A Map of the World Study Guide

A Map of the World by Jane Hamilton

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Plot Summary

A Map of the World by Jane Hamilton depicts from the perspectives of wife and husband the trauma of the death of a child, jailing on charges of child molestation, alienation from the community, and eventual acquittal.

Alice Goodwin is expecting a pleasant summer free from work as a school nurse when she gets distracted and a neighbor's child in her care drowns in the lake on the farm property owned by her and husband Howard. Alice is consumed by guilt and shuts out Howard. Howard desperately needs her to snap out of it and resume caring for their young children, Emma and Claire. She makes a scene, fleeing Lizzy Collins' funeral and cannot face her best friend, Lizzy's grieving mother, Theresa. Rallying to the point of attending a school board meeting about her job, Alice again flees to the restroom and then the school property. Between these events, she is questioned by police about a hateful student, Robbie Mackessy, whom she once slapped. Worried about all of the grief that she has called, Alice blurts out that she hurts everyone. The police take this as an admission that their investigation of molestation claimed by Robbie's mother is true and Alice is arrested next morning.

Bail is set so high that Alice settles into jail life. Howard concentrates on the hopeless task of caring for the children and keeping house while also performing the minimal chores required on a dairy farm. He comes to resent Alice for destroying the family and throwing them further into debt. Still, she is the family's rudder and he needs her back. Howard accepts help from Theresa but when they become too close for comfort, Theresa backs away. Overwhelmed, Howard sells the farm and moves the girls into a temporary apartment near the jail and court. He keeps the sale secret from Alice's lawyer, Paul Rafferty, and Alice herself. Alice comes to admire some of her fellow inmates but is hospitalized during an incident just before the bail money becomes available.

Alice is glad to be free and reunited with her children, but feels like in the farm she has lost something precious without being consulted. Resentment for Howard's controlling ways deepens. Emotions rise and fall as the trial goes forward, with Rafferty proving that Robbie fits the profile of a PTSS child traumatized by seeing his mother engaging in rough sex with a stranger. Acquitted, Alice hopes that her marriage can mend in Chicago.

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 1-2

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 1-2 Summary

Alice Goodwin recalls awakening to a wailing siren last June, but finds that all well on the farm. Howard is in his barn and Emma and Claire are asleep. She looks forward to the pond. Ill-tempered Emma rattles her but Alice is sure that she has everything under control. During the school year, Alice is a school nurse, but summers she and Theresa Collins, mother of Audrey and Lizzy, take turns watching all four girls. On the fateful morning, as Theresa drops off her girls, everything frazzles Alice and she is slow noticing that Lizzy is missing. Suspecting that Lizzy has gone to the pond, Alice panics, pulls the lifeless body out, and forgetting her training, performs ineffective CPR. Alice cannot be shaken from her belief that paramedics will save Lizzy. In Chapter 2, Alice spends three agonizing days and nights in the hospital lounge. Remembering no details, she knows that Lizzy is dead, but hopes that the doctors can work miracles. Robbie Mackessy's mother sneers at her. Robbie is one of her more troubling patients and certainly a victim of negligence. Although a skeptic, Alice prays. She takes an instant dislike of Rev. Nabor who ministers to relatives surrounding Lizzy. Alice recalls a recent fortune cookie about happiness being illusion and pain reality.

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 1-2 Analysis

Part 1 is narrated by Alice Goodwin, who in Chapter 1 describes her life with husband Howard, a philosophical dairy farmer and daughters Emma and Claire. Pages of delightful narrative are devoted to filling the reader's mind with the sights, sounds, and particularly smells of Alice's life. Alice has taken to tedious farm life surprisingly well and finds it comforting. Emma is her troublesome child. She describes a tantrum that begins the morning that utterly transforms the family's life. She also recalls how from the beginning, neighbors in Prairie Center have treated them as outsiders from the time a dreadlocks-wearing black friend visits. Tongue-in-cheek Alice notes that Midwesterners can be "polite about their revulsion" (pg. 11.) Howard does not notice the slights. The hostility soon escalates into hatred as scandal looms over morals charges against Alice. At this point, Alice merely alludes to this subtly, remarking how a single mistake can mushrooms. She opens with a meditation on how swiftly slip in truth can lead to the "bottom of the heap" (pg. 3.)

Alice contrasts the chaos of farm life with that her friend Theresa in the suburbs a short distance away. She alludes to the friendship between two characters of the old Dick Van Dyke Show, evoking the "golden age" of the early 1960s. Alice plans innocently to take her and Theresa's girls to the pond on the Goodwin property, to escape the scorching heat. Note that a drought is beginning. This will become crucial later in the novel. Alice is rattled and distracted when Theresa drops off her daughters, blustering about an unfolding family scandal. Alice takes the reader through the things that rattle her. Everything she does is justified except pausing to examine the maps of the world that

she draws as a child and happens upon in the course of her chores. These inspires the novel's title and become the factor on which Alice's guilt focuses.

Alice describes the drudgery of working as a school nurse at Blackwell Elementary, treating chronic stomachaches and forgotten Ritalin. When trouble arises there it comes as no surprise, given Alice's terse description. She also notes that she enters nursing to please her mother-in-law, Nellie, who pays for Alice's degree. Alice's bitterness at taking money and advice from Nellie grows throughout the novel as does Alice's realization that she is being irrational.

The discovery that Lizzy is missing, the frantic race to the pond, and attempted rescue are told disjointedly. Alice has no sense of time. She forgets her training. Fortunately, level-headed Howard hears her and calls EMS. Alice's description of Lizzy's eyes shows that she knows the girl is beyond help, but she refuses to believe that science cannot bring her back. This continues through the next chapter. Not an orthodox Christian, Alice for the first of many times tries to pray. She wonders if Lizzy sees light and God as she drowns. Religion plays a part in the novel. Alice speaks generally pejoratively, while Howard, raised a no-nonsense Lutheran, she notes, struggles with his faith as trials mount up. Note that Alice believes, rather irrationally, that Lizzy's father Dan, will stab her.

Chapter 2 describes the two-day, two-night vigil for Lizzy at the hospital. Not surprisingly, much of it deals with religion. Alice and Howard spend the time huddling together in the lounge, not being invited to Lizzy's beside, where the relatives offer fervent Catholic prayers. When she first arrives at the hospital, Alice meets a young Presbyterian minister whom she considers a phony. She enjoys considering his shortcomings, but is willing to join his church if God will restore Lizzy. For much of the chapter she admits how childlike her anthropomorphic understanding of God and how out of place it is for a skeptic like herself to pray, but she has no other options. She prays ceaselessly and fervently, taking time out only to remember a recent birthday/anniversary celebration with Howard. Distractions are inevitable. She longs to confess that she deserves to go to hell. As Alice and Howard sit in the lounge, an obese woman occasionally calls on everyone to pray.

When Alice notices Robbie Mackessy's mother staring and sneering at her in the lounge, and comments that Robbie is one of her most troubling patients at school and she believes that he is a victim of negligence, the substance of the rest of the novel is encapsulated. Robbie shortly turns into Alice's nemesis and cruel-mouthed Carol Mackessy becomes a significant and unredeemable character. Still, Alice will feel sorry for them. As she often does, Alice easily finds many faults with herself. In the hospital she laments that she has no instinct for or skill in mothering. The guilt that will lead her to blurt out what police take as a confession is building.

Howard's mother is again mentioned, as perhaps lending them money to pay Lizzy's hospital bill. Soon Howard reveals that he has summoned her from St. Paul. Even when Nellie helps out, Alice is resentful. Recalling the dinner with Howard, Alice recalls how they meet and how they marry because she gets pregnant. At the dinner Alice's fortune

reads, "Happiness is illusion. Pain is reality" (pg. 32), a sentiment to which she objects but sees coming true.

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 3-4

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 3-4 Summary

At the hospital, Alice silently confesses her unworthiness to God while Theresa's family prays goes about needed business. Folk dancing with Aunt Kate had been her version of church. Howard believes that prayers are guiding Lizzy into the next world. Lizzy is disconnected from the machines and dies in Dan's arms. In Chapter 4 Howard and Alice ride home in silence and find that mother-in-law Nellie has been busy. In the morning Alice guiltily rejoicing that beautiful Emma is safe. Nellie insists that Howard buy a decent suit for the funeral. Her money always comes with strings attached. In the crowded church, Howard warns Alice to say nothing. They have talked little in days. Alice's constant apologies annoy him. The enormity of Lizzy's death hits him before the coffin, while Alice is more composed than she had expected, but has nothing to say to relatives. While fidgeting in line, she sees Carol Mackessy and hears monstrous Mrs. M. L. Glevitch, gossiping. The tiny coffin upsets Alice and she pushes her way out of the church.

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Chapter 3 continues Alice's agony in the hospital, and religion is the major theme. Alice prays in her own way for Lizzy's survival, confessing her unworthiness to God, and recalls that for her and Aunt Kate, folk dancing once a week is as close as they come to religion. Aunt Kate, whose significance in Alice's life will be revealed, has died, despite doctors' best efforts. Alice is sure that God could not let a toddler also die. Several times Alice contemplates all that Lizzy would have had before her, just having started walking and babbling. When she talks to her girls, Alice assures them that nothing can happen to them because Lizzy has been sacrificed. She realizes how hollow the promise is but, apparently, not how bizarre this concept of sacrifice is in the orthodox Christian context that she admits she lacks. Alice also pictures the horror of Lizzy surviving in a vegetative state, but this eventuality disappears when Lizzy is removed from life support and dies in her father's arms.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the Goodwin home and Lizzy's funeral. Mother-in-law Nellie's character is developed. She is generous when she wishes to be but always attaches strings. She treats Howard like an infant. Howard and Alice both resent Nellie's ways, but need her help. Howard is silent and several times orders Alice to hold her tongue. She is babbling nervously and apologizing constantly. He emotion and quick tongue will soon get her in deep trouble. Alice guiltily rejoices that beautiful Emma has not drowned and is out of danger, for more than one child never dies in a given neighborhood., but not the oddness of her idea that neighborhoods have a natural limit on the number of children who can die. Alice's mind is moving in bizarre fashions.

There is an interlude as Alice and Howard go shopping for a suit for the funeral, so that Howard will not appear as a hayseed. This allows Alice to vent about Nellie's treating her son as an infant with a silly obsession about farming. Alice resents this and the fact that strings are always attached to Nellie's money. Alice knows that she is being petty but cannot help her feelings. The shopping trip allows a bit of lightness in the midst of tragedy, but ends with Howard reprimanding Alice for flippant comments. He has been silent throughout the ordeal and offers Alice little emotional support. He is of no help as she worries how to get through the agony of the reception line. Alice contemplates how Lizzy would have rebelled at how she is laid out for burial.

Mrs. Mackessy shows up for the funeral, aggravating Alice, who for the first time suggests that Mackessy lives below community moral standards. She also notes that Mackessy makes a good appearance. These factors play out in the end of the novel. Another monstrous woman who becomes an almost equal nemesis to Alice, Mrs. M. L. Glevitch, gossips loudly in line. This is the final straw. Having already expressed her fears about the whole ceremony, Alice bolts to a grove of trees. She feels beyond forgiveness as she begs Lizzy to come back.

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 5-6

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 5-6 Summary

Always low in self-esteem, Alice sees herself as history's worst villain. She recalls the ride home, Howard bemoaning the coffin and telling her to forget Glevitch and go to bed. She appreciates Nellie telling him to give her time. Nellie sleeps for days, resentful of hard farm life, feeling alone in her disgrace and unable to cope with house and children. Alice talks to Lizzy and cannot imagine what lesson Lizzy's death could serve. She avoids a talk with Nellie about her frame of mind, walking to the taboo pond and wondering if Theresa will ever be able to visit the farm again. In the woods, Alice comes upon Theresa, who is screaming and has resumed smoking. Theresa confesses that it is hard to see Alice. There are no adequate words for either of them. Theresa misses Alice but cannot phone and is amazed at how much one can cry. She senses Lizzy in the pond during night time visits.

Fed up with well-meaning advice about keeping busy, Theresa has visited Albert Satinga, her former parish priest and English teacher, whom she once helps avoid a mental breakdown when the woman for whom he leaves the priesthood leaves him. Albert insists that she tell Lizzy's whole story as catharsis and record the 56 words that she knows. Albert encourages Theresa to focus on how extraordinary Lizzy has been and blesses her for the hard road ahead. Listening, Alice cannot keep from thinking instead of all Lizzy is missing. Driving home, Theresa sees the highway shining with the Holy Spirit. She swears Alice to silence and announces that they are leaving on vacation.

In Chapter 6, Alice is unsure about her status with mystical Theresa. She wonders how she would act if one of her daughters died in Theresa's care and cannot imagine how, despite Albert's advice Theresa could resume normal relations. Alice is attracted by the seductive but unlikely scenario of all the dead gathering happily in outer space, of Aunt Kate welcoming Lizzy to heaven. How is heaven organized? Alice is eight when her mother dies of lung cancer. Since births and deaths both occur in hospitals, Alice irrationally blames her own birth for her mother's death. While Mother is dying, Alice constructs maps of the world. When Mother dies, Father gives Alice a tape reel of her reading Little House in the Big Woods. She manages only two chapters, in a rasping voice. Alice listens regularly for a while consigning it to the closet. At the funeral, Alice hates the angels for taking Mother. Aunt Kate arrives and takes over the household, treating Alice as a friend rather than a daughter.

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Chapter 5 shows Alice dealing with her mother-in-law, who surprisingly since Alice is sure that Nellie has never liked her, advices Howard to give her time to recover. Alice has always known that farming is a seven day a week enterprise, a theme that builds

through the rest of the novel. He needs Alice's help, both in the barn and caring for the family. She is unable for days. A complicating factor is that Nellie has agreed to work in Romania and is leaving soon. Howard is confident that they can make do without her. This will prove untrue and have her out of reach when the real crisis begins. Alice is currently most worried about Mrs. Glevitch spreading rumors that she is to blame for Lizzy's death and pointing out how rude it is to run from the funeral.

There is an allusion to Mr. Rochester's mad wife in Charlotte Brontë's novel, Jane Eyre. Alice is ready to live as a hermit in the attic, letting Nellie play the role of farmer's wife. The strains that exist in Alice's and Howard's marriage begin to come out, but Alice sees them as routine and manageable. Alice again recalls growing up with her late Aunt Kate, who has yet to be developed as a character. Howard playing his clarinet after dinner to entertain the girls and for relaxation becomes a recurring motif.

A major concern of the chapter is how Alice and Theresa will relate going forward. Theresa is the only close friend of Alice's life. They meet unexpectedly in the untended apple orchard. It is tense until Theresa tells about visiting an old friend, a defrocked Catholic priest, and asking for the ritual absolution that he can no longer give. Albert encourages her to relate Lizzy's whole life story and Theresa is amazed at the detail that she recalls. He encourages Theresa to focus on how extraordinary Lizzy has been rather than dwell on what she will be missing in this life. Hearing the story, Alice can only think about Lizzy's lost opportunities. Alice is embracing a mysticism of the Holy Spirit.

It is telling that an ex-priest, widely considered a leach for marrying someone whose confession he hears, evokes a positive image of pastoral concern, quite in contrast to Rev. Nabor. Alice is pleased that Theresa has gotten help, but cannot understand the religious aspect.

Alice's doubts continue in Chapter 6 as she reflects on Theresa's state of mind and her own reaction if the roles had been reversed. Alice meditates about heaven in childish, physical terms and considers that forgiveness might carry its own burden of debt. Her lack of grounding in any formal religious tradition grows increasingly obvious. She meanders and finds no peace.

The story shifts to memories of losing her mother at age eight and gaining the friendship of Aunt Kate, who comes to care for her. Details show how the experience deepens Alice's early-life guilt and animosity to religion. She describes how a neighbor tells her (at age eight) that cancer means that cells go haywire. She pictures what goes on in her mother's body for eight months. She is angry that her father, who also smokes heavily, remains. Having earlier mentioned how distant he is, she fills in details. Alice irrationally blames her mother's death on her own birth.

Alice focuses on a tape that Mother in her rasping, dying voice makes of Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House in the Big Woods, reminiscences of young childhood on the American frontier. Hearing the supposedly comforting hymn All Through the Night at the funeral, Alice hates the angels for taking Mother and doubts that she will grow up. Aunt

Kate treats Alice as a friend rather than a daughter until her death just before Alice starts college. There, while other students listen to great music, Alice listens to her mother's tape to find guidance through the darkness.

