

At the Water's Edge Study Guide

At the Water's Edge by Sara Gruen

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| At the Water's Edge Study Guide..... | 1 |
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Plot Summary..... | 3 |
| Prologue, Chapters 1-3..... | 5 |
| Chapters 4-7..... | 9 |
| Chapters 8-11..... | 12 |
| Chapters 12-16..... | 15 |
| Chapters 17-20..... | 18 |
| Chapters 21-26..... | 21 |
| Chapters 27-31..... | 24 |
| Chapters 32-35..... | 27 |
| Chapters 36-41..... | 30 |
| Chapters 42-Epilogue..... | 33 |
| Characters..... | 36 |
| Symbols and Symbolism..... | 40 |
| Settings..... | 42 |
| Themes and Motifs..... | 43 |
| Styles..... | 48 |
| Quotes..... | 50 |



Plot Summary

As “The Water's Edge” opens, Maddie is at a party with her husband Ellis and their best friend, Hank. They all drink too much and act outrageously, though Maddie and Ellis don't realize the full extent of their actions until they sober up the following day.

Ellis and Maddie are both from wealthy families and they feel a sense of entitlement that makes them unable to take care of themselves, even on a very basic level. They live with Ellis's parents and are completely dependent on Ellis's allowance. World War II is in full swing. Ellis claims to have tried to join the military twice, but claims to be color blind. It's a lie that Maddie doesn't discover until very late in the war. Hank has also been rejected because of his flat feet. Maddie comes to suspect that he has also manufactured his condition as a means of avoiding the draft.

Ellis's father took a photo of the Loch Ness Monster and was famous for awhile. Critics later called it a fake and the subject was a sore spot with the family. The day after the disastrous party, Maddie and Ellis argue with his parents. At the end of the argument, Ellis brings up the photo and his father is furious. Maddie and Ellis are banished and they move to a tiny apartment, the best they can afford on their limited resources.

Ellis reveals that he actually believes his father. He and Hank have talked about going to Scotland to search for the monster and Hank manages to make the arrangements, despite the war. The trip is brutal for Maddie and she's ill for days after they finally arrive at an inn near the loch.

The marriage between Maddie and Ellis has never been very solid and their relationship deteriorates as Ellis drinks too much and is often unkind. Maddie begins to see that she's led a sheltered life and she becomes friends with two girls who work hard in the inn where Maddie is staying. Maddie spends some time with Ellis and Hank as they watch for the monster, filming every disturbance on the water's surface. One day, she overhears Hank and Ellis talking, and she realizes that the two men had flipped a coin to decide which of them was going to marry her.

Maddie is unbearably hurt and realizes that her marriage is nothing but a sham. She's relieved when Hank and Ellis are gone for almost two weeks and begins to think that they aren't coming back at all. She pitches in, helping with the cleaning and work at the tavern, and she begins to fall in love with the man who's in charge of the inn. His name is Angus Grant and Maddie eventually realizes that she's seen his name on a tombstone in the local grave yard. She learns that he'd had a wife, Mairi, while he was serving in the war. His wife gave birth to a stillborn daughter and just days later received news that Angus had died. In her grief, she walked into the loch and drowned.

Maddie comes to believe that she has Mairi's blessing for a relationship with Angus but she knows Ellis is a danger to them. Ellis tries to get Angus in trouble with the local police but fails. Maddie knows that Ellis is planning to have her committed to a mental institution where she's to be lobotomized. A showdown is inevitable and it occurs at the



loch. Ellis tries to drown Maddie while Hank is filming the monster. Angus intervenes and saves Maddie. She still fears Ellis until a local policeman, planning to arrest Ellis for attempted murder, finds him drowned at the edge of the loch. Maddie and Angus marry and live happy lives.



Prologue, Chapters 1-3

Summary

The story opens with a Prologue. This section is set in Drummadrochit, February 28, 1942. A woman named Mairi was visiting a grave in the cemetery. The headstone had two names. The first was Agnes Mairi Grant, infant daughter of Angus and Mairi Grant. Her date of death was January 14, 1942. The second name was Capt. Angus Duncan Grant, beloved husband of Mairi. His date of death was listed only as January, 1942. The exact date was unknown. Mairi went to the grave every day and had watched as the earth flattened.

Willie the Postie, the local postman, had delivered the telegram that announced to Mairi that Angus was missing, and presumed dead. She'd gotten the telegram on Valentine's Day. Mairi realized that Angus had been dead for weeks by the time she got the word. He might have even died on the same day her baby died. She had been conscious of the baby's movements throughout the latter months of the pregnancy and one day realized the baby was still. She'd gone into labor 13 days later and the baby was now buried in the cemetery.

Mairi walked toward the ruins of the castle where she'd played as child. She went down the hill to the loch and stepped into the edge of the water. She wished that someone would think her drowning was an accident so that she might be buried with Agnes, but she knew that her body would never be found anyway. She embraced her death.

Chapter 1 is set in the Scottish Highlands on January 14, 1945. This is three years after the prologue. A young woman named Maddie is car sick and calls for the driver to pull over. She's accompanied by her husband, Ellis, and their friend, Hank. She says her "husband's war with his father and their insane obsession with a mythical monster" prompted her to travel so far from her home in America. She wishes she had the chance to do the past two weeks over.

Chapter 2 is set in Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia on December 31, 1944. This is two weeks prior to Maddie's arrival in Scotland. Maddie, Ellis, and Hank are guests at an upscale New Year's Eve party. They drink a lot, get loud several times, and go out into the snow then track the snow back inside. The war is in full swing. Ellis tried to join the military twice but was rejected because he claims to be color blind. Hank also tried to join but was rejected because he has flat feet. Ellis is touchy about the subject. Maddie knows Ellis feels people silently judge him for his lack of military service. Because they don't voice their thoughts, he can't even defend himself. Ellis's father is among those who judge.

Hank has a girlfriend named Violet and Maddie urges him to marry her. Hank hesitates, acting as if he plans to do so at some future date.



Ellis is from a wealthy family. He and Maddie live on Ellis's allowance. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Ellis's parents announced that they were cutting his allowance and would be putting the difference into war bonds. Maddie knows that Ellis's mother cut the allowance because Ellis married her when his parents didn't approve.

Ellis says the three of them should go to Scotland. He grows agitated and loud as he says they've talked about it for a long time. Maddie agrees in an effort to calm him. When Hank rejoins them, Ellis announces that they are going to Scotland. When Hank asks Maddie to confirm, she agrees.

In Chapter 3, the telephone wakes Maddie at 9 the next morning. Her mother-in-law, Edith Stone Hyde, takes a call. The phone rings throughout the day and Maddie knows it's people talking about the way Maddie and Ellis acted at the party the previous evening. She and Ellis remain in bed all day. That evening, Ellis comes into Maddie's bedroom. She tells him about the constant phone calls and that she lost a diamond comb her mother-in-law gave her. Together, they sneak to the phone and contact their hostess. Maddie asks her to keep an eye out for the comb but the woman is obviously upset with Maddie and the call is cut short.

Ellis and Maddie dress and go downstairs together for dinner. Ellis's father, Colonel Whitney Hyde, is there with Ellis's mother and the conversation quickly turns to the party. Edith is angry that everyone is talking about Ellis and Maddie. When the Colonel becomes angry, he accuses Ellis of "coming down with color blindness" when his country needed him most. Edith shouts in Ellis's defense, which is completely out of character. She then makes a derogatory comment about Maddie's mother and Ellis jumps to Maddie's defense. Edith makes additional comments and Ellis becomes furious. He then says his father shamed the entire family "the moment you faked those pictures." Everyone falls silent.

Maddie tells the story of "those pictures." The Colonel was out of the military and bored. He went on safaris but then heard about the Loch Ness Monster. He visited his cousin, the Laird of Craig Gairbh, who had property near the loch. The Colonel took photos of the beast and those pictures became famous worldwide. Then some began questioning the pictures and declared the photos were faked. When one of the Colonel's friends faked additional evidence, trying to help, the situation became a scandal. By the time Maddie married into the family, no one was allowed to mention the subject. Hank had the idea to go find the monster, putting an end to the talk that he and Ellis were cowards.

Back in the moment at the Hyde home, the Colonel demands that Ellis and Maddie leave immediately. He says staff members will pack for them.

Analysis

The book opens with a brief epigraph. It's a rhyme about crows and an indication that superstitions will be important to the story. According to the rhyme, one crow indicates



sorrow and two means mirth. The rhyme goes on to include marriage, birth, and wealth. The final line is that seven means there will be a secret that's never revealed. Mairi sees seven crows while she's in the cemetery and she takes it to mean that she'll never know the final moments of Angus's life. The crows are seen in later chapters of the book and the people of Scotland believe in the signs.

There is not a great deal of religion seen in the book but it obviously exists on some level. Mairi knew her baby had died almost two weeks before she went into labor. She didn't feel the baby's movements and knew that the baby must have died. However, the people in attendance told her that the baby lived for a few minutes after birth, and that they rushed to baptize her during that time. That would have been important to Mairi and she clutched onto the information, choosing to believe it even though she knew it wasn't true.

Willie the Postie was the person who delivered all the telegrams around the neighborhood and he was the first to know when various members of the community died. Mairi got to a point of blaming Willie for giving her the news that Angus was dead. What Mairi didn't know is that Angus really didn't die and that he'll return to the community to live out his life.

Mairi drowned herself in the loch, or lake, in the neighborhood. It's Loch Ness, home of the famous sea monster. She knew that people who drown in the loch are not recovered but what she didn't know was that someone saw her walking into the water. The man tried to get to her in time to stop her but wasn't successful. It meant that there was a witness so that people knew what happened to her. It's interesting that her name appears on the gravestone below those of her husband and daughter. If someone saw her drown herself, they would have known that she committed suicide and the religious view is that she wouldn't be going to heaven because of her suicide. That would often mean she couldn't be buried in the cemetery.

The first chapter of the book is a look into the future. It sets the tone for the coming trip and makes the reader aware that Maddie, Ellis, and Hank really are about to travel to Scotland.

Ellis, Maddie, and Hank belong to a wealthy social set. They are young but they know the bounds of propriety. They simply choose to ignore them even though Maddie immediately jumps to the conclusion that people are talking about them. She obviously knows how to behave at an event like the New Year's Eve party, but chooses not to. This is a precursor to one of the book's main themes. The three consider themselves entitled and believe they can do whatever they want without repercussions. The theme is more readily seen when they are interacting with people of a different social class later in the book.

Edith makes a reference to Maddie's genes, obviously talking about some scandal in her family. Maddie's mother had a very public affair and committed suicide. These details are revealed later in the book.



The photos described in Chapter 3 are real. The author explains that she borrowed the real event, inserting the Colonel's name as the photographer. The photos were famous and they were eventually declared to be an elaborate hoax. The fact that the author uses some real events and places means the story has a level of believability that wouldn't otherwise exist.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Mairi and the tragedies that cause her to commit suicide.

Discussion Question 2

What happens that causes the Colonel to evict Maddie and Ellis?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the author used the story of the famous picture of the Loch Ness Monster, attributing it to the Colonel?

