

High Dive: A Novel Study Guide

High Dive: A Novel by Jonathan Lee

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Plot Summary

The following version of this book was used to create this study guide: Jonathan Lee. *High Dive*. Alfred A. Knopf. First American Edition, 2016.

High Dive is a heavily-fictionalized character-driven historical novel by Jonathan Lee about the 1984 Brighton Grand Hotel terrorist bombing. The novel follows the lives of three fictional characters who become central to the plot as it unfolds against an authentic historical backdrop.

Readers first meet Dan who is initiated into a pro-Irish independence terrorist group. Dan's own father was killed during a protest that turned into a riot some years before when he was hit in the head with a brick, and law enforcement refused to intervene to save him. Now, Dan seeks revenge and independence against the British government now led by the Conservative Party under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Dan becomes obsessed with Irish independence at any cost, and while he does not like killing non-combatants (people other than soldiers, policemen, or politicians) he is willing to do it when convinced by group boss Dawson McCartland. Dan's mother protests his involvement in terrorism, but Dan will not hear anything of it.

Dan goes on to impersonate an Englishman named Roy Walsh to take a room at the Grand Hotel so an associate named Patrick can arrive later with bomb materials to create a delayed explosive. Dan is checked in by 18-year-old Freya Finch, a pretty, intelligent girl who becomes the second major character of the novel. Freya has a difficult relationship with her estranged, remarried mother who lives in America, and wonders what she herself will do in life. She would like to travel, but is not sure about attending college. She wants to get to know Dan (as Roy), but Dan pays her no mind. Instead, she enters a relationship with a hotel worker named John, who in turn ditches her for another girl. Freya is heartbroken, and tries to get on by focusing on the coming Conservative Party Conference to be hosted at the Grand.

Freya is the daughter of Philip "Moose" Finch, the Deputy General Manager of the hotel. Kind, well-respected, and well-liked, Moose is thrilled the Grand is set to host Thatcher and the Conservative Party Conference. Moose has a heart attack, but recovers quickly enough to oversee the Conference. At the same time, Freya and Moose are encouraged to become closer as father and daughter by fellow coworker Marina, and it is Marina who helps Freya move beyond her broken heart with gentle words of encouragement. The delayed bomb planted by Dan at the hotel kills several people and injures countless more when it goes off, but it does not kill Thatcher. Because of this, even her political opponents cheer for her safety, and the case for Irish independence becomes more difficult. Among the dead is Moose. Freya is devastated by this. Dan's own mother is horrified at what Dan has done, and Dan's only response is to backhand her.



Initiation: 1978 – Part One, Chapter 5

Summary

Initiation: 1978 -

Eighteen-year-old Dan heads across the border at the end of June with an unknown bald man. They drive to a clearing amid elm trees where a dark Land Rover is parked with a thin man named Dawson McCartland inside. The bald man, identified as Mick, explains Dan has been recommended by a man named Paddy Magee, whom they refer to as “Mad Dog.” Dan reveals he got to know Paddy through collecting bullets as a job along with an old friend named Cal Doherty. While Dawson and Mick talk, Dan plays with Dawson’s dogs. Dawson is glad to see Dan get along with the dogs. He asks Dan about his work experience, and if Dan knows how to use guns (he does not). Dawson then demands Dan shoot one of the dogs, saying they are a problem for him. Dan does not want to shoot the dogs, even when Dawson threatens to have Mick shoot Dan. Mick then fires, knocking Dan to the ground. When Dan gets up, Dawson is driving away and Mick tells Dan he is the first to ever call Dawson’s bluff. Mick explains the shotgun was loaded with rice, not shot, and that Dan seems to be a distance, DIY man. Mick welcomes Dan to his new life.

Part One: Unaccommodated Men, 1984 -

In Chapter 1, in Brighton, 18-year-old Freya heads back from her swim after running into her old teacher, then heads to see Wendy Hoyt, a stylist at Curl Up & Dye. Freya considers having Wendy bleach her hair, but then decides to go with her regular strawberry wash.

In Chapter 2, single father Philip “Moose” Finch and his daughter, Freya, drive to the Grand Hotel. Moose works at the hotel as a deputy general manager, while Freya works in reception. Moose hopes to be made manager upon the current manager’s retirement. It will mean a better office and better pay. The hotel is preparing for a Conservative Party conference, and the staff are very busy in the process in addition to handling regular, daily operations. Moose finds Guest Relations Manager Marina to be attractive, and Fran, the black woman in charge of p.m. Housekeeping to be lively.

In Chapter 3, between dealing with customers, Freya doodles. Her shift is set to end at 7:30 p.m. A handsome man who identifies himself as Roy Walsh checks in. He pays cash up front to extend his stay to three nights. Freya places him in Room 629, for it has a sea view and she finds Roy attractive and friendly. He explains he did DIY work when he was younger, and encourages her to travel. Freya has the sudden desire to tell him everything about herself, from not being sure about college to her excellent marks in school. She confirms to Roy the coming Conservative Party Conference, and that Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher will be present. Rather than waiting for Derek, the bellhop, Roy heads up to his room on his own.



In Chapter 4, Chef Harry works away in the kitchen while Freya eats dinner. Freya encourages Harry to be healthier in his life as he has been smoking too much lately. Meanwhile, Moose reflects on the upcoming Conservative Party Conference, knowing 150 rooms have been reserved, and knowing it was the result of his own efforts to make the case for the Grand as the site of the conference. If the conference goes well, Moose believes his promotion will be secured. The following morning, he and Freya both go swimming. Marina then comes to find him in the guest room he usually takes naps in, with a human resources problem relating to Karen. Karen, Mainra reveals, has become sexually involved with a married guest, a man named Stephens, whom she has punched outside of Conference Centre. Marina tells Moose he looks tired, and to not stay late.

In Chapter 5, Freya and her friend, Susie, are on the beach where they check out men. Susie is very Left politically, and will not buy shoes produced in sweatshops. She is very outspoken in her opinions, and she dominates conversations. Things become rough between Freya and Susie when Susie plans to protest the Conservatives, while Freya wants peace and quiet for the benefit of her father. Susie says their group – the Collective of the Disconnected – will be peaceful. Freya is still annoyed by this. Later on, she and Karen are chatting in the lobby when Roy appears with another man. This disappoints Freya, for she now thinks Roy is gay.

Analysis

Readers are introduced to Dan at the age of 18 in 1978. He is set to join an Irish independence terrorist organization, and the first part of the novel, Initiation, follows Dan through his appointed errand with McCartland. Readers are struck by the strange irony, perhaps even hypocrisy, of the situation: Dan wants to join a terrorist group (which kills innocent people), but he will not kill a dog. However, what seems ironic or even hypocritical is actually to be seen as a symbolic omen in conjunction with Mick's welcoming of Dan to his "new life." The refusal to kill the dog is a departure from his old life. It will be the last noble act he commits, but it will launch him down a path that will lead to the bombing of a hotel full of innocent people in years to come.

