

Dixie Divas Study Guide

Dixie Divas by Virginia Brown

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Plot Summary

Dixie Divas is a novel by writer Virginia Brown. This novel is the first in a series of novels focusing on a group of Southern women who spend their free time solving crimes. In this first novel, Bitty is accused of killing her husband, State Senator Philip Hollandale. The divas help Bitty hide the body when it shows up at her house, but someone knows the truth and puts the body back. As Trinket, Bitty's cousin, checks into the case, she finds herself searching all the way back to the Civil War for a motive. Dixie Divas is a fun novel that will keep readers laughing as they try to solve the crime with Trinket and Bitty.

Trinket Truevine has recently gotten a divorce and come home to take care of her elderly parents. Within a few weeks of being home, Trinket finds herself pulled into a murder mystery when her cousin, Bitty, finds her former husband dead on the floor of a home Bitty had been trying to get listed on the historical society's parade of homes. When Trinket goes to help Bitty wipe her fingerprints off the murder weapon, they discover the body is no longer there.

Bitty decides that her ex was never really dead, and she ignores the whole situation. However, it soon becomes national news that the Senator is missing. When the body shows up in Bitty's house, Bitty enlists the help of her friends, the Dixie Divas, to help her move it. Unfortunately, the body does not remain where they put it and is discovered again in Bitty's house, this time by the police.

As Bitty awaits charges for murder, she continues to try to get Mr. Sanders, the owner of The Cedars, to list his house with the historical society. Unfortunately, he appears to be missing. On a third trip to The Cedars, Trinket is hit over the head and left in the cellar. The local vet rescues her, and this also leads to the discovery of Sanders' body. Now Trinket and Bitty face charges in this death as well.

Trinket continues to investigate and soon comes across a theory that The Cedars has Union gold buried on its property somewhere. Trinket begins to think that a local girl named Melody killed Sanders to get the gold. However, when Bitty goes missing and Melody is arrested, Trinket learns that Melody had nothing to do with the murder.

Trinket goes with one of the Dixie Divas to meet her lawyer only to discover that this diva has more reason to kill than Melody. Georgie knew where the gold was, and she could not let Sanders sell out and take it all with him. For this reason, Georgie killed Sanders.



Chapters 1-4

Summary

Chapter 1

Eureka Truevine, known as Trinket, has just gotten divorced and moved back in with her parents. Trinket's cousin named Bitty, who is also a good friend, talks Trinket into going to the home of Sherman Sanders to try to convince the man to put his house, The Cedars, on the historical society's tour of homes. Trinket goes only to witness Bitty make a fool of herself over the man's amazingly well kept home. Bitty also brought the man some chicken and dumplings. During the tour of the house, the soup is comically stolen by a local mule.

Chapter 2

On the following day, Trinket goes into town to try to find a job. When she has little luck at the City Hall, Trinket stops at a local diner for some cobbler. Just as Trinket is about to leave, Bitty rushes in and tells her that she found her ex-husband, State Senator Philip Hollandale, dead in Mr. Sanders' front hall. There is a statue that Bitty touched the day before by his side. Trinket wants to call the police, but Bitty wants to go back and wipe her prints off the statue. Bitty pretends to agree to go to the police. However, once she is in the car, she drives straight back to The Cedars. Trinket goes in with Bitty because she can see how frightened she is. When they go inside, there is no body or blood. Trinket does find a wet place on the carpet. Trinket wipes off the statue before they leave.

Chapter 3

A few days later, Bitty invites Trinket to a meeting of the Dixie Divas, an exclusive women's club in town. Trinket pretends not to be excited, but she has always been curious about what goes on at their meetings. On the following morning, Trinket helps her parents feed their legion of cats before going off with Bitty. In the car, Trinket asks Bitty if she has heard from Philip. She says that she hasn't heard from him, but that isn't unusual.

Trinket and Bitty arrive at the Dixie Divas' meeting at the Delta Inn, which is a historical hotel that Rayna Blue, a local artist, lives in. Trinket knows some of the ladies at the meeting, but not all of them. At the meeting, a former school teacher gives advice on what to do about Philip's possible murder. Then a transvestite stripper shows up.