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 7-8

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 7-8 Summary

Next morning, Alice rudely avoids saying goodbye to Nellie, who heads to Romania to care for sick babies. In from chores, Howard finds Alice too limp to help him dress her. He insists that she bear up and keep in motion for the girls' sake, assuring her that no one blames her over Lizzy. Alice is silently doubtful. A comment by Claire makes Alice wonder if Claire reincarnates her own mother, which means that Lizzy might be planning her own return. Alice had never expected to live beyond 18. After watching the Collinses leave, with only Audry waving, Alice sleeps until dark. She cannot see how she will ever turn this into an amusing story, as Howard suggests. She wishes that he could sense her pain. After urging her to seek professional help, he reminds her of a school board meeting to discuss her contract.

Blackwell Elementary is a large school. Principal David Henskin wants to ease the bottleneck in Alice's office. Alice notices that the band director avoids eye contact. She longs to run out into the beautiful sunset. No one hears her shout about it. Instead, she runs to the restroom. Emerging sick and tired, Alice is approached by Detective Drogan and Officer Melby, who ask about Robbie Mackessy. Alice babbles about his frequent illnesses and refusal to cooperate. She fears that Robbie has reported the one time that she slaps him. Unable to bear more, Alice sobs, "I hurt everybody!" (pg. 103), and flees.

Chapter 8 Alice has convinced herself that neither of her two runs-in with Robbie and Mrs. Mackessy are significant. She has confronted Mackessy with neglect over sending Robbie seriously ill to school and the confrontation ends with each threatening to report the other. Mackessy goes a step farther: she intends to get Alice put away. Alice recalls that in the other instance, when she in frustration slaps Robbie, he smiles as if he has something juicy to report to his mother. The slap does not come out until the end of the novel. Alice fails to report it as required by school policy, for fear it will get her fired. Eventually it does, but at this point no one is aware. Robbie, it will soon become clear, has an utterly imaginary and devastating charge against the school nurse.

Just before the police come to arrest Alice, she throws Howard out of bed when he tries to make love with her. They have always enjoyed sex even while arguing. Alice claims to feel like she is drowning and throws him off of her. Talk in the morning is terse and Alice, angry, is about to drive to the grocery store with the girls when the police arrive. She gets out and lies on the grass, looking at the sky beyond her grasp.

Part 1, Alice, Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Nellie departs for Romania for two months. As poorly as Alice has treated her, it seems certain that her help will be needed while she is out of reach. This is the case. The purpose of Chapter 7 is to lay out the gathering crisis. Lizzy's death is only the tip of the

iceberg. Alice is too debilitated to dress herself - or even help Howard dress her. Howard needs her help in every aspect of life and plays on her maternal sympathies for the girls. It does little good. Tensions remain between the spouses. She wishes that he could sense her pain. He wants her to seek professional help.

The religious theme is largely limited to Alice's consideration of a comment by one daughter. She suddenly thinks about reincarnation, a religious variant about which she knows little. She figures that if her late mother has reincarnated in beautiful Claire, then Lizzy might be in the process of effecting her own return. It is little more farfetched than Alice's visions of a rosy Christian heaven.

The action shifts to Alice's job site, Blackwell Elementary School, where the principal has claimed to want to consider using volunteers to dispense over-the-counter medications to ease the bottleneck in Alice's office. Several minor characters are introduced, including the rather unattractive-sounding band leader whom Alice imagines naked. Alice quickly sees conspiracy in the audience as school board members and consultants drone on about asbestos removal and replacing an oil tank. Hamilton depicts these humdrum considerations at length, for they contrast with the beauty of a sunset that only Alice sees. As in the hospital she cries out for people to see what she sees or imagines that she has cried out. At any rate, no one responds and Alice is frustrated. Glevitch the rumor-monger arises in Alice's imagination, saying ever worse things about her. For the second time in the novel, Alice bolts from a public occasion. The repercussions of this exit are the more devastating.

Waiting outside the restroom to which Alice dashes, are two police officers whom Alice had not noticed in the meeting. Detective Drogan, who, Alice describes at some length with some degree of admiration for succeeding in a male enterprise, asks not about Lizzy's drowning, but about Robbie Mackessy, a student who causes Alice continual grief during his visits and whom she has once in utter frustration slapped. She has not reported this infraction of school rules or mentioned it either to Howard or Theresa.

This slap becomes a central concern in the final scenes of the novel. Alice babbles enough at Drogan for the reader to get a picture of how terrible the child is and what trouble he can cause her. He stares constantly, avoiding eye contact, and has a sharp temper. These traits are developed at length later in the novel. Drogan claims not to be at liberty to say why they are questioning Alice, which only increases her fear. Unable to go on, Alice screams that she is near a nervous breakdown, sobs, "I hurt everybody!" (pg. 103), and races home, calling Howard's name. Alice specifies that at the moment of her so-called confession, she is thinking about how badly she has been treating Nellie. This brings the chapter back to its start: Nellie's departure, where Alice avoids saying goodbye and thanks. If Alice is indeed thinking of Nellie at this point, it emphasizes her troubled mind, for she has much more of substance to occupy her.

On what turns out to be her last night at home on the farm, Alice rejects Howard's affectionate advances, claiming that she feels like she is drowning beneath him. For the rest of the novel she will wonder what makes her do this and what long-term effect it will have on her marriage. In the morning, Howard is sarcastic. The extent of the farm's

problems begins to come out. Much more detail is ahead, as Howard takes over the narration. Before she can drive to the grocery store to do her duty as Howard demands, the police arrive. Preparing to drive to the grocery store as Howard demands, and then take her days one-by-one. She has been flipping through songs in the tape deck and finds appropriate Hang Down Your Head, Tom Dooley. It reflects her mood of resignation. As though anticipating that she will not see the sky for a long time, Alice lies on the grass.

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 9-10

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 9-10 Summary

Howard finds officers handcuffing Alice and mumbling her rights as unlikely as space aliens landing. They hand her the warrant and allow her to collect books. She summarizes for Howard: Robbie claims terrible and inexplicable things. She asks him to call lawyer Paul Rafferty. The girls expect every passing car to return Alice and Howard is sure that it is a mistake. Alice uses her one call to babble about abuse cases and rumors stemming from Emma once playing doctor with a neighbor child. Rafferty is on vacation but Alice refuses his partner Finn. She has been under investigation for weeks. It will take more than truth to get her out. Alice makes Howard promise never to bring the girls to the jail.

Finn phones Howard to advise that they let someone begin work and explains probable cause and upcoming procedures. Howard worries about not being able control Alice's talk, the girls complaining about his cooking, and all of the problems stemming from a hot and dry summer. There is too much for him to do alone. He leaves a message for his mother with the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest. Alice phones, describing the public defender as new and nervous. Other children are coming forward with charges and the outraged judge sets cash bail at $100,000. They already owe the bank and have refinanced the house. Her fellow inmates are young enough to be her daughters. She jokes that jail is just a foretaste of hell and that Howard and the girls will be in heaven.

After the call, Howard and the girls are ready to start the first of many drives that edge ever closer to Racine, but are trapped in the house by news people. The newspaper claims that Alice face ten felony counts (with more possibly to follow) that could bring a $100,000 fine and 50 years in prison. It mentions that she is also being investigated in connection with Lizzy's drowning. Principal Henskin is calling a meeting for concerned parents. The scope of the problem hits Howard as phone calls begin, including the mother of one alleged victim. Even if Howard sells everything he owns, leaving himself no way to earn a living, he cannot raise enough to pay Rafferty. He wonders if Nellie can lend him $85,000. He talks with Nellie over a terrible connection but cannot bring himself to tell the full truth.

Rafferty confirms what Finn has: the charges are serious. He wants to meet Howard. When Howard phones around for a babysitter, no one is willing. Suzannah Brooks quotes scripture at him. He has to take the children to meet Rafferty. Without knowing where he will get the money, Howard agrees to the fees - Rafferty's first topic - and then hears that they must lie low while public sentiment boils and then cools. Rafferty calls Alice a unique person and explains the purpose of a preliminary hearing. It will reveal what the prosecution plans, but offers no chance for the charges to be dropped. He will try to get bond reduced. Owning the farm shows that Alice is no flight risk.

In Chapter 10, Howard gets his egg provider, Miss Bowman, to watch the girls while he visits Alice. Rafferty has just told him that a social worker specializing in sexual assault has described symptoms of abuse to parents, which is sure to inflame passions. Driving to Racine, Howard worries that Alice is too frail to survive what he knows happens in jails. The overcrowded hail is a monolith, its procedures for talking via phone through Plexiglas familiar from TV movies. Howard sits where directed, avoiding eye contact with neighbors and, while waiting for Alice, thinks about swimming naked with her the day that they move into the farm. He fears that she will now be beyond reach. Dressed in orange burlap, Alice stands straight. She asks him not to tell Nellie or sell land.

Alice can endure 3-4 months. She has been feeling sorry for herself and thinks she should pray, but it would be hypocritical to start now. Struggling to keep up with her jabbering, Howard realizes that they have not spoken in weeks. She rejects the idea of not discussing certain things over the phone, as she needs to know what people are saying in order to defend herself. When he mentions the tampon story, Alice rails against the troublemakers and explains the innocent context. She hates living in such a perverse world. As time runs out, Alice outlines Rafferty's plan. As the phones go dead, Howard wonders about what Alice had been thinking that last night in bed and how they will mend the tear.

Picking up the girls, Howard finds Bowman inert and pays her, although he would rather have thrown a rock at her. Emma demands why Alice is not back as promised while Claire talks about Bowman's oddities. Emma refuses ever to return. She wants Nellie to pay to get Alice out. Emma probably thinks in practical terms about how her father will do things for them that he has never done, because Alice has taken on housework as her fair share. When Alice sends a detailed letter of instruction about hygiene, laundry, and cooking, Howard cannot believe how matter-of-fact and animated she is. He thinks about their farm and typical clapboard house, about the generations who have lived here and the mementos he has collected in the attic.

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 9-10 Analysis

In Part 2, Howard takes over the narration, beginning with Alice's arrest. Recall that she has not shared with him the run-ins with Carol and Robbie Mackessy, partly because she has discounted their importance. Howard describes himself as believing in a "laissez-faire deity" (pg. 118), who provides the goods and requires one afterwards to make one's own way. He recalls how watching the intense, absolute faith of followers of Ayatollah Khomeni in Iran. It is shocking to him. Howard is sure it is all a mistake. For the course of Chapter 9, he does not waver from this opinion.

Howard is in a cloud during the arrest, seeing it as surreal. He scoffs at how the officers mumble by rote her Miranda rights. Having been oblivious to the world for days, Alice, in Howard's eyes, becomes a model of clear-thinking: she forbids him to follow her to jail, but insisting that he care for the girls and phone lawyer Paul Rafferty, who becomes a significant character going forward. Eventually meeting Rafferty, Howard is less impressed with him than Alice, who refuses to talk to his partner while Rafferty is

unavailable. Both lawyers stress that Alice must say nothing to anyone. Given her history of blurting out odd phrases and tendency to exaggerate and babble, this worries Howard, who cannot contact her directly. Howard admits that for all her faults, he cannot live without Alice. When they do finally talk, Alice's only cogent point is forbidding Howard to bring the girls to see her in jail. When he later breaks his promise, it causes a major rift, with the two spouses interpreting the drama quite differently.

Finn and later Rafferty clarify the legal situation, including the legality of an arrest based on a judge's warrant and what is involved in a probable cause hearing. Howard's knowledge of the law is based entirely on watching Perry Mason on television. Note that in the popular series, Mason never loses a case. Much of Part 2 consists of Howard commenting on his continuing education in the law. Alice talks to a new, nervous public defender and learns that children beyond Robbie are coming forward with charges. A newspaper articles is quoted, talking about the felony counts, the possible fine of $100,000 and term of 50 years in prison, and investigations into Lizzy's drowning. Principal Henskin expresses shock, states that he is cooperating with the month-old investigation, and announces a meeting for concerned parents. Rafferty, when he comes on the case, notes that this normally creates the atmosphere of a witch hunt, but that it generally burns out soon enough. This atmosphere shapes the rest of the novel.

Howard describes phone calls, including offers by the press to print Alice's side, and one from the mother of one alleged victim who tells Howard that his filthy wife has fondled her daughter's back and told her how to pleasure herself with tampons. The context for Alice's contact with this girl is clarified in the next chapter, but the lurid version gets on the streets, and the reader is left with it in his or her head, as is Howard. Howard describes being hounded by the press, including a reporter whom he has known.

The family's financial plight is developed as Howard worries about specific problems of which Alice in her musings had been unaware. They cannot raise the exorbitant bail even if they sell everything that they own. Howard's only priority is to get Alice home. He wonders, irrationally if Nellie can lend him $85,000. He contacts her in Romania. She is willing to come home, but Howard cannot bring himself to tell the whole, terrible story. The children are, on the first day, already complaining of his cooking skills. The situation will decline rapidly.

Unable to get a babysitter for the girls, Howard has to take them to his meeting with Rafferty, who insists that he keep the farm, for it proves that Alice is no flight risk. The farm's fate occupies much of Howard's thoughts going forward and when he sells it, Rafferty is annoyed. Rafferty is a slightly comical character and often provides light moments in the generally dark narrative from this point on. In his search for a babysitter, Howard calls Suzannah Brooks, who piously quotes scripture at him and calls for him to accept Jesus and be saved. She will return late in the novel. Religion gets another black eye through her.

Chapter 10 helps establish Howard's ways of thinking. Much more than Alice, Howard goes off on tangents about growing up and his farm's history back to empty-prairie days.

Everything holds connotations for his six years of life together with Alice. He is, indeed, as Alice has said, a philosophical farmer who looks forward to fitting into local society. His nerves are also frayed. In sketching the strange lady who sells him eggs, when he can find no one else to watch the children so he can visit Alice, he turns cruel. She would have been burnt at Salem. This segues smoothly into a description of the gathering witch hunt about Alice. Howard likens the principal's informational meeting with parents to pouring a ring of gasoline around the farmhouse and igniting it. Howard admits that he has never wanted to throw a rock at anyone as he has at strange Miss Bowman.

Howard includes in his rich background sketch of Racine personal touches. Compare it with the paucity of detail in Alice's description of Prairie Center. He betrays a fondness for TV movies, saying that checking in and visiting Alice conforms to the stereotypes, and describes some of the disgusting people around him. He claims to know how people are mistreated in jail - which proves prophetic.

Howard is amazed that supposedly frail Alice is coping well. He is baffled by their last night together and recalls a pleasant, slightly erotic moment long ago. Alice is all business: do not tell Nellie, lest she pawn her jewels to raise bail, and do nothing foolish like selling land. Although she has complained about the farm, she loves it. Howard had never thought of this before. Alice rejects the idea that she cannot talk freely over the phone, as Rafferty insists. Not really having spoken with Alice in weeks, Howard realizes that she has snapped out of her stupor and become her old self again.

Alice explains the context of the tampon story: she had tried to set straight an innocent girl having her first embarrassing period and had been offended when another girl had mentioned masturbation. Alice had tried to explain the sanctity and beauty of sex. Now it has been twisted in the telling, and she is ready to live in the wilderness away from vile people. More details will emerge during the trial, but it is clear that Alice has innocently said and done things that can be taken wrongly.

Alice mentions thinking about taking up prayer, bur feels that this would be hypocritical. She may attend Bible study sessions in prison, however. Religion is otherwise minimal in this chapter, other than that Mrs. Bowman distributes Jehovah's Witnesses tract and churches are struck in among government buildings in Racine. Howard nearly insinuates a pact between religion and state.

When Howard fetches the girls, they demand to have their mother back as promised. Howard tries to explain the American legal system, but Emma cuts to the bottom line: let grandma pay to get Alice out. Howard ascribes this practicality to Emma's knowledge that he is hopeless doing housework. He reminds himself that farming is hard work and Alice has voluntarily taken on the house and children, so he has an excuse for being helpless. Much of the chapter will show him struggling to come up to par. Alice helps by sending a detailed letter of instruction about hygiene, laundry, and cooking. The light description of Howard's ignorance of such matters breaks the heavy mood. The chapter ends with a long and interesting excursus on the farm's history. Note the mementos that

he has collected in the attic. They will help define his mood later when he decides he must sell despite Alice's and Rafferty's wishes.

