

The Hundred-Foot Journey Study Guide

The Hundred-Foot Journey by Richard C Morais

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Plot Summary

The Hundred-Foot Journey by Richard C. Morais is the story of Hassan Haji who rises from the slums of West Bombay to become one of the elite chefs of Paris. Hassan was the second-born in his family. He was close to both of his parents. The family lived in a poverty-stricken area above Hassan's grandfather's restaurant. Eventually, his grandfather moved the restaurant into a nicer middle-class neighborhood.

Abbas, his father, was actively involved in Hassan's grandfather's restaurant. Hassan's mother kept the restaurant's books because she was good with numbers. After Hassan's grandfather died, Abbas took over the operation. Unlike his father, Abbas stopped hiring boys from the slum which hurt and enraged the people of the old neighborhood. One day, the restaurant was attacked by protestors who set fire to the building. Unfortunately, Hassan's mother couldn't escape and died from her injuries. The family mourned deeply.

Abbas decided that the family needed a new start and moved them to London. They felt comfortable in Southall because there were a lot of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi transplants in the area. Abbas had made a small fortune when he sold his restaurant in West Bombay. He decided to go into a business in London. But, when that fell through, he decided to take the family on an extended European vacation. Abbas tried to keep busy to overcome the thoughts of his wife's death.

While they were on vacation, their car broke down in Lumiere, a small village in France. The break down happened in front of an old mansion that was for sale. After learning that there was no Indian restaurant in the village, Abbas bought the house with plans to redesign part of it mansion as a restaurant. Abbas was unaware that directly across the road from the old mansion was a famous restaurant and inn named Le Saule Pleureur. It was run by celebrated master chef Madame Gertrude Mallory.

Mallory was a sharp-tongued recluse who was obsessed with only one thing in life – her restaurant and earning a three-star rating from the prestigious Michelin board of directors. She was outraged when Abbas, who was loud and boisterous, began building his restaurant. Though Abbas had every right to open his restaurant, Madame Mallory tried to have it shut down. The two restaurateurs became bitter enemies which culminated in a physical altercation in which Hassan was badly burned.

The incident made Mallory take stock of her own self. When she discovered that Hassan had exceptional culinary skills, she decided to take him under her wing and teach him French cooking. At first Abbas was totally against it. He didn't want his son to be around her. But, Mallory was so insistent that she waged a hunger strike on his driveway. Finally, Abbas gave in because Hassan wanted to study under a master chef.

After several years of studying with Mallory, Hassan was offered a position in Paris. His mentor told him that it was time to move on because she had taught him everything she

knew. Eventually, Hassan opened his own restaurant and became part of the circle of elite chefs in France.



Chapter 1

Summary

The aroma that emitted from Hassan Haji's grandfather's restaurant was one of Hassan's first memories. Having been driven from the fields by the blight in the 1930s, his grandfather had arrived on a steam engine in Bombay from Gujarat in 1934. The family members were poor Muslim farmers. Hassan's grandfather – who was called Bapaji – rode on top of the steam engine for three days to reach Bombay. When he arrived, he was starving. His hunger probably sparked his idea of opening a restaurant. But, for years after he first arrived, he worked as a delivery boy and delivered lunch boxes to workers. He often had to ride the crowded trains with his deliveries. The trains were so crowded that some men hung from the windows and doors.

By age twenty-three, Bapaji was delivering a thousand lunch boxes each day. He had fourteen runners working for him. By 1938, he was able to have Ammi, his wife, join him. They had been married when they were only fourteen. They set up a clapboard house in the slums off the Napean Sea road. The world was on the brink of World War II in 1938. Bombay was the “back room” of the Allied Pacific war effort. Thousands of soldiers from all over the world would eventually pass through Bombay. For many soldiers it was their last moment of peace before going into battle. Ammi suggested that Bapaji sell snacks to the soldiers. So, Bapaji made sweet bars that the delivery boys had on hand when they delivered the lunch boxes to workers. It was from the success of this venture that Bapaji was able to open his first restaurant, a primitive building in the slums. The restaurant was popular among the soldiers and sailors who passed through.

Ammi learned what the soldiers liked to eat at home. Bapaji was able to replicate their favorite foods. Of course, this made his restaurant even more popular. Ammi was a great inspiration for Hassan in later life when he became a chef. He held everything he created to the high standards of Ammi's cooking. To Hassan, it represented the essence of Indian culture. Hassan's parents were quite successful and amassed a small fortune from their roadside restaurant. Bapaji was tight-fisted with his money and hid it in a tin can to keep it from neighbors and relatives whom he didn't trust. In 1942, Bapaji was able to purchase a tract of land on the Napean Sea road.

After establishing themselves so well, the couple began to raise a family. Abbas Haji, Hassan's father, was the second born. The family was split from some relatives who fled to Pakistan during the Independence and Partition era. Bapaji decided to keep his family in Bombay. He had hidden them in a business associate's warehouse basement. Bapaji was illiterate, but Abbas was educated, having attended the polytechnic Institute of Catering Technology.

When Hassan was a small child, his father had told him about a wealthy man who owned a first-class restaurant called Hyderabad. Abbas looked at Uday Joshi, the owner of Hyderabad, as his chief rival. Joshi was a billionaire who made his money in



petrochemicals and telecommunications. Abbas promised Hassan that the Haji name would be more well-known than the Joshi name.

The family's compound was located in a sea of rickety clapboard shacks. The compound's courtyard was the heart and soul of the family business. All of the delivery bikes were stacked in that area and much of the food was prepared in open-air cauldrons. Hassan recalled Ammi stirring the food in the large pots in the oppressive heat of the day as pungent smells filled the air.

The old roadside restaurant was replaced with a brick house consisting of a large hall with plastic tables. When Hassan was twelve, Abbas decided to move the restaurant closer to his rival Joshi's establishment. Abbas hung a large disco ball on the center of the ceiling and bribed young starlets to drop by the restaurant throughout each month. He hired singers to entertain on the weekends. The restaurant was such a huge success that it was expanded. Abbas reveled in the success of the venture; but, Hassan's mother was more practical and watched the books carefully. The first chapter ends as Hassan recalls the vultures that had circled the bodies in the Tower of Silence, the Parsi burial grounds on Malabar Hill.

Analysis

It was in the stars. Hassan Haji was destined to become a chef. Though he was influenced by his grandfather and father who owned and operated the family restaurant business, he was inspired by Ammi, his grandmother. Hassan believed that her cooking was the ultimate in Indian cuisine and culture. Hassan was influenced by the hard work and sacrifice of his grandfather who left the farming fields of rural India at seventeen to find his fortune in the large city of Bombay. Bapaji, his grandfather, was an illiterate Muslim; but, he had a keen business sense and an extraordinary work ethic.

Hassan was a by-product of his grandmother's great cooking, his grandfather's business sense and work ethic, his father's ambition and attraction to wealth and glamour. and his mother's practicality.

Perhaps, without being aware of it on a day-to-day basis, young Hassan was also impacted by the squalor that surrounded the family's restaurant and compound. Although the restaurant was a success and their brick compound was a comfortable place to live and conduct business, it was located in the middle of the slums where putrid streams and pungent aromas were a constant reminder of the plight of his people.

The chapter ends on an ominous note, a cliffhanger that portends of the truly miserable setting in which this story takes place. The vultures are focusing on the dead bodies that are held in the Tower of Silence.



Discussion Question 1

Why did Bapaji leave the farmlands of rural India and come to West Bombay?

Discussion Question 2

What was the new name given to the city of West Bombay?

Discussion Question 3

Whose cooking was an inspiration to Hassan?

Vocabulary

aromatic, cardamom, genteel, urchin, primitive, benchmark, charisma, shantytown, putrid, pungent



Chapter 2

Summary

Hassan thought back on his childhood as a happy time in his life. He pictured the kitchen with all its great aromas and wonderful food. He avoided thinking of the cockroaches that scampered about the room. He recalled the helpers and apprentices who were not much older than Hassan. He spent many hours with them as they stripped chicken from bones and chopped vegetables. Hassan had good memories of his trips to Crawford's Market. He and the head chef Bappu went there to purchase fruits and vegetables.

After buying their produce, they would head for the meat market to purchase poultry. Bappu showed Hassan how to determine the health and age of a chicken by looking at its skin. The meat market was a gloomy place with freshly butchered sheep hanging from large hooks. He recalled the black ravens that would loom, hoping they could snatch a scrap of meat. Hassan's favorite place was the fish market which was always their last stop. The Hindus had burned incense and hung yellow garlands to honor one of their gods. The variety of fish available at the market was dizzying. Anwar, the fishmonger, stayed in a back room. There was no better fish expert than Anwar. He knew the best buys and the tricks that other fishmongers used to push their sales.

Abbas and Ammi often conducted studies to determine which dishes were selling the best in the restaurant. They were always encouraging Bappu to do more and do better. The three would try to find ways to improve recipes. Hassan's mother liked to take Hassan and get away from the business. They would take breaks and visit the many shops in the area. She wasn't extravagant with buying things like scarves and saris. After they shopped, they would always dine in a restaurant. She would also take Hassan to museums and to the planetarium. On one occasion, after his mother had worked for weeks on the year-end books, they went to an upscale neighborhood that was filled with posh and exclusive shops.

Hassan recalled one particular occasion when he and his mother went to a French restaurant. The restaurant was dark and smelled of wine-soaked beef and stale cigarette smoke. At first, Hassan was reluctant to try any of the food; but, his mother encouraged him. After eating his lunch, the joy of the meal and the look on his mother's face were fused in his memory. She said they should tell Abbas that French food was now their favorite.

Hassan could feel the hatred and resentment of those less fortunate in his area. Bapaji was a well respected man in the neighborhood. He was one of those who had made it. He always hired his delivery boys from the neighborhood. However, when Abbas moved the restaurant out of the slums, he no longer hired the poor. His customers wanted clean waiters not the filthy boys from old neighborhood. Abbas was not a particularly devout Muslim; but, he did what was necessary to stay on the right side of Allah just in



case. He wouldn't hire the poor in his restaurant, but he fed them the leftovers from the cauldrons.

Abbas and his family were singled out by reformists who depicted them as the cause for the people's suffering and poverty in the community. Hassan and his brother Ubmar looked at the propaganda left by the activists and realized that their family was on the line between poverty and the upper class. Hassan has memories of his last summer as a child. The family had enjoyed a carefree day at the beach. His brothers and sisters were playful and happy. His mother was beautiful and laughing and smiling.

Bapaji died in the middle of a game of backgammon with Hassan. With his death, the family lost the little respect that they held in the community. Soon after, the restaurant was raided and his mother was murdered. She had been beaten and badly burned by the marauders who set fire to the restaurant. Relatives pulled her out as she screamed. She looked at her own skin that had come off in her hands. Abbas gathered the children and the restaurant guests and escaped out the back to the Hanging Gardens and Malabar Hill.

Abbas was distraught and forever changed. He put the property up for sale. They were millionaires, but Hassan's mother was lost forever. Abbas, his six children, an aunt, and two uncles boarded a plane for London. On the plane, Hassan had his first taste of English food. It was bland and tasteless.

Analysis

Tragedy left Hassan and his family millionaires. Hassan, of course, would have done anything to have his mother back and be poor again. His father had made the mistake of refusing to hire the poor boys of the slum in his restaurant. Bapaji was well-respected in the community and had always hired local boys as deliverymen. There was a great resentment for the way Abbas treated those in the neighborhood. While Bapaji was still alive, the family garnered a degree of respect.

However, when Bapaji died suddenly one day, the free ride was over. The hatred and resentment that the people felt for Abbas and his family and the success he had while he abandoned the people of the slums grew. Activists singled the family out as the cause of poverty in the area. Although that was not true, protests served to escalate the hatred and resentment. The restaurant was ambushed by violent reformists resulting in the death of Hassan's beloved mother.

