

The Darkling Heart

**A Play in Two Acts by
Adrian Drew**



A BEDFORDS PUBLICATION



Plays by Adrian Drew about famous authors include:

THE LAWS OF SHADOWS (A PLAY ABOUT MONTAGUE RHODES JAMES.)

Set at Kings College Cambridge in 1893, the play examines the writer and academic's complex relationship with the young student James McBryde. Rich in comedy and period charm this funny and moving story has received critical acclaim.

"A really fine play – as good as anything at the National Theatre!"
Three 5 star consumer reviews from Time Out Magazine.

"An engaging, witty and deeply moving play."
Brian Sibley – Author & Broadcaster

THE DEMOCRACY OF OAKS (A PLAY ABOUT WALT WHITMAN.)

In 1877 young English radical, Edward Carpenter, visited his idol, the aging Walt Whitman, at his home in Camden, New Jersey – it was a meeting that would change both his life and the English socialist movement for ever – an amusing and profound theatrical tour de force.

"Theatrically compelling!"
Professor M. Wynn Thomas – Author.

"Truly magnificent! Faithful and authentic! A beautiful work!"
Scott Winemiller – Founder: the website - dinnerwithwalt.com

A WILDE AFFAIR (A PLAY ABOUT OSCAR WILDE.)

During Oscar Wilde's turbulent life he was to produce some of the greatest plays in the English language. Rich in comedy and pathos too, "A Wilde Affair" is a rich tribute to this astonishing if tragic figure, whose wit, wisdom and humanity will never be forgotten.

"A deeply moving theatrical experience".
Chairman of The Oscar Wilde Society

"A challenging and fascinating play."
Jenny Cooper – The British Film Commission.

WELSH DYLAN (A PLAY ABOUT DYLAN THOMAS.)

Adrian Drew's first play written in 1975, and produced at The Heritage Theatre, Off Broadway, looks at the life of this iconic author of so much loved poetry, plays and short stories, in the context of his life in Swansea & the Gower Coast. It is a richly moving and evocative 'return journey'.

"A masterpiece from an extraordinarily talented young playwright."
Thomas Luce Summa – Artistic Director.

"Astonishing and evocative!"
Craig Bombardier – Artist.

Other plays by Adrian Drew include:

Deck the Halls; October Dreams; Love Lust & Longing; Of Joy & Sorrow Mixt; Jewel of the Snows; Box Office; Meeting Mark; All Hallows; Supper with Sarah; Ellen – Fragments from a Life; Trust; Voices; Tread Softly; Assumptions; Supper at Li Galli; Icicles in the Trees; Edith & Jessie; The Laws of Shadows; Where Poppies Bloomed; Time Out of Mind.

The Darkling Heart

A love story...

"I write partly of the real world but partly of a lost land too.

A place where life and love - it passes oh so soon...

A place as insubstantial as the breeze and fleeting dreams."

"The Darkling Heart" - Act Two

*For Christine & Richard, who totally disprove
Tom Hardy's apparent belief that a solid, happy
and truly fulfilling marriage -
cannot exist!*

Showcase Performance

*The Orangery
The Fan Museum – Greenwich, London
Friday 27th November 2015*

*Thomas Hardy / Narrator - Richard Holliss
Emma Hardy / Narrator - Christine Holliss*

*Produced by
Bernard Victor Thomas*

*Directed by
Wayne Adrian Drew*

Copyright Wayne Adrian Drew June 2015

Wayne Adrian Drew is hereby identified as author of this play in accordance with section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. The author has asserted his moral rights. This play is fully protected under the copyright laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America and all countries of the Berne and Universal Copyright Conventions. All rights including, Stage, Motion Picture, Radio, Television, Public Readings, and Translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. No parts of this publication may lawfully be reproduced in ANY form or by any means – photocopying, transcript, recording (including video recording), manuscript, electronic, mechanical or otherwise – or be transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, without prior permission. "The Darkling Heart" is a fictional drama which speculates on the lives of Thomas & Emma Hardy through the creation of semi-fictional characters bearing their names. The inclusions of, or reference too, any other actual persons and institutions, are purely for dramatic effect and are not intended to infer any negative attributes to such organisations or real persons, whatsoever.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Licence to Perform.

All applications to perform "The Darkling Heart", on the professional or amateur stage, must be made directly to UsTwo Productions and, where permitted, a charge may be made proportional to the venue, or audience size where the show might be performed and the ticket price demanded. It is strongly recommended that no rehearsal of this material be undertaken until a licensing agreement has been reached. The provision of a licence does not infer any additional rights for the applicant, neither does it allow for the exclusive use of the material. Copyright and the freedom to use, or reuse, all or part, of this script remains exclusive to the author.

Applications to:

UsTwo Productions,
42, Shooters Hill Road,
Blackheath,
London, SE3 7BG

Email - ustwo1000@gmail.com

Telephone - 0208 858 5367

BEDFORDS PUBLICATIONS

Bedfords Publications seeks to research, identify and promote new theatrical writing by publishing work of exceptional quality in strictly limited First Editions in which all rights reside with the authors to whom a fee is paid together with a percentage of sales income achieved. Unsolicited manuscripts are regretfully not accepted. For further information, please contact: bedfords.books@aol.com This publication is mainly set in Calibri type and is printed and bound for Bedfords Books, by Book Printing UK, Remus House, Coltsfoot Drive, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9BF, Great Britain.



The Darkling Heart – An Overview

The Darkling Heart is an unflinching portrait of a marriage and the story of a troubled love affair that reaches beyond the grave.

The relationship between Thomas Hardy and his first wife Emma was complex to say the least. Drawn together more by their illusions about each other than reality, after a blissful first meeting, and then subsequently a long and happy courtship, they spent the next 34 years in a difficult marriage that during the final decade was tragic indeed.

Still, despite the misery endured by both, ultimately their relationship inspired some of Hardy's finest verse – particularly those poems written about Emma after her death.

The Darkling Heart is an entertainment in two self-contained parts that are designed to be presented together but could be played independently.

Act One, *The Conformers*, is a biographical account of Hardy and Emma's life, presented by a male and a female narrator, that contains several examples of his poetry as well as period music and sound effects.

Act Two, *Christmas at Max Gate*, is a fantasy set on Dec. 24th 1913, in which Emma and Tom discuss the turbulent years they had spent together and resentment mingles with regret, anger, and high emotions too, as skeletons are released from long locked cupboards.

The Characters

ACT ONE – THE CONFORMERS

In this act there are two Narrators – one male and one female who relate the story of Emma and Tom’s meeting and subsequent marriage.

WOMAN	(Narrator One)	A person of mature years with the ability to provide the required range of voices.
MAN	(Narrator Two)	A person of mature years with the ability to provide the required range of voices.

ACT TWO – CRISTMAS AT MAX GATE

In this act two actors – one male and one female portray Emma and Thomas Hardy’s Christmas together at Max Gate.

Thomas Hardy (TOM)	Age 73. Deriving, as his wife considered, from “peasant” stock, Thomas Hardy rose to become one of Britain’s finest novelists and poets. In the play this elderly character is occasionally comic, often gruff and somewhat irascible too - but also profoundly sensitive and very vulnerable.
Emma Hardy (EMMA)	Age 73. Coming from what Hardy’s mother termed “poor gentry”, like Thomas, Emma Lavinia Gifford had aspirations to write. However after their marriage she became increasingly unhappy with her husband and then decidedly idiosyncratic - or even ‘half-cracked’ as several people claimed. In the play her character is occasionally comic, generally feisty and assertive - but ultimately as vulnerable as her husband too.

ACT ONE

The Conformers



THE CONFORMERS

FX: Sound of the sea.

FX: E.G. Waterwave lantern visual effect.

MUSIC – “The Unforgetting Heart” mixed under the following dialogue for 4’44” – the duration of this opening sequence.

Enter TOM, an old man in an overcoat and hat, leaning heavily on a stick.

RECORDED VOICE

It is late afternoon on March 7th 1913 and a man is walking the steep path to the top of Beeny Cliff high up on the Dorset coast. It is not an easy climb for someone his age but he is resolute in his return journey.

(TOM gets to the summit and peers down to the beach.)

Finally he reaches the summit and looks down to the beach far below. There, a young couple stroll hand in hand at the edge of the waves. Their happiness evident to all.

(TOM picks up a large rock and considers throwing it down at them.)

The old man picks up a large rock – weighs it in his hand – and for a moment jokingly considered hurling it down on their heads.

TOM

“As flies to wanton boys we are to the gods,
They kill us for their sport!”

(He laughs then puts the down the rock and waves instead.)

(TOM shouts down to the walkers.)

Enjoy your walk!

(Then to himself.) Whoever you are.
Yes, enjoy it... while you may.

(TOM then looks around him and smiles sadly.)

“What we did as we climbed, and what we talked of
Matters not much, nor to what it led,
Something that life will not be balked off
Without rude feeling ‘till hope is dead
And feelings fled.

It filled but a minute. But was there ever
A time of such quality, since or before,
In this hill’s story? To one mind, never!.”

Oh my dear.... I thought you might be here today...
An echo of you at least.... On this very day when....
When we first fell in love?
But no...
My punishment will not end so easily I know.
Oh where, where are you now?
In Valency in spring beside its rushing streams?
Or when summer comes Tintagel in the July heat?
Or at St. Julio perhaps when autumn leaves take on the colours...
The colours... of your hair?
And at winter-time? Where then?
At Max Gate perhaps?
You always said we’d spend our Christmas there?
Yes? Will I see you there when the snow lies thick and carol singers call?
It’s what you always promised me...
But no....
Even that’s now forbidden to me too....

Oh my dear, you could not know
That your swift fleeting, would undo me so.

TOM walks slowly away and exits.

RECORDED VOICE

“The past is a foreign country – they did things differently there....”
And in the case of Tom and Emma Hardy...
Well...that is an understatement to say the very least...

BLACKOUT.

EXIT TOM.

Enter NARRATORS (Both dressed in “blacks”).

FX: Sound of a train whistle.

FX: Sound of a steam train starting up then the train proceeding.

WOMAN

It all begins in 1870, on a decidedly bleak March day. A young man travels from the London smoke to a remote part of the West Country.

MAN

It is a difficult and exhausting train journey with four tedious changes at Yeovil, Exeter, Plymouth and Launceston...

FX: Sound of a horse drawn carriage.

WOMAN

Then finally a long carriage ride before he reaches his destination.

MAN

The young man is a certain Thomas Hardy - a trainee architect - and he had come to visit the rectory of St Juliot - a tiny hamlet in the middle of the Cornish countryside - to advise on the restoration of the crumbling old church.

WOMAN

The pony and trap took him to the gate of an ancient rectory – its grey stone walls tinged pink in the late evening sun.

FX: Church clock striking six.

MAN

Tom paid the driver and approached the building with a certain trepidation. For as a young man of limited means...

WOMAN

And even more limited background...

MAN

He was not overly skilled in the social niceties.....

WOMAN

Much as he wished to acquire them!

MAN

The rectory door opened and there stood a very striking young woman.

WOMAN

Whose appearance had a remarkable effect on the young architect.

MAN

(Voice of the young Hardy.)“She was so ‘living’! So full of life & colour.”

WOMAN

It was Emma Lavinia Gifford. Her sister Helen was the wife of the local vicar who on Hardy’s arrival, was tending her older...

MAN

Much older..

WOMAN

Husband - who suffered from gout! As she couldn’t meet Hardy herself, Emma had to deputise.

MAN

Years later Emma was to say that when she met Hardy:

WOMAN

“He seemed so much older than he actually was.”

MAN

And this Hardy rationalized...

WOMAN

For he was a quite a vain man.

MAN

(Voice of the older Hardy.) “The result of a very long journey!”

WOMAN

Emma Gifford had been born in Plymouth in 1840.

MAN

The same year as Hardy.

WOMAN

And was the second youngest of ten children.

MAN

A usual size brood for those days!

WOMAN

Retiring early, Emma’s solicitor father relied heavily on his mother's private income.

MAN

So after her death, the family was forced to move to less expensive accommodation in Bodmin in the heart of Cornwall.

WOMAN

And Emma had to work as governess while Helen, her sister, became an unpaid companion to a lady in whose home she was to meet her husband, the Reverend Caddell Holder.

MAN

Whom she promptly married.

WOMAN

For although thirty five years older than Helen he offered the security she required.

MAN

Romance for the impoverished middle classes was definitely a secondary concern back then.

WOMAN

Then they moved to the isolated vicarage in St. Juliot.
With Emma joining them there in 1868.

MAN

To assist with housekeeping and to help run the parish.

WOMAN

So, despite the financial problems in her background, as he had come from a working class family, this was the first time that the young Tom Hardy had met someone of Emma's social class on an equal footing.

MAN

And it was quite a moment.

MAN

For you see “class” at that time meant so much.

WOMAN

And it was particularly important to Tom!

MAN

And most certainly to Emma too! For though there were several farm labourers’ cottages nearby the vicarage – Emma told Tom their nearest ‘neighbours’ were over nine miles away.

WOMAN

Meaning of course – “neighbours of her class”.

MAN

Indeed Emma felt there was an unbridgeable gap between the gentry and the poor.

WOMAN

So on the day of his arrival, when Emma’s sister finally appeared, they gave Hardy a meal and then entertained him with songs on the piano.

MUSIC: Female vocal of period song. (The Joys of the Country.)

No – Emma definitely had mixed views on the joys of the country!
But beggars can’t be choosers – even when it comes to the gentry.

MAN

Over the coming few days, while Tom stayed at the rectory, a fascination grew between the young couple.

WOMAN

As such things often do! Particularly as Tom wanted to mingle with the higher social classes.

MAN

That he had told Emma he wished to be a writer played its part too.

WOMAN

As it was something she privately wished for herself.

MAN

That they were also both free thinkers & agnostics added further appeal.

WOMAN

And the fact Tom had lived in London gave its own piquancy to the mix.

MAN

For London was somewhere Emma had never been – although she had a brother there.

WOMAN

And that city had a great attraction for her.

