FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

by

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Based on the novel by Thomas Hardy

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FADE IN:

1

EXT. TOLL GATE, NORCOMBE HILL - DAY

A day in LATE AUGUST. A FIGURE on a hill top; the unpopulated landscape - lush in summer, barren and bleak in winter - curving down to high chalk cliffs with the ocean beyond.

GABRIEL OAK sits watching over his flock with his two DOGS, his face handsome if somewhat weather-beaten beneath a low-crowned felt hat. He has a quality of contentment, calm and stillness. Idly, he plays with a stone in his hand. No sound but the sounds of nature.

Which is why his eye is drawn towards the horizon, the sound of wheels. A CART is approaching. Curious GABRIEL rises and walks closer, as the CART stops at a toll gate and the OLD WAGGONER gets down.

2

EXT. TOLL GATE, NORCOMBE HILL - DAY

From GABRIEL’s p.o.v, an argument has broken out with the TURNPIKE KEEPER.

WAGGONER
Misses says she won’t pay more.

TURNPIKE KEEPER
Then Misses’d best turn back. Price is thrupence.

The WAGGONER sighs, and goes to negotiate with his PASSENGER, as yet unseen. GABRIEL steps closer.

WAGGONER
Perhaps best to pay him. Be dark soon.

She replies - barely heard. The WAGGONER returns.

WAGGONER (CONT’D)
She says she’s paid you quite enough.

TURNPIKE KEEPER
Three pence.

A stand-off. Until GABRIEL arrives. He knows the GATEKEEPER. A local.

GABRIEL
Let her through. It’s a woman on her own.
Going through the gate, BATHSHEBA EVERDENE very briefly turns to GABRIEL. If she feels gratitude, she can’t quite bring herself to express it. Pride wins out. The cart moves on.

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLES – ‘FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD.’

Under TITLES, a series of Wessex landscapes.
- CARROW COVE on a brisk autumn day, the low sun glinting on the sea.
- the CLIFFS of NORCOMBE HILL facing out into the sea in the grip of a winter storm.
- the RIVER AXE in full flow with the melting snows of spring.
- bleak EGDON HEATH in the rain, the road seeming to stretch on forever.
- the gloom of the GREAT FOREST, dark in its depths even on the brightest summer day.
- the mud and stone of ploughed fields in the VALE of BLACKMORE, awaiting planting in March.

This is the stage for our story, quite remote from the rest of the world. A grand landscape, sometimes beautiful, sometimes harsh –
- and finally, the slope of NORCOMBE HILL on a day in LATE SEPTEMBER.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. STABLE, MRS HURST FARM, NORCOMBE HILL – DAWN

LATE SEPTEMBER. A chink of light opens out as the stable door is pulled open. BATHSHEBA is silhouetted against the bright light.

EXT. MRS HURST’S COTTAGE – DAWN

BATHSHEBA leads the horse into the yard of MRS HURST’s farm; small, subsistence-level but tidy and well-kept, clinging to the side of the remote hill.

We see her face as she greets the horse; a startlingly vivid face, full of spirit and determination. She rides off.
EXT. NORCOMBE HILL - DAWN
- heading down to the forest that borders the hill.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

BATHSHEBA finds herself in a hollow-way, a path covered by a canopy of trees, too low for rider and horse to pass beneath.

She looks one way, then the other, to ensure that she’s alone then, in a single dextrous movement, then switches from side-saddle to cross-saddle, tucking her dress up – some sort of trousers or breaches revealed beneath. Comfortable now, she lies backwards along the horse so that her head is near its tail, her feet near its shoulders, her eyes to the sky. It’s an impressive performance, almost a circus trick, and she smiles in satisfaction to herself as the horse trots forward, the sky showing between the low boughs.

On the ground behind her, a SCARF.

EXT. NORCOMBE HILL - DAY
- towards a high vantage point. The panorama is magnificent and she smiles to herself.

She urges the horse on, a wonderful rider, riding past GABRIEL without even stopping.

INT. GABRIEL’S COTTAGE, NIGHT

The SCARF again, but now it lies on the table of GABRIEL OAK’s cottage, a neat, comfortable place.

GABRIEL sits nearby, counting out money which he locks away in a strong box. He closes his money box.

His eye returns to the SCARF –

EXT. GABRIEL’S COTTAGE - DAY

Another day. From his high vantage point, GABRIEL with his sheep and dogs, behind him his cottage.

He sees BATHSHEBA walking by, below.

GABRIEL
Miss!

In his hand, the lost SCARF. He stays proudly on top of the hill, so she has to climb the hill towards him. He hands her the scarf.
BATHSHEBA
(out of breath)
My scarf. I lost it. You must be Farmer Oak.
(surprise from GABRIEL)
This is your land, I must be trespassing.

GABRIEL
You’re welcome here. Gabriel. And you are...?

BATHSHEBA
I’d rather not tell you. It’s a very odd name, I try not to say it out loud.

GABRIEL
I’m sure you could get a new one. If you wanted.
(An awkward moment, a misfire. She takes the scarf -)
Forgive me, I can’t always map my mind on my tongue.

BATHSHEBA
Thank you. Farmer Oak.

On BATHSHEBA as she walks away, a small smile appearing.

8A  EXT. MRS HURST’S FARM, NORCOMBE HILL – DAY

BATHSHEBA is milking the cows. GABRIEL is herding his sheep nearby, heading up to the small SHEPHERD’S HUT, a kind of CARAVAN from where he guards the sheep.

A greeting between them. She steps out and looks after him. The ice melting -

8B  EXT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL – DAY

GABRIEL has two dogs, YOUNG GEORGE who barks and nips at the flock, and OLD GEORGE who sits contentedly by BATHSHEBA.

A new development. BATHSHEBA watches GABRIEL go about his work with some admiration. GABRIEL, for his part, is showing off a little.

GABRIEL
Come by, George. Come!
(Returning to BATHSHEBA)
He’s keen enough, Young George, but he doesn’t know when to stop.
(petting OLD GEORGE)
(MORE)
GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Not like this one. Been with me a long time, haven’t you?

BATHSHEBA
And what’s that one called?

GABRIEL
This is Old George.

BATHSHEBA
(she laughs)
Of course. Old George.

And GABRIEL walks away towards his caravan.

GABRIEL
Find me amusing, do you?

EXT. NORCOMBE HILL - NIGHT

BATHSHEBA is out riding once more. She stops. It’s a beautiful night, the stars framing her, steam rising from the horse. From somewhere in the distance, the sound of dogs barking.

Some distance away stands GABRIEL’s hut, the small building on wheels that he uses for shelter when watching the flock at night. Smoke rises from the chimney.

But something is amiss.

We follow her towards the caravan. She knocks on the door - no answer. She goes in and finds -

INT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL - NIGHT

GABRIEL lies unconscious in the smoky interior. BATHSHEBA takes in the scene then leaps into action. With all her strength, she drags him upright, slaps his face.

BATHSHEBA
Mr Oak! Mr Oak, wake up! Gabriel Oak!

Nothing. Now she tries to haul him to her feet. But he falls, a dead-weight, across her lap. This is all new to BATHSHEBA. A man in her lap. She takes it in. To her side, a jug of milk. She takes it, throws it into his face.

Gasping, dazed and confused he comes round. Looks up, sees her face. She laughs with relief. GABRIEL is confused, breathless.

GABRIEL
What’s the matter? What is it?
BATHSHEBA
Nothing, since you’re not dead. I was heading home when I heard the dogs barking.
(she busies herself, ventilating the hut)
It’s very foolish of you, Farmer. Oak. My uncle had a hut just like this, I used to play in it as a little girl and he told me, always, always keep a window open or you’ll suffocate.
(- the wetness -)
I’m sorry about the milk. At least it was warm.
(he attempts to stand, stumbles. Takes her HAND)
Rest a moment. You know, Farmer Oak, I think I may have saved your life.

Her hand in his, as GABRIEL steadies himself.

GABRIEL
Tell me your name. I still don’t know your name.

BATHSHEBA
Then find it out. My hand, Mr Oak?

Somewhat reluctantly, he lets go of her hand. She walks out into the night.

GABRIEL sits on the steps and watches her go.

EXT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL - DAY

Next morning. GABRIEL is working his sheep, but his mind is elsewhere. He stops working, his mind wandering.

INT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL - DAY

GABRIEL polishes his boots, puts away his working clothes. A decision has been made.

EXT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL - DAY

GABRIEL walks through his flock and finds a lamb. It has come weeks early, and is the only one. He scoops the tiny thing up.
Accompanied by OLD GEORGE, carrying the lamb, GABRIEL marches towards MRS HURST’s, a man with a mission.

Middle-aged, wry and weather-worn, MRS HURST joins her niece in clearing brambles from the cottage garden. Tough work, BATHSHEBA scratched and muddy.

MRS HURST stretches out her back and notices GABRIEL approaching.

MRS HURST
Goodness. Mr Oak.

BATHSHEBA
What does he want?

BATHSHEBA washes the mud from her hands, wipes it from her face, checks her reflection in the small mirror. It will have to do.

GABRIEL and MRS HURST sit in the parlour, a little awkward. BATHSHEBA enters, and he stands abruptly.

GABRIEL
Miss Everdene. Bathsheba. I’ve brought you a lamb.

BATHSHEBA
(delighted)
Thank you, Farmer Oak! Such a dear thing, that’s very sweet of you.

GABRIEL
He’s come too soon and won’t last the winter. I thought you’d like to rear it instead.

BATHSHEBA
Thank you. That’s very kind.

MRS HURST takes the lamb out with her.

MRS HURST
I’ll make some tea.

And she makes her exit. Silence.

GABRIEL
The lamb is not why I came.
BATHSHEBA

Go on.

GABRIEL

Well...I wanted to ask, Miss Everdene, if you'd marry me.

A long moment.

BATHSHEBA

Oh -

This is not the response he wanted -

GABRIEL

I’ve never asked anyone before.

BATHSHEBA

No, I -

And impulsively he stands.

GABRIEL

Well. I’ll leave you now.

BATHSHEBA

Mr Oak -

(he turns, waits)

There are things to consider.

GABRIEL

Someone waiting for you?

BATHSHEBA

No, there’s no-one else but that doesn’t mean I’ll marry you.

GABRIEL

Good day to you then.

EXT. MRS HURST’S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

BATHSHEBA follows him out.

BATHSHEBA

Mr Oak, stop! I didn’t say I wouldn’t marry you either!

(he doesn’t understand - which is it?)

I really haven’t ever thought about it. I need time to consider.
GABRIEL
But I know I can make you happy.
(she’s thrown by this)
I have one hundred acres, two
hundred sheep. When I pay off the
money, the farm is ours. You could
have a piano in a year or two.
Flowers and birds. A frame for
cucumbers. A baby perhaps, or two –

BATHSHEBA
Please, Mr Oak, that’s too much –

GABRIEL
- or more. And whenever you look up
I’ll be there, and whenever I look
up there’ll be you.

BATHSHEBA takes this in, imagines it, and makes her decision.

BATHSHEBA
Mr Oak, I do not want a husband.
I’d hate to be some man’s property.
I shouldn’t mind being a bride at a
wedding, if I could be one without
getting a husband, but –

GABRIEL
That’s just stupid talk.

With as much calmness and compassion as she can muster;

BATHSHEBA
You are better off than I, Mr Oak.
I have an education and this dress
and nothing more. You can do much,
much better than me...

GABRIEL
Maybe that’s true. But you know
that’s not the reason.

BATHSHEBA
I’m too independent for you.
(this sounds more
plausible)
If I ever were to marry, I’d need
somebody to tame me, and you’d
never be able to do it. You’d grow
to despise me.

GABRIEL
(with quiet simplicity)
I would not.
(she takes this in.
A moment, then –)
Goodbye, Miss Everdene.
And with that he turns and goes.

For a moment she follows him, just a step or two. Then she walks back to the cottage. One last look.

GABRIEL walks away, no turning back.

EXT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL – DAY

WINTER. Time passing.

GABRIEL is herding sheep as light snow falls. Hard, physical work.

As night comes on, he rests on the steps of the Shepherd’s Hut, the site of BATHSHEBA’s rescue.

INT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL – DAWN

Another day. In his caravan, OLD GEORGE by his side, GABRIEL sleeps on.

The barking of YOUNG GEORGE wakes them both. Something is up. He sits, listens.

The sound of sheep bells now. He is on his feet. To OLD GEORGE –

GABRIEL
Stay here, old boy.

EXT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL – DAWN

GABRIEL steps out of the caravan, pulling on his clothes. He listens to the distant barking to find the direction, then runs off.

A broken fence nearby –

EXT. GABRIEL’S CARAVAN, NORCOMBE HILL – DAWN

He walks through trees, losing track of the barking for a moment. Coming out of the trees and forest, he crests the hill in search of the flock.

But they have gone. Disappeared. Silence.

Then barking, the sound of the bells, further off this time. He runs –
A natural basin leads up to cliffs and, beyond that, the sea. The precipice is fenced off, but it is towards this cliff edge that the flock have been harried by YOUNG GEORGE.

GABRIEL stumbles across the darkened hillside after them.

...but it’s too late. The young, impetuous dog is barking and snapping at a single remaining sheep, forcing it through a gap in the broken fence and into the darkness beyond. The sheep has gone.

YOUNG GEORGE runs to his master, desperate for approval. But GABRIEL is numb. With a terrible sense of foreboding, he walks towards the gap in the hedge, knowing already what he’ll find.

GABRIEL’s POV. A glimpse of white below.

EXT. BEACH, NORCOMBE HILL - DAY

At the bottom of the limestone cliff, the corpses of the flock. Two hundred sheep, all dead.

The sun is up, the water lapping at the corpses. GABRIEL stands exhausted, numb. All of his hopes, his ambitions, the rewards of twenty years hard work, all dead. At his side, YOUNG GEORGE licks his hand, awaiting his reward for a job well done.

He kneels next to YOUNG GEORGE, places his forehead against the dog’s and speaks to him quietly.

GABRIEL
Least we didn’t marry, eh Georgie?

Then he quickly stands and, without malice but with an awful resignation, he raises his gun.

A shot rings out.

INT. GABRIEL’S COTTAGE - DAY

Keys and cashbox handed to two GENTLEMAN FARMERS.

FIRST FARMER
Good luck to you, Mr Oak.

SECOND FARMER
And our sympathies.

FIRST FARMER
Where are you heading?
(no reply)
We take no pleasure in this.
GABRIEL ignores them and goes instead to OLD GEORGE.

GABRIEL

Sorry, old boy.

EXT. EGDON HEATH - DAY

Another day. GABRIEL walks on, everything he owns now in the pack on his back.

Now snow falls. The road across Egdon Heath has disappeared. Desperate for shelter, he sees a barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

GABRIEL wraps himself in his blanket and tries to sleep, his breath hanging in the frozen air.

There’s a hole in the roof. GABRIEL looks to the skies, thinks of BATHSHEBA -

EXT. MRS HURST’S FARM - DAY

MRS HURST

Bathsheba!

A shout. BATHSHEBA, working in the fields, stands. MRS HURST runs towards her, waving something in her hand.

BATHSHEBA

What is it?

A letter. She hands it to BATHSHEBA, breathless. Gasping for air -

MRS HURST

Oh my love, it’s your poor Uncle’s will.

BATHSHEBA

What does it say? What’s happened?

Breathless, MRS HURST indicates.

MRS HURST

Read it! Read!