Vocabulary

carouse, emphatically, sporadically, portended, scrutiny, wafted, spontaneously, lamented, tantamount, ludicrous



Chapters 4-7

Summary

In Chapter 4, Ellis and Maddie go to the Society Hill Hotel. It's shabby but they can't afford anything better with the money they have. Maddie knows the only way they might be allowed to return home is if Edith intervenes. Maddie's father hadn't responded at all when she announced she'd eloped with Ellis, so she knows he won't help her now. The next morning, servants arrive with all their possessions.

Hank arrives and they tell him all the details. Hank then says he has booked passage to Scotland for all three of them, and that they leave in three days. Their friend, Freddie Stillman, made the arrangements. Maddie says there's a war raging in the Atlantic but Hank says they will be aboard the SS Mallory, a supply freighter that will be part of a convoy. He assures them they'll be safe. Maddie hesitates but Hank and Ellis convince her.

Maddie thinks about Freddie. He'd been close friends with Hank and Ellis when she first met them. Freddie had proposed but Maddie laughed before she knew he was serious. She and Ellis married 10 days later and she hasn't spoken to Freddie since then.

Back in their room, Ellis makes it clear that he believes there is a monster. He says they can't live "in this dump" and reminds Maddie that the Colonel might cut off his allowance completely. Maddie realizes that Hank really needs to take this trip and that his "entire self-worth" was at stake.

In Chapter 5, Ellis, Maddie and Hank make the crossing with the convoy. One of the boats in the group is torpedoed. Survivors are taken aboard Maddie's boat. She's horrified at the condition of the men, many burned beyond recovery. They reach Scotland and Maddie continues to be sick. She weaves and has trouble standing even after they are on land. The driver refuses to load their luggage, saying he's a driver but not their servant. Hank and Ellis finally get the bags loaded and they begin their journey.

In Chapter 6, they arrive at the Fraser Arms, an inn where they are to stay during their time in Scotland. Maddie is still so ill that she sits on the ground. They bang on the door and a man finally appears. He refuses to let them in until he sees Maddie. The man is Angus Grant though he doesn't introduce himself until later. Inside, Angus brings ginger beer to help settle Maddie's stomach. He isn't surprised to learn Ellis and Hank are looking for the monster. He tells them they have have any of five available rooms and goes back to bed, leaving them to figure out how to get their own luggage to their rooms.

In Chapter 7, Hank insists on checking the only room that Angus said isn't available. When he rattles the doorknob, a beautiful young woman appears. She says her name is



Meg, that she's not due to work until the following evening, and demands they leave her alone before slamming the door.

As she prepares for bed, Maddie considers her situation. When they were on board their boat, Ellis had put on a life preserver in case they sank. When they met their driver on land, Ellis was still wearing the device and the driver remarked on it. When they arrived at the Fraser Inn, Angus first believed they must be soldiers then commented on the fact that they weren't serving. Maddie realizes that they'd undertaken a stupid and dangerous trip, and that people were still going to wonder why Ellis and Hank weren't serving their country.

Analysis

There is a very telling comment in Chapter 4 that explains a great deal about the relationship between Maddie and Ellis. Maddie and Ellis argue about making the trip to Scotland and Ellis convinces her it's important. When Maddie realizes just how important it is to Ellis, she agrees that they should go. They embrace and Maddie thinks that they might make love. She says the idea was "absurd" and that Ellis begins to cry instead. The fact that she thinks it was absurd indicates that they don't have a healthy sex life, especially for a young couple that hasn't been married long. This becomes an important subject in the book as Maddie makes veiled suggestions that Ellis and Hank are romantically involved. Maddie and Ellis have sex occasionally, but it's awkward and unfulfilling. The author never makes it clear that Ellis and Hank are involved and it's up to the reader to decide.

Ellis claims to be color blind and there's no reason to believe that he's lying at this point. Maddie talks about the fact that he's ashamed that he wasn't allowed to join the military and that he feels people are judging him. His relationship with his father is definitely strained because Ellis isn't serving, and Maddie says it's as if the Colonel can't forgive Ellis for being color blind. No one knew Ellis was color blind until he went to join the military. Maddie will later learn that Ellis isn't color blind and that he faked it in order to avoid joining the military. It seems likely that the Colonel knows this, and that's why he is so angry with Ellis. By faking the condition, Ellis has made it clear to his father that he really is a coward and that he refuses to do his duty. This is unforgivable in his father's eyes. The fact that Ellis pretends to be so upset that he can't join just makes his lie worse.

One of the first looks at Ellis's true nature is seen in the Atlantic crossing. When the convoy is attacked, Ellis puts on a life preserver, obviously sure that they are going to die. He does try to get Maddie to put one on as well, and on the surface it seems that he might have just been afraid for them all. However, he keeps the life preserver on even after they land, indicating that he was very afraid and that the fear held him until long after the danger passed. There is another scene that makes the reader see Ellis's true character. Survivors from the torpedoed boat are brought aboard. Many are horribly burned. Maddie is horrified but she remains on the deck while the men are taken on short. Ellis rushes back to their cabin, unable to watch the men.



Discussion Question 1

Describe what you know about the relationship between Maddie and Ellis at this point. Keep the list and add information as it's revealed.

Discussion Question 2

Why isn't Ellis serving in the military? What does he say about being judged for his inability to serve?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Maddie believes Ellis really is color blind and unable to serve?

Vocabulary

destitute, gratuitous, fiasco, sanguine, capitulate, caper, platitudes, irascible, excruciatingly, repertoire, lackey, proximity



Chapters 8-11

Summary

In Chapter 8, Maddie wakes, screaming in fear. It takes a few minutes to realize she isn't aboard the ship but is in the inn at Drumnadrochit. A young woman named Anna McKenzie rushes into the room. She addresses Maddie as Mrs. Pennypacker, which was Maddie's mother's name. Maddie is confused but doesn't correct her.

Maddie dresses and realizes that she doesn't know how to make her hair presentable. She has depended on a hairdresser for years. She wraps a turban around her head, fastens it with a broach, and goes downstairs where Ellis and Hank are working on their strategy. Anna brings porridge and milk for Maddie. Ellis asks for something more substantial but Anna says those items are rationed and that they weren't expecting guests.

Maddie asks Ellis why Anna is using the name Pennypacker. Ellis says his father wasn't very popular with the locals after the fiasco with the photo, and that he sought to avoid problems.

In Chapter 9, Hank and Ellis prepare to go out but Maddie says she doesn't feel up to leaving the inn. Maddie tries to take a bath but the water is brutally cold. She rushes back downstairs to warm up and discover Anna has prepared another meal. This time there's a coddled egg and fried potatoes. She says her family has a farm. When Anna told her mother, Mhathair, about Maddie, she provided the egg and butter for a better meal for Maddie.

Anna reveals that some of her family members have seen the Loch Ness Monster. Her cousin, a fisherman, refused to say anything about his encounter. Anna says she's lit the boiler so Maddie can have a hot bath. She then says she has to get back to the family farm, or croft, where there's a great deal of work awaiting her.

That evening, Maddie returns to the main room. There are several men in the room, some in uniform. An old man named Donnie arrives. Meg is behind the bar but Maddie declines her offer of something to drink. Ellis and Hank rush in, and Donnie recognizes Ellis as being the Colonel's son. Donnie says he won't return to the inn while Ellis is present. Someone makes a joke that eases the tension in the room. Ellis quietly tells Maddie that was why he used a different last name. Angus stares at Ellis, deep in thought.

In Chapter 10, Maddie goes to Ellis's room that evening, looking for comfort and warmth. He obviously doesn't want her there. She eventually goes to her own room. The next morning, Anna says Ellis and Hank left early and won't be back until the following day. Anna is rude and goes on a tirade about the scarcity of food. Angus enters the room and offers to "correct the spelling" of Maddie's last name on the



register. She's relieved that he isn't forcing her to leave or making a big deal of Ellis's lie. Maddie rushes to her room without eating any of the porridge provided for breakfast.

Maddie remembers events detailing her relationship with Edith. Edith had invited her for a meal and talked to the other ladies about Ellis's color blindness, saying it explained why he had so many car wrecks. She then made a comment about Hank's rejection, saying his claim was a lie. Edith says she's tried to make Ellis stay away from Hank but that he won't listen. Maddie realizes that Edith has probably said the very same things about Ellis's relationship with Maddie, and she faints. Several doctors evaluate Maddie and one announces that she has a nervous ailment and urges Maddie to avoid excitement. Edith and Ellis are present for the diagnosis. Edith is horrified and changes the diagnosis so she can say Maddie has a heart ailment. The doctor prescribes nerve pills.

Edith attributes the nervous ailment diagnosis to Maddie's mother, Vivian. Vivian was beautiful and people loved her. She had a very public affair with a married man, leaving Maddie behind with her father until the man decided to go home. Vivian returned but the relationship with her husband was barely civil. She often told Maddie that she remained only because of her love for Maddie, but she actually manipulated the young girl.

In Chapter 11, Maddie is very hungry and decides to go downstairs. She takes an apple but Meg arrives and she returns the apple to its basket. Meg shows her where the bomb shelter is in case of an air raid. Meg then announces they are having venison for dinner, which isn't rationed and that Maddie will be welcome to share the meal. Maddie asks for advice about her hair and Meg offers to let Maddie use her curlers. She also gives Maddie an apple for a snack.

Maddie remains in the main room for the evening meal and overhears men talking. She learns that Anna works at the sawmill during the day, doing her part for the war effort. They listen to a radio broadcast with news about the war. Maddie realizes she's homesick and hates that Ellis and Hank left her without even leaving a note.

Analysis

Maddie thinks back to a time when she'd caught Ellis at her dressing table, using Maddie's make up. She said he'd allowed Maddie to finish the make up, then put on an oriental robe and a feather boa. Maddie says it was a joke but it seems more likely that this was Ellis wishing he could be a woman. This is yet another sign that Ellis might be gay.

Maddie is beginning to become friends with Anna by this point in the book but Meg still hates her. Anna and Meg are very much alike in some ways. Both work hard and their waking time is filled with jobs and chores. But they are also different. Anna lives and works with her family on a nearby farm and she seems much more pliable than Meg. It's later revealed that Meg is actually an orphan and that may account for some of her attitude.



The story is set in war time and that's an important part of the story. Meg shows Maddie where the bomb shelter is located in case of an air raid. There are blackout shades covering the windows of the inn and tape across the glass in the windows to avoid shattering. Maddie and the others listen to the news each evening at the inn and Maddie is horrified by the number of people who die.

Maddie feels homesick when Hank and Ellis leave her behind. It seems odd that she does because she really doesn't have much of a home back in America. Her father has abandoned her and Ellis's parents don't like her at all. This explains, at least to some degree, Maddie's dependence on Ellis and Hank. They are her "home" and she feels lost when they leave her behind without talking to her about it. If Maddie had been more self-confident with better roots of her own, she might have seen Ellis for what he is much sooner.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ellis sign into the hotel using a fake name and how is the lie revealed?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the lives of Anna and Meg. How are they affected by the war?

Discussion Question 3

What new information is revealed about Maddie's past in this section and what does it say about Maddie's character?

