

Here Comes the Sun Study Guide

Here Comes the Sun by Nicole Dennis-Benn

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Plot Summary

NOTE: All citations in this Study Guide refer to the following version of this book: Dennis-Benn, Nicole. *Here Comes the Sun*. Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016.

Ambition and desperation make a disastrous combination for Margot when she is willing to do whatever it takes to get a position as a hotel manager in the novel *Here Comes the Sun* by Nicole Dennis-Benn. Margot reasons she is doing the things she is in order to make a better life for her sister, Thandi. She intends for Thandi to pay her back for all her hard work once Thandi becomes a doctor. Thandi, however, is unhappy at the private school she attends. She wants to draw, not be a doctor. Margot and Thandi's dreams collide when construction on the hotel Margot intends to manage is halted because of a murder. Thandi's boyfriend, Charles, had confronted the man who raped Thandi years prior causing his death. When Thandi tries to beg forgiveness for Charles, she learns what Margot has been doing to fund Thandi's schooling.

By day, Margot works as a head desk clerk at the luxurious Palm Star Resort. By night, she works her own business as a prostitute for the rich men who visit the resort. Margot's mother, Delores, also works hard selling keepsakes to tourists. Margot and Delores both holds onto the hope that Thandi will save the family from the desperate poverty in which they live when she becomes a doctor.

Thandi, however, does not see herself as a doctor. Even though she makes good grades, she enjoys only her art class and wishes her family understood her love of art. In her hopes of fitting in with her rich schoolmates, Thandi visits Miss Ruby for bleaching treatments. She believes lighter skin will make her more acceptable. Instead, she meets a poor boy who tells her she is pretty just the way she is. As Thandi struggles to discover her own identity, she also harbors a secret. Clover, a handyman in the area raped her when she was only a child.

Margot, meanwhile, agrees to take charge of a ring of prostitutes at the hotel where she works. Alphonso, her boss, discovered Margot's after hours business and demands to be part of it. Margot does as Alphonso wants, but when Alphonso refuses to make Margot the manager of his hotel, she sets up the new manager, a former Miss Universe, to be caught in bed with another woman.

Even though both her sister and mother have warned Thandi not to get involved with boys, Thandi begins a relationship with Charles, a common boy in her neighborhood. When Thandi has a flashback to her rape and attacks Charles when he tries to have sex with her the first time she tells him about her rape. Charles seeks out Clover in order to make him pay for what he did to Thandi. The fight triggers a fatal heart attack in Clover. Charles is accused of Clover's death and a reward is offered for his capture.

Juliette, Charles' sister, comes up with a plan for Thandi to seduce Alphonso and ask that the charges be dropped against Charles. It is while working with Juliette on this plan that Thandi learns that her sister not only has worked as a prostitute but also that



she taught and supervised other prostitutes. Thandi additionally learns that her sister is the one who suggested the reward for Charles' capture.

In the final scene of the novel, Margot is living by herself in the beachfront villa she always dreamed she would own. She has achieved her idea of success but has lost everyone important to her, including her sister, in the process.



Part I, Chapter 1

Summary

In Chapter 1, Margot works officially at the Palm Star Resort as the leading front desk clerk but also sells her services as a prostitute after hours. When she leaves the hotel late, Margot often wonders if the employees ever gossip about her and what she is doing there so late. She keeps working hard with the hopes that one day her younger sister, Thandi, will make everything better. She just has to keep working until that time.

Margot catches a ride home with Maxi, a man with whom she attended primary school. Maxi was smart in school but dropped out when he told a teacher the teacher was ignorant for thinking that Christopher Columbus discovered Jamaica. Back in the present Maxi tells Margot he knows she is planning her future based on her dreams for Thandi. He asks if she has ever considered what Thandi might want for herself.

Meanwhile, Margot wonders if her employer, Alphonso, thinks of her as a glorified servant. He had kept her as an employee at the resort even though he had fired everyone else because she let him have sex with her. She was desperate to do whatever it took to get away from Delores and what Delores had done to her.

Margot asks Maxi to drop her off before he even gets to her house. She walks forward, wondering if anyone can see her. When she reaches the bright pink house, a woman walks out onto the porch. Margot believes this woman, Verdene Moore, is the only one who really sees her for who she is.

At the market, Delores works with a tourist couple, trying to get them to buy the trinkets she sells. She is one of the best sellers because she is working toward her goal of sending her youngest daughter to school to become a doctor. She hopes Thandi will save the family from its desperate poverty.

Thandi, meanwhile, buys Queen of Pearl Crème at Mr. Levy's Wholesale. While she is in the store, she tries to speak with the dialect the other Jamaicans use in their speech although it sounds strange to her. Even though she tries to disguise her proper English, people notice her in the Saint Emmanuel High School uniform that she wears. Miss Ruby has advised her to get the crème with the promise that it will lighten her skin. Thandi believes lighter skin will be the answer to her future. She really has no interest in the subjects she studies and does not want to be a doctor.

After her visit to the store, Thandi walks to Miss Ruby's house past the construction on the new resort. Once at Miss Ruby's house, the woman rubs a lightening concoction into her skin. Miss Ruby reminds Thandi that she and her results on her Caribbean Examination Council exams are the one thing on which her family is counting.

On her way home, Thandi walks past Verdene Moore's house. No one speaks to or about Verdene with any respect. It is rumored that Verdene lures girls to her house to



molest them. She is known as a witch. Once a dead dog was found in her yard. It was believed that Verdene had killed it in a ritual sacrifice.

After running past Verdene's house, Thandi walks past Miss Gracie's house where Charles, a neighborhood boy, calls out to her. She nods at him and continues walking. She wishes he was not a common boy, the kind with whom her mother and sister do not want her associating.

At home, the ladies next door brag on Thandi because she looks so neat and is polite. She greets her Grandma Merle even though the older woman has not spoken since Uncle Winston left years ago. Inside the house, Thandi studies her face in the mirror. She begins to see the person that her family wants her to be.

Analysis

First of all, the reader should notice that the author chooses to write this novel in the present tense. It gives the reader the feeling of forward action. Although the use of present tense makes it feel as if the author is discovering what will happen next, just like the reader is, the author does offer some foreshadowing. One thing to notice is Thandi's dislike for her studies even though she excels at them. She prefers to draw. Another is the emphasis that both Thandi's mother and her grandmother put on Thandi's future. They are willing to do anything to make sure that Thandi is successful because they believe that she will eventually support them. The reader can sense that Thandi's desires for herself and her family's goals for her will wind up clashing.

As Thandi submits herself to Miss Ruby's lightening treatments, beauty and worth emerge as themes early on in the novel. Although the adults in Thandi's life believe that her future will be determined by her studies and learning, Thandi believes she will never be successful in life because her skin is dark. She attends an affluent school where the other students live in larger cities and have lighter skin. Thandi is haunted by the differences between her and the other students there. She does not fit in with them because her mother and sister work to pay for her school. They live in a shack and can afford only two uniforms for Thandi. Because of the speech patterns that Thandi has learned at school, Thandi does not really fit in with the common Jamaicans of her village either. Although she likes Charles, a common boy, her mother and sister have warned her not to become interested in a boy like him because he is poor. They want a rich husband for her, the type of man Thandi does not think is attracted to her because her skin is dark.

Maxi is a character who represents what might happen to Thandi if she does not succeed at her schooling. Maxi is described as having book smarts. It is indicated that he could have been successful at anything he had wanted to do but he had been forced to drop out of school because he spoke his mind to school officials. Instead of being successful, Maxi drives a taxi and has two children by two different women.



It appears that Margot will be a central character in the novel. She is looking to save both her sister and herself. She is so desperate to get away from her past, and make a future for herself and her sister that she sells herself as a sex object. She retained her job at the resort at which she works because she was willing to have sex with her boss. In addition to her duties at the hotel Margot has also made for herself an after hours business of working as a prostitute. Since Margot wonders if the other workers gossip about what she might be doing at the hotel such late hours at night, it appears that Margot is doing this sort of work on her own ambition without her boss knowing what she is doing.

Delores, who is assumed to be both Margot and Thandi's mother, is another important character introduced in this first chapter. The author foreshadows that there is some history between Margot and Delores that has caused a rift. Margot dislikes Delores to the point that she is willing to sell herself for sex in order to get to keep her job.

Another significant character introduced in this section is Verdene Moore. Verdene is seen as completely evil. The people do not respect her. She is believed to be evil incarnate. Yet, it is to Verdene's house that Margot goes when she gets off work. Along with selling herself as a prostitute, Margot also has an unusually close relationship with this woman with whom no one else will associate.

The author sets the tone of the novel with the help an intense drought. The land is dry and thirsty. It is desperate for water, just like the people are desperate for money and prosperity. The drought will continue to get worse as the story of Margot and her family's struggle to survive climaxes.

The landscape of Jamaica contrasts greatly with Margot and Delores' lifestyles. Both work in jobs oriented toward the tourism industry. Margot works at a resort where people come to enjoy the paradise of the Caribbean country. Delores sells trinkets to these tourists. Even though they work in what appears to be a lucrative business, Margot and Delores share none of the benefits of the money brought into the country by the industry. They live in a shack and can barely afford to send Thandi to school.

Two significant objects in this section of the novel are the Queen of Pearl Crème that Thandi buys and her school uniform. The Queen of Pearl Crème represents Thandi's belief that she will be successful only if she is beautiful with lighter skin. Her school uniform represents Delores and Margot's ambitions for Thandi. Even though she does not fit in with the students at her school, her uniform sets her apart from the others in her neighborhood as well.

One thing in this section of the novel to keep in mind is what Miss Ruby says Thandi about beauty: "Cause you and I both know, God nuh like ugly" (27). Miss Ruby's comment almost insinuates to Thandi that not only are men not attracted to "ugly" females but also that God himself is offended if a person is ugly. It is as if she is indicating to Thandi that she has the duty to make herself beautiful in order to please God.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of beauty as introduced in this first chapter.

Discussion Question 2

What is your feeling of Thandi's dislike for her studies? How do you feel Delores and Margot's ambitions for Thandi are misguided?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the idea of evil as it is introduced in Verdene Moore. Of what does it appear that Verdene is guilty?

Vocabulary

delinquent, sauntering, satiate, demeaning, meticulously, accomplice, cognizant, gullible, benevolent, patois, voyeurs, ominous, anomaly, serenades

Part I, Chapters 2-3

Summary

In Chapter 2, Delores, Margot and Thandi are without electricity in their shack because fires started by the drought have damaged power lines. As Delores cooks, she tells Margot, who is braiding Thandi's hair, their landlord has raised the rent again. Delores criticizes Margot, believing that she is not using all of the earnings from her hotel job for the family's benefit.

When Thandi walks into her classes for the first time with straightened hair and a sweatshirt, the students stare and gossip. She wears the sweatshirt in order to create heat that Miss Ruby has told her will make her skin lighten more quickly. The prefect of Thandi's class orders Thandi to take off her sweatshirt but Thandi refuses. She is given a demerit. As Thandi leaves the room to go to the principal's office her classmates begin to make sounds of donkeys braying, making fun of Thandi because she is from the country.

In Chapter 3, in the taxi on the way to work Maxi tells Margot that she ought to be grateful for her life when Margot tells him she wants to move away. When Margot insinuates to Maxi that she wants to be in charge of her own destiny, he suggests that they get married. Margot says she does not want to get married because she does not want to be owned and does not want children. He warns her that she does not want to end up old and lonely with no children. She imagines herself being a couple with Verdene. When she is with Verdene, however, Margot lives in the panic that someone will discover that she and Verdene are lovers and will punish them. She has read in the newspaper about people doing things to homosexuals like burning them inside their houses.

At the hotel, Margot greets the employees who are under her management. She senses that they gossip about her and her affair with Alphonso. She believes, however, that they do not know anything about the after hours activities in which she involved.

At school, Thandi eats her lunch in the bathroom. While there, she hears two other girls gossiping about her, saying that she is crazy. After the girls are gone, Thandi leaves the bathroom and goes to Brother Smith's office. He is her art teacher. She voices her concern to Brother Smith that she likes art more than she likes her other subjects. Even though he has told Thandi she is a good artist, Brother Smith reminds her that it is not with that sort of skill that she will make a livelihood.

Later, when Thandi tries to draw in her art class, she remembers the weight of the man holding her down years before as he raped her. He had held a knife to her temple and warned her not to tell anyone what had happened.



Thandi arrived at home after school to find Margot counting money. She wonders where her sister had gotten so much money. While she rubs Margot's feet and legs, Thandi asks if she can have some money for a dress. Thandi wants to attend a classmate's sweet sixteen party and has her eye on a fuchsia dress. Margot criticizes Thandi for thinking about a party instead of studying. Regardless, Margot gives her sister some money. She tells Thandi she knows that she will pay her back, a comment that increases Thandi's feelings of guilt.

Analysis

In this section, Thandi's desperation becomes even more evident. Even though she wants to fit in, her schoolmates know how different she is and do not like her. They gossip about her. She overhears what they say about her when she eats lunch in the bathroom. After she has been sent to the principal's office she hears the other students making animal noises behind her back. The indication is that she is backward and strange because she is from a rural area.

The sweatshirt that Thandi wears is a significant symbol. It represents both Thandi's desire to fit in with the other students as well as one of the aspects of her personality that separates her from them. Thandi wears the sweatshirt because Miss Ruby has told her that the heat will help lighten her skin. Even as Thandi works to lighten her skin, the sweatshirt causes her more distress at school because the girls gossip that she is hiding a pregnancy beneath it.

Margot, meanwhile, faces a conflict because she loves Verdene and is not interested in men even though she works as a prostitute to earn extra money. Margot knows how badly the community feels about homosexuals and how she would be treated if it were known that she was having a relationship with Verdene. She is not ready to be known as a homosexual.

The author uses a good deal of literary devices in order to develop her story and paint a picture with her words. For instance, personification is used in this description of the way that Delores moves her shoulders: "Her broad shoulders rise as though they themselves are a mounting wall of hard feelings" (34). Although part of Delores, her shoulders are given a personality of their own. The idea that they are "mounting a wall of hard feelings" refers to the divide between Delores and Margot. Even when Margot thinks that her mother senses the connection between them the author uses a simile to describe how Margot's mother's voice "strikes her like a cane" (37). The idea of being caned describes how violent Delores' voice is. The author carries on this theme saying "Delores's voice rushes at her, flogging her with its taunt" (38) Delores' voice is personified, giving it the ability to rush out at Margot. Another simile compares Thandi to the mattress in which Delores hides the money she earns: "Like the old mattress, Thandi is that source in which they plant their dreams and expectations" (58).