Chapter 4

Trinket struggles with her parents as they plan a spring trip. Trinket finally talks them down from a sail on a clipper ship to Brazil to a week long cruise down the Mississippi. Later, Trinket goes to see Bitty at her house and asks once more if she has heard from



Philip. Again, the answer is no. Bitty talks Trinket into going out to The Cedars again to have Mr. Sanders sign the paperwork for the historical society. Trinket reluctantly agrees.

Analysis

The first few chapters introduce the main characters. Trinket is a fifty-one year old divorcee who has come home to care for her elderly parents. Trinket is independent and set in her ways, but she has a cousin who is a little more adventurous. The cousin, who is named Bitty, draws Trinket out of her comfortable routines. Since Trinket and Bitty grew up together, they share a lot of history. This makes their bond very strong and it seems there is little they will not do for one another.

Bitty, like many Southern women, is obsessed with historical homes. As part of the local historical society, Bitty spends a great deal of time trying to find homes to put on the local tour of homes. That includes that amazingly well-kept Cedars, a home owned by an elderly gentleman with roots in the North. Bitty spends a great deal of time trying to woo this man, finally convincing him over a pot of chicken and dumplings. Unfortunately, when she returns to seal the deal, she finds her husband dead on the floor.

Bitty and her former husband are often at odds and Philip, a State Senator, has been openly trying to thwart some of Bitty's historical works. This, perhaps, explains his presence at The Cedars. However, it does not explain how he ended up dead or how his body disappeared.

Discussion Question 1

Why has Trinket come home to live with her parents? How does she feel about her new role as caregiver?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Bitty want to woo Mr. Sanders? What does he offer her? What does she offer him?

Discussion Question 3

Who is Philip? Why does Bitty not report to the police his body, dead on Mr. Sanders' floor? Where is Mr. Sanders?



Vocabulary

Cedars, daggers, direction, slightly, uncertainty, questions, obviously, refined, features, sensible, disappearance, betrayal, truthfully, calmly, politely, cooperating, outraged, alarms, repeated, routine, stoic.



Chapters 5-8

Summary

Chapter 5

When they arrive at The Cedars, it appears no one is home. The walk around the property and discover Mr. Sanders' elderly dog dead in a shed. Then they go into the house and find evidence that suggests no one has been in the house in days. Trinket finally talks Bitty into going to the police, but Bitty does not tell them anything about Philip, only that Mr. Sanders appears to be missing. Afterward, Bitty and Trinket are having lunch at a local diner when they learn Philip is officially missing.

Chapter 6

Philip becomes the subject of gossip all over town as the news spreads. Trinket talks to Bitty about Philip the next morning, but Bitty seems convinced that Philip is alive and well, off on vacation with one of his many lovers. Later, Bitty and Trinket go to have lunch with Rayna. While they are at a local café, they hear that the police took Sanders' dog to the local vet to find out how he died. Afterward, Trinket and Bitty have just arrived at Bitty's house when the police knock on the door to ask Bitty some questions. After Trinket forces Bitty to be polite and let them in, she volunteers to get some refreshments. While Bitty shows the cops into the living room, Trinket opens the hall closet to put away Bitty's sweater and finds Philip's dead body inside.

Chapter 7

Trinket calls Bitty into the kitchen and tells her about Philip's body. Trinket wants to tell the police, but Bitty refuses. Instead, Bitty charms the cops out the door. Then Bitty insists they call the Dixie Divas over to help them figure out what to do next. The divas vote to remove Philip from Bitty's house since it is clear that someone planted him there. They decide to hide him in a vault at the local cemetery. Despite her better judgment, Trinket finds herself helping move the body.

Chapter 8

That night the divas return to take Philip's body to a cold storage place Rayna knew of, but the body is gone. The divas go to Rayna's to discuss the situation, but no one has any idea about what might have happened. Bitty and Trinket go back to Bitty's where they check out the house, including the cellar with its family room and temperature controlled wine cellar. They find nothing suspicious. Trinket spends the night and wakes to the fresh baked muffins of Bitty's cook, Sharita.

Bitty shows Trinket the morning paper. There is no mention of Philip's body being found. Trinket again tries to convince Bitty to go to the police. Bitty suggests that they go to The Cedars first to see if Sanders' signed the paperwork for the historical society.



