

Almost Heaven Study Guide

Almost Heaven by Judith McNaught

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Plot Summary

Almost Heaven is a novel by Judith McNaught. The novel centers on Elizabeth, a young aristocrat whose uncle has decided it is time for her to be married despite the disastrous debut that ruined her reputation in society. Elizabeth resists the idea of a loveless marriage, especially when she learns that one of the men who has accepted her uncle's offer of her hand in marriage is the very man who ruined her reputation in the first place. Almost Heaven is an often amusing romance full of misdirection and the sensuality that fans of Judith McNaught have come to expect.

Nearly two years ago, Elizabeth Cameron debuted and received more than a dozen marriage proposals. Elizabeth's brother Robert had accepted one of these proposals when Elizabeth attended a disastrous weekend party that would change her life forever. At this party, Elizabeth met Ian Thornton, an outsider who charmed his way into her heart and set her up for a scene that would ruin her reputation and end all her chances of marrying a titled gentleman. After an equally disastrous duel, Elizabeth's brother, Robert, disappeared. Elizabeth was left to pay off all his debts and fight to save their family home, Havenhurst. Elizabeth has also been left at the mercy of her uncle who has now decided it is time for Elizabeth to marry in order to provide him and his childless wife an heir.

Only three of Elizabeth's original fifteen suitors respond to her uncle's offer of her hand in marriage. Elizabeth is sent to visit each one for a week to allow the men a chance to decide if they still want to marry her. Elizabeth sets out to dissuade each of her suitors, preferring to remain single for the remainder of her life. The first man is something of a libertine, so Elizabeth pretends to be a religious prude. This play acting causes Sir Belhaven to send Elizabeth away after only one night. The next suitor, Lord Marchman, is an avid outdoorsman, so Elizabeth pretends to detest fishing. However, Marchman recalls that Elizabeth once professed a deep love of fishing, so he confronts her on her behavior. Elizabeth tells Marchman the truth and he agrees to refuse her hand. However, Marchman contacts Elizabeth's uncle and offers to marry her should Belhaven make an offer for her hand.

The third suitor Elizabeth must visit is Ian Thornton. Ian is staying at his family home in Scotland. The road to his home is so rough that Elizabeth's carriage cannot make the journey and she finds herself stranded at the Thornton cottage until her uncle is to send for her in a week's time. However, when Elizabeth arrives Ian immediately attempts to throw her out due to the tension that resulted from their previous meeting. Elizabeth and Lucinda, her companion, are willing to leave, but only after Elizabeth proves to Ian that he invited her to visit him, something that turns out to have been a mistake made by Ian's secretary. Realizing the mistake is his fault, Ian relents and allows Elizabeth to stay.

It is rumored that Ian is the grandson of the Duke of Stanhope. The moment Lucinda sees him, she recognizes the family resemblance and decides that this is the man Elizabeth should marry. Lucinda begins to scheme to leave Elizabeth and Ian alone



together so they can rekindle their romance. While sexual tension builds between Ian and Elizabeth, multiple misunderstandings stand between their ability to admit their true feelings for one another. However, when Elizabeth is called home to marry Belhaven, Lucinda makes sure that Ian learns the truth about Elizabeth. When Ian learns of Elizabeth's ruined reputation and her poverty, he decides he must marry her. In order to do this, Ian is forced to forgive his grandfather for disowning his father for marrying below himself and accepting the title of Marques of Kensington.

With his new title and his grandfather at his side, Ian is able to salvage Elizabeth's reputation. Ian arranges a marriage contract with Elizabeth's uncle and becomes betrothed to her. Elizabeth and Ian work out a contract of their own in which Ian agrees to allow Elizabeth to care for her family home, Havenhurst, any way she should see fit. After their wedding, Elizabeth and Ian settle into blissful marriage. One afternoon while Elizabeth is at Havenhurst, her brother shows up. Robert convinces Elizabeth that Ian had several men force Robert aboard one of Ian's ships and then arranged for him to work in a mine. During his time in the mine, Robert was savagely beaten and he has scars to prove it. Elizabeth sees these scars and agrees to run away with Robert.

Elizabeth pawns the jewels that Ian has bought for her in order to use the money to pay for she and Robert to take a ship to the colonies in America. While waiting for a ship, Elizabeth sees a newspaper and learns that Ian is on trial for her murder and the murder of her brother, Robert. Elizabeth confronts Robert and learns that Ian put Robert on the ship because Robert tried to kill him on numerous occasions. The beating was the result of Robert's own dishonesty and had nothing to do with Ian. Elizabeth gives Robert the money to begin a new life and then rushes back to London to save Ian. Elizabeth gives testimony making it appear as though she is a simple wife who ran off on a whim. Ian is acquitted; however, Ian is so hurt by Elizabeth's betrayal that he refuses to take her back. Ian files for divorce.

Elizabeth refuses to allow Ian to divorce her. Elizabeth waits months for Ian to change his mind, but when she learns that a lawyer is trying to serve divorce papers on her, she decides to leave town. Elizabeth goes to Scotland to wait for Ian to remember his love for her. Eventually Ian comes around and forgives Elizabeth. Ian and Elizabeth go on to have two children and a happy marriage.



Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary

Almost Heaven is a novel by Judith McNaught. The novel centers on Elizabeth, a young aristocrat whose uncle has decided it is time for her to be married despite the disastrous debut that ruined her reputation in society. Elizabeth resists the idea of a loveless marriage, especially when she learns that one of the men who has accepted her uncle's offer of her hand in marriage is the very man who ruined her reputation in the first place. Almost Heaven is an often amusing romance full of misdirection and the sensuality that fans of Judith McNaught have come to expect.

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Chapters 1-3 Analysis

These chapters introduce the reader to many of the main characters of the novel. First and most important is Elizabeth Cameron. Elizabeth is an intelligent young woman who has single handedly saved her family home from the auction block with her wit and the support of her loyal servants during a time period when women do not handle the financial side of running a home. The reader sees Elizabeth as a maiden who is content to remain alone, living at Havenhurst with her servants without a man to tell her what to



do. However, this contentment is put to the test when Elizabeth learns that she is to marry as soon as possible or lose the meager financial support her uncle has given her since her brother disappeared nearly two years before. The reader suspects that something disastrous took place when Elizabeth made her debut into society nearly two years ago, but has no idea what that might be at this point. However, Elizabeth's reaction to the name Ian Thornton gives the reader a small clue what that disaster might have been.

Also introduced is Elizabeth's uncle. The uncle is clearly a selfish man who values a dollar, and resents being placed in the position of caring financially for his unmarried niece. This uncle does something that is outrageous by sending out letters offering Elizabeth in marriage to highest bidder. This behavior clearly underscores the uncle's unhappiness of having to suffer the burden of caring for Elizabeth despite the fact that she clearly only takes from him what is completely necessary. Alex is introduced here as well. Alex is a good friend of Elizabeth's who clearly cares about her friend and wants to help repair the damage that was done at Elizabeth's debut. Alex, however, clearly does not appreciate the extent of the damage that has already been done. Bentner is also introduced. Bentner is a butler, but he is also a friend of Elizabeth. Bentner loves Elizabeth and is willing overstep his boundaries to do whatever it takes to help Elizabeth, suggesting to the reader that he will appear again, and often, in a role that borders on inappropriate in the eye of the society that banished someone as sweet as Elizabeth nearly two years before.



Chapters 4-5

Chapters 4-5 Summary

The mention of Ian Thornton's name causes Elizabeth to reflect back on her disastrous debut. Elizabeth and her half brother Robert were orphaned when Elizabeth was a small child. Elizabeth grew up at Havenhurst, raised mostly by the servants although her brother is her legal guardian. Their father left them with a large number of debts due to his love of gambling. Robert shares the same love of gambling, therefore their debts are so huge that they might lose their house. However, Robert decided to make a good marriage for Elizabeth to a man with a title and wealth, not only to help relieve their debts but to insure Elizabeth's future happiness. A duenna is hired and Elizabeth is trained in the traditions of society. Elizabeth's debut is marked by a record number of proposals. One of these proposals is from Viscount Mondevale, a young aristocrat with a great wealth to go with his title. Robert decides to accept Viscount Mondevale's proposal, but puts off making it public for a few days to insure that it is the best match for Elizabeth. While Elizabeth waits for her brother to make his final decision, she goes to a weekend party at the home of the sister of one of her friends. At the party, Elizabeth's friends talk her into helping them with a bet they made with the hostess. Elizabeth is to get a mysterious gentleman to dance with her. However, Elizabeth is unsuccessful. The man, Ian Thornton, makes a lasting impression on her all the same.

At the ball that night, Elizabeth joins most of the party in the card room where everyone is watching a tense poker game between Ian Thornton and Lord Everly, an acquaintance of Elizabeth. When Lord Everly loses a great deal of money to Ian, he accuses Ian of cheating. No one jumps to Ian's defense because he is an outsider, not titled. Elizabeth finds that unfair and takes it upon herself to stop Lord Everly from challenging Ian to a duel. Elizabeth is successful, by first appealing to the men with honesty and then using feminine wiles to distract, but Lord Everly is so humiliated he leaves the party. Afterward, Elizabeth slips outside only to find herself in Ian's arms. Ian is amused by Elizabeth and asks her to join him at the woodcutter's cottage the next day. Elizabeth refuses because it would be inappropriate for her to be alone with Ian. However, Elizabeth cannot stop thinking about Ian and is jealous when he flirts with other women at dinner later that night.

Chapters 4-5 Analysis

This chapter is the beginning of a long flashback that explains the disaster that caused Elizabeth to become isolated at her home, Havenhurst. This chapter also introduces another character to the reader, Elizabeth's brother, Robert. Robert is Elizabeth's closest relative, her guardian since the death of their parents many years before. Elizabeth clearly cares deeply for Robert and trusts him, as illustrated by her readiness to make a loveless marriage because Robert tells her it is the right thing to do. At the time in which the novel is set, a marriage is often made based on which man can give



the most money to the woman's family as part of the marriage contract, and this aspect of marriage appears to be of utmost importance to Robert. Robert is in deep debt because of his gambling habit. Robert tells Elizabeth they may lose their family home because of the debts. Elizabeth loves Havenhurst because it is a part of her identity, filled with the history of her family. Elizabeth is willing to do just about anything to save Havenhurst, including marry for money rather than love.