MAN

So to this young girl, living so remotely from society, this handsome architect from a larger world....

WOMAN

Well – he quite simply dazzled her!

MAN

Although Emma was a little lame from birth, Tom, who was slight and rather introspective, found her energy and good horsemanship most attractive indeed.

WOMAN

She was very pretty too and had been nicknamed “Peony”.

MAN

For with her rosy cheeks she was like a flower in full bloom!

WOMAN

A day after his arrival Tom and Emma drove to the local slate quarry at Penberthy to see if their stone might be suitable for restoration work on the church - a visit he later recounted in his poetry.

MAN

It happened once, before the duller
Loomings of life defined them
I searched for slate of greenish colour
A quarry where men mined them.

And saw, the while I peered around there,
In the quarry standing,
A form against the slate background there
Of fairness eye- commanding.

And now, green slates seen high on roofs, or lower
In wagon, truck or lorry,
Cry out: “Our home was where you saw her
Standing in the quarry!”

FX: Waves crashing on the shore.

WOMAN

A few days later he and Emma rode alone to Tintagel where, high up on a crag, King Arthur’s ruined castle was said to stand. Then on to mighty Beeny Cliff - a formation as sheer and dramatic as any in the country. And where, as the fierce North Atlantic waves crashed far below - they fell in love.

MAN

“Was there a time of such quality – before or since?”

MUSIC: The Unforgetting Heart.

WOMAN

On March 11th, the day of Tom’s departure, Emma made certain that breakfast was prepared well before dawn so that he could make the sixteen mile journey to Launceston and his train, in good time.

MAN

They ate by candlelight. Then as the sun began to rise, stood on the vicarage lawn, fresh with morning dew, waiting for Tom’s carriage to arrive.

WOMAN

For a brief moment it rained – the gentle rain of early spring.

MAN

But undeterred quite suddenly, and with slow grace, there on the damp grass, Emma began to dance.

WOMAN

“Oh would I were a dancing child!
Oh would I were again
Dancing in the grass in spring
Dancing in the rain

MAN

She looked like a bird from a cloud
On the clammy lawn,
Moving alone, bare-browed,
In the dim of dawn.
The candles alight in the room
For my parting meal
Made all things withoutdoors loom
Strange, ghostly, unreal.

“I am leaving you... Farewell!” I said
As I followed her on
By an alley, bare boughs overspread;
“I soon must be gone!”
Even then the scale might have been turned
Against love by a feather,
But crimson one cheek of hers burned
When we came in together.

WOMAN

And with their hearts full of the joy of first love - they agreed to write to each other.

MAN

Hardy returned to St. Juliot in early August for a summer holiday.
And when he met Emma again she appeared in a lovely ‘air blue’ gown.

WOMAN

It was an image he’d never forget.

MAN

And in those blissful summer days together they explored the local countryside.

WOMAN

Such perfect times...

MAN

They visited beautiful Valency Valley where its sparkling streams rushed down towards the picturesque port of Boscastle.

WOMAN

Walked the coastal sands. Where women gathered rich brown seaweed and packed it onto woven baskets carried by their friendly donkeys.

MAN

And late one afternoon they explored the ruins at Tintagel too.

WOMAN

Where heedless of the time they were almost locked in!

MAN

And with each passing day they seemed to discover more and more about each other too.

WOMAN

Things that gave their growing affection additional emotional fire.

MAN

“Behold thou art fair my love. Behold thou art fair.”

WOMAN

As they picnicked by a small stream Emma lost the glass cup from which they’d drunk in its waters, and Hardy sketched her as she searched for it.

MAN

And Emma sketched him too....

WOMAN

For these small keepsakes they could treasure in the dreaded coming months when once more they would be parted.

MAN

But even more than this, Hardy’s time with Emma provided him with “living moments” he would later capture in his tales – a place where they could live on forever.

WOMAN

When the time came for him to return, although both he and Emma thought of themselves as engaged, they realised they could never marry until Tom was financially secure. Still as he returned on the train his young heart was filled with wonder!

MAN

When I came back from Lyonnaise
With magic in my eyes
All marked with mute surprise
My radiance rare and fathomless
When I came back from Lyonnaise
With magic in my eyes.

WOMAN

For the next four years Tom and Emma were separated for most of the time and saw each other for little more than a month a year – but they wrote – yes they wrote constantly!

MAN

Still, Hardy was very depressed at seeing Emma so little.

WOMAN

And even when they were to meet he could not help feel they would soon be separated again.

MAN

The grey gaunt days dividing us in twain
Seemed hopeless hills my strength must feign to climb
But they are gone; and now I would detain
The few clock-beats that part us; reign back time.

And knowing that what is about to be
Will have all been in O, so short a space
I read beyond it my despondency
When more dividing months shall take its place,
Thereby denying to this hour of grace
A full-up measure of felicity.

WOMAN

Increasingly Tom felt their relationship could have no future.
And this was reinforced by his mother Jemima – a natural pessimist too.

MAN

Still with Emma's help.

WOMAN

For she made fair manuscript copies from his terrible handwriting.

MAN

His novel *Desperate Remedies* was finally completed and published.

WOMAN

But it received a vicious attack in *The Spectator*!

MAN

"Desperate Remedies is a desperate remedy for an emaciated purse!
And this unknown writer has prostituted his powers to the purposes of
idle prying into the ways of wickedness!"

WOMAN

Still, in other quarters the novel had fairly positive reviews. However
when travelling back to Dorset in early June Hardy did see copies selling
at reduced price at the railway station and contacted his publisher
directly!

MAN

“For goodness sake man - advertise!”

WOMAN

Through Emma’s advice the title of his next novel changed from:

MAN

The Mellstock Quire

WOMAN

To:

MAN

Under the Greenwood Tree.

WOMAN

And the novel’s focus moved from:

MAN

A tale about the village choir!

WOMAN

To:

MAN

A decidedly rural romance between a local lad Dick Dewy and Fancy Day the village schoolmistress.

WOMAN

It was filled with quaint country charm, amusing events - and plenty of songs from the Mellstock Choir.

MUSIC: King Arthur Had Three Sons.

MAN

In August, Tom took the manuscript to the publisher.

WOMAN

But they held on to it so long that he decided to give up writing altogether.

MAN

And in despair threw his manuscript into a box!

WOMAN

Emma however had faith in his talent and urged him to continue – while fully realising it would considerably delay any potential marriage.

MAN

But Tom ignored her and devoted his time to architecture as he wanted so much to gain the money needed for them to finally be together.

WOMAN

So , when in April the publisher Tinsley offered him the pitiable small sum of £30 for the book, he took it despondently – all hopes of a future literary career seemingly over.

MAN

However *Under the Greenwood Tree* was published in June 1872 and received very good reviews. So Tom was offered £200 to write a new serial for *Tinsley's Magazine*!

WOMAN

This was *A Pair of Blue Eyes* – and with it his professional writing career truly began.

MAN

So finally his dream to marry Emma could become a reality and Hardy travelled down to her parents home in Bodmin to ask for her hand - for he already had the idea for his next novel firmly in mind. It was to be called *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

WOMAN

And now, filled with enthusiasm and love for the woman he had courted now for four years he was to finally meet Emma's father.

MAN

Who rejected him totally!

WOMAN

A mixture of concern about his background and some worrying reports the father had heard of him....

MAN

Which caused the term "Slander" to fly from Tom's lips.

WOMAN

Resulted in a disastrous meeting all round!

MAN

And Hardy – deeply insulted - never spoke to Emma's family again.

WOMAN

Emma, horrified, left her parent's home and broke with them too. And she and Tom went back to St Juliot where at least The Reverend Holder – her brother in law – welcomed them wholeheartedly.

MAN

And even asked Tom to read the lesson at the Sunday service!

MUSIC: Jerusalem the Golden

WOMAN

And as Emma's father had attacked Tom for his low social status and reputation, the subject of that lesson seemed very relevant indeed!

MAN

(Voice of Hardy.)

“A good name is rather to be chosen than riches.
And loving favour rather than silver and gold.
The rich and poor must meet together
For the Lord is maker of them all
Humility and fear of the Lord
Are riches and honour and life.”

WOMAN

But matters were shortly to improve –

MAN

At least on the literary front...

WOMAN

For it was just shortly after that Leslie Stephen...

MAN

Who was to become the father of Virginia Wolf...

WOMAN

Asked Hardy if he would like to write a serial for the prestigious
Cornhill Magazine, and his future was further secured.

MAN

Around this time Tom went to Cambridge to visit one of his closest
friends - Horace Moule.

WOMAN

As he came from a higher social class, his relationship with this artistic
young man meant a good deal to Tom.

MAN

Tom had been just sixteen when he'd first met Horace, who was eight years older, and a special friendship quickly developed between them.

WOMAN

Horace was a charmer in fact – handsome and gifted too.

MAN

Intellectually Moule fascinated Tom. His education, and sophistication too had a great appeal to someone who was largely self-taught.

WOMAN

His view on Darwin's ideas, and challenging thoughts on religion, influenced the young writer greatly too.

MAN

And encouraged his "free thinking" even more.

WOMAN

And as the years went by their friendship became increasingly intense.

MAN

Particularly on Moule's part.

MUSIC: *King's College Choir or Church Bells.*

When Hardy visited Horace at his Cambridge college he was overwhelmed by University life.

WOMAN

You see, he had always wanted to go to university and the sight of its spires in the early morning light would remain with him forever.

MAN

And echoed despairingly in his tragic later novel “Jude the Obscure”
A tale of both thwarted dreams – and a thwarted life....

MUSIC: *The Unforgetting Heart. (Piano Version.)*

WOMAN

Then he went to Bath to be with Emma and her chaperone Miss d’Arville
and from there first visited the beautiful Wye Valley, then the ancient
ruins of Tintern Abbey and finally the ancient town of Chepstow.

MAN

Leaving Emma in their Bath lodgings one evening he climbed way up to
Beechen Cliff and there, sitting alone high above the city, as the blue and
pink of twilight began to fall, he wrote a poem.

WOMAN

And by midnight it was finished.

MAN

The city sleeps below. I sigh
For there dwells on, all testify
To match the maddest dreams desire;
What swain with her would not aspire
To walk the world, Yea, sit but nigh
On Beechen Cliff!

WOMAN

After the holiday he returned to the family home in Bockhampton to
write “Far From the Madding Crowd.”

MAN

Which he did much in the open air – writing the storm scene during an
actual thunder storm.

FX: Thunder crash

This epic of rural life – filled with incident and once more local colour, was set to become one of the defining works of contemporary fiction.

MUSIC: “Michael Turner” Waltz

WOMAN

Bathsheba, his assertive heroine, was not, however, liked by everyone!

MAN

Henry James found her “coarse”.
And she certainly was a radical creation.

WOMAN (*Voice of Bathsheba.*)

“I hate to be thought men’s property”.
“How difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs.”

MAN

Still however advanced were Hardy’s views – and despite the success of the novel....

WOMAN

In his personal life dark clouds were soon to loom.

MAN

In September, Horace Moule sent for his brother Charles, spent an evening drinking with him, then went into the bathroom and slit his own throat.

WOMAN

His last words were:

MAN

“Easy to die. Send my love to my mother.”

FX: Sound of a funeral bell tolling.

WOMAN

As the verdict was ‘temporary insanity’ Horace Moule could be buried in their country churchyard.

MAN

Horace’s mother lost her sight the year of his death and followed her son to the grave four years later.

WOMAN

He and his parents rest together in a quiet spot, rich with primrose and daffodil in the spring - disturbed only by the song of birds. Whatever torment he had secretly endured now hopefully forgotten.

MAN

Hardy would never have such a close friend again.

WOMAN

Leslie Stephen paid Tom £400 for the rights to serialise “Far from the Madding Crowd” and with “A Pair of Blue Eyes” now published in America too, at last he and Emma could think of marriage.

MAN

However he first had to deal with his mother whose hatred of the institution was so fierce that none of his brothers or sisters ever wed. And over Emma, Jemima Hardy was most clear. To her the girl was:

WOMAN (*Voice of Jemima.*)

“Poor gentry! And there’s naught worse than that! ”

MAN

And that was it!

WOMAN

But Tom was unmoved. If only he could secure just a little more money then they would marry.

MAN

So he went to visit Leslie Stephen once again.

WOMAN

But arrived at totally the wrong time of day as he'd misunderstood it was a lunch invitation he'd been given.

MAN

Then his embarrassment became worse when he met the Stephen's barking dog - Troy.

FX: Dog barking.

WOMAN

A creature of whose existence he was totally unaware.

MAN

For you see a certain *Captain Troy* was the villain in Hardy's latest novel.

WOMAN

However Leslie Stephen was both magnanimous and amused!

MAN (***Voice of Leslie Stephen.***)

"I don't think my dog Troy will be hurt at the coincidence.
That is - if your Captain isn't!"

FX: Single dog bark.

WOMAN

Stephen was married to the great novelist Thackeray's daughter, Minnie.
And so for the first time Tom began to meet people of real social status.

MAN

And started to realise the full truth of Emma's background.

WOMAN

And with this knowledge his early fascination with her... well...

MAN

It began to fade...

WOMAN

But true to his pledge to her, their marriage went forward.
A small private wedding took place on September 17th officiated over by
Emma's Uncle, Cannon Gifford.

MAN

The only witness being their landlady's daughter.

WOMAN

For it was now well over four years since the day they met and the
rapture of first love had changed into something less powerful.

MAN

The pair went on honeymoon to Rouen and then Paris.

WOMAN

And thus began the first of their many trips abroad over their lifetime
together.

MAN

In her journal Emma wrote in joyous detail about the trip.

MUSIC: Accordion Music.

WOMAN

The Place de la Concorde by moonlight!
The stars are quite put out by the Parisian lamps.
Versailles, Saint-Claud, the Louvre, Notre-Dame,
the Hotel de Cluny, Napoleon's Tomb!
The boulevards, the gay shops, the 'gens' sitting in the streets,
the vivant enfants, the white caps of the femmes, the river, the boats,
the clear atmosphere, the brilliant colourings...
Ah the beautiful city!

