more human.

Angel sits down and again feels that he has changed while his family remains the same. His brothers notice that he behaves with the passionate freedom of a farmer, and has perhaps "lost culture." Later Angel walks with them; they are both educated men who wear the glasses that are in fashion, read the poets in fashion, and believe the doctrines in fashion. Angel notices their recent "mental limitations" as they settle into their respective mindframes of the Church and University. Both are somewhat inferior in spirit to their father, and they have little curiosity for life or sense of the wider world beyond.

Hardy disparages the older brothers for their unoriginality and lack of conviction. They are more socially proper than Angel, Tess, or Reverend Clare, but they have lost their sense of wonder in the world and can no longer empathize with other points of view. Hardy's social and religious critique is at its sharpest here, and the perfectly conventional Clare brothers seem like lifeless cutouts of what their society wants them to be.

Felix comments on Angel's farming future and advises him to not drop his morality and thought, as in his latest letters he seemed to be losing intelligence. Angel disparages Felix's fixed ideas of dogma. They return home and Angel is hungry, but neither parent returns until much later.

The brothers' worlds collide but they have little to say to each other, so lost are they in their own states of mind. Angel is used to the hearty meals of a farmer, and finds his family's austerity stifling.

Angel looks around for his gifts from Mrs. Crick, but his mother has given the puddings to the poor and put the mead in the medicine cabinet, as they never drink alcohol. Angel uses a rural expression and then feels ashamed of his family's stiffness.

The contrast between meals at Talbothays and in the Clare household is emphasized. The farmers embrace their appetites and pleasures while the Clares deny themselves.

CHAPTER 26

That night after prayers Angel finally summons the courage to discuss his situation with his father. He talks of his plan to set up a farm in either England or the Colonies, and Reverend Clare reveals that he has been saving up money for Angel's future land expenses. Angel is touched, and so he brings up the subject of marriage. Mr. Clare insists his wife be at least a good Christian woman, and mentions Mercy Chant.

Again Reverend Clare's kindness is emphasized over the harshness of his beliefs. He too is lost in his own world, though, and sees true Christian doctrine as the most important part of marriage. Angel has to translate his life into his father's religious language, but for now he is good at existing in two worlds at once.

Angel argues that he ought to marry someone who could help him with farming, but Mr. Clare is still caught up on the details of Mercy's beliefs. Angel says that Providence has given him a woman just as pure and faithful as Mercy, but with skills in agriculture instead of religion.

Angel frames his meeting with Tess as the work of God, and he tries to emphasize her Christianity. The Reverend is still lost in his specific preferences.

Mrs. Clare interrupts to ask about Tess's family. Angel admits that she is not a "lady," but downplays the importance of ancestry when one is working the land. He compliments Tess for living what poets can only write about, and highlights her Christian faith, which before he had scorned as a façade for her more pagan, naturalistic lifestyle.

Mrs. Clare seems more worldly than her husband, and concerned with their social class. Angel has to downplay the part of Tess that he loves the most, which is her ancient pagan spirit and natural purity.

Considering his other rebellions, the Clares are pleased that Angel has at least chosen a Christian girl, and they offer to meet her. Angel doesn't give many details, as their middle-class prejudices might make his parents biased against Tess as she is. In discussing her, Angel realizes that what he loves about Tess is not her skill or intelligence but her inherent vitality, and he sees that there is little difference in the range of spirits in women across different social classes.

Angel understands the deep divide between his family's world and Tess's, and knows that they might disapprove of her because of external circumstances alone. For now he is blinded by love and so can look beyond the strict roles of convention, but he is still wise to prepare his austere family for the Nature-child Tess.

He departs in the morning, avoiding traveling with his brothers and eager to return to Tess. His father rides with him a while, discussing problems of the parish. Reverend Clare mentions a particular young sinner named d'Urberville. Angel knows about the old family, but Mr. Clare says this young man is no relation. He had sought out the young d'Urberville, who had a reputation for sins of passion, and preached to him. The man responded with angry and insulting remarks to the Reverend.

The hint of Alec brings up the dark past and shows that Tess is never really free; her past can always rise up and work against her. Even just the mention of d'Urberville implies that her happiness cannot last. The Reverend is contrasted with Alec in his beliefs, but especially in the endurance of his convictions.

Angel feels saddened that his father subjects himself to such attacks, but Mr. Clare brushes it off. He says he has been struck by sinners before, but if he was able to save them then it was worth it. Angel does not agree with his father's views but respects his conviction, and admires that the Reverend never asked about Tess's wealth. Angel feels closer to his father than his brothers are.

Again Mr. Clare shows admirable sincerity. Angel realizes that his father is so immersed in his beliefs that he does not care about Tess's worldly situation, but only if her faith is pure. Angel recognizes that this seems like a better way of being than that of his brothers, who are little more than servants to society's whims.

CHAPTER 27

Angel goes down into the damp, fertile Froom Valley, and feels like he is experiencing life more fully than he did at home. He loves his family but he feels freed from a burden in returning to Talbothays. Everyone is napping at the dairy, but then the bell rings and Tess appears first.

Again the purity and freedom of agricultural life is praised over religious repression or upper-class prudishness. Angel is also a young man rebelling against his parents' world, but Hardy echoes his preference.

Tess does not know Angel is back, and he admires the exuberance of Nature within her unconscious self. She suddenly notices Angel and then remembers their new relationship. Angel puts his arm around her and her heart beats excitedly, but she has to go to work soon.

The comparison of his stifling hometown to Tess's unencumbered natural purity reinforces his conviction to marry her.

Angel offers to help her, so it only they two skimming the milk. Tess experiences the afternoon as a hazy, joyful dream. Angels at last asks her to marry him, but frames the question in logical terms as a farmer needing a farmer's wife.

This afternoon is one of the pinnacles of Tess's happiness, before the realities of her own past and the condemning structures of society take control of their relationship.

Tess suddenly seems to grow old and tired, and she says she can never be Angel's wife. Her refusal breaks her own heart. Angel is amazed, and wants to know why she cannot marry him. She admits that she loves him, but gives the excuse that she is too low-born and his parents would disapprove. Even when Angel says he has already spoken to them she refuses, and he fears he has been too sudden in his proposal.

Finally reality catches up and again Tess must sacrifice her own happiness because of something that was not her fault. Angel still idealizes her, and so he cannot imagine his innocent Nature-girl having any kind of real objection to their marriage.

They go back to milk-skimming but Tess begins to cry. Angel tries to reassure her about his parents' compassion, and asks about Tess's religious beliefs. Her response is vague and sorrowful, but Angel thinks she is sincere enough that even his father could not disapprove.

Tess represents an innate, naturalistic religion. She follows Christian traditions because that is what she was taught, but her inner faith is purer and more amorphous. Angel correctly connects her sincerity with his father's.

Angel talks more about his visit, and then brings up his conversation with his father. He retells the story of the insulting young skeptic, and gives enough information that Tess can tell it is Alec. The reminder of her past hardens her in her refusal, but Angel does not notice her expression.

Again the timing is bad for Tess, and even at the peak of her happiness Alec's ghost comes back to haunt her. She can never escape her destiny, and hopelessly tries to push away her own happiness.

Tess runs back into the open field as if trying to escape her sadness. Now that Angel is back in the valley, marrying a dairymaid seems much more natural than marrying a woman like Mercy Chant.

Tess once more returns to Nature to escape her troubles. Angel is ignorant of her inner turmoil, and still enchanted by his own romantic ideas about her.

CHAPTER 28

Angel is not upset by Tess's refusal, and he is reassured that she already let him court her, although he doesn't realize that flirting in the fields is much freer and more common than in stifled middle-class homes.

Angel still condescends to Tess, presuming he knows her line of reasoning, and in doing so once again his social background contrasts itself with Tess's.

Angel asks again about her refusal, and Tess repeats that she is not good enough for him. She affirms that she loves him, and enjoys being with him, but says it is for Angel's own good that they cannot marry. Angel thinks she is just being self-deprecating, so he compliments her all the more, which just makes her sadder once she is alone again.

Tess determinedly keeps sacrificing herself, trying to make her natural inner passions subject to her social guilt. Angel cannot even conceive of his ideal woman having any kind of hidden flaws, which of course makes it all the harder for her to reveal them.

Tess struggles within herself now, shaken by Angel's persuasive words. She had decided before Talbothays that she would never marry, as she might cause pain to her husband. Tess wonders why no one has told Angel her history, as she lived not so far away. Her roommates look at her sadly but without bitterness.

Her inner turmoil continues. It is only convention and Angel's preconceived notions that inspire her guilt. Again, if all was in accord with Nature she could love the man she loves and be unaffected by society's judgment.

Tess has never experienced such simultaneous extremes of pleasure and pain before. Mr. Crick and his wife seemed to have figured out the relationship, so they leave Angel and Tess alone often. One day they are breaking up cheese curds and Angel takes her hand and kisses her arm. She flushes, pleased at his declaration of love but upset at his renewed proposal.

A romantic scene that should be straightforward and sweet, but is instead complicated by all the issues bubbling beneath the surface of both lovers' emotions.

Angel begins to grow frustrated and compares her to a fickle city girl, but then he says he knows how pure and innocent she is. Tess almost breaks under her own desire, and she promises to tell Angel about her past. Angel condescendingly compares her experiences to a flower's. Tess agrees to tell him everything Sunday.

Again Angel's idealized version of Tess subsumes the real Tess standing before him. She has to fit his idea of the pure Nature-goddess, and so couldn't possibly have an unhappy past or inner anguish.

Tess runs off and throws herself into a willow thicket. She feels both joyful and miserable, and realizes that her natural passions are overcoming her intellect, and it is almost inevitable that she will succumb.

Tess seeks out Nature again in her sadness. She sees the hand of fate pushing her forward, and knows that she cannot escape.

Tess is too agitated to go to work, as she will be teased for being in love. In the evening the trees and moon seem monstrous. The days pass, and it is Saturday, and Tess cries out to herself that she will let Angel marry her, but at the same time she can't bear the guilt of hurting him when he finds out her story.

This outburst is the essence of Tess's pain at this point. The oppressive hand of Victorian society works against her even in her anonymity and rural freedom. She still is not free to follow her heart without guilt.

CHAPTER 29

At breakfast Dairyman Crick tells some news he has heard of Jack Dollop, the man from his butterchurn story. Dollop did not actually marry the girl he had wronged, but instead married a rich widow for her pension. But after they were married the widow revealed that she had lost her pension by marrying him. The table discusses whether it would have been better for the widow to tell Dollop the truth before they were married, even if it meant losing him. Again the workers find the story funny while to Tess it is tragic. To her it is like people laughing at a martyr.

Again Dollop appears at an instructive time for Tess, paralleling her own story. She is reminded that she is an outsider from the other dairymaids, who are actually as pure and honest as Angel thinks Tess is. She can understand the pain of telling the painful truth to someone you love, even within the context of a humorous anecdote.

Angel approaches and again proposes, and Tess refuses. He had planned to kiss her, but his surprise at her refusal stops him. It is only the recent story of Jack Dollop that makes Tess refuse this time. A few weeks pass of Angel's persuasive wooing, and Tess knows her resolve will soon break.

Tess starts to accept the inevitable and realizes she cannot escape her own passion. The only question for her is how to spare Angel pain, and how to summon the courage to potentially push him away.

One dark, early morning Angel begs Tess to speak clearly at last, or he will have to leave. She asks for more time again, but agrees to call him "Angel dearest." Angel kisses her for the first time upon the cheek, and Tess runs quickly downstairs.

Tess all but agrees to marriage by accepting his kiss and his pet name, but technically she maintains her position.

Later Tess and Angel follow Marian, Retty, and Izz out and Angel remarks how different they are from he and Tess. Tess denies it and again says any of them would make a more proper wife for him than she would. Then she feels she has done her duty.

Tess again feels duty-bound to push Angel towards her more innocent friends, despite her heart's desire. Angel betrays his naiveté by generalizing the other women together.

That afternoon the time passes faster than usual, and Dairyman Crick declares that someone needs to take the milk straight to the station. Angel volunteers and asks Tess to come with him. She is not dressed for cold, but agrees.

The end of the chapter, in which Tess once again is about to go on a wagon ride alone with a man (last time she did this was when Alec raped her), suggesting that the next chapter will be more decisive than the couple's many previous interactions.

CHAPTER 30

The cart moves onto Egdon Heath, and the two are silent for a long time. It starts to rain, and Tess's hair comes undone. The evening gets cold and she and Angel huddle close under a sailcloth. He asks her for an answer sometime before they get home. At that moment they drive by an old mansion, and Angel says it once belonged to the d'Urberville family.

The d'Urbervilles always seem to pop up at bad times, reminding Tess that she cannot escape the past and is perhaps always doomed. It is again a gray hour like their many pre-dawn meetings.

They reach the railway station, which is the point where modern society daily touches their "secluded world." They unload the milk, and Tess looks totally out of place among the machinery.

