

Chapter VI  
ANNA VICTRIX

Will Brangwen had some weeks of holiday after his marriage, so the two took their honeymoon in full hands, alone in their cottage together.

And to him, as the days went by, it was as if the heavens had fallen, and he were sitting with her among the ruins, in a new world, everybody else buried, themselves two blissful survivors, with everything to squander as they would. At first, he could not get rid of a culpable sense of licence on his part. Wasn't there some duty outside, calling him and he did not come?

It was all very well at night, when the doors were locked and the darkness drawn round the two of them. Then they were the only inhabitants of the visible earth, the rest were under the flood. And being alone in the world, they were a law unto themselves, they could enjoy and squander and waste like conscienceless gods.

But in the morning, as the carts clanked by, and children shouted down the lane; as the hucksters came calling their wares, and the church clock struck eleven, and he and she had not got up yet, even to breakfast, he could not help feeling guilty, as if he were committing a breach of the law — ashamed that he was not up and doing.

"Doing what?" she asked. "What is there to do? You will only lounge about."

Still, even lounging about was respectable. One was at least in connection with the world, then. Whereas now, lying so still and peacefully, while the daylight came obscurely through the drawn blind, one was severed from the world, one shut oneself off in tacit denial of the world. And he was troubled.

But it was so sweet and satisfying lying there talking desultorily with her. It was sweeter than sunshine, and not so evanescent. It was even irritating the way the church clock kept on chiming: there seemed no space between the hours, just a moment, golden and still, whilst she traced his features with her fingertips, utterly careless and happy, and he loved her to do it.

But he was strange and unused. So suddenly, everything that had been before was shed away and gone. One day, he was a bachelor, living with the world. The next day, he was with her, as remote from the world as if the two of them were buried like a seed in darkness. Suddenly, like a chestnut falling out of a burr, he was shed naked and glistening on to a soft, fecund earth, leaving behind him the hard rind of worldly knowledge and experience. He heard it in the huckster's cries, the noise of carts, the calling of children. And it was all like the hard, shed rind, discarded. Inside, in the softness and stillness of the room, was the naked kernel, that palpitated in silent activity, absorbed in reality.

Inside the room was a great steadiness, a core of living eternity. Only far outside, at the rim, went on the noise and the destruction. Here at the centre the great wheel was motionless, centred upon itself. Here was a poised, unflawed stillness that was beyond time, because it remained the same, inexhaustible, unchanging, unexhausted.

As they lay close together, complete and beyond the touch of time or change, it was as if they were at the very centre of all the slow wheeling of space and the rapid agitation of life, deep, deep inside them all, at the centre where there is utter radiance, and eternal being, and the silence absorbed in praise: the steady core of all movements, the unawakened sleep of all wakefulness. They found themselves there, and they lay still, in each other's arms; for their moment they were at the heart of eternity, whilst time roared far off, for ever far off, towards the rim.

Then gradually they were passed away from the supreme centre, down the circles of praise and joy and gladness, further and further out, towards the noise and the friction. But their hearts had burned and were tempered by the inner reality, they were unalterably glad.

Gradually they began to wake up, the noises outside became more real. They understood and answered the call outside. They counted the strokes of the bell. And when they counted midday, they understood that it was midday, in the world, and for themselves also.

It dawned upon her that she was hungry. She had been getting hungrier for a lifetime. But even yet it was not sufficiently real to rouse her. A long way off she could hear the words "I am dying of hunger." Yet she lay still, separate, at peace, and the words were unuttered. There was still another lapse.

And then, quite calmly, even a little surprised, she was in the present, and was saying:

"I am dying with hunger."

"So am I" he said calmly, as if it were of not the slightest significance. And they relapsed into the warm, golden stillness. And the minutes flowed unheeded past the window outside.

Then suddenly she stirred against him.

"My dear, I am dying of hunger" she said.

It was a slight pain to him to be brought to.

"We'll get up" he said, unmoving.

And she sank her head on to him again, and they lay still, lapsing. Half consciously, he heard the clock chime the hour. She did not hear.

"Do get up" she murmured at length "and give me something to eat."

"Yes," he said, and he put his arms round her, and she lay with her face on him. They were faintly astonished that they did not move. The minutes rustled louder at the window.

"Let me go then" he said.

She lifted her head from him, relinquishingly. With a little breaking away, he moved out of bed, and was taking his clothes. She stretched out her hand to him.

"You are so nice" she said, and he went back for a moment or two.

Then actually he did slip into some clothes, and, looking round quickly at her, was gone out of the room. She lay translated again into a pale, clearer peace. As if she were a spirit, she listened to the noise of him downstairs, as if she were no longer of the material world.

It was half past one. He looked at the silent kitchen, untouched from last night, dim with the drawn blind. And he hastened to draw up the blind, so people should know they were not in bed any later. Well, it was his own house, it did not matter. Hastily he put wood in the grate and made a fire. He exulted in himself, like an adventurer on an undiscovered island. The fire blazed up, he put on the kettle. How happy he felt! How still and secluded the house was! There were only he and she in the world.

But when he unbolted the door, and, half-dressed, looked out, he felt furtive and guilty. The world was there, after all. And he had felt so secure, as though this house were the Ark in the flood, and all the rest was drowned. The world was there: and it was afternoon. The morning had vanished and gone by, the day was growing old. Where was the bright, fresh morning? He was accused. Was the morning gone, and he had lain with blinds drawn, let it pass by unnoticed?

He looked again round the chill, grey afternoon. And he himself so soft and warm and glowing! There were two sprigs of yellow jasmine in the saucer that covered the milk-jug. He wondered who had been and left the sign. Taking the jug, he hastily shut the door. Let the day and the daylight drop out, let it go by unseen. He did not care. What did one day more or less matter to him. It could fall into oblivion unspent if it liked, this one course of daylight.

"Somebody has been and found the door locked," he said when he went upstairs with the tray. He gave her the two sprigs of jasmine. She laughed as she sat up in bed, childishly threading the flowers in the breast of her nightdress. Her brown hair stuck out like a nimbus, all fierce, round her softly glowing face. Her dark eyes watched the tray eagerly.

"How good!" she cried, sniffing the cold air. "I'm glad you did a lot." And she stretched out her hands eagerly for her plate — "Come back to bed, quick — it's cold." She rubbed her hands together sharply.

He put off what little clothing he had on, and sat beside her in the bed.

"You look like a lion, with your mane sticking out, and your nose pushed over your food," he said.

She tinkled with laughter, and gladly ate her breakfast.

The morning was sunk away unseen, the afternoon was steadily going too, and he was letting it go. One bright transit of daylight gone by unacknowledged! There was something unmanly, recusant in it. He could not quite reconcile himself to the fact. He felt he ought to get up, go out quickly into the daylight, and work or spend himself energetically in the open air of the afternoon, retrieving what was left to him of the day.

But he did not go. Well, one might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. If he had lost this day of his life, he had lost it. He gave it up. He was not going to count his losses. *She* didn't care. *She* didn't care in the least. Then why should he? Should he be behind her in recklessness and independence? She was superb in her indifference. He wanted to be like her.

She took her responsibilities lightly. When she spilled her tea on the pillow, she rubbed it carelessly with a handkerchief, and turned over the pillow. He would have felt guilty. She did not. And it pleased him. It pleased him very much to see how these things did not matter to her.

When the meal was over, she wiped her mouth on her handkerchief quickly, satisfied and happy, and settled down on the pillow again, with her fingers in his close, strange, fur like hair.

The evening began to fall, the light was half alive, livid. He hid his face against her.

"I don't like the twilight" he said.

"I love it" she answered.

He hid his face against her, who was warm and like sunlight. She seemed to have sunlight inside her. Her heart beating seemed like sunlight upon him. In her was a more real day than the day could give: so warm and steady and restoring. He hid his face against her whilst the twilight fell, whilst she lay staring out with her unseeing dark eyes, as if she wandered forth untrammelled in the vagueness. The vagueness gave her scope and set her free.

To him, turned towards her heart pulse, all was very still and very warm and very close, like noontide. He was glad to know this warm, full noon. It ripened him and took away his responsibility, some of his conscience.

They got up when it was quite dark. She hastily twisted her hair into a knot, and was dressed in a twinkling. Then they went downstairs, drew to the fire, and sat in silence, saying a few words now and then.

Her father was coming. She bundled the dishes away, flew round and tidied the room, assumed another character, and again seated herself. He sat thinking of his carving of Eve. He loved to go over his carving in his mind, dwelling on every stroke, every line. How he loved it now! When he went back to his Creation panel again, he would finish his Eve, tender and sparkling. It did not satisfy him yet. The Lord should labour over her in a silent passion of Creation, and Adam should be tense as if in a dream of immortality, and Eve should take form glimmeringly, shadowily, as if the Lord must wrestle with His own soul for her, yet she was a radiance.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

He found it difficult to say. His soul became shy when he tried to communicate it.

"I was thinking my Eve was too hard and lively."

"Why?"

"I don't know. She should be more —," he made a gesture of infinite tenderness.

There was a stillness with a little joy. He could not tell her any more. Why could he not tell her any more? She felt a pang of disconsolate sadness. But it was nothing. She went to him.

Her father came, and found them both very glowing, like an open flower. He loved to sit with them. Where there was a perfume of love, anyone who came must breathe it. They were both very quick and alive, lit up from the otherworld, so that it was quite an experience for them, that anyone else could exist.

But still it troubled Will Brangwen a little, in his orderly, conventional mind, that the established rule of things had gone so utterly. One ought to get up in the morning and wash oneself and be a decent social being. Instead, the two of them stayed in bed till nightfall, and then got up, she never washed her face, but sat there talking to her father as bright and shameless as a daisy opened out of the dew. Or she got up at ten o'clock, and quite blithely went to bed again at three, or at half past four, stripping him naked in the daylight, and all so gladly and perfectly, oblivious quite of his qualms. He let her do as she liked with him, and shone with strange pleasure. She was to dispose of him as she would. He was translated with gladness to be in her hands. And down went his

qualms, his maxims, his rules, his smaller beliefs, she scattered them like an expert skittle player. He was very much astonished and delighted to see them scatter.

He stood and gazed and grinned with wonder whilst his Tablets of Stone went bounding and bumping and splintering down the hill, dislodged for ever. Indeed, it was true as they said, that a man wasn't born before he was married. What a change indeed!

He surveyed the rind of the world: houses, factories, trams, the discarded rind; people scurrying about, work going on, all on the discarded surface. An earthquake had burst it all from inside. It was as if the surface of the world had been broken away entire: Ilkeston, streets, church, people, work, rule-of-the-day, all intact; and yet peeled away into unreality, leaving here exposed the inside, the reality: one's own being, strange feelings and passions and yearnings and beliefs and aspirations, suddenly become present, revealed, the permanent bedrock, knitted one rock with the woman one loved. It was confounding. Things are not what they seem! When he was a child, he had thought a woman was a woman merely by virtue of her skirts and petticoats. And now, lo, the whole world could be divested of its garment, the garment could lie there shed away intact, and one could stand in a new world, a new earth, naked in a new, naked universe. It was too astounding and miraculous.

