



*The Tenant of
Wildfell Hall*

Anne Brontë

Learn English Through Story

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

Anne Bronte

Retold by
Elizabeth Walker

Level 3

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Contents

A Note About the Author

A Note About This Story

Part One: The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

Chapter One: Mrs. Graham

Chapter Two: I Visit Wildfell Hall

Chapter Three: Scandal

Chapter Four: Mr. Lawrence

Part Two: Helen's Diary

Chapter Five: First Love

Chapter Six: Wife and Mother

Chapter Seven: 'I Shell Never Trust Him Again'

Chapter Eight: 'I'm a True Friend'

Chapter Nine: Decisions

Part Three: Gilbert And Helen

Chapter Ten: 'You Must Never Come Here Again'

Chapter Eleven: Return to Grassdale

Chapter Twelve: Free

Chapter Thirteen: My Dearest Helen

A Note About The Author

Anne Bronte was born on 17th January, 1820. She was the youngest sister of Charlotte and Emily Bronte. The Brontes lived in Yorkshire, a county¹ in the north of England. Anne's father was a vicar and the Bronte family lived in the village of Haworth. The Brontes' home was not a healthy place. The vicarage was dark and cold. There was no clean water.

Around the village of Haworth there were moors - large areas of open land. Farmers kept sheep and some cattle on this high ground. Grass and small plants grew on the moors, but there were very few trees. Crops like potatoes or corn did not grow well on the moors because the soil was poor.

The Brontes liked walking on the moors. But when the weather was bad, they stayed inside the vicarage. Then they wrote stories, plays and poems and they made sketches⁴.

The Bronte family had little money. When they grew older, the sisters had to find work. Each of the sisters were employed as governesses⁵ and they hated the work.

In 1846, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte began writing novels. At this time, publishers did not often publish books by women. So when they wrote their books, the Brontes used men's names. Anne Bronte used the name Acton Bell. A novel by each of the Bronte sisters was published in 1847. Charlotte wrote *Jane Eyre*, Emily wrote *Wuthering Heights* and Anne wrote *Agnes Grey*. Anne wrote only one other story - *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. It was published in June 1848.

The Bronte sisters had one brother, Branwell. Branwell Bronte wanted to be an artist, but he was not successful. He became unhappy and angry. Soon Branwell began to drink too much alcohol and take drugs. He died in September 1848.

Three months after Branwell's death, Emily Bronte died. She had tuberculosis - a disease in her lungs. At the end of the same year, Anne also became ill. She also had tuberculosis. Anne's sister, Charlotte, took Anne to Scarborough - a town by the sea. Charlotte hoped that the clean, fresh air would help Anne. But Anne's health never improved. She died in Scarborough on 28th May, 1849. She was buried⁶ in the churchyard there.

A Note About This Story

At the time of this story, people did not travel in cars or trains. They rode on horses or walked. If they had to make a long journey, people travelled in carriages or coaches which were pulled by horses.

It was important for a woman to marry a man who had money and property. Many young women went to London in the spring. This was called the London 'season'. In London, they hoped to find rich husbands. A young woman's parents decided who she married. They gave their permission⁷ for the marriage to take place.

Men and women who did not know each other well used the titles: Mr, Mrs or Miss in front of their last names. They used Miss (+ their last name) when they spoke to elder, unmarried daughters. And they used Miss (+ their first name) when they spoke to younger, unmarried daughters. For example, in this story Mary Millward is called Miss Millward. Her younger sister, Eliza Millward, is called Miss Eliza. Men often used only their last names when they spoke about each other.

Some young men from rich families did not have good characters⁸. They spent all their time with their friends. They went hunting with guns and dogs. Very many men drank too much alcohol. And they also gambled - they played games for money.

Many women who read *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* agreed with the things that Anne Bronte wrote about. At this time, women could not make decisions about their own lives. A wife's money and property belonged to her husband. He made all the decisions. Helen Graham is a good Christian woman who tries to get away from her unhappy marriage. Married women in the 1820s recognized that their lives were like Helen Graham's life. Wives were not allowed any freedom and their husbands drank too much. If husbands had affairs, their wives could not complain. When she was a governess, Anne Bronte had met people like Helen Graham and Arthur Huntingdon. And she knew what happened when alcohol destroyed a person's life.

Part One: The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

Chapter One

Mrs. Graham

My name is Gilbert Markham and my story begins in October 1827, when I was twenty-four years old. I was living with my mother and my nineteen-year-old sister, Rose. Our home was Linden-Car, a farm in the north of England. My father was dead. He had been a farmer, and I am a farmer too.

One evening, I returned home after working in the fields all day. I took off my dirty boots, put on clean shoes, and went into the sitting-room. Rose and my mother were sitting by the fire. When I came into the room, my mother smiled. Then she told Rose to make some tea.

‘Sit down, Gilbert. I’ve something to tell you,’ Rose said. ‘I visited the Wilsons’ house today. Eliza Millward was there.’ I smiled. ‘What’s the latest gossip¹³?’ I asked. ‘Jane Wilson and Eliza Millward always know the gossip first.’

‘There’s a tenant at Wildfell Hall - a young woman,’ Rose replied. ‘She’s been there for a week and no one knew!’ ‘Wildfell Hall has been empty for years,’ my mother said. ‘The house needs to be repaired. No one can live there.’ ‘Well, someone *is* living there now,’ Rose answered. ‘The tenant’s name is Mrs Graham. Jane Wilson and her mother visited Mrs Graham yesterday. She’s about twenty-five years old and she wears black clothes. She has one servant and they’re living in two or three rooms.’

‘If the young woman is wearing black clothes, she may be a widow,’ my mother said. ‘She’ll be lonely if her husband is dead. We’ll visit her tomorrow, Rose.’

I laughed. ‘I’m too busy to go with you,’ I said. ‘I’ll wait a little longer to see the tenant of Wildfell Hall. But you’ll

find out her secret - if she has one. I’m sure of that!’

On Sunday, we went to church and I saw Mrs Graham for the first time. She was a tall woman, with black hair and a pale, proud face. It was an unusual face, but not a happy one. When I smiled at her, she looked at me with a cold expression¹⁴.

Two days later, I was hunting birds on the moors. My black and white dog, Sancho, was with me and I was carrying my gun. I decided to climb up the hill above Wildfell Hall.

The old house, which was built of grey stone, was gloomy¹⁵. Its gardens were surrounded by a stone wall.

I walked down the hill to see the house more clearly. No one had lived in Wildfell Hall for many years. Many of its windows were broken, but a few had recently been repaired.

Suddenly, I heard a noise on the other side of the wall. Then I saw one little hand on the top of the wall and then another little hand. A few moments later, a small, blue-eyed boy was looking down at me. He saw my dog and smiled. But when the boy tried to get over the top of the wall, he fell. As the boy fell, his clothes caught in the branches of a tree. He began to scream. I ran up and caught the boy in my arms.

‘Don’t cry, you’re quite safe,’ I said. ‘Look, here’s my dog, Sancho. You can touch him. He won’t hurt you.’

The little boy stopped crying. He smiled and put his hand on the dog’s head. At that moment, a gate in the wall opened and a young woman in black clothes ran towards me.

‘Give me the child!’ Mrs Graham cried.

‘He’s not hurt, madam,’ I said. ‘He fell off the wall and I caught him.’

‘I’m sorry, sir,’ the woman said. ‘I thought...’

‘You thought that I was taking your son away,’ I said.

‘Perhaps I did, Mr Markham,’ Mrs Graham replied. ‘I saw you in church on Sunday, didn’t I? You look like your sister Rose.’

But when I smiled, Mrs Graham looked at me with a cold expression on her face.

‘Goodbye, Mr Markham,’ she said suddenly. ‘Come with me, Arthur,’ she said to the boy.

A moment later, they had gone.

Later that day, I went to the vicarage. I wanted to visit the vicar’s daughters, Mary and Eliza Millward. I liked Eliza. The pretty girl soon made me forget Mrs Graham’s coldness. I returned home feeling very happy.

Mrs Graham visited our house two days later. Her little son, Arthur, was with her.

‘We’re surprised that you’ve come, Mrs Graham,’ Rose told our visitor. ‘We didn’t think that you were visiting anyone. You’ve not visited the Wilsons or the Millwards.’

‘The walk to their homes is too far for Arthur,’ Mrs Graham replied. ‘I only leave him with my servant when I go to church.’

‘Why? Is he a naughty boy?’ my mother asked.

‘No,’ Mrs Graham said. ‘Arthur is a very good child. But he’s very dear to me. I am his only friend. We don’t like to be separated¹⁶.’

‘But that is foolish, Mrs Graham,’ my mother said. ‘You’re spoiling¹⁷ the child. It’s not good for him if you are always with him. He must learn to be independent.’

‘You’re wrong.’ Mrs Graham said quietly. ‘My son needs me. I show him how to behave well. And he is safe with me. He knows this and he trusts me.’

I smiled. Not many people told my mother that she was wrong. Little Arthur was looking at Sancho, who was lying beside me. I smiled and the little boy came nearer. He put his arms around the dog’s neck

‘I am reading a book about farming. Would you like to see it, Arthur?’ I asked. ‘It has some pictures of animals in it. Come and look at them.’



He put his arms around the dog's neck

‘No, Arthur,’ his mother said. ‘Mr. Markham wants to read.’

‘He’s no trouble,’ I said. ‘Let him stay.’

‘Yes, please, Mama¹⁸,’ Arthur said. ‘I’ll be good.’

‘We’re having a small party here on Monday evening,’ my mother said to Mrs. Graham. ‘I hope that you’ll come. You’ll meet your neighbours. Mr. Lawrence, your landlord, will be here. Bring your little boy.’

‘Thank you, but I never go to parties,’ Mrs. Graham replied. ‘And the evenings are too cold and dark for Arthur now. Perhaps we will visit you again in the spring.’

Rose offered our guests cake and wine. Mrs. Graham took some cake for Arthur and herself, but she would not drink any wine. Arthur turned away and began to cry.

‘Arthur hates the taste and smell of wine,’ Mrs. Graham explained. ‘I give him wine when he is ill, so now he hates it. I am teaching my son an important lesson. Wine and spirits²⁰ can be very harmful. Alcohol can destroy people. I want my son to hate strong drink all his life.’

‘Then other men will laugh at him,’ I said.

Mrs. Graham stood up and held her son’s hand. ‘You’ll never change my mind about this, Mr. Markham,’ she replied.

‘Women who don’t listen never change their minds,’ I said.

Mrs. Graham smiled coldly and walked towards the door.

‘Mama, you haven’t shaken hands with Mr. Markham,’ Arthur said quietly. Mrs. Graham laughed, held out her hand towards me and said goodbye.

Mrs. Graham did not come to our evening party. My mother told our guests about the young woman’s hatred of wine.

They all laughed except Mr. Lawrence, the owner of Wildfell Hall. He was sitting beside Jane Wilson. They had been talking to each other all evening.

‘Your tenant is a strange person, Mr. Lawrence,’ said my mother. ‘Tell us what you know about her.’

‘I know nothing, Mrs. Markham,’ he said. ‘Mrs. Graham is my tenant, that is all. I have nothing to say about her.’

Jane Wilson and Eliza Millward *were* happy to talk about someone who they did not know. They made jokes about Mrs. Graham.

Later, Lawrence came and spoke to me.

‘You’ve met Mrs. Graham,’ he said. ‘Do you like her?’ ‘She’s an interesting woman who has some unusual ideas.’ Lawrence smiled, but he did not reply.

When our guests were leaving, I helped Eliza to put on her coat. I put my hand on her face and kissed her. I thought that no one had seen this. But I was wrong. My mother saw me kiss Eliza.

‘Please be careful, Gilbert,’ she said when all our guests had left. ‘Eliza is a silly girl - I don’t want you to marry *her!*’ I laughed. ‘I have no plans to marry anyone, mother,’ I said. ‘You take care of me too well!’

Chapter Two

I Visit Wildfell Hall

A week after the party, I went with Rose to Wildfell Hall. Mrs Graham's servant took us into a big room where a warm fire was burning in the fireplace.

An artist's easel stood in the middle of the room. Beside the easel, there was a table which was covered with paints and brushes. Near one wall, several paintings were standing on the floor.

A few minutes later, Mrs Graham came into the room with her little boy. She welcomed us with a smile.

'We must sit here in my studio today,' she said. 'There's no fire in the sitting-room and it's a cold day. Please sit down.' Mrs Graham sat in front of her easel. As she was speaking, she looked at her unfinished painting. It was a picture of Wildfell Hall. I could see that it was well painted. Our new neighbour was a very good artist.

'I'm sorry, Mrs Graham,' I said. 'You're working.'

