

Dalva Study Guide

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Plot Summary

'Dalva' is the story of a woman's journey to find herself amidst the memories of her past and the history of her family. As heir to a fortune and to a family history filled with secrets, Dalva realizes she must give up her own secrets to find peace in her life and to be able to move on.

'Dalva' begins in Santa Monica, California where Dalva, a forty-five year old woman, lives alone. Her life has been a series of unusual relationships with men and a life lived mostly in the past. Her father died early and she was pregnant at fifteen by her half-brother whom she loved. Forced to give up the baby, she became close to her grandfather and uncle, only to have her grandfather also pass away. Left alone, and heir to her grandfather's massive estate, Dalva learns she is also heir to a host of family secrets surrounding her great grandfather, Northridge. As a missionary, Northridge sought to help the Sioux Indians at the end of the nineteenth century but instead found himself fighting the government to help the Sioux maintain their freedom. Continuously beaten down and dealing with the death of his wife, Northridge eventually loses his mind. He becomes a Sioux and helps hide chiefs seeking freedom. In the end, he kills several soldiers and hides the bodies in the root cellar.

Dalva knows of these secrets thanks to a collection of journals written by Northridge. Her lover, Michael, is a history major and seeks to tell the tale of Northridge to the public, so they can gain a better understanding of the Sioux issues. However, Michael's life is riddled with problems as he struggles with sex, drug, and alcohol addictions. Dalva tries to help him but in the end, finds herself tired of his childish antics. Dalva realizes she must find the son she gave up for adoption in order to bring her past and present together. With the help of her family, Dalva locates the mother of her son, only to find her son has been following her for many months. Naomi, her mother, discovers her partner in a nature project, Nelse, is actually Dalva's son. When Dalva goes into the root cellar of the estate, she finds the bodies of the Sioux warriors and the soldiers killed by Northridge, and finds herself able to let go of her own secret past. In the end, she meets Nelse, finds a lover she can respect, and moves forward with her life. Dalva's journey is one of courage, strength, determination, and heritage, and shows that secrets have a tendency to overtake life and that by freeing those secrets, one can move on.



'Dalva', pg. 3-35.

'Dalva', pg. 3-35. Summary

'Dalva' is the story of a young woman's journey through her past in order to accept her future. Dalva must journey through the pain of her father's death, the loss of her son, and the loss of her lover in order to find peace to move forward. Her journey is one of courage, history, and family ties.

The story begins in Santa Monica California in 1986 where Dalva writes a journal to her son whom she gave for adoption when she was a young woman. Her father's brother, Paul, wandered the world for many years and her name, Dalva, is the name of a song he played for her mother, Naomi, and her father, John Wesley. Wesley died in the Korean War, and thus, Dalva only knew him until the age of nine. Her sister, Ruth recently revealed she has taken a lover. Her husband, Ted, is gay, and the two have been separated for fifteen years, but she has met and begun an affair with a priest. Dalva herself explains to Naomi that she is dating a history professor, Michael, but she admits he has issues. Two weeks later, Ruth reveals her priest is being sent to Costa Rica.

Dalva relates that last winter she worked with troubled teens and encountered one whose uncle had anally raped him. Dalva took pity and took him to a private hospital where he was surgically repaired. When Dalva went to the boy's home to question the mother, she was met by the uncle. When the man began slapping Dalva, local boys beat the uncle with car aerials. Dalva was fired for her personal intervention in the case, and Franco, the boy, snuck away from the hospital and disappeared.

Ruth calls and admits she has had one last fling with her priest in an effort to become impregnated, and Dalva is reminded of her own child. She explains that the father of the child is Duane, whom she found in her grandfather's estate's driveway. Dalva admits she loved Duane at first because he ignored her. He lived in the bunkhouse and took care of the farm with the other farmhand, Lundquist. On Christmas, Grandfather gave him a horse, and Dalva told him she was in love. The two went riding, and Dalva believes it was the most romantic day of her life. When he discovered football players at school lied about having sex with her, Duane beat them severely. One day after church, Duane found her, took her to his tipi, and made love to her. She didn't see him again for fifteen years. When she discovered she was pregnant, she lied, saying it was a hunter who caused her pregnancy. The night before she was sent away to have the baby, Dalva told grandfather she would rather shoot herself than have Duane remain gone. Grandfather began to cry and explained that his wife had been insane, and committed suicide. With Dalva's own father deceased and uncle Paul estranged, Grandfather was leaving the estate to Dalva. Grandfather explained that before the war, her father had an affair with an Indian woman, and the result was Duane. When Duane asked for Dalva's hand in marriage, he was told they were half-siblings, and he ran away.



'Dalva', pg. 3-35. Analysis

The opening section of the book introduces many of the characters used throughout the novel and several of the concepts used throughout the novel, as well. Dalva is shown as a strong, independent, caring person who has already led a difficult life. Between falling in love accidentally with a half-brother, the early death of her father, the early pregnancy and forced abandonment of her child, and her series of unsuccessful relationships in life, it is clear Dalva is not only a strong-willed and strong minded woman, but also that these early incidents left their mark on the young woman. Her sister, too, is shown to have her own share of troubles with men from her homosexual husband to her seduction of a priest. Even Naomi, her mother, shows a tendency for unique relationship as she discusses her own brief affairs. These women, all of the same family, have had a lifetime of relationships with men that are unstable.

The men of Dalva's family are also explained in this beginning section. Dalva's father, a military man, not only joined the army to fly, but rejoined. His early death is, in part, responsible for Dalva's relationship issues, but based on her descriptions, it is clear John Wesley was a kind, loving father who adored his daughters. Her grandfather, too, is a noble, kind man who often does what is right regardless of the effects of such behaviors. It is grandfather who explains to Dalva her heritage, and her misguided path in her love for Duane. Paul, too, is introduced in this section, and although it is clear Paul is an unstable character, his existence later in the novel is partially explained through his wayward nature in this section.

Dalva's brief relationship with Duane explains her lack of romantic love throughout her life. It is clear that she was infatuated with Duane, and very in love at a very tender age. Her loss of Duane, her resulting pregnancy, and her giving up of their child, results in her inability to love others effectively. She is good with children and caring, but because of the losses in her life, Dalva is unable to let anyone close to her heart. This foreshadows her journey throughout the novel to let go of the past so she can find love again. This section also introduces the homestead, or the plot of land left to Dalva in the novel, and the land in which much of the rest of the story is based on. The child Dalva seeks throughout the novel is also explained here. Michael's brief introduction foreshadows his erratic existence throughout the rest of the novel, as well.



'Dalva'. pg. 35 - 71.

'Dalva'. pg. 35 - 71. Summary

Dalva finds she is being followed by the uncle of Franco. In response, Dalva calls Ted for assistance since Andrew, Ted's assistant, is an ex-police officer. When Dalva arrives at Ted's for dinner, however, she finds her lover, Michael, already there. Michael is trying to pressure Dalva into giving him access to the family papers, which include journals from Dalva's great grandfather on the "Indian problem" in the nineteenth century. Great grandfather was a business man, but also served as a missionary to the Sioux Indians on behalf of the government. After Wounded Knee, he retired to the farm in secrecy and silence, but continued his friendships with the Sioux he had befriended.

Ruth calls the following day to declare she is not pregnant but that she has begun dating a local grocer. They have attended a dance, and Dalva recalls winning a dance competition with her high school friend Charlene soon after she had her baby. Afterward, Charlene kissed her, which barely fazed Dalva after her experiences with Duane. In the afternoon, Andrew informs Dalva she may have to move, as it appears the uncle of the raped boy, named Guillermo, is tracking her, and is a highly dangerous man. Dalva continues her letter to her son, explaining that she left after Thanksgiving to Michigan, where she was to live with Naomi's cousins to give birth to her baby. Dalva became severely ill with pneumonia, and was hospitalized but Grandfather brought her a necklace Duane had sent for her to comfort her. Doctors forced Dalva to be moved to a warmer climate, and so she was sent to live with her uncle Paul in Arizona. Paul walked with her daily to make her birthing easier, while Dalva learned about the plants and animals living in the area. She finally had the baby on April 27th, saw it only for a moment, and then the child was taken. Once back home, Dalva continued to exercise each day, and on one walking trip, she rediscovered a place she visited with Duane, and she found solace in nature.

Andrew stops by and asks again how long it will take her to move. Dalva questions him about finding her son. In the mail, Dalva receives letters from Ruth, Naomi, and Michael. Ruth has been proposed to by her grocer lover, and Naomi invites Dalva to come back and live in Nebraska, where there is a teaching position. She reminds her that the homestead, cared for by Lundquist, a cousin of the Lundquist who cared for the land with grandfather, has sat empty for twenty years, but is owned by Dalva. Michael's letter is part autobiography and part begging. He has obtained a grant for a sabbatical to write the book about Dalva's historical family, but this is contingent on proof he has gained access to the papers. He begs Dalva to give him such access. In return, he offers to find her son. Dalva relents, and finds herself thinking of when she had to give up Duane's necklace. On her seventeenth birthday, Dalva was given a car by her grandfather. The car meant freedom for Dalva, and one evening, she decided to try to find Duane. She drove first to his old Indian reservation, where she was told Duane and his mother lived in Pine Ridge. She discovered Duane was in jail for beating a police officer, while his mother was supported by a rich man in Buffalo Gap. In Chadron, she was arrested



when she asked of Duane, but was soon released to a local rancher. Her grandfather arrived the following morning, and took her to his hunting cabin in Buffalo Gap, where she met Duane's mother, Sparrow Hawk, or Rachel. Grandfather and Rachel had been lovers for many years. Rachel asked Dalva to return the necklace, as she could return it to Duane, whom she called a lunatic who needed protection. Dalva did so and then raced from the cabin only to return three hours later. She discovered her grandfather was very ill and needed to go home.