Even though others have decided what they want Thandi to do with her life, Thandi is not convinced. She wants to be an artist. Her art teacher discourages her saying that



she needs to reveal more of herself in her artwork in order to make it really effective. Thandi questions herself: “But how can she reveal more of herself when she’s so unsure of who that is?” (54).

One aspect of the Thandi’s personality that the reader learns in this section is that Thandi suffers because she was raped as a child. She has lived with the horror of what happened even though she told no one what happened.

On the surface, Delores and Margot fight over money, but seem to be fighting over harms done that are long past, it becomes apparent that an important theme in the novel will be the relationship between parents and children. The relationship between Margot and Delores is very strained. Margot holds onto the hope that her mother will treat her as a daughter but Delores seems intent on tearing Margot down.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Thandi’s relationship with her schoolmates. Why is she trying so hard to fit in with them even though they are so mean to her?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Maxi suggest to Margot that they get married? How does Maxi think this arrangement would be beneficial to both of them?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the relationship between Margot and Delores. Give examples from the novel to support your description.

Vocabulary

derisive, elusive, martial, languorous, menial, transient, karma, retort, amalgamation, defiance, foraging, languid, plausible, burgeoning, sanguine, guttural, reprimands, officious



Part I, Chapters 4-6

Summary

In Chapter 4, Margot has sex with a man named Horace but she thinks of Verdene. When they are finished, she tells Horace that she has to go. They have spent the evening together, eating, drinking and having sex. Horace is her oldest customer. He promises to marry her and take her back to Germany with him even though he has a wife and children. Margot lies and tells him that she has to meet her mother. He gives her \$300 for the evening.

Later at Verdene's house, Verdene watches as Margot sleeps in her bedroom. She stops when she sees the picture of her mother on the nightstand. Usually she turns it around when Margot is there because it makes Margot uncomfortable. Margot tries to convince Verdene that she is ready for them to have sexual relations. Although they have tried in the past, Margot had reacted badly when Verdene tried to have sex with her. It was as if Margot was not ready to believe she was a homosexual. In the present, Margot tries to convince Verdene that she is ready. When Verdene asks Margot if she is sure she knows what she wants and Margot looks away, Verdene knows that Margot is still not ready.

Time moves forward and it is Sunday. Verdene watches as those going to church make the signs of the cross when they pass her house. Miss Gracie, Verdene's next door neighbor, makes the sign of the cross and also curses Verdene as she walks past. Verdene believes Miss Gracie is responsible for the dead animals and vandalism that had recently been appearing in her front yard and on her sidewalk.

Verdene remembers that when she had first met Margot, she had not wanted the younger girl around. Ella, Verdene's mother, had agreed to look after Margot when her mother and grandmother were busy. Verdene was jealous of Margot because Margot took Ella's attention from Verdene. It was when Verdene heard Margot crying because she was being bullied that Verdene began to develop a protective feeling toward Margot.

Since she has been spending more with Margot, Verdene has begun to understand why her mother cooked for her father and never asked anything from her father. Verdene's first marriage had not worked out because she could not be the kind of wife that her mother had been. When Verdene walks into the bedroom where Margot is getting dressed, Margot agrees with Verdene that she is not ready. She asks Verdene to teach her.

In Chapter 5, Margot thinks about her dream to live away from River Bank. She dreams of a villa in a gated beachfront community where she believes she and Verdene will be able to live together safely. She believes she will soon get a promotion that will allow this dream to come true. While she is thinking about this villa, Margot encounters a



dead John-crow in her path, a bad omen. She is horrified as she watches other John-crows eat the carcass of the first John-crow. At home, Margot showers, hoping to wash away the bad omen. Her mother catches her showering and scolds her for using so much water during a drought. She also criticizes Margot's habit of not staying at home at night.

At the hotel, Margot listens as Alphonso talks to his employees, telling them that they are incompetent. Margot believes she could do a better job managing the hotel than Dwight, the current manager. Kensington, the other girl working the front desk, asks Margot if she knows what the higher ups are talking about. Margot suggests to Kensington that she mind her own business. Alphonso storms out of the office demanding a manila envelope that Kensington cannot identify but Margot has ready.

In Chapter 6, despite the heat, Delores goes to sell her wares. She is critical of the other vendors who pack up and go home because of the heat. John-John brings by a box of hand-carved birds for Delores to sell. As Delores and John-John talk, John-John works on perfecting a bird that he has been carving on for a week. The bird reminds Delores of a trip she took to Devon House in Kingston. She had realized during that trip how dark her skin was and how she stood out from "proper" society.

John-John hands the bird to Delores and she believes he is giving it to her as a gift. He tells her that the bird is for Margot, the prettiest he has made. Delores accidentally drops the bird, breaking its beak. Delores apologizes and John-John says that he will make a new one. She tells John-John that she believes Margot is not worth a gift "yuh can sell fah good money" (93).

Analysis

A significant scene in this section of the novel comes when Margot encounters the dead John-crow on her way home from Verdene's house. The John-crow is apparently believed to be a bad omen since Margot follows a routine based on superstition to cleanse herself of the evil. It is significant that Margot encounters this bad omen just as she is thinking about the villa she hopes to buy and live in with Verdene. "As Margot moves through the expanse of her fantasy — padding lightly on the marble tiles of her dream house — she bumps into something solid on the ground" (76). Remember that as Margot looks at the bird, more birds come and eat the carcass of the first. Margot considers how these birds could be relatives or friends, yet they consume one another in their greed. This image foreshadows Margot's future. Remember also the author's description of Margot "padding lightly on the marble tiles" in her dream villa. These words will come again near the end of the novel but will be in a different context.

Relationships between mothers and daughters again emerge as an important topic as Verdene thinks back about the way she was once jealous of Margot because of the way Verdene's mother paid so much attention to her. Ella, Verdene's mother, took care of Margot when Margot's mother and grandmother were busy. Even though Verdene was in college at the time, she still was jealous that there was someone else who was



getting her mother's attention. Verdene's relationship with her mother appears to be rooted in time since Verdene has left the house much like it was when her mother died. The pots, pans and dishes are still in the same places that Ella had them in the cabinets. One pot in particular will be a significant object in the novel. This pot is mentioned in this section when Verdene leaves Margot to check on a dish on the stove. "I don't want it to burn. My mother left me that pot" (67). The indication is that her mother's pot is more important to Verdene than the need for Margot and Verdene to talk about their relationship.

Meanwhile, Delores is also feeling sorry for herself because neither of her daughters remembered her birthday. She is disappointed and hurt when John-John gives her a bird that he has made but indicates that the bird is for Margot. A very telling quote comes when Delores tells John-John that Margot is not worth anything that can be sold for money. This belief that her daughter has no worth is not just a passing idea for Delores. The reader will come to realize that Delores really believes her daughter is of no worth.

The author continues to enliven her writing with simile. One of these similes includes a reference to an object that will be significant later on in the novel. When Verdene is first captivated by Margot, Margot's eyes are described as "a pair of glistening onyx like the stone Margot gave her" (65). This stone will be mentioned again in the novel. Notice other simile like "her arm a windshield wiper that smeared their frowning faces" (69). This is used to describe the way that Verdene greeted the churchgoers who passed her house even though they made signs that they believed they were better than her. A final simile to notice in this section: "Margot begins to walk with clarity through the thinning fog, cradling this idea like a newborn baby" (75). The author's comparison to Margot's care of her budding relationship with Verdene to a mother's care of a newborn gives the reader some idea how precious the relationship was to Margot and how carefully she believed she needed to protect it.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Delores' comment to John-John that Margot is not worth anything he can sell for good money.

Discussion Question 2

At one point, Margot indicates that she can understand how tourists believe that Jamaica is paradise. How is it that the tourist industry in Jamaica is so lucrative yet the natives are so poor?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the background of Verdene and Margot's relationship. What does it mean that Verdene was once jealous of Margot?

Vocabulary

expletives, postcoital, infidelity, acquiesced, perpetrator, algorithm, precocious, feral, incompetent, brazened, compile, delusions, discrepancy, genteel, bauxite



Part I, Chapters 7-8

Summary

In Chapter 7, Margot arrives at home to find Thandi asleep on the couch surrounded by waded up drawings. She remembers how she had used the Wellington name, that of her boss, to get Thandi's demerit status changed. She has been getting Alphonso to write the checks for Thandi's tuition and calling it a scholarship. Margot notices not only that her sister is turning into a woman but also that her skin is getting lighter.

When Thandi wakes, she kids Margot about the new man she believes her sister is seeing. Margot warns Thandi not to be thinking about boys or getting caught up with one because she needs to focus on studying.

Later, when Margot is visiting Verdene, she thinks about how she was so pleased when Verdene told her for the first time that she was pretty. After eating, Verdene and Margot wash the dishes together. One particular pot Margot dries, but Verdene asks her not to do so. When Margot learns the pot is special because it belonged to Verdene's mother, Margot accuses Verdene of choosing her mother over her. Verdene apologizes and tells Margot that she believes she came back to Jamaica from London not because it was where her mother had lived but because it was where Margot lived. In the passion of the moment, the two have sex for the first time.

After they are finished, Verdene thinks about her college roommate Akua. The two were discovered having sex in their dorm room by the residence hall director. Ella was disgraced and refused to leave her house again. Verdene was sent away to London to keep her from being raped or killed in River Bank. She boarded the plane with only a river stone given to her by Margot. In her hometown Akua was beaten and gang raped. She begged to be allowed to die but she was taken to the hospital and survived. Akua sent Verdene a letter with pictures of her children and husband years later.

Back in the present, when Verdene walks through her house she realizes how strong Ella's presence still is in the house. There are pictures of her mother everywhere. Verdene has spent most of her life doing as her mother wanted her to do. She wonders if she even exists as her own person. In order to make room for Margot, Verdene clears the house of photos of her mother.

In Chapter 8, Margot meets Alphonso at a restaurant away from the resort. Margot wants to confront Alphonso about his use of the word love during their last sexual encounter. When she says she has to ask him about something, he tells her that he assumes it is about Miss Novia Scott-Henry, the woman he has hired to manage the hotel. Margot is angry. She believes that Reginald Senior had hired her to work in the hotel and had taught her everything he knew with the intention of her managing the hotel one day. Alphonso promises Margot that her time will come. She refuses to stay and eat with him but he tells her that he wants to see her that evening.



Margot remembers how Alphonso had fascinated her when they first met. When Alphonso had asked Margot to meet with him, he wanted her to “show me what you’re good at” (112). Margot had believed that he wanted her ideas about the hotel. He instead had wanted to have sex with her. A security guard, Garfield, had walked in on them. Garfield was promised job security in exchange for his silence. Still the story had gotten around.

Margot visits her mother’s stall in the market. For a moment they reminisce about how John-John had always liked Margot but then Margot comments that her mother had preferred to see her with grown men, even when she was a girl. When tourists enter the stall, Margot notices a transformation in her mother. She wishes she had gotten to know that person and wonders why she always made her mother so angry. When the tourists are gone, Margot tells her mother she is seeing a man in the hotel business. She tells her that the man says that he loves her and that he will leave his wife for her. Delores sneers at Margot and tells her that no man would leave his wife for her. She warns Margot that she needs to know her place.

Later, Margot confronts Verdene. She tells Verdene she needs to sell her mother’s house. She believes it would give them a chance to have a fresh start somewhere else. Verdene reminds Margot their lives will be the same anywhere in Jamaica. Besides, Verdene tells Margot that Margot said she had always wanted to stay in River Bank for Thandi. Verdene tells Margot the truth, not what Margot wants to hear. She leaves Verdene and does not tell her when she will return.

Analysis

Margot’s ambition has her living three different lives. She believes it is her relationship with Alphonso that will pay off for her. In many ways, Delores is right when she tells Margot that Margot needs to remember her place. Margot believes that as Alphonso’s mistress she has the right to demand a better life for her and for her sister. She had believed that Alphonso would hire her as manager of his hotel even though she is no one. When he announces to her that he has hired Miss Novia Scott-Henry this announcement seems to be a turning point for Margot. Instead of working and hoping that her reputation will get her what she wants, Margot seems to decide that she needs to get more actively involved in pursuing her own dream.

Verdene, meanwhile, is unaware of what Margot is doing in an attempt to get what she believes will make her happy. This does not stop Margot from taking out her frustration on Verdene after Alphonso does not give her the promotion for which she had hoped. Margot pushes Verdene to sell her mother’s house, believing that the money from the sale can buy a place where they can be happy together. When Verdene does not agree immediately to sell her mother’s house, Margot punishes her by leaving and not saying when she will return.

The reader learns more about the black rock to which the author made a mention in the prior section of chapters. This rock is an important symbol because Margot gave it to



Verdene before Verdene had to leave to go to London. The rock symbolizes the bitterness that Verdene feels about the point in her life when she was forced to flee to London and the way she was treated.

The pot that Verdene was left by her mother becomes a point of contention between Verdene and Margot in this section. When Verdene asks Margot to leave the pot alone, Margot takes the comment as a sign the Verdene is choosing her mother over Margot. Notice that it is Verdene who chooses to do the giving after this argument. She packs away all the pictures of her mother except one. She believes this symbolically makes room for Margot in her life. Margot, however, does not recognize the huge step Verdene has taken for her. She continues to push Verdene to put away the memories of her mother.

Meanwhile, the reader has more and more questions about what Delores might have done to Margot. Margot indicates that her mother sold her out to older men as a sex toy. She defends herself by telling Margot that what she did put food on the table for the family.

Discussion Question 1

Since Verdene's mother was so kind to Margot, it seems like Margot would have more respect for her memory. Why do you think that Margot is so demanding when it comes to Verdene purging her life of memories of her mother?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Margot's ambition, her desire to manage a hotel, is overreaching? Do you think she should do as her mother suggests and remember her place?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Margot so angry when she learns that Alphonso has hired another woman to fill the job of manager at the hotel? Why does she think she is owed the job?

