

AI-Generated Graded Readers

Masaru Uchida, Gifu University

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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* (Simplified Edition,
Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

On an evening near the end of May a middle-aged man was walking home from the town of Shaston toward the village of Marlott in the green Vale of Blackmoor. His legs were thin and weak, and his walk leaned a little to the left, as if the straight road were pulling him aside. Every now and then he nodded his head quickly, though he was thinking of nothing in particular. An empty egg basket hung from his arm, and his old hat had a worn place on the brim where his thumb always pushed it back.

As he walked along the quiet road he met an elderly clergyman riding a gray horse. The man with the basket lifted his head politely.

“Good night to ’ee,” he said.

“Good night, Sir John,” replied the clergyman.

The walker went two or three steps further and then stopped suddenly. He turned around and looked at the rider with surprise.

“Begging your pardon, sir,” he said slowly. “But we met last market day on this road, about this time, and when I said ‘Good night,’ you answered ‘Good night, Sir John.’ And now you’ve done the same again.”

“Yes,” said the clergyman calmly.

“And once before that, near a month ago,” the man continued.

“Very likely.”

The man scratched his head.

“Then why do you call me ‘Sir John’ so often,” he asked, “when I be nothing more than plain Jack Durbeyfield, the haggler?”

The clergyman rode a little closer and looked carefully at him.

“At first it was only a whim,” he said. Then he paused and added, “But there is a reason. You see, I have lately been studying old family histories for the county record. My name is Parson Tringham, of Stagfoot Lane. Tell me, Durbeyfield—

did you never know that you are the direct descendant of the ancient and noble family of the d'Urbervilles?"

The man stared at him.

"Never heard it in my life!"

"Yet it is true," said the clergyman. "Lift your chin a little, if you please, that I may see your face clearly. Yes—that nose and chin belong to the d'Urbervilles, though somewhat worn by time. Your ancestor was Sir Pagan d'Urberville, a famous knight who came from Normandy with William the Conqueror."

Durbeyfield opened his mouth in astonishment.

"Ye don't say so!"

"Indeed I do," continued the parson. "Your family once held many estates in this part of England. Their names appear in the ancient records. In one century they gave land to the Knights Hospitallers. In another they were called to great councils of the kingdom. Many of them were knights, and if knighthood had remained hereditary, you yourself would now be called Sir John."

Durbeyfield looked around him as if the fields had suddenly changed.

"Well, to think of that!" he murmured. "Here have I been walking about the world like the poorest man in the parish, and all the time I belong to a noble race!"

The clergyman nodded.

"There have been generations of Sir Johns among your ancestors."

Durbeyfield seemed almost dizzy.

"And where do we live now, then, sir?" he asked eagerly. "Where do we d'Urbervilles raise our smoke?"

"You do not live anywhere," replied the clergyman quietly. "The family is extinct—as a great county family."

"That sounds bad."

"It simply means the male line has fallen away. Your ancestors lie buried at Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill. There are rows of them in a great vault under the church, with stone figures above."

"And the lands? The houses?"

"All gone."

Durbeyfield stared at the road.

“No lands at all?”

“None,” said the parson. “Though once there were many.”

The man sat down slowly on the grassy bank.

“And what should I do about it, sir?” he asked after a long silence.

“Nothing at all,” replied the clergyman. “Except perhaps reflect upon how the mighty have fallen. Good night.”

He rode away, leaving Durbeyfield staring thoughtfully across the fields.

For several minutes the man remained sitting on the bank. Then he noticed a boy walking along the road in the same direction. He lifted his hand.

“Boy!” he called.

The youth came nearer, though not very respectfully.

“Take up that basket,” said Durbeyfield. “I have an errand for ’ee.”

The lad frowned.

“Who be you to order me about, John Durbeyfield?”

The man stretched himself comfortably among the daisies.

“That’s the secret,” he said grandly. “I’m one of a noble race. It has just been discovered this afternoon.”

The boy looked doubtful.

“Sir John d’Urberville—that’s who I am,” continued the man proudly. “And you must go to Marlott and tell them to send a horse and carriage to fetch me home.”

He pulled a shilling from his pocket and held it out.

The boy’s expression changed at once.

“Yes, Sir John,” he said quickly.

“Good lad. Tell my wife to stop the washing and wait till I come home, for I have news to tell her.”

The boy picked up the basket and started off toward the village.

Soon the sound of music floated across the fields.

“What’s that?” asked Durbeyfield.

“The women’s club-walking,” said the boy. “Your daughter Tess is one of them.”

“Ah, yes!” said Durbeyfield dreamily. “I had forgot.”

Meanwhile, in the village meadow, a group of young women dressed in white gowns were dancing together in celebration of May-Day. Each carried a peeled willow wand in one hand and a bunch of white flowers in the other.

Among them was Tess Durbeyfield.

She was a handsome girl with large eyes and a deep red mouth that gave warmth to her expression. A red ribbon in her dark hair made her stand out among the others dressed in white.

As the dancers passed the road, someone suddenly cried out:

“Look there! Tess—if that isn’t your father riding home in a carriage!”

Tess turned quickly. Sure enough, her father was passing along the road in a hired chaise, leaning back and waving his hand proudly.

He was singing loudly:

“I’ve got a great family vault at Kingsbere—

And knights for my ancestors there!”

The girls laughed.

Tess felt the colour rise to her face.

“He’s tired, that’s all,” she said quickly. “Our horse has to rest today, so he took a ride home.”

“Bless your innocence, Tess,” one of them said teasingly.

Tess’s eyes filled with tears.

“If you say any more about him, I won’t walk another step with you!”

The others saw that she was truly hurt and said no more.

Soon they entered the meadow where the dancing would continue. At first the girls danced with each other because no men had arrived yet.

Before long three young men walking through the valley stopped at the gate to watch.

They were brothers traveling on foot during their holiday. The eldest two were ready to continue their journey, but the youngest looked amused by the sight of girls dancing without partners.

He opened the gate.

“Why should we not dance for a moment?” he said.

His brothers refused and walked on, leaving him behind.

The young man stepped into the field and addressed the nearest girls kindly.

“This is a pity,” he said. “Where are your partners?”

“They’re still working,” one girl replied. “Will you dance with us until they come?”

“Certainly,” he said.

He looked over the group, choosing quickly.

But he did not choose Tess.

Instead he took another girl by the hand and joined the dance.

Tess watched silently.

When the dance ended the young man suddenly remembered his brothers and hurried away.

As he was leaving, he noticed Tess standing quietly apart. For a moment their eyes met. There was a faint reproach in her expression, as if she wished he had chosen her.

He felt a sudden regret.

“I wish I had asked her to dance,” he thought.

But he ran after his brothers and soon disappeared over the hill.

Tess stood alone beside the hedge.

She watched the place where he had gone until he vanished from sight.

Part 2

Tess did not quickly forget the young stranger who had passed through the dancing field. Though she soon returned to the circle of girls, her heart was no longer as light as before. Several village youths asked her to dance, and she accepted some of them politely, yet their voices and manners seemed rough after the gentle speech of the young man who had come and gone so quickly.

The sun slowly moved toward the edge of the valley, and the shadows of the hedges stretched longer across the grass. The music of the small band continued,

and the white dresses of the girls turned and flashed as they danced. But Tess felt a strange quietness within herself. It was not love—she was too young and inexperienced for that—but something like the first soft touch of disappointment.

At last the evening began to grow dark. Tess suddenly remembered her father's odd appearance in the carriage and felt uneasy.

"I must go home," she said to one of the girls beside her.

Leaving the dancers, she walked alone toward the cottage at the edge of the village.

Even before she reached the door she heard familiar sounds from inside the house. There was the heavy rocking of a cradle on the stone floor, and above it the loud voice of her mother singing a lively country song. The cradle struck the floor again and again—nick-knock, nick-knock—while the song galloped forward.

Tess opened the door quietly.

Inside the small room the yellow light of a single candle showed her mother standing beside a large washing-tub. The tub had been there since Monday, and even now it was not finished. Mrs Durbeyfield balanced on one foot beside it while the other foot rocked the cradle where the baby lay. Water dripped from her arms as she worked.

Around her stood several younger children, watching or playing.

Tess felt a sudden pain of guilt. While she had been dancing in the meadow, her mother had been working alone at home.

"Mother," she said gently, "let me rock the cradle for you. Or I can take off my dress and help with the washing."

Mrs Durbeyfield turned toward her with bright eyes.

"Ah, Tess, I'm glad you've come," she said excitedly. "I've something wonderful to tell 'ee!"

Tess looked puzzled.

"Something that happened while I was away?"

"Yes!"

Tess hesitated.

“Does it have anything to do with father riding through the village in that carriage?” she asked. “Why did he do that? I felt so ashamed when everyone laughed.”