'Dalva'. pg. 35 - 71. Analysis

This section of the novel serves both to explain the circumstances surrounding the adoption of Dalva's child, as well as introducing the reader to the family journals which are discussed throughout the novel. The story of Dalva's great grandfather's journals both introduces the man and his general background to the reader, and forms the base for the reading of the journals later in the novel. Additionally, this information foreshadows the story of the Northridge battle against the genocide of the Indians. Michael's arguments to Dalva supporting his use of the journals show him to be a selfish character, as well as one who is intelligent and who uses that intelligence against others. Additionally, the amount of alcohol taken in by Michael foreshadows the revelation later that he is a severe alcoholic. On the other hand, Dalva's arguments against the use of the journals show her allegiance to the Sioux Indians that make up a part of her family tree.

Throughout this chapter, Dalva's sexuality is also examined. Her sexual liaisons with her friend Charlene, her near sexual liaisons with Ted, her homosexual brother in law, her attraction to Andrew, the married police officer, and her relationship with Michael, a troubled and arrogant professor, all show Dalva to be a sexual being, albeit somewhat outside of the ordinary. This is explained in this section as well as in the previous section, when it is discussed that Dalva is a beautiful woman who is also strong-willed, with a history of problematic relationships with the men in her life. Additionally, her responses to Andrew foreshadow her sexual relations with him later in the novel.

The story of Dalva's pregnancy explains both how she and her uncle, Paul, became close, and how she became a lover of nature. It is clear Dalva is torn by the loss of both her baby and her lover, Duane, and this is shown more vehemently as she leave in search of him when she is sixteen. The knowledge that grandfather has been housing Duane's mother, Rachel, throughout the last twenty years show his relationship with her is not simply platonic. Duane's own reputation as a drunk and a violent man is also no surprise, considering his own losses in life, but Dalva's loss of her only remembered of Duane, the necklace, is a symbol for the complete loss of Duane in her life. Finally, the realization by Dalva in this chapter that her grandfather is ill, and his revelations to her of his affair with Rachel foreshadow his death.



'Dalva', pg. 71 - 106

'Dalva', pg. 71 - 106 Summary

Dalva contacts Naomi, and the two arrange to meet Ruth while Dalva decides to accept the offer to move back to Nebraska. She calls Michael, as well, to inform him she is considering his offer. She finds herself missing sexual contact, and realizes she is already accepting that her life in Santa Monica is coming to an end. She meets Ted for lunch in a nearby cafe, where the two are interrupted by a local Australian Dalva has had relations with. As she returns home and packs, she drinks and recalls a conversation with Rachel as grandfather lay dying, where Rachel comforted her as she cried for the loss of Duane.

Back in the apartment, Dalva calls the Australian from the cafe, and the two decide to go to dinner, following which she and the Australian make love several times and fall asleep. The following day, Dalva is in San Francisco with Michael, who reveals he is unable to function without alcohol, due to his extreme nerves about his situation. Once in the hotel, Dalva makes Michael sign a form that gives her a right to control all his habits during their work together. She puts him to bed, buys him new clothing, and calls his chairman to explain they are working out the details for his access to the family journals, knowing she is saving him, but unsure why she is. Once awake, she puts him in the bath, has the sheets changed, and joins him for a bubble bath. Lying together later, Dalva admits she did not have more children because her illness before the birth of her son made her barren. Michael admits she has more reason to be an alcoholic than he does. She decides, as he sleeps, that he can stay in the bunkhouse at the farm while he works, and she in the main house. Dalva awakens later in the hotel room to memories of her Grandfather's death. Once back in Chadron after the cabin, he died within a week. Paul and Rachel were both sent for. While outside one afternoon, a coyote appeared, and Grandfather hoped aloud he was there for his soul. Ruth arrived from school to say her goodbyes, and with a final word about falling through the sky, Grandfather died. He was buried the following morning in the lilac grove, and she cried as Paul held her, and wished for Duane to return.

Dalva wakes Michael at the hotel, and the two pick up Ruth and Naomi from the airport before heading to the meeting with Michael's chairman. Dalva lies at the meeting when asked what happened to the private collection of Indian artifacts that once accompanied the family papers, saying the collection was sold. Over the weekend, Dalva realizes she is ready for Nebraska. Once back in Santa Monica, she learns the uncle has been captured by Andrew and other police as he was sneaking around in her garage. Several hours later, she and Andrew make love, although both agree not to feel badly about it.

The following morning, Dalva leaves Santa Monica for Nebraska. She stops just short of Ajo, Arizona and sets camp for the night. As she lay looking at the stars, she remembers the night Naomi called with news that Duane was dying in Key West. Dalva had made her way down to the area quickly, and called the number Duane gave, which reached



Grace Pindar, the wife of Duane's fishing partner, Bobby. Dalva drove to the camper the following morning, where she found a neat trailer with dozens of prescription medications and pictures of her own family. As Duane arrived in a boat, she noticed several scars, and he reported he was dying. He wanted to give her his military benefits, but the two had to be married. Bobby married the couple, and Duane explained his liver, pancreas, and stomach were failing. After he gave Dalva too much to drink, Duane left the trailer, took his horse, and began swimming into the ocean. A fisherman noted he heard two gun shots. No body was found and Paul came for Dalva to take her to his ranch. Months later, a ceremony was held at the farm to honor Duane's death.

'Dalva', pg. 71 - 106 Analysis

This section reveals more about the main characters of the story, as well as discusses the death of Duane. Again, Dalva's sexuality is a primary topic in this section, as both her promiscuity and her abnormal relationships are examined. First, her sexual encounter with Bill, the Australian, shows her to be capable of completely casual sex. She admitted in this section that she was missing human contact, and she took care of the problem by calling a previous lover. It is clear that Dalva does not place an emotional connection with sexual attraction. Her second lover in this section, Michael, is nearly a lover out of pity. Dalva herself admits she is attracted to his mind but his habits are atrocious and she would rather shake him than baby him. Again, although it is clear that she cares for Michael, as is shown by her care for him, her concern for him, her purchasing of clothes for him, and her other nurturing habits, it is also quite clear she does not love Michael. Her agreement to allow Michael to study the family journals not only sets the stage for upcoming sections, but also shows Dalva as a kind and caring person, as she agrees only to help Michael. Her final lover in this section, Andrew, is a lover out of habit. Andrew and Dalva have often crossed paths and thought of having sex, but the emotion of the uncle's capture and many drinks helps hasten their decisions. Dalva shows little remorse, even though Andrew is married, showing her inability to equate sex with any emotional attachment.

This section also shows Michael to be a raging alcoholic, and helps explain much of the mystery surrounding his behaviors. It is clear from his descriptions of his health issues to Dalva that Michael is in serious need of medical care for his addictions. Michael is unable to make rational decisions, and Dalva, again showing her care, forced Michael to allow her to take over his addictions. She does not try to rid Michael of these, but simply attempts to control them. Michael complains often of his abusive ex-wife, his unattractiveness, and his attitudes of history, which help explain his character. This insight foreshadows the following section, which is written from the viewpoint of Michael. In addition, Dalva's lies to the chairman about the artifacts foreshadow the finding of those artifacts in the basement of the homestead.

The death of Dalva's grandfather, as foreshadowed in the previous section, is a blow to Dalva, furthering the loss she has felt in her short life. By this time in the story, young Dalva has lost her father, her lover, and her child. She now loses a fourth figure in her life, that of her beloved grandfather. Dalva relates the death of her grandfather to the



loss of Duane, as is shown by her comments to Paul on their ride after the burial. She sees the death of grandfather as a symbol of her own loss. At the end of the section, Dalva again discusses another loss in her life, that of the loss of Duane. After not seeing him for fifteen years, Dalva is allowed to see Duane one final time before he marries her, and immediately commits suicide. Duane, punished by himself for his indiscretion with Dalva for years, has ruined his body, symbolizing his own anguish at the situation. It is apparent he, too, loves Dalva, and has led a life that is defiant of that love he cannot obtain. He loves her enough to give her his benefits, and to then leave her life again, so she does not witness his suffering. Although his actions seem selfish, they are truly heroic.



'Michael', pg. 109 - 144

'Michael', pg. 109 - 144 Summary

The next section of the book changes to the viewpoint of Michael, Dalva's lover. Michael is woken at 6:00 am by Frieda, Dalva's housemaid. She explains that Dalva has said a large breakfast followed by a long walk outside is his routine. Michael notes Dalva is delayed by her uncle Paul, and that she seems never to be where she should be at any given time. He begins to examine the grounds as he thinks back to the day before. His first night was frightening, although he realized the family home was filled with antiques worth a fortune. As he journeys around the farm, he finds himself frightened by animals and amazed at the vastness of the landscape. He stops at a rock pile, and thinks of how unreachable Dalva is in her wealth. He also admits to himself he is not interested in the Sioux, but in how Dalva's great grandfather, John Wesley Northridge, looked at the Sioux. Michael gives a sample of the journal, in which Northridge recounts his work in Andersonville writing letters from the dying soldiers to their loved ones. Northridge admitted he hated the work, and that he was heading as missionary and botanist to the Midwest, sent to help the native Americans learn to farm and love God. Michael becomes disoriented and is lost. He wanders for hours before hearing church bells. He walks toward the sound and finds a group on horses coming for him. Naomi explains she thought he was lost or bitten by a snake. She takes him, embarrassed, to the bath, gives him food and drinks, and tucks him into bed. In the morning, he is wakened by Dalva, who takes him to town for the journals. Dalva tells him not to worry about his adventures the day before, as those in town find it endearing. In fact, he has been asked to speak at the Rotary club. Michael is surprised to find the contents of several large trunks in perfect order but Dalva explains she had a nervous breakdown and organized the trunks. In a snippet, Michael reads of Northridge's adventure with He Dog. Michael is thrilled, knowing for sure that Northridge was, in fact, a friend of the Sioux warrior He Dog, friend of Crazy Horse. Back at the homestead, Dalva makes lunch while Michael admits he wrote his dissertation while drunk and on drugs. During lunch, Dalva explains to Michael that the whites were wrong to give a hoe to the Indian, in that they were not farmers, but hunters. The two argue briefly, as Dalva refuses his sexual advances, noting she cannot have sex with him inside the home or the bunkhouse. Annoyed, he returns to work to read that Northridge met up with bone pickers, who collected and sold buffalo bones from animals killed by settlers. Northridge, angered, choose to walk overland as opposed to continuing to ride with the bone collectors.