Vocabulary

clout, modulated, innuendo, fervidly, meticulously, demure, devoid, ogling, hotelier, assuage, vacillating



Part I, Chapters 9-10

Summary

In Chapter 9, trying to get inspiration for her drawing, Thandi goes to the river wearing shorts and a tank top under her dress. Part of the bank where she used to play has been taken over by a resort and has a no trespassing sign posted. Five years ago the village next to River Bank was cleared for resorts. The people were forced out of their homes.

Thandi sees Charles sitting in his father's fishing boat. She sketches him. He sees her watching him and asks what she is doing, embarrassing her. They talk and Thandi admits to him that she wishes she could win an art competition at school. When Thandi leans toward Charles he pulls away and Thandi feels as if she has failed. She runs toward the water, saying that she is going for a swim. Her embarrassment is replaced by fear as she goes further and further out in the water. Just as she thinks she is about to drown, she feels strong arms grab her and pull her out.

Charles takes Thandi back to his shack where he gets her a towel. Thandi remembers playing here with Charles' sister, Juliette. Charles and Juliette's father had run away, leaving his wife and children to fend for themselves. When they reach Charles' shack, Thandi asks how Juliette is. She learns her friend dropped out of school and is working as a housekeeper in Mobay. She is confused when Charles tells Thandi that she can talk to Juliette herself when Thandi asks him to say hello for her. Before she leaves, Charles tells Thandi that she is a good artist.

At home, Margot questions Thandi as to where she was and who she was with. She has some of Thandi's sketches that she has pulled out of the trashcan. Thandi does not want to hear the lecture she knows is coming but her sister pulls her hands from her ears and makes her listen. When Thandi indicates what she does is none of Margot's business Margot slaps her. Thandi goes outside to escape Margot's anger. Margot follows her and tells her more tenderly that drawing will not get her anywhere. She tells Thandi how she had to start working when she was 14. She believed it was by making money that she could earn acceptance. Even though Margot told Thandi she still had a heart that Thandi had drawn for her, and that Thandi was good at drawing, Margot would not pay for art classes.

In Chapter 10, at Alphonso's villa, one of the girls there to entertain the men recognizes Margot. Later the girl introduces herself. She is Juliette, a girl who grew up near Margot and even played with Thandi when they were children. Margot is glad when Alphonso rescues her before the girl asks too many personal questions. As she is walking away the girl tells Margot that she goes by the name Sweetness.

Later that evening, when Margot is alone in the bedroom with Alphonso, Margot asks him before they make love if he loves her. He denies that he said that he loved her, and



indicates he was perhaps referring to loving the time they spent together. He does tell her that he knows about the after hours business she runs selling favors to the men. He suggests they can both profit from her business if she gives him 50% of her profits. He plans to set her up as the head of a prostitution ring. Her job will be to recruit and train girls for the business.

Later that evening on the drive home with Maxi, Margot tells him that she wants to own her own hotel, or even be the head of tourism.

Analysis

Both Margot and Thandi have dreams for themselves but both of them have others that are in charge of the things they need to achieve their dreams. Thandi wants to be an artist. Margot wants to keep Thandi in her place and make her go to school and be a doctor. Therefore, Margot refuses to pay for Thandi's art classes. Without her sister's approval for the classes, Thandi can no longer study her favorite subject. Margot, meanwhile, has ambitions to own and manage her own hotel. In her case, it is Alphonso who holds her back. He likes where he has Margot. She is making money for him and pleasing him in the process. Since he knows that Margot has been drawing men to his hotel with her under the table sex services, he probably realizes what a loss it would be if she were to be manager and stop providing those services. Instead of managing a hotel, Alphonso basically sets Margot up as a prostitution boss.

Jullette, meanwhile, represents a future possible for Thandi if she is not serious about her schoolwork. Margot realizes this when she recognizes Jullette and remembers how she and Thandi once played together. Meanwhile, remember the strange way that Charles told Thandi that she would need to speak to Jullette by herself if she wanted any conversation with her. This may indicate that Charles knows what his sister is doing and does not approve.

Tourism and its affect on Jamaica is pointed out in this section as Thandi looks at the landscape of her home. The resorts are a symbol of greed and the desire to make money regardless of the affect on the natives of the land. The developers of these resorts have gone from waiting until a natural disaster came to move the people from an area they hoped to build a resort, to forcibly throw these people out of their homes. Although Margot is aware of how the tourism industry treats the people of Jamaica, Margot willingly tells Maxi that she wants to be part of that industry.

Meanwhile, notice that Margot believes it is by making money that she earns acceptance for herself. This is why when Alphonso gives her the opportunity to make a good deal of money by basically running a prostitution ring she says yes even though she worries what Verdene will think if she finds out how Margot is making her money. Consider that Alphonso and Margot are basically on the same level. They are willing to do anything and use whoever they need to in order to make the money they believe they need.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Maxi's laugh turns out sounding like a cough after Margot tells him that she wants to own a hotel or even be the head of tourism?

Discussion Question 2

Does the argument that Margot gives Thandi in an attempt to keep her away from art make sense?

Discussion Question 3

In what ways are Margot and Alphonso alike as business people?

Vocabulary

pilfering, titillating, wizened, ambivalence, audacity, flail, concave, dexterity, periphery, conjure, sinuous



Part II, Chapters 11-13

Summary

In Chapter 11, Margot spent four weeks looking for the girls she hired. On the day she introduced the 15 girls who had made the cut to Alphonso and the investors, she told them to make her proud, just like Alphonso had told her. Although the girls are successful and made a good deal of money for Alphonso and Margot, Margot is still not happy. She believes, however, that based on her success that Alphonso will have to give her a managerial position.

As she works, Margot watches Miss Novia Scott-Henry closely. She knows the only reason that Alphonso hired her is because she is the former Miss Universe and will bring publicity to the hotel. Even though the woman is both beautiful and sweet, Margot suspects that she has some hold over Alphonso. It is when Kensington is bragging about how good of a boss Miss Novia Scott-Henry is that Margot can stand it no longer. She suggests to Kensington that the woman is homosexual, knowing that she has planted the beginning of a rumor.

When Miss Novia Scott-Henry begins asking about strange bookings and charges, Margot is surprised that Alphonso has not told her about his after-hours business. She wonders how Miss Novia Scott-Henry learned about the charges and learns, to her horror, that it was she who brought the strange charges to Miss Novia's Scott-Henry's attention because she sent the woman the wrong files.

After receiving a call for a sundae, Margot goes to Georgio's penthouse room. Because Alphonso needs this man's money so badly, Margot takes care of him herself. Georgio is not able to become erect so Margot manipulates him manually. She wonders if there will ever be a time that she will be able to enjoy sex on her own terms.

In Chapter 12, Thandi is getting a lightening treatment from Miss Ruby when she hears Charles calling her name. He tells Thandi she is beautiful the way she is as Miss Ruby runs to chase him off. Embarrassed, Thandi takes a different way home. She slathers her face with the Queen of Pearl Crème. Charles calls to her from outside the house. She ignores him but giggles when she thinks of how he said she was beautiful.

At the store later that week, Clover approaches Thandi. He is the man who raped her. She tries to ignore him but he touches her on the shoulder. When she tells the man to leave her alone he grabs himself and laughs at her. Thandi remembers that she was nine when Clover apprehended her on the way home from school and raped her.

In Chapter 13, Verdene uses bleach and water to scrub the blood off her house. She cries in her anger. Another dead dog is in her yard. Instead of digging a hole once she gets her shovel, Verdene decides to talk to Miss Gracie. No one answers when she bangs on the door. Verdene notices a man working in the garden. She speaks to him.



The boy introduces himself as Charles. When he defends Miss Gracie, Verdene accuses the boy of helping the old woman play her pranks on Verdene even though she feels he is not responsible for the things of which she is accusing him. She finally gives up on blaming Miss Gracie and asks Charles if he will help her to clean her sidewalk and bury the dog. She cries as she admits she wants to live in peace and be left alone. Charles puts his hand on Verdene's shoulder and tells her that he will help her.

That night, Verdene waits in the dark for Margot. She has called the hotel and was not been able to get in touch with her. She believes Margot is avoiding her. She had cooked a meal for herself and Margot but once she realizes Margot is not coming, Verdene eats it all. Then she throws the food up. Verdene believes she is being punished for leaving her husband after having told him about her affairs with women.

Analysis

In this section the reader watches as Verdene punishes herself because she believes she is responsible for running Margot away. Because she has grown up in such a religious atmosphere, she sees Margot's treatment of her as being pay back for the way she treated her husband. She criticizes herself for not being able to be the kind of wife that her mother had been. She does try to be this sort of partner for Margot. It is indicated that she sometimes fixes dinners for the two even though she has heard nothing from Margot.

The community also punishes Verdene because they believe that because she is homosexual, she is evil. They treat her in a way that is immature and uneducated. Verdene, meanwhile, just wants to be left alone. She finds a friend in Charles because he understands what it is like for the community to make judgments. They have done this to him in relation to his father. Charles had to take charity from people whom he knew were spreading cruel rumors about his family.

Notice how the author again uses the weather to strengthen the idea of the struggle within the girls as they try to decide if they want to work for Margot or not. They weigh the needs of their responsibilities at home against their opinion of how wrong working as a prostitute is. The moral storms inside the girls are mirrored by the windstorm that blows the doors of the villa open. The area still suffers from a drought. The narrator makes reference to this drought when he indicates the seed of doubt that Margot plants in Kensington's mind is the only thing that might flourish despite the lack of rain.

Significant also in this section is the final advice that Margot gives the girls before they begin their work. She tells them to make her proud - the same words that Alphonso told Margot when he gave her the job as a boss lady. Margot will use this phrase once again before the end of the novel.

The author continues to point out the differences between the poor of Jamaica and those who make their money off managerial positions in the tourism industry. The poor are reduced to selling their bodies just to ensure they can feed and clothe their children.



Those in the tourism industry, however, make comfortable lives for themselves. Even Alphonso's choice of a beauty queen as the manager of his resort is a publicity stunt to draw visitors to his resort. Although Margot might have been more qualified to run the hotel she is not given the job in favor a known personality.

Charles flatters Thandi when he tells her that she is beautiful even with dark skin. This compliment does more to encourage Thandi even than Miss Ruby's promises that her lighter skin will open doors for her. In fact, notice that when Miss Ruby tells Thandi that she will soon be "white as snow white" (159) an exaggeration that even a gullible teen can see through, Thandi responds "You mean light brown?" (159). Thandi knows that she will never be white. She is beginning to realize that the promises that Miss Ruby is telling her are not completely true.

Discussion Question 1

Now that Margot is working as the head of a prostitution ring, encouraging girls to sell themselves for sex, is she morally any different from her mother?

Discussion Question 2

How does the author use Thandi's encounter with Clover to bring to mind her rape?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the connection between Verdene and Charles. What does this say about Charles?

Vocabulary

brothels, cohort, voluptuous, furtive, abomination, flaccid, entity, imbeciles, indomitable, permeates, reprieve, litany, disparate



Part II, Chapters 14-16

Summary

In Chapter 14, Margot meets Sweetness at Rupert's Box Lunch and Variety Restaurant. She asks Sweetness to perform a job for her, to seduce a woman, before she agrees to hire her. At first, Sweetness refuses the job. Margot tries to help the girl overcome her doubts. When Margot has had enough, she gets up as if to walk away. The girl stands up and agrees to do as Margot wants. They make plans to meet that night. Before Margot leaves, Sweetness tells her that even though she is agreeing to do the job, she is not homosexual.

In Chapter 15, Charles and Thandi walk together toward the castle being built on the hill. They dance in the large, uncompleted hall. Charles says the building will probably be finished in March. Charles tells her that where he lives they can hear the construction noise all the time. He is angry when she suggests the people of River Bank will be kicked out of their houses. He tells her he is tired of the government clearing out the locals to make places for tourists with money.

Charles tells Thandi about his father, who was also an artist. Thandi has heard stories that Asafa was selfish because he left. Charles does not appear to think so even though the rest of the community has already judged him. When Charles looks at Thandi's work one day he tells her that she is the real deal. He asks her when she plans to tell her mother and sister that she intends to study art. He suggests she is rebelling by continuing to study art even though her sister is against the idea. They kiss and Thandi removes her shirt. Charles looks at her breasts wrapped in Saran Wrap and tells her to put her shirt back on.

In Chapter 16, Margot follows Miss Novia Scott-Henry to the hotel restaurant after she leaves work. The guests are excited to see the celebrity, who is even in advertisements for Queen of Pearl Crème. Margot and Sweetness watch the woman from the bar. Sweetness is even more nervous when she learns the woman she is supposed to seduce is the beloved beauty queen. Margot orders her a drink to calm her down. Ray from the kitchen has orders to sprinkle the lady's food with a medicine that Margot has supplied him.

As Margot watches Miss Novia Scott-Henry eat, she believes that Alphonso will have to give her a promotion after Miss Novia Scott-Henry leaves in scandal. Sweetness tries to leave, telling Margot she cannot do what she has agreed to do. Margot catches her outside and convinces her that she is ready. They hear Miss Novia Scott-Henry being escorted from the restaurant. The woman recognizes Margot and engages her in brief conversation, telling her that she hopes to get home before it starts raining. Margot stops the man who is escorting her out and tells him that she thinks Miss Novia Scott-Henry should stay there for the night.



Inside the upstairs room, Margot mixes another dose of medicine into a glass of water for Miss Novia Scott-Henry who is lying on the bed. Margot has Sweetness get on the bed with the lady as Margot takes pictures and makes recordings. She leaves, taking Sweetness' clothes and purse, and leaves the door to the room open.

Analysis

The author continues to make references to the ongoing drought in this section of the novel. Miss Novia Scott-Henry, for instance, is so disoriented by the drugs that Margot gave her that she believes she hears thunder. She wants to get home before the storm comes. Her desire is ironic because Margot has no desire to let Miss Novia Scott-Henry miss the coming storm that will be caused when the public sees the pictures she takes of the beauty queen and Sweetness together. The drought is also used for comparison purposes during the section where Charles and Thandi visit the castle together. It is indicated that "that damp warmth that courses through her body lingers as long as the drought" (182).

As Charles tells Thandi that he and his mother are able to hear the noise of the construction from their house, they discuss what the tourism industry is doing to their home. Charles is angry when he considers the way the developers are kicking the natives out of their homes because of greed. They want to provide tourists with nice places more than they want their people to have places to live, Charles believes. They briefly discuss the possibility River Bank might be destroyed for a development. Thandi does not believe River Bank would be a good place for a tourist site especially since the place is haunted by a presence known as Pregnant Heidi. This ghost is believed to drown unsuspecting amateur swimmers.

