

The Gap of Time Study Guide

The Gap of Time by Jeanette Winterson

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Plot Summary

NOTE: All citations in this Study Guide refer to the Kindle version of *The Gap of Time*, published October 6, 2015.

Jealousy and anger caused Leo to destroy his life and the lives of others in the novel *The Gap of Time* by Jeanette Winterson, a cover version of Shakespeare's play *The Winter's Tale*. Because Leo believed his wife, Mimi, and best friend, Xeno, were having an affair, he refused to believe the daughter to whom Mimi gave birth was his. The actions he took to get revenge on Mimi and Xeno changed Leo's life forever and left him wishing that he could turn back time. The novel ends on a happy note as Perdita was reunited with her mother and learned that Leo was her biological father.

The novel opens with Shep's description of how he found the infant Perdita in the BabyHatch at Santa Maria Hospital the same night that a Mexican man was beaten to death in a car jacking. Shep believed the two incidents were connected in some way. He decided to keep the baby because he believed that she was a gift from God. He named her Perdita, meaning "little lost one," because there was a piece of music left with her that bore that name as a title. Also with Perdita was an attaché case containing a half a million dollars and a diamond necklace that had belonged to Mimi.

In the next section of the novel the author goes back in time to describe how Leo believed that his wife, Mimi, and his best friend, Xeno, were having an affair. He had a webcam put in Mimi's bedroom hoping to catch them in the act. There was no sound on the camera feed so Leo interpreted what he saw as being sexual in nature even though there was no sex between Mimi and Xeno. That night, after Mimi sang a concert at the Roundhouse, Leo tried to kill Xeno by running him over with a car in the parking garage. Xeno managed to get away and left town. Mimi went into labor with the baby and Leo arrived home in time to lock her and her friend, Pauline, in the house so they could not call a doctor. Pauline finally managed to get a message out using a cell phone belonging to Mimi and Leo's son, Milo, that they needed an ambulance.

Because Leo was so determined that the baby girl that Mimi delivered was not his baby he hired his gardener, Tony, to take the baby to Xeno. Tony was the man whom Shep saw killed by the car jackers. Tony had left Perdita in the BabyHatch because he had seen the men following him and suspected they wanted to cause trouble. Meanwhile, Leo tried to sneak Milo out of the country. At the airport he was stopped by three policemen asking where his baby was. Milo was able to sneak away from his father during the confrontation. He was hit by a repair truck outside the airport terminal and was killed.

Years later, Leo tried to do good work to earn forgiveness for what he had done. Mimi and Xeno basically become recluses and Perdita was nearing her eighteenth birthday. She and her adoptive brother, Clo, prepared for Shep's seventieth birthday party. Perdita had invited Zel, her boyfriend, to the party. Xeno, who had been estranged from Zel, who was his son, learned Zel would be at the party and came as well. He initiated



questions in Perdita's mind about her past. Since she did not know who her father was, she worried that Xeno might have been her father. That would mean that she and Zel were brother and sister.

Perdita confronted Xeno and learned his side of the story. She also learned a DNA test had proven she was Leo's daughter, though Leo refused to believe it. Perdita also paid a visit to Leo using a fake name. It was not until Shep, Xeno and Clo went to find Perdita in London that Leo learned the girl with whom he had been working was really his daughter. Meanwhile, Pauline told Mimi that Perdita was alive. Perdita and her girl group would be singing at a benefit concert at the Roundhouse. Mimi arranged to sing at the concert as well. The song she sang was the one she wrote for Perdita.



The Original — One: Watery Star

Summary

In the prologue section “The Original” the author gives a synopsis of the original play *Winter’s Tale* by William Shakespeare.

In the section “Watery Star” Shep, the narrator for this part of the novel, describes a strange sight as he was on his way from the bar where he plays piano. It was hot and humid but suddenly began hailing and raining. His son was supposed to pick him up in the car but he had not come. Shep took the shortcut by the hospital and its BabyHatch, a way he did not like to go because they had built the hatch when his wife was in the hospital dying.

Shep’s son, Clo, found him. He got in the car. Up ahead they saw two men beating another. Clo honked his horn, trying to get them to stop. The men ran away but the man they were beating was dead. They hear sirens and drive away, pulling into the hospital to change the tire that was blown out when it was hit by fire from one of the men. Shep dug the bullet out of the tire and dropped it down a street drain. As he was doing so, he saw that the BabyHatch was lit up and thought the baby inside was somehow connected to the dead man.

Shep’s story switches to the present tense. He says he lives in New Bohemia with his son, Clo. He is in church. His pastor believes God does not punish people, that they do that for themselves. Shep punishes himself because he smothered his wife in her hospital bed. He did it because he could not stand to see her suffering any longer.

Back in the past, Shep had considered returning the baby to the BabyHatch the following day but found he could not do so. He returned home with her. On the television, witnesses to the death of Anthony Gonzales, the man that Shep and Clo saw killed, were being asked to come forward. Even though Shep’s son told him he should return the baby, Shep believed he had been given a life for the one he had taken. He and his son open the attaché case Shep found with the baby. It is full of money, diamonds, a diamond necklace and a piece of music labeled “Perdita.” He used the money to buy a bar called *The Fleece*. It had once been a mafia bar. Because Shep and Clo were black and the baby was white, she knew she was not Shep’s biological child.

Analysis

Author Jeanette Winterson includes at the beginning of her retelling of *The Winter’s Tale* a synopsis of the original play. This synopsis gives the reader an overview of the original play so that the reader can compare the cover story with the original. One of the first things that the reader will probably notice is that the names of the characters are basically the same in both the original play and the cover story. Often in the cover story these names are shortened or modernized in some way. For instance, the play’s



Shepherd becomes Shep while the Clown is Clo in the cover story. Instead of being shepherds, these men operate a bar. The play's name for the character Leontes is shortened to Leo for the modern version, a name that is much less unwieldy.

The overview is told in the present tense but the section "Watery Star" switches to the past tense as Shep discusses the strange night in which he saw a man murdered and rescued a baby from the BabyHatch outside a hospital. There is a short section of this first chapter that Shep narrates in the present tense. This scene is the one in which Shep is thinking about what his pastor has said at church about forgiveness. While the Overview is told by a third person narrator, Shep narrates the section "Watery Star" in this first person point of view.

Shep believes that he is earning forgiveness for himself by taking the baby. He feels guilty because he ended his wife's life. Although she was dying and some believe he did the best he could, Shep knows that he did not kill her to end her suffering. He killed her to end his own suffering. He believes he did "the wrong thing for the right reason" (8).

When he found the baby in the BabyHatch he believed it was a sign of forgiveness. "It's as though I've been given a life for the one I took. That feels like forgiveness to me" (12).

There are a few things to remember that will be important later in the novel. One of these things is Shep's suspicion that the death of Anthony Gonzales and the leaving of the baby girl in the BabyHatch are connected. Important symbols introduced in this section include the bullet that Shep pulled out of the tire of his car and threw away. The question of what happened to this bullet will be raised later in this novel. The BabyHatch is another important symbol. It was at first a symbol of despair when Shep saw the hatch being built when his wife was dying. It becomes a symbol of hope when Shep finds the baby and believes she is a sign of forgiveness.

The author uses a good deal of simile in her writing. For instance, when Shep describes the hail it is said to be "like throwing ice cubes into a fat fryer. It was like the weather was coming up from the street instead of down from the sky" (1-2). Shep also uses a simile to describe the baby. He says that she is "as light as a star" (5). Also in this section Shep describes how he "fell into a gap of time, where one time and another became the same time" (8-9) as he carried the baby down the street intending to take her back to the hospital.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way that Clo and Shep saw Anthony Gonzales being killed. Do you think they should have reported what they saw to the police at that time? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

What are your opinions about Shep's decision to keep the baby? Do you think he should have done as he did? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Compare and contrast the part of the cover story you have read so far with the synopsis of the original. How does the author stay true to Shakespeare's ideas? How is the cover different?

Vocabulary

balustrades, verifiably, reckless, delusional, anonymous



One: Spider in the Cup

Summary

In the section “Spider in the Cup,” Leo and his son Milo were watching planes take off from Leo’s London office. Leo had gone through a rough patch when he had been arrested for common assault and then had become an alcoholic after he was fired from his job. In a session with a counselor, he had asked if one human being could ever really know another one. Leo thought he could know another human by installing a surveillance system.

Leo asked Cameron, who was in charge of security and transport at Leo’s company Sicilia, to install a surveillance system in his wife’s bedroom. When Cameron questioned Leo’s motives, Leo told him that he wanted a divorce. He believed his wife was pregnant with Xeno’s baby even though Xeno was Leo’s best friend.

Leo had known Xeno since they were in boarding school together. They both had fathers who had custody of them but were not interested in raising them and mothers who were no good. They invented their own worlds where they lived. They even had a homosexual relationship with one another.

One day when the other boys were gone home for the weekend, Leo and Xeno were riding bikes near the coast. Leo challenged Xeno to see who could ride his bike closest to the ledge of the cliffs. Xeno’s bike went off the cliff and he was badly injured. Leo realized he had almost killed his best friend.

After Xeno graduated from high school he bought a camper van with insurance money he got from his accident settlement and drove from festival to festival. Leo did well at the bank. When they saw each other three years later Leo pushed Xeno to stay at his apartment. He learned that Xeno was building video games aimed at women, games that would help build relationships.

Back in his office, Pauline interrupted Leo’s thoughts telling him that Xeno was there to see him. She sent Xeno to Leo’s office even though he told Pauline he was busy. Xeno told Leo he was going back to New Bohemia because his son, Zel, was not speaking in class again. Because Leo was angry with Xeno for leaving, Xeno tried to make it up to him by showing him the changes he had made to the video game. Xeno explained it would be about a city occupied by both Dark Angels and by Mortals. These Mortals were referred to as the resistance. The goal of the game was to find the most important thing in the world, which Xeno thought was a baby. The game started in Mimi’s courtyard. The courtyard was full of feathers. Xeno explained that in order for the angels to reproduce, the feathers had to land on water or in fire. Xeno had named his game The Gap of Time.



When Mimi came into Leo's office and joined Xeno, Leo noticed how familiar they were with each other. Leo encouraged Mimi to make Xeno stay longer. Xeno agreed to stay when she asked. When Mimi and Xeno left, Leo looked at Mimi's Wikipedia page. It listed Mimi's accomplishments as a singer as well as a description of her song Dark Angel, which was said to have been inspired by her "stormy relationship" (39) with Leo. Leo remembered the night that he had first heard Mimi sing. That was the place and time at which he had been most happy. He also remembered the time when Xeno was hurt, the accident that separated them. He wanted to be like Superman and be able to reverse time so he could change the past or remain in his most happy time.

Leo remembered that he had been the one who had introduced Mimi to Xeno. Xeno was his best man at his wedding. He remembered Xeno warning Leo not to push Mimi too close to the edge. Although Leo was disturbed by the comment, Xeno acted as if he had not meant anything by it. He had kissed Leo on the mouth after he made the comment.

Analysis

For this section of the novel the narration changes to a third person narrator. The narrator tells this chapter of the story from Leo's point of view. The story seems to have gone back in time from the opening part told from Shep's point of view.

Leo, like Shep, has an event in his life for which he needs forgiveness. He prodded his friend, Xeno, into biking too close to a cliff. Xeno fell from the cliff and was badly injured. Even though Xeno never really said that he blamed Leo for the accident there is a sense that the accident did drive a wedge in their friendship. Leo grieves because he is not able to reverse time and keep Xeno from falling. "Xeno had fallen. Would always have fallen. No matter how close they were, tried to be, had been, from now on fifty feet separated them" (42). It is only when Leo marries Mimi that Xeno makes a comment to Leo about the accident. He warns Leo: "don't push her too close to the edge" (43). This is a veiled suggestion that Leo should not treat Mimi like he treated Xeno.

Also driving a wedge in the friendship between Xeno and Leo is Leo's belief that his wife is cheating on him with Xeno. Remember that when Xeno first visited Leo, it was Leo who pressured Xeno to stay with him and then went into business on the new game that Xeno was putting together. Had he allowed Xeno to leave, Xeno and Mimi might possibly have never met or become so close. Leo sees how close Xeno and Mimi have gotten and is jealous. He believes their easy intimacy with each other is because they are having an affair. Leo does not take into consideration that Xeno is homosexual and is probably not interested in Mimi except as a friend.

The Dark Angel is mentioned in this section and is an image that will recur throughout the novel. According to both Mimi's Wikipedia page and to Xeno, who includes the image of the Dark Angel in his game, this Dark Angel is inspired by the French poet Gérard de Nerval. This man had a dream about an angel who "fell from heaven and was trapped in a narrow courtyard" (39). Notice that in Xeno's game, the action starts in



Mimi's courtyard. This beginning of the game is similar to Nerval's dream of the angel trapped in the narrow courtyard. Some of the characters in the game are also referred to as Dark Angels.

Notice also that the goal of the game is to find something that is hidden. Xeno admits that even though he has created the game, he is not sure what the thing is that the player is looking for. He suspects it is a baby. The idea of a lost baby reminds the reader of the baby that Shep found in the BabyHatch in the opening section. The reader must wonder if there is a connection between the baby in the BabyHatch, the baby the player of the game is looking for and the baby that Mimi is carrying.