In the next journal section, Northridge befriended a Swedish family who had been swindled by land manipulators. He helped them locate land, but saw the daughter, Aase, bathing in a creek, and was disturbed, as he had not seen a woman of his own race naked before, although he had slept with Sioux women. Michael, eyes sore, takes a break, but soon returns to read a collection of letters between Northridge, who owned several plant nurseries, and the workers. Michael discovers Northridge had thirty-seven



thousand dollars in the bank. Dalva arrives, bringing expensive food and wines, and Michael finds he is embarrassed. After dinner, the two drive to the river and make love.

The following morning, Michael realizes he is having difficulty distancing himself from the story within the journals, and he wonders if his bias will show in his work. Dalva leaves for a horse cutting and asks Michael to go to town with Lundquist for supplies. After breakfast, Michael returns to the journals to find Northridge in mourning for a deceased wife, and for a brother, White Tree, who was slaughtered by soldiers. Michael realizes this is not light reading, and that someone with his manic tendencies should start with something lighter. He snoops through the house instead and finds a number of photos with Dalva and various men. He locates the cellar and pokes around, only to be frightened by Lundquist at the top of the stairs. Michael wonders if Northridge married young Aase, and if Lundquist is a descendant. As the two drive to town, Lundquist explains that he normally stops at the tavern but has been told he cannot by his daughter, Frieda, and by Dalva, who said Michael was "a drinker." Lundquist explains, when pressed about the history of the family, that he began working for Dalva's grandfather in 1926. Dalva's grandfather had left him his own piece of land in the will, but he continues to work for the family. Although Lundquist refuses to talk much, he does mention a Sioux boy who had special powers that once worked on the farm. The two load feed into the truck, but soon find themselves in the Swede Hall, where Michael is introduced. He and Lundquist gratefully accept small drinks as they make their way out, and head to the Lazy Daze Tavern. Lundquist plays his fiddle after a meal and several drinks, while Michael speaks with another outsider, known as "Nature Boy", a man who is doing a study of local fauna. At dusk, the two leave, drunk, and crash, only to be discovered by the local sheriff, Dalva, Frieda, Naomi, and others. He is taken home and put to bed, only to wake screaming in the night. In the morning, Michael finds himself outside on the ground among the geese.

'Michael', pg. 109 - 144 Analysis

The sudden shift to Michael's viewpoint serves a number of different purposes in the novel. First, one is able to see Michael through his own eyes, in order to better understand his personality. Michael is a severe alcoholic who hates himself and everything else in the world. He feels constantly less than, and often wonders why Dalva associates with him, since she is so wealthy. Michael is somewhat manic depressive, highly neurotic, childish, and yet he can be charming and witty. His intelligence is clear, as his his pursuit of the truth in history, but his habits and neurosis often get into his way. Once at the farm, Michael is constantly in envy of Dalva and her upbringing, and does not understand how Dalva sees it all as modest. Michael does not hide his problems, but he does blame them on a variety of different situations and peoples, all occurring outside his own realm of responsibility. Another point of the shift is to examine the contents of the journals from a historical point of view, rather than a personal one. Seen through Dalva's eyes, the contents of the journals would be biased by familial ties and a close kindred to the Indian nation. Michael, on the other hand, has none of these biases, and so can tell the story of Northridge without judgment or bias. He cares only for the historical information contained in the journals, and not for the



ghosts hidden between the lines of the pages. Finally, the shift in view allows readers an insight to how others perceive Dalva. Michael sees Dalva as wealthy, strong, self-assured, and at times frightening. She is an intimidating figure in Michael's life, although he clearly cares for her and she for him. Her actions often humble Michael or completely enrage him but in the end, he does love her to the best of his ability. At times, Dalva can also be humorous, as she plays pranks on Michael and teases him for his inabilities as an outdoor man.

The journals introduced in this section serve not only to foreshadow future events, but also to make a clear statement against the treatment of Indians at the hands of the white settlers. From the comments of the disappearing buffalo to the horrible death of White Tree, the journals make clear that Northridge is a champion of the Sioux Indians. The depiction of Northridge through his journals is one of a kind, strong, giving man, much like the men and women of the entire family that Michael has grown to know and love. One can already tell that Northridge finds his duty to instruct the Indians a silly chore, but the fact that he continues to try shows his determination. There are hints in this section about upcoming events, such as the knowledge that Northridge marries and loses a wife, and the death of close Indian friends, which helps move the story forward. In addition, it becomes clear, simply from the names used in the journal, such as Crazy Horse, White Tree, and He Dog, that Northridge is a trusted white man among Indians.

Michael's misadventures in this section serve several purposes as well. First, it is clear Michael is not cut out for frontier life, as he gets lost, enjoys fine wine and food, and is inherently lazy. His wandering trip on his first day shows his ineptitude as a cowboy, foreshadowing Dalva's growing distance from him now that she has returned to a ranching lifestyle. His complete disregard for Dalva's instructions about Lundquist show too his inability to be responsible, either for himself or for others. This type of drunkenness foreshadows events later in the novel as Michael's bad judgment lands him in severe trouble. His meeting of "Nature Boy," while seemingly minor, foreshadow Naomi's involvement with the young man and the eventual knowledge that the boy is Dalva's lost son.



'Michael', pg. 144 - 181

'Michael', pg. 144 - 181 Summary

Michael realizes he is on thin ice with Dalva, and stays straight for several weeks. The morning after his bar visit, Dalva fixes his lunch, and he asks her about Duane. She is clearly bothered, so Michael changes the subject, while Dalva tells him she will be gone for several days. When Michael goes back to work, he is reminded that Northridge tries for twenty-five years to teach the native population to farm, while his own government is constantly taking away the barely fertile farmland given to them in the first place. However, he notes, that is part of history. What is not is the reaction of such men as Northridge, and that is what Michael is striving to reveal.

In the next journal section, Northridge explained that there are months missing from the journals because he was lost at sea. Once back in Chicago, Northridge saw many still in shock from the war, but he found a man willing to oversee his tree business. Northridge and his team were starving at one point, and he saw a man shoot another man over a dog both wanted for dinner. Northridge began speaking against his own faith, and nearly slept with a woman who offered herself in return for food. He did sleep with the daughter of a medicine woman. Michael, now aroused and parched, returns to the house to find Naomi and Dalva waiting with dinner. Michael agrees to do an interview with the high school newspaper the following day, although the women tease him not to have sex with her. Naomi mentions she has been working with "Nature Boy" from the bar, whose name is Nelse, with bird data from the area. When Naomi goes to bed, Michael and Dalva embrace and start towards the hotel in town, but Michael's comments about the ridiculousness of the situation put Dalva off and she returns into the house. Michael returns to work with a bottle of vodka after writing a short note of apology.

In the journal, Northridge discovered Crazy Horse's daughter was ill with whooping cough, and immediately went to her aid, but she died before he reached her. Riding home, Northridge ran into a Calvary group, who shot into the air as he passed to startle him, but Northridge's anger was too great to stop. Several generals had begun to question Northridge's associates with the Sioux. Michael, taking a break, walks outside to speak quietly to the horses, and then returns to his work, reading through the night. The following morning, he answers a knock at the door naked to find Karen, the high school reporter. Michael seduces her by pretending to want to help her model, noting he has a friend, Ted, who can get her into the business. She removes her clothes, but the two are interrupted by Frieda who arrives. Michael tells Karen to return that evening with photographs.

In the journals, Northridge camped alone, noting the settlers were all sick with disease. He had planted his trees and fruits along the journey to create orchards, but worried about their health in the harsh winter. A horse was stolen, and as he walked his other horse to drink, Northridge saw a buffalo herd in the hundreds as they moved across the plains. He was awed at their thunderous presence. In the morning, the Sioux arrived at



his camp for the first time. They were covered in blood from hunting, and were menacing at first, but soon declared Northridge too strange to kill.

Naomi arrives with dinner, and warns Michael about getting Karen's hopes up. Michael asks if Dalva has a lover, and Naomi admits she does not know. When she leaves, Michael finds himself alone, and unable to read the journals, as they are too violent for loneliness. Karen comes over with naked photographs of herself, and the two have oral sex. When she leaves, Michael returns to the journals. Northridge followed the instructions of a medicine man to rid himself of nightmares of war, and he admitted in the journal that he had been a missionary for five years, and had no fruit or converts to show for his time. He mentioned several Indian warriors as friends, but noted he may have chosen the wrong tribe to save. Michael suddenly remembers his dinner in the oven, and once inside, speaks by phone to Dalva. The two are friendly, and Dalva admits she misses him. He eats as he thinks of his first marriage.

'Michael', pg. 144 - 181 Analysis

This section reveals more of Michael's character as well as delves deeper into the family journals. By now, readers have a clear understanding that Michael is not only an alcoholic, but also a person incapable of making good judgment. His actions with Karen in this section show that even more clearly, and foreshadow Karen's father's reaction when he finds the pictures taken of his daughter. Michael himself knows he is a cad, and realizes he is a strain to those around him, but does not seem to be able to control his actions. His jealousy of a possible lover for Dalva shows he loves her, and he admits he loves her, but he is not above having sexual relations with an underage girl at the same time. He wants desperately to show Northridge as he was, and not to introduce bias, but he finds himself pondering how that is possible when one is in the middle of the situation. It is clear that Michael is a key part of the tale, as the voice for Northridge but that he himself is a mess of a human being.