Notice the reference to the Queen of Pearl Crème in this section of the novel. The author shares Margot's opinion of the crème when it is mentioned that Miss Novia Scott-Henry has appeared in advertisements for the beauty product. Margot believes the crème falsely advertises good skin since Miss Novia Scott-Henry already has pale skin. "Some of Margot's girls use the crème, against her advice. Why would anyone want to permanently damage their skin to look like a beauty queen who was born that way?"

(189). With this opinion, Margot would not approve if she knew that her sister was using the crème with hopes of getting lighter skin.

Notice also the way some characters in this novel are judged by the residents of River Bank. Asafa is one of the characters judged by the community as being a bad father because it is believed he abandoned his family. Charles does not see his father in terms of this one single act. He tells Thandi that when his father was present, he learned a good deal from him. Notice that in the previous section Charles also sees beyond the belief that Verdene is all bad. He treats her with respect and even appears to have compassion for her when he learns how badly the people who are vandalizing her house are upsetting her. At the same time, Charles is honest with Verdene. When she



tells him she believes it is Miss Gracie who is leaving the animals in her yard, he tells her that he has heard that Verdene is the one killing the animals.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Charles tells Thandi to put her clothes back on when he sees the way her chest is wrapped up in plastic?

Discussion Question 2

Do you believe Margot is right to take her future into her own hands in the way that she is doing by setting Miss Novia Scott-Henry up with Sweetness?

Discussion Question 3

Compare Charles' opinion of his father with the community's opinion of Asafa. What differences do you see?

Vocabulary

versatile, consensus, accomplice, vertigo, cognition, primal

Part II, Chapters 17-20

Summary

In Chapter 17, Thandi approaches her mother while she is cooking dinner. She first tells her mother she has something to show her but Delores is so engrossed in asking about Margot she does not pay any attention. Delores misunderstands Thandi at first when she tells her mother that she wants to draw. Thandi clarifies she wants to draw for a living. One drawing in particular catches Delores' attention. It is of a half-naked woman in front of a mirror. Thandi tells her mother it is Delores and not her who wants her to be a doctor. When Delores asks who is giving Thandi ideas she can be an artist, Thandi tells her mother she has a mind of her own. She leaves the house. Inside, Delores thinks about the picture that Thandi showed her. Delores sees in that sketch the things that she thought she had hidden from Thandi. She realizes that Thandi sees her as a miserable creature.

Delores thinks about the summer when Margot was barely 24. A white man had walked into Delores' stall and asked how much for Margot. Even though Delores said that her daughter was not for sale, the man counted out \$600. Delores was caught up in all the things the money could buy and the opportunities it would open for the family. Delores had tears in her eyes as the man led Margot away. When the man returned Margot she would not speak to Delores. Delores hid the money in the mattress at the house. She realized it was gone only after her brother, Winston got a visa and a ticket to America. She was angry not only with her brother but also with herself for selling Margot's innocence for so little.

In Chapter 18, after the maids discovered Miss Novia Scott-Henry and Sweetness in the penthouse suite, it was announced that Miss Novia Scott-Henry was going to step down from her position. Because Margot was afraid Sweetness would tell about the set up she tried to fire her. She told Sweetness if she wanted to work for her, she had to agree not to talk about what had happened.

Margot attends her first business meeting the day that Miss Novia Scott-Henry stepped down. In the bathroom before Margot went to the meeting she saw Miss Novia Scott-Henry there. She was crying. The streaks her tears made on her face looked like scars.

In Chapter 19, Charles continues to help Verdene out around the house. They talk one day over tea. Charles is surprised to learn that Verdene attended church when she lived in London. Verdene tells Charles that she is just like him. He disagrees, telling her that he does not go to church. Charles is also surprised when he learns that Verdene was once married to a man. When she asks, Charles tells Verdene he decided to help her because he knew what it was like to have everyone thinking they were better than him.

In Chapter 20, when Margot sees the sketches of the new resort, she realizes it will take over the River Bank area. She listens as the men talk about removing the people from



that area by force. Margot asks why the people will not be given adequate warning. She explains that her family lives in that area. She realizes she should keep her mouth shut, especially since Alphonso has not yet announced who will manage the hotel. She considers that if River Bank is destroyed, it will give her a good reason to leave River Bank.

One of the men asks for a sample of the extra curricular activities that Margot offers. Margot puts him off as she asks Alphonso when she will get what she wants. He tells her that she does not have what it takes to run a resort. In response, Margot tells him that if she is not given the promotion she wants, she will tell the authorities about his prostitution business. She also threatens to make the pictures of Miss Novia Scott-Henry public. When Alphonso calls Margot “a power-hungry whore who would fuck anything” (217) she slaps him. He tells her to leave but when she pushes her threat to expose him he agrees to announce her promotion.

The author indicates that Margot left feeling as if her victory were bitter, the same way she felt when she had given Winston the money her mother had made off her virginity. She thought Winston would leave her alone but it only caused her mother to sell her to more strangers in order to make up the money that was lost.

Analysis

Margot's experience with being used for sex began early. She was barely a woman when her mother sold for the first time. Notice that it is indicated that Margot told her Uncle Winston where her mother hid the money she got from Margot's sexual encounter because she thought it would make Winston leave her alone. Apparently, the loss of the money just made Delores use her daughter to make more money. Although there is a mention by the narrator of Delores having tears in her eyes the first time that she sold her daughter, the reader feels only a slight sympathy for the woman when he learns that she continued to make money off Margot.

Because of the way her mother raised her, Margot sees sex as an asset that she can trade for money and favors. She has been using her sexual power over Alphonso for years. When it does not get her what she wants, she blackmails Alphonso. Not only has Margot set Miss Novia Scott-Henry up to have to lose her job, she also warns Alphonso that she will tell the authorities about the prostitution ring that he runs out of his hotel.

Margot is of the opinion that what she did to Miss Novia Scott-Henry will not have a lasting effect on the woman. She tells Sweetness “She's going to be all right. Those people don't suffer. They don't even know di meaning of dat word” (205). As if to contradict Margot's belief that Miss Novia Scott-Henry will not be permanently damaged, the narrator adds a description of Miss Novia Scott-Henry when Margot sees her in the bathroom. It is described that the lady has “long streaks down her face. Like scars.” (206). The comparison of the lady's tear tracks to scars indicates the incident will have more of a permanent affect on her than Margot had at first thought.



Charles continues to help Verdene and the two begin to form a connection. Charles tells Verdene he agreed to help her that first day “Cause ah know what it’s like to be scorned. To be di talk ah di town. To feel like di whole world turn dem nose up at you ’cause dem t’ink dem bettah than you” (211). Charles is surprised to learn that Verdene both went to church at one point and that she was married to a man. The people who gossiped about Verdene never told Charles those things. They focus only on the fact that they believe she is a homosexual.

Meanwhile, Margot uses the public hatred of homosexuals in order to get rid of the woman whom she sees as a threat to her. Even though Margot claims to love Verdene, she acts just like the people who harass and hurt Verdene.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that Margot tries to destroy Miss Novia Scott-Henry’s reputation by making it appear that she is a homosexual?

Discussion Question 2

What does it mean that Alphonso’s newest resort will be located in the area of River Bank?

Discussion Question 3

How does the knowledge of what Delores did to Margot affect your opinion of her?

Vocabulary

severance, pompous, condescending, heathen, annihilation, avert



Part III, Chapters 21-24

Summary

In Chapter 21, Sister Benjamin discovers Thandi wandering the campus. Thandi tells her she feels sick and goes to the nurse's office. The nurse examines her and assumes Thandi is pregnant because she wears a sweatshirt all the time. Thandi assures her that she is not pregnant. They pray and Sister Benjamin advises Thandi to concentrate on her studies.

After school, Thandi goes to look for Charles. When she cannot find him in any of the usual places she goes inside the main house. The house is dark and smells of urine and feces. She finds him inside, giving his mother a bath. Charles hears a creak from the floorboards and sees Thandi. She notices a look of growing anger in his eyes before she runs.

In Chapter 22, Thandi believes that it is her blackness that connects her to the bad sides she sees in Miss Violet, her mother and her sister. She worries she will end up like them. Delores comes in and sees Thandi ironing a dress. She lies and tells her mother that she is going to extra lessons when she is really going to the party. Delores is angry when Thandi accidentally burns the dress with the iron. It is when Delores is examining her that she notices for the first time how light Thandi's skin has gotten. She accuses Thandi of lying when she asks if Thandi has been going to Miss Ruby.

Thandi is relieved when Margot comes home. Margot tells her mother she will talk to Thandi. She tells Thandi that bleaching her skin is not necessary. That once Thandi believes she is beautiful, others will believe she is beautiful as well. Thandi asks if that is what got Margot her promotion. It is the first time Delores has heard about the promotion. She jumps into the conversation by asking Margot how much more money she is making.

In Chapter 23, Verdene has no choice but to go get food from the market when she is out of almost everything. Even though she tries to be inconspicuous people cross the road when they see her coming. Boys throw mango seeds at her. At the market, the vendors charge her the highest prices. At the end of the line of stalls, Verdene greets Delores. Delores becomes angry when Verdene asks about Margot. Delores yells at Verdene over and over again that Margot is not like Verdene. In her attempt to get away, Verdene runs into John-John and knocks a box of carved birds out of his hands, breaking them. John-John grabs Verdene insisting that she pay for the broken birds. John-John tries to hit Verdene but Verdene blocks his punch and twists his arm behind his back. As Verdene is picking up her basket and gathering the things that have fallen from it she is handed an apple. It is Miss Gracie, accusing Verdene of being a devil and telling her to go back to hell where she came from. As the entire crowd lashes out against Verdene, she runs from the market.



In Chapter 24, Delores remembered the day that Margot had come home so happy because Verdene had told her she was pretty. Delores already saw her daughter as a burden, living proof of her rape and the loss of her innocence. When she saw Margot's pleasure, she made her get in a bath while Delores pinched her all over. Margot's screams made Delores even angrier. When Verdene was sent away, Delores believed she had been right to try to keep her daughter from Verdene. She thought letting the man who offered to buy Margot in the marketplace have his way with her would cure Margot of any hint of homosexuality in her.

Even though it is early, Delores packs up and goes home. When she arrives at home, she is angry with herself for not hiding the money she made for Margot better. She thinks that if she had her circumstances might be different. She is suddenly angry with Merle and yells at her that Winston is not coming back. Her mother blamed her for getting pregnant with Margot. Now, Merle cries not because Delores is abusing her but because she misses Winston.

Analysis

Abuse reaches a high point in this section as Verdene continues to be abused by the entire community, Delores remembers more of the way she was abused by her mother because she was raped and got pregnant, and Delores also thinks of the ways that she abused Margot. For Merle, Delores and Margot, abuse almost seems hereditary. Delores is flattered by the man named Uncle when he tells her that she is pretty. Even though she is not old enough to know what is happening, he rapes her. Merle blames Delores for getting pregnant. It is Margot who came between Delores and Merle. When Delores realizes how happy Margot is when someone, a woman no less, tells her that she is pretty, Delores sees the same gullibility in Margot that got her in trouble. She tries to abuse this gullibility out of her daughter. Notice also that Delores also sees Margot as a burden as well as "a living proof of something stolen, mangled, and destroyed" (247). Margot is a living reminder of Delores' rape.

Meanwhile the entire community gangs up against Verdene. Miss Gracie hands Verdene an apple, a significant object in this section of chapters. The apple symbolizes the original sin committed by Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden. By handing Verdene this apple, Miss Gracie indicates she believes Verdene is the devil on earth.

Notice the personification as the author describes Verdene's empty kitchen. For instance "The open cupboards bare their skeletal insides" (239) and "The refrigerator hums, its cold breath on Verdene's face" (239).

Religion also figures heavily into this section of the novel as Thandi tries to decide how best to explain to the nun in the nurses' office why she is wearing a sweatshirt. "Thandi doesn't know what's worse in the eyes of this woman of God — the discovery that she could be correcting God's mistake and even blasphemously suggesting that he made one; or the assumption that she has fornicated and gotten pregnant" (223). In the religious atmosphere of her school, Thandi tries to determine if the nun will be angrier to



learn she is pregnant or if it will make her angrier to learn Thandi is trying to lighten her skin tone. Thandi considers her desire to change her appearance, the way God made her, just as big a sin as an unwed pregnancy.

Another significant experience for Thandi in this section of the novel occurs when she walks in on Charles taking care of his mother. Thandi senses the hopelessness in Miss Violet, a woman who once impressed Thandi because she was attractive and seemed independent. Now she hears this same woman beg her son to kill her because she believes her life is not worth living since Asafa has left her. Thandi is filled with dread because she fears this might be a vision of her future. All of the women Thandi sees around her are unhappy. She worries this unhappiness is the result of being black and poor.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way sexual abuse and rape has been a feature of Delores and Margot's family. Why does Delores treat Margot the way she does?

Discussion Question 2

How is Thandi affected by her act of walking in on Charles cleaning his mother?

Discussion Question 3

What do you learn about Verdene by the way she reacts to the people who attack her in the marketplace?

Vocabulary

blasphemously, fornicated, piously, indiscretions, nostalgia, regimen, intaglio, indelible, indomitable, litany, abyss, oblivious, propriety, prodigal, assimilated, retorts, vindictive, sodomite, chastises, guttural



Part III, Chapters 25-30

Summary

In Chapter 25, Charles is waiting for Thandi when she finishes the last round of her CXC exams. Thandi is not friendly to him because she feels her classmates are watching. He offers to carry her bag and her umbrella but Thandi refuses both offers. Thandi says she is in a hurry but Charles senses that she is ashamed of him. She tells him she is afraid of ending up like his mother and understands why her mother kept her from associating with certain people. He tells her that he understands and hopes she finds people worth associating with and walks away.

Thandi realizes she has hurt Charles' feelings and is ashamed of herself, especially since she likes the person she is when she is with Charles. Even though she has been taught not to do so, she yells after Charles and runs after him. He turns as she catches up to him and she slams into him. They walk together back to his shack. His attempt to have sex with her reminds her of Clover and she attacks him, clawing and biting. Charles blames himself, believing he was too rough with her.