Trinket does not want any part of it, but Bitty sent her clothes out to be cleaned. So, she's stuck. A few minutes later, the police show up wanting to search Bitty's house. They have a tip that Philip is there. A crowd gathers. As Bitty and Trinket speak with the neighbors, the police come out and arrest Bitty. They have found Philip's body in the wine cellar.

Analysis

Bitty and Trinket go back to The Cedars to talk to Mr. Sanders, but no one is home. They search the area and find Sanders' dead dog and evidence that no one has been there for some time. It seems suspicious to the ladies, so Bitty agrees when Trinket suggests they go to the police. However, Bitty does not tell the police about seeing Philip's dead body in the house. The reader suspects this might come back to haunt her later.

Bitty remains convinced that Philip has run off to Mexico or somewhere exotic with one of his many lovers, even though Trinket is concerned that Philip is still dead and his killer is still out there. Trinket seems to be proven correct when Philip's body is found in Bitty's closet. Again, Bitty refuses to tell the police even though they are there in her house. Trinket allows Bitty to do things her way even though Trinket is convinced the best thing to do is be honest with the police.

Bitty calls the Dixie Divas, and they decide to move the body. However, when they move the body, it disappears again. Eventually the police find it in Bitty's house. This suggests to the reader that whoever is moving the body around is someone close to Bitty, someone who has a personal reason to see Bitty go down for her ex-husband's murder.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Bitty agree to talk to the police about Sanders only? Why does she not tell them about Philip's possible murder? Is this a wise choice?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Trinket not tell the police when she finds Philip's body in the hall closet? What might have happened if she had?

Discussion Question 3

Why do the divas move Philip's body? What are they hoping to achieve by doing this?



Vocabulary

Formidable, gathered, nervously, arresting, understanding, requires, afford, blazes, dreadful, blindly, vision, provided, surprised, gracious, hospitality, corpse, disaster, melodramatic, disappearance, refusing, crusader, democracy.



Chapters 9-12

Summary

Chapter 9

Trinket is taken to the police station to be questioned. Her lawyer, Jackson Lee Brunetti, takes her back to Bitty's to pick up her stuff. When he does, she remembers him from school when they were kids. Trinket gets her clothes and purse before going home to her deeply concerned parents. Trinket and her mother discuss the case before Trinket takes a call from Bitty. Bitty has been released from jail on bond. That night, the news of Bitty's arrest is on television. There is also a report about Mr. Sanders' disappearance. However, when they mention the death of the dog, Trinket notices that they give the reason as natural causes. Trinket clearly saw that the dog had been run over. Bitty catches the same thing and schemes again to take a dog to the vets so she can get more information. Bitty suggests that maybe Philip killed the dog so Sanders killed Philip. Trinket's father also notes that the news report gave the wrong age for Sanders.

Chapter 10

Trinket goes to Bitty's and discovers that she has gone to the vet with a friend's dog. Bitty learned that Sanders' dog died of old age but was run over after he died. Bitty and Trinket visit the lawyer and talk about all they have discovered. Afterward, Trinket catches a look on the lawyer's face that makes her think he loves Bitty.

The next day, Trinket and Bitty drive Trinket's parents to their cruise ship. Afterward, they stop at the Peabody to see the ducks go through the lobby. On the way home, they talk about Philip's funeral. Trinket wonders about Sanders, including how he had the money to keep up his home.

Chapter 11

Trinket spends her first day babysitting her parents' dog, Brownie. Things do not go well when first the dog runs off and then eats her emerald earrings. Trinket takes Brownie in to the vet where she meets the gorgeous new vet, Dr. Coltrane. Later, Trinket learns that Bitty is planning on going to see a new podiatrist just because she has heard he is good-looking. The next day, Trinket and Bitty go shopping for St. Patrick's Day clothes, and Bitty buys Trinket a very expensive dress.

Chapter 12

Trinket and Bitty go to a St. Patrick's Day party at the home of Dr. Johnston, the new podiatrist. Jackson Lee talks with Trinket while they both watch her flirt with Dr. Johnston. Dr. Coltrane seeks Trinket out and they spend some time getting to know one another before Bitty steals Trinket away and makes her socialize more. Trinket ends up speaking with a man named Bellew about politics. While speaking to another man,



Trinket learns that a developer wanted to buy Sanders' property to build a Nissan plant. Philip was involved in the deal. However, an offer had never been made to Sanders.