MAN

But despite the copious descriptions of the places they visited and the people she saw, Emma says absolutely nothing about Tom.

WOMAN

Indeed she might quite easily have been on honeymoon alone!

MAN

On their return to England they moved to Surbiton.

WOMAN

The first in a myriad house moves they'd make over the coming years.

MAN

But, despite Hardy's growing popularity, the genteel poverty in which they lived was far from what Emma wanted.

WOMAN

Especially as her regular attendance at the local church was almost all the recreation she ever had.

MAN

So their next move to Westbourne Grove, near her brother, must have seemed a great improvement.

WOMAN

Although the fact that they took with them only four small crates.

MAN

Three containing mostly books – and these were all their belongings -

WOMAN

Shows they were far from prosperous.

MAN

Hardy's next novel "The Hand of Ethelberta" made clear his views on the class system. And this greatly upset Emma.

WOMAN

Something which would happen over and over in the coming years. As class remained a very important factor in their lives.

MAN

But although the Hardy's stayed in London until June there were no invitations sent to them as a couple.

WOMAN

You see, marriage across class boundaries could be isolating – even if both parties were alike.

MAN

And Tom and Emma weren't – no, not at all ...

WOMAN

Indeed she was generally ridiculed by the upper classes...

MAN

And in many cases understandably – as her behavior and extravagant fashion did not go down well in “polite society”.

WOMAN

Things continued to deteriorate for the pair. And then, only ten months after their marriage, when they stayed at a hotel in Bournemouth, on one rainy afternoon....

FX: Thunder and rain.

Hardy wrote despairingly:

MAN

We sat at the window, looking out
And the rain came down like silken strings
That Swithin's day. Each gutter and spout
Babbled and checked in the busy way
Of witless things.
Nothing to read, nothing to see
Seemed in that room for her and me
On Swithin's day.

We were irked by the scene, by our own selves; yes,
For I did not know, nor did she infer,
How much there was to read and guess
By her in me, and to see and crown
By me in her.
Wasted were two souls in their prime
And great was that waste that July time
When the rain came down.

WOMAN

And shortly after, Emma – convinced that she was an author too – wrote a novel....

MAN

A very poor novel.

WOMAN

It was called “ The Maiden on the Shore”.

MAN

And Emma was at first disappointed...

WOMAN

Then very angry!

MAN

That Hardy did not champion it for her with his publishers.

WOMAN

Despite this, it was in 1876, when they rented an unfurnished house in Stourminster Newton, that some of their happiest days together began. Although oblivious to it at the time – it was to be a two-year idyll!

MAN

Yes such it was. Just those two seasons unsought.
Sweeping like summertide wind on our ways
Moving as straws,
Hearts quick as hours in those days;
Going like wind too, and rated as naught,
Save as the prelude to plays
Soon to come – larger-life fraught;
Yes, such it was.

WOMAN

Their happiness rekindled they even visited his parents for Christmas.

MAN

But it was not a success. And the rift that opened was never healed. Indeed years later Hardy's mother Jemima made it very clear that:

WOMAN (*Voice of Jemima.*)

"Emma brought Tom neither youth nor wealth, small intelligence and no children!"

MAN

And as is often the case in such mismatches, gradually the two drifted further apart.

WOMAN

And it was at their next house in Tooting that Hardy said:

MAN (*Voice of Hardy.*)

"Here our troubles really began as there 'had passed away a glory from the earth'"

WOMAN

Emma made no progress with her writing and began to claim ownership of Tom's - calling it "our work" in public.

MAN

As he grew increasingly isolated from his wife, Hardy's yearning for his family returned and he considered building a house near their home in Bockhampton.

WOMAN

You see, in spite of his five years in London and travels abroad too, Hardy was only truly ever happy at his mother's cottage in Dorset – and on the rugged Cornish coast.

MAN

But Emma – whose estrangement from her own family continued – certainly did not want Hardy to return to his roots.

WOMAN

And the situation was made worse when a major quarrel occurred between Emma and Tom's sisters Mary and Katherine - over a pair of earrings. Kate was known to be quite "acquisitive" you see.

MAN

And for the rest of their lives Hardy's sisters were never allowed to enter their brother's home again.

WOMAN

Hardy's next novel was "Two on a Tower".

MAN

About a young man and older woman's controversial relationship.

WOMAN

And it certainly shocked many.

MAN

But it sold well and furthered Hardy's image as a "controversial" writer.

WOMAN

Then desperately trying to bring some happiness back to their marriage, Emma and Tom went off to Paris once more for a month. And the trip was a modest success.

MAN

But on their return...

WOMAN

Despite Emma's objections!

MAN

Tom acquired the land near his family home and begins to build Max Gate – a house he designed himself.

WOMAN

Then things deteriorated even further.
Indeed in 1887 Hardy wrote to a friend:

MAN (*Voice of Hardy.*)

“ As to despondency I have known the very depths of it. You would be quite shocked if I were to tell you how many nights, weeks and months in bygone years, I have gone to bed wishing to see daylight never again.”

WOMAN

Still the more he entered into high society – something that he greeted ambiguously - the more it delighted Emma.

MAN

However she was aging and her peculiarities were only endured in society because of Tom.

WOMAN

Although she didn't grasp this.

MAN

And her social pretensions grew ever greater as she wanted so much to be with the upper classes.

WOMAN

Even though Tom hated their penchant for game shooting & posturing:

MAN (*Voice of Hardy.*)

“ Lord this and Lady that – it drives me to distraction!”

WOMAN

And some of the expensively dressed women irritated him even more:

MAN (*Voice of Hardy.*)

“ Dress them into rough sacking and put them in a turnip field!
Where would their beauty be then!”

WOMAN

So, between him and Emma the distance grew ever greater.

MAN

And in 1884 he went to The Channel Islands without her.

WOMAN

Then on their tenth anniversary he wrote that he had “put off love”:

MAN

But after love what comes?
A scene that lours
A few sad vacant hours
And then the curtain.

WOMAN

And in his poem “The Conformers” he was even more explicit.

MAN

Yes, we’ll wed my little fay,
And you shall write me mine,
And in a villa chastely gray,
We’ll house, and sleep, and dine.

We shall not go in stealth
To rendezvous unknown
But friends will ask me of my health
And you about my own.

When down to dust we glide
Men will not ask askance
As now "How all the countryside
Rings with their mad romance!"

But as they graveyard glance
Remark, " In them we lose
A worthy pair, who helped advance
Sound parish views."

WOMAN

Still, even if Tom and Emma's domestic happiness was ever diminishing –
the same could not be said for their physical health.

MAN

For in 1899 they rode bicycles 17 miles after a harvest festival at
Turnworth - arriving home at midnight!

WOMAN

And both were 59.

MAN

But if truth be told their life seemed centred around travel that
distracted them from the problems they faced at home.

WOMAN

Then in 1899 on their return to England, after yet another trip abroad,
Emma became a virtual recluse.

MAN

And spent much of her time in an attic room.

WOMAN

And called it 'My sweet refuge and solace.'

MAN

Then, as their estrangement deepened, Hardy began to fall in love with other women.

WOMAN

While at the same time Emma became increasingly political and even joined George Bernard Shaw and his wife on a Woman's Suffrage march in London.

MUSIC: Woman's Suffrage Song.

(Woman marches with Suffrage flag.)

MAN

But all too soon Emma accused Hardy of having no interest in Suffrage – just the women in his stories.

WOMAN

And those he would have liked to have taken to his bed!

MAN

His first major fixation, in fact, was for Rosamund Thomson.
A strikingly beautiful young poet with large and luminous eyes.

WOMAN

But when Hardy felt she was using and “exhibiting” him - he broke away from her in disgust.

MAN

Next he fell in love with Agnes Grove. Another younger married woman - with “advanced views”.

WOMAN

But not 'advanced' enough to get into bed with him!

MAN

And Hardy was acutely aware of his aging body too - that was very much at odds with his passionate soul.

WOMAN

Which didn't help the situation either!

MAN

I look into my glass
And view my wasting skin
And say "Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin.

WOMAN

Agnes was to provide him with some consolation for another unrequited fascination he had for Florence Henniker.

MAN

And continued to have for quite some time.

MAN

For Florence was to have significant influence on his life.

WOMAN

The Honourable Mrs. Florence Henniker was of high social status.
Full of life and vivacity!

MAN

And a cheeky sense of humour too.

WOMAN

When only seventeen she often wrote rather risqué limericks in fact
Including one about a young man she knew in the Blues Regiment.

MAN

There once was a youth in the Blues

WOMAN

Who thought he knew how to amuse

MAN

He was somewhat loquacious.

WOMAN

And very flirtatious
That airified youth in the Blues!

MAN

Oh yes! Florence was an exquisite creature.

WOMAN

Their journey in a cab during a thunderstorm in town,
makes clear the depth of Tom's emotions.

FX: Thunder crash and rain.

MAN

She wore a new 'terra-cotta' dress
And we stayed because of the pelting storm,
Within the hansom's dry recess
Though the horse had stopped; yea, motionless
We sat on, snug and warm.

Then the downpour ceased, to my sharp sad pain,
And the glass that had screened our forms before
Flew up, and out she sprang to the door
I should have kissed her
If the rain had lasted a minute more.

WOMAN

But things do not work out for Hardy with her either.

MAN

You see Florence Henniker's Christian beliefs would not allow her to break her marriage vows. And a crucial appointment...

WOMAN

Or should we call it "an assignation" she had with Hardy was broken....

MAN

You did not come,
And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb
You love not me
And love alone can lend you loyalty
- I know and knew it. But unto the score
Of human deeds divine in all but name
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came
To sooth a time-worn man; even though it be
You love not me?

WOMAN

And so it came to pass, after twenty years of marriage, and several rejections from the women he adored, Hardy begins to write his bitterest novel of all...

MAN

"Jude the Obscure".

WOMAN

But with Mrs. Henniker not Emma – providing platonic assistance.

MAN

Hardy did not let Emma read this tragic tale until it was completed.

WOMEN

It is about a man destroyed by both society and the women in his life.
And contains one of literature's most terrible scenes.

MAN

For in it a young boy murders all his brothers and sisters because he
feels his parents have irresponsibly brought them into the world.

WOMAN

Then leaves them a terrible note.

MAN

"Done because we are too many!"

WOMAN

Emma hated every word in the book - particularly Tom's attack on both
the Church and marriage.

MAN

But she also worried that people would believe the relationship between
the characters of Jude and Sue paralleled her unhappy life with Hardy.

WOMAN

The critics attacks were even more vituperative about this latest work.

MAN

"Grossly indecent"

WOMAN

"A shameful nightmare!"

MAN

The Bishop of Wakefield even burned a copy!

WOMAN

And W.H. Smith removed it from their circulating library.

MAN

But there was tremendous praise too.

WOMAN

“The greatest novel in England for many years!”

MAN

And only three months after publication 20,000 copies had been sold!

WOMAN

It was a publishing phenomenon!

MAN

However Hardy was very badly disturbed by the negative reactions to the novel too.

WOMAN

Yes – profoundly upset indeed.

MAN

There have been times when I might well have passed
and the ending have come
Points in my path when the dark night might have stolen on me,
artless, unrueing,
Ere I had learnt that the world was a welter for fruitless doing
Such had been times when I might well have passed
and the ending have come

WOMAN

Still – probably to stave off such depression - Tom and Emma went abroad once more.

MAN

And on their return Hardy tried everything he could to make their marriage work.

WOMAN

However Emma could not forgive him his failure to champion her writing.

MAN

His lack of acknowledgement of the contribution she thought she had made to his work.

WOMAN

Or his hardly concealed passionate friendships with other women.

MAN

Friendships he made so evident in his poetry.

WOMAN

And she put all this down to his rejection of Christian values!

MAN

Claiming she was superior to him in birth, manner, education and talent – as well as in common decency.

WOMAN

Then totally dismissed as valueless his achievements as a writer. And made these views clear to all who came to visit at Max Gate.

MAN

The embarrassment was profound for everyone concerned.

WOMAN

Particularly the visitors!
And an invitation to tea at Hardy's home was welcomed by very few.

MAN

Increasingly Tom retired to his study during the day.

WOMAN

Then finally in the evening too.

MAN

Until theirs became a marriage in name only.
And in his novel "The Well Beloved" Hardy expressed his belief in the impossibility of ever finding satisfaction in human love.

WOMAN

And when one of his characters finds a photograph of an old lover who he thinks is now dead, he speaks the following:

MAN

"He loved the woman dead and inaccessible as he had never loved her in life – his passionate attachment embittered by regret beyond words."

WOMAN

Still, on the world stage matters were now going even more badly than in the Hardy's "domestic theatre".

MAN

For you see, the Boer War had begun.

Music: Song from the Boer War – Tommy Atkins.

WOMAN

But despite the upbeat songs of the time in 1899 the wars casualties affected Hardy so greatly that he wrote one of his most famous poems: “The Dead Drummer.”

MAN

They throw in drummer Hodge, to rest
Uncoffined, just as found
His landmark is a kopje-crest
That breaks the veldt around
And foreign constellations west
Each night upon his mound.

Young Hodge the drummer, never knew
Fresh from his Wessex home,
The meaning of the broad Karoo
The Bush, the dusty loam
And why uprose to nightly view
Strange stars amid the gloam

Yet, portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge forever be
His homely Northern breast and brain,
Grow to some Southern tree
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally.

WOMAN

Then on 29th of December perhaps his most famous poem “The Darkling Thrush” was published and it sums up the full force of his negativity.

MAN

And things with Emma did not improve either.

WOMAN

Her increasing pretensions were now seen by everyone.

MAN

Even the Dorset children called her “Lady Emma” behind her back.

WOMAN

Still Hardy’s fame as a writer grew and grew. And in June 1901 a group of leading journalists came down from London to pay him tribute.

MUSIC: The Unforgetting Heart (Piano Version.)

MAN

It was a lovely summer’s afternoon when Tom’s mother Jemima found out about the visit, and she made her children help her to a chair by the roadside to watch them pass.