The family, now headed by Abbas, sold the compound and became millionaires. Abbas was grief-stricken. More than likely, he blamed himself for the tragedy and for the horrible death of his wife. He wanted no part of India. Without ever looking back, he immediately took his six children and several other relatives to England..

On the plane to England, Hassan has his first taste of English food which was tasteless and bland. He probably recalled the delicious French food he had with his mother which made the English food all the more tasteless.



Discussion Question 1

Why was the death of Bapaji a turning point for the family?

Discussion Question 2

Why did the reformists hold a deep hatred for Abbas and his family?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Hassan find the English food on the plane tasteless?

Vocabulary

Tandoori, raucous, fishmonger, furred, exuberance, forages, desiccated, paradoxically

Chapter 3

Summary

Although the transition to London was a difficult one, the family needed the two years there to adjust to life without Hassan's mother. At times it seemed that they were in hell. Uncle Sami, Hassan's mother's youngest brother, picked them up at Heathrow when they arrived. Hassan met his cousin Aziza for the first time; but, she was not very friendly. His aunt told him to stay away from Aziza because she was dirty. Sami assured the family that Southall was a good neighborhood to live in and that it was convenient to many Indian shops. Sami found the family a six-bedroom house.

Southall was the unofficial community of Britain's Indian, Pakistanis and Bangladesh population. There were family signs in the neighborhood that reminded Hassan of home. But, the fog that made everything continuously wet was something new. Their new new, stucco house belonged to a Pakistani general who rented it out. The inside was in disrepair with tired linoleum floors and threadbare rugs. The dim lighting and the dampness in the house were depressing. Hassan never considered that house his home.

Abbas wanted to throw himself into a new business. He thought of importing and exporting firecrackers and party favors and becoming a wholesaler of copper kitchenware. Finally, he settled on hot sauces. Abbas decided to do research before jumping into a new business. He found out the variety of Indian sauces that were sold in the local stores. After visiting the small shops, Abbas decided they needed to stop by Harrods Food Hall in London's West End. The store was vast with many delicacies and international foods on display. Many of the items were new to Abbas and Hassan. There were only a handful of Indian spices and sauces which made Abbas realize that the English were not great consumers of Indian food. After deciding that it was best to drop the Indian sauce idea, he succumbed to the depression that he was so desperately trying to avoid.

Analysis

Although the family was in a safer environment among relatives, it did not mitigate loneliness or the necessity of undergoing a difficult transition. Abbas was accustomed to being a man in charge of a large operation. He had been the employer and boss. Even though he was a millionaire, he needed to be productive and run a business. He thought of some schemes, the most serious of which was making and distributing Indian sauces. Although Indian sauces were stocked in the local Indian shops, he realized that the English people weren't into them. After visiting a large food hall and finding only a handful of Indian spices and sauces, he gave up the idea. What he was doing was trying to stay busy and not think about the devastation that his family had endured, most of all the loss of his wife and his children's mother. He tried to avoid the grief – one of



the stages of mourning. However, in the end he found that he had to endure the misery and hope to emerge in a better place, emotionally and mentally.

Discussion Question 1

Who told Hassan not to have anything to do with his cousin Aziza?

Discussion Question 2

What made Abbas realize that the Indian Sauce business would not be very successful in London?

Discussion Question 3

What was Abbas trying to avoid by throwing himself into a new business?

Vocabulary

acclimatized, coquettish, gentrification, entrepreneurial



Chapter 4

Summary

When Hassan and Ubar missed their life in Mumbai, they would take the tube into Central London to Camden Locks. It was crowded and bustling and reminded them of home. It was on the other side of the tracks in Camden that sleazy tattoo parlors, body piercing shops, and ring-studded Goths abounded. These things made Hassan realize that he wasn't the strangest person on earth.

Their favorite spot was a Mumbai grill that featured Bollywood posters on the wall and served lamb Madras and chicken curry. One afternoon after eating, they decided to check out the nearby Indian shops. There were cheap Indian carryalls and bright scarves for sale. All of it reminded the boys of their homeland. It was in one of these shops that Hassan first met Adhidha, his first love. She was a shop girl who helped him pick something out for his aunt. They talked for a while, and Hassan told her he'd like to see her again. She had a stunning figure but, as Ubar pointed out, she had a round face like an onion that was pocked with a few acne scars.

Every chance Hassan got, he would travel to Camden to see Adhidha. She would only meet him if he agreed to go to a museum or some other educational outing. They saw a movie about the dissident underground in the Soviet era. Hassan was not thrilled about seeing it and was surprised when it moved him to tears. One night Hassan met her at the Royal Academy of Arts in Piccadilly for an art exhibit. They ate a picnic lunch in the garden that Adhidha had packed. She invited him to a dinner with her university friends for the next Saturday which was a great compliment to Hassan. She wanted him to meet her friends.

The day before the dinner, Hassan visited his friend Deepak who virtually lived in his parents' basement. A friend, Angie, was there, too. They all smoked pot. A short time later, Hassan and Angie became physically involved. They went to her house and stayed in bed for two days – her parents were gone for the weekend. He stood Adhidha up and finally called a few days later to apologize. She wasn't upset and told him it was best if he spent time with people his age. It was the start of a pattern. Whenever Hassan became close to a woman, he would sabotage the relationship. Mehtab, his sister, was sure it could be traced back to their mother's death.

Other family members were having their problems, too. Ammi was becoming forgetful and senile. Mehtab constantly styled her hair and primped before the mirror to get ready for a suitor who never came. Hassan retreated to the basement and indulged himself on hashish and foosball. But, there was hope for Hassan's future. He learned that there was part-time work available at a restaurant called Batica Chips, which was one of Southall's two fine candy manufacturers. The man who owned the shop didn't want to hire Hassan because he was too frail and weak looking. But, his wife insisted that they



hire him for minimum wages. One of his responsibilities was making the actual candy. While standing before the boiling vat, Hassan felt he had found himself.

After Hassan was caught making out with his cousin Aziza, she was sent on a plane to Delhi. Relations between Uncle Sami's family and Hassan's ended. Abbas decided it was time to leave London. The family toured Europe beginning with Belgium and Holland and ending up in France. A highlight of the trip was in Tuscany where they stayed for several days enjoying the fabulous cuisine. After ten weeks of travel, the family was back in its dark mood. They were tired of traveling and eating out. They were ready to settle down.

They finally came to a village in France that had narrow eighteenth-century lanes. Immediately, Hassan found it to be charming and appealing. Hassan wanted to stay there for lunch, but Abbas wanted to drive on. Suddenly, providence stepped in when Abbas' car started to overheat and smoke. The car had broken down in front of an old mansion known as the Dufour estate that had a "For Sale" sign on its entrance. It was destiny.

The village was Lumiere which had been an active watch making center in the eighteenth century. The population of Lumiere, which was now most famous for its wine, was about 25,000. There were some industries and produced a variety of cheeses. Abbas and Uncle Mayur walked into town presumably to get a mechanic but instead returned with the real estate agent. They toured the large house and the agent assured Abbas that he would have no competition if he opened an Indian restaurant there in the village. Abbas bought the mansion and the years of mourning were officially over. It was time to begin a new life.

Hassan noticed a mansion just across the way that was almost identical to theirs. On closer inspection he realized that the mansion had been converted into an inn. There was a sign which read, "Le Saule Pleureur." He was certain that someone was watching him from the inn's top floor attic.

Analysis

The transition from India to London continued to be a difficult one for Hassan and his family. He and Umbar liked to travel to Camden, a crowded district that reminded them of home. It was where Hassan met his first love. With the relationship he had with Adhidha, the shop girl he met in Camden, Hassan established a life-long pattern of being unable to commit to anyone – especially when a relationship turned more serious. His sister Mehtab attributed this to his hurt and pain over losing his mother. He did not want to feel the anguish of losing another woman he loved. It should be noted that he considered Adhidha his first love and that she was an older woman – perhaps even a mother figure.

But, Mehtab had her own relationship problems. She isolated herself and prepared for a suitor who never came. She too was afraid to risk her feelings for someone she might



lose. Their emotional reactions to their mother's death underscored the lasting impact of losing a love suddenly to violence. The two years in London were considered as a mourning period – a lengthy one by any measure. It is interesting that Hassan who felt lost and alone felt he had found where he belonged when he was hired by a candy maker and learned how to make candy.

Abbas finally decided that there was still a life for him and his family to live. One way to escape the misery of the tragedy was to move away from the haven they sought in London following Hassan's mother's death. Just as Hassan felt he belonged behind the large candy vat in Camden, something seemed to call to him as the family drove through the small French village of Lumiere, It was that same feeling that he had in the candy factory. He felt he belonged in that small village.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Hassan stand Adhidha up?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Hassan feel he belonged in the candy factory?

Discussion Question 3

To what event did the breakdown of Abbas' car lead?

Vocabulary

cavernous, kindred, adamant, dissident, furtively, dementia, gesticulations, arbitrary, bourgeois



Chapter 5

Summary

As it turned out, the old woman staring at him from the inn was Madame Gertrude Mallory. Mallory was an innkeeper originally from Loire. She was also a chef who had lived alone in the attic of the Le Saule Pleureur for thirty-four years when the Haji family bought the Dufour mansion. As a young woman, Mallory was sent to the best hotel school in Geneva. She was a private person who was sharp-tongued and unfriendly. She liked to hike in the Alps and always did so by herself. She was able to purchase the mansion in Lumiere after she received an inheritance. She worked long hours in the kitchen to perfect her culinary skills. The Le Saule Pleureur was considered one of France's top small country hotels.

Mallory had an extensive collection of cookbooks. Her copy of Apicius' "De Re Coquinaria" was the only surviving Roman cookbook. Mallory had many other classic cookbooks in her collection. Mallory ultimately emerged as a master chef – a chef's chef who was admired by the top chefs of France. When she agreed to be interviewed on TV, everyone in the village tuned in with much enthusiasm. She became a celebrity all across France. Her top-floor apartment was stuffed with her ancient cookbooks and framed certificates of awards and achievements. There were two framed articles that appeared in Le Monde that announced her first and second Michelin star. There was space for a third-framed article to announce her third star that was yet to come.

The night the Haji family arrived was Mallory's 65th birthday. She became enraged when her staff made her a birthday cake and sang "Happy Birthday" to her. It was a waste of time and energy. She was upset and felt like a failure because she had not earned her third star and probably never would. She prayed that night asking what her purpose was.

The next day she was appalled at seeing that an Indian family had moved into the old Dufour mansion.

Analysis

Madame Mallory was a celebrated and much admired French chef. She owned and operated Le Saule Pleureur, a country inn that was directly across the street from the Dufour mansion which the Haji family purchased. Mallory is a private person whose only joy in life is her cooking and her inn. She is frustrated on her 65th birthday that she hadn't earned a third star for her inn. As accomplished as she is, she feels like a failure. Since Hassan has a great interest in cooking, it is obvious that Mallory has a lot in common with her young new neighbor.



Discussion Question 1

What collection did Madame Mallory keep in her private quarters?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Madame Mallory feel like a failure on her 65th birthday?

Discussion Question 3

Why was Madame Mallory dismayed to see that the Dufour mansion has been purchased?

Vocabulary

hoteliers, culinary, cognoscenti



Chapter 6

Summary

Hassan and his siblings enjoyed exploring their large, new house. Abbas put all his energies into remaking the mansion into a Bombay image – both the private quarters and the restaurant he planned for a portion of the mansion. Carpenters and craftsmen invaded the house for the renovation. A few weeks after moving in Hassan spotted Madame Mallory outside on her grounds. She was working in her garden. Her tranquility was broken with a commotion made by Abbas and some workers. Hassan could see that Mallory was disturbed by the noise and by Abbas loud vulgarity. Hassan could see the contempt on her face from across the way.