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 11-12

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 11-12 Summary

Howard performs only essential morning and evening chores, letting everything else slide. Drought is killing everything, and without Alice, nothing matters. Bail is not reduced, so they can only wait. The community is lashing out and without Alice the family lacks direction. Howard recalls how he meets Alice, is quickly sure that life with her will be untroubled, marries her when she gets pregnant, and buys the farm. Howard finds it odd that Alice seems distant from her situation. With Nellie he avoids details and resents her reminders of past generosity. Howard knows so little about Alice's upbringing the he fears that it makes her look unwilling to confide in her husband. When describing Lizzy's death to Rafferty, Howard omits Alice's fleeing the church, her compulsive sleeping, her inability to speak or dress, and her knocking him out of bed. Howard wonders why he can say so little about his wife.

In Chapter 12, Theresa visits Howard as he tries to clean Emma's stained T-shirt. Theresa takes over. Howard and Theresa have never been alone together and he feels awkward. Unable to catalog his woes, he says that he is fine. Theresa responds by describing Suzannah Brooks' gossip, and is sure that if she had been here she could have prevented everything. She has had the Mackessys in therapy. Robbie is a liar. Dan is unconcerned about Alice's arrest, the judge is too afraid for his own career to dismiss ridiculous charges, and Myra Flint of Child Protection will be easy for Robbie to manipulate. Theresa helps Howard make sense of splintered facts.

Howard tells Theresa about leaves the girls, wailing, at a drop-in day care center to attend the preliminary hearing. He describes a quotation from Goethe carved over courthouse entrance, that Theresa agrees is unfortunate. Howard hopes that Judge Peterson will take Alice's goodness into account. Peterson does bar a mob of mothers from his courtroom. Manacled and in prison orange, Alice look like a mental patient next to fashionable Assistant DA Susan Dirks and the spruced-up Mackessys. Rafferty imagines those whom he dislikes floating down a tranquil river and being dashed on rocks. He recommends that Howard use this method.

Theresa asks Howard about the line, "I hurt everybody," which is part of the rumor mill, but believes that Alice is prone to unguarded remarks and has much on her mind. This calms Howard and they both wish that they could gag Alice. Howard resumes his description: both Mackessys are dressed to elicit trust. Rafferty's objection to Robbie sitting on his mother's lap to testify is overruled. Dirks treats Robbie gently, while Rafferty shows clear revulsion. Alice never looks up as Robbie compares his nice teacher, Mrs. Ritter, with Alice's hollering and doing stuff that he does not want. Rafferty's objection to Robbie using a doll to show what hateful things Alice does to him is overruled. Because Howard cannot watch Robbie display his knowledge of sexuality, he cannot tell Theresa precisely what he alleges.

In cross-examination, Rafferty makes Robbie dislike him and to demonstrate his temper. The judge sustains many of Dirks' objections and states that he is prejudiced against Rafferty. Rafferty suggests that Miss Flint has coached Robbie, but Robbie sticks by his story and emphasizes repeatedly that Alice calls him bad names and pushes him down. Rafferty's pushing Robbie to recall specifics maddens Robbie, who also admits watching late-night programs unsupervised. Eventually, Robbie's temper flares. Rafferty establishes the layout of the offices to make it clear that Alice could not readily grope children. After finishing with Robbie, Rafferty grills the police officers about questioning Alice. He closes by asking that the unproven charges be dropped. Dirk emphasizes the responsibility of public health officials to the community and claims that parents no longer feel safe sending their children to school. She cites Alice's admission and Robbie's corroboration.

The judge sets a date for formal arraignment and hopes that those spreading rumors will formalize charges and stop talking. Howard is in shock, but Rafferty assures him that all has gone well. Dirks has been flustered and Robbie is sure to be disrespectful to him during the trial; older jurors dislike that. Rafferty is confident that the weak case will be dropped. He will get Alice's admission excluded. Howard had expected Robbie to be tougher. Theresa asks what Robbie had claimed but Howard had not watched the demonstration. Theresa asks if Rafferty is any good, as she knows him only as a donor to the Dairy Shrine museum and a witty party guest. Theresa talks about how capricious these cases are. She warns that the trial date is likely to be delayed and cannot bear thinking about Alice in a cell. When Theresa offers to watch the girls next day, Howard accepts.

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Chapter 11 shows Howard is highly confused. He describes how the farm is suffering neglect, including an aside on slaughtering a half-dead lamb, and how killing becomes routine. He feels as Alice had when her mother dies, like life has been snuffed out and the volume turned too far down. Later in the chapter, Howard admits to Rafferty that he knows about Alice's upbringing only that her mother dies and her mother's best friend steps in. He is sure that Alice's reticence to share her past paints a bad picture of her. He fills in much detail about how they come to marry, dwelling on how Alice is pregnant at the time following a comical description of Nellie bursting in on them during sex to brush her teeth and how Howard's father had always threatened to disown him if he got a woman pregnant.

Howard begins describing how he and the girls are being ostracized and how Nellie is reticent to provide bail money. He examines at some length Alice's views on his mother's generosity and the strings that she attaches to it, but he cannot be as forceful or colorful in his language. He is baffled by Alice's behavior the night before her arrest. He had thought that he had read clear signs that she wanted to have sex. When Rafferty asks about Lizzy's death, Howard finds that there are many details that he cannot include. He notes a general decline in his ability to use language.

In Chapter 12, Theresa, just back in town, visits Howard, feeling guilty about Alice's arrest, for she could easily have cleared everything up. She shows no concern for client confidentiality as she talks about the Mackessys' dysfunction and it seems clear that she will eventually be a major witness for the defense. She is dismissive of politicians who put their careers above the evident truth. Through Theresa's description and direct depiction, new characters are added to the novel: Myra Flint of Child Protection, Assistant DA Susan Dirks, and Judge Horace Peterson. Rafferty comes into sharper focus as a mixture of good and bad qualities and Robbie Mackessy on the witness stand comes across as coldly calculating well beyond his six years. All of these will be further developed in the trial per se.

The mob of embittered, heavily-perfumed women clamoring for Alice's head act as a character. The judge blocks them from his court and within a few hours they drift off to other interests. Howard is reduced to using drop-in day-care because no one will watch his girls. The judge wants the citizenry to file further charges if they wish but then to shut up.

Much of the workings of the legal system is described and analyzed, far beyond what Howard has taken in from TV's Perry Mason, to which he continues to allude. A quotation from the German writer Goethe is discussed such as, "In the government of men a great deal may be done by severity. More by love. But most of all by clear discernment and impartial justice. Which pays no respect to persons" (pg. 174.) Howard is torn by how this sentiment seems wrong when one's loved one is on trial and her intrinsic goodness deserves consideration. Just before Howard mentions the inscription above the courthouse entrance, he and Theresa comment sarcastically about how air-conditioned police cars have replace the medieval execution cart and one may put one's fine on American Express, but the system remains unchanged over centuries.

Howard's interest in history and penchant for getting sidetracked brings in more details about local Indian beliefs and meditates on Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, which he has long used as a mantra. He also meditates on the use in history of narrative and the empirical method; history and literature deal with who and why while science focuses, more successfully on what and how. Howard appreciates how Theresa helps him make sense of the splintered facts of Alice's case, but offers few for instances. Howard meditates on the impact of personality in history, citing Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher. Theresa, who has appeared the staunch Roman Catholic, likens court to church because of ritual, the awful silence, and the waiting. She is usually afraid in church and always in court. She sharply criticizes Suzannah Brooks' holier-than-though attitude and unchristian enjoyment of gossip.

Much of the chapter is devoted to a verbatim of Robbie's testimony at the preliminary hearing. Howard, unfortunately, is unable to watch his demonstration on a doll of what he alleges Alice does to him. This hampers Theresa's ability to help him understand the proceedings. Afterwards, Rafferty explains why he has questioned the boy as he has and what his and the prosecutors have hoped to achieve. He is confident that the charges will be dropped when Dirks sees how her chances of a conviction based on Robbie's testimony are. Everything is about posturing and Goethe's love is all but lost.

When Alice resumes the narrative, she will several times feel compassion for the unfortunate boy who is being used to ruin her life. Rafferty's image of those he dislikes in court floating down a tranquil river before suddenly being dashed on the rocks is several times referenced going forward. Note how Rafferty manages to intimate that Mrs. Mackessy has a vigorous sex life. He further researches this and it provides a deciding factor in the trial. Holding Robbie in her lap, she looks the perfect parent and she must be revealed as a common slut.

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 13-14

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 13-14 Summary

Howard and Theresa establish a routine where he does morning chores before the girls wake, Theresa picks them up, he works all day, and she brings them home and drops off dinner for him. When the Child Welfare Office insists on interviewing the girls, Rafferty says that he must comply. Theresa is comforting but enraged. When Howard pictures everyone being smashed on rocks, Alice is also swept away. Rafferty has demanded to be present and/or that the interview be videotaped. Lexin and Anderson take the girls for separate ten-minute interviews and ask for a follow-up next day. Both times they recommend professional treatment for the girls' trauma.

Howard goes to Theresa's for lunch and gradually stays longer, as work in the scorched fields is frustrating. Rafferty fails to get Alice's bail reduced and her admission suppressed, and the trial is postponed into October. Howard often reads Alice's letters, filled with family stories, to the girls at night. They particularly like the one about Howard making them climb a tree before he cuts loose a dog whose leash has gotten tangled. Howard's goal is to preserve the family and give the girls a secure life. Howard is amazed at how cheerful and philosophical Alice is during visits and at how she guesses that Theresa is feeding him. He feels like he has been caught at something. Recognizing that Howard has a right to be angry, Alice says how his visits anchor her swirling thoughts. Before the arrest, Howard had thought that Alice needed professional health, but now she is stoic while he is helpless, unable ever in his life to stay a course.

Theresa's final visit starts with the girls asking if Audrey can spend the night. Theresa is uncomfortable with this. While the girls spend time upstairs, Howard wonders how he would survive without Theresa. She talks about the temptation to dump all of her problems on Alice and feels responsible for Alice's plight. Helping Howard and the girls helps her. Dan is of no help. Howard has forgotten what it is like to be drawn to someone. Feeling the world tipping, Theresa runs into Howard's willing arms, wailing about Lizzy's burial. They sink to the floor, sobbing together.

In Chapter 14 Howard finds nothing helpful to say to Theresa, as they spend most of the night in cycles of thrashing with sadness and talking. Lizzy is still her child. Sometimes Theresa wants to die to be with Lizzy, rather than trapped on earth as a punishment. Howard hates this idea. Both fall asleep. When she awakens, alarmed, Howard asks her to stay but she cannot. She lets him kiss each of her fingers and smell her skin and then caresses his face. They kiss passionately. Howard carries Audrey only to the edge of the property, hoping that the neighbor's dogs will not bark.

Howard awakens late in his bed, imagining Alice rebuking him. He knows that he cannot go on like this. He is not surprised that Theresa does not come over and is cross with the girls as he considers that Alice might never return home. He doubts if he has ever known her and she knows him too well. He does not know what love means. He

imagines them living parallel lives. Howard recalls his father's moral of Shame and Duty, about his great-grandfather and his mother's useless Bible verse. What had seemed good with Theresa changes within 12 hours, and he knows that it is treachery to think that it is right to love Theresa.

Without Theresa, Howard has no one to watch the girls during his Sunday visit to Alice. He convinces himself that they need to see one another. The girls are ecstatic, while Howard is nauseous. Fidgety, the girls are watching the flashing lights of the communication room when Alice arrives, wearing a pink bandanna around her head, her face bruised. Seeing the girls, Alice collapses and is taken back.

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 13-14 Analysis

In Chapter 13, Howard describes the routine that he and Theresa establish for three weeks and analyzes how it becomes increasingly comfortable and mutually supportive. Intertwined with this are long passages in which Howard describes in technical detail and pathetic feeling how the drought is ruining the farm. He offers another of his lengthy excursuses, this time on the popular saying, "Live as if you're going to die tomorrow and farm as if you're going to live forever" (pg. 205), concentrating on the life cycle of thistles. He can find nothing more useful to do than to collect rocks from the fields and build walls, and when he tries to turn this into a lesson about glaciers, Emma changes the boring subject.

The Child Welfare Office in Racine insists on interviewing the girls for signs of sexual abuse. Rafferty says that Howard must allow it or appear guilty, which will result in their being removed from the home. Theresa explains the procedures and is confident that the girls can say nothing incriminating because they know nothing about sex. This office does not as readily believe children's stories as does the district attorney. Howard gets angry at Alice for bringing this on them and this feeling begins arising in various contexts. Howard and Rafferty are excluded from the interviews, which end with the officers recommending that the girls receive counseling, which Howard angrily but silently rejects. He recalls Rafferty's vision of the waterfall, but is horrified to see Alice following, screaming and flailing.

Howard begins taking lunch in Theresa's air conditioned home, spending longer periods as time goes by and relaxing. Rafferty's motions are being denied. Part of the daily routine is for Howard to read Alice's letters to the girls. In one, she recalls a family walk during which they come upon a dog whose leash has gotten tangled around a tree. Howard makes Alice and the girls climb to safety before cutting the leash and releasing the frantic dog. This image recurs throughout the rest of the novel.

Howard describes his amazement at how well Alice is holding together. Before her arrest, Alice had seemed to need professional health but now is as stoic as Mary, Queen of Scots. She talks a bit about her fellow inmates, suggesting that they would not take kindly to her reading poetry to them as she would like. Her life in jail begins to be described through Howard and then takes center stage when Alice resumes the

narration. She likens jail to a summer camp that she had not wanted to attend. She guesses that Theresa is taking care of Howard and is glad. This makes Howard feel guilty, as though he is being caught in something perverse. This feeling intensifies at the end of the chapter, when he and Theresa fall into one another's arms in a fit of sorrow.

Religion receives short shrift in this chapter. Alice used to say, "There but for the grace of God go I" (pg. 216), quoting John Bradford about criminals being led to execution), but no longer finds it applicable. Theresa uses a phrase from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, "the quality of mercy" (pg. 223) as though it were a verse from the rosary. It talks of both the giver and the receiver being blessed by mercy, which Theresa applies to watching Howard's girls. Theresa also talks at length about growing up Catholic and faults her relatives for wanting vengeance on Alice. Theresa also comments on how mercy blesses both the giver and the receiver.

The chapter ends with Theresa dropping the girls off and Emma asks if Audrey can spend the night with them. Howard is in favor until he realizes that Theresa is uncomfortable and they compromise on a brief time together upstairs. Howard describes wolfing down the food that Theresa has brought him and watching her nervously watch an ant. Theresa talks about Dan working himself to death to avoid thinking about Lizzy. Howard remembers what it is like to be attracted to someone. Theresa is anxious to go home, but stay a while on the porch, where she falls into Howard's arms and they sob together on the ground. The immediate context is Theresa's grief at seeing Lizzy buried. The scene conveys the heartrending emotion without being maudlin. It is a dramatic conclusion that drives one to start the next chapter, where Hamilton cleverly teases with a long preamble before describing what follows. Note that she has stated that this is Theresa's last visit. This adds to the suspense.

Chapter 14 begins with Howard recalling how at age six he loses a friend when he touches the third rail of the train. He remembers the boy's scary mourning sounds and finds instantaneous death impossible. Thus, Howard finds nothing helpful to say to Theresa, who cannot yet accept that Lizzy is dead and fears that she never will. They thrash around, crying their souls out until they fall asleep. Howard most remembers Theresa's foreign but pleasing scent. They share one passionate kiss before she pulls away, as it turns out, for good. In the morning, doing chores and dealing with the girls, who ask repeatedly about seeing their mother, Howard wrestles with what he and Theresa have done and is sure that Alice will intuit it. With no one to watch the girls, he must break his promise and take them on his Sunday visit. He works hard to rationalize the correctness of a decision that he knows is wrong. He cannot be surprised by the outcome. He returns once more to the story of the dog whose leash he cuts, saving it. That dog is the only thing that he has ever save, he believes. Howard's depression is deepening.

Howard reveals a few more details of his growing up. First, he recalls his father's moral about how his great-grandfather has a nervous breakdown when he learns that his third wife when she is pregnant; his first two wives die in labor. Great-grandmother takes care of everything and when Great-grandfather comes to, he is so ashamed that he dies

instantly. The second detail is his mother's favorite Bible verse that says, "In the day of prosperity there is a forgetfulness of affliction: and in the day of affliction there is no more remembrance of prosperity." It is odd having a Lutheran quote from the apocryphal book of Sirach, but it serves the plot, for Howard takes from it that memory does not serve one well. His memory of what transpires between him and Theresa is already going down hill. He wants to recall it as a response to sadness and as a secret they can occasionally share. He knows, however, that it is treachery to think it is right to love Theresa.

