

The Beginning of Spring Study Guide

The Beginning of Spring by Penelope Fitzgerald

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



Contents

The Beginning of Spring Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Chapter 1.....	7
Chapter 2.....	9
Chapter 3.....	11
Chapter 4.....	12
Chapter 5.....	13
Chapter 6.....	14
Chapter 7.....	15
Chapter 8.....	16
Chapter 9.....	17
Chapter 10.....	18
Chapter 11.....	19
Chapter 12.....	20
Chapter 13.....	21
Chapter 14.....	22
Chapter 15.....	23
Chapter 16.....	24
Chapter 17.....	25
Chapter 18.....	27
Chapter 19.....	28
Chapter 20.....	29
Chapter 21.....	30
Chapter 22.....	31



[Chapter 23..... 32](#)

[Chapter 24..... 33](#)

[Chapter 25..... 35](#)

[Chapter 26..... 37](#)

[Chapter 27..... 39](#)

[Objects/Places..... 40](#)

[Themes..... 43](#)

[Style..... 46](#)

[Quotes..... 49](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 50](#)



Plot Summary

The Beginning of Spring takes place in Moscow, Russia in the spring of 1913.

On the first page, Nellie Reid, wife of the principal character, Frank Reid, packs up her three children and leaves for England. She leaves a brief note for Frank, his first notice of her intent. The note does not say why she left or if she has any intention of returning.

Frank Reid is an Englishman born in Moscow. His father arrived there in the 1870s to start a business importing printing machinery and died a few years before the start of the story. Frank has lived there all his life with the exception of a few years in England to learn the printing business. Though he speaks Russian fluently, he is still considered an Englishman. When Frank returns to Moscow to take over his father's business, he finds that the only part of the business worth keeping is a small printing plant known as Reid Press. The machinery import side of his father's business had not prospered.

Along with Reid Press, Frank has inherited two key employees, Selwyn Crane, a management accountant and Yakob Tvyordov, a highly-skilled compositor.

Frank receives a telephone call early the following morning from the station master of Alexander Station, (Alexandervoksal) telling him to pick up his three children, sent back by Nellie, immediately. He takes them back to their home at 22 Lipka Street.

Frank is faced with the pressing issue of making arrangements for the children and approaches Mrs. Kuriatin. Arkady Kuriatin is a Merchant of the Second Grade, a distinction of no little importance, who does business with Reid Press. Frank asks Mrs. Kuriatin if his two older children, Dolly, 10, and Ben, 9, could come to the Kuriatin house after school. He could pick them up after the press closed. The third child, Annushka, is only three and a half and can be taken care of easily by Frank's household staff.

Mrs. Kuriatin says "Absolutely!" and urges Frank to start that very day. There is to be a party for her oldest child, Mitka, who has received a dancing bear as a present.

The party is a debacle, and Frank next calls the English Chaplaincy for help. Mrs. Graham, the chaplain's wife, is feared for her strong views on how people should conduct their lives, but Frank is desperate. When Frank arrives at the Chaplaincy, Mrs. Graham is visiting with Miss Muriel Kinsman, a governess recently dismissed from a position with a Russian family outside Moscow. If she does not find employment, she will have to return to England the next day. Miss Kinsman sets new standards for dowdiness, and Frank is not inclined to offer her a job despite her urgent situation. In fact, he departs without mentioning his children to Mrs. Graham. After he leaves, he senses that Miss Kinsman is trailing him through the streets of Moscow. He tries to evade her, but cannot. Finally, he shifts course to encounter her, and she says she is looking for the address of Mr. Frank Reid. Frank realizes that she does not know who he is, ends the interview and returns home.



The next morning, Selwyn comes to the rescue after Frank outlines the situation to him. Selwyn, who always seems to be assisting some poor soul, says that he might know someone who can help. Lisa Ivanova is quite young, perhaps nineteen or twenty, but she holds a responsible position at Muirka's, a local department store. Frank asks him to bring her to the house after Muirka's closes. The interview goes well, and the children seem to accept her. She is quite beautiful, Frank does not like how she wears her hair, in two long braids. They arrange that she will start the following Monday, with the stipulation that she cuts her hair. She appears the following Monday with her hair cut short.

Later that week, Kuriatin asks Frank to dine with him at Rusalochka's, a tea room associated with the Merchants' Club. Frank leaves the restaurant to find Selwyn waiting for him with news that he had noticed a light on at the press. Frank investigates and finds Volodya, a young man who pulls out a revolver and fires a couple of shots. He misses Frank but destroys a tray of type in Tvyordov's frame and puts a bullet through Tvyordov's apron, which hangs near the frame. Frank subdues the young man, who turns out to be a student, and concerns the night watchman who heard the shots. He sends Volodya home, locks up and goes home. He tells Lisa, Ben and Dolly about the encounter. Lisa expresses a mild interest, unusual for someone so quiet.

The next day a police inspector and deputy arrive at the Press. Frank eases their minds about the break-in and raises doubt about whether the night watchman had actually heard shots. The police accept a routine bribe and leave quietly.

A telegram from Nellie's brother, Charlie, arrives announcing his imminent arrival in Moscow for a visit. Charlie is impressed with Lisa Ivanovna but seems confused about everything else. He has no real news about Nellie. She arrived at his house shortly after her disappearance, but left the next day, leaving most of her luggage. He thought she was teaching somewhere. Charlie proceeds to spend time with Selwyn, Bernov, Kuriatin and others, enjoying his vacation in Moscow.

Frank calls again on Mrs. Graham, who is alarmed that a girl of unknown background is sleeping in the Reid house. She asks Frank if it might be possible that the girl is involved in a revolutionary group. Frank puts her mind at ease.

Before leaving Moscow, Charlie suggests that it would be a good idea to take the children back to England with him. Frank and Dolly disagree. Charlie offers to take Ivanovna, believing Frank may be worried about his children traveling alone with Charlie. Frank is even more opposed to that idea, and the plan is quietly dropped.

On Palm Sunday, Lisa Ivanovna takes the children to see the crowds in the streets. Frank gets a call to come to the Security Police. They have Valdimir Semyonich Grigoriev, known to Frank as Volodoya, who has confessed to breaking in to Reid Press on the night of March 16. Frank answers all their questions, many of which are about his household and business. They hold Frank responsible for Volodya's behavior until he completes his course at the university. Frank and Volodya leave the Security Police office together. Frank says he knows Volodya did not intend to kill him. Volodya says, on



the contrary, he was trying to kill him, but almost immediately amends that to say that he was only trying to frighten him. He admits he knows Lisa Ivanovna, and it becomes clear that he is madly in love with her after meeting her three times in the library. He suspects that Frank may also love Lisa.

Frank eventually meets the children and Lisa Ivanovna. The children beg to visit the dacha with Lisa during a holiday. Frank agrees.

The next day he receives a letter from Volodya. The student says that he realizes that his suspicions about Frank and Lisa must be groundless, for Frank is too old for her. Actually, Frank is realizing he is strongly attracted to Lisa. The night before Lisa and the children are to leave for the dacha, Frank successfully acts on this realization.

While at the dacha, Dolly hears a sound at the door in the middle of the night. She pulls on her coat and boots and finds Lisa on the front porch. Lisa appears to be leaving and says Dolly will have to go with her. They tramp through the forest for a mile or two, finally arriving at a clearing. Dolly becomes aware that there are people hiding behind the trees, saying, "Lisa, I can see hands." Lisa speaks as though to a crowd. "I have come, but I can't stay."

While the children are at the dacha, Selwyn has a meeting with Frank that he has wanted for some time. He confesses that Nellie had urged to him to live with her in a forest. He had watched in hiding as Nellie arrived at the train stop where he was to join her, but he had gotten cold feet. She had given the children to a conductor as the train pulled out. He has learned through correspondence with Miss Kinsman, currently at a Tolstoyan settlement in England, that Nellie had been at the same place until a few days ago.

The following morning, Frank again receives a call to pick up his children at Alexandervoksal. He gets them, brings Ben and Annushka home and takes Dolly to his office where he questions her about what happened. Dolly tells him that Lisa put them on the train to Moscow and then took another train to Berlin. Frank never raises the subject again.

That day, the household staff is having the ritual spring house opening. In the middle of the ritual, a taxi arrives at the front door. A servant opens the door and Nellie walks in.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The setting is 1913 Moscow. Nellie Reid, Frank Reid's wife, has left her home in Moscow and taken her three children, Dolly, Ben, and Annushka, with her.

A messenger has a letter to deliver to Frank. It is odd because Frank is at his home at 22 Lipka, which is where the messenger took the letter from Nellie. The letter was supposed to be delivered to Frank at his office at Reid Press. Frank has arrived home early, so the messenger had not yet started for the office. He is, rather, in the kitchen having a cup of tea. For the benefit of the servants who are watching him closely, Frank reads the letter slowly, and then tells the staff that his wife has taken the three children and left, but that he doesn't know for how long.

Frank Reid was born in Moscow of English parents. His father had been an importer and assembler of printing machinery. Along the way he had acquired a small printing business, which was about all that Frank had left.