Also important in this section is the reference to the spider web. Leo tells Cameron that the surveillance system he wants him to put in Mimi's room is called a web cam because: "It's a spider's web, Cameron, for catching insects" (21). Leo believes he will be able to use the web cam to catch Xeno and Mimi having an affair. Significant also is that Leo does not believe the baby that Mimi is carrying is his baby.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the connection between Mimi's song and Xeno's game.

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Mimi and Xeno are having an affair? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way that Xeno's accident affects the relationship between him and Leo.

Vocabulary

arterial, provocation, leveraged, pixelated, intuition, inseparable, methodical, vulnerability, alliances, existentially, compliant, vertiginous, dystopian, feints, imposter, pretentious

One: Bawdy Planet – Is This Nothing?

Summary

In the section “Bawdy Planet,” Leo watched Mimi and Xeno using the surveillance system that Cameron installed. There was no sound so Leo made up what he believed was happening based on their actions. Each time they stepped away from the camera range Leo believed they were having sex. Leo even imagined there was an orgy when Pauline entered the room.

In the section “Is This Nothing,” Mimi, Xeno and Pauline went to the Roundhouse. On their way there, they discussed Leo’s strange attitude. Pauline believed Leo was just an Alpha male, which made him naturally grouchy and angry. Mimi thought he was angry because he did not want another baby. She told her friends she thought Leo no longer loved her and was having an affair. While Mimi was doing her sound checks, Pauline expressed her concern to Xeno that there was something wrong with Leo. She asked Xeno why he was really leaving and tried to encourage him to stay longer because Mimi needed a friend.

Meanwhile, Leo thought back to the time when he had sent Xeno to get Mimi after Leo and Mimi had an argument. He remembered it was then that Xeno had gotten Mimi involved in working on the game. It was Mimi who told him about the poet Gérard de Nerval and his dream about the angel who had fallen into the courtyard. In order to keep from injuring himself the angel had folded his wings. He was trapped in the small courtyard into which he had fallen. In order to get out of the courtyard the angel would have to open his wings. When he opened his wings, he would destroy the buildings. He would die if he did not open his wings.

Throughout Xeno’s visit to Mimi as he encouraged her to return to Leo, they talked about love and each human’s ability to fall. Xeno told Mimi that he would be going to America to work in the gaming industry. As he talked to Mimi, Xeno realized that he did love Mimi. They walked back to her apartment holding hands. Inside, she leaned against him as they embraced. After just a minute, Xeno walked back down the staircase quickly.

Back on the night of the concert, Leo arrived wearing a t-shirt that read “I AM THE ONE PER CENT” (63). He insisted on wearing the shirt even though Pauline told him to take it off. He sat in the shadows of the balcony listening to Mimi sing. He got upset when a man offered \$5,000 if she would sing an encore. When he looked over the railing, he saw Mimi wink at Xeno and fell out of his chair. When Leo saw Mimi after the concert, she was angry with him. She told him that she was going home.



Analysis

The reader gets more background on the relationship between Xeno and Mimi. It was Mimi who gave Xeno the idea to use the Dark Angel opening for the game that he was creating. This explains why Mimi also has a song based on this Dark Angel. She was the one who shared the contents of Nerval's dream with Xeno. This section is significant because the reader learns that although Xeno claims to be gay, he does admit that he fell in love with Mimi while he was trying to woo her for Leo. Instead of acting on his feelings, he left Mimi.

Notice in this section the use of capitalization and italics to illustrate feelings and emotions. For instance, in the section "Bawdy Planet" Leo's responses to what he is seeing through the webcam are presented in all caps, a way of typing that represents yelling. Much of what Leo is yelling is made of curse words. He interprets what he sees based on his suspicion that Mimi is cheating on him. It is clear to the reader that Xeno is helping Mimi pick out a dress for her performance, Leo, however, interprets their actions as being purely sexual. Italics is used to indicate places where Leo is imagining what might happen next if Xeno and Mimi were having an affair or if there was a threesome going on between the two of them and Pauline. Note also the section in the section "Is This Nothing?" where Paulette and Xeno begin talking at the same time in an attempt to comfort Mimi. In one paragraph, the words run together with no spaces in order to demonstrate the way their words blend.

In this section of the novel, Xeno again has a thought that indicates how deeply he was emotionally hurt by Leo unintentionally causing him to fall off the cliff. When Mimi explains to Pauline that she believes that Leo would avoid getting too close to her by having an affair, in this way pushing her away, Xeno has his own opinion. "Or he would just push you... thought Xeno, but he didn't say it" (52). Xeno is clearly thinking about the time that Leo pushed him to ride too close to the edge of the cliff. In Xeno's opinion, Leo is capable of unintentionally hurting Mimi, just like he hurt Xeno.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss what Leo sees on the webcam and how he interprets it. How are his interpretations of Mimi, Xeno and Pauline's actions colored by his preconceived notions of what he will find them doing? Based on just their actions, do you see anything sexual in their actions?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Xeno chose to walk away from his love for Mimi? What does this say about him? What does it say about Leo's accusations that Xeno and Mimi are cheating on him now?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way the author presents the scene in which Leo spies on Xeno and his wife. How does she use capitalization and italics to convey emotions and add to the tone of the section?

Vocabulary

pantomime, orgy, inscrutable, irascible, introverted, disconcerting



One: Goads Thorns Nettles Tails of Wasps

Summary

In the section “Goads Thorns Nettles Tails of Wasps,” Leo followed Xeno into the underground car lot where their cars were parked. Leo went to his Jeep, a former Army vehicle. He revved the engine and smashed into the car being driven by Xeno. Just as Xeno realized it was Leo who hit him, Leo reversed and was preparing to jam into Xeno again. Xeno thought that Leo must be on drugs. Even as he tried to head for the exit of the lot, Xeno could hear Leo coming from the other direction. Xeno crashed into the wall of the parking garage to keep from colliding head on with Leo. Xeno took off on foot trying to get away from Leo, and was finally able to climb a barricade to escape from him.

Xeno called Cameron asking him to get his laptop and bag from Leo’s house and meet him at Pauline’s. At Mimi’s house Cameron had just gathered Xeno’s things when Leo pulled up. Cameron had changed the gate code so that Leo had to go to Cameron’s house to get an override key giving Cameron a chance to get away with Xeno’s things.

At Pauline’s house, Xeno instructed Cameron to get the remains of Mimi’s car from the garage. Meanwhile, Leo was angry when he arrived at home to find that Xeno’s things were gone. Back at the parking garage, while Cameron, Pauline and Xeno were cleaning up Mimi’s car, Cameron told Xeno the Leo was probably trying to kill him because he thought Xeno was having an affair with Mimi.

When Leo went into the house, Mimi was asleep. He thought about how much he loved her before he woke her up. He told her that he suspected she had slept with Xeno. She was shocked by the accusation, but Leo thought she was surprised because he had found out about the affair. He tried to have sex with her, but she did not respond the way he wanted her to do. When he tried to kiss her, she bit him and he slapped her. Pauline arrived and rang the bell. At the front door, Leo told Pauline they were okay but there was a crash upstairs and Pauline knew he was lying. Upstairs, Pauline saw that Mimi’s water had broken. She ordered Leo to get towels and water, and to call for the doctor. The baby came before the doctor could arrive.

Pauline told Leo he had a daughter. She assumed he had called the doctor and asked how long it would be before the doctor came. Leo said that Xeno could call the doctor since it was his baby. Pauline tried to call but the phones were not working. Leo also locked the front door so she could not leave to call for help. In the bedroom, Leo had mixed feelings as he watched Mimi with the baby. She was struggling and told him she thought she was bleeding. Mimi lay on the floor as Leo told her they should call Xeno. He kicked Mimi in the back.



Meanwhile, Pauline used Milo's cell phone to get in touch with Cameron. She asked him to get an ambulance to Leo's as soon as he could. Leo did unlock the door when the ambulance came. Leo showed Cameron what he thought was evidence of the affair between Mimi and Xeno on the webcam tape. After watching the footage, Cameron told Leo that Mimi should divorce him.

Later that night Leo lay down with Milo on the couch. Milo had been watching the 1978 version of Superman. Leo thought about the scene where Superman rewound time so that Lois Lane did not die. He wanted time to reverse to the point before everything had happened with Mimi and Xeno. Even though he wanted to do so, Leo knew that he could not reverse time.

Analysis

A climax comes in this section of the novel as Leo treats his friends and his wife in ways that seem to be unforgivable. His belief that Xeno and Mimi have had an affair make him so angry that he tries to kill Xeno. The reader understands how hurt this must make Xeno since he has denied his own feelings for Mimi because he did not want to hurt his friend. Now he is being punished, the focus of a murder attempt, yet he had done nothing but be loyal to his friend.

In the same respect, Mimi also has been loyal to her husband. She learns that her husband has turned against her in the time that she most needs him. She is giving birth to his baby but he refuses to call a doctor or allow Pauline to contact medical personnel for help. Not only does Leo not help Mimi, he is actually abusive to her as he hits her and kicks her.

Even as Leo's anger drives him to be cruel to Mimi, he thinks about how much he loves her. Even though he claims to himself that he loves Mimi, he is unable to believe that she has really been faithful to him. He is also not able to forgive her for the crime he believes she has committed.

It appears that Xeno does care for Mimi more than Leo does because he does not seek revenge against Leo even though he has good reason to do so. Pauline tells Xeno that he needs to call the police about Leo's attempt to kill him. She also wants him to get medical attention for his injuries. Because Xeno does not want Leo's murder attempt to mar Mimi's reputation or cause rumors to be spread about her, he chooses not press charges against Leo.

In this section and throughout the book, the author uses the images of Superman and his ability to reverse time. "There's Superman beating the speed of light — turning all his love into speed and light — and forcing time to defeat itself" (82). The particular image that the author uses is the one of Superman reversing time so that he can save the love of his life. Although both Leo and Milo love this scene in the movie, Leo realizes that he is unable to reverse time and return to a place where he has not hurt those who loved him most.



Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that Xeno does not want to involve the police in Leo's attempt to kill him?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Leo is cruel to Mimi even as he thinks about how much he loves her? What makes him so certain that Mimi and Xeno are cheating on him?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way the author incorporates the images of Superman and his ability to reverse time. Is there any way for Leo to undo the damage he has done in this section of the novel?

Vocabulary

queuing, shunted, vaulted, melodramatic, gaunt



One: My Life Stands in the Level of Your Dreams – Kites Raves Wolves Bears

Summary

In the section “My Life Stands in the Level of Your Dreams,” Mimi lay in her hospital bed believing that if she moved she would topple buildings. She was sleepy from pain medicine but wondered how she had fallen and why she was alone. When Mimi asked her nurse if she believed in angels, the nurse pointed out a church that could be seen from the window with a stone compass on top. There was an angel on each of the compass points. The nurse told her that the angels saw everything and that whatever was lost would be found.

In the section “Feathers for Each Wind,” Leo talked Tony Gonzales, his gardener, into taking Perdita to Xeno. Leo told him that Xeno would be expecting the baby and that he would pay Tony 50,000 pounds for doing the job. Tony was the gardener for Leo and also did work for Pauline. Tony and Pauline liked one another. It made Tony uneasy when Leo asked him not to say anything to anyone about what he was doing, not even Pauline because Tony trusted Pauline and her opinion.

Leo had not seen Mimi for three months. Pauline wanted him to take a DNA test so he could know for sure that Perdita was his baby. Pauline asked Leo to come to her house and talk to Mimi. Milo was excited when he first learned his father was going to talk to Mimi, his mother. Inside the house, Mimi gave Leo a letter. She said she had realized she could not talk to him, even after she told Pauline she would try. When Milo came back downstairs and felt the tension between his parents, he knew what was happening and left the room. Leo told Mimi he wanted custody of Milo. She left the room.

Leo read the letter. In it Mimi indicated she had once felt safe with Leo but she had left because she no longer felt safe with him. She also wondered that he would think that she would use Xeno in order to end their marriage. As Leo was standing in Pauline’s house after she read the letter she saw papers where Mimi was writing a song. The top was labeled Perdita. Leo took the papers.

Later, Pauline took the baby to Leo’s house. She talked to Tony first and he invited her to a movie. She agreed to go with him. At the house, Pauline asked Leo again to take a DNA test and set his relationship with Mimi, Xeno and the baby right. He agreed to meet her at her house the following day to take the test.

In the section “Strangely in Some Place,” Tony and Pauline went to the movie together. They arranged to go walking in Kew Gardens the following day. When Tony got home Leo had left a message on his answering machine asking Tony to meet him at noon the following day.



When Leo arrived at Pauline's house the following day she asked him to watch Perdita for 30 minutes. As soon as Pauline was gone, Leo took the baby and took her to Tony at the airport. Meanwhile, Mimi and Pauline arrived at Pauline's house and discovered that Leo had taken the baby. Pauline discovered she had a message on her answering machine that Tony could not go with her to Kew Gardens because he had to go to the airport. Leo had also gotten Milo and taken him to the airport where he had booked a flight to Berlin. Mimi had contacted airport security to warn them that Leo was trying to take Perdita out of the country.

