

# **Away Study Guide**

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# Plot Summary

Away is a fictional account taking place in the mid-1920's and following the life of Lillian Leyb and the circumstances that befall her as she searches for Sophie, the daughter she'd believed was dead.

Lillian and her family live in Russia until political unrest brings constables to their door. Lillian and her daughter Sophie hide, but the remaining family members are killed. Lillian can't find Sophie afterward and is told she was killed as well. The loss is so profound that Lillian is convinced to travel to America and start a new life.

Beginning as a seamstress she lives with her cousin Frieda, but Lillian soon learns how to improve her status and living arrangements. Bold and confident, she introduces herself to the Burstein men, father and son, and soon finds herself living in an apartment paid by the younger Burstein man. Her life is safe, and predictable until a cousin from Russia arrives and tells Lillian that her Sophie is alive and in Siberia.

Without considering much beyond the possibility of finding Sophie alive, Lillian sets off despite the objections of those around her who believe the trip impossible. With little money or possessions, Lillian must earn her way however she can. The pitfalls are many, beginning with her arrival in Seattle where she is soon mugged and left for dead in an alley. A young prostitute named Clothilde (Gumdrop to most people) takes her in, and introduces her to her cousin and pimp, Snooky (Walter to his parents). Before her time with them is up, she will have spent two weeks acting as Gumdrop's personal concierge; and helped Gumdrop to escape Snooky's wrath for stealing what she felt she was owed from him, leaving Walter dead in the alley behind his apartment.

From there, now on the run, Lillian boards an Alaskan Steamship for Prince Rupert. Once there, she is found by the local constable, Arthur Gilpin who takes her home for the evening. Widowed, Arthur would have been content had Lillian simply stayed the winter in his care, but unable to lie to him and tell him she'll willingly stay, he feels he has little choice but to confine her. Arthur handcuffs her to the bedpost over night, and in the morning explains that he will lie about her, telling authorities she tried to steal from him and, as a result, she will be sentenced to Hazelton for the winter.

Hazelton Agrarian Work Center for Women is filled with women who have lived difficult lives, and two weeks after her arrival, Chinky Chang arrives. Lillian saves her life when another inmate tries to throw lye in her face in the laundry room, and she and Chinky become inseparable until Chinky is released two weeks prior to Lillian's release. After the winter, Arthur and his new wife Lorena see Lillian safely into the hands of the mule train skinner in charge, telling him she is their daughter to ensure her safety. Lillian stays with the mule train to Echo Creek where she then proceeds on foot.

Lillian's journey has already been filled with peril, but nothing compares to the struggle she faces ahead. Walking the Telegraph Trail alone, she soon has blisters that open and fester on her feet; bug bites that bleed and become infected; and lice that move in and



colonize her so completely that they can be seen walking in her hair. She experiences loneliness that has no end and despair that threatens to overwhelm her again and again, yet she still continues, determined to find Sophie.

Her arrival at Refuge Cabin Number Nine is something that does not surprise John Bishop despite how remotely he lives. He has two weeks notice from other telegraph operators that she has passed, and when she arrives he offers her first a bath and then food. He helps her to rid herself of lice, dress her wounds and clean her clothing. The next morning, she sneaks out and walks for half an hour before turning around, surprised to realize that she misses John so much. Feeling much the same way, John offers to help her find Sophie, but before they leave Lillian gets lost in a spring snowstorm and when John goes out to find her, he falls and breaks both of his legs. Though he survives, found by natives who take him home until he heals, Lillian has no way of knowing this and after searching for him for three weeks, and posting notes to him everywhere just in case he returns, she leaves for Dawson. There, she finds a boat she can man herself, and sets sail for Siberia. The trip is short, ending when her boat hits a rock and sinks, leaving her to swim for shore. Cold, and having lost everything, Lillian is finally at the end of her strength. She crawls into the brush and sleeps, exhausted until she hears rustling, and the first thing she sees next is John's hand.



# Part 1: July 3, 1924: And Lost There, a Golden Feather...

## Summary

Lillian Leyb comes to America after a letter from Cousin Frieda promises that there is plenty of room and even short term employment to help with relocation. Lillian spends her first month in America doing simple sewing jobs like picking stitches out, basting, or sewing buttons until one day when Judith tells Lillian about the interviews happening at Goldfadn. The next day, Lillian lines up with Judith and 150 other girls for their chance at a limited number of jobs.

Lillian takes Judith by the hand and drags her up to the front of the crowd, just inches away from a Litvak woman. Mr. Reuben Burstein and his son Meyer arrive. Reuben owns the Goldfadn and Bartelstone Theatres and Second's Avenue's The Impresario and Meyer is the Matinee Idol who played Yankl in the Child of Nature. Lillian immediately decides that she will be whatever they require her to be so that she is one of the chosen ones. As soon as the opportunity presents itself, she introduces herself to Reuben, telling him she speaks Yiddish and Russian, that her English is improving and that she can sew anything. Reuben inspects her for a moment before telling her to return the next morning.

At night Lillian relives the murders of her parents, her husband and the disappearance of her daughter Sophie. She screams herself awake, but doesn't tell Judith the truth of the violence of her dream.

Frieda rents out as much of the space as she has, her roomers paying her for the bed and breakfast she provides. Frieda sleeps between two chairs, convinced she is on the road to a better life – living the American dream. She looks out of her window, and sees opportunity. Lillian wants opportunity too, and tells herself that if she is hired, she will buy Judith something for telling her about it.

When Lillian returns to the Goldfadn Theatre the next day, she is given a neat black smock and put to work next to a girl named Pearl. Miss Morris gives her a garment and tells her to take the waist in by two inches as Lady Macbeth had lost weight. Lillian feels as though she had travelled through a darkness to come upon this salvation.

## Analysis

Away is a story of loss, immigration and new beginnings. Lillian loses her parents, her husband and her daughter in Russia, victims of political unrest and killed by the constables' men at the time. The theme of loss is strong as Lillian repeatedly relives the night that her family was killed with vivid clarity, dreaming about it nightly with such



detail that she lives through it over and over again. Her loss is so acute that to get a fresh start, Lillian decides to leave her country and venture to America.

The theme of survival is strong as Lillian courageously immigrates to America to begin life again. Cousin Frieda has written with promises of opportunity, offering her home to anyone who has an adventurous spirit. Lillian arrives in America with dreams of a better life, and instead is immediately reminded that poverty and struggle exist everywhere when she sees Mrs. Lipkin wearing a man's overcoat and her nightgown sitting on the street begging for change. Frieda takes this opportunity to remind Lillian that life can go both ways and that poverty is just a short step from success if you cannot make a living. Lillian understands completely. She isn't surprised to learn that Frieda rents out beds to six other people, and pushing two chairs together to sleep at night herself, dreaming of the day when she will live in the home she deserves. Frieda believes in the American dream; sure that hard work will give her the life she wants.

Poverty is a continuing theme with Lillian looking to make a new life in a country that is touted to be the land of opportunity, but in truth can be equally difficult to earn a living in. Living from hand-to-mouth is nothing new to Lillian who immediately understands that if she wants to survive, she will have to be ready and willing to take advantage of any opportunity that presents itself. As such, when the Burstein men arrive at the Goldfadn Theatre, Lillian ensures that she and Judith are close to the front, and she uses the first chance she has make an impression on the elder Burstein man. Lillian knows that often survival is simply a matter of being willing to do anything necessary to succeed; to eat well; to live in comfort. Lillian doesn't need to see Mrs. Lipkin begging on the street in front of Frieda's place to know how tenuous the line between poor and comfortable is and Frieda makes sure that she clearly understands that there are no free rides from the outset.

Opportunity is a theme that goes hand-in-hand with poverty – one affecting the other and tethered to it with little more than the desire to succeed. Lillian's father always used to tell her she was lucky, usually following that with the comment that she also has to make her own luck, and Lillian knows that luck by itself is not enough. Propelled by the fact that she has no other home, and little more than her overwhelming need for a stable life, Lillian is prepared to do whatever is necessary in order to secure a safe place for herself in the world. This attitude of determination mixed with her desire to improve her current situation foreshadows changes for Lillian, although whether they will be good changes or not is still unknown.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What lesson does Frieda ensure Lillian understands from the very start, and why is it so important at that time?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does Frieda see her future, and what sacrifices is she willing to make to get there?



## Discussion Question 3

What makes Lillian stand out in the group of women interviewing for employment and how does Mr. Burstein respond?

## Vocabulary

firmament, impresario, eviction, privilege, prosperous



# Part 1: July 3, 1924: Apples and Pears

## Summary

Frieda talks about opportunity often, and puts such stock in getting ahead that she isn't angry when Lillian leaves her shorthanded. Frieda encourages Joe's interest in Judith, offering Lillian the couch to give her some space from the still-angry Judith if her matchmaking pans out, but Lillian would rather sleep beside a woman that hates her than give Frieda another nickel to sleep alone.

Lillian would happily become Meyer's mistress, just as any of the other girls would, but he shows no interest in her, so when Meyer invites her to the Royale for cakes and tea, she is understandably confused. In his dressing room she watches as he removes the makeup and changes, allowing Lillian to straighten his shirt before they walk arm-in-arm to the Royale.

Meyer kisses his father's cheek and holds a chair for Lillian. Meyer gets up to circulate the room and winks at her, embarrassing her. She turns to Reuben who introduces Yaakov Shimmelman as his best friend. Yaakov bows, handing her his card which advertises him as a tailor; actor and playwright; an author and then advertises pants altered and pressed. Lillian can't help but laugh, and Yaakov feigns indignance until she begins to defend herself - then admits he is teasing her. Reuben rubs her back as he tells her his friend is high strung but harmless. Yaakov encourages her to eat.

Yaakov tells Lillian in Yiddish that she should get herself both a Russian-English dictionary, and a thesaurus to help her learn the language. He also tells her that if she doesn't like life as Meyer's protégée, or his 'kallehniu' which means little bride, she should call him. Lillian knows that he is tactfully telling her that she is Meyer's mistress.

After three weeks of light courtship, Meyer finally admits that he wants to spend more time with Lillian. She has done her best to encourage his advances, and make her willingness clear to him. She has also clarified that while she would like to marry one day, she has no such expectations of him. Meyer tells her she is a sensible girl, which is exactly what Lillian has been telling herself.

## Analysis

Kleptomania is the first of several themes introduced in this segment. Lillian doesn't consider what she does as theft, and is sure that there is little about her behavior that is habitual, but she regularly takes pennies that have fallen from Joe's pockets; and food that belongs to others without so much as a thought to the fact that these things are not hers. To Lillian she is simply borrowing from her fellow boarders, saving for a belt or new stockings.





That leads readers into the ongoing theme of poverty, the author clearly indicating that Lillian is one of the lower working class, barely able to sustain herself let alone afford the simple accessories in life. Meyer suggests that Lillian buy gloves to cover her work damaged hands. Yaakov reminds Meyer that with her wages, she can barely supply the hair ribbons.

A family theme is also present as Meyer is respectful and demonstrably affectionate with his father when he greets him. His date with Lillian occurs at the Royale with his father and his father's best friend Yaakov – a very public and proper place to be with her.

Their varying relationships are explored as Yaakov confirms Lillian's position with Meyer as more in line with a concubine or 'little bride' as he refers to her than as a date or girlfriend. Lillian has no illusions of marriage and social climbing, content to see herself in this position with Meyer if he will have her. She makes her availability as inviting as she is able, encouraging him and letting him know that she has no aspersions. He tells her she is a sensible girl and because she is a sensible girl, she was also aware of Reuben's hand on her back when he talked to her at the Royale and Yaakov's open ended invitation to call him should she not like being with Meyer.

The relationship developing between Meyer and Lillian is in truth more closely linked to the survival theme – at least for Lillian since the deaths of her family. Lillian knows that her survival hangs tenuously, entirely dependent on her perception of reality. Lillian is only too aware of how little separates her from Mrs. Lipkin. Meyer's interest in Lillian and his assessment that she is a sensible girl foreshadow the likelihood of a relationship of a sort developing between them.

Language skills are also an important theme as Yaakov suggests that Lillian pick up a Russian-English dictionary and a thesaurus. The bookman explains it to her as the dictionary being the book to tell her the word she needs while the thesaurus tells a story about the word and how it is related to other words. Using them, Lillian becomes increasingly comfortable with the English language.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Give examples of the class distinctions that exist in this segment and how, if at all, the differences between the classes affect their interaction or comfort with each other.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What expectations does Lillian hope to be entitled to if she can ensnare Meyer in a physical relationship?



## Discussion Question 3

In what ways does Lillian do her best to communicate her openness to advancements from Meyer?

## Vocabulary

contemplates, prodigal, impetuous, transformation, interminable, idiomatically



# Part 1: July 3, 1924: The Song of Love

## Summary

Meyer gets a small apartment for Lillian and himself on Second Avenue. He shows it to her, telling her how special their first night will be, and that he'll be back at eleven, giving her \$5 and a key. Lillian shops for an assortment of goodies including capon; cold potatoes with dill; white rolls; carrot salad; green grapes; and herring and sliced onions in cream sauce, and prepares them for Meyer's return that night. She even manages to get the cookies he likes.

The room reminds Lillian of a stage set prepped for a romantic comedy. There had been many times at Frieda's when she'd seen herself as part of a great tragicomedy and dreamed of being an American woman, getting up to have breakfast or tea, perhaps hoping to be with her boyfriend, donning makeup and getting ready for the day. Her life in America feels like a performance piece somehow.

She puts on the ridiculously tight, filmy chiffon peignoir set Meyer bought her and watches the clock mark the time as it passes ten, eleven, and then midnight. Finally, she decides that it doesn't really matter whether Meyer returns or not and putting her feet up on the table she eats a chicken leg.

Reuben arrives and finds her reading, her feet still on the table, laughing at the decent girls' sufferings. He encourages her to stay where she is when she suggests for propriety's sake she should don a wrap. When Lillian sits back down, Reuben walks past her and taking a towel out of the closet he turns to the bed. As he is pulling the bedspread down and taking the pillows off, Lillian can't help but remind him that Meyer bought the items – her way of implying Meyer's claim on her, but Reuben isn't deterred. He explains the purpose of the towel, and after they'd spent time in bed together, he manages to position her on it at the crucial juncture.

Meyer strolls down Vaseline Alley, his father's lifelong prejudices ringing in his ears, but not enough to stop him. At the age of 22, Reuben's father had taken him to Times Square for lunch where Reuben had noticed two well-dressed men holding hands under the table. Calling them 'fairies', Reuben's father dismisses them and continues with a tour of the places that were safe and clean for a man to go for good female entertainment. Meyer's father gave him a 'world tour of Poofs on Parade' that lasted five hours.

Meyer is almost all the way through the park before a man in a sailor's pea coat takes notice of him. He squares his shoulders as the man stands up. They make small talk as they head to the large shrubs, ever wary of police, other people or thieves. He gets down on his knees, wishing he could take his time and enjoy the experience more.



Lillian lays her head on Reuben's shoulder, both lying with their eyes closed. Reuben lies beside her, already trying to decide which shows he can miss next week; what books he can buy Lillian; and how little Meyer matters where Lillian is concerned. Lillian, having drifted off, dreams of her family and slowly comes to consciousness feeling more dead than alive.

## Analysis

Relationships are the opening theme in this segment as Meyer finds an apartment for himself and Lillian. Their relationship is complicated when Reuben arrives in Meyer's place, entering with his own key, and makes it clear that he intends to bed Lillian himself. Reuben seems sure that Meyer won't show up while he is with Lillian. As Reuben spends time in bed with Lillian, Meyer is trolling Vaseline Alley for company, more interested in men than women.

Lillian went through a great deal of trouble to make sure that Meyer was pleased when he returned. She bought the food he liked, donned the ridiculous nightgown he'd bought and was even ready to have sex with him but when Meyer doesn't show up it foreshadows a relationship with him that likely will include many such missed engagements. Meyer's trip to Vaseline Alley also foreshadows a troubled relationship from the beginning, fated to end sooner rather than later.