After reading the letter he calls Selwyn Osipych Crane, his chief accountant and a fellow Englishman. Selwyn consoles him briefly on the phone and says he will come over soon, after he has finished checking the wage-bill against what the pay clerks are actually paying. He suggests that they have dinner, but Frank doesn't want to do that. Selwyn comes over to 22 Lipka. He urges Frank to come on a walking tour with him in the coming summer, but it is not something Frank is in a mood to consider. Selwyn leaves. Frank tells him again that he will be in the office in the morning at his usual time. After Selwyn has left, the servant, Toma, tries to elicit information about what Selwyn had told him. They find that Selwyn had left his briefcase behind, which has happened a number of times before. In a way, it feels like a kind of consolation.

Chapter 1 Analysis

In the first paragraph of the novel the readers learn that Frank Reid's wife, Nellie, has taken their three children and left, presumably to return to England. The resolution of that situation is the main thread of the story. The readers begin to meet the main characters, Frank Reid and Selwyn Crane, for example, but also members of the Reid household, like Toma, described simply as a servant, but clearly some sort of a higher ranking person equivalent to the head butler in England. There is an interesting contrast between Reid and Selwyn Crane. Reid, although he was born and grew up in Moscow, is thought of by everyone as a British businessman. Crane, on the other hand, has become completely Russian. He lives in a part of town where foreigners seldom live and he dresses in an odd mix of British and Russian garments of his own design. Even though he works for Reid Press as their principal accountant, people think of him as

very much the creative artist. He has written a volume of poetry, which is being printed by Reid Press.

We begin, in this chapter, to get a sense of Russian life. The Reid's household staff seems to feel that they are participants in the lives of their employers.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

An early morning phone call informs Frank that the three children are at the Alexander Station being looked after by the station master's wife. Frank takes a sledge taxi to drive him to the station and wait while he collects the children. He is careful to choose a sledge that appears to be just starting out for the day, rather than one that had been working all night, because that would be very likely mean the driver would be drunk. The children are not in the station. He is told by the waitress in the station restaurant that they have been taken to the station master's house a short trip away. Telling the sledge driver to wait, Frank goes from the station to the home of the station master, where he finds the children not in the care of the station master's wife, but a kitchen-mother, who is available as required at 80 kopeks a day. It turns out that the stationmaster's wife, trusting no one in Moscow, is back in her village recruiting waitresses for the spring season. There is a tremendous pounding on the door. It turns out to be the taxi driver wondering if they are ever coming. Frank collects the children and they head back to their home on 22 Lipka.

When they reach home the whole household seems to be laughing and crying. Only Dunyasha, whose job is to help Nellie with the children, is absent. As soon as Frank returns, Dunyasha appears to ask for her internal passport. The custom is that the employer holds all internal passports. Without a passport one could not travel more than fifteen miles. Dunyasha wants to leave; she is no longer happy in the house because she is being criticized. Frank opens the drawer where he keeps all the passports locked away. He gives Dunyasha hers.

Later, Frank says to Dolly that it was lonely in the house while the children were away. Dolly says that they weren't away for very long. She asks if he knew what mother was doing. Frank says he did not. Dolly says she expected as much. She adds that her mother had to send them back because they weren't a comfort to her. She tells her father she thinks he asked too much of his wife. Frank does not agree. He tells Dolly he knows his own mind and so does her mother.

Chapter 2 Analysis

In this chapter we see how good Frank is at dealing with Russians. He immediately realizes that his sledge driver is taking a route that allows him to charge extra due to the steepness of the route, but which is not the most direct route to the station. When confronted by the waitress in the station restaurant, he knows how to gain her complete cooperation by saying that he knows that it is in no way her responsibility to keep track of everyone in the restaurant. She immediately becomes anxious to please and tells him where his children have been taken. The readers also begin to see what a remarkably

grown-up ten-year old Dolly is. She knows what she thinks and unhesitatingly speaks her mind.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

We learn how Frank's father, Bert Reid, started his business selling printing machinery in Moscow in 1870. Frank was sent back to England to study printing and mechanical engineering. After completing his courses he took on an apprenticeship at Croppers of Nottingham. While Frank was at Croppers, his father wrote that he had started a small printing press as a subsidiary. He also wrote to say he had hired a man named Selwyn Crane as chief accountant. Selwyn Crane was said to be a poet and very spiritual. He was a disciple of Tolstoy (Lev Nikolaevich) and visited him often at his Moscow estate. Bert also told Frank of hiring Yacob Tvyordov to be his chief compositor.

Frank transferred from Croppers to Hoes of Norbury because of their more up-to-date machines. In Norbury he met Nellie Cooper, who lived with her brother Charles and his wife, Grace. Nellie made it clear that she was twenty-six. She also admitted that she didn't really like anything very much. She was due to take her qualifying exam to be a teacher, but confessed that she didn't like teaching all that much. The choral society where they met was doing *Hiawatha*, but Nellie said, to be honest, she didn't care so very much for music. Frank escorted her home, kept seeing her and shortly they arranged to get married. Nellie doesn't hesitate to say what's on her mind. One day a short time before the wedding, Nellie and Frank are in Nellie's home together while she deals with details of the wedding. She asks Frank if he would like to see her things. He says he would be pleased to. She takes him to an upstairs bedroom where her trousseau is on display (except for the wedding dress) and proceeded to remove her clothes. Nellie didn't like having people say of her that she didn't know what she was in for. "I won't be got the better of," is the way she puts it.

Chapter 3 Analysis

This background is important in understanding much of the interplay among the characters in the novel. Of particular interest is Nellie's lack of enthusiasm for the things she does. It is also interesting to note how often and in what context the word 'spiritual' is used. Selwyn Crane is described by Bert Reid, Frank's father as being spiritual, although his first thought was 'religious.' The word spiritual is used with some frequency throughout the novel, generally to suggest that the person referred to is slightly out of touch with the real world.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

After the marriage, Frank and Nellie didn't go directly back to Moscow. They stopped for three years in Frankfurt, Germany, where Frank worked with Hirschfeld's Printing Machinery. Dolly was born there, then Ben, then a miscarriage.

In the winter of 1905 Bert Reid dies in Moscow. He did not die in the uprisings of that year, which were a series of strikes and violent outbursts in protest of the Russian war with Japan. He died of a heart attack. His wife followed shortly, overcome by grief people said, while in the study of the Anglican Chaplaincy, to arrange for Bert's funeral. Frank was summoned by cable. He remembered his mother had expressed a wish to be buried in her home town in England. He had to make all the arrangements for both funerals, find a place for his family to live, and take over his father's business. He found that his father had taken a number of risks. Included in the papers by his bed was a booklet that described a huge printing press, The Mammoth. Bert had ordered one although he had no customer in mind. The huge piece of equipment was lying under a tarpaulin under many inches of snow. It was unassembled and unpaid for. Frank realized he must arrange to get rid of it and pare back the business. Reid Press, called Reidka by the people who knew it, was prospering nicely so Frank decided to concentrate on that.

Nellie liked Moscow much more than Frankfurt. The Reid family house had half burned down in the riots, and had been filled with water by the firemen. The water immediately froze, ruining pretty much everything that had not been burned. The one article that was saved was Mrs. Reid's Bechstein piano. Frank and Nellie leased a house at 22 Lipka Street and Nellie set about putting it in order, including bringing in the Bechstein.

Chapter 4 Analysis

In this chapter the readers understand how Frank came to be the proprietor of Reid Press. It was the only viable piece of Bert Reid's business that remained after his death: that, plus The Mammoth, which was more of a liability than an asset. The mention of the English Chaplaincy, where Frank's mother collapsed and died, is an indication of the extent to which the Reid family remained British even after having lived in Moscow many years. There is more about the Chaplaincy, and about Mrs. Graham, the chaplain's wife, in later chapters.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Frank begins to assume real control of Reidka. Consultation with Selwyn Crane brings out the fact that an overseer, Korobyev, has been cheating the workers at every turn. Frank calls a special meeting, the only purpose of which is to let the employees talk about the problems they have with the overseer. Korobyev himself does not bother to attend. He asks for his internal passport, which Frank gives him, and leaves the building.

There is a full description of the work habits of Tvyordov, the chief compositor. Tvyordov is widely respected for the quality of his work in hand-setting type. His reputation probably accounts for some portion of the firm's success. His fellow workers are in awe of him and the way he always does everything on a very precise schedule. He arrives for work at the exact same time each day, sets his watch in a special place on his type case, times the minutes and seconds it takes him to set his first few lines and from that sets his goal for the day. Tvyordov takes his break at three minutes to ten each day, winds up the office clock each week, and cleans its glass. His feelings towards typesetting methods probably account for the fact that Reid's does monotype but no linotype.