Michael also has several run ins with Dalva that foreshadow tensions between these characters. First, Michael asks about Duane, and Dalva's reaction makes it clear she does not wish to discuss her previous lover with him. Also, Michael's continued pressure to have sex while on the farm angers Dalva, as she has been clear on the subject. Dalva is a strong woman, and pressure simply causes her to push Michael away. This foreshadows the ending of their relationship later in the novel, as it is clear there are already trust and communication issues.

The journal sections within this part of the novel are beginning to introduce Northridge not only as a missionary and a botanist, but also as an emerging voice against the white man's treatment of the Sioux nation. He himself admits he is not succeeding as a missionary, but that perhaps this is because he no longer believes in what he preaches. He realizes the white man has done severe damage to the Sioux nation as their people become ill and die from white diseases, their lands are taken, and the buffalo are slaughtered. Northridge's friends are nearly entirely Indian at many points in the journal, and his handling of his first meeting of the Sioux is done in a way that make him

appealing to the warriors. These records foreshadow the development of Northridge as a fighter for the Sioux people through the rest of the novel, and also serve to show his hardships at the time of the settlers. The passage of buffalo serves to show the horrible demise of the majestic creatures at the hands of the white settlers, as well.

This chapter also refers again to Nature Boy, or Nelse. At this point, Nelse is a minor character that seems to be growing a relationship with Naomi, but this foreshadows information in upcoming chapters about Nelse's true origins.



'Michael', pg. 182 - 213

'Michael', pg. 182 - 213 Summary

In the last section of this chapter, Michael wakes to find a coyote eating one of the geese, which concerns Michael, so he plans to ask Lundquist for a plan. Back at work, Michael discovers that Northridge was, in fact, married to Aase. Northridge discovered the government was planning to move the Sioux again to the Dakotas, in direct violation of the treaties. His Reverend told him the Sioux were dying so fast, he should focus on saving souls. Northridge rode to find the farmers, the Jensens, he helped settle, and brought them gifts in exchange for a marriage to young Aase. He was told she was ill with tuberculosis, but he did not care. The two courted, and Aase spoke kindly of an Indian named Sam Creekmouth. Aase fell asleep one afternoon during a picnic, and when she woke, the two kissed.

Lundquist arrives, and after a beer, the two build a cage unit for the geese to avoid more coyote attacks. Lundquist, during lunch, tells Michael of Duane, and compares him unknowingly to Dalva's father. Following his leave, Michael mails the photos of Karen to Ted, keeping one for himself. Back in the journals, Northridge rode to avoid a plague of grasshoppers and the smoke of prairie fires. Northridge admitted he had learned that politicians are bought, and that no one will attempt to save the Sioux. His camp was visited by One Stab, a guardian of a white settlement. Northridge told him of Sitting Bull and his five thousand warriors near Bear Butte, but One Stab was unimpressed, having lost nearly his whole tribe to illness. Northridge rode to the white camp where he was welcomed, and where he met Colonel Custer, but found himself angry at their perceptions of the Sioux. His description of Custer is important to Michael, and he sends it immediately to his chairman.

Naomi arrives, and Michael questions why Northridge married Aase, knowing she was terminally ill. Naomi explains that Aase's brother, John, was her grandfather. Dalva's grandfather had made Paul and John Wesley, Dalva's father, read the journals, and so Wesley arrived at Naomi's home, and the two fell in love. Naomi admits she still talks to him daily, and that he tells her things. The two go for a ride, and Michael finds himself with Naomi at the river. Michael hugs her, but Naomi pulls away. She also tells Michael that Nelse has hired her as a part time assistant. Back at the bunkhouse, Michael returns to the journals. Northridge built a cabin for he and Aase, but discovered a tribe of Sioux he had befriended was down to the elderly and small children, as the rest had gone to war with Crazy Horse against the government. Northridge was alerted by John, Aase's brother, that he was to ride to the Jensen's immediately, as Aase's health was failing.

The following day, Michael is taken to his rotary club speech by Naomi, who warns him it may be a tough crowd. He gives a speech about the plight of the Sioux at the hands of the white settlers. During questions, Michael is forced to defend his opinions. Afterward, Michael adjourns with Naomi to the Lazy Daze, where everyone seems to know of



Michael's modeling promise to Karen. Back home, Dalva is there, but seems distant and haggard. When Naomi arrives, Dalva reveals that Rachel has passed on. Michael escapes back to the journal, where Northridge wrote of the Sioux freedom in the final six months, where they won many battles against the whites. Northridge rode to locate the wife of murdered White Tree, Shy Bird. He prayed first where Aase had died the year before, remembering how he felt her last, hot, sick breath against him as the first rain of the season fell. He then rode to Fort Robinson, where many noted increased tensions. Northridge was arrested for trying to access the Sioux, but was freed by a Lieutenant he knew well. While the Lieutenant agreed to retrieve Shy Bird, he also noted he would continue to destroy the Sioux. Shy Bird was taken to a remote cabin, and Northridge returned to Fort Robinson to find the Lieutenant had killed Crazy Horse. Michael finds himself angry, and returns to the house for dinner with Dalva. The two dine out, dance, and return to a hotel to make love. The following morning, Dalva takes Michael to a horse sale, where he is attacked by Karen's father.

'Michael', pg. 182 - 213 Analysis

The last section of 'Michael' ties together several ends from previous sections. First, readers learn of Northridge's marriage to the young woman, Aase, whom he helped in an earlier section. The family ties between the Northridge family and Naomi's own, the Jensens, was solidified not only with the Northridge / Jensen marriage, but with Naomi's own marriage to Wesley. Also in this section, the link between the Northridge clan and Rachel is believed to be broken, as Rachel passes away. The only link left is Dalva's son, foreshadowing his appearance in the novel. Nelse, later revealed to be her son, is mentioned again in this section, but again it is brief, and appears innocent in nature.

This section also serves to show the increased tensions between the government and the Sioux tribes in the journals. Northridge clearly is beginning to side with the Sioux, as he continues to try to fight for their land and property rights, only to be scoffed at and thought a fool. Even the missionaries of the area are allowing the slaughter, as is shown by Northridge's Reverend's instruction to simply save souls, as the natives are doomed. The mention of locusts, prairie fires, the loss of buffalo, and the increase in disease all show the plight of the Sioux nation. In addition, the mentions of large groups of warriors under Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull foreshadow the battles to come between the Sioux and the government. Finally, Northridge's increasingly strained ties with his own government foreshadows his heavy involvement in the fight against the settlers later in the novel. The brief mention of Sam Creekmouth in the journal links to the eventual lover of Dalva later in the novel as well.

This section also shows Michael's character development as a result of his reading of the journals. In the beginning, Michael makes it clear he is not taking sides, but simply wants to relate the story of Northridge for the purpose of history. During his speech to the Rotary, however, Michael's comparison of the settlers to the Nazi's, his clear statement against the slaughter of buffalo and the unlawfulness of the land swindling from the Sioux show he is being affected by his experiences. Michael is not only reading about history, but through Northridge, he is living it. Because this historical account is



being told not by someone on the winning side, but someone who has changed to the losing side, Michael is finally able to see the whole truth of history, as opposed to merely what is on the surface. Being able to commune with the animals on the farm and with nature, Michael is slowly changing into a more whole individual. This is too late, unfortunately, as Michael's previous indiscretion comes back to haunt him when Karen's father attacks him at the horse sale. Michael deserves this but there is a sense that Michael is changing, as well, even before the beating.



'Going Home', pg. 217 - 267.

'Going Home', pg. 217 - 267. Summary

Dalva arrives at the Omaha hospital where Michael has been flown to due to a severe injury to his jaw. Dalva seeks to drop any assault charges on Pete, the father, in exchange for all charges against Michael to be dropped. She realizes Michael really doesn't know any better, but she is angry none the less. Returning to the hotel, Dalva speaks with Naomi and discovers Michael's jaw will require surgery. He is to remain hospitalized for two weeks, and while dining with Naomi later, Dalva realizes she is relieved not to have to deal with him. Naomi agrees to take Michael once he is free from the hospital. Since Naomi would be traveling back and forth to Omaha with Nelse on her project, Frieda could care for Michael. Dalva then asks Naomi if she still believes her son is alive, and Naomi admits she thinks so, but also notes that she knows Duane is the father. Naomi and Dalva fly back home the following day, but stop at the hospital first, where Michael apologizes profusely via notes, since his jaw is wired. Dalva tenderly forgives him. Once home, she decides to travel on horseback to a swale she visited as a younger woman, but when she arrives, it no longer exists. Instead, she travels to a box canyon and decides to camp there. She recalls when she awoke in the canyon on the way to Nebraska two weeks ago, she drove to see Paul and thought of her time after Duane's suicide. Following news of Duane's death, she had gone back to her hotel and called Paul, who came for her. He took her to his home in Loreto, believing that taking her to Arizona would be wrong, since that was where she mourned the loss of her son.

This time, two weeks ago, she found his ranch had been expanded. Three women live on the estate, and Dalva believes them all to be lovers of Paul. In the morning, Paul and Dalva went horseback riding for several hours, and Dalva explains Paul's philosophies on life. Paul admitted he was trying to find a man for Ruth, and he explained he had invited his neighbor, Fred, to dinner to make a potential match. After lunch, Dalva looked through journals made during her stay at the ranch after Duane's suicide. Paul's speak of his perceptions of Dalva, whereas Dalva writes of her pain. Finished with the journals, Dalva joined Ruth, Paul, and Fred for dinner and listened as Paul and Fred discussed the Apache warriors, and argued over the desert as a representative symbol of freedom. The following morning, Dalva left for Nebraska with a reminder from Paul of the 'things' in the basement.

