

The Corrections Study Guide

The Corrections by Jonathan Franzen

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Plot Summary

The Corrections by Jonathan Franzen is the story of a typical Midwestern family that is confronted with the issues of old age and illness. The Lamberts, Enid and Alfred, have grown children living on the East Coast who they want to spend Christmas at their St. Jude home. She wants one last Christmas in St. Jude and this sets off a whole chain of events.

Enid and Alfred have looked forward to their retirement. Alfred had looked forward to hunting, fishing and recreation but he just sits in his chair in the basement. Enid always nags at him, telling him what all of their friends are doing and what she thinks he should be doing. Alfred has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and has problems controlling his body and motor skills. He keeps telling her that he cannot and has no interest in any of those things.

The Lamberts are embarking on a luxury cruise to Canada, and fly to New York to spend the afternoon with their son, Chip and his sister Denise. Chip, who lost a position in academia due to his affair with a student, is now a free lance writer. He is more interested in making corrections to his screenplay than he is in spending time with his parents. While checking with his literary agent, he is introduced to Gitanas, the estranged Lithuanian husband of his mistress Julia. He accepts a position to work on Internet websites in Lithuania that defraud investors. He is off to Lithuania that evening without ever saying goodbye to his parents.

Denise is left to entertain her parents while trying to make excuses for Chip. She is an executive chef at an exclusive Philadelphia restaurant called The Generator and she sees her parents safely aboard the cruise ship and then returns to Philadelphia where she is romantically involved with both her boss and his wife. She is fired.

Oldest son Gary also lives in a Philadelphia suburb. The invitation to spend Christmas in St. Jude almost causes him and his wife Caroline to divorce. She and the two older children refuse to go there. In the end, Gary decides to go with youngest son Jonah who decides not to go at the last minute. Gary goes alone intent on having his parents sell their house before it depreciates more.

The cruise that Enid had looked forward to so much turns out to be a disaster. Alfred has an accident and has to be hospitalized.

Christmas is even more of a disaster due to Alfred's deteriorating condition, but Chip makes it home from Lithuania and Enid and Alfred have their Christmas in St. Jude with their three children.

This book contains elements of both tragedy and comedy that the reader will enjoy. It is lengthy yet entertaining.



Pgs. 3-40

Pgs. 3-40 Summary

The Corrections by Jonathan Franzen is the story of a typical Midwestern family that is confronted with the issues of old age and illness. The Lamberts, Enid and Alfred, have grown children living on the East Coast who they want to spend Christmas at their St. Jude home. She wants one last Christmas in St. Jude and this sets off a whole chain of events.

Alfred has been sleeping since lunch and is waiting for Enid to arrive home. They live in a house full of anxiety, which Enid feels is due to Alfred's lack of interest in life. She cannot get him interested in hobbies or anything else. She is looking for a letter that arrived from Axon Corporation in the drawers that are full of billing notices. She refers to Alfred as the governing force because he raids the drawers at times. She also raids his filing cabinet.

Most of their battle is waged on the basement ping-pong table which both tries to use for their own things. Alfred spends his time at home now that he is retired from the Midland Pacific Railroad.

In The Failure, the Lamberts are traveling to visit their children. Their son Chip meets them at the airport and wonders how he will survive their visit. Chip is spending time with them before driving them to the pier for their cruise. Enid thinks that Chip works for the Wall Street Journal.

They take a cab to Chip's apartment and have a discussion over the amount of the tip Chip gives to the cab driver. His girlfriend, Julia Vrais, is waiting in his apartment and Chip is relieved to find her there. After talking to Enid, Julia has to leave. Chip tells Enid that Denise, his sister, is coming to lunch.

Chip has written a play that he submitted to film producer Eden Procuero and he is waiting to see if it is acceptable. Julia says they feel it has too many references to breasts and Chip says he can make whatever corrections that are required. He asks Denise to stay with their parents while he corrects the script. As he leaves, she tells him that she cannot give him any more money since he already owes her more than twenty-thousand dollars.

Chip has always been successful until his girlfriend broke up with him and began an affair with a female student named Melissa Paquette. This costs him his job.

Pgs. 3-40 Analysis

Alfred and Enid Lambert are a retired couple from St. Jude. They live in a tense atmosphere because they get on each other's nerves. Alfred is ill and takes medication



and Enid feels that he just sits around the house. She can't get him to develop an interest in any hobbies which may be because of his illness.

They are leaving on a cruise and travel to New York where they spend a few hours with their son, Chip, before boarding the ship. Chip is a person who messed up his life by having an affair with one of his female students at a Connecticut college. This cost him his position but he does not tell his parent this. They think he is doing well as a writer.



Pgs. 41-76

Pgs. 41-76 Summary

Melissa argues with Chip in class that his purpose is to make the students hate the same things that he hates. Soon the rest of the students are questioning his motives and have him on the defensive. He is saved by the bell ringing, terminating the class and the semester. Chip is upset because he thinks that he is doing something that is socially useful, which is what his father always said he should do.

He spends the summer in England and Scotland instead of working on the book he had planned to work on. One Friday night, Melissa stops by his apartment. She gives him a plate of cupcakes and walks out. At Halloween, she leaves a Halloween bag of candy at his door. Melissa says she learned a lot in his class. She comes to his office, tells him about her family background, and makes physical advances which he rebuffs. She kisses him on the cheek when she leaves.

Eventually they become involved in a physical relationship and go away for a weekend together. They stay in a motel room until Melissa leaves to meet her father. She leaves in a cab.

Enid is telling Denise how Alfred fell down the basement stairs when carrying a twelve pound bag of pecans. She is still finding the pecans. She says that Gary, Denise's brother, wants Enid and Alfred to sell their house and move to Philadelphia. He wants them to move into an assisted living environment. As they are talking, Alfred falls off the sofa as Denise is preparing lunch.

Denise says that Alfred is depressed. She brings Alfred a plate of snacks and sees that his hands are shaking. Denise knows that Alfred doesn't want her to see him with what is called his affliction. Alfred has a hard time dealing with his affliction which is a body he can't always control. He had been the head of the Engineering Department and was used to having his orders obeyed and now his body won't obey him.

Enid is telling Denise that she is worried about their health insurance coverage as Denise fixes lunch. She tells Denise about the letter from Axon offering money for one of Alfred's patents. He wouldn't ask for more money. Enid didn't mail the agreement that Alfred had signed. Denise tells Enid to let Alfred handle his own business dealings.

Enid says she wants the family to have one last Christmas in St. Jude, instead of traveling with Alfred to Philadelphia.

Pgs. 41-76 Analysis

This section continues to examine Chip's involvement with Melissa. Since Melissa is a student, Chip's behavior is definitely not acceptable for a faculty member. He is



obviously not thinking straight since his former girlfriend broke up with him the previous year. His actions cost him his job.