The narrator's introduction of Dan is quickly followed by the introduction of the characters of Freya and Moose. The three of them – Dan, Freya, and Moose – will become the primary characters around which the novel is driven. The plot is straightforward and high-concept (a coming hotel bombing) but the characters are what bring depth and complexity to events unfolding. Later in the novel, Dan will argue that most things in life are relatively simple – but Jonathan Lee argues through his novel thematically that things are not always so simple. For example, as will be revealed in time, Dan has a deeply personal reason for wanting to commit violence against his fellow man – even though his decision to commit violence is wrong. He is not a cut-and-dried Irish radical, but his actions negate his self-considered justifications for doing what he does. These, of course, will be revealed in time, but readers need to be on the lookout for motivations given the character-driven nature of the novel.



Freya, at first, appears to be a typical 18-year-old girl. She has friends, is debating college, and is working a summer job at the Grand. But, as readers come to realize quickly, Freya is not exactly happy. She is worried, as many are, about stepping out into life, a life that is unknown and uncertain. She is comfortable in Brighton, but comfort does not equate to happiness. Life never turns out the way one expects, Jonathan Lee argues, and Freya is proof of this. She seems to be stalled while her friends are going places and doing things – even if, like Susie, they are local. What seems to an observer like a simple problem – getting over fear – could be monumental to the individual actually facing the fear, and so Lee’s assertion that things are never always simple is tellingly accurate. At the moment, Moose’s desire to ensure a successful Conservative Party Conference are loyally backed by Freya, even at the expense of her friendship with Susie (there are more things to life than anger, politics, and violence, Lee argues here). Readers should note, however, that the Conference reservations are symbolically an ill-omen. Freya’s interest is therein piqued by the appearance of Roy Walsh – who readers should recognize as Dan in disguise.

Discussion Question 1

What accounts for Dan’s desire to join a terrorist group bent on killing innocent people, and Dan’s refusal to kill an innocent dog? How does this reflect the way his life will become once initiated in the group?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Freya willing to risk her friendship with Susie over Susie’s desire to find a way to protest the Conservative Conference? Why is Susie so annoyed by this?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Freya seem so unsure about college, about travel, or about life beyond Brighton? Would you characterize her as merely having fear or cold feet? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

monotone, charisma, wonky, empathy, vulnerability, brutish, bewildered, provisionally



Part One, Chapter 6 – Part Three, Chapter 1

Summary

Part One: Unaccommodated Men, 1984, continued -

In Chapter 6, Moose talks about university and education with Freya for what seems the thousandth time. Freya accuses her father of trying to make her into the person he wants her to be. Moose knows that Freya is a better person than he is, and wants her to live up to her potential. While overseeing hotel preparations, the 45-year-old Moose feels tremendous pain in his chest and collapses.

Part Two: The Flight of a Dive, 1979 – 1984 -

The novel steps back in time.

In Chapter 1, Dan comes to assume the name Roy Walsh at Dawson's request. Dan's early operations involve partnering with Colum Allen, an anxious man. Using paint and fire, the two interrupt a police raid on Catholic homes.

In Chapter 2, Dan reflects on the fates of his brothers. Bobby, deaf, has gone to a home called St. Joseph's in Stillorgan, while Tom has gone to Scotland to farm and Connor has gone to America from where he writes home about chasing girls. Dan helps his mother, Ma, prepare food. Ma has been the victim of RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) violence before, though she remains friendly with some Protestants like palm reader Jan Henry, who insists Ma, Dan, and their kind are their own worst enemy. Ma takes this seriously, but Dan reflects on Dawson telling him his work will put him on the right side of history. Ma is no longer allowed to answer the phone, as any calls that come in might be "business" for Dan. Ma worries for Dan, and worries about what Dan is doing.

In Chapter 3, Dan turns 24 in March 1984. He tries on his dead father's gloves, and remembers growing up watching riots unfold in the streets. He remembers participating with his father in protests that became riots, during which time his father was killed when he was hit in the head with a brick. Dan remembers pleading with the police for help, but the police refused, arguing it was a trap of some kind. Dan remembers learning then that the police were not interested in fairness, and that those who joined the police were scum. In the present, Dan is to attack a British convoy, with the intent of destroying at least three trucks, one of which is full of soldiers.

Dan explains to do this he would need a caravan full of 1,500 homemade mixed explosives. Dan says that if he does this job, he wants in on the big job involving Patrick and an assassination of a political figure. Dawson explains the job will be to take out the whole Cabinet, and that there will be innocent casualties. The point, Dawson explains, will be to get moderates in power to allow them to take their country back. Dan worries



about assassinating the Prime Minister of all people, but Dawson insists this is necessary.

In Chapter 4, a Loyalist terrorist attack on a meatpacking warehouse on Springfield Road kills some and severely injures a little girl on the way home from school. Dawson insists that one bomb against the Prime Minister will end all other bombs. Dan always wonders if he is merely prolonging the violence rather than fighting it by his own terrorist acts. He resolves himself to help carry out the Grand Hotel Plan against the Prime Minister. Dan will now be the lead man, as Patrick will show up later as his face may be recognized. The plan is for Patrick to plant a bomb beneath a bath, set to go off on a prolonged delay on October 12. He wonders how many innocent people will be killed.

In Chapter 5, Dan thinks about Patrick who wants to take the fight to the British, believing peace can only come through causing violence in British towns and cities. Patrick is the Provos' best bomber. It is Patrick who teaches Dan about bombs.

Part Three: Department of Hearts, 1984 -

The novel returns to the present.

In Chapter 1, Moose remembers being told as a child he was meant for great things because of his talent in football. He remembers coming to love gymnastics as well, and opting not to attend university as his talents and skills seemed to plateau.

Analysis

The Conference, apart from his daughter, becomes the primary focus of Moose's life through the course of the novel. He lives for the Conference – and will end up dying by it. The Conference continues to serve symbolically as an omen of impending disaster. Moose's heart-attack is a symbolic precursor to death. It causes him to reflect on his own youth, when he had such promise and such potential. It how he now looks at Freya – as someone with tremendous potential – but someone who is not reaching out to achieve that potential. To the outsider, and to Moose, it seems simple: get over the fear and take a risk. But to Freya, there is a greater complexity to it. At the same time, readers can step back and realize Moose has to take it easy, that he has to be healthier and let go of some of his responsibilities at work – but for Moose, this is not so simple. His desire to oversee the successful Conference is predicated upon his desire to advance his career – but also to fulfill potential he knows he now has, as he has wasted the potential of his youth. This underscores the author's argument that not everything in life is so simple.

Between this and the exposition of Dan's character as a person, the character-driven structure of the plot itself is reinforced. Readers get a better understanding of Dan. Dan's father's work gloves have great symbolic meaning here that readers should not fail to note. His father's gloves represent a kind of becoming, of picking up of where his father left off, and of assuming the work still to be done for the sake of Irish independence. Dan tries on his father's gloves as he prepares to work in the garden.



However, readers should note the gloves do not quite fit, as Dan and his father had vastly different ideas regarding how to achieve Irish independence. Dan's father sought independence through peaceful protest; Dan seeks independence through outright terrorism. This is where Dan and his father become two different people.

