

# Far From The Madding Crowd

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## Chapter 1

### Description of Farmer Oak – An Incident

Farmer Oak's Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days, he was a young man of proper dress and general good character. On Sundays, he went to church, but instead of listening to the sermon, he yawned and thought of what there would be for dinner.

Mr. Oak carried what may be called a small silver clock; in other words, it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the particularity of going either too fast or not at all.

He had just reached the age at which 'young' ceases to be the prefix of man; he had passed the time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles intellect and emotions, but not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again. In short, he was twenty-eight and a bachelor.

The field he was in this morning sloped to a ridge called Norcombe Hill. Oak saw coming down the hill before him an ornamental spring wagon drawn by two horses, a wagoner walking alongside holding a whip perpendicularly. The wagon was full of household goods and window plants, and on the top sat a woman, young and attractive. Gabriel had not seen the sight for more than half a minute when the vehicle was brought to a stop just beneath his eyes.

"The back piece of the wagon is gone, Miss" said the wagoner. "I'll run back and get it."

"Do," she answered. The sensible horses stood perfectly still, and the wagoner ran off.

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Describe Farmer Oak.

## Chapter 3

### A Girl on Horseback – Conversation

The sluggish day began to break. Oak heard the steps of a horse at the foot of the hill, and soon there appeared in view a pony with a girl on its back, ascending by the path. She was the young woman of the night before. Gabriel instantly thought of the hat she had mentioned as having lost; possibly she had come to look for it. Gabriel walked a short distance, and luckily found it among the leaves. He took it in his hand and returned to his hut. Here he hid, watching the girl's movements.

The girl looked around for a moment, as if to assure herself that all humanity was out of view, then dropped backwards flat upon the pony's back, her head over its tail, her feet against its shoulders, and her eyes to the sky. The pony seemed unconcerned by her strange way of riding. Then Gabriel came out of his hut.

"I found a hat," said Oak.

"It is mine!" she said, sitting up straight on the pony, and trying not to laugh. "It flew away last night. You are Farmer Oak, are you not?"

"Yes," he replied, but all of a sudden, the girl had gone. And with an air between that of tragedy and comedy, Gabriel returned to his work.

Five mornings and evenings passed. The young girl came regularly to milk the healthy cow or to attend to the sick one, but never once looked in the direction of Oak's person.

One afternoon, it began to freeze. The wind came in at the bottom of the door of the hut, and to prevent it, Oak laid a sack there.

The wind came in at a ventilating hole—of which there was one on

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How did Gabriel return to work after talking to the young woman?

At last, the eighth day came. The cow had ceased to give milk for that year, and Bathsheba Everdene came up the hill no more. All this while, he was trying to find an excuse to visit the cottage of Bathsheba's aunt.

He found his opportunity in the death of an ewe, mother of a living lamb. One fine January morning, Oak put the lamb into a respectable basket, and walked to the house of Mrs. Hurst, the aunt; George, the dog, walked behind.

Bathsheba's aunt was at home, but the girl was out.

"Will you come in, Mr. Oak?"

"Oh, thank you," said Gabriel. "I've brought a lamb for Miss Everdene. I thought she might like one to take care of."

"She might," said Mrs. Hurst, "though she is only a visitor here."

"The lamb isn't really why I came here, Mrs. Hurst. In short, I was going to ask her if she'd like to be married. Because I'd be very glad to marry her. Do you know if she's got any other young man who is interested in her at all?"

"No young men ever come here—but Lord, in the nature of women, she must have a dozen!"

"That's unfortunate," said Farmer Oak. "Well, there's no use in my waiting, for that was the reason I came; so I'll take myself off home, Mrs. Hurst."

When Gabriel had gone about two hundred yards, he heard a "hoi-hoi!" He looked round, and saw a girl running toward him, waving a white handkerchief. It was Bathsheba Everdene.

"It was quite a mistake—aunt's telling you I had a young man

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Do you think Bathsheba will accept Gabriel's proposal?

However, Coggan knew what Gabriel was thinking and when they were together again he said, "What difference does it make whose sweetheart she is, since she can't be yours, Gabriel?"

"That's the very thing I say to myself," said Gabriel.

## Chapter 22

### Home Again – A Trickster

That same evening at dusk, Gabriel was talking to Coggan when he heard a vehicle of some kind coming down the lane. From it spread the tones of two women talking. Oak instantly knew the voices were those of Bathsheba and Liddy. It was an exquisite relief to find that she was here again. The two ladies quickly entered the house. Almost immediately, Boldwood arrived. He knocked and waited with tense muscles. Liddy opened the door. He inquired for Miss Everdene.

"My mistress cannot see you, sir," she said.

Boldwood left but did not hurry homeward. It was ten o'clock. He was walking through the lower part of Weatherbury when he saw Troy. Boldwood stepped forward.

"I am William Boldwood. I wish to speak a word with you," he said.

"About what?" asked Sergeant Troy.

"All I ask you is, don't molest Bathsheba Everdene any more. Marry some other woman. I will pay you well if you do. Do you accept my offer?"

"I do."

"Here are fifty sovereigns." Boldwood handed Troy a small packet.

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Has Gabriel accepted Boldwood's offer? Why?