Vocabulary

temerity, haggard, savant, blather, libel, sporadically, requisitioned, palpable, culminating, nuanced, burlesque, insidious



Chapters 12-16

Summary

In Chapter 12, Maddie goes to the main room the following morning, planning to read a book. Anna is mopping and goes on a tirade about Maddie wasting her day while Anna and Meg work two jobs, including waiting on Maddie. Maddie goes to the post office and sends a telegram to her father, Dr. Ernest Pennypaker, in Philadelphia. She says she's made a mistake and asks him to send a plane for her. She realizes she can't pay for the telegram but the postman sends it anyway.

Maddie doesn't want to face Anna again so she wanders around, looking for the loch. She notices that all the children at a local school are carrying a bag that Maddie knows contains a gas mask. At the graveyard, she finds a stone with three names on it: an infant named Agnes and her parents, Mairi and Agnes. Maddie notes that the mother died just a short time after her daughter and husband, and wonders if she died of a broken heart. Maddie returns to the inn without finding the loch. She knows she'd only been looking for it in the hope that she would see the monster before Ellis and Hank, and that was just so that she could get revenge for having been left.

In Chapter 13, Meg helps Maddie repair her manicure. Maddie asks about the loch and Meg says it's "behind the Cover," which is the term they use for Urquhart Woods. They talk about the shortages caused by the war, including lipstick and stockings. Maddie shares in the trout dinner served that evening and they listen to the radio broadcast at 9. Ellis and Hank don't return until after the meal. Meg tells them there's only "beetroot sandwiches" available for their supper. Maddie is obviously upset and Ellis reacts, calling her a rude name that prompts Maddie to go to her room. There, she knows that Ellis has been rude before, but never directed his anger at her. She hopes her father sends for her and that Ellis finds the monster so that he'll regain his sense of self-worth.

In Chapter 14, Ellis presents Maddie with a gift the following day. It's a gas mask in a bright red case. As he hands it to her, he asks if she thinks it's pretty. She takes it and points out his own case, which looks the same except that it's in a brown case. They then set out for their first look at the loch in the hope of seeing the monster.

In Chapter 15, they board a small boat rented for their search. Hank rows. Maddie notices that the water is dark and Hank says the loch is very deep. Maddie is worried. When they reach the shore where they're setting up a camera, Ellis jumps out to drag the boat onto the bank. He makes jokes and Maddie decides she's going to send another telegram to her father, telling him she'd changed her mind.

They spend hours taking the temperature of the water with all three looking for the monster on the surface and Hank filming. Maddie sees lots of things and calls out, but they turn out to be logs, otters, and other false alarms. Hank and Ellis are getting upset by the time they call it a day.



In Chapter 16, Maddie goes to her room and Ellis joins her there. They have sex that lasts only a few minutes, leaving Maddie unsatisfied. Maddie remains disappointed but doesn't know how to tell Ellis that she wants something more. The sex is so infrequent that Maddie says she isn't surprised that they haven't yet had a baby.

Analysis

In Chapter 12, it seems that Maddie's feelings are hurt because Ellis and Hank have gone out without her. She wasn't up to going with them on the first day but they left on the second day without even asking if she wanted to go. She telegraphs her father, asking for transportation home. She imagines that Ellis and Hank will ask her to stay but she is determined to go back to America. She believes that Ellis would have left her in America if he'd had the money to pay for her to stay somewhere while he was in Scotland. Maddie has one valid point in that Ellis left her with no money, no ration books, and no real assurances that she would be welcome to stay at the inn until his return. Overall, Maddie's decision to leave seems a rather childish view of the situation but it's also the beginning of Maddie's change in her opinion of Ellis.

In Chapter 13, Maddie and Ellis argue. Ellis doesn't understand why Maddie is upset at having been left and Maddie hates that Ellis doesn't seem to realize that he slighted her by leaving her behind. Maddie says that Ellis has changed for the worse over the course of their marriage and she attributes that mainly to the fact that he can't join the military. She believes that finding the monster will help him regain a level of self-esteem. She fears that he might not ever get over his current anger if he doesn't find it.

Ellis and Hank have some plans for finding the monster but they don't seem likely to succeed. They are taking "scientific measurements," including the temperature of the water. They are also checking into eyewitness accounts, hoping to find the time and place the monster is most likely to be seen. They have a camera and plan to get a movie film of it. They also plan to send the film to a professional production company to be developed so no one can say they tampered with it. They are making it all sound very plausible but they are actually impatient and seemed to expect that they were going to see it immediately. Even during this time period, the Loch Ness Monster was a curiosity and there were a lot of people who had tried to get a look at it. This makes the plans laid by Ellis and Hank seem ridiculous and it gives another look into their character.

When Maddie was diagnosed as having a nervous condition, the doctor told her that she should avoid excitement. Edith was present for the consultation and she delicately asked if that meant Maddie couldn't have sex. The doctor said that Maddie could have sex, so that isn't the reason for Ellis's reluctance. This is just another indication that Ellis isn't really interested in Maddie, except as a friend.



Discussion Question 1

What motivates Maddie to send a telegram to her father? Why does she plan to send a second telegram to him?

Discussion Question 2

How do Hank and Ellis plan to prove the monster exists? What's wrong with their plan?

Discussion Question 3

What is the gravestone Maddie sees in the local church yard and why is it significant?

Vocabulary

lolling, bafflement, libations, beseechingly, promontory, infuriate, vindicating, surreptitiously, colluded, extenuating



Chapters 17-20

Summary

In Chapter 17, it snows while Maddie, Hank, and Ellis are looking for the monster on the second day. Maddie feels Ellis's disappointment and Hank's frustration. Maddie called out and Hank filmed a stag swimming near the opposite shore. He is furious when he discovers what it is and throws the film in the water. Ellis is angry and says they should develop the film in case they caught the monster on film without realizing it. The argument grows more heated and Maddie is amazed, having never seen them fight before. Maddie suggests they use some sort of bait to try to lure it out and both men laugh at her. Maddie realizes they are drunk, though it's still very early in the day.

An hour later, Maddie decides to go back to the inn. She assures them she can walk and they are happy to stay. As she's walking away, she hears Hank says that Maddie was the "best coin toss you ever won." He then says that because of that coin toss, "I'm going to be stuck with Violet." Ellis says Violet is still better than what Edith had in mind for a daughter-in-law. Maddie takes it to mean that Ellis and Hank had flipped a coin to decide which was going to marry Maddie. On the way back to the inn, Maddie tries to figure out some other explanation but can't. By the time she reaches the inn, she's soaked and freezing. Anna helps her warm up and provides hot tea.

In Chapter 18, Ellis and Hank return. They are arguing. Hank says they saw another otter but Ellis insists it was a juvenile monster. When Maddie goes downstairs the next morning, the two are passed out in the main room. They talk briefly and agree that they won't go out today. Maddie leaves the inn just to get away from the two men. She knows now that her marriage is a farce and isn't certain she wants to continue with it.

She thinks about her mother. Vivian had been a social outcast after her affair. She was critical of Maddie, always commenting on her weight and suggesting a nose job. She also suggested that Maddie get a lobotomy, saying the treatment could be done as an outpatient and that Maddie would be much happier for it. One day, her father noticed her appearance and demanded that she go to a boarding school. Maddie was elated. Her mother rushed upstairs and Maddie usually followed, but this time she didn't go up for awhile. She found her mother, dead in the bathtub.

Maddie continues to walk in the Cover near the loch and she becomes lost. She sees a woman washing a "rust-stained shirt." Maddie calls out but the woman doesn't acknowledge her. When Maddie goes toward the spot, the woman is no longer there.

In Chapter 19, Maddie finds her way back and stops at the church. She sees Angus leaving flowers at the gravestone with the three names. (Note: Maddie still doesn't know that Angus is Angus Grant at this point and that it's his stone with the names of his wife and child.)



Back at the inn, Maddie opens a letter from her father. He says that she was foolish to go to Scotland during wartime and that it would be expensive to send a plane for her to get home. He says she should have talked to him first and refuses to help her. He says she should probably remain where she is until the war is over. She remains lost in thought until Ellis and Hank appear that evening.

Bob the Bobby, a local policeman, arrives. It's obvious he and Angus are friends but he says he has to carry out an official duty. He says he's warning Angus not to repeat the "incident" in which Angus shoved the water deputy into the water. Angus says the man deserved it but promises not to do it again. Bob also thanks Angus for the gift of some trout he'd presented to Bob's mother. As the activity in the inn continues, Ellis quietly tells Hank that he believes poaching carries a "stiff penalty."

In Chapter 20, the air raid siren blares in the middle of the night and everyone spends a tense period of time in the shelter. Ellis and Hank are obnoxious, Maddie is terrified, and Angus goes outside to shoot at one of the planes.

When they return to their rooms, Ellis asks Maddie for one of her nerve pills. He is amazed that her room is tidy, saying the staff has refused to put his clothes and personal items away. Maddie says she cleaned her own room which upsets Ellis. He says it's dangerous to "make excuses for the help" and that he was encouraging the servants to be lazy. He rants for awhile, then apologizes. Maddie wants to tell him that he behaved poorly in the shelter but doesn't want to fight so she drops it. When she puts the nerve pills back in her drawer, she realizes that there are a lot missing. She's never taken but one which means that Ellis must be taking a lot.

Analysis

In Chapter 17, Maddie and Anna have a few minutes alone together. Anna was present when Maddie and Ellis argued over Ellis leaving her for several days. Ellis told Maddie that he'd arranged with the innkeeper for Maddie to stay at the inn. Anna says she tries to stay out of other people's business but feels Maddie deserves to know the truth. She says Ellis didn't make those arrangements, meaning Angus might have made Maddie leave at any time.

Maddie seems to feel at least some level of guilt over her mother's death. This is understandable. Her mother had been dependent on Maddie to an unhealthy degree and that would have made Maddie feel responsible whenever her mother was unhappy. Maddie was 15 at the time of her mother's death and she was smart enough to know that she wasn't in a good situation. She was happy when her father said he was sending her to boarding school and she prayed that he wouldn't change his mind. Maddie did go to boarding school and she believes that her mother's death was the price for that.

There isn't a great deal of humor in the book but there is some in the scene between Angus and Bob the Bobby. Angus offers Bob a drink but he declines, saying his wife would be upset. Angus makes a joke of it and then says that a man should "always



carry a flagon of whiskey in case of snakebite, and further, always carry a small snake.” Bob says that's brilliant and Angus promises to get Bob a snake if his wife finds out that he's had a drink.

It appears that Angus is poaching from the nearby property and Ellis has seized onto that fact. Large property owners could limit the game taken from their land and those who disobeyed were punished. Ellis is a distant cousin to the owners of that property and that's where the Colonel stayed when he was in Scotland. It's later revealed that Angus has inherited the property and Ellis's claims of poaching will be null.

Discussion Question 1

Describe how Maddie's mother died and why Maddie feels a sense of responsibility.

Discussion Question 2

What is known about Maddie's relationship with her father, based on information up to this point?

Discussion Question 3

What do you see as the most important theme up to this point? Why?