Interestingly enough, despite the past, and despite Dan's own nonchalance about attacking police officers, soldiers, and politicians, he harbors some reserve about the Grand Hotel bombing, because there will be innocent people present. It will be messy, Dawson assures Dan – but this should be the final bomb. It should sever the head of the British government and allow for Irish independence. Readers immediately reflect on Dan's initiation: he would not kill an innocent dog when told, but now he is morally accepting of the idea that innocent people have to die to achieve a political end. He is not going out of his way to avoid such casualties – but he is ensuring that there will be such casualties. Dan has indeed entered the “new life” promised by Mick in the first part of the novel. Yet, here, Jonathan Lee begins laying the groundwork in force for his thematic argument that there is more to life than anger, hatred, and violence. There are human beings associated with the consequences of such anger, hatred, and violence. These are people like Moose and Freya, as well as any number of secondary and tertiary characters that populate the novel. These people will pay the price for the way Dan lives his life.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the Conservative Conference matter so much to Moose? Why is he especially determined to make sure that it goes off without a hitch?

Discussion Question 2

Is Dawson correct when he says one more bomb will end all other bombs? Why or why not? Is the killing of innocent people ever justified? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Despite Dan's anger over innocent people being caught up in the violence his and other groups commit, he himself commits to the Grand Hotel bombing. Why? What does this say about his character as a human being?

Vocabulary

prospectuses, preeminence, proscribed, consternation, perennial, collateral damage, abbreviated



Three: Department of Hearts, 1984, Chapter 2 - 5

Summary

Three: Department of Hearts, 1984, continued -

In Chapter 2, Moose is taken to the Royal Sussex Hospital. There, Freya waits for news on her father. She meets with Dr. Haswell to learn that her father's artery has been unclogged, and that he is currently comfortable and recovering. Haswell says that Freya's father must be healthier in his lifestyle, and must focus on future goals – like the Conference – to give him a reason to get better and improve. Freya remains beside her father constantly. He does his best to reassure Freya that he is alright. He explains they will be running some tests on his heart, but there is nothing to worry about. Freya encourages him to stop smoking. Freya later comes across Susie, and three friends. Susie sneeringly points Freya out, saying she is not a part of the cause. The lone boy among them wants to know why Freya will not help them plant a stink-bomb. Freya says she might be able to sneak one person in the back provided she knows exactly what is going to happen.

In Chapter 3, Moose desperately longs to be discharged from the hospital and to get back on his feet. Mr. Marshall, one of the doctors, advises Moose to maintain a healthy lifestyle and quit all forms of smoking, be they cigars or cigarettes. Moose comes to think the hospital is not really such a bad place because of kind and humorous nurses like Monica.

In Chapter 4, a new guest from Britvic arrives at the Grand, but Freya must tell him there are no more available rooms. Freya has also been taking time lately to attempt to channel her thoughts and feelings into writing on paper. Freya is also frequently asked for updates on her father, as the hotel staff and many of the guests love him and miss him. While working the bar, a friendly, wealthy regular nicknamed The Captain who runs a museum but never charges anyone to get in, talks with Freya, asking if she will be coming to the museum the following day. Freya does not know. She is then delighted to see Roy Walsh appear, who explains he has had to extend his stay as he is an electrician. The two flirt a little, and Roy asks about the Prime Minister's visit. Freya casually notes that a CCTV system is due to be installed in a week in advance of the Conference. Freya asks if Roy is into politics. Roy explains no more so than the next man, and that everyone is into it whether they know it or not.

In Chapter 5, Marina and her nephew, Engelbert, come to visit Moose in the hospital. Moose asks for news of what is going on at the Grand, but Marina will not tell him as she only wants Moose to relax and continue to recover. At last, Marina gives in relating to details about preparations for the Prime Minister's visit. Marina, however, also insists on talking about Moose's health, wanting him to be ready for the next heart attack when



it comes. Marina explains her second husband died falling from a window, and that she herself always wanted to be an actress. She explains she is now a photographer outside of work, and Moose promises to come to her show in June at the Royal Pavilion Gardens. As the days pass, Moose reflects on his failed marriage to Vivienne, who left him when they lived in America; on the death of his own father; and on how Freya decided to stay with him when he returned to Brighton.

Analysis

Life never turns out the way one expects, Jonathan Lee argues in this section of the novel. Moose never expected to end up in the hospital with a heart attack at the age of 45, and he never expected that anything could deter him from ensuring the success of the Conservative Party Conference. Freya never expected her father to end up in the hospital so young (despite his unhealthy habits). Freya, like her father, never expected her mother to leave him, and she never expected to return to Brighton with her father. Here, readers begin to understand that more than simple fear and cold feet keep Freya anchored to Brighton. Her father is the only real family that she has, and Brighton is the only real stability she has ever known. She does not want to lose her father, even if they are not as close as they could otherwise be.

However, the situation with Moose clearly jolts Freya, who has a sudden twist in character in that she is willing to allow someone to sneak into the Hotel to crash the Conference. This should be seen in context with the shift in Dan's character from one opposed to killing innocents to being willing to kill them for the cause. The strange shift in character can also be noted in conjunction with clues the reader is picking up on thanks to the omniscience of the narrator. Dan's need to stay a few extra days comes because the method for the bomb has changed; and attempts by Patrick to check into the hotel as a guest from Britvic do not pan out because the hotel is full – another reason Dan must stay a few extra days. The knowledge that a CCTV system will soon be installed underscores the need for Dan to stay and finish the planting. At the same time, Dan's assertion to Freya that everyone is involved in politics whether they know it or not is an ominous prophecy of the fate that will befall even innocent people by way of his coming act of terrorism.

Discussion Question 1

What accounts for Freya's loyalty to her father, and her concern about leaving Brighton? Do you believe her reluctance to go on is understandable? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

How does Moose's own past affect him the present, especially now that he is in the hospital after a heart attack? Why is Moose so determined to return to work, when by all accounts he should not have to?



Discussion Question 3

What does Freya believe Dan means when he says everyone is involved in politics, whether they know it or not? What does Dan actually mean? Do you believe this statement, generally or specifically to Dan, is true of all people outside the book? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

convictions, immemorial, fallible, immaterial, pallor, rivalrous, magnanimously



Three: Department of Hearts, 1984, - Four: The Grand, Chapter 6

Summary

Part Three: Department of Hearts, 1984, continued

In Chapter 6, Freya gets together with a local surfer and Grand Hotel worker named John. The two drink, kiss, and explore one another, but do not have sex.

Part Four: The Grand, 1984

In Chapter 1, Dan's mom worries because they are receiving threatening letters. She cannot imagine what Dan has stirred up. She urges Dan to reach out to his friends to protect them. Dan tries calling Dawson, but Dawson does not pick up. It has been four days since Dan has completed his task at the Grand. Instead, Dan gets in touch with John C, who explains Dawson is currently lying low. John C goes on to explain there are safe places Dan and his mother could be taken. Dan explains his mother will not leave and will not sell.

In Chapter 2, the autumn comes on. Freya is happy to have her father back at home. Freya continues to see John, but does not let her father know about her relationship with him. Freya has decided to make a home of things in Brighton. She is happy to help take care of her father as he continues to recover, is happy to be saving some money, and is happy to be seeing John. Freya also receives word that Sebastian will be at the cook's entrance at 10 p.m. on Friday to crash the Conservative Conference. Freya goes to visit the Captain and the museum. The Captain explains that Susie had been in the day before with some friends. Freya is surprised by this. The Captain goes on to ask about Moose's health and recovery.