Analysis

Trinket is questioned by the police and later released when Bitty's lawyer shows up. The lawyer, Jackson Lee, is clearly in love with Bitty, but he is too ordinary for Bitty's tastes. Bitty is oblivious to the lawyer. Instead, she has set her sights on a podiatrist. Being accused of her ex-husband's murder is clearly not enough to keep Bitty out of the dating game.

Trinket meets the new vet that everyone is always talking about, and they quickly hit it off. It seems like there might be some romance ahead for Trinket despite the fact that her divorce has left her with a sour taste in her mouth.

Sanders' disappearance remains a mystery. Several things have come up to make Trinket curious, such as the fact that Sanders kept his house immaculate, but he did not seem to have a lot of money. There is also the fact that it appeared Philip was involved in a deal that would have rested on Sanders being willing to sell his land for the development of a Nissan plant. The reader must wonder if that could be a motive for murder.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Trinket take the dog to the vet? What happened to the dog? What is the result of this meeting?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Trinket wonder about Sanders' income? What is significant about his income?

Discussion Question 3

Why was Philip involved in a land deal over a Nissan plant? What might have stood in the way of this deal?

Vocabulary

Shipwreck, proper, support, foolish, discrimination, vulnerable, continent, restless, chasing, disappointed, realized, interesting, swapping, mystery, responsibility, possess, notion, traumatized, visitors, newcomers.



Chapters 13-16

Summary

Chapter 13

Bitty and Trinket attend Philip's funeral. Afterward, Philip's mother approaches Bitty, and they nearly come to blows; but, Trinket trips Philip's mother before she can attack Bitty. The next day, Trinket's parents return home. Bitty calls to tell Trinket that Sanders has been seen walking outside of town. For this reason, Bitty wants to go back out to The Cedars, and she talks Trinket into going with her. At The Cedars, Bitty and Trinket are standing outside when they hear a loud noise. Bitty insists on going into the house. Bitty goes to the back of the house to catch her friend's dog, which she still has not returned. Trinket calls that she is coming to help when she is hit over the head.

Chapter 14

Dr. Coltrane rescues Trinket from the cellar where she had been locked up. Trinket learns that Bitty thought she had been kidnapped and was at the police station filing a complaint. Dr. Coltrane calls out the police, and they come to take Trinket's statement. A search of the cellar turns up Sanders' body. Trinket speaks to the police with Jackson Lee. The next day, a cop comes to her house to get her clothes. A visit to Jackson Lee later ends with Trinket moving into Bitty's house to keep a closer eye on her.

Chapter 15

Bitty and Trinket spend the day volunteering at the museum reading through some of the archives. Trinket finds one story about the Confederates stealing money from Grant interesting. Later, they spend the evening with the Dixie Divas. Trinket is shocked when Melody, one of the divas not involved in moving Philip's body, knows all about it. Later, Trinket wonders aloud if she and Bitty might be in danger from whomever killed Philip and Sanders.

The next morning, Trinket talks to Sharita about her ancestors during the South's Reconstruction. Bitty comes in and updates them on the case against her, which is not much.

Chapter 16

Bitty's sons come for spring break, so Trinket goes home. At home, she helps her dad move some old furniture into the house and listens to him tell old stories of the family. Curious about the old families in the area, Trinket decides to volunteer at the museum again. After reviewing the land deeds for several old families in the area, Trinket finds nothing. However, she does learn that Sanders might have an heir. Trinket goes by to tell Bitty the latter and finds Bitty having a small party with her boys, Dr. Johnston, and Melody. Melody seems deeply unhappy. Trinket thinks it is because she is in love with



Dr. Johnston. At the same time, Trinket worries that Johnston is a gold digger who is more interested in Bitty's money than Bitty.

Analysis

Trinket and Bitty get themselves in trouble, first while attending Philip's funeral and later while searching Sanders' house once again for any sign of him. It is clear that Philip's mother dislikes Bitty and wants her to stay away, but it is also clear where Philip got his vengeful personality. The reader wonders if this behavior on the part of the son could possibly have anything to do with his death.

Trinket is hit over the head at Sanders' house and locked in a cellar, only to be rescued by Dr. Coltrane. Dr. Coltrane has good reason for being there, it seems, but the reader must wonder about his timing and the fact that Sanders' body is found in the same cellar.