Elizabeth throws herself into the games of her debut despite finding the games people play in the name of status and respect repulsive. Elizabeth downplays her intelligence and allows the men who court her to believe she is less intelligent than she really is. This shows the reader how desperate Elizabeth is to help her brother and to make him happy. Elizabeth receives a record number of marriage proposals, causing her brother a great deal of relief when he is able to pick a man who is both titled and wealthy. It seems that everything is working out for Elizabeth and her brother, except for the fact that Elizabeth is about to marry a man who does not even know that she is well read and highly intelligent. However, before the betrothal is announced, Elizabeth attends a party where she is goaded by her friends into meeting a mysterious stranger. Elizabeth finds this man both charming and aloof, a combination that makes him unforgettable. This stranger, whom the reader knows to be Ian Thornton, the man with whom Elizabeth's brother dueled for unknown reasons, seems to be the reason for Elizabeth's current troubles, leading the reader to suspect that he will play an important role in the events about to unfold in Elizabeth's memories as the flashback continues in the following chapters.

The ball that night is disrupted when everyone became involved in the poker game going on in the card room. Traditionally women would not have been allowed in the card room, but this night they are, giving the reader some insight to the fact that the rules of society are not as closely watched at this party as they might have been at others. Elizabeth watches as Ian successfully wins most of Lord Everly's money. When Lord Everly becomes angry, calling Ian a cheat, Elizabeth is shocked when no one comes to Ian's defense. Showing her depth of character and the affection she has already developed for Ian, Elizabeth comes to his defense. When no one will listen to her, Elizabeth changes tactics, relying on her feminine wiles to distract Lord Everly from his anger. This is a tactic that belies Elizabeth's intelligence, but gets her what she wants and will be a tactic she will use again as the plot of the novel continues to develop.

Elizabeth goes out into the garden and is immediately joined by Ian. Ian is a kinder, gentler man during this meeting. Ian explains that he is not well respected in society due to a lack of title and that this is why he refused to dance with Elizabeth where everyone could see them. However, Ian has no qualms about dancing with her in the privacy of the garden. Ian also steals a kiss, causing Elizabeth some discomfort when she realizes she likes his kisses. Ian wants to meet Elizabeth alone the following day. This is highly unusual and frowned upon in the society of Elizabeth's time because a woman's virginity was a highly valued prize for a prospective husband and the possibility that a woman might have indulged in intimacies before her marriage could ruin her chances of making a good marriage. Elizabeth refuses as any good girl in her position would have. However, Elizabeth is darkly jealous of every woman Ian flirts with at dinner, making the

reader suspect that she might not follow the dictates of society after all. The reader wonders if this possible meeting is the thing that caused Elizabeth's fall from grace and the duel between Ian and her brother.



Chapters 6-7

Chapters 6-7 Summary

The following morning, Elizabeth wakes to find she has overslept and missed out on traveling into the village with the others. Elizabeth decides to take a horse and catch up. However, it begins to rain as Elizabeth reaches the woods, so she takes a path into the woods to find cover. Elizabeth happens upon a cottage and realizes it is the same cottage where Ian asked her to meet him. It is hours past the appointed time, so Elizabeth thinks Ian must have left long ago. However, when Elizabeth enters the cottage, she finds Ian still waiting. Ian is happy to see Elizabeth even though she is concerned about being alone with him without a chaperon. Ian assures her no one will find out. Ian and Elizabeth share a relaxing meal during which Ian encourages Elizabeth to ask him questions she would not otherwise be allowed to ask in the presence of a man. Elizabeth shows Ian her intelligence and in return is treated as an equal. The relaxing meal turns into an intimate moment. Ian kisses Elizabeth and she allows his touch, unable to resist his charms. However, Elizabeth comes to her senses and realizes what she has done is inappropriate. Ian tells her that he loves her and is willing to marry her, but Elizabeth is shocked at her own behavior and eager to get away. Elizabeth rushes back to the estate where the rest of the members of the party have already arrived from their excursion into the village.

Rumors immediately begin to fly when Valerie points out that both Elizabeth and Ian were missing that afternoon and that Ian took lunch for two with her before he left the house. Elizabeth confesses all to her main and then sends for her brother to pick her up early. Elizabeth then receives a note asking that she meet someone in the greenhouse. Elizabeth asks the servant who sent the note and is told it is from Valerie. However, when Elizabeth gets to the greenhouse, it is Ian who comes to meet her. Ian seems to believe that Elizabeth wanted to see him and attempts to seduce her. Elizabeth resists and this is the scene that Robert walks in on. Robert becomes angry, tells Ian that Elizabeth is betrothed to another man, and challenges Ian to a duel. Ian accepts. Elizabeth tries to talk her brother out of the duel, but has no success. The duel goes badly. Robert fires early and hits Ian in the arm. Rather than kill Robert, as is his right, Ian shoots the tassel off his boot. Robert is humiliated. In the following days, rumors about Elizabeth's behavior and the inappropriate duel spread throughout the ton until Viscount Mondevale feels as though he has no option but to end the engagement. A few days later, Robert disappears and Elizabeth is forced to return to Havenhurst in shame.

Chapters 6-7 Analysis

Elizabeth wakes late and rushes off to join everyone in the village only to be sidelined by the rain. Elizabeth ends up at the same cottage where Ian wanted to meet her earlier in the day. The reader wonders if perhaps Elizabeth did not come to the cottage due to an unconscious desire to be with Ian. Elizabeth appears upset at first to be alone with



Ian, but she does not leave, giving the reader the impression that she clearly wants to be with Ian. Ian then treats Elizabeth like an equal, something that was highly unusual at the time the novel is set. Elizabeth appreciates this gesture and takes full advantage of it, asking all the questions she has never been allowed to ask in polite company. It is clear a unique and deep bond is growing between these two characters. This becomes even more obvious to the reader when Ian and Elizabeth move into an intimate embrace. However, this embrace is dangerous and could cause Elizabeth a great deal of grief should anyone find out about it. At the time the novel is set, a woman such as Elizabeth was meant to go into marriage without experiencing any of the intimacy that seems commonplace in modern society. As a result of this, Elizabeth is humiliated and outraged when she comes to her senses and decides to have her brother take her home immediately.

Before Elizabeth can go home, however, rumors begin to spread about her relationship with Ian. Not only this, but Elizabeth is summoned to the greenhouse only to find herself alone with Ian once more. Elizabeth and Ian are caught in an embrace, a fact that has the potential of ruining their reputations and therefore ruining Elizabeth's chances of making a good marriage. A woman should not be alone with a man for any reason, especially not in an intimate embrace. This is witnessed by Robert as well as many people from the party, prompting Robert to challenge Ian to a duel. Elizabeth has already saved Ian from one duel, so it is ironic that she should be the cause of a second. The duel does not go well and Robert is left humiliated. Later, as the reader is already aware, Robert disappears. The reasons for Robert's disappearance seem to be numerous, ranging from his decision to run away from humiliation to Robert's desire to outrun his creditors and debtor's prison, which was a real possibility during the time in which the novel is set. Either way, it seems that Robert is a selfish man if he could leave his sister like he has to face the humiliation of her ruined reputation and the enormity of their debts on her own.



Chapters 8-10

Chapters 8-10 Summary

Elizabeth tells Alex what her uncle has done, arranged for her to visit three possible candidates for her hand in marriage, and together they scheme to find a way to discourage each man from making an offer of marriage. In theory it seems simple to discourage these men, but Elizabeth has no idea how she is going to deal with Ian Thornton. In fact, Elizabeth is still shocked that Ian would make overtures of marriage after all that took place at all. Elizabeth travels to the home of Sir Francis Belhaven with Berta, her maid, disguised as her aunt. Elizabeth is dressed very conservatively and when she arrives to dinner, she makes a great show of praying over the food and denouncing everything that has to do with sex. Elizabeth also discusses her desire to give a great deal of money to many charities. Due to the fact that Belhaven enjoys sex but is conservative with his money, he quickly tells Elizabeth he is no longer interested in marrying her. However, as Elizabeth leaves, Belhaven sees her remove her conservative costume and has second thoughts.

Elizabeth then travels to the home of her second suitor, Lord John Marchman. Although Elizabeth greatly enjoys fishing, she pretends to dislike it when Lord Marchman invites her to fish with him. In fact, Elizabeth makes the afternoon unbearable for Marchman with her constant chatter and complaining. That evening, Lord Marchman asks Elizabeth into his study where he tells her that he does not believe they suit one another. After Lord Marchman promises to write a note to Elizabeth's uncle stating as much, Lord Marchman asks Elizabeth if she remembers meeting him. When she does not, Lord Marchman describes an afternoon during which they discussed their mutual love for fishing in great detail. Caught in her deception, Elizabeth tells Lord Marchman about her problems and begs him to help her. Lord Marchman agrees to send the note he has written to her uncle. However, Lord Marchman is concerned that Belhaven might make an offer for her hand anyway, so he sends a note to Elizabeth's uncle suggesting that if Belhaven makes an offer for Elizabeth's hand, he would like to be considered as well.

Chapters 8-10 Analysis

Now that the reader knows about Elizabeth's disastrous debut, the narration has returned to the current time line. Elizabeth is sent to meet with each of her suitors for a week each. Elizabeth decides to trick each one into believing she would not be a good wife for them. Elizabeth begins at the home of Sir Francis Belhaven, an older gentleman who greatly enjoys sex, but is stingy with his money. Elizabeth knows Belhaven's reputation, so she uses it against him by convincing him she is the exact opposite of what he wants in a wife. Elizabeth does such a convincing job that Belhaven sends her away after only one day, rather than the week Elizabeth was supposed to spend at his home. This charade proves to the reader that Elizabeth is good at play acting,



something that may come up again later in the novel. However, Belhaven catches on and leaves the reader wondering if he might change his mind about whether or not he wants to make an offer for Elizabeth's hand.