Vocabulary

pariah, meticulous, mewling, purdah, euphemistically, chalices, stultifying, nefarious, feckless baubles, innuendo, cacophony



Chapters 21-26

Summary

In Chapter 21, Hank and Ellis get a ride with a man named George, who obviously has a false leg. He drives a local van, making an array of deliveries. When they are gone, Maddie asks Anna to teach her to knit so she'll have something useful to do. Anna says she doesn't have time because of her all her other work. Maddie asks to help with the housework. Anna agrees and Maddie begins with Meg's room, then moves on to Hank's rooms. It takes a lot of work to put away his possessions and she finds some personal items that are embarrassing. She then enters Ellis's room and is horrified to find that he's wrecked it, obviously on purpose in retaliation for the staff not cleaning up his room. She's ashamed and knows Anna and Meg must think the worst of Ellis and Hank, and Maddie because of her association to them. She leaves some stockings in Meg's drawer when she finishes cleaning.

In Chapter 22, Maddie finishes and sits down with Anna for a cup of tea. As they are talking, Maddie reveals that she'd been lost in the Cover earlier. She describes seeing the old woman washing a shirt and Anna is immediately upset. She says Maddie has seen the Coanaig and that it means someone is going to die. She rushes from the house. Angus arrives and asks what happened. Maddie gives him the details and he says Anna "still" has two brothers on the front lines of the war. Anna doesn't return that evening. Meg and Maddie manage to get a meal together. There's a confrontation because Ellis and Hank are not serving in the military.

In Chapter 23, Hank and Ellis say nothing about their rooms being cleaned. They remain indignant because of the argument the previous evening about their service in the military. After Hank and Ellis leave, Maddie and Anna talk, and Anna reveals that Angus's last name is Grant and that he's not the proprietor of the inn, but is only taking care of it while the owner is away.

Willie the Postie knocks on the door. Willie says that Anna's parents need her at home, at once. She asks which of her brothers died, Hugh or Robbie. He says it was Hugh. She begins to shout, saying that it's wrong and that "it'll be like Angus." She doesn't go downstairs for dinner. She goes down later and talks to Angus. She suggests that Anna's brother died because Maddie saw the Coanaig. Angus assures her that the war is to blame. Maddie is very upset. She and Angus hold each other.

In Chapter 24, Maddie tries to assure herself that they had an innocent embrace but she doesn't really believe it. Angus introduces an old woman named Rhona who will help keep the inn running until Anna returns. Ellis asks why Rhona is there and Maddie reveals that Anna's brother died. He says "these things happen" and returns to his conversation with Hank. Maddie is upset that he's so callous.



After Ellis and Hank leave, Maddie goes to the cemetery and looks at the tombstone with Angus's name. Later, she goes for a walk and winds up near the castle at the spot where Ellis and Hank initially set up to look for the monster. She climbs some stairs and discovers that Angus is standing at an arched gate leading to the water. He turns and leaves, carrying a brace of rabbits. Back at the inn, Maddie finds him in the kitchen. He is shirtless and has a crisscrossing of scars. She cries out his name and he holds his hands up to stop her. She rushes from the kitchen to her room.

In Chapter 25, Maddie becomes convinced that Ellis is lying about being color blind. She has red gloves and believes he chose the red gas mask case because they matched the gloves. The next morning, Maddie asks Ellis about the choice of color. Ellis says he chose the case to match her gloves. She says her gloves are green and he argues the point. They argue until Hank arrives and confirms that the gloves are red. Ellis leaves the room. Hank says Ellis wrote to his mother the previous day, apparently asking her to take him back in. Maddie reveals that Ellis is taking a lot of her pills and Hank promises to intervene.

Maddie knows that she's made a mistake. If Ellis really is color blind, she's become as judgmental as everyone else. If he isn't and believes she knows the truth, he'll be ruthless. She tells him she meant it as a joke and that it got out of control. He makes a rude remark about her family and then leaves. They don't return that night.

In Chapter 26, Anna returns after a 5-day absence. Hank and Ellis also return and quickly fall back to their former ways of drinking and rudeness. Maddie watches the news about World War II and hates that Ellis and Hank ignore what's going on while they hunt for the Loch Ness Monster.

Analysis

In Chapter 21, Ellis and Hank go over the details about the air raid several times the next morning. They elaborate and change things to put themselves in the best possible light. They seem to forget that they are talking about the event in front of people who were there. They behaved like cowards, and they were rude to the others in the shelter. They demanded blankets for themselves without caring if everyone else was alright and at one point it seemed that Ellis might demand that Maddie hand over her gas mask, which was borrowed from Angus. By the next morning, they were talking as if Ellis was the one making certain everyone was safe and that Hank had put himself above Meg and Maddie. It seems impossible to think they aren't aware that everyone knows they're liars and that they wouldn't feel at least some sense of shame over the situation.

At one point, Ellis and Hank are talking in a vulgar manner and Maddie suggests they tone it down. Hank asks why Maddie is being a prude and she points out that Anna is also in the room. Maddie notes that Hank hadn't even been aware of her. This is yet another example of the theme related to the class distinctions. Hank thinks nothing of Anna's presence and doesn't think she's worthy of any level of consideration on his part.



In Hank's room, Maddie finds photos of naked women and a condom. In Ellis's room, she finds a photo of Hank without a shirt. It's left to the reader to decide the significance.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the attitudes of Hank and Ellis toward the servants. What does this say about their character?

Discussion Question 2

What changes are Maddie experiencing and how are those changes affecting her attitudes?

Discussion Question 3

What do you believe is the truth about the relationship between Ellis and Hank? Review your answers and update them at the end of the book.

Vocabulary

rhetorical, cache, sundries, colossal, crone, disparate, inextricably, segued, shirk



Chapters 27-31

Summary

In Chapter 27, Maddie continues to help clean and takes on more duties. Ellis never catches on. One day, she's sweeping to the bottom of the stairs and meets Angus. He asks how long she's been doing the cleaning and she says she just wants to help. She's afraid he'll be angry at Anna but he merely smiles and walks away. With that, she began helping in the kitchen.

Maddie also begins to learn more about the country and its people. Anna lives on a croft and she explains that the croft is a small farm that is meant to support a family but is never actually big enough to actually support the family. She gives Maddie a history lesson about the origins of the croft and the oppression the people of Scotland have faced. She also defines a "righteous theft" as the taking of animals from land that was originally stolen from the common people of Scotland. Maddie also learns more about Anna and Meg, including that Meg's entire family had been killed in a blitz attack. Meg was already in Drumnadrochit when the attack occurred.

In Chapter 28, Maddie had realized that Ellis was entering her room and taking her nerve pills. She began locking her door and flushed the rest of the pills. She watched one day when Ellis went upstairs and returned, empty-handed and pale. He didn't ask her about it. Meg gets ready for the Valentine's Day dance and arrives in the main room wearing a pair of the stockings from Maddie. Her boyfriend, Rory, makes a fuss about them but Meg laughs off his questions of where they came from.

In Chapter 29, Ellis has obviously been drinking a lot. He and Maddie argue and he's unreasonable. Maddie goes to her room and locks the door. Ellis is furious and tries to break it down. Hank finally intercedes and Maddie hears Hank urge Ellis into his own room. Hank returns to Maddie's room and asks if she's alright. She makes it clear she's angry at him and that Hank should have kept Ellis from drinking to much. Hank says she's right, assures her that Ellis is locked into his room, and apologizes.

Yelling wakes Maddie. She thinks it's Ellis but realizes it's Rory yelling at Meg. He's accusing her of having another boyfriend who bought her the stockings. When it's clear Rory is hitting Meg, Maddie rushes to the hall and says she gave Meg the stockings. Angus intervenes and beats Rory into submission before throwing him down the stairs. Maddie then hears Rory leave the inn.

In Chapter 30, Meg is seriously hurt. Angus gets her into bed and they begin to care for Meg's injuries, which are significant. Dr. McLean is summoned and says Meg has a concussion, among other injuries. He suggests she go to the hospital but says there's respiratory illness among the patients there and that it would be better if Meg wasn't exposed to that. Maddie pledges to help care for Meg and Angus decides Meg will remain at the inn. Dr. McLean asks if someone had dealt with the "animal" who beat



Meg. Angus assures him that it was done. Dr. McLean obviously approves and says good-night to “Captain Grant” as he's leaving. With that, Maddie becomes certain that Angus is the same person as the name on the mysterious gravestone.

In Chapter 31, Maddie does her part for Meg. When she finally has time to go to her own room, she finds that Ellis has torn it apart, obviously searching for the pills. He arrives and asks for them but she says they're gone. He asks why she's determined to destroy him before he leaves the room.

Anna and Maddie sit together, watching Meg. They talk like old friends and Maddie says she's going to get a divorce. Anna says she isn't surprised and that everyone can see how horribly Ellis treats her. Maddie then asks Anna about Angus and the tombstone. Anna tells her the story but adds that a fisherman saw Mairi walk into the loch but couldn't get to her in time to save her. Her body was never recovered. Angus had been badly wounded and someone ripped his ID tags off, thinking he was dead. He recovered but it was months before anyone knew his identity or that he'd survived. Anna says Angus blames himself for Mairi's death. He didn't return to the war because he'd been recruited to teach at a local training school, which is held at the Big House.

Anna also says that the Big House belonged to a wealthy family but the former owner, or laird, had died a few months earlier. Maddie remembers hearing that there were no longer hunting parties at that Big House, and she knew that Angus was taking game from there to supplement the meager food supplies of everyone in the village.

Analysis

As Maddie becomes more comfortable helping around the inn, she becomes friendlier with Meg and Anna as well. She gets to know both young women better and she learns from them. She picks up on how to do specific tasks that she's never attempted before, including cooking, but she also begins to see how they treat people and how they act. All these lessons rub off on Maddie.

When Maddie begins helping more in the kitchen, she comes up with a plan of how to keep Hank and Ellis unaware of her activities. If they come back unexpectedly, she'll leave by the back door and go into the front door, making it look as if she was out for a walk. Anna objects because she says it's bad luck to enter and leave by different doors. This is another example of the role of superstitions in the story.

Maddie has begun to think about other people and to realize that being kind is better than living the selfish way she's been living. This is mostly because of her time with Anna and Meg, but it's also a sign that Maddie is finally maturing into a thoughtful young woman. A side effect of this is that she's now seeing Ellis and Hank for the rude, selfish people they really are.

When Meg is brutally beaten, Maddie intervenes. Angus asks what she was doing, pointing out that she could have been seriously hurt as well. Maddie says she planned to kill Rory for hurting Meg, and she means it. Once the doctor explains that Meg needs



constant care but that he doesn't want to expose her to the illness in the hospital, Maddie offers to be responsible for the majority of Meg's care. Hank is there by that time and he urges her to reconsider. It would never occur to Hank to give so much of himself and he can't imagine why Maddie would be willing to do so. Later, he brings in some wood for a fire and then pointedly asks if he needs to do anything else. Maddie knows that he's really wanting to get to bed and she hates him for his lack of interest in this young woman's care, especially since he'd made comments several times about how attractive she is.

Discussion Question 1

Describe how Maddie is maturing by this point in the story. Why is she changing?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Rory attack Meg and what is the reaction of the others to the attack?

Discussion Question 3

What new information has Maddie learned about Angus?

Vocabulary

brackish, croft, ribald, melancholy, impeccably, copious, dissuade, slogged, valiantly, conciliatory, solicitous, wheedling



Chapters 32-35

Summary

In Chapter 32, Maddie reads the paper while she keeps an eye on Meg. Dr. McLean arrives in the afternoon and says Meg is out of danger from the concussion but still needs to be watched closely, especially for signs of congestion. They begin giving her liquids and she sleeps deeply under the influence of morphine. At one point, Maddie drops off to sleep and is afraid that Meg isn't breathing. She rushes to Angus for help and he assures her Meg is just sleeping deeply. He helps her back to her room and Maddie feels incredibly drawn to him.

