

Loitering with Intent Study Guide

Loitering with Intent by Muriel Spark

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Plot Summary

Fleur Talbot is a relatively young woman living in London in 1950 when the story begins. She is sitting in an old graveyard, working on a poem, when she is approached by a friendly policeman with whom she chats for a few moments before continuing her work. This event, she states, was the last day of a whole chunk of her life, although she wasn't aware of it at the time. The story then goes back in time ten months where it begins to work forward again, beginning with Fleur's job at the Autobiographical Association, a group of ten adults who have begun to compose their memoirs. Fleur's job is to type out the manuscripts as she corrects them. Her boss, Sir Quentin, takes his work very seriously and warns her that the job must be done in extreme secrecy.

Fleur continues her position at the Autobiographical Association where she befriends the extremely eccentric Lady Edwina, Sir Quentin's mother. Fleur had begun to compose her first novel, *Warrender Chase*, before beginning her job at the Association, and throughout her employment there, she continued to write and, to her great pleasure, finished the novel and submitted it for publication.

After Fleur's submission of her manuscript, a series of strange occurrences follow that lead Fleur to believe that her manuscript has been stolen and used for purposes for which it was not intended. She soon finds out that her suspicions are correct and that Sir Quentin has not only obtained and read a copy of the manuscript, but has been using passages from it to add to the memoirs of clients at the Autobiographical Association. In addition to this, he has begun to personify the main character of the story, Warrender Chase, and has taken the Association to a different level, seemingly brainwashing the members and providing them hunger-suppressant drugs so that they can lose weight. When the events of Fleur's novel begin to unfold in real life as they had done in the novel, including the suicide of one of the Association's female members, Fleur becomes concerned. She soon learns through a meeting with the publisher who had agreed to publish her book that Sir Quentin had threatened legal action if the book was published, claiming that Fleur had libeled the Association by using them as a basis for her book.

With the assistance of Lady Edwina, Fleur is able to retrieve the original copy of her manuscript and prove to Sir Quentin that she knows what he is up to. Sir Quentin, however, continues in his ways and eventually ends up the same way the character Warrender Chase did in the first chapter of Fleur's novel: dead as the result of a car accident.

The end of the story, however, is a happy one, as Fleur continues her friendship with Lady Edwina, finds another publisher for her book and for her subsequent novels, and begins to enjoy recognition for her work. The story ends the same way it began, with Fleur sitting in the old graveyard in London, working on a poem. She is approached by the friendly policeman, and the reader is filled in on the lives of the remaining members of the Autobiographical Association, having therefore learned the events that marked that "chunk" of her life that she had just finished as she sat there that evening.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Fleur Talbot sat in an old graveyard in London in the middle of the twentieth century working on a poem when she was approached by a young policeman who asked her what she was doing. They chatted casually for a while, then he said good-bye and that it was nice to talk to someone. He commented that the graves must be very old and left her to her work. This scene is described by Fleur as the last day of a whole chunk of her life, although she was not aware of it at the time.

She lived nearby in a small room; her morale was high at the time, although she was in need of a job, and her landlord, Mr. Alexander, was constantly trying to convince her to rent a larger room in the house, since her small room was overcrowded, mostly with books. Mrs. Alexander, a tall woman who always had glossy black hair and nails always polished red, stayed away from any of these matters, and went about her business as if she were nothing more than a tenant, although superior from the others. Fleur made it clear she had nothing against either of the Alexanders, except her landlord's insistence that she rent a larger room, and even if they were to throw her out, she would still have nothing against them and would merely be fascinated by them. At this point in her life, Fleur had a number of friends, full of good and evil, and her spirits were high, primarily because she had recently escaped from the Autobiographical Association, and she begins the rest of the novel by explaining it.

Ten months before the day she conversed with the policeman in the graveyard, she had received a letter from a friend who had located a job for her. Fleur mentioned that she had an inexplicable habit of keeping all the letters she received, even the threatening ones from bookstores to which she owed money since this is where she spent the bulk of her money. Fleur went to a job interview with Sir Quentin Oliver, a tall, thin man whose skin was pale except for his flushed cheeks and whose right shoulder protruded slightly further than his left, making it appear as if he were constantly in the position to shake hands. Although he offered her below-average wages, Fleur pushed up the starting price a little and accepted the offer. His flat, where she was to begin her work, was located across the street from the BBC building where Fleur had always hoped to get a job but was never able to.