WOMAN

And under the shadows of the summer trees she saw them all – the great and good of the literary scene – drive past to honour her son.

MAN

She even waved her handkerchief at them - although her daughter told her it was not the thing to do.

WOMAN

You see that was the nearest Jemima could come to her son that day – as Emma would not have her at their home.

MAN

For she regarded her as a peasant.

WOMAN

And less than a month later she died.

MAN (*Voice of Hardy.*)

I shall miss her in many ways. If one had a family of children one would have been less sensitive to it perhaps – but I did not.

WOMAN

In 1905, 26 year old Florence Emily Dougdale who was holidaying nearby, wrote to Hardy and asked him if she could visit.

MAN (*Voice of Hardy.*)

“Dear Madame, as you are not going to print anything about your visit I shall be at home to you some afternoon this month, if you send a postcard a day or two before you are coming.”

WOMAN

Florence told Tom that she was a great admirer of his work and the visit was much enjoyed by them both.

MAN (*Voice of Hardy.*)

What a remarkable creature!
She wears a cap and cape rather like Tennyson’s!

WOMAN

On the next occasion she visited Max Gate – she sends Hardy some flowers too.

MAN

And as their relationship grew Hardy even allows a close friend of Florence - a very ill young journalist - to prepare “The Pocket Thomas Hardy” that he arranges for Macmillan to publish.

WOMAN

An act that could not have gone unnoticed by Emma who for so long had begged for similar help. The meetings between Tom and Florence took place more and more often. And then –

MAN (*Voice of Hardy.*)

“In order not to disturb Emma”.

WOMAN

Tom suggests they were conducted in secret. Including a week’s holiday in the Suffolk resort of Aldeburgh...

MAN

Not only did Florence seemingly manipulate herself into Hardy’s life but then she also befriended Emma - at a time when she and Tom were seeing each other in secret.

WOMAN

Florence even began visiting Tom’s actual family at Bockhampton behind Emma’s back.

MAN

Poor Emma was oblivious of this and regarded her own friendship with Florence very highly indeed.

WOMAN

So when it was suggested that Florence became Hardy’s secretary, and typed his manuscripts for him – Emma was delighted.

MAN

And in 1910 they all spent Christmas at Max Gate.

WOMAN

But as was typical of most Yuletide events in the Hardy household - a fearful row broke out.

MAN

You see Tom finally decided to tell Emma he was going to take Florence to see his family at Bockhampton .

WOMAN (*Voice of Emma.*)

No! No! No!

MAN

For sadly, Emma still oblivious to her husband's increasing involvement with Florence, simply feared his family would poison Florence against her.

WOMAN

Still, terrible though that domestic argument was, it vanished into insignificance with what was happening on the high seas.

MAN

For on the 15th of April 1912 that unsinkable liner The Titanic – hit an iceberg.

WOMAN

And by nine days later, Tom had written - and had printed in the programme for the Covent Garden matinee in aid of a disaster fund – his poem about that awful event. It was called “The Convergence of The Twain.”

FX: The sound of rough waves at sea.

MAN

In the solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity
And the Pride of Life, that planned her, stiffly couches she.

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace and hue
In shadowy silent distance grew the iceberg too

Alien they seemed to be
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history

Or sign that they were bent
On paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said " Now!" And each one hears
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

WOMAN

On Hardy's birthday on June 2nd the poet Yeats and Henry Newbolt
drove all the way down from London to Max Gate to present Hardy with
the gold medal from The Society for Literature.

MAN

But Tom refused to allow Emma to stay in the room when it was given to
him.

WOMAN

And the slight was never to be forgotten.

MAN

Still what little comfort Emma was now afforded came from her new
maid Dolly who idolised her mistress.

WOMAN

This young girl was the kindest presence in Emma's life and she swiftly developed a great affection for her.

MAN

In 1912, on Sunday 24th of November, Emma's birthday passed without notice. For at this stage of their marriage she and Thomas did not talk – even at meals.

WOMAN

On the 26th she felt unwell and allowed a doctor to visit but not to examine her.

MAN

And on the morning of November 27th it was Dolly who found her dying in her room and called for the cook, who attempted to carry her down the staircase

WOMAN

But by the time Hardy had been called she was unconscious - and died shortly afterwards.

MAN

Emma was 72.

WOMAN

The doctor gave the cause of death as heart failure.
And in so many ways it was....

MUSIC: The Unforgetting Heart (Piano Version.)

MAN

She was buried three days later at the church of St Michael in Stinsford in Dorset. The setting of Tom's idyllic *Under the Greenwood Tree* – and a place he loved most dearly.

WOMAN

The note upon his wreath said simply:

MAN

"From her lonely husband, with the Old Affection."

WOMAN

But shortly afterwards Tom discovered a set of Emma's diaries.

MAN

Diaries she had kept conscientiously throughout her life.
And he could not believe what she had written ...

WOMAN

For they detailed the pain and suffering she felt she'd experienced
at his hands.

MAN

The impact was devastating.

WOMAN

He burned the 'diabolical diaries' – as he called them.

MAN

And threw the ashes to the wind....

WOMAN

But then a few days later he found a manuscript covered in brown paper
and bound together with string.

MAN

They were Emma's 'Recollections' of her early life.

WOMAN

They detailed, in almost idyllic terms, her upbringing and their happy first meeting together...

MAN

And all the emotions of their first love flooded back.

WOMAN

On March 7th 1913 Hardy returned to where he had met Emma 43 years before.

MAN

He went back to St. Juliot, the Valency Valley, Tintagel too and despite his age he then climbed high up onto Beeny Cliff...

WOMAN

That place where they had first fallen in love.

MAN

And from this visit came some of the finest poetry ever written in the English language.

WOMAN

In 1914, Thomas Hardy married his secretary Florence who was 39 years his junior.

MAN

It was not the easiest of marriages either as ironically Florence had encouraged Emma to complete her "Recollections".

WOMAN

The words that had rekindled the great love Tom had had for her.

MAN

And on 11th of January 1928 Thomas Hardy died.

WOMAN

His life that had begun in the height of summer ended in the depth of winter...

MAN

A time he said that was the most appropriate to depart.

WOMAN

But his funeral, five days later, proved as controversial as his life.

MAN

For he, his family and friends, had all wished for his body to be interred at Stinsford in the same grave as Emma.

WOMAN

However, his executor, Sir Sydney Cockerell, insisted that he be placed in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey.

MAN

The struggle was considerable - but finally a compromise was reached.

WOMAN

His ashes – they were placed in the Abbey.

MAN

But not his heart.

WOMAN

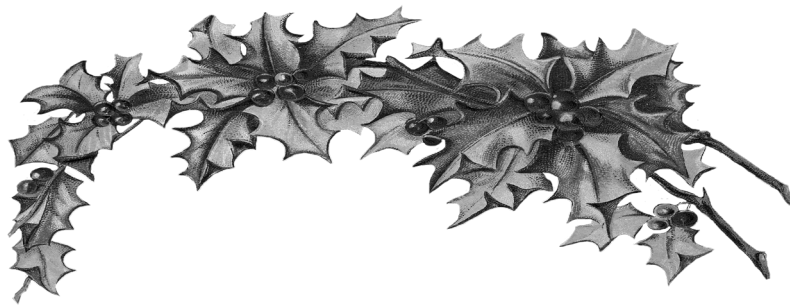
No. That was buried with Emma.

Curtain

Act Two

Christmas

At Max Gate



CHRISTMAS AT MAX GATE

The drawing room of Thomas Hardy's Home
at Max Gate.

Early Evening December 24th 1913

MUSIC: *Song of the Hills.*

FX: *The sound of a cold wind blowing through the trees.*

FX: *Projected effect of falling snow.*

(The curtain rises on the sitting room at Max Gate – Thomas Hardy's home. It is Christmas Eve and outside the snow is falling thick and fast. Some tasteful decorations, branches of holly, and Christmas cards, are to be seen. Positioned on a rear shelf is a small festive arrangement of pine cones, fir branches and similar, in the midst of which is a lit candle.

Centre stage, are two armchairs next to a small side table. On the floor next to one chair is a leather briefcase. Rear stage is a sideboard with a radio, some books, a glass decanter half full of port and some wine glasses, and a small Christmas tree.

Thomas Hardy enters. He is in his 70's but sprightly enough. He turns on the light, goes to the sideboard and pours himself a glass of port which he takes to the small table, then moves over to the rear shelf and turns on the radio.)

MUSIC: *Adestes Fideles.*

(Hardy clearly does not want to hear the carols playing, so he changes the channel - but more carols are playing there too.)

MUSIC: *Away in a Manger.*

Humph!

(Hardy turns the radio off and goes over and looks through the books on his shelf. He picks one and holding it before him, speaks to himself.)

Ah! Perfect for the festive season!

(Hardy takes it back to the side table and places it there next to his wine glass. He then sits and takes a drink. Finally he picks up the book and begins to read.)

“Like all intelligent people - I greatly dislike Christmas!”
Yes Bernard Shaw you’re right there....

(He continues to read.)

“It really is an atrocious institution...”

(Hardy gives a great approving nod!)

“We must be gluttonous because it is Christmas!
We must be drunk because it is Christmas!
We must be insincerely generous...”

FX: Sound of a door knocker.

(Hardy looks up.)

MUSIC: The sound of carol singers - Wassail.

Because it’s Christmas!!

(Hardy shakes his head with an ironic smile.)

You can’t get away from it can you, Tom!
Still at least this one’s pleasantly pagan!

(He stands, feels in his pocket and takes out some change, then goes to the door.)

Cheap at twice the price - to get rid of them!

HARDY exits.

(After a few moments Hardy returns and as he is walking across the room the singing fades away.)

Two shilling clearly doesn’t buy many carols these days.

(Hardy sits once more and takes another sip from his glass. He then picks up the book again and continues to read - but this time silently.)

FX: Clock strikes seven.

FX: Door knocker.

Hardly a silent night!

(He listens for a moment but hears no carols.)

This lot clearly need paying in advance? It must be the church choir.

(He takes more money out his pocket, goes to the door and exits.)

(From outside the room.) Good heavens!
Well... Well you had better come in.
Let me take your coat – it's covered in snow.

(EMMA enters wearing a decidedly flamboyant dress and coat and equally idiosyncratic large hat. She walks into the centre of the room and appraises what she sees. TOM re-enters and stares at his visitor.)

So.... You came after all.

EMMA

I said I would, didn't I?

TOM

Yes...but I never thought... Well, imagined that you would...
Or even could...

EMMA

Oh Doubting Thomas!
And Christmas Eve is the traditional time for such...visits.

TOM

I... I suppose it is. Mister Dickens has a lot to answer for!
Well, you're looking particularly 'festive'. You put my little tree to shame

EMMA

Are you going to ask me to sit down?

TOM

Of course.

(EMMA sits.)

Would you like a glass of port?

(EMMA shakes her head.)

Or something warmer – coffee? Tea?

(EMMA shakes her head again.)

No.... I suppose not.

(Pregnant pause.)

EMMA

Your reticence is disconcerting Thomas. But as we've scarcely talked over the last decade, I suppose a sudden verbosity would disconcert me even more!

TOM

Surely my hesitancy is understandable...

EMMA

My visit shouldn't be a surprise. I always do as I say - don't I?

TOM

Yes. Yes you did. And clearly still do...

EMMA

I said we should always spend Christmas together.

TOM

Yes I know... but....

EMMA

Then there you are then!

TOM

A good deal in life is too strange to be believed.
But clearly nothing's too strange to actually happen!

EMMA

You should sit down. You're not getting any younger.

TOM

That's true enough...

(TOM sits.)

EMMA

And this 'Satire of Circumstance' is clearly a shock..

TOM

It would make a fine old tale – that's for sure.

EMMA

No, Tom Hardy! You used me quite enough in your novels!
I'm not to be turned into a short story too!

TOM

Now come along Emma... You know that isn't right.

EMMA

I know nothing of the sort!
What about Elphrida in "A Pair of Blue Eyes"?

TOM

Well, perhaps she had a certain ... A certain "likeness" to you...

EMMA

"A certain likeness"! It was me to the core!

TOM

I suppose there is some small truth in what you say.

EMMA

I am always truthful?

TOM

That wasn't my experience dear...

EMMA

I beg your pardon!

TOM

And you weren't prone to doing much of that either.

EMMA

Well, if pardons are to be begged – you should be begging mine!

(Pause)

TOM

Yes.... Perhaps you're right.... Over that a least...

EMMA

Of course I'm right – I always was.

TOM

Come – let's not argue... We've done enough of that....

EMMA

To last a lifetime... Well, for me at least.

TOM

So.... For tonight we're back together again.

EMMA

Though you're still surprised I came here I can tell?
Came here to Max Gate!

TOM

Of course I'm not!
Max Gate's our home – where else should you have come?

EMMA

Well I've never liked the place!

TOM

You never said.

EMMA

If one's house is designed by one's architect husband - it would be neither wise nor kind to criticize it. But no! I never liked this ugly "pile" not one small bit. And it was too close to that family of yours too!

TOM

So if this “pile” is not to your liking where would you rather be?

EMMA

In Paris!

TOM

Paris!

EMMA

Of course. It was so interesting there.
And I was always one to take an interest.

TOM

There is nothing of interest to a woman except herself.
And you, my dear, are certainly no exception.

EMMA

(She gives Tom a look that says “typical!”)

Well Paris is much preferred to here.
After all, it’s where we spent our honeymoon.

TOM

And at least you approved of that I take it?

EMMA

Oh yes! With so much to see and do in Paris - we didn’t have to talk to each other!

TOM

Emma!

EMMA

Just face the facts Tom! You know I’m right.

(Pause)

TOM

And here we are thirty five years later - having our customary “Christmas spat”!

EMMA

Yes our “Christmas spat”! It’s become quite a seasonal tradition hasn’t it.

TOM

But one more honor’d in the breach than the observance!

EMMA

Enough of this pointless chit chat. I was never one to waste words.