In Chapter 33, Anna's mother arrives. Everyone calls her Mhathair. She begins making teas meant for specific steps in Meg's recovery. Rhona is also back, helping with the cooking.

Ellis and Hank “breeze” into the room, acting as if nothing is wrong. Maddie is sick of the charade. Ellis says they are going to Fort Augustus to search through manuscripts for information. Maddie says she can't go because she's helping take care of Meg. Ellis says she can't do that and offers to hire a nurse. Maddie says she's already promised and the argument grows heated. Ellis says there's a hospital in Fort Augustus and that he thinks Maddie should stay there for awhile, until she's “back on an even keel.” Maddie realizes Ellis is planning to have her locked away. Their ride arrives and Ellis begs her to come with them. Maddie refuses, and says his plan won't work because she isn't insane. He calls her “darling” and says he'll be back in a few days.

In Chapter 34, Dr. McLean says Meg can stop taking the morphine. He picks up the remaining doses and says there's some missing. Maddie immediately knows that Ellis took them. Days pass and Maddie still doesn't have a plan, but Ellis and Hank don't return. Angus had closed the inn while Meg was so ill, but he now reopens. Maddie pleads with him to let her help and he objects, but finally gives in.

After the inn closes, Maddie takes some soup and beer up to Meg. Meg reveals that Anna told her about Maddie's plan to get a divorce. Maddie says she probably won't get one but she's upset that Anna shared the information. Meg assures her that Anna hasn't told anyone else, except possibly Angus. Meg says it's possible that Maddie and Ellis will rekindle their love. Maddie says she's only recently realized that Ellis never loved her, and that his “affections lie elsewhere.”

In Chapter 35, the air raid siren goes off. Angus carries Meg to the shelter, though it's a brutal trip for her. Angus gives Meg some additional painkillers to help her sleep through the ordeal. It's still dark when the plane stop passing overhead and Angus decides they'll spend the rest of the night in the shelter so that he doesn't have to carry Meg back in the dark.



Analysis

Maddie and Angus are becoming more attracted to each other though they are being careful to limit their contact. Angus was concerned when Maddie rushed to intervene on Meg's behalf, saying she could have been hurt. He doesn't outwardly show this concern when Ellis is around but there's no doubt that Ellis sees there is something between Maddie and Angus. When Ellis asks Maddie to accompany him to Fort Augustus, she says she promised Angus she'd help take care of Meg. Ellis questions the fact that she uses Angus's first name and she correct herself, saying that she promised Captain Grant. This makes Ellis madder but Maddie points out that he earned the rank of captain, which only escalates Ellis's anger another notch. This budding relationship will turn into love, which is a theme of the book.

By this point, the relationship between Maddie and Ellis has deteriorated to the point that they can barely be civil to each other. Ellis breezes into the inn one morning and kisses Maddie on the cheek. To the observer, it may seem that he's trying to make up with her or that he's really in love with her. Then he invites Maddie to go with him to Fort Augustus. Again, the observer might think that he's trying to find a way for them to be together. That's not the case, however, as Ellis really has plans to put her in the hospital in Fort Augustus. He doesn't elaborate but it seems likely that it's some sort of mental institution or that they at least handle mental patients there.

Maddie mentioned a frontal lobotomy earlier in the book. She said her mother wanted Maddie to have one, and she brought it up along with the idea of reconstructive surgery on Maddie's nose. In Vivian's mind, it seems that a lobotomy was nothing more than a minor procedure that would make Maddie a happier, healthier person. Maddie knows better. Ellis never lets on what he thinks would happen after a lobotomy but he does want to put Maddie away. His motivations are not detailed but it seems that he merely wants to keep her under control, doing what he wants without argument.

Maddie says Ellis's "affections lie elsewhere," but she doesn't elaborate. It seems possible that she now knows that Ellis is in love with Hank but she doesn't reveal her thought process to the reader. It's left to the reader to decide what she meant and why she's now so certain.

Ellis wants to put Maddie in the hospital and Maddie knows that he really wants to find a way to get her out of his way and under control, but he doesn't want her out of his life. She knows that having her drugged or lobotomized will accomplish that for him. If she is constantly sluggish or drugged, she'll be out of the picture but will remain Ellis's wife. She says the beauty of this plan is that Ellis won't have to consider marrying again because he'll still have a wife. People will think he's the hero for standing by Maddie but it will actually be just what he wants. Maddie's thoughts on the subject are the only information the reader has. The limited perspective means it's impossible to know if this is also Ellis's idea or if he really thinks he is doing something for Maddie's own good.



Discussion Question 1

Describe Meg's argument with Rory and Maddie's role in breaking it up.

Discussion Question 2

Why does Ellis want Maddie to go with him to Fort Augustus?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the relationship between Maddie and Ellis at this point, and list three things that have contributed to the current situation.

Vocabulary

circumspect, juxtaposition, vindication, absolution, bravado, extricating



Chapters 36-41

Summary

In Chapter 36, 11 days pass and Ellis and Hank have not returned. Maddie wonders if they've "run off together" and wonders what she'll do. She's certain Angus will allow her to remain at the inn and has to consciously avoid thinking about her feelings for Angus. Meg is recovering and asks for real food.

Willie the Postie arrives with a telegram. Anna is shocked and Willie hurries to say that it's not a notice about her brother's death. The telegram is for Maddie with news that her father has died. She goes for a walk and thinks about her life, including the lack of love between her and her father, and the same between her and Ellis. She walks to the loch and steps into the edge of the water. Suddenly, there's a rumbling under the water and "two blades of water curling from the edges of a channel." Maddie can't figure out what's making the channel but then something shoves her back, away from the edge of the water. When she looks again, the water is smooth and there's no sign of what struck her.

In Chapter 37, Maddie goes to the post office. She asks if it's possible to make a phone call to America. He says the only phone with that capability is at the Big House, and that it's for military use only. She sends a telegram to the lawyer involved with her father's estate. She asks for information, including how she can get a divorce while she's in Scotland. Willie's attitude hardens at the mention of divorce.

Curiosity drives Maddie to the Big House. It's huge and with too many chimneys to count. She says it's more like a castle than a house. She has been warned that there's live ammunition used in the military training that takes place there, so she watches from the woods at the edge of the property. Then she sees a sign that reads, "minefield." She is terrified and carefully makes her way back to the road and then to the inn. When she rushes in, Meg is downstairs. Maddie relates all the events leading up to that moment, including that she feels drawn to Angus. Meg says the event at the loch was Mairi, who entered Maddie's heart and head, then gave her blessing to Maddie's love for Angus.

In Chapter 38, Maddie goes to Angus's room. He says she's grieving and that it's not the time for them to come together. She goes back to her room but Angus follows. They talk and she assures him that she's ready. They have sex and declare their love for each other.

In Chapter 39, Ellis and Hank return. Maddie goes to the front room to confront them. At one point, she almost collapses. While Ellis is getting her a drink of water, Hank warns her that Ellis has made arrangements with a doctor. He says Ellis told the doctor that Maddie had "lost all sense of social structure" and was paranoid. Maddie threatens to send a telegram to the Colonel saying that both Ellis and Hank lied about their reasons



for avoiding the military. Hank warns that Ellis will just say that Maddie is acting irrationally and that it will give him ammunition to have her hospitalized.

Meg follows Maddie to her room. Maddie says she's trapped and will have to pretend to reconcile with Ellis. Meg suggests that Maddie hide at the croft or that they poison Ellis, but Maddie is reluctant. They discuss Angus and agree that they can't tell him for fear that he'll "take matters into his own hands." Maddie fears that Angus will stop loving her before she can figure a way out of the situation.

In Chapter 40, Ellis seems very pleased when he discovers they are having venison for dinner. Later, an old man arrives swearing that he's seen the monster. Ellis and Hank pump him for details of the monster's appearance. Maddie knows they will use his description to make a fake monster.

In Chapter 41, Maddie offers to go with Hank and Ellis the next morning. Ellis says it isn't a good time. Willie arrives with telegrams. One is for Maddie and she can't bring herself to open it. Ellis opens it and learns that her father died. The telegram doesn't include answers to Maddie's question about a divorce and she's relieved. Ellis says the telegram indicates that Maddie will inherit everything from her father's estate, and he calls her his "golden goose." Hank's telegram is from Violet and he announces that Violet has left him for Freddie. He seems surprised but Maddie isn't.

Analysis

The Big House has been mentioned several times before Chapter 37, when Maddie goes to get a look at it. This is really a castle of sorts. It's a huge mansion and it belonged to one of Ellis's distant cousins until the man's death. The house becomes an important setting in the story at the conclusion of the book, as it's where Maddie and Angus live after they marry. Maddie calls it "the nucleus of everything." This is the property where Angus takes game to help feed the people of the village. This is where the Colonel stayed during his time in Scotland, and where the Colonel's famous photo was taken while he was here, which prompted Ellis to travel to Scotland. In some ways, it seems Maddie is exaggerating the role of the house, but it is her opinion.

It's important for the reader to remember the time setting of this story. It's the mid-1940s and most people don't approve of divorce for any reason. Willie the Postie's attitude when Maddie sends her message is an example of that. The fact that Maddie is upset that Anna shared the information is another. Even though Maddie is very unhappy, living in a loveless marriage, and is even emotionally brutalized by Ellis doesn't make divorce acceptable in this time.

Maddie is in deep despair when she steps into the water at the edge of the loch, but it doesn't seem likely that she's really thinking about committing suicide. The thing that pushes her out of the water is not identified here but Anna later insists that it was Mairi or Mairi's spirit, putting her blessing on the relationship between Maddie and Angus. This is another example of the importance of superstition in the story.



In Chapter 41, Hank receives a telegram from Violet. He has shown little love for her though he is reportedly on the verge of asking her to marry him. Maddie suspects that he didn't even tell her that he was going to Scotland, let alone invite her along. When they first arrived at the inn, he'd shown interest in Meg and Maddie was upset that he obviously had no loyalty to Violet. The telegram informs Hank that Violet is marrying Freddie. Hank seems surprised. This is yet another example of the careless attitudes Hank and Ellis display. They have no concern for others and don't care who gets hurt as long as they are having fun. Hank seemed to have little love for Violet and it's more likely that he's simply upset that she dumped him than that he's really hurt.

Discussion Question 1

What happens to Maddie's father?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Maddie is attracted to Angus?

Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the time setting of this story? What thinks might have been different if the story had been set in modern times?

Vocabulary

outlandish, strangulation, discern, funereal, diffidence, ignominious, excruciating, unctuous, volatile, artifice, chortles, conviviality



Chapters 42-Epilogue

Summary

In Chapter 42, Maddie tries to imagine allowing the others to poison Ellis but knows it would be outright murder. She knows that it's even worse because he hasn't yet forced Maddie into a mental institution, so she'd be making a "preemptive strike." Just then, two police officers arrive and ask for Angus. They say someone has filed a report alleging that Angus is poaching from the nearby estate known as Craig Gairbh. Angus says he has taken game from there but that he is the laird of the estate, having inherited it upon the previous laird's death. He provides proof and the officers leave.