'I have very few visitors,' she said. 'My work can wait.'

I stood up and looked at the painting more carefully. The words 'Fernley Manor' were written at the bottom of the picture.

'I see that this painting of Wildfell Hall is almost finished,' I said. 'But why have you called the house "Fernley Manor"?''

Mrs Graham was silent for a moment. 'Because I don't want people ... friends ... to know where I'm living,' she said. 'Aren't you going to keep this picture?' I asked.

'No. I don't paint to please myself.'

'Mamma sends all her pictures to London,' little Arthur said. 'Someone sells them and sends us the money.'

I began to look at the other paintings in the studio. Almost every picture was a view²³ of Wildfell Hall, or places near it.

'As you see, I have to paint the same things again and again,' Mrs Graham said. 'I've heard that there is a fine view of the sea near here. Is that true?'

'Yes,' I replied. 'But it's a long walk to the sea - more than four miles. Go along the road to ...'

‘Oh, please don’t tell me the way now,’ Mrs Graham said. ‘I won’t go until the spring.’

As she spoke, Mrs Graham looked out of the window. Suddenly, she got up and left the room. I looked out of the window too. A man was walking away from the house, but I could not see him clearly.

‘That’s Mama’s friend,’ said Arthur.

Rose and I were surprised. We looked at each other.

‘Who is it?’ Rose asked me quietly, but I did not know.

Rose began to talk to the little boy and I looked at Mrs Graham’s other pictures. One painting showed the face of a pretty little child - Arthur himself.

Then I saw another picture on the floor. It was turned round to face the wall. I picked it up and looked at it. The painting was a portrait of a handsome young man with blue eyes and dark red, curling hair. Who was he?

At that moment, Mrs Graham came back into the studio. ‘I’m sorry,’ she said. ‘Someone has come about the pictures.’

I held up the painting of the handsome young man.

‘I’m interested in this portrait,’ I said. ‘Please will you tell me —’

‘Please put that picture back!’ Mrs Graham said quickly. She was angry. ‘You shouldn’t have touched it.’

‘I was only going to ask —’ I began again.

‘I can’t answer any of your questions, Mr Markham,’ Mrs Graham said. She took the painting out of my hand and put it on the floor against the wall. Then she turned back to me and smiled.

But I was angry now. ‘It’s time for us to go, Rose,’ I said. ‘We’ll leave you to your work, Mrs. Graham.’

Then I bowed politely and walked towards the door.

Mrs. Graham followed and held out her hand. ‘I was rude,’ she said. ‘I’m sorry. I want us to be friends, Mr. Markham.’

I smiled too and shook her hand.

Four months passed before I visited Wildfell Hall again. But my friendship²⁵ with Mrs. Graham became stronger. She often walked on the moors with her little son. Sometimes she sat and sketched, or read a book.

Whenever I saw them, I went to meet them. Arthur always talked happily to me and he soon became my friend. When he saw me or Sancho, the little boy ran up to us. His mother was not always pleased, but she usually spoke to me.

Our conversations were interesting. We talked about books and paintings. Mrs Graham's ideas were often the same as mine. I think that she enjoyed my company.

One day in early March, I was working in my fields. I looked up and saw Mrs Graham and her son sitting by a stream. Sancho saw Arthur and ran happily towards the little boy. I followed him and stood silently behind the mother and her son. I watched her draw a picture of the water and the trees nearby.

After a few minutes, she laughed and turned to look at me.

'Mr. Markham, please excuse me,' she said. 'But I cannot draw when anyone is watching me.'

'Then I'll talk to Arthur,' I replied, smiling.

Soon, the sun began to go down. Mrs. Graham finished her drawing and I walked with them to Wildfell Hall.

When we reached the old house, the sky was pale grey and the moon was shining. A light was burning in one of the windows of the dark house.

'Don't you feel that this a gloomy place to live?' I asked.

'I do sometimes,' Mrs Graham replied. 'When the wind blows around the empty rooms, I feel sad and alone. But Wildfell Hall is my home now. Good night, Mr Markham. Thank you for your company.'

I turned and walked away from the house. As I went towards Linden-Car, I saw Lawrence. He was riding his grey pony along the road. I stopped to speak to him.

'Have you been visiting Mrs Graham?' Lawrence asked.

'Yes,' I replied. 'Why do you ask?'

'Oh, well,' he said, 'I thought that you didn't like her.' 'I've changed my mind,' I said. 'I know Mrs Graham a little better now.'

Lawrence smiled but he did not reply.

'Lawrence,' I said, 'are *you* in love with Mrs Graham?' He looked very surprised and then he laughed. 'What makes you say that?' he asked.

'You seem interested in my friendship with her,' I replied. 'Perhaps you're jealous.'

‘No, I’m not jealous,’ he said. ‘But I *am* surprised. I thought that you were going to marry Eliza Millward.’ ‘You’re wrong. I’m not thinking of marriage at all,’ I replied. ‘Then you should leave those young women alone,’ he said.

I was angry. ‘People say that *you* are going to marry Jane Wilson,’ I replied. ‘Are you?’

‘No,’ Lawrence replied.

‘Then you should leave *her* alone,’ I said.

Lawrence smiled. But he said nothing more and rode on. I reached home late that evening. But as soon as I arrived, my mother told Rose to make some fresh tea for me.

I sat down by the fire. ‘You spoil me, mother,’ I said.

‘Yes, Gilbert, I do,’ she replied. ‘When you have a wife, everything will change. A silly, careless girl like Eliza Millward will think only of herself. And a clever woman like Mrs Graham will be too busy with her own ideas. She’ll have no time to think of her husband.’

‘Well, I’m not thinking of marriage to either of them,’ I said. ‘I’m very happy at the moment. I don’t want to get married yet!’

Spring came. One fine day at the end of March, I was on the moors. I was looking at my sheep and their young lambs. I saw Eliza Millward and my sister coming up the hill towards me.

‘Good morning, ladies,’ I said, bowing politely. ‘Where are you walking to?’

‘We’re going to Wildfell Hall,’ Eliza replied. ‘We’re going to see Mrs Graham. I want to know why she lives in that gloomy old place. Why don’t you come too, Gilbert? You know her better than I do!’

‘I don’t know her very well,’ I said. ‘But I’ll go with you. Little Arthur Graham is a good friend of mine.’

Rachel - Mrs Graham’s old servant - showed us into the large, dark sitting-room at Wildfell Hall. All the furniture was made of old, black wood and the windows were high and small. The room was very gloomy.

Mrs Graham was sitting in an old chair by the fireplace. Arthur was reading aloud to his mother. She did not look very pleased to see us.

I sat near the window with Sancho. I called Arthur to sit with me. The ladies began to talk and I listened to them.

‘Why did you choose to live in this old house, Mrs. Graham?’ Eliza asked. ‘A small cottage would be much more comfortable.’

‘And how can you live so far away from other people?’ Rose said. ‘This is such a lonely place!’

‘Perhaps that is why I like it,’ Mrs. Graham replied.

‘How long have you lived alone?’ Eliza asked. ‘Where did you live when your husband was alive? Was it far from here?’

Mrs. Graham stood up. ‘You ask too many questions, Miss Eliza,’ she said. ‘I’m sorry, but I can’t answer them.’

Then she walked across the room to speak to me.

‘Mr Markham, now that the weather is better, I want to walk to the sea,’ she said. ‘Please tell me how to get there. I need some different views to paint.’

Rose heard Mrs Graham’s words.

‘You can’t go to the sea alone!’ my sister said. ‘And you can’t walk there and back again with Arthur. It’s too far.’

We’re all going to visit the sea very soon. We’ll go in a pony-carriage and take food for a picnic²⁹. Come with us! You’ll have plenty of time to paint the view.’

‘Miss Markham, I don’t think that —’ Mrs Graham began, but Rose stopped her.

‘I’ll make the arrangements,’ my sister said. ‘We’ll go on the first warm day!’

A few days later, the weather became cold and wet. We had to wait several weeks before we went on our picnic. At last, on a beautiful morning in May, we all started out.

There were eight of us in the picnic party. Mrs Graham and Arthur, Eliza and Mary Millward, Jane Wilson and her brother Richard who lived at Ryecote Farm, my sister Rose, and myself. Mr Lawrence had been invited too, but he could not come.

I shall never forget that day. I was very happy and I think that Mrs Graham was happy too. Arthur walked happily between Mrs Graham and me, with my dog beside him.

As usual, I enjoyed talking to Mrs Graham. Many of our ideas were the same, but sometimes they were different. The time passed pleasantly.

At last we reached the end of our journey. We all went and stood on the top of a tall cliff. The sea was many feet below us. The water was dark blue and the tops of the

waves were white. Mrs Graham did not speak, but her dark grey eyes shone with happiness. The wind blew her hair about her head and made her pale cheeks pink. I looked at Mrs Graham and I realized that she was very beautiful.

At that moment, Rose called us to the picnic. Eliza Millward sat next to me. She talked and laughed all the time that we were eating.

After the meal, Mrs Graham asked Eliza to take care of Arthur. Then she took her easel and paints and a small seat to a higher part of the cliff.



I looked at Mrs Graham and I realized that she was very beautiful.

Eliza went on talking to me but I did not listen. After a few minutes, I left her and walked towards Mrs Graham. She was sitting on the edge of the high cliff.

As I walked up the narrow path, she turned her head quickly. 'I didn't expect you!' she said. 'Are they all coming up here?'

'No, I don't think so,' I said, smiling. 'I'll sit quietly and watch you.'

'I don't like people watching me,' she said quickly.

'Then I'll look at the sea,' I replied.

I did look at the water, but I looked at the beautiful artist too. 'A painting of her would be wonderful!' I thought. 'I wish that I were an artist!'

We sat silently for some time. Then Mrs Graham spoke again.

'What was Arthur doing when you left him?' she asked.

'He was with Eliza Millward,' I said. 'You left him with her, not me. But I'm his friend, you know.'

'Then please go to him, Mr Markham,' she said. 'Please tell him that I'll see him in a few minutes.'

'Let me wait here for those few minutes,' I replied. 'Then I can help you down this narrow path.'

'I can walk down without help,' Mrs Graham said.

'Then I'll carry your things,' I replied.

The young widow did not answer. Later, she asked my opinion¹⁰ about her painting and I was very pleased.

We returned to the others and soon we were all on our way home. I did not enjoy the journey. I wanted to be alone with Mrs Graham, but she was in the pony-carriage with Arthur and Mary Millward. Eliza Millward walked beside me and talked all the time. I was soon tired of her.

When we reached the road to Wildfell Hall, Mrs Graham and Arthur left us. She smiled as she said goodbye to me and I felt very happy.

Chapter Three

Scandal

Six weeks passed. It was June and the weather was very good. I was working hard on my farm. I was also falling in love with Mrs Graham, but I dared not³² tell her this.

When we met, we talked about poetry, music and art. But I never talked about love. Sometimes I gave Mrs Graham books, because she had very few books of her own. At the beginning of June, I had given Arthur a little puppy and a reading book. Mrs Graham had also accepted some plants for her garden.

One morning, a book of poetry arrived from London for me. I had bought the book because Mrs Graham wanted to read it. I decided to take the book to her that afternoon. I also took a blue collar³³ for Arthur's young dog.

The boy and his mother were in the garden when I reached Wildfell Hall. I gave Arthur the collar and asked his mother about her picture of the sea.

'Is it finished yet?' I asked. 'I'd very much like to see it.' 'It is finished,' Mrs Graham replied with a smile. 'Please come inside and look at it. I'd like your opinion.'

The picture was very beautiful. When I looked at it, I remembered that happy day by the sea. I took the book of poetry out of my pocket.

'Mrs Graham,' I said quietly, 'you wanted to read this book. Please accept it as a gift.'

'I'm sorry, Mr Markham,' she said. 'I can't accept a gift from you. Tell me the price of the book. I'll pay you for it.' 'Why can't you accept a gift from me?' I asked angrily. 'You're very kind, but it's impossible,' Mrs Graham said. She took some money out of her purse and I told her the price of the book. I spoke as politely as I could.

'You feel angry and disappointed, Mr Markham,' she said. 'I *am* sorry. Please understand that.'

'I understand you very well,' I replied. 'You think that I'll want something from you. But I won't. I expect nothing from you.'

'Then I'll take the book,' she said and smiled. 'But *please* remember this! You'll get *nothing* from me!'

'Very well,' I said. I held her hand. I wanted to kiss those soft, white fingers, but I dared not.

I was soon on my way home. My mind and heart were burning with love. I could think of nothing and no one but the tenant of Wildfell Hall!

The next day, Eliza and Mary Millward came to see my sister and me. Eliza was very excited.

