D.H Lawrence’s
WOMEN IN LOVE
(Short Summary)

The Characters

The story is set in England where the four main characters live:

- **Ursula Brangwen** is the older sister and works as a teacher. She will fall in love with Rupert Birkin. Ursula is weary of marriage for women and sees it as a trap; she struggles with this concept and her role as a woman.
- **Gudrun Brangwen**, the younger sister, is an artist who pairs off with Gerald Crich. She is a passionate character and is often seen struggling to align her personality with social norms of women of the time period.
- **Rupert Birkin** works as a school inspector and is often thought to be semi-autobiographical of Lawrence. He’s written as a passionate character with strong ideas. He is often ill.
- **Gerald Crich** is a complex character who is heir to a coal-mine fortune. He struggles with the past and present ideas of men and their role in society.

Plot Summary

The book opens with a conversation between the two sisters about marriage. They later decide to go to a wedding, and meet their future loves, Gerald and Rupert. We see an early instance of modern views versus new ideas of love play out as Rupert grapples with an old flame, Hermione Roddice, who wants Rupert to marry and dominate her. He begins to fall in love with the more modern Ursula, though. Eventually things come to a head when Hermione tries to smash Rupert’s head with a paperweight, and Rupert decides he’d rather not be involved with Hermione Good call!

Rupert and Ursula’s relationship develops quickly. Sometimes Ursula is sure of her love for Rupert, and sometimes she needs to be reaffirmed. Rupert, though, is sure of his feelings and wants to know her as deeply as possible. However, not much later Rupert suddenly realizes he's in love with Gerald and pushes him for a vow of commitment, which Gerald is conflicted about. Though he loves Rupert, the male-male relationship and his growing love for Gudrun confuse him.
The storyline picks up at this point, as the characters begin reacting to each other and letting their emotions run the show. After some back-and-forth, Ursula realizes she's in love with Rupert and tells him she will marry him. But there’s a little snafu with the proposal (we’ll talk more about this later). Rupert angrily leaves Ursula's house and goes to seek comfort in Gerald, where the two wrestle in a very suggestive way. Lawrence uses these and other interactions to make readers wonder if relationships are themselves complicated or if we are the ones complicating them with our assumptions and ideals.

Ursula and Rupert marry and the foursome decide to take a vacation to the Swiss Alps. Things start off swimmingly for the couples but soon take a nose dive when a fellow traveler, Herr Loerke, starts flirting with Gudrun, who is excited by the new man. Gudrun had initially felt a strong attraction to Gerald but, because he lacks a certain passion, her feelings are wavering. Lawrence leaves us wondering if Gerald is truly aware of Gudrun's feelings. One afternoon, Gerald finds Loerke and Gudrun on a picnic and becomes enraged, almost strangling Gudrun to death. At the last minute he lets her go and storms off into the mountains, where he dies of exposure to the cold. Gerald must have known it was unsafe to go off alone in these conditions; was his hike suicidal because of Gudrun? Gudrun is devastated, despite the fact that she wasn’t sure of her feelings for Gerald. The book ends with a conversation between Rupert and Ursula, as he argues that it would have been possible for the two men to have had a close intimate relationship without encroaching on Rubert and Ursula's marriage.
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