Maddie rushes to talk to Ellis and Hank. It's raining and it's obvious they aren't pleased to see her. They argue and Maddie winds up in the boat with Ellis. She tells him she knows he isn't color blind and he says "it doesn't matter" because she's going to be in a mental institution and won't be able to tell anyone. Suddenly, Hank screams out and begins filming. Something strikes the boat and Maddie falls out. Ellis shoves an oar in her direction and she grabs it, but realizes that he's holding her under rather than saving her. Angus grabs her and begin swimming, pulling her toward shore. Maddie faints.

In Chapter 43, Angus carries Maddie to the ruins of the nearby castle. Hank follows and Ellis remain in the boat, frantically trying to retrieve his second oar. Angus tells Hank that Ellis was trying to kill Maddie, and that Hank caught the entire scene on the film. Hank goes to retrieve the camera but returns, saying that Ellis ruined the film. Bob arrives and gives them a ride back to the inn.

Bob gathers the details of what happened. Hank says he didn't see Ellis trying to kill Maddie, but that he did see the monster. Bob says he has enough information to arrest Ellis, even without Hank's film. The women at the inn, including Meg and Anna, take care of Maddie. She knows that Ellis had tried to kill her in order to get her money and to get rid of her, and that he would never admit it. She wonders if Hank really saw the monster but knows Ellis destroyed the only proof.

In Chapter 44, Maddie struggles to recover. At one point, she sees Mairi. When she wakes again, the fever breaks but she suffers through wracking coughs. Hank sits to talk with Maddie. He says he's horrified at Ellis's behavior. He then blames Ellis for many things, including his break up with Violet. Maddie says that Hank is just as much to blame, and she reveals that she knows about the coin toss. He is at a loss for words and Maddie tells him to stop talking.

Bob the Bobbie arrives and says that he found Ellis's body at the edge of the loch. He drowned in a couple of inches of water and most of his body was on dry land. Bob says he will write the report as an accidental death, as long as Maddie doesn't object. Hank goes to his own room and Maddie hears a "bloodcurdling scream" followed by "dreadful



keening” and then crying. Maddie says no one could comfort him because it was as if he had been cut in half.

In Chapter 45, Angus says he wants to marry Maddie to make her “Madeline Grant, Lady of Craig Gairbh.” They wait a few weeks “for the sake of propriety” but live as husband and wife from the day Angus's proposal. The war comes to an end the day before they marry. Anna and Willie also marry.

In Chapter 46, Maddie never saw the monster. She grew up with Angus as her guide, making her understand that men like Ellis and Hank took without a thought for others while the soldiers gave everything they had for their countries. In the Epilogue, Maddie and Angus open the Big House to soldiers as a convalescent home.

Analysis

It's obvious by the time Maddie goes to confront Ellis that Ellis and Hank have come up with some sort of plan. They don't want Maddie involved because they don't trust that she'll keep her secret. This is evidence that they recognize that Maddie is maturing and that she's no longer willing to take part in their antics. This situation makes Maddie a coming-of-age character, which is one of the books' themes.

Ellis and Hank have actually made a fake monster. When Maddie interrupts, they are planning to launch it. Ellis is going to take the “monster” out in the boat then set it adrift, and Hank is going to film it. This is more evidence of the characters of these two men and their willingness to do anything to get what they want.

Hank claims that he sees the monster. It may have been the monster that slams into the boat, knocking Maddie out. During the scuffle, Hank claims that he filmed the monster but Ellis, Maddie, and Angus were locked in a battle for Maddie's life, meaning they didn't look. Hank didn't see the fight because he was looking at the monster. This seems to indicate that the monster is real and may validate the Colonel's original photo.

When Hank learns that Ellis tried to kill Maddie, he's incredulous. He asks if Maddie is certain that's what happened and he seems genuinely upset that things have gotten so far out of hand. It's a sign that Ellis is the dominate personality in their friendship and it may be that Hank would have brought an end to at least some aspects of the situation, if Ellis had lived.

Hank's reaction to Ellis's death seems to support the idea that there was a deeper relationship than mere friendship. However, that is never detailed in the book. Their relationship may have been a deep friendship, spurred by years together. Maddie says it is as if they are two parts of a whole. It's left to the reader to decide the truth about their relationship.



Discussion Question 1

Describe Elli's attempt to murder Maddie and Elli's death. What do you believe happens?

Discussion Question 2

What is Hank's reaction to Elli's death? Why is his reaction so strong?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Maddie opens her home to wounded veterans? What does it say about her character?

Vocabulary

preemptive, parse, truncheons, thwarted, obstreperous, jubilation, frieze, indomitable, despair, sweltering, billowing, cleaved, propriety, escapade, affirmation



Characters

Maddie Hyde

Maddie is the young wife of Ellis Hyde. She had a brutal childhood, beginning with her mother's very public indiscretion. Maddie's mother, Vivian, left Maddie behind when she went away with a married man. The couple were eventually forced to return and the man was accepted back into their social circles, though Vivian was always a source of gossip. At home, Vivian clung to Maddie who spent hours trying to take care of her mother. One night, her parents argued and her mother rushed to her room, fully expecting Maddie to follow as she usually did. This time Maddie didn't go to her mother until much later and discovered that Vivian had committed suicide. Maddie's father was never affectionate and they had little to say to each other.

Maddie's life was lonely because everyone knew that her mother was obviously facing mental issues. Vivian's suicide made Maddie into a social outcast until she met three young men who became her best friends. They were Ellis Hyde, Hank Boyd, and Freddie Stillman. Freddie proposed to Maddie and she laughed before realizing that he was serious. A short time later, Ellis proposed, saying he hadn't realized until that point that he was afraid she might marry someone else. She accepted and they married, despite the fact that her father and Ellis's parents disapproved. Much later, she learns that Hank and Ellis had flipped a coin to decide which one of them would marry her.

Maddie grew up wealthy and without any idea of how to take care of herself, even on the most basic level. Once she no longer had access to a hair salon twice a week, she had no idea how to make her hair presentable. After staying at the inn in Scotland for awhile, she offered to help with some of the work. She had to learn everything, including cutting up potatoes and making beds. Through the work and her friendship with two girls who worked at the inn, Maddie comes to realize that she has acted as a spoiled child with no sense of what the world really is. She also begins to see Hank and Ellis for what they are, and she hates their rude, self-centered actions.

When Maddie learns that her father has died, she realizes she has enough money of her own now to divorce Ellis and live a life of her own. She fears taking this step but she can't stand going on with her marriage, which is now deteriorated to the point that Ellis is planning to have Maddie lobotomized. In a moment of anger, Ellis tries to kill Maddie then dies himself, leaving Maddie a widow.

By this time, Maddie has fallen in love with Angus but until Ellis's death, has little hope that they can have a happy life together. When Ellis dies, Maddie and Angus marry. As a couple, they move back into the castle that Angus inherited and open a hospital to help soldiers returning home from the war.



Ellis Hyde

Ellis is the only son of a wealthy family and Maddie's husband. He is selfish and cruel, thinking little of anything except what makes him happy at any given moment. It seems likely that he is gay and is in a relationship with his best friend, Hank, but is married to Maddie to meet the dictates of his social standing and the time. When Maddie begins to mature, Ellis begins to hate her and seems determined to find a way to keep her under his control. He arranges to have Maddie lobotomized and Maddie knows that he will follow through with the threat. She also knows that it means Ellis won't have to marry again and will be lauded for his devotion to his current wife while he's really free to do whatever he wants.

Ellis lied to keep himself out of the military. He claims that he is color blind but Maddie discovers that it's a lie. He hates that people talk about him because he isn't serving in the military and seems to hate the fact that he can't serve. It may be that he's afraid to serve but it seems more likely that he's simply too selfish to serve. Regardless of the reason, he doesn't ever go into the military but he does want to redeem himself. This is apparently part of his motivation for searching for the Loch Ness Monster.

Ellis's selfishness reaches a new level when he discovers that Maddie is friendly with Angus Grant, the man who runs the inn where they're staying. He reports to the police that Angus is illegally poaching game but Angus reveals that he is actually the owner of that property, meaning the game is his for the taking. Maddie confronts Ellis and he tries to kill her, making it apparent that he doesn't care about her at all.

Ellis dies mysteriously at the edge of the loch. The police officer who finds him says Ellis is literally in a couple of inches of water.

Angus Grant

Angus is a Scottish man who works at training troops for battle and helps keep a local inn functioning. His past explains his outwardly gruff nature. Angus had been married to a young girl named Mairi who gave birth to a stillborn daughter while he was serving in the military. He was severely injured and Mairi heard that he died, which drove her to drown herself in the loch. Angus recovered and returned to find his name on a tombstone and his wife and child dead.

Angus is a man of high morals and protects his friends, especially those weaker than he. When a man beats up his girlfriend, Angus beats him and sends him away. When Ellis tries to drown Maddie, Angus rescues her. Angus and Maddie fall in love and marry shortly after Ellis's death.



Hank Boyd

Henry Boyd, better known as Hank, is a rich young man who lives a lavish and selfish lifestyle. He is close friends with Ellis, Maddie's husband, and it's through a careless comment from Hank that Maddie learns the two had flipped a coin to decide which would marry her. Hank is slightly more conscious of his actions than Ellis though he is also a snob.

There may be a sexual relationship between Hank and Ellis. Maddie hints at the possibility and Hank is devastated when Ellis dies.

Anna

Anna is one of two young women who works at the inn, The Fraser Arms. She lives at a nearby farm and works there with her family. She is superstitious and makes Maddie believe that some superstitions are real.

Meg

Meg is a young woman who lives at the Fraser Arms. She is kind to Maddie and they soon become close friends. She works at a local saw mill during the day and works at the inn in the evenings. She is brutally beaten by a jealous lover and Maddie nurses her back to health.

Mairi

Mairi was Angus's wife. She was so devastated by the loss of her daughter and the news that Angus died in the war that she took her own life. She walked into the cold waters of the Loch and drowned. When Maddie steps into the lock, Mairi or her spirit pushes Maddie out of the water and Maddie comes to believe that's a sign that Mairi has given her blessing for a relationship between Maddie and Angus.

Edith Stone Hyde

Edith is Ellis's mother. She lives by a strict social code and is mortified when Ellis and Maddie make spectacles of themselves during a party. Despite the fact that she's angry at Ellis, she stands up for him when Ellis's father yells. She hates Maddie and believes that Maddie is beneath her. She is rude and condescending.

Colonel Whitney Hyde

Colonel Hyde is Ellis's father. He is a difficult man who doesn't show much affection. Colonel Hyde was famous for awhile because of his photo of the Loch Ness Monster.



Some claimed it was a hoax and the topic became a sore point in the family. When Ellis mentions the photo during a family argument, Colonel Hyde forces Ellie and Maddie out of his house.

Dr. Earnest Pennypacker

Dr. Pennypacker is a wealthy physician who lives in Philadelphia and is Maddie's father. He is a cold man who has no affection for Maddie. He refuses to help Maddie return to the United States, saying she should have contacted him before making such a dangerous trip. He dies, leaving everything to Maddie.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Righteous Theft

This is a way of describing the poaching done by Angus to help feed the people of the area. The term is used because the animals being hunted are on property that was literally stolen from the people.

