The Mayor of Casterbridge

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS HARDY

Thomas Hardy grew up in a cottage near Dorchester. He was not able to receive a thorough education, but, at sixteen, he became an architectural apprentice. In 1862, he moved to London to further his career and worked with an architect named Arthur Blomfield. In London, he started to write and publish poetry. In 1867, he returned to Dorset, working again as an architecture assistant, as he started to craft his first novel. He married his first wife, Emma Gifford, in 1874, after meeting her on a business trip to Cornwall four years earlier. In 1878, the Hardys moved to London, so Thomas could join the thriving literary circles there. But by 1885, Thomas Hardy had again returned to Dorset. There, in his beloved homeland, he wrote many of his major novels: *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* (1892), and his final novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895). For the thirty-two years of his life after the publication of *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy wrote only poetry and drama. His wife's death in 1912 inspired some of his most memorable works of poetry. Hardy remarried a woman named Florence Dugdale in 1914. Before his death in 1928, Hardy was recognized as a major literary contributor of his time period and he was awarded the Order of Merit for his literary achievements in 1910.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Mayor of Casterbridge is one of Thomas Hardy's novels set in Wessex County in Western England. Thomas Hardy hoped to capture the lifestyles of Wessex County, particularly the farming practices, technologies, and the relationships farmers and villagers had with the land in England during the 1800s. While Hardy's Casterbridge is fictional, it is based on the town of Dorchester in Dorset. Hardy lived in this area and used many realistic details in his novels. The visit of "a royal personage" referred to in the novel matches the historic trip of Prince Albert to Weymouth in July 1849.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Literary critics believe Thomas Hardy has more in common with later Modern writers like Virigina Woolf, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, than with his contemporaries. D. H. Lawrence was strongly influenced by Thomas Hardy.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Mayor of Casterbridge: The Life and Death of a Man of Character*
- **When Written:** 1885-1886
- **Where Written:** Dorchester, England
- **When Published:** 1886
- **Literary Period:** Victorian, with qualities of Modernism
- **Genre:** Tragedy, realistic fiction
- **Setting:** The fictional town of Casterbridge and surrounding countryside, in Western England
- **Climax:** Richard Newson returns to claim his true daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. Michael Henchard, unable to endure losing his stepdaughter, plans to kill himself, only to have his suicide prevented by the miraculous appearance of an effigy of himself floating in the river.
- **Antagonist:** Michael Henchard (a protagonist who brings about his own lonely fate)
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Thomas Hardy, the poet. Thomas Hardy wrote poetry throughout his life, in addition to novels. After his final novel, *Jude the Obscure*, was severely criticized for what many critics described as its immoral qualities, Hardy vowed to write only poetry for the reminder of his life.

Thomas Hardy's funeral. Thomas Hardy's heart is buried in Stinsford, in Western England, whereas his ashes are placed in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, in London.

PLOT SUMMARY

On a September day in the 1820s, the Henchard family arrives on foot at the village of Weydon-Priors. Michael Henchard seeks work as a hay-trusser, but he and his wife Susan, who carries their small daughter Elizabeth-Jane, stop for food at the furmity tent at the local fair. Henchard takes servings of alcohol from the furmity-woman, and, as he becomes drunk, he loudly proclaims his unhappiness with his wife and his foolish decision to marry young. Eventually he, half-jokingly, decides to auction off his wife to any other man. A sailor named Richard Newson appears in the doorway of the furmity tent and offers **five guineas** for Susan and Elizabeth-Jane. Susan leaves with the sailor with an angry pronouncement to her husband that she will try for happiness with a different man. Henchard, drunk and somewhat confused by the outcome of events, falls asleep in the furmity tent.

The next day, Henchard is furious with his wife for her simple-minded agreement to her own sale. He knows that she must

believe the transaction to be valid. Henchard attempts to track down his wife and daughter, but eventually must give up the search. He vows to not drink again for twenty-years. He travels south to settle in the town of Casterbridge.

Eighteen years later, Susan Henchard arrives in Weydon-Priors at the time of the annual fair. She is accompanied by her grown daughter, Elizabeth-Jane, who is unaware of her parents' history. Elizabeth-Jane has grown up with Richard Newson as her father, and only his recent death at sea has caused Susan to decide to attempt to find her long-lost first husband. Susan has recently realized her foolish commitment to Newson. For years she believed herself bound to him, until a neighbor in whom she had confided the story told her that the transaction could not be valid: Michael Henchard is her one true husband. At the fair, Susan finds the furmity-woman who had once run the tent at the fair. The poor, old woman directs Susan to Casterbridge.

Susan and Elizabeth-Jane arrive in Casterbridge and find a group of the local residents gathered outside The Golden Crown Hotel where they see Henchard occupied inside at a grand meal. They learn that Henchard is now the mayor of Casterbridge. The townsfolk are complaining about a crop of bad wheat, when a stranger passes a note to Henchard at the door. Susan is reluctant to approach her husband, and she and Elizabeth-Jane spend the night at another hotel in town: The King of Prussia. At The King of Prussia, Elizabeth-Jane volunteers as a waitress in order to help pay for their stay. She delivers a meal to the stranger who had passed a note to Henchard, a young Scotsman named Donald Farfrae. Henchard arrives to speak to Farfrae, and his wife and daughter listen in on their conversation. Farfrae has a method for **restoring wheat**, saving Henchard money.

The next day, Henchard convinces Farfrae to stay in Casterbridge and to work as his manager at his prosperous wheat and corn business. Susan contacts Henchard via a note sent by the unsuspecting Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard and Susan arrange to meet that night at a secret location near town: **the Ring**, an amphitheater, which is an architectural remnant of the historical Roman occupants of the area. Henchard agrees that he and Susan will slowly renew their acquaintance and then remarry. Eventually, the pair does remarry, although Henchard confesses to Farfrae that he had once formed an attachment to a woman named Lucetta. Lucetta's community shamed her for her obvious, though innocent, infatuation with Henchard, but Henchard had told her of his missing wife and his inability to marry Lucetta for that reason.

Through a pair of mysterious notes sent to both of them, Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane meet at the granary. Thinking that they both are waiting for a third person, the two begin a conversation and get to know each other, although the sender of both notes never appears. Henchard and Farfrae's once companionable business partnership begins to decay. The two disagree over Henchard's treatment of a man named Abel Whittle who is perpetually late for work. Farfrae's good temperament and his mannerisms cause all the workers and villagers to like him and his company. Henchard and Farfrae organize two separate events for a public holiday, and Farfrae's dance is far more popular. Henchard jealously observes this, and sees Farfrae dancing with Elizabeth-Jane at the event. He and Farfrae part ways, but Farfrae remains in town and begins his own competing wheat and corn managing business. Henchard insists that Farfrae keep his distance from Elizabeth-Jane.

Susan does not live long after her remarriage. After her death, Henchard confesses the truth of Elizabeth-Jane's parentage to his daughter. Directly after this confession, Henchard finds a letter left by his dead wife and labeled, "not to be opened till Elizabeth-Jane's wedding-day." Ignoring this cautionary note, Henchard opens the letter to discover Susan's confession: this Elizabeth-Jane is not, in fact, his biological daughter, but a second child born to Susan and Richard Newson after the first baby died. Elizabeth-Jane accepts Henchard as her father, but his moment of joy is completely disturbed by his awareness of the truth, which he does not share with her.

While Henchard does not confess the contents of Susan's letter to Elizabeth-Jane, his behavior towards the young woman changes drastically. He is no longer kind to her. He responds aggressively to any evidence of Elizabeth-Jane's poor childhood and lack of education. Elizabeth-Jane tries desperately to correct this through reading and self-instruction, but her "father" does not notice. An unhappy Elizabeth-Jane is visiting her mother's grave when she meets a strange, cultured woman at the gravesite. This woman has recently moved to Casterbridge. She listens to Elizabeth-Jane's story and invites the young woman to move in with her. Only once this move has been agreed to by Elizabeth-Jane and Henchard does Henchard realize that this woman is Lucetta. Lucetta has recently inherited money and has moved to Casterbridge after hearing of Susan's death. By inviting Elizabeth-Jane into her home she hopes to encourage her father to visit, as well.

Despite Lucetta's initial interest in renewing her attachment to Henchard, she meets Farfrae in an encounter that affects them both profoundly. Henchard feels he ought to remarry Lucetta and begins courting her, only to realize that Farfrae is his rival for her affections. Farfrae is unaware of this rivalry. Lucetta confesses the confusing situation to Elizabeth-Jane without explicitly telling her who each of the characters in the story are in real life. Elizabeth-Jane feels that Lucetta owes her loyalty to the first man she was interested in, who she realizes eventually is her father.

Henchard hires Jopp, a man who he had originally passed over in favor of Farfrae as his business manager. In an attempt to drive Farfrae out of business, Henchard and Jopp buy extensively before the harvest. Henchard visits a man who

predicts the weather to learn that the harvest will be poor and he hopes to resell at a high profit. However, the weather stays nice and Henchard has to resell at a lower price. At the very end of the harvest, the weather is poor, and Farfrae makes a great profit. Henchard's business suffers greatly, for which he blames Jopp.

Henchard comes to Lucetta's home and blackmails her into agreeing to marry him. Henchard has a collection of letters written by Lucetta to himself and he vows to make their past relationship public unless she promises to marry him. The next day, Henchard presides over a local trial and the woman brought to court is the furmity-woman, who recognizes him and reveals Henchard's dark secret that he once sold his own wife and child. Henchard's reputation in Casterbridge suffers, as his business also collapses.

While walking, Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane are chased by a loose bull. Henchard appears and grabs the animal, rescuing the women. He escorts Lucetta home where she confesses that she has secretly married Farfrae that week in another town. She wanted to secure him as her husband before Henchard could reveal the truth about their past. She knew she could not marry Henchard after hearing about how he once treated Susan and his own daughter. She begs Henchard to not reveal the truth at this point and so ruin her happy marriage with Farfrae. Despite Henchard's anger, he does not expose the secret. Elizabeth-Jane is also hurt and angry to learn of Lucetta's marriage to Farfrae, and she moves out of her friend's house.

Henchard loses his bankrupt business, his home, and all his personal possessions to his creditors. Henchard frequently stands on **the second bridge** near the lower part of town bemoaning his situation, and, finally, when his twenty years are up, he begins to drink heavily again. Henchard visits Farfrae, who has purchased what used to be Henchard's grand house, and reads several of Lucetta's letters to him aloud. However, in the moment, he cannot bring himself to hurt her by sharing her name as the author of the letters. Henchard gives Jopp the letters to return to Lucetta, so she can keep her secret. Jopp, however, is angry with Lucetta for ignoring his requests that she put in a good word for him as a working partner for her husband. The letters fall into the hands of the villagers, who plan a skimmington, a method of publically shaming those who are perceived to be disloyal or unworthy of their spouses.

Henchard plans to kill Farfrae and confronts him in a hayloft. The two struggle, but, again, Henchard is unable to do through with a harmful plan. Farfrae rides out of town, and is therefore absent that evening as the skimmington occurs. The skimmington features **effigies** of Lucetta and Henchard, tied back-to-back, and paraded through the streets. Elizabeth-Jane arrives at Lucetta's home and attempts to stop her from seeing the parade, but she does and collapses. Farfrae returns, but Lucetta has become dangerously ill. While she may have confessed some of the truth behind her illness to her husband, it is unclear to what extent she shared the story of her past. At four o'clock that morning, Lucetta passes away.

Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane renew their connection. Henchard grows to depend on the girl and her affection for him, despite his knowledge that she is not his biological daughter. Richard Newson, who all had believed dead, arrives in Casterbridge and visits Henchard. He had pretended to be dead in order to free his wife to return to Henchard, but, learning of her death, he has arrived in Casterbridge to find his daughter. Henchard tells Newson that Elizabeth-Jane is dead, in order to keep her love and attention for himself.

Henchard plans to commit suicide at a place in the river near the second bridge, but does not when he sees his own effigy from the skimmington floating in the river. This sign, or vision of a possible future, saves Henchard's life. In his depressed state, Henchard realizes the burden he is on Elizabeth-Jane's happiness and leaves Casterbridge, wandering the countryside for his remaining days. Richard Newson returns to Casterbridge and is reacquainted with his daughter. Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae are married, and her father dances joyfully at their wedding. Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae seek out Henchard, only to learn from Abel Whittle that he has passed away. Henchard has left behind a will, a final expression of his bitterness and loneliness in the world.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Michael Henchard – protagonist Michael Henchard works as a poor hay-trusser until, in drunken anger, he sells his wife and daughter for **five guineas** at the Weydon-Priors fair. Unable to find his lost family members, Henchard moves to Casterbridge where, over the next eighteen years, he makes a name for himself in the hay and corn business and rises to become mayor of the town. After his long-lost wife and daughter reappear in his life, he remarries Susan and takes Elizabeth-Jane into his home. Through Susan's eventual death, and a note she leaves behind, he discovers that Elizabeth-Jane is not his biological daughter. After his wife's death, Henchard hopes to marry Lucetta, a young woman who fell in love with him during his long separation from his first wife. Henchard's life spirals into chaos as he loses his excellent business manager, Farfrae, and Lucetta marries Farfrae instead. Henchard's attempt to undercut Farfrae's business backfires and Henchard is eventually homeless and very poor. After Lucetta's death, Henchard tries to reunite with Elizabeth-Jane, but Richard Newson, her true father, reappears, having faked his death in order to release Susan from her commitment to him. Henchard is tempted to kill himself in the river near **the second bridge**, but is discouraged by the image of his own **effigy** from the skimmington.

Henchard lies to Newson about Elizabeth-Jane, but eventually leaves Casterbridge, knowing that he cannot keep Elizabeth-Jane from the truth of her parentage forever. Henchard dies in a cottage outside of Casterbridge leaving behind a will that asks for no funeral service and that no one mourn or remember him.

Susan Henchard – Michael Henchard's simple, but good-hearted wife. Susan is persuaded that her sale to Richard Newson is a legitimate transaction. When a neighbor to whom she confesses the past tells her that her "marriage" to Newson is not binding, she is tortured by the conviction that she ought to return to Henchard. She conceals the truth of her history with Henchard from her daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. The long-lost husband and wife reunite at a secret place outside of Casterbridge, **the Ring**. When she and Henchard re-marry, she doesn't want Elizabeth-Jane to change her name from Newson to Henchard, as she knows that Elizabeth-Jane is in fact Newson's biological daughter. As she lays dying, Susan writes a note to Henchard, which she indicates should not be read until Elizabeth-Jane is married, that reveals the truth of her parentage.

Elizabeth-Jane Newson – Elizabeth-Jane is the biological daughter of Susan Henchard and Richard Newson. Susan and Michael Henchard had a daughter, also named Elizabeth-Jane, who died not long after she and her mother were sold to Newson. Elizabeth-Jane was given this dead girl's name, and Henchard naturally assumes that she is, in fact, that same girl. Elizabeth-Jane grows up in relatively poor circumstances. However, she is painfully aware of proper behavior, and when she receives a new position through her mother's re-marriage to Henchard, she tries desperately to please her new father by speaking like a young lady. She works diligently at reading and studies. Her young years are filled with confusion and unhappiness. She falls in love with Donald Farfrae, only to watch his falling out with her father, who then forbids her to interact with the young man. Eventually, she sees Farfrae fall in love with her companion, Lucetta, instead. Elizabeth-Jane lives alone for a few years, as her father loses his fortune and position in society. She later tries to care for him and love him, despite his past mistreatment of her. At the end of the novel, she ends up marrying Farfrae (after Lucetta's death), and she searches for Henchard after learning the truth about her biological father, only to discover that he has died.

Donald Farfrae – a young Scottish man who is traveling through Casterbridge when he offers Henchard a way of **restoring wheat** to a high quality. Henchard takes a liking to Farfrae and convinces him to abandon his schemes of traveling the world and to stay in Casterbridge and work as his manager instead. Farfrae and Henchard eventually part ways on bad terms and Farfrae starts his own, more successful business in town. Farfrae is well liked for his personality, his good business, and his beautiful singing voice. Farfrae, despite having first seemed interested in Elizabeth-Jane, marries Lucetta. He is unaware of the past relationship between Lucetta and Henchard until Lucetta confesses some part of this just before she dies. Farfrae eventually assumes Henchard's position in town entirely: he becomes the new mayor, he owns the most profitable business, and he buys and lives in Henchard's house. After Lucetta's death, and Henchard's willing departure from Casterbridge, Farfrae marries Elizabeth-Jane.

Lucetta Templeman – a young woman from Jersey who had a brief relationship with Michael Henchard when he traveled to her town on business. Lucetta nursed Henchard when he fell ill in Jersey, and, despite her innocent love for him, their interactions caused a scandal. Henchard returned to Casterbridge, having told Lucetta of his lost wife. Lucetta wrote a series of love letters to Henchard, and, once she hears that Mrs. Henchard has died, she moves to Casterbridge, having recently inherited a large fortune. In Casterbridge, she takes Elizabeth-Jane into her home and attempts to renew her relationship with Henchard, only to fall in love with Donald Farfrae instead. In order to protect herself from Henchard and his ability to reveal their secret history, she marries Farfrae without anyone's knowledge. Henchard threatens to reveal their secret, but Lucetta meets him at **the Ring** and begs for his mercy. However, Jopp reveals the secret instead. The villagers publically shame Lucetta with the skimmington, and she eventual dies from the emotional strain of possibly losing her husband's love.

Richard Newson – a gracious sailor who buys Susan Henchard and the first Elizabeth-Jane from Henchard. He cares for Susan and their daughter, the second Elizabeth-Jane, until he sees the mother's growing distress when she realizes she is morally bound to return to her first husband. Therefore, Newson pretends he has died. Later he seeks out Elizabeth-Jane once he hears her mother has passed away. He passes through Casterbridge multiple times seeking his daughter. The two are reunited despite Henchard's lie that Elizabeth-Jane has died. He dances joyfully at Elizabeth-Jane's wedding to Farfrae, and lives with the newly wed couple, before eventually settling at Budmouth, in sight of the sea.

Joshua Jopp – a man Henchard promised to hire as his manager, before offering the position to Farfrae instead. Jopp continues to live in Casterbridge, struggling and poor. Henchard hires Jopp after Farfrae leaves his employment. Despite Henchard's past wrong, Jopp welcomes the man into his home when Henchard loses everything to his creditors. Jopp dislikes Lucetta, as she slighted him when he asked a favor of her. Therefore, when Henchard asks him to deliver Lucetta's love letters back into her possession, Jopp willingly reveals their contents, prompting the skimmington that shames and sickens Lucetta before her eventual death, but saves Henchard's life after he sees his own **effigy**.

Abel Whittle – an employee of Henchard's and then later of

Farfrae's. This young man struggles to wake up on time and arrive at work on time. Henchard clashes with his then manager Farfrae over how to punish Abel's tardiness. Abel Whittle finds Henchard wandering alone directly before his death. He takes pity on the older man and cares for him in the days before his death.

The furmity-woman – once a prosperous sales woman, the furmity seller witnesses Henchard's cruel choice to sell his wife and daughter for **five guineas** in her tent at the Weydon-Priors fair. The woman grows poorer as her business declines. Eighteen years later, at the Weydon-Priors fair, she directs Susan toward Casterbridge, as the place she knows Michael Henchard is currently living. Eventually, she travels to Casterbridge and is arrested there. During her trial, she reveals Henchard's secret past.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Benjamin Grower – a prominent Casterbridge man who is Henchard's primary creditor and the witness to Lucetta and Mr. Farfrae's out-of-town marriage.

Dr. Chalkfield – an elderly man who serves as mayor sometime between Henchard's and Farfrae's terms, before he dies.

Mother Cuxsom – a distinctively fat, poor woman of Casterbridge. A local gossip and frequent visitor at Saint Peter's Finger, the pub in Mixen Lane.

Charl – a poor man of Casterbridge and frequent visitor at Saint Peter's Finger, the pub in Mixen Lane. A leader of the skimmington with the **effigies**. Close companion of Joe.

Joe – a poor man of Casterbridge and frequent visitor at Saint Peter's Finger, the pub in Mixen Lane. A leader of the skimmington with the **effigies**. Close companion of Charl.

Nance Mockridge – a poor woman of Casterbridge and frequent visitor at Saint Peter's Finger, the pub in Mixen Lane.

Solomon Longways – employee of Farfrae's, one of the group who attempts to protect Farfrae from the skimmington scandal.

Christopher Coney – employee of Farfrae's, one of the group who attempts to protect Farfrae from the skimmington scandal.

Buzzford – employee of Farfrae's, one of the group who attempts to protect Farfrae from the skimmington scandal.

A Royal Personage – a high-profile visitor who passes through Casterbridge. The town rallies to present an elegant welcome. Henchard's exclusion from the proceedings causes him to attempt to greet the visitor by walking up alongside the arriving carriage, causing Farfrae to have to remove him bodily from the procession.

Dr. Bath – a member of the Town Council.

Lawyer Long – a member of the Town Council.

Alderman Tupper – a member of the Town Council.

Mrs. Bath – a lady of Casterbridge who sits with Lucetta at the royal reception.

Mrs. Blowbody – a lady of Casterbridge who sits with Lucetta at the royal reception.

Mr. Blowbody – a man of Casterbridge who assists Constable Stubberd and Mr. Grower when they try to find the leaders of the skimmington.

Constable Stubberd – the local constable who is fearful of rounding up the crowd that leads the skimmington.

Mr. Stannidge –landlord of the King of Prussia, Casterbridge's second-rate hotel, after The Golden Crown.

Mrs. Stannidge – landlady of the King of Prussia, Casterbridge's second-rate hotel, after The Golden Crown.

The landlady – the proprietress of Saint Peter's Finger, the pub in Mixen Lane.

Lawyer Joyce – The town clerk.

Mr. Vatt – The town mayor who serves after Dr. Chalkfield's death, and who invites Farfrae to serve on the town council.

THEMES

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

SELF-DESTRUCTION

Throughout the novel, protagonist Michael Henchard makes decisions while drunk, angry, proud, or jealous. These choices ultimately harm Henchard himself and lead to the loss of his family, his fortune, and his position in society. The novel opens with Michael Henchard's cruel act of selling his wife Susan and child Elizabeth-Jane while he is drunk. Henchard's drinking early in the novel causes an emotional riff between himself and his wife, and allows her to happily leave him for Richard Newson.

After the loss of his wife and daughter, Henchard vows to not drink for twenty years. This vow allows Henchard to be successful and prosperous, rising to prominence in Casterbridge as the mayor and as the owner of a successful corn and wheat business. His subsequent return to alcoholism contributes to his poor plan to kill Donald Farfrae. Henchard's alcoholism is linked to his pride, as he uses drinking to compensate for feelings of self-hatred. His pride causes him to lose his partnership with Farfrae and to eventually go bankrupt because he cannot accept that the younger man might be more popular and more successful than himself. Henchard's pride

produces his jealousy of Farfrae. After Farfrae's holiday celebrations are more popular than Henchard's, Henchard in a "jealous temper" says that the young man's time as his business manager is drawing to a close.

As Farfrae starts his own separate business and continues to excel within Casterbridge society, Henchard loses family and fortune as his jealousy harms himself and his reputation. For example, Henchard's attempt to ruin Farfrae's business backfires and causes his own business to go into debt. Despite Farfrae's kindness, Henchard establishes himself as Farfrae's rival in business and in romance. Henchard's interest in Lucetta increases, primarily because of her transfer of her affections to Farfrae. Henchard jealously tries to force her to agree to marry him. When Lucetta marries Farfrae secretly, Henchard is angry and obsessed with her betrayal. Henchard is driven crazy by the thought of Farfrae taking a position as the new mayor, and their positions are completely reversed by the end of the novel. Farfrae is a successful and prominent figure in Casterbridge, and he lives in the grand house that was once Henchard's. Henchard dies, virtually alone and friendless.

FAMILIAL AND ROMANTIC LOVE

The plot of the novel is frequently driven by complex truths about characters' family relationships, which are hidden and revealed. Early in the novel, Michael Henchard wishes to remarry Susan for his daughter's sake, but once Henchard learns that Elizabeth-Jane is not his daughter by blood, he no longer cares for her. For Henchard, ties of blood are strongest. Richard Newson also cares deeply for his own offspring, as he seeks out Elizabeth-Jane and goes to great lengths to reconnect with her by returning to Casterbridge multiple times. Susan lies to Elizabeth-Jane about her connection to Henchard. Then Henchard unknowingly misrepresents himself as her father. The final reveal of her true parentage secures her happiness and reconnection with Newson. Confusion surrounding the identity of Elizabeth-Jane's biological father continues throughout the novel, emphasizing the importance of family connections to each of the characters.

Romantic love, in addition to familial love, directs characters' choices in the novel. Love causes characters to feel and behave in irrational ways that defy their circumstances. Love is presented in contrast to one's loyalty to duty and commitment. Love tears Donald Farfrae away from Elizabeth-Jane, as he falls for Lucetta. Despite Farfrae's encouragement of Elizabeth-Jane, he cannot resist Lucetta. He goes against his previous actions and hurts Elizabeth-Jane because his feelings for Lucetta are too strong to resist. Lucetta loves Henchard, despite his commitment to his wife, until she falls for Farfrae. Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane both believe that Lucetta is "bound" to Henchard because of her past commitment to him, but Lucetta prioritizes her love for Farfrae over her duty, saying "I won't be a slave to the past—I'll love where I choose!" Elizabeth-Jane is hurt by Lucetta's secret marriage because she loves Farfrae throughout the novel, despite his relationship with Lucetta.

LOYALTY TO DUTY AND COMMITMENTS

Loyalty is a defining aspect of the characters Elizabeth-Jane and Susan in this novel. Both women fulfill the expectations of their duties as women, wives, and daughters, while also upholding their past commitments. Duty in the novel is any abstract idea of what is expected of an individual because of her or his position in society. Commitments are any specific agreements made in the past above and beyond one's duties.

After Susan remarries Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane is remarkably motivated by a sense of duty to her father and her new position to better herself through education and proper speech. "'If I am not well-informed it shall be by no fault of my own,' she would say to herself," while studying diligently. Only Susan's belief that her sale to Newson was binding keeps her committed to him rather than to Henchard. When she learns the truth, she feels it is her duty to return to her true husband.

Other characters in the novel have more complex relationships to loyalty. Henchard's awareness of his past wrongs is connected to the guilt he feels when he does not fulfill his duty to his wife, daughter, or Lucetta. Henchard wishes to remarry Susan for his daughter's sake. But Henchard also is anxious to atone for his past in which he did not maintain his commitment to his wife. Henchard feels he must marry Lucetta once his wife dies because of their past relationship. Lucetta must decide between her past commitment to Henchard and her love for Farfrae when she moves to Casterbridge. Elizabeth-Jane believes Lucetta must marry Henchard because of their past and their agreement. Lucetta struggles against this commitment because of her love for Farfrae, ultimately choosing love over commitment, which hurts both Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane, who are more driven by loyalty to others.

HUMANS AND NATURE

The natural landscape of the English countryside is the source of livelihood for the inhabitants of Casterbridge. The chance occurrences of nature impact human fates and outcomes in the novel. A bad harvest causes Henchard to lose money reselling his grain when he attempts to drive Farfrae out of business. Henchard angrily says to Jopp after his loss, "you can never be sure of weather till 'tis past." Weather, although uncertain, hurts some and helps others. Farfrae is blessed by his harvests, as if he has the ability to foresee the weather. The unpredictable factor of the weather increases the emotional and economic divide between Henchard and Farfrae, and further angers and frustrates

Henchard.

Yet, Henchard is also saved by the natural world. The river sweeps Henchard's effigy to him, which stops him from killing himself. While Henchard attributes his survival to the skimmington with the **effigies**, it is the chance movements of the river that present the effigy to him at the critical moment. The landscape affects and reflects human emotions. Like a human character, the landscape is changeable, dynamic, and expressive, while directly affecting the plot of the novel. The rural farmers see a "god" in the weather directing their lives. Because of its direct affects on the villagers' livelihood, "sun elated them; quiet rain sobered them; weeks of watery tempest stupefied them."

THE PAST AND FORGIVENESS

Throughout the novel, the darkness of past events haunts individual characters as well as the landscape of the countryside around Casterbridge. The ancient Roman history of the region is referenced multiple times. **The Ring**, where Henchard meets both Susan and Lucetta is an ancient architectural remnant that once served as an amphitheater for violence and entertainment. In the time period of the novel, the Ring is used only for furtive meetings, primarily of a romantic nature, but the bloody history of the Roman Empire presents a backdrop for the events of the novel. As Henchard and Susan reunite at the Ring, their own past is as filled with pain and wrongdoing as the ancient place in which they stand.

The past in this novel often represents suffering and violence, both physical and emotional. Henchard both desperately desires forgiveness and receives it, in many cases, for his past wrongs. Henchard wishes to earn Susan's forgiveness for his past action of selling her and their daughter. Guilt drives his desire for forgiveness for past wrongdoing, causing him to ask her to 'judge [him] by [his] future works" after the couple is reunited. Farfrae forgives Henchard for their business separation and continues to be generous with him. Farfrae purchases Henchard's home and furniture, but he invites Henchard to live with him and he offers to give him some of his furniture without charge. Abel Whittle forgives Henchard in the final hours of his life, despite Henchard having treated him cruelly while he was Henchard's worker. Abel is the only one with Henchard when he dies. Henchard's emotional awareness of his past wrongs, and his need for forgiveness, contribute to his isolation at the end of the novel. Henchard leaves Elizabeth-Jane after lying to Newson, her biological father, and saying she had died. He wishes for Elizabeth-Jane's forgiveness, but Elizabeth-Jane's forgiveness comes too late.

CHARACTER

The full title of the novel is *The Mayor of Casterbridge: The Life and Death of a Man of Character*. Henchard's "character" is neither good nor evil, but complex. Character directly impacts each person in the novel. Henchard's self-destruction is a critical aspect of his character. His self-harming personality traits lead to his isolation and poverty. Elizabeth-Jane and Susan are loyal characters. They honor their duties and their past commitments, which leads Susan to leave and then return to Henchard, and which causes Elizabeth-Jane to never act upon her love for Farfrae. Elizabeth-Jane's fortitude and good character are appropriate to her happy ending of her marriage to Farfrae and reunion with her long-lost father, Newson. Farfrae's character, his easy temperament and his natural goodness, helps his business and position in Casterbridge society and leads him to marry Lucetta. His character causes him to prioritize love and personal happiness. He continues to be kind to Henchard for a long time after he is asked to leave Henchard's business, another mark of his open and generous character.

