

Love among the Haystacks

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D. H. LAWRENCE

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Love among the Haystacks



It is hay-making time on the Wookey farm. Two brothers are building the haystack, but thinking about other things – about young women, and love. There are angry words, and then a fight between the brothers. But

the work goes on, visitors come and go, and the long hot summer day slowly turns to evening.

Then the sun goes down, covering the world with a carpet of darkness. From the hedges around the hayfield comes the rich, sweet smell of wild flowers, and the hay will make a fine, soft bed . . . (Word count 7,030)

- ◀ STAGE 6
- ◀ STAGE 5
- ◀ STAGE 4
- ◀ STAGE 3
- ◀ **STAGE 2**
- ◀ STAGE 1
- ◀ STARTER

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LOVE AMONG THE HAYSTACKS

When the grass is tall and sweet and full of summer sunshine, it is time to cut it down and make hay – hay that will hold that summer sweetness all through the cold, hungry winter months. But the work must be done quickly, to keep the new hay safe from wind and rain. Every farmer knows this.

Geoffrey and Maurice know it too. They are farmer's sons, and work hard, building the haystack. But what do these young men think about, while they work under the hot summer sun? They think about a girl, a German girl called Paula, a girl in a yellow dress, a girl with bright eyes and a funny, quick way of talking. They can see her now, up the hill, in the garden of a house next to the hayfield. Maurice has kissed her, but Geoffrey has not, and Geoffrey burns with hate for his brother. He finds words difficult. No woman will ever love him, he thinks, because he cannot find the words to win her love.

But love does not always need words, and who knows what the day or the night will bring? Paula is not the only young woman to visit the hayfield that day . . .

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Two brothers

The two large fields lay on a hillside that looked south. Most of the hay was already cut, and in the bright sunlight the fields were now golden green.

Across the hill, half-way up, was a high hedge, and they were building the haystack just above this hedge. It was a tall haystack, a great untidy thing standing high above the hedge, but the hay itself was light and silvery in colour, and looked as soft as a cloud. Not far away was another, finished haystack.

The empty wagon was going downhill, and in the far corner of the bottom field, where the hay was still uncut, the full wagon was just beginning its slow journey up the hill to the haystack. The hay-makers worked on, cutting the tall hay, while the wagon climbed the hill.

The two brothers on top of the haystack were having a moment's rest, waiting for the full wagon to arrive. They stood up to their knees in the soft hay, while above them the golden sun burned down, and all around them was the hot sweet smell of the silvery hay. The only two things in the world were hay and sun.

Maurice, the younger brother, was a good-looking young man of twenty-one. He was strong, full of life, with a quick bright eye and a ready smile.

'You thought,' he said to his brother, 'you were very clever last night, didn't you?' He pushed his fork into the hay, and stared at his brother, with a smile on his face.

'No. No, I didn't,' replied Geoffrey. He turned away, frowning. He was a tall, heavy young man, a year older than Maurice. He was full of strong feelings, but they burned silently inside him. He could never find words to say; he could never look anybody in the eye. He always thought the world was looking at him, and laughing.

'Oh, you did, I know you did.' Maurice laughed. 'It was your turn to sleep in the hayfield last night, but you went and hid yourself, so I had to go in your place.'