Her mother waved her hand.

“That was part of the whole affair! We have been found to belong to the greatest family in the county. A noble family that goes back hundreds of years—to the old knights of the land!”

Tess stared.

“What do you mean?”

Mrs Durbeyfield lowered her voice with excitement.

“Our real name is d’Urberville!”

Tess looked thoughtful rather than proud.

“Will that do us any good, mother?”

“Of course it will!” her mother replied. “Great things may come of it. Rich relations may hear of us and come in their carriages to see us.”

Tess was silent for a moment.

“Where is father now?” she asked suddenly.

Her mother gave an uneasy look.

“Well... he stopped at Rolliver’s.”

Tess’s face changed.

“At the inn?”

“Only for a little while,” her mother said quickly. “The poor man felt so excited after hearing the news that he wanted to strengthen himself.”

Tess’s voice trembled.

“Strengthen himself? By drinking?”

Mrs Durbeyfield tried to defend her husband.

“He will have a long journey tonight with the beehives, and he needs a little comfort.”

Tess shook her head sadly but said no more.

At that moment Mrs Durbeyfield suddenly remembered something.

“Take that fortune-telling book out to the shed,” she said. “I don’t like it staying

in the house overnight.”

Tess picked up the thick, worn book from the table. It was a strange old volume that her mother consulted for signs about the future. Tess carried it outside and hid it under the thatch of the shed roof.

When she returned to the house her mother had already gone to fetch her father.

Tess began helping the younger children prepare for bed. Her brother Abraham and her sister Liza-Lu assisted her, while the smallest ones were lifted into the large bed.

Tess felt almost like a second mother to them. There were many children in the house, and though she herself was still young, she often carried the weight of responsibility.

After a time she noticed that neither of her parents had returned.

The village outside had grown quiet. One by one the lights in the cottages disappeared.

Tess looked out into the darkness.

“Abraham,” she said gently, “put on your hat and go up to Rolliver’s. See what has happened to father and mother.”

The boy nodded bravely and slipped out into the night.

Half an hour passed.

Tess waited at the door, listening.

No one returned.

At last she sighed.

“I must go myself.”

She locked the younger children inside the cottage and walked along the crooked village road toward the inn.

Rolliver’s was the only alehouse in this part of Marlott. Because it did not have a full license, customers were not supposed to drink inside the building. But the villagers had found their own way around the rule.

Upstairs, in a bedroom hidden behind a thick curtain, a group of local men and women were gathered in secret comfort. They sat wherever they could—on the bed, the chest of drawers, the washstand—while drinking and talking loudly.

Among them sat John Durbeyfield.

He was humming happily to himself.

“I be as good as any man here! I’ve got a great family vault at Kingsbere—knights and noble bones!”

At that moment footsteps sounded on the stairs.

Tess appeared at the doorway.

Her presence changed the room instantly.

The cheerful noise faded. Even the thick air of drink seemed ashamed before the quiet seriousness of her face.

She looked directly at her father.

No words were needed.

Within a moment he rose awkwardly from his seat. Mrs Durbeyfield followed him.

Together they left the inn and walked home through the dark village.

Tess held one of her father’s arms while her mother held the other. Though he had not drunk much, his weak body made him unsteady, and the three moved along the road in a crooked line.

As they approached the cottage he suddenly burst again into his proud song.

“I’ve got a fam-ily vault at Kingsbere!”

“Hush, Jacky,” said his wife quickly. “Other families were great once too.”

Tess changed the subject.

“Father,” she said quietly, “I’m afraid you won’t be able to take the beehives to market tonight.”

“I shall be ready soon,” he replied stubbornly.

But when the house grew quiet and the night deepened, it became clear that he would not be able to go.

At half past one in the morning Mrs Durbeyfield came softly into the bedroom where Tess and the children slept.

“The poor man cannot go,” she whispered.

Tess sat up at once.

“But the hives must be delivered before market,” she said.

After a moment she added calmly:

“I will take them.”

She woke little Abraham to accompany her.

Soon the two children were outside in the dark stable yard, lighting a lantern and harnessing the old horse Prince to the loaded wagon.

The night road lay silent before them.

Tess took the reins.

And slowly, in the cold darkness before dawn, they began their long journey to market.

Part 3

The road stretched ahead through the dark fields, and the lantern swung gently from the side of the wagon. Its small yellow light moved across the hedges and trees as the horse walked slowly forward. The air was cool, and the sky above was full of quiet stars.

Tess and her little brother Abraham walked beside the horse at first so that the load would not be too heavy for him on the rising road. The horse Prince was thin and tired, but he moved patiently, as if he understood that the journey must be made.

After they had gone some distance, Tess climbed onto the front of the wagon, and Abraham sat beside her. The lantern shone faintly ahead, making the narrow road appear like a pale ribbon through the night.

Abraham had now fully awakened.

“Tess,” he said after a silence, “bain’t you glad that we’ve become gentlefolk?”

Tess did not answer immediately.

“Not particularly glad,” she said at last.

Abraham leaned back against the beehives behind them.

“But you be glad that you are going to marry a gentleman,” he continued.

Tess turned quickly toward him.

“What nonsense is that?”

“Mother said so,” Abraham replied simply. “There is a rich lady of our family out by Trantridge. Mother says if you go and claim kin with her she will help you marry a gentleman.”

Tess became silent again.

For a moment the only sound was the slow movement of the wagon wheels on the road.

Abraham looked up at the sky.

“Tess,” he said thoughtfully, “are those stars really other worlds?”

“Yes,” she replied.

“Are they all like ours?”

“I do not know,” said Tess. “But I think many of them are.”

Abraham continued looking upward.

“Which one do we live on then—a good one or a bad one?”

Tess thought for a moment.

“A blighted one,” she answered quietly.

Abraham considered this deeply.

“’Tis unlucky we did not choose a better one,” he said at last.

Tess smiled faintly, though her thoughts were troubled.

The wagon continued its slow journey across the sleeping countryside. The lantern flickered as the wind moved across the fields, and the road rose steadily toward higher ground.

Soon Abraham began to grow sleepy again. Tess arranged a small nest for him among the sacks and hives so that he would not fall.

“Go to sleep,” she said gently. “I can manage Prince alone.”

Abraham curled up and soon slept soundly.

Tess took the reins firmly in both hands.

The world around her was quiet and lonely. The trees passed slowly on either side, and sometimes the wind moved through the branches with a soft sigh.

Alone with her thoughts, Tess began to reflect upon everything that had happened that day.

The discovery of her father’s noble ancestry seemed strange and useless to her.

What difference did it make that they were descended from ancient knights? Their cottage was small and poor, and the work of each day remained the same.

Then her thoughts turned to the young man she had seen at the dance.

She remembered the gentle way he had spoken, and the moment when their eyes had met as he left the field.

“He should have chosen me,” she thought suddenly.

The thought surprised her, and she felt a warm colour rise to her cheeks even in the darkness.

She shook her head quickly, trying to forget it.

The wagon moved steadily forward.

Tess leaned back against the beehives for a moment while Prince walked slowly along the quiet road. The lantern light swung gently from side to side, and the soft motion of the wagon made her eyelids heavy.

She tried to remain awake.

But the long day, the late hour, and the stillness of the night overcame her.

Gradually her thoughts became confused.

The road seemed to move by itself, and the shapes of trees and hedges turned into strange shadows against the sky.

At last Tess fell asleep.

She did not know how much time passed.

Suddenly a violent shock threw her forward.

Tess awoke with a cry.

The wagon had stopped.

At the same moment a terrible sound reached her ears—a deep groan unlike anything she had ever heard before.

“Hoi there!” shouted a voice in the darkness.

A bright lantern suddenly shone directly into her face. Another wagon stood in front of them, blocking the road.

Tess jumped down from the wagon in confusion.

Then she saw the dreadful truth.

The groan had come from Prince.

The morning mail-cart, moving quickly through the dark road, had struck their slow wagon. Its pointed shaft had pierced the horse's breast like a spear.

Blood poured from the wound in a dark stream.

Tess stared in horror.

"Prince!" she cried.

She ran forward and pressed her hand against the terrible wound, but the blood only covered her hands and clothes.

The horse stood trembling for a moment.

Then slowly he collapsed onto the road.

The mail-cart driver hurried toward them and began removing the harness, but nothing could be done.

Prince was dead.

Tess stood motionless beside the fallen horse, her face pale and her dress stained with blood.

The driver returned to his own horse, which had not been injured.

"You were on the wrong side of the road," he said impatiently. "I must go on with the mail."

He climbed back into his cart.

In a moment the sound of his wheels faded into the distance.

Tess remained alone on the dark road.

Beside her lay the dead horse.

The wagon full of beehives stood helpless behind her.