Frank goes up and down Seraphim Street, where the plant is located, to ingratiate himself with the other firms located there. In this era, part of the taxes paid by a business in Moscow depend on what neighboring companies say about the other businesses. In conjunction with this effort to ingratiate himself, Frank arranges to pay for a night watchman for the whole block

Chapter 5 Analysis

The readers see Frank as a caring and thoughtful manager. When Korobyev, the evil overseer, was bewailing his fate after being let go, Agafya, the tea lady, went to her knees to beg Frank to have mercy. Frank reminded her that Korobyev had been taking forty-seven kopeks a week off her wages, Agafya returned to her samovars. After Korobyev's dismissal, Frank took on the overseer's responsibilities as well as continuing to be the manager.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 all relate things that had taken place prior to the time the novel ostensibly begins. In effect, they were a flashback bringing the reader up to the point where Nellie has left and Frank has recovered his three children.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

In late autumn 1911 Annushka is born. Frank buys a small gold cross for the baby at the behest of the babka who delivered her. Dolly and Ben ask for crosses, too. Frank asks Nellie if he should get similar crosses for Dolly and for Ben. Nellie said he had better if he does not want to be pestered. Frank does not quite believe that part. His experience with Dolly leads him to feel that she says things only once.

Nellie's brother Charlie writes regularly—to Frank rather than to Nellie. His letters generally complain about how terribly things are going in England, that the society is falling apart. His wife Grace died and he lives alone.

Frank thinks that the long-term outlook for foreigners like himself to continue to run a business in Moscow is not bright. He feels that within five to ten years they will probably be forced to leave Russia. One concern is the change beginning to appear in the relationship between the government and the governed. The premier, Piotr Stolypin, has been assassinated. Rasputin is gaining in power and is thought to be extremely corrupt.

At home, Frank hires Dunyasha to help Nellie with the children, but Nellie does not seem to think that Dunyasha is much help.

Chapter 6 Analysis

There is a hint here about the coming revolution in Russia. Frank is concerned about the outlook for his family's long-term future there. This adds to the picture of Frank as a thoughtful person who thinks beyond the boundaries of his business.

The readers also get a glimpse of Nellie seeming to not quite understand her children, to have some distance between her and her brother, and not being terribly successful in making use of the servant Dunyasha, whose only job is to help her with the children. The observations about Nellie begin to draw a picture of a quite difficult person who is not comfortable with her roles of wife and mother of small children.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Frank thinks that Nellie must be coming back. He wires all the railway stations on the way to Berlin. Then he wires Charlie every six hours. After three days Charlie wires back that Nellie is not there with him, but is safe and well. He adds that he will be coming to Moscow shortly. Frank cannot understand how Nellie could be safe and well without him and the children. He writes to her every morning. He tells Dolly that if she wants envelopes and paper they are in the right hand drawer of his desk. Dolly says it would probably be better if she didn't write. She expresses the view that Nellie's mistake was probably getting married in the first place. Frank finally realizes that something has to be done about the children; Nellie's absence might be longer than he had at first thought. Annushka had been pretty much adopted by the cook and the kitchen-maid, but Dolly and Ben need someone. Frank thinks of Kuriatin, a merchant of the second grade who deals in timber, wood pulp, and paper. Kuriatin has a large, albeit somewhat tumultuous, household. The house is not far from Frank's office so one morning he stops around (Kuriatin did not have a telephone) to talk to Mrs. Kuriatin. She agreed to have them come after school; in fact, they should come that very day because there would be a party for her eldest son, Mitya. Mitya, it seems, is getting a bear cub as a Shrove Tuesday present, so the party is expected to be a big event.

Chapter 7 Analysis

From the conversation between Frank and Dolly over writing to her mother, the readers see that Dolly thinks Nellie made a mistake in getting married. That seems an unusual way for a child to think of her mother, but then Dolly is an unusual child.

The complete willingness of Mrs. Kuriatin to have Dolly and Ben come round to her house after school shows the acceptance Frank enjoys in the Russian business community. He is regarded as a friend as well as a customer, so of course they are happy to oblige him with this small favor.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Dolly and Ben are attending Mitya's party at the Kuriatins. There is a bear, supposedly a dancing bear, but the bear refuses to dance. It retreats to a corner. Dolly tells Mitya to get the bear something to drink. Mitya goes into the dining room and comes back with a bottle of vodka, which he proceeds to serve to the bear. The bear laps it up and begins to urinate all over the room. The children all laugh as the drunken bear staggers around the room. It leaves the room and proceeds to tear the dining room apart. Sergei, a servant, comes in and tosses a shovelful of burning coals on the bear, setting it on fire as the children continue to roar with laughter. Kuriatin arrives home at that point. Frank is with him. Frank quickly takes Dolly and Ben home, wondering where Mrs. Kuriatin was while the kids were destroying the place. He wonders also why Sergei hadn't thought to throw water at the bear instead of red-hot coals.

Kuriatin is supposed to be supplying wood to fix the floor of the machine room at Reid Press, but he has not done anything about it. That evening Kuriatin meets Frank in the steam room at the Armenian baths. He is very apologetic for failing on his promise to provide wood for Reid's floor. After paying a number of little bribes the wood is delivered.

Chapter 8 Analysis

After things settle down following Mitya's hilarious party, the thing that most worries Frank is where Mrs. Kuriatin had been all that time. It turns out that she was terrified of animals in the house and had been lying down. There is a good deal of protocol involved in the relationship between Frank and Kuriatin and his family. Things have to be done according to the rules. Knowing that the children had been put at risk, Kuriatin felt Frank's visit as a reproach. He insults Frank by asking why he cannot get his wife to come back, in order to redress the balance between them.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Frank visits the English Chaplaincy. Mrs. Graham, the chaplain's wife, receives him. There is a woman with her, plain, about forty or fifty, who is introduced as Muriel Kinsman. Miss Kinsman has been working as a governess for a family in the depths of the country, but appears to be on her way back to England, although she expresses a willingness to stay if anybody wants her. Miss Kinsman complains about her former employers, who also appear to have had many complaints against her. On his way out Frank runs into the chaplain, Rev Edwin Graham, who is on his way to vespers. Graham greets Frank, then proceeds on his way to the chapel.

Frank leaves the Chaplaincy. Miss Kinsman follows him at some distance. He is undecided as to whether or not he should arrange things so that they cross paths. They finally do. Frank asks her what she wants of him. She says she wants nothing, that it is Frank Reid's address she wants. It seems she did not get Frank's name when Mrs. Graham introduced them. She says she will have to go back to England tomorrow if she doesn't get a position and she has heard that Frank Reid may be in need of someone. He doesn't let her know that he is Frank Reid. He offers to escort her to the nearest tram, but she refuses his offer and trudges off.

Chapter 9 Analysis

This is the first detailed visit to the English Chaplaincy and Mrs. Graham, the chaplain's wife. Mrs. Graham likes to have a hand in everything that is going on in the English community in Moscow. It seems evident that she has told Miss. Kinsman about a possible governess position with Mr. Frank Reid whose wife has left him, but she does not seem to have made it clear to Miss Kinsman that the gentlemen also visiting the Chaplaincy is, in fact, Frank Reid. In a later chapter, it comes out that Selwyn Crane has advised Miss Kinsman to go to the Tolstoyan commune in England, and has been corresponding with her, but there is no mention in this part of the novel that they even know of each other's existence. It seems like a strange omission.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The next morning Frank calls up the Chaplaincy and learns from Mrs. Graham that Miss Kinsman has left for the Alexander station very early. Frank says that he thought Miss Kinsman wanted to be hired to look after his children. Mrs. Graham says she never would have suggested that because she knows why Miss Kinsman has been forced to leave her previous position.

At his office, Frank tells Selwyn about his encounter with Miss Kinsman, mainly as a check on his own understanding of the incident. Selwyn tries awkwardly to help Frank. He suggests that Frank's difficulty in making up his mind about what to do with Miss Kinsman reflects his difficulty in deciding what to do about Nellie. The conversation works its way into a pretty tight corner. Selwyn appears to be trying to tell Frank something, but it develops that, perhaps, Frank is thinking too much about his own needs and not enough about the needs of others around him, like Nellie, or like Miss Kinsman. He then gets around to asking Frank how his book of poems, *Birch Tree Thoughts*, is being set up. Frank says he is still trying to borrow some European type, but that Tyvordov will set it for him and they will hand-print it on the Albion.

Chapter 10 Analysis

One can feel quite sure that Mrs. Graham is not being completely honest when she tells Frank that she would never have thought of suggesting that he hire Miss Kinsman. The conversation between Frank and Selwyn is puzzling. It does seem as though Selwyn has something on his mind that he wants to tell Frank about, but he slips away from that difficult task by falling back on his well-known concern about his manuscript.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Later that afternoon, Selwyn appears at 22 Lipka. He tells Frank about a woman who could be the person to take care of the children. He describes her, Lisa Ivanovna, as a child of nature. She comes from the town of Valdimir where her father is a joiner. She has been working in Men's Handkerchiefs at Muir and Merrilees, known as Muirka's. Selwyn says he had noticed her crying one day at work. It was not that she had anything in particular to cry about but simply was not happy about being alone in the city. Frank says to bring her around after the store closes for the day.

The interview with Lisa Ivanovna goes well. Dolly and Ben seem to come to terms with her very easily and Annushka is still too young to figure in the decision. It is arranged that she will come to work starting next Monday. She asks Frank if they have a dacha; he says they do, although he himself does not go there often. He asks that she cut her hair, which is in two long plaits; he does not give a reason, but she nods to show she understands. Frank finds that he can't imagine her shedding tears as Selwyn has described. He thinks that the outside world does not seem to make enough impression on her for that sort of reaction.