TOM

Who ever told you that clearly didn’t know you very well!

EMMA

A joke Tom Hardy? Don’t break the habit of lifetime, please!

TOM

Oh I joked once...

EMMA

Not since I’ve known you!

TOM

Precisely!

EMMA

Yes! Gloom’s your preferred métier is it not? Gloom and despair.
Your glass is half empty – never half full - that’s your belief and sacred
creed - is it not?

TOM

You exaggerate as always.

EMMA

I think not my dear! I understand the “Hardy School of Gloom” all too well, I’ve had a good teacher on that score!

TOM

If that’s the case why did you come tonight? For further lessons?

EMMA

(Forcefully.) Sufficient to know that I am here!
And for just one hour I will stay - but not a moment more.
And then you’ll never hear from me again.

TOM

Never?

EMMA

Never! And believe what I say for I am a woman of my word.

TOM

Clearly - it seems.

EMMA

Clearly it is!

TOM

Still, after finding your diaries – you surely understand why I’m surprised you came at all. Dared to come in fact!

EMMA

So you did find them then?

TOM

Oh yes!

EMMA

And read them too I see.

TOM

Of course.

EMMA

Well you were meant to!

TOM

I suspected as much....

EMMA

Then your suspicions were correct!

TOM

Those diaries were... They were diabolical!

EMMA

Humph!

TOM

And don't "humph"! You denigrated not just my family but me as well in those wretched volumes. And you'd been writing in them virtually every day of our lives together!

EMMA

They are a record of a woman's most intimate thoughts.

TOM

So clearly meant for publication!

EMMA

Don't quote Oscar Wilde my dear – it's not becoming. And judging from the rumours, shortly to become a criminal offence no doubt!

TOM

But those things you wrote... Those terrible things...

EMMA

I played the part of a devoted wife for almost forty years - so sometime I had to leave the stage and speak the truth – if only in the privacy of my dressing room.

TOM

What do you mean?

EMMA

Woe betide a wife whose husband belongs first to the public – then too his work – and finally – if she were luckier than I – to his wife!

TOM

Such is the life of the author....

EMMA

And the other women in that life? Are those other perks the author can expect as well!

TOM

Sometimes... Sometimes one's impulses can be too strong for one's ...better judgment...

EMMA

Only when “one” thinks “one” can get away with it!

TOM

I was always faithful... Faithful in my fashion.

EMMA

I’m no Cynara! And if you’re quoting Ernest Dowson it is no more edifying than Wilde! So you were “faithful in your fashion’ were you?

TOM

Yes! Yes I was.

EMMA

Then how do you define infidelity Tom?

TOM

Having carnal relations with a woman other than one’s wife!
And that I most certainly never did!

EMMA

No it’s not simply an act!
A vague desire. Unfulfilled. Unrealised. But still there all the while.
Yes that’s just as real and pernicious to a wife....
And certainly was to me!

TOM

Look Emma – you must understand...
My feelings for those women were ones of.... Of admiration.
Nothing more.

EMMA

No! What difference does it make what shape they took?
It was still betrayal... And you betrayed me Tom.

TOM

I never touched another.

EMMA

No – but you wrote those poems to them! And that was far far worse!
Those endless poems showing how much you cared No! Loved them!
Yes! You were faithful in your body Tom Hardy – but not your heart!

TOM

Speak not to me of hearts!

EMMA

What do you mean?

TOM

You never loved me as I once loved you. Never! Never!

EMMA

How can you say such a thing!

TOM

Easily! Yours is not a passionate heart Emma.

EMMA

I gave you what I could...

TOM

No! Far from it.

EMMA

My love... my passion....
It was too... too subtle, too elusive for you to comprehend!

TOM

A Nemesis attends a woman who plays the game of elusiveness too long.
She goes unlamented to her grave.

EMMA

Tom! *(Tears well in her eyes for a moment and she wipes them away.)*

TOM

(Pause.)

I'm sorry... I should not have said that... I... I did not mean it Emma...

EMMA

I fear you did.... But in truth had you ever true feelings for me Thomas?

TOM

Of course.

EMMA

You may say so now... Think it even... But I wonder?

TOM

Sometimes I shrank from you...

Knowing how powerfully... How powerfully I felt about you...

EMMA

That's a line from one of your books! This is so typical of you!

Are you now surprised why I wrote such things in my diaries?

They needed to be said!

TOM

Think what you like! I know the truth, however far you wished to
circulate your defamatory misconceptions.

EMMA

No! My diaries were for you – and you alone.

TOM

So you wished to poison only me! That mitigates your actions I suppose!

EMMA

Mitigates my actions!

No! Perhaps my journals should now be published for all to read!

Then at least some of my writings might see the light of day.

TOM

So you'd have your husband hurt – no wounded to the heart! - just to see your work in print? Do your scribblings matter to you so much!

EMMA

As much as "your scribblings" did to you!

And you wrote regardless of the pain it gave your wife!

TOM

Well those diaries will not be published. I've seen to that.

EMMA

What do you mean?

TOM

They are all burned!

EMMA

You've burned ... You've burned my diaries!

TOM

Yes I burned them - everyone! Or did you think they'd combust spontaneously with all the vitriol they contained!

EMMA

So nothing of my writing will survive....
Life is so unfair – and you the most unfair of all!

TOM

Because I destroyed those wretched books?

EMMA

Forget my journals... Surely with all your novels in print and poems by the hundred too, it would not have been too much to have helped me publish the one novel that I wrote? Or have you forgotten that as well?

TOM

No. I've not forgotten it.

EMMA

Then why did you not help me?

TOM

It is the nature of life that the "call" seldom produces the "comer".

EMMA

You are right.
No one comes when they are truly needed.

TOM

Because no one ever does.

EMMA

But you could have helped me.

TOM

That is not the way of things for writers.

EMMA

But you knew what publishers to approach.

TOM

No one helped me with my first book - which was right and proper!
Indeed "The Poor Man and the Lady" still has not been placed.
Even "Desperate Remedies" I printed at my very own cost and lost full
£15 over the matter. The true artist must be beyond familial entreaties
and the such!

EMMA

Yes but....

TOM

Then publisher's prudery - that held me back still more. But yet I asked
no favours from any man and would not compromise! Even when
Tillotson said he would print my "Tess", but demanded those changes –
I took the manuscript from him – did I not - rather than compromise?

EMMA

Too true you did! And what arrogance it was. Oh if I had been given such
a chance, any changes they required I would readily have made.

TOM

No. Such editors – the circulating libraries too – their prudery had to
be stopped.

EMMA

And cost you much it did.

TOM

1000 guineas. More indeed!
But cheap at twice... No ten times the price.

EMMA

Such idiocy - it should have made you weep. For it did me.

TOM

Rubbish! If the true artist ever weeps it is when he first discovers the fearful price he has to pay for the "privilege" of writing in the English tongue. And that's knowledge you have never learned - nor earned!

EMMA

The simple requirement to omit the coarseness of which you were so fond? You call that a high price Thomas? Well I do not.

TOM

The true price of conceding to such demands would be the destruction of belief in my characters in the mind of every mature reader. And that is what they wanted – those prudish publishers! To allow me access to the printed page they demanded the death of truth!

EMMA

Well in your arrogance you did not concede!

TOM

No! I wanted to destroy the pretty "doll" of English fiction once and for all – and by God through my "Tess" I surely did.

EMMA

"Tess of the D' Urbervilles"? You really believed that sordid tale of a girl of no morals helped our literature advance!

TOM

Yes! Yes I do! And my Tess was a pure woman!

EMMA

Pure! With that weight of sin upon her soul?

TOM

Don't talk to me of "sin" woman. It is such accusations that hold our writers back....

EMMA

Back from what?

TOM

Presenting just the simple and honest truth!

EMMA

You were always one for sophistry to gain your ends.

TOM

Sophistry? Too many who are termed authors favour that. But not I! Their censorious arrogance goes hand in glove with the hypocritical moral superiority they publically display.

EMMA

In other words – their good taste!

TOM

Good taste! No, it is lies they propound as truth!

EMMA

Nonsense!

TOM

“Nonsense” you say? Well just the other day I read a story by some such “literary soul” who dared to term himself an author. “The Wages of Sin” it was called! And it reeked of the ‘good taste’ you prize so much!

EMMA

And I have read it too – a fine and godly tale it is indeed.

TOM

Godly? Only if you worship Moloch!
For on the altars of such “writers” our children will be sacrificed.
That foolish and “ungodly” book sums up your creed and the
“fulsome charity” of your pitiless deity!

EMMA

No! That tale showed clearly the true outcome of a life of sin.

TOM

I said “pitiless” and I mean it!
For her indiscretion the young heroine dies of consumption!
And her young man? What price did he pay for simply being human?
He falls over a cliff that’s what!

EMMA

Well I think their fates were fully justified.

TOM

And that is why in all aspects of our lives, we are many miles – no
universes apart!

EMMA

But my book “The Girl on the Shore” you could have helped me with
that! The incidents and characters they were of true worth - and many
have told me so...

TOM

And many praised “ The Wages of Sin” too I’m sure!
False praise is no recommendation.

EMMA

That cliché Sir, is beneath even you!

TOM

Yes, that I will accept. My words are always original at least.

EMMA

And so was my novel. It was an admirable book as you know full well!

TOM

It had some virtues that’s true enough. But....

EMMA

Tender me no “buts” Tom Hardy! Speak out!

TOM

I think it’s best if I do not.

EMMA

My novel was as good – no finer too – than any you have wrote.
Such a book it could... It could have made my name!

TOM

If one “makes one’s name” through publishing such rubbish it is by far
the more distinguished course - to remain in obscurity!

EMMA

So... You concede me nothing...

TOM

If you see my reticence as a reluctance to concede – then I do not!

EMMA

And I conceded everything to you!

TOM

What do you mean!

EMMA

Why is it that a woman can see at a distance what a man cannot – even close up?

TOM

Because what's before a man's face is deliberately obscured by the female of the species! For women teach each other from the cradle they must never admit the truth to any man!

EMMA

Well here is my truth. I waited day after day knowing it was perfectly absurd to expect you to help me – yet pathetically expecting... No! Praying that you might.

TOM

Well you should not have done!

EMMA

Oh yes.... I now realise that anything is possible at the hands of time and fate - except perhaps fair play!

TOM

Perhaps....

EMMA

No “perhapses’ either. Instead of helping me, you stole from my book and used it in your “Madding Crowd”– that’s what!

TOM

Just one episode... That upon the beach...

EMMA

Then one too many!

TOM

But your story as a whole it was...

EMMA

Was what!

TOM

It lacked impact, depth.... and yes truth too...

EMMA

Well my latest “literary work” surely had the “truth” and “impact” you require! Or weren’t even my diaries deep enough for you!

TOM

Yes they were deep – as deep as Hades!

EMMA

And you never had a clue that I was writing them.

TOM

Oh, I knew you were scribbling away at something in your attic room!

EMMA

But you didn't think for one moment on what - did you Thomas!

TOM

No I did not!

EMMA

Oh it gave me so much satisfaction knowing that.

TOM

Satisfaction!

EMMA

Oh yes. As I could not say to your face how I truly felt about you – each day I wrote it down instead!

TOM

And when I read those terrible things...
It was... It was a frightful shock indeed...

EMMA

Well nosey parkers never hear good of themselves.

TOM

Nor read about it either.

EMMA

Then you should not have pried!

TOM

Pried? I've never pried! You put those journals in your bedside draw – you knew I'd find them.

EMMA

As a stranger to my bedroom when finally you entered...
Well you deserved a small surprise!

TOM

How could you have written such things about... About “your husband”!

EMMA

Quite easily. First with an old quill, then a bright steel nib, and then most lately with my fountain pen!

TOM

The one I gave you for your birthday!

EMMA

Yes – a date you generally ignored.

TOM

Well, if I’d known what you’d do with that nib
I’d never have given it to you!

EMMA

But you did, my dear. So you may consider yourself totally responsible
for my jottings – in thought, word and deed!

TOM

Better far if you’d taken the pen and stabbed me in the heart.

(Emma gives an ironic chuckle!)

(With real violence.) No! That I had stabbed you with it instead!

EMMA

I knew there was something of Doctor Crippen about you!

TOM

What!

EMMA

And when I found out about “that Florence” – I kept watch on every morsel of food you gave me...

TOM

Florence was.... was my secretary!

EMMA

Well Dr. Johnson needs amend his dictionary to provide a better definition of the term!

(Tom rushes over to a shelf - picks up a journal. Looks at it in exasperation. Flicks through it - then begins to read.)

TOM

“What I thought of my husband!”

(He slams it down.)

Humph!

EMMA

You don’t have to read it to me. I know what I wrote.
And I thought you said you’d burned it?

TOM

Well I will soon – believe me.
How did you have the nerve to come this evening –
after writing this!

EMMA

Because every word is true.

TOM

Of course it's not!

EMMA

Tis too! And truth will out.

TOM

No. It's all absurd... As ludicrous in fact as...
(*Gesturing to Emma's headwear.*) As that damn hat!

EMMA

You really are the most irritating of men!

TOM

No really Emma, I have wanted to say this for so long.
The clothes you wear are... Are bloody awful!

EMMA

You vile foul mouthed man!

TOM

I'm sorry – but it's true.

EMMA

Speak of matters you understand - monster!
And ladies couture is certainly not one of them.

TOM

So if you are a mistress of that craft why do you think people
used to stare at you so strangely in the streets?

EMMA

Because they admired me, of course.

TOM

And those children in France who laughed every time they saw you?
They admired you too I suppose?

EMMA

They were French!

TOM

So their ethnicity precluded sound judgment - suppose

EMMA

Yes. If one's beaten them at Waterloo.

TOM

They laughed because of how you dress and those...
Those "birds nests" you wear upon your head!

EMMA

Good heavens!

TOM

No – that's too fine a term for them – no self-respecting bird would be
found dead in such a monstrosity!

(EMMA removes her hat and looks at it mournfully)

EMMA

Absurd buffoon! You never had a sense of style did you!
In any area of your life... Or work!