Tess is explicitly contrasted with the industrial machinery and held up as an example of ancient Nature and purity.

They start to ride back and discuss who will drink the milk far away in London. The city people have to water it down before they can stomach it. Angel changes the subject to his proposal, and again tries to clarify Tess's objections.

The milk becomes another symbol of modern life's separation from Nature. The dairy workers drink the raw, pure milk, while the city people have to water it down.

Tess begins to tell her history, but Angel dismisses her worries or possibly troubled past. Tess reveals that she is actually a d'Urberville. not a Durbeyfield, and pretends that this was the truth she had been withholding, because she heard Angel hated old families.

Angel again condescends and assumes he knows Tess's past. This is the moment of truth, and Tess slips up in her conviction. This is possibly the only selfish decision she has made, but note that it is only a big deal because of social conventions. She doesn't actually have anything to be guilty about, as she did nothing wrong.

Angel laughs at her and says the history of ancient families is interesting to him. Tess realizes she has failed in her conviction, and feels she acted selfishly. Angel says he would have liked her to be truly a child of the soil instead of corrupt aristocrats, but Tess herself has now disabused him of his prejudice.

Tess immediately feels guilty, although truthfully her history shouldn't even be an issue. She can cure Angel of his small prejudice against old families, but not of the large one he and society hold against women like her (who were, in fact, brutally harmed).

Angel asks that Tess call herself d'Urberville now, and thinks his mother will be impressed. Tess would rather not, and then Angel mentions the young man who abused his father, and the coincidence that he was a false d'Urberville. Tess gets upset and says the name is unlucky.

Alec again intrudes on Tess's happiness, even from far away, and the d'Urberville name seems like a bad omen. Mrs. Clare's concern with social norms is made more explicit.

Angel says she should take his name instead, and so escape the d'Urbervilles. Then Tess finally accepts and Angel kisses her. She immediately starts crying, both out of gladness and for having broken her promise to never marry. She says sometimes she wishes she were dead. Angel is slightly offended, but then Tess kisses him of her own volition, and he truly believes she loves him.

Another major turning point in Tess's life, this one potentially for the better, but she still can't escape her guilt and inner turmoil. She takes a little agency and kisses Angel herself, actively showing love instead of being always the object of desire.

Nature always wins against the weak and arbitrary rules of society, so it was inevitable that Tess should have agreed eventually. Tess asks to write to her mother in Marlott, and finally Angel remembers where they met. Tess hopes that his first refusal of her is not a bad omen.

Hardy explains how this result was unavoidable from the beginning, that "what will be will be" despite our feeble social rules. Yet another mention of the past seems like an omen for the future.

CHAPTER 31

Tess writes a letter to her mother, and soon gets a response. Joan writes in a rustic, uneducated manner, congratulating Tess's marriage but warning her to not mention her past "Trouble." She knows it is in Tess's nature to be honest, but says she would be a fool to talk about her past to Angel.

Tess finally gets some outside advice, but while this advice may be clever, it is at odds with Tess's natural sincerity. Her mother's dialect seems foreign to her life now that she is used to Angel's educated manner.

Tess realizes that to Joan her past horrors were but a fleeting trouble, but that she might be right about keeping silent. Tess is somewhat calmed by the letter. That autumn is one of the happiest times of her life. She loves Angel with perfect trust bordering on worship, assured that he is the ideal of goodness and intellect. She tries to dismiss the past altogether.

Tess is finally able to make some sort of decision, and immediately the happiness her spirit has desired overtakes her. She idealizes Angel as much as he does her, and cannot see any of his flaws in her image of a godlike man.

Tess is constantly surprised by Angel's chivalry and thoughtfulness. In reality she exaggerates his qualities, but he is a good, spiritual man, and loves with his mind as much as his heart. This especially pleases Tess in comparison with her past experiences.

Angel's delicacy is again contrasted with Alec's bestial nature. This mutual idealization on the part of both lovers can lead to nothing good, however.

Tess seeks out Angel whenever they are outdoors, which seems presumptuous and immodest to him until he realizes it is the country way. They walk together by brooks and through fogs, and watch men digging in the rich, fertile soil.

Angel shows his ignorance of another rural custom. Images of fertility and natural beauty again accompany his and Tess's happiness.

Angel keeps his arm around Tess as they walk, and Tess asks if he would be ashamed if his Emminster friends found out about it. Angel jokes that a Clare could never be ashamed of a d'Urberville, and says that he does not care what they think, since they will probably move to another part of England or another country altogether. Tess is overcome with emotion at this idea of their future. They stand on a bridge with a river and many animals passing below.

Angel displays an admirable sentiment of independence from convention here, but he cannot maintain it in the face of a real trial. Tess is offered the escape from the past she has been dreaming of, and her joy is heartbreaking. More descriptions of nature are emphasized alongside their relationship.

They walk also in the evenings, and the other workers note the excited change in Tess's voice as they talk, and her gait which is like a bird about to land. Her love for Angel begins to envelop every aspect of Tess's personality, but she never forgets the darkness lurking beyond her happy bubble.

Tess is again compared to a bird. Her personality starts to be subsumed by her passion, but she still has enough wisdom to remember the depression of her past.

One evening they are at home alone when Tess again protests that she is unworthy. Angel responds that being honest and true is better than fitting any convention of society. Tess wishes he had stayed long ago at the May-Day dance and married her then. Angel feels she is being moody and asks why she so strongly regrets such a thing. Tess deflects by saying they would have had more time together then.

Angel still cannot understand her turmoil, and Tess again avoids being honest. The thought of her younger, more innocent self upsets her. Her guilt threatens the happiness she has sacrificed so much for, and the tragedy is that it is guilt for a sin Tess did not commit.

The narrator points out that Tess is still a girl and not yet mature despite her dark past. She leaves for a while to calm down, and when she finally returns Angel says she has been acting capricious. Tess agrees, but promises it is not in her nature.

Hardy reminds us of Tess's age to put this in perspective. She does not have the maturity to deal with all that has happened to her. Angel makes more mistaken observations.

Angel wants to set a wedding date, but Tess delays, hoping to linger as they are. Angel is concerned with his future as a farmer, and wants Tess to help him starting out. The potential nearness of the wedding strikes Tess and she realizes again that it is real.

The nebulous engagement offers an escape from the past for Tess, but setting a date for the wedding (like her musings on the date of her death) makes it frighteningly real.

At that moment the Cricks and two milkmaids enter, and Tess pulls away from Angel, denying that she was sitting on his knee. Dairyman Crick says he wouldn't have noticed if she hadn't said anything. Angel declares their betrothal, and Crick congratulates him. Tess had disappeared at the look of the dairymaids.

Their secluded relationship finally starts to come up against the outside world, starting with their comfortable Talbothays home. Already there is trouble with Tess's roommates.

After dinner Tess's roommates confront her and she admits they are getting married. The three gather around Tess and lay hands on her in awe. They want to dislike her, but cannot. Tess again says they are all better than she is, and bursts into tears.

Tess becomes transformed for the women when they learn of her betrothal, and they lay hands on her as if she had suddenly become a saint or goddess.

The women comfort Tess and put her in bed, and then Marian asks her to think of them when she is with Angel, and to remember how they loved him and could not hate her. Tess cries and resolves again to tell Angel the truth, as her silence seems an offense against these honest women.

Tess is still eaten away with guilt. She thinks again that Retty, Marian, and Izz are more like the pure, innocent female ideals that Angel really loves.

CHAPTER 32

Tess's guilt and joy in the engagement keeps her from naming a date. Angel keeps asking her at tempting times, surrounded by natural beauty or among the cows. One night they are alone beside the river and Angel mentions that Dairyman Crick doesn't need much help for the winter. He had suggested that Tess leave when Angel did, around Christmas.

Setting a wedding date would be like submitting to fate for Tess, so she avoids it. She is most vulnerable and passionate in nature, as Angel has learned. Finally reality starts to catch up with their fantasy.

Tess feels bad at being asked to leave but then is caught in a dilemma. She has to really set a date or else find a new and foreign farm without Angel. He reminds her that they cannot continue as they are forever, and though Tess wishes that they could, she promises to pick a day.

Tess finally gives in to the inevitable future and accepts that this time of easy happiness cannot last. She must face both the past and the future at some point.

They tell the Cricks, who congratulate them and lament losing Tess. Mrs. Crick swears that she always knew Tess was meant for great things. They really set a date and Tess accepts it with the fatalism of her people. She writes again to Joan, reminding her that Angel is a gentleman, and of a different and more discerning society.

Despite the many bad things that have happened to her, Tess still has some of her mother's ability to accept harsh realities and move on. She has to remind Joan of the disparities of class between her and Angel, and how judgmental his community is.

Angel had emphasized the practicality of their marriage, but really he is still enjoying the recklessness of this time of his life, and his love for Tess remains naïve and fanciful, unsuspecting that she could have any troubled history.

Angel also experiences this time as dreamlike, avoiding the realities of his life. His love for Tess comes from a similar state of mind, which will lead to disastrous consequences.

Angel has begun to influence Tess's way of speaking and thinking, and he fears to leave her to revert to rustic ways. He will present her to his parents, but then wants her with him wherever they venture next. But first he wants to ready Tess for a few months before she meets his mother.

Angel plans out their future but fears to startle Tess. He wants to "train" her to meet his mother, so she doesn't embarrass him. Angel still cares more for other's opinions than he thinks.

Angel also plans to spend a while learning about flour-mills at Wellbridge, and he is greatly influenced by the fact that their lodgings would be in an old d'Urberville mansion. He decides to go there right after the wedding, but keeps his plans vague to Tess.

Angel makes more decisions based on whims and sentiments that will have lasting effects on Tess. He unknowingly dredges up her past just at the start of her new life.

Tess contemplates the date (December 31) in wonder. Izz asks her if Angel will follow the customs and ask her parents for permission, but Angel explains he wants to get a quiet wedding license, much to Tess's relief. She feels that her good fortune now will mean bad luck later, as that is how God works.

Tess's experience of fate is harsh and pessimistic; she does not expect any happiness to last in her life. At the same time she cannot help enjoying her present happiness and taking this temporary reprieve from revealing her history.

Angel buys her new wedding clothes, and Tess is overcome with delight. She tries on the dress and then thinks of an old nursery rhyme about an impure bride, and wonders if the dress will betray her and turn red.

Tess is still steeped in both her mother's superstitions and the judgments of Victorian society. The song and the dress seem like bad omens, and she feels impure again.

CHAPTER 33

Angel wants to spend a last romantic day with Tess before their wedding. On Christmas Eve they go out shopping as a couple, and Angel returns to the society he had been avoiding for so long.

They are still trying to prolong this episode of unreality, and play-act as a married couple among Angel's society that will later judge them.

They return to their inn and as two men are leaving the parlor, one recognizes Tess and makes an insulting remark about her past. Angel hears and strikes him in the face. The man apologizes and pretends it was a mistake. Angel gives him some money for his trouble.

Another unhappy coincidence where Tess's past comes up at the peak of her happiness. Angel can physically strike it—just as he has always stopped Tess from admitting it to him—but Tess cannot escape its reality.

As they ride away Tess asks again about postponing the wedding, as she is upset by the incident. She comforts herself with the thought of moving very far away.

Tess's thought is again of putting many miles between her and her history, and so somehow escape the hand of fate.

That night Angel dreams he is fighting the insulting man and lashes out in his sleep. This is the last straw for Tess, and she decides to confess everything in a letter. She writes it all down and slips it under Angel's door. The next morning Tess is distraught but Angel acts normally. She wonders if he got the note, but feels comforted that he will forgive her either way.

When Tess realizes the strength of Angel's love, her guilt overwhelms her. She is still too weak to say it out loud, but here at last she makes her painful sacrifice. Her reward is even more confusion.

On their wedding day they sleep late, and then find that Dairyman Crick has cleaned and decorated the kitchen in their honor. No guests from either family arrive, as Tess invited no one and Angel's family is displeased with his hasty decision. He would be more upset if he did not know the secret of Tess's ancestry, which he exaggeratedly assumes will win his family's hearts.

The ceremony is small and focused on the future rather than on family and the past. Angel fears facing his family's scorn, and wants to delay until he has to. In his passion Angel puts too much stock in the d'Urberville name, which has already been the downfall of many.

Tess is still unsure if Angel read her note, so she checks his room and finds it hidden under the carpet, still sealed. She destroys it. She knows there is still time to confess, but the house is busy with wedding preparations and they only have a minute alone.

Tess is given another painful reprieve, which makes confessing even harder. She chooses to delay the inevitable again.

Tess tries to bring up the subject lightly, but Angel dismisses it and says he will confess his sins as well, later when they are settled and need entertainment. The remaining hours are a whirlwind, and her excitement temporarily drowns out any apprehension.

Angel still assumes he understands the nature of Tess's life. It is notable that he brings up his own faults on their wedding day, framed as an amusing story for later.