BATHSHEBA does so -

BATHSHEBA puts her hand to her mouth. Then she embraces her AUNT.
EXT. MRS HURST’S COTTAGE - DAY

The cart is loaded with suitcases and furniture. In her city dress once more, BATHSHEBA says farewell -
- then clambers aboard, and finds a place amongst the precarious load.

The cart trundles off, BATHSHEBA turning and waving goodbye. Excitement, anticipation. On her lap, the lamb. GABRIEL’s gift.

The blare of a trumpet and -

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

CLOSE on SERGEANT FRANCIS TROY of the 11th DRAGOON GUARDS. Fine-boned, a neatly-trimmed moustache on a finely structured face.

The DRAGOONS are a splendid sight, a blaze of brass and scarlet on a January day.

They ride towards the market town of CASTERBRIDGE

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

The GUARDS are holding an opportunistic recruiting drive. As TROY and the other troops stand at ease SERGEANT DOGGETT, attempts to muster new recruits.

SERGEANT DOGGETT
So who’ll join us, lads? Which of you fine boys’ll put on the scarlet uniform and proudly serve his Queen and Country?...

In amongst the crowd, a YOUNG WOMAN. She’s in her best dress, but painfully under-dressed for the cold weather. She’s also encumbered by a large, impractical carpet bag. Nevertheless, there’s a kind of elation about her, as if she’s embarking on some adventure. An escape. This is FANNY ROBBIN.

She pushes through the crowd towards the front, finding herself next to GABRIEL OAK; gaunt now, exhausted.

FANNY ROBBIN
Frank! Over here! Frank, it’s Fanny!

TROY gives her a quick, fond glance, then fixes his eyes forward again.

FANNY
(to GABRIEL)
My sweetheart. Over there.
SERGEANT DOGGETT
You, sir...
  (he has spotted GABRIEL)
...next to the pretty lady!
  (FANNY ROBBIN blushes)
There’s a good strong figure of a man. Always room in the ranks for gentlemen of your calibre. Come join us, sir!

A moment of hesitation.

FANNY
Go on. You’d make a fine soldier.

But GABRIEL shakes his head and shrinks back into the crowd, walking away as DOGGETT continues.

SERGEANT DOGGETT
Or that gentleman there, you look like a patriot. Come on lad, don’t be shy, step forward...

GABRIEL takes one more look over his shoulder, then heads on his way.

But FANNY has followed him -

FANNY
You might try Weatherbury!
  (GABRIEL turns)
If you’re looking for work, try Weatherbury. There’s a farm there needs all the help it can get.

GABRIEL
Thank you. I’ll do that.
  (a moment. He notices her carpet-bag, her thin clothes)
You should have a cloak, cold night like this.

FANNY
  (with forced pride)
Oh, no, Francis’ll take care of me. He’s a sergeant. We’re going to be married soon you see.

GABRIEL
But tonight, you have lodgings?

FANNY

GABRIEL reaches into his pocket and offers her a coin.
FANNY (CONT’D)
I am taken care of.
(Pride vs. Necessity.
GABRIEL persists.)
But if you’re sure can spare it...
(and she takes it)
I’ll repay you. I’ll send it to
Weatherbury. But please, don’t tell
anyone there you saw me. I’ve run
away you see. Let it be our secret.

GABRIEL nods assent and she hurries off, carrying all her possessions.

30  EXT. CASTERBRIDGE LANE - DUSK

GABRIEL walks on towards Weatherbury now. Exhausted, it’s
time to rest.

31  EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A feeble camp fire. Scooping leaves into a pile, GABRIEL
makes a mattress of sorts in the woods. Exhausted from the
day’s humiliations, he pulls his blanket up and tries to
sleep.

The NOISES of the wood at night. And then a new noise. SHOUTS
of alarm.

GABRIEL sits. Through the trees, a red glow like the end of a
cigar...

32  EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Half a mile away a fire is clearly visible, blazing out of
control. Human shouts, the panic of cattle and horses.

From the edge of the woods, GABRIEL watches impassively. None
of his business. Nothing to do with him.

Then a decision. He heads off towards the flames.

33  EXT. RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

A hayrick in flames, burning with startling speed and
intensity.

The farmyard is in chaos; livestock crying in panic as men
run uselessly back and forth in the orange light. At present,
it’s the only one on fire, but a number of ricks stand close,
and burning straw tumbles through the air, across to the
great BARN that holds the crop.
A rag-tag group of farmhands - JOSEPH, JACOB, BILLY, LABAN, CAINY and JAN - all hurl water uselessly onto the flames. GABRIEL arrives.

GABRIEL
Who’s in charge here?

LABAN TALL
Who are you?

GABRIEL
Who’s in charge? Where’s your farmer?

JOSEPH POORGRASS
Look - the barn!

Sure enough, the fire has spread to the roof of the barn, where all the crop is kept.

GABRIEL
This rick is lost. It’s the barn you need to save. D’you understand?

They stare uselessly at the stranger.

GABRIEL (CONT’D)
Ladder?

JOSEPH POORGRASS
It was on the rick.

GABRIEL thinks for a moment. He takes the scarf from JOSEPH’s neck and wraps it around his face, making a make-shift mask. Then he grabs a bucket of water, pours it over his head, and strides towards the barn.

EXT. RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

A haywain has ignited, burning furiously down one side, the side nearest the barn.

GABRIEL
Get it away! Now!

And he leads the men in pulling the flaming cart away from the precious barn.

But it’s too late! The barn roof is starting to burn.

They do so, but the cart itself is in flames now. GABRIEL steadies himself and looks across to the barn roof.
INT. BARN, RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

GABRIEL runs inside, through smoke and the crop, searching for a way to the roof. The whole building is a tinderbox, but he clambers to the highest level despite the flames above him.

EXT. BARN, RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

And now he appears on the roof (through a hatch? via a ladder? TO BE DISCUSSED) and begins smothering the burning thatch as the MEN watch from below.

EXT. RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - DAWN

The fire is extinguished. Thick smoke hangs in the air, a battlefield after the fighting. GABRIEL, blackened and exhausted, is washing the soot from his face. He gathers his possessions, ready to move on, when a maid approaches. This is LIDDY -

LIDDY (O.S.)
The farmer's here.

GABRIEL
About time too. Where's he been?

LIDDY
She'd like to thank you.

GABRIEL stops still. Stands straight.

A FIGURE approaches, her face covered against the smoke. A WOMAN. She slows. Stops. She uncovers her face -

BATHSHEBA
No. It can't be.

GABRIEL smiles. And BATHSHEBA EVERDENE, owner of Weatherbury Farm smiles back at him.

BATHSHEBA (CONT'D)
Mr Oak, is that really you?

GABRIEL
Do you happen to want a shepherd, ma'am?

BATHSHEBA
As a matter of fact, I do.

EXT. RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

As the WORKERS clear away the fire damage, BATHSHEBA and OAK walk.
BATHSHEBA
I owe you an immense debt, Mr Oak. If I’d lost the barn, I’d have lost my farm.

GABRIEL
Your farm?

BATHSHEBA
It’s my inheritance – And they turn a corner, REVEALING the main house, a little run-down perhaps, but still fine and imposing.

BATHSHEBA (CONT’D)
I loved it here as a little girl. When my uncle passed away, he left it to me. Of course it’s a little ragged now but this was once the finest farm for miles. I intend to make it so again.

(she glances at Gabriel)
Perhaps you find the idea preposterous too, Mr Oak?

GABRIEL
I no longer have that luxury.

BATHSHEBA
I’m truly sorry to hear of your great loss, Mr Oak, but if this reversal of fortunes causes you any embarrassment...

(GABRIEL is silent)
I think it best if you address me as ‘ma’am’ or ‘Miss Everdene’. In turn I will address you as Mr Oak.

GABRIEL
I understand. Ma’am.

An awkward smile, and she goes.

INT. GREAT HALL, EVERDENE FARM – DAY

BATHSHEBA sits at a great oak table, a cash box in front of her.

A noise from the doorway – LIDDY, BATHSHEBA’s maid, friend and confidante.
Fiercely protective of her mistress and, despite being the daughter of BILLY SMALLBURY, fiercely proud of her status.

Liddy
Miss, the philistines are upon us!

The MEN loiter in the doorway, waiting to be paid.

Bathsheba
Send them in.

INT. GREAT HALL, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

A little later. Paid or waiting to be paid are -

JAN COGGAN - strong, capable, reliable, a companionable bachelor.

LABAN TALL. Handsome, conceited, suspicious of GABRIEL’S easy charm.

JOSEPH POORGRASS is weak, physically inept, painfully shy, especially around BATHSHEBA.

JACOB SMALLBURY, LIDDY’s grandfather, is the self-appointed elder statesman, given to wise pronouncements, alcohol and laziness.

BILLY SMALLBURY, his son, is reliable, slightly put-upon by both father and daughter.

CAINY BALL is an awkward teenager, easily distracted, always in the way.

TEDDY COGGAN, JAN’s young brother, is the youngest, indulged and spoiled by the others.

TEMPERANCE and SOBERNESS MILLER are the opposite of what their names suggest; flirtatious, irreverent, ‘yielding’.

MRS COGGAN is the housekeeper and cook, JAN’s mother, perpetually harassed and dusted in flour.

SUSAN TALL is the ferocious, controlling wife of Laban, perpetually enraged at his boozing, his lack of social advancement.

MARYANN MONEY is LIDDY’s side-kick, good-humoured, a dreamer, easily perplexed.
BATHSHEBA hands out the money to each in turn, LIDDY proudly by her side. Next up is -

BATHSHEBA
Joseph Poorgrass! Which one is Joseph Poorgrass?

JOSPEH POORGRASS steps forward. LIDDY indicates 'hat off'.

BATHSHEBA (CONT’D)
And what do you do, Joseph Poorgrass?

JOSEPH POORGRASS
I does general things and in Spring I shoot the rooks and help at pig-killing, Sir, I mean Ma’am.

BATHSHEBA
Here’s seven and ninepence, and another ten shillings as I’m new.

JOSEPH POORGRASS
Thank you, Ma’am.

BATHSHEBA
Now. Fanny Robbin? Where is she?

JACOB SMALLBURY
She has run away ma’am. With a soldier.

GABRIEL picks up on this -

PENNYWAYS
Not a soldier, a sergeant!

Sceptical laughter. BATHSHEBA is unamused.

BATHSHEBA
Bailiff Pennyways, here is ten shillings and a further ten. This ends our association. You are dismissed.

PENNYWAYS
Beg pardon, ma’am?

BATHSHEBA
When my uncle was alive, this was a fine, productive farm. Since his death it has fallen into ruin -

PENNYWAYS leans into BATHSHEBA, his face full of menace. GABRIEL stands, at the ready.

PENNYWAYS
Now see here, Miss -
BATHSHEBA
- a fire threatens to destroy the barn and you’re nowhere to be found. I have no use for men like you, Mr Pennyways. You are dismissed.

She holds her nerve. PENNYWAYS’s bluff is called. A moment as he scans the room for support that will not come. Addressing the others -

PENNYWAYS
I’d get out while you can if I was you!

And he leaves. If BATHSHEBA is shaken, she hides it well. Settling herself.

BATHSHEBA
Now. You’ve met Mr Oak, our new shepherd. You understand your duties, Mr Oak?

GABRIEL
If I don’t, I’ll ask you. Ma’am.

BATHSHEBA
(she stands to address the room)
From now on you have a mistress, not a master. I don’t yet know my talents in farming, but I shall do my best. If you suppose, because I’m a woman, that I don’t know bad from good, right from wrong, then leave. But to those who choose to stay, I promise you this. I shall be up before you are awake, I shall be in the fields before you are up. It is my intention to astonish you all. Now - back to work, please.

She stands and leaves the room. The WORKERS look on, some impressed, some sceptical, some duly astonished.

EXT. MELCHESHER MOOR - DUSK

As the evening falls, FANNY walks through the mud of a riverside path in barely adequate shoes towards MELCHESTER BARRACKS. She still carries her carpet-bag, still on the move.

It’s a barren, bleak landscape, and some of the hope, some of the certainty has gone from FANNY’s adventure.
A river. A wall, high and blank, with shuttered windows. FANNY counts the windows -

FANNY
One, two, three, four...

She picks up a handful of earth, throws it. The small window opens, and TROY appears.

TROY
Who’s there?

FANNY
Is it Sergeant Frank Troy?

TROY
Who is it?

FANNY
Frank, don’t you know me? Fanny Robbin!

TROY
Fanny!

FANNY
Yes!

TROY
How did you get here?

FANNY
You said I was to come.

TROY
Well...I said that you might. You’re too late!

FANNY
You can’t come out and see me?

TROY
No no, the barrack gates are closed and I have no leave. I’ll find you tomorrow.

FANNY
Tomorrow! Oh, Frank. Then I won’t see you till then?

TROY
Do you have a place to stay?

FANNY
Yes. No. I’ll find somewhere. When will it be?
TROY

What?

FANNY

What you promised...Don’t make me
say it. You say it first!

TROY

You say it.

FANNY

When will we get married?

TROY

Soon -

FANNY

Have you asked permission?

TROY

If I said I’ll marry you, I will.

FANNY

Oh, I love you Francis Troy!

TROY

Shhh! Tomorrow.

He closes the window but FANNY lingers, full of hope.

EXT. CORN EXCHANGE, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

Market Day. The building is at the very heart of the town, imposing, high-domed and noisy, a sort of stock-exchange for grain.

Outside, BATHSHEBA and LIDDY hoist hefty bags of grain samples from her carriage and heads towards the entrance.

INT. CORN EXCHANGE, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

Inside, it’s a temple of commerce, and a strictly male preserve that echoes with bargaining, banter and deal-making -
- until BATHSHEBA enters, LIDDY behind her.

BATHSHEBA

(a whisper)

We have a perfect right to be here.

All heads turn. They could not be more surprised if a small elephant had entered the hall. A silence. Then the murmur of gossip, disapproval, some admiration.

Meanwhile, one WELL-DRESSED GENTLEMAN clears his throat.
BOLDWOOD
Gentlemen, shall we return to business?

This man is BOLDWOOD, forties, self-contained, handsome in a Roman way; dignified, the nearest Casterbridge has to aristocracy, and clearly a step above the tradesmen around him.

Needless to say, BATHSHEBA notices him -

But indifferent, BOLDWOOD returns to business.

INT. CORN EXCHANGE, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

A little later. Still BATHSHEBA stands alone, looking for her first customer as the MALE CROWD mills around her. LIDDY returns;

LIDDY
Perhaps we should go, Miss.

But a FARMER catches her eye. There’s nothing for it -

BATHSHEBA
It’s Farmer Stone, isn’t it? I’m Farmer Everdene’s niece. He talked about you with such admiration.

A moment. And the FARMER approaches -

INT. CORN EXCHANGE, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

And now BATHSHEBA is surrounded by FARMERS. She is enjoying herself now, as she pours the grain sample into FARMER STONE’s hand.

FARMER STONE
How much?

BATHSHEBA
Five pounds a quarter.

FARMER STONE
Three pounds ten shillings.

BATHSHEBA
You paid my uncle five pounds. It’s the same grain, Mr Stone.

FARMER STONE
Three pounds ten.

And now BOLDWOOD has approached.
BATHSHEBA
How about you, sir? You’ll pay me five pounds?

He tips his hat and walks away. BATHSHEBA watches him.