Family is an ongoing theme on several levels. Meyer talks at length to Lillian about his mother Esther, comfortable enough to be critical of his mother's traditional baking while Lillian feels mostly dead inside, playing the part of the woman who is happy to move up in social station by way of being Meyer's girlfriend all the while knowing that there was no likelihood that she would ever find herself an invited guest at their house. Reuben shows up after the time of Meyer's return comes and goes, and though Lillian reminds him that the little love nest he intends to enjoy comes as a result of his son Meyer along with everything in it which Reuben acknowledges in passing, but without it affecting the outcome. Reuben also considers the other part of his family - his wife, but only in the context of how much time he can get away from her to be with Lillian, his priorities changing considerably since he began to get to know her. Meyer needs the appearance of normalcy and moving Lillian into an apartment with him is a staggering denial of his true character and sexual proclivity.

Acting is the final theme as Meyer pretends he wants Lillian when all he really wants is the thrill of another man while Reuben acts as if family matters, but is willing to betray both his wife and his son to bed Lillian. At first it feels as though Lillian's real life was the one in which she was a mother, a daughter and a wife, and this life in America is a death of sorts in which she plays whatever part is required of her from one moment to the next. Then she realizes that all of her life has been an act of one kind or another. She acted like a good daughter when her father gave their wheat away for less than nothing and rather than admit her husband had no business sense either, she touted his prowess in the hopes he wouldn't be taken advantage of; and like any mother she



would pretend to be more patient than she really was. In these ways, her whole life had been nothing more than her acting her way through one role or another.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How do Lillian's impressions of Meyer and Reuben impact her behavior with them, if at all?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does Meyer's apartment affect Lillian's self-image and social standings?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does Lillian see herself and which of her actions or inactions does she assign to reinforce this perception?

## **Vocabulary**

contemplate, inamorata, imposing, epaulets, diaphragm, calibrated



# Part 1: July 3, 1924: I've Lost My Youth, Like a Gambler with Bad Cards

## Summary

Reuben takes Lillian to the Café Royale on Thursday afternoons where Yaakov teaches her English and Reuben shows his appreciation by supplying petit fours, tea and coffee. Yaakov brings Lillian two books, "The Beautiful and the Damned" and "A Tale of Two Cities"; letting Lillian struggle through some of the passages. Reuben has less patience, giving her the Times to read and correcting her inflection and diction at every turn. When Yaakov sees Lillian has had enough, he promises to show her some tricks and teaches her a joke that makes him and Reuben laugh until they cry. Lillian memorizes the joke and it is the only one that she will ever tell. Yaakov even teaches her how to waltz. Between Yaakov and Reuben, Lillian learns what to wear, taking her cues from Yaakov when Reuben frowns at her when she arrives. Lillian trusts Yaakov. He is the only one that knows how she feels about Reuben. Yaakov understands, but warns her that she should plan to be on her own as that day will surely come.

Reuben asks her about a scar, and she tells him the truth, choosing her words carefully. Reuben warns her that this story is one not suitable to tell men, it is not seductive. He teaches her that what men want is what he calls calliope music – the background chatter that relaxes them... mindless and reassuring. Of course, he assures her afterward, she can always tell him anything.

When Meyer is there, Lillian wears the uncomfortable nightgown and lies in the bed hoping he believes she is asleep and leaves her alone, but he lies down on the bed beside her and pulls her to him. She lies there, remembering how Reuben had helped her make the bed and sighs. Meyer smiles at her, and offers to take her out to dinner at Ye Olde Chop House by way of apology.

The dinner is an experience for Lillian. Meyer orders for them both and after dinner and a Coca-Cola bottle of brandy, they both laugh most of the way home. Meyer kisses her and in the apartment he appreciates her strong body from behind. Lillian lies down beside him, uncertain and surprised to see that he is not aroused, despite the passionate kiss he gave her on the way home. He flips her onto her stomach, taking her from behind, hardly touching her otherwise.

Later, she dreams again, and wakes screaming. When Meyer asks about it, she remembers what Reuben said and concocts a story. He murmurs his sympathies, and turns her over to take her again. Prepared this time, she helps arrange the pillow underneath her. Later, he tells her that he isn't a romantic, and Lillian reassures him that he is a kind man which is enough.



They fall into a routine. Neither man wears a condom with any regularity, but Lillian is still surprised when she becomes pregnant. She goes to Reuben who insists she marry Meyer and begin a family. Lillian tells Reuben she'd rather marry him. Although pleased, he tells her they will have to stop seeing each other so he can become the grandfather to her child instead. She explains that the child is more likely his than Meyer's because of Meyer's predilection for men, but Reuben isn't listening. She offers to carry on as is, and Reuben, calming himself tells her that marrying Meyer will make everyone happy. As predicted, Meyer proposes to Lillian, and when her period starts a week later, both men behave as though they've lost something.

She dreams again of Turov, remembering how she'd searched for Sophie and how Aunt Mariam had revealed she'd seen Sophie's body. When Mariam had suggested that Lillian go to America, Lillian could think of no reason not to.

## Analysis

Relationships and their complexities continue to be the theme that dominates this segment of the story. Lillian continues to juggle the two Burstein men. Reuben uses Yaakov as a beard, claiming he is teaching Lillian English and making it sound as though Esther is the one who insists Lillian learn. Reuben educates Lillian to behave in a refined and ladylike manner, aloof when appropriate, polite or demure as he signals her discretely. He also teaches her about what he calls 'calliope' music, explaining to her that this is the mindless chatter that is about nothing of relevance that a man enjoys listening to so that he can unwind from the pressures of his day. Reuben and Yaakov continue to instruct Lillian as to the finer points of being a courtesan and Yaakov quietly warns her that the winds of change can blow at any time, and she should always be prepared to leave, and to stand on her own feet.

Class and status are themes of varying degrees as Reuben tries to turn Lillian into a woman of culture and poise – the kind of woman that any cultured gentleman would be happy to have on his arm. Meyer is content as long as she is there when he wants her. He doesn't care about much else, providing she doesn't embarrass him. Reuben takes Lillian to upscale restaurants while Meyer takes her to the equivalent of a middle class buffet. Both men are kind but while Meyer appreciates store bought cookies with tacky frosting, Esther still bakes traditional dishes for Reuben who still enjoys them. Though Meyer is a product of Reuben's upbringing, he has not developed an appreciation for the upper class or finer thing, gravitating instead to the tacky or gaudy side of things.

The lovemaking theme is much the same. Reuben is traditional, enjoying holding Lillian and facing her when they are close; while Meyer uses Lillian as a source of relief and tries not to think about the fact that she is a woman when he enters her. While Lillian has understood from the start that her time with Meyer and Reuben will never lead to anything, she didn't anticipate that Meyer would prefer men and make love to her as though she were one.



Children are also an important theme in this segment as Lillian has a false pregnancy, but for some time was convinced that she would be having another child. The situation brings back memories of Sophie and she vividly recalls the day she gave birth to her, knowing that this situation will be considerably different. Lillian is more attached to Reuben than to Meyer, and when Lillian realizes she is pregnant it is to Reuben that she goes. She quickly learns her place in the world when Reuben immediately insists that she marry Meyer and be the mother to his children, despite her insistence that she would rather marry him, or simply remain single.

Appearances are more important to Reuben than they are to Meyer, this theme becoming clear to Lillian when she talks to Reuben thinking she is pregnant. Though he is obviously pleased, he tells her that she should be talking to Meyer. He is sure that Meyer will marry her immediately, he tells her, despite the fact that there is little to no chance that the child would be Meyers. Reuben sees this as a way to legitimize his son in the public eye, giving him a 'wife' and children. He is also insistent that they will have to stop seeing each other as she builds a family with Meyer, oblivious to the fact that this child would be the first and last if this was the case.

## Discussion Question 1

Based on this story so far, how much of Meyer's sexual proclivities is it likely that Reuben is aware of or understands? Explain your answer.

## Discussion Question 2

What does Lillian see in the Burstein men and what qualities in each of them appeal to her?

## Discussion Question 3

How would Lillian's pregnancy have changed things for her if she had truly been pregnant and why?

## Vocabulary

buoyant, insouciance, equanimity, calliope, magnificent, forthrightness





# Part 1: July 3, 1924: If I Had Chains, I Would Pull You To Me

## Summary

Lillian is looking forward to a night alone but when she opens the door she finds her cousin Raisele standing inside with her arms open. The look on Lillian's face is not welcoming. Sick with fear, Raisele drops to her knees and taking Lillian's hand tells her that Sophie is alive. Then she faints – her way of getting out of any difficult situation. Lillian puts Raisele in bed, and lies beside her. Raisele tells her how the Pinsky family went east rather than west like everyone else, finding Sophie near Lillian's house, covered in blood and filth, her feet speckled with gravel. The Pinsky's were sure that all of the Leyb's were dead so they took Sophie with them to Siberia. This story came to her via Constable Kachikov and she felt compelled to come herself to tell her. Lillian gets up and presses her hot face against the cold window.

Lillian can't find Reuben, so in desperation she goes to Reuben's home. Esther answers the door. Though congenial and accommodating, Esther is no help, suggesting she talk to Meyer if Reuben is avoiding her. Much later, standing in Seattle with a prostitute who looks at her with the same mean, wise smile as Esther, Lillian realizes she could have asked Esther for the fare, and would likely have been given the \$75 just to be rid of her.

Reuben finds Lillian in the Blue Bonnet, and looks like he is ready to kill someone. He can see by the look on her face that he doesn't want to know what is wrong, and that is only confirmed when she tells him about Sophie. Reuben has no intention of helping her, telling her that Raisele is lying, and that she will only get herself killed. He could have offered to take her, make a vacation out of it, but he doesn't. The next day he leaves for Pittsburgh and when he returns, Lillian is gone and Yaakov isn't speaking to him.

Next, she tries Meyer who is equally unwilling to help her. He has no interest in Lillian whatsoever, and even less interest in Raisele, insisting that if Lillian plans to leave, she must take Raisele with her because she scares him.

Lillian goes to Yaakov last. She tells him about Sophie and Yaakov tries to reason with her too, but Lillian explains she has no choice. She is willing to work for her fare, she tells him but Yaakov has a better idea. He tells her that the distance by ship is shorter if she goes from Alaska to Siberia, and shows her maps. Raisele shows up with food and champagne and Lillian asks her again about Sophie. She tells Lillian the same story, and Lillian has no way of knowing whether she is telling the truth or not. She has no choice but to believe her, so she packs as Yaakov told her to, and Raisele helps by going through Meyer's drawers and taking anything of value. She even puts Meyer's tweed pants in Lillian's bag. Lillian takes Meyer's overcoat and his socks, giving her



stockings and shoes to Raisele. She also tells Raisele to help herself to any of the dresses she is leaving behind.

The next morning, Yaakov takes the five best maps out of the Collins Overland Telegraph Trail of the Far North from the Mid-Manhattan Library, sewing a silk pocket in her overcoat for each one for Lillian. He will take her to meet a man named O'Brien who - for \$5 - will guarantee Lillian a spot on the train and a meal along with passage to Chicago. Lillian and Yaakov say an emotional goodbye.

No one realizes how Lillian's leaving will affect the three men in her life. Reuben will lose most of his sight within a year. His vanity won't allow a helper or a cane, so he will isolate himself at home, depressed and eating little throughout the winter. In the spring he'll die in bed beside Esther, his coffin placed on a rose-trimmed wagon; many weeping as it is pulled through the Lower East Side. Eleven theaters will close for the night and after grieving, Meyer will go to Hollywood where he will change his name and play parts of good-natured Italian priests or gangsters. Yaakov will lose all interest in life, no longer seeing, or enjoying anything. He will take his own life not long after she leaves.

## Analysis

The primary themes in this segment include family, opportunism, fear and love. The first, family, is an ongoing theme which intensifies when Lillian hears from Raisele that her daughter Sophie is alive and was taken to Siberia by neighbors who believed the rest of the family had been killed. The connection Lillian feels to Sophie is so strong that she can't even speak at first. The only option she believes she has is to find a way to Siberia to get her back. Raisele, her cousin from Russia, claims to have come to Lillian as soon as she learned about Sophie, but despite being family, Raisele is a wolf in the same way that some people are saints or lambs and neither Meyer nor Reuben enjoy her company.

Raisele is an opportunist, which is the next theme. She has come to America to find the same kind of deal as her cousin Lillian has. Now that she has arrived, she believes that Lillian isn't suited for the opportunity that faces her here while Raisele believes that she could arrange a very nice life for herself in this country. When Lillian packs to go look for Sophie, Raisele plans to be a live in boarder with two girls from Odessa she met. Raisele will take anything that isn't nailed down, even breaking into Lillian's apartment and helping herself to Lillian's robe and oils when she first arrived. She sees opportunity in everything and will likely make a good life for herself.

Fear is a strong theme in this part as well. Lillian is terrified that she won't be able to get back to Siberia to find Sophie, and if she does manage to get there, that she won't find Sophie. Reuben is terrified that Lillian will leave, instinctively knowing that if she does, she will never return. Meyer has similar fears, but he doesn't have the same feelings for Lillian as his father does. He knows that she will never fill the void he feels, but she is comfortable and a good beard for the public when they go out. The last one who is



fearful is Yaakov. He fears that Lillian will leave, and that the only light in his life will go out.

Yaakov loves Lillian. In this segment his love for her is revealed in several ways. The first is in his disappointment that she should come to his shop and see him as a working man rather than the man who flirts with her in fancy environs. He enjoyed the teasing and word play they indulged in, and now that she has seen him on his knees at work, he feels as though they've lost something precious. By helping her, he reveals the depths of his love, and after she leaves, he loses interest in life.

Depression is the final theme of this segment. Lillian's leaving will change things profoundly for both Reuben and Yaakov. Reuben, without Lillian, will wither, his life losing the meaning and enjoyment she brought to it. Without her, he can find no spark; no life. Yaakov suffers as much if not more than Reuben does. He no longer sings at the Royale, he no longer mocks Meyer or teases Reuben. Despondent, he spreads towels around the bath to contain any water that splashes and bracing the door with an armchair to ensure his privacy, he takes his own life. Reuben had saved his life the first time, but this time, Reuben will not be there.

## Discussion Question 1

What is Raisele's motivation where Lillian is concerned and why?

## Discussion Question 2

Why are Reuben and Meyer against helping Lillian to get to Siberia, and what might she have done to change either of their minds, if anything?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Lillian leaving affect Meyer, Reuben and Yaakov; which one feels the loss most profoundly and why?

## Vocabulary

malicious, supplicant, inconsolable, provocations, daguerreotype, ingénue



# Part 1: July 3, 1924: Orphan Road

## Summary

Mr. O'Brien takes Lillian on the subway to Pennsylvania Station where he directs her to track 107. He pushes her into a closet and tells her not to make a sound until they arrive in 22 hours. Lillian feels her way around the small room. She sits down, a bucket behind her, the wall behind it, and a small wooden shelf that just touches her head as she is sitting. There is liquid in the bucket so Lillian sits with her feet facing it in case it spills. With little else to do in the dark, Lillian sleeps. Her nightmare returns, and she wakes just before screaming as someone rattles the doorknob. She listens as a couple talks excitedly at the door, looking for a place to couple.

When the train stops, she can smell the people as well as hear them as they disembark, the conductor calling out Albany. A new group of people board and the train moves again. She dozes off quickly, and screams just five minutes later. The porter returns, telling her that she can't make noise like that. He puts a sandwich in her hands and tells her that she can use the facilities in either Schenectady or Rome.

The over-excited couple returns and Lillian listens as they discuss the logistics of being together. The man suggests they get a drink and Lillian is left alone again. At the stop in La Salle, the porter opens the door and tells her that Union Station is across the river. He is the only person she knows, and for a minute she panics, unwilling to even get up off the floor. Dan O'Brien pulls her to her feet and tells her again to go to Union Station and find Andy McGann - or Red as everyone knows him. He gives her a push to get her going.

Lillian asks the first well-dressed man she sees where Union Station is. He shakes his head at her and she asks another one who gives her directions that leave her standing there with no idea what he'd just told her. A couple steps into the street near her and the man hails a taxi. One pulls up, and Lillian mimics their behavior, a cab stopping just as quickly for her. She remembers taking cabs with Reuben and Meyer and takes thirty cents out to pay the man.