‘Oh, Mr Markham!’ she said. ‘What is your opinion on the scandal about Mrs Graham? It’s a shocking story, isn’t it? Everyone in the neighbourhood is talking about it.’

‘What do you mean? What story?’ I asked in surprise.

My sister looked surprised too.

‘I haven’t heard any scandal about Mrs Graham,’ she said. ‘Tell us what you mean, Eliza.’

‘I won’t believe anything bad about Mrs Graham,’ Mary Millward said quickly. ‘You must be careful, Eliza. The story may not be true.’

Eliza looked at me sadly. ‘Well,’ she replied, ‘I hope that Mrs Graham’s *friends* will believe the truth about her.’

I said nothing, but I was angry with Eliza.

A few days later, my mother invited our neighbours to Linden-Car for dinner. Mrs Graham was there and I was delighted to see her. Before dinner, we all sat together in the sitting-room.

Mr Lawrence had been invited. He arrived late and bowed to everyone, including Mrs Graham. Then he sat down, between my mother and Rose.

‘He hides his feelings well,’ Eliza said to me quietly. ‘What do you mean? Who? What feelings?’ I asked.

‘You know what I mean,’ Eliza replied, unpleasantly.

‘No, I don’t,’ I said. ‘Tell me.’

‘I shall make you angry if I repeat the stories,’ she said. ‘I’m angry now,’ I replied sharply. ‘You’ve said enough. Eliza stood up, walked to the window, and took out her handkerchief. She was crying, but I took no notice³⁴.

We all went into the dining-room and sat down at the long table. I was sitting next to Eliza. As my sister Rose sat down, Jane Wilson whispered,

‘Please let me sit in your seat, Miss Markham. I don’t wish to sit next to Mrs Graham, here or anywhere else.’

‘What do you mean, Miss Wilson?’ I asked quietly. ‘Mrs Graham is my mother’s guest and so are you.’

‘I’m very surprised that your mother has invited Mrs Graham,’ Jane Wilson said coldly. ‘Everyone knows that Mrs Graham has a bad character ’

‘I don’t know it,’ I said. ‘Tell me what you mean.’

Jane Wilson was silent for a moment and then she went on. ‘Can you tell me who her husband was?’ she whispered. ‘Is Mrs Graham a widow, or not?’

‘I have another question,’ said Eliza. ‘Who is Arthur’s father? The boy looks very like ...’

‘Like whom?’ Jane said. ‘Please be careful, Miss Eliza. I suppose that you mean Mr Lawrence, but you dare not say so. Mr Lawrence is a gentleman and he is my friend.’

Mrs Graham said nothing, but I knew she had heard everything.

After dinner, I went outside into the garden. I wanted to get away from Jane and Eliza. I did not want to hear any more of their unpleasant stories. I found a seat in a quiet place. The seat was almost covered with flowers. I sat down and thought about the beautiful tenant of Wildfell Hall.



'Everyone knows that Mrs Graham has a bad character.'

Suddenly I heard voices. Everyone had come out of the house and they were walking in the garden. I hoped that no one would find me. But a few seconds later, I saw someone coming down the path. It was Mrs Graham! Why was she alone? Were our other guests refusing to speak to her? I stood up as she came towards me.

'I'm sorry, Mr Markham,' Mrs Graham said. 'You want to be alone. I'll leave.'

'No, please sit down,' I said. 'You are alone too.'

'That is my choice,' Mrs Graham replied with a smile. 'Sometimes I get tired of people who talk all the time.'

'Especially if they're talking about a scandal,' I said softly. 'People enjoy that more than anything.'

‘Not all of them, I hope!’ Mrs Graham said.

‘Well, my mother and Rose don’t enjoy gossip,’ I said. ‘And I don’t enjoy it either.’

‘Then you’re a good companion for me,’ she said.

‘I hope that I might be more than a good companion,’ I replied.

Mrs Graham did not answer. Instead, she began to talk about the beauty of the flowers around us.

‘Sometimes, I wish that I wasn’t an artist,’ she said. ‘Instead of enjoying the flowers, I’m always thinking about painting them.’

‘Your paintings give your friends great pleasure,’ I said.

‘Well, I enjoy my work, so I’m lucky,’ she replied, smiling. Then she said quickly, ‘Someone is coming.’

‘It’s only Mr Lawrence and Miss Wilson,’ I said.

Jane Wilson saw us. She smiled unkindly and said something to Lawrence. His face became very red and they both walked on.

‘Perhaps the stories *were* true,’ I thought. ‘Does Lawrence also have strong feelings for Mrs Graham?’ I was very angry.

Mrs Graham stood up. ‘I must join your other guests now, Mr Markham,’ she said. Then she walked away.

Later in the evening, our guests were ready to leave.

‘Let me walk with you to Wildfell Hall, Mrs Graham,’ I said.

‘No, Mr Markham. I’ll go alone,’ Mrs Graham replied.

Lawrence smiled when he heard this conversation and I refused to say goodbye to him.

‘What’s the matter, Markham?’ he asked. ‘Are you angry with Mrs Graham? If you have any feelings of love for her -forget them! You’re wasting your time¹⁵.’

I was too angry to reply. Were all the stories true? Were Lawrence and his tenant lovers? Was Arthur Graham his son?

Chapter Four

Mr. Lawrence

Soon, all our neighbours had heard the scandal about Mrs Graham. I did not see her for a week and I was worried. One evening, I decided to visit Wildfell Hall again.

Arthur was in the garden, playing happily with his little dog. I called him over to the gate.

‘Can you find your Mama for me?’ I said. ‘Please ask her to come here. I want to speak to her.’

The little boy ran off quickly. He returned a few minutes later with his mother. She was smiling and she looked more beautiful than ever.

‘Good evening, Mr Markham,’ she said. ‘Would you like to walk in the garden? Look at this plant that your sister gave me. It’s growing well. Here, take this flower for her.’ ‘Can I keep the flower for myself?’ I asked.

‘No, but here’s another one for you,’ Mrs Graham replied. I took the flower then held her hand. For a moment, her eyes shone with happiness. Then she turned away.

‘I can guess what you want to say to me, Mr Markham/ she said. ‘But what you want is impossible. You must think of me as a friend and nothing more/

Then can I come to see you sometimes?’

‘Perhaps, but now you must go.’

As I walked happily down the hill, I saw Lawrence riding along the road to Wildfell Hall. I stepped in front of his pony and held its bridle.

‘Is the gossip about you and Mrs Graham true?’ I asked angrily.

‘Mrs Graham is my tenant. I need to see her on business,’ Lawrence replied. ‘Please leave me alone.’

I took my hand off the pony’s bridle and Lawrence rode on.

Three weeks passed and I saw Mrs Graham several times. She now called me Gilbert and I called her Helen.

Our friendship grew stronger, but we were not completely happy. I wanted to be with Helen forever, but I never spoke about this.

One evening, Rose saw me getting ready to go out.

‘Gilbert, you’re going to Wildfell Hall again, aren’t you?’ she said. ‘People know that you go there. It’s wrong.’

‘Helen Graham and I are friends, that is all,’ I replied.

‘Jane Wilson and Eliza Millward don’t think so,’ Rose said. ‘They gossip about both of you. Please stay at home tonight.’

‘Well, all right. It is getting late,’ I said and I sat down.

The next evening, the vicar came to visit my mother. When Mr Millward saw me, his expression became serious.

‘I’ve just come from Wildfell Hall,’ he said. ‘I had to tell Mrs Graham the truth. It was my duty³⁶.’

‘The truth? What truth? Don’t you mean *lies*, sir?’ I asked. ‘Your daughter, Eliza, and her friends have told *lies* about Mrs Graham.’

‘My daughter does not tell lies, Mr Markham,’ the vicar said. ‘I had to warn³⁷ Mrs Graham about her behaviour. It has been wrong - very wrong. She’s a bad woman!’

‘And what did Mrs Graham say?’ my mother asked.

Mr Millward shook his head sadly. ‘Mrs Graham’s face became white with anger,’ he said. ‘But she didn’t answer. The stories about her are true. I’ll tell my daughters not to speak to her.’

Mr Millward turned and looked at me.

‘Young man, your behaviour is also wrong,’ he said. ‘You’re the friend of a bad woman. It’s my duty to warn you too!’

I did not say a word. I stood up and left the house. In a few moments, I was on my way to Wildfell Hall.

Helen was surprised to see me.

‘Gilbert, you shouldn’t be visiting me at night,’ she said. ‘My neighbours already believe that I’m a bad woman.’

‘I know,’ I said quickly. ‘I’ve heard their lies about you, Helen. That is why I am here. I want to protect³⁸you. I love you and I want to be with you - always!’

‘That is not possible!’ she cried.

‘Why not? I love you,’ I said. ‘You love me, don’t you? What is the problem? Tell me at once!’

‘I’ll tell you one day, but not now,’ Helen replied. ‘Please go now. I can’t love you, Gilbert. It’s not possible.’

‘Please give me a reason,’ I said.

‘Meet me tomorrow, at midday,’ she said. ‘I’ll tell you everything then. Go now.’

‘Helen, I must know!’ I whispered. ‘Do you love me?’

‘I won’t answer that question,’ she replied.

‘Then you *do* love me!’ I cried.

I held Helen’s hand and kissed it. Her eyes filled with tears and she turned her head away.

I left the house, walked across the garden and went through the gate. But I did not want to go home. I stood by the stone wall and looked back at the house. At that moment, the front door opened and I heard a voice - Helen’s voice.

‘Come outside,’ she said. ‘I want to see the moon.’

Two people walked out into the garden. The first person was Helen Graham and the second was ... Frederick Lawrence!

‘I must go away, Frederick,’ Helen said. ‘The people here won’t leave me alone.’

‘If you go, I must go with you,’ Lawrence replied. He put his arm around her and they walked away.

All the stories were true! Helen Graham and Lawrence were lovers. I had been a fool!

I did not go back to Wildfell Hall the next day. And I did not meet Helen. For the next two weeks, I worked hard on the farm. I tried to forget Helen Graham, but I thought about her all the time. Eliza and Jane continued to gossip about her. And I was rude and bad-tempered³⁹ with everyone.

One morning, I was riding my horse along the road to the town. I was going to the market there. Suddenly I heard someone call my name. I turned and saw Frederick Lawrence riding along the road behind me. I did not reply.

‘Markham!’ he said. ‘I warned you not to fall in love with Mrs Graham. And now she’s told you herself. She’s rejected⁴⁰ you and told you to leave.’

I was holding my riding-whip⁴¹ in one hand. Without speaking, I lifted the whip and hit Lawrence on his head. He fell from his pony, to the ground. He lay on the road and did not move. Blood ran down his pale face. Had I killed him?

I got down from my horse and went over to Lawrence. He was still breathing. He opened his eyes and stared at me.

‘Let me help you,’ I said.

‘Leave me alone,’ said Lawrence.



I lifted the whip and hit Lawrence on his head.

‘Very well,’ I said. ‘Stay there. I don’t care.’

I got back onto my horse and rode off to the market. A few hours later, I returned to the same place on the road. Lawrence and his pony had gone.

Soon everyone had heard the news about Lawrence's fall. He was badly injured and lay in his bed for several days. People said that his pony had thrown him onto the ground. No one had seen us together on the road. So no one knew that I had hit him and injured him. Lawrence said nothing.

The following day, I was in one of my fields which was in a valley. On this lower ground, the soil was good. Crops could grow in this part of the farm. Corn was growing in this field now and it was ready to be cut. The weather was warm and the sun was shining. But I was not happy. My heart was sad and empty.

Suddenly I heard a voice calling to me and I turned round. Young Arthur Graham was standing by the gate.

'Mr Markham, Mama wants to speak to you,' he said.

'I'm busy, Arthur,' I replied.

Then I heard his mother's voice. 'Gilbert, I must speak to you alone,' Helen said. 'Please come and talk to me, just for a moment.' Then she turned to her son. 'Arthur, go and pick some flowers,' she said.

'Gilbert,' she said to me sadly. 'Why didn't you meet me?'

'Because I learnt the truth about you,' I replied.

'You listened to people who hate me,' she said. 'You believed their gossip.'

I did not reply. I walked away, but soon I was sorry. I began to think about Helen again. *Did* she love me? Had she ever loved Lawrence?

I had to know the answers to these questions. I had to speak to her again.

I went to Wildfell Hall the next evening. While I waited for Helen in the sitting-room, I saw a book on the table. I picked it up and opened it. The name FREDERICK LAWRENCE was written inside the cover.

Helen came into the room. She looked calm, but her face was very pale.

'Why have you come, Mr Markham?' she asked coldly.