When Elizabeth visits with Lord John Marchman, she attempts the same charade. However, Elizabeth does not recall meeting Lord Marchman and is unaware that she shared with him a love of fishing at their first meeting. Lord Marchman also sees through the charade and wants to know the truth. Elizabeth is backed into a corner and forced to tell the truth. Lord Marchman is very understanding, showing the reader what a kind man he is compared to Belhaven and some of the other people in Elizabeth's life. Lord Marchman agrees to take his name off the list of possible husbands for Elizabeth. However, without telling Elizabeth, Lord Marchman writes to Elizabeth's uncle offering his hand should Belhaven make an offer. Lord Marchman is attempting to protect Elizabeth from a bad marriage to an immoral man. This again goes to Lord Marchman's character and it also illustrates once again the dynamics of the male-female relationships of the time period. Lord Marchman is kind enough to listen to Elizabeth's trouble and take action to help her, but does not think enough of her intelligence to allow her to know what he has done to help. Finally, Elizabeth believes herself to be free of two of her suitors, but it turns out she more than likely will end up married to one of these gentlemen despite her scheme to dissuade their intentions.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

Ian and his friend, Jake, arrive at Ian's family home in Scotland to discover that the caretaker has forgotten to send up a couple of women from the village to cook and clean for them. While discussing this problem, Ian and Jake are interrupted by the arrival of Elizabeth and Lucinda Throckmorton-Jones. Ian immediately insists that they leave, unaware that their carriage broke down and they have no transportation back to the local village for a week. Elizabeth shows Ian the letter inviting her there, but he refuses to look at it. Instead, Ian accuses Elizabeth of having set him up to be in the greenhouse that fateful weekend by sending him a note. Ian even makes fun of Elizabeth's handwriting. Elizabeth becomes so enraged she pulls a gun on Ian. They argue until finally Elizabeth gives in. Elizabeth and Lucinda leave the cottage to sit on the road in the rain because they have nowhere else to go. Ian finally looks at the letter inviting Elizabeth to his home and realizes an inept secretary sent it to her uncle by mistake. Ian sends Jake out to invite Elizabeth and Lucinda back into the house. Tension continues to build, however, when Ian refuses to be hospitable to his unwelcome guests.

Ian continues to refer to a note Elizabeth sent him the day of the greenhouse incident, although Elizabeth did not send a note. At the same time, Jake is concerned about who is going to cook in the absence of the servant girls from the village. Neither issue is resolved, however, when Elizabeth and Lucinda elect to go to bed without eating. Lucinda lies in bed and reluctantly eavesdrops as Ian tells Jake about his prior meeting with Elizabeth. Ian claims that Elizabeth seduced him all the while knowing she was engaged to another man. Ian admits to loving Elizabeth, but says he no longer does now that he knows what kind of person she really is. Lucinda hears all this and decides that Ian is the man Elizabeth should marry, based not only on Ian's admittance of love, but also because Lucinda has heard the rumors that Ian is the grandson of the Duke of Stanhope. Upon meeting him, Lucinda knows this to be true because he is the spitting image of his grandfather. Lucinda believes Ian would make Elizabeth the perfect husband.

The next morning, Jake wakes in the barn and sets about feeding the animals. Jake discovers that Ian's horse has a stone in its shoe and will be lame for a few days. Another horse Ian and Jake used to transport supplies tries to take a bite out of Jake's bottom. At the same time, Elizabeth wakes and begins contemplating another day in Ian's presence. Elizabeth cannot figure out why Ian keeps insisting that Elizabeth sent him a note to meet her in the greenhouse, nor can she understand why Ian seems so angry at her when Robert told Elizabeth that Ian had never intended to marry Elizabeth. To Ian, the whole weekend had simply been a game, something to keep him entertained.



Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Elizabeth and her duenna arrive at Ian's remote Scot cottage only to find themselves stranded for at least a week. Ian is not happy to see them and insists that he never invited them. This misunderstanding opens the theme of misdirection. It seems that Ian's inept secretary sent a message to Elizabeth's uncle on accident. This also explains Ian's sudden interest in marrying Elizabeth when Ian told Robert he was never interested in marrying Elizabeth. However, this claim too seems to be part of the theme of misdirection when Ian tells Jake that he did love Elizabeth and fully intended to marry her until he found out she was a loose woman. Ian seems to believe that Elizabeth knew she was betrothed when she met him at the cottage. In fact, Elizabeth did not know that her brother had entered a contract with Viscount Mondevale because her brother had told her he intended to wait for a time, but he changed his mind without telling Elizabeth. This again illustrates the dynamics of society at the time the novel is set as Elizabeth did not know she was engaged until her brother told her.

A lot of tension has been injected into the plot with this new meeting between Elizabeth and Ian. A large part of the tension is Ian's repeated claims that Elizabeth asked him to come to the greenhouse that ill-fated weekend when in fact she went to the greenhouse in response to a note from her friend Valerie. This confusion also touches on the theme of misdirection and leads the reader to believe that someone wanted Elizabeth and Ian to be caught in the greenhouse together. To add to the confusion of the situation, Lucinda has decided that Ian is the perfect husband for Elizabeth. This seems a little misguided since neither Ian nor Elizabeth likes the other. Not only this, but Elizabeth's uncle is just as determined as Robert was to be sure that Elizabeth marries a man of wealth and title. Ian does not appear to have either. However, Lucinda believes that Ian is the grandson of the Duke of Stanhope, based on the fact that Ian looks a great deal like the Duke of Stanhope. This possibility could make Ian more than qualified to be Elizabeth's husband. The only question is would Ian be willing to embrace this title for Elizabeth. It seems unlikely since Ian has refused to acknowledge his grandfather up to this point as evidenced by the fact that the relationship is only a rumor, not proven fact.



Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

Jake attempts to make breakfast, but because he has never cooked before he ends up burning everything. Lucinda decides that she and Jake should go to the village to hire a couple of servant girls to help out in the cottage. Elizabeth is unhappy with the idea because she does not want to be left alone with Ian since Ian continues to be rude and to insist that Elizabeth invited him to the greenhouse. Before leaving, Lucinda pulls Ian aside and tells him that she knows he is the grandson of the Duke of Stanhope, and as such she expects him to act properly alone with Elizabeth. After Lucinda and Jake leave, Elizabeth asks Ian if they could possibly reach an understanding to perhaps ease the tension. Ian reluctantly agrees, but not before making a few comments about Elizabeth's lack of morals. Encouraged, Elizabeth sets about to make breakfast, but does a worse job of it than Jake. Nevertheless, Ian eats the meal to avoid hurting Elizabeth's feelings. Realizing the meal is a disaster, Elizabeth leaves the house to cry alone in the yard. Ian attempts to joke in order to bring Elizabeth out of her depression. However, when the conversation becomes too serious, Ian finds chores that need to be done.

Elizabeth spends the morning cleaning up the house and then sits down to write a letter to Alex. Later, Elizabeth works in the garden. During all this, Elizabeth thinks about Ian and decides that what happened between them was a result of Ian attempting to be a gentleman in the face of an inexperienced girl. Elizabeth decides to cut Ian some slack in order to reduce the tension between them since they will have to live together for the rest of the week. After working in the garden, Elizabeth washes up and then joins Ian for lunch outside. They talk about Havenhurst and Elizabeth's family as well as Ian's cottage. Elizabeth is left with the impression that the cottage is Ian's only home, suggesting to her that he is a poor man when in fact he is very rich. Later, Ian and Elizabeth fire Ian's guns and the conversation once again turns to that ill-fated weekend. Ian accuses Elizabeth of purposely forgetting to tell him she was engaged while Elizabeth blames Ian for Viscount Mondevale backing out of the wedding. Ian then asks how many suitors Elizabeth has now. Elizabeth mentions both Belhaven and Marchman, explaining that she likes the idea of marrying an older man who will give her a measure of independence.

Ian goes into the house where he finds the letter Elizabeth started to write to Alex. Ian realizes this handwriting is not the same as the note he was given that asked him to meet Elizabeth in the greenhouse. Ian goes back outside to apologize to Elizabeth. When Elizabeth hears the truth, she realizes that Valerie must have set them up in order to steal Viscount Mondevale away from Elizabeth. Elizabeth cries and Ian takes her into his arms. Before either knows what is happening, they begin to kiss. Neither notices they have been joined by the vicar from town until he speaks, breaking their embrace. The vicar tells them that Lucinda sprained her ankle and will remain in the village until it heals, but has sent the vicar to chaperon Elizabeth and Ian until her return. It turns out



the vicar is Ian's uncle, something Elizabeth finds amusing. The trio enjoy a dinner of fish together, during which Duncan, the vicar, learns a great deal about Elizabeth. What Duncan finds most interesting is Ian's behavior around Elizabeth. Duncan finds himself hoping that Ian might actually be falling in love. Duncan recalls how Ian reacted to the deaths of his parents and sister in a tragic hotel fire by getting rid of the only other thing that mattered to him, his dog. Duncan knows that Ian is afraid to trust anyone with his heart and hopes that Ian's behavior with Elizabeth shows that this will change for her. Duncan also hopes that Ian will mellow out enough to forgive his grandfather for disowning his father for marrying below his station and accept the title the dying man has offered multiple times to Ian. However, when Duncan attempts to discuss the Duke of Stanhope, Ian refuses to listen.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Lucinda decides to leave Elizabeth and Ian alone together while she goes to the village, implementing her plan to get Ian and Elizabeth back together. Before she leaves, Lucinda makes sure that Ian knows that she is aware of who his grandfather is in order to force him into behaving like a gentleman. This is accurate to the times in which the novel is set, although it is highly unlikely a young woman would have been left alone with her unmarried, male host. This again would give the appearance that Elizabeth's virtue had been compromised and make it nearly impossible for her to make a good marriage. However, the reader knows that Elizabeth's reputation is already damaged and finds it doubtful that any more harm could come to it. In fact, it seems it would make everything better for Elizabeth if Ian would marry her since he is the only man Elizabeth seems to find irresistible. This is underscored when Ian and Elizabeth share a kiss later in the chapter.