Character, in the subtitle of the novel, implies more than the way in which character correlates to events and outcomes in the novel. Character, in the 19th century, was a term frequently associated with one's social standing and reputation. A man of character was a man who was prominent and respected in society. With this meaning in mind, describing Henchard as "a man of character," is both accurate and ironic. He holds the important position of mayor in Casterbridge for most of the novel. However, this position is, in many ways, one of which Henchard is unworthy. His secret past wrong is concealed from the inhabitants of Casterbridge and when the furmity-woman reveals the story of Henchard selling his wife and daughter, Henchard's popularity declines rapidly from that day onward.

SYMBOLS

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

FIVE GUINEAS

The specific sum of five guineas is used in two significant transactions in the novel: first, this is the amount for which Richard Newson purchases Susan Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane from Michael Henchard at the Weydon-Priors fair. Second, Michael Henchard encloses this sum in a note to Susan when she arrives in Casterbridge eighteen years later. Henchard is aware that by sending this amount to Susan he is, in a symbolic sense, buying her back from Richard Newson. Five guineas is a trivial sum for the lives of two human beings, which should not be treated as commodities. Michael

Henchard's willingness to both sell and buy back his wife and daughter symbolizes his economic perspective on the lives of those around him. Throughout the novel, Henchard relates to his family and his friends in terms of what they can give him. He values people who benefit his business and standing in town and devalues these same people when they do not meet his standards. He is obsessed with how Farfrae can help his business, but then casts off the young man for challenging his authority. His care for Elizabeth-Jane depends on whether or not she is his biological daughter, and he reflects on this relationship in terms of ownership: is she or is she not *his*? Money changing hands to establish family connections symbolizes Henchard's twisted perspective on relationships, which he believes are based on ownership and possession.

RESTORING WHEAT

Donald Farfrae generous offer to show Michael Henchard how to restore the quality of a harvest of bad wheat is the basis of these two characters' first interaction and subsequent business partnership. The conversation the two men have in the King of Prussia hotel, concerning this process, symbolizes more than the start of a dramatic relationship between these two characters. Susan Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane, Henchard's long lost family members, overhear this conversation as they are wondering whether or not to approach Henchard again. In this context, the restoration of wheat, symbolizes the restoration of Susan and Michael Henchard's marriage. Henchard, at first, believes wheat that has gone bad cannot be restored, but Farfrae shows him that there is still hope for improving the quality of his product, although it may never be what it once was. Just so, a wrong from the past is healed as well as it can be when Susan and Michael are reunited and remarried.

THE RING

An ancient Roman construction outside the town of Casterbridge, the Ring is an amphitheater structure once used for violence and entertainment. In the context of the novel, the Ring is primarily used for secretive meetings, as the place hides the dealings of characters very nicely. Michael Henchard meets two different women in the Ring, and despite the different natures and times of these meetings, he observes a striking similarity between them. First, he is reunited with his wife, Susan, at the Ring, and he feels great sympathy for her obvious sorrow and reduced circumstances. Second, Henchard meets Lucetta at the Ring, at her request, after she over-hears him reading some of her love letters to Henchard aloud to her husband, Farfrae. Lucetta pleads with Henchard to have pity on her, and to not reveal their past relationship. The Ring symbolizes the importance of secrets and secrecy in this novel, as well as a history of violence and wrongdoing, both in the Roman amphitheater and in Henchard's life. Numerous plot events depend upon secrets withheld or exposed: Henchard's cruel selling of his wife, the true nature of Elizabeth-Jane's parentage, and Lucetta and Henchard's relationship. The Ring is a venue for, and a physical manifestation of, the secrets that are already held in many hearts in Casterbridge. In addition to functioning as a symbol of secrecy, the Ring symbolizes Henchard's sympathy and empathy. Henchard, while often proud, jealous, and cruel, takes pity on both the women that he meets at the Ring. Within the space of the Ring, he is able to see the suffering of others, which he has caused. The Ring symbolizes Henchard's rare, but powerful, ability to empathize and change his mind.

THE SECOND BRIDGE

There are two bridges near the lower part of Casterbridge where folks who are down on their luck—"in love, in business, in sobriety, in crime"— like to stand and reflect. The first bridge is at the end of High Street and normally draws those of lower character, and those less ashamed of their situation, who don't mind their sorrow being noticed by others. Visitors to the second bridge, which is further along the highway, are often of higher social classes. Henchard, after his secret past has been revealed, and all his money and his home given to his creditors, begins to haunt this bridge. He returns to the bridge after Richard Newson appears in Casterbridge to claim Elizabeth-Jane as his true daughter. While Henchard lies to Newson and says Elizabeth-Jane has died, he knows he cannot keep the secret from her forever and he finds the thought of losing her unendurable. At the second bridge, he walks down a small path to a place in the river called Ten Hatches. As he stands looking into the water, the figure of his own **effigy** appears below him. The sight of himself seemingly already dead is enough to turn Henchard away from the river and his thoughts of suicide. Both bridges are symbolic of the sufferings in human lives, which may be brought about by chance occurrences or one's poor decisions, and the way humans respond to hardship. The second bridge is linked to Henchard's emotional decline, from a position of confidence to a state in which suicide seems desirable. Rivers are always changing, swiftly flowing, and a bridge allows humans to easily cross a treacherous river. A bridge is an appropriate place for one to stand who seeks security or comfort in the face of hardship and change. The suffering individual hopes for a symbolic bridge to carries him over his troubles, as the literal bridge carries him over the river.

THE EFFIGIES

The effigies are symbols in several ways within this novel. Most simplistically, the effigies are symbolic within the story and for the characters who construct them and

see them. The poor folk of Mixen Lane who learn of Lucetta and Henchard's secret past wish to harm the wealthy folk by bringing the secret into the open. By constructing the effigies of Lucetta and Henchard, and parading them through the town together, the poor folk are using the effigies to symbolize Lucetta and Henchard's improper relationship. Lucetta, Henchard, and the other folk who witness the skimmington must understand the symbolism behind the figures in order to understand what is implied about Lucetta and Henchard. In a more complex way, the effigies function as distinct symbols for Lucetta and Henchard. Lucetta panics and faints when she sees the effigies. This reaction eventually leads to her death. The effigies threaten her happiness and the love she shares with her husband. For her, they are symbolic of the dangers of public scandal, words, and knowledge. Lucetta's death shows that immaterial things, like fear and emotion, are as dangerous as physical weapons like swords and guns. For Lucetta, the effigies symbolize the power of secrets and information. For Henchard, the effigy of himself saves his life at **the second bridge**. Seeing the effigy appears to Henchard to be a miracle, an intervention in a dark moment. The effigy symbolizes the power of situations and events to change human lives. Without the effigies, Henchard may have had a different fate.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* published in 2003.

Chapter 1 Quotes

"For my part I don't see why men who have got wives, and don't want 'em, shouldn't get rid of 'em as these gipsy fellows do their old horses...why shouldn't they put them up and sell 'em by auction to men who are in want of such articles? Hey? Why, begad, I'd sell mine this minute, if anybody would buy her!"

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Susan Henchard

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

Early in the novel, Michael Henchard and his wife and child are traveling and stop at a country fair for a meal, where Henchard, intoxicated, grows angry with his lot in life. Henchard turns his bitterness on his wife, as he no longer wishes to be married. In this passage, he wonders aloud to the listening occupants of the food tent why unhappy men cannot sell their wives to other men. Henchard's complaints are set against the sounds of a horse auction, which he mentions as a point of comparison. The language of this passage is quite obviously belittling and hurtful. Not only does Henchard compare his wife to an "old horse" that could be auctioned off, but he calls this "getting rid" of her because he doesn't "want her." This language treats women as the property of men as well as material possessions (Henchard refers to wives as "articles," like articles of clothing).

Henchard's "character" is established early in the novel, though he later grows into a more complex figure, and is haunted by this scene of extreme boorishness. To the modern audience, this scene is horrifying, but it is also upsetting to the other people who witness Henchard's behavior, particularly the kind man Richard Newson who takes in Henchard's wife and child. Henchard's cruelty is attributed in part to his drunkenness, as he later, when sober, regrets his actions. His drinking problem results in self-destructive behavior. While drunk, heforegoes the sense of duty he has to his family, particularly to his young daughter, which resurfaces later in the novel.

In contrast with the harshness of the act just ended within the tent was the sight of several horses crossing their necks and rubbing each other lovingly as they waited in patience to be harnessed for the homeward journey. Outside the fair, in the valleys and woods, all was quiet. The sun had recently set, and the west heaven was hung with rosy cloud, which seemed permanent, yet slowly changed. To watch it was like looking at some grand feat of stagery from a darkened auditorium. In presence of this scene after the other there was a natural instinct to abjure man as the blot on an otherwise kindly universe; till it was remembered that all terrestrial conditions were intermittent, and that mankind might some night be innocently sleeping when these quiet objects were raging loud.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

After the ghastly scene in the tent where Henchard attempts to auction off his own wife, Susan chooses to leave Henchard and takes their daughter. Once she leaves, this passage paints a scene of the natural world at peace in the wake of Henchard's cruelty. Details from this quote

collectively create a sense of relaxation and harmony, from the two horses nuzzling "lovingly" to the sky with "rosy cloud." The horses who stand together represent a different type of union than the unkind marriage between Henchard and Susan. Because Henchard compared the selling of his wife to a horse auction, it is easy to see the calm presence of these horses as a commentary on the animosity between Henchard and his wife, and among humans in general. As this passage points out, by juxtaposing this natural scene with Henchard's drunken behavior, it is easy to see mankind as the worst inhabitants of the natural world.

However, this passage is more complex than this, as it concludes that, "mankind might some night be innocently sleeping when these quiet objects were raging loud." There are times when the "quiet objects" of nature, such as weather, plants, and animals, are cruel and destructive, while, in contrast, humans appear meek. Therefore, the main idea of this passage is that humans and the natural world are not always in tune with each other.

Chapter 2 Quotes

"I, Michael Henchard, on this morning of the sixteenth of September, do take an oath before God here in this solemn place that I will avoid all strong liquors for the space of twenty-one years to come, being a year for every year that I have lived. And this I swear upon the book before me; and may I be stricken dumb, blind, and helpless, if I break this my oath!"

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 18

Explanation and Analysis

In a pivotal moment for his character, Henchard vows to give up drinking any alcohol for twenty-one years after seeing the effect of his drunkenness at the country fair. Henchard acts partly out of regret for his poor treatment of his wife and child, and partly out of embarrassment about his publicly humiliating behavior. Despite these mixed motives, Henchard's vow is a productive one. He has identified an aspect of his character that has been self-destructive and hurtful to others and he seeks to improve. And indeed, he upholds this vow loyally for twenty-one years because he has made a commitment.

The "solemn place" in which Henchard makes his oath before God is a church, which lends significance to his vow because it occurs in a place that is traditionally the site of praying and seeking repentance. Henchard later asks Susan directly for forgiveness, which demonstrates some true feeling of guilt and desire to repent. However, Henchard, true to his character, is also inclined to exaggerated and theatrical behavior. It is not enough to seek to change himself in private—instead he makes an extreme oath, featuring a full twenty-one years of abstinence from alcohol and the condition that he be struck "dumb, blind, and helpless" if he doesn't follow his promise. Ironically, Henchard ends the novel in a helpless state, despite having kept his oath, because he returns after twenty-one years to the self-destructive behavior of drinking.

Chapter 5 Quotes

"If anybody will tell me how to turn grown wheat into wholesome wheat I'll take it back with pleasure. But it can't be done."

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard becomes the mayor of Casterbridge and a successful wheat merchant, but his business is criticized one summer when he sells a large amount of rotten wheat to farmers and citizens in Casterbridge. In this scene, Henchard defends his actions, arguing that he cannot change the bad wheat back into wholesome wheat. This is a significant passage because a comment about a literal problem—the rotten wheat—provides commentary on a larger problem: the inability of any person to turn back time. Henchard wished he could turn back time after he sold his wife and daughter. He saw that he had made something that was once wholesome—his family and his marriage—into something rotten. This passage shows his life philosophy, as well as his understanding of wheat. The past cannot be changed, Henchard believes; something rotten cannot be made wholesome again.

This quote also shows Henchard's rather underhanded business dealings. He is not willing to take the blame or the responsibility for having sold bad wheat, and he will not replace the product he sold with good wheat. He sees that the sale, once complete, is finished, regardless of the outcome for his costumers. Instead, he blames the problem

on the impossibility of restoring wheat that has gone by, encouraging others to blame fate, the weather, science—anything other than Henchard himself.

Chapter 10 Quotes

"Meet me at eight o'clock this evening, if you can, at the Ring on the Budmouth road. The place is easy to find. I can say no more now. The news upsets me almost. The girl seems to be in ignorance. Keep her so till I have seen you. M. H."
He said nothing about the enclosure of five guineas. The amount was significant; it may tacitly have said to her that he bought her back again.

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Susan Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane Newson

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 67

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard and Susan are reunited through a letter that is brought from Susan to Henchard via Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard responds with a note asking Susan to meet him, and includes with it five guineas. Two important symbols appear in this pivotal passage: the Ring and the five guineas. The Ring is a local remnant of the ancient Roman culture in this part of England. As a landmark site, it is linked to the bloody history of the Romans would invaded England; it is an amphitheater for battle as a form of entertainment. Because of its role as a visual reminder of a painful past, the Ring seems a fateful place for Henchard and Susan to meet and address their own painful past.

The second symbol of the five guineas is acknowledged by Henchard, who remembers that this is the sum Newson paid to buy Susan from him years earlier. By enclosing this amount, Henchard intentionally suggests that he wishes Susan to return to him, that he symbolically wishes to "buy her back."

The language of Henchard's note focuses on his commitment to and concern for Elizabeth-Jane. He wants to keep her ignorant of his connection to her, which suggests that he feels guilt over his past wrongs. But he also feels a duty to her and to Susan because of their family connection. This sense of duty seems more prevalent than any feelings of real love or attachment, as the language of his letter to Susan is matter-of-fact, rather than romantic or apologetic. Duty to family also influences Susan when she reaches out to her past husband, once Richard Newson is supposedly dead.

Chapter 11 Quotes

"Right," said Henchard. "But just one word. Do you forgive me, Susan?"
She murmured something; but seemed to find it difficult to frame her answer.
"Never mind--all in good time," said he. "Judge me by my future works--good-bye!"

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Susan Henchard

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

When Henchard and Susan meet at the Ring, their conversation focuses on the future and how to reintegrate Susan and Elizabeth-Jane into the life of the now-successful Henchard. Henchard does, however, turn to discussion of the past briefly when he asks if Susan forgives him. This moment shows Henchard's unwillingness to hear an unfavorable answer, as he dismisses Susan's reply and instead requests that Susan "judge" him by his "future works." But why does Henchard desire Susan's good opinion at this point in the novel? Henchard is concerned throughout this scene about his current moral character and his reputation as mayor of Casterbridge, and it seems that he cannot bear to have anyone, even Susan, think ill of him. His comment about his "future works" shows Henchard's belief that the past can be outweighed by the future. Henchard is a complex character, and this novel works to develop his nuances and changes. He argued that the past could not be changed when his wheat was rotten, but is quick to have Susan overlook the past in favor of the future.

For her part, Susan's murmured response to Henchard's request for forgiveness shows her conflicted feelings about her reunion with her ex-husband. As with many characters in the novel, Susan is concealing some information (here about her motives for returning to Henchard). Henchard might have foreseen this, but he is too self-focused to be troubled by her lack of a legitimate response to his question.

Chapter 15 Quotes

But Henchard continued moody and silent, and when one of the men inquired of him if some oats should be hoisted to an upper floor or not, he said shortly, "Ask Mr. Farfrae. He's master here!" Morally he was; there could be no doubt of it. Henchard, who had hitherto been the most admired man in his circle, was the most admired no longer.

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Donald Farfrae

Related Themes:

Page Number: 98

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Farfrae works as Henchard's manager, but the men disagree on the treatment of their workers. This disagreement comes to a head over the habitually tardy Abel Whittle. Their public disagreement shows Farfrae to be a better man than Henchard, more level-headed and kind, and he wins over the support of the other workers. The disagreement also shows that Farfrae is willing to stand up to Henchard and does not follow all his orders. Henchard responds to both aspects of this situation negatively. He is upset by what he sees to be Farfrae's betrayal and upset that Farfrae is more popular than himself. This passage captures the shifting power dynamic between these two men. Henchard is no longer "the most admired man in his circle" because Farfrae now fills this space.

Henchard's bitterness and childishness is obvious to everyone. Instead of taking responsibility for his actions and continuing to lead his workers, Henchard mockingly says that Farfrae is the master when he is asked questions. This behavior is petty, as is his "moody and silent" sulking. This passage reveals another aspect of Henchard's character: he does not react well to failure. When he fails, he worsens the problem, rather than mending it, by acting childishly. His inability to address the problem of Farfrae's popularity and leadership means that his own popularity and control fail further. This is the very beginning of a downward spiral for Henchard who, once upset and angry, makes his situation worse by acting *more* upset and angry.

Chapter 16 Quotes

"Mr. Farfrae's time as my manager is drawing to a close--isn't it, Farfrae?"
The young man, who could now read the lines and folds of Henchard's strongly-traced face as if they were clear verbal inscriptions, quietly assented; and when people deplored the fact, and asked why it was, he simply replied that Mr. Henchard no longer required his help. Henchard went home, apparently satisfied. But in the morning, when his jealous temper had passed away, his heart sank within him at what he had said and done. He was the
more disturbed when he found that this time Farfrae was determined to take him at his word.

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Donald Farfrae

Related Themes:

Page Number: 106

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard's jealousy and anger over Farfrae's popularity and willfulness is critical in this scene, in which Henchard publically dismisses Farfrae. In company, he says that Farfrae will soon be leaving his employ. He does not talk to Farfrae about this beforehand, nor does he explicitly fire Farfrae. However, Farfrae can tell from Henchard's mood that it will no longer work to be Henchard's manager. Farfrae's decency is shown in his quietness about this problem. When it is addressed, he simply tells others that "Mr. Henchard no longer required his help." He doesn't speak ill of Henchard, despite having been mistreated by him, which shows his respectable and kind character.

Henchard, on the other hand, has acted rashly, which he later realizes, and then attempts to retract his statement that Farfrae should leave his employ. Although Henchard is sober at the time of his rash statement, a clear parallel can be drawn between this scene and the scene in which Henchard sells his wife and child. In both cases, Henchard later regrets his behavior and attempts to reverse the situation, but without success. Farfrae's refusal to return to Henchard's business is notable because it shows another strong difference in the two men's characters. Farfrae has a strong resolve and does not make decisions lightly, while Henchard repeatedly makes decisions that he later regrets—a trait that mostly hurts himself rather than others.

Chapter 17 Quotes

Hence, when she felt her heart going out to him, she would say to herself with a mock pleasantry that carried an ache with it, "No, no, Elizabeth-Jane--such dreams are not for you!" She tried to prevent herself from seeing him, and thinking of him; succeeding fairly well in the former attempt, in the latter not so completely.

Related Characters: Elizabeth-Jane Newson, Donald Farfrae

Related Themes:

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae share a strong connection, but Elizabeth-Jane tries to persuade herself to stop developing romantic feelings for him. She sees Farfrae as her father's competitor, an idea supported by Henchard's anger about Farfrae opening a separate business in the same field. Henchard then openly forbids Elizabeth-Jane to see Farfrae, and Elizabeth-Jane heeds her father's wishes. This quote shows Elizabeth-Jane's strong sense of duty. She is loyal to her father and obeys his wishes, even when they go against her own desires. Yet despite her attempt to avoid seeing Farfrae and even *thinking* of him, Elizabeth-Jane's feelings are clearly too strong to repress.

In Elizabeth-Jane, two types of love are at odds. She feels love and loyalty to Henchard, even though she doesn't yet know the story of his past with her mother or that he believes himself to be her father. She is grateful to him for taking her and her mother in when they were in need. Yet she also feels a youthful romantic love for Farfrae. Tragically, Henchard's conflict with Farfrae means Elizabeth-Jane must choose one type of love or the other—in this situation at least, she can't have both.

Chapter 19 Quotes

"Don't cry--don't cry!" said Henchard, with vehement pathos, "I can't bear it, I won't bear it. I am your father; why should you cry? Am I so dreadful, so hateful to 'ee? Don't take against me, Elizabeth-Jane!" he cried, grasping her wet hand. "Don't take against me--though I was a drinking man once, and used your mother roughly--I'll be kinder to you than *he* was! I'll do anything, if you will only look upon me as your father!"

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Elizabeth-Jane Newson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

After Susan's death, Henchard feels he can tell Elizabeth-Jane the truth (as he understands it) of her parentage. When Henchard confesses that he is Elizabeth-Jane's father, and then tells the story of his sale of wife and daughter to Richard Newson, Elizabeth-Jane begins to cry. Henchard is deeply moved by her tears, pleading with her with "vehement pathos" (expressive, pitiable sadness). He begs for her approval and recognition of the father-daughter relationship between them. As in his reunion with Susan, Henchard focuses on overcoming the woes of the past with promises for the future. He promises to be kinder to Elizabeth-Jane than "he" (either Richard Newson or Henchard's own past self) was, if she will only accept him as her father.

Notably, Henchard's promises of kindness depend upon Elizabeth-Jane's behavior: she must treat him as her father. Henchard also asks that she change her last name to his to reflect their relationship. These details show that Henchard sets a lot of value on their father-daughter relationship. He cares deeply for her *because* she is his daughter. Her worth in his eyes is based on that connection. He does not care about Elizabeth-Jane because of the person she is, independent of that connection. This is due in part to his duty to his family, and in part to happiness he derives from familial love. Henchard's obsession with Elizabeth-Jane's care and support escalates at the end of the novel.

I can hardly write it, but here it is. Elizabeth-Jane is not your Elizabeth-Jane--the child who was in my arms when you sold me. No; she died three months after that, and this living one is my other husband's. I christened her by the same name we had given to the first, and she filled up the ache I felt at the other's loss. Michael, I am dying, and I might have held my tongue; but I could not.

Related Characters: Susan Henchard (speaker), Michael Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane Newson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 123

Explanation and Analysis

After Susan's death, Henchard finds a letter left among her belongings with the instructions that it should be opened and read on Elizabeth-Jane's wedding day. Henchard, ignoring these instructions, opens the letter and discovers that Elizabeth-Jane is not his biological child, but a child of Richard Newson's who bears the same name. This passage shows Susan's anguish at her confession. She "can hardly write" the truth and might have kept to herself, but feels a need to let it be known because she is dying. Susan's reluctance to admit the truth, and her instructions on the letter, show an awareness of how Henchard will react to the news. She knows he is capable of bitterness and spite, and she must have labeled the letter in order to save this news until Elizabeth-Jane's wedding day, because only at that point will Elizabeth-Jane be "free" (because technically "belonging" to her husband) from Henchard's protection and influence.

Why does Susan confess the truth? The pair has each behaved unfairly in the past and sought forgiveness. The love Susan feels for a child is clear in this quote, as she speaks of the "ache" she felt at the loss of her first daughter. It seems clear that her loyalty and love belongs first and foremost to Elizabeth-Jane, but it does not exclude a sense of familial duty to her husband Henchard.

Henchard bent and kissed her cheek. The moment and the act he had prefigured for weeks with a thrill of pleasure; yet it was no less than a miserable insipidity to him now that it had come. His reinstation of her mother had been chiefly for the girl's sake, and the fruition of the whole scheme was such dust and ashes as this.

Related Characters: Elizabeth-Jane Newson, Michael Henchard, Susan Henchard

Related Themes:

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

Elizabeth-Jane has reconciled herself to the truth of her parentage as told to her by Henchard, just as Henchard has learned that she is not, in fact, his daughter. The irony of this—that Elizabeth-Jane should accept him as her father, just as Henchard rejects her because she is not his biological daughter—is not lost on Henchard. He feels the bitterness of a situation that he had longed for as he embraces his daughter, who is not his daughter. Henchard's bitterness also reveals his motivation for taking in Susan and Elizabeth-Jane, for the "reinstation of her mother had chiefly been for the girl's sake." This means that Henchard was eager for Susan's goodwill and forgiveness primarily because of Elizabeth-Jane, and was eager to support Elizabeth-Jane because she was his biological daughter. He refers to this process of reconciliation as a "scheme," which implies some strategic effort on Henchard's part. He is partly frustrated in this scene because a plan of his, into which he put effort, is foiled. Henchard's character is not generous. He expects to get his way when he inputs money and resources.

Henchard places a lot of value on familial "love," although his feelings about Elizabeth-Jane focus on himself and his needs, which does not seem like a very expansive kind of love. He wants his daughter to be a part of *his* life, and sees Elizabeth-Jane's connection to him as part of his identity as a father. He treats her less like an independent person than a possession, and he now feels little affection for her or duty to her without their biological connection.

Chapter 25 Quotes

"I *will* love him!" she cried passionately; "as for *him*--he's hot-tempered and stern, and it would be madness to bind myself to him knowing that. I won't be a slave to the past--I'll love where I choose!"

Related Characters: Lucetta Templeman (speaker), Donald Farfrae, Michael Henchard

Related Themes:

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

Lucetta appears in Casterbridge after Susan's death and meets Elizabeth-Jane, as well as Henchard, whom she once loved. At first, Elizabeth-Jane is unaware of the connection between Henchard and Lucetta, but when she comes to understand it she and her father agree for once: Lucetta is duty-bound to Henchard because she confessed her love to him and publically displayed her affection. Lucetta's feelings change when she meets Farfrae and when she witnesses Henchard's true character, which she refers to as "hot-tempered" and "stern." After Henchard forces Lucetta to promise to marry him by threatening that he will otherwise reveal their past relationship, Lucetta must make a pivotal decision.

In this passage, Lucetta is torn between the emotion she feels in the present and her sense of duty to actions in the past. Tension between past and present, in which the past

influences the present, is a common motif in this novel. Henchard and Susan feel guilt about the past and let it guide their actions in the present. Lucetta rejects this—throwing away her sense of duty to Henchard—and chooses to follow romantic love for Farfrae. She says she won't be "a slave to the past," as she believes that to live according to the past leads to unhappiness. It is certainly true that Elizabeth-Jane, guided by feelings of duty, is unhappy. Lucetta rejects duty in favor of happiness, partly because of romantic love and partly because she sees Henchard's poor character and feels it would be "madness" to marry him.

Chapter 26 Quotes

❝ The farmer's income was ruled by the wheat-crop within his own horizon, and the wheat-crop by the weather. Thus in person, he became a sort of flesh-barometer, with feelers always directed to the sky and wind around him. The local atmosphere was everything to him; the atmospheres of other countries a matter of indifference. The people, too, who were not farmers, the rural multitude, saw in the god of the weather a more important personage than they do now....After midsummer they watched the weather-cocks as men waiting in antechambers watch the lackey. Sun elated them; quiet rain sobered them; weeks of watery tempest stupefied them. That aspect of the sky which they now regard as disagreeable they then beheld as maleficent.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 183

Explanation and Analysis

Throughout Hardy's novel, the agriculture of the region forms an ever-present background to the personal relationships and struggles of the characters. At times, the dependence of this region on farming directly impacts the plot of the novel, as when Henchard is criticized for selling rotten wheat or when he tries to outcompete Farfrae by predicting the weather. In this passage, the relationship between farmer and weather is explained. The farmer is carefully attuned to the weather, a "flesh-barometer," meaning he is a human tool for detecting a shift in air pressure. This passage, in which the narrator steps back and delivers a larger description of nature, allows Hardy to put his characters in perspective and to establish the larger relationship between humans and nature that is ever-present in the novel.

Dependence on the weather is not limited to the farmers who need healthy crops for their income and survival. The local people are also attuned to the weather because it impacts their lives in many ways. A shortage of certain products will limit food for humans, food for animals, and will affect the economy. Farming is the source of life here, and it impacts each person directly or indirectly—but this source of life is irregular and unpredictable, which is why it is equated with a "god" whose reason and actions are beyond the control of humans.

Chapter 29 Quotes

❝ Married him?" said Henchard at length. "My good--what, married him whilst--bound to marry me?" "It was like this," she explained, with tears in her eyes and quavers in her voice; "don't--don't be cruel! I loved him so much, and I thought you might tell him of the past--and that grieved me! And then, when I had promised you, I learnt of the rumor that you had--sold your first wife at a fair like a horse or cow! How could I keep my promise after hearing that?"

Related Characters: Michael Henchard, Lucetta Templeman (speaker), Donald Farfrae

Related Themes:

Page Number: 209

Explanation and Analysis

The truth of Henchard's treatment of Susan in the past is revealed to the occupants of Casterbridge when the furmity-woman is on trial. One consequence of this is Henchard's further decline in popularity, and another is Lucetta's secret marriage to Farfrae. Lucetta confesses the truth to Henchard with "tears in her eyes" and a "quaver in her voice." Her emotions may be the result of fear of Henchard's reaction, guilt over her actions, or an attempt to gain his sympathy for her plight. She implores him to not be cruel and to attempt to understand that she saw herself released from her promise once she learned the truth about his past.

Lucetta's motivation for her secret marriage shows in two ways that the past cannot ever be entirely overcome, overlooked, or forgiven. First, she is unable to think that Henchard might have changed in twenty-five years. She sees the actions of his past as a permanent mark of his character. She speaks of his actions in the most horrifying terms, equating his sale of his wife to treating her like a horse or cow. This is an accurate assessment, but one that overlooks Henchard's later reunion with and kindness toward Susan and Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard's past has come back to haunt him, preventing him from being with

this woman he loves and wants to marry. Second, Lucetta's secret marriage shows that she believes the past connection between herself and Henchard will mark her unfavorably in the present. She married Farfrae quickly because she worried that he would see her in a negative light if he learned of her past, just as she sees Henchard in a negative light because of his past.

Chapter 32 Quotes

"I have heard that you think of emigrating, Mr. Henchard?" he said. "Is it true? I have a real reason for asking." Henchard withheld his answer for several instants, and then said, "Yes; it is true. I am going where you were going to a few years ago, when I prevented you and got you to bide here. 'Tis turn and turn about, isn't it! Do ye mind how we stood like this in the Chalk Walk when I persuaded 'ee to stay? You then stood without a chattel to your name, and I was the master of the house in corn Street. But now I stand without a stick or a rag, and the master of that house is you."