At Union Station, she asks the first porter she sees for Red McGann and when he comes for her, she tells him Mr. O'Brien sent her, and had treated her with great kindness, giving her sandwiches and coffee as well as allowing her to ride in the closet – all for five dollars. McGann agrees that O'Brien is a good man, and helps her onto the train. He takes her to the woman's washroom where he pushes her in and locks the door behind them. He takes her coat, and hangs it on a hook before he unbuttons his pants asking her if she'd rather keep the five dollars. Lillian concentrates on arriving in Seattle and breathes through her mouth to avoid the scent of him, but he stays as soft as oatmeal. She tries to help him with her hands, but he finally admits that there is no lead in his pencil these days. He tells her no harm done, and pulls her to her feet. He takes her to a similar broom closet, telling her she can do her business in St. Paul. She



is given a sandwich along the way, and in Seattle Red opens the door, Lillian falling out the door as he does. He helps her up and tells her to stay sharp because the world is a terrible place.

## Analysis

Nostalgia is the first theme in this segment as Lillian leaves with Dan O'Brien, having said goodbye to Yaakov. At Pennsylvania Station, many of the new things she sees spark memories of Yaakov and she imagines seeing them through his eyes, hearing him cite the virtues of the men who created everything from the marble floors to the ceilings.

Fear follows quickly as Lillian sleeps and the ever present nightmare from her subconscious has free reign to torment her. She almost screams but wakes when a couple tries the door. When she falls asleep the second time, nothing stops the dream or the scream that follows. The fear theme continues to include Lillian's arrival, and necessary transfer to another train from another station. Fear freezes Lillian to the floor, so profoundly afraid of the unknown that even the porter who is all but a complete stranger is a comforting presence somehow.

Need and desire are also themes as the couple seeking a dark place to couple talks about their options. Lillian listens as the man asks the woman why she didn't disembark in Albany. She admits she didn't want to stop at the hotel before they each returned to their respective spouses. It is clear that they are discussing continuing their affair before going home. Lillian is also consumed with need and desire but of a different kind. Lillian is willing and ready to do anything that will get her back to Sophie, including sacrificing her pride, health, friendships and risk her life in a myriad of ways if that's what it takes.

Vanity is the next theme that is introduced as Lillian struggles with her own as she stands waiting for Red McGann. Lillian is acutely aware of the fact that all around her people are getting ready to board the train, dressed in travel finery; carrying bags and towing children and even dogs dressed better than she is. She is suddenly very aware that she is dirty, dressed in someone else's clothing and embarrassingly outcast from the remainder of the travelers she sees.

Pride follows as the next theme when Red McGann escorts her onto the train and directs her into the ladies washroom. He locks the door and offers to save Lillian the five dollars for the trip if she will service him, unzipping himself and putting his muffler on the floor for her to kneel on. Her pride is sacrificed for a five dollar bill, and his is lost when he is unable to enjoy her ministrations or to 'keep the lead in his pencil' while she does. Afterward, he tries hard to convince her that he is a decent man, making it clear that at that moment, he didn't feel like one. He tells her there is no harm done. He wants her to agree that when the need for something is great, no price is too high and no sacrifice too large.



When they reach Seattle, Red McGann comes for her and warns her that the world can be a terrible place and that she must keep sharp, foreshadowing that Lillian hasn't seen the worst of the conditions and trials she will face on her road to find Sophie.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How do the two parts of Lillian's train trip differ from each other? Which is Lillian more likely to have preferred and why?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is Red so desperate to have Lillian understand, and how does the reader know that Lillian has already learned this lesson?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What can Lillian hardly wait to pass and why will its passing make things easier for her, if at all?

## **Vocabulary**

amphiprostyle, nuanced, bombazine, provenance, fluctuate, contempt



## Part 2: September 3, 1925: Ain't It Fierce to Be So Beautiful, Beautiful?

### Summary

Arriving in Seattle, Lillian checks the notes from Yaakov. The Alaska Steamship Company on Pier 70 will take her as far as Prince Rupert, British Columbia. From there, she will take a riverboat from Hazelton to the Telegraph Trail, and after following that to Whitehorse, she can then take a steamship to Dawson City and then a small boat can take her to Siberia. With just \$7.20 on her, she heads out the rear door and finds herself on Skid Row.

She sees a red-haired, dark skinned woman lying on the ground in just her skirt and boots. Her breasts are yellow and blue with bruises and Lillian looks for the police but sees no one nearby. Men come down the alley and the next thing Lillian remembers is someone kicking her in the ribs. The red-headed woman is looking down at her; wearing Mary Jane's and dressed like a young girl. Gumdrop can see Lillian isn't dead, and figures she might be of some use so she kicks her a little harder. Then she bends down and whispers that if she doesn't get up, they'll have the clothes from her back in a couple of minutes.

Later she wakes in Gumdrop's bed, sore everywhere and vaguely remembering a cab and someone carrying her up the stairs. Gumdrop looks less like a little girl and more like an accomplished actress now. She introduces herself and questions Lillian about her life, interrogating every aspect up until now. Lillian withholds information about Sophie, saying only that she hates America and wants to go home. Gumdrop pours them a shot of whiskey, knowing Lillian hasn't told her the entire truth. She helps Lillian bathe and notices her stretch marks, realizing then that Lillian is not the kind of whore she is looking for. She wants a couple of sensible girls, with or without a specialty, who don't use drugs and who won't fall in love with a customer. Gumdrop's interest in business has increased of late, and she nurtures a dream of being Seattle's first colored Madame.

Lillian knows she owes Gumdrop, but isn't sure what or how much. Her money is gone and as far as Gumdrop is concerned, Lillian is useless. It is a blow to Lillian to realize that she is the odd thing out in this place. Gumdrop has already hidden her money and valuables, knowing Lillian would do anything to be on her way again. She invites Lillian to join her for supper at the Golden West Hotel where she introduces her to Snooky Salt. Gumdrop describes him as a pure snake. Gumdrop knows that Snooky has been skimming from her income for some time now, and when she does the math, she figures Snooky owes her about \$30.

Snooky likes Lillian, thinking she'd make a nice addition, and if she isn't everyone's taste, she might just be for him. He feeds her and Lillian is too tired to care about how it



looks. Later, knowing Lillian has lost all of her money as well, Gumdrop offers to pay her four and a quarter a day for two weeks to act as her concierge, although privately Gumdrop thinks of her as a white maid. For two weeks she runs errands for Gumdrop, who admits her given name is Clothilde and shares some of her past with Lillian as well. Snooky floats the idea of a three way with Lillian the next time he sees Gumdrop. As the two weeks come to an end, Lillian gives Gumdrop the appointments she has coming up but Gumdrop isn't ready to say goodbye. She wants Lillian's help to rob Snooky. She asks Lillian to help by pretending to go along with a three way so that she can steal back the money that is rightfully hers. Lillian agrees, and together they get Snooky drunk. Lillian keeps him busy while Gumdrop looks for the strongbox Snooky has. She finally finds it, but it slips from her fingers and falls to the floor. Snooky is up in a shot, and grabs his stiletto. He comes at Gumdrop and Lillian falls on him, driving the stiletto into his heart. Nothing they do afterward will help Snooky, so they clean up so that there is no trace that they were there, and drag Snooky downstairs and into the alley. They leave him with his hat and boots, going back up to dress and finish. Lillian takes Snooky's watch and Gumdrop takes his cane. Gumdrop gives Lillian \$35, taking the remaining \$105.

When they are out of the Golden West, Lillian asks Gumdrop to point her in the direction of the Alaska Steamship Company. They get into a cab together and Gumdrop contemplates the enormity of what they've done. She wonders if it is perhaps meant as a rebirth and decides she'll head to St. Paul and teach English. She manages to do so, teaching in the best colored school where she meets and marries a Jewish man named Morris Teighblum. In the next five years, she will give him three children, and over the next thirty years, she will attend uncounted Hadassah luncheons, but when she sees a black man in the park, she still thinks of Walter.

## Analysis

Inexperience is the first theme evident in this segment as Lillian arrives in Seattle and makes her first of a series of mistakes that will hamper her efforts to find Sophie. Lillian has no idea that when she leaves the King's Street Station by the back entrance she is exiting the safety of the station for the perils of Yesler Way or Skid Row as it is known by locals. Lillian has no idea that the only people who use that exit are people from out of town who don't know better, and the natives to the area who wait to prey upon them.

The fragility of life is brought to the forefront for Lillian when she next opens her eyes and finds herself laying on the ground, a colored girl kicking her in the ribs gently. It doesn't take long for Lillian to understand that if she doesn't get up, things could get considerably worse. A short time ago, Lillian's only concern was to find Sophie, but now her own life is threatened.

Gumdrop is introduced in this segment, playing the part of a young girl for her customers, but well-schooled in life on the street, aware of the risks and potential rewards. Gumdrop knows that this American woman is close to her age, and might be of some value to her, so she makes another effort to wake Lillian and get her up off the





ground while she is still able to do so. The author clearly reveals a world in which people are either used or use others; Lillian is the former, while Gumdrop is the latter. Gumdrop, Reuben, and Frieda all saw the potential use that Lillian could be to them, while Lillian seems to merely bounce from one benefactor to another, her mind consumed with Sophie in Siberia.

Specialties are the next theme as Lillian wakes in Gumdrop's bed and realizes that the little girl she saw in the alleyway is actually as old as she is and was merely playing the part of a young girl. Lillian can see that Gumdrop has many such outfits, all suited to a very spoiled 10-year-old girl, and immediately understands that Gumdrop is a consummate professional – an actress with a great deal of talent who uses every gesture and expression to reinforce the impression that she is just a little girl.

Prostitution is one of the main themes of this segment as Lillian begins to get an idea of who Gumdrop is and Gumdrop realizes that Lillian is not going to be a suitable candidate for prostitution with or without a specialty. Gumdrop is a practical woman who knows that her 'little girl' façade will only work for so long in this business. As such, she is looking for a couple of women who are able to work without drama or drugs and can start her stable.

Ambition is the next theme as Gumdrop carefully studies the business of prostitution, eager to make some changes in her life. She listens to her customers, carefully asking questions when she can and reading newspapers to learn as much as she can. Gumdrop has a pimp named Snooky, but her ambition is to run her own business by becoming Seattle's first colored madam, perhaps even heading the first ever union for whores.

Cheating and dishonesty go hand-in-hand with almost any business, and Gumdrop's relationship with Snooky is no different. Gumdrop knows that Snooky has been stealing from her for some time despite the fact that they are related. It is this bond that keeps Gumdrop from firing Snooky. Instead, she decides to steal it back.

Reality and survival are common themes in the line of work Gumdrop has, and she knows how to take advantage of the things life gives her. Lillian's arrival might complicate life for most in Gumdrop's line of work, but Gumdrop sees her presence as an opportunity. Though Lillian is not a candidate as far as prostitution goes, Gumdrop knows that she is penniless, and offers Lillian the job of her concierge, offering to pay her daily to keep her appointments and run errands for her. Gumdrop enjoys the idea of having a white maid, although she would never refer to Lillian as such to her face. To survive, Lillian has no choice but to accept Gumdrop's offer, agreeing to spend two weeks in her service for \$4.50 a day.

Self-worth is an ongoing theme for Lillian as she examines and re-examines her life. She had been a mother and a wife, living in a nice home when the police had come. Her family all dead now, she wandered aimlessly until a ticket to America was put in her hands. Working as a seamstress lowers her self-worth somewhat, but Lillian climbs the ladder in life quickly again, becoming the mistress to a prominent father and son. Her



self-worth drops considerably when she sees herself through the eyes of other travelers, making her journey in a closet and wishing she could turn off the part of her that is vanity and pride. Now, she is a maid working for a colored whore, her self-worth less important than finding Sophie is.

Lillian's definition of family is also a continually changing theme as she goes from her family in Turov to her cousin in America. Then she became part of Meyer and Reuben's family as mistress to both men. Her life seemed safe until another cousin arrives to tell her that Sophie still lives. Now, no longer a widow alone, Lillian is desperate to resume her role as Sophie's mother. To do so, she must earn enough to leave which means joining Snooky Salt's strange family until she can earn enough as Gumdrop's personal assistant.

Trust is an important theme in this segment as Gumdrop trusts Lillian to help her to rob Snooky and get the money that is rightfully hers. The fact that Snooky largely trusts Gumdrop won't hurt as she convinces Lillian to pretend to be willing to have a threesome with them. Ensuring he is dead drunk, Gumdrop searches the place while Lillian continues to keep Snooky amused. When Gumdrop drops the coin box and it opens on the floor, Snooky is awake immediately. He goes for one of several knives he has hidden and approaches Gumdrop menacingly, the trust he had for her gone in a single instant.

The fragility of life is the next surprising theme as Lillian and Gumdrop accidentally kill Snooky. Gumdrop is convinced that stealing her hard earned money back from Snooky will be easy, and afterward she and Lillian will both leave for separate destinations, but nothing goes as planned. Snooky dies with Gumdrop lying on his chest to try to slow the bleeding, whispering his given name, Walter, over and over. There is little time to grieve now however as the women must erase all traces that they'd been there.

Rationalization is the final theme as Gumdrop considers the fact that her cousin Walter was killed for what amounts to \$105. At first, she is remorseful, but then she considers the story of Moses and Pharaoh, remembering how Moses smote Pharaoh to set himself free, and she tells herself that this was indeed the case with her. She convinces herself that she had to kill Snooky before she could be reborn. Thinking clearly then, she knows that what she really wants is a nice Jewish man who will help her to raise their children.

## Discussion Question 1

What ulterior motives prompt Gumdrop to help Lillian, and what was Lillian's likely future if she hadn't stepped in?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Snooky die, and how do Gumdrop and Lillian deal with his untimely death?



## Discussion Question 3

What is Gumdrops' long term business plan and how does Snooky's death change that?

## Vocabulary

campanile, eventualities, desolation, étagère, judicious, consummated, capricious



## Part 2: September 3, 1925: What Folks Are Made Of

### Summary

Lillian boards the Alaska Steamship Company's worst vessel and finds herself among Christians. The captain tries to do her a favor by putting her with the other women on his boat, and Mary and Martha Hornsmith spend most of their time praying – now for Lillian and her eternal soul. On her first night on board, Mary asks Lillian forty-seven personal questions. Frustrated by the barrage, Lillian tells them she is on the run from her pimp, tired of her life of sin. She claims her name was Gumdrop Brown, and tells them stories of her life at the Black and Tan Club.

The next morning, both Hornsmith women are pleased to see that Gumdrop shows no interest in any of the men on board. Martha brews tea which they take back to the cabin, and they take turns bathing. Mary sits on a stool and asks Lillian how she got the scar on her shoulder. Lillian tells her the truth and Mary pulls up her camisole revealing a section of striated skin, telling Lillian it was from boiling water, and commiserating that it is awful what some people will do. They are almost at their destination when Lillian finally reveals the truth about herself. Martha gives her a cambric handkerchief with her initials embroidered in silk, and Mary gives her a cross made from cherry wood, telling her to 'hold on' to the Lamb of God.

In Prince Rupert, the only local constable, Arthur Gilpin is making his rounds. He stops in at the Winslow after a report of a girl seen there and finds her asleep behind the bar. He taps her boot with his own to wake her. When that doesn't work, he puts a hand on her shoulder and she wakes crying for Sophie. She puts her arms around him, and he holds her as she cries her heart out. Imagining how such a woman could be taken advantage of, he lets her go and she sees him for the first time. He pulls her up and she stumbles into him again. Finally, he learns that she is on her way to Dawson City alone and as she gets ready to leave he stops her, telling her they've already had snow. Lillian thinks he is going to arrest her when he surprises her by inviting her to his home for dinner and a good night's sleep.

Arthur remembers his wife's cooking, missing her more intently when he does, and before long he finds himself telling Lillian the entire sad story. Lillian eats, and after finishing a second helping, she cleans up. He offers her a place to stay while she gets her feet under her, and she thanks him, but her refusal is obvious. She sleeps in one of Helen's nightgowns in a trundle bed her uncle had made.

Lillian lays in bed, thinking about how Lev Pinsky used to talk about how the only future for Jewish people was in Tikhonaia, Siberia, claiming it would be a paradise for Jews, and suddenly she knows where the Pinsky's have taken Sophie. She pulls her clothes over the nightgown and grabbing her satchel, goes downstairs and opens the door. The



snow is blowing and Arthur puts a hand over hers taking her satchel. Lillian is so determined to leave that all he can do is handcuff her to the bannister. He tells her if she promises to stay, he'll remove the cuffs, but she won't lie to him. Knowing she'll leave at the first opportunity, he cuffs her to the iron bedpost telling her he'll be downstairs by the front door.