Trinket is beginning to gather information on the families in the area who have roots back to Grant's stay in the area. There seems to have been some gold stolen at the time and, since money is often a motive in murders, the reader has to wonder what would happen if someone found that gold somewhere in the area. Trinket keeps running up against this story, so it seems it must have something to do with both Sanders' and Philips' deaths.

Melody also sticks out as a strange character. She clearly has feelings for the podiatrist, Dr. Johnston. At the same time she has information about the divas moving Philip's body that no one else should have. The reader must wonder about where and how she got this information.

Discussion Question 1

Who is Melody? Why does her name keep coming up for Trinket? Why is Trinket curious about Melody's past?

Discussion Question 2

Who stole gold from Grant? What impact did this theft have? Who might have benefited?

Discussion Question 3

Who hit Trinket over the head? What was their intent? What might it imply that Sanders' body was found in the same place where Trinket was held?

Vocabulary

Inheritance, younger, unmentioned, certainly, amusing, unarguably, pilgrimage, properly, secretary, mollified, business, establishing, jealous, reason, metaphor, attempt, pilot, insulting, indignantly.



Chapters 17-20

Summary

Chapter 17

Trinket goes to Jefferson Lee's office to look at crime scene photos because she feels like something is wrong. Trinket notices that the statue of Grant is no longer Grant. It's now Forrest. Jefferson Lee tells Trinket this probably will not help Bitty's case and not to tell her. Trinket then goes to see Bitty where she learns that Melody has been breaking Cindy's confidence all over town and that it was Melody's cousin that told the police she saw Sanders walking outside of town. This makes Trinket more suspicious of Melody and Johnston.

Chapter 18

Trinket learns that Melody is related to the Richardson family. The Richardsons once owned The Cedars, but Sanders had the tax man throw them out for not paying taxes, even though they had the money. When Trinket wonders where the Richardsons got the money since Grant had burned their business, she thinks of the stolen gold and the fact that Sanders did not have a job but seemed to have plenty of money. Trinket calls Bitty and learns that Bitty's lunch with the banker uncovered something interesting, but she does not want to share it over the phone. Trinket tells Bitty to meet her at Jefferson's where Trinket tells Jefferson all she knows.

When Bitty fails to arrive at Jefferson Lee's, they become worried and call the place where she went to get her dog. They learn she was seen talking to another woman and that her car is still there. Trinket thinks that Melody took her, so she arranges a search party with Rayna, Jefferson Lee, and Dr. Coltrane. Trinket and Coltrane go to the grooming place to see if Bitty has turned up there, but they have no luck. Trinket and Coltrane then go to Melody's cabin at Snow Lake where they find Cindy injured inside.

Chapter 19

Trinket learns that both Johnston and Melody are in police custody, but no one has found Bitty. Trinket goes to talk to Melody and learns that Johnston is a con artist named Dean and that the two of them came to town to convince Sanders to give them The Cedars. Sanders refused. When Melody and Dean returned to speak to Sanders again, they heard him fighting with Philip about the dog and saw Philip dead. They left, but they came back quickly and found Sanders dead. They hid Sanders' body and put Philip's body on ice before moving it to Bitty's house. It was also Dean who put Philip's body in Bitty's wine cellar.

While outside the police station, Trinket runs into Georgie, one of the Dixie Divas. Georgie convinces Trinket to go with her to the warehouse district to meet Jackson Lee. Georgie suddenly turns a gun on Trinket when they arrive at the ice house. Trinket fights



back and manages to knock Georgie out. Inside the freezer, Trinket finds Bitty all taped up. Jackson Lee and Coltrane arrive to protect Trinket and Bitty from the press and the police.

Chapter 20

Trinket and Bitty learn that Georgie helped Sanders hide Philip's body after Sanders killed him for running over his dog. Sanders then told Georgie he planned to sell his house to Nissan. Georgie killed Sanders so that she could find the gold, which she promptly did. It was in the root cellar, just as old Richardson's grave said.

Sanders left The Cedars to the historical society in Bitty's care.

Analysis

Trinket focuses on Melody and Johnston as the killers because of their odd behavior and Melody's connection to the family who owned The Cedars before the Sanders. When Bitty goes missing, Melody and Johnston are immediately arrested, but they clearly have no connection to Bitty's disappearance. This leaves Trinket scrambling to figure out the identity of the real killer.