They go to the church in an ancient carriage driven by an ancient man. It is just the couple and the Cricks. Angel wishes his brothers had come, but thinks they would have been out of place among the dairy workers. Tess experiences the ride in a bright haze, and feels like one of the divinities Angel used to compare her to.

The description of the carriage lends a somewhat ominous tone to the ride. Angel's conformist brothers clearly would disapprove of Tess. Tess briefly sees herself as others do, as a goddess or symbol larger than her individual self.

The ceremony passes in a blur, and once Tess reaches out to assure herself of Angel's reality. He does not yet appreciate the depth and purity of her love for him. They come out of the church and when the bells die away Tess again returns from her sublime mental state.

Angel's love is still naïve, but Tess's has been matured and strengthened by the pain of her past. He still does not realize how deeply everything he does affects her.

Angel remarks on her expression, and Tess says she feels she has seen the old carriage before. Angel mentions the legend of the **d'Urberville coach**, but doesn't want to tell the story then as it is too morbid, involving a d'Urberville committing a crime in the family coach.

Hardy here introduces the symbol of the coach, which is itself a foreshadowing of murder. The full legend is not told yet, but it does seem like another bad omen on their wedding day.

By the time they reach home Tess is depressed, and wonders if she is rightfully Alec's wife instead of Angel's. When she is alone she prays to both God and her husband, and laments that Angel does not love *her*, but the person she might once have been.

Tess's religion comes from the strength of her passion, and so her prayers are aimed mostly at Angel. She can see now that he loves an idealized version of Tess, not the real Tess.

They leave for the flour-mill, and Tess asks Angel to kiss Marian, Retty, and Izz once for her, as they look so very sad. Angel obeys, and as they leave Tess looks back and sees the kiss has affected them all deeply.

Tess's good intentions do more harm than good, but again the four women remain free of bitterness in their honest country hearts, and also because of Tess's own sincerity.

Angel bids farewell to the Cricks, but at that moment a cock crows. They hear someone mutter about a bad omen, and the bird crows twice again. Tess wants to hurry away, and the dairyman and his wife reassure themselves that it only means a change of weather and "not what you think."

This is another bad omen with its own sense of urgency in ending the chapter. This is also another bird associated with Tess's fate, and the image recalls the story of the Biblical Peter denying that he knew Jesus, like Tess betraying Angel with her silence.

CHAPTER 34

They arrive at the farm with the ancient d'Urberville mansion and see that they have the place to themselves. The moldy house upsets Tess, and she is still worried about the crowing rooster. On the walls are portraits of old, cruel-looking d'Urberville women, and Angel can't help noticing how Tess resembles them.

Even their first day as husband and wife is shadowed by the specter of the past. The old house also provides a gloomy setting for what should be a happy occasion. The portraits hint that Tess cannot escape her cruel blood and the fate that comes with it.

The sun is low, and they share their first tea together as husband and wife. Angel wonders if he can appreciate yet the power Tess has now placed in his hands, that her future depends on his. He vows to himself to never neglect her.

Only now does Angel start to realize the depth of Tess's selfless devotion and his own power as husband. He basically holds her life in his hands now.

They wait for their luggage but it gets dark and then starts to rain. Angel sees Tess is upset and regrets bringing her to this old house. He decides she is stressing about their luggage. There is a knock, but it is not their luggage, and instead a package for Tess from the Clares.

Once again Angel's spontaneous decision (to stay in this mansion) leads to Tess's lasting sorrow. He really doesn't know her inner life well at all if he thinks she is so upset over luggage.

Tess makes Angel break the grave-looking seal, and inside is a note for Angel from Mrs. Clare. It explains that these are the jewels his godmother left him for his future wife. They spread them out and Tess cannot believe they are hers now. Tess puts them on and she appears like an exquisite lady in a ballroom, although Angel decides he prefers her simple farm-clothes.

The Clares at least approve enough to send this gift, and Tess realizes again the disparity of their wealth. Angel finds her beautiful, but prefers his idealized version of Tess the innocent dairymaid. He is still trying to keep the fantasy alive.

Tess leaves the jewels on, hoping they will help her cause later, and they start to eat supper. Finally the door opens and Jonathon (a worker from Talbothays) brings in their luggage. He looks downcast, and reminds them of the cock's crow, and says that he is late because Retty Priddle had tried to drown herself in the river, and Marian was found passed out drunk. Izz alone remained in the house, although depressed. Jonathon leaves the luggage and goes out.

The dairymaids' earlier infatuation turns tragic and intense. It turns out Angel's last kiss was indeed destructive to their inexperienced hearts. This news is surely worse than any of the other bad omens, and it casts even more gloom over the couple's first night.

Angel expects Tess to be happy about their luggage, but she is upset by the girls. She feels less worthy than they are, and yet they had to suffer unrequited love and she did not. Tess decides to tell the truth at last and make amends. She stares into the fire for a long time.

Angel again attributes his idea of shallow female concerns to Tess. Tess's guilt returns stronger than ever, and she decides to sacrifice her own happiness just so she cannot enjoy what she feels her friends deserve.

Angel interrupts her reverie and reminds Tess that he had something to confess. Tess is surprised and relieved. Angel says he did not mention it before because he was afraid of losing her affection. He is not a religious man anymore, but still believes in good morals. He confesses that in London he spent two days with an older woman, before realizing his sin and fleeing. He asks Tess to forgive him, and she squeezes his hand to affirm that she does.

Hardy reveals that Angel has been in almost the same situation as Tess this whole time. He also had a sexual past to confess but waited until they were married in case Tess rejected him. His sin is actually greater than Tess's, as his was voluntary and hers was forced upon her. This surprise confession makes the ultimate result much more tragic.

Tess is relieved and now ready to tell her story, although Angel still can't believe it could be anything bad. Tess feels her sin is the same as his, so Angel will surely forgive her as she forgave him. They hold hands and press their heads together, her diamonds gleaming ominously, and Tess tells the whole story of Alec d'Urberville.

Tess feels (rightly) that their "sins" are almost the same so she should have nothing to fear. In her joy she forgets the cruel conventions of society and Angel's own upbringing and strict ideals. The gloomy diamonds forebode that her hopes will be dashed.

CHAPTER 35

Tess finishes her story, and the "essence of things" seems to have been transformed by it. Angel cannot yet comprehend the truth, and asks if Tess is lying or crazy, and why she did not tell him before. Tess begs him to forgive her, as she forgave him for "the same."

The sharp contrast between Tess's reaction to Angel's confession and Angel to Tess's emphasizes the unfairness of the sexual double standard. He should treat her past as lightly as she did his.

Angel says forgiveness does not even apply here, that Tess is now an entirely different person than he had thought. He laughs hollowly and Tess cries out for mercy, and reveals the depths of her love. Angel repeats that he has not loved *her*, but another woman he *thought* was Tess. Tess suddenly comprehends his point of view and is terrified.

Angel's image of Tess comes crashing down, and they both realize how naïve he has been. Tess's love is still mature and deep, but Angel only loved an ideal, and that ideal has now been broken.

Tess sits down and finally takes pity on herself and starts to weep. She asks if they can ever live together now, and Angel says he has not decided yet. Tess despairs and says she will obey like a servant, and not do anything that Angel doesn't command her to. Angel points out how her present self-sacrifice does not fit with her earlier self-preservation, and Tess takes this likes a beaten animal.

Angel can be unkind to her now without feeling bad, as he is freed from passion and sees with the world's condemning eyes (even though he has long prided himself as someone not blinded by the conventions of society). Tess is again compared to an animal, innocent and now broken by a human's cruelty.

Angel cries a single tear. His whole universe has been changed by her confession. He leaves the house to think, and their twin wine glasses stand tragically full. Tess follows him out into the clear night. Angel's figure looks black and ominous, and he crosses a bridge without acknowledging her presence.

Angel's tears are much less sympathetic than Tess's. His distress is mostly caused by his concern for society's opinion of him *and his scorn for Tess's own reduced image in his eyes.*

Tess follows Angel for a long time. The night clears his mind and he can think logically and coldly about her, as if her spell over him has broken. Tess pleads that her sin was nothing she intended, and it makes no change in her personality or love, but Angel rebuffs her.

Tess follows blindly like a dog and over-pleads her case in her distress. She makes arguments that would again seem logical to Nature's laws, but don't fit with Victorian conventions.

Angel admits that the sin was not her fault, but says Tess does not understand his society and manners. He cannot help but think that her ancestry makes her weak-willed, and it betrays his idea of her as a "new-sprung child of nature." They walk on in sad silence, and a cottager notices them passing as if in a funeral procession.

Angel is finally conscious of their class difference and how much he values the opinion of polite society. His prejudice against old families is renewed without Tess's pleasant spell over him. He cruelly echoes the idea that she is punished for her ancestors' sins.

Tess offers to drown herself in the river to spare Angel his pain. Angel calls her absurd and says their trouble is more satire than tragedy. He sends her home to bed. Everything about the house is the same, and Tess notices sadly the mistletoe that Angel had hung over the bed as a surprise. She feels empty and dull and soon falls asleep.

Tess falls into dramatics while Angel is coldly unemotional. The mistletoe comes as another reminder of the magical, natural world they had enjoyed just moments earlier. Tess is reinforced in her idea that she does not deserve happiness, and that nothing good can last.

Angel returns later and is both relieved and bitter that Tess is asleep. He almost enters her room, but then looks again at the d'Urberville portraits and their sinister faces strengthen his resolution. His own face is cold, unhappy, and free of passion. Angel feels that Tess's appearance deceived him of her inner self, and she has no advocate in his mind to defend her.

Angel's colder, more impersonal nature takes over. He no longer feels the abundance of life and Nature that he did at Talbothays, but has reverted to his repressed, judgmental, middle-class self. The old, dead d'Urberville women watch the unhappy scene.

CHAPTER 36

Angel wakes up and the room seems like the scene of a crime. He makes breakfast and calls for Tess, and her morning hopes die at the sight of Angel's face. The couple is as cold and ashen as the dead fire from the night before.

The cold gray morning reflects their emotions, and the feeling of criminality foreshadows later disasters. It is ambiguous who has committed the crime, though, Tess or Angel.

Tess looks purer and more innocent than ever, and Angel almost can't believe that her story is true, but Tess reaffirms it. Angel asks for the first time about Alec and the baby, and is distraught that Alec is alive and still in England. He states his position that he had decided to not take a wife of high society, but thought that he was getting “rustic innocence” in Tess.

Angel had not even considered to ask about the baby before, showing how wrapped up he was in his own idea of Tess's unfaithfulness. He is finally clear about how he had idealized her, and now he feels he has been cheated by her lack of "innocence."

Tess says he could still divorce her, but Angel calls her crude and not understanding of the law. She feels even more guilty, and reveals that she considered suicide under his mistletoe the night before. She only decided against it as it would have caused a scandal for Angel. Angel is shaken and makes her promise to never think of killing herself again.

Angel again draws attention to her lower class and lack of understanding of his society. The mention of her suicidal thoughts seems to make the power of his actions real to him, but Angel still plows determinedly forward in his decision.

They eat breakfast mechanically and then Angel goes off to study with the miller. Tess watches him disappear over the bridge and then cleans and waits for his return. At lunch he discusses the mill, which is very old compared to most modern machinery, and then leaves again, returning at night. Tess busies herself in the kitchen the whole time.

They act out their planned future with no feeling behind their performance. Even the mill here is of no use to Angel, as it is too old and cannot connect with the modern, industrial world he helplessly belongs to.

Angel finds her and says to stop working, that she is not his slave but his wife, and Tess says she thought she was not respectable enough for him. She starts to cry and any other man but hard, skeptical Angel would have had mercy, but he rejects her like he rejected the Church. He says it is not a matter of respectability, but of principle. Tess takes his condemnation meekly and makes herself pathetically subservient to him. She is like Charity personified returning to the cruel modern world.

Angel clings to his principles and beliefs even in the face of others' pain. He has just as much power over Tess now as Alec did, and he also abuses it, although in a very different way. Tess is compared to a Christian virtue taken human form and beaten down by modernity. This image leaves Angel and Victorian society looking very bad.

More days pass in the same manner, and one morning Tess offers her face to kiss, but Angel ignores it. She is crushed by his rejection, and he says that they have been living together so far for form's sake only, but it cannot last. More days pass, and Tess no longer hopes for forgiveness.

Their parting is not real until Angel agrees to it and Tess's final attempt to cling to the fantasy fails. Angel has only been acting with society's conventions in mind, and when Tess sees this she accepts that she cannot persuade him.

Angel spends all his time trying to figure out what to do next, and tells Tess he cannot live with her without despising both of them. He cannot accept that Alec still lives as her "husband in nature," and that nowhere on earth is far enough away to escape the past, and their future children would suffer for it.

The concept of natural laws versus societal ones is used against Tess here, although by the same logic Angel's true wife is a woman in London. He also crushes Tess's dream of escaping the past by traveling far away.