Thunder was imminent; it was likely to be followed by one of the lengthened rains which mark the close of dry weather for the season.

This was the night which had been selected by Sergeant Troy for giving the harvest supper and dance. There was music and many people were dancing. When the musicians stopped for a rest, Troy took the opportunity to make a speech.

“Friends, it is not only the harvest home we are celebrating tonight, but this is also a Wedding Feast. Friends, we’ll send the women home—it’s time they were in bed — so we can start our celebration.”

Bathsheba indignantly left the barn, followed by all the women and children. Thus Troy and the men on the farm were left the **sole** occupants of the place.

Oak, not to appear unnecessarily disagreeable, stayed a little while; then he, too, arose and quietly took his departure.

Upon exiting, he saw several unprotected **hayricks**. Oak mentally estimated that if they got wet, Bathsheba would lose 750 pounds’ worth of crop. “I will make my last effort to help the woman I have loved so dearly,” he said to himself.

He went back to the barn and started collecting cloths to use to cover the hayricks. It was a difficult operation to perform alone, but he covered as much barley and wheat as he could.





"For Heaven's sake don't be so desperate!" Troy said **snappishly**, rising as he did so, and leaving the room.

The next morning, she rose earlier than usual. When she had finished having breakfast, she walked to the farm. She saw Mr. Boldwood and Gabriel Oak engaging in conversation. Then Joseph Poorgrass joined the two men. He spoke with them for a minute and then continued on until he reached Bathsheba.

"Some news has reached my ears. Fanny Robin is no more."

"Who?" inquired Bathsheba.

"Fanny was your uncle's servant."

"Oh? What was the cause of death?"

"I believe it was a general weakness of constitution."

"I see. Well, if she was my uncle's servant, I will arrange for a wagon to be sent to bring her here and bury her on this land. Thank you Joseph."

Bathsheba went indoors again. In the course of the afternoon, she said to Liddy, who had been informed of the occurrence, "What was the color of poor Fanny Robin's hair?"

"It was light, ma'am. Real golden hair."

"I heard someone say that her young man was a soldier, was not he?"

"Yes. In the same regiment as Mr. Troy. He says he knew him very well."

"What, Mr. Troy says so?"

"One day, I asked him if he knew Fanny's young man. He said he

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Who is Fanny Robin?

## Post-reading Activities

1. Decide if these statements are **true** or **false**. T F
- a. Gabriel Oak is a young farmer who has land which he has inherited from his uncle.
- b. Bathsheba is happy to meet Gabriel because she is eager to make new friends.
- c. Oak falls in love with Bathsheba shortly after they meet.
- d. Bathsheba dismisses the bailiff, Pennyways, when he refuses to take orders from a woman.
- e. Bathsheba manages the farm her uncle left her by herself.
- f. Every man's eyes are on Bathsheba the day she goes to the corn market.
- g. Bathsheba sends Boldwood the valentine card without thinking of the possible consequences.
- h. Boldwood is fascinated by the anonymous valentine.
- i. When Boldwood proposes to Bathsheba, she tells him that she may, one day, consider his offer.
- j. When Oak tells Bathsheba what he thinks about the way she is treating Boldwood, she appreciates his frankness.
- k. Bathsheba decides to visit Liddy, who is visiting her sister, after sending Boldwood a letter saying that she can't marry him.
- l. Troy decides to return to Bathsheba because during his absence, he realizes how much he loves her.

## Glossary

- **adept:** (adj.) very skilled; expert
- **awkwardness:** (n.) embarrassment
- **bailliff:** (n.) here, steward or administrator of land
- **beheld:** (v.) to behold: to see
- **boldly:** (adv.) courageously; with no fear
- **burden:** (n.) that which is carried; a load
- **call upon:** (v.) visit
- **case:** (n.) a small container
- **cloak:** (n.) a loose garment worn around the shoulders
- **clover:** (n.) a type of grass (harmful to sheep if eaten in large quantities)
- **coil:** (n.) loop, ring
- **countenance:** (n.) an expression of the face
- **discharge:** (n.) here, release from military service
- **drew:** (v.) to draw – to move, to go
- **fellows:** (n.) informal for men
- **fern:** (n.) a type of plant
- **flock:** (n.) a number of animals of the same kind, such as sheep, goats, or birds
- **flushed:** (adj.) red in color
- **formerly:** (adv.) previously; in time past
- **frankness:** (n.) honesty
- **gambling:** (n.) playing games of chance in the hope of winning money
- **grieved:** (v.) to grieve, to feel sorrow
- **grinding:** (v.) to grind: to sharpen
- **harvest:** (n.) the gathering of ripened crop; the period in which crops are gathered
- **haymaking:** (v.) the act of cutting hay and spreading it to dry
- **hayricks:** (n.) a large stack of hay, corn, etc., built in a pile in the open air
- **lambled:** (v.) to lamb (of a ewe) – to give birth
- **linger:** (v.) to linger: to remain, to persist
- **meek:** (adj.) quiet and obedient
- **panting:** (adj.) breathing hard and quickly
- **parasol:** (n.) a woman's small or light sun umbrella
- **parish:** (n.) a local church



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