In Chapter 3, Moose is happy to be back at work and recovering. He is taking things easy, one day at a time. He is thrilled as well to be overseeing the Conference, and is happy to see guests arriving. Prime Minister Thatcher will be in by the end of the week. Hours before Thatcher is due to arrive, Moose's mother pays a visit to him. She urges him to get his life in better order, and breaks the news to him that she has seen Freya with a boy. Later, Moose goes upstairs to Suite 122 to oversee final preparations for Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's personal room.

In Chapter 4, Dan reflects on how Patrick, arriving at the hotel, had changed the kind of explosive they were planting to a more powerful kind called Gelignite. Dan now wonders if the explosive will go off because of the new kind of material, and cannot help but think about his mother.

In Chapter 5, Freya and John go swimming. During this time, John reveals he and Sasha from the hotel are also involved. This upsets Freya as she climbs the high dive.



She thinks about her father, and berates herself for thinking she had found happiness. Freya comes to the edge of the high dive, and then decides to climb down. There, John tells her they are better off as friends.

In Chapter 6, Dan feels a need to be away from his fellow terrorists, so he goes out for a drink. He begins speaking with a woman named Lena.

Analysis

Life never turns out the way one expects, Lee continues to argue. Freya begins dating John, and comes to realize that she may not have to travel or go to college to be happy after all. Living in Brighton may indeed make her happy. As it turns out, it does: Freya cares for her father while carrying on a relationship with John. Although Freya does not sit down and have a heart-to-heart with her father about romance or the details of their personal lives, she could not imagine not having her father in her life, and so she steps into a new phase in her life. As Lee also argues, there is more to life than anger, hatred, and violence. In Freya's life, compassion, love, and kindness rule the day and make life far better than anything else ever could. She is finding the peace and happiness she has so long desired. It is not the path of college or travel as her father or her, respectively, previously anticipated. Rather, happiness is home for Freya.

At the same time, the happiness – and indeed, the very lives of these people – are being undermined by the terrorist plot now underway by Dan and Patrick. Nothing good, Lee argues, can come from violence – and violence is not always the answer. Self-defense is one thing, but an unjustified act of aggression against another is indefensible. Readers can already surmise that nothing good will come of bombing a hotel, especially because political disagreements that can be settled peacefully should not be settled by violence. Strangely, Dan begins to think about his mother after the kind of explosive is upgraded to something far more powerful and deadly. Dan's conscience is tugging at his soul because this is the first act of violence he has committed that will not be aimed at people like soldiers.

Readers should also note that it is in this section of the novel, in Chapter 5, that the novel draws its name. Freya, upon learning about John's involvement with Sasha, and thinking about how her own life has been so far, refuses to jump from the pool's high diving board. The high dive symbolizes a point of no return, and a road or promise not taken in life. Freya's backing down from the high dive because the dive – metaphorical for life – has startled and undone her. Rather than moving ahead and seeing where life will bring her, she refuses to even try because of the pain and heartache she is experiencing. This is normal. But whereas Freya has refused to take the plunge from the high dive, that which has held Dan back temporarily – his conscience – he ignores and plunges into things in his own way.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Freya come to think she could indeed be happy in Brighton? What ultimately changes her mind? How does she respond to this changing of her mind? Why?

Discussion Question 2

What is the high dive metaphorical of? How do Freya and Dan each approach their own respective high dives? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Dan think of his mother as the terrorist plot of which he is a part begins to unfold in earnest? What effect on Dan's actions do these thoughts of his mother have? Why?

Vocabulary

acquiescence, complacency, atrocious, charlatan, mythical



Part Four: The Grand, 1984, Chapter 7 – Chapter 13

Summary

Part Four: The Grand, 1984, continued:

In Chapter 7, while in the living room with her father, Freya thinks about her life. She thinks about how Sarah has lost her mother to cancer, while Freya's own mother barely keeps in touch.

In Chapter 8, Dan flirts with Lena. When the conversation turns to Ireland, Dan angrily asks the waiter if he believes Thatcher is a terrorist. This change in mood disturbs Lena, who says she has to go. Dan puts down money for the drinks, then rushes out after Lena. She takes a bus home despite Dan's apologies, and Dan goes home alone.

In Chapter 9, Moose is thrilled for the moment of Prime Minister Thatcher's arrival. Conservative leaders, politicians, and important figures are all gathered to greet her. Staff, security, and the press are also on hand. While waiting by, Marina talks to Moose about his getting to know Freya better. She mentions her nephew is with her for the evening. Moose watches in astonishment as the genteel and refined Sir Keith Joseph has a friendly and endearing conversation with the off-center, crumb-laden Captain about the importance of the environment. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher then arrives, leading to a rush of activity. Moose is thrilled to see Thatcher headed his way – but a Special Branch agent moves him out of the way.

In Chapter 10, Dan nears home at four in the morning. He has seen no signs and heard no news of the bomb going off. Dan is stunned to discover his house on fire. He rushes over while some local women try to throw water on the flames. Fortunately, his mother is safe. She is standing on the curb smoking cigarettes with some other women. Dan considers this to be an act of judgment or an act of revenge, but that either way, he has gotten what he deserves.

In Chapter 11, as the night wears on, Moose realizes the crowd has diminished, and he may have a chance to see the Prime Minister in person. He meets Edward Peterson, who handles Thatcher's logistics. He is dismayed to learn, however, that Thatcher has gone up for the evening already, and that John has escorted her. Moose also learns that he will not be receive the General Manager job, which will go to Richard Baker instead. Moose then learns the dinner they have planned for the following evening for Thatcher will not go off as planned: Thatcher will be dining at the Metropole instead. Moose is stunned, but Freya is angered. She goes off on Peterson, but Peterson is not apologetic. Moose is ready to punch Peterson, but he settles for harsh words instead.



In Chapter 12, Freya, crying in the women's room, is tended to by Marina. Freya is upset not only for her father, but because of John. Marina reminds Freya it is alright to be upset sometimes, and that each day, people have a choice not between doing good and doing bad, but between doing good or doing nothing. Outside, Freya runs into Susie. The protest does not go off as planned. Sebastian's stink bomb is confiscated. Most people expected for the protest to do something else. Susie explains they are not going to try to cause any more trouble with a stink bomb, because Susie does not want things to turn out badly for Freya or her father. Freya and Susie, despite the darkness, decide to go for a walk on the beach. But tragedy strikes first.

In Chapter 13, the bomb in the Grand Hotel explodes. Susie is injured. Moose's office ceiling comes down and traps his leg. As Moose struggles, he prays to God to spare Freya for any cost God deems necessary in exchange. He manages to get free, and begins to crawl away. Meanwhile, Freya urges the firefighters now on scene to go and find her father. More emergency responders arrive. In the midst of tragedy, survivors cheer when they learn Margaret Thatcher is safe. Sir Keith Joseph is also safe, but others are not so lucky. Spouses, loved ones, and friends are still missing. Meanwhile, elsewhere, Dan vows revenge for his burned house. His mother tells him she no longer recognizes him. Dan is angered to find that Thatcher has survived. It means things will get worse for people like Dan.