At the airport, Leo was surrounded by three policemen while he stood in line. They wanted to know what he had done with the baby. Because no one was paying attention to Milo, he backed away from the angry men. He pretended to be part of another family to get through security. He planned to find Tony.

In the section "Kites Ravens Wolves Bears," Tony got in the BMW that Leo had rented for him. He was excited because this was the first time he had been out of England. He got the money from the bank, but did not like one of the young men who worked there because he seemed shifty. Back in the car he worried about Perdita and her crying. He called Xeno on the number Leo had given him but the number was disconnected. Leo did not answer his call. He drove to what he believed was Xeno's house. A Spanish woman told Tony that Xeno was gone to America and would not be back for ten days. He decided to take the baby to the hospital and try to get more supplies for her.

As Tony was driving away from Xeno's house, he noticed a car parked across the street. Instead of going to the hospital first, Tony checked in at his hotel. He bathed Perdita and they fell asleep together. Tony woke to a man coming into his room. When Tony turned on the light, the man left. He sent a text to Leo and took Perdita to the hospital, deciding at the last minute to take the case with the money inside with him.

On the way to the hospital, Tony noticed the car that had been outside Xeno's house was following him. At the hospital the baby was checked out and deemed to be in fine health. Tony was given extra supplies. He was headed back to the hotel when he saw two men near his BMW. He tried to exit the hospital through a different door to take a cab back to the hotel but it began raining. He put Perdita into the BabyHatch so she could stay dry. He propped the lid just enough that he could get it open again. He put the case containing the money inside, deciding he would tell the men that the money was in his hotel. He would go back and get Perdita and then they would go to the airport.

Tony tried to drive away but the men shot out one of his tires, causing him to crash. The men beat him and searched his car. Someone took his hand. He heard a suggestion that they should wait for the cops but another voice said that Tony was dead.



Analysis

This section of the novel deals with the fall out from Leo's crazy actions in the previous section. Mimi is still stunned that Leo believes she is cheating on him. In a letter that she writes to him, Mimi stresses how little Leo must know of her and of Xeno to believe that they would cheat on him with each other. "I would not use Xeno to end our marriage. If I no longer loved you I would leave you. Do you not know that about me? ... Do you not know that about him?" (92). She accuses Leo of being the type of person who would cheat on her with her best friend. This is the only explanation she can find to explain why he would think she would cheat on him in that way.

Images of angels appear frequently in this section. Each of the angels has a different meaning and different impact. Mimi compares herself to the Fallen Angel. She does not know what has happened to cause her to become trapped in the situation she is in but she does know that if she does anything to try to redeem herself from the lies Leo believes, she will end up destroying everything around her. In this sense, the angel is a helpless creature, unable to save itself without hurting others.

The nurse whom Mimi asks about angels provides a contrasting role of angels. This woman tells Mimi that angels are creatures who help humans to find their way, and who return what is lost. The woman uses the spire of a chapel, on which a compass is located to prove this point to Mimi. Each point on this compass has an angel located on it, allowing the angels to look in all four directions. Remember also the nurse's promise to Mimi that everything that is lost will be found. This will be important later in the novel.

There is a point in the novel in the middle of the section "Strangely in Some Place" that the reader gets the idea that Leo may actually be thinking of doing the right thing. There has been fighting in his mind between his belief that Perdita is not his, his love for Mimi and his desire to undo what has been done. It is after Pauline tells Leo "there is still a chance to do right" (95) that Leo realizes what he has to do. He decides that the "emptiness of the house that had seemed hateful to him now seemed like a space to create something new. What had happened could unhappen" (97). The reader gets the idea that Leo may be considering making things right with Mimi and Xeno. This idea is strengthened by the fact that Leo has finally agreed to take the DNA test. The reader is disappointed, however, when in the next scene, Leo steals Perdita. It is his belief that he can make things unhappen by taking the baby away.

In addition to ruining his own relationships with Mimi and Xeno, he also destroys a budding relationship between Tony and Pauline when he sends Tony to take Perdita to Xeno. Both Tony and Pauline had dreamed of having a relationship and family but had never found the right person. They had just begun dating when Tony was killed by the car jackers. This helps the reader understand why it was significant that Tony called out Pauline's name as he was dying.

Notice the literary techniques that the author uses in this section of the novel. First, she alludes to the novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne when she includes Pauline's suggestion that Leo wants Mimi's humiliation "to hang it round her neck with a



giant letter A for Adulterer written on it?” (89). In the novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester had to wear a large red letter A sew to the bosom of all of her dresses to let everyone know her baby was the result of an adulterous relationship.

Also is significant literary technique is the way Milo is represented in a simile. “Milo stood between them like a lighthouse between the rocks and the shipwreck” (90). Milo is the one person who should connect Mimi and Leo. He is their son. Their love for him should have the ability to keep them from completely destroying the other yet they choose to ignore him.

The author additionally uses an oxymoron as she describes what happened after Leo took Perdita. “And then everything happened in slow motion and too fast” (99). It is impossible for things to happen both in slow motion and too fast; it is a contradiction. Notice also the finality and weight of the author’s sentence “Then it happened.” (100) just after the policemen began talking to Leo. Although there is confusion, there is nothing serious enough that seems fit in with the sentence. The reader wonders what “it” was that happened.

It is also during this section of the novel that the events catch up with the night Shep describes in the section “Watery Star.” Tony did notice something peculiar about one of the men who helped him while he was at the bank getting the cash to give to Xeno. “One of the younger men on the team seemed watchful and shifty. He wrote down the address. Said he’d look it up. Tony didn’t like him” (103). Tony later noticed a car following him and put Perdita in the BabyHatch in order to keep her safe while he confronted the men. Shep was right in his suspicion that Tony’s death and Perdita’s abandonment were related.

Discussion Question 1

Knowing that Leo did not believe Perdita was his, do you think Pauline made a wise decision when she asked Leo to watch the baby alone? What do you think her motivation might have been?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the weighted way in which the author leads up to Leo’s encounter with the police at the airport. Does what follows meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Does it surprise you that Xeno is not at home to take the baby from Tony? Do you think Tony was right in staying until Xeno got back home?

Vocabulary

opiate, deftly, sentimental, psychoanalysis, studiously, anorak



Interval - Two: Traffic

Summary

The “Interval” discusses separated twins and pairs that cannot stay together. These separated pairs are compared to the planets that are so far apart, yet they still hold control over each other. The moon orbits the Earth as though the moon is looking for something that it lost.

In the section “Traffic,” Clo and Perdita were preparing for Shep’s seventieth birthday party. Perdita ordered Clo to buy Shep a birthday gift. He stopped on the road when he saw a DeLorean with its upswing doors open. Autolycus was working on the car. Clo walked up and asked if it was the car from the movie “Back to the Future.” Autolycus was frustrated and claimed the man who sold him the car had cheated him.

Meanwhile, the narrator recalls how Shep had worked hard to build the bar, called the Fleece, into a success. When Perdita was still a baby he had worked with her strapped to his back because he did not want her to be put down again. He taught her how to play piano and how to sing. On the day of his seventieth birthday, he gave her the leather pouch from her mother when she went to wish him a happy birthday. He poured the diamonds from the pouch out into her hands. She told him she would wear the necklace at his party later. She asked Shep about how her mother died but he told her that he did not know. Even though he promised that he had told her everything he knew about her, he had not told her about the BabyHatch. He had told her only that her mother had died and that he had adopted her.

Back with Clo and Autolycus, Clo took Autolycus back to his business in his Chevy truck. They discussed how Western civilization might be different if there had been roundabout instead of cross roads. The story of Oedipus is also a topic of discussion because Oedipus’ incident got its start at a crossroads.

They arrived at Autos Like Us and Autolycus introduced Clo to Zel, his assistant. Autolycus said that Zel read all the time. He went on to tell Clo that a Jeep on his lot belonged to Ernest Hemmingway. Autolycus explained Hemmingway had driven the Jeep while looking for the bookstore Shakespeare and Company. Because Clo has never read Hemmingway, Autolycus gives him a copy of the book *The Sun Also Rises*. Clo said he would give the book to his sister, but Autolycus suggested he keep it, telling him he would thank him for it one day.

Autolycus directed Clo to a car he claimed belonged to Marilyn Monroe and then turned to Zel, telling him that Clo was going to buy the DeLorean. Zel reminded Autolycus he could not help because he had to leave early because he had a date. Autolycus thought Zel was leaving early because his father was in town. He encouraged the boy to make things right with his father.



When Clo finished looking at the cars, Autolycus told him he should buy the DeLorean for his father as a birthday gift. Autolycus promised to sell Clo the car for half price and have it running in time for the birthday party. He tried to persuade Clo by telling him he would be buying the gift of time.

Analysis

In this interval between the first and second parts, there is an analogy drawn between the division of the planets and the separation of Mimi from her babies. The planets are far apart, just like Mimi and Perdita, yet their lives are still connected. Mimi is compared to moon, which circles the Earth as if it is looking for something. The reader understands that Mimi must be looking for and mourning her lost baby.

Notice that the “Interval” is told in the present tense. It is as if a character has stepped onto the stage to speak directly to the audience. In this case, it is the narrator who speaks directly to reader. In the second part of the book, the tense returns to the past tense even though the time setting of this part of the book is nearly 18 years later than first part of the novel.

After the destruction and heartbreak of the first part of the novel, the second part of the novel has a festive tone as the characters prepare for Shep’s seventieth birthday. The characters Clo and Autolycus provide comic relief as they try to discuss Greek mythology. The author has fun with the name Autolycus as she has him running a business called “Autos like us,” almost a homonym of the car dealer’s name. Autolycus is described as a “dealer. A wheeler-dealer. A dealer in wheels. A soapbox salesman with a silver tongue. Autolycus. Part Budapest, part New Jersey. Chutzpah of Old Europe meets chutzpahdick of the New World. Autolycus: ponytail, goatee beard, cowboy boots, string tie. Part crook, part sage” (117). Clo, meanwhile, is Perdita’s dedicated but not very intelligent older brother. Even he admits to his lack of brainpower as he talks to Perdita about her past. In the play, Clo is actually Clown, the son of the Shepherd who adopts Perdita.

One important symbol introduced in this section is the DeLorean. Clo recognizes it because it is this type of car that is used in the movie *Back to the Future* to make a time machine. The car is connected with time travel as Autolycus tells Clo that he would basically be buying his father the gift of time. It is almost foreshadowing of the trip back in time that the family will soon be taking because Xeno will tip off Perdita that there are pieces of her past that her father has not told her. Through this section the author connects the idea of driving with time. One quote in particular illustrates this idea. “The past was a long way away. Nearly eighteen years’ drive” (122).

There are two other items of significance that surfaces in this section. First, Shep gives Perdita the diamond necklace that once belonged to Mimi. She promises to wear it the night of his party. Second, Autolycus gives Clo a copy of the book *The Sun Also Rises*. He tells Clo he has second sight and believes that Clo will one day thank him for the gift.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the interaction between Clo and Autolycus.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the use of the DeLorean as a symbol of time in this section of the novel.

Discussion Question 3

How does the author use the “Interval” to connect parts one and two of the novel?

Vocabulary

autistic, obliquity, ingots, amiable, cormorants, calamity, resonance, vocation



Two: The Day of Celebration

Summary

In the section “The Day of Celebration” the band The Separations, of which Perdita was a member, were getting ready to perform. The other members were Holly, Polly and Molly, Chinese triplets. They were BabyHatch kids. Holly, Polly and Molly teased Perdita because she was nervous about her date that night. Perdita and Zel were both nervous and excited when they greeted each other that evening. Clo recognized Zel as being the boy who had worked with Autolycus at the car museum.

Holly, Polly and Molly were sitting with Clo. Holly suggested they answer a 36-question game called The Experimental Generation of Interpersonal Closeness (138). These questions were supposed to make people fall in love with each other. One of the questions asked what the person being questioned wished they could share with another person. Both Zel and Perdita answered that they wished they could share a book with another person. Perdita said that for her that book would be the one she was currently reading, *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. Zel said that he had never read *Walden* because it reminded him too much of his father but that he liked autobiographies.

As Shep watched Perdita make her way to the stage when he asked her to sing a song for him for his birthday, he wondered how his life might have been different if he had made a different decision the day he saw Perdita in the BabyHatch. He also wondered how Perdita’s life might have been different.

Onstage, Perdita led the crowd in singing Happy Birthday. As they sang, they heard what sounded like thunder. Autolycus drove the DeLorean through the delivery doors of the bar. Clo wondered when he had told Autolycus that he would buy the car. Autolycus kidded with Clo, and then told him that he would trade Clo’s Chevy for the DeLorean. Autolycus bragged about the car and encouraged Shep to sit inside it as it was a car for tall people. Shep tried to start the car but nothing happened. Zel came running to fix it. Autolycus was surprised to see him, but Zel reminded Autolycus he had told him he had a date. He did not want Autolycus to ruin it for him. Shep was angry and asked how much Clo had paid for the car. When the car did finally start, Shep asked if Zel came with the car. It was at this point that Autolycus told Shep that Zel was dating Perdita.