The cold morning light was slowly beginning to appear in the east.

Tess covered her face with her hands.

She knew that Prince had been the most valuable thing her family owned.

And now he was gone.

"It is all my fault," she whispered.

Part 4

The pale light of morning slowly spread across the fields. Tess still stood beside

the body of the horse, unable to move. The road was quiet again, as if nothing had happened. But the blood on the ground and on her dress showed the terrible truth.

Abraham had awakened when the wagon stopped. He climbed down slowly and looked at the horse lying on the road.

“Is Prince dead?” he asked in a frightened voice.

Tess nodded.

For a long moment neither of them spoke.

At last Tess forced herself to think. The beehives must still be taken to market, but without the horse that was impossible. The wagon stood useless beside the road.

Tess knew what the loss of the horse meant for her family. Prince had been their most valuable possession. Without him her father could not work properly. The journey to Casterbridge could not be made, and the money they expected from selling the hives would be lost.

Tears filled her eyes.

“It is all my fault,” she said again quietly.

Abraham tried to comfort her.

“No, Tess,” he said. “You were asleep.”

But Tess shook her head.

“I should not have slept,” she replied. “Father trusted me.”

The sky was growing brighter now. Soon people would begin to travel along the road and see the accident. Tess knew she must return home and tell her parents what had happened.

She covered the dead horse with a piece of cloth from the wagon so that Abraham would not see the wound again.

Then the two children slowly began the long walk back toward Marlott.

Tess walked silently. Her hands were still stained with Prince’s blood, and she felt as if she carried the weight of the whole disaster upon her shoulders.

When they reached the village the sun had just risen above the hills.

The cottages were beginning to wake. Smoke rose from the chimneys, and the sound of morning work came from the farms.

Tess and Abraham entered their cottage quietly.

Mrs Durbeyfield turned toward them with surprise.

“Back already?” she said. “What has happened?”

Tess could hardly speak.

“Prince is dead,” she said at last.

Her mother stared at her in shock.

“Dead?”

Tess explained the accident with the mail-cart. As she spoke, her father slowly sat up in bed.

John Durbeyfield looked at her with dull eyes.

“The horse gone?” he murmured.

Tess nodded.

For a long time the room remained silent.

At last Mrs Durbeyfield sighed deeply.

“What shall we do now?” she said helplessly.

The family had little money. Without the horse they could not earn enough to live comfortably.

Tess felt the heavy burden of responsibility pressing upon her.

Later that day the body of Prince was brought back to the cottage. The loss seemed greater each moment.

That evening Mrs Durbeyfield returned to the subject she had spoken of the night before.

“Tess,” she said carefully, “there is something you must consider.”

Tess looked at her.

“You remember the rich lady of our family—the d’Urbervilles who live at Trantridge?”

Tess nodded slowly.

“Yes.”

“Your father and I have been thinking,” her mother continued. “Perhaps you should go and visit her. She may help us.”

Tess understood immediately what her mother meant.

“You wish me to claim kinship with her,” she said.

“Why not?” Mrs Durbeyfield replied eagerly. “She is rich. And we are of the same ancient family. It is only right that she should help us.”

Tess did not answer.

She felt uneasy about the idea. It seemed almost like begging.

But when she looked at the small cottage and thought of the loss of Prince, she knew how difficult life would now become for them.

Her father spoke slowly from his chair.

“It might bring good fortune,” he said.

Mrs Durbeyfield nodded eagerly.

“Yes, Tess. Perhaps the lady will take a liking to you. You are pretty and well-mannered. She may find you a good position.”

Tess lowered her eyes.

“Very well,” she said quietly. “If it will help the family, I will go.”

Her mother smiled with satisfaction.

The decision had been made.

Within a few days Tess prepared to leave Marlott.

The morning of her departure was bright and warm. Tess stood outside the cottage looking across the green valley of Blackmoor.

She had lived there all her life.

Now she was going to a place she had never seen before, to meet a woman she did not know, because of a distant connection between their families.

Tess felt a strange mixture of hope and fear.

As she walked away from the village road, the fields and hedges seemed to watch her quietly.

She did not know that this journey would change her life forever.

And far away, in the rich lands near The Chase, the man named Alec d’Urberville was waiting—though Tess did not yet know his name.

Part 5

Tess left the quiet valley of Marlott early in the morning. The fields were still covered with light mist, and the sun had only begun to rise above the hills. She carried a small bundle of clothes and walked slowly along the road toward Trantridge, the place where the rich family called d'Urberville lived.

The distance was not great, but to Tess the journey felt long and uncertain. She had never been far from her home before. Every field, every tree, every path in the Vale of Blackmoor had been familiar to her since childhood. Now the land slowly changed as she walked.

The soft green valley gave way to a rougher country. The road entered the edge of an old woodland known as The Chase, a wide region that had once been a royal forest. Tall trees rose on every side, and the sunlight passed through their branches in narrow beams.

Tess felt a slight uneasiness as she walked through the shadows of the wood. The silence seemed deeper there, and the road wound between the trees in lonely curves.

At last she reached the village of Trantridge.

It was a busy place compared with Marlott. Farm buildings and cottages stood close together along the road, and several large wagons moved through the village yard carrying sacks of grain.

Tess asked a woman standing near a well for the house of the d'Urbervilles.

The woman pointed toward a large building near the edge of the village.

"That be the place," she said. "The big house with the garden and the red roof."

Tess thanked her and walked toward it.

The house stood on a gentle rise above the road. It was larger and finer than any building Tess had ever entered. A wide garden lay before it, full of flowers and fruit trees.

Tess hesitated at the gate.

For a moment she wondered whether she should really go inside and claim kinship with people she had never met. The idea still felt strange to her.

But she remembered the dead horse, the poor cottage, and the anxious faces of her family.

At last she walked up the path and knocked at the door.

A servant girl opened it.

“What do you want?” she asked.

Tess spoke politely.

“I wish to see Mrs d’Urberville, if she will speak with me.”

The servant looked at her simple dress and doubtful expression.

“Wait here,” she said.

After a few minutes Tess was led into a large room where a woman sat beside the window.

The woman was richly dressed and wore dark glasses over her eyes. She appeared pale and quiet, as if she did not see clearly.

This was Mrs d’Urberville.

Tess curtsied respectfully.

“What is your business?” asked the lady.

Tess spoke gently.

“My name is Tess Durbeyfield. My parents believe that we may be related to your family. They thought perhaps you might allow me to visit.”

Mrs d’Urberville listened without much interest.

“Indeed,” she said. “I have heard of people claiming that before.”

Tess felt embarrassed and wished she could leave immediately. But at that moment another person entered the room.

He was a young man, well dressed and confident in manner.

His dark eyes rested on Tess with sudden curiosity.

“What is this?” he asked lightly.

Mrs d’Urberville turned toward him.

“A girl who says she is related to us,” she replied.

The young man smiled.

“Related?” he said. “How interesting.”

He stepped closer and looked carefully at Tess.

“And what is your name?”

“Tess Durbeyfield,” she answered.

“Ah,” he said slowly. “Durbeyfield... yes, that is close enough to d’Urberville.”

Tess felt uncomfortable under his steady gaze.

The young man continued to observe her for several moments.

Then he turned toward the older woman.

“Mother,” he said, “this girl seems a good, honest country maid. We could find work for her here on the farm.”

Mrs d’Urberville nodded without much thought.

“If she wishes to work, she may stay.”

Tess looked from one to the other in surprise.

The young man smiled again.

“My name is Alec d’Urberville,” he said. “And I will see that you are properly settled.”

Tess thanked them quietly.

She had come only to ask for recognition of kinship, but now she had been offered work.

For her family’s sake she accepted.

From that moment her life at Trantridge began.

Alec showed her around the farm that afternoon. The land was large and prosperous, with fields, barns, and orchards stretching across the hillside.

As they walked together Alec spoke easily and confidently, while Tess answered briefly and politely.

There was something about him that made her uneasy, though she could not explain why.

At one point they stopped beside a group of chickens near the orchard.

Alec suddenly reached toward her and placed a small flower against her lips.

Tess drew back quickly.

“Please do not,” she said quietly.

Alec laughed softly.

“You are a shy one,” he replied.

Tess lowered her eyes.

“I prefer to be treated with respect,” she said.

Alec watched her for a moment with a curious expression.

“Very well,” he said at last. “We shall see.”

The sun was setting behind the trees when Tess returned to the small cottage where she would live during her work at Trantridge.

As she lay awake that night, she wondered whether coming to this place had truly been the right decision.

But it was too late to turn back now.

Part 6

Tess soon began her work at Trantridge. Her task was simple but tiring. Each morning she went to the large poultry yard where hundreds of chickens and ducks were kept. She helped feed them, gather eggs, and carry baskets of birds to the barns.