Related Characters: Michael Henchard, Donald Farfrae (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 223-224

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard has fallen dramatically: he has lost his role as mayor, his business, his love, and his home. Farfrae purchases Henchard's home and moves there with Lucetta, strangely reversing his and Henchard's situations. When these two men meet and share a few words on the street, Henchard acknowledges the irony of this reversal of situation and status. Farfrae is kind to Henchard, as he always has been. He asks about Henchard's plans to leave Casterbridge, and this highlights another reversal in situation between the two men, who once stood on the street discussing Farfrae's plans to travel on from Casterbridge. Henchard's acknowledgement of this situation attributes these changes to fate. It is "turn and turn about," he says, as if the passage of time alone has caused this change in fortunes. He does not admit any fault of his own character in his fall from grace, excluding his bitterness and jealousy, his rash decisions, or his drinking habit that continues to haunt him. His self-destructive tendencies are unacknowledged, and he is left bitter at Farfrae's rise and his fall.

"Michael Henchard have busted out drinking after taking nothing for twenty-one years!"

Related Characters: Michael Henchard

Related Themes:

Page Number: 228

Explanation and Analysis

The moment Henchard's twenty-five year oath ends he begins drinking again. Not only does he drink, but he drinks in excess, casting himself into a downward spiral of bitterness and rash decisions. This new behavior is the talk of the town, which once respected its mayor for his notable restraint. This is a key turning point in the novel for a few reasons. First, Henchard's drinking has already been strongly equated with cruel and rash behavior. Therefore, when he begins to drink again, the reader expects that this self-destructive tendency will cause his fortunes to take a turn for the worse, even though he has already lost a lot. Second, Henchard has been anticipating this moment in recent weeks, whereas he once seemed settled in his habit of abstaining from alcohol. He seeks refugee in alcohol because he is unhappy, and looks forward to drinking as a way of relieving or escaping from his unhappiness. Finally, this quote shows that Henchard, despite years of change for the better because of his oath, cannot escape his past and his character. He returns to his old habits, even though he has lived for as many years as a sober man as he did as a drinking one.

Chapter 34 Quotes

The truth was that, as may be divined, he had quite intended to effect a grand catastrophe at the end of this drama by reading out the name, he had come to the house with no other thought. But sitting here in cold blood he could not do it. Such a wrecking of hearts appalled even him. His quality was such that he could have annihilated them both in the heat of action; but to accomplish the deed by oral poison was beyond the nerve of his enmity.

Related Characters: Lucetta Templeman, Michael Henchard, Donald Farfrae

Related Themes:

Page Number: 244

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard plans to tell Farfrae of his past romantic connection with Lucetta in the hope of turning Farfrae against his wife and poisoning their relationship. To this end, he reads some of Lucetta's letters aloud to Farfrae, pretending he simply wants to share these stories with a friend. Farfrae isn't suspicious of his actions, and is indulgent of a friend's oddity in reading old love letters. Henchard finds that he cannot, in a calm and measured way, reveal the hurtful truth by reading Lucetta's name aloud at the end of one of the letters. This quote shows a key aspect of Henchard's character. He could have "annihilated them both in the heat of action," meaning he is capable of great cruelty in moments of heightened emotion, but he cannot be cruel when his emotions are not stirred. In this calm atmosphere, when he is not provoked by Farfrae, it is "beyond the nerve of his enmity" to inflict great pain. "Enmity" means hostility, which he feels towards both Farfrae and Lucetta, and the "nerve of his enmity" describes what Henchard is capable of doing due to his hatred.

This passage draws an important distinction about Henchard's character. Henchard is more likely to be self-destructive than destructive to others, because he cannot inflict pain "in cold blood." Hurting others often requires forethought, but Henchard mostly lashes out when emotional, and his anger is often public, which turns other people against his anger to hurt himself more than anyone else.

Chapter 38 Quotes

❝ "Now," said Henchard between his gasps, "this is the end of what you began this morning. Your life is in my hands." "Then take it, take it!" said Farfrae. "Ye've wished to long enough!" Henchard looked down upon him in silence, and their eyes met. "O Farfrae!--that's not true!" he said bitterly. "God is my witness that no man ever loved another as I did thee at one time....And now--though I came here to kill 'ee, I cannot hurt thee! Go and give me in charge--do what you will--I care nothing for what comes of me!"

Related Characters: Michael Henchard, Donald Farfrae (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 271

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard attempts to interrupt the proceedings of a formal event greeting a royal personage in Casterbridge, but he is bodily removed by Farfrae, and then he overhears Lucetta speaking ill of him to others. This is the final straw for Henchard who, in anger and bitterness, seeks out Farfrae and attacks him. The two men struggle and Henchard gains the upper hand, but finds that he cannot kill Farfrae. Farfrae says that he knows Henchard has long desired to take his life. This comment interrupts Henchard's anger because it isn't true. This is a turning point in Henchard's understanding of himself: he moves past anger at another to anger at himself. He realizes how much he is to blame for his own situation because he once loved a man he now wants to kill. Farfrae has not changed, but Henchard has changed how he feels about him.

Henchard's is not generally a sympathetic character, because he brings many of his misfortunes upon himself through self-destructive behavior and cruelty toward others. This quote is a rare moment of vulnerability for Henchard, which shows him in a new light to the reader and evokes more sympathy than usual. Henchard must have been deeply hurt in order to want to lash out against someone he cared for. He cannot overcome his past actions, but he begins to feel a new type of remorse, self-hatred, and self-awareness.

Chapter 40 Quotes

❝ When within a few yards of Farfrae's he saw the door gently opened, and a servant raise her hand to the knocker, to untie the piece of cloth which had muffled it. He went across, the sparrows in his way scarcely flying up from the road-litter, so little did they believe in human aggression at so early a time. "Why do you take off that?" said Henchard. She turned in some surprise at his presence, and did not answer for an instant or two. Recognizing him, she said,
"Because they may knock as loud as they will; she will never hear it any more."

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Lucetta Templeman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 285

Explanation and Analysis

Lucetta falls sick after she witnesses the villagers of Casterbridge publically reveal the truth about and mock her amorous past with Henchard. Henchard fearfully awaits news of Lucetta's condition, only to learn that she has died

when the muffler on the door knocker is removed. Henchard's way of learning about Lucetta's death is a poignant metaphor for suffering. The knocker was muffled to protect the dying woman from any stressful sounds, but it is removed once "she will never hear it any more." While alive, Lucetta suffered from external interference—gossip and rumors about her, Henchard's threats, and the skimmington-ride. She overheard Henchard reading her letters aloud to her husband. What she could hear and witness brought Lucetta much suffering in life, as the knocking of the doorbell might. Once dead, Lucetta won't be able to hear anymore, neither the door knocker nor any of the vicious rumors that impacted her life.

This passage uses the detail about the sparrows in the street to again bring nature in close relationship to the life and death of humans. The presence of the sparrows, and their calm lack of fear, places them near Lucetta's death, but unaware of it. Nature is unconcerned with human suffering. At the same time, the sparrows might fear "human aggression," which shows that humans and nature certainly do impact each other.

Chapter 41 Quotes

❝ He watched the distant highway expecting to see Newson return on foot, enlightened and indignant, to claim his child. But no figure appeared. Possibly he had spoken to nobody on the coach, but buried his grief in his own heart. His grief!--what was it, after all, to that which he, Henchard, would feel at the loss of her? Newson's affection cooled by years, could not equal his who had been constantly in her presence. And thus his jealous soul speciously argued to excuse the separation of father and child.

Related Characters: Michael Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane Newson, Richard Newson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 290

Explanation and Analysis

Richard Newson arrives in Casterbridge and seeks his daughter Elizabeth-Jane. Newson was not dead, but lost at sea, and has spent a long time searching for his missing family, guided by love for Susan and Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard, overwhelmed to meet him, tells him in a spur of the moment decision that both women have died. Newson's grief at this news shows the true love he feels for both women. Henchard again exhibits his characteristic rash decisions and his anxiety about these decisions after the fact. Henchard dreads Newson's return because he has grown close to Elizabeth-Jane and expects her to be a part of his life. He is once again guided by jealousy, which also motivated him in his treatment of Farfrae.

This moment is established as a parallel to Henchard's discovery of the truth of Elizabeth-Jane's parentage. In that moment, Henchard had achieved what he wanted—Elizabeth-Jane's love and loyalty—only to find it lose meaning for him. In this moment, Henchard has found meaning in Elizabeth-Jane's love and loyalty, only to find out that she could be separated from him. He had her by his side for a long time when he didn't care to, and now that he cares for her, he may lose her. Like so many other plot twists in Hardy's work, the irony is clear and tragic.

❝ In the circular current imparted by the central flow the form was brought forward, till it passed under his eyes; and then he perceived with a sense of horror that it was *himself*. Not a man somewhat resembling him, but one in all respects his counterpart, his actual double, was floating as if dead in Ten Hatches Hole. The sense of the supernatural was strong in this unhappy man, and he turned away as one might have done in the actual presence of an appalling miracle. He covered his eyes and bowed his head. Without looking again into the stream he took his coat and hat, and went slowly away.

Related Characters: Michael Henchard

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 293

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard reaches new levels of despair when he thinks he will lose Elizabeth-Jane to Newson, just as he has grown to depend on her as his only source of happiness. Henchard's character grows more sympathetic through this relationship: he loves Elizabeth-Jane and begins to see her virtues and value her as a person, but fears he will lose her. Newson's reappearance emphasizes that Henchard cannot escape from his past. Having once given up his wife and daughter, it seems fated that he will not be able to keep them by his side forever. In his despair Henchard considers throwing himself into the river, but he is confronted with the effigy of himself from the skimmington-ride. The image of himself in the water seems to show him the future. This is

what he will look like if he floats dead in the river. This surreal image changes his mind, and effectively saves his life.

The confrontation between man and effigy awakens Henchard from his despair because it seems to him that a miracle has occurred. He understands that the effigy is from the skimmington-ride, but it seems to him more than chance that it would appear in that place at that time. This gives him hope, or at least startles him out of his despair, because it seems that some mysterious force has intervened to protect him. And regardless of whether or not God or Fate has placed the effigy there, it has certainly appeared at that place because of the currents of the river. Therefore, although it seems a miracle to Henchard, the mysterious force at work is most notably nature itself. Nature has helped Henchard, whereas at other points in the novel it has harmed him.

❝ "That performance of theirs killed her, but kept me alive!"

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Lucetta Templeman

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 294

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard realizes that witnessing the effigy from the skimmington-ride has saved him, whereas witnessing the effigy of herself killed Lucetta. This is the type of irony that appears multiple times in the novel: the same event can have the opposite effect for different characters, and characters can completely reverse situations in life. While Hardy is certainly rather heavy-handed in the ironies of his plotting, his characters also witness these ironies within the plot itself: particularly Henchard, as in this passage. Henchard is awed by these ironies, and his reaction is due to his sense that something beyond his control is occurring. Irony often seems like fate because the reversal or change is so dramatic and complete. And yet despite this fatalistic quality of many of the events in this book, there are always other explanations provided for these events, such as the choices characters make or chance events of nature.

Chapter 44 Quotes

❝ Very often, as he wandered on, he would survey mankind and say to himself, "Here and everywhere be folk dying before their time like frosted leaves, though wanted by the world, the country, and their own families, as badly as can be; while I, an outcast, an incumbrance, wanted by nobody, I live on, and can't die if I try."

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 314

Explanation and Analysis

Henchard leaves Casterbridge once Elizabeth-Jane learns the truth of her parentage and is reunited with her father Richard Newson. He is friendless and homeless, and, once again, aware of the irony of his situation. In this passage, he points out the irony that many who are loved die before their time, yet he, who is unloved, does not die. This highlights the role of chance and the indifference of nature. Chance guides life and death, rather than some rationale, such as the one Henchard suggests here: that loved people should live and the unloved should pass quietly away. Death is part of nature, as the language of this quote reminds the reader. Henchard compares the deaths of people who pass on before their time to "frosted leaves" that whither and die in the fall. Just as leaves die according to the patterns of nature, and according to the fickle behavior of the weather, so too do people die seemingly without rhyme or reason. The relationship between humans and nature, sometimes one of impact, sometimes one of coexistence, is repeatedly highlighted in the work.

Toward the end of the novel, Henchard is walking through the countryside, just as he was at the beginning of the novel. Once again he is poor, despite having passed through a period of wealth and success. His life has completed a full circle, and this isolation seems to be partly his fate and partly the result of his self-destructive behavior throughout the book.

Chapter 45 Quotes

MICHAEL HENCHARD'S WILL

"That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death, or made to grieve on account of me.
"& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground.
"& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.
"& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.
"& that no murners walk behind me at my funeral.
"& that no flours be planted on my grave,
"& that no man remember me.
"To this I put my name.

MICHAEL HENCHARD

Related Characters: Michael Henchard (speaker), Elizabeth-Jane Newson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 321

Explanation and Analysis

The novel ends with Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae seeking out Henchard and finding news of him from Abel Whittle after his death. All Henchard has left behind is a will, in which he cannot bequeath anything—having no possessions, nor offspring—so what he leaves is an absence of things. He asks that nothing be done—that he not be buried, mourned, or remembered. Therefore, this "will" serves the purpose of capturing Henchard's isolation, loneliness, and despair at the end of the novel. He has been brought to this place through his self-destructive characteristics, through the chance events of nature, and through past cruelties that were not forgiven by others.

But, Hardy suggests, forgiveness is sometimes possible against all odds. Henchard is tended in his last hours of life by Abel Whittle, whom he once treated cruelly. Elizabeth-Jane also forgives Henchard and attempts to find him, although her forgiveness comes too late to be expressed to him during his life.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

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

CHAPTER 1

On a late summer evening in the 1820s, a man, wife, and child approach the village of Weydon-Priors on foot. The married couple, Michael and Susan Henchard, is silent as they walk. Michael is a skilled countryman with a cynical air of indifference. Susan is beautiful in moments of animation, when her face softens as she interacts with her child. Michael reads from a ballad-sheet he carries. On the road, they encounter a turnip-hoer and Michael, who works as a hay-trusser, inquires about work in Weydon. The turnip-hoer says there is no work at this time of the year, but that it is Fair Day in Weydon and an animal auction has been taking place throughout the day.

Michael and Susan Henchard are introduced in the middle of Michael's quest to find work as a hay-trusser, a lower class, laboring position. The initial descriptions of the characters highlight Michael's talents that stand in contrast to his lowly position as an out-of-work hay-trusser. Susan is characterized by her love and care for her child, which appears to be her only source of happiness. The Fair in Weydon becomes the significant site of Michael's cruelty to his family.

Michael and Susan arrive at the Weydon Fair. Michael tries to lead his family to a food tent advertising good beer, ale, and cider, but Susan insists on going to the food tent selling "furmity": a mixture of corn, milk, raisins, and currants. Michael discovers that the furmity-woman serving is lacing some bowls with rum, and pays her extra to slip rum into his food. Michael's personality changes as he becomes drunk, progressing from jovial to quarrelsome.

Michael and Susan disagree over the minor matter of food at the Fair, but this disagreement reflects their different personalities and the unhappiness of their marriage: the pair no longer gets along. Michael's drinking problem is a recurring topic throughout the novel. He makes terrible decisions while drinking.

Despite Susan's reminder that they must seek lodgings for the night, Michael continues to speak animatedly with the crowd in the furmity tent. He bemoans his early marriage and bondage to his wife and child. Outside the tent, the auctioneer can be heard as he sells the last, and poorest quality, horses at the fair. Michael exclaims that men should be able to likewise auction off their unwanted wives, and says he'd sell his wife then and there, if anyone wished to buy her.

Michael's complaints about his wife are set against the backdrop of the horse auction. Michael realizes the connection and wishes he could auction off his wife. The parallel of these two events demonstrates Michael's view of his wife as property, as well as the way that women and children were often treated as commodities at this time.

Susan attempts to control her husband. He has made such jokes before in public places, but she feels he is carrying his complaints with his marriage too far. Michael begins an auction for his wife, as a short man offers himself as the auctioneer. Someone jokingly offers five shillings for Susan, but Michael says the price must be higher, concluding that he won't sell her for less than **five guineas**. Susan stands and goes along with her own auction. No one in the tent will speak up and offer a bid, perceiving the whole situation to be primarily a joke.

Many of the people in the furmity-tent perceive Michael's auction of Susan as a joke, but Susan feels Michael has crossed a line this time. This shows that Michael has continuously mistreated Susan in this way, and in public. The price of Susan's sale becomes a recurring symbol in the novel, as Michael later sends Susan money to support her, in the amount of five guineas.

Suddenly a voice from the doorway accepts Michael's offer to sell Susan for **five guineas**. A sailor, named Richard Newson, has appeared there as the auction progressed. He walks to the table and produces the money, the appearance of which changes the tone of the proceedings to silent seriousness. The sailor says he will buy Susan and the child, so long as she is willing, and Susan agrees that she is willing to part from Michael.

Richard Newson's appearance reflects his occupation as a sailor, and as a sailor he is a traveler, and a stranger, who will not be expected to stay in one place. He qualifies his "purchase" of Susan by asking for her agreement, demonstrating that he cares more about her free will and happiness than Henchard does.

Michael takes the money, and, as Susan leaves with Newson, she whirls back to her former husband and hurls her wedding ring at him, accusing him of his dreadful temper and claiming she will try her luck elsewhere. Michael is somewhat disoriented by this outcome.

Susan's action of throwing away her wedding ring symbolically reflects the end of her marriage to Henchard from her perspective. Later on, however, both characters will still feel legally *bound to the other.*

The crowd looks out the door after the retreating trio. The world beyond the tent is peaceful: horses waiting for the journey home, the rosy clouds hanging in the sky, and the quiet woods and valleys. All of nature contrasts sharply to the scene that took place inside the tent. The other customers feel that Susan's departure has served her husband right for his behavior. Michael exclaims that she shouldn't have taken *his* child with her. As the other customers depart, Michael falls asleep at a table, and the furmity-woman leaves him there for the night.

The narrator acknowledges the sharp contrast between the emotional events in the tent and the serene natural world outside. Throughout the novel, the natural world will play a role in the plot, as well as provide a backdrop for human actions. Henchard's reaction to Susan's disappearance reflects his perception of their child as his, more so than hers, or theirs.

CHAPTER 2

The morning sun awakens Michael Henchard the next day. He groggily recalls the events of the previous evening, as he discovers his wife's wedding ring in the grass and the bank notes in his pocket. Michael emerges from the tent into a beautiful September morning. The gypsies and other visitors to the area are still sleeping, so he leaves Weydon unobserved. About a mile away, he stops, leaning upon a gate, to reflect on his predicament.

The wedding ring and the five guineas serve as physical reminders of the events of the previous evening. Now Henchard possesses two different "things" than he possessed the evening before. He leaves Weydon unseen, which reflects his feelings that something went wrong in a shameful, even if he is unwilling to feel or admit guilt.

Henchard worries that he might have revealed his own name the previous evening. He is both surprised and angered by Susan's willingness to go along with her own sale, and he realizes that she must, in her simplicity he believes, except the sale as a binding exchange. He rails against her for bringing such disgrace upon him. Her meekness, he feels, has done Michael more harm than a bitter temper could have done. He vows that he will find her and their daughter, Elizabeth-Jane.

Henchard hopes that he didn't reveal his name the previous evening, which shows that Henchard understands his actions to have been wrong. However, he worries more about how others will see him because of the event, instead of feeling guilty. He blames Susan for her choice, particularly because it shows him in a poor light to others.

Henchard walks on until he sees a village and towering church spire. He heads to the church and enters through its unlocked door. At this morning hour, the labors have left for the fields, but their wives have not yet awoken. In the church, Henchard speaks aloud his vow to never drink liquor for at least twenty years, asking that he be struck dumb, blind, and helpless if he breaks this vow. Having taken this first step in a new direction, he eats breakfast in the village.

Henchard's vow is significant because it takes place in a church, a traditional place of prayer and penance. His vow to not drink is both a punishment for his past actions, but also a goal for improvement in the future. Henchard, despite having sold his family, is not "evil." He is a complex character who is able to grow and change.

Henchard seeks his wife and child, but as the weeks turn to months and he continues his search between odd jobs, he realizes the difficulty of the search. He is reluctant to reveal his own misconduct, which also hampers his search. Eventually he arrives at a western seaport, only to learn that people matching the description he gives emigrated before he arrived there. Finally giving up the search, he moves south to settle in the town of Casterbridge.

Henchard's dedicated search for his wife and child reflect a commitment to his family, and his sense of duty to them. However, because this search is hampered by his unwillingness to tell the full story, it is clear that he places his own reputation above this sense of familial duty.

CHAPTER 3

Exactly eighteen years have passed since Michael Henchard sold his wife and child at the Weydon fair. On this early fall day, a much-changed Susan and Elizabeth-Jane take the little-changed road to Weydon-Priors. Susan is dressed in black as a widow, and Elizabeth-Jane is a grown young woman. The mother and daughter walk hand-in-hand. The Weydon Fair has changed, as the entertainments show marks of advancing inventions and improvements, but the sale of livestock and products has reduced by half. The new great markets in neighboring towns have interfered with the business of the fair.

Despite this jump forward in time, the setting is the same. Susan and Elizabeth-Jane are placed on the same road toward Weydon-Priors, so that the reader is able to see the physical change that eighteen years has produced. The pair holds hands, showing their close mother-daughter connection. The reduction of animal auctions at the fair may also reflect the changing roles of women, who Henchard once equated with property.

Elizabeth-Jane questions her mother as to why they are stopping at the fair. Susan says she first met Newson at this very fair, and Elizabeth sighs over the death of Richard Newson, recently drowned at sea. She is unaware that Newson is not her biological father. Hesitantly, Susan also admits that at this fair she last saw the relative she and her daughter are seeking: Michael Henchard. When questioned further by Elizabeth-Jane about their relation to Henchard, Susan says he is a distant relative by marriage who never knew Elizabeth-Jane.

The death of Richard Newson is clearly a sad memory for both women, reflecting his kindness to them both. However, his death is also the reason that Susan is seeking Henchard. Susan's concealment of the truth from Elizabeth-Jane reflects the still-painful nature of the situation. It also shows Susan's natural tendency to conceal problematic truths if possible.

At the fair, Susan spots the same furmity-woman, now grown old and poor. Her furmity pot is outside, without the grand tent it once had, and she is selling only to the poorest of customers. Elizabeth-Jane stays back when her mother goes to the speak with the old woman, cautioning her mother that it isn't respectable for her to speak to such a poor woman.

The furmity-woman's reduction in success and wealth is a portrait of the changes in fortune that can happen to any individual. Her situation is strongly contrasted to Henchard's own successes, which will be discussed later.

Susan purchases a small bowl of furmity and the woman offers to add rum to it, which Susan refuses, recalling how this very rum and furmity lead her husband to auction her off. Susan questions the woman about her past and her better days at the fair. She asks if the woman can remember a man who sold his wife in her tent eighteen years ago today.

The rum offered by the furmity-woman reminds Susan of Henchard's past actions. It provides a further link between drinking and Henchard's self-destructive nature: when he is drinking, he and others suffer, when he abstains, he is able to excel.

The furmity-woman does remember Henchard, but only because, she says, he returned to the fair the following year. At that time, Henchard told the furmity-seller that if a woman every inquired about him to say that he had gone to Casterbridge. Susan returns to her daughter to report that she has heard about their long-lost relative, and that they will head to the distant town of Casterbridge.

The furmity-woman points Susan toward Casterbridge, as Henchard himself requested she do. Henchard's message to the furmity-woman reflects some faith that he might one day be reunited with Susan, or some belief that Susan might seek him out.

CHAPTER 4

Susan has never told Elizabeth-Jane the truth about Henchard and the events at the Weydon-Priors fair. Susan has also innocently believed her sale to Richard Newson to be binding. A friend in whom Susan confided the truth corrected her belief, and Susan was torn between her loyalty to her true husband and her connection to Newson.

Susan's belief that her sale to Newson was binding reflects her innocent acceptance of events in her life. Susan is naturally passive, but she is also strongly driven by loyalty and duty. Upon learning the truth, she felt torn between her duties to both men.

The news of Newson's loss at sea relieved Susan's conscience and made her free to seek out her husband, Henchard. Susan tells Elizabeth-Jane that they are seeking a relative to ask for his support in their state of poverty after Newson's loss.

Death appears at a few places in the novel as a means of relieving other characters from responsibilities and duties, particularly those of marriage or family commitment.

On a September evening, the mother and daughter arrive at Casterbridge, an old-fashioned village crowed together and surrounded by a square of trees. Two talking men pass them on the road, and Elizabeth-Jane overhears them use the name "Henchard." Susan wishes to make more private inquiries than to ask the men about Henchard and his role in the town.

The mention of Henchard's name before Susan and Elizabeth-Jane actually arrive in Casterbridge foreshadows Henchard's importance and prominence in the town. Susan wishes to keep her dealings with Henchard private, which again reflects her interest in secrecy and discretion.

The trees surrounding Casterbridge are part of the town's ancient defenses. The houses are built within a wall within the line of trees on a bank before a ditch. The well-lit town is clearly separate from the dark countryside. Sounds of a brass band can be heard as the two women walk down High Street. The farming tools and products available in the shop windows reflect the pastoral character of the town.

The physical layout of the town makes Casterbridge seem like an old-fashioned fortress, separate from the surrounding countryside, but the shops and tools demonstrate the town's dependence on farming. The success or failure of farming drives major events in the novel.

In the square before the church, a few women taste pieces of bread. Susan inquires after the nearest bakery, but the pair learns from the woman about the shortage of bread in town due to the sale of a crop of bad wheat. The woman notes their unfamiliarity with Casterbridge, but Susan withdraws, not wishing to be to be too closely observed before she learns of Henchard's situation and whereabouts.

The bad wheat and the shortage of bread reflect a problem in Casterbridge, something that needs to be fixed. Another thing that needs to be restored is the broken marriage between Susan and Henchard, and, like the wheat, this is later improved.

CHAPTER 5

Following the sounds of the brass band, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane arrive outside of the chief hotel in Casterbridge, the Golden Crown. The blinds of the front room of the hotel are open and across the street a group of idlers stands surveying the events in the front room of the hotel. Susan encourages Elizabeth-Jane to make some inquiries of his group about Henchard.

Lower class characters in the street observe the goings-on in the Golden Crown. Throughout the novel, the differences in wealth and class in Casterbridge are made clear.

Elizabeth-Jane asks an old man in the group what is going on, and he tells her that they are watching a dinner of the foremost men in town, including the councilmen and the mayor, Henchard. Surprised, Elizabeth-Jane and Susan climb the steps across the street, so they can look into the hotel room. Henchard sits at the head of the table within the room, laughing occasionally, his face matured, and his clothes fine with jeweled studs. At his right hand is only a glass of water.

The marks of the change Henchard has gone through since he stopped drinking are apparent in his position (as mayor), his mannerisms (laughter), and his physical indications of wealth (fine clothes and jewels). He is clearly not drinking alcohol, as he once would have done at any opportunity.

As Susan looks at Henchard, she is overcome with emotion and withdraws into the shadows. Elizabeth-Jane asks her mother if she has seen their relative, and Susan exclaims that she has seen him and now only wants to "go—pass away—die." Elizabeth-Jane thinks her mother is afraid that Henchard will not want to help them, and says she thought he seemed like a generous man, pointing out his gentlemanly looks and his diamond studs. Susan says he overpowers her, and she doesn't wish to see him anymore.

Susan's reaction to Henchard's elevated position is one of intimidation and shame. Perhaps she remembers Henchard's force of character even when he was a lowly hay-trusser, and fears his current power. Perhaps she is ashamed by the economic differences between them that have been the product of eighteen years apart.

Elizabeth-Jane is excited by their connection to the mayor, and watches the scene inside with interest. She notices that Henchard's wine glass is never filled and points this out to the old man in the crowd. The old man says that Henchard is famous for his abstinence from liquor because he swore an oath to not drink, for at least another two years. Another old man joins their conversation and the two refer to Henchard as a lonely widower. Elizabeth-Jane asks when he lost his wife, and learns that it was long ago, before he came to Casterbridge. Henchard, the men report, owns the most profitable business in wheat and corn, and has worked his way up to the top of local society. However, recently his business has sold a crop of bad wheat.

Elizabeth-Jane, unlike Susan, finds Henchard more appealing because of his position and his obvious marks of wealth. From the crowd, Elizabeth-Jane learns of Henchard's abstinence from liquor, his loss of a wife in his past, and his profitable business. All of the details of this information are revealed to be surprisingly accurate for town gossip. Throughout the novel, the townsfolk have access to information and secrets, often before those who the secrets concern.

One of the minor tradesmen seated at the foot of the table in the hotel asks Henchard about the bad bread. Despite this man's lower social standing, others take up his question. Henchard's face darkens with temper, but he tells the listeners that they must make allowances for the running of a large business and the poor weather that year. He says he has advertised for a manager to help with his business and to prevent such mistakes. When pressed on whether he will replace the poor purchased wheat, he says, he would if anyone could tell him how to turn bad wheat into wholesome wheat, but that this cannot be done.

Henchard's face darkening with temper shows that he has not lost all of his natural passion. However, in this situation, he responds rationally to the questions about his bad wheat. He says he is seeking a manager, which foreshadows the introduction of Farfrae's character, but also reveals Henchard's tendency to blame others, or the absence of others, when something goes wrong.

CHAPTER 6

New people have joined the group observing in the street and among them is a young man who is distinct from the others by his pleasant air and his carpetbag, which marks him as a traveler. He overhears Henchard's final words about **restoring wheat** and stops to write a note, which he gives to one of the waiters at the door of the hotel with instructions to give the note to the mayor at once.

The traveler contacts Henchard via a note. He is unable, because of his lower class position and his newness in town, to address himself to the mayor directly. He is described as having a pleasant air, and kindness and joviality continues to define his character.

Elizabeth-Jane overhears this interaction and is intrigued by the young man and his Scottish accent, as well as the exchange. The young man asks the waiter to recommend a more moderately priced hotel, and he is directed to The King of Prussia. The young man leaves for the hotel and Elizabeth-Jane sees his note brought to Henchard at the table. Henchard is visibly affected by the note and stays quiet, thinking, as the other men give toasts. Elizabeth-Jane asks her mother what she would like to do, as it is late in the evening. Elizabeth-Jane recommends that they head to The King of Prussia, like the young man who she judged to be respectable.

Elizabeth-Jane observes the young man, the note he sends, and Henchard's reaction with precise detail. Elizabeth-Jane is intelligent and perceptive. She also, in many ways, is more mother than child to Susan. She practically suggests going to The King of Prussia hotel, taking charge of their situation because her mother is overcome by Henchard's presence and position.

Just after Susan and Elizabeth-Jane leave the crowd outside, Henchard leaves the table and asks the waiter about the young man who sent the note. Seeing that the toasts in the dining room are proceeding merrily without him, Henchard sets off toward The King of Prussia. Henchard buttons his overcoat over his nice shirt and attempts to tone down his appearance of wealth to his everyday appearance before he enters The King of Prussia inn, which is joined by a dimly lit passageway to the horse stalls at the back.