'I think that you have something to tell me,' I said.

'No. I have nothing to tell you,' Helen replied.

'Then I'll go,' I said, walking towards the door.

‘Stop!’ she said. ‘Gilbert, I shall not see you again. I have one question before you go. You were my friend. Why do you believe these stories against me?’

I held the book towards her and pointed to the name.

‘Do you know this gentleman?’ I asked.

‘Of course I do,’ she replied. ‘Why do you ask?’

‘People have been gossiping about you both,’ I replied. ‘I refused to believe the gossip. But then I saw you and Lawrence together. You were here - in the garden. I heard you talking. You spoke like lovers. The scandal about you both is true. I loved you Helen and you deceived me⁴³.’

For a few minutes, Helen did not reply. Then she said quietly, ‘I haven’t deceived you.’

She went to her desk and took a book from one of the drawers. She opened the book and removed the last few pages. Then she gave it to me.

‘This is my diary,’ Helen said. ‘It will tell you everything. It’ll tell you about my life after I left the home of my aunt and uncle - Mr and Mrs Maxwell. They took care of me and my brother when we were young. Bring the diary back to me when you have read it. Never, never show it to anyone else.’

I took the book silently.

Helen sat down and put her hands over her face. When I left her, she was crying.

I hurried home and took the diary to my room. Then I lit a candle, sat down, and began to read.

Part Two: Helen's Diary

Chapter Five

First Love

1st June 1821

Many things have happened to me in the last few months.

I will write about them in my diary. Then perhaps I will be able to think more clearly. I am writing this in Staningley House, my aunt and uncle's home in the country. I have just returned from my first season in London. It was very exciting, but my life here is very dull. I do not enjoy walking. Neither am I interested in music or books. When I draw or paint, the subject is always the same. Every picture is of Mr Arthur Huntingdon. I love his handsome, smiling face, blue eyes and thick, red hair! I hide these pictures from my aunt. She does not approve of Mr Huntingdon. She thinks that his character may be bad.

'That young man is too wild and careless,' she said to me. 'He will certainly *not* be a good husband!'

My aunt had chosen Mr Boarham to be my husband, but I hate him. He is old and very dull. Mr Boarham proposed marriage to me. But I told him that I would never marry him. That same evening, I met Mr Huntingdon for the first time. Mr Huntingdon and I danced together all the evening.

Next morning, Mr Huntingdon came to speak to my uncle. And he came to the house several times after that.

'It's *you* that he comes to see, not me,' my uncle said, laughing. 'Do you want to marry Huntingdon, Helen? Do you want to be Mrs Huntingdon? Arthur is good-looking and he has plenty of money.'

'I'm not sure about Mr Huntingdon's character,' my aunt said. 'I'm not sure if that young man is a good or a bad person. And Helen always wants to do things which please *her*. She's only eighteen. She needs a husband who is older. She needs someone who will control her.'

'I like to laugh and be happy,' I replied. 'I want to enjoy life. I want a husband who I can love, and who loves me.' The next day, we went to a dinner party at The Grove -the home of Mr Wilmot. Mr Wilmot's beautiful niece, Annabella, and her cousin, Milicent Hargrave, were guests at the dinner party. Mr Huntingdon was a guest too. I did not sit next to Mr Huntingdon at dinner. But later, he came and stood beside me. He held my hand and told me that he loved me. My aunt saw him do this and she was very angry.

A few days after the dinner party, my aunt, uncle and I left London. We returned here, to Staningley House.

1st September 1821

My uncle has invited some friends to stay at Staningley House. And Mr Huntingdon is one of the guests! Annabella Wilmot and Milicent Hargrave are guests too.

This evening, Mr Huntingdon looked at my drawings. He picked one up and said, 'This is the best of them.'

I had drawn his face on the back of one of my pictures. He laughed and put the drawing in his pocket. Then he went to talk to Annabella. I watched them as they sat together.

Later, when I was alone, Mr Huntingdon came and held my hand.

'Helen! Do you love me or hate me?' he asked, laughing. 'At this moment, I hate you!' I said.

'No, you hate Annabella Wilmot. You're jealous of her!' 'No, I am not!' I said. And I pulled my hand away.

'Well, good night, sweet girl,' he said. Then he put his arm around my neck and kissed me.

22nd September 1821

Several weeks have passed. I have been too unhappy to write in my diary. But something important happened tonight. I must write it down.

After dinner, Annabella Wilmot played the piano and sang. She sings beautifully. Mr Huntingdon stood by the piano and took no notice of me at all. After about an hour, I went to the library. I wanted to be alone. I sat by the fire and I began to cry. Then Mr Huntingdon came into the room.

'Helen, what is the matter?' he said. 'Why are you crying?'

I could not reply.

'Please answer me, Helen,' he said. As he spoke, he knelt down by my chair and held my hand. But I pulled it away.

'I'm not crying because of you, Mr Huntingdon,' I said.

'Now that isn't true,' he said. 'You're crying because I spent time with Miss Wilmot. I've hurt you and I'm sorry.'

He moved closer to me and looked into my eyes. ‘Now I’ll tell you my secret,’ he said. ‘My dear, sweet girl -I love you. I can’t live without you. Say that you’ll be my wife!’



‘I can’t say “yes” to your proposal,’ I replied. ‘My uncle and aunt are my guardians. They have to give their permission. But my aunt doesn’t approve of you, Mr Huntingdon!’

‘But you love me, Helen!’ he said. ‘Tell me that you love me!’

‘You know that I do,’ I replied.

Then he held me in his arms and kissed me. At that moment, the door opened and my aunt came into the room.

Mr Huntingdon stood up immediately and smiled at her.

‘Mrs Maxwell!’ he said. ‘I’ve asked your sweet niece to be my wife. She says that I must speak to you and Mr Maxwell. I want to marry Helen! Please say that I can.’

‘We’ll talk about this tomorrow,’ my aunt said coldly.

When Mr Huntingdon had gone, she looked at me sadly.

‘Please don’t be angry, aunt!’ I said.

'I'm not angry, Helen. But I *am* surprised,' she said. 'You were alone with Mr Huntingdon. You let him kiss you. You shouldn't have done that!'

'But aunt, I wanted him to kiss me!' I cried. 'I love him!' *24th September 1821*

I felt very, very happy when I woke up this morning. It was a beautiful day and I went out into the garden. Mr Huntingdon found me there.

'My sweetest love. My own dear Helen,' he whispered. He put his arm around me and kissed me.

'I'm not yours yet,' I said. 'My aunt doesn't like you.'

'I'm not a rich man,' he replied. 'But I have enough money to marry.'

'My aunt doesn't care about money,' I said. 'But she wants me to marry a *good* man.'

'A good man?' he said. 'Well, I can be good. It's Sunday today. I'll go to church. That will please you and your aunt!'

'Then you'll be going to church for the wrong reason,' I said. 'You mustn't go to church to please me and my aunt. You should go because you want to pray to God. We must go back into the house now, Mr Huntingdon.'

'Please, call me Arthur,' he said, as he kissed me.

Later, Arthur went to speak to my uncle. My aunt spoke to me. She had nothing good to say about Mr Huntingdon.

'He's wild and careless,' she said. 'His character isn't good. He drinks and gambles. He spends too much money. He has bad friends too. He'll *not* be a good husband, Helen.'

'I'll change him!' I cried. 'With my love, he'll be a better man!'

My aunt laughed. 'Helen, many women try to change their husbands' behaviour,' she said. 'Not many succeed. You've made a bad choice. Please think carefully about this.' My uncle has now said that I can marry Arthur! My uncle likes him, so he has given his permission. Soon I shall be Mrs Arthur Huntingdon. I am the happiest girl in the world!

1st October 1821

Arthur and I are going to be married at Christmas. Annabella Wilmot and Milicent Hargrave will be my bridesmaids⁴⁵.

‘Mr Huntingdon is very handsome,’ Annabella said. ‘But I like his friend, Lord Lowborough. I plan to marry him. He’s rich and he has a title - he’s a nobleman. When I marry Lord Lowborough, I’ll be Lady Lowborough!’

‘Helen, I hoped that you would marry my brother, Walter,’ Milicent said. ‘He’s a better man than Arthur Huntingdon.’ ‘That is *your* opinion,’ I said gently. ‘I’ve chosen Arthur and I’m very happy.’

5th October 1821

Yes, I *am* happy. But my Arthur is not perfect. He has told me things about himself that I do not like. I love him, but his faults⁴⁶ trouble me.

Arthur and I went riding today and Lord Lowborough and Annabella came with us. After a few minutes, they rode away from us. Arthur looked at them and smiled. Then he turned to me.

‘They’ll be married soon and they’ll both regret it,’ he said. ‘Lowborough thinks that Annabella will be a good wife. But she wants to be Lady Lowborough, that is all.’

‘Does Lord Lowborough love Annabella?’ I asked.

‘Perhaps. But he won’t be a good husband,’ Arthur said. ‘Lowborough drinks too much and he was a gambler too. He’s stopped gambling now, but he drinks more than ever!’

‘Arthur, that is terrible!’ I said. ‘Drink can destroy a man.’

‘All men drink,’ said Arthur, laughing. ‘Once, Lowborough tried to stop drinking, but he failed. I made sure of that.’

I was shocked. ‘What do you mean?’ I asked.

‘Lowborough has been my friend for many years,’ Arthur replied. ‘When we’re in London, we gamble and drink together. A few years ago, Lowborough began to drink and gamble a lot. One day he said, “I won’t gamble again. I *cannot* gamble again. I’ve lost almost all my money.” He became very bad company and his friends were not happy. “Lowborough,” I told him, “drink a *little* wine. You’re spoiling our enjoyment.”

‘So Lowborough started to drink again,’ Arthur went on. ‘Soon he was drinking more and more. Now he’s decided to marry. He thinks that Annabella’s love will save him. He’s a fool! She only cares about his title and his money. She told me this herself.’

‘You must warn Lord Lowborough,’ I said. ‘He’s your friend.’

Arthur laughed loudly. ‘No, Helen, that would break his heart⁴⁷,’ he said. And he laughed again.

‘Mr Huntingdon,’ I said coldly. ‘You shouldn’t laugh at your friend.’

‘My dear Helen, I’m not laughing at Lowborough. Pm laughing at you/ Arthur replied. ‘You’re too serious, my love.’ I was very angry and I did not speak until we reached the house.

‘Forgive me, sweet Helen,’ Arthur whispered to me. ‘Then don’t laugh at your friend’s unhappiness,’ I replied. ‘I’ll never do it again,’ he said and he kissed my hand. But Arthur’s story had made me unhappy. I felt upset for the rest of the day.

13 th October 1821

Arthur and his friends have all gone. I shall not see my love again for ten weeks. He has promised to write and the time will soon pass. Then we will be together - forever! I pray that our lives will be happy!

Chapter Six

Wife and Mother

18th February 1822

I have not opened this diary for four months. Arthur has gone hunting today, so I have time to write.

I am now Arthur's wife. I am Mrs Arthur Huntingdon and our home is Grassdale Manor. Arthur and I have been married for two months. Am I sorry? No, my Arthur has many faults. But I will not think about this. He is my husband.

We were married at Christmas. In church, I promised to love my husband and obey his wishes. It is now my duty to love Arthur and take care of him. I love him and he loves me. But I do not believe that he cares about my thoughts and feelings. He does not ask my opinion about anything. And he is selfish. He only wants to do things which please him. He expects me to agree with him. And I do, because I love him.

After we were married, we went to France and Italy. I wanted to see Paris and Rome. But Arthur refused to take me to those beautiful cities.

'I want to take you home Helen,' Arthur said. 'You have a simple unspoilt beauty. I don't want that to change.'

Then he laughed. 'There are ladies in Paris and Rome who would be upset if they knew that I was married,' he said. 'They'd be jealous of you, Helen, and hate you too.'

So I did not complain and we came back to England. When I saw Grassdale Manor, my new home, I was very happy. Arthur was very kind and he did everything to please me. But soon, he made me unhappy again.

It was Sunday and we were returning home from church. 'Helen, you haven't pleased me today,' Arthur said. 'Why, what have I done?' I asked in surprise.

'Well, you're too serious. And sometimes you forget me. This morning, in church, you weren't thinking of me at all. You didn't look at me once. I don't want a saint for a wife⁴⁸.' 'Arthur, I love you,' I said. 'But you can't take God's place. When I'm in church, I think only of God. We have a life here on earth. But one day, we'll have a better life in heaven.' 'Well, for the moment, I'll enjoy my time on earth,' Arthur replied. 'I'm too young to die - and I don't want to. My heaven is here with you, my dear wife!'

