

Everybody's Fool Study Guide

Everybody's Fool by Richard Russo

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Plot Summary

Note: This study guide specifically refers to the 2016 Alfred A. Knopf First Hardcover Edition of *Everybody's Fool* by Richard Russo.

Everybody's Fool is a contemporary novel by Richard Russo in which the lives of a handful of the citizens of North Bath, New York, play out over the course of Memorial Day Weekend. When the novel begins, Police Chief Douglas Raymer arrives to attend the funeral of the deceased Judge Flatt. Raymer has not been to the cemetery since the accidental death of his wife, Becka, who fell down the stairs while Raymer was at work as she prepared to leave him for another man. Raymer spends much of the novel trying to find his wife's lover by using the garage door opener he found hidden in her old car – an opener which did not belong to him. Raymer is late to the funeral because he has personally responded to a call about Alice, Mayor Moynihan's wife, who is mentally unstable and wanders off.

At the same time, Donald "Sully" Sullivan is having lunch at Hattie's, where Ruth, the owner, serves him. Ruth and Sully had an affair a decade ago and have remained friends. Roy Purdy, ex-husband of Ruth's daughter Janey and father of Janey's daughter Tina, interrupts their morning. Roy is an ex-con and a woman-beater, and shouts at Ruth. Sully yells at Roy, who says that trailers, like the kind Sully lives in, are fire hazards. As Sully leaves, a gas explosion causes the north wall of the Old Mill Lofts, a luxury apartment building, to collapse on Roy. Roy is injured, but not killed. Meanwhile, Rub Squeers finishes work at the cemetery, where he reflects on his best friend Sully, and on the knowledge that Sully has a heart condition which will give him one to two more years of life. Rub cannot imagine a world without Sully.

Charice, a beautiful young black woman who works in the police station office, directs Raymer to the Old Mill, then to Morrison Arms apartments, where an illegal snake seller's snakes have gotten loose. Morrison is where Raymer lives, so Charice tells him he can stay with her. Raymer accepts, alternating between anger at his dead wife, anger at the man she planned to run off with, and romantic inclinations toward Charice. Raymer learns from Charice through her brother, Jerome, a police officer and liaison to a neighboring town called Schuylers Springs, that the services of both towns will be merged, meaning there will be cuts and people fired. A bad storm comes that night, during which time Janey invites Roy over, and the two sleep together. When Ruth discovers this the next morning, she is enraged. Roy attacks Ruth, bashing her head with a glass until Sully stops him by slamming Roy in the head with a skillet. Roy escapes before the law arrives. Ruth is taken to the hospital and survives her injuries.

The following day, Raymer continues to struggle with his feelings for the much younger Charice, while catching the snake seller and continuing to look for the man who had the affair with his wife. Roy, meanwhile, plots revenge and prepares to set Sully's trailer on fire while Sully is out. Sully, meanwhile, spends his time looking for Roy, but his heart troubles him and he passes out. As a result, he is taken to the hospital while Zack, husband of Ruth, arrives at Sully's trailer to update Sully about Ruth. Zack discovers



Roy and sets the trailer on fire, killing Roy in order to protect his family. Raymer soon learns that Jerome had an affair with Becka and that Charice does have genuine feelings for him. Raymer decides to let the past go and to forgive Jerome and Charice, who knew about the affair but never said anything. He and Charice begin a relationship. Meanwhile, Sully's time in the hospital leads to life-saving surgery in which he is given the risky operation of a defibrillator, which he survives. Sully is happy to be old and alive.



Triangle – Suppositories

Summary

In "Triangle," Police Chief Douglas Raymer arrives late in Hilldale Cemetery in North Bath, New York, to witness the interment of Judge Barton Flatt, on a very hot day in late May. Raymer has not been to Hilldale since his wife, Becka's funeral. Mayor Gus Moynihan waves Raymer over to join him and other dignitaries. Raymer explains he is late because he got a call from Charice Bond, the black dispatcher, to bring home Alice, the kind but mentally unstable wife of Moynihan who is still troubled by Becka's death. Raymer wishes he were anywhere else other than the funeral. A strange pastor, who Raymer nicknames Reverend Tunic, wearing a multicolored tunic presides. Raymer thinks about how he must write a speech for Monday's big event, in which the middle school will be renamed for Beryl Peoples, a strict but goodhearted eighth-grade English teacher with a negative outlook on humanity. He wonders what Beryl would have made of Reverend Tunic, and considers how she might encourage him to use a rhetorical triangle to decide. Raymer also reflects on how the widowed Judge Flatt hit on younger women, including Becka –something which amused her. Raymer deeply misses Becka, but also remembers how Becka cheated on him following finding someone else's garage door opener in her RAV after she died –meaning to avoid detection of adultery in a small town, Becka simply drove into the garage of the man with whom she was cheating, something which Charice called nonsense.

In "Wishes," Robert "Rub" Squeers is a grave digger who waits down the hill from the funeral in a backhoe to fill in the gravesite. Rub is impatient to finish work for the day, and also reflects on how annoyed he is that his stammer, something he had as a youth, has now returned. Rub carries on a conversation with an imaginary form of Donald "Sully" Sullivan, his best friend, who is elsewhere. Rub envies how Sully no longer has to work, and wishes things could go backwards rather than forwards. The imaginary Sully says this cannot be possible. Still, Rub misses having Sully around and working beside him. Sully no longer has to work following inheriting his boarding house, and a windfall profit from family property purchased by the city. Rub thinks about his own family, and how as a child, his stammer caused him to pronounce his name like "Rub" instead of "Rob." Rub thinks he has let his mother down with his life, and remembers how much he hated his father while his domineering father was alive, but now misses him. This causes Rub to think about how Sully is old and dying, and how he will be the one responsible for digging Sully's grave.

In "Karma," North Bath decorates itself as best as it can for Memorial Day weekend not only as a matter of pride but of competition with the neighboring rival town of Schuyler Springs. Both small towns constantly try to outdo one another. Local entrepreneur Carl Roebuck, who often makes poor business decisions, decides to convert the old shoe factory into luxury condo units called the Old Mill Lofts. While many other locals scoff at this and worry that Carl is up to his old tricks of swindling, Moynihan says it means that North Bath is back in the game and has a bright future. Carl learns, however, the



sewage pipes beneath the factory have burst with yellow slime, having been invaded by tree roots. To cheer himself up, he decides to visit Sully where he sits at Hattie's lunch counter, reading the North Bath Weekly Journal. Sully reads an article about the preparations to rename the middle school after the late Beryl Peoples, who was formerly Sully's landlady. It causes Sully to think about his own pending death, diagnosed by the VA Hospital as A-Fib. Arrhythmia, which will lead to congestive heart failure. Sully risks death by corrective surgery, so he has opted to live out his life naturally, meaning he may have one or two years left to live. He does not wish to trouble his son or grandson with the news.

Ruth, Sully's once lover, waits on Sully's table when Carl shows up. Sully asks about the burst pipes, while Carl asks Sully how often he thinks about sex when Roy Purdy, a local ex-con, comes in for food. Roy is Ruth's ex-son-in-law, and she does not like seeing him. Sully hates Roy. Roy has a restraining order against him, protecting his ex-wife Janey and their daughter, Tina, who live in an apartment over Hattie's. Carl says he thinks about sex constantly, meaning he must be a sex-addict and therefore deserves sympathy. Carl asks Sully to convince Rub to come clean out the yellow slime from the building, but Sully will only do so if Carl promises to pay Rub double the rate Carl paid him for the last job. Carl agrees. Roy asks about his ex-wife and daughter, which annoys Ruth and Sully. Roy says he is a changed man, but Sully and Ruth do not believe him for an instant. Ruth reminds him of the restraining order, and warns him to keep his distance. Roy tells Sully that trailers, like the one he lives in behind his building, are firetraps. Roy says he is keeping a ledger of things he owes others, and what others owe him. He tells Sully that Sully owes him an apology, and he'll have it one day from Sully while sharing a six-pack.

In "Slinky," Reverend Tunic continues his eulogy, saying that Judge Flatt referred to North Bath as a fair city, which to Reverend Tunic believes he meant righteousness. The question, Reverend Tunic continues, is how to make Flatt's vision of North Bath as a fair and just city come true. It is something, he says, which must be done by all men. Meanwhile, Raymer remembers wanting to become a police officer in the first place, because of his belief in the importance of rules as a child, because rules made sense. Without Becka, nothing makes sense anymore. He remembers how, toward the end, he knew Becka had fallen out of love with him. He remembers thirteen months ago, finding her three packed suitcases on the porch, and remembers finding Becka inside, having slipped on the rug at the top of the stairs and fallen to her death. He also remembers a note on the table which asked him to forgive her, and to be happy for her and her new lover. He remembers how Tom Bridger, the medical examiner, described Becka's fall like a slinky going down the stairs. In the present, Raymer is still determined to find out who his wife was having an affair with. He begins to question God's justice when the ground shakes, stunning everyone, and especially stunning Raymer. Charice calls Raymer, asking him to come back to the town, saying he will not believe what just happened. Raymer then faints from the heat.