The Croft

This is a word used to describe the small farms in this area of Scotland. The term dates back to an era of oppression and Anna explains that the croft is considered a family farm but it's never big enough to fully support a family. Anna lives on a Croft.

Coanaig

This is a supernatural being that Maddie sees when she's lost in the Cover. Anna believes it's a sign that someone will die. Her thoughts immediately turn to the idea that one of her brothers has died. The following day, the family gets news that Anna's brother has died.

The Monster

This is a creature that lives in the loch near the Fraser Arms inn. The monster is never seen by any of the main characters in the book except Hank. He films it but Ellis destroys the film.

The Photo of the Monster

This is a picture taken by the Colonel of the legendary monster. He claims that the photo was real but skeptics called it a fake and denounced him as a fraud. Ellis mentioned the photo and that prompted the Colonel to kick Ellis and Maddie out of his house.

Poaching

Poaching is a word used to describe the illegal taking of game. Angus hunted regularly and the game he killed was used to supplement the meager food of the people in the village. It is eventually revealed that he wasn't really poaching because he was the laird of the property in question.



A Lobotomy

This is a medical procedure used to change the personalities of violent mental patients. Both Maddie's mother and her husband believed that a lobotomy would be a good move for her, and it seems that Ellis was on the verge of forcing her to have one. Lobotomized people are usually unable to think and act for themselves, and basically become complacent and mindless.

World War II

This is the war that is a background setting for the book. The war is real and the information included in the book is basically accurate. Maddie is disturbed by what she learns about the war and about the “monster” who is behind much of the slaughter.

The Fake Monster

This is a replica of the real monster, built by Ellis and Hank. They planned to film it in order to prove that the monster was real.

Color Blindness

Ellis claims to be color blind and claims that he was turned down for military service because of this ailment. Maddie comes to suspect that he isn't color blind and Ellis eventually admits that she's right. This stands for his unwillingness to serve his country and is a sign of his selfish nature.



Settings

Urquhart Woods

Better known as “the Cover,” this is the area near the loch. The woods are confusing to those unfamiliar with the area. At one point, Maddie becomes lost and sees an old woman washing a shirt. The woman disappears before Maddie can ask her for directions and she later learns it was a supernatural sighting.

The Loch

This is a large lake near the Fraser Inn and the Big House. The loch is the home of the famous monster and even during the 1940s there were many people who wanted to a chance to prove the beast existed. The loch is very deep and the water is so dark that it's impossible to see very far. This is where Mairi drowns herself and where Ellis almost manages to drown Maddie.

The Castle Ruins

The castle near the Fraser Arms is in ruins. The locals, including Mairi and Angus, know the castle well, including which rooms are still intact. This is where Angus takes Maddie after Ellis tries to drown her.

The Fraser Arms

The Fraser Arms is an inn near the loch. The inn is typical of the time and place. There is running water and indoor plumbing but no electricity. It serves as a gathering place for locals in the evenings where there is food and liquor available. There are six rooms for guests but Meg, one of the inn's employees, has one of them.

The Big House

This is a huge mansion near the loch. There is a lot of property attached to the house and the owner is known as the laird. Angus inherits it when the previous laird dies. Maddie says it's more like a castle than a house. She tries to count chimneys but loses count at 16. There are at least four main stories and multiple staircases and balustrades. Maddie and Angus use the house as a convalescent home for wounded veterans after the war.



Themes and Motifs

The Importance of Love

Maddie grew up in a house where there was no love. Her parents didn't love each other and they didn't love her. Maddie's mother was manipulative and controlling. Her father was indifferent. Her mother died when Maddie was very young and her father's indifference continued until her adulthood. When Maddie contacts him from Scotland, he refuses to send transportation, even though he could afford it. Her parents didn't give her an example of love which means she doesn't know how to tell that her relationship with Ellis isn't love either. Maddie marries Ellis and thinks she is in love with him. She doesn't realize that she's not until she begins to mature and recognizes her marriage for what it really is. When she begins to fall in love with Angus, she finally has a true example of love.

Mairi is another example of this theme. She loved Angus and her unborn child. When she lost both within a matter of such a short time, the grief overwhelmed her. Because her love was so strong, her grief was even deeper. That grief drives her to commit suicide by drowning herself in the lake. Angus loved Mairi as well. When he returned to find that both Mairi and his child were dead, he was heartbroken. Anna says that Angus accepted that he couldn't have done anything to save his child, but he feels responsibility for Mairi's death. There was nothing he could have done differently but this sense of responsibility is a sign of his love for Mairi.

While their relationship is never fully defined, it seems that Hank and Ellis are another example of this theme. They are close friends and on the surface, it seems their relationship is merely a deep friendship. However, a closer look makes it appear that they have a romantic relationship and that they are in love. They are constantly together and Hank urges Maddie to go to Scotland because Ellis needs the trip. Ellis is becoming depressed. Maddie has noted the change and believes it's because he is constantly under scrutiny for not serving in the military. When Hank points out that the trip could salve Ellis's wounded pride, Maddie realizes that Hank is right. The trip is dangerous and Hank probably realizes that more than Maddie or Ellis. Despite the danger, Hank pushes for them to take the trip because he cares about Ellis. When Ellis dies, Hank screams out his grief. All these indicate that the love between Hank and Ellis might have been more than mere friendship.

Love of family is another example of this theme. Anna lives on a farm with her parents and has several brothers serving in the military. Like everyone with family members in service, she worries about them. She is devastated when she receives news that another of her brothers has died in action. Getting this news is a common occurrence and the postman sometimes announces quickly which people are not receiving news to help lessen their fear that he is bringing news about their loved one.



The Role of Superstitions

Superstitions are an important part of the everyday lives of many of the characters of this story. One of the first looks at this is seen in the myth of the crows. The number of crows seen at one time in one place is a sign of something to come. For example, one crow means sorrow and two means happiness. Other numbers of crows indicate specific events, such as marriage, birth, wealth, and secrets. Anna fully believes that the number of crows in a group has significance.

Another important example of this theme is seen when Maddie reports seeing a woman washing clothes by the loch. Maddie is lost at the time and she calls out to the woman, asking for directions. She continues toward the spot where the woman was working but loses sight of her for a moment. When Maddie gets close to the place, the woman has vanished. Maddie doesn't know what it means, but she is somewhat shaken by the encounter. When Maddie relates the story to Anna, Anna knows that Maddie has seen the Coanaig. Anna says the sighting means someone has died. Within a short time, she learns that her brother was killed in the war. Later, Maddie blames herself. She tells Angus that she shouldn't have gotten lost, then she wouldn't have seen the woman and that Anna's brother wouldn't have died. Angus assures her that it isn't her fault, but that doesn't necessarily mean that he doesn't believe in the superstition. It seems more likely that it indicates that he believes Anna's brother would have died, regardless of whether Maddie saw the Coanaig.

Another example is seen when Maddie goes to the edge of the loch at a specific spot. She steps into the water, just as Mairi had done years before. Mairi was deeply depressed over the loss of her daughter and the news that Angus was missing and presumed dead. Mairi walked into the water in the same spot, going farther out until she drowned. As Maddie steps into the edge of the water, something shoves her back, away from the water. When Maddie relates this information, Anna and Meg believe it was Mairi. They believe it means Mairi has given her blessing to the budding relationship between Maddie and Angus, and that she was trying to ensure that Maddie didn't drown as Mairi had done.

Perhaps the most important example of this theme is seen in the monster that supposedly lives in the loch. The book presents the monster as a reality. Some characters believe in it while others do not, but Hank claims to have seen the monster and to have filmed it. The film, of course, is destroyed, meaning Hank winds up without the proof he needed. Ellis's father was in Scotland years earlier and government officials demanded that he refrain from killing the monster. Ellis uses that demand as proof that the government believed the monster was real. When Ellis and Maddie are in the boat together on the loch, the monster strikes the boat, throwing Maddie out.

Class Distinctions

Maddie, Ellis, and Hank are from wealthy families and they were all raised with a heavy sense of entitlement. They don't do anything for themselves and they don't know how to



perform even the most basic functions. They have maids and servants who take care of all their everyday needs. For example, Maddie has no idea how to set her own hair or to repair her own manicure. She goes to the hair salon twice a week and knows only that she's supposed to go right back if anything happens to her hair between appointments. When she arrives in Scotland, she wraps a turban around her head until one of the girls working there shows her how to style her hair.

Maddie also knows nothing about cooking or cleaning. She tries to make up her bed at one point but can't figure out exactly how to make it smooth. Someone has to show her to do the most basic tasks, such as preparing vegetables for cooking. Her ignorance on these topics is because she has always felt that she shouldn't be asked to do any of those things and doesn't need to know how. Ellis and Hank are of the same mind on this subject. They are angry when no one cleans their rooms and puts away their things at the inn. It never occurs to them that they should be responsible for putting away their own clothes or picking up after themselves. Ellis is even upset when Hank tells him to get Maddie a glass of water. He acts as if it's a big deal for him to get a glass and fill it with water, and he fumbles with the task far longer than should have been necessary.

When Ellis and Hank leave Maddie at the inn for days at a time, she begins to make friends with the two young women who work there. As those friendships bloom, Maddie recognizes that these women are people, complete with dreams and heartaches. She begins to help with the chores at the inn and she sees that she has been a complete snob. An important part of this theme is seen in the reactions of Ellis and Hank to Maddie's change of heart. They believe she has mental issues and that those are clouding her judgment, especially where the class lines are drawn. The fact that she's become friends with the people who work for a living indicates to Ellis that Maddie is mentally unstable.

The awareness of class distinctions works both ways. Anna and Meg, the two young women who work at the inn are fully aware that Ellis, Hank, and Maddie see themselves as better than the servants. They are able to get a bit of revenge through small slights, such as serving weaker tea to those they don't like and providing better meals to those they like. When Maddie begins helping Anna and Meg with the work around the inn, she learns about these small slights. She doesn't judge them for it and seems to understand their thoughts and their attitudes.

Serving One's Country

Ellis and Hank grow up as privileged young men who believe they can buy their way into or out of anything. Both claim to have problems that keep them out of the military, and they fake the problems simply because they don't want to serve. Maddie eventually becomes certain that Ellis has lied about his ailment and she believes that Hank has also lied. Ellis claims to be color blind and Hank claims to have flat feet. A person who has flat feet often experiences pain and has trouble walking. Being color blind and having flat feet would typically prohibit a person from serving. Maddie says that Hank



and Ellis choose ailments that can't readily be proven so they can avoid the military. When she eventually voices this to Hank, he seems indignant.

Both Hank and Ellis are very vocal in their effort to justify themselves. Ellis claims to have gone to two recruiting stations in an effort to join the military, and claims that he failed the physical both times. Ellis grows more morose over time and Maddie believes that he's depressed because he is unable to serve. His emotional state is never explained because of the limited perspective, but it seems likely that he is becoming depressed because of the web of lies he's told in an effort to justify his lack of service.

Ellis claims to feel that others are judging him for his lack of service and that he needs to do something worthwhile as a means of making up for it. Hank believes finding the monster will restore Ellis's confidence. This is the reason Hank, Ellis, and Maddie travel across the ocean during war time. It's ironic that Ellis isn't willing to put himself in danger by joining the military but he is willing to put himself and his wife in danger by the dangerous trip.