In the morning, he lets her dress and then cuffs her to a kitchen chair. He makes them breakfast, again explaining how dangerous it is to leave in this weather. To save her from herself, he calls trusties from the Hazelton Agrarian Work Center for Women and then explains that he is going to tell them that she tried to steal his watch. He promises to come at Christmas time and she can repent her sins at that time so that he can free her in the spring so that she can continue her trip to Dawson. When they come for Lillian, she stands looking chastened as he tells them the story he'd concocted. Lillian says nothing.

## Analysis

Religion is the opening theme in this segment as Lillian boards the Alaska Steamship for Prince Rupert and the captain bunks her with two Christian women. Mary and Martha Hornsmith pray constantly, and quickly add Lillian to the prayers. On the first evening, Mary peppers Lillian with questions about her life. Frustrated, Lillian finally pretends she is Gumdrop and regales them with tales of her former wickedness.

The theme of prostitution is one that the Hornsmith sisters can relate to, and they pray all the harder for Lillian's immortal soul. Prostitution is also on Arthur Gilpin's mind. A widower, Arthur misses his wife terribly, and on occasion, too much to drink found him seeking solace in the arms of a prostitute, or one of the Haida girls who came through town. Arthur's experience with prostitutes foreshadows the likelihood that he will meet Lillian as she gets off the ship in Prince Rupert.

Sorrow and loss are strong themes throughout this segment as well, beginning on the ship as Lillian and Mary commiserate over the painful childhood they endured at the hands of those who were supposed to love and protect them. These themes continue as Arthur Gilpin is introduced, and the loss of his wife is described. His loneliness is palpable, and when he discovers Lillian asleep behind the bar in the Winslow Hotel, he recognizes and relates to the pain she is feeling. Her emotional breakdown allows Arthur to consider her pain and forget his own, if only for a short while. Lillian's presence also gives Arthur the opportunity to excise some of his pain by sharing it with Lillian, and Lillian, despite having untold problems of her own to deal with, listens to him tell her about the depths of his love and loss.

Survival is also a theme in this section as Lillian considers life in Turov. She thinks about Joseph Stalin, and how the old-style Jews were being eliminated even before she left. She considers how the Pinsky family had cleverly become Bolshevik when there were Bolsheviks nearby or how he discussed the proletariat when gentiles were close. Lev



Pinsky would become whoever he needed to be in order to survive. Much like him, Lillian has done the same, becoming who she needed to be in order to survive.

Honesty is an important theme in this section as well, beginning with Lillian's confession to Mary and Martha on the steamship, revealing Lillian's conscience and nature. Lillian's honest nature is confirmed when she meets Arthur Gilpin, and responds to his questions without trying to conceal her travel plans or intentions. Later, when Arthur asks her to promise that she won't leave; she is unable to lie to him even if it means her freedom would be secured in the process. Instead, she says nothing, but her stubborn demeanor is enough for Arthur, who handcuffs her until he can secure her for the winter.

Dishonesty follows as the final theme as Arthur explains his decision to send her to Hazelton Agrarian Work Center for Women, telling them that she'd tried to steal his watch. It is in this way that he is able to secure her safely for the duration of winter, despite having to lie and besmirch her reputation to do so. He warns her in advance of his intentions so that when the trustees arrive to take her into custody, Lillian is neither surprised nor resistant.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Lillian lie to Mary and Martha, and what prompts her to reveal the truth before they arrive in Prince Rupert?

## Discussion Question 2

Where does Arthur Gilpin find Lillian sleeping? Where does he take her and why?

## Discussion Question 3

How does the death of Arthur's wife likely affect the decisions he makes where Lillian is concerned?

## Vocabulary

interject, entrepreneurial, constabulary, trousseau, solidarity, repented



## Part 3: October 5, 1925: Hard Times, Hard Times

### Summary

Fat Patty gives Lillian a rag that she claims is mostly clean, and Lillian doesn't argue, claiming she's had worse in her mouth. Fat Patty and the dwarf who helps her both laugh and for a moment, Lillian is ashamed of herself, but thinking that might be a good sign. She is adjusting to life in Hazelton, but still struggling not to watch as women openly have sex. Fat Patty's tattoos are mostly iconic designs or elegant script surrounded by posies. Lillian opts for Sophie's name on her hip, but asks Fat Patty to put seven blue stars with the name instead of having it placed in a banner. The dwarf likens them to the Pleiades.

At the end of the first week, life at Hazelton's feels normal to Lillian. She has an assigned place in the dining hall and knows why her table mates were incarcerated. After eleven days at Hazelton, a new girl comes into the dining hall. The matron sits her between Epiphany Smith, the Jamaican and Gypsy Lou. Mostly, the inmates are all Swedish or Norwegian, English, Irish, Scottish or Newfoundlanders. There are also two from Cape Britain, but Chinky Chang is the first Chinese woman to arrive, and she introduces herself as a grifter.

Lillian learns how to thresh peas and roast them for coffee and learns to expect some variety of peas in her food every day. Mrs. Mortimer asks Lillian if she'd rather do embroidery, but Lillian tells her that she'd much prefer to work in the library. Mrs. Mortimer suggests she have patience, sending her to the laundry room instead. Chinky is beating sheets; the Cape Breton girls are wringing them and Mrs. Mortimer announces that Lillian will help press. Lillian copies how Chinky tucks her skirt into her belt and pushes her sleeves up turning just in time to see the Cape Breton girls shut themselves into the press room and Gypsy Lou wind up to throw a cup of lye in Chinky's face. Without thinking, Lillian throws a wet sheet over Gypsy Lou to save Chinky. Chinky punches Gypsy Lou and the lye drops just as Mrs. Mortimer passes the door. She lifts the sheet, sees Gypsy's face, and tells the girls to clean up.

Mrs. Mortimer begins slipping Lillian books, and she reads them to Chinky as though Reuben still sits beside her. When she is invited to read for the library – a privilege they all began their time in the library with, she is warned about Mrs. Mortimer but afterwards they just talk. Lillian asks her about maps but Mrs. Mortimer isn't helpful and knows Lillian isn't likely to be more forthcoming with her gratitude.

Chinky is a quick favorite of most. She tries to get a map for Lillian too, and shares everything else she gets from Mrs. Mortimer with her. Chinky is part of the library group long after Lillian isn't, and even offers to do for Lillian what she does for Mrs. Mortimer.



Lillian refuses at first, but finally sees it as a transaction of sorts. Afterward, Chinky climbs back into her own bed.

Near Christmas, Arthur comes with a cardigan and a fruitcake. He can see that she's put on some weight and looks less worn. Now she's taken on the look of every prisoner he's ever seen; watchful, weary, angry and careful. Lillian asks if he still needs a housekeeper or a wife, and quickly wishes she hadn't. Arthur admits he is getting married in January and tells Lillian that his fiancée, Mrs. Wexall hoped to meet her and invited her to stay with them until she leaves. After that they have little to say to each other. She wishes him a Merry Christmas and heads to Fat Patty's to watch Merry Christmas being tattooed on the redhead hooker.

## Analysis

Acceptance is the first theme present as Lillian settles into her new environment. She has learned in the past to do what is necessary to get along, and this is no different. She will even have the stamina to joke about it. Lillian knows all about how sometimes you had to go along in order to get along, and within reason, Lillian is flexible.

Power and influence are the next themes introduced as characters like Fat Patty and Mrs. Mortimer are revealed and shown to be the movers and shakers on both sides of the law in Hazelton. Fat Patty is a tattoo artist who makes ink from paper burned and mixed with water while Mrs. Hazelton controls the luxuries and distractions including books, sherry, embroideries, scones and favors of all kinds.

Chinky is introduced as a grifter. Chinky Chang and her family survive by giving people what they want, playing parts that make people more comfortable with them. Chinky's specialty is the Little Miss – a Christian girl with high morals and standards.

Survival instinct is briefly touched upon as Lillian jumps in to save Chinky from a face full of lye when Gypsy Lou attacks her in the laundry room. By doing so, Lillian saves Chinky from disfigurement at the very least, but when Chinky learns that Lillian simply acted without thinking, she tells her later that it is the worst thing a girl could do – act without thinking. Despite that, Lillian's actions have a positive outcome.

Knowledge and its usefulness are discussed as Lillian reads to Chinky from Bulfinch's Mythology. Lillian reads as though Reuben sits beside her, the knowledge he shared with her where the English language is concerned having become part of her knowledge base. She understands the value of knowledge, and a passage extolling the virtue of Mythology appeals so much to her that she has almost memorized it. She tells Chinky that "Literature is one of the best allies of virtue and promoters of happiness."

Misconception and stereotypes are examined lightly as Mrs. Mortimer shares her idea that based on her race; Lillian should be a great reader, telling her that her people are 'people of the book'. This is just a small example of kinds of misconceptions that come from stereotyping. In fact, Lillian's mother was illiterate and her father told stories of being the 'youngest son of the poorest man' in his village growing up. Neither of her





parents could be considered to be literate or well-read despite what her 'people' typically are thought to be.

Maps and cartography are a theme as Lillian tries to get Mrs. Mortimer to bend the rules and bring her a map of Canada. Although Mrs. Mortimer admires her, she also knows that Lillian can be both treacherous and hard-hearted if necessary. She recognizes that Lillian has ulterior motives and though she may not know what they are exactly, she can see that there is more to the request than an interest in cartography.

Sex and sexual favors are a strong themes as Lillian gets an inside look at a different kind of sexual surrogates, discovering that to many of her fellow inmates, sex is a tool for release or for advantage and privileges.

Distraction is a theme throughout as Lillian tries one thing after another to distract her from the fact that this is just one more day wasted in the search for Sophie. She begins walking, to build strength and stamina. Sometimes the Christian Scientists walked as well and Emily Anne suggests that Lillian wear lead disks in her shoes to build up her muscles. Even sex is used as a tool of distraction; Chinky offering to take care of Lillian.

Holidays are the next theme, particularly regarding how they affect the girls who are incarcerated. For some, it is a miserable time, during which they have had to leave loved ones behind or lovers they cannot spend time with. Arthur visits Lillian, bringing her a sweater and some fruitcake. For a moment, Lillian hopes she can convince him to take her home as his housekeeper or even as his wife, but embarrassed, he admits that he is engaged to the widow, Mrs. Wexall.

Arthur Gilpin admits that he is engaged and his fiancé's invitation for Lillian to stay with them foreshadows that she will meet his wife-to-be in the spring and spend time with her and Arthur before she leaves for Siberia to continue her search for Sophie.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What does Chinky share with Lillian and why is she so generous with everything she has?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Chinky do to ensure that she will be unmolested in Hazelton and how effective are her actions?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What changes does Arthur notice in Lillian and why do they surprise him?

## Vocabulary

garroted, representational, presumptuous, escritoire, appellation, cabochon



## Part 3: October 5, 1925: O Beautiful City

### Summary

Chinky leaves in March, before the snow has melted. She offers to wait for Lillian in Vancouver, but Lillian has her own plans. Chinky promises to think of her as she hands Lillian her jumper; her pillow, and a buckle she took from Mrs. Mortimer. Lillian is lonely without Chinky. Both she and Mrs. Mortimer miss her, as good company is scarce.

Chinky sits next to a Mormon boy in the dark. Her sister became sick and Chinky takes her place on the bench. She holds Xiu-mei's bible in her lap and as dawn breaks, the boy dozes with his head on her shoulder and she studies his features. His hand rests on her knee and she feigns sleep so she isn't obligated to pretend to be afraid of his touch like a decent Christian girl.

Chinky knows how to play the part of a good Christian girl. As a grifter she has often played 'The Girl' while her sister is usually 'The Miss' or sometimes 'The Invalid' while her mother plays 'The Blind Servant' or 'The Ladies' Aide' and Mr. Chang is either 'The Minister', 'The Medium', or 'The Herbalist'. Xiu-mei is as good at playing 'The Miss' as Chinky is at playing 'The Girl' but their father is the consummate professional.

Mr. Chang carries a trunk of small silk bags containing natural stimulants for men like deer velvet; or products for women who couldn't have children like reishi mushrooms and even carries saw palmetto for those women who don't care to have children. He has fine red powders made from ground rubies and a blue crystal that burns hot enough to require a fireproof box. He downplays his healing abilities until visits with people are almost at an end. Then a glance at Chinky is enough to have her announce the other methods of healing that he has employed in the past, giving excited examples to her father's feigned embarrassment. After chastising her for discussing something so un-Christian, Mr. Chang walks their guests out and pretends to be surprised when they bring the subject up again. He also has a reputation for being the best psychic around. He can read people better than most and understands the human condition so well that his readings are amazingly accurate. Most often, he will tell them what they want to hear, despite knowing the truth to be something else. He knows how to present himself well, pausing at the right moments; using random letters or numbers to come up with a reasonable guess based largely on information the client gives him themselves.

Chinky thinks her father would have been proud had he seen her in Hazelton. She was every bit the girl he raised her to be. She could present herself so sweetly that adoption was a surety if she decided she wanted to take that route rather than rejoin the Chang Christian Road Show, which according to Xiu-mei had moved to Alaska.

Chinky settles herself so that the lips of the sleeping boy go from her collar to her bare neck and struggles not to move or breathe so deeply that she wakes him. Her left hand brushes his. Cleveland Seward is not asleep, and hasn't been since Chinky sat down



beside him. He is so aroused that he has to pull his jacket onto his lap to hide his reaction to her proximity. His aunt and uncle are waiting for him to join them on their mission to convert gold miners, heathens and fallen women. Cleveland can tell Chinky is not a heathen of the kind his aunt and uncle talk about. He wonders if maybe she was raised on a farm like he was and loses himself in the cross that sits in the valley between her breasts.

Chinky can easily imagine how her father would size this boy up and she is more than a little reluctant to introduce this sweet boy to him. Her hand sits on the inside of his knee and his mouth sits against her skin until finally they kiss as though they were born to be together. The Derblay is about to dock, and passengers around them are gathering their belongings. Not knowing what else to do, Cleveland introduces himself. Chinky takes his hand and holds it to her breast, telling him her name.

Thinking quickly, Chinky changes her hat for a snood that hides her hair and wraps a shawl around her instead of the bombazine jacket she would usually wear. She asks Cleveland if he has people waiting, and instructs him to go left beyond the shipping office, remembering her father telling her that people always go to the right. He tells her he will follow her, despite his aunt and uncle who are watching for him.

Mr. Chang sees Xiu-mei and asks her where Chinky is and she tells him Chinky slipped away from her somehow. Mr. Chang easily reads Xiu-mei knowing she isn't the slightest bit sad and he pinches her arm until tears fall on her cheek.

Chinky and Cleveland head into Fairbanks. Cleveland is good at welding and eventually they open a hardware store called Munson's All-Purpose. Chinky dresses like an Inuit, playing the part that people seem to accept easily, and together they live above the store for the rest of their lives. Their daughters will move away, and try to convince them to move somewhere closer to the ocean, but they both would prefer a trip to the Tanana River to fish than sit somewhere looking at the ocean. When Cleveland eventually dies of old age, Chinky cuts off her long braids and has them laid over him when he is buried. Then she goes home and chops up all of the foxglove and monkshood she has growing. The boy who finds her body will find her sitting with blue and pink petals scattered around her.

## Analysis

This segment has life as an overall theme as it takes readers from Chinky Chang's release from Hazelton to her death soon after her husband dies of old age. Her life as an adult truly starts the day she meets Cleveland and they both know it from the moment they meet on the Derblay.

Fate is also an overall theme when taken in the context that Chinky meets Cleveland on the Derblay and in that brief span of time they both know that they are meant to be together and avoid the people who are there to pick them up so that they can live the



rest of their lives together. Not only do they recognize fate when they see it, but it proves accurate as they live their remaining days together happily.

The familial theme continues – Lillian and Mrs. Mortimer feel as though they've lost a piece of their family when Chinky leaves; Chinky and Cleveland both avoid her sister and their families, heading away from them to be together and start a family of their own. Mr. Chang mourns the loss of his youngest daughter while Xiu-mei quietly celebrates her good fortune as her status in the family is raised.

Grifting and grifters remain a theme in this segment as Chinky describes life in her family; Xiu-mei secretly is thrilled that Chinky left the family to be with Cleveland despite her sorrowful and remorseful act; Mr. Chang's abilities are revealed from Herbalist to Medium to Minister and his constant educational tidbits like 'people always go right' or 'rich people always wear good shoes' or some such adages. It is her education that helps Chinky to observe that she could adopt an image that met with her customer's expectations by making herself appear to be Inuit when she and Cleveland run Munson's All-Purpose. Chinky also instinctively knows how many fox tails will pay for a hammer.