In Chapter 26, Margot arrives home to find her mother looking for Thandi. When Margot suggests she ask Grandma Merle, Delores blames Margot for making Grandma Merle mute with her longing for Winston. She thinks Margot gave Winston the money that allowed him to go to the United States. Delores also accuses Margot of being responsible for Thandi's disappearance. She tells Margot that she is a disgrace and accuses her of allowing herself to be brainwashed by Verdene. When Margot accuses her mother of doing more harm to her than anyone else, Delores claims she did what she had to for Margot's own good. Margot grabs her mother around the neck, attempting to choke her. In reality she wants her mother to hug her and comfort her.

In Chapter 27, Margot begs Verdene to let her in. Verdene tells Margot she can sleep on the couch. Margot notices she has put the pictures of her mother back out. Margot goes to Verdene's room where the other woman is preparing for bed. She sees how skinny Verdene has gotten and hugs her bony frame. She holds onto Verdene even though Verdene slaps and hits her. She continues to hold on until the woman stops fighting.

In Chapter 28, Thandi tells Charles that Clover raped her. He realizes how badly the attack affected her since she fought against him so strongly when he tried to have sex with her. Even though she tells him not to, he says that Clover has to pay for what happened. Thandi begs him not to do anything that will have a lasting affect on him.

Charles confronts Clover at Dino's Bar the following afternoon. The fight begins as a fist fight but Clover pulls out a knife. Clover is cut. Thandi watches the fight. Those gathered are surprised because they have never seen her as upset as she is or heard her speak above a whisper. The crowd finally pulls Charles off Clover. He sits in the street



clutching his chest. An ambulance is called. Clover dies on the way to the hospital because of a heart attack but Charles is blamed with his death.

In Chapter 29, when Charles knocks on Verdene's door she lets him inside. She cleans him up and gives him a fresh shirt. He begins crying and tells her that he killed a man. Miss Gracie has told him that the police are looking for him. He tells Verdene that he killed the man because he had raped his girlfriend. He tells Verdene he has to leave. Verdene agrees because she does not want Margot to see him there and does not want him to see Margot. The darkness outside makes Verdene think that it might rain but she knows it will not. Before Charles leaves, Verdene tells him that she would have done the same thing if someone had hurt someone she loved. Charles says in response: "Yuh know, ah used to be afraid ah witches" (273). Verdene feels completely alone when he leaves.

In Chapter 30, Margot and Sweetness arrive at Alphonso's villa to find him and the developers frantic. A murder has taken place in the area being developed. The police will not allow construction to continue until the killer is located. Margot suggests that they offer a reward of \$10,000 for the killer. She claims the residents will turn the killer in just for the reward money.

The people discuss the reward put on Charles. They believe it is somehow connected to the planned developments for the area. Men had already searched Miss Violet's house. They had not hesitated abusing the woman when she said she did not know where Charles was.

Delores comes home to find Thandi in bed. She tells her about the reward to be given to the person who turns Charles in to the police. Delores imagines what she could do with that amount of money. Delores thinks Charles' mother would be right in turning Charles in because the money she would get would make up for the trouble she had in her life. Changing the subject, Delores tells Thandi that she knows that she has been seeing Charles. She tells Thandi that she should tell where Charles is to make up for the work Delores has done raising Thandi and paying for her schooling. Thandi refuses to tell where Charles is because she believes he is in trouble because of her. Delores is surprised when Thandi tells her the story of Clover raping her. Delores is angry and calls Thandi names, and then she holds Thandi for a moment. After that brief hug, Delores orders Thandi to turn Charles in and get what she deserves. She tells Thandi that Charles loved her for nothing more than her sex. She says that no one really loves a black girl.

Analysis

Thandi, Margot and Verdene all share the same desire for their mother's love. The author describes Delores' love in particular: "Her mother's love is as vicious and domineering as her personality. Once it's felt, there is none other like it" (279). Thandi receives the embrace from her mother she desires but the embrace comes with stipulations. Delores wants Thandi to turn Charles in and get the money she believes



their family deserves. When Margot goes to her mother she also hopes she will get some sign of affection from her mother. Instead, Delores spits in Margot's face, "the slime running down Margot's right cheek, a thick and slow-moving tear" (261). Meanwhile in her mother's house, Verdene also feels further from her mother than ever. Even though she is surrounded by her mother's things, she feels she has not moved any closer to her mother than before.

The author continues to use the drought as a backdrop to the emotions of the novel. The drought is building with little promise of rain. Even though Verdene looks out and believes that the darkness of the night sky, with no stars visible make it appear as if it might rain, as if the land might get some relief from its constant dryness, Verdene does not believe rain will come.

The shorter chapters help the reader feel the sense of urgency and speed as things begin to happen quickly.

A difference is also seen in Thandi by the public when she watches Charles and Clover fight. Although she has always been quiet and restrained when she has appeared in public, she is not worried about what people think of her when she sees the men fighting. "They set their eyes too on the young girl madly screaming, clamping both hands to her face, a woman in despair. 'Stop it! Stop it!' This sets off mild whispers among the women, for they have only heard her speak just a decibel above a whisper. Always proper" (267).

It is indicated that Margot does not completely think through her idea before she presents it to Alphonso. "An idea, which was really a thought uttered too loudly, too prematurely, surfaces from Margot's mouth" (275). The men like Margot's idea but she basically turns her own people against themselves. The promise of a good deal of money as a reward ignites the people and turns them into their own worst enemy. The men who search Miss Violet's house do not even show her the respect due her because she is a woman. "The fact that they came in on a helpless woman means nothing to them; they were looking to fill pants pockets that only knew lint and loose change" (276). Delores additionally uses guilt to try to manipulate Thandi into turning Charles in to the police. She believes Thandi will be getting what she deserves from Charles, who Delores believes is on a lower social level than Thandi.

Discussion Question 1

How are the people of River Bank motivated by greed? How does Margot betray her own people by suggesting the reward?

Discussion Question 2

Should Charles be held responsible for Clover's death? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 3

Why do you think that Verdene feels ambivalent when she at first learns why Charles killed Clover?

Vocabulary

debilitated, gargoyle, repose, spliff, reams, sentiments, defiant, immaculate, reprimanding, transmitted, inscrutable, vengeance, virile, shenanigans, quell, soiree, ransacked, wench



Part III, Chapters 31-36

Summary

In Chapter 31, Thandi sits on Asafa's boat. She is surprised when she hears Charles' voice. He tells her he is staying with Juliette and had just come to say goodbye to his old life. He has plans to move to Kingston. Juliette and Miss Violet will move to St. Elizabeth. Charles promises to call for Thandi to join him when he can.

In Chapter 32, Margot pauses for a moment, happy in her new office. Her peace is shattered when Sweetness runs in without being announced. She tells Margot that she cannot work for her any longer and that she has to go. Although Margot claims to care about Sweetness, the girl tells her that if she did, she would tell Alphonso to call off the reward. She even goes so far as to blackmail Margot by telling her that if she does not ask Alphonso to call off the reward, she will tell him what Margot did in order to get her job.

In Chapter 33, Thandi watches as part of the river village is destroyed by the bulldozers. The people gather at Dino's to talk about what is happening. They are shocked when Verdene joins them. She sits down next to Delores and Thandi, and tells the crowd that she was part of the community, too. She was not going to let the people there run her off again. Although the people try to convince her that they hate her more than the people who are destroying their land, Verdene insists she is not the one responsible for their problems. She refuses to be run away.

Margot scolds Thandi for not telling her that she had a boyfriend as she brushes her sister's hair. She explains to Thandi how her mother used to give her baths to help cure her of her sickness. Margot's sickness, however, was caused by her love for a woman. Thandi asks how Delores cured Margot's sickness and Margot describes how Delores set her up with men who liked her and offered money for her. Margot believes Delores did cure her because she lost herself that day and never felt that same kind of pain again. Thandi tells Margot that Clover hurt her and no one was there to protect her. She believes Charles does not deserve to be punished for standing up for her.

That night Margot meets her mother on the front porch. She asks if her mother knew what Clover had done to Thandi. As the women talk they can see the lights of the men looking for Charles. Delores does not seem upset her daughter was raped. She only tells Margot that she told Thandi to turn Charles in and get what she deserved.

In Chapter 34, Margot goes to Verdene's house where Verdene is looking through papers she has been given for the sale of her house. Margot has encouraged Verdene not to get a lawyer to help with the process. The contract was put together by a "subsidiary group under the Wellington Estate" (299).



In Chapter 35, over breakfast Thandi tells her mother that she knows about her act of selling Margot for sex. When Delores blames Verdene for Margot's sickness, Thandi realizes all that her sister told her is really true. Delores tells Thandi how her mother had beaten her when she learned that Delores was pregnant with Margot. Delores hurt fresh each time she saw Margot. When Delores met Thandi's father, she had realized it was Margot that he had wanted. As long as she let him have his way he stayed around. He left one day because Margot refused him.

As Delores talks, there is a knock on the door. There are two men who are handing out eviction notices to the people renting from owners who have agreed to sell their property. Delores wonders if this eviction is the punishment for what she did to Margo.

In Chapter 36, Thandi goes in search of Charles because she feels he is the only certainty in her life. Miss Violet's house is empty, she has already left. Miss Ruby is at home. Thandi is surprised by her face, which is blotchy and wrinkled. Miss Ruby blames what is happening to them on their ugliness. Thandi walks away and goes to Miss Gracie's house. She sees Margot leaving Verdene's house. Thandi tells her sister that she did not have to lie to her before she runs away. Thandi finally finds two prostitutes who tell her that if she was to ask the women whom they call the boss lady, she might be able to help Thandi.

Analysis

Thandi learns new and shocking things about both her mother and her sister. She feels angry and disoriented. She is angry with her mother for the way that she treated Margot as a tool and a way to earn money. Thandi does not entirely buy the idea that having sex with men was the way to cure Margot of her sickness. When Thandi sees her sister leaving Verdene's house, she is upset with her sister for lying to her and not telling her that it was with Verdene that she was spending all of her time. Adding to the story of Delores and Margot is the mention that Delores' mother beat her when she learned that Delores was pregnant. Delores has come to associate her daughter with her mother's anger and abuse. This knowledge helps the reader to understand why Delores is so hateful to Margot. She also has unresolved issues with her mother and feels she has lost her mother's love.

Notice the images of destruction and ruin included in these chapters. They help to further the tone of hopelessness and strengthen Thandi's new knowledge that not everything is as it appears. The mango that Thandi picks from Miss Gracie's tree is one example of this new knowledge that not everything is as it appears. "But when she lowers the mango, she sees that it is rotting, the inside carved out by worms" (307). While the outside of the mango looked normal, the inside is rotten and worm eaten. Thandi's discovery is similar to her discovery that even though her mother and sister claimed to be doing everything they did for Thandi's benefit, they were in reality both filled with greed and hate.



Remember in an earlier section when Miss Ruby told Thandi that God did not like ugly. She reminds Thandi of what she said when Thandi comes to her looking for Charles. "Didn't I tell you? Didn't I tell yuh dat God nuh like ugly? Look what's happening to us" (307) Miss Ruby blames the destruction of their village on the peoples' ugliness.

Meanwhile, notice how quickly Miss Ruby's bleached complexion has changed to a thing of ugliness. Her skin is described as being "paper-thin, wrinkled, and blotchy" (307). These are perhaps the results of years of damage done by bleaching her skin in her attempt to look attractive. This belief that she could make herself look attractive by chemical means blows up in her face, literally, because her complexion after she stops her bleaching routine looks worse than ever.

Suspense builds as Thandi looks for Charles and runs into people who suggest that she speak to the boss lady about where Sweetness might be. The reader knows that the woman the prostitutes speak of when they speak of the boss lady is Margo. Thandi seems to be on the verge of learning that her sister is in charge of a ring of prostitutes that includes Thandi's childhood friend. Notice what the prostitutes say about Margot. They call her "a snake. A vicious one" (310).

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Miss Ruby's assertion that "God nuh like ugly" (307). How is that statement seen differently in this chapter than it was originally interpreted?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Margot encourages Verdene not to involve a lawyer in the sale of her mother's house? Should Verdene go against Margot's wishes? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

How does Delores react when Thandi confronts her about the way she abused Margot and sold her to men as a sexual object? How is her reaction significant?

Vocabulary

fervor, accolades, tenure, interim, disheveled, animated, encircled, throes, turbulent, languid, concoction, veranda, perplexed, futility, impurities, dredging, subsidiary, repulses, appease, vacate, premises, saunter, eviction, voluptuous



Part III, Chapters 37-40

Summary

In Chapter 37, although Verdene is happy that Margot has come back to her and that Margot intends to include Verdene in her dreams, Verdene is unsure about the sale of her house. Not only has Margot convinced her not to get a lawyer, the contract also calls for Verdene to take less for her house than her parents paid as a down payment. While looking through the papers, Verdene has found more and more flaws in the contract. She decides to call her lawyer despite Margot's advice not to do so.

When she hangs up from her lawyer, Verdene puts on a pot to boil. She hears a knock on the gate and goes out to tell the men she will not sign the contract. She learns from the men that Alphonso Wellington and his company is in charge of the contract. Things fall into place in Verdene's mind as she realizes that Margot had known all along what was happening. She walks away from the men and goes to the kitchen. All the time that Margot had comforted her through the meeting at Dino's and the impending sale of her mother's house, Margot had known exactly what was happening. Verdene's thoughts are interrupted by the smell of something burning. It is the pot of tea that she was brewing in her mother's favorite pot. She looks at the burned inside of the pot.

In Chapter 38, Juliette is surprised when she sees Thandi. At first Juliette says that she does not trust Thandi and that Charles is not there. Juliette accuses Thandi of not knowing suffering even though they both grew up in River Bank together. Juliette reminds Thandi of all the times she rescued Thandi from bullies. She recognizes that Thandi was the one who used Juliette while Juliette was the doormat. Juliette felt that Thandi always needed her, but never made any attempt to return any favors that Juliette did for her. Juliette finishes by telling Thandi that she does not have a mind of her own and that Charles is too good for her.

When Thandi tells Juliette that Juliette is a whore, Juliette tells her what Margot does in order to earn the promotion that she got. Juliette also lets Thandi know that Margot sold out the community of River Bank for the new resort. Thandi asks Juliette to be quiet when Juliette tells Thandi that Margot claims to be doing all she is in order to support Thandi. Thandi asks Juliette what she is getting out of telling Thandi all that she is telling her. Juliette realizes how much she has said and tells Thandi to forget it all, just to do what is best and leave Charles alone.

