

# Far from the Madding Crowd

## THOMAS HARDY

- 1 (a) Gabriel Oak is on Norcombe Hill to look after his sheep and their new-born lambs.  
 (b) The young woman with the dark hair is there to look after a cow and its new-born calf. A few days earlier, she had travelled along the near-by road on a yellow wagon and Gabriel Oak had seen her. Her name is Bathsheba Everdene.  
 (c) The gatekeeper was at the tollgate on the road. He was there to collect tolls.  
 (d) The fifty-year old woman, Mrs Hurst, was in the cowshed with the younger woman, helping to look after her cow and its calf.
- 2 Oak is honest. He tells Mrs Hurst the true reason for his visit. He tells Bathsheba exactly what he could offer her as a husband. When Oak lost his sheep, he sold everything that he had, to pay his debts. He knew that his hopes of marrying Bathsheba were at an end. We also know that Oak is hard-working. He is a man of good character. Bathsheba is vain – she is proud of her own beauty. She looks at herself in the mirror and smiles. We know that she is stubborn, because she refuses to pay the extra money at the tollgate. She is rather rude, because she does not thank Oak when he pays the toll for her. She is unkind too, because she laughs at Oak for proposing to her and does not take him seriously. Bathsheba tells Oak that she is independent and needs a strong husband. Do you think she has a good character too? Or is she silly and childish?
- 3 1 A ladder. The men could not reach the top of the burning rick, because the ladder had been burnt. But Oak manages to climb up the rick and he begins to beat out the fire with his crook. Then men find another ladder and one of them climbs up onto the rick with a bucket of water. Water. Water is poured over Oak's head and clothes to stop them burning. Buckets. Buckets are needed to carry the water in. Oak tells the men to fill the buckets with water quickly, to put out the fire.  
 2 Gabriel Oak has lost all his sheep and has had to leave his farm. He is now a shepherd, not a farmer. He has been very unlucky. Bathsheba is now a rich farmer. Her dead uncle's farm is now hers. She has had very good luck.
- 4 1 Fanny Robin, Bathsheba Everdene's youngest maid, has been courting a soldier who lives in the barracks in Casterbridge. She has been visiting him there. Now he has been sent to Melchester. Fanny finds the soldier, Sergeant Frank Troy, and reminds him that he has promised to marry her. Fanny loves him and she does not want to lose him. Bathsheba sends Mr Boldwood a valentine card and writes MARRY ME on the back of the envelope. She is playing a joke on the farmer, because he is the only man in the district who has not noticed her beauty.  
 2 Fanny was honest. She really loved Frank. He said that he loved her, but he was not honest. When Fanny went to the wrong church, Frank was furious. He used that mistake as an excuse to put off the marriage or not marry her at all. Bathsheba was not honest when she asked Mr Boldwood to marry her. It was a joke. Mr Boldwood was honest. He believed that Bathsheba was telling the truth.
- 5 1 Bathsheba respects Boldwood now and she is sorry that she played that joke on him. She is sorry that she has upset him. But when he proposes to her, Bathsheba is frightened by Boldwood's strong feelings. She does not love him and she does not want to marry him.  
 2 Gabriel believes that Bathsheba has behaved very badly. He thinks that it was cruel and dishonest of her to send the valentine to Boldwood.  
 3 Bathsheba tells Gabriel to go, but when the stomachs of her sheep swell up and begin to die she is told that only Gabriel can save the other sheep. Bathsheba orders him to return, but the shepherd refuses. Then she sends him a note: *Do not desert me, Gabriel*. The word 'desert' shows that Bathsheba relies on Gabriel and that she is begging him to help her and not to leave her alone. She needs him for the first time.