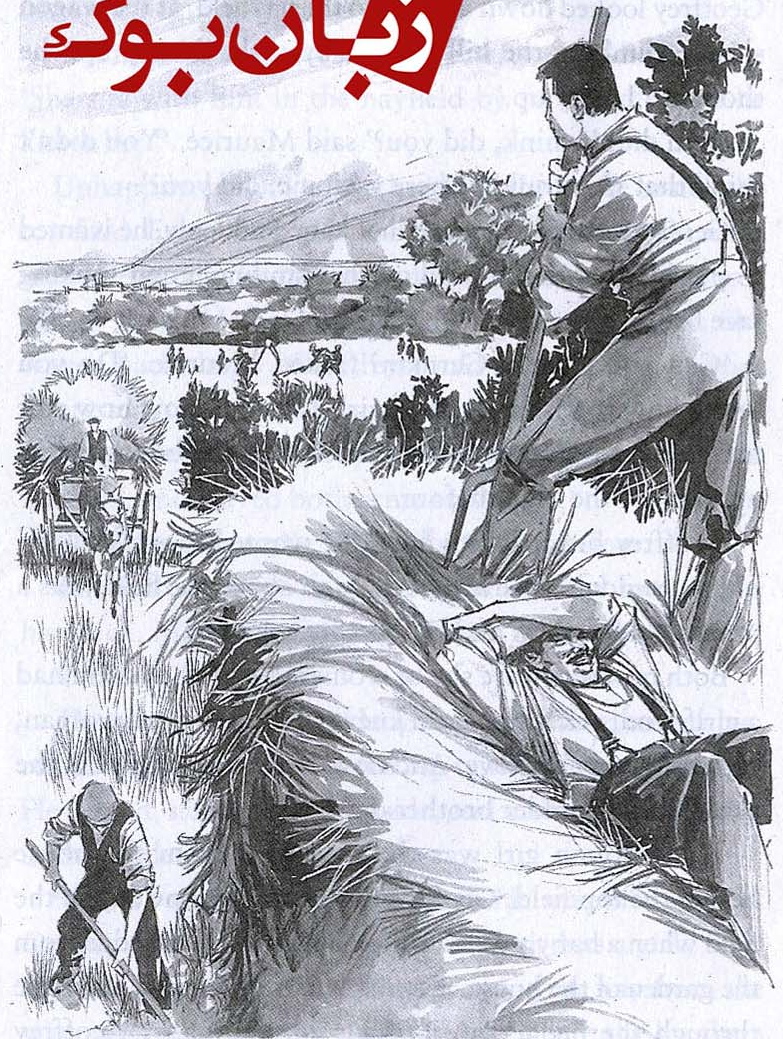
'I didn't hide myself,' said Geoffrey angrily. 'Father sent me to get some wood—'

'Oh yes, oh yes,' laughed Maurice. 'But you don't know, do you? You don't know what happened last night, up here in the hayfield.'

He laughed again, and threw himself down on his back in the hay. He put his arms across his face and lay there, smiling and remembering the night before.

Geoffrey leant on his fork and stared out over the fields. Far away was the city of Nottingham, and between, the country lay under the burning sun, with here and

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Geoffrey leant on his fork and stared out over the fields.

there the smoke from a factory going up into the sky. Geoffrey looked down again into the hayfield, at the wagon slowly climbing the hill to the haystack. 'Hurry up,' he thought. 'Hurry up.'

'You didn't think, did you?' said Maurice. 'You didn't think that *she* would be here with me, did you?'

Geoffrey stared at him, full of hate. Suddenly, he wanted to put his foot down hard on that smiling, good-looking face below him.

'Can you sing in German?' asked Maurice. 'Do you know how to kiss a German girl? Do you know how soft her neck is?' He laughed excitedly, remembering every moment of the night before.

Geoffrey burned with hate. He wanted to walk away, but he couldn't. The haystack, high above the field, was a prison holding him and his brother together.

Both brothers were shy of women. Neither of them had a girlfriend; neither of them knew what to say to a woman, or how to win her love. And now Maurice was first in the game, and the older brother did not like it.

The German girl was the governess from the house beside the top field. Geoffrey was working one day in the field when a baby pushed through a hole in the hedge from the garden of the house. Seconds later the German girl came through the hedge too, looking for the baby. Geoffrey helped her to catch the little boy, and then they stood

talking for a while. Geoffrey liked her bright eyes, and her funny, quick way of talking.

'But now it's Maurice she likes best, not me,' he thought. 'She sits with him in the hayfield by moonlight, and he kisses her.'

Unhappily, he looked up the hill to the house beside the top field. From the top of the haystack he could see right into the garden, and there, suddenly, he saw the girl, in a yellow dress. He held up his arm and waved to her. She waved back, lazily. Geoffrey could see that she was not interested in him, and was waiting for Maurice.

Then Maurice stood up, and saw the girl himself. He laughed, and waved both arms at her.