Thandi thinks how she will carry her sister's legacy like the bucket of blood she saw Miss Gracie and Delores carrying to Verdene's house in the moonlight. Thandi was sickened by what they did. She crouches on the porch until Charles grabs her and pulls her inside. Although he embraces her, Charles steps away and tells Thandi they have to end their relationship. Thandi senses his hopelessness and asks Juliette if she is just going to let her brother give up. Juliette tells Thandi they might have some options but that she has to go and pay someone a visit. Juliette returns a couple hours later with



clothes. She throws Thandi a dress to put on and tells her she should be able to easily do what she needed to do.

In Chapter 39, Juliette and Thandi arrive at Alphonso's villa. Thandi is awed by all of the artwork inside Alphonso's house. He studies her and tells her that a body like hers could make men do anything. When Charles had seen the way that Thandi looked as she prepared to leave the house, he had told her that if she went out looking as she did, she should not plan to come back to him. She reminded him that she was doing it for him.

Alphonso asks Thandi if he can show her his favorite artwork. He takes her outside to a small cottage where he shows her other works of art. He asks her why she is there before he undresses her. She focuses on the paintings and suddenly realizes that Alphonso is on top of her. The door rattles and Thandi hears a woman's voice telling him that Sweetness said Alphonso had a surprise for her.

Margot stops talking when she sees Thandi trying to get dressed. Margot demands to know why she is there. Alphonso laughs at Margot and her anger. He tells her that he hired her to do a job because she is the only one without a conscience who would do the job. When Margot turns again to Thandi, Thandi tells her sister she understands now why her sister expects her to pay her back. She tells Margot she has only been a way out to she and Delores. Because Verdene had turned her back on Margot, Margot feels Thandi is all she has left. She tells Thandi that she owes her. That she had to give Thandi's father sexual pleasures in order to get the things Thandi needed. Now, Margot asks Thandi what she wants. Thandi tells Margot that she wants Charles to be freed of the reward against him. Margot realizes that she has to let her sister go and make her own way. She kisses her on the forehead, and like she tells the girls that she teaches to be prostitutes, tells her sister to "Mek me proud" (340).

In Chapter 40, Margot lives alone in her new beachfront villa. She imagines Verdene with her as she watches the rain from the sunroom. She had heard that Thandi had moved to Kingston. When the sun finally breaks through the rain clouds, the pool and all Margot's surroundings shimmer. It is just like Margot imagined, except she is alone.

Analysis

More important in this section than what the readers learns is perhaps what the reader does not learn. Margot is the only character whose story is completed. The reader learns that she winds up living in the beachfront villa that she always dreamed of living in. The only problem is that she lives there alone. The reader does not know how Thandi did on her exams. We also do not learn if the charges were dropped against Charles. We do not learn what happened with Verdene and her house, or what happened to Delores after she was evicted from her house. The reader is left with a good deal of unanswered questions. Perhaps this is because the only outcome the reader considers important is Margot's outcome. Her ambition and willingness to do whatever it took to get what she wanted paid off because she became the manager of a hotel and she also bought herself the beachfront villa of which she had always



dreamed. Unfortunately, with the way Margot has treated people through the course of her life, she finds herself alone in her villa.

The pot that Verdene's mother left to her continues to be an important image. When the people come to talk to Verdene about signing the contract for the sale of her house, Verdene had just put the pot on the stove with water in it. When she returns from talking to the men, the pot has boiled dry and burned. Although she has tried so hard to protect her mother's memory, Verdene has been unable to do so. She is facing having to sell her mother's house for much less than what it was worth. To make matters worse, Margot, whom Verdene considered being worth sacrificing her mother's memory is the one who has been working with the resort developers who are trying to buy her house. Verdene feels betrayed and tricked.

The author includes Thandi's memories of her mother and Miss Gracie's vandalism of Verdene's house in an interesting way. She compares the way that Thandi views the things she has learned about Margot to the way she views her memories of Delores and Miss Gracie as they carried a bucket of goat's blood to Verdene's house. Thandi was disappointed and sickened by what her mother was doing, just as she is disappointed and sickened by what she has learned that Margot has done. Even though Thandi had watched Verdene scrub the blood off the sidewalk, Thandi knew that the rumors that circulated around the town about the woman were indelible.

Remember in an earlier section of the novel that Margot had dreamed about walking across the marble tiles of her villa. This image occurred right before Margot encountered the dead John-crow on the ground, a bad omen. When Margot's dream comes true, it is not exactly as she thought it would be. Margot walks across the marble tiles as if they might crack. Her movements are careful, as if she is afraid even this bit of paradise that Margot has earned for herself might disappear.

Margot and Thandi's relationship falls apart when Thandi learns what her sister did keep Thandi in school. Thandi is offended by what her sister did but more so because she told people that it was because she wanted Thandi to be in school that she was acting as she was. Thandi feels like the scapegoat for her sister. Meanwhile, Margot realizes after she learns that Thandi was raped when she was nine, that she cannot protect her little sister from everything. Notice that Margot leaves Thandi with the words "Mek me proud" (340) the same words that Alphonso told Margot before he put her in charge of the prostitutes.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Margot is the only character whose story is really brought to a close?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Margot and Thandi's relationship fall apart?



Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that the author includes Thandi's memories about Delores and Miss Gracie vandalizing Verdene's house? What does this make you think about Delores and Miss Gracie?

Vocabulary

alleviate, comply, legacy, indelible, contorts, fatigue, gesticulates, epaulets, demureness, cadence, intrusion, contempt, ultimatum, hotelier, quipped, pristine, demurely, palpable, vulnerability, violating, boisterous, sullied, austere, innuendos, panoramic, pining, receded, inevitably



Characters

Margot

Margot is perhaps the leading character in this story, the one the reader learns the most about through the course of the novel.

Margot is the significantly older sister of Thandi and oldest daughter of Delores. When she was barely 14, Delores sold her daughter for the first time to a man for sex. Delores earned \$600 from that encounter. Margot found where her mother had hidden the money and gave it to her uncle with the hopes that he would leave her alone.

Although Margot felt protective of Thandi and wanted to keep her from the lifestyle she had lived because of her mother's greed, Margot was also resentful of Thandi. Even though Thandi's father had sex with Delores, it was Margot that he really wanted. Delores allowed the man to have sex with Margot because it kept him around helping to support the family. Margot was blamed when she refused the man a sexual favor and he left.

Meanwhile, Margot made friends with Verdene, the daughter of a woman who watched Margot for her mother. Verdene, a homosexual, told Margot she was pretty. It was at this point that Margot and Verdene fell in love with one another. Margot struggles with her affection for Verdene because she is afraid to take on the label of homosexual. A homosexual in their Jamaica village of River Bank is labeled as a witch and is shunned by the rest of the community.

Margot works as a head desk clerk at Palm Star Resort. When Alphonso, a younger generation of the Wellington family took charge of the resort, Margot kept her job because she was willing to sleep with Alphonso. Margot believes that what she is doing will pay off and Alphonso will make her the manager of a hotel like he has promised her. Instead, Alphonso talks Margot into becoming the head of a prostitution ring when he learned about the after hours business she had been running for years.

Because Margot is so intimately involved with Alphonso, she learns that the village of River Bank, where her family lives, will be destroyed when the new hotel that Alphonso has finally agreed to let her manage is built. She knows that the house in which Verdene lives will be purchased from her at significantly less than what it is worth. Regardless, Margot encourages Verdene to sell her house without reading the contract or getting a lawyer. This move on Margot's part destroys her relationship with Verdene.

Construction on the new hotel is stopped because Charles killed Clover and is now on the loose. The police want to catch the killer before construction can begin again. Margot suggests a reward be put out for Charles' capture. This sets her against not only all of the people in her community but mostly against her sister, Thandi. Thandi loves Charles, who had confronted Clover because Clover had raped Thandi.



When Margot walks in on Thandi seducing Alphonso in an attempt to get the reward being offered for Charles' eliminated, she realizes she cannot protect Thandi from everything. She says goodbye to Thandi by asking her sister to make her proud, the same advice she gave the prostitutes she mentored.

In the final scene of the novel, Margot is seen in the beachfront villa she had imagined living in with Verdene and Thandi. Instead, Margot is alone in the paradise she had always imagined for herself.

Verdene Moore

Verdene Moore is a homosexual woman who comes back to the village of River Bank to live after her mother dies and leaves Verdene her house. In River Bank, Verdene is tormented by the people of the community because of her sexual orientation. They leave dead animals in her yard and write in blood on her house and sidewalk.

Verdene had befriended Margot when Margot was only a child. Verdene had not liked Margot at first because she was jealous when her mother, Ella, began watching Margot. When Verdene found Margot crying after her schoolmates made cruel statements about her, Verdene developed a maternal protectiveness toward the girl. It was when Verdene was in college that she was discovered having sex with another girl. Because the people of the community were so biased against Verdene, the girl was sent to London to live with relatives there.

In an attempt to feel close to her mother again, Verdene returned to River Bank when her mother died. She enjoyed living in her mother's house with her mother's things around her. Margot, however, was jealous of the care that Verdene took of her mother's things. Because Margot felt she was competing with Verdene's dead mother, Verdene put away some of her mother's pictures and things in order to make Margot feel more comfortable.

Verdene and Margot's relationship falls apart when Verdene realizes that Margot knew all along that she would not get a fair price for her mother's house from the developers of the new resort. Margot had not told her that the resort was being built by Alphonso nor that Margot would be managing it.

The reader never learns the details of the breakup between Margot and Verdene. Also not known is how Verdene renegotiated the sale of her house or what she did after River Bank was demolished.

Charles

Charles is the common boy with whom Thandi falls in love. Charles is the brother of Juliette and the son of Violet and Asafa.



When Charles' father abandons his family, Charles is forced to drop out of school and do odd jobs to help his family survive.

One of the people for whom Charles does odd jobs is Miss Gracie. When he is at Miss Gracie's house working he is approached by Verdene because someone has painted on her sidewalk with blood. Charles agrees to help her when he sees how distressed she is by the way the community is treating her. He understands because he has been treated much the same way.

Thandi attacks Charles when he tries to have sex with her. She tells him how Clover raped her when she was nine. Charles takes it upon himself to make Clover pay for raping Thandi. The two get into a fistfight at Dino's Bar. Clover pulls a knife. He is not killed by injuries received in the fight but the incident does cause him to have a heart attack from which he dies.

Because the people of the village accuse Charles of having killed Clover, Charles runs. He stops first at Verdene's house where she cleans him up and gives him a clean shirt. He has learned from Miss Gracie that a reward has been offered for his capture. All of the people who had once been his friends are now looking to turn him in because they are greedy.

Charles and his mother hide in the house of his sister, Juliette, who lives in a different village. He disapproves of Thandi and Juliette's plan to save his life. It is never learned if Thandi and Charles continue their relationship or if he is saved from going to prison.

Thandi

Thandi is Margot's younger sister and the daughter of Delores. Both Margot and Delores base hopes for their future on Thandi to get a job as a doctor and pull the family out of its lifestyle of desperate poverty.

Thandi's mother and sister work hard to send her to a private school. Because of her schooling, she does not fit in with the people in her community. She speaks differently from them because she speaks in proper English instead of using the heavy dialect of many of the people. Thandi also stands out because she is most often seen wearing her school uniform. None of the other teens in her community are able to attend this expensive private school.

Because Thandi comes from a rural area known for its poverty, she does not fit in with the other students at the school either. Thandi believes she does not fit in because her skin is a darker color than those who attend the same school she does. For this reason, Thandi bleaches her skin, a procedure of which neither her mother nor her sister approve.

Instead of attracting a student at her school, Thandi falls in love with Charles, a boy who grew up near her. When Thandi tells Charles her secret — that she was raped by Clover when she was a child — Charles confronts Clover and kills him. Thandi feels



responsible and tries to seduce Alphonso in an attempt to get Charles' charges dropped and the reward eliminated.

Miss Ruby

Miss Ruby is the resident of River Bank who had once sold fish in order to make a living.

At the point of time in which this novel is set, Miss Ruby is selling bleaching treatments. She tells the women that it is only by bleaching their skin that they will be able to move forward in their lives.

Thandi visits Miss Ruby for bleaching treatments as well. It is Miss Ruby who tells Thandi that she should bleach her skin because dark skin is ugly and God does not like ugly.

During the time that the village of River Bank is being cleared out by the developers Thandi goes to Miss Ruby to see if she knows where Charles is. Miss Ruby tells Thandi that their community is being punished because the people there are so ugly.

Also significant about Miss Ruby is that when Thandi sees her the last time, her once beautiful complexion is wrinkled and appears to be paper-thin. There are blemishes and purple looking bruises all over her face, apparently the results of the damage she has done to her skin because of the bleaching treatments.

Delores

Delores is the mother of Thandi and Margot. She makes and sells trinkets to the American tourists in Jamaica. She is known as one of the best sellers in the market where she rents a stall.

Delores was never married and raised her daughters on her own. Her poverty made her desperate for money. She was so desperate that she sold her oldest daughter, Margot, as a sex toy when the girl was only 14. Delores continued to use Margot as way to earn money through her childhood.

Delores also abuses her daughter when she learns that Margot has developed a friendship with Verdene, a woman known to be a homosexual. Believing that she will keep her daughter from being a homosexual, Delores gives her daughter ritual baths which include pinching her.

After the shack in which they live is bought by developers for Alphonso's new resort, the reader does not learn what happens to Delores.



Alphonso

Alphonso is the younger generation Wellington who takes over the Palm Star Resort. Alphonso keeps Margot on as an employee only because she allows him to have sex with her. Alphonso also uses the ideas Margot has for making the hotel great, but never gives her credit. He makes empty promises to her that he will eventually let her manage a hotel.

Despite his promises to Margot, when Alphonso fires his hotel manager, he hires a former Miss Universe to fill the position. In order to keep Margot from making a fuss, Alphonso tells her that he knows about her after hours work as a prostitute and that he wants her to manage a group of girls to provide the same services. He does give her a cut on the profits.

It is not until Margot threatens to tell the authorities about the prostitution ring that he is running that Alphonso agrees to let her manage on of his new hotels.

Miss Gracie

Miss Gracie is a highly religious elderly woman who lives next door to Verdene.