Tess had hoped that she could wear down Angel's resolve just by being close to him, but when she sees how far he has thought ahead she despairs. Experience has taught her that life itself is a penalty, no matter how well you try to live it.

Tess had not realized how stubborn Angel could be. After her brief period of happiness she is reinforced in her conception of the cruel injustice of fate.

Tess still might have used her own beauty and the image of a far-off land to persuade him, but she is too crushed to even try. The narrator muses that if Angel had a more animalistic nature he might have acted more justly, as here his idealism works against Tess.

Angel is on the opposite extreme from Alec; he is so concerned for his own moral uprightness that he ends up being as unfair and hurtful to Tess as Alec was.

Tess suggests that they part and she return home, but she is upset when Angel quickly agrees. He is still determined to submit his emotions to his ideals, and decides that he will leave too and write to her when he has cleared his mind.

Their parting is now real, and Tess starts to understand some of her husband's terrifying, unsympathetic firmness. He is like society itself, unwilling to be merciful no matter the special circumstances.

They pack with an air of finality, and both know that it is unlikely that their passion will return, as other things will fill their lives while they are apart.

They prepare for a new stage in their lives, one which is sure to bring as much pain as the last one brought pleasure.

CHAPTER 37

Late that night Angel sleepwalks into Tess's room and begins to grieve that she is dead. Tess knows that in times of great stress he does things like this, but she does not wake him up. She trusts him so much that even when he is acting unconsciously she feels safe.

As when he sleep-fought the man who insulted Tess, Angel's nobler nature comes out in his subconscious. When he is awake he represses himself with his strict ideals.

The sleeping Angel picks up Tess in her sheet and murmurs endearing words that bring her joy. She is not afraid, as she would not care if she died in his arms this way. He kisses her lips and then carries her outside, towards the river.

Again Tess becomes a sort of sacrificial figure, one willing do die for love or to spare her loved on pain. Angel shows that he has not quelled all his passions yet.

Tess is pleased that Angel's subconscious self still regards her as his wife, and then she thinks he is reenacting the day he carried the girls through the flood to church. He stands at the edge of the deep, fast river. The bridge across is only one narrow plank, but Angel starts to cross anyway, and still Tess would prefer to drown together than be separated tomorrow. She almost makes a movement to upset his balance, but she values Angel's life too much to sacrifice it alongside her own.

They both strongly desire to return to the fantasy world of their courtship, and that desire leads to this strange nighttime ritual. Tess's mental state is emotionally dramatic, but she has enough experience of harsh fate to care very little for her own life, as God or destiny seems not to care either.

They reach the Abbey where a stone coffin stands open against the wall. Angel lays Tess inside and kisses her, and then he stretches out on the grass and keeps sleeping. The night is cold enough to be dangerous for them to stay out in the open, but she is ashamed to wake Angel up and reveal what happened. She tries to persuade him to walk on, and he obeys. Tess leads him across the stone bridge, into the house, and back onto the sofa.

Angel's repressive society and mindset makes his true feelings show themselves in this strange way. Tess knows he would be angry to find that he had betrayed his own ideals while asleep, so she keeps painfully silent.

The next morning it is clear that Angel remembers nothing of the incident. His resolve to leave Tess remains after his sleep, so he does not hesitate. Tess wants to tell Angel what happened but knows it would anger him that he showed a passion his reasoning did not approve of. A carriage picks them up and they go to bid farewell to the Cricks.

Angel is much more in touch with his own whims and morals than he is with those of other people. He lacks the empathy to see the situation from Tess's point of view, or even that her only sin is one arbitrarily attributed to her by society, and which in fact was committed against her.

They walk through all the places of their courtship and the green fertility has turned to gray coldness. The other workers tease the couple, who pretends that nothing is wrong. Retty and Marian have left the farm. Tess bids farewell to her favorite cows and they go. Mrs. Crick remarks that Tess and Angel seemed dreamlike and strange.

The fertile imagery has disappeared with Tess's depression. The natural world is no comfort to her now, or else has become weak along with her own weakness.

They drive farther and come to the spot where Tess must turn towards Marlott. Angel assures her he is not angry, but they cannot be together right now. He says he will write to her, but to not come to him unless he tells her. Tess feels these conditions are harsh but she accepts them, and does not make a scene that might have persuaded him. Her pride plays a small factor in this, perhaps as an old d'Urberville fault.

Tess accepts her unjust fate yet again, having internalized society's view of her own guilt and wrongdoing. Despite this self-loathing she retains enough d'Urberville pride to not beg, but not so much to stand up for herself against Angel's unfair condemnation.

Angel gives Tess some money and takes her jewels to keep safe in the bank, and then they part. Angel hopes she will look back, but Tess is so distraught that she cannot. He remarks on the inherent wrongness of the world, and as he turns away he "hardly knew that he loved her still."

Angel too now sees the cruel injustice of fate, and reaffirms his belief that there is no compassionate God taking care of everyone. The necessary exchange of money makes their goodbye all the more tragic, as it contains no love and is just a transaction.

CHAPTER 38

Tess returns again to her home valley and asks the turnpike-keeper for news. The only news he has is of Tess herself and how proud her parents were of her wedding. Tess feels ashamed and decides to return home as secretly as she can. She meets one old friend but diverts her inquiries.

It is another coincidence that the only news in Marlott is of the Durbeyfield family, but Tess is at least warned not to enter publicly and shame her parents.

Tess enters through the back door and her mother is shocked to see her. Joan interrogates her about Angel, and Tess breaks down weeping and admits that he left her because she told him her past. Joan calls Tess a fool and says it was already a sin to marry him, so she might as well have carried on silently. Joan almost immediately comforts herself with "what's done can't be undone," but she worries her husband will be upset, as he has been boasting of the wedding.

As when she returned from Alec, Joan berates Tess but then quickly accepts the news with her optimistic fatalism. Their main concern is not Tess's well-being so much as their own pride and social standing in Marlott; this is the Durbeyfields at their lowest.

John Durbeyfield returns. Joan has quickly taken the news in stride as if it were no more than a rainy day. Tess goes upstairs and sees that her bed belongs to other siblings now. She overhears her father hoping that Angel would take Tess's superior name instead of vice versa. Joan tells him the news and he is crushed, mostly thinking of how he will be made fun of at the bar. He implies that maybe Tess never married at all, and Tess is so upset she decides not to stay long.

There is no room for Tess in her home anymore and even her parents disbelieve her story. She has changed too much for this place, and if she remained it would be once more a constant reminder of her shame.

Tess gets a letter from Angel saying he is in North England, and she pretends she is going to meet him. She also gives some of his money to her mother to imply that she is living well now. Once she is gone Joan reassures herself that the couple will surely reunite through their strong passion.

Tess has her own form of d'Urberville pride which prevents her from revealing her true troubles to her parents. Because of this Joan can dismiss her unhappiness even more easily.

CHAPTER 39

Three weeks after the wedding Angel returns home. He is a changed man, and thinks he can see life practically now, free from romantic ideals. He has been troubled in his thoughts lately, often dwelling on the fact that Tess is a d'Urberville, as if that was the cause of all the trouble. He feels he should have abandoned her when he discovered her ancestry, in accordance with his principles. Other times he feels he has been unfair to her.

Angel has not yet had the epiphany he imagines, and his obsession with the d'Urberville name echoes many of the other characters' thoughts. Though the name has lost all practical value, it can still affect Tess's fate by the power of suggestion. Tellingly, Angel does not dwell so long on his fear that he has been unjust.

In his wanderings Angel noticed a sign advertising **Brazil** as a place to pursue agriculture. The idea attracts him, and he imagines Tess joining him there later. He now readies to tell his parents his plan and downplay his separation from Tess.

Brazil is introduced as a symbol of an exotic land where Angel can escape his troubles. It is also something new for Angel to idealize now that Tess has, for him, fallen off her pedestal.

Again Angel arrives without warning, and his mother is surprised Tess is not with him. He tells them about **Brazil** but they question him about Tess. They are not angry at Angel for his marriage, but wish they could have met his wife first. Angel minimizes her absence by saying he didn't want to bring Tess until she could properly impress the family, and that she will remain at her mother's while he is in Brazil.

Angel's earlier arguments have finally convinced his parents in favor of Tess, but their praise comes at this painful time for him. He is forced to lie to maintain the status quo and not bring shame to his family.

Mrs. Clare is still disappointed and asks Angel to describe Tess. She imagines how beautiful and pure Tess must be, and how inexperienced with other men. She has finally accepted Angel's original argument that a farmer should have a farming wife.

Mrs. Clare seems to say all the wrong things, and accidentally reaffirms Angel in his decision to reject Tess as an "impure woman."

Mr. Clare asks no questions, but he does read a verse from the Bible about the "virtuous woman" and how valuable she is to her husband. Mrs. Clare points out that the Biblical woman was also a worker, and so Angel has surely found the perfect wife. Angel gets upset and flees to his room.

This all becomes too much for Angel. Truthfully the Bible verse does describe Tess, but to Angel the words seem hollow and condemning in his current state of being ruled by society's convictions regarding what makes a woman "pure."

Mrs. Clare asks Angel what is wrong, and quickly figures out that they have quarreled over something in Tess's past. Angel argues that she is innocent, and feels he would suffer Hell to keep telling that lie. Mrs. Clare assures him that any disagreement will be solved by Tess's purity, as that is the most important thing.

Angel belies his own actions by arguing so strongly for Tess's purity. He still clings to his old idealized dairymaid. Mrs. Clare again emphasizes the idea of purity, which in Victorian society means condemnation for Tess.

All these sentiments convince Angel that he has ruined his life with this marriage, and that he will appear as a failure to his family. He grows angry with the absent Tess for causing him such despair.

Angel is at the peak of his unfairness here, no different from Alec accusing innocent Tess of tempting him.

That same night Tess is thinking of how good Angel is. Neither of them perceive that the real trouble lies in Angel's faults. He is intelligent and tries to be independent, but is still actually trapped in conventionality. He cannot see that Tess is in fact the "virtuous women" his mother imagines, and that her "sin" was only circumstance, not intention. She is still just as pure as before she ever met Alec.

Hardy gets to the point here in his criticism of Angel and Victorian society. There is absolutely nothing impure about Tess, as she did nothing wrong (and in fact was herself wronged); it is only arbitrary convention that says so, and Angel is still too weak-willed to go against that convention. Hardy is Tess's only advocate against the world's judgment.

CHAPTER 40

After breakfast Angel meets Mercy Chant in town. She approves of him going to Brazil, but her mind is solely occupied with religious matters. Angel whispers some blasphemous ideas to her but then immediately begs forgiveness. She thinks he is crazy.

Mercy again acts as a foil for Tess. Angel is feeling especially nihilistic in his despair, and bitter against the judgments of Christianity.

Angel arranges for a stipend to be sent to Tess later, and hopes she will ask his father for money in an emergency, but he avoids telling his parents her address.

Angel does not understand the nature of Tess's pride. He still wants to keep Tess and his family separate to avoid scandal.

Angel then returns to the d'Urberville house where they had their unhappy wedding night. He stands sadly by the gate, wondering if he has done the right thing. At that moment Izz Huett appears, as she had been hoping to visit Angel and Tess there.

The setting taunts Angel like the ruined mansion first taunted Tess. Meeting Izz is another coincidence that makes Hardy's Wessex seem very small.

Izz says she has left Talbothays because it was too sad for her, and Angel offers her a lift home. As they ride together Angel admits he and Tess are apart right now, and he is going to **Brazil** alone. Izz says that Retty has had a nervous breakdown, and Marian drinks so much that Mr. Crick fired her. Izz herself is okay, but still depressed.

Angel's decision has had terrible consequences for others, but he still can't comprehend the power he wielded over the dairymaids. He exists in his own head to a selfish degree.

Angel presses her and Izz admits she was in love with him, and can't believe he didn't realize it until now. They reach her home and Angel, feeling suddenly rebellious against society, asks Izz to come with him to **Brazil**. He claims he has been betrayed and needs relief, and Izz immediately accepts, despite Angel's admission of his offer's immorality.

Angel again makes a rash decision that leaves others very hurt. He is willing to defy society's codes in his request to Izz, but still not enough to accept Tess in her innocence. Angel is a very unsympathetic character at this point.

They keep riding, and Angel asks if Izz loves him more than Tess does. Izz cannot help but say that she does not, that Tess would have "laid down her life" for him. Angel is upset by this and he changes his mind, offering to take Izz home. She breaks down weeping, and Angel apologizes, asking if she wishes she had not been so honest about Tess.

Izz again shows the generous honesty of the rural women. The phrasing of "laid down her life" once more portrays Tess in sacrificial religious terms, as a character like Jesus: the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep.

Angel tries to downplay his request as a joke, but it is clear that it was deadly serious to Izz. Even so she forgives him. Angel praises her for her generous honesty that saved them both. They part on good terms, but when Angel leaves Izz throws herself down in despair.

Angel only sees his own side of the interaction, and not the devastating effects his decisions can have on others, especially the women who place their hopes in him.