On her first day of work, Sir Quentin introduced her to Mrs. Beryl Tims, his housekeeper, and Fleur watched as she and Sir Quentin argued about her proper name. Sir Quentin tells Fleur that he hopes she doesn't talk very much, to which Fleur replied that she doesn't, which was true, although she admitted to herself that she does listen a lot, primarily because she was in the beginning stages of writing her first novel. Sir Quentin begins to introduce Fleur to her new job by telling her that her work will be highly interesting, although she has quite a bit of work cut out for her. He continues to explain that he belongs to a group, a very special one, formed for a very delicate purpose and the work must be kept secret, making sure she is aware that he interviewed six women



for the position and chosen Fleur. Sir Quentin motions to a large, antique cabinet, telling her there are secrets inside of it.

Fleur drifts off and begins thinking about her novel, *Warrender Chase* mentioning that it had lately been occupying the primary portion of her life; she felt as if she had become a magnet to people, places and things that contributed to the plot of her novel. She took great happiness from the way Sir Quentin placed his hands on the table as he spoke to her, with the tips of his fingers touching each other, and she noticed in his mannerisms, his desire to impress and to believe in what he was saying. Mrs. Tims had not taken a liking to Fleur, and in response, Fleur thought to herself that the woman was awful, but to her, she was beautifully awful. Fleur notes that her ears have a good memory and that she tends to remember the auditory portions of memories past before the visual.

Sir Quentin continues to explain the Autobiographical Association, which consists merely of a group of ten adults who have written their memoirs and placed them in a safe place where they will remain for seventy years until all the living people mentioned are no longer living. He provided her with a detailed list of each of the members and their biographical information and told her to study it, although Fleur found the information so selective that she found she learned more about Sir Quentin from reading it than she did about the members.

Just as the phone rang and Sir Quentin answered it, his aged mother entered the room, causing a scene and asking him if he thought she was "ga-ga" and insisting that he did, calling him a snob when he asked her to quiet herself so that he could continue his phone conversation.

By the end of Fleur's first week at her new job, she had been let in on the secrets of the great file cabinet which contained ten unfinished manuscripts; her job was to go through each one and correct any and all errors, typewriting in extreme secrecy. Fleur had originally assumed that Sir Quentin was a social imposter; however, she was somewhat surprised to learn that he indeed had a respectable educational background, having attended Eaton and Trinity College and having belonged to three clubs, of which Fleur could only remember White's and Bath. On top of this, he was a baronet and his mother was the daughter of an earl. He was indeed a snobbish man, and Fleur noted during this first week that it was possible he could be using the contents of the cabinet as blackmail, but it was not until much later that she realized this was exactly what he was doing.

Going home that autumn evening, Fleur thought about her job, thinking to herself that the strangeness of it fascinated her, and although while she was there she made no notes, when she went home at night to work on her novel, the events and people of the day would reconstruct themselves into the characters of her book. The female characters in her book, Charlotte and Prudence, were not entirely based on Beryl Tims and Sir Quentin's mother, though, and Fleur explains that the way she creates her characters is through "the sum of my whole experience of others and of my own potential self; and so it had always been." As for her novel's main character, Warrender Chase, he had already been well established before Fleur met Sir Quentin.



As Fleur looks back on this time in her life, she mentions that she had no hope of having her novel published, she was simply excited about the prospect of writing it. The thought of how wonderful it felt to be an artist and a woman in the twentieth century occurred to her as she walked home that evening, the part concerning her being an artist was the compulsion with which she identified the most. She found herself thinking often of Beryl Tims, the kind of woman she had characterized as an English Rose. She had admired Fleur's brooch, her best one, and one day Fleur stated that she hated her so much that she took it off and gave it to her simply to absolve her own hatred, although she meant it when she told her to keep it with pleasure.