FARMER STONE
Very well. Four pounds -

BATHSHEBA
- and ten shillings.

FARMER STONE
Four pounds five.

BATHSHEBA
Perhaps I should move on...

FARMER STONE
Very well. Four and ten.

A handshake, the audience enjoying the show, almost as much as BATHSHEBA is enjoying the success.

Her eyes seek out BOLDWOOD, but he is already on to more important matters.

MUSIC UP: The wheezing of a church organ, the sound of the choir.

INT. CHURCH, WEATHERBURY - DAY

BATHSHEBA and LIDDY are in their Sunday best, taking their seats in the congregation.

BATHSHEBA
It was as bad as being married.
Eyes everywhere!

LIDDY
Men! They do like to stare at us.

BATHSHEBA
There was only one man who had the good sense to pay no attention to me -

INT. CHURCH, WEATHERBURY - DAY

A hymn. BOLDWOOD sings in a strong dignified baritone. But despite BATHSHEBA’s glances, he remains maddeningly indifferent.

Elsewhere, GABRIEL sits in the gallery with the MALE WORKERS, attracting admiring glances from the WOMEN opposite. He observes BATHSHEBA, observing BOLDWOOD.
LIDDY
Rich, handsome, it sends the local girls mad. The Taylor sisters worked at him for two years. Jane Perkins spent twenty pounds in new clothes and might as well have thrown it out the window. It’s said when he was young his sweetheart jilted him...

BATHSHEBA
People always say that. Women don’t jilt men. Men jilt us.

LIDDY
Did someone jilt you, miss?

And there’s GABRIEL, talking with the other MEN.

BATHSHEBA
Me? Certainly not. A man did ask to marry me once, some time ago.

LIDDY
And you wouldn’t have him?

BATHSHEBA
I thought he wasn’t good enough for me.

LIDDY
What a luxury, to have a choice. ‘Kiss my foot sir, my face is for mouths of consequence’.

BATHSHEBA
It wasn’t like that at all.

LIDDY
Why? Did you love him?

BATHSHEBA doesn’t answer.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

Early February morning, and BATHSHEBA is the first in the fields as promised, a shotgun slung across her back, a pair of pheasants hanging by her side.

BATHSHEBA watches and waits, and is about to fire when –

She hears a noise behind her, and turns. MR BOLDWOOD is there on horseback. He rides on.

BATHSHEBA
Mr Boldwood!
BOLDWOOD
Don’t shoot me, please.

BATHSHEBA
I had no intention of shooting you.
(nothing)
It’s Miss Everdene! Your neighbour.
Farmer Everdene’s niece? I’m
managing the farm alone now,
perhaps you’d heard.

BOLDWOOD
Yes, I’m sure you’ll do very well.
In the circumstances.
(BATHSHEBA bridles)
Well. As you say, we are
neighbours. Good hunting, Miss
Everdene.

And that’s it. BATHSHEBA watches him go.

INT. STUDY, EVERDENE FARM – DAY

Surrounded by books, papers, dusty boxes, BATHSHEBA and LIDDY
are sorting through Farmer Everdene’s old belongings.

LIDDY
Listen to this. ‘The Rose is red,
The Violet blue, Carnations
sweet...’

BATHSHEBA
What are you doing, Liddy?

LIDDY
It’s a valentine. I was going to
send it to Joseph Poorgrass, just
to see the look of panic on his
face.

A gawdy, sentimental confection of paper and lace.

BATHSHEBA
Poor boy. A little far-fetched,
isn’t it?

LIDDY
Either him or Mr Oak –

BATHSHEBA
(abruptly)
No. Certainly not Mr Oak.

LIDDY
I know! Let’s send it to high and
mighty Mr Boldwood! Ignoring you
like that..
BATHSHEBA

Yes!

LIDDY

Or perhaps not.

BATHSHEBA

No, we must!

LIDDY

We mustn’t!

BATHSHEBA

Why not?

LIDDY

Because he won’t see the humour -

BATHSHEBA

I’m sure he will. Or perhaps he won’t, perhaps it is too much.

LIDDY

Perhaps it is.

(By it’s too much fun to miss)

Unless we toss for it.

From the debris, she finds a book.

BATHSHEBA

Open Boldwood, closed -

LIDDY

Joseph Poorgrass.

BATHSHEBA

Closed - Joseph, open - Boldwood.

LIDDY

Are we ready?

BATHSHEBA

Quickly, before I change my mind!

And she tosses the book high into the air. It lands. Open.
INT. DINING ROOM, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - DAY

THE VALENTINE. It lies in its envelope on the large dining table in Boldwood’s large, comfortable house.

BOLDWOOD raises his tea to his lips, and glances casually at the envelope. He turns it over.

Facing him is the wax seal. Imprinted in the red wax the words -

‘Marry Me’

Carefully, he places the tea-cup down. He checks the address - yes, no mistake there.

With forensic care, he takes a knife and carefully prises open the envelope so as not to break the seal, then pulls out the card; the gaudy confection of lace and cupids. An entirely foreign object, he holds it with his finger tips.

He opens it, and a perfectly ordered world is knocked out of shape.

INT. ALL SAINT’S CHURCH, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

A service is just ending and as the PARISHIONERS disperse, TROY walks towards the PRIEST, splendid in full uniform, nerves concealed behind his swagger.

TROY
Sergeant Troy, for half-past eleven.

PRIEST
Yes, Sergeant Troy and -

TROY
Miss Fanny Robbin. We’re getting married.

INT. ALL SAINT’S CHURCH, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

Later. TROY, stands erect at the altar, impassive. The sound of a door behind him. He doesn’t turn, but smiles in anticipation of the sight of his bride...

But it’s only SERGEANT DOGGETT, his best man.

DOGGETT
Sorry I’m late, old boy. Not long now.

A few PARISHIONERS have remained to spectate.
PARISHIONER ONE
  (whispers)
  Where is she?

TROY doesn’t move.

EXT. STREET/CHURCH, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

And sure enough, here comes FANNY ROBBIN hurrying along. She looks beautiful, a simple bunch of flowers grasped in her hand.

INT. ALL SAINT’S CHURCH, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

The PRIEST has now taken a seat. TROY’s composure remains intact.

EXT. STREET/CHURCH, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

ALL SOUL’s CHURCH is up ahead. FANNY pauses for a moment, takes a deep breath, composes herself, suppresses her joy. And enters.

A GROOM stands at the altar. A BRIDE too. Consternation as the small CONGREGATION turn and see FANNY in her wedding dress.

Confusion.

INT. ALL SAINT’S CHURCH, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

Meanwhile TROY still waits. Discomfort now. The OLD LADIES whispering. There is some laughter, but TROY’s features remain fixed.

The church bells start to chime. DOGGETT places his hand on TROY’s shoulder.

  DOGGETT
  Don’t think she’s coming, old boy.

A moment. Then with a snap of his heels TROY turns and marches back down the aisle with as much dignity as he can muster.

As he passes, the OLD LADIES smile sympathetically. ‘Poor lamb!’ Enraging! Humiliating.

EXT. ALL SAINT’S CHURCH, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

FANNY hurtles across the square just in time to see a stern TROY marching away from the church.
FANNY
Frank! Oh, Frank! Wait!

TROY doesn’t break stride as FANNY tries to make light of it.

FANNY (CONT’D)
There’s been a mistake! I thought you told me All Soul’s not All Saint’s! I went to the wrong church! I thought you’d jilted me, Frank!
(No smile)
I don’t blame you, but I’m sure you did say...or perhaps it was my mistake after all. Still, we’re here now! Smile, Frank, please?
(He doesn’t speak.)
Tomorrow then! We’ll get married tomorrow, just the same?

And TROY stops and turns on her. With barely concealed rage-

TROY
Do you think I’ll be humiliated a second time?

FANNY
It was a mistake, Frank.

TROY
(striding on)
It was.

FANNY
You will marry me though, won’t you, Frank? You promised, and you know I love you. Don’t walk away. I have nowhere else to go. Tell me, I beg you, when? When?

People are watching now, she’s struggling to maintain her pride despite growing panic. She takes TROY’s arm, he shakes her off.

There’s a final look from TROY before he turns and walks away, leaving FANNY, heartbroken, standing in the street in her wedding dress.

INT. DINING ROOM, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - DAY

‘Marry Me’. The words in red wax on the envelope, which now sits on BOLDWOOD’s mantelpiece. BOLDWOOD takes his breakfast, as before, but now his eye returns to the envelope.

The BUTLER arrives, bearing the post. BOLDWOOD sorts through it eagerly, stops -
He crosses to the window. In the Everdene fields beyond, GABRIEL.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

GABRIEL is stacking logs with the help of little TEDDY COGGAN. BOLDWOOD strides purposefully across fields towards him.

BOLDWOOD
Mr Oak!

A little LATER. BOLDWOOD now helping GABRIEL with his work.

BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
A letter came to me by mistake. ‘The new shepherd, Weatherbury’ I can only assume it’s for you.

GABRIEL opens the letter. The COIN, returned from Fanny as promised. A simple note. ‘Thank You For Your Kindness’

BOLDWOOD, meanwhile, produces his pocket book, containing the letter. With forced casualness -

BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
On a separate matter, between ourselves, I wonder, do you know whose handwriting this is? (He shows him the envelope) It’s just a foolish thing -

GABRIEL
There was no name?

BOLDWOOD
No, I believe that is where the fun lies. Do you recognise it?

He does. And with recognition, he understands BATHSHEBA’s intentions too. Her perceived ambition. It all makes terrible sense.

GABRIEL
Miss Everdene’s.

INT. CORN EXCHANGE, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

Deaf to the noise around him, BOLDWOOD watches BATHSHEBA. For the first time he notices the curve of her neck, the colour of her lips, the shape of her ear. To FARMER STONE;
BOLDWOOD
Is Miss Everdene considered attractive?

FARMER STONE
(has he gone mad?)
Very much indeed.

FARMERS surround her, as she smiles, banterers, negotiates with a HANDSOME YOUNG MAN, all watched from BOLDWOOD’s P.O.V. Another new experience – jealousy.

Suddenly she looks across, and catches his eye. Hurriedly he looks away.

This is all new. For the first time in his life, his heart has begun to move within him.

INT. BOLDWOOD’S MANSION – NIGHT

60A

And so he sits. Insomniac. All peace of mind lost.

EXT. YARD – DAY

61

End of May and the time comes for sheep-washing. To this end, a series of fences have been set up, obliging the sheep to enter a deep stonework pool.

Up to their chests in chill water, stand GABRIEL and his assistant shepherd JAN. They must hold the panicked sheep under water then hoist them on to dry land.

BATHSHEBA and LIDDY arrive.

LIDDY
Careful you don’t get wet, Mr Oak!

GABRIEL
Perhaps you’d care to lend a hand?

The MEN laugh.

BATHSHEBA
You don’t think I could? Very well.

And BATHSHEBA strides towards the water and, without hesitation, steps right in.

She is able and strong, smiling at the applause of the laughter of the others then getting on with the work.

For one moment, in the muddy water, we see the shapes of BATHSHEBA and GABRIEL’s hands meeting for a moment.
BOLDWOOD, in his Sunday best, hears the shouts and splashes of the sheep-dipping, and approaches. Then stops.

The most extraordinary sight. BATHSHEBA up to her waist in the water, manoeuvring the sheep through the water.

LIDDY approaches him quickly and he speaks to her for a moment, passing on a message.

LIDDY
Mister Boldwood wondered if he might have a word.

BATHSHEBA
Mr Boldwood, of course, perhaps later? I’ll need to -

BOLDWOOD nods and leaves. BATHSHEBA hauls herself out of the water. The MEN exchange meaningful glances.

GABRIEL
Back to work.

They do so. But GABRIEL can’t help but watch BATHSHEBA.

The house is beautiful. BATHSHEBA and BOLDWOOD stand on the terrace, somewhat self-conscious.

BOLDWOOD
One-thousand acres, a mix of arable and livestock. An orchard. A glasshouse. I have some interesting pigs.

(BATHSHEBA laughs.
   BOLDWOOD too)

Some other time perhaps.

BATHSHEBA and BOLDWOOD walk through the fine hall, BOLDWOOD watching her, noting how she fits in here. This seems right.

BATHSHEBA
You have a very beautiful house.
   (no reply from BOLDWOOD)
Mr Boldwood?

BOLDWOOD
Forgive me, perhaps I should...I’ll speak plainly. I have felt lately, more and more, that my present way of living is bad, in every respect bad. But we all change, and my change in this matter came with seeing you.
And BATHSHEBA knows what must come next.

BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
Miss Everdene, I want, very much, more than anything, to have you as my wife.
(grasping her hand - )
Miss Everdene - marry me!

BATHSHEBA
I feel, Mr Boldwood, though I respect you very much, I do not feel - what would justify me to - in accepting your offer.

BOLDWOOD looks as if he has been struck.

BOLDWOOD
I see. I have known disappointments in the past, and I wouldn’t have asked in this instance if I hadn’t been led to believe -
(he fumbles in his pocket, the ENVELOPE)
Unless...unless I’m mistaken -

BATHSHEBA
The valentine. No, you’re not mistaken, but I should never have sent it. Forgive me, it was thoughtless to disturb your peace of mind -

BOLDWOOD
‘Thoughtless’?

BATHSHEBA
Impetuous, frivolous -

BOLDWOOD
So - you meant it as a joke?

BATHSHEBA
No! Not a joke, not exactly -

BOLDWOOD
Then a premonition perhaps? Of future feelings?

BATHSHEBA
I haven’t fallen in love with you. Certainly I may say that. I like and respect you very much but you’re too...dignified for me.
BOLDWOOD
Too dignified? I see. Perhaps you think I’m too old, but I’ll take more care of you than anyone your own age -

BATHSHEBA
- I’m sure you would -

BOLDWOOD
I’ll protect you, and care for you, you shall have no worries, your farm shall be looked after by a man, you shall never have to so much as look out of doors at harvest time.

(BATHSHEBA shakes her head)
You shall have dresses, a gig, a piano -

(- and smiles, despite herself)
I amuse you?

BATHSHEBA
No, it’s only...I have my own piano, and my own farm and I have no need for a husband.

(BOLDWOOD doesn’t know what to say)
I think I’d like to return home. My hat, please...

BOLDWOOD
Yes, yes of course. I’ll...I’ll get someone to drive you. Your hat.

But he’s in something of a daze, knocked sideways by this disappointment. BATHSHEBA sees this, and takes pity.

BATHSHEBA
Mr Boldwood. I have made you miserable. It was very wicked of me -

And in her apology he sees his chance.

BOLDWOOD
Will you reconsider?

She takes him in. Handsome, dignified. Would it be so bad?

BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
Can I hope for a change of heart?

BATHSHEBA
Don’t hope. Let me think.
BOLDWOOD
Yes. Yes, I’ll give you time.
(He smiles, gives her the hat)
I will wait.

INT. WORKSHOP, EVERDENE FARM - DUSK

GABRIEL works alone by lamplight, sharpening blades on a pedal-driven grindstone in anticipation of the impending shearing. Sparks illuminate GABRIEL’s face.

BATHSHEBA
You’re working late, Mr Oak.

GABRIEL
We’ll need sharp blades for the shearing.

His manner is subdued. There’s something on his mind. So -

BATHSHEBA
Will you teach me?

GABRIEL gives up his seat at the grindstone. BATHSHEBA sits down, and GABRIEL sets the wheel in motion.