TOM

I beg your pardon...

EMMA

As I said before - it's a bit late for that my dear.

TOM

I ask for no pardon from you! You who dare criticize my work!

EMMA

Well I'm not on my own in doing that!
No! Style was never your forte was it Tom!

TOM

I am one of England's most celebrated novelists and you say I lack style!

EMMA

No dear – simply good style. You've plenty of the other kind.

TOM

What on earth do you mean?

EMMA

You suffer from the failings of the self-educated!
My Lord! You even call "a house" a "domicile" imagining it a term of gentility! And it's not! It's the pathetic pedantry of the peasant class.

TOM

Humph!

EMMA

No! You have never escaped your peasant roots – and those with refined tastes see that all too easily.

TOM

And you of course would I suppose - coming from such "esteemed literary circles" as you did?

EMMA

Most certainly!

TOM

Oh? So did you gain your “refined taste” from your father’s meagre “lawyer’s office” or your brother in law’s “vicarage bookshelf” perhaps? Yes, his tedious sermons on *The Widow’s Mite*, must have been of immense value in learning to judge the literary qualities of others!

EMMA

It never ceases to amaze me how many so-called poets such as you are born common! And like perverse anchorites wallow in their literary filth!

TOM

That is not what the “better critics” think! As you full know.

EMMA

The “better critics” - as you term them - seem most readily to praise authors with whom they’ve dined! Particularly if the bill of fare is at least two guineas - and the payment does not come from their own pockets!

TOM

What!

EMMA

Yes! A fine Beaujolais secures good reviews more readily than the words presented on a page – it seems to me!

TOM

I’ll hear no more of this you wretched woman!

EMMA

Though even a vintage port can’t cultivate them all. Can it my dear? And I speak not simply of the disgust your novel “*Jude*” inspired. You who go hand in glove with Zola!

TOM

My business as a writer is to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things and the grandeur underlying the sorriest.

EMMA

Well “Degrading Filth” is how one critic summed such “grandeur” up!
And so do I!

TOM

Well your views don’t interest me a jot!

EMMA

Then recall what Henry James said of your “Madding Crowd”.
His opinion must interest you at least?
“Imitative” he said it was. “Second rate”. “Fatally lacking in magic.”
“Verbose and redundant in style.”
In fact, the only thing he believed in was the sheep!

TOM

Dear God!

EMMA

Well, is that interesting enough for you!
So much for your novels – Tom Hardy!

TOM

Well at least they are **my** novels! Are they not?
However much it galls you to admit I wrote them all myself!
So now at least you do not claim them as your own!

EMMA

Well the vulgar common bits are certainly yours!
But as for the better pieces – now that is a different matter entirely.

TOM

You are still living in a fantasy world then – even now?

EMMA

We both know the truth – even if you won't admit it!

TOM

How in God's name can you say that?

EMMA

I will not have blasphemy either, Sir!
Keep such things for the pages of your dirty books.

TOM

Lord Almighty – save me from this Eumenidy!

EMMA

If your profanity persist - I will leave on the instant.

(Pause)

Well, shall I do that? Walk out into the night?

TOM

No.... No don't do that.

(Pause.)

As candour seems the tenor of the night - there is a matter we must now discuss. And calmly too...

EMMA

Well don't forget that "calm" is often felt before the greatest storm...

TOM

Well if that is now what lies ahead – then let it be!
How can you have ever claimed to have written my work Emma?
I know it's something you told everyone throughout our marriage –
but surely you can't believe that yourself....

EMMA

Tom Hardy – you know how much I slaved for you!
I literally wrote ever word that was printed – well until that Florence arrived - did I not? Deny it if you dare!

TOM

Of course you transcribed my books. You put them into fair copy but...

EMMA

“But” me no “buts” Thomas!
Your adverbs I could cope with – “perhaps this” – “perhaps that”
but as for negative conjunctions? No! I’ll have none of those!

TOM

Yes but....

EMMA

Have you Conjunction Fever! Or a sudden deafness more political than real? Yes! That opportune disease you’ve had since we first wed?

TOM

Well it must surely be infectious - for you have had it too for thirty years!

EMMA

I will say this and once only.
I transcribed your books into fair copy “but” – ah I have caught the plague now too – I gave you all my ideas as well!
Ideas you readily put into your work – then never credited me once!

TOM

For a word here? A phrase there?
What more than simple gratitude did you expect?

EMMA

Gratitude – that's something for one's servants and the peasant folk!
And I am from neither quarter – thank the Lord! Unlike yourself!

TOM

As you have made clear many times.

EMMA

Yes! Families such as yours are alien to me! I thank My Saviour for that too. I was from the genteel middle class, not field workers like yourself. My relatives are the clergy, doctors, men in the army, navy, yes and lawyers too.

TOM

But not all my dear. Some of your folk were teachers - like my dear sister if I remember true!

EMMA

Yes, sadly with my kin the scholastic line was always taken at times of declining fortunes.

TOM

So you concede that at least!

EMMA

I concede nothing! Those who took that path were far from such peasant stock as yours.
No wonder you were so ashamed of your past life!

TOM

Ashamed! How can you say such a thing?

EMMA

Then why did you drop your Dorset accent!

TOM

I... I...

EMMA

And why was it that you told so few of that cottage where you were born?

TOM

But....

EMMA

Or the existence indeed of your own brother and sisters!

TOM

I never denied such knowledge.....

I simply did not feel such facts were necessary to discuss.

EMMA

Not 'necessary to discuss'?

Mind you if I'd sisters such as yours I'd have hidden them away as well!

They were harpies Sir – pure and simple!

TOM

I will not have you speak of them like this.

EMMA

Well did they not spread evil reports of me?

Deny it if you can!

TOM

Reports of those stories were confused I'm sure...

EMMA

Tom Hardy they said it to my face! And to others too!
They said I was unkind to you! When the truth was you were
outrageously unkind to me!
No, ever since I became your wife all your sisters have done is to make
division between us both.

TOM

Come, come. That is not right.

EMMA

No! They tried to set your entire family against me – though neither you,
nor they, can say that I have been nothing but just, considerate and kind
towards them – not withstanding their frequent low insults!

TOM

Emma you exaggerate!

EMMA

Exaggerate? Not only have they termed me “abominably plain”
but - “half-cracked” too!

(Pause.)

Such wounds.... They are too deep for words...

TOM

I think you mean “tears”, dear. “ Too deep for tears.”
That’s what Tennyson wrote....

EMMA

Don’t tell me what he wrote or what I am to think!
You have done that for too long!

TOM

I was only trying to be helpful.

EMMA

Well, what about the help that I have given you?
Help you did not acknowledge. No! Denied! And for far too long.

TOM

Then I will no longer. And I will say it now....
Your help was considerable...
The service that you did me was....most useful.
There – are you happy!

EMMA

“Service that you did me was most useful!”
I am no washerwoman Sir who has revived a pair of greying
combinations!

TOM

No, no... I did not mean to underestimate your help....

EMMA

Then why did you never acknowledge it before?
Or dedicate just one of your books to me?
That would have been a very simple thing to do.

(Pause.)

And Tom it would.... It would have meant so much...

TOM

I dedicate my writing to no living soul.
Or dead ones either!

EMMA

And even when you received your award from Yeats, and he came to
Max Gate to present it to you? You would not even let me stay in the
room to see it done.

TOM

It was not... appropriate...

EMMA

Appropriate!

TOM

Oh do not dramatise woman! You are not Lady Bracknell.
You have always had a disconcerting flair for the theatrical.

EMMA

But a better one than yours judging from your only play!

TOM

You cannot mean?

EMMA

Yes *The Dynasts* – that wearisome epic. That's exactly what I do!

TOM

The Dynasts was... Was very well respected...

EMMA

If never performed! And understandably so for no one has sufficient
days left in their lives to survive its length!

TOM

Oh where does such poison come from? Is it simply because I did not let
you stay in the room at Yeats' wretched presentation?
Can such a foolishly misperceived insult breed this viciousness?

EMMA

Yes – I can never forgive you for that act!
But there is so much more I could accuse you of!

TOM

For heaven's sake it would have been neither proper nor correct
for you to have been there.

EMMA

Nonsense – Yeats himself said I should stay.
But no! Ordered out I was. Ordered from our parlour with our two cats!
Oh! The indignity to which those poor creatures were exposed was as
bad as my own!

TOM

You speak of cats?

EMMA

And why not? For the two days following they drank no milk at all!

TOM

(Hardy bursts into laughter!) Ha ha ha....

EMMA

Laugh not at me you monster!

TOM

But my dear, cannot you see how foolish all this is?

EMMA

At the heart of folly rests the birth of pain...

TOM

Can you not forget? Forgive? Such things are of the past.

EMMA

No, nothing is past – forgotten – nor forgiven either!
Then when you were offered a Knighthood – what did you do?

TOM

I declined it of course....

EMMA

And why? No, don't waste time thinking up excuses.
It was because if you accepted I would have become Lady Hardy!
And you would have none of that either would you Tom?
For it would have meant I gained some recognition too.

TOM

All such foolish honours... They meant nothing to me and should not
have to you either! I even told Yeats when he arrived at Max Gate I was
too old to receive a medal - and meant it! And I needed no fussy
presentation either.

EMMA

Yes that is what you said it's true enough.
(Pause.) But there were other things you said as well.

TOM

I... I do not recollect...

EMMA

Your full sentence was: "I'm too old to receive a medal as unfortunately
I have no son of my own to pass it on to." Am I not right?

TOM

I really can't remember...

EMMA

Of course you can.

TOM

And how I've paid for those words ever since....

EMMA

Can you not imagine how I felt when they were said?

TOM

Why? I never wanted children.

EMMA

There were two people in our marriage.

TOM

Well for some, childlessness is by far the better option.

EMMA

For some....perhaps – but not for all.....

TOM

No. A marriage without children is definitely the best thing.

EMMA

Marriage is a holy sacrament created to bring new life –
new joy into the world.

TOM

“Joy?” I’m sure that’s what every woman says to catch her prey!

EMMA

Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says – some women might actually believe and mean.... And feel...?

TOM

Ordinary men take wives because possession is not possible without marriage. And ordinary women accept husbands because marriage is not possible without possession. That is the nature of the world.

EMMA

Then what of love...? Does that not exist?

TOM

Oh yes. It exists. But it ends in marriage.

EMMA

Not for everyone. For most respect their vows....

TOM

“Vows!” It is foreign to man’s nature to go on loving when he’s told he must. It would prove more realistic if the marriage ceremony required both parties to cease loving from that day forward!

EMMA

Well if the institution is so flawed – why does it endure?

TOM

People go on marrying because they cannot resist natural forces. They buy a months pleasure with a lifetime’s discomfort.

EMMA

When you speak of “marriage” the word sounds like an abattoir.

TOM

And why not? For it’s where love is slaughtered!

EMMA

You learned that charming idiom at your mother’s knee, I know.

TOM

And I should have listened to her words with greater care.
She warned us all of the dangers of that cursed institution.
And me! Foolish me! Of all my brothers and sisters, I was the only one
who did not heed her!

EMMA

And look where it has placed you now.

TOM

Drenched in blood and offal.

EMMA

After knowing you I’d only agree to be a bride again if marriages took
place without husbands!

TOM

Well if offence comes out of truth better that, than the truth be forever
concealed.

EMMA

So what was it then that “slaughtered” our love?

TOM

“The world’s slow stain....”Yes, I thought it would always be like that summertime at St Juliot’s for us. But the frost came all too soon....

EMMA

When one poet quotes another it must mean something.

TOM

A paucity of courage to speak his own true thoughts.

EMMA

No. Better for us both you speak them loud and clear now!

TOM

Then I will! In my mind marriage is the greatest sin of all.
And if it brings forth children - best they die at birth.

EMMA

Tom!

TOM

For even the death of a child is never to be regretted when one thinks of what it has escaped!

EMMA

Even now you have the power to appall!

TOM

Such is the nature of truth – it is appalling.

EMMA

Oh you and your absurd pessimism.

TOM

Do not denigrate pessimism, it is the one true virtue.

EMMA

A virtue you call it?

TOM

Pessimism is the only view of life that cannot disappoint.
When you have worked out what to do in the worst of circumstances -
when the best arise – life is child's play.

EMMA

Oh how can you say such things?

TOM

As easily as autumnal leaves strew the paths in Vallombrosa!

EMMA

Well, you fly in the face of God! And don't quote Milton – he surely
would not subscribe to such views as yours.

TOM

"Dark, dark amid the blaze of noon"? I wouldn't be too sure of that!
The only thing more absurd than the myth of God is the myth of
marriage. It was our undoing and Milton's too – and that's the truth as
well...

EMMA

And you truly believe that?

TOM

Believe it? I know!

EMMA

But high on Beeny Cliff we ... We fell in love....

TOM

Far better if we'd "gathered samphire there" for our love was no less perilous than that "dreadful trade!"

EMMA

So now you quote "King Lear" at me too.
The self-educated clearly have much to prove!

TOM

Well then – as blind Gloucester high upon his cliff, was tricked by Lear's 'All Licenced Fool', we Emma, on our rocky height, were caught up in our illusions too. For that is what love is – a trick at best – at worst a sickness of the soul... And once that perverse plague had us in its grasp like so many other poor folk... We were condemned....
And doomed to disillusionment....

EMMA

Perhaps you are right...

TOM

I was a young man who dreamed of life and a class to which I was not born ...

EMMA

A class from whence I came... Or so you thought....

TOM

Yes....

EMMA

And I was a young girl – living with my sister, away from life, society, from everything I craved...

TOM

While I was from London! And had entrée to a world so different to your own....

EMMA

Or so you thought.

TOM

So we fell in love with people that...

EMMA

That did not exist.

TOM

And that' the origin of the curse...that's thwarted – no destroyed our lives...

EMMA

No! Our lives were not destroyed.

TOM

It is a fact my dear....

And we are each as innocent and guilty as the other, in doing so...