This then was marriage! The old things didn't matter any more. One got up at four o'clock, and had broth at teatime and made toffee in the middle of the night. One didn't put on one's clothes or one did put on one's clothes. He still was not quite sure it was not criminal. But it was a discovery to find one might be so supremely absolved. All that mattered was that he should love her and she should love him and they should live kindled to one another, like the Lord in two burning bushes that were not consumed. And so they lived for the time.

She was less hampered than he, so she came more quickly to her fulness, and was sooner ready to enjoy again a return to the outside world. She was going to give a tea party. His heart sank. He wanted to go on, to go on as they were. He wanted to have done with the outside world, to declare it finished for ever. He was anxious with a deep desire and anxiety that she should stay with him where they were in the timeless universe of free, perfect limbs and immortal breast, affirming that the old outward order was finished. The new order was begun to last for ever, the living life, palpitating from the gleaming core, to action, without crust or cover or outward lie. But no, he could not keep her. She wanted the dead world again — she wanted to walk on the outside once more. She was going to give a tea party. It made him frightened and furious and miserable. He was afraid all would be lost that he had so newly come into: like the youth in the fairy tale, who was king for one day in the year, and for the rest a beaten herd: like Cinderella also, at the feast. He was sullen. But she blithely began to make preparations for her tea party. His fear was too strong, he was troubled, he hated her shallow anticipation and joy. Was she not forfeiting the reality, the one reality, for all that was shallow and worthless? Wasn't she carelessly taking off her crown to be an artificial figure having other

artificial women to tea: when she might have been perfect with him, and kept him perfect, in the land of intimate connection? Now he must be deposed, his joy must be destroyed, he must put on the vulgar, shallow death of an outward existence.

He ground his soul in uneasiness and fear. But she rose to a real outburst of housework, turning him away as she shoved the furniture aside to her broom. He stood hanging miserable near. He wanted her back. Dread, and desire for her to stay with him, and shame at his own dependence on her drove him to anger. He began to lose his head. The wonder was going to pass away again. All the love, the magnificent new order was going to be lost, she would forfeit it all for the outside things. She would admit the outside world again, she would throw away the living fruit for the ostensible rind. He began to hate this in her. Driven by fear of her departure into a state of helplessness, almost of imbecility, he wandered about the house.

And she, with her skirts kilted up, flew round at her work, absorbed.

"Shake the rug then, if you must hang round" she said.

And fretting with resentment, he went to shake the rug. She was blithely unconscious of him. He came back, hanging near to her.

"Can't you do anything?" she said, as if to a child, impatiently. "Can't you do your woodwork?"

"Where shall I do it?" he asked, harsh with pain.

"Anywhere."

How furious that made him.

"Or go for a walk" she continued. "Go down to the Marsh. Don't hang about as if you were only half there."

He winced and hated it. He went away to read. Never had his soul felt so flayed and uncreated.

And soon he must come down again to her. His hovering near her, wanting her to be with him, the futility of him, the way his hands hung, irritated her beyond bearing. She turned on him blindly and destructively, he became a mad creature, black and electric with fury. The dark storms rose in him, his eyes glowed black and evil, he was fiendish in his thwarted soul.

There followed two black and ghastly days, when she was set in anguish against him, and he felt as if he were in a black, violent underworld, and his wrists quivered murderously. And she resisted him. He seemed a dark, almost evil thing, pursuing her, hanging on to her, burdening her. She would give anything to have him removed.

"You need some work to do" she said. "You ought to be at work. Can't you *do* something?"

His soul only grew the blacker. His condition now became complete, the darkness of his soul was thorough. Everything had gone: he remained complete in his own tense, black will. He was now unaware of her. She did not exist. His dark, passionate soul had recoiled upon itself, and now, clinched and coiled round a centre of hatred, existed in its own power. There was a curiously ugly pallor, an expressionlessness in his face. She shuddered from him. She was afraid of him. His will seemed grappled upon her.

She retreated before him. She went down to the Marsh, she entered again the immunity of her parents' love for her. He remained at Yew Cottage, black and clinched, his mind dead. He was unable to work at his wood carving. He went on working monotonously at the garden, blindly, like a mole.

As she came home, up the hill, looking away at the town dim and blue on the hill, her heart relaxed and became yearning. She did not want to fight him any more. She wanted love — oh, love. Her feet began to hurry. She wanted to get back to him. Her heart became tight with yearning for him.

He had been making the garden in order, cutting the edges of the turf, laying the path with stones. He was a good, capable workman.

"How nice you've made it" she said, approaching tentatively down the path.

But he did not heed, he did not hear. His brain was solid and dead.

"Haven't you made it nice?" she repeated, rather plaintively.

He looked up at her, with that fixed, expressionless face and unseeing eyes which shocked her, made her go dazed and blind. Then he turned away. She saw his slender, stooping figure groping. A revulsion came over her. She went indoors.

As she took off her hat in the bedroom, she found herself weeping bitterly, with some of the old, anguished, childish desolation. She sat still and cried on. She did not want him to know. She was afraid of his hard, evil moments, the head dropped a little, rigidly, in a crouching, cruel way. She was afraid of him. He seemed to lacerate her sensitive femaleness. He seemed to hurt her womb, to take pleasure in torturing her.

He came into the house. The sound of his footsteps in his heavy boots filled her with horror: a hard, cruel, malignant sound. She was afraid he would come upstairs. But he did not. She waited apprehensively. He went out.

Where she was most vulnerable, he hurt her. Oh, where she was delivered over to him, in her very soft femaleness, he seemed to lacerate her and desecrate

her. She pressed her hands over her womb in anguish, whilst the tears ran down her face. And why, and why? Why was he like this?

Suddenly she dried her tears. She must get the tea ready. She went downstairs and set the table. When the meal was ready, she called to him.

"I've mashed the tea, Will, are you coming?"

She herself could hear the sound of tears in her own voice, and she began to cry again. He did not answer, but went on with his work. She waited a few minutes, in anguish. Fear came over her, she was panic-stricken with terror, like a child; and she could not go home again to her father; she was held by the power in this man who had taken her.

She turned indoors so that he should not see her tears. She sat down to table. Presently he came into the scullery. His movements jarred on her, as she heard them. How horrible was the way he pumped, exacerbating, so cruel! How she hated to hear him! How he hated her! How his hatred was like blows upon her! The tears were coming again.

He came in, his face wooden and lifeless, fixed, persistent. He sat down to tea, his head dropped over his cup, uglily. His hands were red from the cold water, and there were rims of earth in his nails. He went on with his tea.

It was his negative insensitiveness to her that she could not bear, something clayey and ugly. His intelligence was self-absorbed. How unnatural it was to sit with a self-absorbed creature, like something negative ensconced opposite one. Nothing could touch him — he could only absorb things into his own self.

The tears were running down her face. Something startled him, and he was looking up at her with his hateful, hard, bright eyes, hard and unchanging as a bird of prey.

"What are you crying for?" came the grating voice.

She winced through her womb. She could not stop crying.

"What are you crying for?" came the question again, in just the same tone. And still there was silence, with only the sniff of her tears.

His eyes glittered, and as if with malignant desire. She shrank and became blind. She was like a bird being beaten down. A sort of swoon of helplessness came over her. She was of another order than he, she had no defence against him. Against such an influence, she was only vulnerable, she was given up.

He rose and went out of the house, possessed by the evil spirit. It tortured him and wracked him, and fought in him. And whilst he worked, in the deepening twilight, it left him. Suddenly he saw that she was hurt. He had only seen her triumphant before. Suddenly his heart was torn with compassion for

her. He became alive again, in an anguish of compassion. He could not bear to think of her tears — he could not bear it. He wanted to go to her and pour out his heart's blood to her. He wanted to give everything to her, all his blood, his life, to the last dregs, pour everything away to her. He yearned with passionate desire to offer himself to her, utterly.

The evening star came, and the night. She had not lighted the lamp. His heart burned with pain and with grief. He trembled to go to her.

And at last he went, hesitating, burdened with a great offering. The hardness had gone out of him, his body was sensitive, slightly trembling. His hand was curiously sensitive, shrinking, as he shut the door. He fixed the latch almost tenderly.

In the kitchen was only the fireglow, he could not see her. He quivered with dread lest she had gone — he knew not where. In shrinking dread, he went through to the parlour, to the foot of the stairs.

"Anna" he called.

There was no answer. He went up the stairs, in dread of the empty house — the horrible emptiness that made his heart ring with insanity. He opened the bedroom door, and his heart flashed with certainty that she had gone, that he was alone.

But he saw her on the bed, lying very still and scarcely noticeable, with her back to him. He went and put his hand on her shoulder, very gently, hesitating, in a great fear and self-offering. She did not move.

He waited. The hand that touched her shoulder hurt him, as if she were sending it away. He stood dim with pain.

"Anna" he said.

But still she was motionless, like a curled up, oblivious creature. His heart beat with strange throes of pain. Then, by a motion under his hand, he knew she was crying, holding herself hard so that her tears should not be known. He waited. The tension continued — perhaps she was not crying — then suddenly relapsed with a sharp catch of a sob. His heart flamed with love and suffering for her. Kneeling carefully on the bed, so that his earthy boots should not touch it, he took her in his arms to comfort her. The sobs gathered in her, she was sobbing bitterly. But not to him. She was still away from him.

He held her against his breast, whilst she sobbed, withheld from him, and all his body vibrated against her.

"Don't cry — don't cry" he said, with an odd simplicity. His heart was calm and numb with a sort of innocence of love, now.

She still sobbed, ignoring him, ignoring that he held her. His lips were dry.

"Don't cry, my love" he said, in the same abstract way. In his breast his heart burned like a torch, with suffering. He could not bear the desolateness of her crying. He would have soothed her with his blood. He heard the church clock chime, as if it touched him, and he waited in suspense for it to have gone by. It was quiet again.

"My love" he said to her, bending to touch her wet face with his mouth. He was afraid to touch her. How wet her face was! His body trembled as he held her. He loved her till he felt his heart and all his veins would burst and flood her with his hot, healing blood. He knew his blood would heal and restore her.

She was becoming quieter. He thanked the God of mercy that at last she was becoming quieter. His head felt so strange and blazed. Still he held her close, with trembling arms. His blood seemed very strong, enveloping her.

And at last she began to draw near to him, she nestled to him. His limbs, his body, took fire and beat up in flames. She clung to him, she cleaved to his body. The flames swept him, he held her in sinews of fire. If she would kiss him! He bent his mouth down. And her mouth, soft and moist, received him. He felt his veins would burst with anguish of thankfulness, his heart was mad with gratefulness, he could pour himself out upon her for ever.

When they came to themselves, the night was very dark. Two hours had gone by. They lay still and warm and weak, like the newborn, together. And there was a silence almost of the unborn. Only his heart was weeping happily, after the pain. He did not understand, he had yielded, given way. There *was* no understanding. There could be only acquiescence and submission, and tremulous wonder of consummation.

The next morning, when they woke up, it had snowed. He wondered what was the strange pallor in the air, and the unusual tang. Snow was on the grass and the windowsill, it weighed down the black, ragged branches of the yews, and smoothed the graves in the churchyard.

Soon, it began to snow again, and they were shut in. He was glad, for then they were immune in a shadowy silence, there was no world, no time.

The snow lasted for some days. On the Sunday they went to church. They made a line of footprints across the garden, he left a flat snowprint of his hand on the wall as he vaulted over, they traced the snow across the churchyard. For three days they had been immune in a perfect love.