After the commotion about the car died down, Perdita approached Zel. He was standing alone by the fence feeling isolated and out of place. He was angry but she thought the ruckus was funny. She asked him to dance with her. When Holly saw the two on the dance floor she began the song “How Sweet it Is.” While they were dancing, Perdita asked Zel about his parents. He told her that his parents had never lived together. They had an arrangement because his father wanted a son, but he was gay. Although his father had been a part of his life up until the time he was eight, his father had some sort of a breakdown and the two did not see each other much after that even though his



father did pay his expenses. Zel thought he was a vanity project. Later, Zel read Perdita's palm. He noticed the breaks in her lifeline. She explained that she was adopted. They briefly discussed their birth parents and then Perdita kissed Zel.

Autolycus interrupted a card game and joined the discussion about free will. He believed in free will in theory. As they were playing, a stranger spoke from behind Zel and Zel's face froze. It was his father. Autolycus had told him that Zel would be at the party. Xeno introduced himself to Perdita and invited her to dance with him. Zel was angry and surprised. When Autolycus commented that family life was always a surprise, Zel told him that Xeno was not his family.

The crowd watched as Perdita and Xeno danced together. Zel was on the outside, as he felt he always was. They went to the bar and Xeno got a drink. He talked about the way the bar used to be before Perdita's family owned it and hinted that it had a different reputation. He seemed wistful but told Perdita he was not searching for lost youth or Leo. When she asked who Leo was he told her he was a lion that Xeno once knew.

When they went back to Clo and Shep's table, Clo was asking who wanted in on another game. While they had been gone, Shep had won back the Chevy, but Clo claimed he had done it. Xeno and Autolycus want to play. Perdita wanted to learn the game. Xeno noticed that Zel returned with his shirt wet. He made a comment about Zel laundering himself and asking if that was what happened there, reminding them the bar had once been a mafia place. As they play, they try to keep Xeno and Zel from fighting.

They kept bidding until there was \$4,000 on the table. Autolycus won with a straight flush. When he stood, Perdita handed him a card he had dropped. Shep recognized that it was not a card from their pack. Xeno commented that "the House" did not like cheaters. Shep told him it was time for him to leave. Xeno continued to talk about how the place was once a Mafia joint, and that the Mafia could never be completely bought out. He pointed out the necklace that Perdita was wearing and said Shep should not have been able to buy that on a bar owner's salary. Clo told Xeno his time was up. That if their bar was truly a Mafia place, he would have a bullet in his head. Xeno asked if it would be somewhat like the bullet that killed Tony Gonzales. Perdita asked who Tony Gonzales was as the other men began reminiscing on what had happened. Xeno announced that he was the man for whom Tony was looking. Clo started to talk but Shep jumped up. He was trying to talk and trying to walk but unable to do either. He fell. Clo hollered for someone to get an ambulance.

The doctors were doing tests on Shep when they sent Perdita home to rest. As she and Clo ate together that night, she suggested to him that there were things that she did not know. Clo tried to avoid telling her but finally went out and returned with the attaché case with which she had been found. Perdita was afraid of the case and the file that Clo had with him. He first showed her the articles about the night she had been found. He explained they had tried to help Tony but that he was already dead.

A week after Tony's death reports were on the news about a missing baby and a million dollars that Tony had with him. Shep had sold his apartment and used money from the



case to buy the Fleece but there had never been any Mafia involvement. He told her that Tony had put her into the hospital's BabyHatch, apparently with the intention of coming back for her. Perdita asked why Shep did not take her to the police. Clo said it was because Shep had fallen in love with Perdita. He thought God had given Perdita to him.

After Clo finished talking, Perdita asked him to drive her to Autolycus' business because she wanted to see Zel. At Autolycus' place, Perdita told Zel that she needed to see Xeno.

Analysis

The tone of this section of the novel remains light until Autolycus makes his appearance in the DeLorean. The tension begins when Shep suspects his son has been cheated and Zel becomes angry with Autolycus for possibly ruining the first impression Perdita's family will have of him. He does not want to be associated with Autolycus' cheating ways. The tension escalates when Xeno appears at the poker table then increases to the point that Shep suffers a stroke as Xeno hints to Perdita that Shep has not told her everything about her life that she needs to know.

Because both Perdita and Zel have bad backgrounds with their real parents, they agree with each other that the people who make up one's family do not necessarily have to be biological relatives. Zel questions Perdita if she would ever want to find her real parents. She answers: "In what sense would they be my parents? I mean, is a parent the person who provides you with the raw materials of life or the person who raises you? I love Shep. He's the one who's my father" (155). In contrast, the man whom Zel calls his father is a man who is a stranger to him. "He could be anybody's dad. I could be anybody's son" (155). Their opposite circumstances prove that biological parents can be distant toward their children while adoptive parents can be more loving than biological parents. Clo echoes this idea to Perdita in his words to her after he tells her the real story of how she was found in the BabyHatch. "We're your family because we want to be. If they had'a found Dad they would'a arrested him. That's how much he wanted you" (175).

The idea of the crossroads that Clo and Autolycus discussed in the previous section is revisited as Shep wonders how his life might have been different if he had not chosen to keep Perdita. This point in his life was a crossroads. Although he does not realize it at that moment, he is about to face another crossroad in which his life will change. Xeno's appearance at the party is the point at which Shep and Perdita are faced with a new crossroads in their lives.

As soon as Xeno sees the playing card that Autolycus has snuck into the game, he begins to make jabs at Shep. He has already mentioned to Perdita that The Fleece had a reputation. Now he asks her how her father could afford to buy a necklace like the expensive diamond necklace she is wearing. He does not recognize Perdita and believes that Clo and Shep killed Tony and took the money that Leo had intended for



Xeno. When Zel came back to the table after he washed the oil stains he got on his shirt from working on the DeLorean Xeno says: “‘My son seems to have laundered himself,’ said Xeno. ‘Is that what happens here?’” (163) suggesting that Clo and Shep are members of the Mafia and have earned their living laundering money.

Shep holds by his declaration about Autolycus and Xeno that they were: “‘Uninvited guests,’ said Shep, ‘but, as it says in the Good Book, ‘Be not inhospitable to strangers, lest they be angels in disguise’” (163). It is not until Xeno begins making accusations toward Shep that Shep suggests it is time that Xeno leave. Notice that it is when Xeno announces that it was he who Tony was looking for that Shep suffers his stroke. Significant also about the saying that Shep uses about the uninvited guests is that this same saying is posted in the bookstore Shakespeare and Company, the store that has been mentioned in the novel as a place aspiring writers can take refuge. Of course, the saying also ties into the theme of angels as presented in the novel as one may never know when they have come into contact with an angel.

Perhaps the angel who is in disguise in this particular scene is Perdita. In his game, Xeno had earlier said that the goal was to find a lost baby. Xeno stumbles across this lost baby but does not even recognize her despite all of the signs that indicate she is Perdita. He is not able to put together that the girl is the same age Perdita would have been if Clo and Shep had taken her and the money from Tony. He also does not recognize Mimi’s diamond necklace, though he will later in the novel. While they were talking after their dance together, Xeno even recognizes something familiar in Perdita. “There was something about her that he thought he knew” (161) but Xeno brushed off the similarity as an impossibility.

Discussion Question 1

What role does the DeLorean play in this part (“Two: The Day of Celebration”) of the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the relationship between Zel and Xeno as presented in this section (“Two: The Day of Celebration”) of the novel.

Discussion Question 3

How does the tone change in “Two: The Day of Celebration”? What precipitates that change?

Vocabulary

intervene, bunting, obscure, provocative, oblivion, cabaret, trifles, recluse, trestle, urbane, detachment, inhospitable, pious



Two: Time's News

Summary

In the section "Time's News" Zel took Perdita to a dilapidated looking house. Although there were no lights inside, Perdita recognized that the house had once been a grand one. As she and Zel talked, they realized that in the time line of what had happened, Xeno had walked out on Zel about the time that Tony Gonzales was shot. Zel remembered that his Uncle Lion, Mimi and Milo had come to visit them once in that house but he did not really remember anything about Tony Gonzales. When Zel asked Perdita why she was so interested in his past, she told him it was because she thought they were brother and sister.

Zel ran away because he was angry and because he loved Perdita. Perdita was the one he felt had found him. At that moment the lights came on in the house and music began to play. Zel and Perdita went upstairs together. They found Xeno in the attic where he was working on his game. Xeno told Perdita the game showed a version of Paris that was ravaged by angels. He told her he had begun working on the game before the world had ended. He said that in his opinion, the world had ended when "it" (183) happened. He told her about Nerval's dream. He added that after the angel was trapped in the courtyard, a child had talked to him and sat with him.

When the time came that the angel was dying, the angel told the child to take the "diamond feathers" (184) from his collarbone. When she finally got them free, the angel died. A wind came and blew the feathers away. He explained to her that he had added the child to the story. He added that at one level in the game a person could move through time and make things unhappy.

As their avatars walked through the game, Xeno told her she could stay at the bookstore Shakespeare and Company or she could stay with him in his apartment below Mimi's. Xeno told Perdita that Leo, Mimi's husband, had tried to kill him twice. He had to make sure it did not happen again.

He told Perdita about the baby that Leo had been sure was not his. He told her that Leo was the baby's father. Although Xeno had loved Mimi, he thought that if he let Leo have her, he could keep the three of them together forever. He had fallen in love with Mimi but he had been a coward and had not gone after her.

He was upset with himself because Leo had sent the baby to him but he had not been at home. Then he tells Perdita the truth. He was there but had his housekeeper tell Tony that he was not there. Xeno had not known about the money and had assumed Tony would get back on a plane and take the baby back home. He assumed instead there had been a tip off at the bank that caused Tony's death. Perdita asked what Mimi had done. Xeno pointed out a tall tower where Mimi lived. He said that she did not sing any



longer. He gave a vague answer when Perdita asked him if Mimi was alive. He said Leo was alive and was reformed, and that he gave a good deal of money to charity.

When Zel spoke up to tell his father that he was full of self-pity, Xeno asked if they could talk. Zel did not want to talk. Xeno took off his shirt and showed them not only the scars on his shoulders and pelvis, but also his tattoo, a pair of angel wings.

Analysis

Just like other characters in the novel, Xeno is broken by what he has done and his inability to tell the truth. He seeks forgiveness for his role in what happened to Tony and Perdita, but there is really no one to grant it to him. The reader learns the source of Xeno's regret when he finally tells Perdita the truth about the day that Tony came to him. Xeno had been at home. He had only pretended not to be there. Had he met with Tony it is possible Tony might have not been killed and Perdita would have been returned to her mother.

Xeno describes the game as his attempt to make everything that happened that day unhappen. Both Mimi and Xeno deal with their grief and pain by hiding out from others. Xeno interacts with the people whom he loves through the game. In this way he has control of them and of their lives.

Significant in Xeno's story is that he believes he forfeited a chance to be happy with Mimi and love her because he did not want to cause trouble with Leo. He knows that the time he went after Mimi to woo her back for Leo that they fell in love with each other. Xeno did not act on these feelings because he believed if he had it would have ruined his relationship with both of them. He wanted to keep them as friends so he sacrificed his own feelings. It is almost as if it were fated for there to be problems between the three of them. Even though Xeno hid his feelings for Mimi and did not act upon his impulses, Leo still accused the two of having an affair.

The idea of the fallen angels is significant in this section. When Perdita first sees the game on Xeno's video screen he tells her it is a picture of Paris filled with damaged angels. This idea of damaged or fallen angels points the reader back to the dream that Nerval had about the angel that fell into the courtyard and could not save itself without destroying everything around it. Xeno sees himself as one of these fallen angels. He has been damaged by Leo's sudden hate for him and Leo's act of accusing him of having an affair with Mimi. He is unable to either claim himself innocent or embrace Mimi as his own without destroying the friendships he cherishes. Xeno not only believes himself to be, but also makes himself into, a fallen angel. He shows Perdita and Zel the tattoos of a set of wings on his back. He tells them "I thought I could fly ... but I could only fall" (194). In addition to describing the wings on Xeno's back, the author also describes the scars from Xeno's surgery; the surgery that Xeno had to have because Leo challenged him to ride his bike on a narrow ledge off of which Xeno fell.



The tone of this section of the novel is particularly dark and haunted. This darkness is reflected in the dilapidation and abandoned appearance of the house in which Xeno lives. Xeno has allowed his life to become broken down and useless, just like he has let his life go to waste by drinking himself senseless.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way that Xeno lives his life vicariously through his video game.

Discussion Question 2

How might things have turned out differently if Xeno had not lied about being at home when Tony came to him with the baby?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the symbolism of the game that Xeno introduces to Perdita.

Vocabulary

diffuse, imposing, inevitability, ascend, apex, savaged, necrotic, calamitous, embedded, urbane, heist, algorithm, reformed



Interval — Three: I Would Not Prize Them Without Her Love

Summary

In the “Interval” Zel drove Perdita home. At home she snuck him upstairs to her bedroom. Perdita told Zel she was glad he was not her brother. The next section of the “Interval” changes to present tense as Perdita indicates she seeks courage from Zel for the strength to get up and go the following morning.

In the next part of “Interval,” in his game Xeno had wings momentarily. He flew up to look at Mimi in her room. She was sleeping but some said they sometimes saw her walking by the river. Leo was there also, throwing himself at the window. Begging and promising but nothing changed.