The note is enough to cause Henchard to seek out the young man who wrote it. He adjusts his appearance before going to The King of Prussia. Wealth is often indicated visually through the quality of the objects one owns. Casterbridge society assesses characters on their possession and treatment of property: clothes, fashionable items, houses, and furniture.

CHAPTER 7

Susan and Elizabeth-Jane enter The King of Prussia after debating about whether or not even this moderate inn is a place they can afford to stay. They are taken to their room where the inn, though old-fashioned and poorly constructed on the outside, is revealed to be clean and well kept with an excess of linen. Susan fears that they cannot afford to stay here, but Elizabeth-Jane insists that they must be respectable. Susan frets that Henchard is "too high" for them to make themselves known to him, and so they have only their own money to depend upon.

Susan and Elizabeth-Jane's opposing reactions to the cleanliness and expense of The King of Prussia reveal their different priorities and personalities: Susan is intimidated by both the inn and by Henchard and feels they don't fit in, whereas Elizabeth-Jane is willing to do whatever it takes to be "respectable." Elizabeth-Jane's self-control and self-regulation guide her throughout the novel.

Elizabeth-Jane decides to sacrifice her own dignity for the sake of their situation, and so she approaches the landlady with the offer of her working at the inn, which is busy that evening, in order to help cover the cost of their accommodations. A bell rings downstairs, and the landlady directs Elizabeth-Jane to take the Scottish gentleman his supper on a tray. Elizabeth-Jane discovers that the young man is in the room next to hers and her mothers. He is reading the local paper when she enters, and she sets down the tray and goes away without a word.

Elizabeth-Jane's decision to wait on the guests of The King of Prussia comes to light later in the novel and divides her and Henchard. Her act of waiting on the young Scottish man reveals her curiosity about him. This, in particular, angers Henchard later in the novel because in waiting on this man, Elizabeth-Jane placed herself as inferior to him and Henchard values his own reputation and that of his family. The man is eventually revealed as Farfrae.

Elizabeth-Jane takes her and her mother's supper upstairs, but finds her mother is listening in on a conversation occurring in the next room. Henchard has called on the young Scottish man and asks if he is the one who sent the note at the Golden Crown. Henchard thinks the young man must be Joshua Jopp, a man who he planned to meet the next day and interview for the position of manager of his business. The Scottish man instead introduces himself as Donald Farfrae, saying he is passing through town on his way to Bristol to seek passage to America.

Susan, despite her close connection to Henchard, is cautious and gathers information before revealing herself to him. Elizabeth-Jane does not know the extent of the reason for this caution. Farfrae is introduced as a traveler, a fortune-seeker, who is passing through Casterbridge. Henchard's insistence that he stay means that he handpicks the man who ruins his life.

Henchard is grateful for the note Farfrae gave him, and asks if he'd be willing to prove the contents of the note: that he has a method for **restoring poor wheat** to quality. Farfrae willingly demonstrates the technique with a few grains he has on hand. He is only too glad to pass on the technique to Henchard, if the older man finds it useful. Henchard is impressed and promptly offers him the position of his business manager. Farfrae, however, refuses, as he is committed to his plan to travel to America.

The method for restoring poor wheat is presented in the overheard conversation. Henchard's insistence that this cannot be done, that time cannot be reversed, allows the bad wheat to be interpreted as a symbol for his relationship with Susan. If this bad wheat can be restored, so too can the connection between Susan and Henchard.

Farfrae will not accept payment for the technique, and Henchard is again impressed by this kindness from a stranger and pleads with Farfrae to accept the post. Farfrae declines, but invites Henchard to drink with him. Henchard says he cannot as he took a vow years ago after a deed he will be ashamed of for his whole life. The two amicably part ways.

Farfrae's generosity is demonstrated in this first interaction with Henchard in which he gives him the wheat restoring technique for free. Farfrae continues his generosity toward Henchard for a large part of novel, despite their falling out.

CHAPTER 8

Elizabeth-Jane and Susan finish their meal in silence, consumed by their own thoughts. Donald Farfrae descends to the general company downstairs, and Elizabeth-Jane, after carrying down his tray, as well as their own, quietly joins the guests in the sitting room. At the request of some tradesmen, the young Scottish man favors the room with a song. Elizabeth-Jane is enraptured by the beauty and emotion of his song.

Elizabeth-Jane is as enthralled as the occupants of the inn by Farfrae's musical talent and his presence. Farfrae seems to win friends and admirers naturally and everywhere he goes, unlike the gruffer Henchard. Elizabeth-Jane's attraction to Farfrae, established in this first scene, persists throughout the novel.

Solomon Longways and Christopher Coney, two local men, call upon Farfrae to sing again, and exclaim over the song, which speaks of Farfrae's homeland of Scotland. They ask Farfrae about why he has left his home when it is clear that he cares for it strongly. They bemoan England, and particularly Casterbridge's dark history, in comparison, referencing its historical rebellions against the crown. Farfrae sings a few more songs, completely winning over the hearts of the occupants of the sitting room. They ask if Farfrae plans to stay in Casterbridge, only to hear that he is passing through.

Villagers like Solomon Longways and Christopher Coney play peripheral and yet vital roles throughout the novel. The development of these secondary characters helps to flesh out the world of Casterbridge. In this scene, these characters discuss their home and develop the setting, as well as demonstrating the way that Farfrae's natural openness and joy makes him immediately popular in the town.

Elizabeth-Jane admires Farfrae and agrees with the general disappointment at his brief stay in Casterbridge. She feels that he sees the world in a very similar way to herself, as something that is primarily tragic, rather than comical, in which happiness and lightness is intermittent, rather than expected. When Farfrae plans to retire, the landlady tells Elizabeth-Jane to turn down his bed. Coming back down the stairs, Elizabeth-Jane encounters Farfrae on the stairs. He sings to her a verse of a song about "bonnie Peg my dearie."

Elizabeth-Jane, despite her limited knowledge of Farfrae, is quick to establish similarities between themselves. Her initial crush holds true, however, over years and in the face of trials. She is attracted to Farfrae's character and this does not change, even as she gets to know him better, and as time passes. Farfrae demonstrates an initial interest in her as well.

Elizabeth-Jane returns to her room to find Susan distraught at the idea that Elizabeth-Jane lowered herself to waiting in the inn, for this would cast a poor light on Henchard, if he did connect himself with them, and this information was public. Elizabeth-Jane says she did not mind waiting upon the very respectable young man. Henchard, who has wandered past the inn after his meeting with Farfrae, overhears the young man singing, and wishes he could have convinced him to stay and join in his business.

Susan's distress at Elizabeth-Jane working at the inn reflects her obsessive focus on Henchard's high position. She has not been able to overcome her fear of Henchard's position, despite her conviction that it is her duty to return to him. At this point, Henchard feels as charmed by Farfrae as any of the villagers, and wishes he would stay.

CHAPTER 9

The next morning, Elizabeth-Jane opens their window to discover a conversation occurring between Henchard, in the street, and Farfrae, at the next-door window. Farfrae is departing and Henchard offers to walk with him to the top of town. Farfrae leaves the inn, bag in hand, and the pair sets off. Farfrae glances up at Elizabeth-Jane at the window, but does not acknowledge her, which makes the young woman feel slighted, despite reminding herself that they did not know each other.

The next morning, Henchard continues to be focused on Farfrae and convincing him to stay in Casterbridge. Elizabeth-Jane likewise is focused on him, to the point of feeling offended that he does not return her interest. Despite Farfrae's brief stay in town, he is already the focus of the main characters' (and the villagers') attentions.

Susan says she has been thinking of Henchard's sudden liking for the young Scottish man, and wondering if he takes so kindly to strangers, perhaps he will respond in kind to his own kin. Five large wagons of hay pass in the street, marked as part of Henchard's business, renewing Susan's conviction that she ought to try to rejoin the prosperous Henchard at least for her daughter's sake.

Susan interprets Henchard's focus on Farfrae as a mark of his newfound kindness. Henchard's wealth persuades Susan that she needs to reconnect with him. More than anything, Susan is motivated by securing Henchard's prosperity for her daughter.

Susan decides to send Elizabeth-Jane to Henchard with a note telling him of Susan's arrival in town, her status as a sailor's widow. She tells her daughter that if Henchard does not wish to recognize them to tell him that they will leave Casterbridge as quietly as they came. If he does wish to acknowledge them, he should arrange a way to see Susan.

Susan does not seek out Henchard directly, but sends Elizabeth-Jane with a note allowing Henchard the option of meeting with her or not. This tentative move allows the decision to be Henchard's. Susan has followed her husband's will in the past, and continues to do so here.

Elizabeth-Jane walks up High Street on the busy market day morning. The street is filled with vans unloading wares, shops displaying their items outside, livestock for sale, and farmers and townsfolk in the middle of business dealings. Casterbridge forms the center of the surrounding country life. All the signs of country life in this old market town are exciting and fresh sights to Elizabeth-Jane. Elizabeth-Jane arrives at Henchard's home, one of the best in town, and finds the front door open revealing a passageways leading all the way to the garden at the back of the house. She is directed to an office in the store-yard.

The description of Casterbridge on market day demonstrates the key role that farming plays in the lives of these villagers. Because Henchard, and later Farfrae, are farming merchants, their economic importance in Casterbridge also makes them important in the social and political community. Henchard's house is another physical indication of his success and wealth.

Elizabeth-Jane enters the office to find not Henchard, but Farfrae, pouring over some samples. Momentarily confused, Elizabeth-Jane recovers and asks to see Henchard. At the moment of Henchard and Farfrae's parting on the road that morning, Henchard had spoken up again and persuaded the younger man to stay. Farfrae had exclaimed that this situation must be the work of Providence, and had agreed to become Henchard's manager. Henchard, now confident and extravagant in his kindnesses, had welcomed Farfrae to a second breakfast and insisted the young man live in his house, at least until he could find other accommodations. Henchard then gave Farfrae a tour of the premises and of his business.

Farfrae's appearance at Henchard's is a surprise for both Elizabeth-Jane and for the reader. The novel then moves backward in time to account for Farfrae's presence, explaining how Henchard persuaded the young man to stay. This twist in the narrative emphasizes Elizabeth-Jane's surprise, and reinforces for the reader that Farfrae will be a main character in the text who will not disappear from Casterbridge, despite Henchard's later wish to be rid of him.

CHAPTER 10

As Henchard opens the door of his office to admit Elizabeth-Jane, a newcomer enters and steps forward before Elizabeth-Jane. This newcomer introduces himself as Joshua Jopp, the man Henchard was supposed to interview that day for the position of his business manager. Henchard tells Jopp that he has hired another man, despite having agreed to hire him subject to an interview. As Jopp leaves, Elizabeth-Jane reads the bitterness in his face expression.

Henchard's engagement of Farfrae as his manager, despite his promise to Jopp, reveals his fundamentally selfish nature. He wanted the best manager, and was willing to go against his previous promises to achieve this. Jopp's disappointment and bitterness foreshadows and propels his need for revenge on Farfrae.

Elizabeth-Jane asks Henchard if she may speak with him on a personal matter. She informs him that his relative Susan Newson is in town and wishes to see him. Elizabeth-Jane introduces herself as Elizabeth-Jane Newson, which suggests to Henchard the truth of the situation: Elizabeth-Jane does not know Henchard's connection to her. Henchard invites her into his house and learns the circumstances of his wife and daughter's seeming disappearance, as they had been living for a few years in Canada. Henchard discerns that, with Newson's death, the pair has not been left well off. He writes a note to Susan and includes a five-pound note and five shillings.

Elizabeth-Jane introducing herself as "Elizabeth-Jane Newson" is interpreted by Henchard as an indication of Susan's desire to hide the past from their daughter, rather than an indication of the truth of Elizabeth-Jane's parentage, as it is revealed later in the novel. Henchard does not suspect that Susan may be keeping a secret from him. He feels obligated to reconnect with Susan because of her poor situation, and, primarily, for his daughter's sake.

Elizabeth-Jane returns with the note and money to The King of Prussia. Susan is moved at the sight of the note and asks Elizabeth-Jane to recount her experience of meeting Henchard. The note asks Susan to meet Henchard at eight o'clock that evening at **The Ring** outside of town. The enclosure of **five guineas** with the note is a significant sum, indicating Henchard's act of buying his wife back again for the same sum.

The five guineas enclosed with Henchard's note are a symbol for both the characters within the novel and the reader. Henchard intends the money to be a symbolic representation of the reversal of his transaction with Newson. Henchard uses discretion in communicating with Susan and meeting with her privately—he wants to make up for his past shameful action, but quietly, without ever revealing the shame.

CHAPTER 11

The town of Casterbridge shows its Roman heritage in its architecture and every street, alley, and precinct. Farmers in the fields frequently uncover Roman skeletons while digging in the ground. One mark of Roman history is **The Ring**, a fine amphitheater existing from this earlier civilization. The Ring in Henchard and Susan's day serves primarily as a spot for furtive encounters, however, it never serves as the site of happy secret meetings between couples. The dark history of The Ring hangs over the place. The town gallows once stood in The Ring and various crimes have been committed in the secluded area. Visitors to the location report having seen ghosts of gladiators in broad daylight.

The Ring is a symbol of both Casterbridge's history and the furtive dealings that still occur in the town. The Ring is, therefore, the perfect meeting site for Henchard and Susan to keep their business private. The place is haunted by its history of crime and violence, and Henchard and Susan's reunion is therefore grouped among these events: an illicit meeting between two ghosts from each other's pasts. Also note how Susan threw off her ring when Henchard auctioned her away. Now a different ring is where they come back together.

Henchard chose **The Ring** as the meeting location for himself and his long-lost wife. He hopes to maintain his reputation, and therefore cannot invite her to his house after nightfall. The pair meets in the middle of The Ring and does not speak at first, but Susan leans against Henchard who holds her in his arms. His first words are to tell her that he no longer drinks and has not since that fateful night at the fair. He tells Susan that he thought she must have died, wondering why she kept silent and distant from him for so long.

Henchard's concern for his reputation reflects his awareness that his hidden past is not compatible with the station he has achieved within Casterbridge society. Henchard and Susan's first gesture upon meeting is one of physical intimacy: a hug that communicates a connection despite the amount of time that has passed since they were together.

Susan explains her confusion and the fact that she believed her commitment to Newson was binding. Henchard says that he thinks Susan innocent in her past actions, but he is frustrated by the thought of Elizabeth-Jane knowing the truth. Susan says she too could not bear for her daughter to know the truth, which is why she was brought up in ignorance. Henchard says that they must be careful to maintain the young woman's ignorance, as well as to maintain his reputation in the town. He has developed the plan of securing a cottage in town for Susan and Elizabeth-Jane, and then staging their meeting, courtship, and marriage, so the pair may join Henchard in his home.

Henchard's belief in Susan's innocence allows him to forgive her for not seeking him out sooner. He wishes to continue to hide the truth from Elizabeth-Jane, and his plan to remarry Susan, after a proper display of courtship, reflects his new interest in both propriety and in providing for those whose care is one of his duties.

Henchard insists that the pair take nicer lodgings, so that they are perceived as genteel. Henchard repeats his anxiety about Elizabeth-Jane discovering the truth, and Susan assures him of how unlikely the young woman is to ever dream of the real story. As the two part, Henchard asks Susan if she forgives him. She struggles to respond, and he asks that she judge him by his future actions, rather than by the past.

Henchard's concerns center around his reputation in town and Elizabeth-Jane's ignorance. He is focused on how he is thought of by others, and wants this opinion, be it the villagers', Elizabeth-Jane's, or Susan's, to be a favorable opinion.

CHAPTER 12

Henchard returns home, and sees a light on in the office where Farfrae is still hard at work. Henchard admires Farfrae's skill at overhauling the business's books, as he himself is not inclined to tasks on paper, or tasks that require attention to details. Eventually, he stops the younger man's work and insists that he join him for supper. Farfrae is already becoming used to the strength of Henchard's requests and impulses.

Farfrae's work on the business books emphasizes a fundamental difference between Henchard and himself: Henchard succeeds through strength of personality, and Farfrae through hard work and attention to details.

Henchard wishes to tell Farfrae about a family matter, saying that he is a lonely man, and that he might as well confess all to his new friend. Henchard tells in full the story of how he sold his wife and child nineteen years ago. He says that it has not been difficult for him to remain without a wife for those many years until this very day, for his wife has come back. Farfrae asks Henchard if he cannot make amends with his wife and resume his life with her. Henchard says that is indeed what he plans to do, but, in doing so, that he must wrong another woman.

Henchard confides in Farfrae before he knows him very well. He later regrets this action after the pair's falling out. Henchard reveals to Farfrae the problem with his plan of marrying Susan, a problem that he did not explain to Susan in the previous scene. Henchard's tendency to hide the truth to benefit himself is here revealed.

Henchard tells Farfrae of his commitment to another woman who had nursed him one autumn when he fell ill on his trade route through Jersey. This woman fell in love with Henchard and, although their relationship was innocent, their proximity and her affection for Henchard caused a scandal in her community. Henchard told her he could not marry her, out of concern that his wife Susan may yet be living. Recently, however, believing Susan to be no longer living, he decided to marry this other woman, if she would still have him knowing the circumstances.

Henchard's connection with this woman in Jersey demonstrates the power of public opinion and reputation at this time period. Although their relationship was innocent, the affection this woman had for Henchard was enough to harm her reputation. Henchard feels that he must do what is "right" by this woman and by Susan, without considering his actual feelings for either woman.

Henchard's agreement to marry the woman who had cared for him was followed directly by Susan's reappearance. Farfrae is baffled by Henchard's complicated circumstances, which far exceed his own straightforward experiences. Henchard feels that, despite his later agreement, his first duty must be to Susan. He is sympathetic, however, toward the other woman and decides to send the poor girl some money along with a letter Farfrae helps him craft.

The timing of Henchard's decision to marry this other woman and the reappearance of Susan will hurt this other woman. His solution is to provide her with money. To Henchard, money seems a fitting replacement for a marriage or a relationship. Once again, money for Henchard is connected to the loss or gain of a human being.

Henchard concludes his tale by telling Farfrae about his daughter and her ignorance of her own past. Despite Farfrae's advice to tell Elizabeth-Jane the truth and ask for her forgiveness, Henchard says that he will not do so, and that he and Susan will pretend to meet and remarry before renewing their lives together.

Farfrae's advice is to tell Elizabeth-Jane the truth and to ask for forgiveness. This advice reflects Farfrae's honesty. Henchard would prefer to conceal the truth than to reveal it and risk losing the girl's affection.

CHAPTER 13

Susan and Elizabeth-Jane live in a nice cottage paid for by Henchard. Henchard visits regularly, with business-like commitment, seeming to have schooled himself to follow his duty to his old wife perfectly. Susan feels she has entered into a new commitment to Henchard solely for the sake of her daughter and her daughter's reputation. She, however, feels concerned by the attention Henchard pays her that she is costing him too much and taking up too much of his time. Henchard, on the other hand, is happy to leave more and more of the business management to Farfrae.

Henchard and Susan's courtship is dictated by their feelings of duty and obligation rather than by any feelings of love. Both are motivated by a commitment to what is best for their daughter. Henchard, now that he has Farfrae, is happy to avoid the business management, which he disliked, and to enjoy the aspects of his position that he found more enjoyable.

The town of Casterbridge gossips about Henchard's delayed choice of a wife in such a pale and fragile woman as the widowed Mrs. Newson. Henchard continues to keep up appearances despite his lack of emotional attachment to Susan. He is motivated not by love, but by his resolve to make amends to Susan, provide for Elizabeth-Jane, and excuse himself from the dark deeds in his past.

To outside eyes, Susan seems a strange choice for Henchard's wife. Henchard's prominence in town means that the villagers feel he is marrying "below him." The match's strangeness to the outside world reinforces the fact that Henchard's decision to re-marry Susan is motivated solely by duty and guilt over the past.

The villagers Christopher Coney, Solomon Longways, Buzzford, and their friends gather on Henchard and Susan's wedding day to gossip. They are surprised to see Henchard has waited to so long in life to marry and to take on so little (a woman such as Susan who is little in both stature and situation). Mother Cuxsom joins the gossiping villagers who banter about her late husband and reminisce about her late mother, among other fond memories. As the married pair appears out of the church, the villagers disperse for drinks as the moist weather is declared reason for doing little work that day.

The villagers of Casterbridge add complexity and interest to the novel with their colorful stories and gossip. Less innocently, they demonstrate the way news and gossip function in a small town. Everyone knows and discusses each other's business. In such an environment, it is difficult to keep secrets. The revealing of secrets causes many of the major plot events of the novel.

CHAPTER 14

Both Susan and Elizabeth-Jane flourish once they move into Henchard's home. He provides for them, improving his own home, and buying things his wife and daughter desire. Elizabeth-Jane's beauty grows as the lines on her brow that came with poverty vanish. She does not make a fool of herself by dressing extravagantly with her new wealth and position, but instead continues to be modest, fearful that a dramatic display of her new situation would only tempt Providence to cast her and her mother down again.

An increase in wealth has a dramatic impact on both Susan and Elizabeth-Jane. Their physical appearances, as well as their possessions, improve. Elizabeth-Jane is wary, however, of this wealth because she is familiar with loss and poverty. Her unwillingness to indulge displays her prudence and her modesty, though her diffidence also stops her from seizing what she wants.

One morning at breakfast, Henchard comments upon Elizabeth-Jane's hair, which is light brown. He says that Susan had once remarked that her daughter's hair would turn out black. Susan gives him a startled look, and once Elizabeth-Jane has left the room, Henchard exclaims that he almost forgot their agreement and mistakenly revealed his and Susan's true connection. He repeats that Elizabeth-Jane's hair had once appeared like it would be darker, and Susan looks uneasy.

Through this minor slip-up, the truth is almost revealed to Elizabeth-Jane. The difficulty of hiding complex secrets is demonstrated. Susan's uneasiness, which Henchard interprets as anxiety about Elizabeth-Jane learning the truth, foreshadows that the secret is more complex than Henchard himself realizes.

Henchard then shares with Susan that he would like to have Elizabeth-Jane called Miss Henchard rather than Miss Newson. Susan protests slightly at first, but then agrees with Henchard. However, Susan goes to Elizabeth-Jane and tells her of Henchard's proposal to change her last name. She asks her daughter whether or not she too feels this to be a slight against the deceased Newson. Elizabeth-Jane asks Henchard if the name change matters greatly to him. Henchard quickly dismisses his commitment to the change, saying Elizabeth-Jane should not do it to please him, and the matter is not discussed again.

Susan does not confront Henchard about changing Elizabeth-Jane's name, but instead subtly convinces Elizabeth-Jane to defend her last name. This demonstrates that Susan is capable of more cleverness and subtly than is revealed by her meek appearance and personality. Henchard never suspects her of anything underhanded or manipulative.

Meanwhile, Henchard's business thrives with Farfrae's management. Farfrae meticulously replaces Henchard's method of making verbal promises and remembering everything with ledgers and written agreements. Henchard spends a large amount of time with the young man and considers him a close companion. Elizabeth-Jane frequently watches the pair in the yard at work from her bedroom window.

Farfrae's meticulous management improves Henchard's business and demonstrates that he is the stronger businessman. Henchard, at this point, does not realize Farfrae's strengths and does not feel threatened. Elizabeth-Jane finds Farfrae alluring.

Elizabeth-Jane also notes how Farfrae looks at her and her mother, as they walk together. She is slightly disappointed and confused to see that Farfrae looks most at her mother. She dismisses this information, not suspecting the truth of her parents' shared past or Farfrae's knowledge of this.

Farfrae is more curious about Susan than about Elizabeth-Jane because of the secret he knows. Elizabeth-Jane's interest in Farfrae is revealed by her disappointment at his lack of interest in her.

A street consisting of farmer's homesteads makes up the Durnover end of Casterbridge where those who farm corn on the uplands side of the town live. These are the men with whom Henchard primarily does business. One day, Elizabeth-Jane receives a note by hand asking her come at once to a specific granary in Durnover. She thinks the note must have something to do with Henchard's business in that area.

Elizabeth-Jane is not suspicious about obeying the request of a note that she thinks has to do with Henchard's business.

Elizabeth-Jane arrives at the granary and waits, only to see Farfrae appear. She hides in the granary itself, not wishing to meet him directly, out of shyness. However, he too stops there to wait, drawing out of his pocket a note identical to her note. The situation, Elizabeth-Jane realizes, is very awkward. She does not want to reveal her hiding place as more and more time passes. Farfrae, however, hears her move in the granary and ascends the steps to see her there.

Elizabeth-Jane's instinctual response to Farfrae's appearance is to hide, which shows both her shyness and her particular shyness of Farfrae. Farfrae, however, does not exhibit this same shyness, and approaches her in the granary.

Elizabeth-Jane assumes Farfrae had arranged to meet her and she shows him the note she received. He shows her the similar note that he received and the pair realizes that some third person must be wishing to see them both and decides to wait. Eventually the two young people begin a conversation. Elizabeth-Jane asks about Scotland and mentions the song Farfrae sang at The King of Prussia. Farfrae says that he does not long to return to Scotland, despite his emotion while singing of his homeland.

The pair believes they must be waiting for some third person, the sender of the notes, but as they wait, they begin to get to know each other. They are able to speak about personal matters, such as Farfrae's emotions about his homeland, despite his assurance that he doesn't plan to return there.

Farfrae delicately points out that Elizabeth-Jane's dress is covered in wheat husks from the granary. He offers his assistance and blows the wheat husks from her clothes and hair. Farfrae no longer seems in a rush to leave the granary. Elizabeth-Jane, however, refuses his offer to get her an umbrella, and leaves promptly. Farfrae looks after her, whistling, "As I came down through Cannobie."

Farfrae's action of blowing the wheat husks from Elizabeth-Jane's dress is both intimate, and able to be interpreted as subtly sexual. Elizabeth-Jane's quick departure reflects her embarrassment, and Farfrae's hesitation shows his newfound interest in the girl.

CHAPTER 15

Elizabeth-Jane, although she now draws Donald Farfrae's gaze, is still not noticed by the townspeople until her dress evolves to contrast the plainness, which had marked her before. Henchard purchased her a fine pair of gloves, and she bought a bonnet to match them, but found she had no dress to match them, and so, in this way, her wardrobe evolved. The people of Casterbridge feel she has artfully created an effect by dressing plainly for so long in order to make her new appearance the more noticeable by contrast.

Elizabeth-Jane draws the attention and interest of the villagers as she improves her fashion. The villagers suppose her new dress to be an artful contrast to her old style. Fashion, even in this time period, received the interest, attention, and gossip of others. Others misunderstand Elizabeth-Jane's innocence and purity.

Elizabeth-Jane feels surprised and overwhelmed by the admiration and notice of the town, despite reminding herself that she may have gained the admiration of those types whose admiration is not worth having. But Farfrae, too, admires her. However, Elizabeth-Jane feels, after consideration, that she is admired for her appearance, which is not supported by an educated mind or a truly gentile background. She feels she'd be better off selling her fine things and purchasing grammar books and histories instead.

Elizabeth-Jane takes a logical view of her new popularity, realizing that it is based on her appearance, and not based on her character and her mind. She feels that those qualities are more important, which demonstrates her level-headedness, as well as her confidence that, as a woman, she is worth more than her appearance. She is, however, pleased by Farfrae's attention.

Henchard and Farfrae continue their close friendship, and yet the disagreement that would break apart their friendship is already beginning. At six o'clock one evening, as the workers are leaving, Henchard calls back and scolds a perpetually tardy young man named Abel Whittle. Abel often over-sleeps and his comrades forget to wake him up. During the previous week, he had kept other workers waiting for almost an hour on two different days.

The source of Henchard and Farfrae's eventual falling out is a man named Abel Whittle, a perpetually tardy worker. The conflict between Henchard and Farfrae begins when Henchard scolds Abel for his tardiness, demonstrating a different management style than Farfrae's. Farfrae is generous. Henchard cares about people following his orders.

The next morning at six, Abel does not arrive at work. Henchard finds the other man who was to work with him that day waiting with their wagon at six-thirty. Abel arrives out-of-breath at that minute and Henchard yells at him, swearing that if he is late the next morning that he will personally drag Abel out of bed. Abel tries to explain his situation, but Henchard will not hear him.

Henchard's shortness of temper is emphasized in his interactions with Abel, as the young man tries his patience. Henchard is interested only in Abel's performance and not his explanation of his tardiness.

The next morning, the wagons have to travel all the way to Blackmoor Vale, so the other workers arrive at four, but there is no sign of Abel. Henchard rushes to his house and yells at the young man to head to granary—never mind his breeches—or that he would be fired that day. Farfrae encounters the half-dressed Abel in the yard before Henchard returns. Unimpressed with the situation, Farfrae commands Abel to return home, dress himself, and come to work like a man. Henchard arrives and exclaims over Abel leaving, as all the men look to Farfrae. Farfrae insists that his joke has been carried far enough, and when Henchard won't budge, he says that either Abel goes home and gets his clothes, or he, Farfrae, will leave Henchard's employ for good.

Henchard's treatment of Abel goes against propriety, as well as the worker's dignity. He does not let the young man get dressed, which shames him in front of the other workers. Farfrae stands up for Abel, saying that he will quit if Abel is not treated with decency and respect, and sent home to retrieve his clothes. Farfrae uses his own weight, which is his importance to the business, in order to get his way. His way is, however, the kind and respectful treatment of any worker.

Farfrae and Henchard privately converse, and Farfrae entreats him not to behave in this tyrannical way. Henchard is very hurt that Farfrae would speak to him as he did in front of all the workers. Henchard is moody all day, and when asked a question by a worker, he exclaims, "ask Mr. Farfrae. He's master here!"

Farfrae believes Henchard's behavior is tyrannical, but Henchard does not focus on himself and the ways he could improve. Instead, he sees only a threat to his own reputation: that Farfrae challenged him, publically, and undermined his authority as the master.

Henchard, who was once the most admired man among his workers and in Casterbridge, is the most admired no longer. A farmer in Durnover sends for Mr. Farfrae to value a haystack, but the child delivering the message meets Henchard instead. At Henchard's questioning, the child says that everyone always sends for Mr. Farfrae because they all like him so much. The child repeats the gossip in the town to Henchard: Farfrae is said to be better tempered then him, as well as cleverer, and that some of the women go so far as to say that they wish Farfrae in charge rather than Henchard.

Henchard learns from a child that Farfrae is more popular than he is among the villagers. This, it seems to the reader, should have been obvious to Henchard when there have been so many examples of Farfrae's popularity. Henchard, however, was blinded by his regard for Farfrae. However, as soon as Farfrae challenges him, Henchard begins to feel threatened and to see Farfrae's popularity as a further threat.