In "Exit Strategies," Carl accidentally urinates on himself in the bathroom, so Ruth brings him into Janey's apartment to help him clean himself up. Left alone at the counter, Sully begins to wonder what a heart attack would be like. Janey then comes



down into Hattie's, having been woken up by her mother and Carl. Janey is unhappy with the disruption and complains to her mother, who tells her to wake up before noon. When Janey goes back into her apartment, Sully tells Ruth that Roy is dangerous. Ruth says she knows this, and doesn't like Sully goading Roy, even if it is in defense of her and her family. Sully says that Roy will go back to jail if he tries anything, but Ruth worries Roy could actually kill Sully. The conversation shifts to Sully's own family, and how Ruth does not like Sully's son, an academic named Peter, because Peter does not feel Sully was enough of a father to him when he was a kid. However, Peter and Sully have been getting along recently, which makes Sully happy. Ruth suggests Sully get away for a while, or take a vacation to a place like Aruba. Sully tells Ruth to come with him, but Ruth is married and could not leave her husband, Zack, for such a trip. Ruth admits she is trying to make things better with Zack. As Sully prepares to leave, an explosion rocks the ground. Outside, a cloud of yellow-brown dust is rising half a mile away, making a smell that has plagued the town for the past few days even worse.

Having fainted, fallen into Flatt's grave, and broken his nose, in "Suppositories," Raymer is sent to the emergency room. He speaks with Charice by phone, who says that Officers Miller and Jerome, the Schuyler Springs police officer brother of Charice who works as a liaison between towns and a PR handler, report that the north wall of the Old Mill that faces Limerock Street has collapsed. Charice explains she and Jerome are worried about him. Jerome arrives in his 1964 Mustang a few moments later to see how Raymer is doing, and tells him to get in the car. Charice calls in by radio, delivering more news about the wall collapse. The wall has fallen on a car passing by, the driver of which was Ron Purdy, who has been injured but not killed. Jerome and Raymer drive to the Old Mill Lofts, where the smell is horrible and yellow dust still hangs in the air. Many onlookers, including the Mayor Moynihan, are already at the scene. It is revealed someone lit a match and threw it into the basement floor drain of the building, coming into contact with a gas pocket. Moynihan urges Raymer to go home and rest, and that everything will be taken care of. Moynihan also tells Jerome to give more thought to something they had previously discussed, but which cannot be mentioned in Raymer's presence.

Analysis

Richard Russo's novel *Everybody's Fool* makes it clear that life never turns out the way it is expected. The protagonist, Raymer, who never imagined that his wife, Becka, would die or that she would have an affair, demonstrates this position. Raymer deeply loved Becka, even though at the end, he knew Becka did not love him. Just down the hill from Flatt's funeral is Rub, who is dreading the coming year or two. He knows he will soon be digging the grave for his best friend in the world, Sully, who is dying of a heart condition because Sully has decided not to opt for risky surgery to install a defibrillator. Sully's prognosis is neither what he, nor Rub, expected. They believed that they, like most people, would have many years left in their old age, but Sully's pending death startled Rub. Sully comes into money, but he does so at the end of his life. Sully no longer has to work for a living, but now knows he will have to work to be among the living.



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Sully, along with most of the people of North Bath, is deeply religious. The majority of people of North Bath looks for signs, symbols, and omens in their daily lives. Russo makes a forceful argument for the seeking and interpreting of such signs through the course of his novel. Some signs are straightforward, while other such signs prove to be symbolic. For example, when Raymer finds the garage door opener in his dead wife's car, he knows it to be a sign that Becka had been having an affair. When the north wall of the Old Mill Lofts collapses on Roy, others consider it to be a deeply symbolic sign of either God's disapproval or God being on Roy's side for some strange reason, but Roy, as the reader will soon learn in coming chapters, is irreligious and cruel. He considers it a means to sue everyone involved with the collapse. When the collapse actually happens, it shakes the ground at the cemetery just as Raymer vows to discover who his wife was having an affair with—a symbolic omen of trouble to come, or a warning from God not to proceed both being things Raymer considers.

Many people would consider the wall to be an indictment against Roy past actions. Roy's past is emblematic of Russo's unfolding thematic argument that the past matters greatly in the present. Roy's past as a wife-beater, his litany of other crimes, and his time in jail explain how Roy ended up with a restraining order against him in the present, how he ended up divorced from Janey, and why no one in town likes him. Similarly, Sully and Ruth have their own history together as well, having had an affair a decade before. Though the affair is long gone, tension remains that explains their awkward encounters in the present.

Despite the troubles and uncertainties they face, there is one thing common among the young, the middle-aged, and the old in North Bath, and that is that they all value their lives. They live simple yet full small town existences. Even the elderly appreciate their lives. This is especially true in the case of Sully and Rub. Rub is deeply distressed by the fact that Sully may soon die. He loves his life with Sully in it and cannot even begin to imagine what life will be like without his best friend. Sully, on the other hand, accepts his situation. With the end in sight, he unabashedly mouths off to Roy in defense of Ruth and her family. He spends as much time as he can out and about, so that he may enjoy the company of friends and loved ones while there is still time.



Discussion Question 1

How does Sully handle his prognosis?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Raymer believe that Becka was having an affair?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Rub so upset about Sully's prognosis?

Vocabulary

fecundity, picturesque, pestilential, acerbic, belligerent, docile, viscerally, rhetorical, mortified, provocatively, adamant, trifecta, injunction, carousing, ubiquitous, beleaguered, abject, monotony, omnipotence, rectitude, celestial, presages, quizzical, obliquely



Dump – Sock Drawer

Summary

In "Dump," as Ruth drives home, she wonders why she told Sully that things had been getting better with her and Zack. Zack is fifty-eight, overweight, lazy, and takes off his pants at home. Zack's love of junking and his insistence that everything he finds is valuable and can be sold once repaired or altered also annoys her. Ruth reflects on the affair she had with Sully a decade before, which her husband suspected but never confirmed. Ruth would like to go to Aruba, she thinks, but alone. Tina is at the house, visiting as she often does. Tina is at the house early because school has let out for Memorial Day Weekend. Tina dislikes her mother, because her mother always yells at her. Ruth knows this is because Tina is mentally slow and feels very badly for Tina. Zack tucks away money for Tina's future and always makes sure to give her spending money. Ruth then gets a call from Roy who says he is in the hospital and needs a ride home. Ruth reluctantly agrees to give him one, laughing about how bad luck follows him. Roy is not angry about this, but agrees with it.

In "Not Happy," Jerome and Raymer head to Gert's, a local bar, owned and operated by Gert, a massively large man in his mid-seventies. Raymer confesses to Jerome he is thinking about resigning. Jerome tells Raymer to let the past go, including the garage door opener thing with Becka. Raymer tells him he cannot do it. Jerome believes Raymer is depressed and is punishing himself by drinking cheap beer in a place like Gert's. Jerome tells Raymer he is a good cop, and should not resign or he'll be sorry about it. The discussion about happiness and work reminds Raymer of the police department's motto: We're not happy until you're happy. Raymer admits he thinks Charice thinks he is a fool and would be happy if he resigned, but Jerome says this is incorrect: everyone is a fool, and Charice would not want Raymer to resign. People voted to put Raymer into his position, Jerome contends, and they wouldn't want him to quit. Gert offers up that he voted for Raymer. Raymer suddenly gets a call that an escaped cobra is on the loose. Raymer and Jerome meets up with Justin, a young man from Schuyler County Animal Control. It is then that Jerome discovers someone has vandalized his car, ripping the roof and insides to shreds. Jerome is heartbroken and enraged.

Throughout "Impulse," Roy waits for Ruth to show up. He is not bothered by the accident at all, knowing that a more religious person might take it as a sign from God to clean his act up. Roy considers the opposite, that whatever deity exists has his back because he survived the wall collapse. Roy intends to sue everyone involved. While waiting, he consults his ledger, which actually only has one column for those who he needs to get even with. Sully is put at the top of the list. Ruth arrives for Roy to bring him home to the Morrison Arms apartments. Ruth is straightforward with Roy: she wants him to leave town and not come back, and is willing to give him money to do it. Roy thinks that Janey may come back to him, but Ruth worries Janey will end up dead because Roy is around. Roy considers the offer of money, and wonders what incentive



he'll have not to come back and be paid to go away again. Ruth prepares to threaten him, but a half-naked man rushes out of the Morrison Arms and bolts down the street. Cora, Roy's somewhat-girlfriend, comes out of the Morrison to explain that there is a snake in the building. As Ruth leaves, Roy sees something in the parking lot he decides to take advantage of.

In "Boogie," the half-naked man, Rolfe "Boogie-Woogie" Waggengneckt runs to Limerock Street, by the collapsed building where he tells Officer Miller the snakes that are loose do not belong to him, and that no one can make him go back in the building. Boogie confesses he was hired by William Smith, a subtenant, to watch over a bedroom full of inventory that needed to be kept cool at all times. He recalls being paranoid upon discovering he was meant to be watching over snakes, drugs, and guns, while William Smith was not at home. When the power goes off, so does the cold air, which wakes up all the snakes. When he hears crashing from inside the bedroom, Boogie opens the door to see a cobra poised to strike. Boogie takes off running without his pants.

In "The Two Rubs," Rub and his very overweight wife, Dolly "Bootsie", live in a small old farmhouse outside of town. They own a stray dog they rescued named Rub, after Rub. Sully heads out to visit. He notices his heart beating like crazy after climbing the four front steps. This worries Bootsie, but Sully says he will be fine in a few minutes. Sully learns that Rub is not at home, so he heads back out. He discovers Rub the dog barking up at a tree, where he discovers Rub the person stuck in the tree after attempting to trim the tree. Sully heads to get a ladder.