15th March 1822

Arthur is bored. He is not bored with me, but he does not like our quiet life in the country. When the weather is good, he can walk, or ride his horse, or hunt. But the weather has been bad lately and he has had to stay inside the house.

Arthur dislikes reading and he hates to see me reading. He likes to tell me stories about the women that he has loved.

One day, we were sitting in the library. Outside, it was cold and rain was falling heavily.

‘You’re very lucky to be here with me, Helen,’ he said. ‘Many women would love to be in your place. Many women have wanted to marry me. Let me tell you about Lady —’

‘Stop, Arthur, stop!’ I cried. ‘I don’t want to hear stories about your other lovers. You’re married now. I don’t want to hear about other women!’

I began to cry.

‘I like to see you angry!’ Arthur said. ‘You’re jealous, aren’t you! Let me kiss you and dry those tears.’

4th April 1822

We have had our first quarrel⁴⁹. Today, Arthur started talking about his affair with Lady Fairley - a married woman.

‘Please don’t speak about Lady Fairley again!’ I said. ‘I hate her. She’s a wicked woman. She deceived her husband.’

Arthur laughed. ‘But Lord Fairley was a stupid old man,’ he said.

‘Then why did she marry him?’

‘For his money, of course,’ Arthur replied. ‘That is the usual reason. Don’t worry, Helen. You’re the one that I love now. I married you, didn’t I?’

‘And now I’m wishing that I hadn’t married you,’ I said.

‘How beautiful you are when you are angry!’ Arthur said. ‘I don’t believe you, my dear Helen. You don’t really wish that you hadn’t married me. If I believed that, I would be angry too. But I know that you belong to me. And you can’t live without me.’

I did not answer. I walked past Arthur and went to my room and I locked the door.

At breakfast the next morning, Arthur came into the dining-room and tried to kiss me. I turned away and poured some coffee into his cup.

‘Are you still angry with me, Helen? Arthur asked. He put the cup to his lips. ‘This coffee is cold,’ he said.

‘It’s your fault, I replied. ‘You were late for breakfast.’

Arthur did not answer. He looked out of the window at the grey clouds and the rain.

‘Curse this weather⁵⁰! he said.

After breakfast, I wrote letters and sketched. Arthur did not speak to me again that day.

After dinner, he drank more wine than usual. Then he lay on the sofa and fell asleep. I was reading and did not look at him.

Suddenly, Arthur’s dog ran up to his master and woke him up. Arthur shouted a curse and threw a book at the dog.

At bed-time, I got up to leave the room.

‘Helen! Arthur said.

‘Yes? What do you want? I asked.

‘Nothing. Go, he said. Then he whispered, ‘Curse the woman!

‘Were you speaking to me? I asked him coldly.

‘No. Go to bed,’ he replied.

The next day was the same as the one before. It was raining and Arthur was late for breakfast. Then he called for his carriage driver and spoke to him very quietly.

‘Are you going away, Arthur? I asked.

‘Yes, I’m going to London,* he replied. ‘I can’t be happy here. My wife doesn’t love me.

‘She would love you with all her heart if ...

‘If what? said Arthur. ‘You would love me if I was sorry? Well, I *am* sorry. I’m very sorry. Forgive me, my dear girl!

I was happy again! I cried and he kissed me again and again.

‘Then you won’t go to London, Arthur?’ I said at last.

‘Not without you, my dear, he said. ‘We’ll go together! *8th May 1822*

We went to London on 8th April. Now I am back at Grassdale. But I am here alone. I did not enjoy my visit. Arthur bought me clothes and jewellery. We met new

people every day and I had no time to rest. Then I told Arthur I am going to have a child.

‘Helen, you’re looking tired,’ he said. ‘London isn’t good for you or your baby. Go back to Grassdale and rest.’

‘Go back alone?’ I said. ‘Arthur, I want to be with you.’

‘I have to do some business in London,’ he replied. ‘I’ll come home in a week or two.’

29th June 1822

Many weeks have passed, but Arthur has not returned. My neighbours are away and I have only Rachel to speak to. I am sad and lonely. Arthur’s letters are short and they tell me nothing. I am afraid that he is in bad company again.

14th August 1822

Arthur returned two weeks ago. At first, he looked tired and ill. He is better now, but he is already bored.

‘There’s nothing to do here,’ he said angrily. ‘We need more company. I’ll invite a few friends to stay here. They’ll make this gloomy place more cheerful.’

I became worried. ‘Who will you invite?’ I asked.

‘Well, Lord Lowborough and his lovely wife, Annabella, of course. You’re not afraid of her, are you, Helen?’

‘No, of course not,’ I replied coldly.

‘And I’ll invite Walter Hargrave and Ralph Hattersley. Hattersley can bring his bride. He recently married Hargrave’s sister, Milicent. I know that you like her, Helen.’

23rd September 1822

Our guests have been at Grassdale for three weeks. As I had feared, Annabella flirts⁵¹ with Arthur.

When Annabella flirts, her husband becomes angry and she knows this. Lord Lowborough is jealous and I feel sorry for him. I sometimes feel jealous too, but I try not to show it.

Mr Hargrave sees what is happening. He spends a lot of time with me. He says kind things to me. He tells me that I am clever and beautiful. I try not to listen to him.

9th October 1822

I do not want to write this, but I must be truthful. I fear that my husband is having an affair with Lady Lowborough. She had been singing and playing the piano all the evening. Then I saw Arthur whispering to her. He held her hand and kissed it.



At that moment, Arthur looked up, saw me, and turned away. But Annabella looked at me and smiled. I felt ill.

Soon afterwards, our guests went to their rooms. Arthur and I were alone. He was very drunk.

‘Are you *very* angry with me?’ Arthur said carelessly.

‘Yes, I am,’ I said. ‘You’ve behaved very badly.’ I stopped speaking. Arthur was smiling. ‘How can you smile about this?’ I asked.

‘Helen,’ Arthur said. ‘I thought that your anger was a joke, but you are *serious!* Oh, dear! I must go down on my knees and apologize!’

He knelt on the ground and held his handkerchief in front of his eyes.

‘Forgive me, dear Helen!’ he said. ‘I’ll never do it again!’ He was making a stupid joke of his bad behaviour.

I turned away and went upstairs to my room. But Arthur ran after me. As I reached the door, he caught me and held my arm. I was extremely angry.

‘Stop, Helen! Your face is white with anger!’ he said. ‘You’ll make yourself ill!’

I went into the room and sat down - I could not stand. I felt weak and ill.

‘Arthur,’ I said. ‘I’m not jealous, but I’m very, very angry. My love for you may soon turn to hate.’

‘I did flirt with Annabella,’ Arthur replied. ‘But it meant nothing. You can’t blame me⁵², Helen. I’d drunk too much.’

‘You often drink too much and I *do* blame you,’ I said. ‘Lord Lowborough is your friend and he loves his wife.’

Arthur began to walk round the room.

‘When we married, you promised to obey me,’ he said. ‘No woman tells me what to do! But I *do* love you, Helen. Forgive me. I’ll try to change.’

I believed him. I kissed him and began to cry. He held me in his arms. I forgave him and we were friends again.

Annabella has tried to speak to me several times. But I have always walked away from her. She will soon be gone.

25th December 1822

Last Christmas I was a happy bride. Now I am a mother.

The past year has not been easy, but now I have a child to care for. I have a baby boy. His name is Arthur too. I love my son very much, but his father is not interested in him.

‘You love that child more than me!’ Arthur said today. ‘You don’t love me at all now!’

‘That isn’t true,’ I said. ‘I love you both. Here, hold your son. You’ll soon love him too.’

My husband looked down at the child in his arms. ‘Take him, Helen!’ he cried. ‘I shall drop him!’

I took the child and held him close to his father.

‘Arthur, kiss your son,’ I said.

‘I’d prefer⁵³ to kiss his mother!’ he replied. Then he laughed and kissed us both.

Chapter Seven

'I Shell Never Trust Him Again'

25th December 1823

A year has passed since I wrote in this diary. My little boy is one year old. He is well and his father loves him. Does my husband love me? I am not sure. But Arthur expects *me* to love him. He goes away and I must wait for him. When he is at home, I must please him. I must not complain.

Early in the spring of this year, Arthur went to London. He would not take me with him.

'Stay here, Helen. I'll only be away for a week, or two,' he said. 'That is a promise.'

It was a promise that he broke. Arthur was away for four months. I shall never trust him again.

But I did not complain about my husband's behaviour. I looked after my child. I drew and painted. And I waited.

The Hargraves live near to Grassdale. Esther Hargrave, Milicent's younger sister, has become my friend. Her brother, Walter, is my husband's friend. Sometimes Mr Hargrave comes to Grassdale with Esther. And sometimes he comes alone.

One day, I was playing with my baby in our garden. Suddenly I saw Walter Hargrave standing near us. How long had he been watching me and my child?

'I don't understand your husband, Mrs Huntingdon,' Hargrave said. He stood close to me and spoke sadly.

'What do you mean, Mr Hargrave?' I asked.

'Huntingdon spends too much time in London with his friends,' he replied. 'He should be here with *you* and his child.'

I said nothing. I distrust Mr Hargrave. I hope that my husband will come home soon.

A few days later, Arthur returned. He looked tired and ill. He was bad-tempered and he complained about everything. He complained that the servants were lazy and careless. He complained that the food was cooked badly. He became angry when his little son cried.

'What is the matter with you, Arthur?' I asked him.

‘I’m ill!’ he shouted. ‘You should be caring for me, not that child! I have a terrible headache. Give me a glass of wine!’

‘Wine has given you the headache,’ I said.

‘No, that isn’t true,’ he replied. ‘My *loving wife* has given me this pain. I wish that I’d stayed in London! I can drink as much as I like in London! No one tells me what to do.’

Then he fell asleep and I left the room.

After several days, Arthur’s temper improved and so did his health. I did everything to help him and make him happy.

20th March 1824

Arthur and I have been married for two years and three months. Every spring, he goes to London. He stays away for several months. I do not know what he does in the city. I do not know how much he drinks. When he comes back he is tired and ill. In the summer, he stays here - in Grassdale. Then his health slowly improves. In the autumn, he invites his friends to our home. He always invites Lord and Lady Lowborough and Ralph and Milicent Hattersley.

22nd September 1824

Our guests have been here for a week. I dislike Annabella, Lady Lowborough, very much. She has not behaved badly, but I do not trust her.

Every night after dinner, Arthur and his friends drink several bottles of wine. Ralph Hattersley and Arthur usually drink the most. Neither Milicent, nor I, can stop them.

7th October 1824

I think that Arthur is getting better. He has been drinking less and he is much more cheerful.

After dinner this evening, our guests were walking in the garden. It was a fine evening. As the sun went down, the shadows of the trees became longer and darker. I followed Arthur along the dark path and put my arms around him.

‘God bless you, my darling!’ he whispered and he kissed me. Then he looked more closely at me.

‘Oh! Helen!’ he said in surprise. ‘What are you doing here? You’ll get cold. Go back into the house!’

I laughed. ‘I’m sorry that I frightened you,’ I said.

As I ran back to the house, I saw Annabella coming along the path. Suddenly I felt terribly afraid. I stopped and hid in the shadows of the trees as she went past. Then I followed her.

I heard Arthur's voice. 'Is it really you, Annabella?' he said softly. 'Helen was here a few minutes earlier. I kissed her by mistake. But now, the right woman is in my arms. Kiss me, my dearest Annabella! I love only you!'



'Don't you love your wife at all?' she asked.

'No, not at all!' my husband said. 'I stopped loving her long ago. Kiss me again, my dearest!'

‘One more kiss and then I must go,’ Annabella said.

At last, she turned and walked back into the house. As she went past me, I saw a smile on her face.

I went into the house, but I could not talk to our guests. I was too upset. I called a servant.

‘Please tell the guests that I’m not well,’ I said.

Then I went into the library and sat alone, in the dark. I did not light the candles. I wanted darkness around me.

I decided to speak to Arthur that night. When I heard everyone going to their rooms, I opened the door.

As Arthur walked past the library, I called to him quietly. ‘Helen!’ he said. ‘You look ill. What has happened?’

‘You know what has happened,’ I said quietly. ‘You and Lady Lowborough have deceived me.’

‘Who has been telling you lies?’ he cried. ‘Was it Rachel?’ ‘No,’ I answered. ‘I saw you and Annabella together, in the garden. And I heard what you said about me.’

‘What are you going to do?’ he asked, after a moment.

‘I want to leave you, Arthur,’ I said. ‘I want to take our child with me.’

‘No, I’ll never let you go!’ he replied.

