

## Desire Under the Elms Quotations

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### Quotes

***"Two enormous elms are on each side of the house... They appear to protect and at the same time subdue."***

—Description

**Exp:** This is a stage description. The elm trees stand over the house like something heavy. The trees keep the house always in their shadow. They symbolically show how the women's power (Maw's memory and Abbie's love) both give comfort and control, or trap the men.

***"Didn't he [Cabot] slave Maw t' death?"***

—Eben, Part 1, Scene 2

**Exp:** Eben says this angrily about his father. He believes Cabot worked his wife, Maw, too hard and caused her death. This line shows Eben's hate. This is also the reason why he wants revenge against his father.

***"We're free, old man!"***

—Simeon, Part 1, Scene 4

**Exp:** Simeon shouts this when he and Peter leave the farm for California. They feel free from their father's control. It shows their choice to leave hard farm life and seek a new, hopeful life.

***"It's cold in this house. It's uneasy."***

—Cabot, Part 2, Scene 2

**Exp:** Cabot says the house feels cold and uneasy. It means the house lacks love and comfort—a father does not love his son, and a wife does not love her husband. Everybody

wants the farm only. This line also suggests that something wrong is happening inside the house—the affair between Abbie and Eben.

***“But her [Abbie’s] eyes are fixed on his so burningly...”***

—Description, Part 2, Scene 2

**Exp:** This stage note describes how Abbie looks at Eben. Her eyes burn with desire. She is both loving and possessive toward Eben.

***“Let me kiss ye, Eben! I’ll be everythin’ she was t’ ye!”***

—Abbie, Part 2, Scene 3

**Exp:** Abbie begs Eben to let her kiss him and promises to be everything his mother was to him. She mixes motherly love with sexual love. This line shows how their relationship is strange and powerful — comfort and desire together.

***“I kin hear His (God’s) voice warnin’ me agen t’ be hard an’ stay on my farm. It’s agoin’ t’ be lonesomer now... God’s lonesome, hain’t He? God’s hard an’ lonesome!”***

—Ephraim Cabot, Part 3, Scene 3

**Exp:** At the end of the play, everyone leaves. Simeon and Peter went to California long ago. Now, Abbie and Eben go to jail. Cabot only stays behind, lonely with his farm. This is his tragedy. Cabot says he feels God telling him to be hard and stay on the farm. He thinks suffering and loneliness are God’s will. This is his wrong understanding of God. So, Cabot’s desire for his farm and his wrong understanding of God led him to his loneliness and tragedy.