Dan's mother is angered that Dan has made it possible for innocent people to be hurt and to die. His mother goes on to say that everything in her life has been undone by people like Dan. Dan then backhands his mother. At the same time, Moose uses his belt to cut off blood flow to his wounded leg so he does not bleed to death. He then finds Marina's nephew, helping the boy along until a fireman arrives to take the child. Not long after, waiting for help and thinking about the past few weeks, and thinking about all the other innocent people trapped in the hotel, Moose dies.

The novel steps back in time to the day Roy Walsh checked out of the hotel. Freya, it is revealed, wanted to get to know him, but he left with a casual goodbye. This caused Freya to realize silence and peace were not the same thing.

Analysis

Life never turns out the way one expects, Lee continues to argue in this final section of the novel. Freya had hoped to begin building a life in Brighton – but John's cheating on her, and the death of Moose, make such a life impossible as the two men she has built her life around, are now gone. Moose himself hoped to further advance his career and give his daughter a better life through the successful conduction of the Conservative Party Conference – but his death changes everything. (Readers should pay attention, however, to his last act on Earth in the saving of Marina's nephew, Engelbert. It is an act of human kindness and love that serves to be something good that comes out of something so bad.) In the midst of heartache, Freya is reminded by Marina of the idea that life may not be perfect, but it must still be lived. The high dive must still be taken. As Jonathan Lee argues through the way Marina describes it, one must always go to the



party. This, in turn, must be taken in context of the final scene in the book in which Freya realizes silence and peace are not the same thing. Freya may have silence by not taking the dive – but it is not genuine happiness, or peace, either.

Things do not turn out in life as expected for Dan, either. Dan returns home to discover his house in flames, and people of all political persuasions rallying around Margaret Thatcher (who has survived) and the Conservatives after the bombing. There is more to life than anger, hatred, and violence, Lee argues, and it is clear here: Dan has ruined his relationship with his mother (signified by his cowardly backhanding of her), has no place to live, and has blood on his hands. (Readers should note that Susie is set to abandon her politics for the evening to resume a friendship with Freya, realizing her politics have driven them apart and that her friendship with Freya is not worth the protest.) Dan's house, as it is burning, symbolizes judgment and the reality that nothing good can come from violence.

Violence here only begets more violence. Violence is not always the answer, Lee herein argues – and nothing good can come from violence. The way Dawson explained things, life should have been simple: the bomb to end all bombs would have brought about Irish independence. Instead, it has only worsened the situation in ways Dan, Dawson, and their terrorist kind could never have imagined. Dan therein has failed to see that, indeed, most things in life are not simple – and even after the loss of his house and innocent blood on his hands, he remains unchanged. There is great irony here as well: deprived of his own father as a youngster, Dan has now deprived Freya of hers.

Discussion Question 1

Despite Dan's house being burned, he is undeterred by what he has done, signified by his cowardly slapping of his mother. Why is this so?

Discussion Question 2

What does Marina mean when she tells Freya to always go to the party? How might this advice be different for someone like Dan?

Discussion Question 3

What was Dan's terrorist attack intended to do? What has it done instead? What does this mean for peaceful Irish independence advocates? Does this confirm or deny the thematic argument that nothing good can come of violence? Why?

Vocabulary

connotation, intermittently, reciprocity, raucous, authoritative, respective



Characters

Dan

Dan is an Irish independence terrorist who becomes part of a plot to blow up the Grand Hotel and kill Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Dan, when the novel begins, is 18 and has a reasonable moral compass that quickly disintegrates upon joining the terrorist group bent on independence. Dan will do whatever is needed to secure Irish independence, but he stops short of killing noncombatants. Only at Dawson's insistence does Dan commit to killing innocents at the Grand Hotel to make a political point. Dan, through his work, becomes a cruel, callous, and careless man who not only kills innocents through the bombing, but backhands his mother like a coward when she dares to oppose what he has done.

Freya

Freya Finch is an 18-year-old girl uncertain about her future. She lives with her father, Moose, and works with him at the Grand Hotel. Pretty, intelligent, but unsure, Freya wants to travel, is not sure about college, and is looking for the right way forward in her life. However, she does not want to rush into anything, because she wants to be home and be near her father after her mother left her father. Her father is the one stable point in her life, and she is devoted to him although she and her father do not have a very close, personal relationship. Freya has a brief romance with John from the Grand, but when he cheats on her, she is devastated. She learns through experience and through Marina that she must always try to live life, regardless, even as she is devastated when her father is killed in the bombing.

Moose

Philip "Moose" Finch is the 45-year-old father of Freya, and the Deputy General Manager of the Grand Hotel. Moose, so nicknamed because of his powerhouse talent on the football field in his younger days, now regrets his wasted promise and seeks to fulfill his promise in the present by successfully hosting the Conservative Party Conference, which he can use as proof he should be promoted to General Manager. Moose is kind, caring, and devoted to his daughter, but his unhealthy ways lead to a heart attack. With his daughter's help, Moose recovers enough to oversee the Conference, but is brokenhearted when he learns a new manager has already been appointed. Moose is later killed in the terrorist bombing, but does not die before he helps to save the life of Marina's nephew. His primary concern as he dies is not for himself, but for the safety of Freya.



Marina

Marina is the Guest Relations Manager at the Grand Hotel. Marina is hard-working and wise, having had the experience of two dead husbands and years of heartache to supplement her wisdom. It is Marina who reminds Freya that most people think life is a choice between doing good and doing bad, but in reality, it is a choice between doing good and doing nothing. As such, Marina explains, life is a party that must always be attended.

Dan's mother

Dan's mother is a kind, caring, and gentle woman who is opposed to her son's terrorist activities. She is later horrified when she learns of the Grand Hotel bombing, and tells her son she can no longer recognize him. Her opposition to Dan leads to Dan smacking her in the face.

Dan's father

Dan's father is spoken of but never seen. Dan's father was a good, kind man who believed in Irish independence through peaceful means. But during a peaceful protest that turned into a riot, Dan's father was killed by a brick to the head and the refusal of the police to intervene to help, fearing a trap.

Mick

Mick is an Irish independence terrorist, and a close associate of Dawson. It is Mick who brings Dan to his initiation with Dawson. It is also later Mick who welcomes Dan to his "new life."

Dawson

Dawson McCartland is an Irish independence terrorist, and the head of his particular terrorist group. Dawson is thin and resembles an accountant, but his appearance is deceiving. He is cold, cruel, and bloodthirsty, wanting independence at any cost – even the lives of innocent people.

Patrick

Patrick is the only character in the novel who is based on a real historical figure – the man charged with blowing up the Grand Hotel in October, 1984. Patrick is chillingly professional about his work, having no qualms whatsoever about killing innocent people. Indeed, he ups the kind of explosive being used to craft a bomb to something more deadly and more powerful.

Susie

Susie is one of Freya's friends. Susie is leftwing protestor who wants to crash the Conservative Party Contest. Her politics strains her friendship with Freya. However, Susie comes to realize what has happened, and ultimately chooses to abandon the protest to spend time with Freya.



Symbols and Symbolism

Initiation

An initiation symbolizes the changing of Dan's life. Dan is ordered to kill one of Dawson's two dogs. Dan refuses. It is the last time he will ever err on the side of life: he is now a part of a terrorist organization that will orchestrate killings. Dan's life has indeed changed through his initiation, and he will never be the same man again.