There were very few people in church, and she was glad. She did not care much for church. She had never questioned any beliefs, and she was, from habit and custom, a regular attendant at morning service. But she had ceased to come with any anticipation. Today, however, in the strangeness of snow, after

such consummation of love, she felt expectant again, and delighted. She was still in the eternal world.

She used, after she went to the High School, and wanted to be a lady, wanted to fulfil some mysterious ideal, always to listen to the sermon and to try to gather suggestions. That was all very well for a while. The vicar told her to be good in this way and in that. She went away feeling it was her highest aim to fulfil these injunctions.

But quickly this palled. After a short time, she was not very much interested in being good. Her soul was in quest of something, which was not just being good, and doing one's best. No, she wanted something else: something that was not her ready-made duty. Everything seemed to be merely a matter of social duty, and never of her self. They talked about her soul, but somehow never managed to rouse or to implicate her soul. As yet her soul was not brought in at all.

So that whilst she had an affection for Mr. Loverseed, the vicar, and a protective sort of feeling for Cossethay church, wanting always to help it and defend it, it counted very small in her life.

Not but that she was conscious of some unsatisfaction. When her husband was roused by the thought of the churches, then she became hostile to the ostensible church, she hated it for not fulfilling anything in her. The Church told her to be good: very well, she had no idea of contradicting what it said. The Church talked about her soul, about the welfare of mankind, as if the saving of her soul lay in her performing certain acts conducive to the welfare of mankind. Well and good — it was so, then.

Nevertheless, as she sat in church her face had a pathos and poignancy. Was this what she had come to hear: how by doing this thing and by not doing that, she could save her soul? She did not contradict it. But the pathos of her face gave the lie. There was something else she wanted to hear, it was something else she asked for from the Church.

But who was *she* to affirm it? And what was she doing with unsatisfied desires? She was ashamed. She ignored them and left them out of count as much as possible, her underneath yearnings. They angered her. She wanted to be like other people, decently satisfied.

He angered her more than ever. Church had an irresistible attraction for him. And he paid no more attention to that part of the service which was Church to her, than if he had been an angel or a fabulous beast sitting there. He simply paid no heed to the sermon or to the meaning of the service. There was something thick, dark, dense, powerful about him that irritated her too deeply for her to speak of it. The Church teaching in itself meant nothing to him. "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us" — it simply did not touch him. It might have been more sounds, and it would have acted upon him in the same way. He did not want things to be intelligible. And

he did not care about his trespasses, neither about the trespasses of his neighbour, when he was in church. Leave that care for weekdays. When he was in church, he took no more notice of his daily life. It was weekday stuff. As for the welfare of mankind — he merely did not realise that there was any such thing: except on weekdays, when he was good-natured enough. In church, he wanted a dark, nameless emotion, the emotion of all the great mysteries of passion.

He was not interested in the *thought* of himself or of her: oh, and how that irritated her! He ignored the sermon, he ignored the greatness of mankind, he did not admit the immediate importance of mankind. He did not care about himself as a human being. He did not attach any vital importance to his life in the drafting office, or his life among men. That was just merely the margin to the text. The verity was his connection with Anna and his connection with the Church, his real being lay in his dark emotional experience of the Infinite, of the Absolute. And the great mysterious, illuminated capitals to the text, were his feelings with the Church.

It exasperated her beyond measure. She could not get out of the Church the satisfaction he got. The thought of her soul was intimately mixed up with the thought of her own self. Indeed, her soul and her own self were one and the same in her. Whereas he seemed simply to ignore the fact of his own self, almost to refute it. He had a soul — a dark, inhuman thing caring nothing for humanity. So she conceived it. And in the gloom and the mystery of the Church his soul lived and ran free, like some strange, underground thing, abstract.

He was very strange to her, and, in this church spirit, in conceiving himself as a soul, he seemed to escape and run free of her. In a way, she envied it him, this dark freedom and jubilation of the soul, some strange entity in him. It fascinated her. Again she hated it. And again, she despised him, wanted to destroy it in him.

This snowy morning, he sat with a dark-bright face beside her, not aware of her, and somehow, she felt he was conveying to strange, secret places the love that sprang in him for her. He sat with a dark rapt, half delighted face, looking at a little stained window. She saw the ruby coloured glass, with the shadow heaped along the bottom from the snow outside, and the familiar yellow figure of the lamb holding the banner, a little darkened now, but in the murky interior strangely luminous, pregnant.

She had always liked the little red and yellow window. The lamb, looking very silly and self-conscious, was holding up a forepaw, in the cleft of which was dangerously perched a little flag with a red cross. Very pale yellow, the lamb, with greenish shadows. Since she was a child she had liked this creature, with the same feeling she felt for the little woolly lambs on green legs that children carried home from the fair every year. She had always liked these toys, and she had the same amused, childish liking for this church lamb. Yet she had always been uneasy about it. She was never sure that this lamb with a flag did not

want to be more than it appeared. So she half mistrusted it, there was a mixture of dislike in her attitude to it.

Now, by a curious gathering, knitting of his eyes, the faintest tension of ecstasy on his face, he gave her the uncomfortable feeling that he was in correspondence with the creature, the lamb in the window. A cold wonder came over her — her soul was perplexed. There he sat, motionless, timeless, with the faint, bright tension on his face. What was he doing? What connection was there between him and the lamb in the glass?

Suddenly it gleamed to her dominant, this lamb with the flag. Suddenly she had a powerful mystic experience, the power of the tradition seized on her, she was transported to another world. And she hated it, resisted it.

Instantly, it was only a silly lamb in the glass again. And dark, violent hatred of her husband swept up in her. What was he doing, sitting there gleaming, carried away, soulful?

She shifted sharply, she knocked him as she pretended to pick up her glove, she groped among his feet.

He came to, rather bewildered, exposed. Anybody but her would have pitied him. She wanted to rend him. He did not know what was amiss, what he had been doing.

As they sat at dinner, in their cottage, he was dazed by the chill of antagonism from her. She did not know why she was so angry. But she was incensed.

"Why do you never listen to the sermon?" she asked, seething with hostility and violation.

"I do" he said.

"You don't — you don't hear a single word."

He retired into himself, to enjoy his own sensation. There was something subterranean about him, as if he had an underworld refuge. The young girl hated to be in the house with him when he was like this.

After dinner, he retired into the parlour, continuing in the same state of abstraction, which was a burden intolerable to her. Then he went to the bookshelf and took down books to look at, that she had scarcely glanced over.

He sat absorbed over a book on the illuminations in old missals, and then over a book on paintings in churches: Italian, English, French and German. He had, when he was sixteen, discovered a Roman Catholic bookshop where he could find such things.

He turned the leaves in absorption, absorbed in looking, not thinking. He was like a man whose eyes were in his chest, she said of him later.

She came to look at the things with him. Half they fascinated her. She was puzzled, interested, and antagonistic.

It was when she came to pictures of the Pietà that she burst out.

"I do think they're loathsome" she cried.

"What?" he said, surprised, abstracted.

"Those bodies with slits in them, posing to be worshipped."

"You see, it means the Sacraments, the Bread" he said slowly.

"Does it" she cried. "Then it's worse. I don't want to see your chest slit, nor to eat your dead body, even if you offer it to me. Can't you see it's horrible?"

"It isn't me, it's Christ."

"What if it is, it's you! And it's horrible, you wallowing in your own dead body, and thinking of eating it in the Sacrament."

"You've to take it for what it means."

"It means your human body put up to be slit and killed and then worshipped — what else?"

They lapsed into silence. His soul grew angry and aloof.

"And I think that Lamb in Church" she said, "is the biggest joke in the parish —"

She burst into a "Pouf" of ridiculing laughter.

"It might be, to those that see nothing in it" he said. "You know it's the symbol of Christ, of His innocence and sacrifice."

"Whatever it means, it's a *lamb*" she said. "And I like lambs too much to treat them as if they had to mean something. As for the Christmas tree flag — no —"

And again she poufed with mockery.

"It's because you don't know anything" he said violently, harshly. "Laugh at what you know, not at what you don't know."

"What don't I know?"

"What things mean."

"And what does it mean?"

He was reluctant to answer her. He found it difficult.

"What does it mean?" she insisted.

"It means the triumph of the Resurrection."

She hesitated, baffled, a fear came upon her. What were these things? Something dark and powerful seemed to extend before her. Was it wonderful after all?

But no — she refused it.

"Whatever it may pretend to mean, what it *is* is a silly absurd toy lamb with a Christmas tree flag ledged on its paw — and if it wants to mean anything else, it must look different from that."

He was in a state of violent irritation against her. Partly he was ashamed of his love for these things; he hid his passion for them. He was ashamed of the ecstasy into which he could throw himself with these symbols. And for a few moments he hated the lamb and the mystic pictures of the Eucharist, with a violent, ashy hatred. His fire was put out, she had thrown cold water on it. The whole thing was distasteful to him, his mouth was full of ashes. He went out cold with corpse like anger, leaving her alone. He hated her. He walked through the white snow, under a sky of lead.

And she wept again, in bitter recurrence of the previous gloom. But her heart was easy — oh, much more easy.

She was quite willing to make it up with him when he came home again. He was black and surly, but abated. She had broken a little of something in him. And at length he was glad to forfeit from his soul all his symbols, to have her making love to him. He loved it when she put her head on his knee, and he had not asked her to or wanted her to, he loved her when she put her arms round him and made bold love to him, and he did not make love to her. He felt a strong blood in his limbs again.

And she loved the intent, far look of his eyes when they rested on her: intent, yet far, not near, not with her. And she wanted to bring them near. She wanted his eyes to come to hers, to know her. And they would not. They remained intent, and far, and proud, like a hawk's naïve and inhuman as a hawk's. So she loved him and caressed him and roused him like a hawk, till he was keen and instant, but without tenderness. He came to her fierce and hard, like a hawk striking and taking her. He was no mystic any more, she was his aim and object, his prey. And she was carried off, and he was satisfied, or satiated at last.

Then immediately she began to retaliate on him. She too was a hawk. If she imitated the pathetic plover running plaintive to him, that was part of the game. When he, satisfied, moved with a proud, insolent slouch of the body and a half contemptuous drop of the head, unaware of her, ignoring her very existence, after taking his fill of her and getting his satisfaction of her, her soul roused, its pinions became like steel, and she struck at him. When he sat on his perch glancing sharply round with solitary pride, pride eminent and fierce, she dashed at him and threw him from his station savagely, she goaded him from his keen dignity of a male, she harassed him from his unperturbed pride, till he was mad with rage, his light brown eyes burned with fury, they saw her now, like flames of anger they flared at her and recognized her as the enemy.

Very good, she was the enemy, very good. As he prowled round her, she watched him. As he struck at her, she struck back.

He was angry because she had carelessly pushed away his tools so that they got rusty.

"Don't leave them littering in my way, then" she said.

"I shall leave them where I like" he cried.

"Then I shall throw them where I like."

They glowered at each other, he with rage in his hands, she with her soul fierce with victory. They were very well matched. They would fight it out.

She turned to her sewing. Immediately the tea things were cleared away, she fetched out the stuff, and his soul rose in rage. He hated beyond measure to hear the shriek of calico as she tore the web sharply, as if with pleasure. And the run of the sewing machine gathered a frenzy in him at last.