The theme of misdirection continues to be a large factor in these chapters. Ian believes Elizabeth sent him a note to meet him in the greenhouse while Elizabeth continues to believe that Ian never intended to marry her, but only found himself forced to deal with a flirtations, naïve young woman. Tensions relax between Ian and Elizabeth for a short time, but when Elizabeth learns the truth, how her friend Valerie set she and Ian up to be caught together in the greenhouse, Elizabeth finds herself faced with the truth of the cruelty of some people in the world and she falls apart. This small breakdown gives both the reader and Ian a true glimpse into Elizabeth's kind heart, helping to soften Ian for a time. Ian actually becomes nice around Elizabeth, impressing his uncle with the idea that Ian might be in love with Elizabeth. The uncle, Duncan, is pleased with this idea because he watched Ian cut everyone out of his heart when his family died. Duncan hopes that this might cause Ian to soften, to allow love into his heart, and to possibly forgive the grandfather who disowned his father mistakenly so many years ago. However, the theme of pride is illustrated here as Ian refuses to even discuss his grandfather, let alone consider forgiveness for what he sees as an unforgivable crime.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

Over breakfast the next morning, Ian is kinder for a time, but then reverts back to his pettiness by teasing Elizabeth for being a spoiled, rich girl, unaware of her true circumstances. Elizabeth brushes off Ian's cruel remarks, telling Duncan about her joy of bargaining with the merchants in the village near Havenhurst. Elizabeth makes it sound like a game rather than a method of survival. After breakfast, Elizabeth goes out into the yard and discovers an old tree house. Elizabeth climbs into the tree house and finds a treasure box that clearly belonged to Ian as a child. Elizabeth opens it and finds a sketchbook, a seashell, and a ring. Elizabeth looks through the sketches and discovers beautifully rendered portraits of a middle aged couple and a beautiful young woman. Elizabeth takes the sketchbook and ring with her when she leaves the tree house and shows them to Ian. Ian tells her that the sketches are of his parents and sister, who died in a motel fire. The ring Ian takes and hides away, insisting it is worthless despite Elizabeth's concern that it is clearly worth a great deal of money.

After dinner that night, Ian invites Elizabeth to take a walk with him. When they reach a secluded section of Ian's property, he stops and tells Elizabeth that he would like to kiss her, but he will not do so unless she comes willingly into his arms. Ian wants to be sure any intimacy between them is of mutual desire, not something he has forced her to do. Elizabeth goes to Ian and they share a long embrace. Elizabeth is overwhelmed and embarrassed by the intensity of her reaction to Ian's touch. Ian too is upset by his own reaction to Elizabeth, determined not to fall in love with her again. Ian does not want to be hurt again. Ian reminds himself that he is nearly betrothed to another woman anyway. However, this is news Ian purposely keeps from Elizabeth. After their kiss, Ian asks Elizabeth which of her suitors she would prefer to marry and Elizabeth announces that she would rather remain unmarried or marry an older man who will give her independence.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Ian makes fun of Elizabeth for being rich and pampered even as she tells Duncan about her skills at bartering with the local merchants near her home. Ian's attitude illustrates the theme of misdirection again as he mistakenly believes that Elizabeth is a spoiled rich girl, rather than living in near poverty in an attempt to keep her precious home off the auction block. Elizabeth does little to change Ian's opinion, adding to the confusion due to her own pride, another theme of the novel. Elizabeth does not want Ian to know about her dark living situation simply because she is too proud to allow a man who thinks so low of her in the first place to know the truth about her situation.

Elizabeth finds sketches and a ring in Ian's tree house. These items are important for several reasons. First, the sketches show not only talent on Ian's part, but show a more



sentimental side of the child he once was. The child who made the sketches was a sensitive creature who seems to have been lost in the adult Ian. However, when Elizabeth shows the sketches to Ian, some of the sensitivity seems to return. The ring Elizabeth finds is very expensive and clearly was important to Ian as a child as proven by his choice to keep it in his treasure box. The ring has lost its value, however, as Ian tells Elizabeth that it is worthless. Knowing what the reader does of Ian's grandfather, it only makes sense that this ring has something to do with Ian's family history. Ian's reaction to the ring proves that while he might have once cared about his history, it now makes no difference to him.

Finally, Ian and Elizabeth share another intimate embrace. Elizabeth is confused by her body's reaction to Ian. Ian, too, is confused by his own reaction to Elizabeth because he is determined not to fall in love, but finds he cannot resist Elizabeth. The reader also learns at this point that Ian is determined to marry another woman despite his feelings for Elizabeth, showing the reader that Ian still believes Elizabeth to be a scheming female who set out to break his heart, touching on the theme of misdirection. This scene shows the reader how many obstacles still remain between Ian and Elizabeth and happiness.



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

While Ian is off hunting, Elizabeth gets word that she is to return to Havenhurst immediately. Belhaven has made an offer for Elizabeth's hand in marriage and her uncle intends to accept. Before Elizabeth and Lucinda can leave, however, Lucinda informs Duncan of everything that has transpired over the past two years, expressing her frustration that Ian would allow an innocent creature like Elizabeth to marry a leach like Belhaven. After the ladies leave, Ian returns to the cottage. Duncan tells Ian everything Lucinda has told him, explaining about Elizabeth's near poverty and her desperation to save Havenhurst. Duncan also tells Ian that Elizabeth is in love with him. Ian feels guilty for what he has done to Elizabeth, finally accepting full responsibility for her situation. Ian also confesses that it is his fault that Elizabeth's brother disappeared, telling Duncan that he had Robert put on one of his ships after Robert attempted to kill him multiple times in the days after the duel. Finally, Ian agrees that he must marry Elizabeth and to do that he has to accept his grandfather's title.

Ian travels to the village outside his grandfather's estate and sends word to his grandfather that he would like to meet. The Duke of Stanhope sends a coach to bring Ian to his home, instructing the coachman to address Ian as the Marquis of Kensington to announce to the world Ian's acceptance of his rightful title. Ian arrives at his grandfather's home and signs a contract accepting the title, in too much of a hurry to see that the contract also includes all the lands and money that come with the title, something Ian did not want. Ian's grandfather becomes ill from all the excitement and has to be seen by a doctor. While his grandfather is occupied, one of Ian's elderly aunts shows him a collection of reports the Duke of Stanhope received on his grandson over the years. Ian is touched by this show of grandfatherly concern, but is still unwilling to forgive his grandfather for the years of separation brought about by his grandfather's refusal to accept his son's marriage to Ian's mother. Ian cuts the visit short in order to speak to Elizabeth's uncle about a betrothal contract. The Duke of Stanhope is disappointed, but informs Ian that he will be in London the following week, hoping for another visit then.

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

As suggested in a previous chapter, Sir Belhaven did not fall for Elizabeth's ruse to convince him that she would not be an appropriate wife for him. Sir Belhaven has made an offer for Elizabeth's hand and because he has a title, Elizabeth's uncle has decided to accept the offer. Elizabeth is to return home as quickly as possible. Ian is not happy when he learns the news, and becomes even more distressed when he learns the truth about Elizabeth's situation. It turns out, touching on the theme of misdirection, that Ian was not aware that his relationship with Elizabeth led to the ruination of her reputation or left her living in near poverty. Not only this, but Ian confesses to being responsible for



the disappearance of her brother. The disappearance of Robert was assumed to have been voluntary, a chance for Robert to run away from the debts that threatened to put him in debtor's prison. However, the reader now knows that Ian had him smuggled away on one of his ships because Robert kept trying to kill him. Ian's actions could cause an obstacle between him and Elizabeth now that he knows the person she really is and has decided to marry her—a bigger obstacle than Ian's need to convince Elizabeth to forgive him for assuming the worst of her.

In order to marry Elizabeth, Ian also needs to repair her reputation. To do this Ian realizes he needs all the help he can get. Ian needs a title and there is no better one than the one he was born to have. Ian goes to his grandfather, a man he hates because he disowned his own father for marrying a poor Scots woman. Ian needs the title his grandfather offers, but not his grandfather's affection. However, Ian soon learns that his grandfather does love him, has always loved him, and deeply regrets his actions. Ian is slow to forgive just the same, refusing to give the old man the only thing he asks of Ian in return for the title that is rightfully his. Ian's unwillingness to forgive his grandfather offers insight into Ian's nature and foreshadows the possibility of Ian refusing to forgive anyone else who might betray or otherwise hurt him.



Chapters 19-21

Chapters 19-21 Summary

Elizabeth is staying at her uncle's town house in London, but is at Alex's home planning to attend a ball that night. Alex is hoping that with the support of her grandmother-in-law, the Dowager Duchess of Hawthorne, they can repair Elizabeth's reputation and find her a better husband than Sir Belhaven. The Dowager Duchess finds Elizabeth to be of strong character and agrees to help, but a friend of Alex's, Roddy Carstairs, whom Alex was planning on escorting Elizabeth to the ball and helping improve her reputation, turns them down because Elizabeth's reputation is too badly damaged. At the same time, Ian arrives at the town house to inform Elizabeth that they are betrothed. Ian ended up paying Elizabeth's uncle a large sum for the right to marry her and is eager to tell Elizabeth the news himself. Unfortunately, Bentner will not tell Ian where Elizabeth is. Rather than go home, Ian decides to go to a local club and play cards. At the club, Ian runs into an old friend, Jordan Townsende, who happens to be Alex's husband. Ian and Jordan talk for a short time, then Jordan tells Ian he must go to attend a ball with his wife and his wife's childhood friend. Jordan tells Ian how his wife is hoping to save the reputation of some poor girl who had a disastrous debut. Ian recognizes his and Elizabeth's story and rushes out of the club.

Ian rushes to his grandfather's town house and informs him that he needs his help. While Ian waits impatiently for his grandfather to get dressed, Elizabeth and Alex arrive at the ball with Jordan, the duchess, and Tony, Elizabeth's escort. They are instantly ostracized, people talking behind their backs about Elizabeth and carefully keeping their distance from the Townsends. Elizabeth is horrified and ready to leave within moments, but Alex will not allow it. Valerie is at the ball with Viscount Mondevale, who is one of the few people to speak to Elizabeth. In fact, Viscount Mondevale apologizes for his part in Elizabeth's fall from grace. Sir Belhaven is there as well, unaware of Elizabeth's reputation until someone pulls him aside and tells him the whole story. Just when Elizabeth could not imagine the night getting worse, Ian shows up with the Duke of Stanhope. Before Elizabeth knows what is going on, Ian carefully begins spreading gossip about how he tried to seduce Elizabeth but she rebuffed him two years ago. Ian makes it seem as though Elizabeth was above reproach and he was the card. Ian then asks Elizabeth to dance, after first dancing with seven other women as was expected. Before Elizabeth realizes what has happened, her reputation has spun on its heels and she is once again the belle of the ball.

Chapters 19-21 Analysis

Alex and Elizabeth are scheming to find another suitor for Elizabeth so that she will not have to marry Belhaven, unaware that Elizabeth is already betrothed to Ian. Ian has bought Elizabeth's hand from her uncle without speaking to Elizabeth first. Ian's actions are fitting with the time in which this novel is set, but the reader is concerned that



Elizabeth will not be happy to find out she is betrothed to a man she thought was not interested in marrying her. Not only that, but Ian is the man who ruined Elizabeth's reputation in the first place, making marriage a necessity for her. Now Elizabeth and Alex must repair Elizabeth's reputation, something that appears to be an impossible task when they first arrive at the ball where they intend to just that. It seems Alex underestimated how badly Elizabeth's reputation was damaged by that weekend party with Ian.