Chapter 11 Analysis

This is the introduction to Lisa Ivanovna, one of the central characters in the novel. One can see that she is beautiful, calm and very quiet, qualities that Nellie could never claim.

There is also a bit more exposure to Selwyn's character. He is, in this chapter, described as a person forever looking for unfortunates to help. After he sees that the interview with Lisa gets off to a good start, he excuses himself. He is on his way to the Foundling Hospital.

A point to remember: it is Lisa who asks Frank if they have a dacha.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Kuriatin has promised to find a buyer for The Mammoth, which has been lying outside on a site that Frank wants to sell. But he has failed to follow through. Kuriatin tells Frank a story supposedly from his old village about a peasant who married a young woman. Frank thinks that this, like many of Kuriatin's stories, is probably something he made up just to make a knowing comment on the fact that Frank has hired a woman to take care of the children. In a conversation with Tvyordov at the press, Frank realizes that Tvyordov is making a comment quite similar to that of Kuriatin about his taking in a woman so soon after his wife has left. Neither of these opinions especially worries Frank, but he is concerned about how the staff at 22 Lipka will react. Toma expresses the feeling of the staff—without saying how they had arrived at it—by saying that they will be glad to welcome Lisa next Monday.

The following Monday evening, the first day of Lisa's employment, Frank and the children are waiting at the dinner table. Lisa appears and she has cut off her hair. Frank tried to avoid looking at her. Dolly tells her father that Lisa cut off her hair because he had not liked it when Lisa was first there. Dolly says he ought to say something about it. Frank is too much overwhelmed by Lisa's beauty to have a coherent conversation with her.

Chapter 12 Analysis

The important part of this chapter is the description of Frank's feelings towards Lisa. He says to her, "I see you've had your hair cut, Lisa Ivanovna." Ben chimes in to say that we all wish you hadn't. Lisa takes this calmly, and Frank is somewhat surprised that she doesn't look at him with some reproach or bewilderment, since it was he who suggested she cut her hair. Ben says she looks like a student. Lisa says she doesn't mind being told she looks like a student, but she doesn't want to look like something she is not.

Later, Frank tells her that he is sorry she'd never managed to study, if that was what she wanted to do. He says that if she needs help on anything at all she has but to ask him. Lisa says there are people who need help more than she does. Frank wonders if he is not one of them.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Selwyn is concerned about how his book, *Birch Tree Thoughts*, is progressing. Frank informs Selwyn that a new cost accountant will be joining the firm. This is something that had been worked out before Nellie left. Frank is conscious of the fact that it would have been better if Selwyn had been invited to be present at the interviews.

Kuriatin calls to ask why Frank needs more staff. He also wants Frank to have dinner with him at Rusalochka's, a crowded, very noisy, tea-room attached to the Merchants' Club. The waiters careen around among the tables, wheeling great silver tea-pots as if they were piloting bumper cars. While Frank and Kuriatin are there, unable to talk because of the noise, Selwyn appears at the table and seems to want to say something to Frank. Kuriatin begs him to sit and join them, but Selwyn will not. He refuses all offers of food and withdraws. The effect on Kuriatin is dramatic. He breaks into tears and tells Frank that he has been lying about arranging a Japanese buyer for the Mammoth. Frank says he knows, which is why he has negotiated the permits himself. Frank leaves the restaurant and finds Selwyn lurking outside, waiting for him. Selwyn tells him that he went past the Press and saw there was a light on where everything should have been dark. Frank asks Selwyn for the keys and asks him to let them know at 22 Lipka that he will be late coming home. Frank takes a cab to the office. On the way, he tosses a coin: heads he will stop at the police station and get an inspector to come with him; tails he will go alone. He goes alone.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Kuriatin appears to have two motives in asking Frank to have tea with him at Rusalochka's: partly he wants to make a deal with Frank that would give him at least an option on the lot where The Mammoth has been resting; partly he just wants to show off. It is interesting that Selwyn's brief appearance, and his refusal to join them at the table, should cause such a change. It is as though Kuriatin feels he has been exposed as a bit of a fraud, and that he now has to shift gears and put on his responsible merchant-of-the-second-class face.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Frank goes to Reid Press and finds it unlocked. He goes upstairs. He finds a young man at one of the compositor's stools. The young man, who appears to be a student, pulls out a pistol and fires twice. He doesn't hit Frank, but does hit Tvyordov's type frame and puts a hole in his white apron. The night watchman, having heard what sounded like shots, calls from downstairs to ask if everything is okay. Frank reassures him that nothing is going on. He then subdues the young man and takes the pistol away from him. The young man says he is a student. He says he is Volodya Vasilych, but does not give his last name. He says he was hoping to have enough time to get a couple of pages printed on the subject of universal pity. Frank convinces the young man to leave. As a parting gesture, he gives him a copy of *Birch Tree Thoughts* as a souvenir. The young man leaves. Frank turns off the lights and locks up. On his way home he throws the gun in the river.

When he gets home Dolly and Ben are studying, Lisa is sewing. Frank tells them about the student. Lisa asks his name, and where he has gone. When Frank says he thinks he went back home, Lisa asks, "Will he come back?" Frank says he thinks it is unlikely.

Chapter 14 Analysis

An important new character makes his first appearance in this chapter, the student, Volodya Vasilych, later to be identified by his full name, Vladimir Semyonich Grigoriev. He is the intruder found by Frank in the composing room of Reid Press. The first understanding is that he is trying to get a couple of pages on universal pity printed.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

The next morning, as he approaches the Press, Frank sends two apprentices who have been waiting for the Press to open, with a message to Tvyordov telling him that there has been a break-in and that he need not come in that day—that his pay would not be docked. A police and an orderly appear, having been told of the break-in by the night watchman. Frank explains to them that it was nothing. He casts doubt on whether the night watchman actually heard shots. Selwyn comes in and says a copy of *Birch Tree Thoughts* is missing. The police are familiar with Selwyn. The Inspector asks, "What do birch trees think?" Selwyn, who thinks that all questions should be answered, says that they think in the same way as women, at the whim of the winds. Frank can see that the captain and orderly are not really listening. He takes an envelope from his desk drawer and slides it across the desk. The captain accepts the small bribe and the two policemen leave.

After the police have left, Frank goes to confront his No. 2 and No. 3 composers. They are upset by the thought that there was an incident in their work area, but particularly by the absence of Tvyordov.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Frank is primarily interested in seeing that the investigation into the break-in is not escalated into a major security matter. He suggests that the night watchman may have only thought that what he heard were pistol shots. There are a lot of sudden noises in the industrial neighborhood where the press is located. He is relieved to see that the policemen are in uniform. If they were in plain clothes it would mean that Security was involved. It is interesting to note that the influence of Tvyordov is so pervasive that the other two composers cannot properly do their work if Tvyordov is not in the room.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

The new cost accountant, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Bernov, arrives at nine o'clock on his first day. He had been working at Sytin's, a large press. Talking to Frank and Selwyn, he puts forth a number of ideas of things that would increase profitability, but that would be hard on the staff. Selwyn Crane asks him how he sees the firm's future. Bernov talked about a system of merit pay for workers, increased fines for drunkenness, lowering payments for wait time and no humanitarian allowances. He defines prosperity as giving everyone the money they deserve. Selwyn punctures him by saying that "We musn't consider what money they deserve...but whether we deserve to have the money to give them." Bernov tries to save face by saying that the question of whether management deserve their profits has no relevance to their economic performance.

At four in the afternoon two very old employees come up to the composers' room, go to the icon corner, and set up a table to serve as an altar. The employees begin to stream in. The men stand on the right, the two women on the left. Frank and Selwyn stand in the middle. Bernov has excused himself and gone home carrying a load of paper-work. Frank is asked to light the candles. The parish priest comes in accompanied by a deacon and a subdeacon, and begins the service for the Feast of St. Modestus, the patron saint of printing.

Tvyordor comes in. After the service is over Frank goes to talk to him. He finds Tvyordov packing up his composers tools and his apron. He tells Frank that he will not work in that room ever again, that he will start tomorrow with monotype. Frank asks him what he will do with his tools. "I shall throw them in the river." He replies.

Chapter 16 Analysis

There is an interesting juxtaposition in this chapter between the urgings of the modern cost accountant, Bernov, and the traditions under which the press has been operating, with time allowed for such things as the observation of the Feast of St. Modestus, the patron saint of printers.

It seems clear that the firm is not about to adopt modern ways. Selwyn's feelings are very much on the side of the people. Frank, while very perceptive, is too considerate to expose the foolishness of Bernov's thinking.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Nellie's brother, Charlie, wires that he will be arriving in Moscow on March 31st (March 18th by the Russian calendar). The servants ask what must be prepared for the English visitor. Frank says Karl Karlovich (that is, Charlie) will need plenty of hot water and a boiled egg every morning. Dolly asks which of the children Frank will take with him to meet Charlie. Frank says he will not take any of them, that Charlie will want a few quiet moments to take everything in. Dollie asks if Uncle Charlie was quite right in the head. Ben asked if he was bringing Mother back with him. Frank said, "No." Ben continued, "If Mother does come, will you have to get rid of Lisa?" Frank does not like the expression 'get rid of' reserving that for bad things like an epidemic of cholera or bad habits. It had been a favorite expression of Nellie's.