‘Then I’m your child’s mother, but I’ll not be your wife,’ I said. ‘I may forgive you, one day. But I no longer love you.’ Then I turned away from him and went upstairs to my room.

Half an hour later, Rachel came to me. She had guessed what had happened.

‘I know the truth about my marriage now,’ I told her. ‘I will stay in this house. But please, never speak to anyone about my pain and sadness.’

Rachel shook her head sadly and said nothing.

18th October 1824

The days have passed slowly. This evening, I was sitting with Milicent and Annabella in the library. I was trying to read, but Annabella talked all the time.

I took a piece of paper and wrote her this note: *I know about you and my husband. We can no longer be friends.*

Annabella's face became red when she read the message. She turned toward Milicent Hattersley.

'Milicent, I must speak to Helen alone,' she said. 'Would you leave us, please?'

When we were alone, Annabella held up the note. 'Who told you this?' she asked.

'No one told me,' I replied. 'I saw you in the garden with my husband.'

'Will you tell Lord Lowborough?' she asked.

'Perhaps,' I replied.

'I *cannot* ... I *will not* stop meeting Arthur!' Annabella cried. 'Help us both! Don't speak to anyone about this!'

'I'll say nothing to your husband,' I said coldly. 'And I've nothing more to say to you.'

19th October 1824

When I went to the dining-room this morning, Annabella had already eaten her breakfast.

'This is the last day that I'll trouble you,' she said. 'I'm leaving Grassdale Manor.'

At that moment, Arthur came into the room. He walked over to her and held her hand.

'The last day!' he whispered.

They stood together for a moment. Then Annabella came over to me. She put her hand on my arm.

'Let me have him,' she said. 'I love him more than you.' Angrily, I pushed her away from me and Arthur laughed. I did not speak to either of them again that day.

20th October 1824

Before she left our house, Annabella spoke to me once more.

'You should thank me, Mrs Huntingdon/ she said. She smiled unpleasantly. 'I told your husband not to drink and he has obeyed me. Your bad temper makes him unhappy and then he drinks. Be kind to him/

The angry expression on my face frightened her and she got into her carriage quickly. I hope that I never see her again!

20th December 1824

Arthur and I have been married for three years.

All our love has turned into hate. And now I want to leave Grassdale, but Arthur will not let me go.

Til hate to look at your pale, sad face/ Arthur said. 'But I don't want our neighbours to gossip. So you must stay here with me!'

Arthur has nothing to do and he is bored. He has started drinking again. I cannot stop him. When he is drunk, he shouts and curses me.

'Why didn't I marry Annabella?' he shouted one day. 'She writes to me and tells me that she loves me. *She* wants me, you don't.'

'I live with you, *Annabella* doesn't,' I said. 'Wine is making you fat and stupid. Does she know that?'

My husband likes to make me unhappy. He hurts me by spoiling our son. He gives the boy whatever he wants. Arthur knows that this makes me angry. My spoilt son hates me when I take these things away from him again. And he cries when I take him away from his father. Then I cry too.

Chapter Eight

'I'm a True Friend'

20th December 1825

Another year is ending. Thank God, Arthur has stayed away for several months. My son is now three years old. I try to help him. I want him to be better than his father.

One day in May, I was walking alone near a narrow stream. Suddenly I saw Walter Hargrave riding his horse towards me. He knew that Arthur was away, so he had come to see me.

'Mrs Huntingdon, you're alone,' he said quietly. 'May I walk with you?'

'I was looking for a good place to sketch,' I said. 'I want to draw those trees by the stream. They're very beautiful.'

Mr Hargrave got off his horse and stood beside me.

'But they're not as beautiful as you, Mrs Huntingdon!' Mr Hargrave cried. 'My dear Helen! Your husband is very unkind. You need a better man. Let me be that man!'

His eyes shone and he held my hand tightly.

'I love your goodness, your strength and your beauty!' he went on quickly. 'I love you. Say that you love me too!'

'Mr Hargrave! I'm a married woman,' I said. I pulled my hand away. 'You mustn't say those things to me!'

'But I'm your friend!' he cried. 'I'm a true friend who wishes to be your lover. You need to be loved, Helen. Don't reject me!'

'I do reject you, Mr Hargrave!' I said. 'Never speak to me like that again!'

He looked very surprised. But he got onto his horse and rode away quickly.

Mr Hargrave stayed in London for several weeks. When he returned, he brought his younger sister, Esther, to see me.



'I do reject you, Mr Hargrave! Mr Hargrave! Never speak to me like that again!'

We sat together in the sitting-room. After a few minutes, Esther went to find my son. Mr Hargrave shut the door and turned towards me.

'Huntingdon is staying with Lord and Lady Lowborough,' he said. 'Did you know that, Mrs Huntingdon?'

'No, I didn't,' I replied. 'But I don't care.'

'So you don't love your husband?' Hargrave said.

'No. I do not,' I replied coldly.

‘Ah! I *thought* that you didn’t love him anymore,’ Mr Hargrave said. ‘You’re too good for him. He’s hurt you. Don’t you want to hurt him?’

‘How would that help me?’ I asked.

‘It will make you happier, Mrs Huntingdon,’ Mr Hargrave replied. ‘And that will make me happy too!’

I walked away from him and looked out of the window. I wished that Esther and little Arthur would return.

‘Trust me, Mrs Huntingdon,’ Mr Hargrave went on. ‘You can’t live alone for ever. Neither can I.’

‘I’m not alone. I have my son,’ I said. ‘And you have your mother and sister.’

‘Our love will be a secret. Nobody will know —’ he began.

But at that moment, thank God, little Arthur ran into the room. Esther followed him. Very soon the Hargraves went home.

I did not want to be alone with Walter Hargrave again. With Rachel’s help, I did not meet him for some time. When he came to the house, Rachel sent him away.

Then, one afternoon, I was returning from the village alone. I heard a horse walking behind me. A few minutes later, Mr Hargrave was riding beside me. I walked on and he followed.

‘I first saw you more than three years ago,’ he said. ‘I loved you then, and I love you now. My love for you is making me unhappy, Mrs Huntingdon. Can’t you help me?’

‘How can I help you, Mr Hargrave?’ I asked.

‘Show me your true feelings!’ he said. ‘You’re lonely and unhappy. Your heart was made for love. Why are you so unkind, to yourself - and to me too?’

‘I’m married, Mr Hargrave,’ I replied. ‘I’ll be happy in heaven, but not before.’

He did not answer. I stopped walking and looked up at him.

‘Do you love me?’ I asked.

‘Yes, yes, I do!’ he said.

‘Then *never speak to me about love again!*’ I said.

Walter Hargrave’s face became very pale. ‘Then I must go away,’ he said. ‘Do you want me to do that?’

‘Yes, I do,’ I replied.

He held out his hand to say goodbye. I shook it quickly. Then he rode away and did not look back.

Not long after our meeting, Walter Hargrave went to Paris. I hope that he stays there for a very long time.

Chapter Nine

Decisions

20th December 1826

I have been married for five years. Five years of unhappiness is enough. I no longer love my husband - I hate him! I am going to leave Grassdale as soon as possible.

In September, the house was full of guests. This year, Walter Hargrave brought his mother, Mrs Hargrave, as well as his sister, Esther.

I spoke to Annabella when we were alone.

‘Please be careful, Lady Lowborough,’ I said. ‘If you don’t stay away from my husband, I’ll tell *your* husband about your affair with Arthur. There’ll be a scandal and you’ll lose everything - your husband, your title and his money.’

But two weeks later, Lord Lowborough found out the truth for himself.

‘Mrs Huntingdon, I must leave here tomorrow!’ he said. ‘I know why and I’m sorry,’ I replied.

His face became very pale. Then you know ...’ he said. ‘Yes. I’ve known for two years that my husband and your wife are lovers,’ I said softly.

‘Has my wife deceived me all that time?’ he cried. ‘Why didn’t you tell me before, Mrs Huntingdon?’

‘I’m sorry,’ I said. ‘But I couldn’t speak about it.’

‘So you’re not happy about this?’ he asked me.

‘Happy?’ I said. ‘I’ve not been happy for a long time. But I’m calm now. One day, you’ll be happier too.’

Lord Lowborough looked at me and smiled sadly.

‘You’re a brave woman,’ he said. ‘I’ll take my wife away from here tomorrow. God help you, Mrs Huntingdon!’

‘He will,’ I said quietly and I went back to my guests.

In the morning, my husband got up early and said goodbye to the Lowboroughs.

‘I’m sorry that you’re leaving,’ he said, laughing. ‘I would never end a friendship with an old friend because of my wife! Lowborough, you can have my wife, if you want her! You might like her better than your own!’

I never saw Lord Lowborough and his wife again. Several months later, they separated. Annabella’s second child, a girl, has blue eyes and red hair. Lord Lowborough cannot be her father. But he loves the little girl and takes care of her.

A few days after Lord and Lady Lowborough left Grassdale, the other ladies went home. From that day, Arthur and his friends drank, shouted and quarrelled all the time.

The nights were terrible. Arthur kept our son with him every evening. He taught little Arthur to drink wine and curse. I could not stop this. I did not care how my husband behaved towards me. But I could not let him destroy our son’s life. I had to take little Arthur away. But where could we go? How would we live? I began to make a plan.

My family - my aunt and uncle, and my brother Frederick - did not know the truth about Arthur Huntingdon. They did not know that he was a bad husband and that he drank. I could not tell them the truth. But Rachel knew everything. She was my only friend and she promised to help me.

I needed to earn money. So I decided to paint pictures and sell them. I put my paints and my easel in the library and started work immediately.

One morning, Mr Hargrave came into the library.

‘Your guests haven’t seen much of you, Mrs Huntingdon,’ he said. ‘I guess that you hate us all. I’ll be leaving this week. I don’t know how long the others will stay.’

‘Your husband doesn’t respect you,’ Mr Hargrave went on. ‘He wishes that he could get rid of^s you.’

‘Then he’ll have his wish soon,’ I said quietly.

‘Are you leaving your husband and your home?’ Mr Hargrave asked me quickly. ‘What about your son? Huntingdon won’t let him go.’

‘Arthur won’t know that my son is coming with me,’ I said. ‘I’ve made my plans carefully.’

Mr Hargrave moved closer to me and smiled.

‘Then I must be part of those plans, Mrs Huntingdon!’ he cried. ‘I love you and I’ll take care of you. You can’t live without me!’

Suddenly, Mr Hargrave got down onto his knees and held my hands. I was shocked. 'Let me go!' I cried.

At that moment, Ralph Hattersley was walking outside in the garden. As he went past the library, he looked through the window. He saw Hargrave - his wife's brother - kneeling by my feet and holding my hands.

'Hattersley will tell your husband that he has seen us together,' Mr Hargrave said happily. 'No one will respect you now. You *must* let me help you!'

I pulled my hands away and stepped back. 'No, Mr Hargrave!' I cried.

'You're a good and beautiful woman and I adore you!' he said. 'You are mine. Hold me in your arms!'

'Never!' I cried. I picked up a knife from my paintbox and held it in front of me. 'Keep away, Mr Hargrave! I don't like you. If my husband was dead, I wouldn't marry you. Do you understand?'

Walter Hargrave's face was white with anger.

'Your husband said that you're a hard, cold-hearted woman,' he said. 'He was right.'

Suddenly, the door opened and my husband ran into the room. Ralph Hattersley was following him.

'You're a wicked woman!' Arthur shouted. 'You say that Annabella is bad, but you're worse than she is! You're having a secret affair with Hargrave. I curse you and all women who tell lies!'

'I've done nothing wrong,' I cried. I pointed to Walter Hargrave. 'Tell my husband the truth,' I said to him. 'You asked me to go away with you. Did I agree, or not?'

'You did not,' he replied.

My husband began to shout and curse. Then he walked out of the library. We followed him into the hallway.

'You have a good wife, Huntingdon,' Hattersley said. 'She's too good for you.'

I went back into the library and locked the door.

The next day, Mr Hargrave left Grassdale. I have not seen him since, and I thank God.

My husband's other friends stayed for another three weeks. I painted every day and I kept my son near me always.

10th January 1827

Arthur was in my sitting-room when I was writing this. He was drunk and I thought that he had fallen asleep on the sofa. But suddenly he stood up and took my diary.

This looks interesting,' he said. 'I'll read it later.'

As he threw the diary onto my desk, Arthur saw my keys and picked them up.

'Ah!' he said. 'Let's go downstairs to the room that you lock so carefully. Let's both go to the library, my dear.'

Arthur pulled me down the stairs and into the hallway. He unlocked the library door and went inside.

Immediately, he saw my paints and the easel with a painting on it.

'Well, it's an artist's studio, not a library now,' he said, with a smile. 'But not for much longer.'