"Aren't you going to stop that row?" he shouted. "Can't you do it in the daytime?"

She looked up sharply, hostile from her work.

"No, I can't do it in the daytime. I have other things to do. Besides, I like sewing, and you're not going to stop me doing it."

Whereupon she turned back to her arranging, fixing, stitching, his nerves jumped with anger as the sewing machine started and stuttered and buzzed.

But she was enjoying herself, she was triumphant and happy as the darting needle danced ecstatically down a hem, drawing the stuff along under its vivid stabbing, irresistibly. She made the machine hum. She stopped it imperiously, her fingers were deft and swift and mistress.

If he sat behind her stiff with impotent rage it only made a trembling vividness come into her energy. On she worked. At last he went to bed in a rage, and lay stiff, away from her. And she turned her back on him. And in the morning they did not speak, except in mere cold civilities.

And when he came home at night, his heart relenting and growing hot for love of her, when he was just ready to feel he had been wrong, and when he was expecting her to feel the same, there she sat at the sewing machine, the whole house was covered with clipped calico, the kettle was not even on the fire.

She started up, affecting concern.

"Is it so late?" she cried.

But his face had gone stiff with rage. He walked through to the parlour, then he walked back and out of the house again. Her heart sank. Very swiftly she began to make his tea.

He went black-hearted down the road to Ilkeston. When he was in this state he never thought. A bolt shot across the doors of his mind and shut him in, a prisoner. He went back to Ilkeston, and drank a glass of beer. What was he going to do? He did not want to see anybody.

He would go to Nottingham, to his own town. He went to the station and took a train. When he got to Nottingham, still he had nowhere to go. However, it was more agreeable to walk familiar streets. He paced them with a mad restlessness, as if he were running amok. Then he turned to a bookshop and found a book on Bamberg Cathedral. Here was a discovery! Here was something for him! He went into a quiet restaurant to look at his treasure. He lit up with thrills of bliss as he turned from picture to picture. He had found something at last, in these carvings. His soul had great satisfaction. Had he not come out to seek, and had he not found! He was in a passion of fulfilment. These were the finest carvings, statues, he had ever seen. The book lay in his hands like a doorway. The world around was only an enclosure, a room. But he was going away. He lingered over the lovely statues of women. A marvellous, finely wrought universe crystallized out around him as he looked again, at the crowns, the twining hair, the woman-faces. He liked all the better the unintelligible text of the German. He preferred things he could not understand with the mind. He loved the undiscovered and the undiscoverable. He pored over the pictures intensely. And these were wooden statues, "Holz" — he believed that meant wood. Wooden statues so shapen to his soul! He was a million times gladdened. How undiscovered the world was, how it revealed itself to his soul! What a fine, exciting thing his life was, at his hand! Did not Bamberg Cathedral make the world his own? He celebrated his triumphant strength and life and verity, and embraced the vast riches he was inheriting.

But it was about time to go home. He had better catch a train. All the time there was a steady bruise at the bottom of his soul, but so steady as to be forgettable. He caught a train for Ilkeston.

It was ten o'clock as he was mounting the hill to Cossethay, carrying his limp book on Bamberg Cathedral. He had not yet thought of Anna, not definitely. The dark finger pressing a bruise controlled him thoughtlessly.

Anna had started guiltily when he left the house. She had hastened preparing the tea, hoping he would come back. She had made some toast, and got all ready. Then he didn't come. She cried with vexation and disappointment. Why had he gone? Why couldn't he come back now? Why was it such a battle between them? She loved him — she did love him — why couldn't he be kinder to her, nicer to her?

She waited in distress — then her mood grew harder. He passed out of her thoughts. She had considered indignantly, what right he had to interfere with her sewing? She had indignantly refuted his right to interfere with her at all. She was not to be interfered with. Was she not herself, and he the outsider.

Yet a quiver of fear went through her. If he should leave her? She sat conjuring fears and sufferings, till she wept with very self-pity. She did not know what she would do if he left her, or if he turned against her. The thought of it chilled her, made her desolate and hard. And against him, the stranger, the outsider, the being who wanted to arrogate authority, she remained steadily fortified. Was she not herself? How could one who was not of her own kind presume with authority? She knew she was immutable, unchangeable, she was not afraid for her own being. She was only afraid of all that was not herself. It pressed round her, it came to her and took part in her, in form of her man, this vast, resounding, alien world which was not herself. And he had so many weapons, he might strike from so many sides.

When he came in at the door, his heart was blazed with pity and tenderness, she looked so lost and forlorn and young. She glanced up, afraid. And she was surprised to see him, shining-faced, clear and beautiful in his movements, as if he were clarified. And a startled pang of fear, and shame of herself went through her.

They waited for each other to speak.

"Do you want to eat anything?" she said.

"I'll get it myself" he answered, not wanting her to serve him. But she brought out food. And it pleased him she did it for him. He was again a bright lord.

"I went to Nottingham" he said mildly.

"To your mother?" she asked, in a flash of contempt.

"No — I didn't go home."

"Who did you go to see?"

"I went to see nobody."

"Then why did you go to Nottingham?"

"I went because I wanted to go."

He was getting angry that she again rebuffed him when he was so clear and shining.

"And who did you see?"

"I saw nobody."

"Nobody?"

"No — who should I see?"

"You saw nobody you knew?"

"No, I didn't" he replied irritably.

She believed him, and her mood became cold.

"I bought a book" he said, handing her the propitiatory volume.

She idly looked at the pictures. Beautiful, the pure women, with their clear dropping gowns. Her heart became colder. What did they mean to *him*?

He sat and waited for her. She bent over the book.

"Aren't they nice?" he said, his voice roused and glad. Her blood flushed, but she did not lift her head.

"Yes," she said. In spite of herself, she was compelled by him. He was strange, attractive, exerting some power over her.

He came over to her, and touched her delicately. Her heart beat with wild passion, wild raging passion. But she resisted as yet. It was always the unknown, always the unknown, and she clung fiercely to her known self. But the rising flood carried her away.

They loved each other to transport again, passionately and fully.

"Isn't it more wonderful than ever?" she asked him, radiant like a newly opened flower, with tears like dew.

He held her closer. He was strange and abstracted.

"It is always more wonderful" she asseverated, in a glad, child's voice, remembering her fear, and not quite cleared of it yet.

So it went on continually, the recurrence of love and conflict between them. One day it seemed as if everything was shattered, all life spoiled, ruined, desolate and laid waste. The next day it was all marvellous again, just marvellous. One day she thought she would go mad from his very presence, the sound of his drinking was detestable to her. The next day she loved and rejoiced in the way he crossed the floor, he was sun, moon and stars in one.

She fretted, however, at last, over the lack of stability. When the perfect hours came back, her heart did not forget that they would pass away again. She was uneasy. The surety, the surety, the inner surety, the confidence in the abidingness of love: that was what she wanted. And that she did not get. She knew also that he had not got it.

Nevertheless it was a marvellous world, she was for the most part lost in the marvellousness of it. Even her great woes were marvellous to her.

She could be very happy. And she wanted to be happy. She resented it when he made her unhappy. Then she could kill him, cast him out. Many days, she waited for the hour when he would be gone to work. Then the flow of her life, which he seemed to damn up, was let loose, and she was free. She was free, she was full of delight. Everything delighted her. She took up the rug and went to shake it in the garden. Patches of snow were on the fields, the air was light. She heard the ducks shouting on the pond, she saw them charge and sail across the water as if they were setting off on an invasion of the world. She watched the rough horses, one of which was clipped smooth on the belly, so that he wore a jacket and long stockings of brown fur, stand kissing each other in the wintry morning by the church-yard wall. Everything delighted her, now he was gone, the insulator, the obstruction removed, the world was all hers, in connection with her.

She was joyfully active. Nothing pleased her more than to hang out the washing in a high wind that came full butt over the round of the hill, tearing the wet garments out of her hands, making flap-flap-flap of the waving stuff. She laughed and struggled and grew angry. But she loved her solitary days.

Then he came home at night, and she knitted her brows because of some endless contest between them. As he stood in the doorway her heart changed. It steeled itself. The laughter and zest of the day disappeared from her. She was stiffened.

They fought an unknown battle, unconsciously. Still they were in love with each other, the passion was there. But the passion was consumed in a battle. And the deep, fierce unnamed battle went on. Everything glowed intensely about them, the world had put off its clothes and was awful, with new, primal nakedness.

Sunday came when the strange spell was cast over her by him. Half she loved it. She was becoming more like him. All the weekdays, there was a glint of sky and fields, the little church seemed to babble away to the cottages the morning through. But on Sundays, when he stayed at home, a deeply coloured, intense gloom seemed to gather on the face of the earth, the church seemed to fill itself with shadow, to become big, a universe to her, there was a burning of blue and ruby, a sound of worship about her. And when the doors were opened, and she came out into the world, it was a world new-created, she stepped into the resurrection of the world, her heart beating to the memory of the darkness and the Passion.

If, as very often, they went to the Marsh for tea on Sundays, then she regained another, lighter world, that had never known the gloom and the stained glass and the ecstasy of chanting. Her husband was obliterated, she was with her father again, who was so fresh and free and all daylight. Her husband, with his intensity and his darkness, was obliterated. She left him, she forgot him, she accepted her father.

Yet, as she went home again with the young man, she put her hand on his arm tentatively, a little bit ashamed, her hand pleaded that he would not hold it against her, her recusancy. But he was obscured. He seemed to become blind, as if he were not there with her.

Then she was afraid. She wanted him. When he was oblivious of her, she almost went mad with fear. For she had become so vulnerable, so exposed. She was in touch so intimately. All things about her had become intimate, she had known them near and lovely, like presences hovering upon her. What if they should all go hard and separate again, standing back from her terrible and distinct, and she, having known them, should be at their mercy?

This frightened her. Always, her husband was to her the unknown to which she was delivered up. She was a flower that has been tempted forth into blossom, and has no retreat. He had her nakedness in his power. And who was he, what was he? A blind thing, a dark force, without knowledge. She wanted to preserve herself.

Then she gathered him to herself again and was satisfied for a moment. But as time went on, she began to realize more and more that he did not alter, that he was something dark, alien to herself. She had thought him just the bright reflex of herself. As the weeks and months went by she realized that he was a dark opposite to her, that they were opposites, not complements.

He did not alter, he remained separately himself, and he seemed to expect her to be part of himself, the extension of his will. She felt him trying to gain power over her, without knowing her. What did he want? Was he going to bully her?

What did she want herself? She answered herself, that she wanted to be happy, to be natural, like the sunlight and the busy daytime. And, at the bottom

of her soul, she felt he wanted her to be dark, unnatural. Sometimes, when he seemed like the darkness covering and smothering her, she revolted almost in horror, and struck at him. She struck at him, and made him bleed, and he became wicked. Because she dreaded him and held him in horror, he became wicked, he wanted to destroy. And then the fight between them was cruel.

She began to tremble. He wanted to impose himself on her. And he began to shudder. She wanted to desert him, to leave him a prey to the open, with the unclean dogs of the darkness setting on to devour him. He must beat her, and make her stay with him. Whereas she fought to keep herself free of him.