In the section “Ghosts That Walk,” there were plans for the company Sicilia to tear down the Roundhouse and replace it with apartment buildings. A wall of water designed by Roni Horn would cut down on the railway noise. Pauline and Leo argued about the design. Pauline tried to get him to include a playground in the design but Leo balked. He said there was no space for it. Leo finally relented. He asked Pauline at what point he would have done enough good in the world.

Leo walked home after work. Just after he and Mimi had divorced, he had sold their house and moved to live in his office building. He had begun walking the Thames River each night. He thought about Mimi even though he tried not to. It had been easier after the news of what happened died down and Mimi became a recluse. People believed they saw her out walking, wearing sunglasses and a coat.

The tense changes to present tense as it is imagined that Mimi walks because it keeps her from being still. She wanders the city looking for angels carved in the architecture.

Back in the past tense, Leo arrived home. He went to the room where he keeps Mimi’s clothes. He buried his face in one of her sweaters.

In the section “I Would Not Prize Them Without Her Love,” Perdita and Zel were in London. They had enough money to stay there for three weeks. Perdita planned to go see Leo at his office the following day. Zel voiced his fear that she would find a new family and forget him.

Inside the reception area of Leo’s office Perdita told the receptionist she was there to find out about an internship. After she had waited an hour Leo arrived. Leo asked who she was and said that he thought he recognized her. The receptionist told Leo Perdita wanted an internship. Perdita stayed and waited even though both the receptionist and Leo told her that she needed to wait and see Pauline.



When the receptionist left at 6 p.m. she told Perdita she would have to leave as well. Perdita suggested she call Leo and tell him that she would not leave. When Leo finally came back, Perdita introduced herself as Miranda Shepherd. Leo told her there was a bar to which they could go.

Once seated, Leo began to talk. He described Sicilia as “responsible capitalism” (218). He told Perdita, whom he knew as Miranda, that the company was organizing a charity concert the next weekend. He suggested she could be part of that concert. She told him about the girl group that she was part of back home.

Back at the house, Leo went to his game console. There was a new player. His avatar had sex with the sister of the Sundial Angel. Leo woke to the sound of a woman talking when his radio turned itself on. He took a shower and prepared for the day but he could not help but look back on one day in particular.

He had been in the line at Passport Control when the three policemen surrounded him asking him about the baby. Milo had snuck away and gotten onto the tarmac. A woman called him back but Milo ran. He ran into the path of a truck when he rounded the corner of the building.

Leo went to Highgate Cemetery where Milo was buried. He put two roses, one for Milo and the other for Mimi, on Milo’s grave. He called out to the gardener and called him Tony by mistake before he remembered that Tony was dead.

Perdita and Zel talked about Perdita’s time with Leo. Perdita described her father as being “pretty controlling” (224). Zel added that adoption reunions usually did not work out. They also wondered if their lives would end up like Leo and Xeno’s. They did not want to have lives that they destroyed. She thanked him for coming with her. He asked if she wanted to meet her mother as well. Because they cannot sleep, they go out and see the sights.

The next morning, Leo called “Miranda” and asked her to meet him at the Roundhouse. Zel came with her this time. She was surprised to see people campaigning to save the Roundhouse. Leo met her and ushered her into the building past the crowd. Perdita asked why he was tearing the building down. He replied it was because he could no longer get subsidies for it. He pointed to the stage where the final concert would be performed. It was a benefit concert for Save the Children. Perdita asked again why Leo was having the Roundhouse knocked down. He did not give her the answer she wanted. She asked him if Mimi had sung there. He said that she had but she was his wife then.

Back downstairs, Leo learned from a security guard that Roni Horn was looking for him. Roni looked angry and was upset about how her wall of water was being used. Leo tried to convince her that it was an honor. She pushed him away when he indicated he wanted a picture with her. She said she was protesting the site. Leo was suddenly angry and reminded her that he had bought the piece from her. Perdita was angry with the way that Leo spoke to Roni and told him so. Leo turned to face Perdita asking who she



thought she was but at that moment someone threw a brick and hit him in the face. At the same time the past hit him in the face like the brick just had.

Perdita called out to Zel, who was arguing with some policemen. Leo felt like he was being taken back in time. Leo thought it surely could not be Zel that he was seeing. Perdita noticed that Leo looked like he had seen a ghost. He asked Zel if Xeno was his father. Zel said he was Perdita's boyfriend but Perdita yelled at him to shut up before he could pronounce her name. Leo asked if Xeno was there as well.

Analysis

The game that Xeno created works as a way for him to control his world. He, Mimi and Leo are all characters in the game. Mimi sleeps in her room high above the city. The only time that Xeno can see her is when he completes actions in the game that allow him to have wings. Notice that it is indicated Xeno knows that he will not keep his wings long and that he will always fall. It is as if he feels that he has no control over his life, just as he had no control over Leo's decision that Xeno and Mimi had cheated on him.

The Roundhouse and its connection to Mimi emerges in this section of the novel. Because the Roundhouse reminds him of Mimi, Leo has his mind set on tearing it down despite the public outcry. When he gives Perdita a tour of the Roundhouse she asks him why he is having it torn down. She seems to sense he is not telling her the whole story because she asks him four times why he is knocking the Roundhouse down. He does not give her what she thinks is an adequate answer so she tells him what she suspects, he wants it gone because Mimi sang there.

Notice also the use of the word "purposeful" in the description of Leo's planned development. It is used eight times in this description as if to stress how necessary the new planned community is for the area. "The purposefully affordable homes were purposefully low-rise" (203) is one example of the overuse of this particular word. Notice the issue between Leo and Pauline over the affordable homes as compared to the prestigious towers in which the rich will live. The affordable homes will be separated from towers as if Leo believes the working classes of people and upper classes should not be able to associate with each other.

Also significant about the structure of this section is that the author repeats a section of the material originally found in the section "Strangely to Some Place" on Page 100. This section of text is repeated verbatim on page 222 except that it is followed up with what happened to Milo after he slipped away from his father. This section may be repeated word for word in order to show how Leo still remembers what happened that day clearly. His memory has not changed. The reader learns that Milo was killed that day.

Leo is hit with a brick both physically and figuratively when he begins to realize who the girl is who has asked him for an internship. He had already mentioned to her on their first meeting that she reminded him of Mimi in the way she was both boyish and feminine. When she stands up for the artist who made the wall of water for Leo's new



housing complex, Leo is once again reminded of Mimi. “He thought... he almost thought... but he was thinking of Mimi” (231).

It is at this point that a member of the crowd hits Leo with a brick. He is both in pain and disoriented when he hears the girl who he knows as Miranda call out to Zel. Leo’s mind jumps to Xeno and he is figuratively hit by a brick when he remembers Xeno had a son named Zel. Notice that while Leo noticed reminders of Mimi in Miranda, the girl who is really Perdita, he also sees bits of himself in her as she yells at Zel not to tell Leo her real name. “Leo looked surprised. He was the one who did the shouting” (232).

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Leo’s reasons for destroying the Roundhouse. Why does this particular project mean so much to him?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it significant that Mimi walks the city looking for angels hidden in the architecture?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Leo’s question to Pauline: “Just tell me this, Pauline of the forty fucking years in the wilderness: HOW MUCH good do I have to do in the world?” What do you think Leo means by this question, found on page 206-207?

Vocabulary

imprinted, prestige, superficially, friezes, fetish, langoustines, perpetual, placard, venue, subsidies, lateral, tyrant, culminating



Three: Here in Your City

Summary

In the section “Here in Your City,” Shep had recovered from his stroke with no lasting damage. When Perdita did not come back to see him he knew that Clo had told her about the BabyHatch. He told Clo they had to finish the deed now that they had started it. Clo got the address he needed from Autolycus. Autolycus asked why he needed the address but Clo would not tell him. He suggested Autolycus ask Shep. Afterward, Clo arrived at the abandoned looking house. He broke a window to get in and found Xeno in the attic. He told Xeno, whom he called Beano to “get it together” (234) because Shep wanted to talk to him.

Back in London, Lorraine told Leo through her speaker phone there where three men to see him. Two were black and one was gay. He asked her to get Pauline. In his office Leo saw Xeno. Pauline also saw him and greeted him happily. Leo suggested they all go into his office. Shep had the attaché case with him. He took out the piece of music. Pauline sat down. Leo asked for clarification on Perdita/Miranda’s name.

Shep explained that Perdita was their daughter. She was Leo’s biological daughter and Shep’s adopted daughter. Leo held out his hand for the diamond necklace and said he had bought it for Mimi when they first met. Xeno mentioned that he had recognized the necklace but wondered why he had not recognized who Perdita was.

Shep told Leo he had used the money to buy the Fleece, a bar and restaurant that was deeded 50-50 to Perdita and Clo. None of the restaurant actually belongs to Shep. Pauline was surprised when Leo reached out for Shep and told him he wished they had met long ago. The tension broke and Leo began arranging places for the family to stay. Pauline said they should stay at her house. In the cab on the way to Pauline’s house, Leo asked where Mimi was. He told Pauline he wanted Mimi to know about Perdita.

During dinner, Pauline slipped out and booked an early morning train to Paris. When she left early the next morning, Xeno was the only one who knew she had left. In his game, there was a light on in Mimi’s room.

Analysis

It is in this part of the novel that the ultimate climax of the novel comes. Identities are revealed and the truth comes out. Xeno and Leo both learn who the girl is who has fascinated them both. She has had this affect on them because she is Mimi’s daughter. A symbol that is important is the diamond necklace that Perdita wore during Shep’s birthday party. During the party Xeno noticed the necklace because he commented that bar owners were not usually able to afford that type of finery. It is not until all the players come together that Xeno recognizes the necklace as having belonged to Mimi. He wonders how he could have missed the connection.



The tension climaxes when Shep tells Leo how he raised Leo's daughter as his own. "I figured that anyone who could abandon his own child wasn't fit to be a father" (237) Shep says when Leo asks why Shep did not turn Perdita in to the police. Leo also tries to accuse Shep of keeping the child for the money but Shep stops this idea by telling him that he used Perdita's money and his own money to buy the bar but had put it in his children's names. Perdita and Clo owned the bar 50-50. Shep had no stake in it. "I guess we're different there, you and me, Leo, because owning doesn't mean that much to me," (238) Shep tells Leo. It is at this point that Leo has a choice to make. He can either be angry with Shep and continue the division of the family that he began when he gave Perdita away or he can be accepting and take the first step toward rebuilding what he tore apart. He chooses to be accepting and this is the point at which the tension in the novel releases.

This section of the novel is rich in imagery. The author illustrates the story of Perdita's life in terms of the diamond necklace that belonged to her mother. "The story fell out stone by stone, shining and held, the way time is held in a diamond" (236). The author has already discussed the diamond as a symbol of time because time is one of the components necessary to make diamonds. In that way, time, the time that has passed since Leo sent Perdita away and the events that happened during these years fall out and come into view, just like the diamonds of Mimi's necklace came into view as Shep poured them into his hand.

Consider also the metaphor that "The past is a grenade that explodes when thrown" (236). This comparison of the past to a weapon of war indicates the destruction the past can have if handled roughly. Grenades are harmless if the pin remains in them but if the pin is removed, the warhead will explode. Notice also the personification of the past as Leo and Xeno are held to the spots in which they stand when they first see each other. They are unable to move because "the past was too strong" (235).

Discussion Question 1

Why do Shep and Clo take Xeno with them when they go to London to talk to Leo?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Shep is so determined to get Perdita's full story out in the open even though he is still recovering from his stroke?

Discussion Question 3

Compare and contrast Shep and Leo.

Vocabulary

jostled, heckled, confident, syncopate, hesitated



Three: If This Be Magic... – Music Wake Her

Summary

In the section “If This Be Magic...” Pauline walked for about an hour near the entrance to the Canal Saint-Martin. She spotted the figure for whom she was looking and handed her the copy of the sheet music labeled Perdita.

In the section “Music Wake Her,” HollyPollyMolly were at the Roundhouse. Leo noticed Pauline was happy for the first time in a long time. He asked about Mimi. Pauline told him to give “time time” (245). As the girls practiced, Autolycus clapped from the floor. When Pauline came with a plate of sandwiches, she asked who Autolycus was and if he was staying with her.

Later, while Perdita and Zel were walking together, he pointed out that even if their lives had not taken such drastic changes, they still would have known one another. Zel asked her to marry him and then swung her around in his arms.

Shep and Pauline talked about Tony. He told her that Pauline was the last word that Tony had said before he died. He wondered aloud to Pauline if he had done the right thing by keeping Perdita. Pauline told Shep that if he had taken Perdita to the police and she had been reunited with her mother her childhood would have been horrible with the divorce. Pauline added that she was not even sure if Mimi would have been able to care for Perdita because of the severity of the breakdown she suffered after the loss of her children.

Pauline admitted to Shep that she had stayed in touch with Mimi through the years. They discussed forgiveness. Pauline said she had not had to forgive Leo because he thought not receiving forgiveness was his punishment. Shep’s situation was different. He wanted his wife’s forgiveness but could not ask for it because she was dead. It was not until he found Perdita that he learned how to love again. Later, when they were inside the house, Shep showed Pauline how to improvise on the piano.