The chapter ends with the prison visit, in which Alice appears to have been battered. She flees from the girls. When she resumes the narration shortly, Alice will give her own interpretation of that terrible moment. For now, Howard believes that she is angry at him for breaking his promise.

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 15-16

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 15-16 Summary

They leave the jail quickly, Howard claiming that Alice is sick and Emma screaming that he is lying and starting the cold treatment. On the way home they pass a man begging for food beside the highway. After bedtime, Howard writes Alice about selling the farm and getting out of the area where they blackballed by babysitters and Emma cannot start kindergarten. He apologizes for bringing the girls to the jail. Mailing the letter, he wonders if he and the girls will soon be begging on the highway.

Howard calls distant Davis Realty and Sandy Brickman arrives. He claims that his sister is dying of leukemia and he needs cash. She sees the land's potential and soon returns with Mrs. Arnold L. Reesman, who wants to establish a Boy Scout camp in memory of her late husband. The house will have to be torn down, but the barn may be converted into a lodge. Howard accepts $300,000, which falls short of his needs but Alice but be home with the girls. He leaves the girls locked in the car on his next visit, where he does not get around to telling Alice. Alice is mad because Theresa has stopped watching the girls - and writing. Alice claims to have bumped her head and been in the hospital, and resents that they fail to call Rafferty or Howard.

Howard has the girls pack their belongings in preparation, he explains, for living as hobos. He separates garbage from auction items and tries not to think about the treasures in the attic or the history of the buildings. They look at many places in Spring Grove near Racine, before Emma approves of a unit in Pheasant Glade. Howard wants to move before the closing, use the sale money to get Alice out, and wait for whatever comes next. He tries to fix up the house, even though he knows that it will be torn down. He packs meticulously, as Alice would, and writes to her half-truths.

Theresa shows up while Howard is sorting record albums. Alice has written of her premonition that Howard will sell the farm and Rafferty is angry. Howard replies that it is obvious that they cannot stay, even if Alice is acquitted. He wonders why he had ever thought he could farm this land, whose very history he loves. Howard refuses to let the girls go to Theresa's cool house or to the pond, but she takes them anyway because they are miserable. Theresa feels Lizzy in the pond. She talks about how her Catholic conscience had made her think about that night as a mistake, but she now knows that the intimacy had been pure and rare. She is sorry for abandoning the Goodwins for two weeks, has told Dan that she will no longer tiptoe around his feelings, and has tried to forget Howard but cannot because she loves him as a displacement for Lizzy. Howard disagrees that he is good.

In Chapter 16, Howard almost tells the buyer legends but decides to let him learn them at Del's and by examining the trunk. The girls are in shock at the upheaval. Their townhouse at Pheasant Glade is newly painted and carpeted but small and tacky compared to the farmhouse. Howard wishes Theresa could help the girls adjust. If Alice

cannot get out, they want to live with Theresa. When Howard visits Alice, she sees in his face that he has sold the farm and wants it back. She weeps as he gives the details and ends the visit. Emma is quickly disenchanted by the hobo life. The closing is in Milwaukee and Howard must take the girls along. A receptionist stops them from fighting. When Sandy asks about his sister, Howard says that she has died.

Depositing the check, Howard goes to fetch Alice, fearful. Alice runs to the girls in the entryway and they cling together on the curb, the girls firing questions. Alice opens her mouth to the rain, notices a wedding party, and hopes that the bride will be able to get missing teeth replaced. Howard has to laugh. He wishes the fire trucks still rang their bells after fires as they tail a silent one out of Racine.

Part 2, Howard, Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Howard finally sees that they cannot stay on the farm, even if Alice is acquitted. Emma has developed the moods of a teenager before starting kindergarten. Howard identifies with a man begging food beside the highway. He mentions him several times and it perhaps inspires his depiction of their new life as that of romantic hobos. The girls fall for it enthusiastically. The sale of the land is swift but the monetary gains insufficient to cover all of Howard's debt. Note that normally upright Howard lies to push the sale along. The agent will poke him about this later on. At first Howard is determined to take the chest of historical treasures along to the new place, but will later decide that they belong here.

Religion plays a minimal role. As Sandy Brickman talks maddeningly about zoning and ordinances, Howard remembers another of his mother's favorite verses such as, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16, pg. 241.) Late in the chapter, Theresa talks about how she has come to realize the pangs of Catholic conscience about their night together are misplaced and acknowledges that the intimacy had been pure and rare. This is as at odds with Catholic doctrine as her having had a tubal ligation following Lizzy's birth. Its reversal will be critical to her reconciling with troubled Dan.

In Chapter 16, Howard indulges in nostalgia for the farm that he cannot keep and describes the trauma of preparing to move. The auctioneer is one of the few adults other than Theresa who has spoken to him that summer. He receives far less than he wants from the sale and auction, but enough to bail out Alice and hold themselves together until he can get a job. He looks forward to moving as far away as Alaska or New Zealand. Alice, predictably, deduces from everyone's silence that Howard has sold the farm, for which she shows unexpected feeling. It is the first place that she has ever felt safe. The family gets Alice out of jail, with the expect play of emotions. They exit to a refreshing rain, which turns into a downpour. In his final contribution as narrator, Howard has built up a sense of foreboding about living in their small, too-new place and in the now-expected opening meditation decides that if this summer is a test of faith, which he has failed. He alludes mysteriously to almost asking Alice something that he is glad he does not manage.

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 17-18

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 17-18 Summary

Alice cannot agree with Theresa that she has learned to embrace fear in jail. She has learned to be quiet and to wait, as she had as a girl, working on her map of the world. She cannot satisfy Howard's desire for details on life in jail, for only after her release does she register fear. Jail has an oral tradition in which stories grow but contain a form of truth. Alice must put the pieces together. The Racine jail is relatively mild, but people are distorted into caricatures. Soon after her arrest, Alice realizes that she is beyond fighting, hoping, or praying. Her fate and her family's fate is sealed. That Robbie will suffer the most is sad. She wishes that she could be put in the stocks and have it over. In jail Alice reads and sleeps between meals and hears racial insults.

When Alice is introduced to the pod, everyone stops and looks. She knows not to show fear. Soon Dyshett confronts her as a granny-pervert and warns her to watch out. Alice's cell mate is 18-year-old Debbie Clark, who is charged with the murder of her self-delivered twins, whom she leaves to buy diapers. Also in the unit are Sherry and Janet. Dyshett picks unmercifully on Debbie and, for beating her up, is put in solitary. Alice forces herself to exercise, write letters, and reads. She thinks about how different life could be, had Howard not constantly belittled her and drained her strength. Television is on constantly, with the guards deciding what to show. The only constant is Oprah at 3 PM. When Dyshett gets out of solitary confinement, she warns Alice that keeping silence only makes her want to stab her.

Alice identifies with Job, whose worst fears come true. She pictures herself an old woman at the end of her life, dreaming about the pond. Alice doubts if she will ever know how to describe Dyshett's lunging attack after mocking her enjoying Oprah. The room seems to close in as Alice talks back and she feels her head hit the steel table. Struggling to understand as she comes to, Alice decides this is starting to pay her pound of flesh for Lizzy.

In Chapter 18 Alice returns from serious brain surgery and four days in the hospital to people still debating what has happened. The hair braids, which define her, are gone but a nurse gives her a scarf. She wonders why Howard has not visited. She needs to touch him. She has wondered if shared children and property will let them to weather the storm. Her feelings towards Howard are varied. Alice recalls swimming naked with Howard in the pond by night soon after Emma is born. She cannot picture her ancestors doing that but hopes that Emma will know the joy. She worries that Howard will sell the farm against Rafferty's instructions. She is sure that they can outlast the hostility and cannot imagine Howard without the farm, but also cannot see how their old life can be salvaged. Perhaps she is in prison to learn that that old life is worth everything.

The pod is changed when Alice returns. Sherry says that before Dyshett can hit Alice, Alice smashes her face down and falls to the cement floor. Others claim that Dyshett

and Janet beat Alice. Dyshett is furious, confused, and subdued. People give Alice a wide berth, as being a saint or crazy. Sherry is the new leader, acting like a minister to Alice. She is better than Nabor and shares food to fatten her up.

Alice loves that Rafferty has never doubted her and hates her being in jail because of fanaticism that was supposed to have died out. She never asks about her chances. She has nightmares about Robbie after slapping him. He is a punching bag and his mother a snake. Rafferty reports that three more boys have come forward and others are being evaluated. Rafferty asks if any procedure could be misinterpreted. As an LPN, Alice does little beyond taking temperatures, looking down throats, calling parents, and telling pupils to hold still and watch their manners. She also lectures on AIDS transmission to eighth graders. She recalls Miss Orin, the gym teacher, asking her to look at a suspected case of scoliosis and both enduring gay jokes from the savage girls. From records Alice recalls pulling Norman Frazer's loose tooth, disinfecting Anthony Jenkins' skinned knee, and treating Tommy Giddings' infected ear. All claim to have been shouted at, spanked, slapped, and held down. Rafferty's clerk discovers links between these boys and Carol Mackessy, allowing Alice to imagine her sitting them down with snacks to concoct stories that will save other boys from her. Rafferty note that this fits the general pattern of how such cases inflame passions.

When they meet after Alice's hospitalization, Rafferty is outraged not to have heard. He scoffs at the idea that she wants to love her fellow inmates and says to reserve love for her daughters. Alice weeps that even if she is released and they move far away, their lives are stigmatized. A week after Alice's return, Debbie asks about her children's ages, setting off a sobbing session. Alice looks at the girls' drawings for signs of emotional scarring. Next day, Alice refuses Dyshett's demand to know how many kids she has. She focuses on Howard, who will wonder about her scarf and she will remind him of that first swim in the pond. In the meeting room, she sees Emma and Claire and is filled with gratitude towards Howard, who is shouting and trying to block her view. Feeling dizzy, she has to leave.

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 17-18 Analysis

Alice resumes the narration, stepping back to the time of her arrest and initially parallels Howard's version. Differences of perception are frequent. She disputes Theresa's idea that in jail she has learned to embrace fear. She has learned rather to be quiet and to wait. She refers again to working as a girl on her comforting map of the world. Her preoccupation with it takes up precious time while Lizzy is making her way to the pond. Still, Alice remembers these drawings as a source of peace and security. She offers a number of autobiographical insights into relations with her difficult father and how she meets Howard. She accepts that she is not th person he first meets but is the person that he needs. She contends that his fathering attitude has gradually stripped her of strength. Recall how often Howard tries to break Alice out of her lethargy. He has indulged in much self-searching, but it seems unlikely that he would agree with her analysis of their relationship.

Alice cannot find ways to explain jail life. When for Emma she compares it to life in a large litter of hamsters, Emma asks if they get to play on a hamster wheel. They turn this into a private joke that provides a rare light moment in a heavy chapter. It fails, however, to get across the terrible lack of sky and air and lack of privacy Alice also cannot satisfy Howard's desire for a narrative of life in jail, for only after her release does she register fear. For the record, she states that the Racine jail is relatively mild but everything serves to turn people into caricatures. Fellow inmates who have served time in other jails give concrete examples of how terrible jail life can be.

Alice describes the numbing routine in jail, the constant noise, and racial insults. As Howard and Theresa had talked about modern penal practices being mere technical updates of medieval practices, so Alice wishes she could simply be clamped into stocks, have rotten vegetables hurled at her, and then go home and forget everything. Several new characters are introduced and have their backgrounds and personalities rather well filled in. Alice reserves the most detail and greatest sympathy for her cell mate, Debbie Clark, who faces life in prison for a stupid mistake done out of fear. Dyshett picks unmercifully on Debbie and once beats her up, anticipating Alice's beating. Dyshett takes an instant dislike to Alice as a granny-aged pervert. Alice bravely insists that it is only alleged. Alice sees considerable potential in this tough, proud young woman, but ends up being assaulted by her and sent to the hospital. This explains the shaved head and bandanna that she wears to several Sunday visitations.

Alice talks about religion in rather scattered terms, chiefly by likening herself to Job in the Hebrew scriptures, upon whom fall terrible sufferings. Before going to jail she never thinks in such biblical proportions. She is beyond praying. She no longer looks for absolute Truth and notes in passing that she is examining Buddhism. She mentions having studied philosophy in college and concluded that she has wasted time guarding her fragile soul. As she tries to make sense of her situation, she feels her essence drift heavenward. Fellow inmate Lynelle believes that the body matters nothing and looks to fly to heaven shortly. She is dying of AIDS. Prison is like church to her. When she leaves the jail, Lynett gives Alice a worn bookmark with the typed text of the 23rd Psalm that she is given long ago in Baptist Sunday school and tells her to keep the faith. Alice does not consider herself a martyr and in struggling to understand why she is beaten, quotes no scriptures, but alludes to Shakespeare: she is starting to pay her pound of flesh for Lizzy.

Chapter 18 opens with Alice describing the emergency hospitalization that puts her in the pink bandanna that so puzzles Howard and ends with her version of the dramatic visitation with the children. She has never seen Howard's face so distorted as when, for some reason, he tries to keep her from seeing her daughters. She had wanted to thank him for bringing them after all, but he acts crazy and she must flee. This is quite different from his viewpoint. Alice is surprised that Howard does not visit her in the hospital, until she learns that calls to the house have been answered by a small child. Recall that while sorting and packing to move, Howard had taught Emma to serve as his secretary, screening calls. Note how skillfully Hamilton avoids spill-over of one narrator's consciousness into the other. Alice frequently recalls a nighttime nude swim in the pond

that marks the beginning of their life in Prairie Center and wants to use it to draw Howard back to the good times. Her feelings towards Howard are complex.

The bulk of the chapter consists of Alice's descriptions of prison life. She introduces a variety of striking characters with whom she strongly empathizes but is frustrated that she cannot get through to them. As an older white woman - Granny - she is a minority and, as an accused sex offender of children, she is considered a pervert is not afforded by her peers the constitutional innocence until proven guilty. Many of the characters come close to being stereotypical but small touches personalize them nicely. Alice knows that jail carries the danger of physical harm and is told first thing by the toughest inmate to watch out for her. She witnesses Dyshett beat another inmate and get hauled off to solitary confinement before she herself falls victim. Fellow inmates' descriptions of that even vary greatly, but Alice absorbing the beating like a sponge unnerves Dyshett and earns Alice a wider berth.

Alice agonizes about Howard giving up the farm but also cannot see returning to the beloved old life. An odd vision involving Howard running off with the local postmistress reintroduces Mrs. Glevitch and Luther Tritz from Part 1. As is known from Howard's narration, Rafferty opposes selling the farm because owning it proves to the court their stability in the community. Alice develops Rafferty's character, showing true affection for the fairly repulsive old man. Together they examine why three boys besides Robbie have filed charges and Alice imagines how Carol Mackessy might have masterminded their similar stories. Rafferty notes that this kind of witch hunt had been common in the early 1980s but he had thought that society had gotten past them. It seems that it has not.

Religion crops up briefly in various contexts. Alice sees even a filthy housefly as God's creature and is charmed. She considers their first erotic dip in the pond as a baptism or blessing since they having foregone a church wedding for a civil union. She sees the merciful inmate Sherry as a better minister than Rev. Nabor, whom she had instantly abhorred at Lizzy's bedside and funeral. Alice hopes for some trustworthy design in the hereafter, to replace this world's chaos.

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 19-20

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 19-20 Summary

Alice knows that something is wrong when Howard's letters grow shorter and gloomier and Theresa's stop altogether. When word comes of Alice's release, everyone gathers but there are no personal goodbyes. On the way home they stop in a park, where Alice feels light as a helium balloon. Emma starts school on Monday but Alice does not want to part with her. Howard looks tired and unhappy and they are awkward together. The new and temporary apartment seems like a strange dream. When Alice removes her bandana, Emma declares her less pretty and asks to see Theresa. Howard shows that they can survive until they get the bond back. Perhaps he believes that she will be convicted, so these are the last months that she can be with the girls. Howard has told Nellie little and they owe her much. He wants to sleep but she cannot. She feels newly born, with no sense of past or future.

Howard gets a job at the Motor Vehicle Registration Office and Emma is reluctant to go to kindergarten. Alice fears that every passing squad car will keep her from picking Emma up again. Theresa invites her to lunch, where they start enthusiastically but quickly run out of topics. Theresa mentions having her tubal ligation reversed to save the marriage. Alice mentions Rafferty's anger and fear that the judge is against her and about jail life. They differ on obligations and part, knowing that this is the one pro forma meeting. Alice horrifies Howard by painting flowers around the living room. He looks odd in uniform and is uncommunicative. Emma prefers recorded books to Alice's reading. Listening, Alice imagines her mother beside her.