In "Sock Drawer," Charice reports to Raymer that no snakes have been found anywhere in Morrison Apartments. Charice is stunned to find that Raymer lives at Morrison Arms and is staying in the office because of the snake, so she invites Raymer home for the night. Raymer wonders how a young black woman like Charice could find happiness in a working-class conservative town like Bath, while her brother lives in the college town of Schuyler Springs, which is liberal and wealthier. Charice brings Raymer by Morrison Arms for a change of clothes and other personal items. He runs into old Mr. Hynes, who is the only resident who has refused to leave the building. Hynes is an eighty-something, conservative and patriotic black man, who is determined to do things his way, but is kind to all those he meets. Hynes thanks but refuses Raymer's offer to bring him to Holiday Inn where the other residents of Morrison are staying. Hynes notices Charice in the car, and encourages Raymer to go after her romantically. Raymer explains he is more than ten years older, that Charice doesn't really like him, and so on, but Raymer dismisses this. Back in the car, Raymer thinks about moving on.

Analysis

The past continues to have great bearing on the present as Ruth returns home to deal with her husband, Zack. Ruth alternates between feeling badly about the past affair with Sully, and feeling annoyance for her husband in the present. The past is something which continues to dog Raymer –and will continue to dog him –through the course of the novel. He alternates between letting the past be as it is, and trying to figure out who



Becka was planning to run off with. The past has a very strong pull on Raymer, however, who feels lost and uncertain in the present due to the unknown past. The very recent past comes into play through an important event in the present: Boogie Woogie, hired to watch over an apartment full of snakes by William Smith, is confronted by his worst nightmare: the power goes out, the snakes wake up, and the snakes become angry. This leads to an evacuation of Morrison Arms in the present –and leads Raymer to accept Charice’s offer to spend the night.

Raymer’s decision to stay at Charice’s apartment also brings about an unexpected change in life for Raymer. As Russo continues to argue, life never turns out the way one expects. Raymer never expected his wife to cheat on him, or to plan to leave him –and certainly never expected to be heading toward romance with a much younger woman of a different race whom he works with. Charice never expected to be in love with an older man of a different race, and according to Jerome, does not expect (and would not want) Raymer to resign. Meanwhile, Roy never expected to have a building collapse on him, just as no one in the Morrison ever believed their building would become infested with snakes.

The past and the unexpected changes in life in the present also have an important effect on those in North Bath. The past, Russo argues, must eventually be let go of. Raymer, as he grows closer to Charice, and as he considers Hynes’s encouragement to romantically pursue Charice, begins to think about moving on in his life. His past with Becka –and Becka’s affair –must stop having a hold on him in the present, or so Charice argues, and Raymer begins to consider. At the same time, Ruth is willing to let go of the past by literally making the past go away. Ruth offers to pay Roy to leave town, but like any immoral lowlife, Roy has no such intentions. Roy is someone who will not let the past go no matter what others may or may not do or say. He keeps a ledger of those on whom he wishes to exact revenge for the past. Roy will only let go of the past when revenge is had.

As the reader will continue to note, signs and symbols seem to be everywhere for the citizens of North Bath. Roy, irreligious and cruel, continues to ignore signs, including the collapse of the north wall of the Old Mill. Roy’s ledger itself becomes a clear and obvious sign of bad omens for those on the list in the ledger. Other signs are also quite obvious: the fleeing of Boogie Woogie in his underwear from the Morrison indicates that Raymer is about to head into a dangerous situation in which snakes have escaped; the idea of snakes being let loose in a building in which mainly snake-like people live (note that only the good residents of the Morrison remain, including Mr. Hynes and Raymer); and Mr. Hynes himself, a conservative black patriot who demonstrates that a book cannot be judged by its cover. Just because a person may be black does not mean the person will be a Democrat as popular stereotypes hold, Raymer recognizes, as he himself describes Hynes as improbably patriotic.



Discussion Question 1

In what ways does the past come back to haunt Ruth in this section of the novel? How does this affect her in the present? Why?

Discussion Question 2

In this section of the novel, Raymer begins to consider that he might just begin to move on. What brings this about? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Roy not take stock in the signs and symbols around him the way other residents of North Bath do? Is this to his detriment or his benefit? Explain.

Vocabulary

ramshackle, arbitrariness, philosophy, congenital, masticated, pendulous, chortled, existential



Spinmatics – Complicity

Summary

In “Spinmatics,” the White Horse is full of tourists and travelers on their way to Lakes George, Placid, Schroon, and Champlain for the holiday weekend. Sully meets up at the Horse with Rub and Jocko for beer and burgers. Birdie waits their table. Birdie complains about a broken glass that cut her finger and about how the summer work crew does not start work for two weeks. Sully wonders if all the women in town are on the warpath. Sully sees Janey in the kitchen working the grill. Another local, named Joe, complains about life at the Morrison, then harasses Sully for being left millions by his landlady. Sully goads Joe, saying he prefers Joe’s brother, but Joe does not have a brother. Joe pours his beer on the bar as Birdie kicks him out. Sully pays for the beer and wonders why he has now goaded two men to near violence. Rub, meanwhile, worries about Sully’s health and his activities.

In the next chapter, “Embers,” Raymer dreams of Becka, but when he awakens, he is alone. He wonders if the dream is a sign of some kind, either blessing or condemning his current situation with Charice. He wonders why he drank so much over dinner with Charice the evening before why Charice has not sent him home yet. Locked out of Charice’s house on her porch, he cannot remember the night before. He then heads toward work. A few blocks away, Miller catches up with Raymer. Miller says a call was made about a man climbing off of someone’s back porch. Raymer explains it was him, then asks Miller to drive him to Hilldale to pick up his car. Miller agrees. Miller explains he drove by Charice’s the night before and heard Charice and Raymer enjoying dinner on the back porch. Miller confesses to having something of a crush on Charice. Lightning strikes a nearby house and strikes Raymer lightly. Raymer considers this might be a sign of some kind from Becka. Miller tells Raymer he looks sad. Miller reveals he is worried that he is to be fired and Charice’s brother hired to replace him. Raymer says this rumor is not true. Raymer and Miller both realize that Charice is not at home. Miller wonders if Charice might date someone like him and Raymer tells him it is not against the rules.

In “Rub’s Penis,” Sully does his best to enjoy the time he has left by staying until last call most nights at the bars. As it gets later, only the locals remain, and Carl Roebuck comes in with a very young woman on his arm, about Janey’s age. Carl introduces the girl as Jennifer, from Lake George. Carl joins a game of poker Sully and the others play. Jennifer talks to Rub the human and pets Rub the dog, wondering why Rub the dog likes to chew on his penis. Meanwhile, Carl loses a hundred bucks to Sully.

In “A Sundering,” at Hilldale, instead of driving home in his car, Raymer goes to Becka’s grave. He wonders why she would have come to him in his dream. She could have been giving him her blessing with Charice, warning him not to date Charice, apologizing in death for what she did in life, or anything else. A flash of lightning which almost hits Raymer illuminates Becka’s grave and reveals her full name, Rebecca Whitt Raymer.



An old bouquet of flowers is at her grave. He sees the florist's card is still attached to the flowers, and knows that, to learn the identity of Becka's lover who must have left the flowers, he must take the card.

In "Reincarnation," Carl asks Sully if he has ever made a rash promise. Sully explains he has, once or twice. He asks if Sully believes in reincarnation. Carl hopes it is true, while Sully hopes it is not. Sully drives Rub home. On the way, Rub the dog jumps out of the truck, and Sully and Rub turn around to find him.

In the next chapter, "Hill Comes to Dale," Kraymer leaves Hilldale Cemetery. Raymer has a conversation with himself about who he is and what he is doing with his life. The voice Raymer hears calls him pathetic. He throws up outside his car as he looks at the florist's card. It is from Gilchrist's Fine Blooms. Raymer tells the voice in his head he is tired of being everybody's fool. On the back of the card, Raymer reads the word "Always."

In "Grave Doings," Sully discovers a strange car parked in front of his house. Sully wonders who it could be. As he does, he thinks about the sudden wealth he has come into—wealth that coincided with his diagnosis of death. Sully finds Raymer in his bathroom. Raymer, when finished, explains he is worried he is going insane and asks Sully if he knows how to operate a backhoe. He explains he lost a garage door opener in the grave of Judge Flatt. Raymer then confesses the importance of the opener to Sully. Sully agrees to help, saying they must move quickly because it is almost four in the morning. Sully then grabs Carl, who rents one of the Sully's building's units, to come along. The three men, along with Rub the dog, assemble in Hilldale to dig. The gravesite is dug out, then Carl and Raymer go in. The opener cannot be found. When Sully drives Carl back to the apartment building, Carl says he knows who was sleeping with Raymer's wife.

In "Complicity," the author explains that Bath residents typically read the Schuyler Springs Democrat for real news about Bath, since the North Bath Weekly Journal keeps to friendly, local news. Bad headlines, in addition to Alice's unwinding mental state, worry Mayor Moynihan. Alice's constant imaginary companion terrifies him. Moynihan is up early in the morning, responding to queries about a grave robbery at Hilldale, though Officer Miller reports finding nothing upon investigating. As Moynihan leaves his house, he discovers his wife is gone. He sets out to find her. While he looks, he remembers a cruel professor named Kurt Wright who dated Alice before Moynihan married her ten years ago. He remembers how Kurt threatened to tell everyone he was gay unless Moynihan freed him of Alice. Moynihan remembers coming to fall in love with Alice, believing she only needed a good man in her life, but that her mental condition never permanently improved. At last, Moynihan finds Alice in the new Longmeadow subdivision of town. He cries with happiness, while Alice dries his tears. She then takes a call on her phone even though it did not ring.