When she and Beryl Tims were together, it seems all Mrs. Tims could talk about was what men wanted in women. At this point, she mentioned that although men like women to wear lipstick, they don't like to see it along the rim of their cups. She tells Fleur that she is always admired for the color of her lipstick, which is called English Rose. Fleur realizes that Beryl Tims reminded her a great deal of her lover's awful wife. As they continue their conversation, Beryl Tims asks Fleur if she will ever get married, to which Fleur replies that she will not; marriage would interfere with her writing. Beryl Tims was shocked at her reply, suggesting that she could write after her children had gone to bed, but Fleur disagrees. The look of shock, however, reminded her of a look she had seen on Dottie, her lover's wife, when she had confronted her with the affair she was having with her husband. Fleur had admitted it, telling her she did love him, but only off and on, and that since she was beginning to write a novel, which required a great deal of poetic concentration, and since she conceived everything poetically, it would probably more off than on with Dottie's husband, Leslie. Dottie replied with both relief that she wouldn't in fact be losing her husband to Fleur and shock at her so-called "unnatural" attitude, although Fleur states it was very natural to her. Before leaving, Dottie tells Fleur that her head rules her heart. Fleur saw a bottle of perfume in her bathroom called "English Rose," which both slightly disgusted her and gave her some comfort in confirming the characterization she had created for the woman. She mentions that she had learned a lot from Dottie; she had taught her quite a few principles she could reject, although Dottie had learned nothing of value from her.

Fleur notes that Beryl Tims was a better and more frightful English Rose than Dottie. She noted that Beryl Tims was constantly trying to provoke Sir Quentin sexually, although he never returned her advances, but kept her in a state of hope that he one day might. Beryl Tims, instead, remained his mother's companion and caretaker.

Chapter 1 Analysis

This introductory chapter serves to establish the characters and setting of the novel. Fleur is clearly a writer and avid reader, evidenced by the stockpile of books in her small room and debts to various bookstores. Her literary-mindedness plays a large part in the way the story is told, since she takes special notice of her surroundings for possible material to use in her novel. The reader learns that she has little interest in romance, although she is having an affair with a married man; she does so only "on and off," when he does not interfere with her writing, which is clearly the priority in her life. Beryl



Tims had taken a strong disliking to Fleur, and made no effort to hide it; in response, Fleur strongly disliked her. Fleur has characterized the two women she strongly dislikes in her life as belonging to the category of "English Rose," and as if reaffirming her beliefs, this happens to be the name of Beryl Tims' lipstick color as well as the name of Dottie's perfume. Fleur's feelings toward Sir Quentin are primarily neutral, although she believes strongly that he is a very snobbish man who is only interested in his work; his mother, however, provides a fascination and welcome interruption to Fleur's workday and she seems to have taken a liking to the eccentric old woman.

The format and setting of the story are made clear as well: the story takes place in London during the year 1949, and is written by Fleur in retrospect; although she is experiencing the events in first person, she narrates as though she is looking back on the memories. The first scene of the story takes place in 1950, exactly ten months before she began her job at the Autobiographical Association.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

None of the members of the Autobiographical Association had gotten past the first chapter in their memoirs, but Fleur had noticed a few common threads in each of the manuscripts she had read: "One of them was nostalgia, another was paranoia, a third was a transparent craving on the part of the authors to appear likeable." Her job of typing out and trying to make sense of the manuscripts was an agony to her until she created a way to make them even worse, and as it turned out, everyone involved was thrilled with the result. Fleur was five weeks into her new job at this point, and on this particular day, a meeting of all of the Association members was to be held. Sir Quentin told Beryl Tims he wanted her to keep his mother under control while the meeting was underway. Beryl Tims was upset at this request, asking him how he expected her to serve tea and control his mother at the same time. She described Lady Edwina's bladder control problems using the phrase "fluxive precipitations," which Fleur had taught her to say.

While they argued, Fleur notes that she had become rather fond of Lady Edwina by this point, primarily because the woman had taken a great liking to her, but also because she enjoyed her grand entrances and extraordinary statements. She believed that a great deal of her erratic behavior was an act, because when the two of them were together, she managed to stay slightly more sane and carry on perfectly normal conversations, even managing to make it to the restroom in time to relieve herself. Fleur had assumed the woman was rich because of some comments she had made about her inheritance and decided there was really nothing wrong with Lady Edwina except that her son and Beryl Tims got her down. Fleur liked her bizarre appearance, and she enjoyed the way Lady Edwina brightened up her job.