Love is also a prominent theme in this segment as Chinky Chang meets Cleveland Munson and finds the love of her life. Though both had family waiting for them on the shore, they made a last minute decision to go off on their own leaving without so much as goodbye. They settle together over the All-Purpose store they own and enjoy the rest of their lives there. Their daughters encourage them to move but neither of them can see the value in leaving where they are. When Cleveland takes his last breath, Chinky has her braids cut off and buried with him before she takes her own life to join him. Her braids are symbolic of their life spent together and when Cleveland is gone, he takes this intimate and personal piece of her with him. When Chinky cuts her braids off, she makes it infinitely more difficult to pass herself off as an Inuit woman and this foreshadows a finality where the All-Purpose store is concerned.

Devotion is also an obvious theme when taken in context as well. Chinky and Cleveland show a devotion to each other that defies all others and Chinky is unwilling to live without him at all.

Adages or sayings are prominent as a theme in this section, particularly by way of Mr. Chang's words of wisdom. Truisms like 'everyone believes they're a little smarter than their neighbors' and 'people generally turn right' are common throughout Chinky's life and come in handy when she and Cleveland want to avoid their respective families.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Chinky feign sleep when Cleveland supposedly falls asleep against her?



## Discussion Question 2

What reasons do Chinky and Cleveland have for not wanting to join their daughters in the lower forty-eight and what would they rather do?

## Discussion Question 3

What causes Cleveland's death and how does Chinky handle it?

## Vocabulary

conversion, conspicuously, distinguish, marquee, acquired, monkshood



## Part 3: October 5, 1925: Bread of the World

### Summary

Lillian is surprised to discover that the new Mrs. Gilpin is a card player of some skill. She admits she isn't much of a cook, but Arthur is handy in the kitchen and Lorena Gilpin tells Lillian about her first husband, who she describes as handsome and rich, but boring. They sit together and play Klaberjass on the night before Lillian is scheduled to leave and Lillian realizes that it would be impossible for her to steal from Lorena and Arthur despite how easy it would be.

Lorena tells Lillian that she lost a child to influenza and taking Lillian's hand, pulls her into her lap. They talk about Sophie and how good Lillian will feel when she finds her, and both women cry over the things that love can make you do.

The next morning Lorena and Arthur walk her to the Winslow Hotel where they put her in the care of the mule train leader, where Lorena tells him she is their daughter. Arthur nods, surprised as they say goodbye to each other and Lillian recognizes that this goodbye is no easier than leaving Yaakov had been.

Lillian rides one of fifty mules sitting between supplies as they head north along the Telegraph Trail, making about eight miles each day. Every morning and evening she is given either cornmeal patties or bear meat and at night she sleeps wrapped up in both of her blankets and laying her head on her satchel. When she hears the men talk about becoming much friendlier with her despite whose daughter she is, Lillian begins to sleep with a rock in each hand.

At night, she watches for an Athabaskan packer who brings her a cigarette and his company each evening before bed. He is handsome enough that even Reuben would have put him on film, but his good looks are reasons for caution in her mind. When the mule train driver comes to her and tells her that Echo Creek is their next stop, where they will stay until the tenders carry on, Lillian asks if perhaps she should continue on her own, and he makes it clear that if she is in a hurry, that is her best option. He gives her a pair of shearling gloves and a Tlinglit knife when they part company.

After leaving Echo Creek, Lillian walks about twenty miles each day, although she struggles to keep track. Mosquitoes and black flies are constant companions and her feet are soon a mass of blisters and open sores. The beauty of the region is staggering, and she reminds herself a dozen times a day to remember what she sees. She catches food when she can, throwing her coat over a pair of porcupines one night; and sometimes catching large, slow moving birds on the ground. She roasts the chicken-like birds and recreates their skeletons before leaving just like Yaakov told her the Red Indians did.



Most cabins are empty along the trail, deserted when the Telegraph Trail was dismantled, and she finds resting places in Stewart, Iskoot, Telegraph Creek, Raspberry and Sheslay. The now defunct Overland Telegraph Trail had been in use for fifty-five years. Nine years after Lillian passes through, a final message from the Department of Public Works will instruct that the stations be abandoned.

## Analysis

Generosity is the first theme in this segment as Lillian finds herself a guest of Arthur and his new wife, Lorena after her release from Hazelton. Arthur and Lorena not only open their home to her, but also welcome her, feed her, offer her employment as their day maid, and ensure that she has safe passage with a mule train heading north when she makes it clear that she has to go.

Love is also an opening theme as Lillian observes the relationship between Lorena and Arthur. While not traditional, their relationship seems to work, and to Lillian's surprise, Arthur seems happy. It is clear that his new wife loves him and that he loves her, their interactions intimate and comfortable. Lorena shares some of her former life with Lillian and they discuss her need to find Sophie. Rather than try to talk her out of going, Lorena understands that Lillian's love for Sophie will drive her onward until she finds her again.

Relationships are an ongoing theme as Lorena tells Lillian about her past marriage, laughing with her about the intimate details of a life she describes as boring. Now, she and Arthur seem to be happy and comfortable with each other, both finding love in the maturity of their years. When it is time for Lillian to leave, Lorena introduces her to the mule train driver as their daughter, and though surprised, Arthur is quick to agree. It is another of those relationships in Lillian's life that she struggles to say goodbye to. Lillian has to go, despite their invitation to have her stay. Each day that she is apart from Sophie is another day in which her memory is beginning to fade in her mind. Sometimes she struggles to remember her face and other times it is all she can think of.

Travel is also a theme again as Lillian resumes her journey north to find Sophie. She is driven forward by the need to be reunited with her daughter and despite occasional setbacks; she is determined to find her daughter. As such, she is willing to travel by any means necessary, riding a mule in a mule train for miles, or walking across the tundra of the north on her own.

Friendships continue to be an ongoing theme throughout this story as Lillian makes friends as she continues on her way north to find Sophie. She thinks about Reuben and Yaakov, although not as often as she used to; and wonders as to their current state, trying to imagine them in the Royale or going about their days.

Survival is an important theme in this section as Lillian continues on her journey to find Sophie. She is often in danger, but determined to continue regardless of her fears. On the mule train north she is reasonably safe because she was introduced as Arthur





Gilpin's daughter and the mule train driver is a friend who takes Lillian's care seriously. He discourages the single or just lonely men from sneaking over to her during the night, and Lillian begins sleeping with a rock in each hand – just in case. When they reach Echo Creek, Lillian is forced to either continue on her own, or face more delays. She sets out without a second thought to her safety or survival, thinking only of finding her daughter. Lillian has had to do distasteful things in the past to survive, and killing things for food is no different in her mind.

Insects and the discomfort they cause are constant companions for Lillian as she walks north. She is assaulted by both new and winter mosquitoes, black flies in swarms and thousands of other burrowing gnats, nits and no-see ums. She suffers as they bury themselves in her hair, into her scalp, inside her ears and under her eyes.

Beauty is also a theme as Lillian tells herself again and again that she will remember how extraordinary her surroundings are. Somehow, the remarkable beauty of the regions will be lost in the struggle to survive her solitary trek through the wilderness. Later, she will only really remember three of the thousands of mental pictures she'd taken as she walked; northern lights streaking across the sky, a series of low purple flowers and one dawn that the sky had been streaked with pink and coral near Tagish.

Themes such as communication and progress are both revealed to Lillian as she walks along the Telegraph Trail. For fifty-five years, the Telegraph Trail provided the only communication across the northern regions. Although eventually replaced by radio and telephone, in its day operators lived mostly in solitude as they manned the small cabins and waystations that served to relay information on down the line. In 1935, the lineman would leave for the last time.

## Discussion Question 1

What gifts do Arthur and Lorena bestow on Lillian before she goes, and how do they add to her safety on the mule train she will travel with?

## Discussion Question 2

What does the Athabaskan share with Lillian each evening, and what is her opinion of him?

## Discussion Question 3

What are the most difficult parts of Lillian's journey in this segment, and why are they so hard?

## Vocabulary

credenza, reticule, contempt, nostalgia, resurrection



## Part 4: May 19, 1926: I Hope We'll Meet on Canaan's Shore

### Summary

The combination of sun and endless snow are agony to Lillian's tired eyes which strain for anything that breaks the monotony of that single color. She follows an exhausted group of ten moose, who pay little attention to her as she plods along behind them. The vast spaces make Lillian acutely aware of her place in the grand scheme of life – she is little more than a gnat.

When she sees the cabin ahead of her, she is so happy that she almost runs the last of the distance, but then realizes that her idea is not sensible. She tells herself to be confident, and boldly walks up to the door and knocks. A young boy with nothing on but a t-shirt opens the door and backs away to let her in revealing two other children. She asks if their parents are home, but at first no one answers her. The oldest boy is holding a baby who is sobbing and in a matter of minutes, all three are crying. She takes off her gloves and scarf and asks her question again in Yiddish, in Russian and again in limited English.

The youngest child is a girl, almost a toddler and the oldest boy holding her looks like he is ready to drop, so Lillian takes the baby out of his arms for a minute and calms her down before handing her back so that she can take her coat off. The boy sees the Tlingit knife she carries in a sheath, recognizing it as the same one his father has. For a minute, he holds out hope that Lillian has come across his father on the trapline and sent her on ahead of him. She takes the baby back and circles the room with her, but before she goes too far, he tells Lillian that the young girl's name is Sally.

Lillian introduces herself, and learns that the other two are named Billy and Ned who is the oldest. She asks Ned to change Sally and while he and Billy do that, she discovers their mothers' body on the path to the privy. She has been there long enough to smell, and to be eaten in places by predators. Her body is partially covered by a blanket and Lillian sees no reason to disturb her. She goes back inside and settles Sally down before putting her to bed and telling the boys to sit with her until she is asleep.

While the boys mind Sally, Lillian goes out back to the food cache and brings beans, honey, flour and a leg of venison into the house. She mixes honey and cream for Billy after cleaning him up as best she can and he falls asleep leaving just Lillian and Ned. The house is cold so Lillian builds a fire and then makes fried dough Ned calls fritters for both of them. Then she climbs into bed, the children all cuddled around her.

The next day Lillian chops down a small pine for firewood and bathes the children but is so exhausted by her efforts that burying the boys' mother will have to wait another day. She makes Billy a pair of pants out of a man's flannel shirt, and offers to pray for their



mother with them, but the children show no interest. She wonders about how fate put her on their doorstep, knowing that these children would surely have died had she not found them. Nestled in bed with the children, she prays.

Finally Mr. Mason returns. While grateful for her help thus far, he has little choice but to ask her to stay for a little longer. Since she's already stepped in and done this much, she feels obligated to continue to help. They wrap Mrs. Mason in canvas and bury her, Mr. Mason saying a few words over her grave. As Mr. Mason continues to pray about the valley of the shadow of death and fearing no evil, Lillian can't help but think that she walks through that valley, and fears everything.

## Analysis

The survival theme is once again in the forefront in this segment as Lillian walks her way north along the Telegraph Trail. She is clearly able to see that she is little more than a gnat in the vastness of this wilderness, and her struggle to stay alive and keep walking is a daily ordeal.

Loneliness is certainly a theme as well as Lillian pushes on alone. The unbroken white of snow and sky leave Lillian seeking out any break on the horizon to give her eyes a rest. Even red berries in the snow are a relief. When she finally sees a house in the distance, she has to restrain herself from running the last of the distance to it.

The family theme is again strong in this segment as well, but the members have changed. Now Lillian finds herself the surrogate relief parent for three young children whose mother died on the trail to the privy. Alone, naked and hungry, the children had fended for themselves for a couple of days, and Lillian finds them cold and needing attention on all fronts. She stays until their father returns, and then remains a little longer to help him bury his wife.

The oldest boy notices her Tlingit buck knife, recognizing it as the same knife his father carries, and to him, it is symbolic of safety. He has already determined that she is a mother from the way that she takes Sally from him and calms her down, so it isn't hard to make the leap that perhaps this woman had crossed paths with his father and come home ahead of him.

The fragility of life is a theme that is starkly evident in Mrs. Mason's manner of death, having died on her way to the privy. The children Lillian finds alone in the house bring that theme home to Lillian as she recognizes the dangers of this lifestyle and that the end can come at any time.

Comfort, both physical and emotional are themes throughout this segment as Lillian does her best to provide these for the children she discovers in the house alone. She cleans them up, feeds them, and builds a fire to warm the house, doing her best to ensure their needs are met.



Prayer is also a theme as Lillian tries to get the children to pray for their mother, but it is clear that they were not a religious family by their lack of enthusiasm for the idea. She doesn't believe in God herself, but is willing to for them. When Mr. Mason finally returns, they bury his wife and he begins to intone 'Yea, though I walk through the shadow of death...' While some are comforted by prayer, Lillian believes in hunger and luck; fear and curiosity; and the fragility of will – barely a spark of hope at night, but a raging fire of need by the dawn of each morning again.

Wishful thinking is a small theme in this segment as Lillian cares for the children until their father can return. She imagines him to be handsome as a movie star; similar to the Athabaskan who shared his cigarettes with her on the mule train, and dreams of Reuben touching her and of the food at Ye Olde Chop House. Of course, Mr. Mason is not the handsome stranger who would save her from herself.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What difficulty does Lillian have crossing the frozen wasteland, and why is it so hard?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Lillian do in order to survive on her journey, and what does she realize about herself in these surroundings?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What condition is Mr. Mason's three children in when Lillian first discovers them and what does she do to improve the way things are?

## **Vocabulary**

crevasses, ascension, pious, perished, inclination



## Part 4: May 19, 1926: Our Brief Life

### Summary

On a warm June Sunday, Lillian crests a hill and sees a cabin. She has come across some telegraph operators still managing stations who have been willing to feed or house her for as long as she wants, some hoping she'll stay longer while others make it clear that they live in this isolation for a reason which doesn't include her. She is almost at the step when she hears the rocking chair and sees the shotgun. She puts her hands up, knocking her hat to the ground. John Bishop has exiled himself in Refuge Cabin Number Nine, although there seems little need for operators these days, the messages past back and forth inane. One message however, had warned him she was coming, and he offers her a bath when he introduces himself. John makes four trips to the river with a bucket, and takes her hat filled with lice in two fingers out to sit on a log off the porch.

Lillian not only has lice, but her feet are filled with blisters that weep red and yellow; wool sticking to the wounds when she pulls off the wrappings. John heats the water and puts mint in the tub. He sees her bruised ankles; her feet spotted with black scabs and he can smell the rotting meat that they are. Her bites and blisters are both infected, but he tells her he has seen, and been worse. While she bathes, he makes stew with vegetables he grew and two rabbits he caught.

Both Lillian and John have been out of contact with people for so long that their communication skills have dwindled. He gives her a pair of pants left by Jack Waller after he'd drowned and a large piece of linen. Then he takes a stool and tub outside where he washes and removes nits from her hair. Afterward, she sits soaking her feet, wearing men's long johns and sipping hot rum.

John tells her the story of him and his fiancé Alice; how he'd been involved in a bar fight where the other man, Tibby Kunish had died; and how since then he'd done his penance here in the great void of Alaska. He asks about her story, but she isn't ready to reveal Sophie to him. That night, he lies beside her and she pretends she is asleep. John thinks that if she looks at him; he'll at least take her hand in his and maybe she'll lie in his arms but when she doesn't move, he goes back to his bedroll on the floor.

Lillian is up early and steps over John to get to the door, slipping out while he is still sleeping. She walks for over fifteen minutes, composing in her mind and thinking about people she'd left behind when she came to America. Then her thoughts return to John and she mentally composes several thank you notes to him before she finally returns to the cabin. She walks past the hat she'd left behind and opens the door, creaking and bringing John up on one elbow, joking that she'd missed him. The truth was that in just a single hour, she missed him so much that she couldn't just leave. He calls her to him and she gets under the blanket with him.



After lying in each other's arms, John tells her to kiss him and embarrassed at first, she kisses his forehead, claiming she is not a romantic. They lie on the floor so long that darkness falls and Lillian gives him a brief overview of Sophie and her need to find her. He listens, and then tells her he'll come with her. At first she doesn't hear him, and he repeats himself several times before she actually hears him. Then she cries and they hold each other.