On another occasion when Hassan had gone to the bakery to buy bread, he was able to see the back of the inn and some of its grounds and gardens. He was shocked to see that Madame Mallory was out in her garden once again. She was meeting with her sous chefs and teaching them how to trim an artichoke. Hassan was fascinated by the demonstration. He was drawn to the sound of her voice. To Hassan, Mallory was no less than an artist.

Looking through an opening through the fence he saw the sous chef, Margaret Bonnier, who appeared to be just a few years older than Hassan. He then saw Marcel, an apprentice and the handsome Jean-Pierre who was the chef de cuisine who were holding trays with that day's offerings for Madame and the others to sample. Hassan had to bring the bread home for lunch. As he walked away, there was something about what he had just witnessed that reminded him of his mother and his homeland.

Abbas was jubilant, whooping and hollering, when the restaurant sign was raised up. "Maison Mumbai" was written in bright gold lettering on an Islamic green background. Hindustani classical music blared and scratched over speakers that Uncle Mayor had set up. Madame Mallory was outraged. She told her manservant that she would not put up with that on her street. Madame Mallory did not deal with Abbas directly. Instead she complained to the Mayor's office. She told the mayor to shut Abbas down. She was told that he had the permission of the Planning Committee. He was acting within the law and he could not be shut down.

Mallory was further angered when she tried to purchase crayfish at the market but was not able to because they had been pre-sold to Abbas. She was outraged. She had been coming to the market for thirty years! She refused to purchase another type of fish and stormed out without buying anything. She had more trouble when she wanted to take all the aubergines and zucchini. They too were not for sale and been bought by Abbas. Mallory took her basket and rushed for the exit. Hassan and Abbas were there purchasing equipment for their restaurant. Abbas' was loud in his negotiations with the vendor.



As Abbas paced in front of the vendor, suddenly he was facing Mallory. She told him who she was and that she didn't like what he was doing to her street. The loud music and ugly placard were in very bad taste. Abbas was at a loss for words. She told him that it was a tradition in Lumiere that she have first pick at the produce each morning. Abbas finally recovered and told her that he was an important man from Bombay. His reputation was meaningless in France she told him. She said that he should not be impertinent to her and called him a mad dog. They had drawn a crowd that was enjoying the confrontation. As she left, Abbas got on his hands and knees and began barking like a dog. She ordered him to stop, but he continued. The townspeople had never before seen Madame Mallory treated with such disrespect.

The opening day of Maison Mumbai was approaching. Abbas was in charge again. He worked tirelessly on every detail. Hassan was eighteen and finally answered his calling. Abbas assigned him to the kitchen. He became the head cook. He wasn't sure of himself initially but he practiced making each of the dishes and developed a menu he felt he could work with. Dementia had complete control of Ammi by then. Though sometimes she tried to offered Hassan some tips, her behavior was usually erratic. One day, Hassan and Uncle Mayur saw the butcher leading a huge pig around to the back of the inn. Madame Mallory and her helpers along with the mayor and the parish priest were all present. The pig was led onto some wooden planks. There was a system of pulleys hanging overhead from a tree. The parish priest sprinkled holy water on the pig and said a prayer. The butcher aimed a handgun at the pig and shot it in the head. The pig was then butchered which took several days to complete. Although Uncle Mayur was disgusted by the "pig eaters," Hassan found himself wishing he'd been part of the slaughter.

Analysis

Madame Mallory is a celebrity chef in the village and in all of France. People treat her like a queen. She is known to be cantankerous and to speak her mind. People steer clear of her because they don't want to offend her and don't want to be the recipient of her venom. She has devoted her life to her cooking. She has a collection of antique cookbooks which she cherishes. She has been awarded two separate high achievement stars for the inn. She wants a third star and feels that she is a failure because she hasn't receive the third star. She is aging and thinks that her time is short and that she will not reach her goal. She is a very private person and no one knows of the personal pain she is suffering because of this issue. She feels she has no purpose in life. She is suffering from a degree of depression and has no way to express it or vent her emotions.

Mallory is given a new impetus to express how she feels when new, noisy neighbors buy the mansion across the street. When that same neighbor opens an Indian restaurant complete with a gaudy sign and irritating Indian music, Mallory is enraged. She is frustrated at every turn. She fails in her efforts to shut them down. To make matters even worse, the neighbor is buying all the produce and fish out from under her. She no longer is the queen of her street. A new king has moved in. When she confronts



Abbas, she is surprised by his reaction. He is rude to her and ridicules her. She is not accustomed to that kind of treatment.

In the meantime, Hassan is becoming a fan of Madame Mallory. He even wishes that he had been part of the slaughtering and butchering of a large pig that Mallory led into her backyard. Hassan may well find himself in the middle of a war between his father and Madame Mallory, a woman from whom he could learn a lot about cooking.

Discussion Question 1

Why won't the Marie shut down Abbas' restaurant?

Discussion Question 2

Explain how Abbas' reaction to Madame Mallory is unusual?

Discussion Question 3

What is Hassan's reaction to the butchering of the pig behind the inn?

Vocabulary

grotesque, vulgarity, mesmerized, virulent, sous chef, ambience, aubergine, lucidity, erratic, officious



Chapter 7

Summary

Madame Mallory made reservations for two at Maison Mumbai. While Hassan worried over the menu, the younger kids teased him about being a “girl” because he was cooking. Mallory was making sure that everything was perfect on her menu as well. Nothing went into the dining room without her approval. She also kept track of each table and the stage of preparation for each meal. Mallory untied her apron and found the gourmet banker Le Comte de Nancy Seliere in the dining room. She described the fare for that evening to him. She left him allowing him to decide what he would order. She found LeBlanc and suggested that they “get this over with.”

Maison Mumbai was half-filled when Mallory and LeBlanc arrived. Abbas greeted them at the door burying any anger or resentment he had for Mallory. Abbas was his usual loud self as he hollered orders to his staff in the dining room which unnerved Mallory. She asked Abbas to help them order. He said he drank beer with his meal so she told him to bring two beers. Hassan was toiling away in the kitchen when something made him turn and look. Madame Mallory was standing there watching him. She was there just a moment then left and returned to her table.

Mallory and LeBlanc were served Goa fish stew, chicken tikka, and yoghurt-marinated lamb liver among other dishes that Abbas had ordered for them. Mallory told LeBlanc that the kitchen was not clean and that the health inspectors would soon be there. Mallory had a strange reaction to her first bite of food. LeBlanc thought that the food was too hot. But, Mallory said that the boy had it!” The boy had talent – talent that cannot be learned. She began weeping at the mere unfairness of it. LeBlanc quickly escorted her back across the street. She sobbed like a teenager in her pillow that night. The next morning she was waking LeBlanc up at 4:30 because she wanted to be the first one at the market.

Analysis

While Hassan would do anything to be part of Madame Mallory’s staff and learn from her, it is she who envies him. Though the food she ate at Maison Mumbai was crude, it only took one taste for her to know that the boy cook had a natural-born talent that could not be taught. The celebrated chef who was renowned throughout all of France was envious of the boy cook who was forced by his father to be the chef. She had a huge collection of cookbooks and had gone to culinary school. But, this neighbor had to go through no learning or schooling or studying. As she had said, “He just had it!”

However, Mallory is a competitive person. She wants her third star and doesn’t want to cede her position as the top chef in Lumiere to a boy from Mumbai. She gets up the next morning at 4:30 so that she can beat Abbas and Hassan to the market. It appears



that she is not backing off. She is determined to out-do this young boy and show that she is still top chef.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Madame Mallory want to dine at Maison Mumbai?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Mallory have Abbas order for her?

Discussion Question 3

Why was Mallory so upset that Hassan was a talented cook?

Vocabulary

concoctions, explicit, cauldron, bouillabaisse

Chapter 8

Summary

Hassan and Abbas didn't arrive at the market until 7:30 the next morning. Abbas was told that there was no fish for sale. It was already all sold. He was told the same thing about the produce he wanted. Madame Picard, who worked in produce, told Abbas that Mallory was in everyone's business and that she was evil. Hassan was afraid that Abbas' depression would return. Instead, Abbas assured Hassan that they would not run this time. They would fight!

They drove to another market quite a distance away and bought the food they needed for the day. Abbas also bought a refrigeration truck and hired a driver. Mallory was feeling smug about her coup that morning. But her mood quickly changed when she heard a truck rumble up and saw that the sign on the truck was, "Maison Mumbai." The driver hopped out of the truck and began unloading all the cartons of food that Abbas had purchased. Her plan to leave them with no food for the day was foiled. Mallory took her frustration out on her staff, berating them for their terrible performance. She wanted perfection, she raged.

When Madame Mallory ran into the mayor she berated him for eating at Maison Mumbai. He shouldn't encourage them, she told him. He should want to preserve their way of life. He countered with the fact that their food was excellent. She had caused the very chaos and hysteria in the inn that she hated about the Mumbai. Her staff was cowed and rattled. The customers were met by a wild-eyed Mallory wanting to know if they'd eaten at the Mumbai. She didn't want to serve anyone who had eaten there. Some customers left at the door under Mallory's harsh questioning. Others picked at their food distracted by the tension in the air.

LeBlanc stepped in and took Madame Mallory by the arm and led her out of the kitchen. They had to talk. He told her she was acting like a madman and abusing the staff. She admitted that she saw red every time she thought of Abbas. She knew she had to get hold of herself. Right when she was in the process of calming down, Uncle Mayur cranked up the Indian music. She called the police but they would be no help. The next day she went to town hall again. The man in charge of noise control admitted that he could launch proceedings against the Mumbai if there was the necessary evidence. He loaned his noise-measuring equipment to Mallory so she could record the disturbances.

In the dark of night, Mallory and LeBlanc set up the listening devices. Hassan and Abbas had no idea what they were up to. But Mallory's campaign of intimidation was paying off. The traffic to Maison Mumbai had sharply declined. Hassan agreed to go boar hunting with the mayor's son. After arriving at the gathering spot, Hassan was suddenly facing Madame Mallory who was toting a shotgun. She was the only woman among all men but seemed totally comfortable. Mallory refused to acknowledge Hassan's presence.



The hunters were dispatched throughout the wooded area. It was time to sit and wait quietly. The “beaters” and their dogs then went to work to scare out the boars. Hassan saw the top of Mallory’s hat a short distance away. In a while, Hassan heard the beating hooves of a panicked boar that came into a clearing and stopped. It was Madame Mallory who took the boar down. As they gathered again, she stood proudly by her kill. But the boar was a juvenile animal, no more than 40 pounds in weight. The other hunters felt it was a disgrace that such a young animal had been killed. The master hunter worked up the nerve to tell Mallory that she was wrong to shoot the young boar. She should have concentrated on the mature animals. She was not rattled and replied that she found the flesh of the young very tasty.

Analysis

Mallory threw down the gauntlet by making sure she beat Abbas to the market. She bought up everything so that he would have nothing. But, he was not defeated. He drove a long distance to another market, made his meat and produce purchases, and even bought a refrigerated truck to haul it back. The incident demonstrated that Abbas and Mallory were both very stubborn and both determined to top the other.

Mallory waged an intimidation campaign which started to take effect. She showed her confidence in her restaurant by warning patrons that they were not welcomed at the inn if they ate at Maison Mumbai. Mallory was willing to go to any lengths to shut her competition down. She convinced the man in charge of noise control for the village to lend her recording equipment that would prove that the music from the Mumbai was a nuisance.

Mallory's spoiled nature was evident on the hunting trip, during which she committed the taboo act of killing a juvenile boar just because their meat was more tender and tasty than an adult boar. By making the kill, Mallory asserted herself as controlling and powerful. She had everyone intimidated, including those from the mayor’s office, the all-male hunting party, and her diners. The only person she didn't intimidate was Abbas, even though she continued to try.