More information is revealed about Alfred's situation. He was forced to retire due to a merger and now has some kind of affliction that results in his not being able to control his body. This is hard for him to cope with. Enid is always nagging at him to become active in hobbies and other activities. She means well but her nagging contributes to the tension between them.

Enid also does things without Alfred's knowledge. He signs an agreement regarding a patent and Enid feels he is not receiving enough money and does not mail it. She wants more money and does not respect his decisions.



Pgs. 76-117

Pgs. 76-117 Summary

Chip tells Denise about his situation with Melissa and why he was fired. Denise suggests that he talk to her friend, Julia Vrais about a writing job. That first Christmas, he keeps calling Melissa and leaving messages. This is the day of his father's seventy-fifth birthday and Denise has to prod him to call Alfred, which he does. He tells his parents that he has decided not to teach and to become a writer. Enid thinks that he should wait until after he has tenure.

Chip borrows ten thousand dollars from Denise and has a lawyer to fight his termination, but loses. He borrows more money and begins dating Julia. He finds a part-time position as a proofreader through Julia's contacts and then Julia tells him that she is married to the deputy prime minister of Lithuania who is the ambassador to the United Nations. When he is recalled, she stays in New York.

He begins work on his play while he is living on the money he borrowed from Denise.

Enid is telling Denise about a party she and Alfred attended. Enid insists that she is not a good cook. The three of them eat lunch. Alfred claims that he is not well and Enid insists that what he has is very mild. Enid insists that Chip works for a law firm and Denise tells her that she shouldn't lie. Alfred tells her that Chip will do what he wants.

Chip is wandering in the rain looking for a functioning pay phone. He is trying to find his script and make the corrections before Eden Procuero reads it. Chip goes to Eden's office where Eden introduces him to Julia's husband. Eden recommends Chip for the job that Gitanas needs and leaves then to talk.

Gitanas is now an entrepreneur and tells Chip that Lithuania privatized very quickly to qualify for World Bank money. When they experienced economic problems, they found that most of their companies were mostly American owned. Gitanas is looking for someone to work on his webpages in which he sells sand and gravel. Eden helps negotiate the financial terms of the deal.

Pgs. 76-117 Analysis

Chip is more interested in his script and avoiding his parents than he is in making them happy and putting up with them for a few hours. Alfred is happy to be in Chip's apartment and wishes that Chip was there. His parents should have been more important than his script even though his actions resulted in a job with Gitanas.

Enid appears to be a meddlesome woman. She keeps insisting that Chip works for a law firm. Both Denise and Alfred tell her to let Chip make his own decisions. Alfred keeps insisting that he is not a well man, and Enid keeps telling him that his affliction is

mild. She does not want him to give up and be overcome by his affliction, but she comes across as insensitive and argumentative instead of supportive.



Pgs. 117-155

Pgs. 117-155 Summary

Both Enid and Alfred like weddings and Enid always dreamed of the kind of wedding Denise would have. But Denise eloped with her boss, Emile Berger and this upset Enid. She is bothered by the fact that her kids didn't seem to want the same things that her friends' kids wanted. News of Denise's marriage brought on Alfred's first attack of tremors.

Enid seems to feel that Denise is involved with a married man and they have words about the subject while doing the dishes. Denise wants to know what Gary told her and Alfred tells Enid to drop the subject.

Gitanas began selling things of Lithuania, like paying to have a street named, as a joke. The site was supposed to be satiric, but people began to send money. He tells Chip the story while they are in a cab. Chip now has money from the deal and is in a hurry to see his parents. He will soon be leaving for Lithuania and Gitanas plans to wait downstairs in the building while Chip packs. When Chip reaches his apartment, no one is there.

Denise goes in the taxi with her parents to the pier. Before they board the ship, both Alfred and Enid tell her to talk to Chip and Gary about Christmas in St. Jude.

Chip and Gatanas board a flight to Helsinki at Kennedy. Gatanas begins to talk about Julia. Chip learns that Gitanas has surveillance cameras in Julia's apartment that he monitors by computer.

In *The More He Thought About It, the Angrier He Got*, Gary Lambert is developing film in his darkroom. His wife Carolina is outside playing ball with the boys. Enid calls to see if they will come to St. Jude for Christmas. Caroline doesn't want to go to St. Jude. She says that she hurt her back and tells him to call Enid back. He tells her to call for an ambulance for her back. Gary says that they don't know about Christmas and that she and Alfred should stop in after their cruise. He then has a fight with Caroline about her eavesdropping on the call. Enid hangs up and when Gary calls her back, he learns about the letter from Axon and the patent. He tells Enid to ask for a two hundred thousand dollar licensing fee plus a one percent royalty on gross revenues. When he tells Alfred that, Alfred tell him what he owes is none of Gary's business.

After the phone call, he learns that his son Caleb wants to purchase surveillance equipment to monitor the kitchen.

Pgs. 117-155 Analysis

Enid, like all mothers, wants certain things for her kids. She is bothered by the fact that her kids do not want the same things that her friends' kids do. Her three children all left



the Midwest and moved to the East Coast. Denise broke her heart when she eloped with Emile. Enid is more interested in appearances that she is in the truth as she often lies about her kids to her friends, such as Chip working at a law firm.

Alfred has a stubborn streak in him, probably because of his family interfering in his business. Enid tells Gary about the Axon offer and Gary tells them what to do and Alfred tells him to mind his own business. Gary's point of view is that if Enid and Alfred run out of money, he is the one that will have to help them. Alfred's point of view is that it is his decision and his alone.

Chip runs off to Lithuania without telling anyone but Eden. He trusted Eden and does not check out any of the details. Gitanas is the husband of the woman that he has been having an affair with.



Pgs. 156-194

Pgs. 156-194 Summary

Gary catches Caroline eavesdropping on his discussion with Caleb and asks why. She tells him that it is his paranoia. Aaron tells Gary to stop shouting at his mother. Gary decides that Caleb cannot put surveillance equipment in the kitchen when Caroline says he has his own money and can spend it as he wants.

Gary begins cooking mixed grill for dinner. He does most of the family's cooking. When he criticizes Caroline, she leaves the table and Caleb and Aaron go with her. After doing the dishes, Gary works on his computer performing an Internet search for Axon Corporation. When he finishes his research on Axon, he begins to look at porno. He then calls his parents in St. Jude. Again, Alfred tells him that Axon is none of his business and that he and Enid will visit for two days the following month and that Christmas will be in St. Jude. He wants them to all be civil with each other.