Analysis

Signs and symbols permeate the novel.. Sully's inheritance and ill fortune in health become the topic of discussion briefly at the White Horse, with the point being that nothing should be taken for granted. Just because someone is rich does not mean that health can be taken for granted. Raymer has several close encounters through the course of the night. First, he dreams of Becka in such a way as to believe that her ghost visits him. Second, he is clipped lightly by lightning on his way into Miller's car. Third, he is nearly struck by lightning once more while visiting Becka's grave, only to discover the florist's card, which is itself a sign. Raymer cannot determine whether the lightning and the dream are signs from Becka to give her blessing to pursue Charice, whether Becka is apologizing for the past, or whether Becka is warning him about things to come.

Raymer is reasonably sure, however, that the card from the florist is a sign that he is meant to always pursue the identity of Becka's lover . Raymer believes that losing of the garage door opener in the grave of Judge Flatt is a sign that he is supposed to bury the past and let things go.. Taken together, these signs contradict each other. Raymer is at a difficult place in his life and seeks answers. Because he has strong faith, he is careful to study how God manifests his will to Raymond.

Raymer is so concerned about the past that he forgets to live in the present.. Raymer goes to the extraordinary length of disinterring Judge Flatt to try to find the remote to no avail. Sully agrees to help Raymer not only as a matter of friendship and honor, but as a matter of recognizing the pain and heartache in Raymer. He wants to help others all he can in the present while he lives. Life becomes more valuable the more limited it becomes. Sully's decision to help Raymer expresses his desire to make the most of his life.

Sully's decision to help Raymer dig up the grave is also proof that life never turns out the way one expects. Sully never imagines that he would help the chief of police dig up the grave of a deceased and respected judge to find a garage door opener that the chief of police is trying to use to discover the identity of his dead wife's lover. Moynihan, likewise, expected that Alice's mental state would improve rather than worsen. Moynihan deeply loves Alice, but no matter what he does, he cannot help her get better. On the one hand, Moynihan is a popular mayor and his professional life is well-ordered. On the other, his personal life is a struggle and a great uncertainty.

Discussion Question 1

What signs and symbols does Raymer encounter through Friday night and Saturday morning? What does he believe these signs and symbols mean?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Sully agree to help Raymer dig up Judge Flatt's grave? Why is Raymer so insistent on digging up the grave?

Discussion Question 3

Raymer receives a host of signs and symbols in this section of the novel. Do you believe these are truly signs and symbols?

Vocabulary

rubric, obligingly, innocuous, visceral, puritanical, tribulations, abject, audibly, dubiously, fastidious, absentmindedly, spectral



Electricity – Home

Summary

In "Electricity," Ruth's favorite part of the day is driving to work at Hattie's. She drives into town with Tina. She remembers how lightning struck Zack's shed the night before, creating a small blue flame which she takes to be symbolic of the returning sexual intimacy she has with Zack. Tina asks to drive down Main Street, past Sully's building, where she met and developed a crush on Will, Sully's grandson, the year before. This causes Ruth to ask Tina if she knows about sex, and to warn Tina that even nice boys want sex. Tina tells Ruth that Janey says Ruth does not love Zack. Tina goes on to say that Ruth seems like someone who is hurt, which causes Ruth to cry. Ruth and Tina then arrive at Hattie's. Ruth opens up and begins cooking food and getting things in order. Ruth and Tina are both stunned when Roy enters the diner from Janey's apartment. Ruth is angered to learn that Janey actually invited Roy to spend the night. Ruth cannot believe that Janey would allow Roy in after Roy physically assaulted her in the past. Janey says she was scared of the storm and needed company, in addition to being horny. Ruth tells Roy to get out or she'll call the police. Roy then smashes Ruth's head with a glass twice, knocking her into the wall. Roy then straddles Ruth to beat her, but is himself knocked sideways by Sully, who has hit him with a skillet from the diner. Sirens can be heard in the distance while Sully tells Ruth everything will be okay.

In "Secrets," Raymer returns to the Morrison Arms, where Mr. Hynes takes his usual seat in a lawnchair and waves at passing cars while holding an American flag. Raymer says hello, then gets a call from Charice as he heads to the station. Charice reports a photographer from the Democrat took Raymer's picture as he climbed down from Charice's porch, and it has made the headlines. Raymer tells her everything will be okay. He also asks about the previous night. Charice explains she left to bring her brother to the hospital, because her brother was having a panic attack he believed to be a heart attack. Charice explains she did not lock him out, but that the door sticks and has to be lifted. Raymer mutters that he is in love with her, and then goes on to ask if Charice believes in ghosts and dreams. He explains his dream and cemetery experiences to Charice, who merely writes it off as a bad day. Raymer then asks about Jerome's potential employment with the Bath Police. Charice says Jerome tells him everything, and that the mayors of Schuyler and Bath have been considering consolidating services so that both towns are covered by one department for each service. Jerome, she explains, would oversee the transition. Raymer and Charice both know this will mean that people will be fired. In his office, Raymer discovers that someone has left a ceramic cobra for him. Charice denies having anything to do with it, but reports that there has been an assault and battery, with Ruth being the victim and Roy Purdy being the attacker. She explains that Roy is on the run, having slipped out when the ambulances arrived. Joe Gaghan has been reported missing. The snakes and other reptiles have been cleared out of Morrison, but the cobra still has not been caught. Charice begins crying when Raymer pens his resignation note, reading over his shoulder. He then heads out to the White Horse, Joe's last reported location. Miller



meets him there, and the two officers find Joe in the woods, barely alive, leg twisted, and left to die. It was a hit-and-run.

In "The Tree You Can't Predict," Roy staggers up the street, bleeding from his nearly-detached ear and dizzy. He calls Cora, who comes to pick him up. Roy tells her to bring him to the CVS out by the highway. At CVS, Roy smacks Cora upside the head, causing her to smack her head against the window and cry. He demands she go into the CVS to pick up butterfly bandages, band-aids, and medical supplies in addition to beer and some orange juice. Cora complies. He then forces her to drive him to the reservoir, but the people at the shore there see he is bleeding. He forces her to take a private road during which time Cora cries that some people have all the bad luck in the world – people like her and Roy. Roy only gets more annoyed with Cora. They pull into a seemingly unoccupied private campsite, then go sit on the dock. Roy is enraged to see that Cora has purchased butterfly-style paperclips, rather than butterfly clip bandages. Cora explains that CVS was out of the bandages. Still, Roy manages to wrap up his ear, then breaks into a local cabin (a line of work once suggested by Gert) where he uses the bathroom to finish tearing off his ear. He then rebandages his head, and heads out to sit with Cora to drink beer and eat Cheetos.

In "Gert Gives the Matter Some Thought," Sully, Tina, and Janey are in the emergency room. Tina has been traumatized into silence by the events of the morning. Janey does her best to get through to Tina, but she is inconsolable. Janey then admits to Sully that she feels like everything is her fault. Sully holds Janey while she cries. Sully reassures her that it is not. Sully then decides to go and find Zack, since Zack has not yet been able to be reached. Sully finds Zack working in the shed. Zack is stunned to learn of what happened, but is glad Janey and Tina are alright. Zack explains he saw a ball of lightning strike the shed during the storm the previous night, and believes it was a sign of some kind of the violence to come to Ruth. As they drive, Zack explains his junking business has been very successful, showing Sully his bankbook for proof. Zack has over three-hundred-thousand dollars in his account, something which Ruth knows nothing about –and something which Zack says he will not tell Ruth until Ruth tells him about her and Sully. Sully confirms that the affair is long over. Sully drops Zack off at the hospital, then heads to speak with Gert. Sully asks after Roy and Cora, inquiring as to what Roy might do on the run from the law. Gert explains that breaking into secluded homes would be a possibility, because he used to do it himself.

In "Words to Die By," Raymer receives a call from Kreuner's Country Market, where the clerk, Karen, has reported a suspicious off-white cargo van with the front hidden. Karen describes the driver, said that he paid by cash, and appeared to have spent the night in the parking lot. Raymer investigates, and finds shattered glass matching the kind that matched the crime scene at the White Horse. Karen also reports the van had a screeching wheel. Raymer then heads to Harold's Automotive World, run by Harold Proxmire. Harold explains the guy who brought the van in said his kid drove into a ditch, and that the license plates are from Georgia. Harold reveals he bought the van for thirteen-hundred dollars. The van is registered to Mark Ringwald, but Andy, son of Harold who gave the driver a ride to the train station in Schuyler, said the man's name was Bill and needed to get to Albany, then Chicago, then Denver.



Raymer next goes to the train station. Finding no one there, he heads to the bus station where he accidentally knocks over a woman on his way to find the buses. On a bus about to leave, Raymer finds the driver of the van. The man is William Smith. He carries a box with a coral snake inside, and opens it to show Raymer. Raymer pretends the box is empty, causing Smith to look and the snake to strike, biting Smith's eyebrow. As Smith reels and dies from the coral venom, he says he knew better than to look. Raymer quickly snaps the case shut and locks it. Justin arrives for the snake. Charice congratulates Raymer through the radio, saying he can't resign because he is just getting good. Raymer is very happy about this, and finds himself happy on the way home. As he thinks on the way back into town, he realizes he already knows who Becka was sleeping with: Peter Sullivan, son of Sully. Raymer realizes he no longer cares, and that it is time to move on. He realizes losing the garage door remote was a sign of this.

In "Home," Sully goes looking for Roy, deciding to begin with Sans Souci Park and Hotel, a place he remembers from childhood where he and his family once lived –and where his father descended into alcoholism while Sully left to enlist. Sully remembers that it was while he was in Normandy that he learned of his father's death. Sully does not find Roy at the Sans Souci.