The farm was busy and noisy. Servants moved constantly between the buildings, and carts loaded with grain rolled across the yard from morning until evening.

Tess worked carefully and quietly. She tried to think only about her duties and not about the strange position in which she now found herself. She had come to claim kinship with the d’Urbervilles, yet she was simply a servant on their farm.

Still, she reminded herself that the wages would help her family.

Alec d’Urberville appeared often in the yard. He seemed to take a particular interest in Tess, though he rarely pretended otherwise. When he spoke to her his voice was always pleasant, but his eyes watched her closely in a way that made her uneasy.

One afternoon he rode into the yard on horseback and stopped beside her while she was filling a basket with eggs.

“You are working very hard, Miss Tess,” he said lightly.

Tess continued her work.

“I do what is required of me,” she replied.

Alec leaned slightly forward in the saddle.

“You should not call yourself a servant here,” he said. “You are one of our own

family.”

Tess looked up briefly.

“I do not feel that I belong to this family,” she said simply.

Alec laughed softly.

“You are proud,” he said.

“No,” Tess answered quietly. “Only honest.”

Alec watched her for a moment longer and then rode away.

The other girls who worked at the farm sometimes spoke about him among themselves. They admired his fine clothes, his confident manner, and the way he spent money freely.

Tess listened to their talk but said little.

Days passed.

One evening Alec offered to drive Tess and several other girls into the nearby village for an outing. The girls accepted eagerly, laughing and talking as they climbed into the wagon.

Tess hesitated, but the others insisted she join them.

“Come with us, Tess,” they said. “It will be pleasant.”

She finally agreed.

The wagon moved quickly along the road, pulled by Alec’s strong horse. The girls sang songs and laughed while Alec joked with them.

But as the evening grew later, the cheerful mood began to fade. The girls were tired and quiet as the wagon returned toward Trantridge through the dark countryside.

When they reached the farm gate, the other girls climbed down and walked toward their cottages.

Tess was the last to remain.

Alec looked at her thoughtfully.

“You live farther along the road,” he said. “I will drive you there.”

Tess felt uncertain.

“I can walk,” she replied.

Alec shook his head.

“It is late and the road passes through The Chase. I would not allow you to go alone.”

Tess could not refuse without seeming ungrateful.

She climbed back into the wagon.

Alec turned the horse and drove away from the farm buildings.

The road soon entered the dark woods of The Chase. Tall trees stood on every side, their branches meeting above the road and blocking the moonlight.

The wagon moved slowly now, for the path was narrow and uneven.

Tess felt uneasy in the deep silence of the forest.

After a time she spoke.

“I believe we have taken the wrong road,” she said.

Alec answered calmly.

“No, this way is shorter.”

But the road grew rougher and more difficult to follow. At last the wagon stopped.

“We must go no farther with the horse,” Alec said.

Tess climbed down uncertainly.

The forest was very still. Only the faint sound of leaves moving in the night air could be heard.

Alec looked around as if searching for something.

“I will find the path,” he said.

Tess waited beside the wagon.

The darkness and silence of the forest pressed heavily upon her. The great trees seemed ancient and watchful, as if they had stood there for hundreds of years.

At last Alec returned.

“You must be tired,” he said. “Sit here and rest while I see the way more clearly.”

Tess sat on the grass beside the road. The long day’s work and the late hour had made her very weary.

She tried to remain awake.

But the quiet darkness of the forest and the gentle night air slowly overcame her.

Her head leaned against the trunk of a tree.

Within a few moments she fell asleep.

Alec returned and stood looking down at her.

Her breathing was soft and regular. Tears still rested on her eyelashes from the trouble she had felt during the long evening.

The forest around them was silent.

Above their heads the ancient trees of The Chase stood motionless. Small birds slept among the branches, and a few rabbits moved quietly through the grass nearby.

Alec bent down.

In the deep darkness of the forest, Tess lay helpless in her sleep.

And there was no one there to protect her.

Part 7

When Tess awoke, the morning light was already spreading through the forest.

For a moment she did not understand where she was. The tall trees of The Chase stood around her, and the cool air of early morning moved quietly through the leaves.

Then memory returned.

A deep feeling of shame and sorrow filled her heart.

Alec stood some distance away beside the horse, looking toward the road.

Tess slowly rose to her feet.

Neither of them spoke for several moments.

At last Alec approached her.

“You had a long sleep,” he said lightly.

Tess did not answer.

She looked pale and distant, as if part of her spirit had withdrawn into silence.

Alec continued speaking in a calm voice.

“You are safe now. The morning has come.”

Tess turned away.

The events of the night had changed everything, though she could hardly find words to describe the change. She felt as if some invisible barrier had been broken, leaving her alone in a world that suddenly seemed colder than before.

Without another word she began walking along the road.

Alec watched her for a moment and then followed with the horse.

When they reached the outskirts of Trantridge the sun had risen fully above the fields.

Tess did not return to the poultry yard that day. Instead she went directly to her small cottage and remained there alone.

The days that followed were heavy and silent for her.

She continued working on the farm, but her manner had changed. The cheerful freshness that had once been natural to her seemed to have faded. She spoke little and kept her eyes lowered when others addressed her.

Alec tried several times to speak with her privately, but Tess avoided him whenever possible.

At last the burden became too great.

One morning she made a quiet decision.

She would leave Trantridge and return home.

Without telling anyone except the housekeeper, she packed her few belongings and prepared to go back to Marlott.

The journey home felt longer than the journey that had first brought her there. Each step seemed to carry the weight of sorrow.

When Tess finally reached the familiar valley of Blackmoor, the green fields and soft hills of her childhood appeared before her again.

But the place no longer seemed the same.

The village looked peaceful as always, yet Tess felt that she herself had changed in a way that could not easily be repaired.

She entered the cottage quietly.

Her mother looked up with surprise.

“Tess! You have come back sooner than we expected.”

Tess forced a faint smile.

“The work was not suitable for me,” she said.

Mrs Durbeyfield examined her daughter’s pale face but asked no further questions.

Life at Marlott continued as before, but Tess lived quietly and avoided the company of others whenever possible.

Months passed.

The seasons changed, and winter slowly turned into spring.

During this time Tess carried a secret burden.

She knew that the child she now carried was the result of the wrong that had been done to her in the forest.

The thought filled her with sorrow, yet she accepted it with a quiet strength that surprised even herself.

When the child was born, it lived only a short time.

Tess loved the small baby deeply, though she knew its life was fragile from the beginning. She watched beside it day and night in the little cottage.

One evening she understood that the child would soon die.

There was one thing she wished to do before that moment came.

According to the church, a child must be baptized before death in order to be buried in the churchyard. But there was no time to call the priest.

Tess therefore decided to perform the baptism herself.

She gathered her younger brothers and sisters around the small bed.

Holding the child gently in her arms, she sprinkled a few drops of water upon its forehead.

“I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” she said softly.

Then she gave the child a name.

“Your name shall be Sorrow.”

The little ones repeated the word quietly.

“Sorrow.”

Soon afterward the child died peacefully.

Tess went to the local clergyman and asked permission to bury the baby in the

churchyard.

The man listened with discomfort.

“A baptism performed by a layperson cannot be fully recognized,” he said carefully. “I am sorry, but the church rules do not allow burial in the sacred ground.”

Tess’s eyes filled with tears.

“Then I hate your church!” she cried suddenly. “I will never come to it again!”

That night the baby was placed in a small wooden box made of thin boards.

With the help of a lantern, Tess buried the child in a quiet corner of the graveyard where unbaptized infants and other unfortunate souls were laid to rest.

Later she made a small cross from two pieces of wood and tied flowers to it with a piece of thread.

When no one was watching, she returned to the grave and placed the cross above the tiny resting place.

A small bottle that had once held marmalade stood beside the flowers, filled with water so that they would not fade too quickly.

The writing on the bottle meant nothing to Tess.

Her thoughts were far above such small details.

She stood beside the grave for a long time in silence.

Then she turned and slowly walked home.

The sorrow of the past months had ended.

But a new and uncertain future still waited before her.

Part 8

Time passed slowly in Marlott after the death of Tess’s child. The quiet valley returned to its usual rhythm, and the villagers continued their work in the fields as they always had. But Tess herself lived apart from their ordinary happiness.

She worked beside her mother and younger brothers and sisters, helping with the daily tasks of the cottage. Yet she spoke little and often seemed lost in thought.

The sorrow she had endured had changed her deeply.

Tess no longer expected much kindness from the world. Still, a quiet strength remained within her. She accepted her life with patience and continued to care for her family faithfully.

Months passed.

Spring came again to the Vale of Blackmoor. The fields grew green, and the orchards filled with blossoms. The gentle beauty of the valley slowly began to ease Tess's troubled heart.