Dan's father's work gloves

Dan's father's work gloves symbolize a becoming, a picking up of where his father left off, of assuming the work still to be done – both in the garden and politically. Dan tries on his father's gloves while preparing to garden and considering the past where his father died during a protest march. It is after trying on the gloves that Dan ultimately finds himself a part of the Grand Hotel bombing. However, the gloves do not quite fit Dan, evidence that Dan and his father both approach Irish independence differently: Dan's father was peaceful, while Dan is violent.

Heart attack

A heart attack symbolizes a precursor to death. Moose suffers a heart attack a few months before the Conference. The heart attack is Moose's notice of impending death, a sign of things to come. Moose will ultimately be killed not by a heart attack, but a terrorist attack.

Bomb

A bomb symbolizes destruction and violence. Dan and Patrick work together to plant a bomb at the Grand Hotel in order to kill Margaret Thatcher and topple the Conservative government. The bomb will not come to kill Thatcher, but other people who have absolutely nothing to do with politics or the situation in Ireland.

Conference reservations

Conference reservations are an omen. The Conference, apart from his daughter, becomes the primary focus for Moose through the course of the novel because he hopes it will improve his and his daughter's place in life. The reservations do not bring about goodness, however, but only destruction due to Dan's terrorist group.



Threat letters

Threat letters symbolize hatred and violence. Dan's mother receives several letters threatening her and Dan thanks to the work that Dan does. Rather than rejecting violence or soothing his mother's concerns by finding a real way to protect her, Dan brushes off the threats. He does not recognize that living by the sword will mean dying by the sword.

High dive

The high dive symbolizes a point of no return, and a path not taken in life. Freya backs down from the high dive because the dive – metaphorical for life – scares her. Rather than moving ahead and seeing where life will bring her, she refuses to even try.

Aborted jump from the high dive

The aborted jump symbolizes choosing to back away from things rather than facing them as they are. Freya's decision not to jump is reflective of her decision to remain in Brighton rather than pursuing her dreams of travel and possibly college. The aborted jump is normal in a life, especially given Freya's past – but Marina's reassurances later help give Freya courage to continue on.

Dan's house burning

Dan's house burning symbolizes judgment and the reality that nothing good can come from violence. The day the bomb is set to go off, Dan finds his house in flames – but his mother, thankfully, safe and outside of the blaze. Dan realizes in this moment that to live by the sword means dying by the sword, and that there is an order to things in life: violence only breeds more violence. But rather than learn from the experience, it angers Dan – who backhands his mother when his mother expresses her fears and anger over Dan's work.

Moose's final act of heroism

Moose's final act of heroism symbolizes human resilience in the face of tragedy. Moose, who is in the process of dying after the bomb goes off, helps free a child from danger, and ensures the child is taken by a firefighter. It demonstrates that ordinary people can be heroes, and that even in the midst of violent tragedy, good is still possible.

Margaret Thatcher's survival

Margaret Thatcher's survival symbolizes both hope and a backfiring of the intent of the terrorists. When it is announced that Thatcher is safe, everyone – regardless of their

political beliefs who has gathered around, or escaped from the hotel – cheers. Rather than toppling the Conservative government and freeing Ireland, Dan and Patrick and their group have only ensured that violence will continue.



Settings

The Grand Hotel

The Grand Hotel is located in Brighton. A beautiful, massive, and well-loved building, the Grand Hotel features multiple floors, hundreds of rooms, reception rooms, a restaurant and bar, a pool, oceanfront space, and countless other amenities that make it a hotspot for tourists and travelers alike. The Grand Hotel is overseen on a daily basis by Moose, while Freya, Marina, John, and others work at the Grand in various capacities. The Grand comes to play host to the Conservative Party Conference of October, 1984, and is targeted by Dan and his terrorist group in the attempt to kill Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher when she visits. By planting a delayed bomb in the bathroom, Dan and Patrick ensure that a huge part of the Grand is destroyed, and countless people are either killed or hurt.

Brighton

Brighton is a southeastern seaside English town where The Grand Hotel is located. Brighton appears to be a middle-class community that caters to beach crowds, and whose tourist season is decidedly the summer. Brighton is where Freya, Moose, Marina, John, and others both live and work. Brighton is where Freya hopes to begin her life, establishing a home there and saving up some money which she can then use to travel or step forward in life.

The clearing

The clearing is located over the border in Ireland, and is where Dan takes his initiation. The clearing is isolated, surrounded by trees, and far away from anyone. It is there that Dan first meets Dawson McCartland, and where Dan makes his last humane act as a human being by refusing to kill a dog. The clearing is also where Dan is told by Mick that he will now begin his “new life.”

Royal Sussex Hospital

The Royal Sussex Hospital is where Moose convalesces after his heart attack. Moose uses the time to focus on getting back to work at the hotel, and to recall events from his own past – from his youth to his ex-wife, Vivienne, leaving him. The hospital helps heal Moose more than just physically: it helps to put his mind and soul in a better place, especially through Marina’s visits.

Ireland

Ireland is located to the west of the main British island. Ireland has been engaged in a civil dispute of sorts, as many want Ireland to be independent of Britain, while others want Ireland to remain a part of Britain. Dan, Dawson, Mick, and their terrorist group are among those who resort to violence to secure Ireland's independence; and they run counter to the violence groups who wish to keep it a part of Britain. To help Ireland gain independence, Dan travels to England



Themes and Motifs

Life never turns out the way one expects

Life never turns out the way one expects, argues Jonathan Lee in the novel *High Dive*. *High Dive* depends upon a character driven plot, so it is only natural that the lives of those characters be examined in some detail in the novel. And the lives of the three main characters do not turn out as they expected it should.

Freya is 18 in the novel, standing between childhood and school, and adulthood and college. Freya wants to travel, is not so sure about college, and has concerns over her next step in life. She never expected to be facing this stage in life without her mother. However, she comes to realize that, between John and her father, she could begin a happy life in Brighton. Yet, even this turns out not the way she expects it to, as John cheats on her and her father is killed in the Hotel bombing.

Moose was noted as having great potential as a sportsman when he was younger – but through his young adulthood, his sporting skill seemed to even out and he never had the chance to live up to his expectations. In the present, Moose works hard so that he might become the General Manager of the Grand. It is his second attempt to fulfill potential in his life, and he does not want to miss an opportunity to further his career or provide better for his daughter. But the sudden hiring of a different manager – and the bomb – ensure life does not turn out as planned.

When Dan is young, he sees his father killed during a protest that becomes a riot. Witnessing the death of his father is not something Dan had ever planned. He never expected, likewise, to become involved in a terrorist organization until he felt he had no other choice. He never expected to be setting a bomb in a hotel which would kill innocent people, but he ended up doing so. Dan also expected the bomb to bring about Irish independence – but the entire plot backfired completely.

There is more to life than anger, hatred, and violence

There is more to life than anger, hatred, and violence, argues Jonathan Lee in the novel *High Dive*. The historical backdrop to the novel is the long and often violent struggle for Irish independence. Into that backdrop are inserted the characters of Freya, Moose, and Dan, who give the struggle a very human element so that readers can see that the struggle was not all there was to life at the time – and also to demonstrate that a life full of anger, hatred, and violence, will leave one alone.