They went their ways now shadowed and stained with blood, feeling the world far off, unable to give help. Till she began to get tired. After a certain point, she became impassive, detached utterly from him. He was always ready to burst out murderously against her. Her soul got up and left him, she went her way. Nevertheless in her apparent blitheness, that made his soul black with opposition, she trembled as if she bled.

And ever and again, the pure love came in sunbeams between them, when she was like a flower in the sun to him, so beautiful, so shining, so intensely dear that he could scarcely bear it. Then as if his soul had six wings of bliss he stood absorbed in praise, feeling the radiance from the Almighty beat through him like a pulse, as he stood in the upright flame of praise, transmitting the pulse of Creation.

And ever and again he appeared to her as the dread flame of power. Sometimes, when he stood in the doorway, his face lit up, he seemed like an Annunciation to her, her heart beat fast. And she watched him, suspended. He had a dark, burning being that she dreaded and resisted. She was subject to him as to the Angel of the Presence. She waited upon him and heard his will, and she trembled in his service.

Then all this passed away. Then he loved her for her childishness and for her strangeness to him, for the wonder of her soul which was different from his soul, and which made him genuine when he would be false. And she loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, or for the way he came through a door with his face open and eager. She loved his ringing, eager voice, and the touch of the unknown about him, his absolute simplicity.

Yet neither of them was quite satisfied. He felt, somewhere, that she did not respect him. She only respected him as far as he was related to herself. For what he was, beyond her, she had no care. She did not care for what he represented in himself. It is true, he did not know himself what he represented. But whatever it was she did not really honour it. She did no service to his work as a lace-designer, nor to himself as bread-winner. Because he went down to the office and worked every day — that entitled him to no respect or regard from her, he knew. Rather she despised him for it. And he almost loved her for this, though at first it maddened him like an insult.

What was much deeper, she soon came to combat his deepest feelings. What he thought about life and about society and mankind did not matter very much to her: he was right enough to be insignificant. This was again galling to him. She would judge beyond him on these things. But at length he came to accept her judgments, discovering them as if they were his own. It was not here the deep trouble lay. The deep root of his enmity lay in the fact that she jeered at his soul. He was inarticulate and stupid in thought. But to some things he clung passionately. He loved the Church. If she tried to get out of him, what he *believed*, then they were both soon in a white rage.

Did he believe the water turned to wine at Cana? She would drive him to the thing as a historical fact: so much rain-water — look at it — can it become grape juice, wine? For an instant, he saw with the clear eyes of the mind and said no, his clear mind, answering her for a moment, rejected the idea. And immediately his whole soul was crying in a mad, inchoate hatred against this violation of himself. It was true for him. His mind was extinguished again at once, his blood was up. In his blood and bones, he wanted the scene, the wedding, the water brought forward from the firkins as red wine: and Christ saying to His mother: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? — mine hour is not yet come."

And then:

"His mother saith unto the servants 'Whosoever he saith unto you, do it.' "

Brangwen loved it, with his bones and blood he loved it, he could not let it go. Yet she forced him to let it go. She hated his blind attachments.

Water, natural water, could it suddenly and unnaturally turn into wine, depart from its being and at haphazard take on another being? Ah no, he knew it was wrong.

She became again the palpitating, hostile child, hateful, putting things to destruction. He became mute and dead. His own being gave him the lie. He knew it was so: wine was wine, water was water, for ever: the water had not become wine. The miracle was not a real fact. She seemed to be destroying him. He went out, dark and destroyed, his soul running its blood. And he tasted of death. Because his life was formed in these unquestioned concepts.

She, desolate again as she had been when she was a child, went away and sobbed. She did not care, she did not care whether the water had turned to wine or not. Let him believe it if he wanted to. But she knew she had won. And an ashy desolation came over her.

They were ashenly miserable for some time. Then the life began to come back. He was nothing if not dogged. He thought again of the chapter of St. John. There was a great biting pang. "But thou hast kept the good wine until now." "The best wine!" The young man's heart responded in a craving, in a triumph, although the knowledge that it was not true in fact bit at him like a weasel in his heart. Which was stronger, the pain of the denial, or the desire for

affirmation? He was stubborn in spirit, and abode by his desire. But he would not any more affirm the miracles as true.

Very well, it was not true, the water had not turned into wine. The water had not turned into wine. But for all that he would live in his soul as if the water *had* turned into wine. For truth of fact, it had not. But for his soul, it had.

"Whether it turned into wine or whether it didn't" he said "it doesn't bother me. I take it for what it is."

"And *what* is it?" she asked, quickly, hopefully.

"It's the Bible" he said.

That answer enraged her, and she despised him. She did not actively question the Bible herself. But he drove her to contempt.

And yet he did not care about the Bible, the written letter. Although he could not satisfy her, yet she knew of herself that he had something real. He was not a dogmatist. He did not believe in *fact* that the water turned into wine. He did not want to make a fact out of it. Indeed, his attitude was without criticism. It was purely individual. He took that which was of value to him from the Written Word, he added to his spirit. His mind he let sleep.

And she was bitter against him, that he let his mind sleep. That which was human, belonged to mankind, he would not exert. He cared only for himself. He was no Christian. Above all, Christ had asserted the brotherhood of man.

She, almost against herself, clung to the worship of the human knowledge. Man must die in the body, but in his knowledge he was immortal. Such, somewhere, was her belief, quite obscure and unformulated. She believed in the omnipotence of the human mind.

He, on the other hand, blind as a subterranean thing, just ignored the human mind and ran after his own dark-souled desires, following his own tunnelling nose. She felt often she must suffocate. And she fought him off.

Then he, knowing he was blind, fought madly back again, frantic in sensual fear. He did foolish things. He asserted himself on his rights, he arrogated the old position of master of the house.

"You've a right to do as I want" he cried.

"Fool!" she answered. "Fool!"

"I'll let you know who's master" he cried.

"Fool!" she answered. "Fool! I've known my own father, who could put a dozen of you in his pipe and push them down with his finger end. Don't I know what a fool you are!"

He knew himself what a fool he was, and was flayed by the knowledge. Yet he went on trying to steer the ship of their dual life. He asserted his position as the captain of the ship. And captain and ship bored her. He wanted to loom important as master of one of the innumerable domestic craft that make up the great fleet of society. It seemed to her a ridiculous armada of tubs jostling in futility. She felt no belief in it. She jeered at him as master of the house, master of their dual life. And he was black with shame and rage. He knew, with shame, how her father had been a man without arrogating any authority.

He had gone on the wrong tack, and he felt it hard to give up the expedition. There was great surging and shame. Then he yielded. He had given up the master-of-the-house idea.

There was something he wanted, nevertheless, some form of mastery. Ever and anon, after his collapses into the petty and the shameful, he rose up again, and, stubborn in spirit, strong in his power to start afresh, set out once more in his male pride of being to fulfil the hidden passion of his spirit.

It began well, but it ended always in war between them, till they were both driven almost to madness. He said, she did not respect him. She laughed in hollow scorn of this. For her it was enough that she loved him.

"Respect what?" she asked.

But he always answered the wrong thing. And though she cudgelled her brains, she could not come at it.

"Why don't you go on with your wood carving?" she said. "Why don't you finish your Adam and Eve?"

But she did not care for the Adam and Eve, and he never put another stroke to it. She jeered at the Eve, saying, "She is like a little marionette. Why is she so small? You've made Adam as big as God, and Eve like a doll."

"It is impudence to say that Woman was made out of Man's body" she continued, "when every man is born of woman. What impudence men have, what arrogance!"

In a rage one day, after trying to work on the board, and failing, so that his belly was a flame of nausea, he chopped up the whole panel and put it on the fire. She did not know. He went about for some days very quiet and subdued after it.

"Where is the Adam and Eve board?" she asked him.

"Burnt."

She looked at him.

"But your carving?"

"I burned it."

"When?"

She did not believe him.

"On Friday night."

"When I was at the Marsh?"

"Yes."

She said no more.

Then, when he had gone to work, she wept for a whole day, and was much chastened in spirit. So that a new, fragile flame of love came out of the ashes of this last pain.

Directly, it occurred to her that she was with child. There was a great trembling of wonder and anticipation through her soul. She wanted a child. Not that she loved babies so much, though she was touched by all young things. But she wanted to bear children. And a certain hunger in her heart wanted to unite her husband with herself, in a child.

She wanted a son. She felt, a son would be everything. She wanted to tell her husband. But it was such a trembling, intimate thing to tell him, and he was at this time hard and unresponsive. So that she went away and wept. It was such a waste of a beautiful opportunity, such a frost that nipped in the bud one of the beautiful moments of her life. She went about heavy and tremulous with her secret, wanting to touch him, oh, most delicately, and see his face, dark and sensitive, attend to her news. She waited and waited for him to become gentle and still towards her. But he was always harsh and he bullied her.

So that the buds shrivelled from her confidence, she was chilled. She went down to the Marsh.

"Well" said her father, looking at her and seeing her at the first glance, "what's amiss wi' you now?"

The tears came at the touch of his careful love.

"Nothing" she said.

"Can't you hit it off, you two?" he said.

"He's so obstinate" she quivered; but her soul was obdurate itself.

"Ay, an' I know another who's all that," said her father.

She was silent.

"You don't want to make yourselves miserable," said her father; "all about nowt."

"*He* isn't miserable" she said.

"I'll back my life, if you can do nowt else, you can make him as miserable as a dog. You'd be a dab hand at that, my lass."

"*I* do nothing to make him miserable" she retorted.

"Oh no — oh no! A packet o' butterscotch, you are."

She laughed a little.

"You mustn't think I *want* him to be miserable" she cried. "I don't."

"We quite readily believe it" retorted Brangwen. "Neither do you intend him to be hopping for joy like a fish in a pond."

This made her think. She was rather surprised to find that she did *not* intend her husband to be hopping for joy like a fish in a pond.

Her mother came, and they all sat down to tea, talking casually.

"Remember, child" said her mother "that everything is not waiting for *your* hand just to take or leave. You mustn't expect it. Between two people, the love itself is the important thing, and that is neither you nor him. It is a third thing you must create. You mustn't expect it to be just your way."

"Ha — nor do I. If I did I should soon find my mistake out. If *I* put my hand out to take anything, my hand is very soon bitten, I can tell you."

"Then you must mind where you put your hand" said her father.

Anna was rather indignant that they took the tragedy of her young married life with such equanimity.

"You love the man right enough" said her father, wrinkling his forehead in distress. "That's all as counts."

"I do love him, more shame to him" she cried. "I want to tell him — I've been waiting for four days now to tell him —" her face began to quiver, the tears came. Her parents watched her in silence. She did not go on.

"Tell him what?" said her father.

"That we're going to have an infant" she sobbed "and he's never, never let me, not once, every time I've come to him, he's been horrid to me, and I wanted to tell him, I did. And he won't let me — he's cruel to me."

She sobbed as if her heart would break. Her mother went and comforted her, put her arms round her, and held her close. Her father sat with a queer, wrinkled brow, and was rather paler than usual. His heart went tense with hatred of his son-in-law.

So that, when the tale was sobbed out, and comfort administered and tea sipped, and something like calm restored to the little circle, the thought of Will Brangwen's entry was not pleasantly entertained.

Tilly was set to watch out for him as he passed by on his way home. The little party at table heard the woman's servant's shrill call:

"You've got to come in, Will. Anna's here."