The ton, or the members of society, begin talking about Elizabeth the moment she walks through the door and go so far as to shun the Townsends for having Elizabeth in their company. Not only do these actions anger the Townsends, but it also makes it appear that repair of Elizabeth's reputation will be impossible and marriage to Belhaven inevitable. However, Ian walks in like a white knight and suddenly everything changes. Ian allows everyone to believe that he was the one acting inappropriately that weekend and Elizabeth was the picture of a lady. Before the night is through, Ian has managed to completely repair Elizabeth's reputation as though nothing ever happened. Ian could not have done this without his grandfather and his new title, which explains to the reader why he so quickly agreed to accept his grandfather's offer of the title. The entire episode draws to a close the plot line regarding Elizabeth's reputation, leaving few story threads left unfinished. The reader can now focus on Ian's intent to marry Elizabeth, secretly hoping that Elizabeth accepts Ian without a fight.



Chapters 22-25

Chapters 22-25 Summary

Elizabeth is at her uncle's town home the following day visiting with Alex and the dowager duchess, still scheming on how to end Elizabeth's betrothal to Sir Belhaven. They are interrupted when Elizabeth's uncle arrives and announces that he has entered into a marriage contract with Ian Thornton on her behalf. Before Elizabeth can react, Ian arrives. Ian drags Elizabeth out of the room and explains to her that he now knows the truth and that he regrets his part in her downfall. Elizabeth becomes angry, accusing Ian of marrying her out of pity. To convince her that this is untrue, Ian agrees to allow Elizabeth to add a few conditions to their marriage contract. When they attempt to do this, however, Elizabeth's uncle becomes angry. Ian throws the uncle out of the house, insisting on buying the town house when the uncle refuses to be thrown out of his own house. When the dust settles, Elizabeth and Ian agree that Elizabeth should be allowed to run Havenhurst as she sees fit with monetary support from Ian until it can begin to pay for itself. In exchange, Elizabeth agrees to give Ian children and to refrain from causing gossip that would appear that Elizabeth was cuckolding Ian, a term Elizabeth does not understand but quickly agrees to.

It is agreed that Ian and Elizabeth should court for two weeks and then be married two weeks after that. Ian wants to begin courting Elizabeth that night, but Elizabeth refuses. Ian realizes that Elizabeth does not have any appropriate clothing to wear to the balls taking place that season, so he arranges for her to have a new wardrobe made. Ian also visits a jeweler and buys a great number of jewels for Elizabeth, including a betrothal ring. However, Ian decides not to give the ring to Elizabeth until he feels that she is ready to accept him as the loving husband he intends to be. That weekend, Ian joins Elizabeth at Havenhurst because she is eager to show off her family home. Ian is unimpressed with the estate itself, but loves the happiness Elizabeth clearly gets from sharing the history of the place. Ian then teases Elizabeth for all the conditions she added to the betrothal contract and she chastises him for paying too much for her uncle's town house. Elizabeth is afraid Ian does not have much money and is spending too much on gifts for her. Elizabeth assures him that she is good with budgets and can help him save his money, even offering to make Havenhurst their home should Ian need to sell his other home to conserve money. Ian finds this concern heartwarming. Later, Elizabeth tells Ian that she has hired a detective to find Robert. Ian does not tell Elizabeth that he has done the same. That night, Ian and Elizabeth enjoy a relaxing dinner with Alex and Jordan and then settle down to play cards. Elizabeth asks Ian to show her how he cheats. Ian pretends to be outraged, but does exactly that, allowing Elizabeth to win several hands before she realizes what he has done.



Chapters 22-25 Analysis

Elizabeth learns from her uncle that she is betrothed to Ian. At first Elizabeth is angry, as the reader suspected she would be. Elizabeth is an independent woman who does not like for the men in her life to make decisions for her, although by the rules of the society they live in it is their right to do. However, Ian knows Elizabeth well and knows how to appease her. Ian allows Elizabeth to add her own stipulations to their marriage contract. The negotiations prove to be a test of wills with Elizabeth pushing Ian as far as he will go. Ian readily accepts all of Elizabeth's demands, most of which center around her right to care for Havenhurst without his input, showing both Elizabeth and the reader how deeply Ian loves Elizabeth. Ian has finally allowed someone into his heart for the first time since his family died. The reader is overjoyed, but also concerned that something might go wrong since there is so much of the novel left to be read.

Elizabeth shows Ian around Havenhurst, revealing to both Ian and the reader how deeply she cares for the old estate even though it is not as impressive as the reader might have thought earlier in the novel. Havenhurst is an important part of Elizabeth's life, as illustrated by her demanding the right to continue to care for it on her own. Havenhurst will prove to be a turning point in the novel as the plot continues to race toward its climax. At the same time, Ian is touched when Elizabeth chastises him for spending too much money. Elizabeth clearly is not aware of Ian's enormous wealth, something that makes Ian happy. Now Ian knows that Elizabeth has not agreed to marry him simply to have access to that great wealth, putting an end to a final false impression Ian was left with the first weekend he met Elizabeth.



Chapters 26-28

Chapters 26-28 Summary

Elizabeth is shocked when she arrives at Montmayne, Ian's home, and discovers it is no less than an imposing mansion. Elizabeth chastises Ian for not telling her about his obvious wealth, but Ian is pleased with her reaction because it proves that she is not marrying him for his wealth. Now Ian gives Elizabeth the betrothal ring. At the same time, Elizabeth criticizes Ian's habit of spending too much money, promising to teach him how to bargain. At a ball a few nights later, Elizabeth's dance card is full. It is as though the last two years never happened. Elizabeth and Ian play the game, pretending to not know each other well in order to make it appear their courtship has just begun. Belhaven is present and tries to monopolize Elizabeth's time until Ian insults him, scaring him away. Lord Marchman is there as well, but recognizes Ian's affection for Elizabeth and does not attempt to push his own affections on her. Valerie and Viscount Mondevale are also in attendance. Ian makes it clear to both that he knows about Valerie's part in Elizabeth's downfall two years ago and suggests that they are well suited for each other.

On the morning of her wedding, Elizabeth receives a visit from her private investigator. The investigator tells Elizabeth that although it appears that Robert attempted to kill Ian several times in the days before his disappearance, it seems that Ian most likely had Robert kidnapped. The investigator suggests that because Robert has not been located, it is safe to assume that Ian had him killed. The investigator clearly dislikes Ian because he is a Scotsman, but what he says causes Elizabeth to wonder if she really knows Ian as well as she thinks she does. Elizabeth decides to marry Ian anyway, hoping that he will prove to be innocent in Robert's disappearance. Elizabeth and Ian are married later that morning with Duncan officiating.

Chapters 26-28 Analysis

Elizabeth discovers the great wealth of her future husband, but true to character continues to caution him about his wild spending habits. At the same time, Ian is finally satisfied that Elizabeth is marrying him for him and not his wealth, feeling safe enough to finally give her the betrothal ring he bought for her. Ian's actions prove to the reader that he has finally given his heart to Elizabeth, trusting her not to break it. However, the reader is still concerned that Ian's heart is destined to be broken. Trouble seems to follow Ian and Elizabeth. On the morning of their wedding, Elizabeth learns that Ian had Robert placed on a ship and taken out of the country, learning that her investigator suspects Ian had Robert killed or put to work in one of his mines. Elizabeth cannot bring herself to believe Ian could be capable of something so coldblooded. Elizabeth marries Ian anyway, leaving the reader wondering what might happen should Elizabeth learn of Robert's true whereabouts.



In the weeks before the wedding, Ian and Elizabeth become active at all the season's events, including the balls. Ian and Elizabeth play all the games of the ton, pretending to only know each other as acquaintances and dancing with many other partners. However, behind the scenes, they flirt mercilessly and Ian goes out of his way to scare off Elizabeth's other suitors. Ian also puts Valerie in her place, finally ending the vicious plot that began Elizabeth's turbulent introduction to society. It seems happiness is just around the corner for Ian and Elizabeth. However, the reader suspects disaster is waiting just around the corner.



Chapters 29-32

Chapters 29-32 Summary

Elizabeth greatly enjoys the wedding reception, especially touched by Ian arranging a reproduction of the arbor where they first danced on the night they met. When Ian suggests that they retire, Elizabeth is shocked that he wants to leave before any of their guests until he explains that it is tradition for the newly married couple to leave the reception before any of the guests are allowed to retire. In her bedroom, Elizabeth wonders where Ian will sleep. Elizabeth knows nothing of the intimacy between married couples. When Ian comes into the room and suggests they lay in her bed together, Elizabeth is shocked. However, Ian is gentle with her and Elizabeth soon discovers she enjoys the intimacy between married couples. Elizabeth and Ian quickly settle into marital bliss. Elizabeth learns a great deal about her new husband, including the fact that he is an unusually fast reader and has a near genius ability to add figures in his head. At the same time, Elizabeth joins a hospital committee and is shocked when Ian attempts to silently seduce her during one of their meetings. The only down side to their new relationship is Ian's fear that Elizabeth will learn what he did to Robert before he can find him and make his own explanations.

One afternoon while Elizabeth is in the garden at Havenhurst, Robert appears. Robert shows her scars he got working in one of Ian's mines and tells her that her husband is violently insane. Robert tells Elizabeth they must run away together to protect themselves from Ian. Robert also insists that if Elizabeth confronts Ian with the story Robert has told, he might kill her, so Elizabeth is cautioned not to tell Ian she is planning to leave him. Elizabeth agrees to everything Robert says. Elizabeth sells all the jewels Ian bought for her to a pawn broker. When Elizabeth fails to come home from Havenhurst, Ian rushes to her side to find out what is going on. Elizabeth is tempted to tell Ian the truth, but remembers Robert's warning and the scars he showed her that seemed to prove the cruelty of his story. Rather than tell Ian the truth, Elizabeth lies and tells him that she is suffering from stress. Ian agrees to allow Elizabeth to remain at Havenhurst for a few more days and arranges to meet her in London after a business trip to Devon. Elizabeth sobs herself to sleep after Ian leaves, causing her servants to believe Ian has caused her undue distress.