Freya lives in England, miles away from the struggle itself. Freya is much like any teenage girl between childhood and adulthood: she is contemplating her future while trying to find a way to include her father in that future. Freya is challenged by the hotheaded liberal Susie who demands Freya be a part of the stand against the Conservatives. Freya opposes this for the sake of her father and his career. Freya's



continued disinterest in becoming politically active causes a strain on her friendship with Susie, who cannot conceive of a life not political. Only at the end of the novel does Susie realize her friendship with Freya is worth more than her politics.

For his part, Moose does not seem to be political, either. His decision to host the Conservatives has nothing to do with his politics or anger, but everything to do with his career. He is in the service industry, and he is there to cater to anyone who chooses the hotel's services, be they Conservatives or traveling tourists. The point of Moose seeking to advance his career is not only to fulfill his own potential – but to better care for his daughter with a better-paying job. Moose knows there is more to life than politics, and he is determined to be that.

Dan, however, cannot see beyond politics, anger, hatred, or violence. Dan could have very easily continued to protest for independence peacefully, but he chose to become involved violently. As he tells Freya, everyone is in politics whether they want to be or not. His fury disallows him from making a human connection with Freya; and his anger later bumbles his picking up of Lena at the bar. The hatred and anger that Dan has allowed to subsume his life lead to his killing of innocent people, the burning of his house, and his own cowardly slapping of his mother for opposing him. As such, Dan ends up completely alone at the end of the novel – and worse off for the cause of Irish independence than he had been before.

Violence is never the answer, and nothing good can come from violence

Violence is never the answer, and nothing good can come from violence, argues Jonathan Lee in the novel *High Dive*. The historical background for the novel is that of the oftentimes violent struggle for Irish independence – and the penchant for violence in the novel is manifested in Dan and the terrorist group he serves. They seek to use violence as a means to an end, but their end is not achieved and things turn out worse than before.

Years before the novel, Dan participated with his father and brothers in peaceful protest marches that ultimately became violent. During one such march, his father was hit in the head with a thrown brick and killed. When the police would not intervene to save his father, Dan decided that only violence could solve the question of Irish independence – and so he joined Dawson's terrorist group.

As a terrorist, Dan primarily targets policemen and soldiers. As the years go by, his confrontational tactics with police and soldiers become violent to the point where he is plotting to blow up trucks, convoys, and kill as many loyalists as possible. Dan, however, resists killing innocents until the Grand Hotel plan. Dan agrees to commit to the plan to kill Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister, by bomb, with the hope this will be the last bomb ever planted. With a new British government, Irish independence will be assured – or so Dawson claims.



The bomb goes off, kills several and wounds many others – but Thatcher escapes unharmed. People of all different political persuasions – including those who peacefully support Irish independence – rally to her. This means the struggle for independence will continue. Meanwhile, Dan and Patrick are now wanted men. Dan's own house is burned down – in judgment or retaliation is not clear – but it is clear that no good ever comes of violence. Dan has set back the struggle for independence with violence rather than ending the struggle altogether.

Most things in life are not simple

Most things in life are not simple, argues Jonathan Lee in the novel *High Dive*. Human life is often complicated, especially for the individual living that life – and those who claim that life is not complicated tend to be hypocrites. This is certainly the case for Dan.

An angry Dan challenges a waiter at a bar whether or not the waiter believes Margaret Thatcher is a terrorist. The apolitical waiter says this is difficult to answer, but Dan argues it is not. Dan contends that such a question – and most things in life – are actually very simple. But Dan betrays his own prejudices and his own failures as a person with respect to his own life. Dan's own story (seeing his father killed while a child) is the mark of a difficult rather than a simple life. Dan's decision to join the terrorists was a decision easily reached in anger – but his decision to begin killing innocent people was not an easy decision: it took convincing by Dawson. Dan's commitment to terrorism was wrong to begin with – and his decision to involve innocent people only makes things worse. But were one to ask Dan about this, he would not admit he was a terrorist or doing anything truly wrong.

Freya's own life may at first seem fairly simple. She is a typical teenage girl struggling to figure out her next step in life. But for Freya herself, life is far more complicated than what it may seem to someone outside. Her heartache at not having her mother in her life has weighted her desire to keep stability – and her father – in her life. She wants to but is hesitant to travel, is not convinced about going to college, and is unsure about life as a result. When her father has a heart attack, Freya's life becomes more complicated: should she take care of her father and give up her future, or should she continue on anyways? Ultimately, she decides to care for her father and forego travel, at least for now, by making her life in Brighton.

Moose's own life may seem fairly straightforward from the outside: he is a man seeking to advance his career through the successful hosting of a conference at his hotel. However, readers come to learn that Moose was considered a promising sportsman as a youth, but he never lived up to his potential. Likewise, the abandonment of his wife and his daughter's decision to stay with him rather than going with her underscores Moose's desire to provide for his daughter. Moose's struggle to advance his career is not only to fulfill his own potential in the present, but to provide a better life for his daughter.



Always go to the party

Always go to the party, argues Jonathan Lee through the character of Marina in the novel *High Dive*. When Freya refuses to take the high dive (the plunge into life) because things are not exactly the way she had hoped they would be, and because of recent concerns (ranging from her own romantic heartbreak to her father's heart attack), it is Marina who comforts her. Marina tells Freya that she must always go to the party.

Marina's advice about always going to the party means always taking the plunge into life. People, Marina explains, believe you can either do something good or something bad each day. But this is not accurate, she contends: people can do good, or they can do nothing. A choice to sit life out is still a choice. Choosing not to take the plunge and take one's life into one's own hand is still a decision to do nothing.

Moose himself is an excellent example of someone who has decided to go to the party. Moose has experienced heartbreak through Vivienne's leaving him, and personal setbacks through his unfulfilled sporting career as a young man. Still, he has a daughter who loves and remains loyal to him, and the promise for career advancement at work. Rather than dwelling on the past, Moose focuses on the present and the potential of the future. He will not sit out the future because of the past.

However, Lee is quick to caution that going to the party does not mean attending at any cost. Dan's tragedy of seeing his father killed as a child is enough to send Dan into the arms of terrorists. In a sense, Dan stops living a normal life and takes a plunge into the wrong direction in life. Rather than using his father's death as a foundation for constructive ends to a peaceful resolution to the Irish independence question, he commits to violence – and deprives Freya of her father in the process.



Styles

Point of View

Jonathan Lee tells his novel *High Dive* in the third-person omniscient perspective from the point of view of an unknown narrator. The narrator acts as common, unifying thread that strings together the three distinct lives and stories of Freya, Moose, and Dan – especially as they intertwine at the Grand Hotel however briefly and tenuously. The novel is character-driven, and the exploration of the lives of these characters are what adds depth to the basic historically-based background. Readers are given full-fledged and intimate views of the lives of each of the characters in the novel – from Moose’s failed marriage to Freya’s sexual awakening to Dan’s childhood where he witnessed the killing of his father – something that each of the characters do not know concerning one another. Indeed, the reader is given a privileged view, knowing everything about every character when some – like Freya, regarding Dan – do not even know the other’s real name. This gives the reader a bird’s eye view of the lives of the characters and the events that unfold because of them and also allows the reader to draw conclusions and judgments about the actions of these characters.

