Part I
“I have a Love I love too well
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor:
I have a Love I love too well,
To whom, ere she was mine,
‘Such is my love for you,’ I said,
‘That you shall have to hood your head
A silken kerchief crimson-red,
Wove finest of the fine.’

“And since this Love, for one mad moon
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor,
Since this my Love for one mad moon
Did clasp me as her king,
I snatched a silk-piece red and rare
From off a stall at Priddy Fair,
For handkerchief to hood her hair
When we went gallanting.

“Full soon the four weeks neared their end
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor:
And when the four weeks neared their end,
And their swift sweets outwore,
I said, ‘What shall I do to own
Those beauties bright as tulips blown,
And keep you here with me alone
As mine for evermore?’

“And as she drowsed within my van
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor —
And as she drowsed within my van,
And dawning turned to day,
She heavily raised her sloe-back eyes
And murmured back in softest wise,  
‘One more thing, and the charms you prize  
Are yours henceforth for aye.

“And swear I will I'll never go  
While Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor  
To meet the Cornish Wrestler Joe  
For dance and dallyings.  
If you'll to yon cathedral shrine,  
And finger from the chest divine  
Treasure to buy me ear-drops fine,  
And richly jewelled rings.’

“I said: ‘I am one who has gathered gear  
From Marlbury Downs to Dunkery Tor,  
Who has gathered gear for many a year  
From mansion, mart and fair;  
But at God’s house I've stayed my hand,  
Hearing within me some command —  
Curbed by a law not of the land  
From doing damage there!’

“Whereat she pouts, this Love of mine,  
As Dunkery pouts to Exon Moor,  
And still she pouts, this Love of mine,  
So cityward I go.  
But ere I start to do the thing,  
And speed my soul’s imperilling  
For one who is my ravishing  
And all the joy I know,

“I come to lay this charge on thee —  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor —  
I come to lay this charge on thee  
With solemn speech and sign:  
Should things go ill, and my life pay  
For botchery in this rash assay,  
You are to take hers likewise — yea,  
The month the law takes mine.

“For should my rival, Wrestler Joe,
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor —
My reckless rival, Wrestler Joe,
    My Love’s bedwinner be,
My rafted spirit would not rest,
But wander weary and distrest
Throughout the world in wild protest:
    The thought nigh maddens me!”

Part II
Thus did he speak — this brother of mine —
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor,
Born at my birth of mother of mine,
    And forthwith went his way
To dare the deed some coming night . . .
I kept the watch with shaking sight,
The moon at moments breaking bright,
    At others glooming gray.

For three full days I heard no sound
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor,
I heard no sound at all around
    Whether his fay prevailed,
Or one more foul the master were,
Till some afoot did tidings bear
How that, for all his practised care,
    He had been caught and jailed.

They had heard a crash when twelve had chimed
By Mendip east of Dunkery Tor,
When twelve had chimed and moonlight climbed;
    They watched, and he was tracked
By arch and aisle and saint and knight
Of sculptured stonework sheeted white
In the cathedral’s ghostly light,
    And captured in the act.

Yes; for this Love he loved too well
Where Dunkery sights the Severn shore,
All for this Love he loved too well
    He burst the holy bars,
Seized golden vessels from the chest
To buy her ornaments of the best,
At her ill-witchery’s request
And lure of eyes like stars. . . .

When blustering March confused the sky
In Toneborough Town by Exon Moor,
When blustering March confused the sky
They stretched him; and he died.

Down in the crowd where I, to see
The end of him, stood silently,
With a set face he lipped to me —
“Remember.” “Ay!” I cried.

By night and day I shadowed her
From Toneborough Deane to Dunkery Tor,
I shadowed her asleep, astir,
And yet I could not bear —
Till Wrestler Joe anon began
To figure as her chosen man,
And took her to his shining van —
To doom a form so fair!

He made it handsome for her sake —
And Dunkery smiled to Exon Moor —
He made it handsome for her sake,
Painting it out and in:
And on the door of apple-green
A bright brass knocker soon was seen,
And window-curtains white and clean
For her to sit within.

And all could see she clave to him
As cleaves a cloud to Dunkery Tor,
Yea, all could see she clave to him,
And every day I said,
“A pity it seems to part those two
That hourly grow to love more true:
Yet she’s the wanton woman who
Sent one to swing till dead!”

That blew to blazing all my hate,
While Dunkery frowned on Exon Moor,
And when the river swelled, her fate
Came to her pitilessly. . . .
I dogged her, crying: “Across that plank
They use as bridge to reach yon bank
A coat and hat lie limp and dank:
Your goodman’s, can they be?”

She paled, and went, I close behind —
And Exon frowned to Dunkery Tor,
She went, and I came up behind
And tipped the plank that bore
Her, fleetly flitting across to eye
What such might bode. She slid awry;
And from the current came a cry,
A gurgle; and no more.

How that befell no mortal knew
From Marlbury Downs to Exon Moor;
No mortal knew that deed undue
But he who schemed the crime,
Which night still covers. . . . But in dream
Those ropes of hair upon the stream
He sees, and he will hear that scream
Until his judgment-time.

1911

(From The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan, 1930)