Analysis

Signs and symbols continue to present themselves. Russo argues that signs and symbols in his fiction bear importance. The lightning that strikes Zack's shed elicits a small blue flame. For Ruth, it is a sign of a reignited sexual intimacy with Zack. For Zack, it is as a sign of violence to come to Ruth. It turns out that Zack is correct. Not long after the strike, Ruth is beaten into a bloody pulp by Roy. As Raymer successfully apprehends William Smith, progenitor of the snakes and culprit of the hit-and-run against Joe, he takes it once more as a sign that losing the garage door opener was a sign to let the past go. Here, Russo again picks up his thematic argument that eventually, one must let go of the past. Given the potential for things with Charice, and given that Raymer is reasonably sure Peter Sullivan was the man whom Becka wished to leave him for, Raymer is content –at that moment –to let the past go.

The past, however, still has tremendous relevance and impact on the present. Roy's bloodthirsty history is something that Janey does not take into account. Janey, obviously selfish and self-absorbed, takes Roy to bed with her. This leads to the attack on Ruth, and the intervention of Sully. Although Sully reassures Janey that everything will be okay and that what happened is not her fault, the reader recognizes that she does indeed bear large responsibility for what happened because it was she who invited Roy over in the first place, refusing to take his history into account. Sully goes to visit his ex-wife, Vera, who has been committed to a psychiatric ward due to her insanity. Although he may not love her anymore, he still feels an emotional pull toward her, for she was so long a part of his life. The recent past –the attack on Ruth –has obsessed Sully, who is determined to hunt down and find Roy. The past also holds sway for Roy: he has gotten revenge on Ruth, and now seeks revenge on Sully.



Roy certainly has not expected events to play out as they have. He blames Ruth for his attack on Ruth, and blames Sully for intervening. Roy never expected he would have to tear his own ear off, or that he would be on the run from the law again so soon. Sully never expected he would be hunting down Roy, and certainly never expected that Ruth would end up fighting for her life in the hospital. Indeed, he only believed harm would come to Janey, though did indeed worry for Ruth's safety. Zack, likewise, never expected that he would be driven to the hospital by Sully, or that Sully would offer peace to Zack over the affair Sully and Ruth had a decade before. In so doing, Sully offers peace for the past, while Zack accepts and makes peace with both the past, and with Sully. Life must be lived as it is now. Life, as both men acknowledge, is not something to be taken for granted. This is especially true for Sully, who in his old age and with limited time, values life all the more.

Discussion Question 1

For the moment, Raymer is content to let the past stay in the past. Why is this so? Do you believe he will change his mind again? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Despite Sully's ill health, he determines to track down Roy. Why? What does he hope to accomplish by doing this?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sully offer Zack peace over the affair Sully had with Ruth a decade before? How does Zack respond? Why?

Vocabulary

intuit, aggrieved, grotesquely, redundancies, sauntered, clientele, adfinitum, apoplectic



Dougie Reneges - Cured

Summary

In "Dougie Reneges," Raymer meets up with Mayor Moynihan at the cemetery to tender his resignation, but Moynihan refuses it, even after the bad publicity in the morning's paper. After all, Moynihan says, Raymer solved two cases and saved Joe's life. Moynihan does recommend that Raymer go to a hospital to have all of the injuries he has sustained in the past twenty-four hours examined and treated, including from the fainting incident. Moynihan later goes on the news to talk about Raymer's heroic work. It makes Raymer happy. He sees the sky over the cemetery is a beautiful blue, which he realizes means peace with the past. He looks up to Heaven to speak with Becka, telling her about what has happened, promises to let her affair and the past go, and promises to move on. However, Rub suddenly arrives, handing Raymer the garage remote, saying he found it yesterday at the bottom of the grave before the burial.

In "Charade," Carl wakes up at two in the afternoon, still exhausted from the night before, and vows that Saturday will be different. He is determined to get Rub working on the basement of the Old Mill as soon as possible, then calls his ex-wife, Toby, to see how she is doing. He then sees Raymer outside, testing the garage door opener on Peter's old house, only to discover Peter was not the man Becka was having an affair with. Carl knows he could put Raymer out of his misery, but he considers it none of his business.

In "Crazy Like a Fox," with the snake situation at Morrison Arms across the street removed, Gert's bar's business picks up back to normal. Raymer stops in for a drink, and to call Jerome. He tells Jerome his car was probably shredded by Roy, then tells Jerome he believes he has feelings for Charice. Jerome doesn't want to talk, begins crying over his Mustang, and hangs up. Raymer then drives over to see Jerome. He finds Jerome sleeping in the Mustang in the garage. Jerome screams in fear when Raymer wakes him. Raymer accidentally pushes the garage remote in his pants pocket, the garage door rises. Charice suddenly arrives, during which time Jerome, panicked, admits to the affair with Becka, saying they were both in love.

In "Something with No Name," Roy travels back toward town after dark, coming to wait by Sans Souci where he abandons Cora's vehicle and prepares to walk to Sully's. He thinks about how he knocked Cora out with a rock before making the drive back toward town in order to prevent her from following or calling the police.

In "Motion," Sully and Rub the dog travel back to Sully's trailer, where he leaves Rub before heading to the hospital to see his ex-wife, Vera, who has gone insane. Sully still feels an emotional pull toward Vera, and tells her about his heart condition. Vera is physically unable to respond. Sully heads to the Horse for drinks with the guys. Rub and his wife, Bootsie, also come in for a visit. Sully decides then and there that he will go to Albany for a defibrillator operation at the VA Hospital. It is risky, but he is willing to take



the chance. On the way home, Sully checks the Sans Souci one more time, and finds the yellow-and-purple car Roy drives in the parking lot. Sully deflates the tire, then returns to his car. His heart is beating erratically. When he returns to his building, he passes out and does not hear the footsteps approaching.

In "Normal," Raymer meets with Jerome's therapist, Dr. Pamela Qadry, and who also wishes to question Raymer about his time over the past day –as well as the untreated injuries he has. Raymer denies that he has been harassing Jerome about the affair with Becka as Jerome claims, because Raymer did not even know about Jerome until that afternoon. Qadry asks if Raymer would like to talk about Charice. Raymer thinks about how Charice had been urging him to move on not because she felt it was time or that she liked him, but because she wanted to protect Jerome. Raymer wonders how many people knew about his wife having an affair with Jerome. Raymer refuses to talk about Charice much, then heads out to leave.

On the way out, he runs into Moynihan, who has come to visit Alice after Alice attempted suicide by pill. He explains that Alice will live. Moynihan feels a failure, and begins hitting himself in the head with his phone. Raymer rips the phone away. Bleeding, Moynihan must now head into the hospital for treatment. On the way back to town, Raymer is called to Sully's trailer, formerly Miss Beryl's, as the place is on fire. Mark Diamond, the fire chief, explains only one skeleton has been found, and it does not belong to a dog. The body belongs to Roy. Raymer then drives to Zack's house, where he discovers a gas can in Zack's pickup bed. Rub, the dog, is safe with Zack. Zack confesses he went to tell Sully that Ruth would be alright, but then discovered Roy in the trailer planning to douse the place on fire. In revenge and in defense of his family, Zack explains, he set the place on fire. Zack will have to come down to the station in the morning to make a statement, Raymer explains further, but it is clear that the death was accidental to him.

In the novel's final chapter, "Cured," it turns out that Miller, out to investigate reports of a peeping tom, saw Sully collapse and called for an ambulance, saving Sully's life. Sully's heart operation is a success. He now has a defibrillator, and has a new lease on life. Sully then goes to visit Ruth, who is sleeping. Peter comes to visit Sully, which makes him feel better. Charice later comes to visit Raymer at the station as it begins to rain. Charice explains she knew about the affair between Jerome and Becka from the start, but realized eventually she was protecting him more than he was protecting her. She explains that Becka had believed through love to have cured Jerome of his obsessive compulsive behavior. Charice explains that the day Jerome and Becka were due to run away together, Jerome was going to tell Raymer the truth about the affair. Charice asks for forgiveness for herself and Jerome. Raymer says it can be done. Charice asks if Raymer wants to be in a relationship with her. Raymer says he does. When they kiss, electricity literally sparks between them. Charice then grabs the ceramic cobra, saying she originally bought it for Jerome to help his fear of snakes, but that it didn't work. Charice asks Raymer if the ceramic snake scared him, but Raymer says only Charice does that.



Analysis

Symbols and signs continue to be an important part of the novel as it concludes –some in fairly straightforward ways, others in deep and religious ways. All, Russo argues, must be paid attention to. Raymer stands before Becka's grave, filling her in on the events of the past twenty-four hours. He initially believes he will be putting the past to rest –but the sudden return of the garage door opener causes Raymer to recognize that the past is not yet put to rest: the man with whom Becka had an affair must still be found. By all accounts, Zack is a lazy and laidback guy. This is a sign of deception, however. As has been previously noted in the novel, Zack's junk business has netted him over three-hundred thousand dollars, demonstrating that he is not lazy after all. Second, Zack, though passive and laidback, has been stirred into life to defend his family. There is nothing Zack is not willing to do to defend his family –including burning Roy to death. The manner in which Roy dies –by fire –is the manner of death he threatened Sully with at the beginning of the novel. Not only is this a source of irony, but is to be seen as God's justice: Roy is burned to death in fire representing Hell, the place for which Roy is bound. The town of North Bath is left to the living, to better people.