Henchard goes to value the hay in Durnover and meets Farfrae along the route. Farfrae accompanies him, singing as he walks, but he stops as they arrive remembering that the father in the family has recently died. Henchard sneers at Farfrae's interest in protecting others' feelings, including his own. Farfrae apologizes if he has hurt Henchard in any way. Henchard decides to let Farfrae value the hay, and the pair parts with their friendship renewed. However, Henchard often regrets having confessed the full secrets of his past to Farfrae, who he thinks of now with a vague dread.

Henchard and Farfrae's friendship is restored because of Farfrae's immediate and honest apology when Henchard acts as if he has been offended. Henchard is able, at this point, to accept the apology, but he is never as comfortable and as open with Farfrae again. He fears Farfrae has power over him because of his knowledge of Henchard's secret.

CHAPTER 16

Henchard grows more reserved toward Farfrae, no longer putting his arm around the young man, or inviting him to dinner. Otherwise, their business relationship continues in a similar vein until a day of celebration of a national holiday is proposed. Farfrae has the idea to create a tent for some small celebrations, and upon hearing his idea, Henchard feels that he has been remiss, as the mayor of the town, in not organizing some public festivities.

Henchard and Farfrae are able to maintain a professional relationship, although not a friendship, after the Abel Whittle incident. The role of organizing any public celebration would normally belong to the mayor, so Henchard creates a separate event, rather than help with Farfrae's idea.

Henchard begins preparing for his celebrations, which everyone in the town applauds when they heard that he plans to pay for it all himself. Farfrae, on the other hand, plans to charge a small price per head for admission to his tent, an idea that Henchard scoffs at, wondering who would pay for such a thing.

Henchard believes his event will be superior to Farfrae's because it will be free. Henchard, despite having been told of Farfrae's popularity, is still blind to the type of draw Farfrae's event could have.

Henchard's celebrations feature a number of physical activities and games. He has greasy poles set up for climbing, a space for boxing and wrestling, and a tea free for everyone. Henchard views Farfrae's awkward tent construction and feels confident that his own preparations are more exciting and extravagant.

Henchard's event centers on physical activities, an area where he himself excels. Henchard's self-confidence continues to blind him to Farfrae's successes and the potential of his plan.

The appointed day arrives, overcast and gray, and it starts to rain at noon. Some people attend Henchard's event, but the storm worsens, and the tent he had set up for the tea blows over. By six o'clock, however, the storm ends and Henchard hopes his celebrations will still continue. The townspeople, however, do not arrive, and Henchard learns upon questioning one man that nearly everyone is at Farfrae's celebration.

The weather is against Henchard. Weather, later in the novel, will again function against Henchard's hopes and plans. The weather is a force Henchard cannot control, and, because he overlooks this, the weather continues to cause him problems.

Henchard moodily closes down his celebrations and returns home. At dusk, he walks outside and follows others to Farfrae's tent. The ingeniously constructed pavilion creates a space for a band and for the dance taking place. Henchard observes that Farfrae's dancing is much admired and that he has an endless selection of dance partners. He overhears the villagers discussing himself and Farfrae, saying that he must have been a fool to plan an outdoor event that day. Farfrae is also praised for his management, which has greatly improved Henchard's business.

Farfrae's event features dancing, an area in which he excels. His dancing is praised, as well as his management. Farfrae too has created an event that plays to his strengths, but his graciousness, his skills, and his popularity turn the villagers against Henchard and toward Farfrae. They are not afraid to express their preference for the younger man.

Back in the tent, Elizabeth-Jane is dancing with Farfrae. After the dance, she looks to Henchard for fatherly approval, but instead he fixes an antagonistic glare on Farfrae. A few good-natured friends of Henchard's tease him for having been bested by Farfrae in the creation of a town celebration. Henchard gloomily responds that Farfrae's time as his manager is about to end, reinforcing his statement as Farfrae approaches and hears him.

Elizabeth-Jane dances with Farfrae, and when she seeks her father's approval she does not receive it. This foreshadows the problems a falling out between the two men will create for Elizabeth-Jane, trapped in the middle. Henchard subtly dismisses Farfrae in front of everyone.

By the next morning, Henchard's jealous temper has passed and he regrets his pronouncement that Farfrae would soon leave his employ. However, he finds that the young man is determined to do so after hearing Henchard's statement the previous evening.

Henchard's change of heart the next morning reflects his common tendency to react in a moment of anger or jealousy and regret these actions later.

CHAPTER 17

After Henchard's departure from Farfrae's celebrations, Elizabeth-Jane remains for a brief while, distressed that she in someway must have offended her father or her position as the mayor's daughter by dancing with Farfrae. She leaves the pavilion to walk home and encounters Farfrae who asks to walk with her. Farfrae has just left Henchard, after his pronouncement that Farfrae would soon leave his employ, and he shares this information with Elizabeth-Jane.

Elizabeth-Jane's reaction to Henchard's bad mood is to assume that she has done something wrong or improper in dancing with Farfrae. Farfrae demonstrates his interest in Elizabeth-Jane when he asks to walk with her, and he confides in her as the two walk together.

Elizabeth-Jane lets out a quiet sigh of disappointment when she fears that Farfrae will leave for another part of the world. Farfrae impulsively says that he wishes he were richer or that he had not offended her father, or he would have that very night asked her a certain question. He is not more specific than this, and she is fearfully shy and does not encourage him. She does, however, say that she wishes he would not leave Casterbridge.

Elizabeth-Jane's quiet sigh indicates her feelings for Farfrae. She is shy and does not know how to encourage him, but her emotions show in that moment. Farfrae's partial proposal to Elizabeth-Jane is both an admittance of his feelings and an unwillingness to commit to anything specific for practical reasons.

At home, Elizabeth-Jane ponders over Farfrae's unwillingness to ask her the question that he might have. She had observed his growing popularity in town, as well as her stepfather's temper, so the announcement that he would no longer be manager did not surprise her. But she wonders again whether he would, in fact, quit the town, and over the following days her anxiety to know the course of his actions only increases, as she can no longer hide from herself the reason for her interest in Farfrae's situation.

Elizabeth-Jane's lack of surprise that Farfrae will be leaving Henchard's employ demonstrates her observant understanding of both men. She is less insightful, however, about her own feelings. As she worries over whether or not Farfrae will leave town, she must finally admit to herself that she cares about him and wants to be able to marry him.

Word spreads through Casterbridge that Farfrae has purchased a small-scale corn and wheat merchant business in Casterbridge. He does not plan to leave town and has instead set himself up as an independent businessman in the same business as Henchard. Elizabeth-Jane persuades herself that Farfrae does not care for her. She dresses up in her outfit from the night of the celebration and looks in the mirror, theorizing that her appearance must have inspired a fleeting regard, but nothing lasting.

Farfrae's action of opening a separate and similar business to Henchard's could be either a competitive move or an innocent move. Farfrae may think the town could support two such businesses. Elizabeth-Jane's need to convince herself that Farfrae doesn't care for her shows where she places her own desires and interests: far behind others'.

Henchard is furious at what he perceives to be Farfrae's betrayal in setting up competition with himself. He vows that he will overbid Farfrae and that he knows his business better than the young man. At home, Henchard sees Elizabeth-Jane and warns her that he never wants her to see the young man, his enemy, again. To ensure this, Henchard sends a note to Farfrae expressing his desire that he no longer contact or visit Elizabeth-Jane.

Henchard's anger at Farfrae is deeply personal. This is reflected in his desire to separate him from Elizabeth-Jane. He sees Elizabeth-Jane as necessarily his, and therefore is unwilling to let her choose Farfrae over himself. The note he sends to Farfrae dissuades the young man as well.

Farfrae sets up his business far from Henchard's, on Durnover Hill. He feels there is room enough for both of them in Casterbridge and does not plan to steal Henchard's customers. Farfrae goes so far as to refuse a good customer because he had recently dealt with Henchard, citing Henchard's kindness to him and his refusal to hurt Henchard's business in any way. Despite this approach, Farfrae's business thrives, mainly due to his character, which is happy and energetic, and well liked by all.

Farfrae's refusal to engage Henchard's customers shows that his business is based on both a sense of honor and the innocent belief that Casterbridge is large enough for two wheat and corn merchants. Yet it is precisely this honorable foundation that wins customers. His generosity encourages the villagers to seek out his services.

Every Saturday, the once-friends encounter each other at the marketplace. Whereas Farfrae is always friendly, Henchard angrily storms by him. Farfrae's name is no longer used in Henchard's household, and if Susan accidentally mentions the young man, Henchard accuses her of also being his enemy.

Farfrae's and Henchard's temperaments are shown when they meet in public. Henchard views Farfrae as an enemy, and anyone who associates with him as an enemy, whereas Farfrae still remembers Henchard's kindness to him.

CHAPTER 18

Susan falls ill, but recovers after a few days. Henchard is surprised to receive a letter from the woman in Jersey whom he had thought he would never hear from again. This woman, Lucetta, apologizes for her past behavior of pestering him with letters of passion and frustration and knows that he has not wronged her, and that the only course available to him is to re-marry his long-lost wife. She asks that he keep their past a secret, so that she may hope for a happier future. She also wishes that the letters she sent to him be returned to her, as she travels back through Casterbridge after visiting her remaining relative in Bristol.

Susan's first fleeting illness shows her weak health and foreshadows her death. Lucetta, Henchard's woman from Jersey, wishes to receive the love letters she once sent to Henchard in order to hide their past connection. The letters are incriminating evidence of what, in this time period, would have been considered a scandal. Lucetta is concerned enough about her reputation to want to hide any mark of what society considers misbehavior.

Henchard is moved by Lucetta's letter and vows that if he is ever in a position to carry out the proper marriage with her then he *ought* to do so. Such a situation would, of course, only occur if Susan died. Henchard arrives with the letters to meet Lucetta's coach through Casterbridge, but she is not there. With relief, Henchard believes her plans must have changed and is glad that he did not have to see her in person.

In another moment foreshadowing Susan's death, Henchard vows to marry Lucetta if he ever finds himself able to do so. The missed connection between Lucetta and Henchard does not seem to be the end of their story, despite Henchard's belief that he will not have to see Lucetta.

Susan's health worsens. One day, after much distressed thought, she wishes to write something down. She puts this writing in a sealed envelope addressed to Mr. Michael Henchard, and labeled, "not to be opened until Elizabeth-Jane's wedding day." She locks the envelope in her desk.

Susan's act of writing this letter shows she believes she will not be alive as long as her daughter's wedding day. Her need to leave some secret behind her demonstrates that she is not as naively straightforward as she seems.

Elizabeth-Jane sits up with her sick mother through the night. During the night, Susan confesses that she was the one who sent the matching notes to Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae with the hope that they would get to know each other, and one day marry. She regrets that this won't happen given Henchard's new hatred of Farfrae. Not long after, on a Sunday morning, Susan passes away.

Susan's confession that she wrote the notes sending Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae to the granary together is another indication of Susan's subtly. This also shows Susan's support for a match between the two young people, despite Henchard's wishes.

Mrs. Cuxsom recounts the events of Susan's death to the other townsfolk. Susan had prepared her own funeral clothes and pennies to weigh down her eyes. The maid buried these pennies according to Susan's wishes, but another villager, Christopher Coney, dug them up and spent them. Mother Cuxsom's listeners agree that Coney's deed went against the wishes of the dead, but Solomon Longways argues that death shouldn't rob the living of money, which is so hard to come by.

The novel includes this seemingly trivial story of a villager who dug up the pennies buried with Susan and spent them. This side story, however, reflects the perspective that the villagers have of the wealthier families in town. The villagers treat them with some irreverence and are willing to get involved in their business. It also shows the different lifestyles of the rich and poor: the rich can use money in non-monetary ways; the poor can't afford to behave that way.

CHAPTER 19

Three weeks after Susan's funeral, Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane are sitting before the fire in the evening. Henchard asks about Richard Newson's kindness as a father and whether or not Elizabeth-Jane could have cared as much for Henchard should he have been her real father. Elizabeth-Jane says she cannot imagine anyone else as her father, but her real father. Henchard decides to confess the truth, and tells Elizabeth-Jane that he is her biological father, and that shame alone prevented him or Susan from confessing this. He, however, withholds the details of him selling Susan at the fair, saying only that the pair had thought each other dead.

Henchard's decision to confess the truth of her parentage to Elizabeth-Jane is spontaneous. In the moment, he witnesses her love and care for Newson, the man she believes to be her father, and he wants to inspire her to care for him in that way. Despite this confession, Henchard still withholds the secret of the true crime: his act of selling Susan.

Once the truth of this story has been impressed upon Elizabeth-Jane, she begins to cry. Henchard, in distress, vows he'll do anything to make Elizabeth-Jane happy, so long as she'll look on him as her true father. Henchard says he'll leave her and give her time to trust him. He says that he was the one who named her Elizabeth-Jane, and that she should now take his surname, despite her mother having been against it while she lived.

Elizabeth-Jane's reaction to this news is to cry. She is clearly distressed to learn the truth. Henchard's desperation to earn her love as a daughter is revealed as he pleads with her. He also reminds her about taking his name. This gesture reflects Henchard's desire to fully claim Elizabeth-Jane as his, *his daughter, his creation.*

Elizabeth-Jane remains alone that evening, weeping for her mother and for Richard Newson to whom she feels she is doing some wrong. Henchard, meanwhile, goes upstairs to find some papers to prove Elizabeth-Jane's parentage to her. He uncovers the letter addressed to him by Susan before her death. Supposing the restriction "not to be opened til Elizabeth-Jane's wedding day" to be a passing fancy of Susan's, Henchard opens the letter.

Elizabeth-Jane's tears are not due to dislike of Henchard. Her sense that she is doing Newson some wrong reflects her deep emotional connection to the man who raised her. Henchard uncovers the note from Susan, but never suspects her of hiding anything, and so he opens it willingly.

Susan's final letter reveals that Elizabeth-Jane is not, in fact, the Elizabeth-Jane whom Henchard fathered. Her first daughter with Henchard died three months after the pair was sold to Richard Newson, and the living Elizabeth-Jane is Susan's daughter with Newson, whom she named after the dead baby, and who helped her recover from the loss of her first child.

The truth of Elizabeth-Jane's parentage is finally revealed to Henchard, as well as Susan's willful deception. Susan allowed Henchard to think that Elizabeth-Jane was his biological daughter in order to encourage Henchard to reunite with them.

Henchard is upset and sits aimlessly in the room for a couple hours. He realizes that Susan's stubbornness about changing Elizabeth-Jane's last name is now explained. Eventually, he steals into Elizabeth-Jane's room as she sleep and sees the marks of Richard Newson in her face and lighter coloring than Henchard's own.

Henchard understands the real reason Susan didn't want Elizabeth-Jane's name changed. Now that he knows the truth, it seems obvious. The marks of Newson in Elizabeth-Jane's face had been in front of his eyes this whole time.

Henchard's is furious at the irony of the situation: that he would not have found Susan's letter had he not revealed what he thought to be the truth of Elizabeth-Jane's parentage to her, and that in claiming her as his daughter, he had directly learned that she is not. Henchard walks through the gloomy evening out past the location of the gallows where public executions are held. He feels that the situation of the night and his surroundings too closely mirrors his personal situation and his bitter disappointment.

The irony of the situation is clear to Henchard and to the reader. The secret had been concealed from the reader too, but, in retrospect, both the reader and Henchard can see the many clues pointing to the truth. Henchard is aware of another literary device: the setting as a reflection of mood. The protagonist, as well as the reader, notices how the natural world mirrors human emotion.

Henchard decides as the next day dawns that he will not tell Elizabeth-Jane of the letter. Elizabeth-Jane greets him lovingly that morning, telling him that she has thought over the matter, and realized that despite Newson's kindness to her, this is not the same as being one's true father. She embraces Henchard and he feels that this moment, which he had waited for so long, is now miserable and pointless, as he had only re-married Susan to reconnect with his daughter. The whole scheme has turned out to mean nothing to Henchard, as Elizabeth-Jane is not truly his daughter.

Elizabeth-Jane has come to terms with the information Henchard told her just as Henchard has become aware that it is false. When Elizabeth-Jane embraces him as her father, Henchard can only focus on the ways the whole situation has been ruined. If Elizabeth-Jane is not his biological daughter, it seems she means nothing to him, despite the care he has given her. She is not truly his.

CHAPTER 20

Elizabeth-Jane must endure Henchard's sudden change in behavior towards her. He confessed the truth of her parentage with affection and emotion, but from the next day onward he is cold to her. He often grows angry at her use of commonplace, or low-class, words or phrases, such "bide as you be" rather than "stay where you are." Elizabeth-Jane is already working to improve herself and her mind by reading, and Henchard, as a man of low origin himself, often unfairly criticizes her lack of breeding. Elizabeth-Jane changes her speech to reflect her position as the mayor's daughter and her father's wishes.

Henchard's behavior toward Elizabeth-Jane changes dramatically when he discovers she is not his daughter. He cannot see the situation from Elizabeth-Jane's perspective and acts as if he blames her for hiding a secret she did not know. He projects his emotions onto Elizabeth-Jane, criticizing her unfairly. Elizabeth-Jane focuses on these criticisms, not understanding what motivates them.

One evening when Henchard is meeting with a gentleman on business, he calls Elizabeth-Jane in to write down an agreement between the men. He is ashamed to see her bold, inelegant handwriting, and dismisses her, saying he will finish writing himself.

This is one of many examples of Henchard projecting his anger at the truth of Elizabeth-Jane's parentage onto a small fault of the young woman's.

Elizabeth-Jane natural consideration for others also sparks Henchard's anger when she thanks the maid or does something herself instead of ringing for assistance. Such behavior reveals her self-sufficient, lower class upbringing. Despite Henchard's outbursts, Elizabeth-Jane prefers his passion to his neglect, which becomes more frequent as she schools herself into a proper young lady.

One of Elizabeth-Jane's "faults" as Henchard sees them is her unawareness of her station as a relatively wealthy young woman. She is used to doing things for herself and so continues this behavior. Henchard wants her to demonstrate her station—and uphold his own reputation—by relying on the servants.

Elizabeth-Jane often provides a small meal or drinks for one of Henchard's workers, a woman named Nance Mockridge. Henchard sees this and exclaims that Elizabeth-Jane will shame him for lowering herself to wait on such a woman. Nance, overhearing this, says that Elizabeth-Jane once waited on others of lower character for hire at The King of Prussia. Elizabeth-Jane admits the truth of this information.

Elizabeth-Jane's one evening of service at The King of Prussia resurfaces to shame Henchard, as Susan had feared it would. This is the final straw for Henchard. He does not see Elizabeth-Jane's resourcefulness, only her actions, although in the past, as going against his wishes.

From that day onward, Henchard showed an obvious distaste for the girl who is not his own daughter. He often leaves her alone for meals and she fills her solitary hours by learning Latin and studying incessantly. Elizabeth-Jane continues her quiet and lonely existence, crushing, through force of will, her interest in Farfrae whom she had been forbidden to see.

Henchard stops complaining about Elizabeth-Jane and starts ignoring her. Elizabeth-Jane is incredibly lonely, and yet she remains obedient. She attempts to better herself and she does not see Farfrae because Henchard has forbidden her from doing so.

Although winter is arriving, on the nicer days Elizabeth-Jane walks in the morning to visit her mother's grave. One morning, Elizabeth-Jane sees another woman in the graveyard standing at her mother's grave and reading the tombstone. This other woman is much more finely dressed than Elizabeth-Jane, though also in mourning. Elizabeth-Jane's nature is not envious, so she wonders about the woman, supposing her to be a stranger in Casterbridge. Eventually the woman leaves and Elizabeth-Jane returns home without speaking to her.

Elizabeth-Jane's encounter with a finely dressed woman standing at her mother's gravestone reveals Elizabeth-Jane's modesty and hints at the identity of this new character. Elizabeth-Jane is not jealous of the other woman, but curious about her. The new woman is looking at Susan's tombstone, which implies she has some knowledge of Susan and is curious about her death.

At home, Henchard is particularly upset. His term for mayor is ending and Farfrae will be selected as a member of the Council, rather than himself. He also has learned that Farfrae was one whom Elizabeth-Jane waited on in The King of Prussia, which he considers another slight to his position and himself. He explodes at Elizabeth-Jane after she mistakenly uses the commonplace term "leery" to refer to her exhaustion.

Henchard's is upset at Farfrae's growing importance in the town, but he takes this anger out on Elizabeth-Jane. He has learned that she waited on Farfrae and he sees this as a victory of his enemy, and as Elizabeth-Jane having placed Farfrae above herself in importance and situation.

Henchard contemplates his decision to warn Farfrae away from Elizabeth-Jane when he thought her his own daughter, whereas he now wishes his enemy would take the girl off his hands. He composes a note to Farfrae saying that he may court Elizabeth-Jane, so long as the business does not occur in his own home.

Henchard's decision to encourage Farfrae's suit of Elizabeth-Jane shows how his decisions on the matter of Elizabeth-Jane's love life and her happiness have been entirely guided by his own interests.

The next morning, Elizabeth-Jane returns to the graveyard. Depressed and feeling the weight of her father's scorn, she exclaims aloud, "I wish I was dead with dear mother." The woman from the previous day is also revealed to be in the graveyard and she overhears Elizabeth-Jane. The woman asks about her dead mother and then inquires after her father, who she knows to be Mr. Henchard.

Elizabeth-Jane's quiet persistence hides the extent of her sadness. She is only able to reveal this when she thinks herself totally alone. Her wish to be dead shows her deep loneliness. The finely dresses woman appears at that moment, as if she is the answer to a prayer.

Elizabeth-Jane tells the woman of her history and her quarrel with Henchard. The woman seems strangely unable to criticize Henchard, insisting that he cannot be a bad man, while at the same comforting Elizabeth-Jane, who is all too willing to admit her own fault in the situation. The woman is not shocked by Elizabeth-Jane's tale, and invites the young woman to come live in her own house, as her companion. Elizabeth-Jane enthusiastically agrees, saying that she would love to be independent from her father, but quickly says she is not accomplished and lady-like, as a companion must be. The woman says she is moving to Casterbridge, and the two agree to meet again the following week, once Elizabeth-Jane has thought over her proposal.

The woman's offer of companionship appears at the ideal moment in Elizabeth-Jane's life. Her loneliness and her poor treatment at Henchard's hands could both be resolved by moving in with her new friend. This woman's high opinion of Henchard hints at her having a past connection with him. This woman does not receive the full story of Henchard's mistreatment because of Elizabeth-Jane's propensity to blame herself, and so this woman continues to believe Henchard an entirely good man.

CHAPTER 21

Elizabeth-Jane's imagination fills with the prospect of the fine lady, her new house in Casterbridge, and the possibility of her living there. One early evening, Elizabeth-Jane decides to walk up to the house, High-Place Hall, which she had passed many times, but which had never before taken on particular meaning. The new lady now occupies the house, and Elizabeth-Jane sees lights in the upper rooms. The architecture of the house is fine, but it overlooks the marketplace, which might be seen to be undesirable.

High Place Hall occupies Elizabeth-Jane's mind as her future home and as the residence of her new friend. High Place Hall overlooks the market place, which continues to be significant while Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane live there. The house places them at the center of events in Casterbridge, as the village depends on the weekly market day.

Moving men are going in and out of the house and Elizabeth-Jane enters as well through an open door. Startled by her own brazenness, Elizabeth-Jane quickly exits through another open door and finds herself in a little-used alleyway. Turning to look back at the door by which she had exited, Elizabeth-Jane sees that is was an old doorway, older than the house itself, decorated with a masked face decayed and worn away by age. The secret doorway with its grim face constitutes the first unpleasant aspect of Elizabeth-Jane's visit.

Elizabeth-Jane's brazenness at entering the house shows her already strong feeling of connection to this woman she barely knows. Finding a companion marks a distinct change in her life. Yet the hidden door that she encounters represents a darker side to High Place Hall, a signal that there are secrets she doesn't understand.

Hearing approaching footsteps, Elizabeth-Jane hides from another passerby in the alleyway before heading home. Had she lingered, she would have seen the other person was Henchard who enters by the secret doorway. He returns home not long after Elizabeth-Jane and she decides to ask him if he would allow her to move out of the house. He has no objection and offers to make her an allowance, so she can live independently. He seems relieved to part from Elizabeth-Jane and any responsibility toward her.

It is not unintentional that Henchard enters the house through this secret doorway. His business there and his connection to the woman are both secrets. Elizabeth-Jane's request to move out pleases Henchard. His offer to support her financially is generous for him because he believes he is not responsible for the young woman who is not his daughter.

Elizabeth-Jane returns to the graveyard to meet the lady and finds her there despite the poor weather. The woman invites her to move in immediately. The two women overhear voices from beyond the churchyard wall, one of which Elizabeth-Jane identifies as her father's. The woman suddenly asks whether or not Elizabeth-Jane told her father where she was moving. After Elizabeth-Jane negative reply, the woman realizes she never gave her name and introduces herself as Miss Templeman.

Elizabeth-Jane and the woman both arrive at the graveyard, despite the poor weather. This demonstrates that both are eager to start their new living arrangements, and the woman reveals her motivation when she asks if Henchard knows where Elizabeth-Jane is moving. Elizabeth-Jane, however, is not suspicious.

Miss Templeman arranges for Elizabeth-Jane to arrive at her house and move in at six that evening. Henchard is surprised when he arrives home to see Elizabeth-Jane departing so promptly. He asks her if departing with so little warning is any way to treat him for his trouble taking care of her. Henchard goes to her room to look over the moving of her things and sees all her efforts to study and improve herself. In a sudden change of temperament, he implores Elizabeth-Jane to stay with him saying that something specific has grieved him, which he cannot yet confess to her.

Henchard's last minute change of heart is motivated by his selfishness. He sees that Elizabeth-Jane has tried to change herself through study, which proves the influence Henchard has over her. It is only when he realizes that he'll lose her that Henchard sees some of her value and importance, even as only his stepdaughter.

Henchard's change of heart comes too late and Elizabeth-Jane is determined to leave. She promises she will return though, if her father needs her, and she leaves, saying she is headed to High-Place Hall.

Elizabeth-Jane sticks with her plan to leave, for once doing something for her own happiness rather than another's.

CHAPTER 22

Henchard's stunned reaction to Elizabeth-Jane's new address is explained by the events of the previous evening. Henchard had then received a letter from Lucetta. In this letter, Lucetta wrote that she had heard of Susan's death and felt in these circumstances that she must reach out to Henchard in the hope that he would keep his previous promise to her. Henchard had already learned that a lady of the last name Templeman, which he knew was the name of Lucetta's remaining relative, had purchased High-Place Hall.

Henchard realizes upon hearing that Elizabeth-Jane is moving to High-Place Hall that her move must have been the intentional plan of the woman living there. Lucetta's note to Henchard expresses her hope of reconciliation and Henchard connects this to High-Place Hall because a woman named Templeman, Lucetta's relative, is moving in there.

When Henchard visited High-Place Hall the previous evening, he inquired after Miss La Sueur (the last name by which he had known Lucetta) and heard that only Miss Templeman had arrived. Henchard wondered if Lucetta had come into some money through her relations with the Templeman relative she had spoken of. The next day, soon after Elizabeth-Jane's departure, Henchard receives another note from Lucetta explaining that she is, in fact, the Miss Templeman in residence, having taking her rich deceased relative's name, along with her inheritance. She refers to the "practical joke" of getting Elizabeth-Jane to live with her, and says she has moved to Casterbridge that Henchard might easily visit her.

Lucetta's change of name, which she reveals to Henchard in a second note, reflects two things: first, it shows her desire to hide her past, which is linked to her real last name, and second, it shows the dramatic change of situation Lucetta has experienced because of the money she has received from her relative named Templeman. Lucetta's perspective on Elizabeth-Jane's move as a "practical joke" demonstrates that Henchard, and not her "friendship" with the younger woman, is her priority.

Henchard's excitement and hopes for Lucetta are greatly increased by her letters and he sets out that very night to visit High-Place Hall. However, upon calling, he is told that Lucetta is engaged that evening, but would be happy to see him the next day. Henchard exclaims at Lucetta giving herself such airs and resolves to likewise make her wait to see him.

Henchard is inspired by these letters, but angered by Lucetta acting as if she is now a great lady. Henchard's reaction to such treatment is one of pride: he will not humble himself, but will wait for her to come to him.

Earlier in the evening when Elizabeth-Jane arrived at High-Place Hall, she had joined Lucetta in the drawing room where the other woman endeavored to entertain her with some card tricks. Instead, the two women have a conversation in which Lucetta shares the story of her newly received fortune. She also tells Elizabeth-Jane about her true home in Jersey, although she arrived in Casterbridge from Bath. Lucetta could not have confessed these details to a safer person than Elizabeth-Jane who tells no one else.

Lucetta's partial confession of her past and her previous identity, although this might have been a mistake with another listener, is safe with Elizabeth-Jane. In many ways, Elizabeth-Jane, although younger, is more mature than Lucetta in her discretion, her emotional support, and her ability to focus on others rather than draw attention to herself.

The next day, Lucetta dresses for Henchard's visit and waits for him all day. She does not tell Elizabeth-Jane for whom they are waiting. That day is market day, and the two women watch the action below in the square. Elizabeth-Jane observes Farfrae and then her father as the pair encounters each other, and Henchard clearly refuses to speak to the younger man. Lucetta asks Elizabeth-Jane if she is particularly interested in any of the men she sees below, but she says no, despite her blush.

Lucetta prepares for Henchard's visit, which shows she is interested in catching his attention. The market day scene provides a venue for Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane to observe life in Casterbridge. Elizabeth-Jane does not admit her affection for Farfrae to Lucetta because she is unwilling to admit it even to herself.

Lucetta is disappointed that Henchard did not visit, despite having spent the day so nearby in the square. She supposes he was busy and that he will come on Sunday or Monday, but he does not. Lucetta no longer loves Henchard, as she once did, but she wishes to secure her position. On Tuesday, the Candlemas Fair calls the merchants back into the market square. Lucetta wonders aloud to Elizabeth-Jane if her father will visit her today because he will be coming for the fair. Elizabeth-Jane says he will not come because of his grudge against her.

Lucetta's focus on Henchard is explained as practical rather than emotional. She is more interested in preventing gossip about her past than in marrying for love, which shows the pernicious nature of gossip and the effects it could have at this time period, as well as Lucetta's desire to be successful in the eyes of society. Elizabeth-Jane believes Henchard is staying away because of her.