After a few moments, the youth entered.

"Are you stopping?" he asked in his hard, harsh voice.

He seemed like a blade of destruction standing there. She quivered to tears.

"Sit you down" said Tom Brangwen "an' take a bit off your length."

Will Brangwen sat down. He felt something strange in the atmosphere. He was dark browed, but his eyes had the keen, intent, sharp look, as if he could only see in the distance; which was a beauty in him, and which made Anna so angry.

"Why does he always deny me?" she said to herself. "Why is it nothing to him, what I am?"

And Tom Brangwen, blue-eyed and warm, sat in opposition to the youth.

"How long are you stopping?" the young husband asked his wife.

"Not very long," she said.

"Get your tea, lad" said Tom Brangwen. "Are you itchin' to be off the moment you enter?"

They talked of trivial things. Through the open door the level rays of sunset poured in, shining on the floor. A grey hen appeared stepping swiftly in the doorway, pecking, and the light through her comb and her wattles made an oriflamme tossed here and there, as she went, her grey body was like a ghost.

Anna, watching, threw scraps of bread, and she felt the child flame within her. She seemed to remember again forgotten, burning, far-off things.

"Where was I born, mother?" she asked.

"In London."

"And was my father" — she spoke of him as if he were merely a strange name: she could never connect herself with him — "was he dark?"

"He had dark brown hair and dark eyes and a fresh colouring. He went bald, rather bald, when he was quite young" replied her mother, also as if telling a tale which was just old imagination.

"Was he good-looking?"

"Yes — he was very good-looking — rather small. I have never seen an Englishman who looked like him."

"Why?"

"He was" — the mother made a quick, running movement with her hands — "his figure was alive and changing — it was never fixed. He was not in the least steady — like a running stream."

It flashed over the youth — Anna too was like a running stream. Instantly he was in love with her again.

Tom Brangwen was frightened. His heart always filled with fear, fear of the unknown, when he heard his women speak of their bygone men as of strangers they had known in passing and had taken leave of again.

In the room, there came a silence and a singleness over all their hearts. They were separate people with separate destinies. Why should they seek each to lay violent hands of claim on the other?

The young people went home as a sharp little moon was setting in the dusk of spring. Tufts of trees hovered in the upper air, the little church pricked up shadowily at the top of the hill, the earth was a dark blue shadow.

She put her hand lightly on his arm, out of her far distance. And out of the distance, he felt her touch him. They walked on, hand in hand, along opposite horizons, touching across the dusk. There was a sound of thrushes calling in the dark blue twilight.

"I think we are going to have an infant, Bill" she said, from far off.

He trembled, and his fingers tightened on hers.

"Why?" he asked, his heart beating. "You don't know?"

"I do" she said.

They continued without saying any more, walking along opposite horizons, hand in hand across the intervening space, two separate people. And he trembled as if a wind blew on to him in strong gusts, out of the unseen. He was afraid. He was afraid to know he was alone. For she seemed fulfilled and separate and sufficient in her half of the world. He could not bear to know that he was cut off. Why could he not be always one with her? It was he who had given her the child. Why could she not be with him, one with him? Why must he be set in this separateness, why could she not be with him, close, close, as one with him? She must be one with him.

He held her fingers tightly in his own. She did not know what he was thinking. The blaze of light on her heart was too beautiful and dazzling, from the conception in her womb. She walked glorified, and the sound of the thrushes, of the trains in the valley, of the far-off, faint noises of the town, were her "Magnificat".

But he was struggling in silence. It seemed as though there were before him a solid wall of darkness that impeded him and suffocated him and made him mad. He wanted her to come to him, to complete him, to stand before him so that his eyes did not, should not meet the naked darkness. Nothing mattered to him but that she should come and complete him. For he was ridden by the awful sense of his own limitation. It was as if he ended uncompleted, as yet uncreated on the darkness, and he wanted her to come and liberate him into the whole.

But she was complete in herself, and he was ashamed of his need, his helpless need of her. His need, and his shame of need, weighed on him like a madness. Yet still he was quiet and gentle, in reverence of her conception, and because she was with child by him.

And she was happy in showers of sunshine. She loved her husband, as a presence, as a grateful condition. But for the moment her need was fulfilled, and now she wanted only to hold her husband by the hand in sheer happiness, without taking thought, only being glad.

He had various folios of reproductions, and among them a cheap print from Fra Angelico's "Entry of the Blessed into Paradise". This filled Anna with bliss. The beautiful, innocent way in which the Blessed held each other by the hand as they moved towards the radiance, the real, real, angelic melody, made her

weep with happiness. The floweriness, the beams of light, the linking of hands, was almost too much for her, too innocent.

Day after day came shining through the door of Paradise, day after day she entered into the brightness. The child in her shone till she herself was a beam of sunshine; and how lovely was the sunshine that loitered and wandered out of doors, where the catkins on the big hazel bushes at the end of the garden hung in their shaken, floating aureole, where little fumes like fire burst out from the black yew trees as a bird settled clinging to the branches. One day bluebells were along the hedge bottoms, then cowslips twinkled like manna, golden and evanescent on the meadows. She was full of a rich drowsiness and loneliness. How happy she was, how gorgeous it was to live: to have known herself, her husband, the passion of love and begetting; and to know that all this lived and waited and burned on around her, a terrible purifying fire, through which she had passed for once to come to this peace of golden radiance, when she was with child, and innocent, and in love with her husband and with all the many angels hand in hand. She lifted her throat to the breeze that came across the fields, and she felt it handling her like sisters fondling her, she drank it in perfume of cowslips and of apple blossoms.

And in all the happiness a black shadow, shy, wild, a beast of prey, roamed and vanished from sight, and like strands of gossamer blown across her eyes, there was a dread for her.

She was afraid when he came home at night. As yet, her fear never spoke, the shadow never rushed upon her. He was gentle, humble, he kept himself withheld. His hands were delicate upon her, and she loved them. But there ran through her the thrill, crisp as pain, for she felt the darkness and otherworld still in his soft, sheathed hands.

But the summer drifted in with the silence of a miracle, she was almost always alone. All the while, went on the long, lovely drowsiness, the maidenblush roses in the garden were all shed, washed away in a pouring rain, summer drifted into autumn, and the long, vague, golden days began to close. Crimson clouds fumed about the west, and as night came on, all the sky was fuming and steaming, and the moon, far above the swiftness of vapours, was white, bleared, the night was uneasy. Suddenly the moon would appear at a clear window in the sky, looking down from far above, like a captive. And Anna did not sleep. There was a strange, dark tension about her husband.

She became aware that he was trying to force his will upon her, something, there was something he wanted, as he lay there dark and tense. And her soul sighed in weariness.

Everything was so vague and lovely, and he wanted to wake her up to the hard, hostile reality. She drew back in resistance. Still he said nothing. But she felt his power persisting on her, till she became aware of the strain, she cried out against the exhaustion. He was forcing her, he was forcing her. And she wanted so much the joy and the vagueness and the innocence of her pregnancy.

She did not want his bitter-corrosive love, she did not want it poured into her, to burn her. Why must she have it? Why, oh, why was he not content, contained?

She sat many hours by the window, in those days when he drove her most with the black constraint of his will, and she watched the rain falling on the yew trees. She was not sad, only wistful, blanched. The child under her heart was a perpetual warmth. And she was sure. The pressure was only upon her from the outside, her soul had no stripes.

Yet in her heart itself was always this same strain, tense, anxious. She was not safe, she was always exposed, she was always attacked. There was a yearning in her for a fulness of peace and blessedness. What a heavy yearning it was — so heavy.

She knew, vaguely, that all the time he was not satisfied, all the time he was trying to force something from her. Ah, how she wished she could succeed with him, in her own way! He was there, so inevitable. She lived in him also. And how she wanted to be at peace with him, at peace. She loved him. She would give him love, pure love. With a strange, rapt look in her face, she awaited his homecoming that night.

Then, when he came, she rose with her hands full of love, as of flowers, radiant, innocent. A dark spasm crossed his face. As she watched, her face shining and flower-like with innocent love, his face grew dark and tense, the cruelty gathered in his brows, his eyes turned aside, she saw the whites of his eyes as he looked aside from her. She waited, touching him with her hands. But from his body through her hands came the bitter-corrosive shock of his passion upon her, destroying her in blossom. She shrank. She rose from her knees and went away from him, to preserve herself. And it was great pain to her.

To him also it was agony. He saw the glistening, flowerlike love in her face, and his heart was black because he did not want it. Not this — not this. He did not want flowery innocence. He was unsatisfied. The rage and storm of unsatisfaction tormented him ceaselessly. Why had she not satisfied him? He had satisfied her. She was satisfied, at peace, innocent round the doors of her own paradise.

And he was unsatisfied, unfulfilled, he raged in torment, wanting, wanting. It was for her to satisfy him: then let her do it. Let her not come with flowery handfuls of innocent love. He would throw these aside and trample the flowers to nothing. He would destroy her flowery, innocent bliss. Was he not entitled to satisfaction from her, and was not his heart all raging desire, his soul a black torment of unfulfilment. Let it be fulfilled in him, then, as it was fulfilled in her. He had given her her fulfilment. Let her rise up and do her part.

He was cruel to her. But all the time he was ashamed. And being ashamed, he was more cruel. For he was ashamed that he could not come to fulfilment

without her. And he could not. And she would not heed him. He was shackled and in darkness of torment.

She beseeched him to work again, to do his wood carving. But his soul was too black. He had destroyed his panel of Adam and Eve. He could not begin again, least of all now, whilst he was in this condition.

For her there was no final release, since he could not be liberated from himself. Strange and amorphous, she must go yearning on through the trouble, like a warm, glowing cloud blown in the middle of a storm. She felt so rich, in her warm vagueness, that her soul cried out on him, because he harried her and wanted to destroy her.

She had her moments of exaltation still, re-births of old exaltations. As she sat by her bedroom window, watching the steady rain, her spirit was somewhere far off.

She sat in pride and curious pleasure. When there was no one to exult with, and the unsatisfied soul must dance and play, then one danced before the Unknown.

Suddenly she realized that this was what she wanted to do. Big with child as she was, she danced there in the bedroom by herself, lifting her hands and her body to the Unseen, to the unseen Creator who had chosen her, to Whom she belonged.

She would not have had anyone know. She danced in secret, and her soul rose in bliss. She danced in secret before the Creator, she took off her clothes and danced in the pride of her bigness.

It surprised her, when it was over. She was shrinking and afraid. To what was she now exposed? She half wanted to tell her husband. Yet she shrank from him.

All the time she ran on by herself. She liked the story of David, who danced before the Lord, and uncovered himself exultingly. Why should he uncover himself to Michal, a common woman? He uncovered himself to the Lord.

"Thou comest to me with a sword and a spear and a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord: — for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

Her heart rang to the words. She walked in her pride. And her battle was her own Lord's, her husband was delivered over.

In these days she was oblivious of him. Who was he, to come against her? No, he was not even the Philistine, the Giant. He was like Saul proclaiming his own kingship. She laughed in her heart. Who was he, proclaiming his kingship? She laughed in her heart with pride.