'What's going on?' called a voice from below.

The full wagon was now standing at the foot of the haystack. Maurice's face turned deep red.

'Nothing!' he called.

There was the sound of laughing below, and soon a big, red-faced man climbed to the top of the hay in the wagon. He turned, stared up the hillside, and saw the yellow dress in the garden.

'Oh, it's a girl, is it?' he laughed. He was the father of Geoffrey and Maurice. 'Yes, I *thought* it was a girl.'

They began working again, throwing the hay from the wagon up to the top of the haystack. There the brothers had to place the hay carefully, building a stack with four

strong walls which would not fall over. It was hard work. The father threw up great forkfuls of hay, Geoffrey then passed them along to Maurice, who built up the haystack's walls.

But Geoffrey was full of angry feelings. Usually he threw the hay into the places where Maurice wanted it. Now, he threw it into the middle of the stack, and Maurice had to work twice as hard, carrying it out to the walls. Once, a great forkful of hay from Geoffrey hit Maurice on the back.

'Be careful!' called Maurice angrily. 'And why are you throwing it in the middle, you stupid man?'

'I'll throw it where I like,' answered Geoffrey.

They worked on, both brothers angry now. They got hotter and tireder, and still the hay came up from the wagon below.

'There, that's the end,' the father called at last from the wagon. Geoffrey threw the last forkful into the middle of the stack, then stood still, watching Maurice.

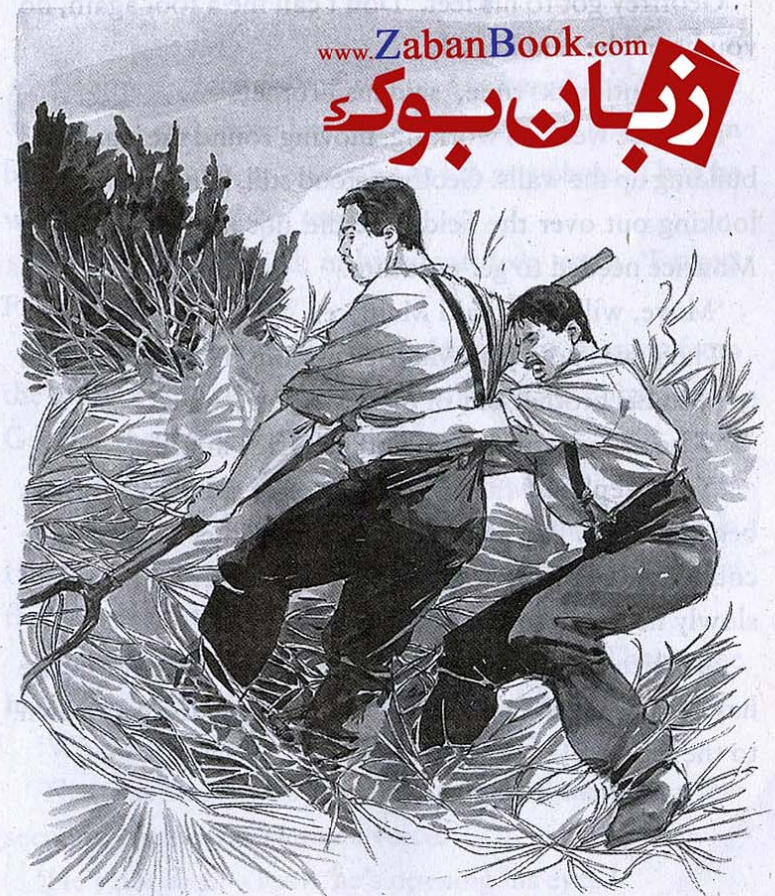
'This side wall isn't very strong,' came the father's voice from below. 'You must build it up more.'

'No, it's fine,' called Maurice crossly.

Geoffrey moved across to the side wall, and pushed his fork down into the hay. He pushed harder, and the top of the haystack began to move just a little.

'What are you doing, you fool?' cried Maurice.