Lisa comes for her weekly wages. Frank asks her how long she is going to stay with them. Lisa said she cannot answer. Frank says she might say, "as long as I want to." Lisa amended that to "as long as I'm wanted." Frank, who is required by law to keep the papers of his household staff, gives Lisa her internal passport. As he hands her her passport Frank says she can now say "as long as I want to." He adds that he very much wants her to stay.

Charlie arrives and Frank asks him immediately about Nellie. Charlie says she is not with him, but that he knows that she's perfectly well. He says she is school teaching, but he doesn't know where. It turns out that Charlie really has very little information. He seems to have come all the way to Moscow to say nothing.

Toma, the servant, in order stay in the room to have a few minutes to observe Charlie, revives an old argument with Frank saying that they need to have a fifth samovar.

Lisa comes into the room. She smiles at Charlie and says to Frank in Russian, "Please don't think I intended to sit down here. I know you want to talk to your brother-in-law." Frank says, in English, "No, I don't want to talk to him. Stay here, I'm in love with you. Charlie doesn't quite hear what is being said. After Lisa leaves the room he says, "She looks like a very refined type of young lady, Frank." Frank says, "She's employed here on a temporary basis. I mean while Nellie is away."

Chapter 17 Analysis

What Charlie had to say, which Frank thought amounted to nothing, was that Nellie had appeared at his door one day, left most of her luggage and disappeared the next day. He had heard she was at a school, although he doesn't know where it is. He assumes because of her age that she was not there as a student, and, therefore, must be teaching.

Frank's feelings toward Lisa are coming more out in the open, if not to Lisa (they were, after all, expressed in English) at least to the reader.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Frank and Charlie go to the Chaplaincy and have a talk with Mrs. Graham. Charlie is constantly impressed with Moscow and speaks of Frank's life there as something out of Arabian Nights.

Charlie has been spending time with Selwyn, and speaks with amazement that a management accountant should also be a poet. Charlie tells about Selwyn taking him to a concert to hear the pianist, Scriabin. On the way back he ordered Charlie to stop, threw back his head and looked at the stars. He had also given Charlie a copy of his book, which impressed Charlie greatly, although he could not claim to be a reader of poetry.

When Charlie goes off with Selwyn to the Conservatoire, Frank pays another visit to Mrs. Graham. He wants to ask her about Miss Kinsman, who seems to want something from him. Mrs. Graham assures Frank that Miss Kinsman has arrived safely in England. She has given Miss Kinsman a note to the Distressed Gentlewomen and said that Mr. Crane has recommended a Tolstoyan settlement somewhere near London with running water. But Mrs. Graham wants to move on to a discussion of Lisa Ivanovna and her presence in Frank's house. Mrs. Graham is distressed at the fact that all the men are so impressed with Lisa's beauty, accusing all men of being serf-owners at heart. She says she finds Lisa difficult to place. She says, "Let me put it quite plainly. Perhaps I'm quite on the wrong tack in thinking that there's anything mysterious about her. But do you think it's possible that she's connected with any kind of revolutionary group?" Frank tries to reassure her and they part on friendly terms.

Chapter 18 Analysis

This chapter shows Mrs. Graham to be something of a busybody, but it also includes her view on Selwyn. She seems to not quite trust him and refers to him as the great recommender because of his tendency to try to direct peoples' lives. She describes him as an idealist with his head in the clouds.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Kuriatin takes Charlie on an outing in his Wolseley car. Bernov, the accountant, is sent along to act as an interpreter. Kuriatin has suggested they go to the Merchants' Church, about twelve miles outside of Moscow. During the day at the Press, new official regulations have arrived, requiring that all fines for absence or drunkenness should be paid into an account under government control. Frank knows that Bernov would have enjoyed figuring out whether the lost income was overhead, a variable cost, or an abnormal cost.

Frank arrives home quite late. Lisa brings the children in to say goodnight, which both amazes and pleases Frank. Dolly suggests that Uncle Charlie shouldn't stay much longer because he hadn't brought Mother back and really can't say when she will be back. Dolly thinks that Charlie shouldn't be there just to enjoy himself. Frank would like it if Dolly were to give Charlie a hug, but Dolly has apparently decided against it. Frank realizes that as long as he can remember he has been used to human warmth, from his Russian business contacts, from his employees, from his servants. All Dolly gives him is a fearless, affectionate glance.

Frank sends all the servants to bed and stays up to wait for the trippers. They arrive sometime after 10:30. Kuriatin offers to take over complete control of the three children. This greatly impresses Bernov, but Frank says Kuriatin doesn't really mean it.

Chapter 19 Analysis

The reader hadn't been aware, before this chapter, of the extent to which Frank welcomes the warmth of family life. He is very pleased to have his three children brought in all together to say goodnight to him. Of course, Dolly and Ben could be expected to go to bed at the same time because they are very close in age, but it is unusual that Annushka should be going to bed at the same time. It is also brought out in this chapter how attuned Frank is, and how much pleasure he derives, from physical contact.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

It's the day before Charlie is scheduled to leave for home. When Frank leaves for work, Charlie walks with him as far as the tram stop. He says Dolly is going with him to do a little shopping for presents he needs to take home. He suggests to Frank that he take the children with him back to England. Frank is incredulous.

As Charlie and Dolly set out for the Trading Rows, Charlie says to Dolly that her father looked quite put out. He says he hopes he didn't talk out of turn. Dolly tells him not to worry about it now. She says that after they do his shopping and have some tea, she will tell him what she thinks. After they have gotten all the things he wants to take back, they find that the tea-room of the Rows is far too crowded. Dolly decides they will go to Selwyn's, which is in the vicinity. Selwyn lives in the east Miasnitskaya, just where it changes from a prosperous to a doubtful quarter. He lives without electricity. He is surprised and pleased to have visitors. He offers them a sort of tea he makes from nine herbs of healing. Dolly says they are for healing sick cows and says he should send the doorman out to get some tea. The doorman, however, anticipates that they will want tea and has some of his own to sell them. Dolly sees to the tea then sits down and says abruptly, "Uncle Charlie wants to take us back with him to Norbury. How he got such an idea into his head I can't think." Charlie tries to calm her. Selwyn chimes in with, "Dolly doesn't want to leave her father."

"I don't want to leave Russia," says Dolly. "It's the beginning of Spring. We want to go to the dacha. We don't want to leave Lisa Ivanovna."

Chapter 20 Analysis

While having tea at Selwyn's Charlie comments that Dolly was very handy in the kitchen. Selwyn relates that Tolstoy told him that if grown men and women live simply, and do tasks for which the need is obvious, the children will soon wish to share them. Charlie asks, "Do you think Nellie lived simply?" The question goes unanswered.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

That evening Charlie repeats his offer. He says that his theory is that Frank is negative about him taking the children because he thinks Charlie will have trouble managing the kids on the trip home. He suggests that the solution is for Lisa Ivanovna to come with them. Frank says, "Have you asked her?" Charlie reminds him that he doesn't speak Russian. He asks Frank to speak for him. Frank runs through several scenarios in his mind, all of which seem ludicrous. Frank finally says he does not know quite how to explain it to her. He asks Charlie if he is sure the children want to go to Norbury. Charlie admits that he is not sure they do. The subject is basically dropped, and the next morning Frank takes Charlie and all his packages to the station, including some last minute gifts of vodka and green tea sent by Kuriatin, and sees him off. Frank realizes that Charlie seems to have forgotten the main object of his visit. Nellie is not mentioned.

At supper Dolly asks, "Has he gone?" There is a feeling that they were somehow safer. Lisa never speaks at supper unless to answer a question. Frank thinks he has to do something to stir her up. Later in the meal, Dolly says that she thinks she will probably never get married and that neither will Lisa. Frank asks Lisa why she tells Dolly that. Lisa says, "What I told her was that once, perhaps even ten years ago, it was considered a terrible thing in the villages for a woman to be single." They agree that that is not the same thing at all. Later in the conversation Frank asks Lisa to respond to Ben's question asking: How it is better for women than it was ten years ago? Lisa puts down her spoon and says she hasn't had much experience in explaining. She says it is unkind to ask anyone for more than they have to give. Frank is shocked. The next day at the office he asks Selwyn if he ever thought of him as unkind. When it comes out that Frank is asking because of Lisa's comment, Selwyn says he will talk to Lisa.

Chapter 21 Analysis

It is with a feeling of considerable relief that the family says good-bye to Uncle Charlie. At supper that evening we witness the first supper-table conversation we have been told about between Frank, Dolly and Ben, and Lisa. Lisa, for the most part, is quiet. Frank thinks to himself that he's got to disturb her.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

On the day before Palm Sunday, the servants go round the house and to neighbours' to ask for forgiveness of any sins they might have committed during the year. Frank is surprised when Lisa asks him for forgiveness. She waits silently until Frank says, "I forgive you, Lisa."