Trinket is taken to meet Jefferson Lee with one of the divas, but she soon discovers that her escort is really the killer. Georgie had known about the gold the Richardson family hid at The Cedars for years. She panicked when she thought Sanders was going to sell it and walk away with everything. So, she killed Sanders. It was all about the gold.

Trinket and Bitty end up with the guys and the house. It is a happy ending.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Trinket think Melody is the killer? What about Melody makes her think that? Is it true?

Discussion Question 2

From where is Bitty kidnapped? For what reason? What do Trinket and Coltrane find while searching for Bitty?

Discussion Question 3

Who is the real killer? What is her motive? How far from the truth was Trinket?

Vocabulary

Arrested, insanity, con man, confederate, childish, protective, happiness, arrest, foreclosure, childish.



Characters

Trinket Truevine

Trinket is a recently divorced woman who has returned to her childhood home to care for her parents. Trinket is a simple woman who likes a simple life, but her cousin Bitty often brings excitement into her life. Bitty is the Southern belle where Trinket is more of the intellectual. Therefore, when Bitty finds herself charged with murder, she goes shopping while Trinket tries to solve the case.

Bitty Hollandale

Bitty Hollandale is Trinket's cousin. Trinket and Bitty grew up together and are very good friends. When Trinket moves back to town, she and Bitty take up where they left off twenty years before.

Bitty is a woman who likes luxury. For this reason, all of Bitty's husbands have either been rich or been able to offer her something she wants. Bitty is not shy in telling people what she wants. Bitty is a force of nature who keeps Trinket on her toes.

When Bitty sees her husband dead in another man's house, her first instinct is to return to wipe her prints off the murder weapon. Bitty never goes to the police about what she has seen, even when Philip shows up dead in her closet. Instead, Bitty calls her friends.

Philip Hollandale

Philip Hollandale is a state senator and Bitty's most recent ex-husband. On a visit to The Cedars, Bitty finds Philip dead in the front foyer. Then, his body disappears. A few days later, Philip shows up in Bitty's front closet. The following day, the police find Philip in Bitty's wine cellar. Bitty is charged with Philip's murder because of their acrimonious divorce and the evidence of his body in her house.

Sherman Sanders

Sherman Sanders is the owner of The Cedars. Sanders is a grouchy old man who frightens Trinket the first time she meets him. However, he loves his home deeply and appreciates Bitty's love for it, too.

Sanders kills Philip for running over his dog. Afterward, Georgie helps him clean up, but Sanders mistakenly tells her he plans to sell his property to Nissan. Georgie kills Sanders and leaves his body in the house for Melody and Johnston to find.



Jefferson Lee

Jefferson Lee is the lawyer whom Bitty hires after she is arrested for Philip's murder. Jefferson Lee is a local boy who grew up with both Bitty and Trinket. Jefferson Lee has feelings for Bitty, but Bitty does not give him a second glance because he is not rich like her former husbands. However, after Jefferson Lee shows his concern for her in the aftermath of Bitty's kidnapping, Bitty gives him a chance.

Kit Coltrane

Kit Coltrane is the new, good-looking vet in town. Trinket meets him when she takes her parents' dog to him after the dog unfortunately swallows her earring. Coltrane is clearly attracted to Trinket, and he stays by her side throughout the investigation and the aftermath, clearly interested in a long term relationship.

Trinket's Parents

Trinket has come home to care for her elderly parents, expecting it to be an easy job. However, Trinket's parents are going through a second adolescence and are quite difficult to keep up with. This leaves Trinket at her wit's end, but she finds that she enjoys seeing her parents happy.

Melody

Melody is Jackson Johnston's secretary. Melody appears to have a crush on the doctor, but it is later proven that Melody and Johnston are lovers. They are also criminals who came to town to try to force Sanders to give up The Cedars to them. Melody feels that she is owed The Cedars because her family owned it before the Sanders paid the tax man to foreclose on them. Melody is Trinket's prime suspect in the murders, but Melody only moved the bodies.

Jackson Johnston

Jackson Johnston is the new podiatrist in town. Bitty likes Johnston and thinks about making him her next husband. However, Johnston turns out to be a con man with a long arrest record. Johnston only came to town to help Melody steal The Cedars from Sanders.