Chapter 20 sees the Goodwins' life normalizing, as the three boys drop charges and Alice's story moves to the back pages of the newspaper. Rafferty enjoys shining light in dark places. The judge has ordered both sides to avoid mentioning Lizzy. Alice testifies last. Rafferty's friend prepares her for brutal cross-examination. Rafferty wants her to come off as unsuspecting and pure. The girls enjoy their first true Halloween and stomach flu saves the family from entertaining Nellie at Thanksgiving. As the trial date nears, Rafferty predicts a short one. Jury selection and the trial seem to Alice somehow set to music. Rafferty likes the idea and tries to listen for it.

On the first day, Rafferty explains strategies for choosing jurors. Alice wonders if they are up to the task. Howard in his suit sits behind Alice, who dresses to look vulnerable pink. Dirk's primary witnesses cut their own throats, Rafferty says, but she gets to use Alice's outburst to the police. Rafferty generally loses on objections. Dirks urges the jury to consider Robbie's emotion, while Rafferty emphasizes Constitution and context . Two woman jurors, one surly and the other astonished, intrigue Alice. Robbie again sits on his glimmering mother's lap to testify. He looks tired of the game and Rafferty easily goads him into screaming that his questions are hurting him. Robbie refuses to respond to questions about his babysitter, Mrs. Sheridan, but both he and his mother stiffen.

Myra Flint describes techniques for improving children's recall and denies that they turns them into ventriloquist dummies. Flint is convinced that Robbie's post-traumatic stress syndrome or PTSS stems from Alice's sexual abuse. She doubts that anyone would fantasize about being assaulted, disagrees with the American Psychological Association on the liabilities of using anatomically-detailed dolls, and admits both that she has only a master's degree in social work and has misdiagnosed clients. She is not up on the latest literature and does not know by heart the symptoms of self-destructive behaviors. She does not believe that Robbie has manipulated her and his mother, whom she has not interviewed. During the break, Howard wishes that Robbie had drowned instead of Lizzy, as that would have been merciful compared to suffering on the stand. He is disgusted by Rafferty's tactics. Alice is sorry on everyone's account.

On the third day, the principal and Robbie's teacher testify against Alice's character, although Henskin admits that the school's layout makes abusing a child dangerous and that all teachers fear the hysterical climate. Alice muses about what might be going through jurors' minds. On the fourth day, an expert, Dr. Eugene Bailey from the University of Wisconsin, admits that the trauma of the so-called primal scene of children witnessing sexual intercourse could account for PTSS, particularly if it involves a mother and a violent outsider. Melby is the last prosecution witness. As he describes Alice's behavior, Alice watches snow flakes beyond the windows and thinks about how Lizzy's drowning will not be an annual event. On the way home, they buy cheep sleds for the girls to ride that night.

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Alice gives her version of her release from jail, which omits the heavy downpour and wedding and adds a walk in the park. The dog that Howard once frees returns as apropos of Alice's new freedom. Eating cheap store-bought white bread as bad as that in jail, Alice recalls Howard's homemade and butter-rich loaves. As Emma says candidly, the apartment smells. There is nowhere to plant tulips. Everything about the place is the antithesis of the farm, whose importance to Howard is summed up for Alice in his polishing the barn windows while everything else falls apart. She is determined not to be ungrateful about gaining her freedom at the cost of the farm, but she feels that they belong there organically. Tension between the spouses is high. Howard's narration never gets this far into post-jail life.

Much of the chapter is devoted to Alice and Theresa's "Kabuki version of a women's breakfast" (pg. 332.) This is a splendid evocation of the stylized drama described. Alice dwells on how awkwardly they search for topics other than Lizzy and are relieved when interruptions occur such as food service. Some new facts come out about Theresa's trouble marriage and Alice's case. They differ on whether Alice should try to visit her former cell mates or send a care package. Alice is amazed that she had once thought of volunteering to teach in prison. The girls know far more about life than she could hope to offer. Theresa does not understand. Theresa likes a bit of poetry by Gerard Manley Hopkins that Alice quotes, claiming it sums up her feelings about failure such as, "No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief, More pangs will, schooled at forepangs,

wilder wring. All life death does end and each day dies with sleep" [pg. 329. Alice again mentions inmates' lively oral tradition but again fails to clarify what she means sufficiently.

Alice admits to the danger of dealing with intelligent inmates in the Noble Savage tradition. One feels Alice struggling with such condescension earlier, as she characterizes Dyshett and Sherry, and it is a relief that she deals with racism even if she has simplified the technical term. The obligation to Nellie comes up again, promising more family conflicts, She observes that Nellie's joy that the farm adventure is over shows how little she understands her son. Alice is also bitter that Howard overlooks his obligation to tell her about the girls being interviewed. Theresa blandly notes that he might have wanted to spare her feelings. Talk stalls at this point and future meetings are unlikely, guaranteeing that Theresa's and Howard's secret will not be revealed by her.

Chapter 20 describes the preparation for trial and the first three days of testimony. Alice does not care for Rafferty's gleeful enjoyment of the process, which he claims is the key to victory, or the need for her to act a role. Rafferty specifies that he wants Audrey Hepburn in the movie Wait Until Dark (pg. 336). He sees himself as shining light in dark places, hoping that cases like Alice's will be discouraged. Heartwarming and/or humorous bits of normal home life are interspersed with trial-related materials.

Alice is concerned with the process of choosing jurors and focuses on three whom she caricatures amusingly and monitors from time to time throughout the trial. Through Rafferty's explanations of procedures to Alice, Hamilton sketches a good deal of legal principles and procedures that have grown hackneyed in literature and movies. This is inevitable, because usages are universal: jurors are screened for the proclivities of various age and sex combinations, principals and witnesses wear clothing calculated to impress the jury, etc. It is all filtered through Alice's quirky mind, which makes it more interesting than it might otherwise be. She notes that Nellie had been right after all to insist that Howard buy a respectable suit. Alice wears pink to look more vulnerable than her butch haircut suggests. During the first recess, Rafferty out of character exclaims, "He likes me! Judge Peterson really likes me!" (pg. 343), an allusion to actress Sally Field's exclamation at the Academy Awards presentation, which occurs in the time frame of this novel.

Rafferty's questioning of Robbie about Mrs. Sheridan breaks Robbie's and his mother's composure and provides a hint, when combined with Dr. Eugene Bailey's testimony about PTSS and the primal scene, as to the tactic of which Rafferty is so proud and so intent on getting allowed by the judge. Obtuse references have built suspense. Myra Flint reveals a good deal of technical information about how children are helped to recall and testify. Rafferty is rough on her, exploiting every perceived weakness. Because one pulls for Alice, one has to root for Flint to be discredited, but she is a sympathetic character on the whole. Alice herself is coming to wonder how she had so hated Robbie's behavior. Howard is disgusted by Rafferty's behavior and withdraws into himself. Alice buys Christmas presents just in case.

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 21-22

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 21-22 Summary

Rafferty's first witness is Robbie's preschool teacher, Linda Gildner, who tries not to mention his bad behavior but concedes that he is troubled, belligerent, and manipulative. Alice sees evidence of Rafferty coaching Gildner. In cross-examination, Dirks denigrates Gildner's credentials and crushes her. When Rafferty warns her not to start feeling sorry for Robbie, Alice pictures Dyshett's reaction. Rafferty next calls James "Grinder" Perkins, who readily describes his brief sex life with Carol Mackessy. It always takes place at her house and he assumes that her son is elsewhere. Alice dislikes Howard's sizing Perkins up as a redneck, which further chills relations between them. Next is Nancy Sheridan, Rafferyt's dream come true. A meanderer, reticent to talk about sex, Sheridan recalls a frightened-looking Robbie brings her into his house to see Carol on all fours, being ridden and tortured by one of her men. Robbie is screaming that his mama is being hurt and that it will happen to him too. He then pushes Sheridan out the back door. Because Mr. Sheridan is away and she fears retribution, she waits to call the police. In cross-examination, Dirks cannot shake Sheridan. Rafferty gloats that Meryl Streep could play this no better. Alice is upset. Theresa believes that deep-seated guilt moves Carol to institute this case.

When Theresa takes the stand as an expert, she is lucid, compelling, and commonsensical. Alice is nervous for her. Theresa points to four dangers for examiners: believing that children do not embellish and lie; arousing curiosity through anatomically-detailed dolls; asking leading questions; and selectively ignoring the impossible and bringing charges out of context. She says antisocial-personality disorder or APD prevents one from looking another in the eye unless manipulating or angry, brings out outrageous lies and forms of aggression. APD children often have not bonded with parents and/or their parents are hostile and angry. She agrees with Bailey's assessment of PTSS, but she suggests it comes from seeing one's mother engage in sex and fantasizing about overcoming in such a situation. Theresa concludes by admitting her friendship with Alice and rejects any sign of danger in Alice.

Alice cannot recall Rafferty's coaching as she takes the stand. She tells of being hospitalized for a beating but emphasizes her awe of Lynelle, Dyshett, Sherry, and Debbie. She admits that during 25 recorded visits with Robbie, she slaps him once and explains how he had provoked her. She supposes that Robbie gets hit at home and does not find it extraordinary. In explaining the context of her admission to the officers Alice forgets and mentions how Lizzy's death makes her fall apart. She has hurt her children, husband, and the Mackessys. She dislikes difficult Robbie, slaps him, tells no one, and lives with the guilt, but does not abuse Robbie. Her intent when talking to the police is to say that she is an inattentive human. Dirks mentions the drowning in her closing. Alice hears little of Rafferty's closing as she prays for strength and a peaceful new world.

In Chapter 22, Alice is acquitted and the family has moved to Chicago, where it is doing well, but she and Howard have much mending to do. Theresa is pregnant and she and Alice are no longer really friends. In December Alice had driven to the farm alone to walk in the woods. She feels that Lizzy's spirit has left the pond, which will be the Boy Scouts' best place. She has rejected suing Carol for damages and denies that mentioning Lizzy had been premeditated. Theresa has forgiven her. Exiting the courtroom together, Howard and Theresa had looked right together. Loving Theresa would be less messy for Howard. Alice's chance meeting with Theresa in the orchard had been a fitting ending. Taking a last view of the land, Alice returns to Spring Grove for the overdue Thanksgiving dinner. Howard cannot articulate what is bothering him, but it is a hovering black cloud that could change them again. Alice has forgiven his many betrayals. Forgiveness is like a strong web.

Part 3, Alice, Chapters 21-22 Analysis

The trial resumes, with the defense calling witnesses. Alice's pity for Robbie and even for his mother grows, annoying Rafferty, whose aggression in turn, annoys Alice. The tide turns for Alice as one of Carol's lovers testifies candidly about their affair and paints, at least for Alice, a picture of hedonism and neglect. Alice hopes that the jurors are doing the same. It is still fresh when Rafferty's prime witness confirms the kinky sex in the household and Robbie's wide-eyed panic, showing it to her. Neighbor Nancy Sheridan, Rafferty's dream witness fills in the long-anticipated details. Rafferty likens her performance to actress Meryl Streep, reinforcing Alice's perception that he views the law as live drama. She does not approve. This is at least Rafferty's third reference to motion pictures. A good Catholic, Sheridan faces a moral dilemma about reporting what she sees to the police. Fear for her family at first wins out. She knows what kind of men Carol attracts. Eventually, however, she performs her civic duty after Rafferty's investigator smokes her out. Alice sees Sheridan and Carol somehow needing one another. come true.

The chapter contains even more technical material about the psychological effects of premature sexual experience in children. Theresa is better prepared and more organized as a witness than her predecessors. Alice notes in passing that the district attorney tears apart Theresa's credentials. One gets the feeling that the legal system does little other than alternate between posturing and tearing down. Recall Alice and Theresa's cynical takes on justice in Part 1. Alice has Dyshett in mind much of the time, imagining how she would respond to events as they transpire.

When Alice takes the stand, she forgets her coaching and commits a major error by mentioning Lizzy's death. Recall that the judge had put this out of bounds for both sides. The prosecutor is now allowed to delve into it, but surprisingly makes only minor mention in her closing. Alice explains to the court that her so-called admission is simply an emotional declaration that she is human and has hurt family, friends, and even Robbie indirectly by allowing Lizzy's death to incapacitate her. Recall how Howard had pointed out to Alice that the baby was toying with a sharp object. Alice does not use her

earlier explanation, that she had been upset about being rude to her generous mother-in-law. That had never rung true. Alice is beginning to pray in earnest.

The final chapter is composed at some point in the future. It assumes that Alice is found not guilty, as she takes up details of their new life in Chicago. She is glad that Howard works in the zoo and comes home smelling of cows - albeit Holsteins rather than his beloved golden Gurnseys. Their relationship is still rocky, but Alice seems hopeful. Alice describes a last, solo visit to the farm and its woods. There, in the peaceful atmosphere, she records fleeting impressions of the verdict, including the vanquished prosecutor and Carol disappearing, Rafferty's ebullience and desire to sue Carol, and Howard and Theresa looking right for each other as they leave court. She gives no hint of having learned or intuited their link. She meditates on the meaning and mechanism of forgiveness, for Theresa and herself. She notes that Theresa's God is external, while hers is that part within her that occasionally lets her see. She has forgiven Howard's many betrayals, but doubts if he has let go of anything. She pictures forgiveness as a strong web. This is quite an odyssey from her desperate unbelief during the vigil over Lizzy.

Characters

Alice (née Gardner) Goodwin

The 32-year-old narrator of Parts 1 and 3 of A Map of the World, Alice is married to Howard and is the mother of two young daughters, Emma and Claire. Blond and statuesque when she and Howard met and thoroughly bored in school, Alice has become a licensed practitioner nurse and works mornings as a school nurse at Blackwell Elementary. She is also a feared "shot lady" at clinics. During summer vacations, she trades off watching her and her neighbor and best friends' two daughters. Distracted one hot morning, Alice does not notice that Lizzy Collins has slipped out of the house and gone to the pond to cool off. Alice finds Lizzy drowned, in her panic does a bad job of administering CPR, and stays in the waiting room of the hospital emergency ward until the family abandons hope and discontinues life-support.

Alice panics again at the funeral, running away to sit and contemplate the sky. Howard tries for weeks to get her to snap out of her depression, to care for the children and do her share of the work. Attending a school board meeting, Alice grows paranoid and, when interviewed by the police, yells that she hurts everyone, before fleeing home. As a result of this supposed admission of guilt on a charge of child molestation that has been under investigation for weeks, Alice is arrested and jailed on $100,000 bail. More children come forward and the town takes on a witch-hunt mentality.

Alice remains in jail for months until, against her objections, Howard sells the farm. She reads, exercises and tries to avoid confrontations with fellow prisoners. In an incident that remains unclear, Alice lands in the hospital, suffering a concussion that requires emergency surgery. Shortly afterwards, she joins the family in a cramped apartment in Spring Grove. At trial, Alice is acquitted, despite the fact that her testimony is so scrupulous that it might have incriminated her. The family moves to Chicago, where Alice hopes her marriage can be revived. She has forgiven Howard his many betrayals but doubts if he is reciprocating.

Alice is the child of an uncommunicative man and a loving mother who unfortunately dies when Alice is eight. She is raised by her mother's friend, whom she calls Aunt Kate. Kate dies just before Alice goes to college, which bores her. She meets Howard and marries him when she finds that she is pregnant. She seems to resent that there is no religious ceremony to mark the beginning of their marriage and considers a nighttime nude swim in the pond on the land that they buy a kind of baptism or blessing. Howard is attracted not only to her beauty but also to her self-containment. He is sure that no one will have to show her her way. She turns out to be not what he expects but what he needs. Despite her periodic attacks of goofiness, she anchors the family. She tends to think in black-and-white. She sees jail as something unpleasant that everyone should experience.

Howard Goodwin

The 36-year-old, Cro-Magnon-faced narrator of Part 2 of A Map of the World, Howard is raised in the city but realizes his dream of buying and running a farm in Prairie Center, even as the last days of the American family farm are approaching. He and wife Alice have two daughters, Emma and Claire. Howard is a "poetical and philosophical farmer" (pg. 3) who raises Golden Guernsey cows for their color and the sound of their name as much as for their high butterfat content. He rises early and works hard all day, leaving most of the child rearing to Alice.