Language and Meaning

Jonathan Lee tells his novel *High Dive* in language that is simple and straightforward, but in such a way as to laden what seem simple with complex depth and need for consideration. The simple language necessarily begs the subsequent consideration – and Lee’s intent is to make readers truly think about the arguments he makes. This is in keeping with the novel’s themes, as the themes touch upon incredibly complex and important arguments. Consider, for example, the straightforward way in which Dawson claims, in Part Two, Chapter 4, “Your bomb ends the other bombs, Danny” (110). Danny – and readers – must contemplate and consider whether Dawson is right, or completely wrong. Or consider Dr. Haswell’s assertion in Part Three, Chapter 2, that “The heart’s a tricky muscle” (138). He refers here not only to physical health, but romance and familial love. Or, especially consider Marina’s advice in Part Four, Chapter 12: “...for most of us, for decent people, the choice each day isn’t between doing something good and doing something bad. It’s between doing something good and doing nothing. So this is my advice, if you ever want it: always go to the party” (293).

Structure

Jonathan Lee divides his novel *High Dive* into five primary parts, with each part being further subdivided into chapters. Apart from the first part of the novel, titled *Initiation*, the subsequent four parts are numbered and given a setting and a date. This helps to establish the contextual setup of the chapters within, and to establish a point in time at which the events transpire. *Initiation* deals with Dan’s joining of Dawson’s terrorist group

six years before the events of the rest of the novel. The following four parts weave back and forth through time in the year of 1984, until the past and the present join in Part Four for the bombing of the Grand. The alternating of the plot through past and present helps Lee to establish the depth and dimensionality of his characters – and this is important as the novel itself is character-driven. The last small section of the last chapter returns readers to a point several months before the bombing, where Freya hoped to get to know Dan (as Roy) better, but Dan had no interest in this at all.



Quotes

Welcome to your new life.
-- Mick (Initiation)

Importance: Here, Dan is welcomed into an Irish terrorist group seeking Irish independence. Dan has been taken in by the group in order to benefit its operations. Dan's early refusal to kill an innocent dog is the final stand of his former life. He will be irrevocably changed when, years later, he helps to kill numerous innocent people in a hotel bombing. This is his new life. Saving the dog was the final act of his old life.

We would like to provisionally reserve 150 rooms.
-- Conservative Party (Part One, Chapter 1)

Importance: Here, Moose is beyond thrilled when the Conservative Party agrees to host its annual conference at Brighton's Grand Hotel. Moose takes this as a sign of his capabilities, and as a chance to demonstrate his potential for General Manager. The Conference, apart from his daughter, becomes the focal point of Moose's life through the course of the novel. He lives for the Conference – and will end up dying by it.

What do you do when the people making the rules aren't interested in fairness? When they choose to protect based on religion, race, history? The police are scum. People who join the police are scum.
-- Narrator (Part Two, Chapter 3)

Importance: Here, the narrator lays out the logic for Dan's decision to join a terrorist organization. During a protest march, police refused to intervene to help Dan's father, who had been hit in the head with a brick and died as a result of no one coming in to help. This causes Dan to believe the only way to fight those in charge is with violence.

Your bomb ends the other bombs, Danny.
-- Dawson (Part Two, Chapter 4)

Importance: While Dan does not mind committing acts of violence against those who deserve it, he does not like collateral damage – innocent people being hurt or killed through their actions. However, Dawson says such things are unavoidable, and that innocents must die for a greater cause. Dawson argues that one last bomb meant at severing the head off the Conservative government will bring about peace – but this turns out not to be the case.

The heart's a tricky muscle.
-- Dr. Haswell (Part Three, Chapter 2)

Importance: Here, Haswell speaks to Freya after Moose has had a heart attack. However, his insistence that the heart is a tricky muscle is not only a physiological diagnosis. Haswell's comment has far deeper meaning romantically and emotionally.



Freya herself has had emotional difficulties thanks to her mother, and will have romantic difficulties thanks to John later on in the novel.

We're all into it, aren't we? It's just a case of whether we know that we're into it or not.
-- Dan (posing as Roy Walsh) (Part Three, Chapter 4)

Importance: Here, Dan converses with Freya about politics. Dan, seeking to provide himself cover, says he is not any more or any less into politics than the next man – an outright lie. Dan is so into politics he is willing to kill innocent people for it. His statement in normal circumstances could be taken to mean that everyone is affected by politics whether they like it or not; but in Dan's situation, innocent people will die from political extremism whether they know it or not – and there is nothing they can do to stop Dan from wrecking their lives.

That hurt all the more, though. The idea she'd only been playing at happiness, a stupid little-girl game.
-- Narrator (Part Four, Chapter 5)

Importance: Here, Freya dwells on the trickiness of the heart. She had been hoping to build a life in Brighthelm, and to have a romance with John. But her discovery that John does not want to be with her, hurts her deeply. She feels stupid, like a hopeless romantic who is lost in the throes of youthful innocence. She is embarrassed for giving away her heart and having it rejected.

...and she climbed down the ladder, felt broad round beneath her feet.
-- Narrator (Part Four, Chapter 5)

Importance: Rather than plunging into the pool from the high dive, Freya returns to the ground. The dive – life – is not what she had expected it might be, so she refuses to proceed with it. She backs down from the challenges of life. However, she will not back down forever, as a pep talk by Marina later on encourages Freya to go on anyways.

Most things are unbelievably fucking simple.
-- Dan (Part Four, Chapter 8)

Importance: Here, Dan becomes angry with a waiter for calling the situation with Ireland complicated, and refusing to call Thatcher a terrorist. Dan believes she is, and argues most things in life – like this – are very simple. However, this is a statement of hypocrisy: Dan cannot see his own actions are terroristic in nature, and that not everything in life is actually that simple.

I've got what I deserve. There is an order to events after all.
-- Dan (Part Four, Chapter 10)

Importance: After waiting for word of the bomb, Dan comes home to find his house in flames. His mother is safe, but Dan realizes either judgement or revenge have been



leveled against him for what he has done. But rather than contrition or seeking to protect his outraged and brokenhearted mother, he backhands her in front of neighbors.

...for most of us, for decent people, the choice each day isn't between doing something good and doing something bad. It's between doing something good and doing nothing. So this is my advice, if you ever want it: always go to the party.

-- Marina (Part Four, Chapter 12)

Importance: Here, Marina comforts Freya after Freya has her heart broken. Marina essentially tells Freya that life is not perfect, but it must be embraced – and dived into – anyways. A person's day consists of doing something, or doing nothing at all. Doing nothing at all – backing up from the high dive – means nothing will change. But taking the plunge means something could.

Silence and peace were not the same thing.

-- Narrator (Part Four, Chapter 13)

Importance: Here, Freya is disappointed that Roy has no interest in getting to know her any better. When he leaves, she realizes she is in relative silence, but not in peace. Just because things are silent, does not mean they are peaceful (the planted bomb). Just because things are peaceful, does not mean they are silent (the Conservative gathering prior to the explosion).