Discussion Question 1

What happened to stir Mallory up anew just when she was trying to calm down?

Discussion Question 2

What evidence was there that Mallory's intimidation campaign was working?

Discussion Question 3

Why did the master hunter tell Mallory she shouldn't have shot the juvenile boar?

Vocabulary

dilapidated, impeccably, incomprehensible, cumbersome, imperialism



Chapter 9

Summary

Abbas received a registered letter ordering him to shut down his garden restaurant by 8 pm each night. He was in violation of the village's noise ordinance. If they didn't shut down as ordered, they would face a court appearance and fine. Abbas knew immediately that Mallory was behind it. He immediately called his lawyer. A few days later, a man from the town hall came to visit her. Mallory was handed a letter indicating she was in violation of code 234bh. The beautiful weeping willow in front of the inn would have to be cut down. The branches were hanging over the pavement and were a danger to pedestrians. Mallory hugged the tree and said she would be killed before she allowed the tree to come down. She knew that Abbas was behind this.

A crew of tree cutters had accompanied the noise manager and pried Mallory off the tree. Mallory hid her face as the cutters went to work. Soon the tree was cut down. Mallory was devastated and enraged. The noise manager and his tree cutters saw the loathing on her face and scurried away. Against LeBlanc's protestations, Mallory immediately marched across the street. She burst into the house and found Abbas and Hassan in the kitchen. She vowed to drive him out. They had words and threw insults back and forth. She began beating him with her fists. She called him a dirty foreigner and told him to get out of her country. She shoved Abbas which caused him to stagger backward. He tumbled into Hassan who was pushed against the hot stove. Hassan's tunic was up in flames.

Analysis

Although Mallory had her revenge on Abbas, he was not about to concede. He fought back as he had promised Hassan he would do. His music was cut off which led to her beloved weeping willow being cut down. Mallory angrily confronted Abbas. She was frustrated because nothing she had done to drive Abbas out had worked. She was accustomed to getting her way. Her anger turned to violence. The chapter ends with Mallory shoving Abbas into Hassan who is pushed against the hot stove.

Discussion Question 1

How did Abbas fight back against the noise code violation?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Mallory react so violently to losing her weeping willow tree?



Discussion Question 3

Why did Mallory become violent when she didn't get her way?

Vocabulary

adroitly, loathing, disheveled



Chapter 10

Summary

Hassan was in and out of consciousness the next few days. He remembered the IV hanging over his head, the bumpy ride to the hospital, and his father's worried face looming over him. After Hassan began to recover, Abbas told Hassan that they were moving back to London. Tears began to run down Hassan's face. He didn't want to leave. As Abbas tried to convince him that it was best for the family and that they would never be accepted in Lumiere, there was a knocking on the hospital door. Abbas opened it to find Mallory and LeBlanc standing there. She came to see how Hassan was doing. Abbas angrily told her to leave. She had won. They would be moving.

Mallory felt vindicated. She tried to do the right thing by visiting Hassan. But, LeBlanc was angry. She was blessed and had a fortune. All she gave back to the world was her selfishness. LeBlanc had never talked to her like that before. He was so angry that he stopped the car, pulled Mallory out and told her to walk home. She began her solo walk on the icy turf that led across a vast field. She had time to think. She worried that LeBlanc would leave her. What would she do without him? After walking for forty minutes, she was out of breath and ran into a chapel where she could rest.

No one was sure about what happened in the chapel. Perhaps, she realized that the chapel was dead and had lost its religious meaning. It may have reminded her of her childhood and her father speaking harshly to her. Whatever occurred, Mallory was transformed by it.

Analysis

Finally, Abbas was defeated. His son was hurt, burned like his mother. It was too frightening for Abbas. What if Hassan had been burned to death?! Abbas was ready to return to London. But, it was Hassan who was against leaving even though he was hurt in the fight between Mallory and Abbas. Mallory did "the right thing" and visited Hassan in the hospital, but her gesture was superficial. LeBlanc, her man servant, saw through her and finally called her out. When she was left on her own, Mallory realized that she could not do without LeBlanc. It was the first time that she had admitted to herself that she needed someone. She saw that she was driving that person away. Mallory experienced some kind of epiphany in the chapel. Only time would tell if she was truly changed.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Abbas decide that the family should return to London?



Discussion Question 2

Why doesn't Hassan want to leave France?

Discussion Question 3

What event was pivotal in making Mallory take stock of herself?

Vocabulary

pristine, inexplicably, incredulous, rummaging



Chapter 11

Summary

After dinner, Mallory slipped into Hassan's hospital room. She looked at his bandaged arms and hands, but mainly his hands. He asked why she hated them. She didn't answer; but, she asked if his hands were damaged. She wanted to know if they had the same sensitivity as before. The important thing was that he'd still be able to cook. She hadn't wanted it to come to this she told him. Hassan could not forgive her yet. From her mere behavior, Hassan realized at that moment that he had a gift for cooking. He had pitch perfect culinary skills.

When Mallory returned to Le Saule Pleureur late that night, she stood in the snow looking in the window to see LeBlanc greeting the guests. She saw that her staff was running the restaurant beautifully – without her. LeBlanc was concerned about her the next day, worried about what he had done to her. But, she was forgiving and didn't want to talk about it. They needed to get on with the work of the day. Christmas was coming, and it was time to collect foie de gras.

Mallory and LeBlanc drove to Madame Degeneret's farm. She raised ducks; and, her livers were the best in the area. To LeBlanc's surprise, Mallory allowed him to select the livers for the foie de gras while she visited with old Madame Degeneret. Degeneret told her that one duck was off limits for butchering. She had taken over the rearing of six ducklings whose mother had been killed. She would never kill that duck. It was kinder that most humans.

When Hassan was released from the hospital, crepe banners welcomed him home. Family and neighbors welcomed him back. Madame Mallory was among them. Abbas did not want her on his property and told her to leave. Mallory responded that she came to apologize and to beg him not to leave Lumiere. She wanted Hassan to come and work in her kitchen. She would teach him French cooking and give him a proper education. She could train Hassan to be one of the top chefs of France. But, Abbas was still angry and told her that they wanted no part of her.

Mallory returned across the street. She was met by LeBlanc who had watched her from the window. He took her hand which showed that he had nothing but the deepest respect for her. His deep devotion warmed her heart. She felt that with a friend like LeBlanc she could get through anything. Ammi found Mallory sitting on the cobblestone drive of Maison Mumbai. She had several bottles of water and was covered with a tartan. She told Ammi that she was sitting there and waiting.

When Abbas found out that she was sitting on his property, he came bursting out of the house. Again he told her to leave. But, she said she would not leave until it was agreed that Hassan would work for her. He told her to sit there until she rotted. When his guests left for the evening, she was still sitting there. Later, when Hassan was up in his room



he looked out to see that Mallory was bundled up and still sitting in the pouring rain. Abbas was getting concerned. He didn't know what to do.

Mallory sat there all night and the entire next day. Her hunger strike became the talk of the town and drew the attention of the press. Mallory drew a crowd of supporters who chanted "tyrant" when Abbas came outside to shoo them away. A reporter asked him why he treated Madame Mallory so shabbily. Abbas tried pleading with her – she was too old for this! But, she wouldn't budge and neither would he.

Hassan was beginning to lean toward Mallory's side, as was his younger sister Zainab. In the middle of the night, Abbas caught Abbas and Auntie trying to sneak out to bring Mallory some food and water. The next day when Abbas was bellowing on the phone to the authorities to come take Mallory away, Hassan and Zainab approached him. They told him that it was time for this to stop. They wanted to stay there. They were tired of running. If Hassan became a French chef they would have to stay and their mother would want them to stay. At first, Abbas looked like he'd been betrayed; but, he softened. He stepped outside and invited Mallory in for breakfast. She was pale and ill but wouldn't budge until Abbas promised that Hassan would come and work with her. Abbas asked Hassan what he wanted to do. He told Abbas that he wanted nothing more in the world than to study with Mallory. With that promise, Abbas helped Mallory up to have breakfast with his family.

The next day Auntie and Mehtab helped him pack a bag. He crossed the street -- it was his one-hundred foot journey. The family was sad to see him go. Abbas wept openly, even though Hassan was just across the way.

Analysis

Mallory felt guilty about Hassan's injuries. She apologized in her own way by saying that she didn't want it to come to this. Her pride kept her from groveling too much. She felt bad about his injuries, but she was looking at a much bigger picture. If his hands had been badly damaged, it would have denied the world of a top chef. It was then that an idea that would pay him back and give the world a great chef began to crystallize. Hassan was not ready to forgive her, but he got the sense that he did have an extraordinary gift for cooking.

Mallory began to realize that LeBlanc was a true friend and that he loved her and was devoted to her. He had put her out of his car, but it was for her own good. He wanted to force her to think about what'd she'd done and how selfish she'd been. When she returned to the inn, she saw through the window that LeBlanc and her staff were running the place beautifully. They didn't need her. Since they didn't need her, she would have time on her hands. What better way to use that time than to train a young chef?

Madame Degeneret told Mallory that one duck was not for sale. The duck had taken over the rearing of six orphaned ducklings whose mother had been killed. Mallory might



have related to that story, at least subconsciously. She could play a role in Hassan's life. He was a young boy who had lost his mother.

By the end of the chapter, there is no doubt about who is more stubborn--Mallory or Abbas. Mallory gets her way again; but, this time it's for a good cause, not for a self-centered reason.

Discussion Question 1

What did Mallory realize about LeBlanc and her staff?

Discussion Question 2

How was the story of the orphaned ducklings relevant to the main story?

Discussion Question 3

How is Mallory's offer to Hassan a gift?

Vocabulary

culinary, equivalent, foie de gras, dilapidated, morosely



Chapter 12

Summary

Hassan's room at Le Saule Pleureur was at the top of the house down the hall from Mallory's quarters. Not only was it small, but it was a flight of stairs and a hallway away from a bathroom. It was hot in the summer and cold in the winter. When Hassan first arrived, his room was filled with old musty items, including Christmas decorations and several cedar hangers. It was the attic. Hassan wondered about what he had done. He was tempted to grab his bag and run back across the street.

But, then he spotted an old cook book with yellowed pages that Madame had left for him. Inside there was a handwritten note from her welcoming him to Le Saule Pleureur. She wrote that she was looking forward to having him as a student in her kitchen. As it turned out, his room was not an issue because he was hardly ever in it.

Their day would start out before six. He would have breakfast with Mallory in her flat. She would pummel him with questions about what he'd studied the day before. A trip to the market was next. During the first six months of training, Mallory had Hassan learn every low level function in the kitchen – from mopping the floors to plucking and cleaning chickens to setting the tables. He was off on Mondays which he spent with his family across the street. Abbas always greeted him warmly but unlike the rest of the family did not ask him many questions about his training. But Abbas would get Hassan aside and ask him how he was being treated.

Hassan was getting anxious to begin actually cooking, but Madame told him that she would begin to teach him when the time was right. Madame continued to grill Hassan on his studies every morning at breakfast. Jean-Pierre, one of Madame's cooks, was obviously resenting the attention that Hassan was getting from Mallory. He felt there would be trouble ahead. One morning at the market when Mallory was giving Hassan a lesson on produce, they ran right into Abbas. Hassan was surprised to see his father with Madame Picard, who was a widow. Mallory told Abbas that Hassan was doing very well in his studies.

One day when just Hassan and Marcel were at the inn mopping the kitchen, Monsieur Iten came by with some oysters that had just come in. No one of authority was there to purchase the oysters. Hassan assumed that Madame would want the oysters and signed for them. Hassan bought the whole lot except for four oysters that he found inferior. Hassan learned later that Madame had arranged for the fishmonger to come by while she was away to test Hassan's ability to purchase only the best oysters. In the winter, Hassan was having trouble getting soufflés out of the oven without them falling. Margaret was told to take over for him. She whispered that the cold weather was the cause of the falling soufflés – the same thing had happened to her.