On Palm Sunday she takes the children out to see the crowds. Frank says he will join them later. Then he has a phone call from the Ministry of Defense, political division, in other words, the Security Police. They say they are holding one Vladimir Semyonich Grigoriev, a student who has confessed to breaking into Reid Press on March 16th. They ask Frank to come to their office to identify him. While he is there, they ask Frank to confirm their information about his household staff. They further indicate that they know Frank has been taking steps to be able to sell his business and that he might leave Russia. Frank didn't contest any of their information, but said that he is not intending to leave at the moment. They say that all of his exit permits could be legally invalidated. They say they are making Frank responsible for Grigoriev, and that as long as Grigoriev is a student at the University Frank will not be allowed to leave Moscow.

Chapter 22 Analysis

This chapter shows the oppressive nature of the Russian bureaucracy. It is one thing to have neighbors, friends, employees, and casual acquaintances know all about one's business—the way, for example, that Kuriatin does—but it must evoke a different feeling to know that the state has a record of every detail of one's life. Frank seems to accept all this with equanimity.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Frank and Volodya walk away from the Security police. Frank, suspecting that Volodya has no money, buys pussy-willow branches and rolls (a Palm Sunday tradition) for Volodya. Volodya asks that they forgive each other. Frank says he is doing his best. He points out that to some extent his own well-being depends on Volodya's behavior. He says he doesn't think Volodya had intended to kill him the other night, but Volodya says that indeed he had, but that here had been something wrong with the pistol. Volodya goes on to say it is because Frank has taken Lisa Ivanovna into his house. He met Lisa at the public library and talked to her there on three occasions. Then, in a quick change, he says that he wasn't telling the truth before when he said that he intended to kill Frank; the truth was he had just wanted to frighten him. Frank asks, "What made you think I'd be frightened?"

"I thought you were a coward...because you ran away from the English governess."

Frank spots Lisa and the children across the square. He abandons Volodya and makes his way through the crowds to them. The children beg him to let them go to the dacha with Lisa. Frank decides that it will be all right if they go for a few days.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Finally, the readers learn why Volodya was found in Reid Press that night. He has been smitten by feelings of love for Lisa, and he cannot stand the idea that she is living in the home of an English businessman where she might become intimate with Frank.

It is interesting to speculate on where the idea of a trip to the dacha came from. Did the children think of it, or was it suggested by Lisa? Remember that when Lisa was first interviewed by Frank, the one question she asked was whether they had a dacha.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

On Easter Monday Frank receives a letter from Volodya. He writes in the letter he has revised his earlier thinking about a possible a sexual relationship between Frank and Lisa. He writes that because of Frank's reputation in the foreign business community in Moscow, and especially because of Frank's age, he now thinks that his suspicions must be groundless.

At 22 Lipka there is great packing activity. Even though they are only to be gone for a few days, the staff, possibly because none of them are going on the trip, begin packing as though the children would be away for months. After the packing is over for the night Frank asks Lisa not to go to bed. He says there is something he wants to ask her about, namely, Volodya. Lisa says she knows him. When Frank asks for more detail she describes him as someone who used to hang around the Men's Handkerchief department in Muir and Merrilees where she worked, and that he had stuck a note to her in a magazine she was reading in the library and waited while she approached that page. She even quoted the note to Frank; it read, "You're alive. I too am alive." She asks Frank what kind of trouble Volodya is in. Frank, gripping Lisa by the forearms, bursts out with Volodya's feeling that he couldn't bear that she should be close to someone like him. For the first time he feels he has Lisa's full attention, or at least as much of it as possible. He further feels sure she is not taken by surprise.

At that moment Selwyn appears, having picked his way through the clutter in the front hall. Frank tells him to get out unless he want his teeth shoved down his throat. During Selwyn's little interruption Lisa leaves the room. With Selwyn gone, Frank goes up the stairs at the back of the house and knocks at the door of Lisa's room. The door is not locked, but Frank waits until Lisa crosses the room and opens the door.

The next morning, early, the travelers leave for the dacha. Lisa appears in her raincoat. "What are you going to say to me?" Frank asks her at the foot of the stairs. After a slight pause, Lisa say, "Until next Saturday, Frank Albertovitch."

Frank says, "For God's sake, stay with me, Lisa."

But in the confusion of everyone saying goodbye he is almost sure she could not have heard what he says.

Chapter 24 Analysis

In his discussion with Lisa about Volodya, Frank can see that the young man has made no great impression on her. She seems to look on him as a somewhat foolish, and very young, man. Volodya's possessiveness of her is based only on his own imagination.

This may account for Frank's increased aggressiveness toward Lisa, although it does not seem he is wrong in feeling that he is stirring up a response. The good-bye as she and the children leave for the dacha, after the events of the night before, seem a further confirmation that she accepts Frank's ardor. She even addresses him by his Russian first name, Frank Albertovitch.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

The Reid Dacha is little more than a shack in the woods, but no one in the family, including Nellie, has been willing to part with it. The forest it was in had been cut occasionally, but never cleared, so the dacha is closely surrounded by trees. There is no way to reach it directly. The railroad stops at a nearby village, but from there the quickest way is on foot through the woods. The luggage went a roundabout way by horse and cart. There are other dachas in the forest, but at night there is not a light or a sound from any neighboring dachas. There is only the sound of the birch trees.

On the third night they are there, Dolly wakes in the night with the slight noise of a door opening. She puts on her boots and a coat and goes out to the veranda. Lisa is standing there, leaning against a pillar with a black shawl over her head. Lisa says it might have been better if Dolly had not woken up, but since she has, now she will have to go with Lisa. Lisa begins a rapid walk through the forest with Dolly struggling to stay up with her.

At one point Lisa notices that Dolly is limping—she put on her boots without socks, but Lisa says, "I can't go back with you now."

They walk straight away from the dacha and for a while Dolly can still see the light if she looks back, but then they turn to the left and the light is no longer visible. Dolly begins to see hands among the thronging stems of the birch trees. The hands seem to be moving to touch each other. Dolly calls out, "Lisa, I can see hands." Lisa stands still. Dolly can now see that by every tree a man or a woman is standing. Their faces are all turned toward Lisa.

Lisa says, "I have come, but I can't stay. You came, all of you, as far as this on my account. I know that, but I can't stay. As you see, I've had to bring this child with me. If she speaks about this, she won't be believed. If she remembers it, she'll understand in time what she's seen."

No one speaks. No one leaves the protection of the trees or moves towards them. Lisa turns and leads Dolly back to the dacha. Neither of them speaks about what happened. Dolly goes to her room and lies down in the bed she shares with Annushka. The smell of leaf sap is as strong inside the house as out.

Chapter 25 Analysis

The midnight scene in the woods is the most mysterious scene in the entire novel. What are readers to make of the strange meeting? Lisa seems to be drawn into her part in it as though governed by some odd compulsion. When Lisa speaks to the half-visible people hidden by the birch trees she says that they have come on her account, but she



cannot stay because of the child she has had to bring with her. Do readers now understand why she has asked Frank if they have a dacha? Is Mrs. Graham perhaps right to suspect that Lisa might be involved with a revolutionary group?



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

It is about time to open 22 Lipka for spring cleaning. Frank is putting it off until the children return because he knows they will be disappointed to miss it. He plans to go down to the dacha on Saturday to fetch them. In the morning mail he receives a letter from the Ministry of Defense. The letter says that he, Frank Reid, is released from his responsibility for V.S. Grigoriev (Volodya) because the latter has been taken into preventive detention. The letter goes on to say that not only would there be no objection to Frank's departure from Russia, he is urged to do so at his earliest opportunity.

Tvyordov comes to ask Frank if he will sign papers so he can go work in England. Tvyordov has a copy of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, which had been printed in England in Russian and he wants to go set type for the firm that has done this. Frank points out to him that the book is not in legal circulation in Russia and that he had better get rid of it as soon as possible. Secondly, he says that while he probably can arrange for Tvyordov to leave Russia, it is doubtful that he will be allowed to return. This is disheartening news. Tvyordov has been thinking of working in England only long enough to give him money to retire to his home village. He is crushed at the thought that he might not be allowed to do that.

Selwyn asks Frank to go with him that evening to the Philharmonia. He says he wants to have a serious talk with him. Frank wonders why it is necessary to go to a public place to have a talk. Instead, he asks Selwyn to come to the house that evening.

Selwyn starts with a philosophical comment about the two sides of man's nature. Frank asks him what he is talking about. Selwyn says, "Nellie." He suggests to Frank that Nellie has been changed by Russia, that she has turned toward the spiritual. He tells Frank that Nellie had suggested that they run off together. He was supposed to join her at the station in Mozhaisk, where the train makes a half-hour restaurant stop before proceeding toward Berlin. Selwyn tells how he hid himself so that he could watch Nellie as she walked up and down the platform, having sent the children to the restaurant. He said he watched as Nellie came to realize that her tryst with Selwyn was not going to take place. He saw her have the children's things taken off the train, saw her give the guard some money, and saw her get back on the train. Frank understands; Selwyn had gotten cold feet.