Gary has looked over the house in St. Jude and found many things wrong with it. He feels his parents should sell the house now. He talks to Alfred about it but he says Enid doesn't want to leave. The house is a source of pleasure for her. When Gary tells Alfred that he is clinically depressed, Alfred responds that he, Gary, is also depressed.

Enid brings up the subject of Christmas again and Gary asks if she will sell the house if they come for Christmas. She says maybe.

When Gary mentions Christmas to Caroline, she tells him that he is depressed. She also says that the two older boys will not go with him. She will not go to St. Jude and she and the older boys are not looking forward to their grandparents' visit. Gary seems to expect them to meet Enid's standards. Caroline says there is nothing wrong with the way they live their lives and Gary always sides with Enid. Gary says the St. Jude argument may end their marriage.

Denise and Gary attend an Axon shareholder's meeting in Philadelphia. Gary decides to invest in Axon.

Pgs. 156-194 Analysis

Gary is very concerned with his own mental health and seems to have a fear of being clinically depressed. He feels that he has three boys side with Caroline against him. He keeps accusing his wife of eavesdropping and she keeps telling him that he is paranoid. Both Alfred and Caroline tell Gary that he is depressed.

Enid is critical of Caroline and the boys thinking that they should do things the way she wants. This upsets Caroline along with the fact that Gary sides with Enid. Gary seems to want his parent's approval more than his wife's.

Gary wants Caroline to go to St. Jude for Christmas and she says she won't. Gary wonders if this will be the end of their marriage.



Pgs. 194 - 235

Pgs. 194 - 235 Summary

The Axon Corporation produces equipment that helps people who suffer from Parkinson's disease. Denise tells Gary that they should register Alfred to the program.

Gary and Caroline are still having problems over the St. Jude trip at Christmas. Gary orders tickets for the family when he finds them on sale.

During the intermission at the Axon presentation, Denise and Gary talk to the Axon staff. Gary tells them that they should have offered more money to Alfred. Denise asks about including Alfred in their testing program. They say he will have to be on the East Coast to be part of the program. After they walk out, Denise and Gary discuss where Alfred would stay and how he would get to the testing site in Schwenksville. Gary feels that Enid deserves a better life than she has now. He says Alfred can sit in his chair until he dies for all he cares.

Denise suggests that Enid and Gary live with her for the six months of the treatment program. During that time, they can decide if they like living in Philadelphia. They both agree that they should spend one last Christmas in St. Jude, given the age of their parents.

When he returns to his office, he finds numerous calls from Caroline. She says that somebody is sitting in a car in front of their house and she is afraid to go out. He tells her to call on her cell phone and stay on the line with him while she walks to the car. She does this and finds the car gone when she reaches the street. When Gary arrives home, he notices that their Security Systems sign is missing, as Caroline said it was. He hangs another sign.

Gary makes a martini and cooks mixed grill for dinner. After dinner, he trims the hedges and cuts his thumb. He is too drunk to drive to the hospital and won't ask Caroline, so he tries to bandage the wound himself. As he goes for another drink, he notices Caleb's security camera following his moves. Gary cleans up the mess and then goes upstairs to play chess with Aaron, his hand still wrapped in a towel.

The next morning, Gary stays home. He tells Caroline that she does not have to go to St. Jude and that he agrees that he is depressed.

The phone rings. It is Enid calling from the ship.

Pgs. 194 - 235 Analysis

Gary views his relationship with Caroline as a war in which she uses the children against him. He thinks about the tactics they use, like his taking the older boys mountain



biking so he can get them away from Caroline for a while. They are each using tactics against each other from his point of view.

Gary also has an argument with Denise over their parents. Gary obviously doesn't care about his father and says so. Alfred can spend the rest of his life sitting in his chair as far as Gary is concerned. He doesn't like the kind of life that Enid has. Denise says that Alfred is entitled to the best care that they can find.

Gary finally realizes that there is something wrong with his thinking. He tells Caroline that she does not have to go to St. Jude and that he is depressed.



Pgs. 239 - 276

Pgs. 239 - 276 Summary

Alfred and Enid are aboard the Gunnar Myrdal in a cabin without a porthole. Enid did not want to spend the extra money for a porthole.

When Enid is pregnant with Denise, she asks Alfred to buy a certain stock. He feels that finance is none of her business and leaves for an eleven day business trip without even saying goodbye to her. He wants her to move some magazines and glass jars while he is gone. She does not and he is mad when he comes home and finds out.

When Chip was a boy, he was a very fussy eater. Enid would become upset at preparing healthy meals and watching her family not want to eat them. She used to leave the discipline to Alfred.

Alfred was an amateur inventor and has his lab in the basement where he spent much of his time. The children know to never enter his lab.

That first night home after his business trip, Chip refuses to eat his dinner and spends the evening sitting at the table. As soon as Alfred goes to bed at midnight, Enid brings up the question of the stock again and he still says no. Enid had gone to bed leaving Chip sitting at the table saying Alfred is the one who told Chip to sit there. Alfred feels that Enid is using Chip against him and says so. Enid begins to cry. Alfred left on his trip without saying goodbye and comes home and spends the evening in the lab. He says that there are reasons for his behavior.

Pgs. 239 - 276 Analysis

This section looks back at a time when Enid is pregnant with Denise. Enid wants him to buy some stock that was recommended to her. He tells her that finances are none of her business. They both seem very unhappy in their marriage, each wanting something that the other can't give. They each want someone to understand them and give them what they need. Alfred had gone on a two-week business trip and did not even kiss Enid goodbye when he left and when he arrived home. Each of them is too tangled up in their own problems to understand the other so they are both unhappy.



Pgs. 277 - 314

Pgs. 277 - 314 Summary

Alfred awakens at three in the morning on the ship. His mistress, sleep, has deserted him. He has an imaginary conversation with his illness that he calls a turd. He calls out to Enid for help since he can't control his excrements, but she is asleep. He crawls to the bathroom where he tries to put on extra diapers but he can't peel the tape. Again, he calls out to Enid for help.

Enid is enjoying the first good night's sleep she'd had in a long time. She saw people on the cruise enjoying life the way she wanted Alfred to. At dinner, he announces that he is tired and going to bed at seven o'clock. He tells Enid to stay and enjoy herself. Enid remains at the table and talks to a couple from Europe.

Enid and a woman named Sylvia Roth go to the casino where Enid wins on the slot machines. Then they go to a concert and then to an ice cream social. She and Sylvia talk about their children and grandchildren. Sylvia says that she and her husband, Ted, are on the cruise because in two days the man who killed their daughter will be executed in Pennsylvania. Sylvia has spent time in therapy to deal with the grief and uses art to heal. She finally realizes that she wants Khellye Winters, the man who killed her daughter, dead. Her husband Ted deals with the situation by refusing to admit that it happened. He won't talk about it and just says that their daughter is dead.