EMMA

I did not spoil your life! If we'd not married where would you be now? Not writing books. No! No indeed. I was the one who helped you on that course – whatever cost its been to me!

TOM

So you're my saviour? Well - oh poor martyr - what life have you saved me from? A happy one I do suspect!

EMMA

A second rate architect you'd be now, without my help - rebuilding fallen churches! Yes - preserving the House of God – and you an atheist!
A fate as ironic as any suffered in your novels – that's for sure.

TOM

So you think that?

EMMA

And most assuredly too! Without me, you'd have become.....
(Trying angrily then finding the right words!) “Tom the Obscure!”

TOM

Good God!

EMMA

And then your blasphemy, despair and native gloom would have run rampant in your soul. Even more than it has already done – if such a thing is possible.

TOM

And after what has happened in my life – are you surprised?

EMMA

Excuses for a life that's failed are the worst kind of all.

TOM

No! You cannot blame me for my views on life... For I too have had an unsparing teacher in the “Books of Woe” - Schoolmistress wife!

EMMA

Don't dare blame me Thomas. You have brought it all upon yourself.
Your endless questioning of Christian belief has removed all Hope from your life.

TOM

And don't you reprimand me with your Low Church Protestantism either! When we met you were as much of a free thinker as I Mrs Hardy!

EMMA

Well, I'm not anymore.... My Bible has shown me the one true way.

TOM

When I see someone reading a Bible I always assume they must be slightly mad.

EMMA

You cannot shock me Tom! I am secure in my faith!

TOM

Your faith! Such as you take your pleasure on earth by making lives like mine bitter with sorrow. And when you've had enough of that, you seek pleasure in heaven by becoming converted! No! Don't talk to me about your faith - or non-existent god!

EMMA

I have never believed your talk of atheism in the past, and I certainly don't believe it now!

TOM

why, oh why, do you cling on to your raft of faith amid the tides and whirlpools of the Sea of Truth? Oh foolish woman! Steer it towards the rational shore while you still can!

EMMA

The godless shore you mean. But however foolish you feel my beliefs to be, I do not claim that this little world of man – is meant to be a comfortable place – or an easy one indeed.

TOM

That's just as well...

EMMA

But what I believe. No. What I know, is it's all a part...
A part of God's good plan. And even you don't doubt His existence...
However much you may profess!

TOM

Yes there is a President of the Immortals - I concede.
Like someone high upon a cliff he stands. Imperious and malign.
A stone in both his hands ready to hurl at some poor soul below.
He knows nor cares who is the object of his deed, but hurl those stones
he does! And as they fall a mother, husband.... or a child that too...
is slain by chance if not design. Yes your ruler of the universe - is thus.
Not moral or immoral – it just “exists” Emma – and that is all.
So expect not justice, comfort or redemption from that quarter.

EMMA

“Not moral or immoral” – what do you mean?

TOM

That power is as wild and ferocious as a winter's gale that tears the
branches from the giant oak. It works beyond reason – love and hate!
What you call God my dear is devoid of thought and judgment too.
It is quite simply ‘unmoral’! Nothing more nor less!

EMMA

“What nonsense is this!

TOM

No, “non-sense” is His one defense. For if there was a God, he has much
to learn from man. Yes, much indeed, that could help mitigate the
cruelty of such a high and mighty being.

EMMA

Thoughts like yours might lose a man his soul....

TOM

Speak not to me of souls! God and immortality are illusions.
Better by far for mankind to remain chaste and to die from off the face
of the earth than such a world as this to endure.
No better... better far never to have been born.

EMMA

Well, look whose being theatrical now!

TOM

Humph!

EMMA

But if it's truth you want – I'll give it you.
And expect no mitigation from me either. For like your deity I'll hold
nothing back. The time has come for clear speech – Mister Thomas
Hardy...And I, your wife, will tell it simple and direct!

TOM

Lay on Macduff and damned be him that first cries "Hold, enough!"

EMMA

You are a Resurrectionist, Tom! Trying, through your poems and your
tales, to bring back to life the lost and dead...
Mother, sister, brothers, friends – yes those you lusted after them as
well – they are no longer in their graves but living in your pages now.
A countryside that's vanishing fast – you've resurrected even that.
And now you seek to confine me there too – forever answering to your
pitiless deity.
But no! I will not have it!
No man or woman is as simply defined as you would make them seem in
your grimly written universe – victims of coincidence and life and fate -
who have no free will of their own!
And I most certainly am not one of them!

TOM

No! I have not “used” those whom I care about.
It’s not their faces or their lives that inhabit what I write.
But rather something of their being.
And I do it... I do it with the best intent.

EMMA

So am I to believe it is with the “best intent” you call me back upon this
holy night. Back to this place where we had shared so much?

TOM

I did not call. You came unthought-of.... Unannounced.

EMMA

No! That’s not true.
I came because your heart called out to me....
Your time-torn heart my dear... Is that not so?

(Pause.)

TOM

Yes...

EMMA

And for what purpose did you call – and conjure me out of the night and
frost and stars?
Please God, I pray it’s more than simply to inspire a further book,
or rhyme, or some depressing Wessex tale.
Surely Tom, oh surely, I meant more to you than that!

TOM

Oh my dear you did.
And always will....

EMMA

Then why? Why have you summoned me here tonight?

TOM

For us both.... to understand...

EMMA

To understand? I wish that it could be...
But understanding is for the living... And not for those who've past...
There are no insights now afforded me...
The best to which such as I can now aspire is to watch...
To watch while "others" learn... and understand.
Those for whom the wheel still turns...
But for me that chance is over...

TOM

Oh Emma – suddenly you're solemn indeed...

EMMA

I am dead – remember.
So solemnity is something I have justly earned.

TOM

I understand only half of what you say.

EMMA

And there is too much feeling in my heart - to speak again.

TOM

So truth will not come to me now.
Even from the ashes of the dead?

EMMA

No. It is for the living to find that.
For all that's left to those who've passed are dark imaginings.
And you have left me with far more of those
than any person then should ever seek.

TOM

But that is what they were... Nothing but "imaginings" !
All that you thought... Thought about those women in my life...
There was no truth in any of it.

EMMA

Then why did you never make that clear?
For when one sees but blackness, the eye creates its shapes...
And the mind... its images of despair.
For in dark corners monsters breed as every child knows well.
And such as you should surely understand – for child you always were!

TOM

Oh yes... I understand.

EMMA

So what thoughts did you have when those women – oh so many –
did not return your "notes" that offered friendship – and "more"
perhaps as well?
Or after those trysts that failed to come to pass because your hoped for
lover did not arrive? Yes? What then?
No I am not the only one who devised demons in the darkness to
torment myself – am I Tom?

TOM

Mea Culpa!

EMMA

(With hard irony.) Is that the title of some new book you're writing?
For if it is it's more than apposite!

TOM

(Bitter Irony.) Yes perhaps it should be.
Walpole was right. Life truly is a comedy to those who think...

EMMA

But a tragedy to those who feel...
And my God Tom... I felt so deeply the hurt you did me.

TOM

But I did not mean to cause you pain....
I never said anything unkind to you. No! Nothing you could name...

EMMA

Your apathy was worse than any words could be.

TOM

My apathy?

EMMA

Yes! In your novels and poems you said more about your life than any conversation you ever had with me.

TOM

Oh Emma, it was only in my work that I could be free...

EMMA

What do you mean?

TOM

Free to speak as I had wished so much to do with you...
But just could not...It is the better part of me...The truthful part...
The part where perhaps I may endure...

EMMA

Or become itself a monument to wasted time?

TOM

So you think as well, that nothing I have written will ever last?
Not one small part will be remembered after I am gone?

EMMA

To save you from the dark?

TOM

No! Thought of death has never frightened me.
It's thinking of the work that's left undone - that's where my true fear
lies... And it is....unbearable. A humiliation of the soul.

EMMA

Yes.... Humiliation is the worst fate of all I do suspect...
And it is something that I've endured long.

TOM

Oh Emma!

EMMA

And that's why once I wanted just a single tale or verse –
just one would do - to have found its place in print.
So that after I had gone I could live on in books left idly on dusty shelves.
So that, beside a winter's fire they might be then picked up...
Picked up and read... by a lover to his dearly loved perhaps?
Or mother to her sleepy child?
Read by those to come....
Who then maybe might simply smile or frown...
Or sometimes even moved to tears.
And thus preserve my memory from the growing darkness all around...

TOM

And I'll ensure that your poems and your "Recollections" too –
they are all published.

(He holds up the diary.)

Even this your diary - if you wish.

EMMA

No! Burn my journals.
Burn them all and scatter the ashes to the wind.
For they have done their task.
And as for my work? My novel, poems too.
Burn those as well.
For I have come to realise they matter not a jot!
Yes, you were right – they are but noises in the night.
Sounds that made the silence bearable - for me at least.
They're nothing of the slightest worth.
Yes – burn them. Burn them all!

TOM

No Emma. That I'll never do.
For in your words there rests your secret self – hidden away as in some
grove deep in a wood – where all who read them can join and share the
loves - and hates – yes those as well – clearly and yes honestly expressed.
For true poetry is never lost. It is like true feelings and feelings have the
power to touch and shape and comfort. And yes – inspire as well.
They show us things. Things beyond our understanding.
The "days of splendour in the grass....
Of glory in the flower...."

EMMA

Oh Tom....
Why do you quote from other's words.
Speak your own my dear...
For they are worthier much...

TOM

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-grey
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunten night
Had sought their household fires.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around.
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

EMMA

Your poetry sends forth true light upon our darkened plain.
A light that even now may pierce the darkling heart as well....
Oh Tom – why is it we have never talked like this before?

TOM

Because we never dared.
Our lives were such it was by far the best to speak of nothing...
Nothing at all....

EMMA

Oh why is it I never knew?
Knew how to speak to you?
What words to use?
Or listenwhen it was needed most?

TOM

Because the need for love is seldom met by those wishing to provide it.

For I did not know, nor did she infer,
How much there was to read and guess
By her in me, and to see and crown
By me in her.

EMMA

Your words... They bring me understanding now.

TOM

No, do not credit me with such. For I write partly of the real world but partly of a lost land. A place where life and love - it passes far too soon... A place as insubstantial as the breeze and fleeting dreams.

EMMA

But oh, what dreams they are!
Through you we touch with outstretched hands – a wagoner about his trade in the early morning dew – a thrush that's chirping on a frosty thorn – the sun that's setting o're the heath... Filling the sky with brilliant reds and golds... Yes fleeting all those dreams might seem - but through you Tom they're captured now, forever on the page.

TOM

Well the dream for me is over because both of what I've done ... and failed to do. Oh Emma, never in my life, and I can swear it from my soul, have I intended to do wrong. Whatever my sins, they were not sins of intention.

EMMA

Oh my dear I know.

TOM

So why have I been punished so persistently – and now to have lost you too? That was the most terrible thing of all. Dear God! For every bad there is a worse!

EMMA

(Laughing with affection.) Oh Tom, take heart!

For you are Joseph the dreamer of dreams.

A tragic Don Quixote that as well. And yes St. Stephen too! For while they were stoning him he saw the heavens open – and what beauty was brought forth. Oh my dear, yours is an affliction – yes that's true – But it's gilded with divinity as well.

TOM

From the very day I stood beside your grave I too have put on the manner of a ghost. Yes I walk and talk and smile but I am a corpse thing. To think of my life swiftly passing away is the only thing that makes my existence tolerable now! For it's the only way that I can live... Live without you, my love.

EMMA

Oh why could we not have spoken thus before about our lives.

TOM

Some matters are not easy to speak forth.

EMMA

Like love you mean....

TOM

Yes love is so much easier to endure upon the written page.
For there it's joys and pain... they are contained by paper, pen and ink...
And although they may make sad the heart...
They scarce can ever break it there....

EMMA

Like I did yours....

TOM

Like both we did...

EMMA

Oh Tom, Tom, what have we done....

TOM

We committed to our dreams my dear....
Not the reality before our eyes....
And rather than rejoice in what we had - like oh so many foolish folk -
we tried to make of each - that what we wished.

EMMA

No! What we dreamed about.
But dreams fade with the morning light...

TOM

As we discovered did we not?

EMMA

And to accept what the dawn had brought, was not within our harsh
purview.... Acceptance was a virtue neither of us possessed.

TOM

Well now I do.

(Pause.)

(With gentle comic irony.) Good heavens!

Can I finally be of some good before I'm dead?

Yes! I have become a frightful example of what not to do?

(Ironic laughter.)

A warning to the human race.

The embodiment of lost hope, lost lives, lost love....

EMMA

So you still think we've lost – lost everything?

TOM

No. But in accepting that we might have lost, the pain is less than wondering if we ever could have won. So for me the cold peace of defeat is now as much as I could wish, no dare, to hope for.... And that you surely understand....

EMMA

No! Now, the prize is still within our grasp. At this very instant your life is in the balance...

TOM

What do you mean?

EMMA

Can you not feel it?

TOM

Yes... Yes I can...

EMMA

It is like a moment in the evening when the light and darkness are so evenly poised that....The hope of day and night's despair both neutralize each other...

TOM

Yes... Oh yes.... Yes I fee it now.
It is a moment of... Of pure liberty.

EMMA

And such a moment's blessed!

TOM

Oh Emma remember now that day, when in St Juliot I must leave before
the sun had risen....

EMMA

We ate by candlelight in that old kitchen beside an early fire of sweetly
scented apple wood

TOM

Yes... Neither speaking much – but just our looks showed clear the depth
of caring that had grown between us two? Now we stand once more
upon that dew-damp lawn... And wait...

EMMA

Wait for a carriage that I wish would never come....

TOM

And there in the rain... Oh feel it Em., the gentle rain of early spring...
Upon the lush green grass - you start, my dear, to dance...

EMMA

For love my Tom and hopes to come.

TOM

It's moments such as this we've captured in our work....

EMMA

And held them firm forever.

TOM

And with them lies the one true hope - the hope that even on our darkling plain there will be light once more – a light which comes not just at break of day - nor from some spurious deity - but freely flows as from the gladsome heart.