Chapters 29-32 Analysis

Elizabeth and Ian have a beautiful wedding night together and quickly settle into their happily ever after. Elizabeth learns a great deal about life and her husband in those first few months of marriage, enjoying Ian all the more with every passing day. Ian too is blissfully happy, although he fears that the truth about Robert will come out and Elizabeth will become angry with him. However, Ian cannot predict exactly how that truth will emerge. Robert arrives at Havenhurst and convinces Elizabeth that not only did Ian put him on a boat out of the country, but he caused Robert to be forced to work



in a mine where he was badly beaten. Now Elizabeth is stuck between her brother and her husband, forced to choose which to believe. Elizabeth's eyes tell her that Robert is telling the truth because of the horrible scars on his back. However, Elizabeth does not give Ian a chance to defend himself.

Elizabeth shows some of her character here. Elizabeth feels as though she owes her brother her loyalty, so she agrees to run away with him, even selling the jewels that Ian gave her to finance the trip. However, Elizabeth is conflicted. Elizabeth wants to confide in Ian because she believes him to be a good man who has to have a good reason for the things that happened to Robert. Unfortunately, Elizabeth decides to listen to Robert. At the same time, the reader is not sure if Ian had anything to do with Robert's ordeal. The reader knows that Ian did put Robert on a ship and sent him out of the country, but Ian claims not to know what happened to Robert after that point. The reader also knows that Ian owns some mines. It is possible Ian caused Robert to be put in the position to be beaten. However, the reader wants to believe that Ian is innocent based on everything the reader has learned about him thus far and is somewhat confused as to why Elizabeth also does not question Robert's story. Perhaps it is as simple as the fact that Robert is her brother, her only family.



Chapters 33-36 and Epilogue

Chapters 33-36 and Epilogue Summary

Ian initiates an investigation into Elizabeth's disappearance as soon as he realizes she is gone. Within days the press gets a hold of the story and begins to circulate theories regarding the disappearance. Most of the theories center around the idea that Ian murdered Elizabeth when she stumbled on proof that Ian also murdered her brother. Soon even the police begin to believe this theory. Ian, knowing he did not hurt Elizabeth, becomes convinced that she ran away with another man. Heartbroken, Ian buries himself in his work, refusing to grieve for a woman who could walk away from him so easily. At the same time, Ian is charged with the murders of Elizabeth and her brother Robert and put on trial before the House of Lords. At the same time, Elizabeth is living in a small seaside town waiting for transportation to the colonies in America. Robert has instructed the couple with whom he and Elizabeth are living to keep newspapers from Elizabeth, but Elizabeth talks the wife into allowing her to see a newspaper three weeks after her disappearance. The headline story was about Ian's trial. Elizabeth realizes immediately that she must return to London. When Elizabeth confronts Robert, she learns that the scars were a result of Robert stealing, not anything Ian did. Elizabeth gives Robert all her money and encourages him to start a new life somewhere else.

Elizabeth returns to London and testifies at Ian's trial, convincing everyone that she is an unintelligent, petty young woman who ran away on a whim. It turns out, however, that Ian would not have been convicted because he had the entire crew of the Arianna set to testify that Robert ran away from the ship before it reached its destination. After Ian's acquittal, Elizabeth attempts to apologize, but Ian will not forgive her. Ian has already shut Elizabeth out of his heart much like he did to his dog after his family died. Elizabeth sees what he is doing and warns him that she will not be so easily pushed away. Ian files for divorce. Elizabeth writes him letters and attempts to change his mind, but when she realizes she cannot, she runs away again to keep the lawyer from serving her with divorce papers. After time, Ian comes to realize he misses Elizabeth. Not only this, but Ian comes to realize that her actions were reasonable given the situation and that he could forgive her. Ian goes to Scotland to his family cottage, hoping for some quiet before going in search of Elizabeth. However, Ian discovers that Elizabeth is in Scotland. Elizabeth once again asks for forgiveness and Ian offers it. Elizabeth and Ian make amends. Many years later, they have a six year old son and three year old daughter. One afternoon Ian and his son discuss heaven, much to the delight of the Duke of Stanhope and Duncan, and Ian tells his son that his family is almost heaven.

Chapters 33-36 and Epilogue Analysis

Ian is concerned for Elizabeth until it begins to look as though Elizabeth has run off with another man. Ian then shuts Elizabeth out of his heart, much like he did to his dog when his family was killed in a hotel fire. Ian was deeply hurt when his family died and swore



to never allow anyone to hurt him like that again. Ian let Elizabeth into his heart only to have her break it, too. It does not matter to Ian that he is placed on trial for murder, all that matters to Ian is that Elizabeth has betrayed him. Ian can control the trial, he can prove he did not commit murder, but he cannot control Elizabeth, therefore he cuts her completely out of his life. Ian will never again allow anyone to hurt him like that.

At the same time, Elizabeth realizes the kind of man she married and knows that he never could have hurt Robert. Elizabeth had never wanted to believe that Robert would be dishonest, but can no longer ignore the obvious. Robert has lied, out of humiliation and selfishness, causing Elizabeth to betray the one man who has ever truly loved her unselfishly. Elizabeth sees her mistake and sets about to put things right. Elizabeth arrives in London to rescue Ian much the same way he rescued her when he helped repair her public reputation. However, Ian does not appreciate her actions, instead would have preferred if she had never returned. Ian wants nothing to do with Elizabeth. However, true to her nature and the new maturity Elizabeth has gained, Elizabeth refuses to let Ian shut her out forever. Elizabeth fights for her marriage and is rewarded when Ian returns to her.



Characters

Lady Elizabeth Cameron

Elizabeth Cameron is the orphaned daughter of the Earl of Cameron and his wife. Upon the death of her father, Elizabeth inherited his title, the family home, and her father's large number of gambling debts. Elizabeth has a half brother who strives to care for her, but he too has a gambling problem. Robert has a stroke of genius when he realizes that Elizabeth could make a good marriage that would solve all their money problems. Robert orchestrates Elizabeth's debut during the social season and is rewarded with more than a dozen offers for her hands. Robert is on the verge of making the most important deal of his life when Elizabeth's reputation is ruined by a dalliance with an outsider named Ian Thornton.

Elizabeth attends a questionable weekend party at the estate of a friend where she is tricked into introducing herself to Ian Thornton by a group of friends. Elizabeth finds Ian to be charming and kind despite his reputation as an outsider because he does not have a title. Later in the evening, Elizabeth is watching Ian play poker when another man accuses him of cheating. Elizabeth jumps to Ian's defense, prompting him to seek out her company. After a clandestine meeting in the woods, Ian confesses his love and offers to marry Elizabeth. However, before an offer can be made to Elizabeth's father, the lovers are caught in a passionate embrace, forcing Robert to challenge Ian to a duel. The entire affair ruins Elizabeth's reputation and ends any possibility of a good marriage. Elizabeth returns to Havenhurst to face her family's mounting debts alone.

Despite the fact that Elizabeth deals with her debts with grace and intelligence, her uncle is anxious to have her married and off his payroll. The uncle arranges for Elizabeth to visit with three potential husbands, including Ian. Elizabeth manages to scare off the first two, but her visit to Ian is volatile and disastrous. Afterward, Ian learns the truth about Elizabeth's ruined reputation and vows to marry her and make everything right. Elizabeth loves Ian and is pleased in their marriage, until her brother comes to her one day and convinces her that Ian had him forced into labor in a mine and caused him to be beaten by a sadistic foreman. Elizabeth agrees to run off with her brother, only to learn that his story is filled with lies. Elizabeth returns to Ian, refusing to allow him to run her out of his life. Elizabeth's stubbornness pays off and she and Ian live happily ever after.

Ian Thornton, Marques of Kensington

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Robert Cameron

Robert Cameron is Elizabeth's half brother. Robert is someone Elizabeth looks up to and admires, therefore she has no reason not to trust her brother, even when he attempts to make a marriage for her based, not on her happiness, but on the groom's ability to give Robert enough money to pay off his debts. Robert is on the verge of making the perfect marriage for Elizabeth when he finds Elizabeth with Ian. This leads to a duel to defend Elizabeth's reputation. However, Ian is a much better marksman than Robert, so Robert jumps the count, hoping to kill Ian before he has a chance to fire. Robert misses, only wounding Ian. Ian does not kill Robert, however, he only shoots the tassel off his boot. Robert is so humiliated by this duel that he attempts several times to kill Ian as he travels the roads around London. As a result, Ian has Robert put on one of his boats hoping that by the time he returns to England he will no longer want to kill Ian.

When Robert returns to England he discovers that Elizabeth has married Ian. Robert is outraged by this and convinces Elizabeth that Ian is a cruel man who forced Robert to work in the mines where he was beaten by a cold-hearted foreman. Elizabeth does run



away with her brother only to learn that Robert was beaten not because of something Ian did or did not do, but because of his own dishonesty. Elizabeth gives Robert money and sends him off to start a new life while she returns to Ian in London.

Alexandra Lawrence Townsende

Alex Townsende is a childhood friend of Elizabeth's who has been out of the country for several years on her honeymoon and is unaware of the events that led to Elizabeth being ostracized from public life. Alex loves Elizabeth and cannot imagine how Elizabeth could have done anything to bring this disfavor on herself, therefore she blames Ian completely for Elizabeth's problems. Alex decides that Elizabeth should have a second debut and clear her name with the support of Alex's grandmother-in-law. However, when Elizabeth attends a party with Alex and her husband, she is treated poorly by everyone in attendance, as is Alex for associating with Elizabeth. It is not until Ian shows up and makes everyone believe that the rumors about Elizabeth and he are inaccurate does Elizabeth begin to regain her reputation.

Alex is a good friend who fights hard to help Elizabeth. When Elizabeth regains her reputation, thanks to Ian, Alex feels that she should get married. Elizabeth learns that she is betrothed to Ian and Alex is shocked, afraid for her friend to marry such a person. However, Alex quickly sees how much Elizabeth loves Ian and slowly begins to like him herself. When Elizabeth disappears, it is Alex and her husband Jordan who stand by Ian during his trial, not choosing sides, but supporting Ian because Alex knows that is what Elizabeth would want. Alex also supports Elizabeth in her quest to earn Ian's forgiveness when she returns and does all she can to make Ian see that he should not divorce Elizabeth.