This changes when a neighbor child in Alice's care drowns in their pond and Alice goes into a paralyzing depression. Howard's mother helps for a while but Alice cannot snap out of it. Howard is desperate. To make things worse, Alice is arrested for child molestation at the elementary school where she works as a nurse. Howard has to learn housekeeping on the fly while continuing to work the farm, whose productivity is destroyed by a savagely hot and dry summer. The holier-than-thou people of Prairie Center blackball Howard, even spitting on him in a market. Regular babysitters refuse to help and money is tight.

Howard is helped by Theresa Collins, the mother of the drowned girl. Theresa delivers bag lunches and watch the girls so that he can work. Eventually she convinces him to eat lunch in her air-conditioned home while her husband is at work. They grow close and spend a passionate night together, crying out their respective pains. Both feel guilty and Theresa ends contact for weeks, putting the full burden back on Howard who decides he cannot bear it. He sells the farm to pay creditors and an attorney and to bail out Alice. He moves the children into a small apartment and lives a miserly life until he gets a good job with the Department of Motor Vehicles. During the trial, Howard has a hard time watching Alice's accuser on the witness stand and half-believes that Alice must be guilty to have been charged.

Howard always smells of musky hard work and the barn and fields. He grows up, unsmiling, in a Lutheran neighborhood in Minneapolis, MN, believing that one must use the abilities that God gives in order to travel the path that God has specifically designed. After Alice's arrest, he claims to follow a "laissez-faire deity" (pg. 118), who provides the goods and requires one afterwards to make one's own way. He is raised to revere hard work and free enterprise. Mental strength and desire constitute bravery. He believes that the farm is proof of his good faith. He has no use for foolishness. He is silent, solid, and systematic. Alice views him as a Superman. He observes without judging. He never stretches the truth or embellishes. He is scrupulously honest. He is a lover of history and the clarinet. Alice considers Howard a hopeless romantic.

Theresa Collins

The best and only friend of Alice Goodwin, Theresa is a part-time mental health counselor. She is married to workaholic Dan Collins and is the mother of two young daughters, Audrey and Elizabeth or "Lizzy." During the summer, Theresa and Alice take

turns watching both of their children. Theresa is adept at disciplining her children, much to Alice's envy. Alice likens their friendship to television's Laura Petrie and Millie. Theresa has a round, cutely-dimpled face, black, curly hair, octagonal glasses often halfway down her nose, and translucent, lightly-freckled Irish skin. She speaks with a naturally soft voice. She grows up in farmland, goes off to Chicago to become a therapist, and returns to the Vermont Acres subdivision. Alice and Theresa share intimate stories about their marriages and howl with laughter over them.

After Lizzy drowns while in Alice's care, Theresa sometimes feels that people are as expendable as kittens. She goes daily to the pond where Lizzy drowns to feel close to her. She misses her easy friendship with Alice and knows that Alice's pain must also be intense. Because Dan withdraws into work, leaving Theresa with no one with whom to talk, she drives to Neenah to talk with her former parish priest and English teacher, Albert Satinga, whom she once helps keep from a mental breakdown when the woman for whom he leaves the priesthood leaves him. Albert has her recall and celebrate every detail of Lizzy's short life to achieve catharsis. Theresa confesses this meeting to Alice when they run into one another in the woods. Shortly afterwards, the Collinses go on vacation to recover.

Returning to learn that Alice has been arrested and charged with child molestation, Theresa visits Howard and rants about how her former therapy patients, Carol Mackessy and her son Robbie, Alice's accusers, will manipulate the system. Theresa for several weeks watches the Goodwin children and feeds hapless Howard, until they find themselves clinging together and crying out their shared pain. It takes Theresa weeks to decide that this is not a violation of her marriage vows as a Catholic, but as a sacred, shared experience. She meets Alice once for breakfast after Alice's parole, but they find little to talk about other that Lizzy and cannot speak of her.

Theresa likens court to church because of the ritual, the awful silence, and the waiting. She is usually afraid in church and always in court. She always looks for a bright side. She testifies effectively for the defense in Alice's trial, which ends in an acquittal. Theresa forgives Alice, but they are no longer friends. She has her tubal ligation reverse to become pregnant again, in hopes of saving the marriage.

Miss Bowman

A scrawny, gray-haired woman who raises chickens and terriers, Miss Bowman supplies the Goodwins eggs. She passes out Jehovah's Witnesses tracts and has something wrong with her right eye. She reluctantly agrees to watch Emma and Claire so that Howard can visit Alice in jail. Emma has to be threatened into entering the house that smells and where they are forbidden to touch anything. Emma refuses ever to return.

Sandy Brickman and Mrs. Arnold L. Reesman

The agent of Davis Realty, Waukesha, WI, who is assigned to sell Howard Goodwin's farm, Brickman totters over the uneven farmland in high heels and scowls at the

dilapidated condition of the house. She wears too much makeup to conceal bad skin and is in Howard's opinion, the most surreal of the surreal summer's characters. Seeing potential in the property, despite zoning problems, Sandy convinces Mrs. Arnold L. Reesman II to purchase it on behalf of the Boy Scouts of America. Reesman arrives with her son, Arnold Reesman III, as her technical advisor. She is small and white-haired with an enormous upper lip. She is little concerned about her appearance but carries herself like a queen. Her late husband had been a scout master for 35 years and she wants to donate a camp in his memory.

Suzannah Brooks

A holier-than-thou neighbor of Theresa and Dan Collins, Brooks home-schools her three children. When Dan Collins calls about babysitting his girls so that can he meet with Alice's lawyer, Brooks quotes scripture at him and calls on him to surrender his life to Jesus. As soon as the Collinses return from vacation, Brooks, "the model Christian," descends on Theresa to fill her in on "the dirt" (pg. 170.. When Brooks mentions Robbie Mackessy, Theresa closes the door in her face. Brooks is brought up often in the novel by various characters as the embodiment of hypocrisy.

Debbie Clark

Alice Goodwin's 18-year-old, white cell mate for 13 weeks, Debbie whimpers about giving birth to and accidentally letting die her premature twin babies. She is charged with murder. A large girl, she does not realize that she is pregnant until her water breaks. She had stalked the father, a milk-chocolate colored Jamaican and Irish meter reader, Jess O'Leary, won his affection, and become pregnant. Alice cries for her as Debbie talks non-stop. Debbie nervously plucks out her eyelashes and brows and has skin that oozes and flakes. She spends her days eating Doritos and frequently chokes even on soft foods. When frightened, her eyes glaze over and she breathes through her mouth. Dyshett finally gets to Debbie by claiming that she is impregnated by her own father.

Audrey and Elizabeth (Lizzy) Collins

Theresa and Dan Collins' daughters, Audry is five years old and Lizzy two. During the summers they play with Emma and Claire Goodwin, being watched every other day by one of the mothers. While Alice is distracted by Emma and her own musings, Lizzy slips out to the pond and drowns. Paramedics revive her and she hovers in Room 309 at the local hospital before her parents decide to turn off life support. Lizzy is buried in an outfit that would have caused her to throw a fit. It is a long time before the surviving girls are allowed to play together.

Dan Collins

Theresa Collins' husband, Dan has created a museum devoted to dairy farming, which earns him the nickname City Dan. His exhibit is half-mockingly called the "Dairy Shrine." Dan enjoys donning a black robe to play organ in the local Presbyterian church. When daughter Lizzy drowns, Dan withdraws in his work and refuses to speak, driving Theresa into neighbor Howard Goodwin's arms. She eventually refuses to tiptoe around him, charging that he will die of overwork before he recovers from the shock of Lizzy's death.

Susan Dirks

The assistant district attorney assigned to prosecute Alice Goodwin, Dirks is slim and elegant, with the kind of ruffled hair worn throughout the upper Midwest. She succeeds in keeping the charge in place after three boys drop their allegations and keeping Alice's so-called confession in evidence. She is generally outmaneuvered by defense attorney Paul Rafferty and her expert witnesses let her down.

Detective Drogan and Officer Melby

Members of the Investigation Unit of the Racine Police Department, Drogan in civilian clothes and Melby in uniform attend a school board meeting to which Alice Goodwin has been summoned, ostensibly to talk about her contact. Drogan is petite, with curly blond hair, glue eyes, a freckled nose, and a pleasing smile. Melby is big and handsome. As Alice emerges from the restroom, sick and tired, she fails to realize that they want to question her officially, and not about Lizzy Collins' drowning, but about difficulties with a student, Robbie Mackessy. Alice babbles about troubles with him and fears that she has been reported for slapping him once in frustration. Drogan claims not to be at liberty to say why they are questioning Alice. When Drogan pushes the questioning, Alice screams that she is near a nervous breakdown, sobs, "I hurt everybody!" (pg. 103), and races home, howling for Howard. This is taken as an admission of guilt for molesting Robbie and she is soon arrested. Melby testifies at her trial.

Lynelle Duchamps

One of the inmates in Alice Goodwin's jail unit, Lynelle is a 22-year-old prostitute, dying of AIDS. Wise beyond her years, she likens jail to church. She hears words and sees visions. When one gets out, the air smells good. She comes in during Alice's fifth week in jail, from Chicago, where jails are much worse. She considers Oprah Winfrey her fairy godmother, Oprah's success her success. Lynelle believes that she will be dead by Christmas. During her short stay, Lynelle helps lift her spirits. Bailed out, Lynelle gives Alice a bookmark with the 23rd Psalm as a memento, which Alice cherishes.

Dyshett

One of the inmates in Alice Goodwin's jail unit, Dyshett has a slight build, wears long braids, and has skin the color of a Coppertone ad. Dyshett confronts Alice within 15 minutes of her entering the unit. Dyshett's characteristic pose juts one hip out, with fists on her hips. She knows far more than most inmates, has a good vocabulary, and sings with a clear, rich voice. Knowing the charges of child molestation against Alice, Dyshett wonders how a female could accomplish that. Calling Alice Granny, Dyshett warns her to sit and wait for her. Dyshett rides Alice and Alice's cell mate, Debbie Clark, calling both baby killers. At one point, Dyshett gets angry at Alice and attacks her. Witnesses differ on whether she beats Alice into the hospital or whether Alice does it to herself as a taunt. Either way, Dyshett loses spirit and de facto leadership of the unit. Alice wishes that Dyshett could channel her energy and rage into something productive and during the trial frequently wonders how Dyshett would react to events.

Dyshett faces five years for scratching an officer while being booked for possession of cocaine. She leaves south Illinois in search of a better life but falls in with drug dealers. She brags about avoiding becoming a welfare mother in the projects and catalogs imaginary possessions, exceeding everyone else's. Dyshett frequently tells of knifing someone as he is raping her, just as he achieves orgasm. Sherry confides that Dyshett has a troubled upbringing and is abused in foster homes. She has two babies at age 14 and 15, whom she puts into good foster homes and buys them fancy presents for their birthdays.

Myra Flint

The Child Protection worker who is put in charge of Robbie Mackessy's case, Flint is, in therapist Theresa Collins' opinion,"a caricature of the system" (pg. 171.) She will miss symptoms of a character-disturbed child and be easily manipulated by the accomplished young liar. When Emma and Claire Goodwin are summoned to an interview, Theresa judges Flint to be loath to remove a child from his or her family unless they are "pretty mangled" (pg. 205), physically bruised and able to describe in plain English what has been done to their private parts. Testifying at the trial, Flint contrasts physically with elegant Carol Mackessy and neither evasive or defensive. Her build, clothes, and hair suggest sound judgment. She patiently gives technical answers to tedious, repetitious questions. She uses cognitive interviews and context reinstatement even with younger children to improve memory. She denies that this makes them ventriloquist dummies.

Barbara Gardner

Alice Goodwin's mother, a dedicated, 1950's style homemaker and a heavy smoker, Barbara dies of lung cancer when Alice is eight. Towards the end of her eight-month battle, Barbara makes a recording of Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House in the Big Woods, ending by saying how she loves her daughter and is proud of her. Barbara's last

will and testament asks her old friend Kate to come from Sweden and care for her daughter. After Lizzy Collins' death, Alice considers that Barbara may have died willingly, knowing that she will be reincarnated in her wise granddaughter, Claire. It would free her from marriage to a difficult, reclusive man.

Mrs. M. L. Glevitch

A monstrous-looking woman wearing unnaturally-colored make-up, a dress that looks like a garbage bag, steel-tipped shoes, and a name label from a previous engagement, Glevitch gossips loudly in the line to view Lizzy Collins at her funeral. As Alice Goodwin bolts from the funeral, she imagines Glevitch blaming her for Lizzy's death and during a school board hearing imagines her spreading rumors about saving Audrey from her sister's fate. Glevitch's image comes up regularly throughout the novel as a nightmare figure.

Emma and Claire Goodwin

Alice and Howard Goodwin's daughters, Emma is six years old and Claire three. Emma is a trying, demanding child, given to hysteria over trifles and to terrifying tantrums. Claire has stolen the limelight from her but is destined to have her milestones overlooked. Claire knows things that her mother is sure no one has taught her. Alice suspects that Claire is the reincarnation of her own late and beloved mother. The girls are best friends with Theresa and Dan Collins' girls, Audry and Lizzy. The girls play together during the summers, as one mother takes them every other day. While Alice is distracted by Emma and her own musings, Lizzy slips out to the pond and drowns. Alice goes into a deep depression and her girls have to rely on their inexperienced father for everything. While Alice is in jail, Theresa takes them in by day to play with Audry, but this ends out of fear that she and Howard will grow too intimate. Emma and Audra dislike the small apartment to which they move after Howard sells the farm. Emma settles into kindergarten and after Alice is found not-guilty, both girls attend private school in Chicago, which is their new home.

Nellie Goodwin

Howard Goodwin's mother, Nellie, is an unpredictable but generous woman and a stickler for neat appearance. A nurse, she suggests that daughter-in-law Alice study nursing and funds her degree. Alice is convinced that Nellie dislikes her from their first meeting. Nevertheless, when Lizzy Collins drowns while Alice is babysitting her, Alice thinks that Nellie may lend them money to pay her hospital expenses. Nellie comes from Chicago to care for the girls while Howard and Alice sit at the hospital, waiting for news. She cooks and bakes and orders Howard to buy a decent suit for Lizzy's funeral. He covers his exasperation at how her generosity always comes with strings attached. A week after the funeral, Nellie leaves for Romania for two months of volunteer work among AIDS children. She is there when Alice is arrested and the telephone connection

is too poor for Howard to get the facts across. She cannot afford the $100,000 bail, even if Howard could ask her for it. After Alice is found not-guilty, Nellie funds the girls' education in private school in Chicago. She is glad that Howard's farming adventure is over, showing how little she understands him. Alice considers Nellie "a passive-aggressive busybody" (pg. 164.)

David Henskin

The principal of Blackwell Elementary School, Henskin summons school nurse Alice Goodwin to a meeting of the school board to discuss using volunteers to ease the bottleneck in her office. He is a formidable, remote man with steel-colored hair, old-fashioned glasses, and oily skin. He is near the end of his career and loves details. He is of no help when Alice asks for help with troublesome Robbie Mackessy. When Alice is arrested for molesting Robbie, Henskin denounces her and calls a parents' meeting that inflames passions. Testifying at Alice's trial, Henskin admits that everyone on the staff fears an untrue denunciation.

Janet

One of the inmates in Alice Goodwin's jail unit, Janet is a large white girl with curly blond hair and a mouth that hangs open. The charges against her are too numerous to list.

Aunt Kate

The woman whom Alice Goodwin calls Aunt Kate is a friend of her mother's who comes home from Stockholm, Sweden, when she hears that Alice's mother is dying and asks in her last will and testament to raise her daughter. Kate moves into the attic and takes care of the household until she dies of a heart attack the summer before Alice goes to college. Alice's father retreats into his own study and acts the reclusive border. Kate treats Alice more like a friend than a daughter. Kate always smells of lavender and cigarette smoke. Alice fondly recalls their Friday night square dancing outings in Chicago, likening it to church. The money that she leaves Kate suffices to buy a farm in Prairie Center.

Lloyd

An old friend of Howard Goodwin's, Lloyd with his dirty dread locks gives new neighbors a fright weeks when he visits the farm for two months, helping with repairs. Neighbors continue to ignore the Goodwins after Lloyd leaves, foreshadowing the treatment they will give them after Alice is arrested and charged with child molestation.

Robbie and Carol Mackessy

Alice Goodwin's primary accuser, Robbie is one of her more frequent and ill-behaved patients in the Blackwell Elementary School nurse's office. He is a cruel, hard, fearless, energetic, and disturbed boy who enters her doorway and silently stares. Alice is sure that he is a victim of his mother Carol's negligence, a view shared by Carol's neighbor, Nancy Sheridan, who eventually testifies against her.