Lucetta starts to cry as she realizes that she has prevented Henchard from visiting by inviting Elizabeth-Jane to live with her. Lucetta says she likes Elizabeth-Jane's company very much, and the younger woman feels the same way. Lucetta devises an errand to send Elizabeth-Jane away from the house that morning, so that Henchard may visit. Elizabeth-Jane senses that Lucetta wants to get rid of her that morning, but does not understand why.

Lucetta feels she has prevented the very thing she wanted through her own scheming, so she plans to get Elizabeth-Jane temporarily out of the way. She does not realize that Henchard is in fact staying away as a response to Lucetta's airs and waiting for her to reach out to him. Lucetta blames Elizabeth-Jane for a situation outside of Elizabeth-Jane's control.

As soon as Elizabeth-Jane has departed, Lucetta writes to Henchard explaining that she has sent Elizabeth-Jane away that morning so that he may visit. Finally hearing a man being shown into the house, Lucetta hides behind the curtains in the drawing room, suddenly timid. When she throws back the curtain, she discovers that the man who has been shown in is not Henchard.

Lucetta reaches out to Henchard once Elizabeth-Jane is gone. Lucetta is always direct and forward with Henchard when she is attempting to secure her position. Lucetta is left alone with the different visitor who arrives because she has sent Elizabeth-Jane away.

CHAPTER 23

The man in the drawing room is years younger than Henchard and well dressed. The stranger is immediately apologetic, saying that he is calling upon Miss Henchard, and did not mean to so surprise her. Lucetta encourages the man, who she learns is Mr. Farfrae, to stay and sit now that he has come to call. There is something in his person that Lucetta finds immediately attractive and compelling.

Lucetta is immediately drawn to Farfrae and she is far better than Elizabeth-Jane at speaking to a man and encouraging him. In the moment, she encourages this newcomer to stay and to speak with her, so that the pair gets to know each other.

Farfrae's appearance at High-Place Hall is the result of Henchard's note to him that he could court Elizabeth-Jane. His recent business success has made him aware that he can afford to marry. Lucetta and Farfrae comment upon the busy market scene. Lucetta says that she will look for Farfrae in the crowd now that she knows him. She confesses her loneliness, and as the pair converses she also expresses how interesting she finds Farfrae. He colors at her praise, and she praises Scottish men more generally, asking if he wishes he could be in his homeland again.

While Farfrae arrived at High-Place Hall to see Elizabeth-Jane, he does not depart upon learning that she is not there, and he is moved by Lucetta and her praise of him. Lucetta confesses to being lonely, another characteristic that separates her from Elizabeth-Jane, who could only admit to loneliness in the graveyard when she believed no one could hear her.

Farfrae and Lucetta observe a disagreement occurring outside of the window. A farmer is hiring an elderly worker, but only if his healthy son agrees to come too. The son is apologizing to his sweetheart who does not want him to leave for such a distant farm. Lucetta turns to Farfrae, both their eyes moist at the scene occurring below, and she says lovers ought not to be parted like that. Farfrae says perhaps he could help by hiring both father and son and keeping the pair employed and in town. He heads outside to offer his proposition to the group who are all cheered by it.

The scene between father, son, and the son's sweetheart provides an opportunity for Lucetta to witness Farfrae's care and attentiveness to others, and for the pair to unite in the protection of two lovers. The concept of love is introduced to the reader during this scene of close conversation between Farfrae and Lucetta.

Lucetta tells him his offer is kind-hearted when he returns to her drawing room. Outside the window, they overhear another conversation as a young farmer says he was supposed to meet Farfrae at the fair, but has not seen him. Farfrae says he must go, but still he remains with Lucetta. Farfrae exclaims that he wishes that there were no business in the world, as it calls him away from Lucetta. She says he has changed his priorities very quickly, but he responds that this change has only been since he arrived at High-Place Hall and saw her.

Farfrae is called back to his business only when they overhear men at the market who are looking for him. He makes his interest in Lucetta clear by expressing his wish to stay with her, to not be called back to his business. The change in his affections is very fast, but he seems allured by Lucetta from the moment he sees her, to the exclusion of any other thoughts.

As Farfrae leaves, Lucetta says eagerly that he should not heed any gossip he may hear about her in town. As a young woman, Lucetta would not have been interested in a tradesman, but she watches Farfrae from the window and pleads with her rational self to welcome him again on another visit to her home.

Lucetta is interested in Farfrae as well. Her rational side argues that his trade is too lowly for her to consider him as a suitor. It is clear, however, that her heart and her emotions do not agree with this rational side of herself.

Minutes after Farfrae's departure, Henchard calls with the message that he is only able to make a brief visit. Lucetta tells her maid to send him away that day with the excuse that she has a headache. Lucetta is no longer interested in Henchard's attentions, having finally reawaked his affection for her. She no longer feels the necessity of getting rid of Elizabeth-Jane, but instead wanted to keep the younger woman near, as a means of dissuading her father's visits. She greets Elizabeth-Jane enthusiastically upon her return and implores that she live with Lucetta for a long time.

Lucetta's priorities have changed as dramatically as Farfrae's. Lucetta did not love Henchard any longer, and she finds it easy to lose interest in his attentions. She is also able to let go of her obsession with her reputation. Her dramatic change in treatment of Elizabeth-Jane is again motivated by her own interests, as she now wishes to use the young woman as a shield against her father's attentions.

CHAPTER 24

On every Saturday market day, Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane are inevitably at home, watching from their windows the maneuvers of Farfrae in the marketplace. He, however, never glances towards their window. Elizabeth-Jane does not guess how Farfrae's attention has been removed from herself.

Neither Lucetta nor Elizabeth-Jane realizes that they are interested in the same man because the two women, despite their companionship, confess very little to each other. They never seem to have a strong friendship.

Two new purchases arrive on the same day: a brightly colored dress ordered by Lucetta and new farming machine, which the two ladies see from their window. The pair decides to go look at the new purchase, and, while observing it, Henchard appears and greets Elizabeth-Jane who, unknowingly, introduces him to Lucetta. As Henchard leaves, Elizabeth-Jane sees and hears him say to Lucetta, "you refused to see me," but Lucetta does not respond, and Elizabeth-Jane cannot understand the interaction.

Lucetta's gaudy dress stands in sharp contrast to Elizabeth-Jane's more modest way of dressing. Lucetta, unlike Elizabeth-Jane, wishes to draw attention to herself, as evidenced by her showy dress. Elizabeth-Jane witnesses an interaction between Henchard and Lucetta. Eventually she is able to piece together their past connection, although neither tells her directly.

Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane meet Farfrae who is inspecting the machine, which was purchased at his recommendation. Elizabeth-Jane feels in the exchange between Farfrae and Lucetta that she is in the way.

Elizabeth-Jane's feeling that she is "in the way" demonstrates that Lucetta and Farfrae have formed a connection.

As night falls, Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane continue to watch the scene outside their house. Elizabeth-Jane bemoans the fact that, as she believes, Henchard does not think her respectable. Lucetta comments upon women who get themselves into compromising situations through no fault of their own, and winces at Elizabeth-Jane's reply that such women, although not despised by other women, are hardly respected.

Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta each have their own set of worries: Elizabeth-Jane for her lost connection with her "father," Lucetta for her reputation. Elizabeth-Jane makes it clear that she holds the standards of propriety as highly important.

After seeing how Farfrae acted around Lucetta, Elizabeth-Jane pays special attention to Lucetta's actions and discovers a time when she leaves and returns flushed, and says aloud that Lucetta has seen Mr. Farfrae, which the other woman confirms. The next day, an agitated Lucetta says she has something on her mind. She tells Elizabeth-Jane a story about a woman who got herself into an unfortunate position through her affection for a man who could not marry her. Eventually, this man was able to marry her, but in the meantime she had met a second man whom she preferred.

Elizabeth-Jane confronts Lucetta about seeing Farfrae, an act of boldness surprising for her character. This boldness may be due to Elizabeth-Jane's repressed jealousy. Lucetta presents her "confession" as a story about another woman. She is wary of admitting any fault of her own, or exposing her secret, even to Elizabeth-Jane.

Elizabeth-Jane refuses to pass any sort of judgment on the situation described or to advise Lucetta about what she ought to do. Elizabeth-Jane is not fooled by Lucetta's pretense that her story is about another woman and knows that she speaks of her own situation. She wishes Lucetta was able to be fully confident and honest in her confession to her friend.

Elizabeth-Jane is able to see through Lucetta's pretense, which shows both her intuition and Lucetta's difficulty concealing her emotions. Lucetta does not trust Elizabeth-Jane or see her as a true friend. She has only used her presence to her advantage.

CHAPTER 25

Farfrae calls upon Lucetta, and while Lucetta insists that Elizabeth-Jane join them, Elizabeth-Jane is fully aware that she is excluded even while in the room. She thinks that Farfrae seems a different man from the one who danced with her. She, observing him, realizes that he must be the second man in Lucetta's story.

Elizabeth-Jane has been established as an intuitive and observant character, further evidenced by her observation of Farfrae's dramatic change, and her discernment of the truth of Lucetta's story.

Henchard, meanwhile, has found his affections for Lucetta increasing due to her inaccessibility and her growing beauty. Having realized that ignoring her is not working to increase her interest, Henchard calls on Lucetta while Elizabeth-Jane is not at home. Henchard tells her that she has his full consent to their being married, as they had planned before Susan's return. Lucetta replies that it is still early for any such plans. He says he is happy to see her come into so much wealth, and comments upon the fineness of her furniture, which she had brought from Bath.

Henchard is more interested in Lucetta now that she is uninterested in him. As he attempted to keep near Elizabeth-Jane once he realized he would actually lose her, he again seems only to see the value of others when he is losing them. Lucetta's evasion of Henchard's plan for their marriage shows her changed heart. Henchard is clearly interested in Lucetta's wealth, as well as her beauty.

Henchard says his proposal of their marriage will silence the gossip in Lucetta's home town of Jersey, and Lucetta angrily replies that she did nothing wrong in Jersey, despite the talk of her connection with Henchard. She says that they should let things be for the present, and act as acquaintances.

Lucetta would once have stopped at nothing to silence gossip about herself, whether or not she was in the wrong, but now that she has met Farfrae, she attempts to defend her actions in Jersey.

A wagon of Farfrae's, accompanied by the man himself, passes by the window, and if Henchard had been looking at Lucetta's face at that moment, he would have seen the love shining there. Henchard, however, does not see this and points out that Lucetta came to Casterbridge for his sake and now will not give him the time of day.

Henchard isn't able to understand why Lucetta no longer seems interested. That he would have understood the expression on her face had he only seen it shows that he is not clueless about affairs of the heart.

After Henchard leaves, Lucetta passionately exclaims that she will not be a slave to the past by binding herself to Henchard, but instead that she will love Farfrae.

A key sentence in the novel, Lucetta's decision has a dramatic impact on multiple characters. Henchard, meanwhile, has been a slave to the past, with equally terrible consequences.

Elizabeth-Jane observes both Farfrae and Henchard's love for Lucetta and her own invisibleness in comparison. She feels that such a situation is reasonable in Farfrae's case, for who is she, she believes, next to Lucetta? But she feels some pain over being neglected by her own father. Elizabeth-Jane's life has taught her to be good at renouncing her own emotions and interests. Life has given her things she did not want and kept away those things she did.

Elizabeth-Jane's situation is painful because both her father (she thinks) and her love interest clearly prefer her companion to herself. Neither man attempts to still be kind or attentive to Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard is guided by his selfish interest in only his own feelings. Elizabeth-Jane, however, is used to the feeling of isolation.

CHAPTER 26

One spring morning, Henchard and Farfrae pass each other on the street. Despite their cold relationship, Henchard stops to ask Farfrae a question, explaining how the second woman from his story, who he had planned to marry should he ever lose Susan, no longer wishes to marry him. Farfrae's advice is that Henchard no longer owes her anything. Because Henchard looks up from reading a letter before asking about this woman, and because of Lucetta's dramatically altered situation, Farfrae does not suspect them to be one and the same. And while Henchard suspects a rival for Lucetta's affections, he does not realize it is Farfrae.

Henchard and Farfrae's passing encounter on the street reveals that the friendship that once existed between the two men has not been completely lost. Farfrae does not realize that that advice he gives Henchard—to give up on the woman who is no longer interested in him—benefits his own situation. Henchard's discernment about Lucetta's character only acknowledges that her lack of interest in him must be because she is interested in someone else.

Henchard seeks another meeting with Lucetta and at this visit he intentionally mentions Farfrae's name in order to see her reaction. During Henchard's visit, Farfrae himself arrives, and during the tense visit, Henchard attempts to discern whether Farfrae is his rival. Despite Lucetta's nervous behavior, he cannot be certain. Elizabeth-Jane, on the other hand, present, but outside of the game, observes everything. She can tell that Lucetta likes Farfrae and is unable to keep her eyes off him at certain points, which Henchard does not observe.

When the principle players in this confusing love triangle are all in the same room, Elizabeth-Jane is more discerning than Henchard. She realizes the truth, whereas Henchard cannot be sure. Henchard is both less subtle than Elizabeth-Jane and more blinded by his own interests in the situation.

Henchard decides to hire the man who he had originally considered for the position of his business manager before meeting Farfrae, Joshua Jopp. Jopp has remained in Casterbridge living in poor circumstances, and readily accepts the job. Jopp is the only other person who knows Lucetta's origin in Jersey, having lived there when Henchard did business in that area.

Henchard's decision to hire Jopp reintroduces him into the story, despite his presence in Casterbridge all along. The detail about Jopp's knowledge of Lucetta's past in Jersey foreshadows his connection to the secret between Lucetta and Henchard, and his ability to reveal the truth.

Henchard tells Jopp that they must drive Farfrae out of business by fair competition. Jopp dislikes Farfrae for having previously claimed his position as manager and is happy to go along with this plan. Elizabeth-Jane is troubled by Henchard's choice of a new manager, but Henchard will not listen to her advice.

Henchard, although wishing to defeat Farfrae, plans to do so through fair competition. He believes himself the superior businessman. Elizabeth-Jane, once again, has an intuitive sense of the arising problems.

The bad weather seems to indicate a poor wheat crop that year, which favors Henchard and Jopp's plan for driving Farfrae out of business. The farmers and the villagers of Casterbridge and the surrounding area depend entirely upon the weather, and its effect on the growth of the wheat, for their livelihood and way or life.

The weather and nature form a backdrop for this novel, an infrequent, but recurring reminder of the town's dependency on the harvest for their basic survival needs.

Henchard decides to seek confirmation of the future bad weather from a hermit living outside the town who is famous for his weather predictions. Those who seek out this weather-prophet's advice always pretend that they will not take him seriously, and yet his services are sought, nonetheless. Henchard visits this man who predicts that the last fortnight in August will be rainy.

The weather hermit is both scoffed at and believed by the local people. The way his visitors pretend they will not take him seriously reflects a surface-level distrust of superstitious information. However, these people are, at heart, deeply superstitious.

On the security of this information, Henchard buys a large amount of grain, planning to sell at great profit, once the bad weather means a poor harvest and not enough wheat and corn available. After this purchase, the weather suddenly becomes sunny and the price of grain drops. Henchard is forced to sell his grain before it rots when the price is much lower than the price he paid.

Henchard's purchasing and selling of grain is exactly what he ought not to have done given the weather. By trying to predict the weather, his business is hurt more dramatically, which shows that the weather is a force beyond human control.

Farfrae sees Henchard in the marketplace and expresses his concern over Henchard's business situation, hoping that his losses are not too bad. Despite his cheerful response to Farfrae at the time, Henchard has to go to the Casterbridge bank later that day. Leaving the bank, he sees Jopp who he shoves up against the wall, blaming the manager for bad advice and for his current situation. Jopp swears that Henchard will be sorry for this accusation.

Although Henchard pretends his losses are not too dramatic in front of Farfrae, they are, in fact, very significant. Henchard blames Jopp for the failure, showing his inability to recognize and admit his own faults in the face of Farfrae's continued success.

CHAPTER 27

The low prices of grain cause Farfrae to buy after Henchard has resold his grain and lost a significant amount of money. After three days of fair weather, at the end of August bad weather arrives and the harvest is poor. Farfrae who purchased at low prices before the harvest is able to make a large profit as prices rise. Henchard feels as if someone must have been making a voodoo doll of him to bring him such bad luck.

Farfrae times his purchases and sales perfectly with the weather and thrives. Henchard attributes his own bad luck and Farfrae's good luck to luck or forces outside of their control (like a voodoo doll) rather than attribute the difference to their different business styles.

Henchard frets that Farfrae will soon be mayor, stepping up to fill the leadership position in town that Henchard once filled. Soon their workers take on the dispute between Henchard and Farfrae. One September evening, Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta hear angry voices outside and discover a collision between two wagons in the narrow street, one driven by one of Henchard's men, and the other wagon belonging to Farfrae. Henchard's wagon spills and the two workers come to blows.

Henchard focuses on Farfrae's social successes as well as his business ones, and worries that Farfrae will become the mayor. Henchard and Farfrae's workers show surprising loyalty to both their masters. Perhaps this loyalty is based on their desires to maintain their respective master's business and their own jobs.

Henchard arrives and, seeing the state of his wagon, yells at Farfrae's man. Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta run down into the street, and Lucetta says that they saw it all, and that Henchard's man was most in the wrong. Henchard's man fires up that the women aren't trustworthy in what they saw, as all women favor Farfrae. Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane retreat inside before Henchard is able to speak with him further and question Lucetta about her favoritism of Farfrae.

When Henchard yells at Farfrae's man, Lucetta supports the worker's actions. Henchard's worker interprets this as favoritism rather than honesty. This is a problematic stereotype to assume all women behave in a certain way, but the generalization also reinforces Farfrae's popularity among many people in Casterbridge.

As Henchard stands in the street, the constable arrives and asks him to fill in for the mayor, who is out of town, for a trial of an old woman to be held the next day. After agreeing to this, Henchard knocks at Lucetta's door only to be told that she cannot see him that evening, as she has a prior engagement. Henchard hides nearby and watches her door, and at nine o'clock he sees Farfrae arrive and leave on a walk with Lucetta.

The detail of Henchard filling in on a trial the next day seems innocuous. It is unclear that this will be a turning point in the novel. Henchard spies on Lucetta and Farfrae, demonstrating how far he is willing to go, at this point, to discover their connection.

Henchard follows them, but to avoid meeting them face-to-face hides in the field where they are walking and overhears their conversation. He hears Farfrae's expression of his strong feelings and Lucetta's commitment to him, although she asks if they might not always live in Casterbridge, should she not like it. Henchard returns to Lucetta's house and in his agitation opens her door, walks in, and waits for her return in her drawing room.

Henchard overhearing Farfrae and Lucetta's conversation functions as a literary device for the reader to overhear the conversation as well. Henchard's agitation and reaction frames the conversation, but the reader is also able to witness the connection between the two younger people.

Lucetta returns and Henchard presses her about her connection to him, alluding to their past in Jersey. He says that it is wrong of her to "throw him over," and she said she only came to Casterbridge because she believed she ought to marry Henchard, not because she liked him any longer. While she does not explain this, it is clear that her duty and conscience ruled until new love intervened. Henchard says that unless she agrees that night to marry him, before a witness, he will reveal their history, out of fairness to other men.

Henchard confronts Lucetta and attempts to control her actions through his threat of revealing their past together. His reaction to overhearing her conversation with Farfrae is not sadness, but anger, and he tries to control her when he can no longer win her love. Lucetta's change of heart shows the power love has over her sense of duty.

Lucetta bitterly agrees, and had she settled upon any man other than Farfrae, Henchard might have taken pity upon her in that moment. Elizabeth-Jane is sent for to serve as a witness. Lucetta swears to marry Henchard and then faints. Elizabeth-Jane implores her father not to force Lucetta to do anything that so clearly pains her. Henchard points out that this course of action will leave "him" free for Elizabeth-Jane, but Elizabeth-Jane insists that there is no one to whom the "him" could refer.

Elizabeth-Jane must serve as the witness to Lucetta and Henchard's promise to marry, which means she is the only other character fully aware of the truth of the situation. Lucetta's faint demonstrates her emotional distress, but also a stereotypical feminine weakness referenced in novels from this time period. Women, not men, faint when distressed.

After Henchard leaves, Elizabeth-Jane asks Lucetta how Henchard can have this much power over her, and why she calls him Michael, as if she knows him very well. Lucetta will not confess, but Elizabeth-Jane says she will try to reason with her father, until Lucetta says only, "no, no, let it all be."

Lucetta will not confess her secret to Elizabeth-Jane despite the other woman's involvement in the situation, demonstrating her inability to speak the secret aloud. She also does not want assistance.

CHAPTER 28

The next day, Henchard goes to the Town Hall to fill in for Dr. Chalkfield, the mayor for that year. The woman on trial is elderly and poorly dressed. Constable Stubberd implies that he caught her in the act of relieving herself right by the church. Stubberd is sworn in and gives his testimony, during which the old woman objects twice, and the bench must consult. The old woman has been in court more times than the magistrates, so they must be careful about how they proceed.

It is clear from the old woman's trial that she is both intelligent and difficult to handle. She challenges the proceedings in any way she can, which demonstrates that the men who are passing judgment on her do not intimidate her. She is also shown to be a repeat criminal through her knowledge of court proceedings.

Finally impatient with these proceedings, Henchard interrupts and asks the old woman if she has anything to say. She says yes, and refers to a time twenty-years earlier when she was selling furmity at the Weydon Fair. The clerk says that cannot be relevant to the case, but Henchard is startled and forgets to worry about the case at hand. The woman tells the story of a man who sold his wife and child and points out Henchard as that very man.

Henchard is the one who asks the woman to speak, and he is the one whose reputation is damaged irreversibly by the story she tells. The woman tells the shocking story of the man who sold his wife and child before pointing out Henchard as the subject of the story, a rhetorical technique that produces dramatic effects.

The other members of the court protest, but the furmity-woman says the story shows that Henchard is no better than she, and therefore unfit to pass judgment on her. Henchard confirms the truth of the story, and leaves the court, saying he must avoid any temptation to seek revenge on this woman by way of punishment.

Henchard is more strongly impacted by the weight of the woman's story than anyone else. He admits the truth of it, instead of attempting to discredit the woman. Henchard is, despite his flaws, honest about his past in this moment.

Lucetta sees a large crowd around the Town Hall that day and asks her servant what everyone is so curious about. The servant says that an old woman in court has revealed that Henchard once sold his wife and child for five guineas. Lucetta is greatly disturbed to hear the true character of the man who she is being coerced into marrying.

Lucetta hears the story about Henchard by word of mouth. The story reveals Henchard's true character to her, she feels. However, his crime of selling his wife and child is barely worse than the way he has already treated Lucetta. Arguably, it is also similar in spirit if not in degree to the way she used Elizabeth-Jane.

Lucetta tells Elizabeth-Jane that she plans to go to Port-Bredy, to the seaside, for a few days. Elizabeth-Jane, perceiving her unhappiness, encourages this plan. While Lucetta is away, Henchard calls at the house only to learn of her absence. He calls the next day, but learns that Lucetta is out walking on the road toward Port-Bredy.

A trip to the seaside was often completed for one's health, or as a vacation, at this time period. Elizabeth-Jane is not surprised to hear that Lucetta would want to take such a trip, and is not suspicious of her motives.

CHAPTER 29

Lucetta walks along the road. Before turning back, she peers into the distance, looking for any approaching figure. When she turns back toward town, an approaching person, Elizabeth-Jane, has decided to come meet Lucetta on her walk. Lucetta she sees a loose male cow on the road. At this time in the year, cattle are driven to and from Casterbridge to be auctioned. Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane regard the large bull with concern. They notice that a stick hangs from the ring in the bull's nose, which immediately alarms them, as this animal must have gone wild and escaped from whoever had been holding him.

Lucetta is walking along the road toward Port-Bredy when Elizabeth-Jane joins her. At this point in the novel, the two women seem closer than they ever have been. Elizabeth-Jane is supporting Lucetta by accompanying her. The bull that chases the two women presents a threat from the natural world. The natural world is beyond human control, threatening and influencing human lives.

Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane see a barn off the road, but as soon as they turn toward it, the bull begins to chase them. As they start to run, the bull charges. They run into the barn and circle inside, as the bull chases them in. At the last possible moment, a man appears, grabs the bull by the stick attached to its nose, and wrenches its head violently. Their rescuer is Henchard.

Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane flee the bull, but at the last second they are rescued. Henchard is able to establish physical control over the bull, which is both comforting and troubling. Henchard treats the animal violently, reflecting his cruelty and ability to control.

Henchard consoles a frantic Lucetta, saying that he has returned the favor of saving her, as she once saved him (while he was ill in Jersey). He says he followed her on her walk in order to speak with her. As they leave, Lucetta realizes she dropped her muff in the barn and Elizabeth-Jane offers to run back for it. After collecting the muff, Elizabeth-Jane looks at the bull, pitying him now that he stands quietly, his nose bleeding.

Elizabeth-Jane leaves Henchard and Lucetta alone, which gives them time to speak to each other. Elizabeth-Jane's observation of the bull and her pity for him reinforces Henchard's act of rescue as, fundamentally, an act of domination. This shows what he is capable of in his treatment of others.

As she returns to the road, Elizabeth-Jane encounters Farfrae driving a wagon. She tells him what has happened and he gives her a ride back to town. Although they see Henchard and Lucetta ahead of them, Farfrae does not hurry his horse in order to catch up with the pair on foot. Farfrae returns home, where his house is in disarray, as his servants learned that day that he is planning to move.

Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane have not been alone in a long time, and Farfrae's offer to drive Elizabeth-Jane shows that the two treat each other as friends. Farfrae intentionally gives Lucetta and Henchard time to speak, which indicates that he must sense the tension between them.

Henchard and Lucetta's conversation on the walk back begins with Henchard's apology for his insistence the other evening and his offer that they remain engaged until such a time as Lucetta is ready to marry. Lucetta says she is grateful for his help in rescuing her and wishes she could do some other thing in order to repay him.

Henchard apologies for his treatment of Lucetta, but does not budge on the critical point: that she must one day marry him. Lucetta's gratitude for his rescue shows that she is not completely repulsed by Henchard's treatment and her knowledge of his past.

Henchard suggests something else she could do to help him. His primary creditor Mr. Grower expects money, which Henchard cannot yet pay, given his financial situation. Henchard hopes that Lucetta will go with him before Mr. Grower to confirm their engagement, which will show that Henchard will be able to eventually pay off his debts. Lucetta says she cannot do this, and, eventually confesses that Mr. Grower was a witness of her marriage—to Mr. Farfrae when they married that very week in Port-Bredy.

Henchard's favor that he asks of Lucetta shows his focus on his own affairs. He hopes to survive his financial problems on Lucetta's money, and perhaps this is connected to his insistence that she marry him. Lucetta's confession of her secret marriage is a surprise for both Henchard and the reader, who did not know until this point whether Lucetta would marry Farfrae, Henchard, or neither man.

Henchard bursts out angrily that Lucetta would marry Farfrae while bound in agreement to him. Lucetta says she knew she had to secure Farfrae before Henchard went so far as to confess the truth of their past situation. The bells of the church are ringing, and Henchard asks if that is in celebration of Farfrae and Lucetta's marriage. Henchard says that he wishes to punish her for her betrayal by telling Farfrae everything, and Lucetta begs him to not do so, offering to pay off his debts for him. Henchard parts from her angrily.

Lucetta's underhanded manipulation of both men is clear when she confesses that she had to get Farfrae to marry her before he knew the truth. Henchard, now that he can no longer control Lucetta with their secret, threatens to punish her with it. Lucetta is revealed to be not so different from Henchard in this scene: willing to do whatever it takes to secure her own interests.

CHAPTER 30

Farfrae's plans to move, as he discussed with his servants, are a transition to joining Lucetta in High-Place Hall. Lucetta greets him upon on his arrival, and tells him that she has not yet shared the situation of their marriage with Elizabeth-Jane. She asks Farfrae if it would be okay with him if Elizabeth-Jane continues to live at High-Place Hall, as her friend, and as she has no other home. Farfrae agrees, but with some awkwardness, and perceives that Lucetta does not have any idea of quiet Elizabeth-Jane's history with Farfrae.

Farfrae moves in with Lucetta because she has a nicer house, and greater wealth, than he does. For this time period, this was a non-traditional marriage. Because of her wealth, Lucetta is socially higher than Farfrae. Farfrae feels awkward at Elizabeth-Jane's presence at High-Place Hall, which demonstrates that he knows he has wronged her in pursuing another woman, even if he did so for love.

Lucetta reminds Elizabeth-Jane of the story she told her about her "friend," but the younger woman drops the pretense and says that she knows Lucetta to be the one in the story. Although embarrassed at being found out, Lucetta attempts to explain how her commitment to the first man (Henchard) was brought about the circumstances of their situation and the gossip of others. Elizabeth-Jane asks whether or not Lucetta has recently renewed her commitment to this man, having realized that he is her father. Lucetta pleads that she only did so under force and that she has discovered that Henchard is a man she would be afraid to marry.

Lucetta is invested in convincing Elizabeth-Jane that she did no wrong, as if, by doing so, she could be comfortable and confident about herself. She "pleads" with Elizabeth-Jane to understand how she was forced to agree to marry Henchard and her fear to marry him after learning what he did to his first wife. This plea does not include empathy for Elizabeth-Jane, or recognition that this terrible story involves her.

Elizabeth-Jane says that she ought to marry Henchard, given how far they are entangled. If Lucetta cannot marry Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane feels that the only other possibility is for her to remain single. She is clear in her judgment of the situation this time, saying that it is Henchard or no one for Lucetta. Impropriety has always been a primary concern of Elizabeth-Jane's, and something to be avoided at all costs.

Elizabeth-Jane has changed her opinion. This may be due to Elizabeth-Jane knowledge of the identities of the main players in the situation. She gives strong advice that warns Lucetta away from Farfrae, and from impropriety, where before she refused to make any judgment.

Lucetta, overcome, shows Elizabeth-Jane the ring on her finger, at which Elizabeth-Jane happily assumes that Lucetta has, in fact, married Henchard. Lucetta corrects her, and invites her to still live in the house with herself and Farfrae. With great self-control, Elizabeth-Jane asks that she be allowed to consider the decision alone. She decides instantly that she cannot remain in the house, when Farfrae and she so nearly became engaged to each other.

Elizabeth-Jane's misunderstanding of the ring on Lucetta's finger increases the pain of the truth when it is finally made clear to her. This is a moment of dramatic irony: the reader knows that truth, but must watch Elizabeth-Jane misunderstand and suffer through the realization that Farfrae has married another.

Elizabeth-Jane finds lodgings nearly across the street from Henchard's home and arranges to move there that very night. She knows that the annual sum from her father, plus her netting skills will earn enough money to support her. She leaves a note for Lucetta and departs. The town is celebrating the news of the marriage, and debating whether or not Farfrae will quit his business and set up on his wife's money, or continue as a corn and wheat merchant.