There was a growing attraction between Hassan and Margaret. She told him to visit her flat on his break. He rushed to her flat. Once he was inside, each fell into the arms of the other. Margaret wanted the relationship to be more serious. It was the first time that Hassan didn't run away from a woman for whom he had started having feelings. He decided to spend his day off with her. It disappointed the family when he told them he would not have lunch with them. Abbas guessed that he was seeing a girl. He told him to go and not worry about the family.

A couple of years into Hassan's apprenticeship, Mallory announced that she and LeBlanc would be gone on errands most of the day. She expected them to fulfill all their responsibilities. There was suspicion among the staff members that Mallory and LeBlanc were having a romantic affair. She mixed up the assignments that day and gave Hassan the responsibility of preparing the meat dishes for that evening's meal. She told him to astonish her in preparing the hare. Hassan worked hard and did his best to please Mallory. Hassan was nervous later that evening when Madame tasted all of their dishes. She told Hassan that he had done well.

Jean-Pierre exploded in anger for her public compliment to Hassan. He had a fit. He demanded to know how she could treat Hassan better than the others on her staff who had been her loyal employees for much longer. If there was one emotion that Mallory understood it was jealousy. She was truly surprised and sorry that she had unknowingly offended Jean-Pierre and, probably, the others. Jean-Pierre could no longer work for her. LeBlanc stepped in to defend Mallory. But, Mallory surprised everyone by telling Jean-Pierre that she was sorry and that he was entirely right. Jean-Pierre was in shock. She tried to explain that Hassan was different than everyone else, including herself. Hassan had far to go and would not be with them very long. She told Jean-Pierre that Hassan would be a great chef. She also told him that Hassan was not her favorite, he – Jean-Pierre – was.

Mallory was right. Three years after Hassan began his training with her, he was ready to move on. He was offered a position as sous chef at a top restaurant in Paris. Mallory encouraged him to take it. She had taught him what she could. Before he left, he and Margaret went on an all-day outing. They stopped by a store for some snacks. Margaret ran into some young men she knew. When Hassan was in another aisle, he overheard the men making racial remarks about him. Margaret remained silent and did not defend him. They went on a hike that afternoon and enjoyed a picnic lunch.

While they rested on some flat rocks, they heard a commotion and saw Madame Picard and Abbas mushroom hunting in the nearby woods. Abbas was excited and announced in his loud voice that he had found a truffle. The thought of his father with this crude woman was upsetting to Hassan. But, then he realized that Abbas had sacrificed much in his life. If he enjoyed Madame Picard's company, Hassan decided he shouldn't begrudge him his fun.

It was difficult for Hassan to leave his family and Madame; but, the hardest goodbye was with Margaret. Hassan asked her to come to Paris with him. She appreciated the offer and loved him, but she could not leave Lumiere.



Analysis

It was a transition for Hassan and his family when he took the 100-foot journey across the street. It was no picnic; Madame Mallory kept him busy from sunrise to sunset. Hassan didn't know what to expect when he began his training. Just as any venture that is a first-time, once-in-a-lifetime experience, Hassan was in for many surprises. Mallory taught him everything she knew. Eventually, she knew that she had run out of things to teach him. He was beyond her in ability, and she knew that it was time for him to move on. He was special, and she treated him that way. Her relationship with Hassan was a complicated one. Although she told Jean-Pierre that he was her favorite, she put all her attention and effort on Hassan and his progress. She tried to explain to Jean-Pierre and, perhaps, even to herself that Hassan was in a different category than everyone else at the inn. He was a rising star and had far to go. Eventually, she had to release him and send him on his way to his destiny which was obviously not In Lumiere. It was in Paris where all the top French chefs pursue their careers.

Mallory showed growth in her sensitivity and the way she treated others. When Jean-Pierre had a fit over the perceived favored treatment that Hassan received from Mallory, she apologized and begged him to stay. The staff suspected that Mallory and LeBlanc were involved in a romantic affair. LeBlanc had been her only friend and confidant for many years. There had been a deep caring all along and, perhaps, it had turned even more personal.

Although Hassan at first resented his father's friendship with the widow Madame Picard, he realized that his father had sacrificed a lot for his family and that he deserved some personal happiness.

Hassan was maturing and had finally been able to deal with his mother's death in a healthy manner. He fell in love with Margaret, the sous chef in Mallory's kitchen. It was the first time in his life that he wasn't frightened away by the thought of commitment. He wanted Margaret to go with him to Paris. However, she knew that her place was in Lumiere and that he was destined for stardom in Paris. She loved him; but, she had to let him go.

Discussion Question 1

Why was Hassan's training a difficult transition for him as well as for his family?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Jean-Pierre explode in anger at Madame Mallory?



Discussion Question 3

Why did Hassan resent his father's friendship with Madame Picard?

Vocabulary

malevolently, austere, treatise, primordial, consternation, imperious, pulverized



Chapter 13

Summary

Hassan's climb to success was not as difficult as it first seemed. After two years, he was promoted to sous chef at La Gavroche which was the one-star restaurant located behind the Elysee Palace. He often wondered if Madame Mallory had a hand in his meteoric rise. He saw her only on occasion when he visited his family in Lumiere. Hassan learned after he arrived in Paris that the chef who offered him the position was a distant relative of Madame Mallory. He asked Madame if she had contacted Pierre on his behalf. She denied having made such a contact.

After five years at La Gavroche, he took a position at La Belle Cluny, a small but elegant restaurant, and stayed there four years. Hassan worked for Chief Marc Rosier at La Belle. Rosier demanded that his chefs wear all black instead of the traditional white. Hassan liked Rosier who was eccentric but fun-loving. At age thirty, he had a discussion with his father. He wanted to open his own restaurant. Abbas was eager to help his son get started in his own business. Abbas gave Hassan his share of the estate which came to 800,000 Euros so he could open his restaurant. Hassan was appreciative but he needed at least 2 million Euros to open the type of restaurant he envisioned in an upscale area of Paris. Abbas suggested that Hassan including his sister Mehtab in the restaurant so that she could invest her share of the estate. She was still single and Abbas felt she needed to break away from Lumiere. Mehtab agreed to the proposition and moved to Paris with Hassan.

The name of the new restaurant was "Le Chien Mechant." They hunted through Paris for months looking for the perfect locale. A man who he met in Lumiere, Le Comte de Nancy Seliere, happened to call one afternoon. He heard that Hassan was looking for a place to open a restaurant; he might have the perfect spot.

Le Comte de Nancy took Hassan and Mehtab to an area that was near the basilica and Le Pantheon. He owned the house he showed them which was just two doors down from his own residence. Hassan and Mehtab liked the house immediately. Hassan felt like he was at home. Part of the house could be easily converted into a restaurant. And it was big enough that the restaurant activity would not disturb Le Comte de Nancy's other tenants. Hassan was worried that they couldn't afford it but Le Comte de Nancy wasn't worried – they could work out the financial details. As it turned out Le Comte was more than fair with the rent and he became one of Hassan's most loyal customers. Again Hassan suspected that Mallory had something to do with the arrangement. But she would never admit it.

Mehtab handled the renovation crew while Hassan concentrated on hiring a staff. He hired Serge Poutron to be his chef de cuisine. The restaurant became a success. There was a positive review in La Monde when it first opened and popularity grew through word of mouth. The restaurant won a coveted Michelin star in its early days. One



evening a man came in and was dining alone and was eager to meet Hassan. It was Chef Paul Verdun one of France's greatest chefs. He was an immensely talented cook and a hugely successful restaurateur. Hassan told Paul that his favorite dish at Paul's restaurant was the omelet. The two chefs became friends and saw each other often over the years.

When Hassan won his second Michelin star, Paul showed up at the restaurant that very night. He had arranged for the staff to run the restaurant that night and whisked Hassan away in his Mercedes. Paul drove them to Orly Airport where a private plane was waiting for them. They were heading for Chez Pierre in Marseille for an excellent fish dinner. They drank fine champagne which loosened their tongues and shared their experiences and plans for the future. Hassan sensed that Paul was becoming morose thinking that Hassan would one day claim his position as top chef. It was one of the most memorable evenings Hassan had ever experienced.

A year later, Hassan was in Normandy and stopped by Paul's house. His wife, Anna, wasn't very friendly. She preferred to spend her time with Paul's upper crust customers. Hassan spotted a framed pamphlet on the wall that was signed by Gertrude Mallory.

Hassan was complacent for the next few years but when he turned forty, he felt the urge to advance his career. It was around this time that they found Abbas dead on the kitchen floor. Hassan and the entire family was heartbroken over the loss. He noticed at the funeral how feeble Mallory had become. Just two months later, Mallory fell down the stairs and died a few weeks later.

Analysis

Hassan became the success that Madame Mallory was certain that he would be. He could not help but think that she had a hand in some of the lucky breaks that he got. Perhaps she saw herself as still responsible for him even though he was an adult and far away. She was like the duck who reared the orphan ducklings. She felt a responsibility for him. There were at least three times when she probably had a hand in helping to move his career along. But she always denied it. She wanted him to think that he was advancing on his own. He could have achieved success without her – she knew that. But it was her very nature to be controlling and interfering so it makes logical sense that she helped nudge him in the direction which she felt he should go. It was destiny but she helped it along.

Hassan's dream of having his own restaurant was something a great chef would want to achieve. But looking back on Hassan's family both his grandfather and his father were restaurateurs. It was therefore very fitting and almost expected that he too would one day own and operate his own restaurant. Hassan could take comfort that both Abbas and Mallory lived to see him become such a success. They both had helped him attain his dreams.



After the deaths of his father and mentor, Hassan was truly on his own. Although he had other family members, the chief driving forces in his life were gone. Where would his life and career go from there?

Discussion Question 1

Why did Hassan think that Mallory had a hand in his lucky breaks?

Discussion Question 2

How did Abbas and Mallory each in their own way help Hassan achieve his dreams?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Hassan want to have his own restaurant?

Vocabulary

aristocrat, curmudgeon, temerity, gourmand, starstruck, enigma, sustenance



Chapter 14

Summary

Twenty years after arriving in Paris, Hassan learned while shopping at a market that Paul Verdun had died in a car crash. The news shocked Hassan. He felt that not only had his friend died but an important branch of classic French cuisine had died as well. Hassan felt that the country should have honored him, but there was no interest in doing so. His career had been on the decline lately. The critics were bored with his classic style and were focused on more exotic styles of cooking.

Hassan planned to call Paul's widow and offer his condolences. On his way home, he recalled some of the good times they had spent together. When he thought about sharing a meal of tripe with Paul, the full impact of his friend's death crashed down on him. The deaths of those close to Hassan had occurred during the time of economic collapse in Europe. The combination of events had been devastating for him. When he gathered with some friends at a coffee shop the next day, Paul was the topic of conversation. There were questions about the accident. His car had just been serviced at a garage. There were no tire skid marks to indicate that he was trying to stop from going over the cliff. A witness said that the car seemed to accelerate toward the cliff edge instead of slowing down. He and his friends, all fellow chefs, vowed to show up at a protest against a value-added tax proposed by the restaurant industry.

When Hassan arrived at Le Chien Mechant that night, his maitre d'hotel, Jacques, was all excited having thought he discovered who the Michelin critics were that visited the restaurant. He was sure it was a young couple that had dined there several times. He took photographs of those he suspected of being inspectors. But, Hassan knew the couple. In fact, he had personally referred them to Chez Geraud. Jacques was crestfallen that his detective work had been for naught. Chief Serge was playing pranks on a new apprentice, and Mehtab was fighting with an accountant. Hassan could not deal with any of them and secluded himself in his office.

Hassan scanned the antique book collection that took up a large section of his office. Mallory had bequeathed the collection to him. He scanned through some of the books with trembling hands. He was not well.