Angel is still troubled by Izz's words and wonders again if he is making a mistake. But he decides to stick to the choice he already made, comforting himself that he can send for Tess soon. He takes the train to London and from there boards a ship.

Angel goes with inertia and sticks to his decision despite misgivings. The decision is now irrevocable, and his and Tess's destinies are parted for now.

CHAPTER 41

Eight months have passed and Tess is again poor and laboring. She has worked occasionally at other dairies and farms in the spring and autumn. Angel's money has all gone to her family's broken roof and Tess's own needs, and she is both too proud and too ashamed to ask Mr. Clare for money as Angel had suggested. She does not disturb her own parents' notion that she and Angel are happily reconciled, as admitting the truth would destroy her own hopes as well.

Angel has left Tess in just as bad a state as Alec did. She is much older now but essentially back to where she started, unfairly used by a man and forced to sacrifice herself to take care of her poor family. Her d'Urberville pride and the shame that society has bred in her are almost her undoing.

At the same time Angel is sick with fever in **Brazil**, and has found that the paradise he expected is in fact harsh and not at all inclined to English agricultural methods.

Just like with Tess, Angel finds that his agricultural wonderland is not as he expected. He also sickens away from Tess, like modern man when removed from Nature.

Tess needs another job, but she prefers rural, outdoors work, as her only experiences with society have been negative. She could have returned to Talbothays but could not bear it for many reasons. She decides to go to a farm recommended by Marian, who is working there now.

The outdoors life is the only one Tess knows, and she knows she would suffer even more if kept inside and stifled by humanity's unfairness.

Tess begins to lose hope and rambles onward as thoughtlessly as a "wild animal." She often draws unwanted attention from men because of her beauty, but the worst incident occurs one afternoon, when a man greets her on the road and then recognizes her from Trantridge. It is the same man that Angel struck for insulting her. He mocks her again and Tess runs away into the woods. She makes a nest of leaves and falls asleep.

She seems to be returning to wild nature in her depression, reverting to the primitive pagan state of the ancients and fleeing from humanity into the forest. Her "nest" again associates Tess with birds, but it also recalls the bed of leaves Alec made for her that night in The Chase.

Tess thinks of Angel far away and feels that she is the most unhappy thing in the world. She repeats "All is vanity" to herself, but then sees that it is worse, there is injustice and important things that are taken away, and Tess wishes she was dead.

One of her lowest moments, when she can truly appreciate the cruelty of her fate. Vanity would not be so bad, but instead there is love, and then love ruined and taken away.

Tess starts to hear a strange sound, but when she realizes it is coming from animals she is not afraid. Dawn breaks and she sees that around her are pheasants, some dead, some injured and in pain, that a hunting party must have shot the day before and left behind. Tess has always been afraid of hunters, as she could not understand their desire to kill those creatures weaker than themselves.

Tess only fears humans now. She is again associated with birds, this time united with them in their sufferings at the hands of unsympathetic men. The hunters recall Alec and the other men that have abused their power over helpless Tess.

Tess feels akin to the pheasants in their suffering and she breaks the necks of the wounded ones to end their misery. She then feels guilty that she had been so depressed the night before, as at least she has not been shot and left for dead, and the shame that tortures her is based only on an arbitrary social convention, not any inherent law of Nature.

Tess appears as a benevolent, godlike figure, mercifully ending the pheasants' misery. (Later she herself will welcome death as an escape from misery.) She now realizes that most of her suffering comes from her society's condemnation of her. She knows she is at heart still innocent.

CHAPTER 42

Tess returns to the road feeling strengthened, but she still cannot be happy as long as Angel condemns her. More men flirt with her, so she puts on her oldest clothes, covers her face, and cuts off her eyebrows. She resolves to be ugly for all other men except Angel. She walks on as a simple fieldwoman, at one with the landscape.

Tess makes herself ugly and wanders the road like an ancient pilgrim or martyr. Her beauty she now sees as a kind of curse, bringing only misfortune. She has become the image of the rural woman, no longer standing out from the rest but entirely blending in with her surroundings.

Tess keeps asking for employment at farms on her path, as she has heard that Marian's farm is especially harsh, but no one has any positions open. She reaches a plateau where the land is cold and unfriendly-seeming, and before her is dreary Flintcomb-Ash, the farm where Marian works. Tess accepts that she is doomed to work in this rough land, and looks for shelter against a warm wall.

Flintcomb-Ash, with its bleak name and landscape, is the opposite of Marlott or Talbothays, and fits well with Tess's unhappiness and lost innocence. Once again she has only been delaying the inevitable by asking for work elsewhere – she must come to this dreary farm as a sort of punishment for her bliss at Talbothays.

The village is empty until one woman approaches, and Tess sees that it is Marian. Tess slowly reveals how unhappy she is, and that Angel is abroad, but she asks Marian not to question her any further. Marian says the place is a rough starve-acre (poor soiled) farm, and her only comfort here is in alcohol. She is sure that Tess is only unhappy because Angel is away, but she agrees to speak his name no more.

Things have really gone downhill since the dairy-farm days. Tess still idealizes Angel and depends on him for happiness, but cannot bear the shame of discussing their situation in detail with someone who knew them both before – just like she could not remain in Marlott.

Tess agrees to work until the holiday of Lady-Day, and they are happy to hire her because women's field labor is cheaper than men's. Tess writes to her parents with her new address, but does not tell them how bad her situation is, as it might reflect poorly on Angel.

Hardy again notes the sexual double standard, this time with regards to pay. Women can do the same work as men but get paid less, and no one questions the system's unfairness.

CHAPTER 43

Flintcomb-Ash is a dreary place not even cared for by its residents, but Tess sets to work hacking at turnips in a field of rocks. The earth and sky are both colorless and she and Marian seem alone on earth. It starts raining but they keep working, as otherwise they won't be paid. Tess becomes colder and wetter than she has ever been before. They escape the present by talking of green Talbothays and the past.

Flintcomb-Ash is the polar opposite of Talbothays, reflecting the stark change in the dairymaids' moods, so once again they seem integral to the landscape. Their idealized memories of Talbothays offers them escape from the unhappy, uncomfortable present.

Here too there is the human desire for pleasure doing battle with circumstances that deny pleasure. Marian drinks as she works, and finds her enjoyment there. Tess's power of dreaming is enough for her.

Hardy frames the struggle of life as people wanting to be happy and fate wanting people to be unhappy. They can only escape fate as best they can.

The mornings are frosty and the afternoons rainy, and Tess works constantly, but still she hopes for Angel's forgiveness. Marian wishes more friends from Talbothays would come, so she writes to Izz and Retty, and Izz agrees to come.

Again the cast of characters is set to reunite in different combinations. All their destinies are inextricably linked. Tess is doing penance for her perceived sins.

The winter is a bad one, and strange birds from the Arctic arrive at the farm, birds that have seen the wonders and horrors of the far North, and they land near to Tess and Marian. One day it starts to snow, and so they have to trudge off for reed-drawing. Izz shows up, along with Car Darch and her sister from Tantridge so long ago, but they do not recognize Tess.

More birds connect to Tess, but these ones are foreign and wild, symbolic of Hellish horrors and sublime Nature. Tess can never escape Trantridge it seems.

They start to work and then the owner, Farmer Groby, arrives. Tess recognizes him as the man from Trantridge she had run from on the highway. He remembers Tess and says now he has "got the better" of her at last. She realizes he is not a threat anymore, and at least he doesn't try to seduce her, but he does belittle her day's labor. Tess can't imagine a worse place to work.

More coincidental meetings of characters. The farmer also wields power over Tess, but he is only interested in getting the most work out of her as possible. She finds this at least simpler and easier to deal with than the sexual desires of Alec or even the romantic interest of Angel.

Izz and Marian remain with Tess to finish the reed-drawing, and they start to reminisce. Tess again asks to not discuss Angel, but Izz presses on with questions. Finally Tess collapses from distress and weariness for a while, but resumes when she hears the other two gossiping. Izz breaks down next, and then it is Tess and Marian.

The past Tess is trying to avoid once more returns to her. Too much talk of Angel combines with her many labors and her body cannot stand the unfairness of fate anymore.

Marian immediately reveals what Izz just told her, which is the story of Angel asking her to come to **Brazil** with him. Tess goes white and then starts to cry. She resolves to write to Angel, feeling that she has neglected him somehow. That night she tries to write a letter but is disturbed by the image of Angel propositioning Izz so soon after their separation.

This should be a revelation for Tess of Angel's many flaws, but once again she takes the burden of guilt first onto herself and refuses to let go of her idealized image of her husband. It is only later that Izz's tale starts to trouble her, that he was apparently willing to sin with Izz so soon after condemning Tess for the same.

CHAPTER 44

Tess wonders if she should ask the Clares for Angel's address. She has been too independent and proud to appeal to them for assistance so far, but now she wants to send a letter to Angel. She has heard that Reverend Clare is a good man, and hopes he will take pity on her. She has to walk to Emminster, so she can only go on a Sunday and has to leave before dawn.

Tess finally decides to act towards achieving her goals of reconciliation. So powerless is she in the relationship that she does not even know where Angel is, and has to walk miles through ice just to entreat his parents. But at least she is taking some agency in her fate now.

On the day she decides to leave Izz and Marian dress her up and sincerely wish her the best, despite their own passions. It has been a year since the wedding. Tess feels hopeful that she can win Mrs. Clare over. She passes by the Vale of Blakemore and feels sad, and then goes near a stone monolith called "Cross-in-Hand," which marks "a miracle, or murder, or both." As she gets nearer her confidence fades.

Izz and Marian again show their honest hearts, or else it is just impossible for anyone to hate Tess (which seems plausible, too). Cross-in-Hand will become important later, but for now it is just a vague reminder of the primal pagan forces of the land.

She reaches Mr. Clare's stern-looking church and takes off her walking boots before entering the town. Tess looks for a good omen but none appears. She calls at Angel's house but no one is there – they are all at church. A bloody piece of paper blows down the road. Just as Tess reaches the church the congregation emerges. Everyone stares at her, so she tries to escape, but two young men walk closely behind her.

Fate again treats Tess cruelly, as the bloody paper seems like a bad omen arriving at this vulnerable time. She has experienced the judgmental eyes of churchgoers before, and she flees from the memories as much as the people.

Tess realizes the men are Angel's brothers, and she dreads meeting them. They see a young woman and name her as Mercy Chant. Tess recognizes her significance. Tess then overhears the brothers' conversation. They lament Angel's foolish marriage and lack of communication, and then find Tess's walking boots. The brothers assume they belong to some treacherous person, and they take them to give to charity.

More coincidental meetings – the world of the novel is small and interlaced. Angel's brothers are again portrayed negatively. They judge Angel for marrying a dairymaid and judge the boot-wearer without even knowing who it is. They symbolize the part of society Hardy dislikes the most.

Tess despairs and starts to weep. She cannot help but see the scene as a bad omen and condemnation of her journey. She cannot bear to return to the Clares' house. The narrator muses that if she had met Mr. Clare first instead of Cuthbert and Felix, things would have gone better. The brothers are more liberal but lack the Reverend's charitable heart.

Tess can't help her ingrained superstitions, and her journey was already tenuous. Fate again deals cruelly with her, and Hardy points out the unhappy coincidence that she meets the brothers instead of the father.

Tess dissolves into self-pity and starts the long walk back to Flintcomb-Ash. She does not realize what a mistake this is, as Mr. and Mrs. Clare would surely have taken her in as a lost soul.

Hardy emphasizes the misfortune of her decision, drawing out the tragedy of circumstance once again.

Her journey back is sorrowful and slow, and she does not stop until she reaches a barn with a fiery Christian preacher giving a service. Tess can hear his words as she passes, and he describes how he was once a great sinner, but then was touched by the patience of a parson he had insulted, and so became converted. Tess recognizes the preacher's voice, and she nervously enters the barn to see that he is none other than Alec d'Urberville.

Things just keep getting worse for Tess as everyone from her past eventually returns, culminating with this encounter. It is an elegant plot twist that the antagonist should become a Christian, converted by Angel's father to repent his sins against the heroine, but surely this will lead to more turmoil for Tess.

CHAPTER 45

Tess cannot help being afraid when she sees Alec, and it feels grotesque to watch him speak the words of Scripture. His passion and sensuality seem to have been transformed into religious devotion, although faithfulness looks unfitted for his bestial features. Tess thinks of other great sinners that have been converted, and tries not to feel angry.

This is another brutal plot twist for Tess. According to society, Alec is in the right now as a Christian. She cannot even see him as a villain, but must now think of him like this, and feel confusion instead of hate.

Tess decides to leave immediately, but when she moves again Alec notices her. The passion of his sermon is suddenly extinguished, and he hesitates. Tess keeps walking, thinking how unfair it is that now God is on the side of her attacker, while she remains "unregenerate." She can feel the physicality of the past following her as she walks.