Lucinda Throckmorton-Jones

Lucinda Throckmorton-Jones is Elizabeth's duenna, the woman who schools Elizabeth in manners and behavior prior to her debut and who aids her in making an appropriate marriage. Lucinda blames herself when Elizabeth is caught with Ian because Lucinda took ill the weekend of the party and was therefore unable to stop Elizabeth from attending the party. Lucinda remains in Elizabeth's employ after she returns to Havenhurst, acting as a companion rather than a duenna. When Elizabeth's uncle decides Elizabeth should marry, it is Lucinda who gives him the list of gentlemen who asked for Elizabeth's hand before, including Ian.

When Elizabeth visits Ian in Scotland, Lucinda immediately recognizes him as the grandson of the Duke of Stanhope, deciding he is the man Elizabeth should marry. Lucinda schemes to get Elizabeth and Ian together, leaving them alone at Ian's family home for several days in the hopes that they will realize that they are still in love. When this does not work, Lucinda tells Ian's uncle how Ian ruined Elizabeth's life and that he should marry her if only to save her reputation. It is this information that makes Ian see the truth and realize that he loves Elizabeth, spurring him to marry her.



Duncan

Duncan is Ian's uncle on his mother's side. Duncan is a vicar in the small village in Scotland near Ian's family home. It was Duncan who told Ian about the deaths of his family and witnessed Ian shut himself off from everything that could possibly hurt him. Duncan relates this story to Elizabeth and she recalls it when Ian asks her for a divorce. Elizabeth refuses Ian to repeat his history and will not allow him to shut her out the same way.

Duncan is a kind man who loves his nephew very much. Duncan is thrilled when he sees Ian with Elizabeth. Duncan decides to do all he can to get Elizabeth and Ian together. When Lucinda tells Duncan about how Ian ruined Elizabeth's reputation, Duncan relates this news to Ian and tells him that he must marry Elizabeth to set things right. Duncan is Ian's biggest supporter and one of only a few who truly wants to see him and Elizabeth happy together.

Lord John Marchman and Sir Francis Belhaven

When Elizabeth's uncle sends out invitations to all of Elizabeth's previous suitors to offer for her hand again, these two are the only ones who respond, besides Ian. Lord John Marchman is an avid outdoors man who enjoys hunting and fishing. When Lord Marchman met Elizabeth, they spent an afternoon walking in the park talking about fishing. However, when Elizabeth comes to stay with Marchman to see if they would suit, Elizabeth pretends to hate fishing so that he will not ask for her hand in marriage. Marchman sees through Elizabeth's ruse and asks her why she bothered to come stay with him at all. When Elizabeth explains her situation, Marchman agrees to refuse her hand. However, unbeknownst to Elizabeth, Marchman does offer to marry her if Sir Francis Belhaven has offered himself in marriage.

Sir Francis Belhaven is obsessed with sex. Belhaven likes to have many lovers and loves variety in his mistresses. Belhaven is also very frugal. It is because of a desire to keep his money that Belhaven has remained single. However, the idea of having a beautiful wife such as Elizabeth overrides his sensibilities. When Elizabeth comes to stay with him, she pretends to have found religion and suggests that the idea of sex frightens her. Belhaven quickly sends her away only to change his mind when he realizes the whole thing was a ruse to avoid marriage. Belhaven makes an offer for Elizabeth's hand, which is quickly accepted by Elizabeth's uncle.

Bentner

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Edward Avery Thornton, Duke of Stanhope

The Duke of Stanhope is an elderly man who, in old age, has come to realize that disowning his son for marrying a woman he disapproved of was wrong and tries to make amends with his grandson. Ian, the Duke of Stanhope's grandson, does not wish to forgive his grandfather. However, when Ian realizes he needs his grandfather's standing in society to help Elizabeth, he agrees to accept the title his grandfather offers, but does not want his money. The Duke of Stanhope tricks Ian into accepting the money anyway. The Duke of Stanhope then stands beside Ian at a ball to which Elizabeth has decided to make her second debut, causing a stir among the members of society, but also successfully repairing Elizabeth's reputation. The Duke of Stanhope slowly wins his grandson's affections and lives the rest of his long life in his grandson's company.

Valerie Jamison

Valerie Jamison is the daughter of the woman whom Robert has arranged to sponsor Elizabeth for her debut. Valerie is jealous of Elizabeth and feels that if Elizabeth were ruined her suitors would be available for the rest of the debutantes. Valerie schemes to cause Elizabeth to get caught in a lover's embrace with Ian so that her reputation will be ruined and she will not be able to make a good marriage. Valerie's scheme works at first. However, Ian and Elizabeth eventually realize what has taken place and manage to repair their reputations and their relationship.



Objects/Places

Jewels

Elizabeth sells all the jewels Ian gave her in order to finance Robert's escape to the colonies in America.

Garden

Ian and Elizabeth meet for the first time in a garden. Later, Ian recreates the garden for their wedding reception.

Cottage

Ian and Elizabeth meet and spend an afternoon alone together in a cottage shortly after they meet.

Notes

The day Elizabeth is caught in the greenhouse with Ian, she and Ian both received notes. Ian believed his to be from Elizabeth. It turns out Valerie orchestrated the ruse in order to steal Elizabeth's betrothed.

Dowry

A dowry is the property and money a woman brings into a marriage.

Marriage Contract

In Elizabeth and Ian's time it was customary for marriage contracts to be written before a wedding to be sure both parties got all they deserved through the marriage. Ian and Elizabeth's marriage contract is unique because Elizabeth is allowed to make concessions through it, which was highly unusual in their time. Negotiations normally took place between the groom and the bride's father, excluding the bride completely.

The Ton

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Duel

Robert and Ian fight a duel after Ian and Elizabeth are caught alone in the greenhouse during a weekend party.

Arianna

The Arianna is the ship on which Ian has Robert placed in order to keep him from attempting to kill Ian.

Havenhurst

Havenhurst is Elizabeth's family home. Havenhurst is rich in history and Elizabeth has had to sell everything she owns in order to keep Havenhurst from falling on the auction block. After Ian sues Elizabeth for divorce, Elizabeth sells Havenhurst to repay him all the money he gave her for Havenhurst and the jewels she sold only to have Ian buy it back for her.

Montmayne

Montmayne is the name of Ian's estate where he and Elizabeth reside.

London

London is one of the places where Ian owns a home and is where he and Elizabeth reside both during the season and Ian's trial.

Scotland

Ian is half Scot and still owns his family home in Scotland where Elizabeth is sent to spend a week with him.



Themes

Love and Forgiveness

Elizabeth is a young, naive woman who has debuted into society a year or so older than most girls because her brother, a chronic gambler, did not believe he could afford a dowry until he realized how much money he would gain if Elizabeth made a good marriage. Robert Cameron puts all his ready money into Elizabeth's debut and is rewarded when Elizabeth receives more than a dozen proposals. However, Elizabeth does not love any of these men. In fact, due to societal expectations, Elizabeth is not even allowed to express her own opinions or thoughts in front of these men, leaving them with the impression she is an unintelligent young woman. All of this changes when Elizabeth meets Ian Thornton. Elizabeth approaches Ian on a bet, attempting to help her girlfriends save their monthly allowances. This first meeting is electrifying and leads to another, until Elizabeth finds herself on an emotional roller coaster with a man unlike any other she has ever met. Unfortunately, this relationship is doomed from the start. Once again, society comes between them, ruining Elizabeth's reputation and opportunity to marry, leaving her alone and depended on her uncaring uncle.

Ian Thornton has never allowed anyone to get too close to him. Ian is an outcast, an outsider, who has been forced to prove his worth to the ton through hard work and perseverance. While Elizabeth lives in near poverty, Ian has become one of the richest and most respected men in London. However, his brief relationship with Ian has left him angry and bitter, unreceptive to the possibility of a reconciliation. When Elizabeth appears on his doorstep, Ian is tempted to throw her out, but finds himself in a position where he forced to accept her as his guest. A few minutes alone with Elizabeth and Ian is drawn back into her web of seduction, eager to share her bed if not give her his heart. However, when Ian learns what their brief acquaintance has done to Elizabeth's reputation, he vows to marry her and repair the damage done.

Ian and Elizabeth find happiness in each other's arms. However, a secret threatens to tear apart everything they have built. Elizabeth learns that her husband sent her brother away on one of his ships and as a result he was beaten brutally while working in a mine. Elizabeth is afraid her husband is capable of cruelties she never imagined and decides to run away with her brother. However, the moment Elizabeth learns the truth, she returns to her husband. Unfortunately, Ian is unwilling to forgive her betrayal. Ian tries to send Elizabeth away, going so far as filing for divorce. However, Elizabeth refuses to allow him to push her away and patiently waits until he returns to her.

Misdirection

From the first moment they meet, Elizabeth and Ian omit information that causes one or the other to jump to certain wrong conclusions. Ian believes Elizabeth to be a debutante who is still free and able to choose a husband from the many bachelors asking for her



hand. Unknown to either him or Elizabeth, however, Elizabeth's brother has already entered into a contract with another man. At the same time, Ian refuses to dance with Elizabeth, leaving her with the impression that he is not attracted to her. Later Elizabeth learns that Ian refused, not because he did want to dance with her, but because he was afraid of the impression their union would give the members of the ton.

The confusion continues. Ian wants to marry Elizabeth and confesses his love, only to find out about her fiancé, giving him the impression that Elizabeth is in the habit of taking lovers outside of her committed relationship. In truth, Elizabeth is as naïve about men and sexual relationships as a child. Ian also believes that Elizabeth sent for him to meet her in the greenhouse, the sight of their disgrace, when in fact a scheming socialite set up the meeting in order to ruin Elizabeth's reputation. Finally, Ian is unaware of the disaster his relationship with Elizabeth caused, believing her to be a spoiled rich girl when in fact she is living on the fringes of poverty, desperate to find a way to save her family home.

The many misdirections in this novel tears the two main characters apart as often as the truth brings them together. If not for misdirection, the novel would consist of two chapters, their meeting, their marriage, the end. However, misdirection injects tension and confusion into the plot, allowing the main characters to run through a lifetime of disappointment and bliss before finally resolving their differences and settling down to a happy life together. It is this collection of misunderstandings that makes misdirection a major theme of the novel.