They play cards and pass time, eating when hungry and just spending time together. Lillian offers to check his seine traps in the river while John is working and manages to get turned around when an early spring snowstorm covers everything. She huddles under a tree and when the snow stops she doesn't recognize any landmarks. She finally finds the cabin, crying with relief, but John is gone; a note saying he'd gone out to find her and telling her to stay put. She stays for three weeks, searching for John every day in a larger grid but without success. Finally, putting notes everywhere in the hopes that one will find him, she leaves the cabin for the last time and heads for Dawson City.

John broke both legs when he tumbled down the incline, and realizes he will probably die in the wilderness. Next time he wakes, he is in a birch bark canoe. The Tr'ondeck Hwech'in, the Han people of the First Nation (known to telegraph operators as the People of the River), find him and, pitying him, take him home to the Twelve Mile village where they help nurse him to health. As soon as he is able, he asks for a pencil and paper, writing a note to Lillian and asking if there is anyone who can deliver it to Dawson.

Lillian sees John around every corner, and nowhere. She finds a boardinghouse, and looks for a boat to take her to Siberia. Most people laugh at her or discourage her from going, but one man offers her a craft that she can sail by herself. He helps her to rig it, and after some helpful tips, she heads out on the swift moving river. The river is wide and the current against her as she sets out.

They watch her till she's out of sight, and no one is around when Lillian's small craft hits a rock and begins to sink. She manages to swim to shore but loses all of her supplies, her pack, and is truly beaten. She wrings her clothing out and puts it back on, crawling into the bushes to sleep. She hears rustling, and the first thing she sees is in John's hand.

## Analysis

Loneliness is not as prevalent a theme in the beginning of this last segment as Lillian is finally getting used to talking to Sophie and Yaakov, and having only herself for company. She stops at the Telegraph stations she finds along the trail and is greeted with more enthusiasm from some than from others. When John learns that Lillian is headed his way, he finds himself hoping that perhaps she will stay the night; play checkers or gin rummy with him; and if that goes well maybe even just lie down with him for a night before she goes. Lillian doesn't realize just how lonely she had been until she meets John, and while she leaves him without so much as a goodbye, she finds that she is unable to continue. She turns back to the cabin again.



Communication skills are an immediate theme as Lillian and John have both been so long on their own that their ability to make small talk has all but disappeared. John finds himself telling her she can use a bath, without actually offering her one, and informs her that she has lice – a fact she already is well aware of. Lillian apologizes for the poor condition she and her garments are in, but John just tells her he's seen worse, and been worse. Lillian can't stop herself from commenting that the rabbits he is dressing for stew look like dead children and adding that she is a Jew, although she doesn't know why she adds that.

Bugs and blisters combine to make pain and discomfort an ongoing theme as Lillian pulls off socks and reveals bites and blisters that have festered and opened again and again. John even puts her hat outside on a log, so full of lice that he won't even leave it on the porch.

Relationships are a theme that provides much conversation between John and Lillian. John begins by telling Lillian how he went from a police officer to a telegraph operator, and Lillian eventually manages to talk one more time about Sophie. To her surprise, John offers to go with her to Siberia to find Sophie but before that can happen, they become separated. She gets lost in an early spring snowstorm, and when she returns, she finds a note saying he's gone to look for her, and telling her to stay put. She has no way of knowing that in his search for her, John had fallen down a ravine and broken both legs. It will be weeks before he can walk again.

Love is an evolving theme that wins out in the end after Lillian returns to John Bishop, unable to leave him to continue her journey to Sophie. The pull is so severe that although she'd already walked away, she finds herself looking for an excuse to return. They spend the entire day and night in each other's arms and when he announces he'll go with her, she is overwhelmed to tears. When John doesn't return after going out to look for her, Lillian waits twenty-one days, searching an ever increasing grid every day, but there is no sign of John. Believing he is likely dead, she leaves notes for him in all the places she can think of, and heads for Dawson. Despite breaking both legs, all John can think of is Lillian and getting to Dawson where he is sure she will be. He tries to send word ahead, but his message misses her and she leaves Dawson on a small boat. When the boat hits a rock in the river and finally sinks, leaving her to swim for shore, Lillian is beyond discouraged. For the first time, Lillian simply has nothing left. Her will to continue is dead, and she pushes her way into the brush to lie down. She hears a rustle and the first thing she sees is John's hand.

Acts of kindness are shown as regular themes throughout this story and this segment is no exception. When John breaks both legs in a fall, the Han people find him and take him back with them to their village to heal. Their kindness will save his life, and allow him the chance to find Lillian again. This is not unlike his acts of kindness John shows when he invites Lillian in and helps her to rid herself of lice, and to clean and dress her weeping wounds.

The future is a theme that the author bounces ahead to several times throughout this story, and this segment is no exception. The author reveals that although John and





Lillian try to reach Siberia three separate times, they were unsuccessful. They settle down and have two children of their own, who go on to produce grandchildren that they are very proud of. They visit their son and daughter every winter until it is too much for them, loving each other deeply the rest of their lives. Though John and Lillian never find Sophie, she goes on to live with the Pinsky's who change her name to Tatiana Bugayenko. The apple of their eyes, Tatiana finishes school and then continues on to college where she takes studies science.

## Discussion Question 1

What condition is Lillian in when she arrives at John's cabin, and why is it a lucky thing that she did under the circumstances?

## Discussion Question 2

What does Lillian do when John fails to return for her after tracking her through the snow?

## Discussion Question 3

What reactions does Lillian get to her request for a boat to take her to Siberia and why do most outfits react in the same manner?

## Vocabulary

inclination, suppurating, illegitimate, contrecoup, manslaughter, abstruse



# Characters

## Lillian Leyb

The main character, Lillian, became an orphan and a widow at the age of twenty-two and is convinced by her aunt that her daughter was also killed that night. Lillian leaves Turov where she was born to board a ship to America. Lillian speaks both Russian and Yiddish. Her grasp of English is improving and she is well versed in sewing of all kinds. Lillian is thought of as bold by Reuben Burstein. Lillian knows intimately about loss. Not only has she suffered the loss of her parents, but her daughter, Sophie, as well. Lillian often dreams of the murders of her parents and her husband, seeing them lying on the floor, covered in blood. Her daughter's bed is empty and Osip's wedding band is still on the second hand she sees. She screams herself awake many nights.

Lillian is a solidly built woman with rope-like muscles and square shoulders. She and Osip were married for four years, but when he and the rest of their family is killed, she must change her expectations and harden herself for the life ahead. When she arrives in New York, she sews for survival until an interview with the Burstein men opens up an opportunity for her to upgrade her circumstances. Boldly, she will introduce herself to them, and convince them that she is the employee they seek. It won't take long after that before Lillian is approached by Meyer Burstein, courted, and put up in an apartment he pays for. His father begins visiting her as well, but Lillian sees the attentions of both men as a necessary evil to survive, and since they treat her kindly, Lillian stays with them until her cousin Raiselle arrives and tells her that her daughter Sophie is alive and well, living in Siberia with neighbors who thought Lillian had died with the rest of her family.

Thus begins her search for Sophie, beginning with a train trip to Seattle - a \$5 cost providing she is willing to ride in a closet for the duration; then a quick steamship ride to Prince Rupert; but the rest of her journey will be made by mule train and then on foot. The journey along the Telegraph Trail on foot is arduous and lonely. Occasionally, she is able to spend a night in one of the telegraph cabins along the trail, sometimes because they were empty, or because the operator missed having company as well. Others, who enjoyed the solitude and privacy, were more reluctant help. One man goes far beyond just offering her a night to stay. John Bishop begins by suggesting she bathe, and hauling up several buckets of water so she can. He gives her clean clothing, washes her dirty clothing and wraps, feeds her dinner, and gives her a bed for the night. As far as courtesy goes, John is a perfect gentleman, cleaning and dressing the wounds on her feet, and even helping her to get rid of the lice that have made her head their home.

When Lillian leaves the following morning, it is with reluctance, but she knows that the longer she stays, the harder it will be to go at all. She walks for half an hour, after slipping out while John still slept, but then retraces her steps, justifying it to herself by remembering that she hadn't left him a note to say thank you and goodbye. When she opens the door, he greets her and she admits that she'd already missed him. John and



Lillian spend the day together, wrapped in each others arms and hearing each others fears and secrets. When she tells him the bare basics about Sophie, he agrees to go with her, but before they can leave John breaks both of his legs in an early spring snowstorm in the bush. Two tribesman find him and take him to their village to heal. Lillian waits three weeks for him, searching a larger and larger grid each day, but when she still doesn't find him, and begins to run out of food, she finally decides to leave for Dawson. Surprised by the degree of her feelings for John, Lillian still manages to put one foot in front of the other.

Lillian finds a boat that she can maneuver herself and sets out for Siberia. John Bishop heals and returns to Dawson to find her, but she has already gone. Lillian manages to get around the first bend before she hits a rock. The boat quickly sinks and she is left with nothing as she struggles through the frigid water to shore. Lillian gives up, and can't bring herself to continue. She crawls into the brush but then rustling brush reveals John's hand reaching down.

Lillian and John try three more times to get to Sophie, failing each time. They finally settle in Dawson, have two children, and grandchildren as well that they visit each winter. They love their lives and each other, but Lillian never sees Sophie again.

## John Bishop

John is a good man who was forced into a life of exile after he killed a man in a bar fight. John is a gentle man whose body shows the signs of age and a difficult life. He has long blond hair that he wears loose to his shoulders. His collarbone was broken but was never set correctly, and he has a livid barbed wire scar around his wrist.

Refuge Number Nine is the telegraph cabin he lives in, sadness the cloak he wears each day. He still works, passing messages and getting gossip, but he hadn't received a message directed at him in some time. Two days earlier, however, he had learned that Lillian was on her way. Now, she stood in front of him crookedly. He can see the nits in her hair and wonders if maybe...just maybe if it would be beyond foolishness to hope that they would share some conversation or perhaps a game of checkers or chess or something. Perhaps if that went okay, he could maybe ask her to lie down with her for an evening.

John's loneliness is palpable. For two days, he'd imagined a blonde, pretty and clean woman who he thought would wear a trim jacket. He had even thought perhaps she'd have flowers in her hair and ruffled things under her clothes. Perhaps she'd even be eager to please. Instead, looking at the reality that is Lillian, he tells her that she could use a bath and introduces himself.

John had been engaged before his life as a telegraph operator, and worked as a policeman. One night, out for a drink with his fiancé, a man starts a fight with him and while at first he had the upper hand, John manages to retaliate and hitting the man hard, he goes down and hits his head on a packing crate behind him. The man dies



there, and John's life ends. His fiancé is not so invested that she would consider leaving with him, so he says goodbye to her and makes his way to Alaska.

Meeting Lillian changes John's life. He knows that the job he is doing is no longer of any value and it is just a matter of time before it ends. He decides to go with Lillian. Before they leave, Lillian offers to check the seine traps and while out is surprised by a spring snow storm. Everything looks different, and for a time, she is lost. Finally she makes it back to the cabin, but John has gone out looking for her. He falls down an incline, breaking both legs and is sure that his life is over, but two natives find him and take him back to their village to heal.

As soon as he is able, John follows Lillian and discovers she has already left for Siberia. He finds her and together they try to make it to Siberia three different times, each unsuccessful. While they don't manage to find Sophie, they do successfully have and raise two children who have children of their own as well. John and Lillian live a long and happy life together.

## **Aunt Mariam**

Miriam is Lillian's aunt, and she had slept in a cowshed until the Russian soldiers had gone. Miriam tells Lillian that she's seen Sophie's body in the river but was too frail to pull her out by herself and couldn't get anyone to help her. This is a large part of the reason that Lillian simply gives up. She convinces Lillian to go to America when she sees the flyers, but she herself never leaves Turov and dies at the ripe age of 86 while in her garden.

## **Meyer Burstein**

Meyer can easily be referred to as handsome, with long lashes and brown curls framing a smooth face with a hawk-like nose. His mouth is red, and full, and he has a strong square chin, all of which combine to make him look like the perfect specimen. Meyer is the Matinee Idol who played Yankl in *The Child of Nature*, and did so with such finesse that he had the audience weeping with the beauty of his tortured death. He is a forceful dancer, and referred to as tragically handsome. Even without his black fedora, Meyer is taller than his father. He smokes and wears shirts without vests under suit jackets. Meyer keeps his alternate life as much a secret as he can. Meyer is homosexual. He strolls Vaseline Alley on the nights when he can no longer resist, pleasuring strange men before going home to sleep.

## **Raisele Perlmutter**

Raisele already loves everything about America. She likes the sheer stockings women wear; the bright signs everywhere; the men in their suits that look in passing; and the music she hears. She'd stopped at Cousin Frieda who had no room to put her up, but Raisele likes Lillian's apartment better. The lock was easily defeated and she'd made



herself to home, using Lillian's things and wearing her clothing. Raisele hopes that Meyer will see that she is a trade up from Lillian, but that doesn't happen. Instead, she becomes the next ingénue of the Vilna Art Theater, replacing Ida Liptzin as Juliet. She creates such a stir that Samuel Goldwyn gives her his card in El Morocco after dinner. Her screen test reveals a vamp of a woman with alabaster skin, pale eyes and lips.

## **Clothilde Browne (aka Gumdrop)**

Gumdrop is a colored Mary Pickford with more to offer on many levels. She has a tiny waist that curves in so sharply that most men can put their hands around it and have their fingers meet. Her rear end is bigger than expected and she has breasts that each fit perfectly into a champagne coupe. She has skin that is satiny, soft and brown which she keeps that way by applying cocoa butter liberally. Naked, Gumdrop is without hair below her head and she puts rouge on her nipples twice a day for the enjoyment of her customers. Gumdrop knows how important her hands are, washing them every night with one part vinegar, one part lemon juice and two parts white brandy to prevent roughness or chapping. Gumdrop believes that a beautiful hand can captivate the heart.

Gumdrop's father died in 1916 from the flu, and they lost her 6-year-old sister, Mabel, to the flu as well. Gumdrop was fourteen at the time, and her brother was eleven. Her younger sister was eight. Together, what was left of the family continued to work the farm. One day two white men showed up and took their goats after having their way with Gumdrop. A baby girl was born the next spring. She tried to raise the baby, with help from her mother, but finally realized that she'd had enough of farm life. Promising to send for them when she could, Gumdrop left. It took two years before Gumdrop was ready, and she sent her mother a letter. When there was no answer, she sent another with \$5 in it, and sometime later, the minister returned it with a note to tell her that her brother shipped out; her sister was in a convent and her mother and daughter were killed by a disease.

Gumdrop tells Lillian how she remembers growing up with chickens, goats, and a dog named Delta even. Having come from a small town nearby, they were the only colored family in the neighborhood. Her mother was a healer.

When plans to rob Snooky go awry, and she and Lillian accidentally kill him, Clothilde decides to go to St. Paul to teach English. She manages to find a teaching job in the best colored school and after meeting a nice Jewish man, she converts and marries him becoming Clothilde Browne Teighblum. In the next five years she will bear him three children – Samuel, Sylvia and Louise. She gives to the NAACP, wears smart looking suits with matching gloves and attends thirty years of Hadassah lunches. She still thinks of Snooky, even all that time later, and can feel where she stabbed him in her own heart.



## Walter (aka Snooky Salt; aka Sugar Bear; aka Brown Sugar; aka Sweet Man)

Walter is Gumdrop's pimp. He wears a black and white houndstooth suit and his boots match the lilac derby he wears. Walter has a small, hooked nose with ears that are neatly curled, and a moustache that makes him look dapper. Gumdrop calls Snooky a snake, whose lineage includes a long line of small, muscular men who were all as mean as snakes. The fact that he is pure snake, without pretenses is why Gumdrop trusts him. It also doesn't hurt that Snooky is family – her cousin.

Snooky begins skimming from Gumdrop when he raises the prices for her Johns but doesn't raise the percentage he gives her. Finally fed up, Gumdrop convinces Lillian to help. Together they get Snooky drunk, and Lillian keeps him busy while Gumdrop looks for his lockbox. When she finds it, it drops to the floor waking Snooky and he goes after Gumdrop with a knife. Lillian jumps into the fray and in the struggle that ensues, Snooky is stabbed in the chest with his own knife. Lillian and Gumdrop take his body down to the alley and clean up his apartment to make it look as though they had never been there.