Life is something to be heavily valued, no matter how old someone is, Russo continues to argue in his novel. This is true for Ruth and for Sully. Ruth will live, but her recovery will be long and difficult. The reader should pay careful attention to Sully's visit to Ruth, during which time he says it would be nice to be young again –but that he is fine with being old and alive and so would not want to be young again. The attack on Ruth demonstrates just how frail life can be –and life is worth preserving no matter what. In order to save Sully's life after his collapse, a defibrillator has been implanted, meaning that so long as Sully takes care of himself, his life will be indefinitely prolonged. Ironically, the procedure that Sully thought could kill him in the short-term has saved his life in the long-term.

As the novel concludes, the past continues to hold important sway in the present –but only so far as those in the present are allow it to hold sway. As Russo argues, eventually, the past must be let go. Raymer comes to discover that Jerome is the man with whom Becka had had an affair. Jerome's conscience has crippled him in the present, explaining his panic attacks and desire to avoid Raymer. Charice confesses to as much. Charice also confesses to having feelings for Raymer, and being willing to pursue a relationship with him if he could forgive her and her brother. Raymer agrees to forgive them both, and to let the past go. He focuses instead on the present, and on the future with Charice. The spark between Raymer and Charice when they kiss is symbolic proof of an electric future between the two.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Raymer finally agree to move on, even when he has reneged on his vows to move on before? What is different about this time? Do you believe Raymer will finally move on? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

Who kills Roy? Why does Raymer consent to considering the entire situation an accident? Do you believe he is right to do so? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

How does Sully come to see life at the end of the novel? Has his opinion about life (especially in regards to his own condition) changed since the start of the novel, or is it the same? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

inference, benign, charismatic, bloodcurdling, loomed, unambiguous, mirthlessly



Characters

Sully

Donald “Sully” Sullivan is a resident of New Bath, a World War II veteran, and has been diagnosed with heart disease which will lead to congestive heart failure. Refusing to undergo risky surgery to have a defibrillator implanted due to his age, Sully has been given one to two years to live. He does not wish to trouble his son or his grandson with this news, and only tells a few select people, such as his best friend, Rub, and his former lover, Ruth. Sully accepts but values what limited life he has left, going out of his way to help others, such as Raymer digging up a grave or smashing Roy with a skillet to protect Ruth and her family. While out looking for Roy, Sully suffers a serious heart attack, during which time he is operated on and has a defibrillator installed. This allows Sully to have an indefinitely prolonged life, and to value life as never before.

Raymer

Douglas Raymer is the chief of police for New Bath, and is still haunted by the death of his wife, Becca, and the knowledge that she had an affair. Raymer is a religious man who puts much stock in signs and symbols, but these leave him uncertain, which is in turn a reflection of Raymer’s own uncertainties. Raymer spends the majority of the novel either dragged down by the past in pursuit of Becca’s lover, or struggling to let the past go and move on. Raymer ultimately comes to discover that it was Jerome with whom Becca had an affair and planned to run away with. Raymer is able to let the past go with this knowledge, instead turning to focus on a relationship with Charice by the end of the novel.

Charice

Charice Bond is the police dispatcher, secretary, and station officer in New Bath. Charice is a young, beautiful African-American woman. She takes no slack from anyone, including Raymer. Charice. She is, however, handicapped by her brother, Jerome, whom she struggles to protect and shield his indiscretions and irresponsibility, such as Jerome’s affair with Becca. Charice is romantically interested in Raymer, and urges Raymer to move on from the past not only as a possibility of a future with her, but to protect Jerome. Likewise, Charice does not want Raymer to retire as he threatens to do, because she would miss him too much. By the end of the novel, Charice asks for forgiveness for herself and for her brother, which Raymer grants. She and Raymer then begin a relationship.



Ruth

Ruth is the wife of Zack, mother of Janey, and grandmother of Tina, as well as a waitress at Hattie's and the former lover of Sully. Ruth struggles with keeping close to, and reconnecting with Zack despite Zack's apparent laziness, feeling badly about her affair. Ruth is enraged when Janey sleeps with Roy, leading to Roy beating Ruth with a glass. Ruth survives the attack, but just barely, and is still in the hospital recovering when the novel ends.

Jerome

Jerome Bond is the brother of Charice. A police officer in Schuyler Springs who also acts as liaison between both Schuyler Springs and North Bath, Jerome has been tasked with overseeing a transition of service merging between the two towns. Jerome is plagued with guilt over his affair with Becka, and does his best to avoid Raymer when possible. Eventually, Jerome has a panic attack because of this, and is later committed when he becomes unhinged over the entire affair.

Zack

Zack is the husband of Ruth, father of Janey, and grandfather of Tina. Originally supposed to be lazy, passive, unthinking, and with a bad habit of collecting junk for a business that doesn't seem to be taking off, Zack proves everyone wrong. It is Zack who kills Roy in defense of his family, and to ensure that Roy will harm no one else. It is also revealed that Zack's junk business is ridiculously successful, netting him a bank account of over three-hundred-thousand dollars.

Janey

Janey is the daughter of Zack and Ruth, and the mother of Tina. Janey is also the ex-wife of Roy, against whom she has filed a restraining order for herself and Tina. Janey and Tina live in an apartment over Hattie's, while Janey works nights at the White Horse bar. Janey is grossly irresponsible and unkind toward Tina, with Janey living and acting as though she was still a teenager. Janey's decision to hook up with Roy leads to Roy attacking Ruth when Ruth chastises Janey and Roy over the situation.

Rub (the person)

Robert "Rub" Squeer is the best friend of Sully, and the husband of Dolly "Bootsie" Squeer. Rub is so named due to his stutter, leaving him unable to pronounce "Rob" properly as a child. Rub is a gentle, kind, and loyal friend who is devastated by news of Sully's impending death. Rub works as a gravedigger and maintenance man at Hilldale Cemetery, where he finds the garage door opener and returns it to Raymer.



Rub (the dog)

Rub the dog is the dog owned by Rub and Bootsie, though he often spends time with Sully when Bootsie tires of Rub the dog. Sully is happy to have Rub's company, for Rub is a kind but strange dog who chews on his own penis. Rub tries to defend Sully's trailer against Roy, but is locked in the bathroom by Roy instead. Rub is saved by Zack when Zack sets the trailer on fire with Roy in it. Raymer finds Rub the dog safe and sound with Zack after the fire.

Roy

Roy Purdy is the villain of the novel. The ex-husband of Janey and the father of Tina, Roy is an ex-con, recently released from prison. He has a track record of physical abuse toward Janey and Tina, and a litany of other crimes on his record ranging from violent assault to robbery. Roy is irreligious, could care less about signs and symbols, and hurts all those he comes into contact with in some way, shape, or form. Roy seeks revenge against Sully in the novel for Sully's defense of Ruth and Janey; and Roy later bashes Ruth's head with a glass when Ruth opposes to his sleeping with Janey. Roy is ultimately burned to death by Zack while preparing to set a trap for Sully.



Symbols and Symbolism

Garage door opener

A garage door opener is found hidden in Becka's old RAV by Raymer, and symbolizes the fact that she was having an affair before her death. Raymer spends much of the novel trying to figure out who Becka's lover was by using the remote on random people's garages. When he passes out and falls in Flatt's grave, Raymer loses the remote and takes it as a sign that he is not meant to find the lover. When Rub finds and returns the remote, Raymer takes it as a sign he is meant to see the search through.

Earthquake

The Old Mill sewer gas explosion causes an earthquake. Raymer infers that the earthquake is symbolic of either God's warning not to proceed, or that the search will only lead to unhappiness. He considers this because the earthquake occurs at the precise moment Raymer renews his vow to find Becka's lover. Raymer is ultimately not deterred by the earthquake, because a series of other signs –including the rediscovery of the garage door opener –compel him forward.

Wall collapse

The Old Mill Lofts apartment building's north wall collapse is symbolic either of God's warning to Roy, or nothing at all but a reason to sue people, according to Roy. The wall collapses on Roy as he is driving away from Hattie's having vowed revenge on Sully and Ruth for their opposition to him. While some consider this a warning from God for Roy to clean up his ways, Roy, irreligious and cruel, does not. He considers it a fluke and luck that now allows him to sue everyone involved with the wall.

Roy's ledger

Roy keeps a ledger to keep track of those he wishes to seek revenge against, while the ledger itself becomes symbolic of great danger. There are only a handful of names in the ledger, but at the top is Sully. Roy especially hates Sully for the mouthing off Sully gave Roy in defense of Ruth and her family. The ledger is burned to death along with Roy in the fire.

Dream of Becka

Raymer has an unnervingly realistic dream of Becka while sleeping on Charice's back porch, which he takes to be symbolic of either her request for forgiveness, or her blessing of the potential relationship with Charice. Raymer is shaken by the dream, and



spends the rest of the night and the most of the next day attempting to figure out just what the dream meant. He is never able to pin it down, reflecting his own uncertainty about his life in general.

Blue flame

A small blue flame appears on Zack's shed after it is struck by lightning, and which symbolizes nascent sexual intimacy to Ruth. Ruth, who still feels bad about the affair with Sully, has been trying to grow close with Zack again. She sees the small blue flame as representative of a small but returning sexual intimacy between the two.

Lightning striking Zack's shed

Lightning strikes Zack's shed during the big storm on Friday night, leading Zack to consider it a sign of violence to come to Ruth. Zack is proven to be correct when Roy savagely attacks Ruth only hours later that very morning. Zack reveals the lightning strike and its importance to Sully when Sully picks him up to drive him to the hospital.

