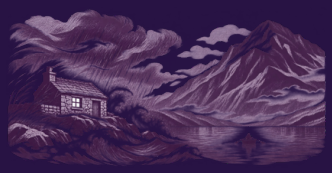
NEUTRAL TONES

Thomas Hardy



WHAT HAPPENS? A remembered meeting in a bleak landscape becomes an image of failed love.

BIG IDEA **A failed relationship makes one memory into a lasting lens through which the speaker interprets love.**

FOUR EVIDENCE FRAGMENTS · ZOOM IN, THEN EXPLAIN

“the sun was white, as though chidden of God,”

Colour imagery

The sun fails to provide the warmth conventionally associated with it.

“a few leaves lay on the starving sod;”

Personification

The earth seems deprived of nourishment, reflecting the relationship.

“The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing”

Superlative paradox

A smile, normally a sign of life, becomes an image of emotional extinction.

“keen lessons that love deceives,”

Personification

The speaker converts a particular loss into a broad, pessimistic lesson.

FORM

Four quatrains with enclosing ABBA rhyme; the final stanza returns to details from the opening.

CONTEXT

Written in 1867, Hardy’s lyric uses a remembered landscape to test optimistic expectations about love.

COMPARE IT WITH…

When We Two Parted: enduring hurt.
Winter Swans: weather and relationships.

VOICE, TONE & FEELINGS · FOLLOW THE SHIFTS

Pond and winter

BLEAK

Colour and life appear drained from the setting.

Eyes and smile

BITTER

The lovers’ exchanges make intimacy seem exhausted and hostile.

Later lesson

DISILLUSIONED

The remembered scene becomes a general belief about deception in love.

FULL POEM: use your anthology. Evidence fragments are prompts for close reading.

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