GABRIEL
Here -
(he sits behind, arms wrapped around her)
Incline the edge so. That’s right.
Like that.

His hands cover hers. The wheel spins. Too casually -

BATHSHEBA
I wanted to ask, did the men say anything today, about Mr Boldwood?

GABRIEL
Yes they did.

BATHSHEBA
What did they say?

GABRIEL
That you’d be married before the end of the year.

BATHSHEBA
I see. Well I’d like you to contradict it, to the men.

And any warmth there might have been instantly disappears. The wheel spins, then GABRIEL speaks -
GABRIEL
Well, Bathsheba -

BATHSHEBA
‘Miss Everdene’ please -

GABRIEL
- if Mr Boldwood did really speak of marriage then I’m not going to tell stories just to please you.

BATHSHEBA
I said that I wanted you just to mention that it was not true that I was going to marry him.

GABRIEL
I can say that if you wish. I could also give an opinion of what you’ve done.

BATHSHEBA
I dare say, but I do not want your opinion, Mr Oak!

GABRIEL
I suppose not.

A beat.

BATHSHEBA
Well, what is your opinion?

GABRIEL
That you are greatly to blame for playing pranks on a man like Mr Boldwood. Your actions were unworthy of you.

BATHSHEBA
Unworthy! May I ask where my unworthiness lies? In rejecting you perhaps?

GABRIEL
I’ve long given up thinking of that.

BATHSHEBA
Or wishing it?

GABRIEL
Or wishing it either.
(Does he mean it? Has he moved on? This blow hits too. With great dignity)
But I will say this;
(MORE)
Leading on a man you don’t care for is beneath you.

And with this parting shot he turns and walks away.

BATHSHEBA
I cannot allow an employee to criticise my private conduct. You will please leave the farm at the end of the week!

GABRIEL
(calmly)
I’d prefer to go at once.

BATHSHEBA
Then go! I never want to see your face again!

A long moment.

GABRIEL
Very well ‘Miss Everdene’. I’ll go first thing tomorrow.

He walks away with great dignity, and BATHSHEBA can only watch him go.

EXT. GABRIEL’S COTTAGE – DAY

His possessions on his back, GABRIEL closes the door of his small, comfortable cottage, and sets off once again.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM – DAY

Bathsheba gallops up, Jan and Joseph running alongside. Scattered across the field the sheep lie on their side, their stomachs swollen, Jacob and Billy examining them.

BATHSHEBA
What is wrong with them?

JOSEPH POORGRASS
They broke fence and got into a field of young clover. Makes their stomachs swell. Come see.

They approach one particular sheep, breathing fast, foam at its mouth.

BATHSHEBA
How did this happen? Who let them break fence?

(the men look at the ground)

(MORE)
BATHSHEBA (CONT'D)
And why didn’t you tell me sooner?
(BATHSHEBA kneels.)
Poor thing. What do we do now?

JOSEPH POORGRASS
Nothing. The whole flock is blasted.

BATHSHEBA
Blasted? You mean they’re all going to die?

BILLY SMALLBURY
Most probably.

JAN COGGAN
(with a sheep)
Another one gone here.

BATHSHEBA
But there must be something we can do!

JACOB SMALLBURY
(the elder, sagely)
Only one way of saving them.

BATHSHEBA
What is it? Tell me, quickly!

JACOB SMALLBURY
They must be pierced in their side with a tool made on purpose. A hollow pipe, with a pricker inside.

BATHSHEBA
Well can you do it?

Eventually -

JACOB SMALLBURY
No.

BATHSHEBA
Can I?

JACOB SMALLBURY
Good lord, no. One inch to the right or left and you kill the ewe for sure. Not even a shepherd can do it as a rule.
BATHSHEBA
Then who? Tell me!
(They look at the floor-)
No. Oh no.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY
GABRIEL is well on his way to Casterbridge with his possessions on his back. Healthier than when we first saw him, but on the road again.

A shout comes across the fields.

JOSEPH POORGRASS
Gabriel! Gabriel Oak! Wait!

He turns, curious.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY
BATHSHEBA stooped over another dying sheep. Elsewhere -

JAN COGGAN
Lost another one, ma’am

Breathless, JOSEPH POORGRASS rides up.

BATHSHEBA
Why are you alone? Did you find him?

JOSEPH POORGRASS
Yes miss...

BATHSHEBA
So what did he say?

JOSEPH POORGRASS
(embarrassed)
He said...

BATHSHEBA
Joseph, please...

All are listening.

JOSEPH POORGRASS
He said you’re to come in person and request him civilly in a proper manner.
BATHSHEBA
Where does he get his airs! I’ll do
no such thing!

JOSEPH POORGRASS
He said you’d say that. He said to
reply that ‘Beggars can’t be
choosers’.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

GABRIEL waits patiently, a picture of nonchalance as a figure on horseback appears. BATHSHEBA.
If he’s enjoying this, he tries not to let it show. The mere ghost of a smile as he stands.
BATHSHEBA dismounts. With some effort, she re-arranges her face, from vexed pride to forced humility.

BATHSHEBA
Mr Oak. Gabriel?
(a deep breath)
Please don’t desert me, Gabriel. I need your help.

A moment. Then he walks abruptly towards BATHSHEBA...
...and past her, taking the reins of the horse, mounting it.
He’s about to ride off.

BATHSHEBA (CONT’D)
Make room for me.

GABRIEL smiles and holds out his hand to her -

GABRIEL
Hold on.

He urges the horse into a gallop, BATHSHEBA holding on tight around his waist.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

- then across the fields. LIDDY, JAN COGGAN and the others see them approach. JAN smiles.

JAN COGGAN
You sly old dog...

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

GABRIEL kneels over a bloated sheep, reaches into his pocket and produces a strange instrument.
A brass rod, with a needle concealed inside, a kind of basic syringe. Like a surgeon, he passes his hand over the sheep’s flank.

GABRIEL
Find the spot...just here, between the ribs...

And with a sudden, skilled motion, he stabs the sheep. BATHSHEBA and the others recoil.

LIDDY
Oh Lord!

GABRIEL
Looks worse than it is. Now-

The lance pierces the skin, and when the needle is removed the air rushes audibly through the tube. Slowly the sheep visibly deflates, a living balloon. BATHSHEBA can’t help but laugh. GABRIEL smiles and sets to work on his next patient.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

BATHSHEBA has the syringe now, and leans poised over a bloated sheep. The other WORKERS look on -

BATHSHEBA
Here?

GABRIEL
Fast and strong and she won’t feel it.

He takes her fingers, places them on a spot over the sheep’s ribs. BATHSHEBA summons up her courage, raises the syringe like a dagger -

LIDDY
I CAN’T LOOK!

BATHSHEBA
Liddy!
(she raises it again)
Perhaps you should do it.

GABRIEL
And when I’m not here?

BATHSHEBA stabs the sheep. The needle is removed, the sheep deflates. The crowd sighs in relief. BATHSHEBA laughs...
EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DUSK

And now the sun is setting, and BATHSHEBA watches, admiring his skill and dedication as GABRIEL, lit by lamps, moves expertly from one sheep to the next.

BATHSHEBA
Ridiculous animals. Always getting into trouble.

And if GABRIEL remains his own misfortune, he doesn’t say anything.

The last of the sheep is on its feet again. He crosses to BATHSHEBA, and they survey the scene.

BATHSHEBA (CONT’D)
Gabriel. Stay on with me?

He smiles. And nothing more needs to be said.

EXT. EVERDENE GARDEN - NIGHT

A celebratory meal. BATHSHEBA’s piano has been moved out into the yard and decorated with flowers, and JAN COGGAN plays and sings a tune.

GABRIEL is dressed smartly, a man on the move at one end of the table, BATHSHEBA at the other.

As twilight falls and the music plays, BATHSHEBA surveys the bucolic scene and allows herself a smile for her achievements. Her eyes meet GABRIEL’s in gratitude.

JOSEPH POORGRASS, meanwhile, has conquered his nerves enough to sing a song, a truly awful dirge, literally MONOTONOUS.

JOSEPH POORGRASS
I sowed the seeds of love/It was all in the spring....

It’s all too much for LIDDY, who has the tablecloth stuffed into her mouth to suppress laughter.

JOSEPH POORGRASS (CONT’D)
O the willow tree will twist...

The fit of giggles is spreading along the table. BATHSHEBA struggles with a straight face. Then she sees a new arrival; MR BOLDWOOD.

BATHSHEBA
(premature applause)
Thank you Joseph! That’s enough.

(JOSEPH sits)
Mr Boldwood! Will you join us?
Where -

(MORE)
A brief moment of awkwardness as the social order re-establishes itself. But -

LIDDY/MARYANN/TEMPERANCE AND SOBERNESS
There’s a space next to me,
Gabriel!/Over here, Mr Oak!/Come
and sit with us, Mr Oak!

He joins LIDDY further down the table.

JACOB SMALLBURY
A song, ma’am?

General approval at the notion.

BATHSHEBA
Me? I couldn’t possibly!
(LIDDY and GABRIEL share
an ironic smile)
I don’t know what to say! Very
well.

She sits at the piano and begins to play. The song is ‘The
Banks of Allan Water’ and, after a moment’s nervousness, she
sings it beautifully.

GABRIEL watches her, then turns to look at BOLDWOOD,
enthroned at the head of the table, the heir apparent.
GABRIEL notes the devotion in his eyes. To everyone’s
surprise, he starts to sing too. A faltering baritone that
grows in confidence.

The song becomes a duet then ends with LOUD APPLAUSE. GABRIEL
realises that this is a battle that he can never hope to win.
He joins in the applause.

EXT. EVERDENE GARDEN - NIGHT

In the exquisite evening, a lantern between them, BATHSHEBA
and BOLDWOOD walk away from the party.

BOLDWOOD
I thought we were rather good.

BATHSHEBA
So did I!
(They laugh. A beat.)
I wanted to thank you for not
approaching me again on...that
subject.

BOLDWOOD
It has not been easy.
BATHSHEBA
And I’m grateful for your restraint, Mr Boldwood. I can’t give you my answer tonight but by the end of the summer, in six weeks time, my mind will be clearer and you’ll have my decision then.

BOLDWOOD
It’s enough. It’s more than I hoped for.

BATHSHEBA
Was there...anything else?

A moment. Will he kiss her? Her face is raised towards him, exquisite in the glow of the lamp.

She smiles - granting permission. But -

BOLDWOOD
Do you wish me to accompany you back to the house?

With disappointment, BATHSHEBA registers the hesitation.

BATHSHEBA
No, I like to walk around the farm myself each night, to make sure all is safe.

BOLDWOOD
Then I’ll walk with you -

BATHSHEBA
I’ve done it many times alone. Goodnight, Mr Boldwood.

And she walks off, leaving BOLDWOOD hopeful, BATHSHEBA thoughtful.
A narrow, overgrown footpath through a fir plantation. The passage is barely wide enough for one and she’s disconcerted to see another figure enter the corridor ahead of her.

A MAN.

A moment of fear and hesitation. She gathers her nerves, lowers the lantern and proceeds to walk. The male figure gets closer. A scarlet jacket, unbuttoned, an uncertain step.

They are about to pass. Head down, she squeezes by and -

- is immediately stopped in her tracks. Her dress has become entangled with the spurs -

    SOLDIER
    Have I hurt you?

    BATHSHEBA
    No -

    SOLDIER
    We are entangled. Let me -

He turns on the lantern. She places the lantern on the ground, sending great shadows dancing in the trees.

He takes it from her, and raises it so that their faces are illuminated. SERGEANT FRANK TROY.

The sudden sight of all that silver and scarlet is like the blare of a trumpet. BATHSHEBA is taken aback. TROY too.

    TROY
    Good God!

They kneel together simultaneously, then with the lantern shining onto their faces, they untangle the knot.

    BATHSHEBA
    We’ve got hitched together somehow.

    TROY
    Then it seems you’re my prisoner -

    BATHSHEBA
    You’re making it worse on purpose -
TROY
Now why would I do that?

BATHSHEBA
Let me do it myself-

TROY
Why such a hurry? Husband waiting?  
(BATHSHEBA is silent)
I have a knife here.

BATHSHEBA
No! Here, let me try-  
(He can’t look away.)
Please don’t stare.

TROY
I can’t help myself.

BATHSHEBA
You’re drunk. I smell it on your breath.

TROY
I don’t think I’ve ever seen a woman as beautiful as you.

BATHSHEBA
How dare you!

TROY
Take it or leave it, it’s the truth.

The knot comes undone suddenly, causing her to stumble backwards. He pulls her to her feet.

A moment as they face each other, then she bustles off. To her back -

TROY (CONT’D)
At least tell me your name! Where do you live? I want see you again!

And he watches her as she disappears into the night.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

A bright SUMMER’s day and the FARM WORKERS are making hay. The MEN lead, scythes flashing in the sun. The WOMEN, wearing tilt bonnets to protect them from the sun, follow on behind, raking the cut hay into windrows - ranked piles left to dry in the sun before binding into sheaths.
LIDDY and BATHSHEBA join in the work.

LIDDY
Miss, look -

Amongst the dull yellow smocks, a bright white shirt; TROY, with a scythe, energetically mowing ahead.

BATHSHEBA
Who is he, Liddy?

LIDDY
Sergeant Francis Troy. Mother was a French governess, father was a doctor. Or an Earl, depending on what you believe. Noble blood, full of promise, very sharp and trim. Well educated, good things expected of him, and he threw it all in to be a soldier. And a walking ruin to decent girls.

(BATHSHEBA gives her a look.)
So they say.

BATHSHEBA
(tuts, strides off)
Well I won’t have it.

LIDDY
What are you doing, Miss?

BATHSHEBA
I’m going to tell him to leave!

And she strides towards TROY. LIDDY watches, amused.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - CONTINUOUS

TROY watches her approach. The other workers too, stop and stare, GABRIEL amongst them.

BATHSHEBA
Sergeant Troy, I must absolutely insist that you leave this very moment!

TROY
I can’t, I have to work off my sin.

He goes back to work.

BATHSHEBA
Well...I wish you wouldn’t.

TROY
Why not?
BATHSHEBA
Because I’d rather not thank you.

TROY
And I’d rather not leave. So I won’t.

And he returns to work. BATHSHEBA left staring at his back.

GABRIEL lays down his scythe and is about to intervene.

BATHSHEBA
(To TROY, sternly-)
Will you follow me, please?

And she strides off through the tall grass. TROY puts down his scythe, and follows, grinning.

TROY
Farmer Everdene, you’re quite the local legend.

BATHSHEBA
Please!

TROY
What angers you exactly? What I said, or the way I said it?

BATHSHEBA
Neither... both! I won’t allow strangers to be impudent, even in praise.

TROY
Even if it’s the truth? You must know. There must be some man who tells you that you’re beautiful.

BATHSHEBA
Not to my face, not exactly -

TROY
But there must be someone, who kisses you and tells you -

BATHSHEBA
I’ve never been kissed.
(The admission surprises both of them. They stop.)
Why couldn’t you have just passed by and said nothing?

TROY
Half the pleasure of a feeling lies in being able to express it. Do you forgive me.
BATHSHEBA
I do not!

TROY
Why?

BATHSHEBA
Because...the things you say.

TROY
I said you were beautiful and I’ll say it again. The most beautiful face I ever saw.

BATHSHEBA
That’s simply not true -

TROY
But you’ve never seen yourself through a man’s eyes -

BATHSHEBA
Of course not -

TROY
- you don’t know what it’s like.