He threw all my painting things into the fireplace. Soon my pencils, brushes, paints and canvasses were all burning. Then he called for a servant. 'Take away this easel and the picture on it!' my husband said. 'Throw them away. My wife will not paint again.'

Arthur did not know about my finished pictures. I had sold several paintings and I had hidden others in a cupboard.

He laughed. Then he picked up my keys and said, 'Now I'm going to look in your rooms upstairs.'

He returned half-an-hour later.

'How angry you look!' he said. 'Your eyes shine like a cat's. Here are your keys. I've taken the money and jewels from your room. You were going to run away and make money by painting. That will never happen now! You're my wife. I'll never let you go.'

Then Arthur walked out of the library. I went back upstairs to my sitting-room. He had forgotten about my diary. I picked it up and took it to my bedroom.

Please, God! Help me! I am a prisoner in this house now.



‘Take away this easel and the picture on it!’

20th March 1827

It is spring again and Arthur has gone away. He left Grassdale early in February. I have used the time well.

My husband had taught my son to like alcohol. Now when little Arthur drinks wine, I add bitter medicine. This makes him feel ill. Soon, my son will hate all strong drink.

I have made another plan. I will go and live in Wildfell Hall - the house where I was born. When my parents died, my brother Frederick and I went to live with my aunt and uncle in Staningley. Wildfell Hall has been empty for many years and it

needs many repairs. I will ask my brother to repair a few rooms and I will live there with little Arthur and Rachel. The house is far away from Grassdale or London. My husband will not find me.

16th April 1827

Frederick came to stay here for two weeks. We enjoyed each other's company. Little Arthur pleased his uncle too.

The boy looks like you, Frederick,' I said. 'I'm glad. I don't want him to look like his father.'

'Is your husband really so bad?' Frederick asked.

'He's wicked,' I replied. 'I must get away. I need your help.' Frederick listened carefully to my plan. 'I'll repair some rooms for you at Wildfell Hall,' he said. 'I hope that you don't leave Grassdale. But if you do, I'll help you.'

10th October 1827

Arthur returned home about three weeks ago. He has found a governess for little Arthur.

'You shouldn't teach children or be near them,' Arthur said to me. 'A governess named Miss Myers will be here next week. She'll teach my son and take care of him.'

When Miss Myers arrived, I did not like her. I am afraid that my husband likes her too much.

'Miss Myers is a bad woman,' Rachel told me. 'She wants to take your place, ma'am.'

'She can have my husband,' I replied. 'I'm leaving here for ever.'

'I'll go with you, ma'am,' Rachel said. 'You and little Arthur need someone to take care of you. I won't stay in this wicked house when you've gone.'

12th October 1827

I have written to Frederick and my aunt. And I have written to Milicent Hattersley and Esther Hargrave. I have told them that I am leaving Grassdale. Only Frederick knows where Rachel, little Arthur and I will be living. With Rachel's help, everything is ready.

I went downstairs to the dining-room, but I could not eat my dinner. I was thinking about my secret journey. 'What's the matter with you *no<wV* my husband asked. 'I'm not well,' I replied. 'I'm going to go to my room.' 'Go,' Arthur said. 'I

can find someone to take your place.' I tried to sleep, but I could not. I wrote in this diary instead. Little Arthur was asleep when Rachel carried him downstairs. We left the house quietly.

In my new life, I shall be called 'Mrs Graham'. Graham was my mother's name before she married my father - Mr Lawrence. I dare not use my own name.

24th October 1827

I am free! The journey here to Wildfell Hall was long and very tiring, but we arrived at last.

Frederick has visited this house several times. But we must be careful. The people here do not know my real story. If anyone asks, we say this: 'I am Mrs Graham and I'm a widow. Frederick Lawrence is my landlord.' No one will know that he is my brother.

We have been here for two weeks now. Frederick has bought me everything that I need to start painting again. I must sell some paintings soon. We need the money.

My husband is trying to find me. But he does not want me, he wants my son. Frederick tells me that my husband has written to my aunt and uncle. They may believe his lies, but they cannot help him.

30th October 1827

My neighbours are kind, but they ask too many questions. My past life must remain a secret, or my son will be in danger. I am afraid to leave him alone.

3rd November 1827

I have visited my nearest neighbours - the Markhams of Linden-Car Farm. Mrs Markham is a widow. She has a son named Gilbert and a daughter named Rose. Gilbert Markham looks after the farm. Gilbert is a young man who

Here Helens diary ends. The rest of the pages have been removed.

Part Three: Gilbert and Helen
Chapter Ten
‘You Must Never Come Here Again’

I read and re-read Helen’s diary all night. In the morning, I opened the window and breathed the fresh air. Thank God! My beautiful Helen had done nothing wrong! All the stories about her were untrue. She is a good woman who has a bad husband. We are free to love each other.

After breakfast, I hurried to Wildfell Hall. I took Helen’s diary with me. Rachel opened the front door but she did not look happy when she saw me.

‘Mrs Graham can’t see anyone today,’ Rachel said.

‘But I must see her!’ I said. ‘Please tell her that I’m here!’ The old servant shook her head. But at that moment, Arthur came to the door with his little dog.

‘Mama says that you must come in, Mr Markham,’ he said. Then he ran outside.

Helen was in the sitting-room. Her face was pale, but very beautiful. I gave her the diary.

‘I believed the stories about you,’ I said. ‘I didn’t know the truth about your marriage. Can you ever forgive me?’

‘Can you ever forgive me?’ she replied. ‘I should have told you everything before now. But my life has been terrible.’

I held her in my arms and kissed her. When Helen looked at me, her expression was calm.

‘Gilbert, you must leave me very soon,’ she said. ‘And when you leave, you must *never come here again.*’

‘Never come here again?’ I repeated. ‘But now I love you more than ever, my dearest Helen.’

‘And that is why we must never meet again. I’ll be leaving Wildfell Hall soon. This must be our last meeting.’

‘But I can’t live without you, Helen. You can’t go back to Huntingdon now! He’s a bad man and a bad husband.’ ‘Gilbert, don’t say that,’ she cried. ‘You’re not helping me. You’re making things much, much worse.’

‘Then I won’t talk about him again,’ I said. ‘And I won’t speak about my love for you. But can’t we meet as friends?’ ‘No. That is impossible,’ Helen said. ‘Every time that we meet, our love will become stronger. This mustn’t happen. I’m married to Huntingdon. I promised God in church that I’d always be a good wife. I mustn’t love another man.’ ‘Then let me write to you. Write to me, Helen,’ I said. ‘My brother will give you news about me,’ she replied. Then I remembered my fight with Frederick.

‘Your brother won’t help us,’ I said sadly. ‘I was jealous and I didn’t know the truth. I behaved badly towards him.’

‘Yes, I know. Frederick doesn’t think that we should meet,’ Helen said. ‘But I’ll not forget you, Gilbert. You’re young. You’ll find a good woman to love. You’ll marry.’

‘You’re young too,’ I said. ‘Huntingdon is ten years older than you. He might die soon. Then we can be married.’

‘My husband may live for many years,’ Helen replied. ‘I’ve thought about all these things, Gilbert. You must trust me. I’ve made my decision.’

‘Then let’s write to each other,’ I said. ‘Please, Helen!’ Helen thought for a moment. ‘I’d like that,’ she replied. ‘But you mustn’t write to me yet. We’ll wait six months —’ ‘Six months!’ I cried.

‘Frederick will tell you where I am,’ Helen said. ‘Write after six months, and I’ll answer you. But we must never meet again.’

Helen looked at me and I saw the sadness in her eyes. I held her close in my arms for many minutes.



‘Go, go!’ she whispered at last.

I held her for a moment more. Then I left her.

Little Arthur saw me in the garden and ran to meet me. But I did not stop and speak to the boy. I ran until I could not see Wildfell Hall. I did no work that day.

But there was something that I had to do. I had to visit Frederick Lawrence and apologize to him. And I had to tell him about my last meeting with his sister. I went immediately to Woodford House, Lawrence’s home.

‘I’m sorry, but Mr Lawrence is ill,’ his servant said. ‘He can’t see anyone. I’ll give him a message from you.’

‘I must speak to him myself,’ I said.

I walked past the servant quickly and opened each of the doors that led off the hallway. When I opened the door of the sitting-room, I saw Lawrence lying on a sofa. I walked into the room. Lawrence looked ill. He did not get up.

‘Markham!’ he said in surprise. ‘What are you doing here?’ ‘I’ll not stay for more than a few minutes,’ I replied. ‘Please listen to me.’

‘Then speak quickly,’ he said. ‘You’ve behaved very badly. I don’t want you in my house.’

‘I’ve come to say that I’m sorry/ I said.

‘Why should I believe you? said Lawrence. ‘You hit me and left me on the road/

'I *am* truly sorry/ I said. 'I did a terrible thing to you. I didn't know that you were Mrs Graham's brother.'

'Who told you that?' he asked.

'Mrs Graham,' I said. 'She's told me everything. She's told me about Huntingdon and her terrible marriage. But don't worry, Lawrence. I'm not seeing her again.'

'I'm pleased to hear it,' he replied. 'You're doing the right thing, Markham. If my sister trusts you, so do I. I accept your apology. Let's shake hands.'

'Thank you,' I said. 'Have you told Helen about our fight?' 'No, and I'm not going to,' he replied with a smile. 'I feel better now. Come and visit me again, when you have time.' I thanked Lawrence again and bowed. Then I left him.

I wanted to tell my mother and sister the truth about Helen, but I could not. Soon, our neighbours stopped talking about Helen when I was with them. They knew that this gossip made me angry.

Chapter Eleven

Return to Grassdale

One morning, at the beginning of November, Eliza Millward visited Linden-Car. She came to see my sister. I was in the sitting-room with Rose, when Eliza arrived. I was writing some business letters.

‘I find *you* at home too, Mr Markham!’ Eliza said. ‘I’m very lucky!’ As she spoke, she smiled an unkind smile. ‘I’ve some news for you and Rose. It’s about Mrs Graham.’

I looked up from my work quickly.

‘Oh, and what is your news, Eliza?’ Rose asked.

‘Well, Helen Graham isn’t a widow!’ Eliza replied. ‘Her husband isn’t dead. She ran away from him! And *now*, she’s gone back to him! They’re friends again!’

‘Who told you this, Miss Eliza?’ I asked angrily.

‘A servant at Woodford House told my servant, and she told me!’ Eliza said.

‘So you listen to servants’ gossip now, do you?’ I replied. ‘Excuse me, but I have to go out with these letters.’

I had to know the truth. I got on my horse and rode immediately to Frederick Lawrence’s house.

‘Has your sister left Wildfell Hall?’ I asked Lawrence.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘She’s returned to Grassdale.’

‘But that’s impossible!’ I cried. ‘Why would she do that?’

‘Huntingdon is ill,’ Lawrence replied.

‘Is he dying?’

‘No, I don’t think so,’ Lawrence said. ‘Helen thought that she should go to him. She thought that it was her duty.’

‘Her duty? Nonsense!’ I cried.

‘I agree with you, Markham,’ said Lawrence calmly. ‘I hate Huntingdon. But he had a fall from his horse. He’s very ill. There was no one who could take care of him. Here, read Helen’s letter. It came this morning.’

Grassdale, 4th November

Dear Frederick

I am writing to tell you that Arthur is ill. He fell from his horse when he was drunk. He has injured his leg badly. He is not dying, but he has been in bed for many days. He is weak and he does not know where he is. At first, he did not recognize me. He thought that I was the governess - Alice Myers. But she left him some time ago. Arthur called out for Miss Myers many times. Then he said that he could see the white face and dark eyes of his wife T me. He shouted out again and again. He was terrified. He believed that he was going mad. After a few minutes, he became calmer. Then I told him that Alice had gone and I had returned to Grassdale. I told him that I had brought a nurse to look after him. Arthur wanted to see our son and he promised not take the child from me. When the boy saw his father, he was afraid. Arthur cursed me. He told me that I had made the boy hate him.

The next day, Arthur talked about dying. I do not want him to die. But I told him that he was very ill and that only God could save him. Then Arthur cursed again and turned his head away.

Dear brother, my life is not easy. Drink has destroyed my husband. But with God's help, I will do my duty.

Your sister Helen

‘What do you think, Markham?’ Lawrence asked me.

‘I wish that your sister hadn’t gone back to Grassdale,’ I replied. ‘But she’s gone to do her duty.’

‘Please let me keep this letter,’ I went on. ‘I want to tell Rose and my mother the truth about your sister. When you write to Helen again, please ask her if I can do this.’

Lawrence agreed and a few days later, he came to see me. He showed me a second letter from his sister.