This is the first day of the cruise. Back in her cabin, she tends to Alfred, getting him ready for bed. She signed up for a tour of historic Newport, Rhode Island the next day. Alfred refuses to go with on the tour so Enid goes with Sylvia.

Pgs. 277 - 314 Analysis

Enid looks at the couples on the ship and sees that they are enjoying their retirement. This is what she wants for herself and Alfred and she encourages him to take part in activities aboard the ship. He is too involved in his own illness however to have fun.

Enid meets with Sylvia Roth at dinner and spends the evening with her after Alfred goes to bed. As they talk, Enid learns that she isn't the only one with problems. She spent most of that first night aboard the ship listening to Sylvia.

Enid is still very concerned with appearances. At first, she does not want Sylvia to know that she doesn't have an upper deck cabin, then finally tells her that she and Alfred are staying on a lower deck. Enid might find it easier if she drops her pretenses.



Pgs. 314 - 350

Pgs. 314 - 350 Summary

Enid goes to the ship's infirmary to discuss Alfred and finds that the doctor recommends medication for her. They discuss the drug and Enid comes to like the idea of a pill that will help her to relax, sleep better and enjoy the cruise more. She pays one hundred fifty dollars for the infirmary visit and the drug Aslan. She returns to her cabin and swallows a pill.

The next morning when she awakens, she finds Arthur in the bathroom. He'd had a dream in the night and became confused. She helps him dress. At breakfast, the people at their table talk about the stocks they own. Enid learns that Sylvia and Ted have recently dined at The Generator, the restaurant Denise works at. Ted talks about Aslan and calls it grandmother's helper. Enid tells Alfred to lie in the sun and read while she and Sylvia attend the investment lecture.

While on deck, Alfred has a problem controlling his bladder. He also cannot determine the exact location of the ship.

The investments lecture, given by Jim Crolius, talks about changes coming in the stock market.

The section entitled The Generator begins with a discussion of the Fazios, who were Teamsters. Nick and Colleen adopt Billy when he is one year old and then have three daughters. Robin, the oldest daughter, was always tormented by Billy. Robin becomes a friend of Denise.

Billy beat and almost kills a man named Rick Flamburg and he acts as his own defense attorney in court, having refused all offers of help. Robin regularly visits the Flamburg family. Robin, husband, Brian Callahan, sells his business and asks Robin where she wants to move. She says she does not want to move. She tells Denise that they bought a big house and two days later, Billy attacked Flamburg. During the trial, Robin quits her job and begins a philanthropic project to teach organic gardening to underprivileged children.

Since Brian is stuck in a place where he didn't want to live, he begins dining at some of the better restaurants in Philadelphia which is how he meets Denise.

Pgs. 314 - 350 Analysis

Enid is determined to have a good time on the cruise, even if it means leaving Alfred alone. He still refuses to take part in any activities. The ship's doctor gives her a drug, Aslan, to help her relax and to deal with her sleeplessness and anxiety. She hopes the drug will help her to enjoy the cruise.

The next section introduces the characters of Brian and Denise Callahan. The sale of their company brought the Callahan's immediate wealth. Brian, who does not want to live in the Philadelphia area, begins to frequent the better restaurants. He meets Denise and offers her double her salary to work for him. Brian has decided to open his own restaurant.



Pgs. 351 - 392

Pgs. 351 - 392 Summary

Denise has never received the kind of offer she receives from Brian Callahan. She has always been very competitive. She had worked at MidPac before the merger and was known as a good reliable worker. One day as she sits in the lunch room, she listens to the men talking about the merger and the hopes they have. Later that evening, she asks Alfred about it and he says that most of the men will lose their jobs. He tells her not to talk about it at the office.

Denise doesn't date much because she doesn't romantically like the boys she knows. One day a married man at work, Don Armour, asks her to dinner and she accepts. She doesn't have much of an appetite and just has iced tea and French fries. Since her parents are out of town, she takes him home and to her bedroom. He leaves before her parents arrive home.

Denise doesn't know how to break off the relationship and sees him again for the next three weeks. She lies to her parents about where she is going. In fall, she enters Skidmore College, near Philadelphia. This is where she meets Julia V rais. Denise spends summer in the Hamptons with friends, working as a dishwasher. She has an affair with her girlfriend's father, Ed Sterling.

Eventually, Denise quits school, travels to France and Italy and then returns to Philadelphia and takes a job as a cook. She then goes to work for Emile Berger, whom she marries, and then becomes involved in a lesbian affair to force him to leave her.

She begins seeing Brian Callahan. He shows her the site of the restaurant he is planning. He will pay her until the restaurant is opened and wants her to travel to Europe to plan the menu. Brian introduces Denise to his parents and to Robin. Denise wants her parents to come with to Europe but Alfred cannot manage the trip and Enid will not leave him alone so Denise leaves for Frankfurt. She travels around Germany and Austria and then meets Brian in Paris.

Pgs. 351 - 392 Analysis

This section is about Denise and how she came to be the executive chef at The Generator. Denise has had sexual affair with men before she married Emile. She had dropped out of college, travels through Italy and France and then returned to Philadelphia and worked as a cook. When her skills improve, she gains employment with Emile, whom she marries. She forces Emile out of the marriage by becoming involved in a lesbian affair.

When she meets Brian Callahan, he has a lot of money from the sale of his company and has decided to open a restaurant. He offers her a deal that she cannot refuse and

she leaves for six weeks in Germany and Austria and then meets Brian in Paris. Brian gives her a free hand in designing the menu. Denise has a good reputation as a chef before she goes to work for Brian.



Pgs. 393 - 425

Pgs. 393 - 425 Summary

In Paris, Brian tells Denise how Robin has not been happy since he sold the company. Brian says he wants to have fun with the money. They spend ten days together without any physical involvement until two nights before they are to leave. Even though they stopped short of involvement, he feels guilty afterward.

Back in the states, she is surprised at the progress made on the restaurant. She begins to work on the menu. She wants the reviewers to pay more attention to the food than to the physical environment. Denise eats at different restaurants to size up the competition. Her relationship with Brian is now more businesslike.

One day, Denise walks over to see Robin's Garden Project. Robin is there and explains why she didn't go to Paris with Brian. Denise and Robin decide to have dinner together since her daughters, Erin and Sinead, are at a ball game with their father. They talk as they walk to Denise's apartment.

As they eat, Robin admits that she sensed Denise as a rival. They talk about Brian and Denise tells Robin that Brian needs her to be more bourgeois. She and Robin become friends and Denise becomes a frequent visitor at the Callahan house. She babysits with the girls when Robin and Brian go out. She is attracted to Robin.