Elizabeth-Jane, ever practical, secures a place to live and considers her finances before leaving High-Place Hall. Her emotions, however, show through in her inability to say farewell to Lucetta or Farfrae. The perspective of the villagers and their gossip is again displayed as they discuss this new surprise marriage.

CHAPTER 31

The story about Henchard's sale of his wife and child revealed by the furmity-woman spreads throughout town, and from that day onward Henchard's reputation rapidly declines. An incident of some sold wheat that is far below the quality of the sample of wheat Henchard's business provided, drags Henchard's name into the mud. Elizabeth-Jane is passing the Golden Crown not longer afterward and learns from the crowd outside that a meeting of the commissioners is occurring concerning Henchard's bankruptcy.

Henchard's reputation and his business take a hit once the secret of his past is revealed. Elizabeth-Jane learns, through the town gossip, that Henchard has gone bankrupt. This is a technique frequently employed in this novel: information is gained through the gossip of the villagers, and information is revealed to the reader at the same time as it is revealed to a character.

Henchard willingly gives everything that he has to his creditors in order to settle his debts, attempting to go so far as to give them his gold watch, which they will not accept. The creditors say that despite Henchard's rash business dealings that have created his debt, they feel he has been fair and conscientious in trying to repair the unfortunate situation. Henchard is deeply moved by these statements, and sells his watch and takes the money to one of his smaller creditors. All of Henchard's belongings and furniture are auctioned off.

Henchard is occasionally able to confront problems of his own creation. This happens only a handful of times in the novel, and it occurs when Henchard's mistakes are large and noticeable. He is able to attempt to pay back all his creditors, just as he was able to take a vow to stop drinking when he was aware of the dramatic mistake he had made.

Elizabeth-Jane alone feels for Henchard and attempts to reconnect with him. She writes to him, but he does not reply. She wishes she could make it clear to him that she does not blame him for his treatment of her. Henchard's house is sold as part of the process of paying his creditors and Henchard moves into Jopp's small cottage by the Priory Mill, despite Jopp being the man whom Henchard had mistreated, employed, abused, and dismissed.

Elizabeth-Jane's empathy is apparent in her treatment of Henchard. Despite his ill-treatment of her, she reaches out to him in this difficult time. Henchard's one other friend is Jopp, who he has also mistreated. Without the kindness and forgiveness of others, Henchard's situation would be far grimmer.

Elizabeth-Jane sees that Henchard's wagons have been painted over with Farfrae's name. She sees Abel Whittle at work, and he tells her that Farfrae has purchased Henchard's entire business, which the workers are happy about, as they no longer have to fear Henchard's temper. Henchard's business, which has been inactive as he fell into bankruptcy, is revitalized with a new precision under Farfrae's ownership.

Farfrae has bought Henchard's business and employs his workers. This literal transition represents an emotional and social transition: Farfrae is taking over Henchard's place, his role, and his situation in Casterbridge. Unintentionally, Farfrae is claiming everything Henchard had and wanted.

CHAPTER 32

On the road out of Casterbridge are two bridges where those in unfortunate circumstances often linger to reflect. The nearer of the two bridges is the haunt of those from poorer backgrounds, who do not mind being seen by passersby in the middle of their misfortunes. Jopp often stood on this bridge after losing the position as Henchard's manager. **The second bridge** is the place for unfortunate souls of a more privileged background. These individuals often stand looking into the river, and sometimes their bodies are found the next morning floating at that location.

These two bridges are introduced at this point in the novel, although they will be more significant later on. The bridges symbolize isolation, positioned as they are outside of town, and used as places for the reflections of the unfortunate. When the second bridge reappears later in the novel, the reader has already been prepared to think of this bridge as a place of isolation, with a history of suicides.

Henchard walks to **the second bridge** and is gazing into the water when Jopp arrives and greets him. Jopp tells Henchard that Lucetta and Farfrae have moved into their new house, which is Henchard old house. Farfrae has also purchased all of Henchard's furniture to use in the house. Henchard says ironically that Farfrae will likely buy his body and soul as well.

Jopp's news of Farfrae's purchases is further literal evidence of the ways Farfrae is replacing Henchard in Casterbridge. These literal changes represent Farfrae's social replacement of Henchard (in more ways than by living in his house).

After Jopp leaves and Henchard remains at the bridge, a gig passes and Farfrae jumps out. He stays to speak to Henchard and asks if it's true that he is considering leaving town. Farfrae kindly offers Henchard a space in his home (Henchard's old house) until Henchard is able to sort out his circumstances. Henchard refuses, saying that they would surely quarrel. As they walk back to town together, Farfrae instead offers Henchard's his pick of the furniture that he purchased, saying he bought it all that Henchard might have those things he cares about. Henchard is moved by this generosity and exclaims that sometimes he wonders if he has wronged Farfrae.

Farfrae's act of generosity, while innocent on his part, is difficult for Henchard to hear because it would put him in reach of Lucetta and his old property, which are things, as Henchard sees it, that Farfrae has "stolen" from him. He points out that he and Farfrae would quarrel, despite Farfrae having always been kind and never quarrelsome with Henchard. Henchard is, however, not entirely blinded by his jealousy. He is able to admit Farfrae's kindness.

Elizabeth-Jane's new apartment, situated as it is across from Henchard's old home, is now in close proximity to the lives of Farfrae and Lucetta. Elizabeth-Jane avoids looking across the street as much as possible, as she occupies herself with netting and studying books.

In attempting to flee from exposure to Lucetta and Farfrae's happy married life, Elizabeth-Jane has accidently positioned herself close to them. She is forced to see their lives, even though she tries to avoid this.

Elizabeth-Jane hears that Henchard has fallen ill and she arrives at Jopp's cottage. Despite Henchard's initial protests that he does not want to see her, Elizabeth-Jane stays and cares for her father, as he recovers quickly with her assistance.

Elizabeth-Jane is able to break through Henchard's pride with her kindness. Until this point, Henchard has never admitted his weakness or that he could need help from someone else.

Henchard appreciates and cares more for Elizabeth-Jane. He is able to seek work at Farfrae's business, and is immediately employed. Farfrae wishes to help Henchard as much as possible, but keeps distance between them, knowing the older man's strong temper. Often Henchard, as he works, must see Farfrae coming and going from his old home and from Lucetta inside.

Henchard is also directly exposed to Lucetta and Farfrae's happily married life once he works at Farfrae's business. The complex theme of love is explored by scenes of Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane, father and daughter, both pining over the same marriage.

Henchard hears a rumor that Farfrae will be elected as mayor soon. As Henchard works, Farfrae's replacement of himself in reputation, location, and love festers in his mind. He feels Lucetta's loss far more desperately than he had ever felt interest in her when he could have had her. Henchard is overheard to mutter to himself a count down of days, and when questioned, he says he is counting down the days until he may be released from his oath against drinking.

Working at Farfrae's allows Henchard's wounds time to fester. Henchard, although he is often rash in the moment, can also build a deep grudge over time. He focuses on being able to drink again as a way to relieve himself of his pain and resentment. As usual, his anger is focused on another and not at himself for his mistakes.

One Sunday, Elizabeth-Jane is sitting by her window when she overhears voices in the street, and one that exclaims that Michael Henchard has started drinking again after twenty years of sobriety.

Henchard drinking again marks a return to the angry, spontaneous, and extravagant personality he exhibited when he sold his wife and child.

CHAPTER 33

By Casterbridge tradition, many workingmen go to The King of Prussia for just one half pint of liquor on Sunday afternoons. The conversation reflects the finer occasion, and that day's sermon is often discussed. Henchard chooses The King of Prussia to that day begin his drinking. The other workingmen remark that he is a stranger there, to whom Henchard replies that he has been in a melancholy mood lately, and they all know why, and hopes to lift it. He calls for a song, and the choir members say they will offer a hymn. Henchard looks outside and sees Farfrae passing in the street with Lucetta on his arm.

Henchard joins the workingmen at the King of Prussia. The workingmen are at first sympathetic for Henchard and his situation. Henchard has become one of them. The characters that have been presented as the villagers, the gossips, and the ones who observe the wealthier characters throughout the novel now surround him.

Henchard requests the hundred-and-ninth psalm and when the choir leader protests and says the fourth instead, Henchard roars that they shall sing the hundred-and-ninth. The choir complies, and the words of the psalm describe a cursed man who dies and leaves little prosperity or happiness behind him. Farfrae and Lucetta pass by again and Henchard, indicating Farfrae, says that he is the man they've been singing about.

Henchard imposes his will on the choir and on the gathered group. The choir's willingness to sing his chosen psalm demonstrates their fear of Henchard's temper and his outburst. Henchard uses the psalm as a curse, connecting its situation with Farfrae, like a prayer for his downfall.

The choir is horrified and says that they would not have sung the psalm if they thought the words were meant for a living man. Elizabeth-Jane arrives and is able to convince Henchard to leave The King of Prussia. As they walk home, Henchard repeats the ending of the sung psalm. He says aloud that Farfrae has taken everything away from him and that he must meet him. Elizabeth-Jane is alarmed by these words and asks her father what he is planning, but he does not answer.

The choir's horror at this use of the psalm shows that they believe in the power of these words to inflict harm. Elizabeth-Jane, while not alarmed by Henchard's use of the psalm, is alarmed at the possibility of what her father might physically do to harm Farfrae. She is focused, as usual, on the rational possibilities.

Elizabeth-Jane keeps a close eye on her father. She comes to the yard and works with him in order to do so. After a few days, Lucetta happens to stumble upon Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane working together. Henchard says to Lucetta that humble workmen are honored to have the lady of the house look in on them. Lucetta is embarrassed and hurt by his bitterness and the irony of the situation.

Elizabeth-Jane witnesses a confrontation between Henchard and Lucetta that demonstrates the extent of Henchard's bitterness. He addresses Lucetta as if he is a lowly servant, mocking her for her position so far above him, which he presents as if it is her fault.

The next day, Henchard receives a note from Lucetta asking him not to speak to her in such a way when she has done him no injury and only wishes for him to be well off in her husband's employ. Henchard laughs at her foolishness in writing him such a letter, which he could easily show to Farfrae, before throwing the letter into the fire.

Henchard's laughter at Lucetta's foolishness, before he throws her letter away, demonstrates his understanding that he still has some power over her because of their secret past. He burns the letter because he is confident about this power.

Elizabeth-Jane often brings her father tea, as one strategy for preventing him from going out to drink alcohol. One day, on this errand, she arrives to find Henchard and Farfrae both working on the top floor of the corn stores. As she watches, she sees Henchard raise his hand up behind Farfrae's back as the younger man stands near the edge of the floor. While Henchard does nothing else, the odd expression on his face causes Elizabeth-Jane to decide that she must warn Farfrae in some way.

Elizabeth-Jane witnesses an interaction between Farfrae and Henchard, which demonstrates his desires to Elizabeth-Jane as well as to the reader. Instead of directly presenting Henchard's internal thoughts and feelings, the novel presents his emotional state through a considered action: the death of Farfrae.

CHAPTER 34

The next morning, Elizabeth-Jane rises early and meets Farfrae as he leaves his house. She says that she has something to tell him about Henchard and did not want to alarm Lucetta by calling at the house. She says that she fears Henchard will insult or harm Farfrae in some way. Farfrae's reaction is one of disbelief. He does not suppose that the poor man in his employ with whom, he believes, he gets on well would do him any actual injury.

Farfrae is unable to believe that Henchard would hurt him. This is a moment of dramatic irony because the reader is aware of the extent of Henchard's hatred. Farfrae doesn't believe Elizabeth-Jane, showing him to be blinded by his goodwill towards all.

Elizabeth-Jane leaves Farfrae, unhappy that she has not been able to impress upon him the seriousness of the situation. Farfrae does not forget the conversation, however, and he knows from Elizabeth-Jane's serious character that she would not make such a warning lightly. Later that day, Farfrae meets the town clerk about his kind plan to set Henchard up in a new shop. The clerk, Lawyer Joyce, tells Farfrae that others see what he does not: how deeply Henchard hates him.

Upon reflection, Farfrae realizes that the warning has weight because it comes from Elizabeth-Jane. But it takes confirmation from another character for Farfrae to admit Henchard's hatred to himself. As a popular person, the concept of being hated is foreign to Farfrae and difficult for him to believe or understand.

Farfrae feels obligated to keep Henchard in his employ, as the man was his friend for so long, but he decides to give up on securing him the new shop. He tells the owner of the shop that the plan has changed, and the owner then tells Henchard that a plan of the council's to set Henchard up in the shop was struck down by Farfrae.

Gossip is harmful in this scene. Farfrae's decision reaches Henchard as a willful act of harm against him. Although gossip has been used throughout this novel, it has never warped the truth of a situation as it does here.

When Farfrae returns home that evening, he is visibly troubled. He confesses to Lucetta that he is worried about and confused by Henchard's hatred of him. He says that he cannot understand why Henchard feels so strongly about the situation, saying that he acts as if they are in an old-fashion rivalry of love, rather than a small trade rivalry. Lucetta, pale, wonders what he has heard, but he assures her that the situation is not all that bad. Lucetta says she wishes he would seriously consider her plan of moving elsewhere.

Farfrae comes very close to discerning the truth when he observes that Henchard's actions resemble the dramatic behavior of an "old-fashioned" love rival. His use of the world "old-fashioned" gives both the character and the author's understanding of historical romance, in the context of a narrative, which the reader may consider "old-fashioned."

Farfrae and Lucetta are discussing this plan when the current mayor, a Mr. Vatt, arrives at their house. He shares the news of the previous mayor Chalkfield's death. Mr. Vatt offers Farfrae his seat on the council, and Farfrae accepts, despite Lucetta's reminder that they were discussing moving away.

Farfrae prioritizes his social position in Casterbridge over Lucetta's wish to move away. Although he doesn't understand Lucetta's reasons, he is still surprisingly ready to ignore her wishes in the face of this offer.

Lucetta is very troubled from that evening onward. Imprudently, she asks Henchard when she next encounters him about the parcel of love letters she had sent him and then asked him to return to her. He recalls packing them up and then not seeing her on the coach through Casterbridge. Lucetta says she was prevented from arriving at that time by the death of her wealthy aunt, and wishes to have the letters returned to her.

Lucetta's request is imprudent because Henchard had forgotten about the letters she sent him, which are evidence of their history. Henchard has demonstrated his desire to control her and to seek revenge for her marriage to Farfrae, and she has reminded him of the ammunition to use if he wants to hurt her.

Henchard later realizes that the letters are most likely still in a safe in his old home, where Lucetta and Farfrae now live. Henchard is already furious about his mistaken information on Farfrae's willful end to the plan to give him the seed shop when he learns that Farfrae has been elected to the council. The next day, he asks Farfrae about a package of letters left in the safe, which Farfrae says he has not opened.

Ironically, the letters are in Lucetta's possession, left in the house where she and Farfrae now live. When Henchard hears that Farfrae has been elected to the council, this is another blow to his pride. He asks about the letters because he plans to reveal the truth.

Henchard calls the next evening to pick up the papers from the safe, having had some alcohol beforehand to prepare himself. He inquires after Lucetta and learns she is already in bed. Henchard asks Farfrae if he remembers the woman who had once been interested in Henchard, but whom he could not marry after Susan returned. Henchard indicates that the letters are from this woman and reads some of the writing aloud to Farfrae. Farfrae asks what has become of the woman, and Henchard says she has married well, saving him from any guilt upon seeing her letters. Henchard had intended to read the name at the end of the letters aloud and so reveal the truth that way, but in the moment he finds he cannot hurt both Farfrae and Lucetta in cold blood.

This scene demonstrates a key aspect of Henchard's personality: despite his anger, his willingness to blame others, and his long-held grudges, he is not cold-hearted. To scheme and to prepare Farfrae and Lucetta's destruction is something he cannot do. If he were angry in the moment, he may have revealed the secret. If the secret had been revealed, the course of the novel would have been dramatically changed. The scene is tense for the reader who observes Henchard teetering on the edge of telling the secret. But ultimately, while terribly flawed, Henchard is not a bad person, which in turn only heightens the tragedy of the novel.

CHAPTER 35

Lucetta had retired upstairs that evening, but she had not gone to sleep. As the time arrives and passes when Farfrae normally comes to bed, Lucetta decides to get up and see where he is. She hears voices downstairs and overhears Henchard and Farfrae. She stands transfixed by horror as she hears her own words read aloud by Henchard. Their conversation indicates, however, that Farfrae does not know the author of the letters. He encourages Henchard to burn the letters to preserve the woman's privacy, but Henchard says he will not do so.

Lucetta overhears Henchard reading the letters. Again, the power of language, and overheard information, is key. Lucetta is aware of Henchard's ability to hurt her, but also aware of Farfrae's ignorance about the situation. Farfrae's advice that Henchard burn the letters is unknowingly advice that protects himself. It also shows his sense that they shouldn't pry into private affairs.

Lucetta sits on her bed, waiting, unable to undress or move in her state of anxiety. Had Henchard revealed the truth before leaving? She wonders. Farfrae arrives upstairs and upon observing that he does not know the truth, Lucetta bursts into tears.

Lucetta's anxiety shows her lack of control in the situation. She is entirely at Henchard's mercy because she will not be able to defend herself against his accusation, especially as a woman at this time period.

The next day, Lucetta wonders how to parry Henchard's next attack. She considers telling Farfrae the truth, but is too afraid that he will consider the situation her fault rather than her misfortune. She decides to attempt to persuade Henchard to return the letters to her and writes to him, requesting that he meet her at **The Ring** that evening.

When Lucetta considers whether or not to tell the truth, she is primarily guided by considerations of how Farfrae will react. She is worried about her reputation, but now this concern is focused entirely on what Farfrae will think. Love has changed Lucetta.

Lucetta prepares for the meeting with Henchard by wearing her drabbest clothes and attempting to heighten her tired and worn look that is the result of a sleepless night after overhearing Henchard read her letters aloud. When Lucetta sees Henchard at **The Ring**, she marks a change in his demeanor when he sees her. Henchard remembers his meeting with Susan in this same place, and the similarity between Lucetta's appearance and Susan's appearance at that moment predisposes him to take pity on Lucetta.

The Ring, which symbolizes the concealing of secrets, is the perfect meeting place for Lucetta and Henchard. Lucetta's resemblance to Susan causes Henchard to take pity on her. Henchard was aware of the wrong he had done to Susan, but he was not aware, until this moment, of the wrong he did to Lucetta.

When Henchard says he is sorry to see her looking so ill, Lucetta says that he is the cause. She begs him to not ruin her happiness and her marriage in this way. Henchard realizes that such a woman is a "very small deer to hurt" and he feels ashamed of his desire to punish Lucetta. He promises Lucetta that he will return the letters to her, but cautions her that Farfrae may still discover the truth through someone other than himself. Lucetta says that she hopes this will not happen until she has proved herself a faithful wife, so that Farfrae might forgive her for everything.

Henchard uses the words "a very small deer to hurt" to describe Lucetta in the moment that he understand he should pity her, rather than punish her. Henchard views women as either vulnerable creatures or wild creatures to be controlled according to his wishes. To compare Lucetta to an animal is, therefore, fitting. Lucetta believes in her eventual ability to convince Farfrae to see beyond her past.

CHAPTER 36

As Lucetta arrives at home after her secret meeting with Henchard, Jopp stops her outside. He asks her to put in a good word for him with her husband, as Jopp hopes to be offered a position as Farfrae's working partner. Lucetta says she knows nothing about the issue, and refuses to offer her help. Jopp points out that she knows he is trustworthy, as they knew each other slightly in Jersey. Lucetta still refuses his request.

Lucetta's refusal of Jopp's request is surprising. Until this point in the novel, Lucetta has only interacted with characters who she cares about or who she is manipulating or who have power over her. When interacting with Jopp, Lucetta is dismissive, and acts as if her position places her above him.

Jopp returns to his cottage where Henchard asks him to do him a favor by delivering a package to Mrs. Farfrae. He says that he would take it himself, but does not wish to be seen at their house. Jopp agrees and Henchard retires to his own portion of the house. Jopp sits up and as he looks at the parcel he is supposed to deliver, he wonders about the connection between Henchard and Lucetta. He was aware in Jersey that there was some sort of connection between them. Inspired by Lucetta's haughtiness to him, Jopp peeks in the end of the parcel and sees that it is full of letters.

Henchard's request to have Jopp deliver the parcel is innocent, not a scheme. The exchange of the parcel seems fated, however. Many events in this novel exhibit ironic coincidence: Farfrae's replacement of Henchard in Casterbridge, for example, is perfect and complete. Jopp receives this parcel about Lucetta directly after Lucetta has hurt him. Her treatment of him inspires his retaliation.

Jopp leaves on foot to deliver the parcel and meets Mother Cuxsom and Nance Mockridge, who invite him for a drink in Mixen Lane. Mixen Lane constitutes the poorest part of Casterbridge, full of disease, decay, recklessness, and the lowest class of residents of the town. Mixen Lane is separated from the countryside by a brook, which resident poor folk cross by way of wooden plank bridges lowered by others from the town side. The inn and pub of Mixen Lane is the centrally located Peter's Finger. The front door is always closed and patrons enter through a hidden side door in an alleyway.

The language chosen to describe Mixen Lane and Peter's Finger captures the way in which lower class life, poverty, and minor criminal activity compliment each other in Casterbridge. The poverty of this area creates people who are naturally secretive, e.g. they enter their pub through a concealed side door. Mixen Lane shows the economic divide in Casterbridge, and accounts for the unpopularity of the wealthy.

Among the mixed company at Peter's Finger, where Jopp and his companions arrive, is the furmity-woman, lately settled in that area. Charl tells an animated story about his fight with another man, Joe. The furmity-woman inquires about the parcel, which Jopp holds. Jopp replies that the parcel contains the love letters of a great woman in town, whom he would like to shame. Mother Cuxsom exclaims that they should read the love letters, and Jopp opens the parcel.

It is no surprise to find that the furmity-woman fits in among the crowd at Peter's Finger. The furmity-woman, like Mother Cuxsom, is curious about affairs that are not her own, like Jopp's letter parcel. The characters and their stories flesh out the world of Casterbridge, showing a side of Casterbridge that is both impoverished and violent.

As the letters are read, the identities of the main players are revealed. The furmity-woman feels she has saved Lucetta from a bad marriage. Nance Mockridge says the letters are a good foundation for a skimmity-ride, a custom in Casterbridge for exposing scandals and shaming those involved.

The skimmington (or skimmity) ride is presented as a familiar custom. The practice seems to allow the poor to avenge themselves on the wealthy who enjoy very different lives than themselves. They achieve this revenge by shaming the rich, by attacking their reputations.

A whistle is heard and Joe and Charl go to lower the bridge across the brook for a man who is arriving. In the process, they are hailed by a stranger, who asks whether this is the way to Casterbridge. Joe and Charl lower the bridge for this man as well. Seeing the inn, the stranger invites Joe and Charl back in for a bite to eat at his expense, as a thank you for their assistance.

The bridge over the river and the whistle needed to lower the bridge shows the secrecy of Mixen Lane and the close-knit community. The community will, however, welcome a stranger who seems more economically stable.

In the light of the inn, the stranger is revealed to be more finely dressed than expected. Upon seeing the company at Peter's Finger, the stranger seems uninterested in taking a room there for the night. He overhears the discussion of the skimmington-ride and asks what it is. He offers some money toward the proceedings, saying that he'll be in Casterbridge for a while and that the skimmington-ride sounds like great entertainment. Having inquired the way into town, the stranger takes his leave.

Despite the stranger's welcome at Peter's Finger, the stranger sees himself as above the lodgings. The physical appearance of the location and the people is the basis for the stranger's decision. Appearance and company could indicate whether or not a place was "proper". The stranger is not, however, too proud to disapprove of the skimmington-ride.

The skimmington-ride having been planned, Jopp leaves, but does not deliver the letters that night, at the late hour. Jopp delivers the letters the next morning and Lucetta promptly burns them, grateful than no evidence of her unlucky situation with Henchard remains.

Although Jopp delivers the letters, the damage has been done and the secret has been exposed. Evidence is, in this moment, less important than public opinion.

CHAPTER 37

A royal personage plans to pass through Casterbridge on his way West and to change horses at the Golden Crown. The town decides to make a fine and welcoming affair of the event, as this royal personage has worked to promote the science of farming on a national level. The town prepares an address, and the council meets to discuss the proceedings. At this meeting, Henchard appears and asks to be able to walk with the rest of the council.

The reason Casterbridge wishes to particularly support this royal personage is his commitment to promoting and supporting farming across England. Casterbridge society demonstrates its primary focus and interest: farming. Henchard wishes to be a part of the celebration, despite his changed circumstances.

Farfrae is now the young Mayor of the town, and, in this position on the council, he is the one who must refuse Henchard's request. Henchard's interest in walking with the council to greet the royal personage was only a passing fancy, but the opposition, particularly from Farfrae, makes him determined to welcome the visitor.

Farfrae refuses Henchard's request. Henchard sees this as a particular and personal affront, rather than realizing that Farfrae's position as mayor made him the one to have to make the decision. Henchard rises to the challenge.

The celebratory day arrives and all the villagers appear at their best to welcome the visitor. Henchard sees Elizabeth-Jane in the street after he has primed himself with a glass of rum. He tells her that it's lucky his drinking days have returned or else he would not have the courage to carry out his plan. Elizabeth-Jane is concerned and asks him about his plan, but he says only that he will welcome the royal personage.

Henchard drops a hint of his plan to Elizabeth-Jane. She has already been suspicious of Henchard's motives and threats, and this, paired with his drinking, creates a dangerous combination of which Elizabeth-Jane is fully aware.

Elizabeth-Jane sees Henchard go into a store and reappear with a small union jack flag and a large rosette. She surveys the scene, noting Lucetta seated at the front of the chairs set up for ladies. Lucetta is watching her husband, as he stands with his friends. Henchard stands near her as well, but her eyes pass over him, and her behavior indicates that she will not acknowledge him in public any more.

Henchard's actions seem innocuous: he purchases celebratory and patriotic items like the other villagers. Lucetta's unwillingness to acknowledge Henchard shows her haughtiness. Henchard has fallen below her notice now that she sees him as no longer a threat, and those of lowly backgrounds do not receive her attention.

As the royal carriage arrives, a walking procession of the council is formed around it. Suddenly Henchard appears among them and steps directly up to the carriage, reaching out his hand to shake the hand of the royal personage inside. Farfrae, with the mayor's authority, grabs Henchard and drags him away from the carriage. For a moment Henchard holds his ground before giving way.

Henchard attempts to greet the royal personage directly and must be dragged away by Farfrae. This conflict is both physical and public. Henchard had displayed his physical power, as when he subdues the bull, but here the power is Farfrae's, as evidenced by his physical rebuff of Henchard.

Mrs. Blowbody, a lady sitting next to Lucetta, asks whether Henchard wasn't once Farfrae's patron when he first arrived in Casterbridge. Lucetta exclaims that Farfrae could have found his footing in any town without a patron. The townspeople, including Longways, Coney, and Buzzford, recall Farfrae's humble beginnings, however, and say how greatly he has changed since he sang that night at The King of Prussia. The rest of the royal personage's visit happens smoothly and after the address and greeting Farfrae and Lucetta, he continues onward.

Lucetta dismisses the impact Henchard has had on Farfrae's life and success. She sees her husband as solely responsible for their good fortune. Other villagers, however, have turned against Farfrae now that he is no longer a poor worker. Farfrae's popularity has dwindled as he has raised himself above the villagers to a position of affluence.

The townsfolk disperse after the event. Longways, Coney, and Buzzford remain in the street, while many others walked back toward their homes in Mixen Lane. Buzzford mentions the skimmington-ride, which is being planned in Mixen Lane. As Farfrae has risen to such a prominent position in town as the mayor and a man of money, he no longer inspires the interest and sympathy of men like Buzzford, Longways, and Coney, as he once did when he sang at The King of Prussia. These three are less inclined to help Farfrae, but agree to make an inquiry into the matter.

Longways, Coney, and Buzzford discuss the skimmington-ride and whether or not they should protect Farfrae from it. These three men are not among the crowd seen at Peter's Finger. Therefore, they are established as middle class, neither poor nor wealthy, and not enthusiastic about siding with either party.

Longways, Coney, and Buzzford would have been surprised to learn of the imminent nature of the plan for a skimmington-ride. At Peter's Finger, Jopp says to the company that the event will occur that very night, so as to stand in sharp contrast to Farfrae and Lucetta's prominence that day. For Jopp, the plan is not a joke, but his means of revenge on both the mayor and his wife.

The skimmington-ride is planned for that night to make it more painful after Lucetta and Farfrae's day as the most prominent couple in town. The skimmington-ride is both a joke and a serious means for revenge. Those who view it as a joke do not stop to consider its consequences.

CHAPTER 38

After Henchard's failed greeting of the royal personage, he stood behind the stand where the ladies sat. He overheard Lucetta deny to Mrs. Blowbody that he had ever helped Farfrae. Returning home, he meets Jopp. Jopp says that he too has been snubbed by Lucetta, and recounts his story of his request that she put in a good word for him about working with her husband. Henchard is unable to focus on anyone's plight, but his own.

Overhearing Lucetta's high opinion of Farfrae and her denial of him is a breaking point for Henchard. To be insulted by Lucetta cuts more deeply than anything else. Jopp tries to commiserate, but Henchard, as has been demonstrated many times, is focused only on his own suffering.

Henchard, without forethought and bent on taking drastic measures, goes looking for Farfrae after supper. Henchard walks to Farfrae's house where he knocks and leaves the message that he would like to see his employer in the granaries as soon as possible. He goes to the corn stores, which are empty, as no one is working on this celebratory day. He says aloud that he is stronger than Farfrae, and so he takes a rope and ties one of his own arms down to his side. He ascends to the loft, where there is a drop from the edge of thirty or forty feet—the very spot where Elizabeth-Jane once saw him lift his arm, as if to push Farfrae over.

Henchard's plan to challenge, and kill, Farfrae occurs directly in the backlash of anger toward Lucetta. This means of destroying Farfrae is more fitting to Henchard's character than using his secret past with Lucetta. Henchard has demonstrated his physical superiority before. He is not, however, unfair, and he wishes to defeat Farfrae fairly, which is why he ties down his own arm. A physical struggle seems to Henchard like a fair contest.

Farfrae arrives, singing the old tune he had once sung at The King of Prussia. Henchard is moved by the song and draws back saying, "No, I can't do!" Eventually, Farfrae is quiet and Henchard calls for him to come up into the loft. Farfrae does, and asks Henchard what's wrong and why he isn't celebrating like everyone else. Henchard says that now Farfrae's money and his wife cannot lift him above Henchard, as the two face each other man to man.

