



The Virgin and the Gipsy

D. H. Lawrence

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The Virgin and the Gypsy is a short story by English author D. H. Lawrence. It was written in 1926 and published posthumously in 1930. Today it is often entitled The Virgin and the Gipsy which can lead to confusion: first and early editions had the spelling Gypsy.

The tale relates the story of two sisters, daughters of an Anglican vicar, who return from overseas to a drab, lifeless vicarage in the post-First World War East Midlands. Their mother has run off, a scandal that is not talked about by the family. Their new home is dominated by a blind and selfish grandmother along with her mean spirited, poisonous daughter. The two girls, Yvette and Lucille, risk being suffocated by the life they now lead at the Vicarage. They try their utmost every day to bring colour and fun into their lives. Out on a trip with some friends one Sunday afternoon, Yvette encounters a Gypsy and his family and this meeting reinforces her disenchantment with the oppressive domesticity of the vicarage. It also awakens in her a sexual curiosity she has not felt before, despite having admirers. She also befriends a married Jewish woman who has left her husband and is living with her paramour. When her father finds out about this friendship, he threatens her with "the asylum" and Yvette realizes that at his heart her father, too, is mean spirited and shallow. At the end of the novel, Yvette is rescued during a surprise flood that washes through the home and drowns the grandmother. The rescuer who breathes life and warmth back into the virginal Yvette is the free-spirited Gypsy. Yvette's life is changed forever after.

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