When the restaurant kitchen is finished, Denise trains her crew. She has twenty French, Italian, and Austria entrees on the menu. The restaurant opens in March, a year after Denise has been on Brian's payroll. By this time, Denise is sleeping with Robin. The restaurant is a success and Denise is working long hard hours, but she still runs out to meet Robin whenever she calls.

When Robin stops calling, Denise goes to their house and lets herself in with her key. She finds condom wrappers in the bedroom. She returns to the restaurant. The next day Robin appears and says they can't meet like they used to. They break it off. Denise didn't want to lose her job. She is becoming famous with interviews and guest appearances.

A week later Brian asks Denise if she and Robin had an argument. She says she has just been too busy with work. He tells her that he is thinking of moving out of the house. It is at this time that Denise goes to New York to meet Enid and Alfred.

Brian has been going around with movie industry people since he began investing in production. One night he invites Denise out to dinner with his film industry friends. He tells her that his marriage is ended. He spends the night at Denise's and the next morning Robin appears at the door. Denise tells Robin she will meet her that afternoon. Then Gary calls and says that Alfred fell off the cruise ship. He is alive and will be okay.



Robin appears at the door again having realized that Brian is there. Brian and Robin have a shouting match upstairs. Robin walks out and Brian tells Denise that she is fired.

Pgs. 393 - 425 Analysis

Denise is responsible for the state of Brian and Robin's marriage. She has physical relationships with both of them. She should have realized that she jeopardized her good position as executive chef at the Generator and not become involved with her boss or his wife. Whatever Denise wanted, she ended up being fired. Denise did not use good judgment in this situation and should have known that the only way it would end is with her being fired. She threw away the good career opportunity that she had because she couldn't control her own sexual desires.



Pgs. 428 - 455

Pgs. 428 - 455 Summary

Denise and Chip communicate by email. She tells him about their father's accident and that she has been fired from her job. They write back and forth discussing Christmas until Chip stops answering.

Chip's website is launched in November and he and Gitanas celebrate the launch. They are selling things like the rental of Lithuanian troops at a fifty percent discount. The more satirical and outrageous their offerings, the more money they make. He is happy and reasonably affluent in Vilnius and plans to stay there until he repays his debts which he figures will be about six months. Then he will meet the family in Philadelphia. However, the political situation in Lithuania is deteriorating. As the danger increases, Gitanas hires more body guards.

When civil unrest begins in Vilnius, Gitanas gives Chip his severance pay and tells him to go back to the United States. Chip packs and leaves for the airport, hoping that he and Gitanas will meet in New York. There are long lines at the airport. Chip calls Enid and tells her that he is on his way. Afterward, one of the women notices a tank outside. Then the lights in the airport go out.

Pgs. 428 - 455 Analysis

Denise and Chip communicate by email. She tells him about Alfred's accident and how, she is trying to have him accepted into Axon's treatment program. She explains how and why she lost her job at The Generator. Denise keeps trying to talk her brother into spending Christmas in St. Jude. She wants her parents to be happy and their happiness seems to hinge on having their family at their home for Christmas.

Chip enjoys his life in Vilnius. The company, Lithuania.com, is one big scam but he enjoys the life he is leading and the money he is making. He is in a country where he cannot read or speak the language and unaware of the political situation. When social unrest begins, Gitanas gives him his severance pay and tells him to go home. Chip is stuck at the airport.



Pgs. 459 - 499

Pgs. 459 - 499 Summary

Alfred is unpacking the Christmas decorations in St. Jude. Enid doesn't allow him to drive now so he doesn't want to go to the store to replace broken light strings. He tries to fix the strings that don't work but can't.

He remembers falling off the Gunnar Myrdal and clinging to the flotation device. He makes a choice in the water when he did not let go and drown. He knows that he chose a nursing home future. Alfred had imagined a retirement of hunting, fishing and recreation. He looks forward to Christmas because his children are coming.

Enid misses the Aslan pills she had been taking on the cruise. Her own doctor, Dr. Hedgpeth, wouldn't give her a sleep aid. She asks her friend, Bea, if she would buy some Aslan-cruiser in Europe. Enid buys the plane tickets to Philadelphia so they can see if Alfred qualifies for the test program. She is also looking forward to the arrival of her children and grandson Jonah for Christmas.

Gary calls to say that Jonah is sick and that he will be coming to St. Jude alone. Chip calls to say he will arrive the next day.

The next day, Gary arrives. He makes it clear to Enid that he won't help Alfred if he gets into situation he shouldn't be in, like being stuck in the bathtub when he should be using the shower. That evening, the three of them go to see the Christmasland light show.

The following day, Gary drives to the medical supply store to purchase a stool and bar to fix the shower so Alfred can use it. He does it only because he promised Enid he would do anything she asked.

Bea drops off a Christmas gift for the Lamberts along with a package of pills for Enid. She gives the items to Gary who doesn't give the pills to Enid. Instead, he shows them to Denise when he picks her up at the airport. The pills, Bea's son-in-law said, were very addictive.

Enid waits for Chip. They learn from the newspaper of the civil unrest in Lithuania so she now worries about him. That night, Gary finds Alfred hallucinating in the bathroom. Enid stays downstairs leaving Gary and Denise to deal with Alfred. Gary talks to Alfred, settles him down and gets him back into bed.

Pgs. 459 - 499 Analysis

Alfred is looking forward to seeing his children at Christmas. He is afraid of what is happening to him, as he confesses to Gary when Gary tries to explain what hallucinations are. Gary, who made it clear to Enid that he has no sympathy for his



father, softens a little when he sees how scared Alfred is. Gary has every intention of interfering in Enid and Alfred's lives, both with Alfred's physical condition and with Enid's pills. In spite of this, he configures the shower in the way that Enid wants for Alfred. For some reason, he does not sympathize with his father as a human with feelings.



Pgs. 499 - 536

Pgs. 499 - 536 Summary

Denise knows that her mother wants her to live with them and help her with Alfred. She has had many job offers since leaving The Generator. When she returns to Philadelphia from New York, she finds a message from Emile saying he accepted the job of executive chef at The Generator. Brian and Robin are separated and Denise has lunch with Robin. She refuses to see the girls.

Denise prepares her house for her parents stay as she lives off of her savings account. Before Christmas, Robin offers to help out with her parents several mornings a week. During their discussion, Denise strikes Robin and says she does not want Robin in her life. Robin leaves. Denise leaves for St. Jude.

By her second day in St. Jude, Enid is getting on Denise's nerves. She throws out a lot of old food and wine. In the back of the cabinet, she finds an envelope addressed to Axon Corporation. She shows it to Alfred and they question Enid. Enid says she lost the first batch of documents and sent in duplicates. Alfred already received the check.