EMMA

“Yes I am a dancing child!
Yes I am again
Dancing in the grass in spring
Dancing in the rain
Leaping with the birds awing
Singing with the birds that sing.”

Oh Tom can it stay like this forever?
Can it...? Can it?

TOM

Yes my Emma – Yes it can... And will - I promise you.

(TOM turns – to looks out into the starry Christmas night.)

Oh the snow clouds are gone and sky is clear once more.
Oh my dear - look at its kingly brilliance.
The stars – they seal our pact.
See Sirius – it pierces the eye with its steely glitter.
That star called Capella is golden yellow.
Aldebaran and Betelgeux they shine tonight with fiery light.
See Emma, the roll of the world eastward...
It is almost a palpable movement.
Yes, together we will ride the world again.
And find once more a home.
A home where by the fire whenever you look up
there I shall be.
And whenever I look up there will be you.
And in that home our hearts....
Our hearts will never part again...

(EMMA gets up and leaves.)

FX: Clock strikes eight.

(TOM turns and sees that she is gone.)

Emma! Emma Where are you?

(Tom stands transfixed as the clock strikes and looks out into the darkness as if searching for her – then he turns to the audience and speaks.)

She died ... While I was walking up the stairs, angry, irritated
as I thought once more she'd simply tried for my attention.
Called me to her side as so often she had done pretending to be ill
or so I thought - when in truth.....

She died... and cook instead of me, she held her in her arms.
She died... with only her poor maid to mourn her loss.
She died... while our sleek cat was sleeping by the kitchen fire...
Her milk half drunk... She dreamed of chasing dormice in the
autumn fields...
Yes.... So my Emma died...

And thus poor soul, she's helpless now to hinder me again.
To argue with me over trivial things:
A broken glass...
A box left carelessly upon a chair...
A book... she so much wished to see in print...
A credit given... for the work she'd done.

And all her shining keys are took from her.
And her cupboards opened.
And things she never did wish seen, were privy to all who cared to look.
And her little ways and wishes were as nothing then to others...
No nothing....
Nothing at all...
But not to me!
No! To me they were – they are!
Another matter.... Yes indeed...

FX: Sound of the wind.

To find oneself alone at night makes some people afraid.

(TOM looks around him and then smiles as if he perceives an unseen presence.)

But to sense companionship when intuition, sensation, memory – every kind of logic has united to tell us we are alone....

Ah.... that brings a certain kind of comfort.

And yes redemption too...

Perhaps?

(Tom picks up a glass of wine and makes a toast.)

"From her lonely husband - with the old affection."

(Tom takes a drink. Then kisses the palm of his other hand – and casts the kiss into the night.)

My Emma!

(TOM turns and walks away.)

CURTAIN

Afterword

The ending of Thornton Wilder's masterpiece *Our Town*, in which the dead resting in the cemetery high above their old homes discuss their lives, was a significant influence in the writing of this fantasy. So often far too many things are left unsaid in a relationship until it is too late and in my sad tale of Tom and Emma I wanted to give them the opportunity to come to terms with some of the problems that defined their turbulent relationship and for which, I firmly believe, neither was truly to blame.

The play is a mixture of biographical detail, comedy, irony and full-blown emotion and needs accomplished actors and direction to make it breathe the air necessary to give it life. Act One appears to be a simple biographical exposition but requires considerable theatrical flair and emotive music and sound effects to bring it to life. Once more it's influenced by the narrator in *Our Town* and fulfills his function by giving biographical details. Act Two needs brave performances, that never fall into caricature, to bring the human tragedy to life. Timing is all as it moves from a comic and semi-naturalistic opening to its 'poetic' and moving conclusion.

Both Tom and Emma are very 'human' beings and are as true to life as I could make them after reading extensively about their flawed lives. If I say that the play had a number of early titles and these included *A Time of Such Quality* and *A Worthy Pair* you may see where I was coming from and the fact I changed the original strap line from "Occasional episodes in a general drama of pain...." and "Nobody did come....because nobody does.." to "A Love Story...." was not simply for commercial reasons – although I cannot imagine the first two would attract an audience if written over the marquee!

For yes, *The Darkling Heart* is a love story and a very poignant one in which one of the world's finest novelists ironically finds it impossible to communicate with his partner and despite her literary ambitions neither can she. The problem of class is a central issue too and I suspect almost impossible for contemporary audiences to understand, for to quote again L.P.Hartley, "The past is a foreign country – they did things differently there" and that is an understatement to say the least when it comes to social prejudice at Hardy's time.

In this context one can only wonder at the radical nature of his advanced views on, class, religion, and sexuality (see *Jude the Obscure*) that caused much sensation at a time when our nation was 'between two worlds –one dying, the other powerless to be born' to quote Matthew Arnold whose poem *Dover Beach* is the perfect summation of early Edwardian, post Darwinian, paranoia. So in any production of "The Darkling Heart" it is vital to realise the social and cultural attitudes that underlie the action and to ensure that the characters embody those complex tensions and emotional responses to such threatening trends at that fast changing moment in British history.

Although both Emma and Tom are very modern in many ways, don't be deceived, they are also essentially people of their period and appropriate manners, language, intonation, and posture must be embraced by the actors attempting to resurrect them. Their emotional responses must be realistic too, as should be the depth of their caring for each other – something that hovers beneath their words even during their most ferocious interchanges.

That said, the play is very much a contemporary "Christmas Carol" that takes place primarily in Tom's mind with Emma a projected 'shade' whose diary, detailing her treatment at his hands, has brought about his need to re-evaluate both their relationship and his own life too. As such, in production, it needs to demonstrate the fluidity of Dicken's tale if it is to fully work. For ultimately *The Darkling Heart* is no more or less than a ghost story too about a man confronted by a phantom that bring to him self-knowledge equal to that of Scrooge. It is a morality play for the young at heart who still believe in redemption's power and an unashamedly seasonal offering that I hope provides you with some enjoyment too!



Notes for Actors & Directors

This entertainment is designed to be inexpensively produced. It is performed by a small cast and requires one technician to handle the sound and lighting so is ideal for intimate venues and libraries etc. where it's subject matter may find receptive audiences.

Only a basic set is required and realistically a performance could take place simply with two chairs! Or it could be played with a fully designed sitting room set at Max Gate with snow falling outside the windows and a glowing fire in the hearth – which is my preferred option obviously!

Talented actors, capable of providing bravura performances, are however essential as Acts One and Two are more demanding than they might at first appear on the page.

In Act One both narrator's energy and versatility are required to hold the audiences' attention during what is primarily exposition – lightened by fast verbal interplay and music and sound effects.

On the few limited occasions, in this section, that the narrators are required to speak the words of Tom or Emma, it is necessary for them to adopt the vocal attributes they will be using in Act Two.

I'm sure it's unnecessary to say that the actors should speak their lines "with" the music rather than going "against" it – but sympathetic timing of delivery is essential if one is to gain the required emotional impact and I cannot stress too strongly how important it is to rehearse carefully those sections where music underlies the spoken word.

There are virtually no stage directions for movement within the piece and this should provide the director with considerable creative leeway – particularly in Act Two.

In terms of delivery, I would wish the 'Narrators' to luxuriate in the language of Act One and to make full use of the adjectives and adverbs in order to both bring it to life and provide the descriptive richness required. They need to 'live' the parts not simply narrate the story.



The demands made in Act Two are no less than in Act One – but they are very different. This is a proper one act play requiring period costume and significant attention to the gesture's pronunciation, and posture of the aged characters.

However modulation is the key to any successful performance. The pacing, emotional range required and humour and irony of the piece, must be made very clear and it is vital that the Act never degenerates into an angry one-tone rant. The “colours” imbedded in the scene must all be found and played to maximum effect.

I have deliberately structured the act so that there are clear mood changes throughout and also sometimes between lines. Where an emotional or ‘sentimental’ line is given it is often immediately deflated or counterpointed by an ironic comment - and such moments should be “pointed” as appropriate.

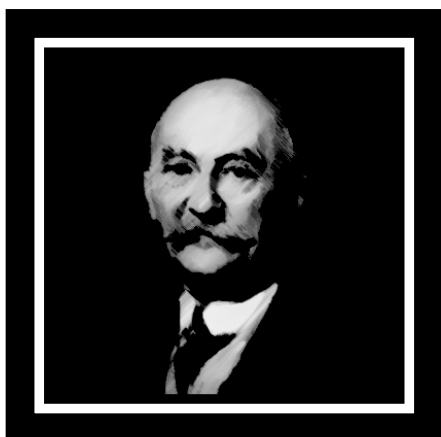
Throughout the Act, I have attempted to destabilise the audience's response so that the action never becomes predictable and to move their allegiances between the players. Emotional empathy for the characters needs to be secured in a totally dynamic way with sometimes Emma, and then Tom, gaining our ‘support’ until finally we see they are both simply flawed human beings – like ourselves – both equally requiring our sympathy and understanding.

The end of the play requires a lyricism – where Tom looks out at the stars – and then a profound pathos when he talks about the death of Emma. The music that underlies this section should maximize the impact of the scene.

However the final moments that are music free - and heralded by the cold winter wind - rely exclusively on the abilities of the actor to deliver the plays ‘message’.

And what is that you may ask?

Well, that is for the production team to decide.
And for me to criticise them, if you they get it wrong!



Acknowledgements

My gratitude must, as always, first go to my partner Bernard Thomas for his unceasing support in all aspects of my work and life and to my colleagues, the highly accomplished actors, Richard and Christine Holliss for whom this play is written and whom I suspect will make triumphant work of the roles of both Tom and Emma! I would also like to thank that doyen of museum life, Hélène Alexander MBE for her ongoing friendship and support and for facilitating the first preview of this play at The Orangery in Greenwich in November 2015.

Next I wish to acknowledge the enthusiasm of that fine Inspector of English, the late David John from Llantwit Major in South Wales whose passion for the “time-worn” author was so great he even named his golden labrador Hardy! David, whose M.A. thesis on Thomas Hardy was written fifty years ago, had an influence on me similar to that of William Ivor James, English master at Ogmere County Grammar School who, by insisting I read *Under the Greenwood Tree* and then *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, first introduced me to Hardy’s works. My subsequent grounding in the life and work of the author was admirably continued by the academic staff at Swansea University who also insisted that we students read every one of his novels and a large selection of his poetry too – and for this I will be eternally grateful.

In later years my interest was revived through the texts of Robert Gittings, Michael Millgate, Ralph Pite, and Claire Tomalin as well as by the work of the editor of Emma Hardy’s *Diaries*, Richard H. Taylor - and Evelyn Hardy & Robert Gittings once again for editing Emma’s *Recollections*, although they are all entirely innocent of my speculations in writing the “Dickensian” fantasy that is Act Two – or for what comprises the opening of Act One. Indeed I’m most confident that when Hardy revisited Beeny Cliff he never – jokingly or otherwise – considered braining with a boulder those on the beach below, even during his most pessimistic of moods!

I would also wish to thank Helen Gibson of Dorset County Museum, that jewel in our cultural life, for sharing her knowledge with me, Whopsil for the drawings of Hardy and Emma, in this publication and cover designs, Bunny D. my Editor and all at Bedfords Publications for their continuing support.

Finally I would like to dedicate performances of this play to Vanda Jones, Christine Kirby & Dennis Corr, colleagues no longer with us, with whom, while staying at Woodsford Castle together over a windy and atmospheric Hallowe’en in 1995, we visited Hardy’s cottage at Bockhampton, and then Dorchester town. All three dear friends, at various times, encouraged me to write – but it took over fifteen years for me to actually begin. They are remembered with great fondness as their friendship was beyond value and their loss is great indeed.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adrian Drew FRSA, FIVCA, is the pen name of writer, director & producer, Wayne Adrian Drew who, alongside Lord Attenborough, Kevin Spacey CBE, Bob Geldof KBE, Sir Ridley Scott and Sir David Frost, received an International Fellowship, at the House of Lords, for his contribution to the media industries.

For 25 years Adrian held senior positions at the British Film Institute and The Prince of Wales Leaders Forum as well as being Chief Executive of the International Visual Communications Association. He was the founding Chair of Leonard Cheshire's Ability Media Centre – an initiative designed to assist people from under-represented groups enter the media industries - a board member on various charities & arts organizations; and for over a decade was a member of the Arts Council of Great Britain and representative on six Arts Associations.

He is currently a Lifetime Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts and a long-standing member of The British Academy of Film & Television Arts and was also: a former producer of the BBC's arts magazine *Kaleidoscope*; critic on Radio Two's *Cinema Two*; Film & Theatre Editor of *MixMag*; and is author of over thirty books on media & related business issues.

Adrian has written 24 plays that have been staged to capacity audiences on London's fringe, as well as in regional venues and at festivals, including an Off Broadway production of *Welsh Dylan* – his play about Dylan Thomas. Recently acclaimed London productions & showcases of his work include: *Tread Softly* - a bitter-sweet examination of love; *The Laws of Shadows* - about the celebrated ghost story writer M.R. James; *Uncommon Spring* - concerning the rivalry between Edgar Allan Poe and his literary executor, and *Icicles in the Trees* - a family saga taking place over a century in a Welsh mining valley.

His plays, *The Democracy of Oaks* about Walt Whitman & Edward Carpenter and *Where Poppies Bloomed* about the impact of WW1 on a Norfolk Village were both produced in 2014. Most recently he directed three important productions, including Cocteau's famously demanding monologue, *The Human Voice*, for the Hostry Festival and the Maddermarket theatre and has just completed *Edith & Jessie* and *Time Out of Mind*, very different theatrical experiences, that together with *The Darkling Heart* and a celebrity rehearsed reading of *You Bring Me Joy* will be produced in 2015, while showcases of his musical *Torch Song*, his comedy, *Box Office* and *Supper on Li Galli* about Rudolph Nureyev are all planned for 2016.

Twelve of his plays and *Lost Moments*, an anthology of his work, are published by Bedfords and *Shadows on the Fens*, his short story compilation, will shortly be available from IndeBooks.