BATHSHEBA
What is it like?

TROY
Like not being able to think, or hear, or look in any direction. Except one.

BATHSHEBA glances to where the WORKERS and GABRIEL, are staring.

BATHSHEBA
I hope you fight as well as you speak.

TROY
Better. Meet me tomorrow, eight o’clock and I’ll show you.

A pause.

BATHSHEBA
I can’t.

TROY
You don’t want to?

BATHSHEBA
Yes, but -
TROY
Then you must.

BATHSHEBA
I mustn’t. I can’t tell you why, but I mustn’t...

TROY
But you could. Nobody would know.

BATHSHEBA
Then I must bring Liddy...

TROY
Now why would you want to do that?

BATHSHEBA
Please. Go now.

TROY
Tomorrow night. Eight o’clock. The hollow in the ferns.

He turns and walks casually away, leaving BATHSHEBA flushed and breathless.

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - DAY
BATHSHEBA attempts to read. But her mind is elsewhere. Exasperated, she puts down the book. Glances at the clock. Picks up the book. Should she go? And –

INT. HALLWAY, EVERDENE FARM - LATE AFTERNOON
If she goes, is she dressed right? She assesses herself in the mirror. She wears her finest summer dress, pulling the material against her body. She looks exquisite.

EXT. MEADOW, WEATHERBURY FARM - LATE AFTERNOON
And now she’s hurrying through the meadow towards her rendezvous, flushed in anticipation –

EXT. THE HOLLOW IN THE FERNS - LATE AFTERNOON
An uncultivated tract of land forms a natural amphitheatre, at the base of which stands a smudge of scarlet.

TROY, waiting.

BATHSHEBA watches him a moment, breathless. She should leave, immediately.

But he sees her, and smiles.
EXT. THE HOLLOW IN THE FERNS - EVENING

An exquisite evening, sultry and sensual. TROY is giving his lesson, a fearsome looking sword glinting in his hand.

The sword exercise is a series of lethal looking slashes and thrusts, very precise. TROY narrates as he demonstrates.

TROY
Four right and left cuts, four right and left thrusts.
(The sword hisses through the air. BATHSHEBA watches, entranced.)
Cut one is as sowing corn, two as if hedging. Three as if reaping, four as if threshing...Do you trust me?

BATHSHEBA
I do.

TROY
(He removes his jacket.)
Now. You are my enemy, with this exception; I shall miss you every time by a hair’s breadth...
(His hand on her waist, he positions her as if for a dance.)
I give you my word as a soldier, I will not harm you. The sword is blunt, but you must not flinch.

BATHSHEBA
I’ll try not to.

TROY
(He readies himself)
Very well. Let’s begin.

And suddenly the air is filled with the swash of the blade, glinting in the sun’s low rays as TROY repeats the exercise, the blade passing thrillingly close to BATHSHEBA’s body.

And then the display is over. TROY is sweating and BATHSHEBA too is exhilarated.

BATHSHEBA
Is it over?

TROY
Yes. Except -

And he raises the point of the sword once more to her cheek. A flick of the wrist, and a lock of hair falls.
BATHSHEBA
How did you...how could you cut my hair?

TROY
This sword could skin you alive.

BATHSHEBA
You lied! You told me I was safe!

TROY
And you were, entirely safe. I gave you my word.
(He steps closer.)
Now, I will take this -

- the lock of dark hair lies on her breast. Instinctively BATHSHEBA turns her face up towards him, and he takes her face in his hands.

Her first kiss has a startling passion, like nothing she has ever experienced before. His hand, too, is between her legs. She gasps.

And then, with a coolness that’s almost callous, he simply walks away, leaving BATHSHEBA breathless.

EXT. MEADOW, WEATHERBURY FARM - NIGHT

And as night falls, she walks slowly home, transformed. The night is warm, it has a sensuality to it. Something has changed.

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - LATE AFTERNOON

BATHSHEBA dresses for her rendezvous. There is no hesitation this time. She stands...

EXT. EVERDENE FARM - LATE AFTERNOON

- and hurries through the courtyard towards her next rendezvous with TROY. When -

GABRIEL
Miss Everdene.
(she stops - caught)
Perhaps I could walk with you.
BATHSHEBA and GABRIEL walk side by side in silence in the warmth of the summer evening. But BATHSHEBA is on edge, keen to get away.

BATHSHEBA
I’m quite happy to walk by myself.

GABRIEL
I’ll walk with you.

They walk a little further.

BATHSHEBA
Still, perhaps I’ll say goodnight -

GABRIEL
You should have nothing to do with him. He’s not good enough for you.

BATHSHEBA
Why ever not? He’s perfectly honourable, perfectly decent-

GABRIEL
That’s not what I believe.

BATHSHEBA
Why, what have you heard? Tell me! (And he could. He knows. But he hesitates.) You see, it’s all rumours, prejudice, simply because he’s a soldier -

GABRIEL
I like soldiers, but not this one. I believe him to have no conscience at all. Stay clear. Don’t listen to him, don’t believe him. Get rid of him.

BATHSHEBA
And why should you care?

A moment. They both know.

GABRIEL
I’m not such a fool as to imagine I might stand a chance now that you are so...above me. But - (A deep breath; this is hard.) Mr Boldwood loves you. You would be safe in his hands.
BATHSHEBA
You want me to be ‘safe’?

A beat. It pains him to say it, but -

GABRIEL
Yes, I do.

A long moment. BATHSHEBA is touched, but also surprised by her own reaction. She reaches for indignation instead.

BATHSHEBA
Then I think it might be best for both of us if you leave this farm immediately.

But GABRIEL starts to laugh.

GABRIEL
This is the second time you’ve pretended to dismiss me -

BATHSHEBA
Pretended! -

GABRIEL
What’s the use of it? Sometimes I’d be glad as a bird to leave this place, for don’t suppose I’m content to stay a nobody all my life. One day I will leave you, you can be sure of that. But for now I care for you too much to see you go to ruin. So if you don’t mind, I’ll stay by your side.

BATHSHEBA smiles, GABRIEL too. But now another a figure approaches.

TROY. He stops and waits a little way off.

One moment’s hesitation, and she walks towards TROY.

Without looking back, GABRIEL walks away.

INT. STUDY, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

Next day. BATHSHEBA writes a letter, seals an envelope To ‘Mr Boldwood, Lower Farm, Weatherbury.’ No turning back now.

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

Decisive, BATHSHEBA goes to her wardrobe and begins to pack -
EXT. FARMYARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

She hurls her bag into her fastest gig, heads off into the night.

EXT. BATH - DAWN

And as the sun rises, the city of Bath appears in the distance. A weary BATHSHEBA urges the horse on.

EXT. STREET CORNER, BATH - DAY

At the appointed time and place, TROY waits. Through the crowds, he sees her; BATHSHEBA, breathless with anticipation. She watches for a moment and approaches. They stand in the street, tantalisingly close.

BATHSHEBA

I wasn’t sure if you’d be here.

Frank...

TROY

Of course.

Beneath her cloak, she reaches out one hand. Just their fingertips entwine.

INT. DINING ROOM, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - DAY

BOLDWOOD sits alone at a large dining table, taking his solitary breakfast, reading his mail just as he had on Valentine’s Day.

A LETTER. He recognises the handwriting now. A rattling sound. He notices that his hand is shaking. Carefully, he puts his tea-cup down.

BOLDWOOD opens the letter.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE, WEATHERBURY - NIGHT

The coach from Bath makes its lonely way towards Weatherbury. BOLDWOOD watches the coach approach, his hand tightening on the silver-headed cane.

The coach stops at the top of the lane that leads to the Everdene farm. A figure descends;

TROY starts to walk towards the farm.

BOLDWOOD falls into step behind, cane in hand.
EXT. COUNTRY LANE, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

On the approach to BATHSHEBA’s house now.

BOLDWOOD
Going to see her I suppose?

TROY walks on without turning.

BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
Did you hear me?

TROY
Should I know you?

BOLDWOOD
My name is William Boldwood.

TROY
Never heard of you.

BOLDWOOD
Nevertheless, I wish to have a
correlation. I don’t wish to enter
into questions of right or wrong,
you wouldn’t understand. I’m a
businessman, and I intend a
business transaction with you.

TROY
Go on.

BOLDWOOD
I was engaged to be married to Miss
Everdene until you came along.

TROY
Not quite engaged...

BOLDWOOD
You have heard of me then.

TROY
She told me some foolish old man
was in love with her. You, I
presume.

BOLDWOOD
(he lets this go)
Miss Everdene will never marry you.
You’re not even an officer. She’s
playing with you, you’re too poor,
too low-down. A nobody.
(TROY laughs this off -)

TROY
What is your proposal?
BOLDWOOD
Marry the other girl. Leave Miss Everdene alone. I’ll make it worth your while.

But this is like a slap for TROY. He considers Boldwood, taking him seriously now.

TROY
How?

BOLDWOOD
Leave tonight and I’ll give you fifty pounds. The girl shall have money too, and after the wedding I’ll settle a certain amount of money on the both of you, paid annually. You can resign your commission, leave this place, start a new life. And leave us be.

TROY considers the deal.

TROY
Fifty pounds you say?

BOLDWOOD
I have the money here.

And he produces the money.

TROY
You seem very confident I’ll accept.

BOLDWOOD
I know what you’re worth.

TROY lets this pass. He takes the money, weighs it in his hand, then opens the gate and heads towards BATHSHEBA’s house. BOLDWOOD follows on, alarmed -

BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
Where are you going? You must go tonight, that’s the agreement -

TROY
I can’t just leave without saying goodbye. It’ll break her heart. I’ll tell her I’m not good enough then go straight away. How’s that?

BOLDWOOD
No word of me or our arrangement. And never see her again, you must swear...
TROY
I give my solemn vow as a soldier,
that I will...
  (Almost at the door, he
  suddenly stops.)
But wait a moment....

BOLDWOOD
What is it?

TROY
There’s a problem.

BOLDWOOD
Tell me!

TROY
We’re already married. You see?

TROY holds his hand up to BOLDWOOD’s face.

A gold band on his finger.

BOLDWOOD is broken.

TROY (CONT’D)
We married first thing this
morning. Lovely service in Bath,
very quiet, the two of us.
Tonight’s our wedding night. So,
you see, it seems I am good enough
for her after all.

BOLDWOOD lunges, but TROY intercepts the blow. BOLDWOOD’s
hand goes to TROY’s throat.

BOLDWOOD
I’ll kill you, d’you hear me! I’ll
break your wretched neck!

But TROY swiftly turns the table, shrugging off BOLDWOOD’s
grip and hurling him to the ground. Three sharp blows to the
face - swift and effective.

TROY
  (whispering in his ear)
Best kill yourself, old man. Don’t
you think?
  (pushing him to the
  ground)
Now - pick up your money and go.
You’re trespassing.
INT. EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

TROY surveys his home for the first time. He fingers a porcelain figure, a book. He picks out notes on the piano, pours a glass of wine. His hand is still shaking.

This is all his property now. For all its comforts, suddenly it seems bourgeois, dowdy, dull. A twinge of doubt. There is, he realises, the potential for this all to go horribly wrong.

A noise, a voice from above. TROY walks towards the stairs.

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

They make love for the first time. In contrast to the bravado and swagger of their past encounters, there’s something tender, tentative about it.

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - MORNING

BATHSHEBA sleeps soundly in the tangled sheets.

Sounds from the yard wake TROY. Wearing breeches and his scarlet jacket, he sits on the edge of the crumpled bed and lights a cheroot.

From outside, the sound of hammering -

EXT/INT. YARD, BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - CONTINUOUS

GABRIEL, POORGRASS and JAN COGGAN are in the yard, well into the working day.

    TROY
    Good morning, comrades!

    JAN COGGAN
    Morning sir!
    (hissed to GABRIEL-)
    Answer the man!

    TROY
    Fine old house. Needs a lick of paint, don’t you think?
    (nothing from the MEN)
    You, Sir -
    (- GABRIEL)
    What’s your name?

For a while it seems as if he might not answer.

    GABRIEL
    Oak.
TROY
Can’t hear you!

GABRIEL
My name is Gabriel Oak.

INTERCUT. BATHSHEBA hears this.

TROY
(to JAN)
Can you hear him? Mr Oak, please learn to smile and answer when you’re spoken to. I’ll be down in the fields some time this week, but until then we’re not to be disturbed.
(meeting GABRIEL’s eye;)
Here, this -
(he tosses them coins)
- is to drink our health.

JAN stoops eagerly to pick up the coins, but GABRIEL doesn’t move. A figure has appeared behind TROY. BATHSHEBA, wrapped in the sheet of the marital bed, momentarily catches GABRIEL’s eye. Nothing shameful in her decision, but still a concern for GABRIEL.

TROY (CONT’D)
Who is this Mr Oak?

BATHSHEBA
He’s my right hand.

TROY takes this in...

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY
The harvest begins, the ricks piled high with the fruits of the year. Back-breaking work, sweaty, the kind of occasion BATHSHEBA would once have relished.

But not now.

From a carriage at the edge of the field the newly-married couple watch the workers, sheltered from the heat and humidity. TROY is now a Gentleman Farmer, ill-at-ease in new civilian clothes. BATHSHEBA in her fashionable clothes is an observer, no longer a participant.

GABRIEL glances over at her, then returns to work.

EXT. THE RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - DUSK
Dusty from the days labours, GABRIEL washes. Then notices - a great fat toad lumbers across the ground.
OAK kneels and watches its progress. The toad is looking for shelter - a sure sign that a storm is coming.

He looks to the skies too. The evening is clear, but dark clouds are already rolling in. Rooks caw, clouds of starlings wheel confusedly around the sky. The night has a sinister aspect. There’s a sense of foreboding.

The year’s harvest stands unprotected in the rick yard.

The sound of MUSIC comes from the barn -

INT. BARN, EVERDENE FARM - DUSK

A band is playing and the barn is full of the WORKERS and their FAMILIES. Foliage and old chandeliers have been hung from the rafters, food and drink laid out

Clapping, cheering and stomping as TROY and BATHSHEBA dance, wonderful together, eyes locked. The dance ends to much applause, TROY and BATHSHEBA at its centre. TROY kisses her; cheers, laughter.

TROY
Gentlemen! Silence! Friends, it is not only the Harvest Home that we’re celebrating. This is also a wedding feast. A short while ago I had the happiness to lead to the altar this beautiful lady, your mistress, and only now have we been able to celebrate our happy news. So please, charge your glasses and raise them to - my wonderful wife, Mrs Bathsheba Troy!

GABRIEL watches the applause, then approaches BATHSHEBA.

GABRIEL
(to BATHSHEBA)
I have to tell you -

TROY
To me, please, Mr Oak.

GABRIEL
(to both of them)
There’s going to be a storm. We need to protect the ricks or we’ll lose the harvest.

TROY
And how do you know there’s going to be a storm?
GABRIEL
(hesitates, then -)
Certain signs. The animals.

TROY
(laughing, teasing)
The animals told you?

GABRIEL
I need five, six men for an hour, no more.

BATHSHEBA
Frank, perhaps we ought to-

TROY
Nonsense! Tonight’s our celebration. Oak, you have no glass in your hand - here.

He pours a glass and offers it to GABRIEL.

GABRIEL
With all due respect, we need able-bodied working men, not drunks and fools...