Denise makes it clear that she doesn't want Enid interfering in her life when they come to Philadelphia. Enid promises that they won't and says she just wants Denise to be happy.

Denise helps Alfred with his exercises and finds out how confused he is. She has to keep showing him what to do and showing which is right and left. Denise realizes that Enid and Alfred will never come to Philadelphia. Alfred tells her that and says he doesn't want to involve her in his problems. Afterward, Denise goes out for a walk and thinks about her family. She feels that Chip can't see how much Alfred loves him. It is Chip that Alfred calls for in the middle of the night.

In Vilnius, Chip is rescued at the airport by Gitanas and his friends who are trying to flee the city. They are followed and stopped. When they are searched, the men take Chip's dollars. The police eventually leave and Gitanas says that he is no longer a criminal warlord. Chip says goodbye to the group and begins to walk to the border on foot. He crosses into Poland and makes it to Warsaw where he boards a plane to Chicago where he catches a flight to St. Jude.

Pgs. 499 - 536 Analysis

Christmas is not going the way Enid and Alfred had hoped. They have problems. Alfred is in poorer shape than they had realized and Denise, Enid and Alfred realize that they won't be going to Philadelphia. Denise learns that Alfred knew about her affair with Don Armour and that was why he retired, instead of staying with the company. That cost him

a large part of his pension and accounted for much of the situation that they are presently in. This is hard for Denise to accept.

Chip makes it out of Lithuania to Poland by walking. He is lucky that Gitanas learned of the situation at the airport and stopped to pick him up on their way out of Vilnius. They are stopped by the police who take most of Chip's money, but Chip makes it to St. Jude. Gitanas probably would have made it into hiding if he hadn't gone to rescue Chip.



Pgs. 536 - 566

Pgs. 536 - 566 Summary

Alfred answers the door when Chip arrives. Chip is warmly greeted by his family. Enid says that this is the best Christmas present that she ever had. Chip showers in the downstairs bathroom while Enid and Denise make breakfast.

Gary is leaving that morning and wants to force the discussion about selling the house which brings a family argument. He also confronts Enid about the pills and Denise says that Enid disposed of them. Gary leaves.

After dinner, Chip goes out for a walk. When he returns, he says he will open his gifts in the morning. Enid comments that this is not the kind of Christmas that she wanted. Alfred's condition has worsened so much in the last days. Enid wants Chip to stay more than three days.

Denise and Chip talk later that evening. She asks Chip to stay the next week to help Enid. While they talk, Alfred calls for Chip's help and he goes upstairs.

Alfred is in the hospital for observation to see if his confusion is drug-induced. Chip is there to help him. Alfred begs Chip to get him out of the hospital and Chip tells him he has to stay for another week. Alfred says he wants to die and wants Chip to help him. Chip says he cannot.

In *The Corrections*, there is a stock market crash. Enid is not affected much because Alfred has their money in other financial instruments. Alfred is in a nursing home and Enid is doing better in her own house which is appreciating in value. Chip fixes some of the things at the house so Gary lost the grounds for his argument to see the house.

Denise has a new job in New York and Enid spends four days with her. Chip moves to Chicago and marries his girlfriend who is seven months pregnant with their twins. He continues to work on his screenplay. Enid continues to visit Alfred every day and continues to tell him how wrong he was and how right she was all those years. He dies after two years in the nursing home.

Pgs. 536 - 566 Analysis

Enid's Christmas does not turn out as she had hoped. Her children all fight, Alfred's condition worsens, but Chip makes it home from Lithuania. All of them viewed the Christmas as a disaster years later. Alfred is finally admitted to a hospital and then to a nursing home where he dies after two years. The rest of the family picks up the pieces of their lives. Enid visits Alfred every day always telling him how wrong he was and how right she was.



Characters

Enid Lamber

Enid Lambert is the wife of Alfred and they live in their house in St. Jude. She is the mother of three grown children. Chip is a writer who lives in Manhattan. Denise is an executive chef in a ritzy Philadelphia restaurant and Gary is a successful banker with three children. Enid is constantly complaining about Alfred just sitting around and feels that if other people who have health problems can be physically active, so can Alfred. She keeps nagging him which doesn't help the situation, even though she means well. Enid and Alfred always spend Christmas at Gary's in Philadelphia. This year she wants the entire family to come to St. Jude for one last Christmas and tells Denise to talk to Chip and Gary about it. Enid is somewhat of a busy body always telling her children and grandchildren what to do, expecting them to live their lives her way. She does not understand that she drives them away when she does this. Since both she and Alfred are aging, she is determined to have her one last Christmas with them in St. Jude and is not aware of the problems this causes for her children. Enid had grown up in a poor family and, as a young woman, decided she would marry someone who could give her a comfortable life. Alfred was a young steel engineer and a lodger in her mother's boarding house when she first met him. Her cruise vacation is ruined when Alfred falls off the ship and they go to a hospital in New Brunswick. Enid has her Christmas in St. Jude that doesn't go the way she hoped. Her life is much better after Alfred is put into a nursing home.

Alfred Lambert

Alfred Lambert is the husband of Enid. He is retired from the Midland Pacific Railroad and he spends most of his time at home in their house in St. Jude. He and Enid have three children, all grown. They are Chip, who is a writer, Denise who is an executive chef at an exclusive Philadelphia restaurant and Gary, who is a banker. There are three grandchildren by Gary. Alfred has health problems and spends most of his time sitting in his blue leather chair in the basement. He doesn't have any hobbies or physical activities which is a source of conflict between him and Enid. His health problems result in a body that he can't control and this is difficult for him to cope with. He had been the head of the Engineering Department at the railroad and was used to being obeyed. When the company management merged with another railroad, they closed MidPac's St. Jude headquarters and Alfred retired, two months before his sixty-fifth birthday. He is depressed about his situation and Enid's constant nagging and deceitful actions don't help the situation. His Parkinson's disease began when he first learned of his daughter's elopement. He also wants the family to gather in St. Jude for one last Christmas because he knows that that is what Enid wants. On the cruise, he is too involved in his own illness to enjoy himself. He falls off the cruise ship and is injured, but not seriously, but is taken to a hospital in New Brunswick. At Christmas, his condition has deteriorated



so much that he is admitted to the hospital and then to a nursing home where he remains for two years until he dies.

Chip Lambert

Chip Lambert is the son of Enid and Alfred. He lives in New York City where he works as a writer and proofreader. He had been dismissed from an academic position at a Connecticut college for his sexual behavior with a student. He is now having financial difficulties and has borrowed more than twenty thousand dollars from his sister, Denise. Chip thought it was possible to be successful without earning a lot of money. He had always been successful in everything he did until his problems at the college. Denise suggests he contact her friend Julia Vrais if he is interested in writing. He does and becomes romantically involved with her, even though she is married. Chip goes to work for Julia's estranged husband who is an entrepreneur and flies to Lithuania with him. Chip eventually marries a doctor, moves to Chicago and teaches high school. He has twin daughters.