Back in the box canyon, Dalva awakens to find herself in a rain storm, and three days later, Dalva comes down with a cold. She reminisces about Lundquist, who has served her family for years as he cares for her in her time of illness. He asks her of Michael, and Dalva reports from his latest letter that he is doing well, although in reality he has realized his life is a mess, and, now free of drugs and alcohol, he feels pain and suffering. Michael compares his new feelings to the pains of Northridge and his Sioux friends. He believes his work on the journals will be the first meaningful work of his life. Dalva finds herself tired of Michael's self-realization, although she appreciates his new



found self. She wanders around the farm doing chores, looking for peace, and goes through lovers in her mind, realizing she has worked her entire life in a variety of jobs, but that they have led to an interesting life.

She calls a man, Sam Creekmouth, as he is selling dogs, and realizes the name is one in the journals. Before going to look at the animals, Dalva calls Ruth who admits she is longing to see the priest in Costa Rica. After spending time reflecting, Dalva realizes she is home to stay. After a night of nightmares, Dalva drives to a farm near Chadron, where Sam has the puppies for sale. Sam is a tall and dark man whom Dalva immediately finds attractive. The two talk of knowing one another and Dalva follows him to the trailer where the pup plays happily. After a disturbing phone call clearly about money, Sam wordlessly invites Dalva to ride horses with him. The two rest near a creek, and Sam explains since the owners have let the ranch go under, he will have to find employment, perhaps in Texas. The two talk about his previous employment as well as their ideals, and decide to return to his trailer for drinks. The following morning, Dalva recalls her night before. They had gone back to the trailer, where she had offered to show him how his new telescope worked. Following drinks, they made love on the couch, and enjoyed each others company for the evening. At breakfast in the morning, Dalva realizes he reminds her of Duane, and she is nearly frightened into leaving, but convinces herself that she is allowed to love. On her way home with the puppy, she recalls the passage in the journals where Aase passes away. Northridge described Aase as extremely thin, but her faith remained. She was given opium daily for the pain, and always woke to the birds, but Northridge noted she would soon never wake. He mentioned a doll Aase had brought with her to her marriage home that she wished Northridge would give to a daughter he would have with someone he married after her death.

'Going Home', pg. 217 - 267. Analysis

The beginning section of Going Home is the beginning of Dalva's journey toward healing. Back in the hospital, where she has not been since the birth of her child, Dalva begins to realize that her life has always been a journey to save others, including Michael, and that she has come to a point where she wants only to save herself. While Dalva does help Michael to escape his latest crisis, she also knows she has begun to feel differently about him. This foreshadows the ending of their relationship in the last section of the novel. In addition, Dalva and her mother come to terms with the shared knowledge that Duane is the father of Dalva's child, and that he is forever a part of their family. At this point, it is unclear whether Naomi realizes Nelse is in fact Dalva's son, but her response indicates that she does, or at least that she has strong feelings about the situation. Either way, the knowledge that Naomi knows the father allows another secret to leave Dalva, and another part of her healing to begin.

The reading of the journals at Paul's that were written following Duane's death also help Dalva to heal. She is able to relive her pain with the knowledge that her life continued on. The journals also help to show Dalva's condition as she mourned Duane, and Paul's perceptions of Dalva at the time. It is clear from these journals that Paul loves Dalva



dearly, and that she sees Paul as a father figure. Paul understands the need to give to others, which he teaches to Dalva during their time together. Paul loves a variety of women, showing again the sexual deviancy that the family seems prone to, but the women do not hide this fact from one another and seem to enjoy one another's company.

Paul and Fred's argument over the desert as a symbol of freedom is interesting, in that the argument serves as a symbol of the same disagreement in terms of the status of the plains. Michael noted earlier in the novel that Northridge believed the plains belonged to the Indians, and that they represented freedom and honor to the Sioux. Fred believes the desert represents freedom and liberty, as well. Paul, however, notes that ascribing a concept such as freedom to a landscape means to take away the natural beauty of the landscape that exists outside of human perception. This argument can equally be applied to Northridge's argument for the plains, in that by attributing the plains as a symbol for heritage to the Sioux, the land becomes useless without the native American population. Since his own wealth continues to prosper in the plains, despite the decline of the Native America, Paul's argument is shown to be accurate.

Michael's sudden realization of his life and his new found ability to feel the pain of others also helps Dalva to free herself from her emotional baggage. It is clear Michael is beginning to find himself after his battle with drugs and alcohol, and in his recovery, he is better able to understand the pain and suffering of those in the journals, which will allow him, he believes, to tell their tale more accurately. While this relieves Dalva, it also tires her to listen to Michael's self-realization. Her beginnings of acceptance of her life is also shown in her recounting of her previous careers and lovers. Her realization that her life has been interesting shows she has separated her life until now with her life in the future, indicating a beginnings of acceptance.

Dalva's sexual relations with Sam Creekmouth, along with her relaxed sense of caring for the man, show too that she is beginning to allow herself to love again. Although she is afraid, Dalva does not run from Sam, as she has so many others, but instead convinces herself that to love and be loved is acceptable, even if the man reminds her of Duane. She is able, for the first time, to see someone as 'like Duane' instead of an attempt to be with Duane. This subtle difference is one that allows Dalva to begin to fall in love again. The fact that the man is a descendant of a person mentioned in the journals is simply an additional fact that shows the ties of history. Finally, this section tells of the tragic death of Aase and the mention of the doll foreshadows the reappearance of the doll in the journals in the final section of the book.

There are also several references to the bodies in the basement during this section, as well, which foreshadow the story of where the bodies came from during the next section. The items in the basement have been hinted at throughout the novel, with Dalva's 'lie' about the location of the Native American collection, Paul's reminder of the 'things' in the basement, and Dalva's knowledge that grandfather wanted her to view items in the basement when she was forty five.



'Going Home', pg. 264 - 324

'Going Home', pg. 264 - 324 Summary

When Dalva returns to the homestead, Sam calls and offers to repair the corral at the hunting cabin as payment since Dalva has offered to allow him to live there. Nelse and Naomi are finding new bird species, but plan to return in ten days, and Paul and Luiz, a student of Dalva's, offer to come in mid-July for a visit. Michael sends another letter to Dalva, explaining that he is becoming more healthy. Dalva finally gathers the courage to call Andrew, and discovers that her son grew up in Omaha, and his adoptive mother is willing to meet with her. As she rides a horse later, she screams into the wind about the unfairness of a world that takes father, child, and lover in a few short years. After letting her concerns lose to the wilderness, however, Dalva finds herself again at peace. When the two mother's meet, they discuss how much Dalva looks like the son. The mother explains they agreed to name the child John, as that is what Dalva's grandfather demanded, although they never used the name. She describes the boy as kind, athletic, contrary, and not a good student. Dalva tells the mother of the boy's father, Duane, and the two part.

Dalva returns home, realizing she now has hope to meet her son. A letter from Michael reveals that he is still soul searching but that his recent reading on the Dawes Act has led him to conclusions. He also admits to sleeping with one of the nurses. The following day, Frieda informs her Lundquist was treated in the night for a urinary tract infection and, fearing death, he walked home fifteen miles. Dalva agrees to watch the old man that evening. After time riding, she drives to Lena's cafe in town to tell Lena, the mother of Charlene, about the news of her son. The sheriff, eating inside, hands her papers for Michael to sign, indicating no charges will be filed. Back home, where she wonders about a room downstairs that grandfather told her to view when she was forty-five. Dalva serves Lundquist dinner, and realizes how much she cares for the old man. He tells Dalva he saw Duane in the bar a few weeks ago, and Dalva realizes it had to be her son. She asks him to join her in the cellar and Lundquist notes he will only go to the door, as that is where he went with grandfather when they hid the Indian artifacts. The two are interrupted by Naomi. She explains she and Nelse are still researching, and Dalva wonders if the two are having an affair. When everyone leaves, Dalva takes out a note from Grandfather which asks her to view the contents of the cellar. He notes the bodies should be buried.

Traveling to Naomi's, after another night of dreams, she finds a letter noting the school will be closed. Dalva immediately calls to accept another job offer as a counselor. When she and Michael speak alone, Michael asks about the final journal, which is missing, and Dalva notes she will have to discuss it with Paul, as it's contents involve a lot of money. Michael accuses her of being cold, and she reiterates the story of her son. On the road, Dalva realizes she feels nothing for Michael but pity. She realizes she is trading the past, including her father, Duane, and the souls in the basement, for her son. She knows she has to put them in her past. When she arrives at the cabin, she and



Sam are distant, and she finally admits to him about her lost son. The two celebrate and make love, and for three days, are blissfully happy.

Returning home, Dalva finally enters the cellar, where she is confronted by a nest of blacksnakes. Passing through them, she opens the root cellar, where she finds the skeleton of a lieutenant, a soldier, and a sergeant, along with the bodies of five Sioux warriors. The government officials were shot by Northridge, while the warriors are friends Northridge wanted to keep safe from grave robbers. The rest of the room is full of various artifacts. Dalva sits quietly, feeling the souls of Duane and her father leave her. On arriving at Naomi's later, Dalva discovers Michael is extremely depressed. Michael begins crying in earnest, and Dalva holds him, telling him he is trying too hard. He has written her a note that explains that, in his sobriety, he has realized a desire for change, but that change is difficult for him. He admits he found the missing journal by snooping, but that he will not mention the bodies, or the artifacts. Michael, when he wakes early from the sedative, asks Dalva to make love one more time, as he senses their romance is over. She refuses, and returns to Michael's writing, which includes passages from the journals.

Northridge admitted he and his Sioux bride, Small Bird, thought of having children, and that she convinced him by reminding him that the Sioux can only survive through parenthood. Michael summarizes some of the entries, noting that Northridge had lost his missionary affiliations but was allowed to remain in the area thanks to political ties. He continued to help the Sioux who were avoiding being sent to reservation, and continued to fight against the government's abuse of the Sioux. Dalva breaks off to feed Michael, who is amiable during dinner, where Lena is a guest. Paul calls and tells Dalva he and Luiz and Ruth will arrive Saturday.