Carol is introduced staring and sneering at Alice in the hospital lounge after Lizzy Collins is brought in, drowned. Alice recalls them clashing when Carol sends Robbie to school sick and arrives late to pick him up. Alice believes that Carol has dumped Robbie on the school for her convenience, while she works managing a steak house in Blackwell. Carol arrives dressed conservatively for her job but walks with arrogance, flipping her hair. When Alice confronts her negligence, Carol tells her to mind her own business. When Alice describes dangerous symptoms and threatens to report her, Carol threatens to report Alice and get her put away. Theresa Collins has had the Mackessys in therapy and knows their troubles. Carol's parents are both deaf and let their six children run wild.

During Alice's trial, experts describe Robbie as a victim of Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome or PTSS, brought on either by Alice's alleged performing fellatio on him or by witnessing the so-called primal scene of his mother having sex with a stranger. Robbie clearly fits the profile of sufferers of Antisocial-Personality Disorder or APD, which is the inability to look another in the eye unless manipulating him or her or in anger, able to create outrageous lies, and aggressive. APD children often have not bonded with parents and their parents are hostile and angry. Defense attorney Paul Rafferty succeeds in making Robbie show his true colors, and witness James "Grinder" Perkins freely admits to having sex with Carol, merely assuming that Robbie is elsewhere.

Rev. Joseph Nabor

The newly-arrived Presbyterian minister in Prairie Junction, Nabor comes to the hospital to minister to Lizzy Collins' grieving family and later officiates at her burial. Nabor suffers such acute asthma that he needs a nebulizer to preach. He is 28 years old, just out of school, and, although only a few months in Prairie Center, is working on a land deal. Alice Goodwin is instantly repulsed by the affected "ministerial tilt" (pg. 29) of his bearded head, supposedly conveying humility and authority. He performs and acts, using the few Bible verses that he has memorized.

James (Grinder) Perkins

Carol Mackessy's short-term lover, Perkins testifies in court that their trysts always take place in her house and he assumes that her son is elsewhere. Perkins is office manager for the Oscar Mayer plant in Madison, but is well-dressed and groomed and not at all

the Neanderthal redneck that his nickname suggests. Another of Carol's many lovers refuses to testify.

Judge Horace Peterson

The judge who presides at Alice Goodwin's preliminary hearing and trial, Peterson is 55 years old and looks tire. He physically bars rampaging women from his courtroom during the preliminary hearing and bars both sides from mentioning Lizzy Collins' drowning. He rather consistently sustains objections by defense attorney Paul Rafferty, but Rafferty is convinced that Peterson likes him.

Paul Rafferty

Theresa and Dan Collins' lawyer, Rafferty is Alice Goodwin's only choice when she is arrested for allegedly molesting Robbie Mackessy and other youngsters at the school where she is a nurse. Rafferty is out of town for the crucial first few days, but Alice rejects his partner, Mr. Finn, as even a temporary substitute, for she has heard that he is a lecherous drunk. Instead, she talks to a public defender. Alice considers Rafferty peculiar and eccentric, but trusts him because of his decency, ever since meeting him at a Collins barbecue. He has a nasal voice that makes Howard Goodwin always want to clear his throat for him. Rafferty is tall and thin, with large eyes behind thick lenses. To Howard, the eyes suggest an intensity that he may or may not have. He has a yellowing goatee, buck teeth, a sallow complexion, and reeks of aftershave. The first thing that he discusses are his fees. Sometimes Howard thinks that he is a charlatan. Alice appreciates that he never questions her innocence, but she dislikes his theatricality and enjoyment of crushing opponents. He tells her that it is the only way. Whenever Rafferty dislikes someone, he imagines him or her floating down a tranquil river and suddenly plunging to his or her doom... Rafferty buys his suits at Goldblatt's in Chicago, noted for shoddy goods, whereas he could afford to shop at Saks or Brooks Brothers. Rafferty & Finn has offices in a rejuvenated Victorian house in Racine, WI, up the street from the courthouse and jail. Rafferty forbids Finn's wife from decorating his upstairs office with the dizzying flair that she employs downstairs. Outside of Rafferty's office are stacks of boxes. Non-legal volumes have fair share of the built-in bookshelves.

Albert Satinga

An ex-priest who repairs musical instruments in Neenah, WI, Albert is an old friend of Theresa Collins. He had been her parish priest and English teacher at St. Benedict's High School, where he passed out subversive literature like The Catcher in the Rye. At age 16, Theresa had considered him the most intense person she had ever known. When he falls in love for a woman whose voice in confession fascinates him, Albert leaves the priesthood in disgrace. When the marriage breaks up, Theresa helps him ward off a nervous breakdown. Theresa is too busy to tell Albert about her daughter Lizzy's drowning until she drives out to seek his advice. Albert has grown fat and greasy

but still, to Theresa, shines with holiness. He insists that she tell the whole sad story as catharsis. It seems to work.

Mrs. Nancy Sheridan

Lawyer Paul Rafferty's star witness, whom he dubbs "the mother of us all" (pg. 367), Sheridan lives down the street from the Mackennys, who accuse Alice Goodwin of child molestation. Sheridan forbids her tenth son, Jack, to play with Robbie Mackenny, but often babysits for Robbie at his house, rather than leave him unattended when his negligent mother leaves. One evening, Sheridan testifies in court, Robbie is anxious to have her come in to see something in a dark back room where loud music is playing. She sees Carol involved in violent sex with one of her many men. Because her husband is away and she fears retribution, Sheridan does not call the police, but wishes that she had. In cross-examination, the assistant district attorney cannot shake Sheridan.

Sherry

One of the inmates in Alice Goodwin's jail unit, Sherry is an accomplice in an armed robbery. She is 19 years old, six feet tall, has deep, glistening black skin, and wears her orange hair in a ponytail. She helps Dyshett pick on Debbie Clark but also explains to Alice Dyshett's troubled childhood. After Alice's emergency hospitalization, Sherry gives a version of the accident and, with Dyshett depressed, takes over as the leader, dispensing hoarded Valiums, food, and advice. Alice deems Sherry a better minister than the Presbyterian Rev. Nabor. When Alice weeps at the thought of losing her girls, Sherry reveals that she has three children, Dante, Jamella, and Michael J. Jail is like a vacation, she jokes.

Luther (Luke) Tritz

The music director at Blackwell Elementary School, Luke is a short, stocky, orange-haired man void of humor. An Episcopalian with a wife and five children, he excites fellow staff member Alice Goodwin, and she several times imagines a relationship with him. He attends the school board meeting called to consider Alice's contract after the death of Lizzy Collins, and his avoidance of eye contact convinces Alice that he is part of a plot against her.

Catherine Trumper

A local newspaper reporter, Catherine attends the school board meeting called to consider Alice Goodwin's contract after the death of Lizzy Collins. Catherine is rumored to have had an affair with the high school football coach. Although quite fat, she dresses provocatively and sits too close to teacher Luther Tritz at the meeting.

Objects/Places

Ann Arbor, MI

Ann Arbor is where Alice and Howard Goodwin meet, while he sells his home-grown vegetables at a farmers' market by the old railroad tracks. They marry before a justice of the peace in Ann Arbor when Alice discovers that she is pregnant before moving to Prairie Center.

Blackwell, WI

A town neighboring Prairie Center, WI, Blackwell contains the elementary school where Alice Goodwin works, a college where she has earned her nursing degree, and a museum where Dan Collins has produced a "Dairy Shrine" commemorating the industry that exerts such an influence in southern Wisconsin. Alica and Howard Goodwin go shopping in Blackwell for a suit for Howard to wear to Lizzy Collins' funeral.

Blackwell Elementary School

Blackwell Elementary employs Alice Goodwin as a nurse five mornings a week from September to June. She has an open cubicle beside the principal's and secretary's offices, where she deals with chronic stomachaches and forgotten Ritalin. Blackwell is an enormous K-8 school with nearly 700 students. Noting that Alice's office is occasionally a bottleneck, Principal David Henskin calls a school board meeting to consider using volunteers to dispense over-the-counter medications. Police officers, who have been investigating charges of abuse against Alice, attend the meeting, where she is nervous and upset. They confront her in the hallway outside the restroom, where she blurts what they take to be an admission of guilt and shortly afterwards she is arrested. At the trial, Henskin admits that in the atmosphere of witch hunting, all teachers fear that they are at risk of false accusations.

Chicago, IL

Alice Goodwin grows up in Chicago with Aunt Kate. On Fridays, they go to Ida Noyes Hall in Hyde Park for international folk dancing. It is their form of church and communion. Most of the males have spent too much time in the labs at the University of Chicago. After being acquitted of child molestation charges, Alice and her family move to Chicago, where her husband Howard gets a job in the zoo, her children attend private school, and they live within sight of Wrigley Field.

Davis Realty

The real estate agency that Howard Goodwin contacts about selling his farm, Davis Realty is located in Wakesha, WI beyond the reach of the rumor-mongers who are driving him out of Prairie Center. Sandy Brinkman handles Howard's sale.

Earl Farm / Howard Goodwin Family Farm

Covering 400 acres of land with a varied topography and strictly zoned for agriculture, the Earl Farm includes a solid three-story house with a dry basement, a barn in good repair, and a seven-acre pond that seems to be the Goodwin family's salvation from summer heat until a neighbor girl drowns there. Alice Goodwin's favorite place is the untended apple grove near the pond. Howard Goodwin buys the property for half-price when Maynard Earl dies, the last of four generations on the land. Alice tends the enormous garden that feeds them all summer and helps with the dairy chores. Howard has a herd of registered golden Guernseys. His road sign proclaims him a proud "Milk Producer of America" (pg. 122).

Thomas Clausen builds the farmhouse in 1852 in typical Midwestern style and later goes off to the Civil War and then the California Gold Rush. Howard imagines the Wisconsin Indians living here in 10,000 BCE and mourns the loss of openness. He thinks of a boy, Gurdon Huck, who in 1908 falls from a hay wagon and dies. Howard finds the father's journal and keeps it, along with other mementos of history in the attic. That past flows into the present for Howard and runs together. After six years, the family knows the farm intimately, as they live according to the seasons. Selling the farm to the Boy Scouts of America for a camp is heartbreaking for Howard, but it is the only way he can raise wife Alice's $10,000 bail. She cannot imagine him living without his barn. During the brutally hot and dry summer in which the novel is set, most of the crops and the sheep die.

The GEM of Egypt

A giant excavating machine that Alice Goodwin's late father takes her to see Bolyston, OH when she is ten years old, the GEM of Egypt is, he says with exaggeration, larger than the Parthenon, his standard unit of measurement. Alice always recalls how he holds her up to get a better view and this is the one time he ever holds her.

Minneapolis, MN

Minneapolis is the city where Howard Goodwin grows up in a heavily-Lutheran neighborhood.

Prairie Junction / Prairie Center, WI

The very small town in which the Goodwin's farm is the last rural property, Prairie Center until recently is called Prairie Junction, and locals are still confused by the name change, which follows a flourishing of businesses around a new racetrack. Housing tracts have taken over most of the land. Theresa Collins is a native of Prairie Center, who has returned after seeking her fortune in Chicago. Cites mentioned in Prairie Center include the unnamed hospital to which Lizzy Collins is taken after drowning. It is newly-remodeled and modern. The Presbyterian church from which she is buried is small. Out Highway P is the library, once a Sinclair Station, where Howard Goodwin picks up interesting bits of history, and Del's Diner, the heart of the community. An old man at Del's tells Howard the history of his house.

Racine, WI

The county seat and home to the county jail and courts where Alice Goodwin is held and tried, Racine is an old manufacturing town and port city that in the 1800s is upstaged by Chicago and Milwaukee. At the bend on Highway 20 is a five-block stretch of government buildings, utilities, churches, and lawyers' offices. The courthouse is a "monolithic gray slab with an inscription from Goethe, "In the government of men a great deal may be done by severity. More by love. But most of all by clear discernment and impartial justice. Which pays no respect to persons" (pg. 174.) Alice likens the building to "a Porta Potti in the middle of a forest preserve" (pg. 144.) Alice's hearings and trial are held there, in Branch Six. The Law Enforcement Center stands across from the courthouse. It is built to hold 146 but has nearly 500. It is brick with narrow gold windows. It is airless and admits no light. The atmosphere breeds violence. Prisoners may talk with visitors for 15 minutes once a week via telephone through Plexiglas.

Romania

Howard Goodwin's mother, Nellie, goes to Romania to do volunteer work with a medical team helping AIDS babies at the time of Alice's arrested. She tells her son horror stories about primitive conditions there. Even at the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest satellite telephone connections are broken.

Spring Grove, WI

The small town near Racine, WI, where Howard Goodwin moves his family to get away from vicious blacklisting in Prairie Center and to be near the jail that holds Alice. He rejects a few undesirable places before settling on a group of units called Pheasant Glade, of which Emma approves. The townhouse is newly painted and carpeted but small and flimsy compared to the farmhouse. The girls take an instant dislike to its smell, which is eliminated by adopting a cat. There is nowhere to plant flowers or play,

but it is near the public library and the A&W where the Goodwins frequently eat. When Alice is released on bail, she paints flowers on the living room walls.

St. Paul, MN

Home to Howard Goodwin's mother, Nellie, St. Paul is an eight-hour drive from Prairie Center WI. Nellie responds quickly to Howard's emergency request, when Lizzy Collins drowns while in Alice's care.

Vermont Acres

The twenty-lot subdivision where Theresa and Dan Collins live next to Howard and Alice Goodwin's dairy farm, Vermont Acres sports a decorative New England-style covered bridge at the entrance and all or the streets are named for New England states. Unlike the farm, the houses have all of the modern amenities, including air conditioning, which is a necessity in a brutally hot summer. Howard accepts Theresa's invitation to lunch and relax in the middle of the day.

Themes

Child Abuse

At the heart of Jane Hamilton's novel A Map of the World is the troubling question of child abuse. Six-year-old Robbie Mackessy alleges that the school nurse Alice Goodwin forced him down in her office and fellated him. His fiery mother believes the story, lodges a complaint, and the two encourage other boys to help put Alice away. Police launch an investigation, interview other children, and arrest Alice on a probable cause warrant. Her lawyer, Paul Rafferty runs an independent investigation that determines that Carol Mackessy enjoys a rich and varied sex life and Robbie has most certainly been traumatized by seeing her and a partner engaging in rough sex. When this is shown in court, the result is Alice's acquittal. Hamilton interweaves legal, psychological, and sociological aspects.

Police, child welfare agencies, and the courts assume that children do not embellish and lie, ask them leading questions, and selectively ignore the impossible and bringing charges out of context. Robbie exhibits the signs of antisocial-personality disorder or APD where he avoids eye contact unless he is attacking, tells outrageous lies, and can easily be made aggressive. The prosecution holds that Robbie's Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS) stems from Alice's touching but defense witnesses says it attribute it as readily to witnessing Carol's sexual behavior. There is a witness to the latter but not to the former and Alice is acquitted.

Her family's life is at that point already in tatters for months. Outraged at the alleged betrayal of the public trust, the judge sets an impossibly high bail, which guarantees that Alice stays in jail until Howard can bear no more and sells the farm to cover it. He sees no reason to stay, because the community has turned against him, to the point of spitting at him. He is hounded by the media and cannot imagine his daughter going to the local school. At the trial, the principal of Alice's school concedes that in this charged atmosphere, every teacher fears a false denunciation. Rafferty had thought such witch hunts a thing of the past, but sadly they are not. The Goodwins have to move in order to avoid the stigma. Even in jail, Alice is particularly scorned by fellow inmates. There is virtually no assumption of innocence in such cases.

Grief

Jane Hamilton's A Map of the World shows a variety of ways of dealing with grief. Alice Goodwin, who is distracted while watching her and her neighbor Theresa Collins' children, is torn not only by grief but also guilt and utter helplessness when Lizzy drowns in the pond and her nurse training fails her even to perform CPR. Alice bolts from Lizzy's funeral, unable to face the family and having no adequate words. The grief is far greater than when as a child she loses her mother and later the woman who raises her. A child's death is particularly grievous. Add to this that Alice cannot imagine

that Theresa will ever be able to talk with her again, and Alice has no other friends. They are so close that this loss will be devastating.