One evening she sat alone beside the cottage door watching the sunset over the distant hills.

Her mother joined her.

"Tess," Mrs Durbeyfield said carefully, "you are young still. You must not think your life is finished."

Tess did not answer.

"There are other places where you might find work," her mother continued. "A fresh start would do you good."

Tess looked across the valley.

The peaceful fields reminded her of childhood days when life had seemed simple and hopeful.

"Perhaps you are right," she said at last.

A few days later she made a decision.

She would leave Marlott again and find work somewhere far from the memories that troubled her.

Soon she heard of a dairy farm in a distant valley called Talbothays. The farm was known for its rich green pastures and fine milk cows, and the farmer sometimes hired new workers in the spring.

Tess decided to go there.

Early one morning she packed her small bundle once more and said goodbye to her family.

The road led her out of the Vale of Blackmoor and across several hills into a new region called the Vale of Froom.

This valley was very different from the one she had left.

It was wider and richer, full of deep grass and clear streams. Large herds of cows moved slowly through the fields, and the sound of cowbells echoed across the pastures.

When Tess arrived at Talbothays Dairy, she immediately felt the gentle peace of the place.

The farm stood beside a wide meadow where the cows grazed quietly near a flowing river. The air smelled of fresh grass and milk, and the work of the farm followed the calm rhythm of the seasons.

The farmer, Mr Crick, greeted her kindly.

“We can always use another good milkmaid,” he said after speaking with her. “If you are willing to work, you may stay.”

Tess thanked him gratefully.

Soon she began her new life at Talbothays.

The work of milking cows began early each morning. Tess and the other dairymaids rose before sunrise and walked together to the milking sheds. There they sat beside the cows and filled the large metal pails with fresh milk.

The work was tiring but peaceful.

The other girls—Marian, Izz, and Retty—became friendly companions to Tess. They laughed together during their work and often sang songs while walking through the fields.

For the first time in many months Tess began to feel a small return of happiness.

The beauty of the valley, the gentle rhythm of the farm, and the kindness of her companions slowly brought life back to her spirit.

One day, while the girls were walking beside the river after their work, Tess suddenly saw a familiar figure approaching along the path.

It was a young man carrying a book beneath his arm.

When he came closer she recognized him at once.

He was the same man who had once passed through the village dance at Marlott. Angel Clare.

Angel had come to Talbothays Dairy to learn the work of farming. Though he was the son of a clergyman, he had chosen a different path from his brothers.

Instead of becoming a minister he hoped to own a farm of his own one day, perhaps even in a distant country.

When he saw the group of dairymaids, he greeted them politely.

His eyes rested on Tess.

For a moment he seemed uncertain.

Then he smiled with sudden recognition.

“I remember you,” he said. “You were among the girls dancing on May Day in Marlott.”

Tess felt her face grow warm.

“Yes,” she said softly.

Angel looked thoughtful.

“I regretted that I did not speak with you that day,” he said. “I noticed you only after I had already chosen another partner.”

Tess remembered the moment clearly.

“Yes,” she said again.

The conversation was brief, but something quiet and powerful had begun.

From that day forward Angel Clare often found reasons to walk beside Tess during their work at the dairy.

At first their conversations were simple and polite.

But gradually they spoke more freely with one another.

Angel admired Tess’s natural grace and honesty. Tess respected Angel’s gentle manners and thoughtful mind.

As the warm days of summer passed, their friendship slowly deepened.

And though neither of them yet spoke the word aloud, the first quiet beginnings of love had entered their lives.

Part 9

Life at Talbothays Dairy followed a gentle rhythm that matched the slow movement of the seasons. Each morning before sunrise the dairymaids walked across the soft grass toward the milking sheds, their wooden pails swinging lightly

in their hands. The air was cool and fresh, and the valley was often covered with a thin mist that slowly disappeared as the sun rose higher.

Tess grew strong from the healthy work and the peaceful life of the farm. The sorrow that had once weighed heavily upon her began to fade, though it never entirely left her heart.

Angel Clare worked beside the dairymaids as he learned the practical side of farming. Though he was educated and thoughtful, he did not hesitate to take part in the daily labor. He carried milk, helped with the cows, and joined the others in the fields.

The other girls soon noticed that Angel spoke more often with Tess than with anyone else.

Retty Priddle watched them with quiet sadness. She had secretly admired Angel from the first day he arrived at the dairy. Marian and Izz also felt a gentle affection for him.

Yet it was Tess whom Angel seemed always to seek.

One warm afternoon he walked beside her as they carried milk across the meadow toward the dairy house.

“This valley is very different from the place where I was raised,” Angel said thoughtfully.

Tess glanced toward the wide fields and the shining river.

“It is beautiful,” she replied.

Angel nodded.

“Yes. But what interests me most is the people who live here. Country life reveals something honest about human nature.”

Tess listened quietly.

Angel often spoke about ideas that she had never heard discussed before—about religion, about society, about the way people should live their lives.

Though Tess did not always understand everything he said, she felt drawn to his thoughtful manner and his kindness.

As the summer passed, Angel began to admire Tess more deeply.

He noticed the grace of her movements, the quiet dignity of her character, and

the natural beauty that seemed to shine from her without effort.

One evening the dairymaids sat together beside the river after finishing their work. The golden light of sunset reflected upon the water, and the cows moved slowly through the distant fields.

Angel approached and joined them.

The girls laughed and spoke freely, but when Angel turned to Tess his voice softened.

“Miss Tess,” he said gently, “do you ever think of leaving this place?”

Tess considered the question.

“I have not thought much about the future,” she replied. “For now I am content to work here.”

Angel smiled slightly.

“Contentment is a rare gift.”

He paused for a moment before speaking again.

“But sometimes life asks more of us than quiet work in a valley.”

Tess lowered her eyes.

“Perhaps,” she said.

As the weeks passed, Angel found himself thinking of Tess constantly. Her presence seemed to bring a peaceful brightness to every part of the farm.

Yet Tess herself felt troubled.

The affection she felt for Angel grew stronger each day, but she carried a secret from her past that she believed would make any honest love impossible.

She often asked herself whether she should tell him everything.

Several times she tried to write a letter explaining the truth about her life at Trantridge and the sorrow that had followed.

But each time she stopped before finishing the letter.

“He will never care for me if he knows,” she thought.

So she remained silent.

Autumn slowly approached. The leaves of the trees began to turn gold, and the air grew cooler each morning.

One evening Angel walked with Tess along a narrow path beside the river.

The valley was quiet, and the last light of sunset lay softly across the fields.
Angel suddenly stopped.

“Tess,” he said.

She looked at him with quiet surprise.

His voice was serious now.

“I must speak honestly,” he continued. “For many weeks I have tried to think clearly about my feelings. I now understand that I love you.”

Tess felt her heart begin to beat quickly.

She had expected this moment and feared it at the same time.

Angel continued.

“You are the most genuine and beautiful person I have ever known. I wish to spend my life with you.”

Tess stood silent.

The happiness that his words brought was mixed with deep fear.

At last she spoke.

“You do not know me as well as you think,” she said softly.

Angel smiled.

“I know enough to understand that you are the woman I wish to marry.”

Tess turned her eyes toward the darkening river.

“Please,” she said gently, “do not speak of marriage now.”

Angel looked surprised.

“Why not?”

Tess struggled to find words.

“Because... because I am not worthy of such happiness.”

Angel shook his head firmly.

“That cannot be true.”

Tess said no more.

But in her heart she knew that one day she must tell him everything.

And she feared that when that moment came, the love between them might not survive the truth.

Part 10

The autumn days at Talbothays passed quietly after Angel Clare spoke of his love. Though Tess had asked him not to speak of marriage again, Angel could not easily hide his feelings. His affection for her had grown too strong.

Tess continued her work at the dairy as before. She rose early with the other girls, milked the cows, and carried the heavy pails across the fields. Outwardly her life seemed peaceful and unchanged.

But inside she lived in constant conflict.

She loved Angel deeply. His kindness, his intelligence, and his gentle nature had awakened a happiness within her that she had never known before. Yet the memory of her past weighed upon her heart like a shadow.

Often she walked alone beside the river in the evening, thinking about what she should do.

"He must know the truth," she would tell herself.

But each time she imagined the moment of confession, fear overcame her.

Meanwhile Angel's admiration only increased.

One day he spoke privately with the dairy farmer, Mr. Crick.

"I wish to marry Tess," Angel said.

Mr. Crick looked surprised but pleased.

"She is a fine girl," he replied. "Honest and hardworking. Any man would be fortunate to have such a wife."

Encouraged by this support, Angel returned to Tess with renewed determination.

One evening he found her standing alone near the milking shed.