Back to the journals, Northridge wrote of being in jail, to be released only on promise of not returning. His wife, he noted, was pregnant, and he had attended the Mohank conference to help address the "Indian Problem" by reminding politicians that the Indians are people, and should be treated fairly. On the third day, he attacked a Reverend, who was speaking about awakening the savage beasts that were Indians by stealing their land, and starving them until they found God. On returning home, he became an Indian as he started a headquarters in the Badlands that supported an army. Dalva's grandfather was born in a tipi that year, and the Ghost Dance movement began. Sitting Bull was murdered for his non committed stance on the subject, and Northridge slowly lost his mind. His journal notes he drank too much, and that while he loved the Sioux, he had begun to doubt his ability to become one fully. Once the reservations had been torn apart, Northridge moved to his land in Nebraska with his wife and son. A visit from Kicking Bear in 1890 signaled the end, as he reported he was headed to Nevada to partake in a new Ghost Dance, dreamed of by Wowavka, which appeared to be a mix of Christianity and Indian beliefs.

Returning to her own home the following day, Dalva continues to read Michael's account, noting that Kicking Bear returned from his visit to teach Northridge the Ghost Dance. There are no entries in the journals until one month after Wounded Knee. Northridge admitted he arrived late to the battle only to see children sliced to ribbons by



soldier gunfire. He was arrested while trying to bandage the dead children together. His release was contingent on not returning to Sioux country. The later journal entries are all code for the hiding of chiefs in the cellar, along with artifacts the government declared illegal. One day, Northridge was met at home by the lieutenant friend who freed him years before. The lieutenant ordered Northridge to feed and house him and his men, and Northridge obliged. Drunk, the man teased small John about the doll he was carrying. When John and Small Bird left the room, the lieutenant threw the doll into the fire. Northridge immediately shot both him and his two men. The bodies were dragged to the root cellar and the horses were led away. Northridge continued farming but his story ended here.

The following day, Michael, Frieda, and Lundquist arrive to begin cooking for the family barbecue. Naomi arrives with Paul, Ruth, and Luiz, and after pleasantries, the women go to the house to begin cooking. Nelse arrives, and as he stands in the barn helping with saddles for Luiz, Dalva is struck by his resemblance to Duane. Dizzy, she goes outside to him, and is told by Naomi that Nelse is her son. The two walk silently down the driveway, when Dalva stops, telling him of Duane. They hug stiffly, and Nelse admits Naomi had figured it out a week ago. Nelse asks to see his father and Dalva shows him a photo of Duane and the two toast and talk. Lundquist begins playing his violin and the two join the family for dinner.

'Going Home', pg. 264 - 324 Analysis

The final section brings together several themes mentioned throughout the novel. The relationship between Dalva and Sam develops, and it becomes clear they care deeply for one another. Unlike previous relationships, Dalva finds herself able to become close to Sam. This shows again she is beginning to let go of Duane, and move forward. In addition, this chapter introduces the adoptive mother of Dalva's child. She gives information of John, the son, that fits the same description as Duane, and Dalva is again torn between her past and her present. She realizes she has been stuck in the past for far too long, and that she wants to begin to live in the present, with a job, a permanent lover, and a home she enjoys. She finds herself being more careful than normal since she now has a reason to live.

Michael, too, shows signs of development, although some of it is not necessarily good. Michael's sobriety has been hard on him, and when combined with an inability to speak, Michael's manic tendencies begin to overpower him. His legal troubles are over, thanks to Dalva, but his psychological trouble is just beginning. He is depressed, but he does show signs of hope for his work. He has gained a respect for Northridge and the Sioux that didn't exist previously, and he has begun to genuinely wish to tell the story of the family. However, Michael also admits to sleeping with the nurses in the hospital, showing he is not yet changed of his ways. He and Dalva are through, as is shown by her refusal of his advances in the book, and Michael seems to understand this, although he is sad about the loss. In total, throughout the book, Michael has grown much, and although he still has more changing to do, his new sobriety has led to a sincere desire for change.



Dalva's trip to the root cellar is the culmination of the bringing together of past and present that has been led up to throughout the novel. Dalva's letter from her grandfather, and his mention again of the bodies, foreshadows the actual bodies Dalva finds in the basement. Her conversation with Michael about the missing journals foreshadows the artifacts being located, as does the letter from grandfather and Lundquist's own admittance that he helped move the items there. However, the moment of Dalva's acceptance of the bodies in the basement, along with the items that represent her heritage, seem to symbolize for her the full acceptance of her past, and the letting go of the souls of her father, Duane, and grandfather. With the release of the secret of the bodies, Dalva is able to release the souls of her loved ones she has held for so long, and embrace her lost youth, as symbolized by her loss of the little girl inside herself.

The final confrontation of Northridge and the lieutenant in the journals signifies yet another ending. Northridge fought his entire life to help the Sioux remain free, and he did this without killing a single individual. His crime, in the end, is not caused by the Sioux problem, but by the simple disrespect of the lieutenant. When he throws the doll into the fire, Northridge's patience ends, and in a rage, he kills the man and his soldiers. It was not an Indian related issue, but a personal issue that finally allows the rage inside Northridge to rise. He is not caught, and he continues to ferry Sioux through his railroad, but his story virtually ends. In addition, the final journal entries also show the rise of the Ghost Dance, which is vital to the Sioux nation, the death of Sitting Bull, and the psychological effect of Wounded Knee, all of which are important concepts to an understanding of the fall of the Sioux.

Finally, this last section explains the arrival of young Nelse, the odd behavior of Naomi, and the part that Paul played in the adoption of Dalva's child. Naomi has worked with Nelse for several weeks at this point, and Dalva suspects something is up because of subtle changes in her behavior. When she unexpectedly realizes Nelse is her son, however, the situation makes more sense. Several people have claimed to see Duane over recent months, and it is now clear they were seeing Nelse, Dalva's son. The scene between the newly found family members is clearly stiff but one can tell that there is love between them and that a relationship is likely. This final confrontation between the living and the dead symbolizes the coming together of all of Dalva's past and present, allowing her to move forward into a new life.



Characters

Dalva Northridge

Dalva Northridge is a forty-five year old bachelorette who has led a hard but interesting life. Part-Sioux, Dalva has the classic Native American beauty and as a result, is forced to grow up early due to male attentions early in life. After growing up wealthy, but losing her father to the Korean War at age nine, Dalva finds herself in love with a half-Sioux boy named Duane Stonehorse. After months of trying to gain his affections, Dalva has intercourse and ends up pregnant. However, Duane disappears and Dalva learns that he is her half-brother. Forced to give up her child, Dalva plunges into a depression which only her uncle Paul can lift. However, the experiences leave Dalva somewhat jaded, and fearful of relationships. Unable to bear children, Dalva has a series of unsuccessful relationships that borderline often on harmful. Dalva is kind, and finds happiness working several positions that allow her to help others in crisis. However, Dalva is unable to let go of her own past crises and move forward. The death of Duane fifteen years later again forces Dalva into sorrow and it is Paul who must lift her but Dalva still refuses to accept herself and her past. It is only when she gains the courage to look for her lost son and to confront family secrets that Dalva begins to find herself again. Dalva is a strong-willed, intelligent, and caring character who finally learns to love again.

Michael

Michael is the lover of Dalva and an academic historian interested in writing about the Northridge family. Michael is a professor of history and loves to discuss historical events. He is extremely intelligent, highly motivated, and caring. However, Michael has a secret problem with severe alcoholism. Michael lies nearly constantly as a result of his alcohol use. He has lost a wife and child as a result of his drinking and his manic behavior. Michael is likely manic depressive and uses alcohol as medication. However, he also uses alcohol for everything else from relaxation to stimulation and even to focus. Michael loves Dalva but is incapable of making good decisions as a result of his disease. He is not cruel and does not mean to hurt others, but his alcohol abuse has left him selfish and self-serving. It is only when Michael's behaviors land him in the hospital that Michael is forced into sobriety and into viewing himself as he is. Michael finds himself able to identify with Northridge in the journals and finds himself excited to tell the story, sure it will be his best work. Michael's journey is one of acceptance like Dalva's and in the end, it is clear that Michael is beginning to find himself.

John W Northridge

John W. Northridge is the great grandfather of Dalva. After serving in the civil war, Northridge is given the job as a missionary and botanist to the Sioux nation. He is to



head west and attempt to convert the Native American's to Christianity while teaching them to farm. Originally, Northridge sees his mission as one of necessity, and sets forth with the idea that he can help save the Sioux tribe. The journals track Northridge as he faces the same extreme conditions as the Sioux, and begins to understand their ways of live. He is a strong man, but a kind one as well. When he learns a settler family, the Jensens, have been swindled of their money and land, he helps them find unsettled territory, and helps them build a homestead. Later, he marries the young daughter only to watch her die of tuberculosis. Over time, Northridge is forced to watch as his government destroys the Sioux by killing their animals, taking their land, killing their people, and starving them to death. Northridge, unable to stand by, begins fighting for the Sioux, and with them. He sells his businesses to fund their battles, and helps start an underground railroad for hunted warriors. In the end, Northridge is forced to choose between soldiers and his own beliefs, and he shoots several soldiers. He hides the bodies, and continues living quietly until his death. Northridge, over time, became a hero to the Sioux and a champion of the Native Americans.

Naomi Northridge

Naomi Northridge is the mother of Dalva. As a descendant of Northridge's wife's family, Naomi herself married into the Northridge family when she married Dalva's father, Wesley. Naomi is a caring and kind woman with a love for birds and for her daughters. She is a caring mother but a worried one as well. She knows Dalva is hurting but encourages her daughters to do what makes them happy and not what others think they should do. It is Naomi who helps Dalva realize her family roots and Naomi who first realizes her bird partner, Nelse, is Dalva's lost son. She is never judgmental, and treats everyone as family. Naomi too has a hard time letting go of the past, as she continues to speak to her deceased husband for several years, but Naomi also knows one must move forward in life.