TROY
It will not rain tonight. My wife forbids it! Now, if you’ll excuse me, Mr Oak. Gentlemen, one more thing. Even though I’m no longer Sergeant Troy! I remain a soldier in this one respect -
(he beckons one of the MEN forward. He carries -)
Bottles of the finest French brandy! A triple-strength dose to every man here!
(Disquiet from BATHSHEBA, shouts and cheers from the men)
And if any of you men show the white feather, then you can look elsewhere for a winter’s work!

And to cheers and applause, the bottles are passed round. BATHSHEBA, meanwhile, looks to GABRIEL, wanting to follow.

TROY (CONT’D)
You wouldn’t leave our wedding party. Would you?

He kisses her, and she does her best not to worry.
But outside, dark clouds have indeed started to form in the evening sky. A distant flash of lightning.

The harvest stands vulnerable and exposed. GABRIEL makes a decision.

INT. BARN, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

TROY is in amongst his MEN, laughing, joking, passing out the brandy, trying to recreate the camaraderie of the barracks. The WOMEN have largely gone - only SOBERNESS and TEMPERANCE, neither sober nor temperate, remain.

The band strike up again, and TROY leads the singing of a bawdy song. Excluded, BATHSHEBA and all but a few of the WOMEN have no other choice but to turn and go.

EXT. RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

GABRIEL hauls the water-proofed tarpaulins into the yard. Attaching a rope to one corner, he hurls the other end over the stacks.

INT. BARN, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

Mad dancing from the MEN, TROY the life and soul. A drinking song now - something like The Barley Mow -

EXT. RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

With great effort, GABRIEL hauls at the rope, dragging the tarpaulin over the top of the third stack. But the wind catches it, filling it like the sail of a ship.

The storm is overhead now. No rain yet, just startling blue skeletons of crackling light. GABRIEL takes a long metal rod with a chain attached - imagine a giant needle and thread - and jams it into the highest point of the rick. This he hopes will act as a lightning conductor.

But there’s still so much to do.

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

From her bedroom, BATHSHEBA looks out of the window towards the rick yard. A flash of lightning. GABRIEL silhouetted against the sky as he begins the work of roughly thatching the remaining stacks.

She makes a decision. Hurriedly, excitedly, she removes her jewellery, her party shoes. The old BATHSHEBA, back again.
EXT. RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

GABRIEL works on. BATHSHEBA walks towards him, lamp in hand, in working clothes now.

BATHSHEBA
What can I do?

GABRIEL
It’s too dangerous.

BATHSHEBA
If it’s too dangerous for me, then it’s too dangerous for you.
(GABRIEL hesitates)
Just tell me what to do.

A rumble of thunder; not much time.

INT. BARN, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

The MEN are visibly staggering now. JOSEPH POORGRASS, slight and not used to drinking, is laughing hysterically. Young CAINY BALL, too young to drink, can barely stand. Meanwhile LABAN TALL has picked a fight with another man, and a messy brawl is starting.

TROY, the Master of Revels, watches over them.

EXT. RICK YARD, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

Perched on ladders on top of the rick, BATHSHEBA and GABRIEL work together, hammering sheaves in to place to shelter the crop. Thunder rolls, lightning crackling but -

BATHSHEBA
Still no rain.

GABRIEL
It’ll come.

A flash of lightning, the thunder following immediately.

GABRIEL (CONT’D)
Frightened?

BATHSHEBA
Why, are you?

As if in rebuke there’s a terrible crack. Lightning forks down from the black sky, and strikes the conductor.

Then the terrible peal of thunder. BATHSHEBA, startled, stumbles and falls. GABRIEL grabs her arm and holds her. A moment of relieved laughter -
And then the RAIN starts. An extraordinary downpour.

BATHSHEBA (CONT'D)
Gabriel, if I were to die - and I may die soon, and I’d hate you to think badly of me -
(GABRIEL goes to protest)
Please, let me explain. I didn’t intend to marry him. I had every intention of ending it, just as you’d advised. But he told me about another woman, a great beauty that he’d loved before and so, somewhere between jealousy and distraction...I married him. Please understand.
(GABRIEL goes to speak)
No opinions. I only wanted you to know.

GABRIEL smiles. A moment of extreme closeness between them. For a moment, they might almost kiss. But to what possible end?

GABRIEL
Go to bed, I can finish the rest without you. Let me help you -

He helps her down the ladder. She holds him back.

BATHSHEBA
Gabriel. Thank you.

A look of immense gratitude and affection. GABRIEL accepts it, and understands, and returns to work.

112

EXT. YARD, EVERDENE FARM

Early morning. The work is completed and GABRIEL, exhausted, climbs down from the last rick. But someone is watching. At a distance, MR BOLDWOOD.

GABRIEL
Sir?

(BOLDWOOD turns, walks smartly away. GABRIEL follows)
Mr Boldwood, sir -

BOLDWOOD
I wanted to ensure your mistress’ crops were safe -

GABRIEL
Wait a moment, sir -

BOLDWOOD (CONT'D)
Good work, Gabriel, she’s lucky to have you -

He turns. Haunted, strained, pale, soaked to the skin.
GABRIEL
You seem unwell. You should go home.

BOLDWOOD
Yes. Yes, I will.
(he hesitates)
Oak, you know that things have not gone well with me lately. I was going to get a little settled in life, but it was not to be. I daresay I am something of a...joke about the parish, but I do want to make it clear that there was no jilting on her part. We were never engaged. No matter what people say, she promised me nothing. And yet, Gabriel, I feel the most terrible grief.
(He turns to GABRIEL. With an awful false bonhomie )
Still! No woman ever had power over me for any length of time. Not a word to her. We understand each other, yes?

And poor, mad BOLDWOOD walks on.

112A  EXT. YARD, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

A dreary day in AUTUMN. TROY stands alone in shirtsleeves, a broom handle clutched like a sword. He carries out the sword exercise, as before, the chickens pecking around him. But there’s something diminished, pathetic about the man in his civilian clothes.

This private display is watched by BATHSHEBA, with concern and sadness as he completes the exercise then, in a mad flash of rage, hurls the broom handle against the wall.

112B  EXT. BOXING ARENA, MARKET SQUARE, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

A FIST connects with a man’s head. Blood and sweat. Market-day at the Corn Exchange has bought a BOXING MATCH to the town, and in a corner of the square a CROWD has gathered to watch PATTERSON Vs. SULLIVAN.

The fight has brought with it BEGGARS, GYPSIES, DRUNKS, GAMBLERS, SOLDIERS on furlough. And among them is TROY, smoking a cheroot, aloof, indifferent.

A blow lands. SULLIVAN crashes to the ground.

TROY scowls and stabs out his cheroot. His money is handed over to the BOOKIES. And TROY stalks off -
EXT. BOXING ARENA, MARKET SQUARE, CASTERBRIDGE - CONT.

- and becomes aware of a BEGGAR WOMAN following close behind.

TROY
No money, I’m afraid. All gone.

He turns. And freezes. The BEGGAR-WOMAN, hunched, barely able to stand, clutching a familiar, battered carpet bag.

She’s barely recognisable as FANNY ROBBIN. TROY is stunned.

TROY (CONT’D)
Fanny.

FANNY
Hello, Frank.

TROY
What are you doing here? I thought you were at your mother’s, I thought you were safe.
(taking her hands)
You’re so pale. You’re shaking.

FANNY
I walked here. I’m very tired.

EXT. MARKET SQUARE, CASTERBRIDGE - CONT.

BATHSHEBA has finished her business, and wants to return home. The carriage is empty. Where’s TROY? Impatient, she scans the street. The next BOXING MATCH has begun.

EXT. BOXING ARENA, MARKET SQUARE, CASTERBRIDGE - CONT.

TROY sees BATHSHEBA searching for him, getting closer

TROY
My wife mustn’t know -

And there it is; ‘wife’.

FANNY
Your wife.
(she follows his look)
Mrs Troy is very beautiful.

TROY
No more than you. Fanny -
(Searching his pockets-)
Six-pence. It’s all I have left.
Take it -
From BATHSHEBA’s p.o.v., she sees her husband talking to a WOMAN, sees the lingering touch of hands, the exchange of money. An unmistakable intimacy, a terrible blow. She quickens her pace -

Back to TROY and FANNY. BATHSHEBA is nearly there - he speaks quickly, desperately...

TROY
I’ve made a terrible mistake, Fanny, but I will make amends. I swear on my life, I’ll find a way to be with you.

FANNY
You’ve sworn before, Frank.

TROY
But this time, this time...
(FANNY smiles sceptically)
Go to Budmouth, stay at the Union -

FANNY
The workhouse, Frank? -

TROY
(quickly)
Tonight, just tonight, one night, then meet me tomorrow at ten at the bridge. I will bring you all the money I have, I’ll find a place for you. You’ll want for nothing and I promise you, I will make amends.
(-heading to BATHSHEBA -)
Tomorrow, Fanny, at twelve.

And he backs away. FANNY watches him go.

For a moment, BATHSHEBA and FANNY’s eyes meet...

But TROY is approaching now, eyes black with rage.

BATHSHEBA
Do you know who that woman was?

TROY
Get back in the carriage.

BATHSHEBA
Who is she?

And now he grabs her wrist, pulls her towards the carriage - violent, public too.
TROY
How dare you spy on me. Get back in the carriage -
(grabs her wrist, pulls her away)
Back in the carriage, damn you!

EXT. CASTERBRIDGE ROAD - DAY
And so, exhausted and pale, FANNY begins her long journey towards BUDMOUTH.

EXT. CASTERBRIDGE ROAD - DAY
An autumn rain starts to fall.

EXT. CASTERBRIDGE ROAD - DUSK
Later. FANNY stirs from uneasy rest. No time to rest or shelter now. She struggles to her feet, steps back out into the rain and -

EXT. BUDMOUTH WORKHOUSE - NIGHT
A grim, grey building, its iron gates forbidding in the gloom.
FANNY reaches for the wall to steady herself, stumbles, falls, lies there in the rain.
A light appears in a window. An alarm bell is rung...

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT
BATHSHEBA lies on one of the bed, TROY on the other, shirtless, smoking a cheroot. She watches his back. He stubs out his cheroot. Unbearable tension.

INT. GREAT HALL, EVERDENE FARM - DAY
BATHSHEBA eats breakfast alone. TROY strides in.

TROY
Could you let me have twenty pounds?

BATHSHEBA
What for?

TROY
I need twenty pounds.
BATHSHEBA
If you continue to gamble, I will lose the farm.

TROY
It’s not for gambling. Do you have the money or not?

BATHSHEBA
That money is required for farm expenses.

She returns to her breakfast. TROY looks dangerous.

TROY
You’ve had your fun. Now don’t do something you’ll regret.

BATHSHEBA
I already have.

TROY
What do you regret?

BATHSHEBA
That our love is at an end.

TROY
Well, all love ends at marriage.

BATHSHEBA
I wish you wouldn’t talk like that.

TROY
I believe you hate me.

BATHSHEBA
I hate your vices.

TROY
Then give me the twenty pounds and perhaps we can be friends.

Stung, she holds her nerve –

BATHSHEBA
The money is required for farm expenses.

A direct challenge.

Then he stands and walks determinedly towards the study. BATHSHEBA, enraged, follows.

INT. STUDY, EVERDENE FARM – CONTINUOUS

TROY strides towards the bureau.
BATHSHEBA
It’s for that woman, isn’t it?
Tell me her name!

He begins to rifle through the drawers, a thief now.

TROY
I will not-

BATHSHEBA
Is she married? -

TROY
No -

BATHSHEBA
Is she the one you spoke about, the other woman? Who is she?

TROY
The woman I love! The woman I should have married instead of you!
(back to the drawers, scrabbling for the money)
There, you’ve wormed it out of me, I hope it makes you happy...
(He finds the money.)
And if you regret our marriage, then you can be damn sure so do I.

BATHSHEBA
But I don’t! I don’t regret it if you still love me! I still love you, Frank...
(Desperate, holding him)
Come to bed, let me try and please you like I used to. I still love you, Frank. Say you love me too! Say it, Frank, and kiss me!

He regards her face with a look of appalling scorn, then pushes her away from him.

TROY
Bathsheba, please. Don’t be so sentimental.

He pockets the money and goes.

EXT. CASTERBRIDGE ROAD - DAY

Glad to be free, glad to be making amends, TROY rides at speed to the rendezvous.
TROY waits anxiously at the appointed time for his rendezvous with FANNY.

A rumble. Along the road comes a waggon bearing a COFFIN. New pine, a pauper's casket, a WORKHOUSE OFFICIAL driving. As a matter of course, TROY removes his hat out of respect...

The cart continues on its way. In the distance, its destination - the EVERDENE FARM.

GABRIEL and the WORKHOUSE OFFICIAL are in discussion as BATHSHEBA approaches.

GABRIEL
Well there must be some mistake.

WORKHOUSE OFFICIAL
No mistake, Mr Oak. This was Miss Robbin’s last known abode.

GABRIEL
No, you’ll have to take her to the church.

BATHSHEBA
Bring her inside.

GABRIEL
Perhaps we might let her rest in the coach-house, ma’am.

BATHSHEBA
We’ll do no such thing. Fanny was my uncle’s servant and we shall treat her with respect. Bring her inside please.

Pale, troubled, BATHSHEBA heads into the house.

GABRIEL climbs the waggon, removes the black cloth, and starts-

On the lid he sees words written in chalk;

‘FANNY ROBBIN AND CHILD’

He glances towards BATHSHEBA, waiting at the doorway.

A moment’s thought. She can’t know. GABRIEL takes his handkerchief and removes the words ‘AND CHILD’
Surrounded by candles, resting on two benches, the coffin sits in the solemn room. BATHSHEBA and LIDDY, with some reverence, place flowers and branches around the plain pauper’s coffin.

LIDDY
Do you want me any longer ma’am?

BATHSHEBA
No more tonight, Liddy.

LIDDY
I’ll wait up if you like.

BATHSHEBA
No, you go to bed.
    (LIDDY stands)
Do you know what she died of, Liddy?

LIDDY
No, miss. There were rumours but...no.

BATHSHEBA
I see. Liddy, Fanny had a sweetheart. Is that right?

LIDDY
(LIDDY hesitates.)
Yes, miss. A soldier. A sergeant.
    (An admission from Liddy.
     And now she knows)
Please, come sit upstairs with me.

BATHSHEBA shakes her head - she is crying quietly

BATHSHEBA
I seem to cry a great deal these days. I never used to cry at all.
Good night Liddy.

And somewhat reluctantly, LIDDY goes, leaving BATHSHEBA alone.

Midnight. BATHSHEBA, pacing up and down.
She removes the boughs and flowers from the coffin lid.
She sees Fanny’s name, and the smudged chalk beneath. Her worst fears...
She finds the nails that hold the rough lid down. A moment...
Then she takes the poker from the fireplace, places it beneath the lid, pushes.

She stumbles back. The coffin lies open in the darkness. Her hands shaking, she reaches for a candle and walks towards the coffin.

FANNY looks beautiful in the candle light. In her arms, a bundle confirms BATHSHEBA’s suspicions. She takes the flowers with which she was adorning the coffin, and now places them on her rival’s body...

Suddenly -

TROY

What?

BATHSHEBA stumbles backwards.

BATHSHEBA

I must go.

TROY

Who is it?

BATHSHEBA

I can’t stay. Let me go, I want air.

TROY

Stay here!