The day of the concert Perdita was nervous because she and the girls had not been able to rehearse the day before because the Roundhouse was closed. When they had walked by the building they thought they heard sounds like someone rehearsing for a concert. Also the day of the concert Pauline told Leo that the planning permission had been called in because one of the backers had been “charged with bribery, corruption and conspiring to pervert the course of justice” (251).

Pauline indicated to Leo that it would be easier not to knock down the Roundhouse because the backer had pleaded guilty to the charges against him.



Leo sobbed as he told Pauline he had thought about killing himself but had not done so because he knew death would be the easy way out for him. Living was his way of giving himself a life sentence. Pauline said she was still with him because she already knew that.

Xeno met Zel on his way to the Roundhouse. They walked together. Xeno told Zel he wanted to get to know him. Meanwhile, Clo was talking to Lorraine. She was the first person he had met who was as tall as he was. She found the book *The Sun Also Rises* in Clo's jacket pocket and shared with him that was her favorite Hemmingway book. Shep and Perdita talked before the concert about how things Perdita had learned about herself recently had changed their lives.

The crowd loved *The Separations*. After they were finished, Leo asked for whom the stage was being rearranged. Pauline told him it was for "her" (256) band. There was a light high up and then feathers, or snow, began falling as the spot beam lit up the stage. There is a woman standing there. She says the song she is about to sing is for her daughter, Perdita. Leo is crying. Xeno puts his arms around him.

The narrator tells the reader they will leave the main characters. The narrator had watched the play from the back row. She tells the reader how the play is one of forgiveness. There are three different possibilities for an ending to a story, the narrator explains. She says these are revenge, tragedy and forgiveness. She discusses how forgiveness works a theme in this play, as well as other of Shakespeare's late plays.

She goes on to discuss the play as Shakespeare wrote it, contrasting parts one and two. She indicates that nothing is a key word in the play as Hermione does nothing to prove her innocence. Additionally, she indicates that Shakespeare leaves it up to Perdita and Zel. The narrator lets Perdita have the last word in the story.

Perdita wonders if she and Zel will forget the miracle of which they were part. She wonders if they will stay together or if they will wind up hurting each other. Despite what happens, she realizes that she has known a love worth knowing.

Analysis

The uses of forgiveness are a major point of discuss in this section. Some see forgiveness as a way to determine if their actions were acceptable. Some characters realize their actions were not acceptable and will not accept forgiveness because they believe they do not deserve it. Shep is one character who desires forgiveness, particularly from his wife. There is no way for him to ask for and receive her forgiveness because she is dead. He shares with Pauline that he had considered Perdita a sign that his wife had forgiven him because it was with her help that he learned to love and live again.

When Shep sees the pain he caused Mimi by taking Perdita he wonders if he did the right thing. Even though Perdita helped him heal, her disappearance decimated Mimi. It is Pauline's opinion that perhaps Perdita had a better childhood with Shep and Clo than



she would have had with her natural parents. She points out that not only would Perdita have been drug through a divorce, it was quite likely her mother would not have been able to care for her because to the breakdown she suffered not only because she lost her baby but also because Milo was killed.

In the same way that Pauline helps Shep to see that his decision to keep Perdita might have been the best, Shep gives Pauline closure on her relationship with Tony. The two had a budding romance that was cut short when Tony was killed. Shep explains to Pauline that he thought when Tony called out the name Pauline just before he died he was referring to the baby. Since he has met the real Pauline of whom Tony was speaking, he realizes that this was an affirmation of the love Tony had for his new girlfriend. He and Pauline seem to have a good deal in common, including music, and the reader must wonder if a relationship will begin between them.

Leo had an entirely different take on forgiveness. He sees forgiveness as a reward of which he is not worthy. Pauline tells Shep that she has not had to struggle with forgiving Leo because Leo has not asked for forgiveness. Because Leo will not allow others to forgive him, he also cannot forgive himself for what he had done. He lives his life trying to make amends for his mistakes. It is a major breakthrough for Leo when he is able to push down the anger he feels when Shep confronts him about Perdita for the first time and accept the fact that he is guilty of the things of which Shep accuses him.

Just like a narrator or character sometimes speaks directly to the audience in some of Shakespeare's plays, the narrator assumes a role at the end of this story. She presents herself as a spectator, sitting in the back row of the Roundhouse as Mimi appears in concert for the first time in years. She discusses the significant themes that she sees in the play and how they worked both in her version and in Shakespeare's version.

Notice one of the things she explains is Perdita's use of the name Miranda when she introduces herself to Leo for the first time. As was mentioned in the section "The Day of Celebration" Miranda is a fictional character, actually from another Shakespeare play. Miranda is a girl who had and grew up with a father worth knowing but her father went crazy. This explains why Perdita told her group of friends that she would like to have dinner with Miranda.

One of the significant symbols in this section is the piece of music that Mimi wrote for Perdita. All Pauline has to do is hand the sheet music to Mimi to make her understand that Perdita has been found. When Mimi decides to reintroduce herself to society, she does it through music, singing the song that she wrote for her daughter. The author uses the title "music wake her," a line from the play because Mimi in the original play Mimi (Hermione) "wakes" from her form as a statue once Perdita returns. In Xeno's game, the character that portrayed Mimi has been sleeping. It can be assumed that once the lost baby, Perdita, is found Mimi will wake.



Discussion Question 1

Of what is the Roundhouse a symbol? Why does Leo want to destroy it so badly? What does it mean for him when he learns that he cannot destroy it?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Zel's comment to Perdita that they were meant to be because they would have met one another regardless of the paths their lives had taken. Do you believe this is the case? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss forgiveness as it is presented in this section ("Three: If This Be Magic... – Music Wake Her") of the novel.

Vocabulary

quay, adamant, goyish, kvell, improvising, delusions, predicated, nascent, pilgrimage, alibi, rote



Characters

Leo

Leo is the father of Milo and Perdita. He is also Mimi's husband, then ex-husband. He is described by Pauline as being "a typical Alpha Male. They don't grow up, they just get meaner" (50).

Leo puts into action the tragedy of this story when he makes up his mind that Mimi and Xeno have cheated on him with each other. He also thinks that the baby that Mimi is carrying is not his. Leo has a web cam installed in Mimi's bedroom. Even though the footage does not necessarily show Mimi and Xeno doing anything sexual in nature Leo already has a preconceived notion that they are so he interprets what he sees as being sexual.

Leo pays Tony to take Perdita to Xeno. About the same time he arranges to take Milo out of the country. When Mimi and Pauline discover that Perdita is missing they assume that Leo has her. They alert the authorities at the airport who stop Leo and question him. Meanwhile, Milo slips away from his father and gets out of the building onto the tarmac. He is hit and killed by a repair truck.

Although Leo is in deep depression after the death of his son, he does not kill himself because he believes that his life of pain is his way of giving himself a life sentence. He additionally donates a good deal of money to charity in an attempt to earn atonement.

When Leo meets Shep he is originally angry with Shep because he thinks that Shep is trying to lecture him about how he should have lived his life. Instead of allowing himself to get out of control with his anger, Leo decides to give Shep the benefit of the doubt and accept him as the man who raised his daughter. At the end of the story, Leo is surprised when Mimi sings at the Roundhouse as the finale of the benefit concert he hosted.

Perdita

Perdita is the daughter of Leo and Mimi. She is adopted by Shep after she is left in a BabyHatch by Tony. Tony had been hired by Leo to take her to Xeno because Leo believed that Perdita was not his daughter despite a paternity test that proved she was his.

Perdita is raised by Shep and Clo. She knows that she is not biologically related to them because they are black and she is white. Clo has told Perdita some of the details about the day that he adopted her but has not shared with her all of the information that he knows.



When Xeno began talking at Shep's birthday party about the past and after Clo told her the truth about her past, Perdita began to put the information together and suspected that she might have been Xeno's daughter. She made a visit to him directly to find out the truth. After she learned that she was Leo's biological daughter she made a trip to London to get to know him.

Perdita at first introduced herself to Leo as Miranda Shepherd. The name Miranda is significant because Miranda is a character in one of Shakespeare's plays that, as the author of this story says, "gets a father worth being born for" (259). Her use of the last name "Shepherd" is a nod to the original *The Winter's Tale* play because in the play Perdita was adopted by a shepherd.

Perdita falls in love with Zel, who is Xeno's son but is estranged from him because Xeno separated himself from his son after Leo accused Mimi of cheating on her. At the end of the story it is understood that Zel and Perdita marry with the intention of doing a better job of living their lives than their parents did.

Shep

Shep is Clo's biological father. He adopted Perdita after he found her in a BabyHatch outside Santa Maria Hospital.

Shep had been working as a pianist in a bar when he found Perdita and the money. He kept Perdita because he thought she was a gift from God. He thought she was a sign that he had been forgiven for smothering his wife, who was dying. Even though he believed he had done the right thing by putting his wife out of her suffering, he thought he had done it for the wrong reason. He was no longer able to stand her suffering. When he finds Perdita he believes that it is a sign that he has been forgiven. The baby teaches him how to love again.

Shep sells his apartment and uses some of the money he found with Perdita to buy an old Mafia bar called *The Fleece*. He renovates the bar and turns it into a successful business. On his seventieth birthday, his children are preparing a party for him at the bar. It is during this party that Xeno angers Shep to the point that he has a stroke.

Although Shep has told Perdita some things about how he came to have custody of her, he has not told her the entire story. When Xeno begins hinting about the facts of the day that he found Perdita, Shep asks him to stop talking, not wanting Perdita to learn the real story from a stranger.

After he recovers from his stroke, Shep learns that Perdita has gone to London to see her biological father. He, Clo and Xeno join them there to tell the whole story.



Pauline Levy

Pauline is Leo's assistant at Sicilia. Even though she is probably the reason his company is so successful, Leo hates her. She is Jewish.

Pauline not only works for Leo but she is also friends with Mimi and Xeno. Before Leo took the baby and had her sent away, Pauline tried to convince Leo that Mimi had not cheated on her. She even encouraged Leo to have a paternity test done to prove Perdita was his daughter.

After Mimi and Leo are divorced Pauline continues to work with Leo. She tells him that she has continued to stay with him because she knows that he has allowed himself to continue to live because he considers it his punishment for what he has done.

Although she is not directly related to Leo and his family, Pauline is also hurt by Leo's decision that Perdita is not his child. Tony, who is killed when he tries to deliver Perdita to Xeo, was Pauline's boyfriend. Pauline had always dreamed of having a house full of family. She believed that Tony was her chance at having that family.

Hermione "Mimi" Delannet

Hermione "Mimi" Delannet is the wife of Leo. She is also the mother of Milo and Perdita. Mimi is a famous singer.

Mimi and Xeno are friends but are not lovers. Their familiar behavior, however, leads Mimi's husband to believe that Mimi and Xeno are having an affair.

Mimi is depressed after Leo accuses her of cheating on him. When Milo is killed and Perdita disappears, Mimi has a breakdown. Many people do not even know where she is. Some suspect that she is no longer alive. Pauline is the only one who appears to have kept in touch with Mimi through the years.

When Pauline tells Mimi that her daughter, Perdita, has come back to London and is singing in the Roundhouse, Mimi arranges to sing the song that she wrote for her daughter for the finale of that same concert.

Clo

Clo is Shep's biological son. He is Perdita's adoptive brother. Clo was with Shep when Shep saw Tony Gonzales being car jacked. He is the one who suggested to Shep that they take Perdita and the money to the police.

Clo's role in the novel is one of comic relief. In the original Shakespeare play, he is the one who bears the name Clown, shortened to Clo for the cover version. Clo describes himself to Perdita as being "a few neons short of a light show" (175).



Clo allows himself into being tricked by Autolycus into trading his Chevy truck for a DeLorean, a car that Autolycus tells Clo will be a perfect gift for his father's birthday. Clo also adds the comedic side of the conversation when Autolycus tries to tell Clo about the story of Oedipus.

Anthony “Tony” Gonzales

Anthony “Tony” Gonzales works as Leo's gardener. He is the man whom Leo hires to take Perdita to Xeno in exchange for a million dollars.

Tony is killed when he is car jacked while trying to find Xeno. He had noticed a car following him and suspected that something was up. He put Perdita in the BabyHatch at the hospital to keep her safe when he went to talk to the men who were following him. He fell and hit his head, a blow that caused his death.

Tony is the equivalent of the character Antigonus in the original play. In the original play, Antigonus and Pauline are married. In the cover version, Tony and Pauline are dating.

Zel

Zel is Xeno's son. He falls in love with Perdita. It is assumed the two get married after they learn that they are not brother and sister.

Because his father has not been part of his life since he was eight, Zel grows up angry. He feels as if he is on the outside of every group. Perdita is the one who makes him feel accepted. It is only after Xeno, Shep and Clo meet Leo and Pauline that Xeno and Zel begin to try to mend their relationship.

It is Zel who points out to Perdita that regardless of the track her life had taken, they still would have met. If she had not been adopted by Shep, he and Perdita would have met because their families were friends.