"Tess," he said gently, "I cannot keep silent any longer. I ask you again to marry me."

Tess's heart trembled.

"You must not ask me," she replied softly.

Angel looked troubled.

"Why do you refuse me when I know that you care for me?"

Tess struggled to answer.

“Because I am not the woman you believe me to be,” she said.

Angel smiled slightly.

“You are too modest. I know your character well enough.”

Tess shook her head.

“No,” she said. “You do not know everything.”

Angel misunderstood her meaning.

“Everyone has faults,” he replied kindly. “Whatever your small weaknesses may be, they cannot change my love.”

Tess looked at him with deep sadness.

“My fault is not small,” she whispered.

Angel gently took her hand.

“Tess,” he said warmly, “I love you for who you are, not for some perfect image. Will you trust me?”

His sincerity moved her deeply.

At last she gave a faint nod.

“Very well,” she said. “If you truly wish it, I will marry you.”

Angel’s face brightened with joy.

From that moment their engagement became known at the dairy.

The other milkmaids received the news with mixed emotions. Though they congratulated Tess warmly, some of them felt quiet disappointment in their own hearts.

Retty Priddle wept secretly when she heard the news. Marian and Izz also felt sadness, though they tried to hide it.

Tess noticed their sorrow and felt guilty for causing them pain.

“I wish none of you to suffer because of me,” she told them gently.

Marian shook her head.

“We cannot help our feelings,” she said honestly. “But you deserve happiness, Tess.”

As winter approached, Angel returned home for a short visit to his parents.

His father was a clergyman who lived in a quiet village. Angel had two older brothers who had both become ministers, following their father’s example.

During his visit Angel spoke to his parents about Tess.

His mother listened with concern.

“Is the young woman from a respectable family?” she asked.

Angel answered without hesitation.

“She is not what people usually call a lady,” he said. “She is the daughter of a farmer.”

His mother looked surprised.

“Then she is not a gentlewoman?”

Angel remained calm.

“She may not belong to the upper classes,” he replied, “but in character and spirit she is more truly a lady than many who bear that title.”

His father observed him thoughtfully.

Though the older couple had hoped their son might marry within their social circle, they could see that his decision was firm.

After some hesitation they gave their cautious approval.

Angel soon returned to Talbothays with good news.

“My parents accept our marriage,” he told Tess happily.

Tess smiled faintly, though the shadow in her heart remained.

She knew that Angel still did not understand the full truth about her past.

As the wedding day approached, Tess once again tried to write a letter explaining everything.

Late one evening she sat alone in her small room with pen and paper.

Carefully she wrote the painful story of her life at Trantridge and the sorrow that had followed.

When the letter was finished she folded it slowly.

“Now he will know,” she whispered.

That night she slipped the letter under Angel’s door.

Then she returned to her room and waited anxiously for morning.

But the next day Angel spoke to her cheerfully as always.

He showed no sign that he had read the letter.

Tess soon discovered what had happened.

The letter had slipped under the carpet near the door and had not been seen.
The truth remained hidden.
And the day of their wedding continued to draw nearer.

Part 11

The day of the wedding arrived during the quiet days of winter. The air was cold, and a pale sunlight lay across the fields around the small church where Tess and Angel were to be married.

Tess rose early that morning.

For several moments she sat silently beside the window of her room, watching the pale light of dawn appear above the hills. The peaceful beauty of the morning seemed almost unreal to her.

“Perhaps everything will still be well,” she thought.

Yet the secret she carried remained in her heart.

When Angel came to meet her before the ceremony, his face showed simple happiness.

“Are you ready, Tess?” he asked gently.

She looked at him quietly.

“Yes,” she said.

The ceremony itself was simple. Only a few people from the dairy were present, along with the clergyman and his wife. The small church seemed calm and solemn as the vows were spoken.

When the ceremony ended, Tess became Mrs Clare.

Afterward Angel and Tess left the dairy and began their new life together in a small country house that Angel had rented.

The house stood alone in the countryside, surrounded by quiet fields and trees. It was a peaceful place where they could begin their married life away from the busy farm.

During the first hours of their arrival Tess felt a strange mixture of happiness and fear.

She loved Angel deeply and wished their life together to be honest and true.
That evening they sat together beside the fire.

The room was warm and quiet.

Angel looked thoughtful.

“Tess,” he said gently, “there is something I must tell you.”

Tess’s heart began to beat quickly.

Angel continued slowly.

“Before I met you, I made a mistake in my life. I once behaved foolishly with a woman I met by chance. It was a moment of weakness that I have always regretted.”

Tess listened carefully.

Angel’s voice was sincere.

“I wished to tell you this because I want our marriage to be based on complete honesty,” he said.

Tess suddenly felt a great wave of relief.

“Angel,” she cried softly, “I am glad you told me! Now you can forgive me too.”

Angel looked surprised.

“Forgive you?”

Tess nodded quickly.

“I also have something to confess,” she said. “I told you once that I had a secret. I must tell you now.”

Angel smiled gently.

“Whatever it is, it cannot be as serious as my own fault.”

Tess shook her head.

“It may be worse,” she said quietly.

Angel laughed lightly.

“Nothing could be worse than what I have told you.”

Tess looked directly at him.

“Angel,” she said softly, “my story is the same as yours.”

For a moment Angel did not understand.

Then Tess began to tell the truth about her life at Trantridge—about Alec

d'Urberville, the night in the forest, and the child who had died.

As she spoke, the colour slowly faded from Angel's face.

When she finished, a long silence filled the room.

Tess looked at him with pleading eyes.

"For the sake of our love, forgive me," she whispered. "I forgave you for your past."

Angel stood motionless.

At last he spoke slowly.

"Tess... forgiveness does not apply in the same way."

His voice sounded distant.

"The woman I loved before tonight was pure and innocent."

Tess felt a terrible fear rising within her.

"But I am still the same person," she said desperately.

Angel shook his head.

"No," he replied quietly. "The woman I loved was another Tess—someone who existed only in my imagination."

Tess stared at him in horror.

"Then who am I?" she asked.

Angel answered slowly.

"You are another woman who looks like her."

The words struck Tess like a blow.

She suddenly understood what he believed—that she had deceived him, that she had pretended to be innocent when she was not.

The fear she had long carried in her heart had become reality.

Her strength left her.

Tess's pale face trembled, and she swayed unsteadily.

The man she loved no longer saw her as the woman he had married.

In that moment the happiness of her wedding day vanished completely.

And the quiet house that had seemed full of hope only hours before now felt cold and empty around them.

Part 12

The room remained silent after Angel spoke those painful words. The fire burned quietly in the hearth, and its faint light moved across the walls of the small house.

Tess stood before her husband, pale and trembling.

She had hoped that his love would remain strong enough to overcome the truth of her past. Instead she saw that the truth had broken something deep inside him.

Angel walked slowly across the room.

“You should have told me before we married,” he said at last.

Tess lowered her eyes.

“I tried,” she whispered. “I wrote a letter and slipped it under your door.”

Angel looked surprised.

“A letter?”

Tess nodded.

“Yes. I wanted you to know everything. But you never spoke of it.”

Angel searched his memory.

The letter had never reached him.

For a moment he felt a sharp regret. If he had read that letter before the wedding, perhaps everything would have been different.

But the thought came too late.

Angel turned away.

“Even so,” he said slowly, “the fact itself cannot be changed.”

Tess stepped closer.

“Angel,” she said softly, “I did not do wrong by choice. I was young and helpless.”

Angel’s voice became troubled.

“I know... and yet the feeling remains.”

Tess looked at him with deep sadness.

“You say you loved me,” she said. “But if you cannot forgive me, then perhaps you loved only an image that was never real.”

Angel did not answer.

He sat down heavily in a chair, pressing his hands against his forehead.

The conflict within him was painful. He understood that Tess had been more a victim than a sinner. Yet the strict ideas he had learned since childhood made it difficult for him to accept what had happened.

Hours passed.

At last Angel spoke again.

“Tess, I must think carefully about what we should do.”

Tess waited silently.

“For the moment,” he continued, “we cannot live together as husband and wife.”

The words fell like cold rain upon her heart.

Tess nodded slowly.

“If that is what you believe is right,” she said.

Angel looked at her with sorrow.

“I do not hate you,” he said. “But my feelings have changed. I need time to understand them.”

Tess accepted his decision without protest.

In the days that followed they continued to live in the same house, but their relationship had become distant and painful.

Angel treated Tess kindly but without the warmth of love that had once filled his voice and eyes.

Tess remained gentle and patient.

She did not blame him openly, though the loss of his love wounded her deeply.

At last Angel made a final decision.

He would travel to Brazil for a time. There he hoped to learn the work of farming in a new country and perhaps clear his troubled mind.

One evening he spoke to Tess about his plan.