Ruth Northridge

Ruth Northridge is the sister of Dalva. Ruth was young when her father dies, and thus has no recollection of him. Ruth is as flighty as Dalva when it comes to men, although she has had a much tougher time of things. Her husband, Ted, admitted he was homosexual following the birth of their son, and the two separated. For fifteen years, Ruth had no male contact. However, she suddenly begins an affair with a priest, and shortly thereafter, with a grocer. Ruth is a soft-spoken woman, and shy, but with the determination and kindness of her mother and sister.

Paul Northridge

Paul Northridge is the brother of Dalva's father, Wesley. Paul spent much of his youth traveling the world but has since settled into a life traveling North and South America. Paul loves women and has several girlfriends but does not marry. It is Paul who



becomes a father figure to Dalva following grandfather's death. It is also Paul who saves Dalva from herself following the loss of her son and the loss of Duane. Paul helps Dalva to realize that nature can be healing, and that by giving back to others and the world, one can find salvation.

Duane Stonehorse

Duane Stonehorse is the lover of Dalva. As a half-Sioux, Duane has the looks of a Native American with the green eyes of a Caucasian. He is the love child of Rachel, his mother, and Dalva's father, Wesley, with a strong work ethic like his mother and a love of horses like his father. At fifteen, Duane arrives at the Northridge estate, seeking work as he is unhappy on the reservation and Rachel told him to seek out Grandfather. Accepted as a farmhand, Duane ignores Dalva for many months before he admits he loves her, and makes love to her. On asking for her hand in marriage, however, he learns she is his half-sister and runs away. Duane keeps tabs on Dalva, however, though her life. Duane lives a hard life of alcohol abuse, war, drugs, and pain before his body gives up. Still in love with Dalva, he calls her as he is dying and her he marries so she can have his benefits. Duane commits suicide following the wedding in a last act of misunderstood heroism.

Grandfather Northridge

Grandfather Northridge is the descendant of the original Northridge of the family estate. Grandfather loves his family and has a particular love for Dalva as the daughter of his lost son, Wesley. Grandfather dotes on Dalva, and is heartbroken to find her in love with her unknown half brother. Grandfather does not judge Dalva, but instead tries to ensure she is cared for, loved, and strong. Grandfather leaves the estate to Dalva, along with explanations of the contents of the house. He realizes Dalva must be ready for the treasures in the basement, and thus instructs her not to open things until this year. Grandfather took care of the adoption, and continued to care for her child and for Duane, Wesley's illegitimate son, even after Dalva thought the child was long gone and even though Wesley knew nothing of the child, showing that family was highly important.

Rachel or Sparrow Hawk Stonehorse

Rachel Stonehorse is the mother of Duane, Dalva's lover. Rachel was hired one winter to help Paul and Wesley and grandfather with their hunting cabin. Hired by Paul, it was Wesley who immediately fell for Rachel, and ended up impregnating her. To avoid a fight between brothers, Grandfather sends Rachel away, but helps care for Duane throughout his life. He also eventually locates Rachel and begins to care for her as a lover. Rachel cares deeply for her son, but realizes he is a wild child and one that is likely headed for destruction. Rachel cares for Grandfather and asks for Dalva's



forgiveness, showing she is not a callous woman. However Rachel is an alcoholic and eventually dies early from her habits.

Sam Creekmouth

Sam Creekmouth is the eventual lover of Dalva. Originally, Sam is selling puppies and Dalva is there to purchase one. In Sam, however, Dalva finds a shy and polite cowboy who is intelligent, giving, honest, and loving. In very little time, Dalva finds herself falling for him and although she fears such an emotional reaction, she allows herself, for the first time, to love him without reservation. Sam shows Dalva that love can be strong without a need to fix someone.

Nelse

Nelse Stonehorse is the son of Duane and Dalva. Nelse is a caring, loving boy who is a bad student and a bit wayward. He has a love of horses and nature, like his father, and a sensible and practical approach to life, like his mother. Much like both of them, Nelse wanders through the first part of his life, unsure of what he wants. However, Nelse soon desires to find his mother, and sets off to locate her. Once he does, however, he is afraid to approach her and instead befriends Naomi. Over time, he gathers courage and he and Dalva begin to form a relationship.



Objects/Places

Car Aerial

A car aerial is a type of car antennae and is the weapon used against the uncle of Franco who anally raped him.

Baboquivari

Baboquivari is the sacred Papago mountain in Arizona.

Dawes Act

The Dawes Act was a government act that eventually led to the loss of most of the land given originally to the Sioux Indians.

Whooping Cough

Whooping cough is a disease of the lungs that was originally transferred to the native Americans by white settlers. While the white settlers were generally able to combat the disease, the Native American population was drastically reduced as a result of an inability to fight the infection.

Sioux Indians

The Sioux Indians were a tribe of Indians that originally inhabited Nebraska and other surrounding territories. The Sioux were treated horribly at the hands of the white settlers and the US government.

Dry Tortugas

Dry Tortugas is an old prison located in a fort near Key West in the Gulf of Mexico. This prison was where Crazy Horse was to be sent, prior to his murder.

Medicine Man

This is a medicine man is a Sioux version of a doctor or one who tends the sick and wounded.



Holy Man

This is a holy man is a man who has visions and has a relationship with the spirits.

Ghost Dance

The ghost dance, dreamed by Wovoka during a solar eclipse, was a religious movement among the Sioux Indians that promised a new life for them.

Cornhuskers

The Cornhuskers are the football team of Nebraska that Naomi loves watching.



Themes

Letting Go

The concept of letting go of the past in order to enjoy the present and look into the future is the fundamental point of the novel. Dalva has spend forty-five years living her life in the past. After losing her father at age nine, Dalva spends much time trying to replace him in her life. She begins with her grandfather, who also dies. She then uses Paul and Lundquist, her uncle and farmhand, as male role models in her life. Instead of accepting her father's death and moving on, she remains forever searching for his memory. Similarly, Dalva does the same with her lovers. When she finds out that her only love, Duane, was her half-brother, Dalva loses the ability to let another man into her life fully. While Dalva is able to love, she is not able to shake the past of Duane and move forward. Even following Duane's death, Dalva cannot leave his memory behind so that she can fully embrace love. Naomi, Dalva's mother, has a similar issue in that she continues to speak to her deceased husband her entire life, although she does seem to be able to enjoy the present, as well. Northridge, in the journals, is unable to let go fully of his beloved Aase, to the point where an unintentional disrespect for her results in the death of three men. Michael, too, consistently looks backwards into his failed marriage, his previous failures, and his constant lies to find reason to belittle and hate himself.

In the end, Dalva is only able to shake her past by forcing herself to release the secrets of her family history. Once she finds her son, she is able to let go of the pain of her past losses, and look forward to beginning a new life with herself. She is able to let go of Duane so she can love Sam, is able to relieve her guilt about her family and allow Michael to tell the story, and is able to finally forgive and accept herself, and move forward. Michael, too, is able to let go of his past as he learns to live a life of sobriety. In finding himself naked without any substance abuse as a crutch, Michael is forced to accept himself and his actions. He is able to move forward with renewed hope.

Fall of the Sioux

Another primary theme in the novel is the destruction of the Sioux tribe and other Native American tribes as a result of the settlers move westward. In the novel, Northridge begins his journey as a missionary to the Sioux who is sent to teach the Native Americans how to farm, and of God and 'proper' customs of the white man. Northridge is originally hopeful in his mission and seems to genuinely wish to help the Native American. Over time, however, Northridge realizes that the government and the people he works for are systematically destroying the Native American populations. Settlers and soldiers alike kill off nearly all the buffalo, resulting in starvation for the tribes who use the buffalo for food, clothing, and other necessities. The government, in an effort to control the native population, enacts laws that forbid customs necessary to the Native American culture. The land the Sioux have lived on for hundreds of years is taken away from them for settlers and they are forced to relocate to lands that are infertile, and void



of life. Even those lands are eventually diminished to a small piece of land for thousands of Native Americans. Native Americans are killed by settlers and soldiers alike, simply out of fear. Northridge realizes by the end of the journals that the Sioux are doomed to failure as a result of the settlement of the west, and that his mission was never one that could succeed. His late attempts to help the Sioux are somewhat successful, in that he is able to preserve at least a piece of their history, but in the end, Northridge has no choice but to give up as the traditions and roots of the Sioux people are lost. Harrison's strong knowledge of Native American history allow this theme to be particularly strong in this novel, and the compassion in which the tale is told only lends to the overall sadness of the loss of a great tribe.

Alcoholism

Another theme in the novel is the high price of alcoholism and the destruction alcohol can bring to anyone who chooses the abuse the substance. Michael is the primary alcoholic in the book, and his troubles are rather severe. Michael uses alcohol to calm his nerves but eventually turns to alcohol for sleep, inspiration, relaxation, and in anger. Alcohol becomes a center in Michael's life, to the point where he is unable to function sober. Dalva attempts to help with this, but even she realizes that without alcohol entirely, Michael would fall to pieces. Due to Michael's use of alcohol, he has not learned the proper way to deal with pain, suffering, or other emotions. His life is one series of mistakes after the other, and his problems with alcohol have led to an inability to properly make positive decisions. This is shown through Michael's lies, his manipulation of others, and even his own thoughts of himself. When Michael is forced to give up alcohol, even for a short time, he finds he is woefully unprepared to deal with his own life. In the end, Michael begins to overcome his disease, but realizes he must change in order to properly deal with life on a sober level.

There are others in the story that are severe alcoholics as well. Lundquist, Dalva's beloved caretaker, is also an alcoholic, although a functional one. Lundquist seems to exist only on the promise of alcohol. His age has slowed his drinking, but it is clear he has had an alcohol problem his whole life. He too makes bad decisions while intoxicated, but unlike Michael, Lundquist is able to accept himself and his life as he is, and therefore he does not use alcohol as a crutch. His alcoholism is a source of health issues and frustration for his daughter, but Lundquist does not have the personality deficits of Michael.