Cameron

Cameron is the man in charge of Security and Transport at Sicilia. Even though he does not feel comfortable doing so, he agrees to help Leo by installing a webcam in Mimi's bedroom. Afterward, Cameron regrets having installed the camera.

When Leo shows Cameron the footage from the camera, Cameron tells Leo that any lawyer he shows the video footage to with the intention of using it as grounds for divorce will laugh at him. Cameron suggests that perhaps the video is instead grounds for Mimi to divorce Cameron.



Autolycus

Autolycus is one of the comedic characters in the play. He owns the Motormobile Museum. The name of his shop is a play on his name. Autolycus becomes “Autos Like Us.”

Autolycus is the man who tricks Clo into trading his truck for the DeLorean. He also wins the poker game the night of Shep’s birthday party but his cheating is discovered because it is found he is playing with cards other than those belonging to the deck in play.

Lorraine LaTrobe

Lorraine LaTrobe is the receptionist at Leo’s office when Perdita goes there to meet her father. It turns out that Lorraine is trans-sexual. She also likes to wear Lycra biking outfits even though she does not ride a bicycle.

Lorraine and Clo are attracted to each other. Clo likes Lorraine because she is the first woman he has met who is as tall as she is. Lorraine likes Clo because she believes that he has read the novel *The Sun Also Rises* when she finds it in his jacket pocket.

Gerard de Nerval

Gerard de Nerval is the French poet who, according to Xeno, had the dream about the angel that fell into the courtyard. In order to keep from damaging his wing, the angel had to close his wings as he fell. In order to save himself the angel would have to open his wings, an action that would destroy everything around him. If he did not open his wings, the angel would die.

Anna Conchitas

Anna Conchitas is the nurse who examined Perdita when Tony brought her into the emergency room at Santa Maria Hospital. According to the newspaper article, Anna Conchitas was the last person to see Tony and the baby before he was killed and Perdita disappeared.

Milo

Milo is the son of Leo and Mimi. He is killed at the airport when his father is trying to sneak him out of the country, away from Mimi.



HollyPollyMolly

HollyPollyMolly are Chinese triplets who were left in a BabyHatch. Perdita met the girls while they were attending the same church. The girls later began a band together.



Symbols and Symbolism

The BabyHatch

This BabyHatch is both a symbol of hope and a symbol of resignation. Because his wife was dying in the hospital when Shep watched the hatch being built, he is reminded of the pain of her passing and his part in her death. Later, after Shep gets Perdita out of this same BabyHatch he sees it as a symbol of hope. He believes he was given Perdita as a sign of forgiveness and new life. It is while raising Perdita that he learns to love again.

The Bullet

This bullet is symbolic of Clo and Shep's part in the car jacking. Because they tried to scare the car jackers away from the man whom they were beating, one of the men fired a shot at their car, causing their tire to go flat. When the police worked up the forensics at the scene of Tony's death, they realized one bullet was missing. It was the bullet that had flattened to tire of Clo's car. Shep had removed it and dropped it down a storm drain in an attempt to keep from being implicated in the crime.

Attaché Case

This attaché case is symbolic of Perdita's past. It contained the money that Leo had sent to take care of her as well as the song her mother had written for her, and the diamond necklace that had been her mother's.

Sicilia

The company Sicilia in this novel represents the fictional land of Sicilia in which part of Shakespeare's play was set. In the novel, Leo is the founder and president of Sicilia. In the play, Leo is the king of this fictional land.

The Gap of Time

The Gap of Time is symbolic of Xeno's desire to be able to change the world in a positive way. The Gap of Time is the name of the game that Xeno created. It is geared toward female players. The game represents Xeno's life and the guilt he feels because of what he believes he allowed to happen to Mimi and her baby.



A Playing Card

This playing card is a symbol of Autolycus' habit of cheating. When Perdita picks up this card and the other players realize that it is not from their pack, they know that Autolycus won the poker game by cheating.

The Book The Sun Also Rises

Autolycus gives this book, *The Sun Also Rises*, to Clo with the promise that one day Clo would thank Autolycus for giving him the book. The book is a symbol of fate, Autolycus' claim to have a second sight, because it is this book that helps Clo to develop a relationship with Lorriane LaTrobe.

DeLorean

This DeLorean, the car used as a time machine in the movie *Back to the Future*, is symbolic of both time and time travel. Autolycus tries to sell the car based on the idea that it has the capability to allow its driver to travel through time.

Half a Million Dollars

According to Xeno this half a million dollars that Leo planned to leave with Xeno to take care of the baby represented Leo's intent to insult Xeno.

The Diamond Feathers

The diamond feathers represent the Flight of Love and the Flight of Time. They are the feathers that cross the angel's collarbone. According to the information that Xeno added to Nerval's dream, the angel told a child who had been keeping him company to take these feathers and keep them with her. When these feathers were removed, the angel died.



Settings

New Bohemia

New Bohemia is the place where Xeno lived with his son. It is also the place to where Tony travels with Perdita when Leo hired him to take Perdita to Xeno. Tony is killed in New Bohemia when some men car jack him looking for the money that Leo was paid to take Perdita to Xeno.

Spot on the Cliffs

Leo returns to this spot on the cliffs several times during his youth. It was at this spot that Xeno fell when Leo challenged him to see which of them could ride closest to the edge. Leo sees this spot as the place where his friendship with Xeno changed for the worst.

The Roundhouse

The Roundhouse is a theater and music venue that had once been a shed for turning trams. Mimi presents a concert for charity in this venue the night that Perdita is born. After Mimi learns that Perdita is alive and the her band is performing at the Roundhouse, she arranges to sing again for the first time since she lost her baby and Milo was killed at that same place.

Little Venice

Little Venice is the area in London in which Mimi's house is located.

Santa Maria Hospital

Santa Maria Hospital is the hospital where Shep's wife stayed while she was sick. It was at this hospital that Shep watched the BabyHatch being built during his wife's stay. Because he could no longer stand watching his wife's suffering while she died, Shep smothered her with a pillow. Later at this same hospital in the BabyHatch that he saw being built Shep found Perdita. He believed she was a gift from God.

The Fleece

The Fleece is the name of the bar that Shep buys, renovates and reopens after he adopts Perdita. This bar is the place where Shep's seventieth birthday party is held.

The bar is named The Fleece as a nod to the original play, where Shep was a shepherd.



Xeno's House

It is in Xeno's House that Perdita and Zel track him down after he crashed Shep's party. Xeno told Perdita the story of how Leo did not believe that she was his daughter and had her sent to Xeno.

Highgate Cemetery

Highgate Cemetery is the place where Milo is buried. Leo had bought the plot in a charity auction before Milo had died. It had cost him a good deal of money but Leo believed it was a challenge because the cemetery was world famous.



Themes and Motifs

Forgiveness

Forgiveness has a variety of functions in this novel including being a reward for those who choose to accept it while those who refuse to accept it imprison themselves in their guilt. Shep is one character who chooses to accept what he sees as a sign of forgiveness. Leo refuses to be forgiven and believes he is punishing himself by doing so. Xeno is another character who cannot find the strength to forgive himself or even admit the truth for which he needs to be forgiven.

Shep's crime in life is the death of his wife. She had been suffering a terminal illness and Shep ended her suffering by smothering her. He feels guilty because he believes that he killed her for the wrong reason. He loved her deeply and could not stand to see her suffer any longer. Instead seeing himself as being self-sacrificing, Shep believes he is selfish for killing his wife. Her death broke his heart.

When Shep found Perdita in the same BabyHatch that he had watched being built while his wife was suffering in the hospital, he believed it was a sign that his wife had forgiven him. He saw Perdita as a sign from God. It was by caring for this baby that he learned to love again. By accepting what he saw as forgiveness, Shep was able to go ahead and live a fruitful life.

Leo is one of the main characters who refuses to accept forgiveness. In fact, Pauline says of Leo "He doesn't want to be forgiven" (247). Leo believes he does not deserve to be forgiven for what he has done. Encouraged by Pauline, Leo lives his life giving to charity and supporting various causes. He hopes eventually his good deeds will lead him to a place in life where he will feel he has earned the right to ask forgiveness. At this point in the novel, Leo has still not reached that point. In fact, he admits to Pauline that he has only allowed himself to live because his guilt-filled life is a way of punishing himself. He believes that killing himself would even be a release of which he is not worthy.

Xeno is another of the main characters who cannot forgive himself for what he has done and the choices he has made. He wonders if he had not been such a coward and had declared his love for Mimi back when he first discovered that he loved her if their lives would have been different. He is also haunted by his decision to make Tony believe he was out of town when Tony brought Perdita to him. Xeno did not foresee the awful consequences that decision would have. He has gone so far as to lie to others about his whereabouts when Tony came looking for him. Xeno lives a life as a recluse because he cannot forgive himself for what he believes he has done.



The Fallen Angel

Xeno bases the video game the he creates on the incident of poet Nerval's dream about a fallen angel. The video game reflects life and allows Xeno to live vicariously with the people he cares about most. Just like in the game, there are instances through the course of the novel in which characters imagine themselves in the role of the fallen angel. Both Mimi and Xeno are characters who seem to understand this angel's predicament.

Xeno bases his game on the central idea of a dream had by a French poet named Gerard Nerval. Nerval dreamed that an angel had fallen into a narrow courtyard. In order to protect his wings he had folded them against him and could not unfold them to fly out because the courtyard was so narrow. If he did open his wings, he would destroy the buildings all around him. Xeno reimagines this dream in his game. The courtyard into which the angel falls is Mimi's courtyard.

When Mimi is recovering in the hospital from having her baby, she relates to the fallen angel's predicament. She feels as if she is trapped in a narrow courtyard. As she lies in her hospital bed she believes that she will destroy everything around her if she tries to move or free herself, just like the fallen angel. Mimi fits the description of the fallen angel because she has done nothing to deserve the predicament in which she finds herself. She has not cheated on her husband but he has left her and accused her of having a baby that is not his.

Xeno is another character who relates to the idea of the fallen angel. Xeno is being punished but feels he had done nothing to deserve the position in which he finds himself. If he does anything to try to free himself from his situation, he will destroy all those around him. When talking to Perdita and Zel about his past, Xeno admits to them that he believed he could fly. It is why he had a set of angel wings tattooed onto his back. He learned through his experiences that he "could only fall" (194).

Time

Time is significant in this novel as characters search for a way to manipulate this dimension. In his game, Xeno develops a level in which one can manipulate time, undoing things that have happened. Leo wishes he could be Superman with his ability to make the Earth spin backwards and undo things he had done. There are significant symbols that deal with time and the ability to manipulate time. One of these symbols is the DeLorean, a car once used as a time machine. The other is the diamond, a gem formed by time and pressure.

When Xeno is describing his game to Perdita he tell her about one level in particular. "At Level 4 you can move around in time. At any point in the game you can deep-freeze an action, an event, a happening, and return to it later — because, perhaps, you can make it unhappen" (186).



Because he cannot undo the bad choices he has made in his life, Xeno creates a vicarious life in which he can go back and alter the past. One of the things that Xeno wants to take back is his decision to have Tony told that Xeno was in the United States when he was actually at home when Tony came to him with Perdita. Xeno lives with the guilt that he might have been able to change the lives of Tony, Perdita and Mimi had he made a different decision.

Leo is another character who wishes that he could manipulate time. Even before Milo's death, Leo loved the scene in the Superman movie where the hero was able to spin the world fast enough to reverse time and keep Lois Lane from being killed. Leo wishes he could reverse time and keep Xeno from being hurt in the bicycle accident. Later, after Milo is killed, Leo again wishes that he had the ability to reverse time and save his son.

A symbol of time travel is introduced in the second part of the novel as the characters celebrate Shep's birthday. Autolycus encourages Clo to buy a DeLorean for his father. The car salesman says it will be like giving his father the gift of time. The car is featured in a movie in which it is made into a time machine. The characters go back in time to change past events. Although Shep does not have a point in time he wishes he could change, he does have his doubts about his decisions in the past. He wonders if he did the best for Perdita when he decided to keep her. The introduction of the "time machine" into this part of the novel suggests that even people whose lives have not been touched by tragedy sometimes wish they could go back in time.

Finally, the diamond is a symbol of what time can do. When Shep first shows Perdita her mother's diamond necklace, he tells her that diamonds are "a layer of time" (120). Diamonds are created when carbon is submitted to pressure over a long period of time. Just like these precious gems come from uncomfortable situations, so can people be turned into gems from emotional pressure over a period of time. It is Leo who seems to learn the most from his emotional distress. Instead of lashing out at Shep, Leo chooses to seek unity.

Family

Being family is not a prerequisite for loving a person like a family member, the novel *The Gap of Time* teaches. In Perdita's case, her adoptive father loved her just as deeply as a biological father could have done. Zel's case is opposite as he felt unloved by his father. When they discuss their families, they realize that love is not contingent on blood relations.

When Zel was still a child Leo had once criticized Xeno for the way the boy was being raised. Xeno was not married to Zel's mother. He had arranged to have sex with her because he wanted a son. At that point in time Xeno had lashed out at Leo, telling him "There are different ways of doing family" (33). At that point in time, Xeno was still an active part of Zel's life.