## Arthur Gilpin

Arthur is the constable in Prince Rupert. He lost his wife nine months previously and missed her every night and day of those two hundred and seventy nights. Though lonely, he only feels worse if he finds himself with one of the town's whores or one of the Haida girls who come through. The latter are less bitter, and don't involve themselves with local gossip, making it clear when they like or dislike what you are doing.

Arthur is a tall man with bushy sideburns and eyes that are as sad as any can be until he meets - and finally marries - Lorena. Arthur is a good man with good instincts who truly acts in the best interests of the public he serves.

Arthur is on patrol when he finds Lillian asleep behind the bar in an abandoned hotel. He takes her home to his place, hoping to talk her out of continuing her journey to Siberia in the winter, but when he realizes she is determined, he arrests her and locks her up in Hazelton until spring. Arthur goes to see Lillian at Christmastime and announces his engagement to Lorena.

When Lillian is released in the spring, she stays with Arthur and Lorena until the mule train leaves. Then they deliver her to the lead mule skinner telling him she is their daughter to ensure she will be treated with some respect.

## Lorena Gilpin

Lorena is Arthur Gilpin's second wife and a card shark, playing sixty-six, Swedish rummy, and Napoleon at St. Helena. Her father, she says was a founder of the



American Skat League. Lorena is a generous and outgoing woman who finds a soft spot for Lillian, even offering to take her in as a day maid, but Lillian is determined to find Sophie. When it is time for Lillian to leave, Lorena gives her several small keepsakes and some geranium oil to defer mosquitoes.

## Chinky Chang

Chinky Chang is a grifter who arrives at Hazelton Agrarian Work Center for Women eleven days after Lillian. She has a bright and narrow smile much like Esther Burstein's or Gumdrops which is to say that it has little to do with happiness. During her first meal in the prison, Chinky takes offense to comments made by Gypsy Lou, and uses her spoon to apply pressure to her neck, holding her face down in her potatoes until she stops thrashing. Gypsy Lou responds by cornering Chinky in the laundry room and attempting to throw lye in her face. Lillian intervenes, and earns Chinky's friendship from that day forward.

Chinky quickly learns how to make her stay more comfortable, getting as friendly as possible with Mrs. Mortimer who runs the center. She is well liked by most people and when she leaves the Center, both Lillian and Mrs. Mortimer miss her company.

Chinky takes a ship with her sister Xiu-mei to meet Mr. Chang, but on the way she meets Cleveland who becomes the love of her life. From the very beginning, they can hardly resist a caress, a touch, a brush against in feigned sleep. Chinky convinces him to avoid his aunt and uncle and come with her instead. Eventually, they open Munson's All-Purpose store and spend the rest of their lives in the suite above. Chinky loved Cleveland from the start, and though their children moved to the lower forty eight, Chinky had no desire to leave the perfect place. When Cleveland dies of old age, Chinky cuts off her long grey braids and lays them on his chest to be buried with him. Then she goes home and picks all of the monkshood and foxglove from the garden behind the store, grinding up the flowers and stems and eating them all with a whiskey chaser. An Inuit boy who delivers groceries to them finds her sitting upright, the pink and purple petals scattered around her.

## Mrs. Mortimer

Mrs. Mortimer is the lord of everything at Hazelton Agrarian Work Center for Women. She is described as the Hera and Zeus of Hazelton; pursuer of virgins and nymphs; a jealous goddess rife with dark vengeance and suspicions. Her hands are the hands of a Victorian woman, long and pretty with rosy nails that are oval and just a fine trace of blue lines. Aware of their effect, she uses them dressing with stiff lace cuffs and wearing a large ruby cabochon on her index finger.



## **Guy Gagneaux**

Guy is the man who drives the mule train that Lillian takes after she leaves Arthur and his new wife Lorena to continue her search for Sophie. Guy is a gentleman who helps keep Lillian safe on their trip and when they arrive at Echo Creek, he gives her a pair of shearling gloves and a Tlingit knife.

## **Athabaskan**

The Athabaskan is one of the people who travel the Telegraph Trail when Lillian heads that way by mule train. He is the kind of handsome that is suitable for the movies, with long black hair. He is generous, sharing his cigarettes with Lillian each night before heading back to his own bedding.

## **Yaakov Shimmelman**

Yaakov and Lillian meet at the Royale when Meyer invites her to join them for cakes and tea. Yaakov hands her his business card and feigns indignation when she laughs out loud at his tragic but humorous outlook on life. Meyer refers to Yaakov as high strung and harmless. Yaakov appreciates Charles McKim and Stanford White, having walked past buildings of theirs and seen displays of the drawings.

## **Andy McGann**

Andy McGann works as a porter out of Union Station. Called Red by most people, he is the second person who will hide Lillian on a train as she continues her trip. Red is a bit taller than Lillian and his muscles are slowly turning to fat. His skin is white with the exception of high pink cheekbones, and he has rust colored hair, slicked back high and smoothed down. His eyes are blue and he has age creases on his neck.

## **Fat Patty**

Hazelton's artist, Fat Patty suffers from spasms and hepatitis – both as a direct result of her profession, but she keeps the room warm to cut down on the shivering of her canvas. She has the large laugh of many overweight women, and runs her cell as though it is a department store offering everything from lipstick to chocolate. Fat Patty gives Lillian her first tattoo when she arrives at Hazelton - the name 'Sophie' in script with seven stars.





## Sophie

Tante Liesl helps as Sophie is born the daughter to Osip and Lillian. She had black hair, thick and full, and midnight blue eyes. Her cheeks were red and her eyes had a look of comprehension from the start.

Sophie is four when the soldiers come and her mother sends her to the chicken coop, telling her to be very quiet. Somehow, when her mother comes looking for her after the soldiers had gone, she is not by the coop and though her mother searches for her, she can find no sign of her.

Sophie is seen by Mr. and Mrs. Lipsky who were neighbors and, believing the rest of her family was dead, they take her with them to Siberia. Once there, they change her name to Tatiana Bugayenko and is the jewel of Rivka Pinsky's life. She is intelligent, gets good grades, and eventually goes to university where she studies science. A poem written by her is published in the early 1960's in which she thanks her father for telling her the truth about universities. She continues to read and write poetry and marries a scientist. They have no children of their own, but are devoted to their three nephews.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Litvak

This is a type of Russian person.

## The Child of Nature

This is the play in which Meyer Burstein made a name for himself playing the part of Yankl.

## Matinee Idol

Meyer Burstein is referred to as a Matinee Idol, a term which describes theater or film stars who are love to the point of adoration by their fans.

## Broom Closet

A broom closet is the extent of the accommodations provided for Lillian which she pays five dollars and includes a drink and a sandwich.

## Mary Jane's

Mary Jane's are the kind of white shoes with rounded fronts that Clothilde is wearing when she first meets Lillian.

## The Little Girl Specialty

The Little Girl specialty is what Clothilde uses as her lure as one of Snooky's prostitutes. Calling herself Gumdrop, she wears the clothing that would typically be found on a well-heeled young girl whose parents loved to dress her up. Outfits that Clothilde wears include a sailor suit; a lavender wool coat with matching gloves; saucy berets and other outfits that an extremely spoiled ten-year-old might wear.

## Stiletto

A stiletto belonging to Snooky is what accidentally lodges into his chest after Lillian falls into him, killing him.



## **Snake**

A snake is what Clothilde refers to when she speaks of Walter.

## **Pleiades**

This is a constellation of seven stars in the northern sky that are often referred to as the seven sisters. It is said that Orion chased them, and the Gods turned them into stars according to the dwarf at Hazelton.

## **Bulfinch's Mythology**

Bulfinch's Mythology is one of Mrs. Mortimer's favorites and she typically lends it out to new girls who join her library group.

## **Chang Christian Road Show**

The Chang Christian Road Show is the travelling show that Chinky Chang's father and the rest of her family ran for a living. All Grifters, each family member contributes a skill to support the overall cause.

## **Derblay**

The Derblay is the boat on which Chinky met Cleveland and both of them abandoned their families to be together.

## **Austrian Hiking Boots**

Before Lillian leaves Arthur gives her a pair of Austrian hiking boots lined with rabbit fur.

## **Tlinglit Knife**

The mule train driver, Guy, gives Lillian a Tlinglit knife along with a spare pair of shearling gloves when they part ways in Echo Creek.



# Settings

## Turov, Russia

Turov is the town in which Lillian was living with her husband and daughter until the soldiers came and killed all but her.

## New York City

New York is where Lillian arrives in America when she first immigrates from Russia.

## Goldfadn Theatre

Girls lined up in the Goldfadn Theatre in the hopes of securing a sewing job and are interviewed by Reuben Burstein.

## The Royale

The Royale is the first outing that Meyer invites Lillian on, joining Reuben and Yaakov for cakes and coffee.

## Ye Olde Chop House

Located at 118 Cedar Street, Ye Olde Chop House is where Meyer offers to take Lillian to.

## Siberia

Siberia is where Raisele tells Lillian that her daughter Sophie was taken by the Pinsky family when they thought the entire Leyb family had perished.

## Blue Bonnet

The Blue Bonnet is one of the few places where Yaakov and Lillian can go without fear of being seen by someone.

## Pennsylvania Station

Pennsylvania Station is where O'Brien takes Lillian to board a train for Chicago. She will have to transfer to the Great Northern Railway in La Salle.



## **Track 107**

Track 107 is where O'Brien takes Lillian as arranged through Yaakov for her train trip to Chicago.

## **Great Northern Railway**

The Great Northern Railway is the railway on which Lillian will travel to get to Chicago. The company logo is a white goat standing against the backdrop of a red mountain.

## **St. Paul**

St. Paul is the stop at which Red McGann lets Lillian out to use the facilities and also where Clothilde Browne goes to begin her new life as an English teacher after she and Lillian accidentally kill Snooky.

## **King Street Station**

In Seattle, King Street Station is where Red McGann lets Lillian out, her train ride at an end.

## **Skid Row**

Called Yesler Way now, the original Skid Row was so named in 1852 when a logger named Henry Yesler built the narrow, rutted strip to slide his logs down from the forest to the mill.

## **Alaska Steamship Company**

The Alaska Steamship Company is located on Pier 70 and will be the steamship that takes Lillian to Prince Rupert.

## **Prince Rupert**

Located in British Columbia, Prince Rupert is where the Alaska Steamship will take Lillian, according to Yaakov.

## **Seattle**

Seattle is where Walter (aka Snooky) sets Clothilde up as one of his prostitutes.



## **Black and Tan Club**

The Black and Tan Club is where Snooky sets Clothilde up to work for him.

## **Golden West Hotel**

The Golden West Hotel is the best colored hotel west of Chicago and is where Clothilde takes Lillian for dinner and to meet Walter.

## **Collins Overland Telegraph Trail**

The Collins Overland Telegraph Trail was the widely known information trail for the north until radio and telephone took over and the stations closed. It is along the Telegraph trail that Lillian walks to get to Dawson.

## **Winslow Hotel**

In Prince Rupert, the Winslow Hotel is where the Haida girls who come to town on occasion set up their personal services. The hotel is empty and it is where Arthur and Lorena hands Lillian off to a wagon train driver as she heads north.

## **Hazelton Agrarian Work Center for Women**

The Hazelton Work Center is a place for women who house women who are in trouble, but not bad really. Arthur Gilpin calls the center and tells them that Lillian tried to steal his watch. She will spend the winter at the work farm and in the spring she can leave for Dawson, he tells her.

## **Ketchikan**

Ketchikan is where the missionaries who are Cleveland's aunt and uncle want to take him to help them convert fallen women, gold miners and heathens.

## **Munson's All-Purpose Store**

Munson's All-Purpose Store is the name of the place that Chinky and Cleveland open and run together for the rest of their lives.



## **Echo Creek**

Echo Creek is where the mule train that Lillian takes north stops for a time, and then is taken over by the tenders.

## **Tinglit Knife**

When the mule train arrives in Echo Creek, Guy Gagneaux gives Lillian a Tinglit knife to help her on her journey north.

## **Refuge Cabin Number Nine**

Refuge Cabin Number Nine is the cabin that John Bishop finds himself maintaining after a confrontation in a bar has him accidentally killing a man. It is also where John Bishop meets and falls in love with Lillian Leyb.



# Themes and Motifs

## When One Must, One Can

'When One Must, One Can' is a saying Lillian is famous for quoting, especially when she is faced with a task that is distasteful or difficult. The first time she uses it in this story is when she asserts herself in front of Meyer and Reuben Burstein, taking charge of a group interview and making sure that she stands out in their minds. When asked about her abilities, she reassures them that she is capable, insisting that when one must, one can.

This saying may not be repeated by Lillian out loud often, but her general behavior and demeanor tell the reader that it is her mantra and her constant companion as she goes from one difficult situation to another while on the road to Siberia where her daughter Sophie was taken.

Lillian's next opportunity to think of this phrase would be when Red offers to help Lillian save herself the \$5 fare for riding in the closet by getting down on her knees and satisfying him. She tries, but he admits that most times he is without success and then tries to convince her that he is really a decent man. Lillian is again given an opportunity to chant her mantra when she gets off the train in Seattle and going out the wrong door is mugged. She loses her money and spends the next two weeks working as the secretary for a black prostitute with a 'Little Girl' specialty. Worse yet, Lillian is accidentally responsible for killing Gumdrops cousin and pimp, Walter (aka Snooky). They clean up and run, Lillian undoubtedly telling herself that when she must, she can.

When Lillian gets to Prince Rupert, she is discovered sleeping in an abandoned hotel by the local constable who locks her up for the winter (for her own safety) giving Lillian an entire winter for her now well used mantra, but still she continues. Next, Lillian takes a mule train to Echo Creek and then begins the long walk down Telegraph Trail to Dawson. It is a long, lonely, painful trip with many opportunities for her favorite saying.

Luckily, Lillian meets the love of her life, John Bishop along the Telegraph Trail. They plan to find Sophie together, but when John doesn't return from looking for Lillian after she gets lost in a spring snowstorm, Lillian looks for him for three weeks and then, with food running out, she leaves for Dawson alone... likely citing her mantra.

When she manages finally to secure a boat she can handle herself, probably citing her saying every time another person told her she couldn't do it, she sinks it shortly after rounding the first bend in the river, losing everything. This is the first time that Lillian loses her way, and her sayings are no help until John miraculously finds her.





## Love and Life

Lillian loved many during her lifetime, most of it spent on a quest to find her daughter, Sophie, a task she never accomplished. Her love and the loss of loved ones convinced her to leave her home for a new life in America. In no time, she was living in an apartment that Meyer Burstein paid for and his father Reuben visited frequently. While she was fond of both – more senior than junior – she loved Yaakov. Their relationship was like that of father and daughter, and she would hear his voice in her head for years after she saw him last. Lillian left them and the security they provided her for love but this time is the love of a parent for a child. Lillian is determined to find her daughter Sophie.

Her trip to Siberia where Sophie now lives with neighbors, is one that takes Lillian by train to Seattle and on by boat to Prince Rupert. The next love she finds is the love of friendship that she extends and receives in Hazelton where Chinky befriends her and makes living there bearable for all but two weeks of her sentence. Lillian stays with Arthur and his new wife Lorena who personally put her on a mule train heading north.

Lillian travels until Echo Creek where she is told they have come to the end of the road. From there, Lillian continues on foot following the Telegraph Trail. It is on this trail that she will find love again. Lillian meets John Bishop in Refuge Cabin Number Nine on the Telegraph Trail. His job, all but obsolete now, had been the source that had warned him she was coming. Lillian is welcomed, looked after, fed and almost leaves the following day, but after walking away from the cabin, she found she already missed John. She went back, telling herself that she would at least leave him a note, but awakened when she opens the door, he invites her to come closer instead. She loved him then, and likely stayed twenty one days looking for him because of that love, but when food ran out, she set out for Dawson, leaving notes and directions should John be looking. This love, shared by John, would sustain her a lifetime. Together they would try to cross the straight three times to look for Sophie and three times they would fail. They would have a son and a daughter, and love them dearly followed by grandchildren that they spend many trips visiting.