This really is terribly unfair, as it seems cruel to protest someone's conversion, but now Alec has eluded condemnation yet again while Tess is left to suffer. Even though she is the victim, she is technically "worse" than Alec now because of her religious doubt.

She hears footsteps behind her and Alec approaches, agitated. Tess wishes he had not followed her, and speaks to him with scorn. Alec disparages his former self and tells the story of his conversion by Reverend Clare, who bore his insults with such grace that Alec began to reconsider his life, especially after his mother died.

She cannot escape the past, and it keeps returning in grotesque ways like this. Their closely interwoven lives are shown by the connection to Reverend Clare. Tess's dignity at least shines through in this meeting, and she is cold and scornful to waffling Alec.

He tries to both apologize and preach to Tess, who becomes enraged, pointing out the horror that Alec should be able to use her as he did and then just change his mind and have everything forgiven. She won't accept that Alec has really been converted because "a better man" than he is does not believe. Tess says that Alec's fickle passions don't usually last.

Tess again loses her temper with Alec (entirely justifiably), which foreshadows the novel's climax. No matter how angry she becomes or how she tries to flee, she still cannot escape the persistent presence of this man who ruined her life.

Alec asks Tess to put down her veil, as she is tempting him, and she can't help feeling her old guilt just for existing as she does. Alec does not want to remember his old ways. They walk together and pass more fences painted with Bible quotes, and Alec says the man who paints them works with him.

More horrible unfairness of the double standard. Tess must feel guilty just for being attractive to men, as if her very existence was inherently sinful, when really the sin is in Alec for his lack of morals, decency, or self-restraint.

They reach "Cross-in-Hand" again, which is a bleak land with a single stone monolith carved with a human hand, rumored to once have held a cross. The place seems ancient and sinister. Alec says he has to leave and asks Tess about her new way of speaking, and the trouble she had mentioned. She tells him about the baby, and he is distressed.

The sinister monolith foreshadows Stonehenge and makes the tone of their meeting seem more portentous. It is also a reminder of ancient pagan powers, contrasted with Alec's quick and easy Christian conversion.

Alec says they will meet again, but Tess warns him not to come near her. Alec says he fears Tess now, and he asks her to place her hand upon the stone hand and swear that she will not tempt him again. Tess is offended, but complies. Alec says he will pray for her and leaves. He is disturbed as he walks, and often rereads a letter from Reverend Clare to give him strength.

This oath summarizes well the novel's themes. Tess is seen as actively "tempting" the cruel, dominant man just by existing, and the idea is so ingrained in her by society that she can't help believing it. She swears the oath on an ancient paganistic monument, alone in the bleakness of Nature.

Tess meets a shepherd and asks him about Cross-in-Hand. He says it is haunted, a place where a criminal was tortured long ago. Tess later approaches a young couple, and then sees that the girl is Izz. She says the man is from Talbothays, and followed her here, but she hasn't answered his proposal yet.

Again Tess finds a murderous, spiritual past lurking behind seemingly commonplace things, as in the d'Urberville coach. There is hope that the dairymaids can move on with their lives after Angel's rejection.

CHAPTER 46

A few weeks later Tess is in the field with a male worker throwing turnips into a slicing machine, when Alec d'Urberville appears in the distance. Tess repeats her demand that he not come near her, but Alec says he wants to help her in her bad economic state. Tess keeps working, trying to stay detached.

Again Tess is made powerless by her situation, and her antagonist does not respect her wishes. Alec has all the advantages, and she cannot escape – once more she is dependent on his whims.

Alec blames himself for corrupting Tess's innocent life, but also her parents for not warning her of men like him. He plans to sell his estate and become a missionary in Africa, and he asks Tess to come with him as his wife. When she refuses, his disappointment shows that his old desires have reawakened.

Alec's Africa dream sounds like Angel's Brazil – an idealized place far from the troubles of England, and also associated with some kind of frustration regarding Tess. His faith is just as fickle as his other passions.

They step away from the other worker to talk. Alec is shocked when Tess says she loves someone else, and he calls her improper. Finally Tess reveals that she is married, but she won't say Angel's name. Alec is distressed and begins to return to his old ways, admitting he has fallen back in love with Tess.

Despite everything he has done, Alec dares to judge Tess through society's and religion's eyes. No one, not even her "reformed" rapist, sympathizes with her unfair situation.

Alec says he at least wants to help her financially, and is surprised to hear that Tess's husband is far away. She says it is because he found out about Alec. He calls her a "deserted wife" and tries to take her hand, but she cries out and begs him to leave her alone.

Alec brings up his financial superiority again, this time intending charity but actually emphasizing how bad Tess's situation really is. She still can't see Angel's faults.

At that moment Farmer Groby rides up, mad that Tess isn't working. Alec defends her angrily but finally leaves. Tess is almost relieved at Groby's reprimands, as they have nothing to do with sexuality. She considers for a second how much her life would be improved by Alec's money, but she still finds him repulsive and frightening.

Farmer Groby's antagonism only has to do with work and money, which is much more straightforward than the other more complicated and infuriating judgments of Alec, Angel, and Victorian society in general.

That night Tess writes another, more desperate letter to Angel, but again she remembers the episode with Izz and her uncertainty returns, so she doesn't send it.

Tess is still unsure if Angel really loves her, and cannot yet see how he unfair he has been to her.

On the Candlemas holiday Alec shows up at her lodgings. He is agitated and admits that he can't stop thinking about Tess since he saw her. He asks her to pray for him, but Tess says she cannot pray because her husband has taught her to disbelieve in an active God. They have a theological discussion where Tess says she believes in the spirit of Christianity, but nothing supernatural.

Alec's religious fervor falls from him as quickly as his passion for Tess reignites. She is again shown as a temptress, a role women are often accused of by super-religious men. This makes her "sinful" through no action of her own. It allows the sinning man to pin the blame for his sin on her. Tess clarifies her vague, Naturalistic beliefs.

Alec scorns her for parroting her husband's beliefs, and Tess defends Angel with a faithfulness he doesn't deserve. She repeats some of his arguments to Alec. Alec says that he still believes, but he is slipping, and that at that moment he was supposed to be preaching. He loves Tess once more and could not stay away despite his commitments.

Tess still idealizes Angel, especially when comparing him to Alec. Alec's old ironic nature starts to return along with his infatuation with Tess.

Alec gets angry at Tess for tempting him and causing him to backslide, comparing her to Eve or a "witch of Babylon," but then he seems to wake up and apologizes again. He tries to embrace her, but she invokes Angel's reputation and again Alec is ashamed. He leaves, and Tess's recitation of Angel's logical arguments begin to wear at his emotion-based faith. His passions reawaken, and he scorns Angel for unwittingly making him return to Tess.

Tess is again compared to Eve, but this time the religious figure is a "temptress" and "fallen woman" that society sees Tess as. Religious shame is the only defense she has against Alec now, and even that is quickly becoming useless as his religious faith fails in the face of his powerful passions and jealousy.

CHAPTER 47

It is threshing day at Flintcomb-Ash, and all the women gather around the sinister red threshing-machine. Nearby is a black, smoking engine, tended to by an engineer who serves its fire and industry and looks out of place in nature. He is strange and Northern and seems like a servant of Hell.

Hardy is at his most explicit here in portraying modern industry as Hellish and destructive, a fiery intrusion on Nature. The engineer seems similar to the eerie Arctic birds.

The women start to work, feeding the ravenous machine with corn. Old men talk of the hand-labor of the old days, which got better results. Tess does not even have time to talk, she must work so fast to satisfy the machine.

Hardy empathizes with the old men in his nostalgia for the agricultural past. The machine is never satisfied, and the work becomes unbearable for the innocent, rural women.

Tess doesn't notice that Alec d'Urberville has arrived and is watching her. He is dressed fashionably now, no longer like a preacher, and Izz and Marian can't believe he is the same man. Tess takes a break and is surprised to see him. It is clear from his appearance that he has returned to his old libertine ways.

Alec has totally reverted to his original ways. Tess doesn't even have his own shame protecting her from his advances now. He also comes upon at her at her weakest, when she is made vulnerable by the terrible machine.

Tess asks why he keeps bothering her, but Alec accuses her of bothering *him* by haunting him with her eyes and ruining his faith. He has entirely given up religion, and blames Tess for taking his innocence as revenge for him taking hers. He says no saint could have kept the faith either if tempted by her face.

Again Tess is accused of sinning just by existing as she is. She has no agency to take revenge and no power over Alec, but he *still plays the victim and pretends they are equally powerful.*

Alec admits that Angel's arguments have convinced him, and Tess asks that he keep the religion of kindness and purity, if not doctrine. But Alec says if he has no one telling him what to do then he will do what feels good – he has no inner moral compass.

Tess's religion is clarified as the morality behind Christianity without the dogma. Alec doesn't have the capacity to live in this way without acting reckless.

Alec emphasizes how Angel has abandoned Tess, and again he propositions her, implying that he is closer to her than her mythical husband. He reaches for her and Tess slaps him in the face with her glove. Alec jumps up, bleeding from the mouth, and Tess invites him to attack her, because "once victim, always victim."

The social law that makes Alec seem like her "natural husband" is again invoked. Tess's violent outburst is finally some action on her part, and foreshadows the future. She sees how unjust her position as constant victim is.

Alec does not retaliate, but he does threaten Tess that he will be her master again, and if she belongs to anyone it is to him, not Angel. He leaves and the machine starts up again, and Tess keeps working, stunned.

There is no more pretense as Alec again abuses the power he wields over Tess. Everything she tries fails, and she cannot escape him.

CHAPTER 48

Farmer Groby makes them keep working by moonlight, and Alec returns to watch Tess. The work seems endless and the threshing-machine insatiable. The machine shakes her into a reverie. The other women keep going by drinking ale, but Tess still abstains because of her childhood experience of her drunken father. The work is terrible, but less terrible than facing Alec again. Finally they catch the rats under the sheaves and are finished.

This is one of Tess's lowest moments, as she is caught between wearily serving an industrial master and seductions and antagonism from her rapist. Alec is no longer her employer, but she is just as vulnerable to him now as when she lived at the Slopes. The machine is again described negatively.

Alec approaches Tess again and offers to help her. She tries to give him the benefit of the doubt but is still wary. Alec mentions her family, and Tess gets upset. She still refuses to take anything from Alec, and he finally departs.

Tess still is able to be independent of his financial aid, but he uses her family's hardships to again wield power over her through her own morality and guilt.

That night Tess writes a passionate letter to Angel, begging that he return because she is so terribly tempted and oppressed. She says her punishment is just, but asks him to have mercy and come home. She still loves him purely and entirely, and is the same woman he feel in love with, only now much more unhappy. She does not value her beauty except for Angel's sake, and she would willingly be his servant if only she could be near him. She warns that there is something terrible threatening her, and she fears she will succumb to it if he doesn't return.

Tess finally takes some action with regards to Angel, but she still hopelessly idealizes him and sees herself as the guilty one in the matter. All of her most submissive, self-deprecating feelings come out in this letter, and it seems like a step backward in terms of her independence and happiness.

CHAPTER 49

The Clares receive Tess's letter and hope that it will make Angel hurry home. Mrs. Clare's only complaint to her husband is that Angel wasn't given the chance to attend Cambridge like his brothers. Mr. Clare still feels justified in his decision, but he prays for Angel and misses him. They wonder what went wrong with his marriage and blame themselves.

The Reverend still stands by his convictions, but also remains strong in his love for Angel. The Clares' kindness is one of the good example of Christianity in the novel, and emphasizes the tragedy that Tess never meets them.

At that moment Angel is in the interior of Brazil, riding towards the coast. He has had a hard time in **Brazil**, as have all the hopeful farmers and their families from England. His moral sense has also matured, and he now considers intentions more important than results. This makes him start to feel guilty about how he has treated Tess. He wonders why she doesn't write, and assumes she is doing well.

Angel has experienced another ideal being ruined for him, and it finally matures him some. He still doesn't realize Tess's proud streak, or how devoted she was to his instructions to not write unless he asked for her. Away from the narrow Victorian society he can begin to expands his idea of morality.

On one of his journeys Angel rides with another depressed Englishman, and tells him all the details of his marriage. The stranger has traveled in many cultures and remarks how limited Angel's views are. Tess's past should be nothing compared to her present, and Angel was wrong to reject her.

This stranger seems almost like a stand-in for Hardy, telling the harsh truth to Angel about how unfair he has been, and complaining about how foolishly stifling the conventions of Victorian England are.

The next day the stranger gets a fever and dies, making his words feel more important. Angel begins to realize how narrow-minded he has been, all while thinking he was being so philosophically open. He had chosen Paganism over Christianity, but Pagan culture would never punish someone for being raped.

Angel had rejected the doctrines of Christianity but still kept the judgmental mindset, and now finally can step outside of his society and religion and see how unjust he was.

Angel thinks again of Izz's words and of Tess's faith in him on their wedding day. Slowly he becomes Tess's advocate against himself, and withdraws his criticisms. Her d'Urberville name starts to appeal to him, as it has no economic value but much sentimental interest in terms of the fallen mighty ones.