Lightning striking Raymer

A small streak of lightning strikes Raymer on his way toward the station, and to Raymer symbolizes the unknown regarding Becka. Raymer cannot determine whether the lightning strike is a warning or blessing. This in turn continues to reflect Raymer's uncertainty about his life in general, but only urges him on in his quest to either determine the identity of Becka's lover, or to determine to let the past go.

Electricity

Electricity sparks up between Raymer and Charice when they kiss the first time, symbolizing a romantic spark between them, and the potential for an electric (good) future together. The electricity seems to be left over from Raymer being struck by lightning, which in turn could suggest God's approval of the unfolding relationship between Raymer and Charice. The electricity may also be seen to be God's approval regarding Raymer's forgiveness of Becka, Jerome, and Charice.

Fire

Fire is the method by which Roy threatens to kill Sully, by which Zack kills Roy, and which symbolizes God's justice. The method by which Roy dies cannot only therefore be seen as irony, but real divine justice: Roy is burned to death in fire which in turn represents judgement and Hell, the place for which Roy is certainly headed.



Settings

North Bath

North Bath is a town located in upstate New York, near the Great Lakes. It is the main setting for the novel. North Bath is a small, rural-suburban town which is home to Sully, Raymer, Ruth, Zack, Charice, and other characters in the novel. Solidly working and lower middle-class, North Bath is deeply conservative, deeply religious, warm, and welcoming. Administered under the mayoralty of Moynihan, and with police services overseen by Raymer, North Bath has its good elements (such as people like Raymer, Sully, and Rub), its character elements (such as Carl) and its bad elements (such as Roy). In terms of pride, decoration, and events, North Bath has been lifelong rivals with Schuyler Springs, though both cities are set to merge public services such as their police and fire departments.

Schuyler Springs

Schuyler Springs is a town located in upstate New York near the Great Lakes, and is a neighboring town to North Bath. Middle and upper-class, Schuyler Springs is a college town that is liberal and very wealthy. It is where Jerome lives, and the town serves as a lifelong rival to North Bath in terms of things like pride, decorating, and events. Recently, the two towns have begun collaborating, preparing to transition to a place where they will share public services.

Hilldale Cemetery

Hilldale Cemetery is the primary cemetery located in North Bath, and serves as an important setting in the novel. The cemetery has frequent problems from flooding and caskets floating to the surface, and is a mix of an old, traditional section with standing headstones, and a new, modern section with flat headstones. The novel begins in the cemetery with the burial of Judge Flatt, and is where Raymer passes out, loses, and later recovers the garage door opener. Raymer later visits Hilldale to visit Becka's grave, and to commune with her in Heaven. The cemetery thus serves as a place of endings and beginnings.

Hattie's

Hattie's is a diner located in downtown North Bath. It is run by Ruth, and rests beneath an apartment where Janey and Tina live. Sully is a regular at Hattie's, where he gets his coffee and many of his meals. It is at Hattie's that Sully mouths off to Roy in defense of Ruth and her family. It is at Hattie's that Roy later beats Ruth to within an inch of her life after sleeping with Janey.

The White Horse

The White Horse is a local North Bath bar and grill popular with locals and tourists on their way through to the lakes. It is frequented by Sully, Rub, and their friends. There, they drink beer, eat food, play poker, watch games on TV, and simply spend time with one another. As Sully learns that he may only have a year or two left to live, he does his best to make as many last calls as possible, wanting to spend as much time as possible in the company of friends. It is at the White Horse that Janey works as a cook, and where William Smith runs over Joe in a hit-and-run that leads to his capture.



Themes and Motifs

Life's Value

Life must be valued no matter how old someone is, argues Richard Russo in *Everybody's Fool*. Life, Russo contends, is a gift and must not be taken for granted no matter at what stage of life, or in what condition in life, one finds himself or herself. Russo's characters nearly all see life as meaningful. Sully best exemplifies this idea.

The opening scene contrasts the importance of life and death when Raymer attends a funeral while Rub watches on from afar. The juxtaposition of death to Rub's concerns about Sully's life is clear and distinct. Rub worries that Sully will be dead within a year or two and that his own life will be less without his best friend. Rub deeply values not only his own life, but Sully's life and wellbeing. He knows Sully could have life-saving surgery, but the risk of short-term death worries Sully.

Sully worries about the risk of dying on the operating table due to his age because he values life. Sully weighs the consequences in juxtaposition to his own love of life. He could have the risky surgery and probably die in the short-term or forego the surgery and definitely die in the long-term. Sully has come to a grudging acceptance of his situation and is determined to make the most of what time he has left. This includes everything from helping Chief Raymer to defending Ruth and her family to spending time with Rub and the guys at the White Horse.

However, Roy's savage attack on Ruth jolts Sully into reexamining of his settled stance on how his life will end. Sully goes on the hunt for Roy, which results in a cardiac attack which in turn requires the emergency surgery which installs a defibrillator and saves his life. Visiting with Ruth in the hospital, Sully himself recognizes just how much life means and should not be taken for granted, even at his old age. He muses that it would be nice to be young again, but that he wouldn't want it if didn't mean having his life. He would rather be old and alive.

Happenstance

Russo argues that life is unpredictable. Characters in the novel all have ideas about life and what they believe will or will not happen, but life surprises them. Some of these surprises are good and some of these are bad, but all influence the plot.

Raymer never expects the early death of Becka, never expects her to fall out of love with him, and never expects her to want to leave him for another man. Likewise, Raymer does not expect that Jerome is Becka's lover or that Charice would hide the secret of the affair. On this note, Raymer never expects that he would fall for a much younger black woman like Charice or that she would return his feelings. Likewise, Charice herself never expects to fall for someone like Raymer, but in the end is very glad that she does.



Sully, meanwhile, never expects to inherit the sudden wealth that he does or to learn he has a terminal heart condition that may kill him even if operated on. Sully never expects to learn that he has only a year or two left to live and never expects to nearly die. Rub, Sully's best friend, has always imagined living out his old age over the span of decades with Sully by his side. Rub's learning of Sully's condition is not only unexpected, but painful.

Ruth, on the other hand, never expected that her attempts to get close to Zack again following her affair with Sully would ever begin to work. She also never expects that Janey would hook up with Roy again after all the trouble Roy gave them in the past. Least of all, Ruth never expects to be beaten to within an inch of her life by an enraged Roy, wielding a heavy glass. Janey never expects her mother to be savagely beaten following a night of sex with Roy. Zack, meanwhile, never expects to formally make peace with Sully over the affair with Ruth a decade before, nor does he ever expect he will kill Roy in order to defend his family.

Omens

Signs are prevalent in the novel. What these signs mean is left up to the individual to determine. In other situations, the meanings of such signs are clear and are to be understood and acted upon.

When Raymer discovers a garage door opener hidden in Becka's old RAV, he knows it means that she was having an affair before her death for two reasons: first, the hidden opener did not belong to him; and second, Becka's packed suitcases were on the porch the day she died. Raymer spends much of the novel seeking out the person with whom Becka had an affair until he loses the opener. He takes this as a sign that he is meant to discontinue the search.

Upon Rub finding and returning the opener, Raymer takes it as a sign to reinitiate the search. Raymer receives a number of other signs and signals through the novel—from being struck by lightning to dreaming of Becka—which he alternately takes to mean forgiveness or a blessing for a relationship with Charice, but in the end, Raymer is doubtful. The uncertainty of so many unclear and mixed messages is itself a sign of the confusion in Raymer's own life.

Ruth and Zack are also quick to witness and determine the signs and symbols that they see like when lightning strikes Zack's shed. The lightning strike produces a small, blue flame, which Ruth is quick to interpret as the fire of sexual intimacy that has been reignited between her and Zack. Zack, on the other hand, takes a much more ominous view of lightning striking his shed. Zack sees the strike as an omen of violence to come for Ruth. Zack is proved correct when Roy beats Ruth.

To his detriment, Roy is the only character in the novel who does not take signs or symbols seriously. Following his decision to hurt Sully, a wall collapses on his car. While others might see this as God's warning against what Sully is planning, Roy sees it as a



reason to sue everyone connected with the wall. Roy becomes the victim in his own scheme to burn Sully to death. This result reflects the judgement of God and represents the place for which Roy is bound.

The Past's Effect on the Present

The past matters greatly. The past constantly plays an important role in the present in that it defines how the present has been achieved. For many in the novel, the past is primarily a negative, though heavily influential, entity.

When the novel begins, Raymer attends the funeral of Judge Flatt. The cemetery reminds him of the past, specifically his dead wife, Becka. This, in turn, leads Raymer to think about the affair she had before she died and her plans to leave him before her untimely death. Her death and betrayal still depress him thirteen months later. Raymer cannot get over her affair and becomes obsessed with finding the man with whom Becka cheated.

The past also matters greatly for Ruth. Ruth, who feels badly about the affair she had with Sully ten years before, has done all she can to reconnect with her husband, Zack. Ruth also struggles to help care for her daughter, Janey, and her granddaughter, Tina, who suffer from Janey's bad life choices. Ruth seeks to protect them from Roy, who was physically abusive, and against whom Janey filed a restraining order. Ignoring the past, Janey takes Roy to bed with her, which in turn leads to an argument with Ruth which results in Roy beating Ruth to within an inch of her life. Because Janey ignores the past, Roy savagely beats Ruth.

