



Paul meets Clara

One day, while walking in town, Paul meets Miriam who introduces her friend Clara Dawes to him.

David Herbert
Lawrence
Sons and Lovers
(1913)

Chapter 8

One day, as he was going up Castle Gate, he met Miriam. He had seen her on the Sunday, and had not expected to meet her in town. She was walking with a rather striking¹ woman, blonde, with a sullen² expression, and a defiant³ carriage. It was strange how Miriam, in her bowed⁴, meditative bearing, looked dwarfed⁵ beside this woman with the handsome shoulders. Miriam watched Paul searchingly⁶. His gaze was on the stranger, who ignored him. The girl saw his masculine spirit rear⁷ its head.

'Hello!' he said, 'you didn't tell me you were coming to town.'

'No,' replied Miriam, half apologetically⁷. 'I drove in to Cattle Market with father.'

He looked at her companion.

'I've told you about Mrs Dawes,' said Miriam huskily⁸; she was nervous. 'Clara, do you know Paul?'

'I think I've seen him before,' replied Mrs Dawes indifferently, as she shook hands with him. She had scornful⁹ grey eyes, a skin like white honey, and a full mouth, with a slightly lifted¹⁰ upper lip that did not know whether it was raised in scorn¹¹ of all men or out of eagerness to be kissed, but which believed the former. She carried her head back, as if she had drawn away in contempt¹², perhaps from men also. She wore a large, dowdy hat of black beaver¹³, and a sort of slightly affected simple dress that made her look rather sack-like¹⁴. She was evidently poor, and had not much taste. Miriam usually looked nice.

[...]

Paul remembered that Clara Dawes was the daughter of an old friend of Mrs Leivers¹⁵. Miriam had sought her out because she had once been Spiral overseer¹⁶ at Jordan's¹⁷, and because her husband, Baxter Dawes, was smith¹⁸ for the factory, making the irons for cripple instruments¹⁹, and so on. Through her Miriam felt she got into direct contact with Jordan's, and could estimate better Paul's position. But Mrs Dawes was separated from her husband, and had taken up Women's Rights. She was supposed to be clever. It interested Paul.

Baxter Dawes he knew and disliked. The smith was a man of thirty-one or thirty-two. He came occasionally through Paul's corner – a big, well-set man, also striking to look at, and handsome. There was a peculiar similarity between himself and his wife. He had the same white skin, with a clear, golden tinge. His hair was of soft brown, his moustache was golden. And he had a similar defiance²⁰ in his bearing and manner. But then came the difference. His eyes, dark brown and quick-shifting, were dissolute. They protruded²¹ very slightly, and his eyelids hung over them in a way that was half hate. His mouth, too, was sensual. His whole manner was of cowed²² defiance, as if he were ready to knock anybody down who disapproved of him – perhaps because he really disapproved of himself.

[...]

Clara Dawes had no children. When she had left her husband the home had been broken up, and she had gone to live with her mother. Dawes lodged with his sister. In the same house was a sister-in-law, and somehow Paul knew that this girl, Louie Travers, was now Dawes's woman. She was a handsome, insolent hussy²³, who mocked at the youth, and yet flushed²⁴ if he walked along to the station with her as she went home.

- 1 striking. Singolare.
- 2 sullen. Accigliata.
- 3 defiant. Spavaldo.
- 4 bowed. Rassegnato.
- 5 dwarfed. Piccola.
- 6 searchingly. In modo indagatore.
- 7 half apologetically. Quasi per scusarsi.
- 8 huskily. Con voce roca.
- 9 scornful. Sprezzanti.
- 10 lifted. Sollevato.
- 11 scorn. Sdegno.
- 12 contempt. Disprezzo.
- 13 dowdy ... beaver. Cappello trasandato di castoreo scuro.
- 14 sack-like. Somigliante ad un sacco.
- 15 Mrs Leivers. La mamma di Miriam.
- 16 Spiral overseer. Sorvegliante nel reparto spirali.
- 17 Jordan's. La fabbrica dove lavorava Paul.
- 18 smith. Fabbro.
- 19 cripple instruments. Strumenti per storpi.
- 20 defiance. Sfida.
- 21 protruded. Sporgevano.
- 22 cowed. Atterrita.
- 23 hussy. Donnaccia.
- 24 flushed. Arrossiva.

**LITERARY COMPETENCE****> VOCABULARY****1 READ** the text and match the highlighted words with their Italian translation.

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | desiderio, brama | 5 | abitava |
| 2 | sfuggenti, che si spostano rapidamente | 6 | portamento |
| 3 | sollevare | 7 | affettato, pretenzioso |
| 4 | disgregata | | |

> COMPETENCE: READING AND UNDERSTANDING A TEXT**2 READ** lines 1-19 again and find out

- 1 where Paul met Miriam one day;
- 2 who she is walking with;
- 3 whether Paul is interested in the stranger;
- 4 what the stranger looks like.

3 READ the second part of the text again and answer the following questions.

- 1 Who is Clara Dawes?
- 2 What is her husband?
- 3 Why has Miriam sought her out?
- 4 What movement has Clara taken up?
- 5 What is peculiar of Baxter Dawes and his wife?
- 6 Where do Baxter and Clara live?

> COMPETENCE: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING A TEXT**4 IDENTIFY** the point of view adopted.**5 COMPLETE** the table below about Clara and Miriam. Then answer the questions below.

	Miriam	Clara
Attitude		
Figure		

What kind of women are Clara and Miriam? Which features in their personality are Victorian and which modern?
How would you define Clara's attitude to men?



- 6 FOCUS** on Baxter Dawes. Complete the table indicating similarities and differences between Baxter and his wife. Then answer the question below.

	Baxter	Clara
Similarities		
Differences		

What does the similarity between these characters point out?

- 7 READ** lines 25-27 again. What does the word 'But' (line 25) connote? What is it linked to? What does 'It' (line 27) refer to? What interests Paul?

➤ **COMPETENCE: FINDING AND UNDERSTANDING LINKS AND RELATIONSHIPS**

- 8 DISCUSS.** Refer to 6.17 and state what this text highlights about Lawrence's relationship to women.