'Don't you call me a fool,' said Geoffrey, and he pushed again on his fork. Maurice jumped across to him, and pulled him away from the wall. It was not easy to stand in the soft bed of hay, and Geoffrey fell over.



Maurice pulled Geoffrey away from the wall.

Maurice called down to his father below. 'This wall is fine. It's not going to fall down.'

'All right,' came the father's voice. 'We'll be off now to bring the next wagon up here.'

Geoffrey got to his feet. 'Don't call me a fool again, do you hear?' he said heavily.

'Not until next time,' said his brother.

Maurice went on working, moving round the stack and building up the walls. Geoffrey stood still, hand on his fork, looking out over the fields. He did not move even when Maurice needed to get past him.

'Move, will you?' said Maurice.

There was no reply. Maurice put out his arm and tried to push his brother out of his way.

'Who are you pushing?' said Geoffrey angrily.

'You,' replied Maurice, and at once the two brothers began to fight. Each pushed against the other as hard as he could, but Geoffrey was the heavier of the two men, and slowly he began to win.

Maurice had to move back, but his feet caught in the hay, and he fell over the side of the stack, all the way down to the ground.

The German girl

Geoffrey's face turned white. He heard the fall. He stood still, listening. He could hear no sound from below; he could hear no sound at all, anywhere. Then he was filled with sudden terror.

'Father!' he shouted, in his great deep voice. 'Father! FATHER!'

The cry rang across the fields. Men came running from the bottom field, and a girl ran down across the upper field. Geoffrey heard her strange, wild voice.

'Ah-h!' she cried out. 'Ah-h! Are you dead?'

On the top of the stack Geoffrey did not move or speak. He was too afraid to go down, too afraid even to hide in the hay. He listened to the voices below.

First to arrive was his older brother, Henry. Then came his father, and Bill, one of the farm workers.

'What's the matter? What's happened? Oh no!'

That was his father's voice. They were all silent for a few seconds, then came Henry's voice.

'He's not dead - look, he's opening his eyes.'

Geoffrey heard, but he was not pleased. Half of him

ACTIVITIES

While Reading

Read Chapter 1, then match these people with the sentences.
(You can use the names more than once.)

Geoffrey / Maurice / the German girl

- 1 _____ slept in the hayfield last night.
- 2 _____ has never kissed a girl.
- 3 _____ works at the house near the hayfield.
- 4 _____ is interested in _____, not _____.
- 5 _____ pushes _____ off the haystack.

Before you read Chapter 2, what do you think happens?
Choose one answer for each sentence.

- 1 Maurice . . .
a) breaks a leg. b) is all right. c) breaks his neck.
- 2 The German girl . . .
a) cries. b) kisses Maurice. c) hits Geoffrey.
- 3 Geoffrey . . .
a) feels pleased. b) feels angry. c) feels afraid.

Read Chapters 2 and 3. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Rewrite the false ones with the correct information.

- 1 Maurice was badly hurt by his fall.

ACTIVITIES: *While Reading*

- 2 Paula said that Geoffrey knocked Maurice over the side of the haystack.
- 3 Maurice told his father about the fight with Geoffrey.
- 4 Geoffrey did not say anything about the fight.
- 5 Paula worked for the vicar, but the vicar did not like her.
- 6 At dinner Maurice asked Paula lots of questions.
- 7 A tramp came into the field and asked for food.
- 8 The father gave the tramp something to eat.
- 9 The tramp's young woman had something to eat.
- 10 Geoffrey understood how the young woman felt.

Before you read Chapter 4, can you guess who will stay at the hayfield when the men stop work?

- 1 Geoffrey 2 Maurice 3 Henry

Read Chapter 4, then put these sentences in the right order for the chapter.

- 1 Paula helped Maurice carry the cover up the ladder.
- 2 After the others left, Maurice washed himself in the river.
- 3 Geoffrey went to the shed and lay down on the hay bed.
- 4 The ladder fell down and Geoffrey left it there.
- 5 Paula came, and rode with Maurice across the hayfield.
- 6 Paula and Maurice stayed on top of the haystack.
- 7 Geoffrey arrived and walked across to the stacks.
- 8 It began to rain.