“I must go away for a while,” he said.

Tess listened quietly.

“Will you come back?” she asked.

Angel hesitated.

“I hope so,” he replied. “But for now it is better that we live apart.”

Tess accepted his words with calm dignity.

She had already suffered enough to understand that life could not always be shaped by hope.

Before leaving, Angel gave her a small amount of money and suggested that she return to her family for a time.

“When I have settled my affairs abroad,” he said, “I will write to you.”

Tess nodded.

“I will wait,” she replied softly.

Soon afterward Angel Clare left England.

Tess watched him go with quiet sorrow.

The road that carried him away seemed to take with it the last bright dream of her life.

After his departure Tess returned to Marlott.

Her family welcomed her warmly, but their poverty had grown worse during her absence. Without steady work they struggled to provide food and shelter for the many children.

Tess soon realized that she must once again find employment.

This time she went to work at a farm called Flintcomb-Ash.

It was a harsh and difficult place.

The land was poor and stony, and the labor required of the workers was heavy. The winter winds swept across the fields with bitter cold, and the days were long and exhausting.

Tess worked there patiently, though the labor was far harder than anything she had known before.

She carried heavy loads, cut tough plants in the frozen fields, and endured the rough discipline of the farm owner.

Yet she continued with quiet determination.

The memory of Angel remained alive within her heart.

And though he was far away across the ocean, she still believed that one day he might return.

Part 13

Life at Flintcomb-Ash was far harsher than anything Tess had known before. The farm stood on high, rough land where the wind blew strongly across the fields. The soil was thin and stony, and every kind of work required great effort.

The winter weather made everything worse. Cold rain often fell across the hills, and the ground turned hard and heavy under the workers' feet.

Tess rose before dawn each morning with the other laborers. They walked silently to the fields while the sky was still dark. Their breath formed white clouds in the freezing air.

The work was exhausting.

One day they cut swedes in the frozen ground. Another day they carried heavy bundles of straw. Often they worked beside large machines that made loud, harsh noises as they crushed and separated the grain.

The farm owner, Farmer Groby, was a hard and unpleasant man. He spoke roughly to the workers and showed little kindness.

Tess bore his harsh words quietly.

Though her body often ached with fatigue, she continued working with calm determination. She knew her family depended upon the money she earned.

Several other women worked beside her at Flintcomb-Ash. Among them were Marian and Izz, two of the dairymaids from Talbothays. They had also been forced to seek work there after the dairy closed for the winter.

When the three friends met again, they felt comfort in each other's company.

During their short rest periods they sometimes spoke softly about the past.

Marian once asked gently, "Have you heard from Angel?"

Tess shook her head.

"No," she said.

Yet she continued to hope that one day a letter might arrive.

Months passed.

The cold winter slowly gave way to the first signs of spring.

But Tess's life did not become easier.

One afternoon, while she was working alone near the edge of the field, she saw a man walking toward the farm along the road.

At first she did not recognize him.

But when he came closer her heart suddenly filled with dread.

It was Alec d'Urberville.

His appearance had changed slightly. His clothes were darker and simpler than before, and his manner seemed serious.

When he reached Tess he spoke in a calm voice.

"Tess."

She turned away.

"Please go," she said quietly.

Alec continued speaking.

"I have changed since we last met. I have become a religious man."

Tess looked at him in disbelief.

"Religious?"

"Yes," Alec replied. "I have listened to a preacher and repented of my past behavior."

Tess felt bitter anger rising within her.

"Then perhaps you should repent by leaving me alone," she said.

Alec looked troubled.

"I have tried to forget you," he said. "But I cannot."

Tess's voice became firm.

"You destroyed my life once. Do not attempt to enter it again."

Alec watched her silently.

For a moment it seemed that he might accept her words and leave.

But after a pause he spoke again.

"Your husband has abandoned you," he said. "You are alone in the world."

Tess's face grew pale.

"He has not abandoned me," she replied quietly. "He will return."

Alec smiled slightly.

“You believe that?”

Tess turned away.

“Yes,” she said.

Alec studied her expression carefully.

“Very well,” he said at last. “But if you ever need help, remember that I am willing to offer it.”

Without waiting for an answer he turned and walked away from the field.

Tess watched him go with deep uneasiness.

The past she had tried to escape had returned again.

And she feared that Alec d’Urberville might not easily disappear from her life a second time.

Meanwhile, far away in Brazil, Angel Clare was struggling with difficulties of his own.

The climate was harsh and unhealthy, and the farming methods were very different from those he had known in England.

Angel soon fell ill.

During the long weeks of sickness he had much time to think about the past.

Gradually he began to understand how unfairly he had treated Tess.

The memory of her patience and honesty returned to him again and again.

“I judged her too harshly,” he thought.

When he finally recovered from his illness, his first decision was clear.

He would return to England.

And he would find Tess again.

But while Angel was crossing the ocean on his journey home, Tess’s life in England was moving toward a very different and tragic path.

Part 14

The work at Flintcomb-Ash continued through the cold months. The wind swept across the open fields, and the workers bent over their tasks from early morning until the light faded in the evening.

Tess endured the labor patiently. Her body grew thinner from the hard work, yet her quiet strength remained.

Sometimes, when the long day ended, she stood alone for a moment and looked across the wide, empty land. In those silent moments she thought about Angel and wondered where he might be in the distant world.

She still believed that he would return.

But life around her was becoming more difficult.

Her father's health had begun to fail, and her family at Marlott struggled with increasing poverty. Letters from home told her that money was needed more urgently than ever.

Tess worked even harder, hoping to send what little she could earn.

One afternoon, while she was carrying a heavy bundle of straw across the yard, she again saw a familiar figure approaching along the road.

Alec d'Urberville had returned.

He walked calmly toward her, as if the meeting had been arranged.

Tess stopped and faced him with quiet determination.

"Why do you follow me?" she asked.

Alec spoke gently.

"I told you before that I wished to help you."

Tess shook her head.

"I need no help from you."

Alec's voice became more serious.

"Your husband has not returned. You work here like a servant, suffering in this miserable place."

Tess answered firmly.

"That is my concern."

Alec looked at her thoughtfully.

"You are proud," he said. "But pride will not feed your family."

Tess turned away.

"Please leave me," she said.

For a moment Alec seemed uncertain. Then he spoke again.

“Think carefully about what I offer. I could give you comfort and security.”

Tess did not respond.

At last Alec slowly walked away.

But the meeting left her deeply troubled.

Not long afterward worse news arrived from home.

Tess received a message that her father had died suddenly.

The shock struck her like a heavy blow.

Without her father the family lost the right to remain in their cottage at Marlott. They would soon be forced to leave their home and search for shelter elsewhere.

Tess immediately left Flintcomb-Ash and hurried back to her family.

When she arrived she found them already preparing to move their few belongings.

Her mother looked exhausted and frightened.

“We must leave the cottage tomorrow,” she said.

Tess helped gather their possessions and load them onto a wagon.

The family walked slowly along the road together, searching for a place where they might live.

It was a painful journey.

The children were tired, and Mrs Durbeyfield struggled to keep her strength.

Tess felt the heavy responsibility of protecting them all.

As evening approached, the family rested beside the road near an empty field.

Tess looked at their tired faces and felt a deep despair.

She knew that her family needed shelter, food, and security.

And she also knew that she had little power to provide these things.

That night she made a difficult decision.

The next morning she left her family for a short time and walked alone toward the town where Alec d’Urberville was staying.

When she found him, she spoke quietly.

“If I accept your help,” she said, “will you provide for my mother and the children?”

Alec looked at her carefully.

“Yes,” he replied.

Tess closed her eyes for a moment.

The decision felt like the final surrender of her own happiness.

But she believed she had no other choice.

She returned to her family and told them that help had been arranged.

Soon afterward Tess went away with Alec d’Urberville.

From that day forward she lived under his protection.

Meanwhile, across the sea, Angel Clare was finally returning to England.

The long journey had given him time to understand his mistake. He now saw clearly how cruel his judgment had been.

“Tess was innocent,” he thought again and again. “She deserved my loyalty.”

When his ship reached the English coast, his first thought was to find her and ask her forgiveness.

But the world he returned to was no longer the same one he had left.

Tess’s life had taken a path he could not yet imagine.

Part 15

When Angel Clare returned to England, the country seemed strangely quiet to him. The familiar fields and villages reminded him of everything he had lost.

During his long illness in Brazil he had thought constantly about Tess. At last he understood that she had been more innocent than guilty, and that his harsh judgment had caused her terrible suffering.

“I must find her,” he said to himself.

He first went to the village where her parents had once lived. But the cottage at Marlott was empty. The neighbors told him that Tess’s father had died and that the family had been forced to leave their home.

Angel felt a deep pain when he heard this.