Even though Charles does not think she is capable, Miss Gracie and Delores work together to put dead animals and write threats in blood on Verdene's walls and sidewalk.

When the community attacks Verdene at the market, Miss Gracie hands Verdene an apple, indicating that she equates Verdene with Eve, the woman whom it is believed committed the original sin of eating fruit forbidden by God according to the Christian Bible.

Miss Novia Scott-Henry

Miss Novia Scott-Henry is the resident of Jamaica who is a former Miss Universe. Alphonso hires Scott-Henry to work as the manager of his hotel because he believes she will bring people to resort because they are familiar with her.

Margot is angry because Scott-Henry is hired instead of her for the manager's job. Therefore, Margo arranges to set Scott-Henry up with Sweetness to appear as if they are having a homosexual relationship. Scott-Henry is forced to quit her position when Alphonso finds out about the incident.



Uncle Winston

Uncle Winston is the brother of Delores. After Delores sold Margot to a man as a sex object, Margot gave the money she made to Winston in the hopes that her uncle would leave her alone.

Delores held a grudge against Winston because she believed he had found and stolen her money. When Winston left, their mother also became mute, leaving Delores with another person that she had to support.

Juliette aka Sweetness

Juliette, who uses the name Sweetness as her work name, is a girl Thandi's age who works as a prostitute. Juliette is also Charles' sister. She is the one who Margot hires to pose for the blackmail pictures with Miss Novia Scott-Henry.

After Charles accidentally causes Clover's death, it is Juliette who helps keep Charles hidden and then later helps Thandi get the reward eliminated that has been offered for Charles' capture.

Grandma Merle

Grandma Merle is Delores' mother and the grandmother of Margot and Thandi.

When Delores discovered she was pregnant with Margot, Merle beat her. As a result, Delores hurts every time she looks at Margot.

At the time in which the novel is set, Grandma Merle is mute. It is believed she lost her will to live because her son, Winston, left and went to America.

Ella

Ella is Verdene's mother. After Verdene went to school and Ella's husband died, Ella agreed to watch Margot when her mother and grandmother were busy. Verdene was at first jealous of the attention her mother gave to Margot.

Later, Margot blames Verdene for allowing her mother to come between the two even though Verdene's mother is dead. In her will, Ella left her house to Verdene.

Georgio McCarthy

Georgio McCarthy is a wealthy older man whom Margot knows that Alphonso depends upon for his funding. Because Georgio is so wealthy, Margot attends to him herself instead of sending one of her girls to take care of his needs. Margot believes that she is



the one responsible for getting the resort built that will destroy River Bank because she convinced Georgio to sign a check to invest in the new property.

Asafa

Asafa is Miss Violet's husband and the father of Charles and Juliette. He worked as a fisherman when he lived in River Bank. Charles told Thandi that he was also an artist. Although everyone in River Bank believes that Asafa was a loser, Charles tells Thandi that he learned a good deal from his father.

Miss Violet

Miss Violet is the mother of Charles and Juliette. She is the wife of Asafa. Since her husband abandoned her, Miss Violet has stopped living. The atmosphere in her house is caught in the past. She does nothing but lie in bed. Charles tries to take care of her but she begs for him to put her out of her misery.

Reginald Wellington Senior

Reginald Wellington Senior is the man who owned the Palm Star Resort when Margot was first hired to work there. He recognized Margot's ambition and taught her all that he knew about managing a hotel and resort.

Clover

Clover is the handyman, plumber and electrician for River Bank. He is also the one who raped Thandi when she was only nine years old. When Charles finds out about the rape, he engages Clover in a fight. During the fight, Clover starts having a heart attack, which ultimately kills him.

Kensington

Kensington is a young, gullible girl who works with Margot at the front counter of Palm Springs Resort with Margot. Margot feeds Kensington ideas that Miss Novia Scott-Henry is homosexual. She knows that Kensington will spread the rumors among the employees.

Brother Smith

Brother Smith is Thandi's art teacher. Although he recognizes that Thandi has a talent for art, he encourages her to focus on her studies.



Jacques

Jacques is the name of the man who is believed to be the father of Thandi. It is from Jacques that Thandi got her good hair.

Akua

Akus is the girl with whom Verdene is caught having a homosexual affair during college.

John-John

John-John is the boy who grew up with Margot. John-John appears to still have a crush on Margot even though Delores tells John-John that Margot is not worth his attention.



Symbols and Symbolism

Queen of Pearl Crème

The crème represents the dream harbored by young black girls that if their skin is lighter, they will be accepted and loved. Queen of Pearl Crème is a bleaching crème that Miss Ruby recommends that Thandi purchase to help lighten her skin. It is noted that Miss Novia Scott-Henry, who had a naturally light complexion, worked as a model for the crème. This is perceived as false advertising on the part of the makers of the crème.

Thandi's Uniform

Thandi's school uniform is a symbol of the ways in which she is different from the other teens in her area. It is also a symbol of the high hopes that her family members have for Thandi.

A Small Dutch Pot

This small pot is a symbol of Verdene's mother. Because Verdene criticizes the way Margot handles this pot, Margot believes that Verdene is allowing her mother to come between the two of them. The pot is burned when Verdene leaves water boiling in it when she deals with the men who are trying to buy her house. She learns from those men that Margot knew how little Verdene would get from the sale of her house. She also learns that Margot has known all along that the resort would take the house and has done nothing about it because she had been promised that she would manage the hotel that was going to take over River Bank. When Verdene returns to her kitchen to see the burned pot it symbolizes the way Margot has burned Verdene in their relationship.

Smooth Black River Stone

This smooth black river stone represents the bitterness that Verdene holds onto because she had to leave her home after she was caught sleeping with another woman.

Charles' Towel

This towel represents Charles and his love for Thandi. It is after their first conversation together when Thandi decides to go swimming even though she is not able to swim. Charles saves her from the undertow and gives her this towel on which to dry off.



Sweatshirt

This sweatshirt represents Thandi's desire to have lighter skin. Even though it is hot and dry, Thandi wears the sweatshirt because Miss Ruby says the heat will make her skin get lighter faster.

A Fuchsia Dress

This fuchsia dress represents the way that Thandi misrepresents herself to her family. Her mother and sister think that Thandi wants to be a doctor and that she is taking their advice and not getting interested in boys. In reality, Thandi is paying for bleaching treatments in the hopes of attracting a light skinned boy. She also buys this dress to attend a party that her family has told her that she is not to attend.

An Apple

This apple represents the idea of the original sin. Miss Gracie gives Verdene this apple after Verdene is attacked by the community members in the market.

Asafa's Boat

Asafa's boat represents Charles' father. Charles often spends time sitting in his father's boat in an attempt to feel close to his father.

The Reward for Charles' Capture

This reward for Charles' capture represents the greed that overcomes the members of the River Bank community when the reward is offered.



Settings

River Bank

River Bank is the village in Jamaica where a majority of the action of the novel takes place. It is where various characters including Verdene, Miss Ruby, Margot, Delores and Thandi live. At the end of the novel, the residents are being forced out of River Bank so that a new resort can be built.

Palm Star Resort

Palm Star Resort is the resort on which the hotel where Margot works is located.

Bright Pink House

This bright pink house is located next to Miss Gracie's house. It is the house that Verdene's mother, Ella, left to her when she died. Verdene moved back to River Bank after her mother died and lives in that house.

Old Fort Craft Park

Old Fort Craft Park is one of the places where Delores sells her trinkets to American tourists.

Mr. Levy's Wholesale Shop

Mr. Levy's Wholesale Shop is the store where Thandi buys the Queen of Pearl Crème that is supposed to lighten her skin. It is also at this store that Clover approaches Thandi again after he returns to River Bank.

Dino's Bar

Dino's bar is the place where Charles confronts Clover about raping Thandi. Charles accidentally injures Clover badly enough that he dies.

Rupert's Box Lunch and Variety Restaurant

It is at Rupert's Box Lunch and Variety Restaurant that Margot meets Sweetness and proposes to her that she seduce a woman in order to get a job working for her.



Saint Emmanuel High School

Saint Emmanuel High School is the private school that Delores and Margot work to make sure that Thandi can attend. They believe her schooling is the answer to a good future.

The Beachfront Villa

Margot dreams of being able to purchase for herself a beachfront villa. When she finally gets a position where she can afford this position, she has alienated everyone whom she ever loved.



Themes and Motifs

The Negative Impact of Tourism on the Natives of a Country

Although tourism may bring millions of dollars to a country, the common people of that country often suffer. The novel *Here Comes the Sun* illustrates how tourism impacts the people of River Bend as more and more resorts take over the area. Jobs are created, but most of them are low paying. Homes are taken over when resort owners decide on a new resort area. In their attempt to fight for what is theirs, residents often find themselves on the wrong side of both the government and the law.

Margot is one of the people who tries to make her livelihood by working at one of the fancy resorts in Jamaica. She believes that because Reginald Senior teacher everything she needs to know about running a hotel that she will eventually be able to move up to a managerial position. When the younger generation Alphonso takes over, Margot eventually realizes Alphonso has no intention of making her manager. What makes Margot different from the others who work at the hotel is that she is willing to do whatever she has to in order to get what she wants. This includes being the owner's mistress and taking charge of a ring of prostitutes.

Margot's mother, Delores, also tries to take advantage of the tourists to make a living for herself. Even though she is considered one of the best salesmen in the market, Delores still lives in poverty. She makes barely enough selling her trinkets to keep her family's rent paid and buy food.

The people of River Bend learn first hand how ruthless the developers can be when their area is slated for a resort. Little consideration is given to the people who call that area of the land their home. Renters are given little time to leave their property. Home owners, like Verdene, find that they are forced to sell their homes for much less than they are worth.

The people know better than to try to revolt against the developers. They have seen how the government will take sides with the developers because the resorts bring in income for the country. Residents of a neighboring community even had soldiers sent to their area take control of the situation when residents began stealing building supplies from resort sites in order to try to build new homes for themselves. The people were punished and forced to leave their homes.

The Belief that Beauty Brings Success

The novel *Here Comes the Sun* portrays women as sexual figures. Women are not seen for their abilities but their beauty. Thandi falls prey to one of the fables about



beauty when she goes to Miss Ruby for skin bleaching treatments. She believes that if her skin is lighter, she will be more accepted and more likely to be successful.

Thandi admires her sister, Margot, because she sees the way that men look at her. Thandi wants men to look at her that same way. She is too young to realize that the way men look at Margot is demeaning because they see her only in terms of her sexual attractiveness. Still, Thandi wishes that she had this power over men.

Believing that lighter skin will help her to get the results she desires, Thandi begins buying skin-bleaching treatments from Miss Ruby. The treatments are dangerous and bad for the people who are having their skin bleached, but Miss Ruby does not mention this. She tells Thandi only that it is by bleaching her skin that she will get ahead in life.

When Delores and Margot find out that Thandi is bleaching her skin, they are both angry with her. Margot's thoughts about Miss Novia Scott-Henry and her work as a spokesperson for Queen of Pearl Crème lets the reader know what Margot thinks of the crème. Not only is this false advertising since Miss Novia Scott-Henry has naturally light skin, it also encourages young people to follow a fad that could damage them and make them less attractive as they get older.

It is Charles who finally tells Thandi that she is beautiful even with dark skin. He is one of the few men in the novel who is characterized as seeing women as something other than a vessel to satisfy his sexual desires. He seems to truly care about Thandi and wants her to be herself, not a washed out version of herself.

The Destructive Relationship Between Mothers and Daughters

Destruction seems to be almost hereditary in the line of mothers and daughters who descend from Grandma Merle. Merle, Delores, Margot and Thandi all have troubled relationships with their mothers. One similarity between these relationships is that the mothers withdraw their love as a way to punish their daughters. In comparison with the ladies of Merle's family is Verdene's relationship with her mother Ella. Although their situation was very different, Verdene also feels hurt by her belief that her mother withdrew her love from her.

The relationship between Merle and Delores is strained because Merle did not believe that Delores was raped. Even though her daughter was too young to know what her uncle was doing to her, Merle chooses to blame Delores. Delores remembers her mother beating her when she learned that Delores was pregnant. Every time after this when Delores sees Margot, she remembers the pain of her beating as well as the loss of her virginity. She blames Margot for what has happened to her. For this reason Delores is cruel to her daughter. Even though Margot longs for her mother to love her, Delores can not bring herself to do so.



Margot and Delores' relationship is even more strained because Delores sold Margot, at age 14, to a man for \$600. Margot is angry that her mother could use her only as a way to earn money for herself. She stays with her mother and Thandi, her younger sister, only because she is so afraid that Delores will do to Thandi the same things that she did to Margot.

The relationship between Thandi and Delores is strained because Delores intends for her daughter to get a job that can help support her family. Thandi, however, does not want to be a doctor like her mother wants her to be. She wants to draw. Most of all Thandi wants her mother's love and acceptance. She wants her mother to hold her and comfort her. Thandi feels punished because her mother refuses to give her love freely.

The relationship between Ella and Verdene is different from the ones in Margot's family but Verdene still feels as she were alienated from her mother and her mother's love. Verdene is forced to move to London when she is discovered having an affair with another women. It is when Verdene is separated from her mother that she feels she has been discarded. Ella dies while Verdene is in London. Verdene returns from London and lives in her mother's house after Ella's death. Even in her mother's house, surrounded by her mother's things, Verdene still feels as if there is a great divide between herself and her mother.

Thandi's Coming of Age

Thandi's coming of age is a significant theme in this novel as she falls in love, learns how her sister has been funding her schooling, and takes a stand to protect someone she loves. Thandi is portrayed at first as a gullible teen who believes that lightening her skin will make people like her. At the end of the novel she appears as a young woman who is willing to give herself up in order to help the man she loves.

The reader finds it easy to sympathize with Thandi because it is easy to understand the pressures teenagers feel. Even in Jamaica, teens want to be popular and accepted. They also want to be able to have the freedom to decide their own future. Thandi has had her future decided for her. Her mother and sister work to send her to a private school and insist that she will be a doctor. They do not care that she wants to be a professional artist.

Thandi is probably most upset by the way her mother and sister continually blame her for the hard work they have to do. Thandi does not ask for them to send her to school. When Thandi learns that Margot has been selling herself as a prostitute and telling others she is doing it to help Thandi, Thandi is both sickened and disappointed.