Robin Callahan

Robin Callahan is the wife of Brian and mother of Sinead and Erin. She is from a Teamster family. When her husband comes into money from the sale of his company, she does not want to move from the Philadelphia area, as he does. She begins a philanthropic project for underprivileged children called the Garden Project. Her physical involvement with Denise leads to Denise's dismissal as executive chef of The Generator.

Brian Callahan

Brian Callahan is the wife of Robin and father of Sinead and Erin. He lives in a Philadelphia suburb and becomes very wealthy from the sale of his company. He hires Denise Lambert as a chef and opens a restaurant called The Generator. He becomes romantically involved with Denise and then fires her when he discovers she is romantically involved with Robin.

Denise Lambert

Denise Lambert is the thirty one year old daughter of Enid and Alfred. She is a successful executive chef at an elegant restaurant in Philadelphia. She is married but the marriage is not good and they divorce five years later. Denise becomes the executive chef at The Generator but is fired after sleeping with both the owner and his wife. She accepts another position in Brooklyn, New York.



Gary Lambert

Gary Lambert is the son of Enid and Alfred and the brother of Chip and Denise. He is married to Caroline and has three children. They live in Philadelphia where he is a vice president at CenTrust Bank. He is forty-three years old and holds an MBA from the Wharton Business School.

Caroline Lambert

Caroline Lambert is the wife of Gary and mother of Caleb, Aaron and Jonah. She is a lawyer who works part time for the Children's Defense Fund. Her father, an anthropologist, died in a plane crash when she was eleven. Her mother remarried and lives in Laguna Beach.

Gitanas Misevicius

Gitanas Misevicius is the estranged husband of Julia Vrais. He is a former member of the Lithuanian government and now an entrepreneur. He hires Chip to work on websites for him. He was born near the Belorussian border and the son of a pub owner.

Julia Vrais

Julia Vrais works in film development and meets Chip through Denise. Julia is married to Gitanas Misevicius, the deputy Minister of Lithuania but still becomes romantically involved with Chip.



Objects/Places

St. Jude

St. Jude is the city where Enid and Alfred live in the Midwest.

Manhattan

Manhattan in New York City is on the East Coast of the United States and where Chip Lambert lives.

Carparts Creek

Carparts Creek is the area in Connecticut where the college Chip taught at is located.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia is a major city on the eastern border of Pennsylvania across from New Jersey.

Chestnut Hill

Chestnut Hill is a suburb of Philadelphia where Gary and Caroline live.

Gunnar Myrdal

Gunnar Myrdal is the ship on which Enid and Alfred cruise to Canada.

Austria

Austria is a county in Europe where Denise travels to prepare her menu.

Germany

Germany is a country in Western Europe where Denise travels to prepare her menu.



Paris

Paris is the capital of France where Denise and Brian spend ten days preparing for the restaurant's opening.

The Generator

The Generator is the high end Philadelphia restaurant where Denise works as an executive chef.

Vilnius

Vilnius is the capital of Lithuania, a former Soviet republic located on the Baltic Sea.



Themes

Retirement and the Elderly

Retirement and the elderly is a dominant theme of the book and a common problem in society. Both Enid and Alfred have always looked forward to their retirement. Enid wanted to travel and have a good time. Alfred always thought that his retirement would consist of hunting, fishing, and recreation. He buys a shotgun for that purpose. However, it did not work out that way for either of them. Alfred just sits in his chair in the basement hour after hour. He might watch television but does little else because of his illness. Enid keeps nagging him to take up a hobby and tells him what all of the other people she knows are doing and this only increases the tension between them. He isn't interested in anything and Enid can't get him interested in anything. Enid thinks things will be different when they go on their luxury cruise to Canada. They will meet people on the cruise ship and there will be activities for them to take part in. This is true for Enid who makes friends and takes part in the ship's activities but not for Alfred who is too ill to do anything. Retirement should be a time when people enjoy themselves and do the recreational activities that they enjoy. They have worked all of their lives and raised their families and now should be able to relax. Alfred's illness and Enid's lack of understanding his situation prevented them from doing this. His Parkinson's disease and dementia prevented this.

Illness

Illness is also a prevailing theme of the book. Illness is a part of old age that robs many people of the enjoyment of their retirement years as it did Alfred and Enid. Alfred suffers from Parkinson's disease and dementia. He cannot control his body due to the Parkinson's disease. The tremors make it difficult for him to perform simple motor tasks like eating because of the tremors. The dementia is slowly destroying his mind. He suffers from bouts of confusion which is why Enid often found him sleeping in the bathroom. He is incontinent and wears diapers. He often has accidents and always carries his raincoat with him in case he has an accident. Alfred is embarrassed by his incontinence and tremors especially in front of his children. He does not want them to witness his problems and see him in this condition, yet he wants to see them. He keeps telling Denise that he does not want to involve her in this yet he needs their help as he becomes unable to care for himself. Alfred is confused and afraid because he doesn't understand what is happening to him. At the same time, he is stubborn and resents Enid and Gary meddling in his business. He requires constant care and attention which Enid has to give him. Her continual nagging at him to do something does not help the situation. His illness progresses to the point where he cannot do the things that Enid wants him to do.



Coping

Coping is a third theme of the book and how to cope with aging parents and illness is also a major theme of the book. Enid and Alfred live in the Midwestern town of St. Jude while their grown children all live on the East Coast. Gary, Denise and Chip all have their own lives and see their parents once or twice a year. They know their father is ill but don't realize how ill. Chip, the youngest son, couldn't deal with their afternoon in New York and ran off chasing a script he has to make corrections to, leaving Enid and Alfred with Denise, although at the end, it is Chip who gets Alfred into a hospital and stays with him until he is settled in a nursing home. Gary's way of coping is to refuse to have much of anything to do with Alfred. If Alfred fell, he says, he would let him lay there. He gives orders about selling the house and expects to be obeyed. Denise is the most humane of the three. She realizes that her father has a serious problem and confronts the issue. She is prepared to have her parents live with her in Philadelphia so Alfred could undergo treatment. She views him as a human being with a problem. Enid, for the most part, does not understand the extent of Alfred's problems. Even though she cares for him, she never stops nagging at him. She turns to the drug Aslan which she obtains from the ship's doctor, for help in coping with the situation. Everyone has different ways of coping with stress and different situations.