And she had to dance in exultation beyond him. Because he was in the house, she had to dance before her Creator in exemption from the man. On a Saturday afternoon, when she had a fire in the bedroom, again she took off her things and danced, lifting her knees and her hands in a slow, rhythmic exulting. He was in the house, so her pride was fiercer. She would dance his nullification, she would dance to her unseen Lord. She was exalted over him, before the Lord.

She heard him coming up the stairs, and she flinched. She stood with the firelight on her ankles and feet, naked in the shadowy, late afternoon, fastening up her hair. He was startled. He stood in the doorway, his brows black and lowering.

"What are you doing?" he said, gratingly. "You'll catch a cold."

And she lifted her hands and danced again, to annul him, the light glanced on her knees as she made her slow, fine movements down the far side of the room, across the firelight. He stood away near the door in blackness of shadow, watching, transfixed. And with slow, heavy movements she swayed backwards and forwards, like a full ear of corn, pale in the dusky afternoon, threading before the firelight, dancing his non-existence, dancing herself to the Lord, to exultation.

He watched, and his soul burned in him. He turned aside, he could not look, it hurt his eyes. Her fine limbs lifted and lifted, her hair was sticking out all fierce, and her belly, big, strange, terrifying, uplifted to the Lord. Her face was rapt and beautiful, she danced exulting before her Lord, and knew no man.

It hurt him as he watched as if he were at the stake. He felt he was being burned alive. The strangeness, the power of her in her dancing consumed him, he was burned, he could not grasp, he could not understand. He waited obliterated. Then his eyes became blind to her, he saw her no more. And through the unseeing veil between them he called to her, in his jarring voice:

"What are you doing that for?"

"Go away" she said. "Let me dance by myself."

"That isn't dancing," he said harshly. "What do you want to do that for?"

"I don't do it for you" she said. "You go away."

Her strange, lifted belly, big with his child! Had he no right to be there? He felt his presence a violation. Yet he had his right to be there. He went and sat on the bed.

She stopped dancing, and confronted him, again lifting her slim arms and twisting at her hair. Her nakedness hurt her, opposed to him.

"I can do as I like in my bedroom" she cried. "Why do you interfere with me?"

And she slipped on a dressing gown and crouched before the fire. He was more at ease now she was covered up. The vision of her tormented him all the days of his life, as she had been then, a strange, exalted thing having no relation to himself.

After this day, the door seemed to shut on his mind. His brow shut and became impervious. His eyes ceased to see, his hands were suspended. Within himself his will was coiled like a beast, hidden under the darkness, but always potent, working.

At first she went on blithely enough with him shut down beside her. But then his spell began to take hold of her. The dark, seething potency of him, the power of a creature that lies hidden and exerts its will to the destruction of the free-running creature, as the tiger lying in the darkness of the leaves steadily enforces the fall and death of the light creatures that drink by the waterside in the morning, gradually began to take effect on her. Though he lay there in his darkness and did not move, yet she knew he lay waiting for her. She felt his will fastening on her and pulling her down, even whilst he was silent and obscure.

She found that, in all her outgoings and her incomings, he prevented her. Gradually she realized that she was being borne down by him, borne down by the clinging, heavy weight of him, that he was pulling her down as a leopard clings to a wild cow and exhausts her and pulls her down.

Gradually she realized that her life, her freedom, was sinking under the silent grip of his physical will. He wanted her in his power. He wanted to devour her at leisure, to have her. At length she realised that her sleep was a long ache and a weariness and exhaustion, because of his will fastened upon her, as he lay there beside her, during the night.

She realised it all, and there came a momentous pause, a pause in her swift running, a moment's suspension in her life, when she was lost.

Then she turned fiercely on him, and fought him. He was not to do this to her, it was monstrous. What horrible hold did he want to have over her body? Why did he want to drag her down, and kill her spirit? Why did he want to deny her spirit? Why did he deny her spirituality, hold her for a body only? And was he to claim her carcase?

Some vast, hideous darkness he seemed to represent to her.

"What do you do to me?" she cried. "What beastly thing do you do to me? You put a horrible pressure on my head, you don't let me sleep, you don't let me live. Every moment of your life you are doing something to me, something horrible, that destroys me. There is something horrible in you, something dark and beastly in your will. What do you want of me? What do you want to do to me?"

All the blood in his body went black and powerful and corrosive as he heard her. Black and blind with hatred of her he was. He was in a very black hell, and could not escape.

He hated her for what she said. Did he not give her everything, was she not everything to him? And the shame was a bitter fire in him, that she was everything to him, that he had nothing but her. And then that she should taunt him with it, that he could not escape! The fire went black in his veins. For try as he might, he could not escape. She was everything to him, she was his life and his derivation. He depended on her. If she were taken away, he would collapse as a house from which the central pillar is removed.

And she hated him, because he depended on her so utterly. He was horrible to her. She wanted to thrust him off, to set him apart. It was horrible that he should cleave to her, so close, so close, like leopard that had leapt on her, and fastened.

He went on from day to day in a blackness of rage and shame and frustration. How he tortured himself, to be able to get away from her. But he could not. She was as the rock on which he stood, with deep, heaving water all round, and he was unable to swim. He *must* take his stand on her, he must depend on her.

What had he in life, save her? Nothing. The rest was a great heaving flood. The terror of the night of heaving, overwhelming flood, which was his vision of life without her, was too much for him. He clung to her fiercely and abjectly.

And she beat him off, she beat him off. Where could he turn, like a swimmer in a dark sea, beaten off from his hold, whither could he turn? He wanted to leave her, he wanted to be able to leave her. For his soul's sake, for his manhood's sake, he must be able to leave her.

But for what? She was the ark, and the rest of the world was flood. The only tangible, secure thing was the woman. He could leave her only for another woman. And where was the other woman, and who was the other woman? Besides, he would be just in the same state. Another woman would be woman, the case would be the same.

Why was she the all, the everything, why must he live only through her, why must he sink if he were detached from her? Why must he cleave to her in a frenzy as for his very life?

The only other way to leave her was to die. The only straight way to leave her was to die. His dark, raging soul knew that. But he had no desire for death.

Why could he not leave her? Why could he not throw himself into the hidden water to live or die, as might be? He could not, he could not. But supposing he went away, right away, and found work, and had a lodging again. He could be again as he had been before.

But he knew he could not. A woman, he must have a woman. And having a woman, he must be free of her. It would be the same position. For he could not be free of her.

For how can a man stand, unless he have something sure under his feet. Can a man tread the unstable water all his life, and call that standing? Better give in and drown at once.

And upon what could he stand, save upon a woman? Was he then like the old man of the seas, impotent to move save upon the back of another life? Was he impotent, or a cripple, or a defective, or a fragment?

It was black, mad, shameful torture, the frenzy of fear, the frenzy of desire, and the horrible, grasping backwash of shame.

What was he afraid of? Why did life, without Anna, seem to him just a horrible welter, everything jostling in a meaningless, dark, fathomless flood? Why, if Anna left him even for a week, did he seem to be clinging like a madman to the edge of reality, and slipping surely, surely into the flood of unreality that would drown him. This horrible slipping into unreality drove him mad, his soul screamed with fear and agony.

Yet she was pushing him off from her, pushing him away, breaking his fingers from their hold on her, persistently, ruthlessly. He wanted her to have pity. And sometimes for a moment she had pity. But she always began again, thrusting him off, into the deep water, into the frenzy and agony of uncertainty.

She became like a fury to him, without any sense of him. Her eyes were bright with a cold, unmoving hatred. Then his heart seemed to die in its last fear. She might push him off into the deeps.

She would not sleep with him any more. She said he destroyed her sleep. Up started all his frenzy and madness of fear and suffering. She drove him away. Like a cowed, lurking devil he was driven off, his mind working cunningly against her, devising evil for her. But she drove him off. In his moments of intense suffering, she seemed to him inconceivable, a monster, the principle of cruelty.

However her pity might give way for moments, she was hard and cold as a jewel. He must be put off from her, she must sleep alone. She made him a bed in the small room.

And he lay there whipped, his soul whipped almost to death, yet unchanged. He lay in agony of suffering, thrown back into unreality, like a man thrown overboard into a sea, to swim till he sinks, because there is no hold, only a wide, weltering sea.

He did not sleep, save for the white sleep when a thin veil is drawn over the mind. It was not sleep. He was awake, and he was not awake. He could not be alone. He needed to be able to put his arms round her. He could not bear the empty space against his breast, where she used to be. He could not bear it. He felt as if he were suspended in space, held there by the grip of his will. If he relaxed his will would fall, fall through endless space, into the bottomless pit, always falling, will-less, helpless, non-existent, just dropping to extinction, falling till the fire of friction had burned out, like a falling star, then nothing, nothing, complete nothing.

He rose in the morning grey and unreal. And she seemed fond of him again, she seemed to make up to him a little.

"I slept well" she said, with her slightly false brightness. "Did you?"

"All right" he answered.

He would never tell her.

For three or four nights he lay alone through the white sleep, his will unchanged, unchanged, still tense, fixed in its grip. Then, as if she were revived and free to be fond of him again, deluded by his silence and seeming acquiescence, moved also by pity, she took him back again.

Each night, in spite of all the shame, he had waited with agony for bedtime, to see if she would shut him out. And each night, as, in her false brightness, she said goodnight, he felt he must kill her or himself. But she asked for her kiss, so pathetically, so prettily. So he kissed her, whilst his heart was ice.

And sometimes he went out. Once he sat for a long time in the church porch, before going in to bed. It was dark with a wind blowing. He sat in the church porch and felt some shelter, some security. But it grew cold, and he must go in to bed.

Then came the night when she said, putting her arms round him and kissing him fondly:

"Stay with me tonight, will you?"

And he had stayed without demur. But his will had not altered. He would have her fixed to him.

So that soon she told him again she must be alone.

"I don't *want* to send you away. I *want* to sleep with you. But I can't sleep, you don't let me sleep."

His blood turned black in his veins.

"What do you mean by such a thing? It's an arrant lie. *I don't let you sleep*  
—"

"But you don't. I sleep so well when I'm alone. And I can't sleep when you're there. You do something to me, you put a pressure on my head. And I *must* sleep, now the child is coming."

"It's something in yourself" he replied, "something wrong in you."

Horrible in the extreme were these nocturnal combats, when all the world was asleep, and they two were alone, alone in the world, and repelling each other. It was hardly to be borne.

He went and lay down alone. And at length, after a grey and livid and ghastly period, he relaxed, something gave way in him. He let go, he did not care what became of him. Strange and dim he became to himself, to her, to everybody. A vagueness had come over everything, like a drowning. And it was an infinite relief to drown, a relief, a great, great relief.

He would insist no more, he would force her no more. He would force himself upon her no more. He would let go, relax, lapse, and what would be, should be.

Yet he wanted her still, he always, always wanted her. In his soul, he was desolate as a child, he was so helpless. Like a child on its mother, he depended on her for his living. He knew it, and he knew he could hardly help it.

Yet he must be able to be alone. He must be able to lie down alongside the empty space, and let be. He must be able to leave himself to the flood, to sink or live as might be. For he recognized at length his own limitation, and the limitation of his power. He had to give in.

There was a stillness, a wanness between them. Half at least of the battle was over. Sometimes she wept as she went about, her heart was very heavy. But the child was always warm in her womb.