He asks where Nellie is now. Selwyn says she went to Bright Meadows, the Tolstoyan camp he had recommended to her. It turns out that Selwyn knows this because he has been corresponding with Muriel Kinsman, whom he also referred to Bright Meadows. The latest word is that Nellie is no longer at Bright Meadows. She had not taken to the communal life and had left. Frank said Selwyn could have told him all this before. Selwyn said that he had tried to but had found Frank with his hands on Lisa's breasts and thought it was not an appropriate time for discussion.



Chapter 26 Analysis

Now, finally the reader can understand how it came about that Nellie left. She was running away to be with Selwyn to live a life under the sky in forests of pine and birch. Frank protests that Nellie is the most practical person he has ever met. He has never known anyone to act more sensibly. Selwyn points out that Frank brought her to Russia, "a land of great contrasts." He said that Nellie was turning more towards the spiritual, although she tends to confuse it with the romantic.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Frank has an early morning phone call from the Alexander Station. The station master says to him, "Mr. Reid, for the second time your children are here at this station. Please come and get them right away." Frank asks to speak to Dolly. After a wait, Dolly announces, "This is Darya Frantsova Reid. Do you hear me?" She speaks clearly, but not with her old decisiveness.

Frank asks her what they have done with Lisa. Dolly says Lisa went with them to Ostanovka, put them on the train and turned and walked down the platform. He goes to the Alexandrovksal to get the children. They are all right, but Dolly is very clingy. She will not leave his side. He takes her to his office where she sits in the customer's chair. After a while, Frank asked her some questions; have they locked the Dacha? Yes. Have they been into the woods? Yes. Were the paths wet? Yes. When Lisa Ivanovna told them to stay on the train and get out at Moscow, did she say where she was going? Yes, Berlin. Frank never asks Dolly another question about the visit to the dacha. He realizes why the Security police are now in favor of his leaving Russia. He has at least one dangerous employee. He realizes that he has given Lisa back her papers without reporting that to the authorities, but he can't imagine who could have suggested it to them.

At noontime he sees he should take Dolly back home. He tells Selwyn and Bernov to carry on. Selwyn unexpectedly shakes his hand, and says, "Remember that what binds us together is the knowledge of the wrongs we have done to one another."

Bernov asks if he can ride with them in the taxi as far as the Alexander Gardens. On the way he tells Frank that he wants to go work in England—to emigrate. He says that Charlie has told him that he would always have a welcome in Longfellow Road.

When they get home they find that the window opening is in full swing. A horse-and-cab pull up in front of the house. Toma rushes to open the door. Nellie walks into the house.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Dolly has changed from her visit to the woods with Lisa. It is unusual for her to use the Russian version of her name. Frank touchingly recognizes her need to stay close to him, which is why he takes her with him to the office. He does a minimum amount of questioning, uncovering the fact that Lisa left the children go to Berlin. He understands why the Security police now favor his leaving Russia as soon as possible—it turns out that he has had a dangerous employee, pretending to be looking after his children. He wonders who, between Palm Sunday and today, could possibly have suggested this to Security.



Objects/Places

Reid Press

Referred by the affectionate diminutive, Reidka's. Frank's printing business on Seraphim Street, Moscow.

22 Lipka Street

The Reid house, leased when Frank and Nellie came to Moscow following the death of Frank's father. It is a roomy, two-storied house. The ground floor is stone; the second floor is wood.

The English Chaplaincy

An outpost of England in Moscow. It acts, largely due to the work of Mrs. Graham, the Chaplain's wife, as the central clearing-house for all the English people living in, or passing through, Moscow.

The dacha

The Reid's rough summer cottage deep in a pine and birch forest outside of Moscow. The railroad stops at a nearby town, Ostanovka. From there visitors generally walk through the forest, while luggage must come by cart via a circuitous route.

The river

Muscovites are devoted to their river. They watch it for signs of the ice breaking up. They use it to dispose of no-longer-wanted objects.

Rusalochka's

A super-crowded tea-room that is part of the Merchant's Club. Kuriatin likes to entertain there.

Tvyordov's type frame

Much of Tvyordov's personality, his work habits and his view of what constitutes acceptable typesetting, runs through the novel. His type frame is damaged in the break-in by Volodnya.



The Mammoth

A huge printing press bought by Frank's father on speculation lies disassembled on an empty lot near the printing plant. It is the subject of a good deal of back-and-forth bargaining between Frank and Kuriatin.

Alexandervoksal

The railroad station where Frank's children appear twice in the course of the novel, each time prompting a phone to Frank to come and retrieve them.

Mitka Kuratin's bear

A gift to Kuriatin's son, the bear is a central figure in a wildly entertaining chapter.

Blashl

The Reid family dog, is never allowed in the house. Nevertheless, she does appear on a couple of occasions.

Birch Tree Thoughts

Selwyn's book of poems.

Russian Proper Names

The Russian tradition for informal names is to combine a person's first name with the name of the person's father. For example, Frank is often referred to as Frank Albertovich, (meaning Frank, son of Albert). When Dolly uses the Russian version of her name, it is Darya Frantsovna (Dolly, daughter of Frank); Lisa is Lisa Ivanovna (Lisa, daughter of Ivan). Throughout the novel, when British characters are referred to in this manner by Russians, it can be read as a sign of affection or at least acceptance.

Muir and Merrilees

Also called Muirka's. A department store where Lisa works in Men's Handkerchiefs before being hired by Frank.

The Wolseley

Kuriatin's sporty car.

Tolstoyan Settlements

Communes that carry some sort of a blessing from Tolstoy that are routinely recommended by Selwyn.



Themes

Russia

Throughout *The Beginning of Spring*, the idea of Russia and of being Russian colors everything. Frank Reid, the principal character, was born in Moscow and grew up there, but he is not thought of by anyone as Russian. He is British and will always be British. His employees at Reid Press treat him affectionately, but on the two occasions when employees at the Press consider working in England, they appeal to him for help with the expectation that he can make arrangements for them because he is, after all, British. As soon as Lisa Ivanovna is introduced into the novel, it is a foregone conclusion that Frank is going to fall in love with her. It is as though she is the personification of Russia.

Privacy

It is almost an ongoing joke. Everybody in this novel seems to know everything that happens, particularly in the Reid household and at Reid Press. In fact, in a conversation with Mrs. Graham, Frank says, "Everyone in Moscow knows everything I do." Kuriatin comments repeatedly on events at Reid Press and at Frank's home. When Frank hires Bernov as his cost accountant, Kuriatin asks, "Why do you need more staff?" Frank says, "You'd be just as suspicious if I got rid of the lot of them." His circle's concern with his affairs could be a sign of Frank's high esteem, or it could be that gossip was an important part of life in Moscow at the time.

Spirituality

People in this novel, particularly Selwyn, are frequently described by others as spiritual. Selwyn himself asks Frank if he had noticed that Nellie appeared to be more spiritual before her flight. The word does not seem to be used in any ecclesiastical sense, but rather to indicate a tendency toward matters of the spirit as opposed to practical matters of the real world. Bert Reid, in writing to Frank about hiring Selwyn Crane, first describes him as being 'religious', but then revises that to 'spiritual.'

Attitude of the People Toward Government

The time of the novel is early spring of 1913, over a year before Russia became involved in World War I and four and a half years before the Bolshevik Revolution, yet there is a growing feeling that the government is becoming oppressive. Land reform has been a critical source of discontent. In the middle of the 19th century, vast amounts of land were taken away from serf-holding landowners and given to communities to administer for the benefit of the serfs. Attempted changes in plans of this nature never



seemed to last more than a few years. In 1911 the Premier, Piotr Stolypin, an activist in the land reform effort, was assassinated.

Russia

Throughout *The Beginning of Spring* the idea of Russia, and of being Russian, colors everything. Frank Reid, the principal character, was born in Moscow and grew up there, but is not thought of by anyone as Russian. He is British and will always be British. His employees at Reid Press treat him affectionately as a Russian, kiss his hand, hug him, and so on, but on the two occasions when employees at the Press are considering going to England to work, first Tvyordov and then Bernov, appeal to him for help, with the expectation that he knows exactly what to do to make arrangements for them, because he is, after all, British.

As soon as Lisa Ivanovna is introduced into the novel, it is a foregone conclusion that Frank is going to fall in love with her. It is as though she is the personification of Russia.

Privacy

It is almost like an ongoing joke. Everybody in the world of this novel seems to know everything that happens, particularly, everything that happens in the Reid household and at Reid Press. In fact, in a conversation with Mrs. Graham, Frank says, "Everyone in Moscow knows everything I do." Kuriatin comments repeatedly about events at Reid Press as well as at Frank's home. When Frank hires Bernov as his cost accountant, Kuriatin asks, "Why do you need more staff?"

Frank says, "You'd be just as suspicious if I got rid of the lot of them."

It could be taken as a sign of the high esteem in which Frank is held that his entire circle is concerned with how he is getting along, or it could be that gossip was an important part of life in Moscow at the time.

