

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is a Victorian novel written by an English novelist Thomas Hardy. It is signature for Hardy's work that his stories have sad endings, and a lot of symbolism is incorporated. One of his most famous novel, about a simple country girl with not as simple life, is not an exception.

Hardy starts the story by painting a picture about a family with many children. We soon discover that this family has noble ancestors and therefore should be rich, but instead is barely getting by. It is demonstrated that Mr Durbeyfield has a strong desire to live up to his ancestors by suddenly acting like a rich gentleman but based of his daughter's red cheeks coloured by the shame when she sees him riding home in the carriage, it is clear that Mr Durbeyfield can't fool anyone.

Tess however could be the saviour of the family. She is displayed like the prettiest, most innocent and clearly special. Her uniqueness was shown by the red ribbon in her hair that shone among others and made her stand out.

On the other hand, with all that beauty and charm, Tess was destined to get noticed by boys which not always ends well. The first sign of Tess's irresistible charisma was by Angel's regret when he did not dance with her and continued to be shown in Alec's behaviour towards her. When they first met, he forced Tess to eat a strawberry out of his hand. The strawberry is a symbol of lust and desire he had for her and the way he made her eat it, predicted his character and the way he was going to treat her.

The beginning of Tess's problems could have also been predicted when her horse died on their journey. Death of the horse could symbolize Tess's childhood dying and the need to take responsibility and deal with the consequences even if it was not quite her fault something like that happened.

The biggest consequence she was forced to deal with, was her new-born child Sorrow. It is no doubt that Tess loved her child, but the name was connected with all the sorrow she went through starting from the way she got pregnant, continuing in the way everyone she knew started seeing her and her family as and ends with her child's tragic death.

A glance of hope occurs to Tess. Just like God sends his angels to help people, Angel was sent to Tess during her stay on a dairy farm. She was ready and eager to start her new life, as shown by her commitment to work right after her arrival. The most heavenly instrument of all, harp, started playing when Tess was introduced to her saviour. Just as the weather was getting warmer, their feelings for each other also grew warmer and Tess's chance of finding happiness was getting bigger. We are once again reassured about their relationship when a big pool of water appeared in front of Tess, which symbolized their problems not being the easiest to overcome, but with the help of Angel caring her in his hands, they could beat any obstacle that would come in their life.

But life was never a bed of roses for Tess. Just as she thought she could start from the beginning with Angel, by marrying him on New Year's Eve, a sight of fresh start for Tess, her past started to surface. First by farmer Groby who recognized her and then the unspoken skeleton in the closet, or under the carpet in her case, reminded itself. The letter was left undiscovered in Angel's room, just as suppressed as it was in Tess's head. When the bubble of secrets was finally splashed, the two of them walked their own paths.

After that, life was hard for Tess. It was not summer anymore. Cold, dark winter came and Tess's spirit gradually darkened as well. She was working on a field with poor land full of stones and crops. Nothing grew well there same as Tess couldn't grow there as a person. She was stuck in a place

where only hard work existed, and her happiness was far away, shaded by the sorrow from missing her love and doubtful thoughts connected to it.

She thought she found a solution to her problems by going to see Angel's parents, but she was very mistaken. Her leather boots, which she hid in a hedge represented Tess as they were not very noble but were suitable for much more than good looks. But Tess was ashamed of who she was. The thin shoes she decided to wear instead of the leather ones, were something she was trying to be and in Mercy's reaction to her true nature she realized how Angel's family would react to her despite her putting on an act.

Tess's act continued when she reencountered Alec and went in a heated conversation with him. She spoke to him very fearlessly but that wasn't quite like she was feeling. A large stone standing beside the road, which people hurried away from because they were feeling uncomfortable and afraid around it, shown Tess's true feelings towards Alec. These feelings didn't change and were proven valid when he later on appeared behind her from the flames of her burning grass like Satan from hell.

On the contrary, that wasn't how she was feeling about Angel's sudden arrival. For life with him she was determined to do anything, even kill. Angel and Tess knew that they couldn't be together for long and that their past actions would come hunt them once again. They entered the house that would soon become a safe harbour for them, through a window like robbers, stealing every moment with each other. That house symbolized everything Tess ever wanted. A safe place shared with a person she loved. It was very hard for Tess to leave this place, because it wasn't just the shelter that she was leaving behind, it was also her life.

At last, the end came at dawn in the ring of stones where people used to perform rituals. This was somewhat a ritual for Tess, because she knew that it would come. She believed that her destiny was being fulfilled.

Thomas Hardy didn't disappoint with this story and brought to the people a tale intertwined with symbols on every possible occasion. That makes the reader look behind the curtain and, in some cases, even discover the beauty of literature.