Georgie

Georgie is one of the Dixie Divas. Georgie is a quiet woman who never says much to anyone. For this reason, it is a surprise that Georgie is the killer. Georgie killed Sanders to keep him from selling The Cedars and running off with all the gold Forrest stole from

Grant. Georgie gives herself away when she tries to kidnap Trinket and fails. Georgie ends up going to the state hospital.



Symbols and Symbolism

Pot of Chicken and Dumplings

Bitty takes a pot of chicken and dumplings to Sanders to bribe him into putting his house on the historical societies parade of homes. The soup is eaten by a mule.

Grant Statue

Bitty sees a statue of Grant in The Cedars that she picks up and touches. Later, Bitty sees that the statue has been used to kill her ex-husband, so she returns to wipe her prints off it.

Forrest Statue

Trinket notices in the crime scene photos of The Cedar that the Grant statue has been replaced with a Forrest statue.

Gold

Sanders has gold stolen by Forrest from Grant in his cellar at The Cedars.

Emerald Earrings

Brownie eats Trinket's emerald earrings, forcing her to have to take him to the vet where she meets Kit Coltrane.

Cat Food

Trinket finds it ridiculous that her parents go through dozens of bags of cat food to feed cats that live in their barn.

Green Dress

Bitty buys Trinket a dress so that Trinket will go to a St. Patrick's Day party with her at the home of a new podiatrist.



Windbreaker

The police find a windbreaker of Bitty's that has Philip's blood on it. What the police do not know is that the blood got there when Philip's body was placed in her hall closet.

Bitty's Shopping Purse

When Bitty goes missing, Trinket identifies her shopping purse which was left behind in her car.

Miata

Bitty drives a tiny Miata, causing Trinket to feel like a giant when she rides in it.

Settings

Holly Springs, Mississippi

The novel is set in modern times in Holly Springs, Mississippi. This is a small town where everyone knows everyone else. It is also a very Southern town that can trace its roots back to before the Civil War. For this reason, there is a great deal of pride in this area and a deep sense of history.

The Cedars

The Cedars is the home of Sherman Sanders. The house is a very well preserved house that dates back before the Civil War. The house is also the setting of two murders, those of Philip Hollandale and Sherman Sanders.

Cherryhill

Cherryhill is Trinket's home. Cherryhill is not as old as The Cedars because it was burned by Grant and rebuilt. However, it is a nice old house that has been well preserved as well. Trinket is proud of her home.



Themes and Motifs

Southern History

This novel is set in the deep south in an area that has a great deal of history. The area in which the novel is set can trace its roots back before the Civil War and can even claim to have been home to one of the most well-known soldiers in the war, Nathan Bedford Forrest. For this reason, history is a major theme of the novel.

As Trinket begins to investigate the murder of her cousin's ex-husband, she continuously runs across a story of how Forrest stole a large sum of gold meant to pay for Grant's march further south. This money was never accounted for and has been assumed lost. However, Trinket learns that the Richardson family in Holly Springs had the money and they left it behind when they were foreclosed out of The Cedars. The Sanders family has since taken possession of both the house and the gold. It is this gold that causes Sanders' death; therefore, history is an important theme of the novel.

Family

Family is an important theme of this novel for several reasons. The first reason family is a theme of this novel is because Trinket has come home to Holly Springs in order to be close to her family. Trinket has recently gotten divorced after more than twenty years of marriage. Trinket has chosen to come home to take care of her parents, finding it more of a struggle than she ever could have imagined. However, it is an experience that makes Trinket appreciate both her parents and her only child more.

Another reason family is a theme of the novel is because Trinket's best friend since childhood also happens to be her cousin, Bitty. They share a great many memories together and this works to make their bond to one another stronger. For this reason Trinket goes out on a limb to help her cousin when she is accused of murder.

Finally, another reason family is a theme of this novel is because of the deep family roots that tend to grow in the south. Without the family ties and bitterness that remained in the Richardson family, Melody would never have known about the gold at The Cedars and would not have become involved in murder. At the same time, without family roots, Sanders would not have had the gold or the house.