Spirituality

People in this novel are frequently described by others as being spiritual. The word is often used to describe Selwyn. Selwyn himself asks Frank, in connection with Nellie's running off, if he had noticed that she appeared to be getting more spiritual. The word does not seem to be used in any ecclesiastical sense, but rather to indicate a tendency toward matters of the spirit as opposed to practical matters of the real world. Bert Reid, in writing to Frank about hiring Selwyn Crane, first describes him as being 'religious', but then revises that to 'spiritual.'

Attitude of the People Toward Government

The time of the novel is early spring of 1913, a year and a quarter before Russia became involved in World War I, and four and a half years before the Bolshevik Revolution, yet there is a growing feeling among the people that the government is becoming oppressive. Land reform has been a critical source of discontent. In the middle of the 19th century, vast amounts of land were taken away from serf-holding landowners, but instead of being given to the serfs, the land was given to communities to administer for the benefit of the serfs. Attempted changes in plans of this nature never seemed to last more than a few years. In 1911 the Premier, Piotr Stolypin, who had been active in the land reform effort, was assassinated.



Style

Point of View

The Beginning of Spring is written using the third person limited omniscient narrator point of view. Frank Reid is the only character whose thoughts are revealed. When Frank is not present Fitzgerald uses the third person omniscient point of view to tell what took place. In the chapter at the dacha, when Lisa leads Dolly through the woods, the story is told through the eyes and mind of Dolly.

There are instances, particularly in scenes between Frank and Selwyn, where Frank is left feeling that there is more that Selwyn wants to say, but Fitzgerald doesn't disclose more than what Frank observes.

Setting

The novel is set in Moscow in 1913, a year and a quarter before Russia's entry into World War I and over four years before the revolution. There is a feeling among members of the foreign business community that they need to prepare to return home. Even the Russians sense that an important change is coming. Kuriatin, for example, has built up a stock of fine quality household goods - table-linens, china, against the day when the peasants rise up. Kuriatin mentions that this practice is not uncommon among merchants.

The season is late winter to early spring, symbolizing the experiences of the principal characters. In the final chapter the ritual reopening of the house takes place...and Nellie returns.

Language and Meaning

The language of *The Beginning of Spring* is economical and understated, dense without being difficult. When Frank tells his family about the student who broke into at Reid Press, Ben asks, "Do you think he's got a gun?" Franks says simply, "Not now." Foreshadowing is done subtly. For example, Lisa Ivanovna asks if there is a dacha during her job interview long before any significance can be attached to the question. Later, the children beg Frank to let Lisa take them to the dacha, but it is unclear as to why she does so.

There are interesting shifts in language depending on whether the people in the scene are British alone or British and Russian. When the characters are British, there are none of the Russian-style word forms, such as Muirka's for Muir and Merrilee's. When both British and Russian characters are involved, the Russian-style names and the diminutive nicknames are used.



Structure

The novel is divided into 27 chapters and is 187 pages in length. Some chapters are as short as four pages. After the first two chapters in which Nellie Reid takes the couples' three children and heads for England (Chapter 1) and the three children are returned the first thing the following morning (Chapter 2), there is a 3-chapter flashback. In the flashback Frank and Nellie meet in England, marry and move to Frankfurt, Germany. Frank is called back to Moscow when his father suddenly dies, and he takes control of Reid Press.

Chapter 6 returns to the point in time where the story began, the spring of 1913. From here things move forward chronologically over a period of five or six weeks, from the middle of March to late April. The novel ends on the Monday after Easter.

Point of View

The Beginning of Spring is written using the Third Person/Limited Omniscient Author Point of View. Frank Reid is the only character whose thoughts are revealed. When Frank is not present Fitzgerald uses the Third Person/Omniscient Author Point of View and just tells the reader what has taken place. In the chapter at the dacha, when Lisa leads Dolly through the woods, the reader experiences events through the eyes and mind of Dolly.

There are instances, particularly in scenes between Frank and Selwyn, where Frank is left, and the reader is left too, feeling that there is more that Selwyn wants to say, but Fitzgerald doesn't tell the reader more than what Frank observes.

Setting

The novel is set in Moscow in 1913. It is a year and a quarter before Russia's entry into World War I and over four years before the revolution, but there is a feeling among members of the foreign business community that they need to be prepared to close down and return home. Even the Russians sense that an important change may be coming. Kuriatin, for example, has built up a stock of fine quality household goods—table-linens, china, against the day when the peasants rise up. Kuriatin mentions that this practice is not uncommon among merchants.

The season is late winter—early spring. That is symbolic of what is happening in the lives of the principal characters. In the final chapter the ritual reopening of the house takes place...and Nellie returns.



Language and Meaning

The language of *The Beginning of Spring* is economical and understated: dense without being difficult. When Frank tells his family about the student who broke into Reid Press, Ben asks, "Do you think he's got a gun?" Franks says simply, "Not now." Foreshadowings are done very subtly. For example, Lisa Ivanovna asks if there is a dacha during her job interview—long before readers are able to attach any significance to the question; the children beg Frank to let Lisa take them to the dacha—again, before readers can understand why.

There are interesting shifts in language depending on whether the people in the scene are British alone or British and Russian. When the characters are British alone, there are none of the Russian-style word forms, such as calling Muir and Merrilee's Muirka's, for example. When both British and Russian characters are involved, the Russian-style names (Frank Albertovich, for example) and the diminutive nicknames are used.

Structure

The novel is divided into 27 chapters and is 187 pages in length. Some chapters are as short as four pages. After the first two chapters in which Nellie Reid takes the couples' three children and heads for England (Chapter 1) and the three children are returned the first thing the following morning (Chapter 2), there is a 3-chapter flashback. In the flashback it is revealed how Frank and Nellie meet in England, marry, and move to Frankfurt, Germany, how Frank is called back to Moscow when his father suddenly dies, and how he takes firm control of Reid Press.

By Chapter 6 readers have regained the point in time where the story began, Spring 1913. From here things move forward chronologically over a period of five or six weeks, from around the middle of March to late April. Actually, the novel ends on the Monday after Easter.



Quotes

"But we weren't meant to live alone" (13).

"I'm not going to let them stand about knowing more than I do. I won't be got the better of" (32).

"He didn't oppose his will to the powerful slow-moving muddle around him. What he did not like, or could not change, he guilelessly avoided. The current of history carried him gently with it" (37).

"With the terrible aimlessness of the benevolent, he was casting round for a new misfortune"(83).

"Lukewarm, but not quite cold, unbelieving, but not quite disbelieving, he had fallen into the habit of not asking himself what he thought"(90).

"Middle-aged poets, middle-aged parents, have no defenses" (95).

"Just as a woman's body...moves at her heart's prompting, so the birch tree moves in the winds of spring" (114).

"Yes, but you are Russian, you are used to everything Russian. You make mistakes, and you don't mind our mistakes. God has given you patience, to take the place of your former happiness" (124).

"All day, ever since he could remember, Frank had been used, in Moscow, to physical human warmth..." (142).

"...you don't grasp the importance of what is beyond sense or reason. And yet that is a world in itself. 'Where is the stream,' we cry, with tears. But look up, and lo! There is the blue stream flowing gently over our heads" (155).

"Who is there who can go through a single day without doing wrong" (156)?

"This is Darya Frantsovna Reid. Do you hear me" (184)?

"Remember that what binds us together is the knowledge of the wrongs we have done to one another" (186).



Topics for Discussion

Explain Lisa.

Why did Nellie run away? Why did she come back?

How will Frank and Nellie's relationship change following her return?

At one point, Selwyn asks Frank if he had noticed the extent to which Russia had changed Nellie. Do you agree that it might have been true? Discuss.

Does Frank become more Russian in the course of the novel, more spiritual?

At one point the author observes that Kuriatin has a rather strong odor. In what way does this observation contribute to the story?

Can Selwyn Crane be trusted?

In what way can Russia itself be considered a character in the novel?

In answering Frank's question about whether he (Frank) can be thought of as 'unkind,' Selwyn says, "...you don't grasp the importance of what is beyond sense or reason.' Do you agree? Discuss.

1913 is historical year in Russian history. How is that reflected in the novel?

Why did the author choose to title the novel *The Beginning of Spring*? Is there more to this choice than the obvious one?

Explain Lisa.

Why did Nellie run away? Why did she come back?

How will Frank and Nellie's relationship change following her return?

At one point, Selwyn asks Frank if he had noticed the extent to which Russia had changed Nellie. Do you agree that it might have been true? Discuss.

Does Frank become more Russian in the course of the novel, more spiritual?

At one point the author observes that Kuriatin has a rather strong odor. In what way does this observation contribute to the story?

Can Selwyn Crane be trusted?

In what way can Russia itself be considered a character in the novel?



In answering Frank's question about whether he (Frank) can be thought of as 'unkind,' Selwyn says, "...you don't grasp the importance of what is beyond sense or reason.' Do you agree? Discuss.

The year 1913 is an interesting time in Russian history. How is that reflected in the novel?

Why did the author choose to title the novel *The Beginning of Spring*? Is there more to this choice than the obvious one?