- 6** 1 Oak works for Bathsheba as a shepherd, but he used to be a farmer, like Boldwood and Bathsheba herself. Bathsheba respects Oak and she admires him for shearing a sheep more quickly than anyone else. But he is now her servant. She tells him where to sit at the table. Oak still loves Bathsheba and he is jealous of her friendship with Boldwood. He watches everything that they do together. Boldwood is in love with Bathsheba and she goes riding with him. At the supper, Boldwood is cheerful and confident and wears smart clothes for the first time. He sits next to Bathsheba and they treat each other as equals. Later, Boldwood proposes to Bathsheba. She says that she will give him her answer in a few weeks, when he returns from his journey. Boldwood is happy because Bathsheba has not said no.
- 2 The stranger is Sergeant Troy. Bathsheba is attracted to him because he is young and handsome. He flatters her and calls her 'Beauty' and that pleases Bathsheba very much. She knows that many women have been attracted by the fine soldier. But Troy tells her that she is the most beautiful woman that he had ever seen. When they meet again, Troy tells Bathsheba that he loves her.
- 7** 1 Bathsheba has fallen deeply in love with Sergeant Frank Troy. He flatters her and excites her and this makes her lose her good sense. Frank is used to telling women lies. He tells Bathsheba what she wants to hear and she believes every word. The poor girl is not used to strong, clever men like Troy and she can no longer control her feelings.
- 2 Gabriel Oak says this about Frank Troy. Oak understands Troy and he thinks that the handsome soldier is not good enough for Bathsheba.
- 3 Mr Boldwood says this to Bathsheba. Before he went away, the girl had said that she would think about marrying him. Then she fell in love with Frank Troy, so she wrote to Boldwood, telling him that she could never marry him. This letter upsets Boldwood very much. Bathsheba admits that she would have married the farmer, if she had not met Troy.
- 8** 1 Boldwood knows about Troy and Fanny Robin. He wants to give Troy money to marry Fanny and to keep away from Bathsheba. Boldwood gives Troy fifty pounds and promises him more when he marries Fanny Robin. Bathsheba meets Troy as they had arranged and they speak together like lovers. Boldwood listens and he is furious. When Boldwood is alone with Frank again, he threatens to kill him. Frank laughs and shows Boldwood a newspaper. It has a report of Troy and Bathsheba's marriage. They have been married for a week.
- 2 Troy is now the manager of Bathsheba's farm, but he knows very little about farming. Gabriel Oak had been a good farmer. He leaves the harvest supper to check the ricks. They are not covered and a storm is on the way. The rain will damage the ricks of wheat and hay and ruin the crop. Oak sends a message to Troy, but he says that it will not rain and he does nothing. Then he orders brandy for the farm workers and they all get drunk together. Troy does not care about the crops at all. Oak wants to save Bathsheba from losing her crops. So he covers the ricks himself, with some help from Bathsheba. Troy and the farm workers are all so drunk that they fall asleep. Oak works hard all night. By the time the rain comes, all the ricks are safe. When Troy wakes up, Gabriel has done his work for him. He is the better man.
- 9** The lock of hair was Fanny's and she had given it to Frank. When Bathsheba sees it, Frank lies to her and says that the lock of hair is hers. But Bathsheba's hair is black and the lock of hair is fair. Frank admits the truth. The hair belongs to a pretty woman and he was going to marry her before he met Bathsheba. Bathsheba is very jealous. Later on, she has the idea that the hair is Fanny Robin's. She is afraid that Frank Troy still loves Fanny, who has gone away. Frank had stopped the carriage to speak to a poor girl on the road from Casterbridge the Saturday before. He had made Bathsheba go on. Was the poor girl Fanny Robin? Bathsheba thinks so. She is in love with her husband, Frank, but she knows now that she cannot trust him.
- 10** 1 Bathsheba is talking about Fanny Robin. Fanny and her tiny baby are lying dead in their coffin. Bathsheba and Frank are looking down at them. He has just kissed the dead woman and said that Fanny was his true wife, not Bathsheba.

- 2 Frank is alone in the house that night. The next morning, he goes to the churchyard where Fanny will be buried. Then he goes to Casterbridge and orders a gravestone. He pays for it with his wife's money. When Troy returns to the churchyard in the evening, Fanny is in her grave and the gravestone is in place. Troy plants some flowers on the grave and then stays in the church all night. By the morning, rain has ruined the flowers and there is mud on the gravestone. Troy walks away sadly and goes on walking until he reaches the sea. He takes off his clothes and swims out into the sea. He nearly drowns, but is rescued by some men in a boat. He decides to stay with them.
- 11 'Promise me that if you marry again you'll marry me.' Boldwood asks Bathsheba to give him this promise. Then he asks her to promise to marry him in six years' time, if Troy has not come back.
- 12 Bathsheba believes that Frank Troy is dead. So she receives a shock at the party on Christmas Eve when Troy walks into Mr Boldwood's house. Troy stands in the middle of the room and tells Bathsheba to go home with him. She is too shocked to move.
- 13 (a) Boldwood had bought coats and dresses for Bathsheba and put them in boxes. On the boxes he had written: '*Bathsheba Boldwood*' and a date six years in the future. He was looking forward to the time when Bathsheba would be his wife. His love for her had driven him a little mad.
- (b) The words were written on the gravestone of Fanny Robin and Frank Troy, who had been buried in the same grave. In August, Bathsheba goes to the churchyard and looks at the grave of Fanny Robin and Francis (Frank) Troy. Bathsheba reads the words that Frank had ordered for Fanny's gravestone: '*This stone was put here by Francis Troy in loving memory of Fanny Robin*'. These words are important because they show how much Troy had loved Fanny. Then Bathsheba looks at the other words: '*In this same grave lies the body of Francis Troy*'. Bathsheba realised that Frank had loved Fanny, so he was buried in the same grave. The words on the gravestone do not say that Frank Troy had been married to Bathsheba. She must have chosen these words, so they are important too. Bathsheba understands now that Frank had never loved her. He had always loved Fanny.
- (c) Gabriel writes to Bathsheba and tells her that he is going to leave Little Weatherbury Farm at the end of March. Before this, Gabriel had told Bathsheba that he would probably leave England and go to America. Bathsheba thinks that the letter is Gabriel's farewell to her. She cries, because she had expected him to love her and stay with her for ever. She is very unhappy, so she goes to see Gabriel. They talk about their feelings for each other and they realise that they are in love. A few weeks later they are married. So that 'farewell' letter is very important.