His statement to Farfrae reinforces Henchard's sense that a physical struggle is a fair fight, that when they meet hand-to-hand wealth and popularity cannot give Farfrae the advantage. Henchard still deliberates in the moment because Farfrae's song reminds him of their past and their lost friendship.

Henchard says that Farfrae should not have insulted him as he did by bodily dragging him away from the royal personage. Farfrae becomes irritated at this, saying that Henchard had no right to be there and do what he did. Henchard says that they will fight in the loft, and one of them will fall through the door, while the master remains. Immediately, he attacks Farfrae who can only "respond in kind." The wrestling match brings Farfrae close to the door, but Henchard's tied arm hampers him.

Farfrae has rarely showed any anger, toward Henchard or any other character in the novel. However, he is angered by Henchard's approach of the royal personage, presumably because this wild behavior made him, the mayor, look bad. Farfrae is presented as only able to "respond in kind" in the fight. Henchard is clearly the one who instigated the fight.

Eventually, Henchard pins Farfrae at the edge, the young man's head and arm dangling out the door. Henchard gasps that Farfrae's life is in his hands, and Farfrae responds that he ought to just take it, as he has clearly wished to do for so long. Henchard is moved and exclaims that this is not true, and that he has never cared for any other friend, as he once cared for Farfrae. He says that although he came there to kill Farfrae, he finds he cannot do it, and he releases the younger man.

This scene is a dramatic climax of the novel: Henchard is moved from a desire to kill Farfrae to unwillingness to do so. His confession of how much he once cared for Farfrae emphasizes how deeply Henchard has been hurt. And while this hurt has often come about through his own doing, it is clear that Henchard has lost all the confidence he once had.

Farfrae leaves and Henchard sits in the loft for a long time, filled with self-reproach. He says aloud that Farfrae once liked him, but that now he is certain to hate him. He wishes to see Farfrae again that night, but, as he sat in the loft, he heard Farfrae come into the yard for his horse and gig. Abel Whittle brought him a letter and he told Abel that instead of heading to Budmouth, as he had planned, he had been summoned to Weatherby. Realizing that Farfrae won't return until late, Henchard decides to wait for him. As he waits, he hears a confusion of rhythmic noises, like a band, but his humiliation is too great for anything else to catch his interest.

Henchard's reflection in Farfrae's loft is one of deep self-hatred and remorse. As with Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane, Henchard realizes his connection to Farfrae in the moment that he loses him. He hopes to try to patch things up by speaking to Farfrae again, but the reader has already seen the problems with this approach with Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane. Farfrae leaves for the evening, and only Henchard and Whittle know his change of plans.

CHAPTER 39

After his fight with Henchard, Farfrae decided to follow his plan of heading to Budmouth, until the letter requesting that he go to Weatherby rerouted him. Farfrae wishes to think over the situation with Henchard, and to not encounter Lucetta or act immediately without thought given the seriousness of the situation. The note about his business in Weatherby is an attempt by Longways, Coney, and Buzzford to remove him from Casterbridge for the evening, should the skimmington-ride take place.

Farfrae's wish to give the situation with Henchard thought reflects his fundamental difference from Henchard as a man of premeditation and planning rather than a man of spontaneous decisions. Farfrae still has some friends among the villagers, who attempt to protect him from the skimmington-ride.

Longways, Coney, and Buzzford do not want to warn Farfrae directly should they receive any backlash from their friends and neighbors who enjoy the event. They also take no precautions on Lucetta's behalf, believing there to be some truth in the scandal, and feeling she ought to endure the proceedings.

Farfrae receives protection, but Lucetta does not. The villagers are particularly cruel-hearted about scandal, allowing Lucetta, who they are suspicious of, to suffer through the skimmington-ride.

At about eight o'clock, Lucetta is sitting in her drawing room when she overhears a distant hubbub. This does not surprise or interest her, given the celebratory nature of the day, until she hears a maid from an upstairs window talking across the street to a maid in another window. The maids can see the figures of a man and a woman, tied back-to-back, riding on a donkey, and surrounded by a crowd of people.

Lucetta is notified about the skimmington-ride by overhearing the voices of maids who can see the proceedings. Again, a character learns of an event through the gossip and words of others. If not for this gossip, Lucetta may have not witnessed the skimmington-ride.

The one maid exclaims that the female figure is dressed exactly as Lucetta was dressed when she sat in the front row for a performance at the Town Hall. Lucetta hurries to the window, just as Elizabeth-Jane enters. Elizabeth-Jane attempts to close the window and curtains, but Lucetta tells her to let it be. Lucetta realizes that the two figures are effigies of herself and Henchard, and Elizabeth-Jane's look betrays that she already knew this to be the truth of the situation.

Elizabeth-Jane attempts to project Lucetta from seeing the skimmington-ride once Lucetta has realized it might be about her. Elizabeth-Jane's gesture shows no triumph, only pity. Elizabeth-Jane is not relieved to see the truth come to life, nor does she feel Lucetta is "getting what she deserved."

Elizabeth-Jane attempts again to shut the window and block out the skimmington-ride. Lucetta shrieks that Farfrae will see it and never love her again, which will kill her. Lucetta is determined to see it and rushes out onto the balcony. In the lights surrounding the two figures there is no mistaking whom they are meant to represent. Lucetta collapses and lies on the floor in a seizure.

When Lucetta fully realizes that the effigies are herself Henchard, her first thought is of Farfrae and how he will never love her again. Her second reaction is collapse. Lucetta's emotional distress is clear and acute. The skimmington-ride displays the secret she has fretted over, the secret that destroys her reputation.

Elizabeth-Jane rings for the servants, but they have all run out of the house to see what is happening. Eventually, the servants reappear. The doctor is called and Lucetta is carried to her bed. The doctor arrives and says Lucetta's fit is serious, in her condition (she is pregnant), and Farfrae must be sent for immediately. They believe that Farfrae has taken the road toward Budmouth, and a man is dispatched to find him.

Lucetta's sickness appears to be life threatening. The doctor adds the information of Lucetta's already frail pregnant body, which accounts for the dramatic nature of her illness. When a servant is sent to find Farfrae along the Budmouth Road, the reader knows that he has not actually gone to Budmouth.

Mr. Grower sees the proceedings and calls the Constable. The two look for backup against the crowd leading the skimmington-ride, and meet up with Mr. Blowbody. But when they split up to find the crowd, it appears to have disbanded and the perpetrators cannot be found. Mr. Grower speaks to Charl, Joe, and Jopp, but they claim they haven't seen anything.

The villagers who are not a part of the skimmington-ride and who attempt to disband it are all upper class. Mr. Grower is a creditor. Mrs. Blowbody, Mr. Blowbody's wife, has been mentioned as a society woman and friend of Lucetta's. This emphasizes the economic divide.

Mr. Grower and Constable Stubberd organize a group to go into Mixen Lane in search of information about the leaders of the skimmington-ride. In Peter's Finger a small group is drinking. They speak again to Charl, asking if they just saw him, but he claims to have been at Peter's Finger for the last hour, which Nance Mockridge confirms. No incriminating evidence or information can be drawn from the Peter's Finger crowd and the investigators leave.

Despite the attempt to catch the perpetrators of the skimmington-ride, these people escape. When Mr. Grower and Constable Stubberd confront Charl twice, he outsmarts them, by denying his presence in town, with the support of Nance Mockridge. The Mixen Lane inhabitants stick together and help each other.

CHAPTER 40

Henchard returns to town after standing and thinking on the second bridge. He witnesses the skimmington-ride procession as it passes and understands its meaning. He tries to see Elizabeth-Jane and learns that she is not at her home, but with Lucetta at Farfrae's. Henchard calls there and learns how ill Lucetta is, and that Farfrae is being sought on the Budmouth road. Henchard says that he knows Farfrae has actually headed toward Weatherby, but Henchard's position and opinion has been so far discredited that the servants will not believe him.

Henchard's reaction to the skimmington-ride is to seek Elizabeth-Jane's support. He is more dependent on the support and care of his step-daughter than he fully realizes at this point. When Henchard learns of Lucetta's illness and how Farfrae is being sought in the wrong place, he genuinely attempts to help. But, like the boy who cried wolf, Henchard's genuine advice is no longer trusted.

Henchard resolves to seek Farfrae himself. He intercepts Farfrae's gig on the road from Weatherby as he is heading to Mellstock. Henchard insists that Farfrae needs to return home and that is wife is ill. As he repeats this news, he realizes Farfrae's complete distrust of Henchard and his story. Farfrae says that he must go to Mellstock and will not follow Henchard down the road to Casterbridge, where, Henchard realizes, Farfrae thinks that a man who tried to kill him that very day may have confederates hiding.

Henchard does not realize how fully he has undermined himself and his good intentions with Farfrae until he confronts him on the road and tells him the truth. Farfrae is unwilling to believe him, and Henchard has, if anything, achieved the opposite, and caused Farfrae to avoid returning home. Henchard has done something that he sees he cannot reverse.

Henchard returns to Farfrae's house alone, dismayed at this failed attempt to do something for Farfrae's good. He asks Elizabeth-Jane, who is at the house, how Lucetta is doing. Elizabeth-Jane says that she fears the townsfolk have killed Lucetta. Henchard reflects on Elizabeth-Jane and the care and affection she continues to show him, as no others do. He begins to realize that even though she is not his daughter, perhaps they may care for each other as father and daughter.

Henchard realizes how important Elizabeth-Jane is in his life. This realization is, primarily, about himself. He notices how she is the only one who is still kind to him. With Elizabeth-Jane he might be able to reverse the past. He also sees, for the first time, Elizabeth-Jane's selflessness.

Henchard returns home to Jopp's cottage. Jopp's face is anxious as he mentions the bad news of Lucetta's illness, but Henchard does not suspect his part in it. Jopp says that a man, a sailor, has called for Henchard while he was away.

Henchard is not suspicious of Jopp, despite his distressed reaction to Lucetta's illness. It is clear that Jopp meant to hurt Lucetta, but not so dramatically. The mysterious sailor is that this point unexplained, although there is only one sailor of note in the novel: Newson.

Farfrae returns home late and is greatly distressed to see his misinterpretation of Henchard's motives. Another doctor is sent for, and Farfrae stays by Lucetta's side throughout the night. He doesn't hear the details of the skimmington-ride, as the news of Lucetta's severe illness and miscarriage spreading throughout the town silences any mention of the cause of her situation. How much of the true story Lucetta may have confessed to her husband during the night remains Farfrae's secret alone.

Lucetta's situation is characterized as a miscarriage, showing fully the dangerous situation for a woman of this time period. The villagers who hear this news do not mention the skimmington-ride. The secret is concealed, rather than confessed to Farfrae, who may, however, hear some of the story from his wife.

Henchard calls at Farfrae's throughout the night, to check on Lucetta's condition, but also to see Elizabeth-Jane. Every other hope and connection having been removed from his life, causes Henchard to focus more and more on the stepdaughter who still cares for him. At Henchard's final call at about four o'clock in the morning, he sees a servant taking a muffling cloth off the knocker on the door. The servant says that any visitors may knock as loudly as they will now, but the lady of the house will hear them no more.

Henchard focuses intensely on Elizabeth-Jane, this intensity growing in the hours after his realization of her worth. This focus also coincidences with his realization of how irreparable is his connection with Farfrae. Lucetta's death is represented by the knocker, which, when no longer muffled, shows that the invalid can no longer be disturbed by noise from this world.

CHAPTER 41

Not long after Henchard learns of Lucetta's death, he is sitting up at home when Elizabeth-Jane arrives. She gives him the news, which he has already heard. He says how kind of her it was to come and invites her to rest there while he prepares some breakfast. Elizabeth-Jane lies down and falls asleep, and Henchard waits with the breakfast, contemplating a better future with his stepdaughter.

This domestic interaction between Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane marks a change for both characters: Henchard is able to care for another and put Elizabeth-Jane's needs first, and Elizabeth-Jane is willing to be taken care of, and to trust Henchard.

Henchard answers a knock at the door and is greeted by the stranger who stopped at Peter's Finger in Mixen Lane. The stranger identifies himself as Richard Newson, and a chill goes through Henchard upon hearing this name. Newson speaks of Susan's innocence in the matter of her own sale; how she did not realize that the transaction between them was not binding. Newson explains how he hoped to give Susan a better life and how she had seemed happy once she had a second child to replace the first who died.

Richard Newson's arrival is ironically timed: just at the moment when Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane were forming a closer bond, a "ghost" from the past appears to disrupt this. Newson, despite his ill-timed appearance, is presented as a good-hearted man who expresses his care for Susan and their daughter.

Newson says that eventually Susan realized she was not bound to stay with him and was tormented by her sense of duty to return to Henchard. Therefore, when a storm at sea meant that many sailors were supposed dead, Newson decided to leave Susan with the belief that he had died and so free her to return to Henchard. He says that he learned of Susan's death, but wishes to find Elizabeth-Jane, his daughter.

Newson further demonstrates his honorable nature in his explanation of his "death": he let Susan believe him dead, so that she could return to Henchard, which was the thing that would bring her peace and fulfill her sense of duty. Newson hopes to reconnect with his biological daughter.

Henchard doggedly replies that Elizabeth-Jane has also died. He says she is buried next to her mother and died more than a year previously. Newson exclaims that his journey to Casterbridge has therefore been in vain, and departs. Realizing that Newson may discover the truth in town, and take away Henchard's only remaining companion and hope in life, Henchard follows Newson until he sees him leave in a coach. His simple faith in the truth of Henchard's words prevents him from inquiring elsewhere for Elizabeth-Jane.

Henchard's lie to Newson is entirely selfish. Earlier in the novel, when Henchard believed Elizabeth-Jane to be his biological daughter and then discovered the truth, he demonstrated the importance in his mind of biological parentage. However, he is able to turn Elizabeth-Jane's biological father away with the most painful lie: a story of her death. Newson, an honest man, believes this.

Henchard realizes that perhaps Newson's grief at believing Elizabeth-Jane dead has also prevented him inquiring further. But he feels that Newson's grief could be nothing next to his if Elizabeth-Jane were taken from him. He returns home and has breakfast with Elizabeth-Jane, who is grateful for his kindness and attentiveness. Elizabeth-Jane asks if Henchard is lonely, and promises to come visit him frequently. After she departs that day, Henchard knows that she would come live with him if he asked, and yet he fears that Newson will still discover her and take her away from him.

After his initial reaction, which was to fearfully lie to Newson, Henchard does consider Newson's connection to Elizabeth-Jane and his grief. He feels his own grief must be greater, despite having ignored Elizabeth-Jane for a portion of their lives in Casterbridge. Henchard often changes his emotions suddenly and intensely, and he now sees Elizabeth-Jane as his only source of happiness and stability.

Henchard thinks about his life, in which he may live on for many more years, and he sees nothing in it to look forward to, no hobbies or interests to occupy him in place of the people who have been taken from him. He walks to the second bridge and follows the river to a place called Ten Hatches. He takes off his hat and coat and stands at the very edge of the river. But as he looks down, he sees a figure in the water, which is revealed to be *himself*. Henchard turns away, overwhelmed as if witnessing a miracle. He takes his hat and coat and leaves the river.

Fear of losing Elizabeth-Jane drives Henchard to nearly commit suicide. This occurs at the second bridge, a place that has already been symbolically linked with tragedy. What stops Henchard's suicide attempt is the image of himself. More so than any natural forces, Henchard considers a message from himself to be a sign, "a miracle." Henchard has always relied primarily on his own strength.

Henchard returns home to find Elizabeth-Jane waiting to see him, saying that he had appeared sad that morning and that she wished to visit again. He asks her if she believes in miracles. He asks if she will come with him, so that he can show her something and the pair returns to Ten Hatches. Elizabeth-Jane sees in the water Henchard's **effigy** from the skimmington-ride. Henchard says that the performance of the skimmington-ride killed Lucetta, but saved his life.

Henchard takes Elizabeth-Jane to witness his "miracle," which is revealed to be the effigy of himself from the skimmington-ride. Although the image stops Henchard's course, it is an ominous image, showing Henchard's figure, broken, and cast out of Casterbridge into the river at the second bridge, foreshadowing future events.

Elizabeth-Jane comprehends the seriousness of Henchard's situation and asks if she might come and live with him. He says he wishes she would, but wonders how she can forgive him for his past treatment of her. Elizabeth-Jane says that it is forgotten and the two plan to live together. She overhears Henchard later say that someone must be looking out for even such an outcast as himself.

The seriousness of Henchard's situation causes Elizabeth-Jane to want to spend time with him and help him, rather than to fearfully turn away. Elizabeth-Jane demonstrates her fortitude, and her power to move past Henchard's treatment of her, in this moment.

CHAPTER 42

Henchard lives in constant anxiety that Newson will return to Casterbridge, but as time wears on and he does not, Henchard grows increasingly dependent upon Elizabeth-Jane's care and love. Farfrae's initial instinct to seek revenge upon the leaders of the skimmington-ride is tempered by his realization that to make too much of Lucetta's history will harm himself and Henchard, as well. The outcome of the event is therefore regarded as an unintended and unfortunate accident. Henchard accepts the small seed business purchased for him by Farfrae and the members of the council.

Time passes and smoothes over some of the wounds that have been made by the skimmington-ride and Henchard's fall from prominence. Henchard accepts the generous charity of Farfrae and the council, and the care of Elizabeth-Jane. Farfrae's reaction to the skimmington-ride is tempered by reflection and time. A delicate peace has been reached in Casterbridge.

With time, Farfrae is able to put Lucetta's life and death into perspective, realizing that with the revelation of her history, which would have occurred some day, life with her could never have been the same. By the end of the year, Henchard's seed business is doing very well. Elizabeth-Jane takes long walks most days in the direction of Budmouth.

Farfrae's rationalization demonstrates the sexism of the time period: to learn that Lucetta had a previous romantic connection would have hurt their marriage. While this rationalization is surprising, it helps Farfrae move past Lucetta's death.

Henchard notices Elizabeth-Jane spending more money than she used to. Although her room is humble, it is filled with books, many of which are new purchases. She also buys an expensive muff, which he comments upon. Henchard wonders about this, but is distracted by another concern about Elizabeth-Jane when he observes Farfrae looking at her one day. He remembers that Farfrae once showed interest in Elizabeth-Jane in the past, but he hates the idea of a union between the two now, which would take Elizabeth-Jane away from him.

Henchard is more attuned to the emotions and actions of other characters than he has been in the past. This new attentiveness is focused on Elizabeth-Jane because he is obsessed with keeping her in his life. He worries about the secrets she may be keeping, from spending more money to forming a connection with Farfrae.

From that point onward, Henchard keeps a close eye on Elizabeth-Jane. By hiding in **The Ring**, he observes the two meet and stop to talk on the Budmouth road. He feels that Farfrae means to rob him of Elizabeth-Jane as well, when he thinks Farfrae has already robbed him of so much else.

In his usual selfish way, Henchard views a union between Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae as a personal attack. He has to hide in The Ring to observe the pair, the place associated with underhanded deeds.

In Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae's conversation on the road, she confesses that she likes to walk that way in order to get a view of the sea, but she will not confess why this is so. She also thanks him for the new books, which are gifts he has given her.

Henchard's two fears about Elizabeth-Jane are linked: the new items she owns, which Henchard thought she was spending more money on, are gifts from her suitor, Farfrae.

Henchard vows to himself that he will do nothing to hinder Farfrae's courtship of Elizabeth-Jane, despite his thoughts and wishes. But when he sees how close the two have become, and believes they must be engaged, he cannot help how he feels about the situation. If Elizabeth-Jane had been interested in any other man than Henchard's great rival, he feels he could have been content to part with her constant company and attention.

Henchard demonstrates a hard-earned maturity in vowing not to interfere with Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae's future together. Despite this decision, his feelings are still selfish. His dislike of Farfrae is renewed because he sees this as a new affront to his happiness and stealing of "something" that is his.

CHAPTER 43

The townsfolk of Casterbridge gossip about the engagement between Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane. The original occupants of The King of Prussia who witnessed the young people's humble appearances in Casterbridge are happy for them and their union. Some townsfolk argue that the successful Farfrae is choosing a new wife below his station, whereas others feel that the well-liked Elizabeth-Jane is lowering herself to marrying a widower with a dubious first wife.

The gossip of the Casterbridge villagers focuses on the inequality between Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae, although opinions differ as to which young person is marrying below his or her station. This discussion reflects the importance in Casterbridge society of status, which is based on wealth, success, popularity, and modesty.

Henchard is tormented by Elizabeth-Jane's silence on the matter of her relationship with Farfrae. He supposes that she must see him as an obstacle to her future happiness given his past with Farfrae. Henchard wonders, on the other hand, if a union with Farfrae wouldn't necessarily prevent him from maintaining a close relationship with Elizabeth-Jane. He continues to keep a close eye on Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae. While one day spying on the Budmouth road for the pair's arrival there, he sees another man arrive on that road. It is Richard Newson.

Elizabeth-Jane does not confess to Henchard about her relationship with Farfrae. While this situation is presented from Henchard's anxious and possessive perspective, and not from Elizabeth-Jane's, it seems that Elizabeth-Jane does not feel as close a connection with Henchard as he feels with her. Henchard's spying allows him to see Newson's return to Casterbridge.

Elizabeth-Jane confesses to Henchard that she has received a letter from a strange man about meeting her on the Budmouth road and wonders whether or not she should go. Henchard tells her to go. Then he tells her that he plans to leave Casterbridge, foreseeing how his life must change with the reappearance of Richard Newson. Elizabeth-Jane, surprised and confused by this announcement, begins to cry.

Henchard does not delay the inevitable, and tells Elizabeth-Jane that she should meet the man, who Henchard knows to be Newson. Elizabeth-Jane, despite her discretion with respect to her stepfather, does not want him to leave her life. Although she has every reason to distrust Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane does care for him.

Elizabeth-Jane thinks her father must be leaving because she wishes to marry Farfrae. He assures her that she may do so, but that he will not come to her wedding. He asks her to remember, once she knows *all* his sins, that he loved her and cared for her. She promises not to forget him. That very evening, Henchard secretly leaves town, with only Elizabeth-Jane accompanying him as far as **the second bridge**. As Henchard travels alone, he wishes he still had Elizabeth-Jane with him, believing any hardship would be nothing then. But to live alone is his punishment, he believes.

Elizabeth-Jane, typically self-effacing, assumes that Henchard's departure is all her fault. Henchard leaves town directly, and in this departure, he and Elizabeth-Jane part ways at the second bridge. Losing Elizabeth-Jane is the final tragedy in Henchard's life and his fall from mayor of Casterbridge to friendless wanderer is complete. He recognizes his own fault in much of this fall from prominence.

Elizabeth-Jane meets Farfrae on her walk back. She tells him that Henchard is gone. Farfrae has a friend that he wishes her to meet at home, and Elizabeth-Jane is surprised to see this man, who is Richard Newson. The reunion between long-separated daughter and father is emotional. Newson is so proud of the woman Elizabeth-Jane has grown up to be.

Newson's treatment of Elizabeth-Jane is sharply contrasted to Henchard's: Newson sees and values Elizabeth-Jane, but not because of her treatment of him.

Newson expresses his happiness to be involved in their lives now that Henchard is gone. He feels that he has already inserted himself into Henchard's family life too far, and wishes to not hurt or offend the other man. Newson explains how Henchard had told him that Elizabeth-Jane had died when he had come through Casterbridge previously, searching for her. Newson regards the situation as a joke, but Elizabeth-Jane is angry and revolted by Henchard's actions.

Elizabeth-Jane has been infinitely patient and forgiving, but the lie Henchard told Newson is unforgiveable in her mind. Throughout the novel, it has been clear that Elizabeth-Jane cared for Newson, and did not want to lose her connection to her father, despite Henchard's attempts to replace Newson in her affections.

Newson good-naturedly encourages Elizabeth-Jane to put the past behind her. He offers to help pay for the wedding, which Farfrae plans to hold in their own large house.

Newson assumes the role of father seamlessly, with his positive focus on the future and his offer of monetary support.

CHAPTER 44

Henchard travels back to Weydon-Priors and visits the location of the fair where he made the error of selling his wife and daughter. He visits this place as an act of penance and feels fully the bitterness of his situation. He had planned to travel far away from Casterbridge, but because his mind is on Elizabeth-Jane, he continues circling distantly around the town. He often sneers at himself for this weakness and for caring so deeply about a girl who is not his daughter.

When Henchard returns to Weydon-Priors, the same physical place indicates to the reader that the novel has come full circle. Through the years that have passed, Henchard has changed. The major change is that he has come to love his "daughter" when he once gave up his family members willingly. And yet he is also warped by self-hatred, and by a continuing sense that to be dependent on anyone is weakness.

Henchard obtains work again as a hay-trusser and so finds himself in exactly the same circumstance in life where he found himself twenty-five years earlier. He has no interest, at this point, in attempting to better his situation, as he once did. He often thinks as he works of the people everywhere dying before their time, while he, an outcast who no one will miss, lives on.

Henchard has also lost the ambition that once ruled his life and pushed him to become the mayor of Casterbridge. He sees the loneliness that pervades his life and realizes that he needs others. However, he still is selfish and self-pitying.

One day, Henchard hears the word "Casterbridge" spoken by someone in a passing wagon and runs to the road to inquire about news from the town. He asks about a wedding, and hears that one is taking place on Martin's Day. He thinks of writing to Elizabeth-Jane, remembering that she had said she wished him to be at her wedding, but he is unsure how to reverse his own self-willed seclusion.

Henchard receives news of Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae's wedding, and of Casterbridge, by word of mouth. Despite Henchard's choice to isolate himself, he is not beyond the reach of society, which has been connected throughout the novel with news and gossip spread by villagers.

Henchard decides to arrive at the wedding, in the evening, so as to make as little disruption as possible. He travels toward Casterbridge, planning to wear his working suit, the only clothes he owns, to the event. He buys Elizabeth-Jane a gift of a goldfinch in a cage.

Henchard wants to go to the wedding, unable to resist the appeal of seeing Elizabeth-Jane. The gift he buys reflects how he has always seen the girl: a possession in a cage to be admired and enjoyed.

He arrives at Farfrae's house that evening and sees the lively proceedings within. He can hear Farfrae's voice singing. The door is open and everything inside is brightly lit. Henchard's courage fails him. He does not want to appear among such splendor as an embarrassment to Elizabeth-Jane. He enters by the back door instead and sends a servant to pass a message to his stepdaughter.

The liveliness of the wedding party is intimidating to Henchard because he no longer sees himself as part of the world of splendor he once enjoyed. He is outside looking in on success, as Susan and Elizabeth-Jane once gazed in at him at a brightly lit dinner at the Golden Crown.

Henchard watches the dance underway in the other room, and sees one man who dances particularly grandly. This happy man, Elizabeth-Jane's dance partner for that number, is Newson.

Newson is fulfilling all that Elizabeth-Jane needs in a father, as he dances with her at her wedding.

Elizabeth-Jane appears, having been summoned by the servant. She tells Henchard she might once have cared for him, but she no longer can knowing that he deceived her about her parentage and deceived Newson, her true father, into believing that she was dead. Henchard cannot begin to explain his own limited knowledge and confusion about these matters, but only apologizes for distressing her at such a happy time and swears he will not trouble her again until his dying day.

Elizabeth-Jane shares her changed opinion with Henchard. She has never, before this, directly stood up to her stepfather. She has avoided him, moved away from him, and forgiven him, but she has reached the point when she cannot forgive. This is, despite all he has experienced, the most painful blow to Henchard.

CHAPTER 45

About one month after her wedding, Elizabeth-Jane discovers that the caged goldfinch that had been found starved to death, had been brought to the wedding and forgotten by Henchard. Realizing that the bird had been a gift from Henchard causes Elizabeth-Jane to reflect and to wish to make her peace with her stepfather. Newson, although remaining in Casterbridge for a while after the wedding, eventually settled in Budmouth, as a more desirable residence near the sea.

The caged goldfinch, when found starved to death, represents Henchard rather than Elizabeth-Jane. Elizabeth-Jane has declared her independence from Henchard and achieved happiness, but when she sees the gift she realizes that Henchard is now alone and suffering. She, as Henchard frequently did, changes her mind too late.

Elizabeth-Jane tells Farfrae that she wishes to find Henchard, but when he cannot be found, Elizabeth-Jane remembers that he once considered suicide and worries what may have happened to him. Eventually, they hear a report from someone who saw Henchard on foot, and they take the gig to drive in that direction. They spend the day searching Egdon Heath, and as they are planning to turn around for the day, they see Abel Whittle.

Elizabeth-Jane thinks about Henchard's desire to kill himself when her step-father cannot be found. This memory causes her interest in Henchard to increase, as she worries for his life. She is willing to go on an extensive search for her stepfather.

Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae follow Abel Whittle to a cottage where they see him enter. When they enter the cottage, they find Abel who is deeply saddened. He reports that Mr. Henchard has died just before their arrival. Henchard, Abel says, was kind to his mother, and supported the poor woman, even though he was rough on Abel for his tardiness. Abel explains that he saw Henchard leaving Casterbridge after the wedding and he followed him. Henchard grew weak and sick on the road and Abel brought him to the abandoned cottage and cared for him.

Abel Whittle cared for Henchard in his final hours. This minor character, who Henchard once mistreated, reappears in Henchard's life in his moment of need. Henchard receives an astonishing amount of forgiveness from other people throughout the novel. But the novel reinforces the idea that forgiveness can come too late, as Elizabeth-Jane loses her chance to make peace with her stepfather.

Abel shows Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae a will that Henchard produced before he died. The will does not describe any inheritance, as Henchard owned nothing by the end of his life, but asks that Elizabeth-Jane not be told of his death, and that no funeral with mourners be held for him, and that no one remember him.

Henchard's will is, in fact, the opposite of a will. He has nothing to pass on, and his requests are only the absence of things—that nothing happen after his death—rather than plans for the future after he is gone.

Elizabeth-Jane is moved by Henchard's bitterness in his will and regrets her unkindness at their last meeting. For a long while, her regrets about her relationship with her stepfather are painful. But eventually the happiness and tranquility of her adult and married life prevails. She had suffered in her youth, and so, in her secure adulthood, must consider herself fortunate, despite having grown up viewing life as moments of happiness among more extended periods of pain.

Elizabeth-Jane's guilt over her relationship with Henchard shows that she is motivated by care for others. She eventually is able to appreciate her own happiness, despite having grown up feeling that life involves mostly suffering. The novel ends on this note, having resolved the consequences of Henchard's life and character, which ultimately only destroyed himself.

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