



Jude the Obscure

Thomas Hardy

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The novel tells the story of Jude Fawley, who lives in a village in southern England (part of Hardy's fictional county of Wessex), who yearns to be a scholar at "Christminster", a city modelled on Oxford. As a youth, Jude teaches himself Classical Greek and Latin in his spare time, while working first in his great-aunt's bakery, with the hope of entering university. But before he can try to do this the naïve Jude is seduced by Arabella Donn, a rather coarse and superficial local girl who traps him into marriage by pretending to be pregnant. The marriage is a failure, and they separate by mutual agreement, and Arabella later emigrates to Australia, where she enters into a bigamous marriage. By this time, Jude has abandoned his classical studies.

After Arabella leaves him, Jude moves to Christminster and supports himself as a mason while studying alone, hoping to be able to enter the university later. There, he meets and falls in love with his free-spirited cousin, Sue Bridehead. But, shortly after this, Jude introduces Sue to his former schoolteacher, Mr. Phillotson, whom she eventually marries. However, she soon regrets this, because in addition to being in love with Jude, she is physically disgusted by her husband, and, apparently, by sex in general. Sue soon leaves Phillotson for Jude. Because of the scandal Phillotson has to give up his career as a schoolmaster.

Sue and Jude spend some time living together without any sexual relationship, because of Sue's dislike both of sex and the institution of marriage. Soon after, Arabella reappears and this complicates matters. But Arabella and Jude divorce and she legally marries her bigamous husband, and Sue also is divorced. However, following this, Arabella reveals that she had a child of Jude's, eight months after they separated, and subsequently sends this child to his father. He is named Jude and nicknamed "Little Father Time" because of his intense seriousness and moroseness...

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