Pride

Ian Thornton is a prideful man. Ian's father was banished by his own father when he chose to marry the love of his life, a Scottish woman that the Duke of Stanhope deemed unsuitable for his eldest son. After the death of Ian's family in a fire, the Duke of Stanhope began contacting Ian in the hopes of making up for a lifetime of heartache. However, Ian is so angry at the Duke of Stanhope for disowning his father that he refuses to contact him. In fact, Ian wants nothing to do with his grandfather despite the promise of a title and riches should he extend his forgiveness. It is only when Ian needs the Duke of Stanhope's reputation and position in society to save Elizabeth that Ian allows himself to forgive his grandfather.

Elizabeth is also a proud woman. Elizabeth was raised at Havenhurst, a home so full of history that she has made it her life's purpose to learn all she can and to preserve it for future generations. When Elizabeth's reputation is ruined and her brother disappears, Elizabeth sells all she owns to keep Havenhurst off the auction block. However, this is not enough. Elizabeth's uncle decides she must be married in order to provide him with an heir. Elizabeth finds herself in a position of having to pick a husband or face losing Havenhurst. Elizabeth swallows her pride and does as she is asked, but manages to find a way to convince each prospective husband that she would not be a suitable wife.



Pride is an important theme of this novel for two reasons. First, pride is a character trait that both characters have and it is part of what keeps them from happiness. Second, pride is such a large part of who Elizabeth is that a reader cannot appreciate her character without taking her pride into account. It is pride that forces Elizabeth to return to society despite the reputation Ian has left her with, and it is pride that makes Elizabeth wait for Ian to forgive her betrayal. It is also pride that forces Ian to face his emotions and marry Elizabeth, then later forgive her her betrayal.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. The main narrator is Elizabeth Cameron. The majority of the novel is seen through Elizabeth's eyes, giving the reader not only insight into the actions that Elizabeth sees and partakes in, but also insight into her own emotions and thoughts. The narrator does shift from time to time, allowing the reader into the thoughts and emotions of other characters, such as the Duke of Stanhope and Ian Thornton. This shift in narrating characters allows the reader a greater depth of story, allowing the reader to see more story than they might be limited to if restricted to Elizabeth's narration.

The point of view in this novel works because it allows the reader insight into the thoughts and emotions of the main characters. This novel is a romance and therefore it requires an intimate relationship between the reader and characters. If the novel was not written in the omniscient third person, the reader might not appreciate the depth of emotion involved in the romance between the two main characters and therefore would not appreciate the overall theme of the novel. However, this point of view is sometimes confusing when the writer jumps from the mind of one character and into the mind of another within a single scene without preamble. This is common in romance novels, especially shifts between the lead male and female characters during an intimate scene. It can lead to a certain amount of confusion, but in the end, the reader is often able to sort out the confusion and enjoy the intimate moment along with the characters.

Setting

The novel is set in England sometime in the 19th century. The novel moves from the countryside of England, where the Cameron family home of Havenhurst is located, to the city of London, the scene of Elizabeth's humiliation in the aftermath of her brief affair with Ian Thornton. The novel also moves to Scotland on several occasions when Elizabeth goes there to visit Ian Thornton at his family home and later when Elizabeth retreats to the Thornton family home to wait for Ian to forgive her betrayal.

The setting has two facets that are important to the overall plot of the novel. First is the time period. By setting the novel somewhere in the 19th century, the author gives her story a certain amount of social expectation and rigidity that plays into the story when the heroine breaks certain rules of society and suffers the resulting humiliation. Second, the novel is set in England. This setting also adds certain social expectation to the story and allows for many of the characters to have titles, which implies a certain amount of respect for their station in life. These settings work well in the novel because they directly affect the plot of the novel and give the story line a sense of authenticity that is vital to make the imaginary world of a novel work.



Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple English. The novel is set in England during the 19th century, therefore much of the dialogue is stiff and includes terminology important to the speech of the time period. Some of the dialogue tends to be more formal than the speeches found in other novels of a different time period, adding to the authentic feel of the novel. The language of this book is fitting to the time period and setting of the plot, but is simple enough for even the youngest readers to grasp the overall intent of the story.

The language of this novel works because it uses some of the stiff language expected of the time period in which the novel is set. The language gives authenticity to the plot of the novel by including some terminology and slang that would have been used during the time period in which the novel is set. However, the writer does not go overboard in using this stiffer language, allowing the reader to get a feel for the period without being overwhelmed with unusual phrases or stiff dialogue.

Structure

The novel is divided into thirty-six chapters and an epilogue. The chapters vary in size, jumping from a chapter of only a few pages, to a chapter with more than twenty pages. The timeline of the novel is fairly linear with the exception of a flashback that spreads over several of the early chapters. The novel is told in equal amounts of exposition and dialogue, giving the reader an enjoyable amount of white space among the beautifully written passages of description.

The novel has one main plot revolving around the romance between main characters Elizabeth Cameron and Ian Thornton. Several subplots dart in and out of the main plot, including a story of deception plotted to ruin Elizabeth's reputation as well as the Duke of Stanhope's betrayal of Ian's father and attempts at reconciliation. The subplots support the main story well and serve to enhance the overall story. All the story lines converge at the end of the novel and bring the story to a satisfying conclusion before the final sentence.



Quotes

"Fifteen servants wearing the traditional blue and silver livery of the Earl of Cameron left Havenhurst at dawn on the same day. All of them carried identical, urgent messages that Lady Elizabeth's uncle, Mr. Julius Cameron, had directed them to deliver at fifteen homes throughout England. The recipients of these messages all had only one thing in common: They had once offered for Lady Elizabeth's hand in marriage." Chapter 1, pg. 9

"For a year and a half there had been no visitors at Havenhurst, and so it was little wonder that Elizabeth felt an absurd burst of pleasure followed by confusion." Chapter 2, pg. 21

"Two things hit Elizabeth at once: His piercing eyes were the strange color of gleaming amber, while his voice was richly textured and deep; the combination sent a peculiar warmth up her spine." Chapter 4, pg. 75

"Something in the somber way he was standing—added to the fact that he'd waited more than two hours for her—made her doubt her earlier conviction that he hadn't truly cared whether she came or not." Chapter 6, pg. 139

"Elizabeth took one look at the satin-clad figure who rather resembled the cupids he obviously admired, and the dire reality of her predicament hit her like a bucket of icy water, banishing all thoughts of laughter." Chapter 9, pg. 210

"Without being conscious of what he was doing, Ian moved his thumb from her chin to her lower lip, rubbing lightly against its inviting fullness. He finally realized what he was doing and stopped." Chapter 14, pg. 365

"Two years ago she'd fallen under his spell; she was wiser now. She knew he was a libertine, and even so her heart rebelled against believing it. Yesterday, in his arms, she'd felt as if she was special to him—as if he not only wanted her close but needed her there." Chapter 16, pg. 418

"Instead of being insulted, as Ian meant him to be, Edward Avery Thornton looked at his grandson, and his heart swelled with pride at the dynamic, forceful man who bore his name." Chapter 18, pg. 469

"Many of the names he called out Elizabeth recalled from her debut, and each one identified another person who, she knew, was about to walk down the stairs and learn to their derision that Elizabeth Cameron was there. One more voice would repeat the old gossip; one more pair of ears would hear it; one more pair of cold eyes would look her way." Chapter 21, pg. 527



"If he was innocent and she stopped this wedding, Ian would be made to look a fool; she couldn't even give him a reason for doing it, and he would never forgive her. She would lose him forever. If she married him, if she followed her instincts, she might never know what happened to Robert. Or Ian would be vindicated. Or else she would find out that she was married to a monster, a murderer." Chapter 28, pg. 658

"She frowned as she reconsidered Lucinda's explanation; it did not, in Elizabeth's opinion, make a great deal of sense. She was not ignorant of the way other species on earth created their young; on the other hand, she realized that people could not possibly behave in such appalling fashion. But still, a kiss in bed from a spouse?"
Chapter 30, pg. 670

"She bowed her head, and tears slid down her cheeks, dropping onto the reticule that covered her hand; tears of sorrow mingled with tears of relief and fell from her lashes—but all the tears were for her brother, not for her.
Because inside the reticule was her pistol.
And from the moment she realized he might not agree to let her leave, she'd been pointing it at Robert." Chapter 34, pg. 769

"They're going to ask what you said. And if I tell Mr. Twindell you said heaven will be like this, he'll be very disappointed. He's counting, you know, on gold streets and angels and horses with wings.'
'I see where that could be a problem,' Ian agreed, and he tenderly laid his hand against his son's cheek. 'In that case, you can tell him I said this is almost heaven.'"
Chapter 36, pg. 866

Topics for Discussion

Who is Ian Thornton? Why is he something of an outcast in society in the opening pages of the novel? What does Ian do to change his standing in society? What does this say about society? Does Ian love Elizabeth? Do you think he really meant to marry her that first weekend they spent together? Why did he change his mind? Why do you think it was so easy for Ian to believe Elizabeth to be a dishonest woman? Why does Ian change his mind?

Discuss Elizabeth Cameron. What kind of a woman is Elizabeth? Is Elizabeth naïve or stupid? What is the difference between these two character descriptions? Why does Elizabeth approach Ian at the weekend party? Are Elizabeth's intentions honest? Why does Elizabeth attempt to stop Ian from being branded a cheat? Why does no one listen to her? What does this say about society?

How is Elizabeth's reputation ruined by Ian? Why? What should Robert have done differently? What could Elizabeth have done differently? What might have happened at the Viscount of Mondevale not ended his engagement to Elizabeth? Would this marriage have saved Elizabeth's reputation?

Why does Elizabeth's uncle want her to marry? Why does Elizabeth not want to marry? What would have happened to Elizabeth in that time period had she remained unmarried? What would have happened had she defied her uncle? Could Elizabeth have saved Havenhurst on her own?

Why does Ian need his grandfather's title to help save Elizabeth? What would have happened if Ian had simply married Elizabeth without going to his grandfather? Why is reputation so important? How would marrying Elizabeth without his title have affected Ian's ability to make business deals? Is this fair?

Why did Elizabeth not tell Ian about Robert's return? What was Elizabeth afraid would happen? Did Elizabeth truly believe Ian capable of hurting her or Robert? Why or why not? Why did Elizabeth marry Ian when she knew he was responsible for Robert's disappearance? Did she believe the private investigator? Why or why not?

Why is Ian accused of Elizabeth's murder after she disappears? Who accuses Ian? Why? Why is Ian also charged with Robert's murder? Could Ian have been convicted without proof? Why or why not? What would have happened if Elizabeth had not returned to save Ian? Would Ian have been acquitted? Did Elizabeth help or harm Ian?