Numb, dazed, TROY crosses and sees his beloved’s face. In her arms, the bundle of white linen. He reaches for the linen, reveals the face. A thunderbolt of shame and remorse.

BATHSHEBA

Is it her?

TROY

It is. A boy. I had a son. My son.

TROY crumples, tears forming in his eyes; shock and grief and remorse.

TROY (CONT’D)

Forgive me...

And as BATHSHEBA looks on, he bends and kisses the lips of his dead fiancee. It’s a kiss you might give to a sleeping child, one of surpassing tenderness. BATHSHEBA is heartbroken.

BATHSHEBA

Frank. Don’t kiss them, I can’t bear it. I love you more than she did!
TROY
Bathsheba, this woman is more to me
dead than ever were or are or can
ever be. You are nothing to me now.
Nothing.

Heartbroken, BATHSHEBA staggers out -

EXT. FARMYARD, EVERDENE FARM - DAWN

The coffin is loaded onto a hearse.

TROY steps from the house. His farmer’s clothes have been
discarded in favour of his old uniform; the vivid scarlet
jacket. He carries a small suitcase and the sword. He looks
broken, haunted, a deeply changed man.

He takes one last look at the farmhouse that has felt like a
prison, then closes the door.

Turning, GABRIEL is there. The men stand firm. An
acknowledgement of each other. No affection, but no hostility
either. If anything, there’s a sense of TROY handing
something back.

TROY
Goodbye, Mr Oak.

A salute perhaps? GABRIEL nods.

EXT. OAK TREE, EVERDENE FARM - DAWN

Early morning, a light rain falling, the end of a long, dark
night of the soul.

Shivering, wet hair clinging to her face, BATHSHEBA sits
beneath an old oak, overlooking the farm that she inherited
with such hope and spirit just nine months ago. Now all she
feels is weariness, a great melancholy.

She sees a figure striding up the hill towards her, hopping
and sliding through the mud.

LIDDY
There you are! Oh, Miss, whatever
are you thinking? You’ll catch your
death.

BATHSHEBA
Is he at home?

LIDDY
Gone, Miss, with Fanny. The money
too.

(LIDDY embrace BATHSHEBA)
I’ve come to take you home.
BATHSHEBA
Liddy, will you promise me something?

LIDDY
Go on.

BATHSHEBA
Don’t ever marry.

LIDDY
Not much chance of that, between the ugly ones I won’t have and the handsome ones who won’t have me.

BATHSHEBA
Well if you do find someone, stand firm. When trouble comes your way, and it will, don’t run from it. Stand your ground, even if you’re cut to pieces. That’s what I intend to do.

And they start to walk towards the farm.

EXT. CHURCHYARD, WEATHERBURY

A new slab of white marble. The new grave, with new headstone now in place. A simple inscription;

_Erected by Francis Troy. In loving memory of Fanny Robbin and Child._

TROY takes all the money he has and pays the STONEMASON.

TROY
There you are. That’s everything.

Alone now, he tends to the rough grave as best he can, planting it with wild flowers, a little garden for her.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE, BUDMOUTH - DAY

The road to the coast. TROY walks with determination towards a new, as yet unknown life.

It’s the last warm day of the year and hot and tired, he stops. In the distance, the sea shimmers invitingly. TROY thinks for a moment, then changes direction, and heads towards the coast.

EXT. CARROW COVE - DAY

A deserted, sandy cove, concealed from view by a semi-circle of high rocks.
TROY’s possessions, folded and stacked with military precision, lie on the beach. The sword glints in the sun.

TROY sits, naked, and contemplates the sea. Then he stands and runs into the waves.

EXT. THE SEA - DAY

TROY pounding away from the shore, attempting to wash away the past in the cold sea water.

Breathless, he stops and turns. The beach is somehow a little further away than he thought. He must have been caught by the tide. He starts to pound back towards the shore.

But the shore is no nearer. If anything it’s suddenly further away.

EXT. CARROW COVE - DAY

TWO BOYS run on the beach. One of them comes across the suitcase and uniform, the thrilling sword. Curious, they stoop and examine it more closely.

EXT. THE SEA - DAY

TROY can see the tiny figures on the beach. Treading water, he starts to shout and wave...

TROY
Hello! Over here...

EXT. CARROW COVE - DAY

The scarlet jacket is held aloft, the sword is pulled from its scabbard. It glints in the evening sun. The sight is intoxicating for the BOYS.

As the sun sets, they play at soldiers at the water’s edge, sword slicing through driftwood while out to sea, TROY’s figure is lost in the waves, his voice unheard...

EXT. THE SEA - DAY

From far out to sea, TROY watches the boys playing at soldiers.

There’s a strange calm in his eyes. And he starts to swim again, this time away from the shore.
EXT. CORN EXCHANGE, CASTERBRIDGE - DAY

BATHSHEBA is at work again in the halls of the Corn Exchange. But the CUSTOMERS who once flocked to her now pass her by. She notes the disapproving looks, the gossip.

An abandoned wife, her husband the father of an illegitimate child. There’s a cloud of scandal, disapproval, which she accepts with as much dignity as she can.

And now TWO MEN are approaching her, a CONSTABLE and a SOLICITOR. All eyes on her now -

CONSTABLE
Mrs Troy?

BATHSHEBA
It’s about my husband, isn’t it? Tell me.

SOLICITOR
I’m afraid...I’m afraid your husband has drowned.

BATHSHEBA staggers from the blow.

BATHSHEBA
It’s not true. It can’t be.

And now BOLDWOOD is approaching, arriving just as she collapses.

BOLDWOOD
What did you say to her, man?

CONSTABLE
Her husband is dead. Drowned at sea.

No glee from BOLDWOOD, a man of action and decision now. He scoops her up, carrying her through the crowd.

BOLDWOOD
Some air! Gentlemen, some air please. Make way! (BATHSHEBA, recovering now, stirs)
You’ve had the most terrible shock. My carriage is outside, I’ll take you home -

BATHSHEBA
No, put me down please.

He does so immediately.
BOLDWOOD
You’re hardly in a condition to
drive yourself -

BATHSHEBA
Please, Mr Boldwood. I’d like to go
home alone.

And she gathers herself and walks, a little unsteadily,
towards the exit.

EXT. EVERDENE FARM - DAY
A sombre mood at the farm. A pale of black water. LIDDY holds
up BATHSHEBA’s scarlet dress.

LIDDY
You’ll need something to wear, it’s
only proper. Miss?

BATHSHEBA
No. It’s not necessary.

LIDDY
Why not, ma’am?

BATHSHEBA
Because he’s still alive.

LIDDY
Oh, Miss...

BATHSHEBA
Wouldn’t I know more, and wouldn’t
they have found him, and wouldn’t
death feel...different to this?

LIDDY
It’s only natural to hope. But
still -

BATHSHEBA hesitates.

BATHSHEBA
Very well.

The dress is immersed in the black water.
And now hangs up to dry, dripping black dye on the ground.

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - DAY
Brown-paper packages.
BATHSHEBA, austerely beautiful and pale in the black of her mourning dress, opens it; his jacket, his sword – all his possessions, retrieved from the beach.

138  EXT. YARD, EVERDENE FARM – DAY

GABRIEL returns from a day in the fields to find MR BOLDWOOD waiting near the entrance. Bright, cheerful –

BOLDWOOD
Mr Oak, I wonder if I could have a word.

139  EXT. YARD, EVERDENE FARM – DAY

GABRIEL
It’s a great responsibility, sir.

BOLDWOOD
Nonsense! No reason why a man of your abilities should not be able to superintend two farms. And why shouldn’t there be stronger links between our establishments? Think of it; two thousand acres under your sole charge, a share of my profits...

GABRIEL
Miss Everdene needs me here.

BOLDWOOD
And her farm would have priority.

He sees BATHSHEBA, holding back, watching. There’s something gleeful about BOLDWOOD here, as if holding something back.

GABRIEL
I would need Miss Everdene’s permission.

BOLDWOOD
But of course. I wouldn’t dare to do anything without her blessing.

(GABRIEL contemplates)

If it helps sway your decision, there’s an old colleague of yours here –

He opens a side door and out bounds –

OLD GEORGE. GABRIEL can’t help but laugh as the dog bounds into his arms. BOLDWOOD watches with pleasure.
BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
He took some finding, Mr Oak. I hope you’re pleased.

GABRIEL
I am, sir. Very much.

BOLDWOOD
And you’ll give me your decision soon. Yes?

BATHSHEBA watches too.

INT. EVERDENE FARM - DUSK
BATHSHEBA and GABRIEL are sheltering from the rain in the doorway. OLD GEORGE is there too - a memory of past times.

BATHSHEBA
Farmer Oak, you’re getting on in the world. I knew you would.

GABRIEL
Only with your approval. You know where my loyalty lies -

BATHSHEBA
You’re a man of great talent, it’s only natural that you should rise. I’ve no desire to hold you back.

She smiles sadly, and he watches her go. Something has been lost; her arrogance and vanity, but also her spirit and exuberance.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY
But the demands of farming are constant, and as late AUTUMN passes into early WINTER, BATHSHEBA works away in the fields -

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT
- and falls asleep, exhausted, fully-clothed, alone in this big old house -

INT. CHURCH, WEATHERBURY - DAY
A hymn. In the church, much has changed. GABRIEL has joined MR BOLDWOOD in the private pews. In smart Sunday clothes, he gathers many admiring glances.

BOLDWOOD, too, has lifted his spirits, singing out loud.
BATHSHEBA, pale in her mourning black, keeps her eyes forward.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

BATHSHEBA is out hunting. Pheasants move in the undergrowth, and she raises her gun to take aim...

But a noise startles them - they fly off, and she turns and sees BOLDWOOD approaching on horseback.

An accidental encounter.

BATHSHEBA

Mr Boldwood.

BOLDWOOD

Mrs Troy.

BATHSHEBA

We’ve not spoken since -

BOLDWOOD

No. We’ve not.

BATHSHEBA

I was heading home, if you’d like to...but perhaps you’re busy.

BOLDWOOD

No. I’d like that. Very much.

INT. GREAT HALL, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

They sit, companionably, taking tea.

BATHSHEBA

You were very kind to me that day. I hope you’ll forgive me if I’ve kept a certain distance. I’ve been...not my old self.

BOLDWOOD

No.

(a delicate matter) Forgive me, I understand there are debts.

BATHSHEBA

You’ve heard then -

BOLDWOOD

Your late husband -
BATHSHEBA
Perhaps we should change the
subject -

BOLDWOOD
Perhaps I can help.

BATHSHEBA
Mr Boldwood, that’s a kind offer,
but I would never dream of
borrowing -

BOLDWOOD
Not money.
(He’s trying to restrain
himself. But no good - )
I’m a middle-aged man willing to
protect you for the rest of your
life. You may run your farm if you
wish, without risk. I’ll pay your
departed husband’s debts and
guarantee its financial stability.
It can be your pastime. Of course,
we’d need to wait, for propriety’s
sake. But when you are ready, I’m
offering you shelter, comfort. A
safe harbour. As my wife.
(a beat)
You must at least admire my
persistence.

She smiles at this.

BATHSHEBA
I do -

BOLDWOOD
And like me?

BATHSHEBA
Yes -

BOLDWOOD
And respect me?

BATHSHEBA
Yes, of course -

BOLDWOOD
Which is it, like or respect?

BATHSHEBA
I..it is difficult for a woman to
define her feelings in language
that is made by men to express
theirs. I know I do not love you.
(MORE)
I know that I can never love you the way a woman ought to love her husband.

If you worry about a lack of passion on your part, a lack of...desire, if you worry about marrying me merely out of guilt and pity and compromise, well - I don’t mind. I love you and, for my own part, I’m content merely to be liked.

INT. STABLE, EVERDENE FARM - NIGHT

BATHSHEBA and GABRIEL, wrapped up against the chill night, stand shoulder to shoulder.

GABRIEL
When must you give your answer?

BATHSHEBA
By Christmas. It’s a terrible responsibility, to hold a man’s happiness in your hands. His sanity too, perhaps.

GABRIEL
Could you...care for him?

BATHSHEBA
You mean love him? Let’s just say...love is wanting. But then love’s a worn-out, miserable thing for me now, love for him or anyone. And perhaps a marriage without love is the price I have to pay.

It’s too much for GABRIEL.

GABRIEL
Why are you asking me? Why not ask Liddy or the parson -?

BATHSHEBA
I need someone who’s clear-headed, who’s objective, indifferent...

GABRIEL
Then I’m afraid you ask the wrong man.

And there it is. An admission. She does not answer immediately.
BATHSHEBA
Well...thank you, Mr Oak –

She stands, smiles sadly. And walks away.

145

EXT. COUNTRY LANE, BUDMOUTH - DAY

A TRAVELLER walks along a deserted country road. The overcoat
and uniform he wears – an ordinary merchant navy seaman’ – is
somewhat bedraggled and muddied, and the face is unshaven,
but he’s still recognisable as FRANCIS TROY.

A cart approaches. He waits until it’s near then hails the
DRIVER.

TROY
Can you take me to Weatherbury?
(the DRIVER rides on.
TROY’s most charming
smile –)
It is Christmas.

The DRIVER slows TROY jumps on the rear of the cart.

146

EXT. FOREST, BOLDWOOD ESTATE - DAY

Axes thud into wood. A great pine is felled by WORKMEN as
BOLDWOOD looks on.

147

EXT. BOLDWOOD ESTATE - DAY

The steam tractor drags the immense tree towards BOLDWOOD’s
mansion.

148

INT. GREAT HALL, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - DAY

The great tree stands in the process of decoration.

Christmas Eve preparations. A table is laid with meats, wine,
bread, even fruit. In pride of place – a pineapple!

BOLDWOOD presides over it all, glowing with hope and
excitement, a little manic perhaps as he shows GABRIEL
around.

BOLDWOOD
So - what do you think?
(the room)
I’m not in the habit of organising
parties. Perhaps we should make it
an annual event, every Christmas
Eve. I’ve invited the whole
village, do you think they’ll come?
(MORE)
BOLDWOOD (CONT'D)

Do you think Miss Everdene will come?

OAK

I’m sure she will.

Fussing in a mirror, he attempts adjust his tie, while GABRIEL looks on.

BOLDWOOD

You’ll stay too I hope? I know Miss Everdene would like you to be here.

GABRIEL

Perhaps. For an hour or so.

BOLDWOOD

Look - my hands are shaking I’m so nervous. Gabriel, would you? As well as you can, please.

(GABRIEL takes the tie.

Face to face -)

Is there a knot that’s particularly in fashion?

GABRIEL

You’re asking the wrong man.

BOLDWOOD

What about women? Does a woman keep her promise?

GABRIEL

She has promised?

BOLDWOOD

An implied promise.

GABRIEL

Once again, I’m not the best person to -

BOLDWOOD

But will she do what’s right?

GABRIEL

If it’s not inconvenient to her.

BOLDWOOD

Oak, you’ve become quite cynical lately! She never promised me that first time, therefore she has never broken her promise.

GABRIEL

She hasn’t promised this time either.
BOLDWOOD
But she will tonight, I know she will. And when she does -

He produces a small box from his pocket. An engagement ring, heavy with diamonds. GABRIEL can’t speak.

BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
I wanted to tell you in advance, Gabriel, because I believe I know your secret. 
(an awkward stab at intimacy)
I’ve seen you together, the way you speak to her and watch her and look after her. And I know of her profound...affection for you. You’ve behaved like a man and as the successful rival - successful through your kindness - I wish you to know that I am profoundly grateful.