Distance finally makes the heart grow fonder, and his rigorous ideals start to give way to emotion. Hardy uses the d'Urberville name in the same way – it has no real wealth attached, but lots of symbolic and dramatic value.

Angel also realizes that despite her "impure" past, Tess is still the ideal of purity and freshness that he had loved, and so his feelings begin to return, though he is too far inland to receive the letter yet.

Angel's idealized version of Tess returns, but he now realizes that in many ways she lived up to the ideal – he just has to widen his narrow parameters in order to be able to see it.

Tess meanwhile fluctuates in her hopes of Angel's return. She decides to learn to sing some of the songs Angel had played on his harp, and she cries as she practices them alone in the cold fields.

Tess at her most heart-wrenching. Her portrayal here emphasizes how harshly she has been treated by fate, society, and men.

Lady-Day and the end of her employment approaches, and one day her sister Liza-Lu appears at the door, looking much more mature. She says that their mother is dying, and their father is also ill, and he still won't work because of his high ancestry. Tess decides to leave the farm early and start home that night.

Another unhappy twist of fate for Tess, although at least she gets out of Flintcomb-Ash. She will now be even more vulnerable, especially to Alec's offers of wealth in her family's time of need.

CHAPTER 50

Tess walks under the stars and finally reaches the heavy soil of Blackmoor, and the forests still alive with old pagan superstitions. She reaches home the next day to find her mother sleeping. The children have grown, and Durbeyfield is also ill, but excited by his new scheme of asking historians to pay for his well-being.

She is back in her fertile native land, among the pagan spirits of Nature. Durbeyfield has reached new heights in his laziness and farcical pride, but now his shiftlessness is really putting his family in danger.

Tess begins to work in the garden, as no one has tended to it lately, and she prefers the outdoors work to staying her mother's sickroom. One evening she and Liza-Lu are working as other farmers start burning their grass piles, sending up eerie plumes of smoke and making the atmosphere hazy and dreamlike. Tess works into the night, comforted by her own labor.

As always, Tess prefers the outdoors to the indoors. The smoky atmosphere is reminiscent of the Trantridge dance so long ago. Tess is able to find a little solace in her solitary labors, untroubled for a while by external society.

She is so absorbed that she doesn't notice the man working next to her for a long time, but he approaches the fire and she sees it is Alec d'Urberville. He looks grotesque in the dim light and peasant's clothes, and he laughs at Tess's shock and compares her to Eve, and himself to Satan. He quotes Milton to her.

Alec in peasant clothes seems like a mockery of Tess's class. She is again compared to Eve, although this time as the innocent girl suffering the serpent's temptation. Alec embraces his role as villain.

Alec says he has come entirely for Tess, and offers to help her family out of love for her. He mentions her young siblings, and wonders what would happen if her mother dies. Tess is upset but still refuses his help. Alec leaves angrily.

Alec again presses her at her most vulnerable spot – the Durbeyfield children. She is helpless to assist them, but still asserts her independence against Alec.

Tess starts home and is met by one of her sisters who says that their father is dead. Tess rushes home. Joan is out of danger, but John suddenly fell dead of his heart condition. The news means that the Durbeyfields will be evicted, as John was the lease-holder. The narrator muses that their fate is now the same as those of many peasants whom the ancient d'Urbervilles once displaced long ago.

Another sudden tragedy for Tess, this one compounded by their impending eviction. Hardy again brings up the idea that perhaps Tess is being punished for the sins of her cruel ancestors, although he knows how unfair this seems.

CHAPTER 51

Old Lady-Day arrives, and everyone is changing farm locations. The Durbeyfields, though slightly above the peasant class, are now looked down on because they don't directly work their land. The village also disapproves of the household's shiftlessness, drunkenness, and Tess's scandals, so no one will help them from being evicted.

Tess would have already had a hard life based only on her family's faults. The community's judgment of her troubles adds on to the general feeling that Marlott would be better off without the Durbeyfields.

The night before they depart, Tess is home alone, feeling guilty for her part in the family's situation, as some villagers had recently shamed her mother for "harboring" her. She is so absorbed that she doesn't notice Alec until he knocks at the window.

Earlier the villagers seemed to have forgotten her shame, but now she has a reputation as a "fallen woman" and so they brings real suffering upon her family with their judgment.

Tess says she thought he was a carriage passing by, and Alec tells her the story of the **d'Urberville coach**. Some past d'Urberville supposedly kidnapped a beautiful woman in his coach, and as she was trying to escape he accidentally killed her, or else she killed him. Since then it is a bad omen if a d'Urberville hears a phantom coach.

The story Angel alluded to regarding the d'Urberville coach is finally finished, and the legends itself foreshadows the novel's final murder. Alec laughs it off, but he is not a true d'Urberville and cannot know his own fate.

Tess admits that her family is being kicked out because she is not a "proper woman," and Alec is enraged at the villagers. Tess says they are going to Kingsbere where the d'Urberville tombs lay, and Alec offers that they stay at his estate instead. He says he will clean the house and expect their coming, as he owes her for the past and also for curing him of Christianity. Tess says she has money if she asks for it from her father-in-law, but Alec knows she will never ask. As he leaves he passes the man who paints Bible quotes, and curses at him.

Alec is upset at her misfortunes that he himself caused. Tess's dignity and loyalty again do battle within her, as she wants to be independent of Alec but her family's situation keeps getting worse. It seems only a matter of time before she gives in to the inevitable, just like she helplessly accepted Angel's marriage proposal despite her qualms.

Tess suddenly feels the injustice of her situation, and realizes how harsh Angel has been to her. She has never intended to do wrong, and yet she has been condemned so many times for sins that were not her own.

Tess finally begins to see clearly in her sadness, and she nears Hardy's perspective on the unfairness of fate, society, and Angel.

Tess writes a sudden, passionate letter to Angel, lamenting how badly he has treated her. She says she can never forgive him for his cruel and unjust actions, and she will try to forget him. She hurriedly delivers it to be mailed and does not feel guilty.

Tess takes up agency in her life as a victim and as a wife, finally refusing to submit to her husband and no longer accepting constant shame for a sin she did not even commit.

The children gather around and Tess reminds them that this is their last night at home, and they sing a song about the harsh world and hope for a better heaven. Tess wishes she could believe the words of the song, but to her life has been nothing but an ordeal and no afterlife could undo her suffering.

The children are still full of hope that even if the world is cruel, God will reward them later, but Tess has lost that innocence. Even if there is a heaven, it would only be a bandage for her wounds.

Joan returns and hears that a gentleman has been by. She thinks it was Tess's husband, but Tess says he will never return. She cannot help but feel that Alec is more truly her husband than Angel is.

Tess is still troubled by the idea that Alec "owns" her, but it makes sense in a society where a woman's "purity" and therefore her ability to marry is wholly dependent on whether or not she has had sex (even if she didn't want or intend to have sex and was raped). In such a society, the man who rapes her becomes her "husband" because society won't let her have any other.

CHAPTER 52

The Durbeyfields have to hire a wagon to move themselves out. Tess is at least glad it's not raining. They load up onto the ancient cart and ride on top of their belongings, their clock striking at every bump in the road. A few neighbors say goodbye, but they all expect the family to come to no good.

No good has come to the Durbeyfields so far, especially considering their lofty past, so there is no reason to hope that things will get better in a new town.

They meet other moving wagons on the road, and Tess sees Marian and Izz among them. They have fled Flintcomb-Ash, and warn her that Alec is looking for her. They also ask about Angel.

Another chance meeting of characters. Wessex is apparently very small, as there are so many dramatic coincidences among people.

The family reaches Kingsbere very late, and are met by a man saying the rooms they rented aren't available anymore. Joan is upset at such an ignominious entrance to their ancestral land, but pushes on into the town. There are no rooms anywhere and the wagon they rented has to leave, so they unload their things next to the church.

They reach the ancient d'Urberville land at a symbolically low point in their lives. They once owned this town but now can't even find a room. Hardy lays on the situational irony pretty heavily here.

Tess looks sadly at the familiar pile of belongings. They set up their bed outside, next to the part of the church where the d'Urberville vaults lie. The stained glass windows are marked with emblems like those on the family's **seal and spoon**. Joan and Liza-Lu go looking for food and encounter Alec on horseback. They reluctantly tell him where Tess is.

The useless seal and spoon are finally reunited with the useless d'Urberville tombs. The family legacy has left Tess nothing but bad omens and a painful destiny, and possibly punishment for their ancient sins.

Tess meanwhile enters the church and walks among her family's tombs. Everything about them is ancient and broken, a reminder of their extinction. Suddenly one of the effigies moves, and she almost faints before she realizes it is Alec d'Urberville.

More heavy symbolism, as Alec lies satirically atop a tomb pretending to be a d'Urberville, just like his father did in buying the name.

Alec apologizes for interrupting her reunion, and stamps ironically on the vaults. He says he, the sham d'Urberville, can do more to help her than all these dead knights and famous ancestors. He leaves, and Tess wishes she were dead, on the other side of the vault door.

The contrast is clear between the grandiose but worthless tombs and the false d'Urberville who has real wealth. English society has changed, and the old families are dead and buried.

Meanwhile Izz and Marian ride on, talking of Tess, Angel, and Alec. They are worried that Tess will succumb to Alec if Angel does not return, and they want to help her. A month later they hear of Angel's approaching return, and so write a letter to him asking that he save his wife from the enemy that is near to her, as even a diamond can be worn down eventually. Afterwards they feel both generous and agitated.

The dairymaids again show their simple generosity in pleading to Angel on Tess's behalf despite their own reawakened passions. It is interesting that Hardy cuts away from Tess at this point, potentially the climax of Alec's seduction, so the reader never sees what actually happens.

CHAPTER 53

At Emminster Vicarage the Clares are nervously waiting for Angel's arrival. The man who comes to the door is unrecognizable, so thin and aged does he seem. Mrs. Clare weeps to see his state but feels more deeply affected by his return than any religious experience. Angel looks like a corpse, and he admits he has been ill. He asks if any more letters have come from Tess.

Hardy shifts the point of view away from Tess and lets the reader discover her fate through Angel's eyes. Angel too has done his penance during their separation. Mrs. Clare loves her child more than she loves God, relating to Hardy's idea that women's religion is more instinctive and emotional.

Angel reads Tess's second, angry letter and despairs that she will never forgive him. Mrs. Clare disparages her as a “mere child of the soil,” and Angel wearily reveals her d'Urberville heritage.

Angel can finally see with clear eyes that Tess is not an idealized Nature-girl or a cruel, doomed d'Urberville, but a unique woman.

Angel decides to break the news of his return slowly in case Tess is still angry. He assumes she is still living in Marlott under his allowance, and so sends a letter there. Joan responds immediately saying Tess is gone away, but she cannot tell him where. Angel is relieved that Tess is well but fears they are all angry with him. He feels guilty for how he treated his wife, and wonders why he did not judge her by will instead of deed from the first.

Hardy breaks the news slowly and painfully, not yet revealing where Tess is but implying through Joan's evasive letter that she has succumbed to Alec. Angel knows nothing of this, and can only regret the unfair judgment he made when he held all the power over Tess.

He waits a while at home but Joan does not write again. Angel rereads Tess's first letter and decides to find her immediately. Mr. Clare says she never asked him for money, and Angel finally understands that Tess was too proud to do so, so she has probably been suffering financially.

Angel was too busy with his idealized Tess to realize that the real Tess had too much pride in her own independence to ask the Clares for money, especially after Angel had rejected her.

The Clares figure out the reason for the couple's separation, and they take even more pity on Tess because of her past sin. As Angel is packing up his things he gets the letter from Izz and Marian.

The Clares are again examples of pure Christian charity. Everything starts coming together for Angel, but he is far too late.

CHAPTER 54

Angel sets out to find Tess. He passes by Cross-in-Hand, the sinister stone where Tess swore to never tempt Alec again, and continues on to Flintcomb-Ash. He finds that she is not there, and that when she was she never called herself "Mrs. Clare," but only went by her maiden name. Angel begins to appreciate the hardships Tess has endured alone.

Angel makes a quick tour of all the sites of Tess's trials. Cross-in-Hand once again darkens the mood of his journey, and Tess's old oath becomes cruelly ironic in light of what has probably happened to her.

Angel next goes to Marlott to find out where the Durbeyfields are. Spring has hardly begun in the Vale of Blakemore. There is a new family in the Durbeyfield house who lives happily in their place, and Angel cannot help but hate the place for not containing Tess. The children tell him that the Durbeyfields intended to go to Kingsbere.

Nature reflects the mood of the story, as winter has dominion but spring is tentatively approaching. The happy new family in the Durbeyfield house shows just how quickly people can be forgotten, and makes Tess's story seem tragically small.

On his way out of town Angel passes by the field where he first saw Tess at the May-Day dance, and he sees John Durbeyfield's grave marked with "How Are The Mighty Fallen." A stranger approaches and says that the headstone has not even been paid for, and Angel finds the mason and pays the debt.