As a contrast, Maddie watches as young men are pulled from the water following a torpedo attack. Many of the young men are severely burned and Maddie knows some of them won't live. She forces herself to remain on the deck of the boat while the men are being unloaded but Ellis rushes below decks so that he doesn't have to watch. Maddie is constantly horrified by the number of people killed in the war and she comes to have a great deal of respect for those who serve in the military. When Maddie and Angus marry, they open their home to wounded veterans. As a contrast, Ellis and Hank avoid news and don't want to know what's going on with the war.

Angus is another example of this theme. He was fighting in the war when his unborn daughter died. He wasn't there when his wife, Mairi, gave birth to the child. Angus was then severely wounded but Mairi got notice that he had died. Driven by grief, she drowned herself in the loch. Angus eventually recovered and returned home to find that he had lost everything. He would have returned to the fighting but was needed to help train young recruits.

Coming of Age

In many ways, Maddie is the perfect coming-of-age character. She is an adult when the book opens. She is already married but has few responsibilities. She doesn't know how to do anything for herself, including fixing her own hair. She depends on servants for her every physical need and on her husband and her in-laws to fill her financial needs. She doesn't realize that she has any other needs, including the need for love.

Maddie, Ellis, and Hank are at a party as the story opens. They go outside and make a scene, returning with snow on their clothes and disrupting the party. Maddie goes along with all of this. The next morning, Maddie hears her mother-in-law answer the phone several times and she knows immediately that people are talking about the behavior of Maddie, Ellis, and Hank the previous evening. The fact that she knows this indicates that



she already knew her behavior was out of line. She accepts that they've made a mistake long before Ellis comes to that conclusion. This indicates that Maddie is beginning to mature and to take responsibility for herself though she really has no one showing her the way.

When Maddie, Ellis, and Hank arrive in Scotland, Maddie is still spoiled and expecting that someone will wait on her. However, instead of throwing a fit, she begins to watch. She sees that the two young women who work at the inn also have other responsibilities. One of them has to point out to her that Maddie is doing nothing to help anyone before she really takes stock of her situation. At first, she tries to hide, spending hours away from the inn so that she won't look like she's doing nothing. She comes to understand that she has to take action. With that understanding, she begins helping with the cleaning around the inn, even though this was completely out of character. She cleans up her own room, then the rooms occupied by Hank and Ellis, all without pay and only because she wants to help. When Meg is seriously injured, Maddie steps in and helps take care of her. This all hints at an emerging maturity though Ellis and Hank condemn her for her actions. Both say she's lost sight of her social boundaries and Ellis even uses it as a sign that Maddie should have a frontal lobotomy.

Maddie eventually becomes a respectful young woman who cares about others. She falls in love with Angus and realizes that her feelings for him are nothing like her feelings for Ellis. She was unable to truly love or even truly evaluate her feelings before she matured. She and Angus have a family of their own and Maddie opens their home to wounded veterans. She gets to know those men personally as she helps them on the road to recovery. There is not a great deal of information about her life after her marriage to Angus, but the few details given indicate that this maturity is not a short-lived epiphany, but is a long-term understanding of herself.



Styles

Point of View

The main body of the story is written in first person from the limited perspective of Maddie Hyde. She provides a reliable perspective but her view is completely limited. This means the reader doesn't know anything until Maddie is aware of it. An important example of this limitation is seen when Ellis makes arrangements for Maddie to be treated for her mental state. He says she is unstable and has found a doctor willing to do a lobotomy on Maddie. Hank informs Maddie of Ellis's plan and that's the first time the reader has any inkling of the situation. A similar example is seen in Ellis's claim that he's color blind. Maddie believes Ellis, meaning the reader believes it's true as well. The reader has no reason to question the situation until Maddie has doubts.

Another important example of this limitation is seen in the supernatural pieces of the story. Something shoves Maddie away from the edge of the loch. She never knows for certain what shoved her, meaning the reader also doesn't know. The limitation means there are some twists in the plot that might not otherwise be possible.

The only exception to this perspective is seen in the prologue of the book. That chapter was also presented from a limited perspective but it's from the perspective of another character. Mairi gave birth to a stillborn daughter and then received news that her husband was killed in the war. She then walked into the water of the loch, planning to drown herself. The reader sees all this from Mairi's perspective which allows the author to create the twist by presenting Mairi's husband, Angus, who didn't die after all. The continued limited perspective means Angus's true fate is revealed only when Maddie finds out those details.

Language and Meaning

The story is set in the 1940s with two distinct settings. The first is in the United States and the second is in Scotland. The story is limited to Maddie's perspective and the language doesn't change a great deal when the settings change. There are a few Scottish words and phrases thrown in and the average reader may not know what these mean except from the context. These include the "wee bairn" which refers to a baby and "pulling a pint" which means pouring a beer. None are vital to the overall understanding of the book and it seems likely that the author included them to help the reader remember the setting.

There are some old-fashioned words and phrases as well. Someone talks about a "flagon" of whiskey. As is the case with the Scottish words, the definitions are implied in the context. The war provides an important background for the events and the book includes pieces of information about events and battles. The author notes that she uses information that would have been available to the public at the time and that some of



that information was actually incorrect once all the details were compiled. This includes numbers of casualties.

There are a few passages that would not be suitable for young readers. Curse words appear in a few places and these are apparently meant to make some of the characters appear more believable and more coarse. There are also a couple of sexual scenes and there are some details included in those. Most modern-day readers will not find these to be overbearing.

Structure

The book is divided into 46 chapters with an epigraph, a prologue, and an epilogue. The epigraph is a rhyme regarding a superstition about crows. The rhyme is to be used to determine the message when a person sees a crow or a group of crows. A single crow indicates sorrow while 2 means mirth. The rhyme goes on to give a message for up to 7 crows. The epigraph sets up the reader for the level of superstition that's included in the book.

The prologue is set in Scotland in 1942. This focuses on Mairi's grief and her death. Chapter 1 is set in Scotland in 1945 and covers Maddie's first day in Scotland. Chapter 2 steps back to the previous New Year's Eve when Maddie, Ellis, and Hank celebrated at a party. They ended the evening very drunk and set the coming months in motion, including the trip that put Maddie and Angus together. The remainder of the book is in chronological order. Information from the past, specifically details about Angus's near-death experience, is revealed through conversations between characters.

The epilogue provides an important look into the lives of Maddie and Angus after their marriage. They have children and do some important work for the veterans returning from the war.

The chapters are titled by number only, meaning the reader has no idea what to expect from any upcoming title. The book is divided into dialogue and narrative. Both are believable and appropriate for the story.



Quotes

And so, because of my husband's war with his father and their insane obsession with a mythical monster, we'd crossed the Atlantic at the very same time a real madman, a real monster, was attempting to take over the world for his own reasons of ego and pride.
-- Maddie (Chapter 1 paragraph 21)

Importance: This is just one example of Maddie's full awareness of the events of World War II, going on at this time. The fact that Ellis and Hank don't fight in the war but put themselves in danger to search for the Loch Ness Monster is an important aspect of their characters.

Ellis's crime against his father was twofold, and the parts were equally grievous. He had been caught railing against the Colonel behind his back, and then had accused him of fraud to his face.
-- Maddie (Chapter 4 paragraph 4)

Importance: Maddie is talking about Ellis's comments about the monster and about his father in general. Ellis and his father are at odds and that drives Ellis to travel to Scotland, which is where the majority of the book takes place.

It was the stupidest and most dangerous thing we'd ever done. It was also pointless.
-- Maddie (Chapter 7 paragraph 55)

Importance: Maddie has come to realize how dangerous it was for them to cross the Atlantic Ocean during the war. Part of their purpose was to get Ellis away from the people who judged him for his failure to serve in the military and Maddie has realized that people are judging him in Scotland, just as they did in America.

There's a war going on, but apparently it's all fun and games for you lot.
-- Anna (Chapter 12 paragraph 12)

Importance: Anna is voicing what many people seem to be thinking. Ellis and Hank are able-bodied men of age to serve in the military, but they aren't. Even the women are pitching in to do their part, such as working in the sawmills like Anna or working on the farm like Meg. Maddie is spending her days killing time and is not contributing the war effort at all.

The bottom third of the oars disappeared with each stroke, and I found myself thinking of what might be lurking down there.
-- Maddie (Chapter 15 paragraph 3)

Importance: Maddie is riding in the boat with Ellis and Hank. It's her first look at the loch where the monster is supposed to be, and she realizes that the place could hold secrets such as the monster.



I tried various ways of analyzing what I'd just heard, twisting the phrasing in the hope that I might have misinterpreted, and finally concluded that I understood perfectly. I'd been won in a coin toss.

-- Maddie (Chapter 17 paragraph 51)

Importance: Maddie has just overheard Hank and Ellis discussing her. They are talking about what a great girl she is and Hank says that it's the best thing Ellis ever won in a coin toss. Up until this point, Maddie thinks her relationship with Ellis is built on love but she now realizes that's not true, and she's heartbroken.

Deep lines appeared between his eyes, and when he tilted his chin so he could look down his nose at me, I could have sworn I was looking at his mother's head spliced onto his body, a living breathing cockatrice that had climbed off its planner and spat the apple out of its mouth so it could yammer at me about how surely even I could see that my blurred boundaries not only encouraged the lower class to be lazy, but threatened the very social structures our lives were built upon.

-- Maddie (Chapter 20 paragraph 96)

Importance: This is an example of one of the book's themes related to the social classes. Ellis is talking to Maddie and he truly seems to believe that their lives would collapse if they treated the servants like people or became too friendly with them.

I realized I was finished making excuses for either of them.

-- Maddie (Chapter 23 paragraph 23)

Importance: Maddie is talking to Anna and the conversation turns to the reason Hank and Ellis aren't serving in the military. Maddie has begun to realize that the two are not upstanding young men and that they don't deserve respect. It's all part of Maddie's coming of age, which is a theme of the book.

I'd always assumed his avoidance of all things war-related was guilt over not being able to serve, but now I realized that he just didn't care.

-- Maddie (Chapter 24 paragraph 28)

Importance: Ellis has just made a rude comment about Anna after Maddie said Anna's brother was killed in the war. This is yet another example of Maddie realizing Ellis's true character as she matures into a thoughtful young woman.

I could feel his presence, and for a moment I thought he might reach for me. I held my breath and lay absolutely still, waiting, hoping, yet also fearful.

-- Maddie (Chapter 32 paragraph 103)

Importance: Angus is in Maddie's room and she's torn between wanting him and being afraid of what will happen if he does reach out to her. This is early in their attraction for each other and the feeling seems to be mutual.



Oh, how I hated him. It seethed inside my belly like a squirming snake.
-- Maddie (Chapter 40 paragraph 19)

Importance: Maddie has realized just how devious Ellis is and that he'll go to any lengths to get what he wants. She knows that he's planning to lobotomize her and she's afraid that he'll get away with it.

In all its beautiful, tragic, fragility, there was still life, and those of us who'd been lucky enough to survive opened our arms wide and embraced it.
-- Maddie (Epilogue paragraph 6)

Importance: This is the final sentence of the story. The significance is that several people didn't survive, including Mairi and her daughter.