Additionally, Rachel and Duane both appear to be alcoholics, as do many of the Native Americans living on reservations. Throughout the novel, Paul and Dalva both discuss the alcoholism rates of Native Americans, and how that alcoholism has negatively affected their lives. It is clear that alcohol played a part in Duane's disease, in Rachel's death, and in the plight of the Sioux nation as a whole. Harrison is clear in the novel that the use of alcohol in any manner other than for occasional pleasure can only lead to destruction.



Style

Point of View

The author uses the first-person perspective in the novel, although the perspective switches from Dalva to Michael to Northridge throughout the book. The book opens with Dalva as the narrator, which is vital in that the opening part of the novel describes Dalva's past, much of which very few know. Without using the first-person perspective, the love between Dalva and Duane, the feeling of loss after the baby's birth, the endless wish for a father figure, and the constant looking backward into the past would not come across to the reader. It is because Dalva is the narrator that the reader is able to feel what Dalva feels and understand the emotions that lie underneath her decisions. Similarly, the use of Michael as a narrator serves a purpose as well. Michael is the voice of historic reason in the novel. As a scholar, Michael looks at history as simple events that occur, and looks to find new ways to tell stories. His perspective on the Northridge journal's at the beginning is therefore one of the more unbiased opinions in the novel. Had Dalva been the narrator of these portions, there would have been severe bias in that she clearly has an affiliation and love for the Sioux, but Michael in the beginning does not. By reading the journals and by going through his own torment, however, Michael is better able to understand the Sioux plight and sides with Northridge by the end. This character development is vital to the story and can only be accomplished with a narrator who is unbiased in the beginning. Finally, the use of Northridge as a narrator for the journal is a necessity, as well. Northridge was, as Michael states, there when it all went black. Northridge was there when the Sioux rose up against the settlers, and was there when they fell. His narration of the torment of the Sioux, the destruction of the land, and the plight of the Indians during the settlers move westward is a vital part of the story, and the secrets he holds within the journal are symbols of the bodies Dalva carries with her. Without this first-person narration, the true story of the Sioux would not be able to impact the reader as drastically.

Setting

The setting of the novel is important and moves throughout the book as Dalva tries to find herself in her surroundings. The scenery is nearly a character in the novel as partner to Dalva, in that her source of peace, compassion, and sanity is often the landscape in which she lives. In Santa Monica, where the book opens, Dalva finds solace in the rhythm of the ocean. In Nebraska, where Dalva was raised and where she returns to in the middle of the novel, Dalva finds herself in the trees, the streams, and the animals that roam the still wild prairie. The thunderstorms that arise become a part of Dalva as she seeks to calm the storm inside herself, and the wind through the trees on the estate remind her of the Northridge clan, and their attempts to keep their own peace. In Arizona, Dalva and Paul both find themselves in the desert as they ride horses, examining the wild life that can only exist in the harshest of environments, and this landscape becomes a vital part of Dalva's healing following the adoption of her



baby. Similarly, the land of Loreda becomes her sanctuary following the loss of her lover, Duane. In all aspects, the settings of the novel are important in the book, because the characters make that setting so much a part of their lives.

Language and Meaning

The language used in the novel changes with the narrator, as one would expect. When Dalva is narrating the story, the language is easy, often naturalistic in content, and practical. While Dalva explains her emotions, they always seem distant to her and somewhat cold. She is not a cold person but she does have a tendency to push those away that she loves and this comes out in the language the author uses for Dalva. Her thoughts clearly show her to be warm, caring, loving individual, but it is also clear she puts distance between herself and others. She is practical and everything in Dalva's life is planned, organized, and only her sexual encounters seem a result of pure emotion. On the other hand, Michael's narration is that of a drama queen. Michael is a scholar and examines history in a categorical way that allows him to view the world as a series of dates. However, Michael is too emotional, and as a result, finds himself in a duality of sorts that is difficult for him to maintain. He turns to alcohol and drugs to hide his emotional side, and the result in a manic form of language that often jumps from thought to thought. He uses his feelings as a guide to his history and while this method seems almost hypocritical for a historian, it allows Michael in the end to grow as a person. Finally, the language used by Northridge is typical of a person at the end of the nineteenth century. He writes with emotion, like Michael, but also has a critical and sensible approach to most things, showing him to be a combination of Michael and Dalva. In all cases, the language is simple in content and easy for anyone to read and understand.

Structure

The novel is 324 pages in length and is broken into three distinct parts. In the first part, Dalva is the narrator and she introduces the story line relating to herself, her past, and her family. The story is emotional and filled with true pain, suffering, and loss, but Dalva continues to remain positive and caring, despite all she goes through. In the second section, the narration changes to that of Michael. Michael is an overly dramatic character with a severe drinking problems whose life has a tendency to be out of control. This is in contrast to Dalva's life in the first section, which is always under tight control and constantly maintained, although both have a tendency to be wanderers. Northridge also has a voice in this section and the structure changes to reflect that of journal writing. The final section is a combination of Dalva's style mixed in with journal entries, which offset one another nicely.

The novel flips back and forth between the present, the past when Dalva was younger and the distant past when Dalva's great grandfather fought against the government for the Sioux. This constant change of tense can be confusing, and the use of the same name for many of the descendants of Northridge can add to the confusion. There is a lot

of Indian legend and history in the novel, much of which remains unexplained. As a result, a working knowledge of Native American history would assist a reader in comprehending the full impact of the novel.

Quotes

"...people have an instinct to be useful, and can't handle the restless everydayness of life unless they work hard. It is sheer idleness that deadens the soul and causes neurosis" (pg. 12.)

"What you call history avoids any valuable concern for people. The essence is the mythology that allows us to conquer the native populations - actually over a hundred small civilizations - and then to make sure that their destiny becomes one of humiliation, a day-by-day shame and defeat, and what's more, we can feel right about it, because they are drunken Indians." - pg. 37.

"What grand people! We minimize these people now so we don't have to feel bad about what we did to them. An English author who was otherwise quite daffy said that the only aristocracy is that of consciousness" (pg. 53.)

"The secret life can be based in the childhood mythology of cowboys and Indians, the outlaw, and rambling gambler, or more recently, in the popular culture of detectives, rock music, sports, gurus, religious and political leaders. The roots seem always connected to sex and power, and how free they felt as children to enact feelings that ran counter to the behavior they were taught" (pg. 84.)

"...it occurred to me that every man, woman, and dog in America was tethered on too short a lead or chain, and that's how they begin the training of guard dogs - a three-foot lead to an iron post and the dog was permanently pissed off within a few weeks" (pg. 97.)

"It is interesting to note that in an approximately fifteen year period up until 1883 an estimated twenty thousand buffalo hunters slaughtered between five and seven million of the animals, pretty much the continent's entire population" (pg.130.)

"I have tried to tell them I will only have the vision Christ has given me, but they say they have already heard that from all manner of thieves & swindlers. I am recently of the opinion that the Antichrist is Greed" (pg. 198.)

"I never said the Sioux were weeping Jesus white Christians. I'm saying that history teaches us that your forefathers behaved like hundreds of thousands of pack-rat little Nazi's sweeping across Europe. That's all. You won the war. Don't sweat it" (pg. 204.)

"As far as I had ever been able to determine the central aspects of his ethic were rather stern notions of generosity and accountability. You were accountable in the strictest sense for every moment you were alive, though it was never clear to me who you were accountable to" (pg. 230.)

"We always destroy wilderness when we make it represent something else, because that something else can always fall out of fashion. Freedom to the all-terrain vehicle



addict, the mining and oil and timber companies, has always meant the absolute license to do as they wish, while 'heritage' is a word brought up by the politicians to recall a virtue they can't quite remember" (pg. 237.)

"Just because you've been a student of all the permutations of brain chemistry and their behavioral effects, doesn't exclude you from being a victim, albeit a knowledgeable victim" (pg. 253.)

"Some wise soul said that grownups are only deteriorated children" (pg. 256.)

"...I had come to know only recently that one could emerge without forgetting, and that to remember need not be to suffocate" (pg. 307.)



Topics for Discussion

One of the primary themes in 'Dalva' is the poor treatment of the Native American's at the hands of the white settlers throughout American history. How does the book show this treatment? What happens that indicates the native American's were treated badly? How effective is this method? Do you think the point could have been better shown in any way? How? Do you agree with the author on this point or disagree? Why?

Dalva searches in the novel for the son she gave up for adoption as a young woman. Do you think women who give up their children for adoption have a right to know of their children's lives through the years? Why or why not? Do you think Dalva was right in searching for her son? Why or why not? Do you think Dalva sought her son to see him or to see the remnants of her deceased lover and half brother, Duane? Why do you believe this?

Another topic in the novel is the abuse of alcohol and drugs. Michael, for example, is a severe alcoholic. Dalva blames alcoholism for his many faults and failures, including his inability to tell right from wrong in many situations. Do you believe Michael can control his behavior? Why or why not? What examples in the book support your belief? Do you think his punishment by Karen's father was justified, considering your opinion about his ability to behave? Why or why not?

Dalva remains unmarried and without child throughout her life, following the discovery of Duane as her half brother and the forced adoption of her child. Why do you think Dalva chose this route in life? What reasons would she have for remaining alone? Do you think, by the end of the novel, Dalva is ready to move forward? Why or why not?

At the end of the novel, Dalva finds the bodies of several white soldiers in the root cellar, and the journal explains how those skeletons came to be there. Explain why the skeletons are in the root cellar. Who killed the soldiers? Why? Why does Dalva feel freed by these bodies? How does she relate the bodies to her own life, and her own situation?

Describe Dalva's relationships with the men in her life. What type of relationship does she have with Duane, Paul, her father, her grandfather, Michael, Lundquist, and her son? How do these relationships change over the course of time?

In the novel, Harrison changes narrator halfway through the novel. Why do you think the author decided to write part of the novel in the voice of Michael? What insight does this give into Michael's character? Into Dalva's? Does this help to enhance the story? Why or why not?