The recent past also bears heavily on the present. Carl Roebuck's decision to purchase the Old Mill to turn it into apartments leads to the gas explosion when work is being done on the basement. This, in turn, leads to the collapse of the north wall of the building which falls on Roy's car. Roy's own recent release from prison teaches him nothing. Rather than attempting to correct his behavior or taking the collapsed wall as a sign to clean up his life, Roy goes right back to his usual operations. He even beats Ruth and seeks to kill Sully.

Moving Forward

Eventually the past must be let go. Although the past should not be forgotten, it cannot be allowed to dominate one's present life in such a way as they are unable to move on. Acknowledging and learning from the past is one thing, but being unable to let the past go is something else.

Raymer has a serious difficulty letting the past go. Most particularly, he cannot move past the affair his late wife had and her death. Raymer was deeply in love with Becka, so to lose her twice over simultaneously –first in an affair and then in death –was traumatic for Raymer. For a year, he lived in anticipation of finding out with whom his wife had an affair. He becomes moody and depressed as a result and begins to



question his life and his purpose in it. Charice urges Raymer to move beyond the past, but Raymer cannot let things go.

Elsewhere, other characters do their best to move beyond the past. Sully and Ruth, ten years after their affair, have remained friends. While Sully no longer actively pursues Ruth, Ruth is in the process of repairing her marriage with Zack. She has learned from the past and wants to build on beyond it. Mayor Moynihan tries to move the cities of North Bath and Schuyler Springs beyond their rivalrous past by working out an agreement to share services and bring the cities closer together. Moynihan himself tries to move beyond his wife's mental instability, but is unable to do so. Despite his failures, Moynihan does not give up on Alice and chooses to keep helping her in spite of the past.

Ultimately, at the end of the novel, Raymer is finally able to let the past go. He learns that Jerome was the man with whom Becca was having an affair. Letting go also comes by way of accepting the past and forgiving those responsible, including Jerome for having the affair and Charice for not telling Raymer of the affair. Forgiving both of them allows Raymer to begin a relationship with Charice.

Styles

Point of View

Everybody's Fool is in the third-person omniscient narrative mode. This mode allows Russo to tell the novel in great depth, as the third-person relates the actions, thoughts, feelings, and motives of the characters of the novel as the novel moves from character to character. Each chapter deals primarily with one or two particular characters. The actions and thoughts of these characters are known only to the characters themselves, the reader, and the narrator. As such, the reader knows about things going on in the novel at all times, including when other characters do not. The third-person narrator also acts as a common unifying voice and thread between many different characters and subplots, drawing them altogether in a wider narrative as lives and events intersect. For example, Sully, dying of a heart condition, comes to help the chief of police dig up the grave of a recently deceased judge to find a garage door opener that Raymer is trying to use to discover the identity of his dead wife's former lover. Here, multiple characters and subplots cross, made possible by the third-person narrator.

Language and Meaning

Russo tells his novel Everybody's Fool in language that is simple, casual, and straightforward. Large words are not typically used and the narrator and characters typically say exactly what they mean. Even symbols and signs are explained in detail so that reader has a clear understanding of not only the symbols and signs themselves, but of which characters are interpreting them. This technique is done for at least two reasons. First, the novel is set in 2016 when common language was simple, casual, and straightforward. It is only natural for a novel with a contemporary setting (in 2016) to reflect aspects of contemporary culture (in 2016). Second, the novel is physically set in a small town that is working to lower-middle class. The simple and straightforward, casual language that characters use reflects the level of education and small town atmosphere of North Bath where people are primarily concerned with things like daily work, friends, and family. Contrastingly, Jerome, who lives in the wealthy, liberal town of Schuyler Springs, uses eloquent language with large words, reflective not only of the town in which he lives, but of his education as well.

Structure

Richard Russo divides his novel Everybody's Fool into thirty-three unnumbered, titled chapters. Each chapter bears a title that reflects the events that take place within the chapter. For example, the chapter "Dougie Reneges" involves Raymer going back on his vow to let the past stay in the past, while the chapter "Boogie" deals with Boogie Woogie fleeing the snake-infested apartment he has been watching. Most chapters deal primarily with one or two main characters, with the narrator primarily focused around the

thoughts, feelings, history, motivations, and actions of that particular character. For example, the chapter “The Two Rubs” deals primarily with the characters of Rub the person and Rub the dog, while the chapter “Words to Die By” recounts Raymer’s efforts to hunt down and apprehend William Smith. An exception is the final chapter of the novel “Cured” which examines the lives of several of the characters, including Sully, Moynihan, and Raymer.



Quotes

Things don't go backwards just because you want them to. If they did, we'd all be getting younger.

-- Imaginary Sully (Wishes)

Importance: While waiting to fill in Judge Flatt's grave, Rub Squeers has an imaginary conversation with his best friend, Sully, who happens to be elsewhere. Rub's mind wanders, and he finds himself wishing things could go back to the way they were, or that things could go backwards at all. These are the reflections of a man who does not like aging- and the imaginary response (though arguably Rub's own response to his own consideration) is that the reality is that things change and do not go back. One has to embrace the life one has.

Sully was old. He wasn't going to wander off. He was going to die. And the worst part was that when the day came it would fall on Rub to dig his best friend's grave.

-- Narrator (Wishes)

Importance: As Rub waits for the Flatt funeral to finish, he thinks about his best friend, Sully. It is revealed that Sully is dying, though he still has a little while left to live. This terrifies and hurts Rub deeply, especially knowing he will be the one to have to dig the grave of his own best friend. It is a tragic and terrible truth that Rub knows he will one day soon confront.

Two years, the VA cardiologist had given him. Probably closer to one.

-- Narrator (Karma)

Importance: Here, the reader learns that Sully is plagued by a serious heart condition. Because of his age, Sully risks immediate death with surgery. Without surgery, Sully will have between one and two years left to live. It is something which worries him, but which he strives to face as bravely as possible. He keeps the news mostly to himself, not wanting to trouble his son or his grandson.

Don't resign, is what I'm saying. If you do, you'll be sorry, is what I'm saying.

-- Jerome (Not Happy)

Importance: Jerome cautions Raymer not to resign his role as chief of police because not only is Raymer a good man and a good cop, he is also someone people look up to and voted for in the election. Although Raymer feels lost, his work as a police officer gives him routine and a reason to keep going. Jerome can see that Raymer might lose his way if he were to resign.

You are a fool. So am I. So's just about everybody we know, dude. I mean, look around. Who's not a damn fool most of the time?

-- Jerome (Not Happy)



Importance: As Raymer explains his unhappiness, he admits to feeling like a fool sometimes. Jerome believes this is irrelevant not only because everybody is a fool most of the time, but because Raymer is not a fool on his own. Everyone attempts to do well or to get ahead in life, but everyone comes up short sooner or later.

I'm thinking about moving." On, he thought. He was thinking about moving on.
-- Raymer (Sock Drawer)

Importance: Charice offers Raymer the chance to stay at her place while the Morrison Arms is checked for snakes. Raymer reluctantly accepts. During a conversation with old Mr. Hynes, Hynes encourages Raymer to romantically pursue the much younger, beautiful Charice. Raymer dismisses this, but then realizes he must not only move out of Morrison, but move on romantically and move on in life in general.

The possibility that such happiness won't and can't last, that its source is genetic foolishness, hasn't occurred to you yet, but it will.
-- Raymer (Embers)

Importance: When driving Raymer to Hilldale to pick up his car, Miller comments that Raymer looks sad. Raymer knows that Miller is very young, and thinks in his mind that Miller does not yet understand that happiness is not genetic. Instead, life has a way of making someone happy or unhappy that has nothing to do with the person himself. Raymer is, however, unhappy, but does not know what to do to become unhappy.

I'm so tired of being everybody's fool.
-- Raymer (Hill Comes to Dale)

Importance: Raymer begins having conversations in his mind with himself, where his mental self accuses his real self of being pathetic. Raymer reflects sadly on the events of the day and the past thirteen months. He feels as if he is a fool, not getting anywhere in life, and doing only what others set him up to do. He tells the voice in his head he is tired of being everybody's fool –and from here, the novel draws its title.

You're just getting good.
-- Charice (Words to Die By)

Importance: After Raymer stops William Smith, solving both the crime of the snakes and Joe's hit-and-run, Charice congratulates him by radio. She insists he is not off his game like he thinks. She goes on to tell Raymer he is just getting good, and so therefore cannot quit. Raymer is grateful, and moved by her compliment.

Charice is right. It's time to move on.
-- Raymer (Words to Die By)

Importance: After Raymer feels happy about solving the William Smith cases, he comes to think about Becka's affair. Becka, cultured and well-read, would be attracted to a similar kind of man –Peter Sullivan. Raymer realizes he no longer cares about the



past, and realizes Charice was right when she told him that it is time to move on. This begins a new era in Raymer's life, and gives him a new perspective on his own life.

Tuesday I've got to go down to the Albany VA for –a procedure.
-- Sully (Motion)

Importance: While at the White Horse with his friends, Sully makes a sudden decision to go down to Albany to have the needed surgery for his heart. It may kill him, but without the surgery, he will die anyways. Sully's decision is courageous, and also speaks to his desire to want to live, and demonstrates just how much he loves life.

You don't want to be young again? Me neither. Make do with being alive, I guess."
-- Sully (Cured)

Importance: After Sully is nearly killed by his heart, he is taken to the emergency room and given the defibrillator operation, which he survives. He visits Ruth while he is in the hospital while she is sleeping, and has a conversation with her. In addition to healing their injuries, he wonders if the hospital might make them young again. He decides he would rather be old and alive than young again, especially given the events of the past day.