And BOLDWOOD beams tearfully in gratitude for the final fulfilment of his dream. Then -

BUTLER
The musicians are here, Sir.

The BUTLER departs. To GABRIEL;

BOLDWOOD
Please - stay. Celebrate with us.

EXT. BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - NIGHT

Lit by torches, the exterior of the mansion looks magnificent. MUSIC can be heard. The party has already started, and BATHSHEBA, descending from the carriage, beautiful in a black silk dress, looks up at the house with a terrible sense of foreboding.

At some point this may well be her new home. It’s a fine house, yet she can barely bring herself to step inside. 

She takes LIDDY’s hand, squeezes it, and they head in.

INT. GREAT HALL, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - NIGHT

The Party. There are a great many GUESTS here, largely local GENTRY and FARMERS but, in the spirit of Christmas, some of the WORKERS too, all of whom are making the most of the food and the wine. JOSEPH, JACOB, JAN and BILLY, all in their Sunday best, all in various stages of inebriation.
The band plays. The dancing has just begun - rather formal and reserved at present. Bathsheba's arrival, though, is enough to draw the other guest's attention. The beautiful widow, still a source of fascination.

From his vantage point on the great stairs, Boldwood watches Bathsheba arrive. She smiles back, a little awkwardly.

INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

A shadow in the hallway. Troy, alone, in his old home.

He looks through cupboards and drawers. On a shelf, a glimpse of red. Through torn brown paper, his cavalry jacket, his sword. All his possessions, retrieved from the beach.

INT. GREAT HALL, BOLDWOOD'S MANSION - NIGHT

The party continues, the wine taking effect. Dancing has started, and Boldwood, still keeping his distance, is urging people to join in the merriment.

Bathsheba, sitting apart, watches him. An effort of imagination; her future husband, her future home.

Gabriel, in turn, is the centre of attention. Two farmer's daughters, working away at him. But his eyes are on Bathsheba, and her sadness. She catches his eye, smiles.

Gabriel

Will you excuse me -

- and he crosses to her, leaving his admirers sadly alone.

Bathsheba

Mr Oak, you've broken their hearts -

(the admirers)

Go back and talk to them, poor things -

Gabriel

I've come to say goodnight. I don't suit this kind of affair.

Bathsheba

No, neither do I. I wish I could leave too.

Gabriel

Stay a little longer. For his sake.

Both look to Boldwood the buoyant host.
BATHSHEBA
I’ve been trying to imagine myself living here. I can’t seem to manage it.

GABRIEL
You’d suit it very well.

BATHSHEBA
Would I?

A sad smile, a moment between them, interrupted by BOLDWOOD.

GABRIEL
I must go.

BOLDWOOD
Not before you’ve danced, both of you. I insist.

BATHSHEBA
Mr Oak?

Hesitation, then GABRIEL offers his hand. They take to the floor, and join the other DANCERS.

The dance is by no means intimate or improper. There’s a distance between them at all times, and LIDDY, BOLDWOOD, the GUESTS watch it with pleasure.

But for GABRIEL and BATHSHEBA it is a kind of agony.

BATHSHEBA (CONT’D)
Gabriel. Tell me – what am I going to do?

GABRIEL thinks about this. He sees BOLDWOOD watching them, the smile on his face, the ring in his pocket.

He can’t answer. BATHSHEBA looks to him –

BATHSHEBA (CONT’D)
Gabriel?

GABRIEL
Do what is right.

BATHSHEBA struggles to accept the truth of this, and to hide her disappointment.

BATHSHEBA
Yes. Yes, of course.

She nods tearfully, breaks away and heads for the door.

BOLDWOOD sees her and follows, GABRIEL watching them go.
INT. STAIRWAY, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - NIGHT

BOLDWOOD
Mrs Troy, surely you’re not leaving?

BATHSHEBA
Yes, I should like to go now-

BOLDWOOD
But your promise! You said by Christmas -

BATHSHEBA
Yes I did.

BOLDWOOD
My proposal, you accept it?

(she hesitates)
A business contract, between two friends free of passion or sentiment. I deserve it.

A deep breath.

BATHSHEBA
I give my promise, yes. I give it as the payment of a debt.

BOLDWOOD
When enough time has passed, you’ll marry me? Yes?

(She nods.)
Say the words.

BATHSHEBA
I will marry you.

BOLDWOOD’s face lights up. Wild-eyed joy.

BOLDWOOD
Thank you! Thank you, thank you, thank you, God bless you, Bathsheba-

BATHSHEBA
Now I must go-

BOLDWOOD
One more thing-

BATHSHEBA
Please, Mr Boldwood-

BOLDWOOD
(the ring)
You’ll take this. As a token of my love-
BATHSHEBA
I cannot wear a ring, it is not right, it is too soon -

BOLDWOOD
Just for tonight. For me.

BATHSHEBA takes in the man, his look of total adoration. She relents and holds out her hand.

To her discomfort, BOLDWOOD slides on the ring, then kisses her hand.

BOLDWOOD (CONT’D)
Finally. I am happy now.

EXT. BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - NIGHT

BATHSHEBA hurries out into the night, desperate to get away. She slows, and STOPS.

On the great lawn, lit by flaming torches, the STRANGEST SIGHT.

A FIGURE stands in the moonlight, scarlet and silver, a sword in his hand as he practices the sword drill. It might almost be a ghost.

INT. GREAT HALL, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - NIGHT

GABRIEL is pulling on his coat, leaving now. LIDDY rushes up to him, drunk, flirtatious.

LIDDY
Mr Oak, no more excuses, you’ll dance with me now.

GABRIEL
Have you seen Mrs Troy?

LIDDY
(disappointed)
I think she may have left.

EXT. BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - NIGHT

TROY and BATHSHEBA face to face, TROY a little drunk now, dishevelled, unshaven.

BATHSHEBA
Frank.

TROY
Black suits you. A little premature, I’m afraid.
BATHSHEBA
I knew it, I knew you were alive, I felt it.

TROY
And here I am. Some fishermen pulled me from the sea. Then I discovered I was dead, and found that I preferred it, for a while anyway.

BATHSHEBA
So why have you come back, Frank?

TROY
The strangest thing. I found I missed you. What’s the matter? You don’t seem very pleased to see me. No kiss after all this time?

BATHSHEBA
You said that I was dead to you.

TROY
Did I? Well, then - honesty at all times. I find myself in need of money. I gave up my profession for you, it seems harsh that you should have a house and farm while I’m living hand to mouth.

BATHSHEBA
There is no money -

TROY
Then we’ll sell the farm.

BATHSHEBA stands numb, devastated - finally defeated.

Near the house a few FIGURES can be seen. GUESTS from the party, SPECTATORS, incredulous at the sight.

TROY (CONT’D)
Come my love, no tears. Come home with me. We’ll talk like we used to.
  (BATHSHEBA doesn’t move)
Did you hear what I said? Come.
  (No reply)
I’M YOUR HUSBAND AND YOU’LL OBEY ME, DAMNIT!

Furious, he reaches for her hand and grabs it -

He sees the engagement ring glittering there. A realisation, the truth dawning.

TROY smiles, and -
An EXPLOSION. A gunshot. The force of the blast is immense, sending TROY sprawling across the lawn, the full force of a shotgun blast directed straight into his chest.

BOLDWOOD stands, gun in hand. BATHSHEBA’s face, her dress, are sprayed with blood. She starts to shake. OTHER GUESTS come running -

BOLDWOOD
I won’t be robbed again. Not again.

He gives the gun to GABRIEL. Then, with calm simplicity, he approaches BATHSHEBA, takes her hand, kisses it -

Then BOLDWOOD walks away.

FADE TO BLACK.

156 INT. GREAT HALL, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - DAY 156

GABRIEL walks through the great hall, empty now. The Christmas tree stands forlorn and wilted.

157 INT. BEDROOM, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - DAY 157

GABRIEL pulls open the wardrobe. Dresses in every colour of the rainbow, silks and satins, poplins and serges, all ready for his beloved fiancee...

Stitched into a pair of white calf-skin gloves, a label bears the name -

‘Bathsheba Boldwood.’

158 INT. CASTERBRIDGE GAOL - DAY 158

Perfectly calm, BOLDWOOD sits erect in his cell, hands in lap. Strangely peaceful and still at last.

159 EXT. CHURCHYARD, WEATHERBURY 159

A grey January day, and rain falls on TROY’s funeral. His friend and comrade-in-arms SERGEANT DOGGETT and a small scattering of military men represent his former regiment.

BATHSHEBA stands a little way off, dressed in black, in mourning for the second time.

The inscription on the gravestone now reads -

In the same grave lies the aforesaid Francis Troy, Who Died December 24th.

INT. BEDROOM, BOLDWOOD’S MANSION - DAY

GABRIEL opens a drawer. Jewellery; diamonds, pearls, rubies, heavy gold bracelets.

BATHSHEBA (O.S.)
Let me see.

REVEAL BATHSHEBA, in mourning, as she steps forward gingerly, and takes in the jewellery.

She takes something from her pocket. The engagement ring that BOLDWOOD gave her.

GABRIEL
If it’s any consolation, his life will be spared. A crime of passion.

BATHSHEBA
Because of me.

GABRIEL
You did the right thing in the end.

BATHSHEBA puts the engagement ring back in amongst the other jewels.

GABRIEL pushes the drawer closed.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

Summer again. Another harvest. The fields are full of WORKERS scything the corn - a fine harvest, a flourishing business.

Still in mourning black, BATHSHEBA watches, and allows herself a smile of satisfaction.

Music continues -

EXT. CHURCHYARD, WEATHERBURY - DAY

The choir is practicing in the church nearby as BATHSHEBA tends her husband’s grave.

She is still in mourning, but some of the colour has returned to her face now; not quite the firebrand of the last year, but not so drawn and haunted.

She becomes aware of a figure behind her; GABRIEL.
GABRIEL
I’m sorry, I startled you.

BATHSHEBA
I wanted to tend their grave. I’ve not been here for so long.
(the church)
Are you going in?

GABRIEL
Rehearsals. I sing bass in the choir.

BATHSHEBA
Yes, I’ve heard you.

GABRIEL
Then I apologise.
(she smiles)
I’d been hoping for a chance to talk to you. We’ve not spoken as much as I’d have liked -

BATHSHEBA
No -

GABRIEL
And I wanted an opportunity to say...well, the fact is I’m leaving England.

BATHSHEBA
Leaving?

GABRIEL
To go to America. I’ve a mind to try California, and there’s a boat leaving Bristol. Four day’s time. I’ll be on it.
(She’s struggling to take this all in. )
I understand that I should give you notice.

BATHSHEBA
No, you must go when you want.

GABRIEL
Then I’ll leave first thing in the morning. No fuss. I think that’s best.

And BATHSHEBA stands, shell-shocked in the graveyard as GABRIEL walks away.

The choir sings. She is struggling to take this all in.
INT. BEDROOM, EVERDENE FARM - DAWN

BATHSHEBA sits on the edge of the bed. She hasn’t slept a wink.

She stands, opens the window, looks out at her land.

Her wardrobe. Her dress of mourning black.

INT. GREAT HALL, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

No longer dressed in black, BATHSHEBA sits at the table, attempting to sort through the accounts.

LIDDY and OLD GEORGE are there too, LIDDY, tearful, consoling the dog, sniffing, inconsolable at the news.

BATHSHEBA

Liddy, that’s enough.

LIDDY

Sorry, Miss.

BATHSHEBA returns to the papers before her. Staring. Unseeing.

Suddenly she pushes her chair back, walks from the room.

EXT. FARMYARD, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

BATHSHEBA mounts her horse, determined, a decision made.

EXT. FIELDS, EVERDENE FARM - DAY

BATHSHEBA rides and rides, just as we first saw her. Cresting a hill, she searches the western road ahead, searching for GABRIEL.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

The spot where she found him before, but no sign of him this time. Is she too late? She urges the horse on -

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

She comes to a halt. Losing hope now. Then - a figure, far off. It can only be GABRIEL. She rides on -
GABRIEL walks on, his possessions on his back. The sun is setting now, but he doesn’t look back, not even when he hears the sound of horses hooves behind him.

BATHSHEBA
Gabriel! Gabriel, wait!
(she dismounts, breathless)
You’ll think I’m strange, but...I thought...I wanted to know...
Gabriel, have I offended you?

GABRIEL
No -

BATHSHEBA
- or upset you in some way?

GABRIEL
Not at all.

BATHSHEBA
Is it money? I will pay you more, Gabriel, whatever you want.

GABRIEL
I don’t need money now.

BATHSHEBA
A formal partnership then?

GABRIEL
...nor a partnership. The farm belongs to you alone. The finest farm for miles around.

BATHSHEBA
Then why are you going?

A moment.

GABRIEL
I said I’d leave you one day.

BATHSHEBA
I had hoped I could change your mind.

GABRIEL
Not this time.

BATHSHEBA
Well you must not go!

GABRIEL
You forbid me?
BATHSHEBA
Yes, if you like! I forbid you!

GABRIEL
(he smiles)
It’s time for you to fight your own battles, and win them too. I believe in you entirely. I don’t believe there’s anything you can’t do.

And that’s the end of the discussion.

BATHSHEBA
So we should say goodbye then.

GABRIEL
I suppose so.

BATHSHEBA
Thank you, Gabriel. You’ve believed in me and fought for me and stood by my side when all the world was against me, and we’ve been through so much together – Wasn’t I your first sweetheart? Weren’t you mine? – and now to have to carry on without you when I’ve loved you for so long –

(and there it is)
I love you, Gabriel. There.

A moment –

GABRIEL
If I knew –

BATHSHEBA
Go on.

GABRIEL
If I knew that you would let me love you and marry you –

BATHSHEBA
- but you’ll never know.

GABRIEL
Why not?

BATHSHEBA
Because you never ask!

GABRIEL
Would you say no again?

BATHSHEBA
I don’t know. Probably.
GABRIEL can’t help himself. He laughs, and she laughs too.

BATHSHEBA (CONT’D)
So why don’t you, Gabriel? Ask me now. Ask me!

A moment and then he steps towards her, takes her in his arms and kisses her. And then -

167A

INT. CHURCH, WEATHERBURY - DAY

We are in the church, GABRIEL and BATHSHEBA at the altar, smart but not over-dressed, GABRIEL immensely proud.

GABRIEL
I will.

The VICAR turns to BATHSHEBA -

VICAR
Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband?

In the small but happy congregation, LIDDY, the MEN, MRS HURST. But our attention is on BATHSHEBA, C.U., listening intently.

VICAR (CONT’D)
Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour and keep him in sickness and in health?

This is not just a conventional form of words, but a solemn vow and she weighs each part. Obey, serve, love, honour...

VICAR (CONT’D)
And forsaking all others, keep thee only to him, so long as you both shall live?

A suspended moment. A decision.

And then, finally, with joy and conviction, an affirmation -

BATHSHEBA
Yes. Yes, I will.

167B

EXT. CHURCH, WEATHERBURY - DAY

The doors of the church -

- burst open as the CONGREGATION spills out. All the workers are there – LIDDY laughing and crying at the same time, MRS HURST too. Not a grand marriage, but a joyous celebration none the less. A ramshackle procession forms, heading down the country lane.
And at the rear walk the bride and groom.

BATHSHEBA takes GABRIEL’s arm, and rests her head on her husband’s shoulder.

FADE OUT.

THE END