New Beginnings

New beginnings is a theme of this novel because Trinket recently walked away from her life, a marriage and a home, to begin all over again. It is a difficult transition that is made more complicated by her cousin's arrest for murder. However, the investigation brings Trinket into the confidence of Kit Coltrane, another new beginning as Trinket and Coltrane develop a new relationship.

Bitty, too, has a new beginning at the end of this novel. Bitty is known for seeking out men for what they can offer her. However, after Jefferson Lee fights for her both in and out of court, Bitty decides to give him a chance. This is new for Bitty.

Styles

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person. The narrator is Trinket Truevine. Trinket tells her story through clear narration. However, as a Southern woman, her narration tends to become distracted and include too much detail about her life and the things around her. This adds a bit of Southern flare to the story.

The point of view of this novel works well with the plot because it offers an intimate relationship with the main character. The reader gets to know Trinket and to like her. As the plot develops, the reader only learns what Trinket knows, keeping the reader from becoming overloaded with too much information or figuring out who did it before Trinket. For these reasons, the point of view works well with the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language is simple English. The novel is set in the south, so there is a great deal of southern slang and dialogue that adds a flare to the novel. The language works well with the plot because it is authentic to the setting as well as the characters.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty chapters. Each chapter is of varying length, most less than fifty pages. The novel is told in a linear time line with narration and dialogue.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Trinket as she becomes involved in a murder investigation. One subplot follows Trinket's relationship with her parents. Another subplot follows Bitty's attempts to find a new husband and find Trinket a boyfriend. All the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

If not for long-dead Civil War Generals Ulysses S. Grant, Nathan Bedford Forrest, and a pot of chicken and dumplings, Bitty Hollandale would never have been charged with murder.

-- Trinket (Chapter 1 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote not only introduces the conflict that will propel the plot, it also introduces the quirky tone and the Southern flare of the language.

While some days I feel my old age is already here, I figure it'll be a few years yet before I can spend money without worrying about having to live under a concrete overpass and eat cat food in my 'golden' years.

-- Trinket (Chapter 2 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote shows Trinket's sense of humor and her view of her advancing age.

I've recently realized that childhood memories and adulthood expectations are often at complete odds with reality.

-- Trinket (Chapter 4 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote shows Trinket's growing frustration with her parents as well as her growing appreciation for how they felt when she was younger.

My mother is one of those people who's come to enjoy many activities in life she'd once eschewed as improper.

-- Trinket (Chapter 6 paragraph 5)

Importance: This is Trinket's amused way of trying to understand her mother's changing opinions about proper behavior.

I'm not at all sure those are my parents. I think someone abducted my real parents and replaced them with sixteen year olds in wrinkled birthday suits.

-- Trinket (Chapter 8 paragraph 7)

Importance: Trinket is trying hard to understand her parents' behavior in light of their more energetic outlook.

Remind me never to apply for a position as an efficiency expert.

-- Trinket (Chapter 11 paragraph 10)

Importance: This is Trinket's tongue in cheek way of saying she was wrong in criticizing the way her parents care for their cats.



Thoughts of going to Philip Hollandale's funeral weren't cheering enough to get me out of bed. I dreaded it.

-- Trinket (Chapter 13 paragraph 2)

Importance: Trinket admits that she does not always like doing the things Bitty wants her to do. This shows that they have a relationship where Trinket will support Bitty even when she does not want to.

Living in Bitty's World has taught me the value of silence.

-- Trinket (Chapter 15 paragraph 1)

Importance: This illustrates the differences between the two cousins.

It's the divorces that make her money, not the husbands,' Mama said.

-- Mrs. Truevine (Chapter 17 paragraph 8)

Importance: This quote refers to Bitty who has been divorced multiple times. It also refers to her choice of husbands.

There are times when I think I have too much trust in human nature.

-- Trinket (Chapter 18 paragraph 1)

Importance: This is how Trinket describes herself even after a divorce and a cousin with multiple divorces.

Bitty was hidden somewhere and left to die. Or dead already.

-- Trinket (Chapter 19 paragraph 17)

Importance: This quote shows Trinket's fear and grasp of reality after Bitty goes missing.

I've always known that Happily Ever Afters aren't really possible. not like in fairy tales or Disney movies. But sometimes, the next bet thing is better than you ever thought it might be.

-- Trinket (Chapter 20 paragraph 1)

Importance: Trinket, the cynic, expresses happiness for how everything was resolved.