They were friends again, new, subdued friends. But there was a wanes between them. They slept together once more, very quietly, and distinct, not one together as before. And she was intimate with him as at first. But he was very quiet, and not intimate. He was glad in his soul, but for the time being he was not alive.

He could sleep with her, and let her be. He could be alone now. He had just learned what it was to be able to be alone. It was right and peaceful. She had given him a new, deeper freedom. The world might be a welter of uncertainty, but he was himself now. He had come into his own existence. He was born for a second time, born at last unto himself, out of the vast body of humanity. Now at last he had a separate identity, he existed alone, even if he were not quite alone. Before he had only existed in so far as he had relations with another being. Now he had an absolute self — as well as a relative self.

But it was a very dumb, weak, helpless self, a crawling nursling. He went about very quiet, and in a way, submissive. He had an unalterable self at last, free, separate, independent.

She was relieved, she was free of him. She had given him to himself. She wept sometimes with tiredness and helplessness. But he was a husband. And she seemed, in the child that was coming, to forget. It seemed to make her warm and drowsy. She lapsed into a long muse, indistinct, warm, vague, unwilling to be taken out of her vagueness. And she rested on him also.

Sometimes she came to him with a strange light in her eyes, poignant, pathetic, as if she were asking for something. He looked and he could not understand. She was so beautiful, so visionary, the rays seemed to go out of his breast to her, like a shining. He was there for her, all for her. And she would hold his breast, and kiss it, and kiss it, kneeling beside him, she who was waiting for the hour of her delivery. And he would lie looking down at his breast, till it seemed that his breast was not himself, that he had left it lying there. Yet it was himself also, and beautiful and bright with her kisses. He was glad with a strange, radiant pain. Whilst she kneeled beside him, and kissed his breast with a slow, rapt, half-devotional movement.

He knew she wanted something, his heart yearned to give it her. His heart yearned over her. And as she lifted her face, that was radiant and rosy as a little cloud, his heart still yearned over her, and, now from the distance, adored her. She had a flowerlike presence which he adored as he stood far off, a stranger.

The weeks passed on, the time drew near, they were very gentle, and delicately happy. The insistent, passionate, dark soul, the powerful unsatisfaction in him seemed stilled and tamed, the lion lay down with the lamb in him.

She loved him very much indeed, and he waited near her. She was a precious, remote thing to him at this time, as she waited for her child. Her soul was glad with an ecstasy because of the coming infant. She wanted a boy: oh, very much she wanted a boy.

But she seemed so young and so frail. She was indeed only a girl. As she stood by the fire washing herself — she was proud to wash herself at this time — and he looked at her, his heart was full of extreme tenderness for her. Such fine, fine limbs, her slim, round arms like chasing lights, and her legs so simple and childish, yet so very proud. Oh, she stood on proud legs, with a lovely reckless balance of her full belly, and the adorable little roundnesses, and the breasts becoming important. Above it all, her face was like a rosy cloud shining.

How proud she was, what a lovely proud thing her young body! And she loved him to put his hand on her ripe fullness, so that he should thrill also with the stir and the quickening there. He was afraid and silent, but she flung her arms round his neck with proud, impudent joy.

The pains came on, and Oh — how she cried! She would have him stay with her. And after her long cries she would look at him, with tears in her eyes and a sobbing laugh on her face, saying:

"I don't mind it really."

It was bad enough. But to her it was never deathly. Even the fierce, tearing pain was exhilarating. She screamed and suffered, but was all the time curiously alive and vital. She felt so powerfully alive and in the hands of such a masterly force of life, that her bottom-most feeling was one of exhilaration. She knew she was winning, winning, she was always winning, with each onset of pain she was nearer to victory.

Probably he suffered more than she did. He was not shocked or horrified. But he was screwed very tight in the vice of suffering.

It was a girl. The second of silence on her face when they said so showed him she was disappointed. And a great blazing passion of resentment and protest sprang up in his heart. In that moment he claimed the child.

But when the milk came, and the infant sucked her breast, she seemed to be leaping with extravagant bliss.

"It sucks me, it sucks me, it likes me — oh, it loves it!" she cried, holding the child to her breast with her two hands covering it, passionately.

And in a few moments, as she became used to her bliss, she looked at the youth with glowing, unseeing eyes, and said:

"Anna Victrix."

He went away, trembling, and slept. To her, her pains were the wound smart of a victor, she was the prouder.

When she was well again she was very happy. She called the baby Ursula. Both Anna and her husband felt they must have a name that gave them private satisfaction. The baby was tawny skinned, it had a curious downy skin, and wisps of bronze hair, and the yellow grey eyes that wavered, and then became golden brown like the father's. So they called her Ursula because of the picture of the saint.

It was a rather delicate baby at first, but soon it became stronger, and was restless as a young eel. Anna was worn out with the daylong wrestling with its young vigour.

As a little animal, she loved and adored it and was happy. She loved her husband, she kissed his eyes and nose and mouth, and made much of him, she said his limbs were beautiful, she was fascinated by the physical form of him.

And she was indeed Anna Victrix. He could not combat her any more. He was out in the wilderness, alone with her. Having occasion to go to London, he marvelled, as he returned, thinking of naked, lurking savages on an island, how these had built up and created the great mass of Oxford Street or Piccadilly. How had helpless savages, running with their spears on the riverside, after fish, how had they come to rear up this great London, the ponderous, massive, ugly superstructure of a world of man upon a world of nature! It frightened and awed him. Man was terrible, awful in his works. The works of man were more terrible than man himself, almost monstrous.

And yet, for his own part, for his private being, Brangwen felt that the whole of the man's world was exterior and extraneous to his own real life with Anna. Sweep away the whole monstrous superstructure of the world of today, cities and industries and civilization, leave only the bare earth with plants growing and waters running, and he would not mind, so long as he were whole, had Anna and the child and the new, strange certainty in his soul. Then, if he were naked, he would find clothing somewhere, he would make a shelter and bring food to his wife.

And what more? What more would be necessary? The great mass of activity in which mankind was engaged meant nothing to him. By nature, he had no part in it. What did he live for, then? For Anna only, and for the sake of living? What did he want on this earth? Anna only, and his children, and his life with his children and her? Was there no more?

He was attended by a sense of something more, something further, which gave him absolute being. It was as if now he existed in Eternity, let Time be what it might. What was there outside? The fabricated world, that he did not believe in? What should he bring to her, from outside? Nothing? Was it enough, as it was? He was troubled in his acquiescence. She was not with him. Yet he scarcely believed in himself, apart from her, though the whole Infinite was with him. Let the whole world slide down and over the edge of oblivion, he would stand alone. But he was unsure of her. And he existed also in her. So he was unsure.

He hovered near to her, never quite able to forget the vague, haunting uncertainty, that seemed to challenge him, and which he would not hear. A pang of dread, almost guilt, as of insufficiency, would go over him as he heard her talking to the baby. She stood before the window, with the month-old child in her arms, talking in a musical, young sing-song that he had not heard before, and which rang on his heart like a claim from the distance, or the voice of another world sounding its claim on him. He stood near, listening, and his heart surged, surged to rise and submit. Then it shrank back and stayed aloof. He could not move, a denial was upon him, as if he could not deny himself. He must, he must be himself.

"Look at the silly blue-caps, my beauty" she crooned, holding up the infant to the window, where shone the white garden, and the blue tits scuffling in the

snow: "Look at the silly blue-caps, my darling, having a fight in the snow! Look at them, my bird — beating the snow about with their wings, and shaking their heads. Oh, aren't they wicked things, wicked things! Look at their yellow feathers on the snow there! They'll miss them, won't they, when they're cold later on.

"Must we tell them to stop, must we say 'stop it' to them, my bird? But they are naughty, naughty! Look at them!" Suddenly her voice broke loud and fierce, she rapped the pane sharply.

"Stop it" she cried, "stop it, you little nuisances. Stop it!" She called louder, and rapped the pane more sharply. Her voice was fierce and imperative.

"Have more sense" she cried.

"There, now they're gone. Where have they gone, the silly things? What will they say to each other? What will they say, my lambkin? They'll forget, won't they, they'll forget all about it, out of their silly little heads, and their blue caps."

After a moment, she turned her bright face to her husband.

"They were *really* fighting, they were really fierce with each other!" she said, her voice keen with excitement and wonder, as if she belonged to the birds' world, were identified with the race of birds.

"Ay, they'll fight, will blue-caps" he said, glad when she turned to him with her glow from elsewhere. He came and stood beside her and looked out at the marks on the snow where the birds had scuffled, and at the yew trees' burdened, white and black branches. What was the appeal it made to him, what was the question of her bright face, what was the challenge he was called to answer? He did not know. But as he stood there he felt some responsibility which made him glad, but uneasy, as if he must put out his own light. And he could not move as yet.

Anna loved the child very much, oh, very much. Yet still she was not quite fulfilled. She had a slight expectant feeling, as of a door half opened. Here she was, safe and still in Cossethay. But she felt as if she were not in Cossethay at all. She was straining her eyes to something beyond. And from her Pisgah mount, which she had attained, what could she see? A faint, gleaming horizon, a long way off, and a rainbow like an archway, a shadow door with faintly coloured coping above it. Must she be moving thither?

Something she had not, something she did not grasp, could not arrive at. There was something beyond her. But why must she start on the journey? She stood so safely on the Pisgah mountain.

In the winter, when she rose with the sunrise, and out of the back windows saw the east flaming yellow and orange above the green, glowing grass, while the great pear tree in between stood dark and magnificent as an idol, and under

the dark pear tree, the little sheet of water spread smooth in burnished, yellow light, she said "It is here". And when, at evening, the sunset came in a red glare through the big opening in the clouds, she said again "It is beyond".

Dawn and sunset were the feet of the rainbow that spanned the day, and she saw the hope, the promise. Why should she travel any further?

Yet she always asked the question. As the sun went down in his fiery winter haste, she faced the blazing close of the affair, in which she had not played her fullest part, and she made her demand still: "What are you doing, making this big shining commotion? What is it that you keep so busy about, that you will not let us alone?"

She did not turn to her husband, for him to lead her. He was apart from her, with her, according to her different conceptions of him. The child she might hold up, she might toss the child forward into the furnace, the child might walk there, amid the burning coals and the incandescent roar of heat, as the three witnesses walked with the angel in the fire.

Soon, she felt sure of her husband. She knew his dark face and the extent of its passion. She knew his slim, vigorous body, she said it was hers. Then there was no denying her. She was a rich woman enjoying her riches.

And soon again she was with child. Which made her satisfied and took away her discontent. She forgot that she had watched the sun climb up and pass his way, a magnificent traveller surging forward. She forgot that the moon had looked through a window of the high, dark night, and nodded like a magic recognition, signalled to her to follow. Sun and moon travelled on, and left her, passed her by, a rich woman enjoying her riches. She should go also. But she could not go, when they called, because she must stay at home now. With satisfaction she relinquished the adventure to the unknown. She was bearing her children.

There was another child coming, and Anna lapsed into vague content. If she were not the wayfarer to the unknown, if she were arrived now, settled in her builded house, a rich woman, still her doors opened under the arch of the rainbow, her threshold reflected the passing of the sun and moon, the great travellers, her house was full of the echo of journeying.

She was a door and a threshold, she herself. Through her another soul was coming, to stand upon her as upon the threshold, looking out, shading its eyes for the direction to take.

THE END