Later, when Zel appears in the novel as a grownup he tells Autolycus that Xeno is “not my family” (158). Zel confides to Perdita that most of his life, his father did not mean anything to him. They did not ever get a chance to get to know one another personally. Zel is angry because he believes his father abandoned him. He considers himself a vanity project on his father’s part. As she listens to Zel talk about his father, she does not realize how closely their stories intertwine. She, too, was abandoned by her father though she does not realize it at the time.

After Perdita learned the true story of her background, she could understand more closely how Zel felt. As Clo tells her what really happened, he stressed that he and Shep took her because they loved her. “We’re your family because we want to be. If they had’a found Dad they would’a arrested him. That’s how much he wanted you” (175). Later, Shep defends his love for Perdita to Leo. Leo tries to excuse himself for giving Perdita away because he thought she was not his. Shep does not let Leo get away that easily. “‘I knew she wasn’t mine,’ said Shep, ‘but I loved her’” (237).

During a discussion between Zel and Perdita when he first learns that she is adopted, Zel asks her if she would like to find her parents. She responds to him by telling him that she believes her real parents, the ones who gave her up, would not really be her parents. “Is a parent the person who provides you with the raw materials of life or the person who raises you?” (155), she asks. In this case she tells him that it is Shep who is her parent because he is the one who raised her.

Does Fate or Free Will Determine One’s Outcome

Although it is a minor theme in the novel, the characters often discuss the idea of free will versus fate. They wonder if their actions are the result of free will or fate. One particular incident in which the characters wonder if their actions are the result of fate or free will is in relation to the relationship between Perdita and Zel. Shep also wonders if he was fated to raise Perdita or his free will choice changed the course of her life in ways he could not imagine.

When Perdita and Zel had their first date, Perdita asked him if he thought he had any control over his life. He told her that the answer to that question depended on whether she believed in free will or destiny. Free will being the ability of a human to act independently and make his own choices while destiny or fate implies that there is a certain preordained series of events in one’s life.

At one point the characters use the free market system as a way to prove there is no such thing as free will. Consumers and marketers have to pay for or sell their products at a predetermined price, thwarting the idea of free will. Autolycus makes an interesting point when he claims that he believes in free will in theory. He says that it is human nature and the desire for things, like sex, that make free will nonexistent.

The characters never quite decide if life is determined by free will or by fate. It seems that Perdita and Zel are fated to be together. Zel points out to her that they managed to

find one another despite the change in her life that placed her in the custody of Shep and Clo. Had Perdita stayed with her biological family, they would have known one another as children because the families were friends.

When Zel asks Perdita to marry him she asks him: "So am I fated to spend the rest of my life with you?" (246). He responds that the answer to the question is the point at which free will is put to use. Fate brought them together but it is up to her to decide if she wants to marry him or not.



Styles

Point of View

For the most part, this story is told from the point of view of a third person omniscient narrator. There are parts of the story, however, that are told from the point of view of a specific character. One of these parts is the section entitled “Watery Star,” the opening section. This section is narrated by Shep who refers to himself by the personal pronoun “I.” On page 6 of the story, Shep lets the reader know his name and that he is the one doing the narrating. “That’s me. Shep.”

There is a section of the chapter “The Day of Celebration” in which the narrator narrates in the second person. The section begins on page 168. The use of “you” draws the reader into the story and reminds the reader that tragedies like the one that happened to Shep can happen to any one at any time.

At the end of the novel the author again directly addresses the reader. She explains the themes Shakespeare intended to discuss in his play and the way that forgiveness is a major theme. The reader also allows Perdita to have the final word in the story. In this ending section Perdita narrates in the first person about the love that she has found with Zel.

Language and Meaning

The author uses language and words to tie her cover story of Winter’s Tale to the original play. She also uses her language to update the play and give it a modern feel. Certain words and phrases also appear in multiple places throughout the novel as a way to unite certain themes and ideas.

One of the most significant uses of language in this novel is the way the author uses the character names from the original play but gives them a modern twist. For instance, in the original, Leo was the king of an imaginary country called Sicilia. Since each small country no longer has a king a queen, Leo appears in the cover story as the powerful and wealthy owner of a company called Sicilia. Names like Polixenes and Florizel are shortened to the less unwieldy nicknames of Xeno and Zel.

Phrases like “the gap of time,” “fallen angel” and “reverse time” are used again and again throughout the novel to strengthen the themes. The Gap of Time is the name of Xeno’s video game. It is also a phrase that Mimi includes in her song about Perdita. The phrase connects the novel with the original play because the same phrase can be found in the fifth scene of the play after all the characters have been reunited with each other. The phrase “fallen angel” is one that Winterson adds to her version of The Winter’s Tale as are the references to wishing one could reverse time. The titles of many of the chapters, including “Time’s News” and “Music Wake Her,” are drawn directly from the text of the original play.



A few foreign phrases are also scattered throughout the novel. Because Mimi is French she will sometimes speak in French. One example of this is when she tells Milo to “Dépêche-toi!” (90) or hurry up. Pauline also sometimes intersperses some Jewish words in her speech. Examples of these words can be found on Page 245. They include words like “goyish” and “kvell.”

Structure

The structure of this novel is interesting because it contains some aspects of a book and some aspects of a play. There are three main parts of the novel in which the story is told. Each of these parts is separated by an “Interval” which seems to work almost like a break in a play where a character or narrator speaks directly to the audience. While most of the novel is presented in paragraph form, there is a short section in the chapter “The Day of Celebration,” located on pages 139-151, in which characters and their lines are notated in places as if in a play. There are even some parts of this particular section that are presented with stage directions for instance, “My father, Shep — you all know him’ (CHEERS AND APPLAUSE). We’re here to celebrate his birthday (MORE CHEERS)” (145).

Part One of the novel opens with exposition. Shep tells the story of how he found Perdita in the BabyHatch. The story then goes back in time to fill in details for the reader as to how Perdita came to be in the BabyHatch and how Tony was involved with her. This section of the novel works up to a climax as Leo accuses Mimi of cheating on him at the same time that she goes into labor with the baby that Leo claims is not his. This section ends almost on a cliffhanger as the reader has the idea that something terrible happened while Leo was at the airport with Milo but the author does not let the reader know exactly what happened.

Part Two opens with a happy tone and begins giving the reader information about Perdita’s life since she was left in the BabyHatch. Just like the first part, the second part builds to a climax when Xeno begins dropping hints that Shep and Clo were somehow involved in a man’s death. Shep is so angry with Xeno that he has a stroke. Tension remains high as Perdita finally learns her true background from her brother and then goes to Xeno to find out if he can tell her who her father really is.

Part Three starts in high tension as Zel and Perdita sneak off to find Leo. The part of Perdita’s life that put her in Shep’s path, along with her life with Shep collide with the highest tension of all when Leo, Shep, Clo, Perdita, Zel and Xeno all meet in the same room. This tension releases only when Leo decides to forgive himself for what he did instead of lashing out at Shep. As Perdita and the members of her band prepare for their benefit concert the action falls, reaching a denouement when Mimi appears and sings at the benefit concert.



Quotes

God doesn't need to punish us. We can do that for ourselves. That's why we need forgiveness."

-- Narrator (One: Watery Star)

Importance: The need to forgive one's self and others is a major theme in this novel. Shep introduces this theme as he thinks about his preacher's belief that God does not punish people, only offers them forgiveness. He believes that God does not need to punish people because they punish themselves enough for the things that they have done wrong in their lives.

The truth is, Cameron, that I think Mimi is having an affair. And I want to catch her at it. You know why they call it a webcam?"

-- Leo (One: Spider in the Cup)

Importance: When Leo tells Cameron that he wants to catch Mimi and Xeno cheating on him, he compares the webcam to a sort of spider's web that he hopes to use to catch his wife and best friend, whom he compares to insects.

They were both laughing. They were intimate, private. Leo, ghost-faced, his beating heart invisible, wondered if he was in the room.

-- Narrator (One: Spider in the Cup)

Importance: When Mimi and Xeno are together in Leo's office, he notices how they do not even try to hide their affection toward each other. He feels as if they are acting as if he is not even in the room.

The song 'Dark Angel' is understood to have been inspired by the French poet Gérard de Nerval — who dreamed that an angel fell from heaven and was trapped in a narrow courtyard. Some say it is a reference to her stormy relationship with her husband, Leo Kaiser.

-- Narrator (One: Spider in the Cup)

Importance: This dream by the poet Nerval is the inspiration for Xeno's video game. The dream also is significant because Mimi, Leo and Xeno all find themselves in places where, like the angel if they try to save themselves by opening their wings they will destroy everything around them. In this particular snippet from Mimi's Wikipedia page, it is indicated that her song "Dark Angel" was influenced by this same dream.

Make sure you do,' said Xeno. 'And don't push her too close to the edge.'"

-- Xeno (One: Spider in the Cup)

Importance: When Leo tells Xeno that he does not believe that he deserves Mimi, Xeno suggests that he make himself into a person who deserves Mimi. Xeno also advises Leo not to push Mimi too close to the edge, a comment in which Xeno alludes



to the time that Leo challenged him to see who could ride his bike closest to the edge of a cliff. Xeno fell down the cliff and was badly injured.

He's crazy! He's got his own way all his life so he can't control his emotions, desires, rages, affects. He's a typical Alpha Male. They don't grow up, they just get meaner."
-- Pauline (One: Is This Nothing?)

Importance: Pauline gives her take on Leo's personality. While others believe Leo's strange behavior means that he is crazy, Pauline believes he is just being himself.

It crossed Cameron's mind that this was a perfectly good sentence — adjective, noun, verb. Not Shakespeare certainly, but adequate.
-- Narrator (One: Goads Thorns Nettles Tails of Wasps)

Importance: This quote is an example of the way that the author makes references to Shakespeare through the course of her cover version of one of Shakespeare's last plays.

If she moved her wings she would topple the houses into the street.
-- Narrator (One: My Life Stands in the Level of Your Dreams)

Importance: After Mimi realizes that Leo really believes that she cheated on him with Xeno and that Perdita is Xeno's daughter and not his, Mimi compares herself to the fallen angel in Nerval's dreams. She is afraid that whatever she does to try to save herself, she will only cause more damage to those around her.

There's an old saying,' said Pauline. 'What's past help should be past grief.' / 'That's Shakespeare,' said Tony. 'The Winter's Tale,' said Pauline."
-- Pauline and Tony (One: Feathers for Each Wind)

Importance: This quote is an example of the way the author occasionally incorporates direct quotes from *The Winter's Tale* into her novel.

He had worked with Perdita strapped to his back. She had been put down once and he was never going to let her be put down again.
-- Narrator (Two: Traffic)

Importance: Because Perdita had been abandoned once, Shep even worked with the baby strapped to his back. He did not want her to ever be abandoned again, even for a short while.

"I TOLD you, I had a date — not that I will have a date now that you have fleeced the son and hijacked the dad's birthday."
-- Zel (Two: The Day of Celebration)

Importance: Zel is angry as he tries to fix the DeLorean that Autolycus tricked Clo into getting for his father. He is afraid that Autolycus' trick will cost him Perdita.



I used to deal in other currencies,' said Xeno, 'love, friendship, trust, loyalty. And I felt good about myself. And then I discovered that it's all sentiment. Means nothing. We don't love others and others don't love us.'"

-- Xeno (Two: The Day of Celebration)

Importance: This statement illustrates how jaded Xeno has become about his life. Because of the way that Leo treated him, he has come to believe that love means nothing.

My friend Leo loved that Superman movie where Lois Lane doesn't die in a car crash because Superman is powerful enough to belt the earth like Puck on speed and turn back time."

-- Xeno (Two: Time's News)

Importance: The allusion of Superman and his ability to turn back time is an idea that is returned to again and again through the course of the story. It is learned that Leo wished he could turn back time so he could keep his son from getting killed.

But someone did know about the money — there must have been a tip-off at the bank. It wasn't much money by criminal standards, but an easy heist from a hotel room, I guess. A pity to waste it. And it went wrong."

-- Xeno (Two: Time's News)

Importance: Xeno talks about the car jacking in which Tony was killed. He believes someone at the bank knew that Tony had gotten the money, leading to their attempt to steal it from them.

It takes so little time to change a lifetime and it takes a lifetime to understand the change.

-- Narrator (Three: If This Be Magic)

Importance: The author alludes to how quickly one's life can change, yet how long it can take a person to come to grips with that sudden change.

I love having you all in my house. I feel like I'll know you all forever. I've always lived here but I feel like I've come home."

-- Pauline (Three: Music Wake Her)

Importance: Pauline is finally happy and feels at home when her house is full of Xeno and Leo's family members. She had imagined her house filled with a family that she and Tony might make together but she lost that chance when Tony was killed when he agreed to take Perdita to Xeno.

But we can't, she thought, because home isn't where we left it. If I could wind back time, I would.

-- Narrator (Three: Music Wake Her)



Importance: Perdita realizes her life will never be the same when she thinks about what she and Shep would be doing if they were at home at the bar. She is sad because she cannot ever return to that place in her life.

It's a play about forgiveness and a world of possible futures — and how forgiveness and the future are tied together in both directions. Time is reversible.

-- Narrator (Three: Music Wake Her)

Importance: In the ending section of the novel the author discusses forgiveness, one of the play's major themes.