It is when Thandi meets Charles that she begins to pull away from her mother and sister. She finally tells them what Clover did to her when she was nine. Delores does not seem particularly sympathetic that her daughter was raped. Margot is angry with herself because she was not able to protect her sister. It is Charles who says that Clover has committed a crime and that he must pay for that crime.



Thandi seeks action when Charles is in danger of being jailed for accidentally causing Clover's death. She agrees to seduce Alphonso in hopes that she can have Charles' charges dropped. Thandi seems to be following in the same steps as Margot although Margot slept with Alphonso because she wanted to keep her job. Thandi seduces Alphonso to help another person, an act that seems to prove that Thandi is maturing.

Ambition

Ambition, especially when it is paired with desperation, can be dangerous, as is illustrated in the novel *Here Comes the Sun*. Margot tells her friend Maxi that she wants to be the manager of a hotel. Even though she tells others that she works at the hotel because she wants to send Thandi to a private school, Margot appears to be working at the hotel for her own purposes as well. In the end of the novel, Margot gets what she wants but has alienated herself from everyone she loves in the process.

Margot wants to be the manager of a hotel. She believes the job will come easily because Reginald Senior had taught her everything she needed to know about managing a hotel. Margot comes to realize that she will have to take care of herself if she wants the job she so desires. She first has to sleep with Alphonso just in order to keep her job at the hotel. After that, she keeps sleeping with Alphonso hoping he will give her what she wants. Margot finally sets up the manager of the hotel, a woman, to be discovered in bed with another woman in order to get rid of her. She blackmails the owner of the hotel to give her the manager position.

Margot additionally goes so far as to betray her girlfriend and the people of her village in order for a new hotel and resort, which she has promised she will manage, to be built. When Margot sees the new resort will be built where she lives, she says little about the location. In fact, it is noted that she realizes she needs to keep her mouth shut if she wants to get the job she desires. It is also noted that Margot is probably aware of how little Verdene is being offered for her house. She encourages Verdene to sign the papers without reading the contract or hiring a lawyer. It is when Verdene realizes how much Margot will benefit from the sale of Verdene's house and how little Verdene will get that she breaks off the relationship.

In the end, Margot is pictured living in the beachfront villa she had always imagined she would purchase for herself. She had always imagined that Verdene and Thandi would live there with her. Instead, Margot is alone.

Styles

Point of View

This story is told from the point of view of a third person omniscient narrator. There is no particular character of focus. This keeps the reader from getting connected to any of the characters since all of the characters have their own story to tell about life in the small Jamaican village. Had the author chosen a first person point of view or even had the third person narrator to focus on one character the story would not have been as complete since only one character's point of view and opinions would have been shared in the novel.

Language and Meaning

Because the author copies the stylistic speech of the Jamaicans she can individualize her characters based on the way they speak. The less intelligent people, like Delores and Miss Ruby, speak with more patois than those with more schooling. Thandi, for instance, is often made fun of by the common people of her village because she speaks using proper English. Margot, meanwhile, is able to speak basically proper English when she is waiting on the people in the hotel but she can also speak with the more common dialect when she is with her own people.

Structure

This book is written in the present tense with events occurring in a basically linear timeline. The first chapter of the novel lays down the basic information the reader needs to understand the novel. By the end of the first part of this novel Margot has put voice to her desire to manage a hotel. The action rises through the second part of the novel with Margot setting Miss Novia Scott-Henry up to be fired and blackmailing Alphonso to get her position as hotel manager.

It is in Part III of the novel that everything begins to fall apart for Margot. The action also climaxes in this section when Charles learns that Clover raped Thandi. The climax remains high until Margot discovers Thandi in Alphonso's villa at which point the action falls. The denouement comes when Margot finds herself alone in the fancy villa she had finally bought for herself.



Quotes

She rolls over in the bed she shares with her sister knowing that one day she won't have to do this. That one day Thandi will make everything better.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1)

Importance: The author includes a note about how poor Margot and Thandi are, they have to share the same bed even though Margot is an adult and Thandi is 15, even as Margot thinks about her expectations for Thandi to bring her family out of poverty.

At first she despised herself for letting him touch her. But then she despised herself for the pride that made her believe she had a choice."

-- Narrator (Chapter 1)

Importance: Because Margot agrees to have sex with Alphonso, she is one of the only employees at Palm Star Resort who was allowed to keep her job after this younger generation of the Wellingtons took over. Because her mother sold her for sex as a young girl, Margot has always seen sex as a way of getting things. Even though she had hoped that she would not always have to depend on sex to get what she wanted, she has inherited the opinion that because she is a black woman, she will have to let men have their way with her in order to get what she wants.

Only Delores can sell this many souvenirs in a day, because, unlike the other hagglers, she knows she has a gold mine at home — a daughter she has to support — one who is going to be a doctor.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1)

Importance: Even though her family lives in desperate poverty, Delores hopes that Thandi, her youngest daughter will provide the family with a wealthy future. For this reason, Delores works as hard as she can selling trinkets to tourists in order to pay for her daughter's schooling.

Thandi has seen the effects of the crème on the women who use it, the lightness coming into their skin, and the darkness receding like a sinister shadow around their hairline."

-- Narrator (Chapter 1)

Importance: As Thandi thinks about her purchase of the Queen of Pearl Crème she thinks about the women she has known in the past who have used the crème and have had good results. Notice the way that the author describes the darkness that leaves the skin as being "sinister." This reinforces the idea in the novel that black skin is ugly or evil.

You is yuh mother's only hope. Yuh know how hard she wuk fi send you to dat school?"

-- Miss Ruby (Chapter 1)



Importance: Even Miss Ruby, the lady who performs bleaching treatments on Thandi and promises that her lighter skin will be key to her future, reminds Thandi how hard her mother works in order to send her to private school.

It is known and has been known in River Bank's history that Verdene Moore is the Antichrist, the snake every mongoose should have hauled off the island and eaten alive; the witch who practices obscene things too ungodly to even think about."

-- Narrator (Chapter 1)

Importance: The superstitious and religious people of River Bank accuse Verdene of being evil based on her sexual orientation. Even though they know nothing about her as a person, they pass judgment on her based on only one part of her personality.

She imagined seeing those slippers parked next to hers on a welcome mat."

-- Narrator (Chapter 3)

Importance: When Maxi proposes marriage to Margot, she thinks instead how she would like to see herself as a couple with Verdene.

Margot was astonished by how the wealthy in Jamaica live; how for them, the island is really paradise — a woman who offers herself without guile, her back arched in the hills and mountains, belly toward the sun."

-- Narrator (Chapter 5)

Importance: Margot is jealous of the wealthy Jamaicans. She is surprised how some can be so poor in a place that is considered paradise and a tourist destination. Just as Margot has always offered herself up to the men who wanted to enjoy her, she believes the country does the same thing for wealthy people.

He hired her to work at his hotel and taught her everything she needed to know about running it. Everything she's done since that day, every bitter compromise, every buried regret, was to lead to this point. That job should be hers.

-- Narrator (Chapter 8)

Importance: When Margot thinks about how Reginald Senior groomed her for the position of hotel manager as well as all of things that she has done to prove herself to Alphonso, she is angry when Alphonso tells her that he has hired another woman to take the position.

But when tourism became the bread and butter for the island's economy, the developers and the government alike became ravenous, indifferent."

-- Narrator (Chapter 9)

Importance: This quote describes how uncaring the both the developers and the government of Jamaica became when they became greedy for the money brought in by the tourists. The developers for Alphonso's latest project are similar in their greed as



they evict residents of rental properties with little notice and purchase homes for far less than they are worth.

You will recruit and train girls you see fit for the business. You'll be the boss lady in charge."

-- Alphonso (Chapter 10)

Importance: Although Margot had hoped that Alphonso would offer her the job as the new manager of his hotel, Alphonso instead told Margot he wanted her to take charge of a prostitution ring he planned for his hotel. He believes this offer will make up for his choice of a different woman as hotel manager.

And just like that, Margot knows she has planted a seed, perhaps the only one that has the potential to thrive in this drought."

-- Narrator (Chapter 11)

Importance: When Margot gives Kensington, the girl who works with her at the front desk of Alphonso's hotel, the idea that Miss Novia Scott-Henry is homosexual, Margot knows that Kensington will make her assumptions and spread the rumor.

Remember you're doing a job. It's not a reflection of who you are as a person. I'm sure yuh screw men and, according to those rumors, women too."

-- Margot (Chapter 14)

Importance: When Margot tries to talk Sweetness into agreeing to seduce Miss Novia Scott-Henry she tells the girl that what she does as part of her job is no reflection of who she is as a person. Sweetness, however, believes that if people learn she has seduced a woman they will think she is homosexual.

In this sketch she was not human, but a creature. This is how her daughter sees her — bull-faced and miserable. All Delores's secrets and insecurities are exposed in the gaze of this child."

-- Narrator (Chapter 17)

Importance: Although Thandi probably did not realize that her sketch of her mother would raise any bad feelings, Delores sees the sketch and believes that her daughter sees her as a cruel beast.

Delores almost collapsed, not with the fury and raging anger she harbored for her brother, but for the loss of her daughter's innocence, which, she realized too late, was worth more than the money she lost and all the money she would ever gain."

-- Narrator (Chapter 17)

Importance: Although Margot never thought that her mother had any qualms about selling her as a sex toy to an adult male, the narrator shares that Delores was deeply upset because she realized how valuable her daughter's virginity actually was.



Margot studies the sketches and realizes that River Bank will be completely taken over.”
-- Narrator (Chapter 20)

Importance: When Margot sees the plans for Alphonso’s new project, she notices that it will take over the area where the village of River Bank is located. Even though she mentions that area is where she and her family live, she says nothing else to discourage the development.

It’s the one thing that connects her to Miss Violet’s sickness, Margot’s restlessness, and Delores’s intermittent wrath. After being inside Miss Violet’s shack, she saw, with overwhelming dread, what might become of her.

-- Narrator (Chapter 22)

Importance: When Thandi sees the way Charles has to wash his mother, she is struck by what she believes might be in her future. She believes her mother, her sister and Charles’ mother are all unhappy because they are black and poor. She is afraid she may have the same future in store for her.

Her hope wilts on its stem before it can bloom into promise. Miss Ruby was wrong. Bleaching her skin doesn’t make them see her as beautiful.”

-- Narrator (Chapter 22)

Importance: When no one pays any attention to Thandi at the sweet 16 party, even with her bleached skin, Thandi realizes that changing the color of her skin has not affect on the way the other students see her. She believes she is not beautiful even with the bleached skin.

The day Thandi finishes her final round of CXC exams and sees Charles waiting by the school gate in his cutoff trousers, open shirt, and dusty old shoes, she nearly ditches him. She has been avoiding him since the day she walked in on him cleaning his mother.”

-- Narrator (Chapter 25)

Importance: Even though her schoolmates scorned her at the party, she still has a lingering desire to not alienate them any further by letting them know that she is friends with Charles, who is a common boy.

The news comes back later that night that Clover had a heart attack and died on the way to the hospital. But the people believe that it was Charles who killed him.

-- Narrator (Chapter 28)

Importance: Although Clover’s death was not directly caused by injuries from the fight between him and Charles, the people of River Bank made up their mind that Charles had killed the older man.

He leans against the doorpost and looks Verdene right in the eye. ‘Yuh know, ah used to be afraid ah witches.’”



-- Charles (Chapter 29)

Importance: After Charles accidentally caused Clover's death, he went to Verdene's house to get her advice because he knew she understood what it was like to be outcast by the community. Before he leaves her house, Charles jokes with Verdene telling her that he had once been afraid of witches. He understands how easily it can be to become an outcast from one's community. He also is not longer afraid of Verdene but considers her a friend.

Membah dis, nobody love a black girl. Not even harsel. Now get up an' guh get yuh pay."

-- Delores (Chapter 30)

Importance: When Delores learns that Thandi had been dating Charles, she tells Thandi that Charles did not love her. She tells her daughter that a black girl is not worthy of love. Delores suggests that Thandi should do what is best for her and cash in on her relationship with Charles. The idea is that money is the ultimate goal and can cure all miseries.

Happiness feels like an office with good air-conditioning, a chair that adjusts to her back as though it is made for her, a mahogany desk with her name on it, a better view of the beach, the ability to slip out of her shoes and wiggle her toes, and a door she can keep locked. She can't believe that Miss Novia Scott-Henry had all this to herself yet chose to leave the door wide open."

-- Narrator (Chapter 32)

Importance: When Alphonso finally agrees to give Margot the job as hotel manager, she believes she has found happiness when she first sits in her new office.

Unlike you, is blood dat pump through me vein. Not greed."

-- Sweetness (Chapter 32)

Importance: Sweetness identifies Margot's problem when she tells Margot that she has been overcome by greed and ambition. Sweetness accuses Margot of becoming so greedy that she is willing even to betray her friends and family members. Sweetness says this to Margot when she announces to the woman that she is quitting. She knows that Margot is the one who suggested that a reward be offered for Charles capture and that she suggested the reward be offered so the construction of the new resort to be located on the land where the village of River Bank is located could move forward.

Yuh sure 'bout dat? Didn't I tell you? Didn't I tell yuh dat God nuh like ugly? Look what's happening to us.

-- Miss Ruby (Chapter 36)

Importance: This quote echoes Miss Ruby's words to Thandi at the beginning of the novel. She had told Thandi during one of her first bleaching treatments that it was Thandi's responsibility to make herself more attractive because God did not like ugly. In



this quote, Miss Ruby blames the fate that faces River Bend, destruction at the hands of a developer of a resort, on the fact that the people are ugly.

Yuh probably believe dat di likkle scrap Delores an' Margot mek can put togethah to sen' yuh to dat school. Yuh really t'ink likkle chicken-feed money can afford dat deh school, Thandi?"

-- Sweetness (Chapter 38)

Importance: Sweetness points out to Thandi what should have been apparent to her all along; that the little money that Delores and Margot made from their jobs could not finance Thandi's expensive private school. Her blunt words make Thandi realize that her whole life has been built on lies.

Yuh sistah, Margot, is more of a whore than I will ever be. She's the biggest pimp on di North Coast. Yuh sistah sell out River Bank. She's di one who g'wan manage dat hotel dey destroying River Bank to build."

-- Sweetness (Chapter 38)

Importance: Thandi is shocked when Sweetness tells her the truth about what Margot has been doing for so many years in order to earn money to fund her education.