“Where did they go?” he asked.

No one could give him a clear answer.

For several days he traveled through the countryside asking questions and

searching for news. At last he learned that Tess had worked for a time at Flintcomb-Ash.

Angel hurried there immediately.

When he arrived at the farm, he spoke with the workers and asked about Tess.

Marian and Izz recognized him at once.

Marian looked at him sadly.

“You have come too late,” she said.

Angel’s heart began to beat quickly.

“Too late?” he asked. “What do you mean?”

Izz spoke gently.

“Tess suffered greatly after you left. She worked here very hard, and she waited for you longer than anyone could expect.”

Angel felt ashamed.

“Where is she now?” he asked.

The two women looked at one another before answering.

Marian spoke slowly.

“She is living with Alec d’Urberville.”

Angel stared at her in disbelief.

“That cannot be true.”

Izz nodded sadly.

“It is true.”

Angel felt a sharp pain in his chest.

“Where can I find her?”

Marian explained that Tess had been seen in the town of Sandbourne.

Angel left immediately and traveled there as quickly as he could.

When he arrived, he walked through the busy streets searching for the house where Tess was living.

At last he found it.

The house was large and comfortable, very different from the poor places where Tess had lived before. Its windows were bright, and expensive curtains hung inside.

Angel approached the door and knocked.

A servant answered.

"I wish to see Mrs d'Urberville," Angel said.

The servant hesitated but allowed him to enter.

After a few minutes Tess came into the room.

When she saw Angel, she stopped suddenly.

For a moment neither of them spoke.

Angel looked at her with deep emotion.

"Tess," he said hoarsely, "can you forgive me for leaving you?"

Tess's eyes shone strangely.

"It is too late," she said quietly.

Angel stepped closer.

"I was wrong. I see that now. I judged you unfairly, and I have regretted it every day."

Tess shook her head slowly.

"You came too late."

Angel continued desperately.

"Come back with me. Let us begin our life again."

Tess looked at him with a strange mixture of sorrow and anger.

"Where were you when I needed you?" she cried suddenly. "Why did you leave me alone in the world?"

Angel tried to answer, but she continued speaking.

"You should have come sooner! Now everything is changed."

Her voice grew sharper.

"He is upstairs," she said suddenly. "The man you hate. The man who told me you would never return."

Angel felt a chill of horror.

Tess looked down at her rich clothes.

"These were given to me by him," she said bitterly. "I allowed him to do whatever he wished. I believed you would never come back."

She turned toward the door.

“Please go,” she said softly. “And never come again.”

Angel stood helplessly in the room.

At last he left the house and walked slowly away.

Tess remained behind.

Her heart was filled with unbearable emotion.

Angel had finally returned—but far too late.

The love she had once believed in had arrived only after she had sacrificed everything.

Part 16

After Angel left the house in Sandbourne, Tess remained standing in the room for a long time. Her heart was filled with violent emotions—love, sorrow, anger, and despair all mixed together.

She had waited for Angel with patient hope for many months. When he finally returned, it should have been the happiest moment of her life.

Yet now that he had come, everything felt broken beyond repair.

Tess slowly climbed the stairs.

In one of the upper rooms Alec d’Urberville was resting. He had spoken proudly only a short time before about the life he had given her—the comfortable house, the fine clothes, the money that supported her family.

When Tess entered the room he looked up.

“So,” he said with a smile, “your husband has come at last.”

Tess stood silently.

Alec continued speaking with cold amusement.

“I told you he would never return. But it seems I was mistaken.”

Tess’s voice trembled.

“Why did you say that to me?”

Alec shrugged.

“Because it was the truth as I saw it. He abandoned you once. Why should he return?”

Tess stared at him.

“You persuaded me that my life was finished—that I had no hope left.”

Alec answered calmly.

“And now you see that I was the only one who helped you.”

Tess felt a sudden storm of anger rising inside her.

“You ruined my life!” she cried.

Alec laughed lightly.

“You exaggerate. I have only given you comfort.”

For a moment the room was silent.

Then something in Tess seemed to break.

All the suffering she had endured—the loss of her child, Angel’s rejection, the poverty of her family, and the humiliation she had felt—rose suddenly in her heart.

Before Alec could move, she seized a knife from the table.

In a moment of wild despair she struck him.

Alec fell back with a cry.

The room became terribly quiet.

Tess stood motionless, staring at what she had done.

Alec d’Urberville was dead.

For several minutes Tess remained frozen with horror.

Then suddenly she understood that there was only one thing she wished to do.

She must find Angel.

Leaving the house quickly, she ran into the street and hurried through the town.

After searching anxiously for some time, she found Angel walking slowly along a road outside the town.

When he saw her running toward him, he stopped in surprise.

Tess’s face was pale and wild.

“Angel!” she cried.

He hurried toward her.

“Tess! What has happened?”

She grasped his arm tightly.

“I have killed him,” she said breathlessly.

Angel stared at her.

“Killed him?”

Tess nodded.

“Alec d’Urberville. I could not bear it any longer.”

Angel understood at once what had driven her to this desperate act.

For a moment he said nothing.

Then he took her hands gently.

“Come with me,” he said.

Tess looked at him with desperate hope.

“You forgive me?”

Angel answered quietly.

“I understand you.”

Tess’s eyes filled with tears.

“While I was running to find you,” she said softly, “I thought that now you would surely love me again. I believed that by doing this I could win you back.”

Angel felt deep sorrow for her suffering.

“We must leave this place,” he said.

Together they began to walk quickly away from the town.

For a short time they traveled through the countryside, hiding from people and resting only when necessary.

Though they both knew that Tess could not escape the law forever, the days they spent together felt strangely peaceful.

At last they reached an ancient place among the hills—Stonehenge.

The great stones stood silently under the wide sky, just as they had stood for thousands of years.

Tess lay down upon one of the large stones and looked up at the stars.

“This place feels peaceful,” she said quietly.

Angel sat beside her.

“Rest here for a while,” he said.

Tess closed her eyes.

“I am ready,” she whispered.

Soon she fell asleep.

When morning came, soldiers appeared among the ancient stones.

Tess awoke calmly.

She looked at Angel with gentle acceptance.

“I am ready,” she said again.

The men approached and placed her under arrest.

Angel watched helplessly as they led her away.

He knew that the final tragedy of Tess’s life had now begun.

Part 17

After Tess was taken away from Stonehenge, Angel Clare remained standing among the great stones for a long time.

The early morning sun slowly rose above the hills, shining across the ancient monument. The soldiers and their prisoner had already disappeared down the road.

Angel felt empty and helpless.

He knew that nothing he could do now would change what had happened.

A few days later he traveled to the town where Tess was being held in prison. Though he was allowed only brief contact with her, he visited whenever possible.

Tess herself seemed strangely calm.

The violent storm of emotion that had once filled her heart had passed. Now she faced her fate with quiet acceptance.

One afternoon, during a short meeting with Angel, she spoke gently.

“Do not be sad for me,” she said.

Angel looked at her with deep sorrow.

“How can I not be sad?”

Tess smiled faintly.

“Because my life has been difficult from the beginning. Perhaps this ending is only the final part of that story.”

Angel tried to protest, but Tess continued.

“There is something I wish to ask you.”

“Anything,” Angel replied.

Tess spoke slowly.

“After I am gone, you must not remain alone forever. There is someone I trust.”

Angel listened carefully.

“My sister Liza-Lu,” Tess said. “She is younger than I am, but she is good and pure.”

Angel was silent.

“She has always loved you with quiet respect,” Tess continued. “If one day you should marry again... I would wish it to be with her.”

Angel could hardly speak.

“Tess, you must not think about such things.”

But Tess shook her head gently.

“It would comfort me,” she said.

The time allowed for the visit soon ended. Angel had to leave the prison again.

Days passed slowly.

Tess’s trial came quickly, and the judgment of the court was certain.

She was condemned to death.

Angel waited outside the prison walls during the long days that followed. He could do nothing except remain nearby and hope for some impossible mercy.

One morning he stood in a field not far from the prison.

Beside him stood Liza-Lu, who had come to support him during the final days.

The prison tower rose above the town in the distance.

For a long time the two figures watched it in silence.

Then suddenly a dark flag was raised above the tower.

Angel and Liza-Lu understood at once.

Tess had been executed.

The law had taken what remained of her life.

Angel stood motionless, his face pale.

The wind moved slowly across the fields.

According to the law, justice had been done.

Yet to those who had loved Tess, the world seemed colder and emptier than

before.

Angel and Liza-Lu looked at the prison tower for a long time without speaking.

At last they slowly turned away.

They walked together across the quiet field, hand in hand.

Behind them the black flag continued to move gently in the wind.

The long suffering of Tess Durbeyfield had ended.