## Masks We Wear

Gumdrop is a prostitute with a specialty. Gumdrop's specialty is 'The Little Girl'. Her closet is filled with clothing that perpetuates this theme including white and navy pinafores; silk blouses with matching flounced skirts; silk stockings in varying colors; several pairs of Mary Jane shoes in varying colors with rounded toes (some with ribbons instead of snaps); a sailor suit with white ribbon trim that has a matching red and white saucy beret; and a wool coat and matching kid gloves in lavender and much more. Gumdrop has the wardrobe of a very spoiled 10-year-old girl. Lillian realizes that Gumdrop is more of an actress than anyone she has ever met and sees her as a colored Mary Pickford. Watching Gumdrop go from being Clothilde to adopting the demeanor of Gumdrop reminds Lillian that everyone wears masks of one sort or



another to survive. At first she tells herself that she has only begun wearing masks since the death of her family, but realizes soon enough that that is not the entire truth. Lillian faces the fact that she had been playing a part of one sort or another for as long as she could remember. She was the dutiful daughter; the wife; the mother; and the widow long before coming to America.

Clothilde and Lillian were not the only ones who wore masks of one sort or another to survive. Walter wore a mask when he adopted the personality of Snooky and conducted business as Gumdrop's pimp. Meyer Burstein put on a mask whenever he held the public eye, the Hollywood heartthrob while in private he preferred the company of other men to the company of women. To further his image publicly, he secures a love nest into which he moves Lillian who discovers that Meyer's father Reuben is more likely to make use of it than his son is, although Meyer is there on occasion. A further example of a mask worn by Reuben is the one he dons as the potential dotting grandfather to Lillian's child when Lillian believes she is pregnant. It is beyond doubt that of the two Burstein men, Reuben would be the father if a child were created simply because Meyer had never been face to face with Lillian in bed. Still, Reuben insists their time together would of course have to be concluded, and he would soon dote on the child that they would tell the world is a product of Meyer and Lillian.

Chinky is another example of a person who dons many masks to survive. A self admitted grifter, Chinky travels with her family, taking advantage of those they came across as they traveled. Each family member played a role in the Chang Christian Road Show and Chinky was no exception until she meets Cleveland on the river boat from Hazelton to be reunited with her family. Exchanging her role in the Chang Christian Road Show for a part in life with Cleveland, she dons the mask of his wife, and adopts the dress and mannerisms of an Inuit woman when running Munson's All-Purpose Store - a persona she believed the general public could identify with and expected to see.

Lillian realizes that we all wear masks of one form or another to survive in life; some wearing it so well that they are no longer aware they have it on at all.

## **Prostitution/Survival**

This novel gives several examples of how people are sometimes forced to prostitute themselves in order to survive. One of the oldest professions, prostitution has long been seen as a woman's 'get out of abject poverty' option. While there are a few that would take on this kind of profession for the sheer enjoyment of it, those are uncommon. Most people would sell or part with their prized possessions before they would give up their dignity, but when one has nothing left to sell or barter with, prostitution is a service for profit industry. Prostitution can take on many forms. This book shows brief glimpses into prostitution with a pimp where money is exchanged for sexual services; Snooky has three girls including Gumdrop, and only Gumdrop has a specialty. This book also shows how prostitution can be seen as a civilized transaction in which one member is willing to pay for the exclusive services of another - this is seen in the case of Lillian and Meyer (and Reuben as well).



While prostitution is generally seen as sexual services for a price, but that is not always the case. In this story, Meyer prostitutes himself on the silver screen for an audience who view him as a heartthrob actor. He sells that image to maintain his support on the stage while in truth what Meyer really wants bears little resemblance to what he has. Meyer leaves New York soon after he grieves his father's death, heading for Hollywood and a new career in film.

## Parental Love

Away is a fictional account of one woman's love for her daughter and the strength and determination that love gives her. Lillian Leyb is convinced that she has lost her entire family when she leaves Russia for America. Lillian's Aunt Mariam told her that her daughter was dead, and encouraged her to get a new start somewhere else. When Lillian gets word through her cousin Raisele that her daughter Sophie is alive and being cared for by neighbors who moved to Siberia, Lillian is overcome with the need to be reunited with her. She immediately begins to search for help to get her to Siberia, appealing to Reuben first, and then Meyer, telling them the story that Raisele told her. Despite their discouraging remarks and complete lack of financial support, Lillian is determined to find Sophie. With no one else to turn to, Lillian asks Yaakov for help. Though Yaakov doesn't have the resources financially that the Burstein's have, he is willing to help, and Lillian is willing to lower her expectations so long as she is able to get to Siberia.

Yaakov arranges for Lillian to ride a train to Seattle for the bargain basement price of five dollars, but her accommodations on two different trains are in a broom/utility closet. Both train rides are done in the dark and she spends them sharing a floor with a bucket and mop, and a variety of other cleaning implements. The second train porter offers to save her five dollars for some personal attention along the way, and not wanting to make waves, Lillian agrees. Her standards continue to drop as she travels northward, hoping every day brings her closer to Sophie. In order to be with her daughter again, Lillian will face hardships in the wilderness that she has never known before; walk miles and miles along the Telegraph Trail to get to Dawson City; serve a winter in a woman's work farm and almost leaves the love of her life, but at the last moment loneliness has her turning back to him. Of course, returning to John Bishop doesn't mean that Lillian will give up her search for Sophie. Lillian will try to sail the crossing from Dawson City to Siberia once alone, almost drowning in the process and losing everything she owns; and twice more with John, but she never manages to get all the way there. Despite months of travel, and the sacrifice of everything else in her life to that point, Lillian will never see Sophie again, but her parental love will last her lifetime.



# Styles

## Point of View

*Away*, by Amy Bloom is written in an omniscient viewpoint in which the story is told by an all-knowing presence that is able to reveal past or future events and can at any time dip into the consciousness of a given character and reveal their inner thoughts and emotions. Amy Bloom does a credible job of giving each of the major characters a unique and idiosyncratic voice so that the reader never struggles to follow the story line or figure out the sub plots.

Part one examines Lillian Leyb's past and present, along with revealing the strength of her character. The story takes place between July 1924 and May 1926 - the first part covering up until September 1925. Although several other characters are introduced in part one, the parts they play in Lillian's life are brief and only serve to add structure and context for survival. The author does reveal the future course for two of the characters introduced in this part, describing how they fare after Lillian is gone and in the future of their lives as well.

Part two introduces Clothilde and Walter, showing the lengths that Lillian is willing to go to in order to continue on her quest to find Sophie. There is also an overview of the future Clothilde has after she and Lillian part company, and despite her outward success, she still thinks of Walter and his death, revealing a knowledge of yet another character's future.

Part three introduces Chinky Chang who impacts Lillian's life briefly. Chinky's future is revealed including Cleveland Munroe and is described to their conclusion after she and Lillian go their separate ways which is another clear example of this writing style.

Part four brings Lillian to Mr. Mason's cabin where for a time she stops to help out after Mrs. Mason passed away. Finally, Lillian comes upon the love of her life. John Bishop is introduced, and despite setbacks that kept them apart for a year, John finds his way to her again and they are never apart again. Their future together is a story revealed before he finds her.

## Language and Meaning

*Away* by Amy Bloom is a story that follows the struggle of Lillian Leyb to find her daughter after they are separated when soldiers come and kill all other members of the family in the house. Sophie is found by neighbors who believing Lillian is dead take her to Siberia to live with them. Lillian, having nothing left to live for in Russia, immigrates to America where she is hoping to start a new life. Lillian leaves what was a secure and happy life as a mother and a wife and moves to America where she peddles her services as a seamstress until she finally manages to secure a love nest paid for by two prominent New Yorkers. Lillian's grasp of the English language improves quickly with



the help of a thesaurus and an Russia - English dictionary. Although there are Yiddish expressions that she uses from the very beginning such as 'Az me muz, ken men' (When one must, one can.), Reuben does his best to correct every mistake she makes. The result is that although slow to respond at times, her fluency soars.

Part two introduces Gumdrop and her pimp, Snooky, and recounts the events that lead up to Snooky's accidental death. Lillian spends two weeks in Seattle's prostitution business, adapting her skills from 'companion' to Reuben and Meyer to 'secretary' for Gumdrop. Her life changes from lunches at the Royale to managing the social calendar for a specialty prostitute. It is a culture shock, but one she will adapt to in order to see Sophie again.

In part three, Lillian is introduced to Fat Patty and Chinky Chang among others who make Lillian's incarceration in Hazelton bearable. Once again, she suffers a culture shock as she goes from being the consort of two important New York business men to being the last woman on the chow line in an institution which alter her perceptions of social graces somewhat. In Hazelton, women barter sex and contraband, thinking nothing of conducting either business in full view of the other residents. Lillian quickly learns a very different social structure, and must adapt or suffer to survive. The same can be said for Chinky in part three who goes from being part of a traveling show to being a wife and mother as well as store owner, and must change her entire demeanor to fit the part. Playing an Inuit woman, Chinky trains herself to boldly look directly into other people's eyes, and add a degree of cheeky to her demeanor.

In part four, the author reveals how much Lillian's journey has truly changed her, and how difficult the constant isolation has been. Lillian meets John Bishop who operates one of the stations on the Telegraph Trail and their first few attempts at conversation are a train wreck at best. He begins by telling Lillian she looks like she could use a bath, without actually inviting her in to enjoy one, and she soon responds by announcing that the rabbit he is preparing to feed them both for dinner looks like dead children. Neither observation is one that could be considered as socially acceptable, but since both have been beyond the realm of social graces for some time, they've both lost the subtleties and manners of polite conversation. They bring each other back from the wilderness and into civilization of sorts again bringing them both full circle emotionally in their lives.

## Structure

Away by Amy Bloom is a fictional story of one 193 pages which is divided into four parts. Each part is further divided into chapters, the first part containing the most at six chapters and the remaining three parts containing either two or three chapters each.

The first part is 82 pages in length, divided into six chapters that average 14 pages each. The shortest chapter in this section is seven pages in length and the longest is 24. Each chapter is titled and Part One opens in 1924. Lillian has come to America from Russia hoping to escape the horror of losing her entire family at the hands of soldiers. She lines up with a hundred and fifty other girls for a chance at a job at the Goldfadn



Theatre where father and son Burstein are interviewing. Lillian reveals herself to be bold and resourceful as she pushes her way to the front of the crowd and manages to get their attention. In the second chapter, Meyer Burstein invites Lillian out for tea and cakes at the Royale and when they arrive, they join his father Reuben and long time family friend Yaakov Shimmelman. In chapter three Meyer sets Lillian up in an apartment where he can visit her in private, but his dark secret is also revealed - Meyer Burstein, the Matinee Idol is gay. Meyer's father begins visiting Lillian while Meyer is trolling elsewhere for attention, and Reuben doesn't much care what Meyer thinks about it, so taken is he with Lillian. In chapter four, Lillian juggles the attentions of Meyer and Reuben, each revealing a very different need for her. Raisele is waiting inside the apartment when Lillian returns from shopping and tells her that her daughter Sophie is alive and with former neighbors who headed to Siberia with her. Lillian asks both Reuben and Meyer for help to get there and find her, but both refuse. Only Yaakov helps although it breaks his heart to let her go. Chapter six is the beginning of Lillian's journey - a train ride to Seattle that is reduced because she is willing to ride in a closet.

In Part Two, which is thirty-three pages long, there are only two chapters - the first 24 pages in length and the second has nine pages in total. In the first of two chapters, Lillian arrives in Seattle, but is mugged before she can get to the Alaska Steamship Yaakov told her would be the next part of her journey. She meets Gumdrop and her pimp Snooky, and together, they accidentally kill Snooky when they try to rob him of money that Gumdrop assures Lillian he owes her. In the second chapter, she is boarding the Alaskan Steamship for Prince Rupert, and finds herself in the company of two Christian woman. She meets Constable Arthur Gilpin in Prince Rupert, who tries to talk her out of making the rest of her trip to Siberia in the winter, but when Lillian refuses to wait for spring, he has her arrested and held till winter passes.

Part Three has three chapters that span 30 pages. In the first chapter, Lillian adjusts to life in Hazelton Agrarian Center for Women where she meets Chinky. In the second chapter, Chinky's life is revealed while in the third Lillian is released and after a brief stay with the Gilpin's. she is introduced to the mule train skinner as the Gilpin's daughter and begins her journey to Dawson. The mule train gets her to Echo Creek where she will begin the rest of her journey along the Telegraph Trail on foot.

Part Four has only two chapters and is 33 pages in length. The first chapter reveals the toll her journey takes on her, and introduces Mr. Mason and his three children. The children are found by Lillian after their mother has been dead at least two days, and she stays until their father returns. The last chapter introduces John Bishop who will be a part of Lillian's life from then forward, despite hardships and a year of separation when John breaks both legs in a fall. They will try three times together to go to Siberia for Sophie, failing each time, but have a family of their own and live a happy and full life together.



## Quotes

Come back tomorrow morning, clever pussycat.  
-- Reuben Burstein (Part 1: Chp 1 paragraph 13)

**Importance:** This quote is significant because it reveals the character of the girl Reuben Burstein is referring to: Lillian Leyb. He tells her she is clever because rather than wait her turn to be quietly interviewed, Lillian pushes her way to the front and ensures that she is noticed. Reuben and Meyer both notice her.

You ought to get some gloves.  
-- Meyer Burstein (Part 1: Chp 2 paragraph 26)

**Importance:** This quote is relevant because despite Meyer's desire to be with a 'real' woman who earns her paycheck weekly with her hands, he is still embarrassed to be seen in public with her when her hands so obviously tell the world that she is a seamstress and little more.

It would be for propriety for you and me, I should get my wrapper.  
-- Lillian (Part 1: Chp 3 paragraph 17)

**Importance:** Lillian reveals her intention to keep some decorum between them when he arrives late one night. She is Meyer's 'kept' woman and Reuben knows it, but can't see why he can't have what he wants too.

My Esther is more modern than you think - she wants Lillian to speak English at home.  
-- Reuben Burstein (Part 1: Chp 4 paragraph 2)

**Importance:** Reuben tells anyone who will listen that Esther is the reason that Lillian and he spend so much time together learning English with Yaakov at the Royale.

You'll be dead before you get to Kiev.  
-- Reuben (Part 1: Chp 5 paragraph 37)

**Importance:** Lillian desperately wants to go to Siberia to find Sophie and Reuben tries to show her the folly of her idea, explaining that even if she got to Siberia, she would never find Sophie as easily as she thought. Besides, if she left to find Sophie, she would no longer be there for him.

You must keep sharp.  
-- Red McGann (Part 1: Chp 6 paragraph 46)

**Importance:** Red tells Lillian this because he truly believes that the world is a terrible place and that she has to be prepared. In many ways, despite the ordeals she has already survived, Lillian is still an innocent.



In about two minutes, they'll have the clothes off your back.  
-- Gumdrop (Part 2: Chp 1 paragraph 9)

**Importance:** Gumdrop wants Lillian to understand the peril she is in, and to get her to her feet before things get worse. Normally, Gumdrop would not have involved herself, but she thought that this woman might be of some use to her.

Promise me you'll stay in for the night and I'll take off the handcuffs.  
-- Arthur Gilpin (Part 2: Chp 2 paragraph 30)

**Importance:** Arthur can't seem to impress upon Lillian that a trek along the Telegraph Trail in the fall is a dangerous idea and will likely get her killed. He can see that she has integrity however, and would take her word for it had she simply said she would have stayed.

I'll think of you the whole time I'm travelling.  
-- Chinky (Part 3: Chp 2 paragraph 5)

**Importance:** Chinky reveals in one sentence how close she and Lillian became in the winter that they spent together in Hazelton. She even offers to wait another two weeks until Lillian is released, but had she done that, she would have missed meeting her soul mate.

This is our daughter.  
-- Lorena Gilpin (Part 3: Chp 3 paragraph 11)

**Importance:** The quote is important because by telling the lead mule skinner that Lillian is their daughter, they ensure a safer ride for her. This kindness kept her from harassment most of the mule train trip.

You could use a bath, I expect.  
-- John Bishop (Part 4: Chp 2 paragraph 7)

**Importance:** John doesn't ask Lillian if she wants a bath, but makes the statement that she can use one. While Lillian recognizes this, she isn't about to be embarrassed out of a bath and some rest and dinner.

I thought I'd lost you.  
-- Lillian (Part 4: Chp 2 paragraph 147)

**Importance:** Lillian loses track of John in this brief glimpse of their future the author gives us. She casts around in the crowd for him and for a moment briefly panics, thinking she'd lost him. John puts his arms around her and reminds her that she couldn't lose him if she tried.