All the past images start to coincide as the novel approaches its climax. Angel is faced with the full weight of his guilt. Durbeyfield's grandiosity helped him just the same as it did his ancestors – not at all.

Angel goes next to Kingsbere and finds Joan's house. She is unwelcoming to him and won't tell him where Tess is. The children ask if this is the man come to marry Tess, but Joan shoos them away. She says Tess would not want Angel to find her, but he begs until she finally reveals that she is at Sandbourne. Angel asks if they need anything, but Joan says they are well taken care of. Angel catches the train to Sandbourne.

It is finally made clear to the reader, though not to Angel, what has happened – Tess is gone and the Durbeyfields have money, so Alec must have won. The suspense builds for the inevitable reveal to Angel and whatever tragic climax Hardy has prepared.

CHAPTER 55

That night Angel walks through Sandbourne, a fashionable pleasure city on the English Channel, and wonders what possibly could have drawn Tess here. There are no cows or farms, but only mansions. He goes restlessly to sleep.

It is tragic to watch Angel slowly discover the truth. Tess is completely out of her element here – she has sacrificed everything in her despair and need.

The next morning Angel asks a postman for information. He has never heard of a Mrs. Clare or a Ms. Durbeyfield, but he knows there is a d'Urberville staying at a place called The Herons. Angel is excited and goes there to find it is a luxurious lodging-house. He fears Tess is working there.

The shifting names of the novel come together here, as all the different "Tesses" are named, each with her own history and misfortunes. She has become a Tess unknown to Angel now.

The landlady says there is a Mrs. d'Urberville there, which slightly confuses Angel, but he asks her to tell Tess that he has come. He waits among flowers, wondering if Tess sold her jewels to afford the place.

He cannot conceive of her infidelity, so pure was her love. The inevitable finally approaches among bright Nature.

Tess appears dressed in expensive, elegant clothes. She stands still on the threshold, and Angel begs her forgiveness. Tess's eyes appear strange, and she says it is too late, to not come near her. She says that she waited and suffered for so long, and then Alec appeared, and helped her family, and convinced her that Angel would never return, and at last he won her back.

Hardy reveals Tess through Angel's eyes to show how much she has given up of herself, totally sacrificing her integrity for her family's needs. This fully emphasizes her tragic state and how truly trapped she is now. Angel finally matured in his love, but too late.

Angel understands the terrible truth. Tess says Alec is upstairs, and that she hates him now, but Angel must leave and never return. She disappears and Angel walks blindly through the streets.

Alec holds her in complete dominion now – even though she hates him she is still dressed in his clothes.

CHAPTER 56

Mrs. Brooks, the landlady of The Herons, grows curious about the aftermath of Angel's visit to the d'Urbervilles so she eavesdrops at their door. She hears moaning, and through the keyhole sees a woman kneeling in despair. A man asks what the matter is.

Hardy again changes perspective for the climactic action. This helps build up the suspense, but it also echoes the switch to Angel's perspective earlier, which avoided describing Alec's victory.

Mrs. Brooks hears snatches of a lament from the woman. She says that the man never relented in his cruel persuasion, and used her family's needs against her, and mocked her that her husband would never return. She finally believed him, but now her husband *has* returned, and she has lost him again because of the man, and she fears her husband is ill and will die for *her* sins. Mrs. Brooks sees that her lips are bleeding from clenching her teeth, and then an argument starts and Mrs. Brooks runs downstairs.

Tess finally lists all of her grievances against Alec and all the ways he controls her. This is her final outburst before the climactic action (which Hardy never actually describes), and almost justifies the murder as the only way she can escape her rapist's terrible influence on her life. Her bloody mouth also recalls Alec's after Tess struck him with her glove.

She enters her own room which is directly below the d'Urbervilles'. She hears nothing through the ceiling, so she finishes her breakfast and knits. Then she sees Tess passing outside and into the street with a veil over her face. Mrs. Brooks goes back to knitting, wondering about the couple, but then she notices a red spot on the white ceiling. It grows quickly until it looks like an ace of hearts. Mrs. Brooks touches it and sees that it is blood.

The red spot against white echoes Prince's blood on the innocent Tess, and is also a symbolic image of the original rape. The "ace of hearts" also recalls Car Darch, the "Queen of Spades," and suggests that Alec is the red card finally laid low. Hardy never shows us the actual murder.

She goes upstairs and listens through the door, but can only hear an ominous dripping. She runs out for help and then returns with a man and enters the apartment. The man looks in the back room and comes back shocked, saying there is a dead man who has been stabbed with a knife. They raise the alarm and later the surgeon finds that the small wound touched the man's heart, and the news of the murder spreads through the village.

Hardy adds another layer of remove from the climax by not even having Mrs. Brooks see the body, but only another man describe it. The stabbing is similar to Prince's goring. Tess is like the small wound that touched Alec's heart, or else her d'Urberville blood is the small murderous flaw in her own heart.

CHAPTER 57

Angel sits at breakfast and stares blankly forward, then suddenly packs up and leaves his hotel. Just before he goes out he gets a telegram saying his brother Cuthbert is engaged to Mercy Chant. Angel goes to the train station and then starts walking out of town, heartbroken. A force impels him to turn around and he sees someone pursuing him. Finally he realizes it is Tess.

Cuthbert has become the man Angel was supposed to be in terms of vocation and marriage, but it still seems like Angel is the favorite son. The force of destiny or the finger of God turns him back to Tess. The murder has been committed; now only Tess's inevitable doom remains.

Tess says she has killed Alec, and she smiles. Angel thinks she is delirious. She says she feared it would happen eventually, and she never loved Alec, and he ruined her life with Angel. She hopes Angel will forgive her again now that she has killed him.

Without Alec, Tess has become like an innocent girl again. She is finally free, and she experiences that freedom—at least for the moment—as if it did not come by murder.

Angel embraces Tess and say he does love her, but he still isn't sure if she has actually killed anyone. She weeps happily, and Angel sees that her love for him has eclipsed her other moral senses. He wonders if this murderous strain comes from her d'Urberville blood, and he thinks briefly of the legend of the **d'Urberville coach**, but then reassures himself that Tess is probably just delirious with grief.

Their happy reunion is surreal and corrupted by all the horrors of the past. Angel wonders, with Hardy, if murder was always in Tess's fate simply because she is a d'Urberville. The old coaches throughout the novel suddenly seem ominous in retrospect.

Whether the murder is a hallucination or not, Angel sees he needs to take care of Tess, and finally he kisses her and promises to never leave her again. They walk together and Tess looks at Angel as if he were Apollo or the man she first loved, and not the thin and sickly man he is now.

They tragically return to their old state of blissful lovers, each idealizing the other as godlike figures. However, the only way this dream could become real was through a murder which itself makes the dream impossible.

They feel intoxicated being together and can momentarily forget the murder, although Angel instinctively leads them further into the woods and away from civilization. They ramble about in random paths like children. Angel enters an inn for food but he makes Tess stay outside, as she is still dressed in noticeable finery.

The fantasy continues, but Angel also starts to accept that the murder is real. They cannot be both careless lovers and cautious fugitives – their dream world will be their undoing.

They eat and Angel forms a vague plan to lie low in central England until the crime has been forgotten. They walk through the green forest and come to an empty mansion, and after walking farther decide to turn back and stay there. They learn that the place only has an old woman caretaker, and they enter through an open window. The place is large and grand and they are glad to rest. They sit in silent darkness once the caretaker shuts the windows.

They finally start to make plans, but it is inevitable that Tess cannot escape her doom. They are at least able to walk through Nature in the spring together, as again the landscape reflects Tess's brief happiness. The abandoned mansion recalls their wedding night and the d'Urbervilles' lost glory and terrible fate.

CHAPTER 58

That night Tess tells Angel the story of his sleepwalking episode, but she begs him not to talk about the past – she is only going to enjoy the present. The next day they explore the house and Angel only leaves to get food. Five days pass and they are isolated but for the forest birds. They never speak of the past, and Tess doesn't want to leave. She accepts her fate but wants to keep the cruel world outside while she can. She also fears that Angel will despise her later, and she wants to die before that happens.

Tess has accepted her fate, and accepted that the fantasy is a fantasy, but she still wants to enjoy it while she can. This is almost Hardy's metaphor for life – no one can escape their doom, so they should live and love as best they can before death. Birds again keep Tess company. Fate has taught her that no happiness can last, so she does not hope for much.

The next morning the caretaker comes early to open the windows, and she sees the sleeping couple in the house. They look so peaceful and idyllic that she does not disturb them, but leaves to tell the neighbors.

Tess and Angel have become the innocent lovers of Talbothays again. The mansion is like their wedding night as it should have been.

Tess and Angel awake uneasily and decide to leave. Tess says goodbye to the happy place, and admits that she will not live much longer, but Angel won't accept it and wants to keep moving. Later she rests hidden among some trees while he buys food.

Tess can see her fate and accepts it like a martyr or Christ-figure. Again the woods provide a nest for the Nature-girl.

They decide to cross the open country at night. The moon is covered by clouds and they are alone. Suddenly a huge stone monolith rises up out of the darkness and they can hear the wind humming through other pillars. Angel realizes that they are at Stonehenge, the ancient heathen temple.

The monolith recalls Cross-in-Hand, and The Chase, and the ancient pagan powers of the land. They are outside of time now, and the modern world is far away. Stonehenge was thought at Hardy's time to be a place of ancient pagan sacrifice.

Tess lies down on a slab of rock and does not want to go further. Angel urges her on, but Tess decides she is at home among the heathen stones and wants to stay. Angel says she is lying on an altar.

Tess fully accepts her fate as a sacrificial victim, lying down on the altar like a d'Urberville on his tomb or Christ on his cross.

Tess feels solemn and peaceful, and suddenly she asks Angel if he will marry her sister Liza-Lu once she is gone. She says Liza-Lu is like the best part of her without the bad, and if they married it would be like she and Angel were not separated at all.

Liza-Lu seems to symbolize Tess as she should have been, or would have been if she had never heard the name of d'Urberville. If Liza-Lu marries Angel they can have the happiness Tess deserved.

Tess asks if they sacrificed to God at Stonehenge, but Angel says it was to the sun instead. Tess asks if he thinks they will meet again when they are dead. Angel kisses her and Tess starts to cry, begging him to say they will meet again, but he is silent. After a long while she falls asleep, and dawn starts to break on the horizon.

Hardy returns again to the pagan sun-gods and powers of Nature. Tess tragically needs this last comfort but Angel still cannot betray his intellectual ideals. Tess falls asleep as before Prince's death, and before her rape, passively accepting her fate.

A man walks up the hill and approaches them in the dim light. Angel stays quiet, but then realizes there are more men all around them. He suddenly realizes that Tess has truly committed murder, and he readies himself to fight. There are too many men though, and he begs them to at least let Tess finish resting. They oblige, and Angel holds her hand as she sleeps.

The fantasy is suddenly broken and the truth strikes Angel. The policemen give Tess this one last kindness at least, and she is allowed to dream a little longer before her doom.

The sun rises and its light awakens Tess. She knows immediately what has happened, and she feels almost glad, as their happiness could not have lasted. The men come for her and she says she is ready.

Tess wakes up among Nature and accepts her fate as the sacrifice for sins not her own. She has tragically learned that no happiness lasts, and so is glad to end this way.

CHAPTER 59

It is July in the city of Wintoncester. Two people walk up the road away from town, moving quickly as if fleeing something. They are young but their heads are bowed by sadness. One is Angel Clare and the other is Liza-Lu, who has become the image of a young Tess. They hold hands as they walk.

Hardy again removes the narration from the climactic action, just like with the rape and Alec's murder. It is ambiguous if they hold hands for comfort or if Angel is following Tess's last request.

When they reach the top of the hill they turn helplessly back and wait beside the milestone. They can see everything from their position – the brilliant sun, the cathedral, and the College. The only stain is a large prison tower partly disguised by trees. Angel and Liza-Lu gaze fixedly at a pole on the tower's corner. After the clock strikes eight a black flag rises.

The milestone becomes another sinister monolith foreboding doom. All of Nature is beautiful except the place of human condemnation. Hardy at least spares us a view of Tess imprisoned and trapped indoors. The black flag rising indicates that she has been executed. Society has enacted its punishment of her, though it never examines its own brutal role in forcing Tess to commit the murder she did.

"The President of the Immortals" has finally ended his game of Tess's fate, and the world has carried out its justice. Angel and Liza-Lu fall to the ground, but after a while they stand up, take hands once more, and keep walking.

There is no benevolent God in Hardy's world, but only a cruel being using human lives for sport, and the justice of the world is harsh and unfair. Tess has reached the only fate possible in her situation as the innocent victim and unfairly persecuted woman. There is the possibility that she has gotten the one fleeting hope she continued to be able to hold after all her misery—that Angel and Liza-Lu would marry—but even that is uncertain.

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