

you birth is such an awful, bloody, terrible, painful thing. It was born with the cord round its neck. It had strangled itself the poor, poor, little tiny thing and I looked at it before they took it away (*Bitterly*.) and I thought, you lucky, lucky bastard, how much better if I'd have been born like that.

She starts to sob for the first time since the baby was born. ELLEN looks at her and puts her arms round her and lets her cry.

Hindle Wakes

Stanley Houghton

The scene is the breakfast room of the Jeffcote's house in Hindle Vale at 9 p.m. on Tuesday August 7, 1912. Fanny Hawthorn, a weaver at Daisy Bank Mill in Hindle, Lancs, has spent the weekend with Alan Jeffcote, son of the mill owner. Although Alan is engaged to Beatrice Farrar, a girl of his own class, the respective fathers decide that he and Fanny must wed. But Fanny, a young girl with a mind of her own, has not been reckoned with. Fanny is about 17, sturdy, determined and attractive.

FANNY. Don't you kid yourself, my lad! It isn't because I'm afraid of spoiling YOUR life that I'm refusing you, but because I'm afraid of spoiling MINE! . . . I don't know as money's much to go by when it comes to a job of this sort. It's more important to get the right chap. Suppose it didn't last? Weddings brought about this road have a knack of turning out badly. Would you ever forget it was your father bade you marry me? No fear! You'd bear me a grudge all my life for that. You wouldn't be able to help it. You're a nice, clean, well-made lad. Oh, ay! I like you right enough. . . . I WAS fond of you, in a way. . . . But love you? Good heavens, of course not! Why on earth should I love you? You were just someone to have a bit of fun with. You were an amusement – a lark. . . . How much more did you care for me? You're a man and I was your little fancy. Well, I'm a woman and YOU were MY little fancy. You wouldn't prevent a woman enjoying herself as well as a man, if she takes it into her head? . . . You're not good enough for me. The chap Fanny Hawthorn weds has got to be made

Note: *The Gut Girls* was first performed at the Albany Empire, London on 2 November 1988.