Analysis

Death has impacted Hassan in very personal ways. First, the death of his beloved father and then his mentor, Madame Mallory, who was solely responsible for the career he was able to enjoy. They had both been responsible for shaping Hassan into the man that he had become. In addition to the deaths, the economy in Europe was in collapse. Although it was not a personal tragedy as the deaths of his father and mentor had been, being a businessman with his own restaurant carried its own risks. The economic



downturn could have a major impact on revenue. He worried about his continued success and was always reminded about the tough times because it was constantly in the news.

To top off this downward spiral in his life, his best friend Paul Verdun was killed in an automobile accident. There were hints that Paul was unhappy in certain areas of his life, although he did not openly discuss them. After his death, there were hints that he committed suicide. Paul's death left Hassan alone again. There were no other close friends to fill the void in his life.

Discussion Question 1

Besides the death of those close to him, what other condition put Hassan in a depressed state?

Discussion Question 2

Why was there some suspicion that Paul committed suicide?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Hassan isolate himself in his office and turn to Madame's antique cookbooks?

Vocabulary

cantankerous, contrivances, crestfallen, insignia, bequeath



Chapter 15

Summary

Madame Verdun told Hassan that she was furious .at Paul. She concluded that he had committed suicide. Paul left no note – only a will that he had updated several years before. It was her contention that the inspectors from Le Guide Michelin and Gault Millau had killed him. They treated Paul harshly and had blood on their hands. They were going to reduce Paul to two stars. She held them personally responsible for Paul's death. She was concerned that she would not get Paul's life insurance pay out if his death were to be deemed a suicide.

Madame Verdun had invited Hassan over. In Paul's final wishes contained in his will, he wanted the most talented chef in France to “send him home.” Paul thought that that person was Hassan. She therefore asked him to oversee Paul's memorial dinner. Hassan said he would be honored to do so. As Hassan left that day, Madame Verdun told Hassan that Paul felt they were very much alike, made from the same ingredients. The words upset Hassan. He was not like Paul – he would not take his own life.

More than twenty-five thousand restaurateurs came to the protest in the capital, gathering at the Arc de Triomphe. They had a legitimate complaint. While McDonald's food was tax free, their quality cuisine was targeted for taxation. A 19.6 percent VAT (value-added tax) would be placed on restaurants like Hassan's. They had to fight back. He had run into Le Comte earlier who warned him to take care – the government would surely mismanage the protest.

At 10:30, the protestors began their march to the beat of African drums and whistles. They were arm and arm and chanting their protest in unison. An hour later, the horde reached the other side of the Seine. In front of the assembly was a line of riot police who were preventing them from going further. They would not be allowed to reach the podium that had been set up where speeches were to be given. Violence broke out – rocks and a Molotov cocktail were thrown. The police converged on the crowd and started swinging with their batons. The police used tear gas on the crowd. A number of cars were set on fire. None of Hassan's people were hurt or arrested.

Hassan and several members of his staff were among a group of protestors who were forced back toward the river. An elderly hippie couple had docked their barge at the shore. They invited the protestors on board. They would take them to safety. They glided down the river to the Paris suburbs where Mehtab was to pick them up. While waiting for his sister, Hassan sat on a low wall by the river. He spotted an elderly woman across the way. She looked exactly like Madame Mallory, and she seemed to be calling to him.



Analysis

It seems that in times of stress and loneliness Hassan thinks of Madame. After Paul's death he had retreated to his office and immediately began scanning through the antique cookbooks that Madame had left him. After the violent protest, he thought he spotted Madame beckoning to him from across the river. Madame Mallory had a much greater impact on Hassan than just teaching him French cooking. Although she had a sharp-tongue and was a very private person, there was an underlying caring and concern for Hassan's welfare and future. She was the mother duck who took on the responsibility of the orphaned duckling. Just like everything else in her life, she took that responsibility seriously. That was what Hassan was feeling when he turned to her in tough times. He needed Mallory.

The VAT tax that Hassan and the other restaurant owners were fighting was a result of the economic downturn. The financial collapse was being felt by these businessmen. It was another worry for Hassan to work through. Now that he is so alone, he thinks of Mallory.

Discussion Question 1

What was Madame Verdun's main concern about her husband's death?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Madame Verdun's comment that Hassan and Paul were just alike bother Hassan?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Hassan think of Mallory after the violent protest?

Vocabulary

capricious, veneer, proletariat, phalanx



Chapter 16

Summary

Paul's death had changed Hassan. He was restless and irritable. He was having trouble sleeping. There was a constant feeling of doom following him. He accompanied Jean Luc to the kitchen. The apprentice had told him that the ptarmigan had arrived. Jean Luc opened the crate and removed the fragile poultry. His staff began butchering the birds. Hassan carefully watched over the process.

When Hassan first trained, he had to pluck feathers from game birds, sometimes forty at a time. The apprentices were lucky that feather plucking machines did the job for them. He took the plucked grouses over to the fire to remove any remaining feathers. Siberian ptarmigan was Hassan's signature dish at the time. He showed Jean-Luc the step by step process he took in preparing the birds.

With images of Paul's demise in his thoughts, he called his staff together and announced that the next day they would throw away their current menu and start anew. He wanted to get away from the heavy sauces and complicated dishes and gear their new fare to simple dishes – delicious but simple. They would experiment and draw inspiration from old recipes and local dishes.

A few weeks later, the memorial dinner for Paul took place. Everyone in French haute cuisine was there. It was a posh and elegant affair. Though it was a "sad" event, the excitement of the Cannes Film Festival taking place was in the air. Madame Verdun was at the head table bedecked in diamonds. Madame had agreed to drop any idea of a lawsuit in exchange for a negotiation with Barthot. Chef Mafitte was also at the head table fawning over Anna Verdun. Hassan was relegated to a table in the back, which was fine with him. Le Comte was at Hassan's table as was the food critic James Harrison Hewit, an American expat.

Hewit confided in Hassan that Anna had dropped the lawsuit because all kinds of saucy details would have emerged. Paul was deeply in debt, and his empire was about to collapse. Hassan didn't believe that Paul was in that kind of trouble. He had contracts that extended outward of ten years, and he was a consultant to a number of major corporations. There were products that were branded with his name. But, Hewit insisted that Paul was on his last leg financially. When Hewit provided details about Paul's situation, Hassan was stunned.

Hassan saw Chef Mafitte flirting with Anna. He recalled to him when he was dining with a former girlfriend, Marie. Chef Mafitte came to their table, his hand winding up in Marie's lap. Marie later referred to Mafitte as a sex maniac. Mafitte had been Paul's nemesis. It bothered Hassan that he was at the head table of Paul's memorial dinner flirting with his widow.



The roast partridge was delicious and well-received. Hassan named the dish “Paul’s Partridge in Mourning” in his honor. The talk was of Paul and of other culinary experiences of the famous chefs and celebrities who attended the dinner. Still, throughout the entire evening Hassan was upset about Paul’s financial trouble. Given the current economy, it could happen to any of them. But, Le Comte blamed Paul for not growing. The most difficult thing was to stay fresh. He said that it should be a lesson to all. Hassan added that he was exhausted by the competition between all the ideologies about cooking. He explained that he had changed his menu to a simpler one that utilized local ingredients.

Hassan was sure that Paul had planned the memorial dinner not for himself, but for Hassan. It was his way of passing the torch. After that night, Hassan was elevated to the top ranks.

Analysis

Paul’s death was not only a personal tragedy for Hassan; it was a pivotal point in his life. He became irritable and restless. He suddenly decided to throw out his old menu and create one that was simple and utilized local food. He wanted to take the confusion out of his life. Simplifying his menu was a step toward doing just that.

Hassan also used Paul’s death to acknowledge that financial ruin could very easily come to him as it had to Paul. The economy was tanking – something Hassan had to face. He was annoyed that Paul’s widow was openly flirting with a chef who was known to be a sexual predator. It was the same feeling he had when his father had a close relationship with Madame Picard. Just as he had felt that it was an affront to his mother, he felt that Anna Verdun’s flirtation with Chief Mafitte was disrespectful to Paul.

No matter what happened – whether Paul committed suicide and was dead broke or not – Hassan felt he received the benefit of Paul’s final word. Paul wanted to hold a memorial dinner for himself so that Hassan could meet the top people in the industry. Paul was passing the torch.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Anna Verdun’s flirting with Chef Mafitte bother Hassan?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Hassan think that Paul wanted a memorial dinner more for Hassan’s sake than to honor him?



Discussion Question 3

What did Hassan learn about finances and the economic downturn from Paul's death?

Vocabulary

malaise, ptarmigan, platitudes, embellishments, expat, subservience



Chapter 17

Summary

Even top restaurants like Maxim's felt the economic downturn. Hassan faced an employee problem. He had hired a waiter named Claude. French law granted many rights to employees who worked for an employer for six months or more. Claude was the perfect employee until after those six months were up. His productivity and speed were suddenly cut in half. Furthermore, he made no bones about his disinterest in improving. Claude was cheating Hassan on time cards by claiming time and a half. He knew that Hassan had no choice but to pay him. By checking the pay records during the time Claude was employed, it was easy to see that he was a scam artist. Hassan told Jacques to fire Claude, which he did. But, Jacques returned with his union representative.

The union representative claimed that Claude's dismissal was not legal. Hassan said that Claude was a cheat and a fraud. Jacques was present at the meeting and provided proof of Hassan's assertions. Unfortunately, neither Jacques or Hassan had documented Claude's poor performance. The union man said that Claude was slow because he was concerned with the quality of his work which Hassan expected to be exceptional. The union rep demanded that Claude be reinstated at once. If they refused, Hassan would be brought before the labor board for wrongful dismissal. Their only other choice was to pay Claude almost 200,000 in Euros and vacation pay. Hassan ordered Mehtab to pay him off.

Paul had been a visionary as far as the economic downturn was concerned. He saw the dark clouds coming before the rest of the chefs and restaurateurs. Paul had noticed the decline of the fashion industry and figured that the restaurant industry was next. Hassan finally saw the truth about Paul. He was bankrupt and dead.

The year before, Hassan had made on an 87 Euro profit on a 4.2 million turn-over. Now having to pay out 200,000 Euros to Claude would put them at a loss for the year. He understood that Paul had been driven to borrow money to bridge the gap between a bad year and what he hoped would be a good year. Mehtab put Hassan in a worse mood. She was all doom and gloom, crying and fearing they would be selling food from a roadside shack.

Hassan thought of a chicken farm he had recently visited. The chickens were being dispatched to a slaughtering machine but had no idea that their end was near. Hassan felt like the chickens. However, it was during times of uncertainty that one must be the bravest. He tried to hold onto that thought. Hassan and Jacques were in search of a replacement for Claude. Out of the blue, Margaret showed up one afternoon. What is notable is that when he heard that someone was there to see him that he used to work with, the first person he thought of was Madame Mallory. But, Hassan was very happy to see Margaret.



Margaret was in Paris looking for a job. She had married the town mechanic, Ernest Borchaud. He owned the Mercedes and Fiat dealerships. They had two children, a boy and a girl. But, Margaret and Ernest had recently divorced. Margaret needed a job. Hassan could not afford to hire another sous chef. He called Chef Piquot, a colleague who had an opening. Margaret was overcome with emotion. Hassan grabbed her hand to calm her.

Analysis

The payoff to Claude had the potential to literally ruin Hassan's restaurant. He had not made a big profit. Most of his money went to overhead and staff. The example that Paul's economic woes and suicide held for Hassan was worrisome. Hassan was smart enough to know that it could happen to him.

Hassan realized that Paul was wiser than he and the rest of his colleagues because he had seen the economic collapse coming. He saw the fashion industry decline and felt that the restaurant industry was next. People who are struggling financially will eliminate things like expensive designer clothes and dining in fancy restaurants.