Dear Frederick

Arthur is a little stronger, but his temper is worse. He wants me near him all the time. Sometimes he curses me. Sometimes he asks me if I love him. I am sorry for him. I will stay here while he needs me.

At the end of the letter, there was a message to me: *Mr Markham may tell his mother and sister my story. I hope that he is well. But he must not think about me. Please tell him this.*

Helen’s letter made me sad. But I was happy to tell my mother and sister the truth about the tenant of Wildfell Hall. Rose was delighted to know the truth and she told her friends. Soon everyone knew my dear Helen’s story. They knew that Helen

was Mrs Huntingdon - not Mrs Graham. And they knew why she had left her husband.

But I do not think that I will see my dear love again.

Chapter Twelve

Free

Frederick Lawrence and I were now good friends. I often went to Woodford House. When Lawrence had a letter from his sister, he always let me read it. One day, Helen told him that her husband's health was much worse.

Huntingdon's doctor had told him that he must not drink any alcohol. But he had started to drink wine again. When Helen mixed the wine with water, Huntingdon threw the glass out of the window. He told his servant to open a bottle of the strongest wine. Then he drank it all. After this, Huntingdon's leg became bad again. Once more, he was very ill. He blamed Helen for his pain. He cursed her because she had not taken the wine away from him. She could do nothing that pleased him.

Helen sent another letter a few days after this news. It had been written over several days.

Dear Frederick

My husband is in great pain now. He wants me to be with him all the time. He is terrified of death. I can say nothing to help him.

...There has been a change in Arthurs health. He is very happy now and feels no pain. But his leg is worse and he is very weak. I know that this is bad.

...The doctor has told Arthur that he is near to death. Arthur is terribly afraid of dying. I cannot write more.

Your sister Helen

Helen's next letter brought worse news. Lawrence gave it to me and I read it quickly.

Dear Frederick

Esther Hargrave has come to Grassdale. She is taking care of little Arthur. I have to stay with my husband all day and all night.

He fears death. He cannot trust in God. And he cannot think of heaven. Nothing that I say helps him.

The letter stopped suddenly. Then it continued on a new line:

Arthur has gone at last. He is dead. I sat beside him all night, holding his hand. In the early morning, he asked me to pray for him. Then he died. He is now free.

Arthur will be buried on Thursday. Frederick, please come to me quickly. I need your help.

Helen

I gave the letter back to Lawrence.

‘Will you go to her?’ I asked.

‘Yes, my carriage is waiting outside/’ Lawrence replied.

I shook his hand and left the house at once.

As I returned to Linden-Car, I thought again and again about what had happened. Huntingdon was dead. Helen was a widow now. She was free. I thought of her all the time. But did she ever think of me? Would she forget all thoughts of love now that her husband was dead? I did not know.

And then there was another problem. Grassdale now belonged to Helen. She was no longer a poor artist. She was a rich woman. Would she marry me - a simple farmer?

Lawrence stayed at Grassdale for nearly two weeks. He wrote and told me that Helen was very tired. He also told me that she was very unhappy about her husband’s death.

I wanted to know if Helen had spoken about me. But I dared not ask Lawrence. In ten more weeks, Helen and I could write to each other.

Then suddenly at the beginning of February, Helen’s uncle died. She went to Staningley and stayed with her aunt. Her brother went to Mr Maxwell’s funeral. When Lawrence came home to Woodford House, Helen stayed at Staningley.

‘When will Helen return to Grassdale?’ I asked Lawrence.

‘I don’t know,’ he replied, smiling. ‘Why do you ask?’

I thought that he was laughing at me and I did not reply.

I did not see Lawrence again for several weeks. It was June when we met again.

‘Hello, Lawrence,’ I said. ‘I called at Woodford House several times, but you weren’t there.’

‘Well, I’m pleased that we have met now Markham,’ he said. ‘I’m leaving here soon. I’ll be away for a month or two.’ ‘Where are you going?’ I asked.

‘First, to Grassdale,’ he replied. ‘Then I’m taking my sister and our aunt to the sea. We all need a holiday.’

Lawrence did not return to his home until the end of August. Helen went back to Staningley with her aunt. I was very disappointed. I did not want to write to her there.

Weeks passed and I did not see Helen, or write to her. And she did not write to me. I thought that she had forgotten me. I tried to forget her, but it was impossible. I loved her! Would I ever see her again?

Chapter Thirteen

My Dearest Helen

It was a cold afternoon in December. Snow had fallen on the hard ground and everything was white.

I had taken a message from my mother to Mr Millward at the vicarage. As I was leaving the Millwards' home, Miss Eliza came into the hallway. She was wearing a hat, a warm coat and boots.

I'm going to visit your sister, Mr Markham/ she said. 'I'll walk to Linden-Car with you/

I bowed politely but I did not reply.

'I hope that Rose is at home/ Eliza went on. I've some news for her. I hope that she hasn't heard it already/

'What news is that?' I asked.

'Mr Lawrence has left Woodford House/ Eliza said. 'He's gone to see his sister. Didn't he tell you? Mrs Graham - er -Mrs Huntingdon is —'

'What has happened to her?' I asked quickly.

Eliza began to laugh. 'Oh, your face has become quite red, Mr Markham!' she said. 'So you haven't forgotten Mrs Huntingdon? Well, she's going to be married next Thursday!' 'That is not true, Miss Eliza!' I said quickly.

'I'm not a liar!' she replied. 'My servant told me about Mrs Huntingdon's marriage. Mr Lawrence has gone to Grassdale for the wedding. Now ... what was the name of Mrs Huntingdon's gentleman? I forget.'

'Was it Hargrave?' I asked.

'Yes, that is the name,' she said.

'It's impossible!' I said angrily and Eliza began to laugh more loudly.

'Oh, Mr Markham!' she cried. 'Were you planning to marry Mrs. Huntingdon yourself? I'm afraid that you've missed

your chance! But perhaps she said "no" when you asked her Does Rose know about your feelings? What does your mother say?

'Miss Eliza, I don't like people who laugh at me,' I said angrily. 'You can finish your walk alone.'

I did not say another word. I ran to Woodford House. I now knew how I felt about Helen. I loved her! But I was going to lose her! I could not let this happen.

A servant at Woodford House told me that Lawrence had gone to Grassdale. Was Eliza's news true! What could I do?

I made a decision. In the morning, I would take a coach to Grassdale. I would try to stop the wedding. Helen disliked Mr Hargrave - she had said this in her diary. She must not marry him. She must marry *me!* I hurried home and told Rose and my mother that I was going away.

That night, a lot of snow fell. The journey took a long time because the horses had to pull the coach through the thick snow. It was Thursday morning when we reached the nearest town to Grassdale. I got out of the coach and asked the way to the village. I was tired, but I started to walk there at once.

I reached the little church at Grassdale at last. There were several carriages outside the small building. A crowd of excited people was standing by the church door. As I pushed through the crowd, someone shouted: 'They're coming out!'

I was too late! The bride and bridegroom came out of the church. Everyone, except me, shouted their good wishes.

The bride had a veil⁵⁷ over her face, but I could see her hair. It was blonde, not dark. She was not my Helen!

I looked at the bridegroom. It was Frederick Lawrence! He looked at me and shouted in surprise.

'Hello, Markham!' he cried. 'I'm glad that you came.'

He turned to the pretty girl by his side and she lifted her veil.

'Esther, this is my friend, Gilbert Markham/ he said. 'Markham, this is my bride, Mrs Lawrence. She was Miss Esther Hargrave.'



I bowed to the bride and shook Lawrence's hand happily. 'Why didn't you tell me about this?' I said.

'I *did* tell you. I wrote you a letter,' he replied.

'I didn't receive it,' I said.

'Then why ...?' he began, but I shook my head. This was not the time to tell him the truth. Very soon, the bride and bridegroom got into their carriage and drove away.

Grassdale Manor stood just outside the village. It was a fine house, with pleasant gardens. I did not expect Helen to be there and I was right. A servant told me that Mrs Huntingdon was with her aunt at Staningley.

'Then I must go to Staningley,' I said to myself.

I walked slowly back to the town. I was very tired now. At an inn, I asked about a coach to take me near to Staningley. A coach was going there early the next day.

I slept well at the inn that night. After a good breakfast, I was ready for my journey.

It was a bright, cold day. There had been no more snow and the journey was fast and pleasant. As we came near to Staningley, the other passengers began to gossip.

‘All this land belonged to old Mr Maxwell.’ one passenger said. ‘Now he’s dead, and his niece owns all of his property.’

‘All of it?’ another passenger asked.

‘Yes. Staningley Hall and all the land around it. It’s a very fine house. Maxwell’s niece is a young widow. And I hear that she’s good-looking. She won’t be a widow for long!’

They were talking about Helen! So she was a very rich woman. What chance did I have?

We were driving along by Maxwell’s home now. The coach stopped.

‘Staningley Hall!’ the driver shouted.

I picked up my bag and got out of the coach. I stood in front of the gates of Staningley Hall and looked at the large house and its beautiful gardens. All my hopes and dreams were disappearing. I could not ask Helen to marry me. She was rich and I was a simple farmer.

‘Goodbye my dear Helen, goodbye,’ I said.

At that moment, a carriage drove along the road towards me. Suddenly, I heard a voice that I recognized.

‘Mama, Mama, here’s Mr Markham!’ It was young Arthur Huntingdon.

And then I heard the voice that I loved so much.

‘Oh, aunt, it’s Mr Markham!’ Helen cried. ‘Driver! Stop the carriage!’

A hand wearing a black glove came out of the carriage window. It was my dear Helen’s hand! For a moment, I held it tightly in my own.

‘Were you coming to see us?’ Helen asked quietly. ‘Or were you only passing by?’

‘I... I was coming to see the house/ I said.

The house/ she said sadly. ‘Do you want to come in?’

‘Of course I do/ I replied.

Arthur had jumped out of the carriage. He ran towards me, smiling happily.

‘Don’t you think that I have grown, sir?’ he said.

I looked at the handsome boy and I smiled too.

‘Yes. You’re much taller,’ I said.

‘Arthur, bring Mr Markham into the house,’ Helen said.

Then the carriage drove on through the gates. Arthur walked with me towards the house, talking all the time.

When we entered at the house, Helen and her aunt were in the sitting-room. Helen looked more beautiful than ever. I bowed to Mrs Maxwell, before she left the room.

Helen looked at me sadly.

‘How are you all at Linden-Car?’ she asked softly. ‘Has anything changed? Is anyone married? Or is anyone going to be married?’

‘Nothing has changed,’ I said quietly. ‘I haven’t changed at all. But I was afraid that you’d forgotten me.’

Helen asked Arthur to go and get a book from another room. We were alone for the first time. I did not speak.

‘Gilbert, what’s the matter with you?’ Helen asked quickly. ‘You *have* changed.’

‘No, I haven’t,’ I replied. ‘But things are different now. You’re a rich woman, Helen. I’m a farmer ... as I was before.’

‘But what about your *feelings*? Have *they* changed?’ she cried.

‘My feelings are the same,’ I said. ‘It’s wrong to talk about them now. I must go.’

‘In the past, it was wrong to talk about our feelings,’ Helen replied. ‘But it isn’t wrong *now*. Gilbert, if you really want me, you must take everything that I have too. I am yours, if you want me. Do you want me?’

‘Of course I do!’ I cried. ‘Dearest Helen! I want you now and forever.’ I put my arms around her and held her.

Then she moved away and stood by the window.

‘We can’t marry immediately,’ Helen said quietly. ‘My aunt doesn’t know you. Perhaps in a year —’

‘I *cannot* wait a year, dearest Helen!’ I cried. ‘It’s winter now. You don’t want your second wedding to be in the winter too. Let’s get married in the spring!’

‘No, Gilbert,’ she said. ‘That is too soon. Next autumn, perhaps.’

‘Let’s marry in the summer,’ I said.

‘Very well. We’ll marry at the end of summer. You must be happy with that.’

‘This is how happy I am!’ I said. And I pulled Helen into my arms and kissed her.

A few minutes later, Arthur came back into the room and I kissed him too. He was my son now, as well as Helen’s.

I ate lunch at Staningley Hall and I talked to Mrs Maxwell. Helen’s aunt and I were soon friends.

In the evening, I returned home to Linden-Car and told my mother and Rose the news. At first they were surprised. But before our wedding day, they had begun to love Helen too.

Helen and I were married on a beautiful day in August. Helen, Arthur and I made our home at Staningley. Mrs Maxwell lived with us, until her death.

Helen and I are very happy. We have children of our own now and Arthur is becoming a fine young man. Unhappy times are behind us. We hope for many more happy years together.

— THE END —

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