Alice's husband Howard sits with her through the agonizing days of vigil in the hospital is not struck by grief until seeing the tiny coffin at the funeral. He has to deal with practical matters of keeping the farm running and motivating Alice out of her deep depression to care for the children. His grief quickly changes into anger at Alice, but his perspective is restored when Theresa wails in his arms over her lost child. They share a unique and secret emotional bond that they dare not extend beyond one intense night. Howard has no choice but to sell the farm to bail Alice out and pay legal fees and other debts. Although thankful to be out of jail, Alice grieves the loss of the farm, which defines her husband and which surprisingly has become her source of safety and peace.

Theresa cannot imagine facing Alice and is encouraged by her relatives never to forgive her. They meet by change in the orchard, however, and Theresa needs her friend to pour out her heart. Her husband, Dan, is so overwhelmed by grief that he throws himself into his work and refuses to speak. Eventually she stops tiptoeing around him, but early on she can only hold her thoughts inside. She tells Alice about consulting a defrocked priest whom she has always admired. He recommends that she recall every detail possible about Lizzy's brief life and celebrate her wonders. This catharsis works briefly but Theresa can never forget that she is the mother of two, one of whom happens to be dead and buried. She takes no consolation in her Catholic faith. Eventually she forgives Alice, but they are no longer next-door neighbors.

Religion

Religion threads through Jane Hamilton's A Map of the World as the major characters seek to deal with the untimely death of a toddler. While there is no consideration of theodicy or why a just and powerful God tolerates evil, the principal characters represent a diversity of religious backgrounds and none seems particularly comforted by faith. Lizzy Collins' mother, Theresa is raised in a large Roman Catholic family, while her father Dan plays the organ in the local Presbyterian church. Nothing is made of the mixed marriage and both are devastated by their loss. Theresa's family, half of whom have committed sins worthy of excommunication, urge her never to forgive Alice Goodwin, in whose keeping Lizzy dies. Theresa does manage to forgive. She finds a measure of peace by visiting a defrocked priest who advises her to recall and celebrate all of the events of Lizzy's short life. Leaving the meeting, Theresa sees the highway glow with the light of the Holy Spirit.

Alice is raised without religion and has no idea how properly to pray for Lizzy as she is being kept alive artificially and her relatives are praying rosaries and offering novenas. Alice feels consigned to hell and wants to confess her guilt but cannot gain admittance to their circle. Not knowing what to say at the funeral, Alice flees, publicly shaming herself and husband, Howard. Howard is raised an unsmiling Lutheran, believing that one must use the abilities that God gives one in order to travel the path that God has

specifically designed. As an adult, he follows a "laissez-faire deity" (pg. 118), who provides the goods and requires one afterwards to make one's own way. He reveres hard work and free enterprise and sees his farm is proof of his good faith. Lizzy's tiny coffin shakes Howard, but life demands that he press on.

Alice continues her quest for something to believe in, although she realizes that a jail house conversion and intense prayer to get out of her predicament would be cynical. She consider going to Bible classes in jail but does not report whether she does and learns a bit about Buddhism. She is impressed by the spirits of some inmates, especially a 22-year-old prostitute who is dying of AIDS but sees visions, considers Oprah Winfrey her fairy godmother, and gives Alice a tattered bookmark of the 23rd Psalm that Alice cherishes. Another inmate ministers to Alice and others. Alice greatly prefers her to Rev. Joseph Nabor, the newly-arrived Presbyterian minister in Prairie Junction, whom she instantly diagnoses to be a spiritual fake. She never wavers from this prejudice.

Several other citizens of Prairie Center have their religion analyzed. Miss Bowman passes out Jehovah's Witnesses tracts and would have been burnt at Salem during the witch hunts. Suzannah Brooks, Theresa's holier-than-thou neighbor, quotes scripture at Howard when he begs her to babysit so he can meet with Alice's lawyer. She calls on him to surrender his life to Jesus. Later, Brooks hurries to fill in Theresa on "the dirt" (pg. 170) when Theresa gets back to town. Mocking her as a "model Christian," Theresa slams the door in her face. In general the faithful of Prairie Center spurn Howard his children, helping to convince him to sell out and move. He knows that his family will be forever stigmatized.

By the end of the novel, Theresa has forgiven Alice and Alice has forgiven Howard's betrayals, but cannot figure out what is still bothering him. She sees forgiveness as a strong web. She has developed a sense of natural religiosity, considering, for example, a nighttime nude swim in the pond a kind of baptism or blessing on their secular marriage. She meditates on the meaning and mechanism of forgiveness and notes that Theresa's God is external, while hers is that part within her that occasionally lets her see clearly. This is quite an odyssey from her desperate unbelief during the vigil over Lizzy.

Style

Point of View

In A Map of the World, Jane Hamilton divides narration between a wife and husband both reacting to the trauma of the death of a lost child, charges of child molestation, and alienation from the community. The perspectives are carefully kept separate unless and until the narrators confide specific information to the other. Neither is an omniscient point of view. Both are confused and conflicted.

Alice Goodwin opens with a reflection on how what should have been a pleasant summer free from work outside the house and farm is destroyed when a neighbor's child drowns while in Alice's care. Alice candidly admits that she cannot deal with the guilt. She shuts out her husband, Howard, who desperately needs her to snap out of it and shoulder her part of the work. She describes how pre-existing marital tensions magnify and how Howard's prodding drives her deeper. She admits to two public outbursts that alienate her from others. The second one ends in her surprise arrest for molesting a boy in her nurse's office during the school year.

Howard takes over narration, concentrating on the hopeless task of picking up the pieces. Gradually, he comes to resent Alice for destroying the family and throwing them further into debt. Still, she is the family's rudder and he needs her back. Howard accepts help from the mother of the drowned child but when they become too close for comfort, Theresa backs away. He sells the farm and moves the girls into an apartment. Much of Howard's section deals with the lawyer whom they hire and weekly visitations to Alice, who is frustratingly resigned to her fate.

Alice resumes narration, backtracking to her prison experiences. Her point of view often contradicts the impressions that Howard has developed, looking in from the outside. When bailed out, she is glad to be free but feels like she has lost something precious without being consulted. Resentment for Howard's controlling ways deepens. She details the legal processes that end in her acquittal and in the end reflects on her hopes for the future.

Setting

A Map of the World by Jane Hamilton opens in Prairie Center, a tiny town in Wisconsin, only recently renamed from Prairie Junction to suggest its prosperity. It is located near Blackwell, where co-narrator Alice Goodwin works as a school nurse from September to June, the county seat of Racine. This is where Alice unexpectedly spends the summer and autumn in jail and faces trial, and Spring Grove, where Alice's beleaguered husband and co-narrator moves the family when he sells the farm to afford Alice's bail. Action moves fluidly between these primary locations.

The physical and emotional center of the novel is the Howard Goodwin Family Farm, which they buy six years earlier. It includes a solid three-story house built in 1852, a barn in good repair, outbuildings, and a a seven-acre pond that seems to be the family's salvation during a bitterly long, dry, and hot summer until a neighbor girl drowns there. The child, Lizzy, is the daughter of Theresa and Dan Collins, who live in Vermont Acres, a modern subdivision next to the farm. With modern amenities, it stands in sharp contrast to the primitive farm. When Alice is arrested for child molestation, which allegedly occurs at Blackwell Elementary School, Howard struggles to survive alone, but crop failure and the need to get Alice out of jail force him to sell the farm and move to temporary lodging Spring Grove, near the jail and court. The Pheasant Court units are newly painted and carpeted, but smell badly and have no place for planting or child play. The Goodwin children are not happy there.

Racine is reduced to the Goodwins' focus, which is an unattractive five-block stretch of government buildings, utilities, churches, and lawyers' offices. Life inside the jail is detailed but comes down to a crowded, airless, noisy, and violent place. Alice and Howard talk via telephone once a week for 15 minutes through Plexiglass. Alice spends a few days chained to a bed in the hospital after an "accident." Both hospital and courtroom are described by both narrators according to the stereotypes that one would see on television movies.

The novel closes in Chicago, IL where Alice grows up and where the family moves after her acquittal. She looks back to her life there, recalling with particular pleasure folk dancing in Hyde Park. They also recall meeting and marrying in Spring Valley and Howard rather incidentally recalls growing up in Minneapolis. The novel mentions Romania, where Howard's mother briefly works with AIDS-infect children. The time frame for the main action is, according to Alice around 1990. Her vagueness is rather odd. The narrative covers the period of June through December.

Language and Meaning

In A Map of the World, Jane Hamilton makes use of two first-person narrators, a wife and husband, both reacting to the trauma of the death of a lost child, charges of child molestation, and alienation from the community. Alice Goodwin is a licensed nurse practitioner (LPN) who is caring, erudite, disorganized, and harried by two young children, one of whom seems to work at being difficult. Alice has a quirky sense of humor and a congenital inability to keep her mouth shut when that would be prudent.

Alice narrates the first and third books. In the first, she reacts to the guilt of being distracted while one of the neighbor children for whom she is caring slips away and drowns in their pond. She battles with her inability to revive the child and longs to be able to pray to an unknown God to spare little Lizzy. When Lizzy dies, Alice goes into weeks of paralyzing depression, agreeing with husband Howard that she should get up and keep moving but feeling unable. She increasingly resents the pressure. She admits to two major mistakes, which are fleeing Lizzy's funeral and telling police that she hurts everyone. This leads to her arrest for allegedly molesting several children at school.

Howard takes over the narration. He is a history buff and philosopher, content with routine farm work and utterly unable to care for the children alone. He often indulges in asides on various subjects that cross his mind and increasingly bitter that Alice has destroyed the family. He seems to come to doubt her innocence but cannot admit it. He writes emotionally about his trials and brief intimate encounter with Theresa Collins, Lizzy's mother. He wrestles with selling the farm but cannot see any other way to raise Alice's bond. Frustrating as she is, she is the family's foundation. Howard is generally bitter towards the legal system and cannot understand Alice's acceptance of her fate.

When Alice resumes narration, she describes jail life in detail, including colorful verbatim conversations with fellow inmates. She also describes dealing with her lawyer and the emotionally difficult trial. She reproduces the highly technical testimony given by expert witnesses, including Theresa about the psychology of young victims of abuse. Alice is more mellow, understanding, and hopeful. She has found a spiritual life that satisfies her.

Structure

A Map of the World by Jane Hamilton consists of three unnumbered parts, which are titled for its narrator. Alice Goodwin narrates Parts 1 and 3 while her husband, Howard, gives his point of view in Part 2. The time frame of Parts 2 and 3 overlap.

The book is also divided into twenty-two chapters, numbered consecutively through the three parts. Part 1 consists of chapters 1-8, while Part 2 consists of chapters 9-16 and Part 3 consists of chapters 17-22. These have no titles and vary considerably in length. Each narrator's first entry tends to be very long and comprehensive in setting up the situation.

The novel generally proceeds in chronological order from June through December. Flashbacks to the narrator's earlier lives are spread throughout the text. In Howard's portion asides on history and farming are frequent and extensive. He is a philosopher. Both narrators insert brief asides at the beginning of chapters, interrupting the transition. This occurs even at the most dramatic points in the story. They somehow relate to the transition and are interesting in and of themselves.

The mood of Part 1 is generally one of disbelief and horror. In Part 2, Howard is frustrated by Alice's unwillingness to fight and the looming likelihood of having to sell his beloved farm. Tensions between the two rise. In Part 3, Alice is far stronger and more perceptive. She focuses on the realities of jail life and the legal processes that lead to her acquittal. She provides a glimpse of the family's new life in Chicago and reveals hope.

Quotes

I used to think if you fell from grace it was more likely than not the result of one stupendous error, or else an unfortunate accident. I hadn't learned that it can happen so gradually you don't lose your stomach or hurt yourself in the landing. You don't necessarily sense the motion" (Part 1, Alice, Chapter 1, pg. 3.)

"She was speaking as if we always met each other and began com,paring the children's oxygen intake. Our small-town hospital was civilized, a place where babies were carried to full term and then born, where prostates were mended, and tonsils removed only when necessary. Children didn't go brain dead in the newly remodeled facility with track lighting and carpet on the walls" (Part 1, Alice, Chapter 2, pg. 27.)

"They could touch her anywhere they wanted now. They talked to her, and believed that her reason had returned, that she could now hear and understand. Dan counted to himself while Lizzy took breaths first twelve seconds apart, and fourteen, and eighteen, and twenty. They waited, bent over her, but no next breath came" (Part 1, Alice, Chapter 3, pg. 43.)

" 'No,' I said to Howard, 'don't force me.' I began to cry as I said again, 'Don't force me.' I turned around, tripping over the brogans, stepped flat on someone's sandals, and then pushed my way past the sweating people in the doorway. Once I was in the parking lot I lit out" (Part 1, Alice, Chapter 4, pg. 57.)

"We had understood one another, felt a sympathy, an affection, as well as been critical of the other's idiosyncrasies. We were friends in a deep way, in a way that involved obligation and trust, a solid faith in the other's love. I had never had a friend like her and I felt her life moving alongside of mine in much the same way I felt my husband's days and passages to be a complement to my own. Only with the prospect of her letting me go had I begun to realize how important she was" (Part 1, Alice, Chapter 5, pg. 72-73.)

"'I said, 'If he keeps coming to school sick I'll report you to - It's not right, that he's always so run down. I'll do that, Mrs. Mackessy. I'll report you.'
'I'll report you,' she snarled, coming past me with Robbie slung over her shoulder. She turned, almost cracking her son's head in the molding of the door. 'I'll get you put away if anything is the matter with him'" (Part 1, Alice, Chapter 8, pg. 106-107.)

"I was as mystified by her behavior as I was by the charge. Even the drought, and the sick lamb who had lost control of its limbs, even I suppose, the death of Lizzy - all of that hard luck and tragedy was something a person could expect as they grew older. There was nothing in our experience, nothing that had prepared us for being taken from our life" (Part 2, Howard, Chapter 10, pg. 153.)

"I remember weakening, seeing the kitchen go fluid and red. The place spread, the trembling walls steaming beyond their own boundaries. I was at first hot, and then

suddenly cold, hard. How Alice could have done this to us, I didn't know" (Part 2, Howard, Chapter 13, pg. 204.)

"She flew into my outstretched arms, hit hard, and stayed there. That is how I remember it. I meant to draw her in and she was alredy against me. 'They put her in the ground,' she cried into my chest. 'It was not, that yellow windy night she was buried. It was blowing, blowing. I couldn't stop them from burying her. I couldn't stop it.' We held each other, swaying back and forth. She was so heavy, too heavy to hold up. We sank to the hard porch floor, nothing between us and the stone but the thin rug woven from old jeans and shirts. We held each other against each fresh racking sob as it came" (Part 2, Howard, Chapter 13, pg. 224-225.)

"Alice knelt at the curb and they alternately held close to her and pulled away to stroke her bandanna, her face, her chest. They touched her shyly, as if she was a wounded animal. She didn't say much" (Part 2, Howard, Chapter 16, pg. 267.)

"And while jail is a shock to a middle-class person - more so than for the drug addicts and prostitutes who regularly come in off the street, I came to think that for the common good everyone should spend a little time reduced to a hamster that incarceration should be mandatory, like jury duty" (Part 3, Alice, Chapter 17, pg. 274.)

"I could say I'm sorry for the rest of my life, every day, every minute for the rest of my life and it still wouldn't exhaust all the sorriness I have inside me. I'm sorry for Lizzy most of all. I'm sorry for Robbie, I'm sorry for Theresa, I'm especially sorry on your account, and for Emma, and Claire. I'm sorry specifically, and I'm just plain sorry. I'm sorry Rafferty makes you sick. Maybe, just maybe, he'll get me off, and then we can somehow try to begin all over, or back in the middle, or go forward from this ending place" (Part 3, Alice, Chapter 20, pg. 351.)

Topics for Discussion

How is Oprah Winfrey and her popular television program used in the novel? How do various character's opinions about her help define their personalities?

What is Suzannah Brooks' role in the novel? Why is she a lightning rod for criticism?

What do Howard Goodwin's chest of treasures in the attic say about his character, particularly vis-a-vis Alice?

How do the conflicts in Howard and Alice Goodwin's marriage intensify by the molestation charges? How does each come to regard the other and what hope does each hold for reconciliation?

What lessons does the novel offer about forgiveness?

Why, when Alice and Theresa meet for lunch and see one another at the trial, does Alice consider the change meeting in the orchard the appropriate end for their intimate relationship? What factors create closure?

Is Paul Rafferty a good lawyer? Is he a good human being? Explain what factors go into your answer.