Hassan felt the walls closing in on him. When would the next shoe drop? When would he be in the same position as Paul had been? Hassan thinks of himself as a chicken heading for a slaughtering machine but doesn't know it. He probably worries that if he were to go broke that he might become depressed and think of suicide as Paul had.

When Hassan was told that someone had stopped by to see him, he thought that the person was probably Madame Mallory. He was not aware that she was deceased. The visitor was Margaret, the girl with whom Hassan had fallen in love quite some time ago.

Discussion Question 1

Why was the incident with Claude potentially a very damaging one for Hassan and his business?

Discussion Question 2

Whom did Hassan think of when he heard he had a guest? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why was Margaret overcome with emotion when Hassan arranged for her to meet a prospective employer?

Vocabulary

pugilistic



Chapter 18

Summary

Hassan was working in the kitchen one afternoon when his staff returned from their two-hour break. There was tension in the air. Hassan feared that a fight might break out between Jacques and Serge. They had gotten into it the day before. Jacques was reading the late edition of the *France Soir*. Suddenly he began shouting. Michelin had just given Hassan his third star. Hassan was happy, yet stunned. The staff banged pots and yelled and danced about. The news even made Serge and Jacques forget their differences and embrace each other in joy.

Hassan was in shock. There were only twenty-eight restaurants in all of France that had a three-star rating. He couldn't believe that it had happened to him and his restaurant. Just then, Hassan was advised that he had a phone call from the director of Michelin making the awarding of the star all the more official. The director had called to congratulate him. He was told that he was the very first immigrant to be awarded a third star.

Analysis

Hassan had achieved what Madame Mallory had longed to attain over the course of her entire career. Hassan had been elevated to the top echelon of his field. But, he had put many hours and much effort into his work. Just as Mallory predicted, Hassan had surpassed her and was becoming a true star of the culinary world in France.

Discussion Question 1

What was particularly distinctive about Hassan's third Michelin star?

Discussion Question 2

What did Hassan achieve that Madame Mallory failed to achieve?

Discussion Question 3

What had Mallory predicted about Hassan's career?

Vocabulary

wallop, arduous, enormity



Chapter 19

Summary

On the night of the third star, Hassan helped Chef Suzanne prepare the desserts. Le Comte de Nancy was at his usual table with several guests. When Hassan emerged from the kitchen, one by one the guests stood up to applaud him. The commotion drew out the staff who came into the dining room to join in the celebration. The clapping was the deafening pinnacle of Hassan's life. He thanked everyone and thought of his father who would be standing proudly next to him.

Calls for reservations by the hundreds were pouring in as were emails of congratulations. The phone was ringing off the hook. They were booked solid for months. Food companies were calling for endorsements and other joint ventures. All the good news made him sad to think about Paul who had died while he was losing everything.

After his night of celebration, Hassan was the last to leave the restaurant. On the way home, he was drawn down a small street by the smell of curry. It reminded him of his childhood. The main lights of the restaurant were out; but, Hassan saw that the kitchen lights were on. There was a lone chef watching over a large vat of fish stew that bubbled away. He felt a sense of longing for his parents, Madame Mallory, and Paul.

Hassan thought of something that Mallory had told him on one of his last night's working for her. She told him to be smarter than she was and never be a snob because a snob is a person utterly lacking in good taste. Somewhere in life she had lost her way, she told him. She felt he had been sent to her, perhaps by her father, to give her a second chance.

Analysis

There was no longer any doubt that Madame Mallory saw her relationship as much more than master chef and apprentice. She told Jean-Pierre that Hassan was special and that he had a special gift. She was talking about much more than his culinary skills. He was a gift sent to her so she could redeem herself before she died.

When Hassan saw the young Madras boy watching over the fish stew, he saw himself. He wanted to reach out to the boy to tell him that he could be special, too. However, he knew that was something the boy would have to discover himself.

Discussion Question 1

What are the signs that Hassan has achieved ultimate success?



Discussion Question 2

What memories did the Madras boy stirring the fish stew spark in Hassan?

Discussion Question 3

What did Hassan really mean to Madame Mallory?

Vocabulary

pinnacle



Chapter 20

Summary

When Hassan arrived home, Mehtab was as excited as everyone else about the third star. She led Hassan to the living room where Margaret was waiting for him. Her children were with her. They had all drifted off. It was Margaret who had told Mehtab about the star. Margaret woke. She hugged and kissed Hassan, congratulating him on his third star.

Margaret thanked Hassan again for getting her the job as sous chef for Chief Piquot. It was working out very well. Hassan popped a bottle of champagne. Margaret, Mehtab, and Hassan had yet another celebration for Hassan's great achievement. Zainab called the next day with congratulations. She had married the son of Abbas' old enemy, Uday Joshi. Uday, Jr. and Zainab owned a successful boutique and restaurant chain. Umar was going to drive his family down for the Three-Star party. Umar still lived in Lumiere and owned two local garages. The oldest of Umar's boys was going to join Hassan the next year in Paris to work in the kitchen.

While Mehtab and Margaret talked about the upcoming party and who should be invited, Hassan stepped into his study. A copy of the newspaper was lying on his desk. He cut the article out, placed it inside a wooden frame, and hung the third star on his wall. Perhaps, it filled that hungry space from so long ago.

Analysis

Not only had Hassan soared to great heights, he had fulfilled the dream of Madame Mallory. He had earned the third star, and it was hanging on the wall in the empty space that had awaited it. But, the star was not Hassan's alone. It belonged to his parents, grandparents, siblings, Paul, and especially to Madame Gertrude Mallory. She had shared her wisdom with Hassan. The least he could do was share his star.

Discussion Question 1

Why was Margaret grateful to Hassan?

Discussion Question 2

How did winning the third Michelin star brought Hassan's family together?



Discussion Question 3

What did it mean when Hassan placed the third star in the hungry space on the wall?

Vocabulary

scowled, barrage



Characters

Hassan Haji

Hassan was the second of six children. He was born above his grandfather's restaurant on the Napean Sea Road in West Bombay. . While growing up, Hassan looked up to his grandfather. Years later, Hassan was chosen by Madame Mallory, a master chef, to be her apprentice. She had seen something very special in his culinary talents. After several years of training with Madame Mallory, Hassan landed a job in Paris. Eventually, he opened his own restaurant and became part of the small circle of elite chefs that were considered the best in all of France.

Madame Gertrude Mallory

Madame Gertrude Mallory was the innkeeper of the celebrated inn and restaurant known as Le Saule Pleureur. Originally from Loire, she was a very private person who was feared for her sharp-tongue and unfriendly demeanor. She worked long hours in the inn's kitchen to perfect her culinary skills. The Le Saule Pleureur was considered one of France's best small country hotels.

Madame Mallory was disgusted when Hassan's family bought the DuFour mansion across the street from Le Saule Pleureur. Though Abbas and she became bitter enemies, in time she made her amends for her behavior and convinced him to allow Hassan to be her apprentice. She saw that Hassan had extraordinary culinary skills. After Hassan had apprenticed for several years, Madame Mallory told him that it was time for him to accept a position in a Paris restaurant.

It was ultimately revealed that Madame Mallory felt that Hassan had been sent to her by God – that God was giving her a second chance, a chance to redeem herself and do something good for humanity. By training Hassan in the culinary arts, she felt she had done just that.

Bapaji

Hassan Haji's grandfather who was called Bapaji left the farming fields of rural India when he was seventeen to seek work in the big city of West Bombay, which was later renamed Mumbai. He was a delivery boy for years after arriving. Eventually, he opened up and ran his own restaurant.



Abbas

Abbas was Hassan's father. After the tragedy of losing his wife in West Bombay, Abbas moved his family to London. Later he traveled with his family to France where he opened a successful Indian restaurant.

Margaret Bonnier

Hassan had a two-year love affair with Margaret Bonnier who was Madame Mallory's sous chef. She was five years older than Hassan. When he left for Paris, he asked her to come with him, but she rejected the offer.

Paul Verdun

Paul Verdun was one of France's top chefs when Hassan met him. He took Hassan under his wing. He died in a car accident which many suspected was an act of suicide. Hassan was sure that Paul had passed the torch to him and positioned Hassan to take his place.

Adhidha

Adhidha was Hassan's first love. He met her in a shop in Camden where she worked as a clerk. She was several years older than Hassan and only wanted to go on educational outings with him like taking in a museum. Their relationship ended when Hassan became afraid to get more serious with her.

Mehtab

Mehtab was one of Hassan's younger sisters. She was a single woman when she agreed to invest in Hassan's restaurant to help him get started. She worked in the restaurant office.

Le Comte de Nancy Seliere

Le Comte de Nancy Seliere was an aristocrat and a gourmand who had known Madame Mallory for many years. When Hassan was looking for a place to open up his restaurant, Le Comte de Nancy Seliere contacted him and offered to rent him one of the big mansions he owned in Paris. He became a regular in Hassan's new restaurant.

Henri LeBlanc

Henri LeBlanc was Madame Mallory's manservant. He had worked for her for years. He was actually her only friend and she often relied on his advice and help. There was speculation that the two were actually involved in a romantic relationship.



Symbols and Symbolism

Tandoori

The tandoori was the deep coal pot on which Hassan's grandmother and mother cooked the family meals.

Michelin Star

Restaurants that were awarded the Michelin star were considered to be the cream of the crop in France. It was such a prestigious award that Madame Mallory, who had received two Michelin stars for her restaurant before Hassan's family moved across the street from her inn, felt like a failure because she had not earned the third star.

Passive Resistance

When Mallory went on her hunger strike to compel Abbas to allow Hassan to work for her, Abbas was upset because by sitting in his driveway until she got her way she was using "passive resistance." Abbas felt she stole that method from Gandhi, the father of modern India.

The Ducklings

Madame Degeneret refused to sell a certain duck to Madame Mallory because the duck took over raising six ducklings whose mother had been killed. Degeneret said that the duck was kinder than most humans.

The Antique Cook Book Collection

Madame Mallory had an extensive antique book collection which she cherished. Her copy of Apicius' "De Re Coquinaria" was the only surviving Roman cookbook. When she died, she bequeathed the collection to Hassan. He kept the collection in his office at the restaurant.

Paul's Partridge in Mourning

Hassan created a special entrée for Paul's memorial dinner. He named it "Paul's Partridge in Mourning."



Siberian Ptarmigan

The Siberian ptarmigan is a member of the grouse family. Hassan had some imported into his restaurant. It was the last gourmet dish he prepared for the restaurant. After that, he made simpler dishes made from local ingredients.

Paul's Memorial Dinner

Hassan oversaw the memorial dinner that was held for Paul. Hassan strongly felt that the only reason that Paul requested such a dinner was so that Hassan could be introduced to the elite inner circle of master chefs. He felt that Paul wanted to pass the torch to him.

The Hundred-Foot Journey

The Hundred-Foot Journey is the name of the book. It describes how far it was from Hassan's home to Madame Mallory's inn. He took that journey when she hired him as her apprentice.

The VAT Protest

Hassan and thousands of chefs from around France gathered at the capitol to protest the government's plan to add a value-added tax to restaurant fare. The protest ended in violence; but, Hassan and his staff were able to escape unharmed.



Settings

West Bombay

West Bombay was the birthplace of Hassan Haji. Twenty years later it was renamed Mumbai.

London

Southall was the area of London where the Haji family settled after moving to England. The area was London's unofficial homeland for Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis. Hassan and Ubar would often travel to Camden a district in London that reminded them of their home in Mumbai. Hassan met and fell in love with an older woman who was a shop girl in the Camden district.

Le Chien Mechant

After working in Paris several years, Hassan decided to open his own restaurant. He named the restaurant Le Chien Mechant. It was located in an exclusive area of Paris.

Maison Mumbai

Formerly known as the Dufour Estate, Maison Mumbai was the name of Abba's Indian restaurant in Lumeire, France.