Style

Point of View

Jonathan Franzen writes *The Corrections* in the third-person point of view. This approach allows him to function as the narrator and to provide the necessary background and detail information that is of importance to the reader. It allows him to present the perspective of each of the major characters towards Alfred's illness and the idea of spending Christmas in St. Jude. The use of the third-person point of view overcomes the limitations of the first person point of view in which the knowledge of the reader is limited to the knowledge of the storyteller. This approach would not have worked for this kind of novel. For example, the reader would not have known about Chip's problems in Lithuania until he arrived in St. Jude. The third-person point of view is most appropriate for a novel of this type. It allows the reader to learn of the activities and views of each of the characters. There is plenty of dialogue in the novel that allows the reader to see how the characters interact.

Setting

There are numerous settings for the action of the novel. The setting changes as the characters move around their localities and travel to other places. Enid and Alfred live in the Midwestern town of St. Jude. This is where they raised their family and where they want their children to come for one last Christmas. Chip lives in Manhattan in New York where Enid and Alfred go to board the luxury ship, *Gunnar Myrdal* for their cruise to Canada. There are numerous scenes aboard the ship when Enid and Alfred are on the cruise. There are also scenes in Carpets Creek and other places in Connecticut from where Chip taught at a Connecticut college. Philadelphia is also a setting. Gary and his family live in the suburb of Chestnut Hill and Denise lives in the city. There are scenes at the restaurant, *The Generator*, and various other places as the characters move around the area. When Denise is hired by Brian, she travels to Austria and Germany to develop the menu and then meets Brian in Paris, France. Chip takes a job with *Gitanas* and spends six weeks in Vilnius, Lithuania, which also functions as a setting.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel and the meaning of the language are simple and easy to understand. The characters are all everyday people and the language is everyday English with no terms with hidden meaning for the reader to have to decipher. The vernacular of the language is the vernacular of everyday people. There are no foreign language terms or phrases in the book for the reader to stumble over. The book is written for quick and easy reading. What makes the book difficult to follow is not the language but the fact that the story is continually jumping around in time and place. This forces the reader to have to piecemeal the story as it jumps around from person to



person, place to place and time to time. In spite of this, the language and meaning are easy to understand and follow and in no way interferes with the reading speed of the novel. Since the novel is about everyday people, the language and meaning of the language are appropriate to the kind of novel the author has written.

Structure

The structure of the novel is a little unusual. The novel is divided into seven sections. St. Jude deals with Enid and Alfred's life in the Midwest. The Failure basically tells the story of Chip and his problems. The More I Thought About It, the Angrier I Got presents Gary and his family. At Sea discusses the events that take place while Enid and Alfred are on their cruise. The Generator concentrates on Denise and her activities. One Last Christmas tells of the family's final Christmas together in St. Jude. The Corrections tells of the lives of each of the characters after Christmas. Within each of these divisions, the story jumps around in time and setting which is why the reader has to piece the overall story together.

There are no chapters within these seven divisions. The author uses paragraph spacing to indicate a change in character, time or place. There is no Table of Contents listing the seven divisions. There is also no Preface or Introduction but none is really needed. The structure of the book works for the novel.



Quotes

"Ringing throughout the house was an alarm bell that no one but Alfred and Enid could hear directly. It was the alarm bell of anxiety" (St. Jude, pg. 3.)

"He'd never quite realized how seriously he'd taken his father's injunction to do work that was 'useful' to society. Criticizing a sick culture, even if the criticism accomplished nothing, had always felt like useful work" (The Failure, pg. 45.)

"The shame and disorder in his house were like the shame and disorder in his head" (The Failure, pg. 83.)

"It was the same problem Enid had with Chip and even Gary; her children didn't match. They didn't want the things that she and all her friends and all her friends' children wanted. Her children wanted radically, shamefully other things (The Failure, pg. 121.)

"To Caroline it probably seemed that he was changing the rules on her. But to Gary it seemed that the nature of family life itself was changing - that togetherness and filiality and fraternity weren't valued the way they were when he was young" (The More He Thought, pg. 164.)

"For a moment, after he hung up, Gary let himself imagine being divorced. But three glowing and idealized mental portraits of his children, shadowed by a batlike horde of fears regarding finances, chased the notion from his head" (The More He Thought, pg. 202.)

"If she tried to get credit for these labors of hers, however, Al simply asked her whose labors had paid for the house and good and linens? Never mind that his work so satisfied him that he didn't need her love, while her chores so bored her that she needed his love doubly. In any rational accounting, his work canceled her work" (At Sea, pg. 249.)

"There were a thousand things she wanted from life, and since few were available at home with Alfred in St. Jude, she had forcibly channeled all her wanting into the numbered days, the mayfly lifetime that the luxury cruise would last. For months the cruise had been her mind's safe parking space, the future that made her present bearable, and after her afternoon in New York had proved deficient in the fun department, she boarded the Gunnar Myrdal with her hungers redoubled" (At Sea, pg. 289.)

"Enid pulled a scowl. Dr. Hibbard was very handsome and charismatic, and she liked the idea of a pill that would help her enjoy the cruise and take better care of Alfred, but the doctor seems to her a trifle glib" (At Sea, pg. 319.)



"What kind of idiot, she wondered, lets her husband go to Paris with a person like me?" (The Generator, pg. 392.)

"They marched along in silence. Denise, to whom winning did matter, grimly noted that, on top of all his other luck, Brian had married a woman of principle and spirit" (The Generator, pg. 402.)

"The lesson that Gitanas had learned and that Chip was now learning was that the more patently satirical the promises, the lustier the influx of American capital" (The Generator, pg. 436.)

"She had an intimation that the family she'd tried to bring together was no longer the family she remembered - that this Christmas would be nothing at all like the Christmases of old. But she was doing her best to adjust to the new reality" (One Last Christmas, pg. 474.)

"To Chip, unfortunately, it seemed that Alfred cared about his children only to the degree that they succeeded. Chip was so busy feeling misunderstood that he never noticed how badly he himself misunderstood his father" (One Last Christmas, pg. 523.)

"Enid shook her head. 'This wasn't the Christmas I'd hoped for. Suddenly Dad can't do a thing. Not one single thing'" (One Last Christmas, pg. 545.)



Topics for Discussion

What led to Chip's problems in academia? What led to his job with Gitanas?

What problems result from Enid wanting her family to spend one last Christmas in St. Jude? Why?

What problems exist in the home of Gary Lambert? Why are he and Caroline having problems?

When Denise was appointed executive chef of The Generator, in what ways did she use poor judgment? What did it lead to?

Enid only wanted to have a good time on the cruise. What happened when she went to the ship's infirmary? What was the outcome of the cruise?

How do Gary, Denise and Chip view Enid and Alfred? Which of the views are similar? In what ways do they differ?

What are the results of the last Christmas in St. Jude?