Le Saule Pleureur

Le Saule Pleureur was a famous French restaurant owned by Madame Gertrude Mallory. Le Saule Pleureur was right across the street from Maison Mumbai. Eventually, Hassan trained as an apprentice chef under Madame Mallory at Le Saule Pleureur.



Themes and Motifs

Envy

Although Madame Mallory was a talented and celebrated chef of more than thirty years, she suffered from envy. As a result, she made others suffer from it as well. When Abbas opens a restaurant across the road from her famous inn and restaurant, she is irate. She tries to get his place shut down claiming that the authorities couldn't let Abbas ruin "her street."

When she was thwarted in these efforts, she confronted Abbas himself and berated him for opening a restaurant near her own. She wanted to be the only restaurant on the street. When Abbas' restaurant enjoyed some success, she was so envious that she made life miserable for her entire staff. She was so angry that she shoved Abbas who bumped into Hassan which sent him flying into a hot stove. Hassan was hospitalized for his burns. That incident turned out to be a pivotal one for Mallory. She saw the real hurt that resulted from her anger and jealousy.

There was another element of envy within Madame Mallory that ran deeper and was more complicated than her envy over Abbas' restaurant. Although Mallory was a very private person and kept herself insulated from the outside world, she had a keen sense of another's abilities and talents. Almost from the moment she met Hassan, she sensed that he was special and that he would achieve greater success than she had as a chef. She envied the innate ability and talent that he had. She was ultimately able to suppress the envy she held for Hassan's culinary talents and helped him on his way to achieve great success.

Self-Absorption

The Hundred-Foot Journey explores the theme of self-absorption. First of all, Madame Mallory was a very private person who kept herself isolated from most of the world. She is a case-study in self-absorption which was in large part due to her self-inflicted isolation and her ability to intimidate others. Madame was a very talented person and obviously very bright. She had a stubborn streak which she aimed strictly at her own goals, wants, and needs. She was dedicated to the inn and often found fault with every move her staff members made. They feared her more than respected her. She wanted that inn to need her as much as she needed the inn. That hope vanished day when she observed them from afar and saw that they were responsible and dedicated workers and that the inn was running smoothly without her.

Another example of self-absorption is seen when Madame Mallory was outraged after learning that Abbas was opening an Indian restaurant directly across from her inn and restaurant. She did not want any competition. When she complained to the mayor of the village, she referred to the street that she and Abbas shared as "her street."



When Madame went to the market, she was treated like a queen. She had first pick of the produce and meats and anything else she wanted. Everyone was afraid to cross her. She was a famous chef and celebrity. Her wicked tongue could cut to the quick. When Abbas came along, he didn't know that she was the queen of the town. He bought up all the produce and meat before she had a chance. Madame Mallory was irate. After all, it was most important for her to get the cream of the crop and leave the crumbs for others.

Madame and Abbas became bitter enemies because Abbas didn't kowtow to her demands. Their feud led to a violent altercation in which Hassan was injured. It was perhaps the first time in more than thirty years that she looked at herself and saw that she had turned into a selfish, self-centered woman who was hurtful and very disliked. She had wasted so many years wrapped up in herself that she had failed to let anyone else in and insulated herself against others who could have made her life fuller and brighter.

Dedication

Hassan Haji saw what dedication was from the moment of his first memories. Bapaji, his grandfather, worked day and night to provide for his family. Bapaji had come to West Bombay as a young teenager, driven away by the lack of work after the blight of the 1930s. Alone in the huge city with nowhere to live, he was industrious and started his own delivery service. He would go to great lengths to deliver lunch boxes to workers every day. By the time Bapaji was twenty-three, he was delivering 1,000 boxes each day and had more than a dozen delivery boys working for him.

Bapaji expanded his operation to include a roadside shack where people could quickly pick up snacks. Soldiers from all over the world passed through West Bombay during the World War, and Bapaji served snacks to many of them. He scrimped and saved and worked hard enough to eventually save enough to open a real restaurant which he operated until his death. His son Abbas took over after Bapaji died.

Abbas had a different style than his father. He was loud and boisterous and didn't hire the boys from the slums to deliver food like his father did. This led to a violent attack on the restaurant which left Abbas' wife dead and the family fleeing to London. Abbas was determined to be a useful member of society and eventually he found his place in Lumiere, France, where he converted an old mansion into an Indian restaurant. His work and dedication to his restaurant were in homage to his father. His work ethic was a striking example to his children, especially Hassan.

Abbas's influence on Hassan's work was apparent. Hassan was so dedicated to his culinary efforts that he spent three years under the tutelage of the sharp-tongue master chef, Madame Mallory. As a result, he was able to secure a position in several high-profile restaurants in Paris over the next twenty years. Finally, he reached the apex of his field when he was named a three-star chef. Without his dedication and the

dedication of his grandfather and father before him, Hassan would have never achieved such success.



Styles

Point of View

For the most part, *The Hundred-Foot Journey* by Richard C. Morais is written in the first-person from the perspective of the story's protagonist, Hassan Haji. However, there is an unusual element in the way this story is told. Although Hassan tells the story, the perspective at times drifts from Hassan telling his own story to Hassan telling the story as a narrator, from a third-person perspective. He relates what actions people took and what thoughts they had even though he wasn't present and couldn't read the minds of the other characters. It drifts back and forth between Hassan's first-person narrative to a more omniscient third-person perspective. It was undoubtedly done by design. It is an unusual style, but it does not detract from the story.

The Hundred-Foot Journey is author Richard Morais' first novel. He was a senior editor at *Forbes*. He was also the magazine's longest-serving foreign correspondent. It is apparent that the book is a result of the many years he spent overseas. His knowledge of Asian and European lands stands out. Also, he has an intimate knowledge of the foods of different cultures, in particular Indian and French, which are at the heart of the book. He wrote about what he knew which is the safest way to write a successful novel.

Language and Meaning

Metaphor is used throughout *The Hundred-Foot Journey*. For example, Hassan compares how he feels about being transplanted from India to London to an octopus being captured in a Portuguese village. The creature is lured with a cod fish baited on a hook and line. Once the octopus is snagged, it is pulled out and quickly turned inside out. This results in suffocation which is a quick death. That was exactly how Hassan felt when he first arrived in London.

Metaphor is also used when Madame Degeneret tells Mallory that one of her ducks is not for sale. The duck had taken over the orphaned ducklings of a mother duck that was killed. She would never kill that duck because it was kinder than humans. Hassan is a duckling without a mother, and Mallory is a childless woman. When she takes him under her wing to teach him French cooking, she is taking on a maternal role with the motherless boy.

Language from the culture of West Bombay is interspersed throughout the story. The Haji's family business is a restaurant. Hassan makes references to the different Indian dishes that they prepare for their diners. One is a fish dish called "pearlspot." Carp-head soup, lamb Madres, and tandoori chicken are a few of the others which are mentioned.

Structure

The Hundred-Foot Journey is comprised of twenty medium-length chapters. Preceding the first chapter are several pages of book reviews . The twenty chapters are divided into four main parts, which are segmented by the geographic locations that the protagonist lived and worked in during the course of the story.

"Part One: Mumbai" covers Hassan's childhood and early life. It is comprised of two chapters. "Part Two: London" focuses on the two years that the family spent in London after they fled from India. They were in deep grief over the loss of Hassan's mother. It is also comprised of two chapters. "Part Three: Lumiere" recounts the years that Hassan spent in the French village that began as an accidental home. There are twelve chapters in this section. "Part Four: Paris" covers the years that Hassan spent as a chef in Paris, eventually rising to the top of his field as a master chef. There are eight chapters in this last section.

There is an "Acknowledgements" section following the story. Finally, a conversation with some fans of the author and two recipes that an executive chef in New York made from descriptions in the book are shared.



Quotes

There is no dish finer than her pearlspot, a fish she dusted in sweet-chili masala, wrapped in a banana leaf, and tawa-grilled with a spot of coconut oil. It is for me, well the very height of Indian culture and civilization, both robust and refined and everything that I have ever cooked since is held up against this benchmark, my grandmother's favorite dish. And she had that amazing capacity of the professional chef to perform several tasks at once.

-- Hassan Haji (Chapter 1)

Importance: This passage illustrates that Hassan was inspired by his grandmother's cooking when he became a professional chef.

Never be afraid of trying something new, Hassan. Very important. It is the spice of life.

-- Hassan's mother (Chapter 2)

Importance: Hassan's mother encouraged him to try French food. French food would later become a major part of his culinary life.

This is too much, Henri. Did you see that placard? Hear that plinky-plinky music? Quelle horreur. Non. Non. He can't do such a thing. Not on my street. He's destroying the ambience. Our customers. What will they think?

-- Madame Mallory (Chapter 6)

Importance: Madame Mallory was expressing her dissatisfaction with the Indian restaurant that Abbas had opened across from her high-class country inn.

Talent... talent that cannot be learned. That skinny Indian teenager has that mysterious something that comes along in a chef once a generation.

-- Madame Mallory (Chapter 7)

Importance: Madame Mallory was expressing her angst over the discovery that Hassan had natural born culinary skills – something which she obviously envies.

This time we don't run... this time we fight.

-- Abbas (Chapter 8)

Importance: After a confrontation with Madame Mallory, Abbas indicated his determination to fight it out with her and not run as the family had done before when facing controversy.

There was a scream and flurrying arms, and only days later did I realize that the yellow I witnessed was the sight of my tunic going up in flames.

-- Hassan (Chapter 9)



Importance: The feud between Mallory and Abbas escalated to violence. Hassan, an innocent bystander, was the victim of their hatred for each other.

And when she did turn around, her eyes glistened like Spanish olives, a single eyebrow arched up, and she stared fiercely at me like that in the dusk until I realized, for the first time, I had the culinary equivalent of perfect pitch.

-- Hassan (Chapter 11)

Importance: This was a pivotal point in Hassan's life. Hassan realized from the behavior of one of the top chefs in France that he had an extraordinary talent for cooking.

The thing that most galled him [Abbas] was the idea that Mallory was using passive resistance to get what she wanted. Of course, this was the very same method with which Gandhi had created modern India, and it was intolerable, so infuriating, that she would use the same methods against us.

-- Hassan (Chapter 11)

Importance: Abbas was trying to resist Mallory's demands but realized that she was using the same tactics as the modern father of Gandhi. In his heart of hearts he probably knew that he would eventually give in to her wishes.

If I am honest, my rise in Paris over the next twenty years, it was not as difficult as one would suspect. It was as if some unseen spirit were clearing obstacles and helping me take the path that I believe was always destined for me.

-- Hassan (Chapter 13)

Importance: Hassan was referring to his destiny of becoming a master chef, which Madame Mallory sensed when she first met him.

Tell me, Chef, would you invite all your enemies to your memorial service? I simply don't understand it. It must be a kind of showing off from beyond the grave, but I don't know.... Truth be told, I never really understood my husband. Not in life. Not in death.

-- Madame Verdun (Chapter 15)

Importance: Madame Verdun was grappling with her husband's last request. She was seeking help from Hassan who was probably closer to Paul Verdun than Madame Verdun herself had been.

I am sad because I am thinking of Paul Verdun. My friend, he could not save himself. But he saved me.

-- Hassan (Chapter 19)

Importance: After winning his third Michelin star, Hassan became depressed thinking about Paul Verdun. He was sure that Paul positioned Hassan to succeed knowing that he could not save his own career.



Somewhere in life I lost my way and I believe you were sent to me, perhaps by my beloved father, so that I could be restored to the world. And I thank you for this. You have made me understand that good taste is not the birthright of snobs, but a gift from God sometimes found in the most unlikely of places and in the unlikeliest of people.
-- Madame Mallory (Chapter 19)

Importance: Mallory provided the final truth about her relationship with Hassan. It was much more than just master chef/apprentice.