Beryl Tims had refused to take care of Lady Edwina when she entered the room, ranting about how they planned to give her sleeping pills that afternoon, stating that she would do absolutely no such thing. To ease the situation, and also because she genuinely enjoyed her company, Fleur bribed Lady Edwina by telling her that if she agreed to rest that afternoon, she would invite her to dinner with her later that evening, and Lady Edwina graciously accepted her offer, hurrying off to find something suitable to wear.

That evening, the six members who were able to attend the day's meeting entered the room, and Fleur realized she had been expecting too much of them. The work she had put into perfecting their pathetic manuscripts had lead her to almost think of the writing as her own work, based on Sir Quentin's original writing which was an attempt to make their boring lives appear distinguished and important.

Sir Quentin introduced Fleur as his new and very reliable secretary to the members of the Association who attended the meeting that evening, including Sir Eric Findlay, whose memoirs, like the others' had not gone past the first chapter, which he called



"nursery days." Fleur had embellished his story a great deal, to the extent of portraying young Eric locked in a cupboard and forced to polish silver while his nanny and the butler sat together on his rocking-horse. At the meeting, Sir Quentin passed out to each of the attendees a set of each of their new and improved manuscripts. At the meeting, Fleur paid close attention to each of the members, although she preferred to look merely out of the corner of her eyes and not directly at any of them.

Besides Sir Eric Findlay, the other attending members included Lady Bernice Gilbert, whose nickname was "Bucks," and was a wealthy and well-dressed woman, as well as the only seemingly literate member of the group in Fleur's opinion. There was Baronne Clotilde du Loiret, whose memoirs took place in a French chateau where she was eighteen years old in 1936 yet she was well into her fifties in 1949 and Mrs. Wilks, a stout, happy-looking woman in her mid-fifties who wore a considerable amount of makeup. Fleur met Mrs. Maisie Young, a young girl of about thirty who walked with a stick and one of her legs in a contraption after having lost the use of her leg in a horseback riding accident. In addition, she met a non-practicing priest by the name of Father Egbert Delaney, whose memoirs seemed entirely dedicated to proving that he lost his position as a result of a loss of faith and not morals. According to Fleur, each member of the group was relatively illiterate with the one exception of Bernice Gilbert.

The meeting consisted of lively chatter covering the subject of the members' manuscripts. Maisie's manuscript consisted primarily of wonderings about the state of the universe and the place of mortals in it, which Fleur thought all rather silly, although she did take a liking to Maisie herself. Sir Findlay made a comment about the changes Fleur had made to his manuscript, but upon further inspection, the other members seemed to agree that the changes were for the better, and Sir Findlay ended his protest. The conversation continues as the members discuss their manuscripts until suddenly Lady Edwina, who was presumed to have been sleeping peacefully in her room, to Sir Quentin's horror and to Fleur's delight, entered the room and joined the meeting. Rather than making a scene, however, she conducted the meeting as if it were a tea party, charmingly inquiring about the members' families until finally departing to take her nap, and the members continued to discuss their memoirs.

When the meeting finally ended, Beryl Tims and Sir Quentin informed Fleur that Lady Edwin was sound asleep in her room and that it would therefore not be necessary to take her to dinner; however, when Fleur returned home she was shocked to find Lady Edwina waiting for her in her room. Fleur, although surprised, was happy to see her and made her comfortable in her room as they began their dinner. During their discussion of one of Fleur's poems, her lover, Leslie, entered the room. Fleur introduced him to Lady Edwina, and although she began to become irritated by his mildly unfriendly behavior toward the woman at first, he soon warmed up to her, and they all chatted warmly until Leslie agreed to take Lady Edwina home.

That night, Fleur is surprised by a visit from Leslie's wife, Dottie, who arrives very upset and reveals to Fleur that Leslie is being unfaithful to both of them and having a homosexual affair with a young poet, but Dottie refuses to use the term "homosexual," though Fleur identifies the affair as such without difficulty, a bit to Dottie's distress. Dottie



asks her if she is surprised at the news, to which Fleur replies that she is not; in fact, she wondered how he found the time for all of them. Dottie tells her she was astounded and deeply hurt at the news, attempting to convey to Fleur just how much she was suffering. When speaking of Leslie, Fleur refers to him as "poor Leslie," which she explains to Dottie is because he clearly has difficulties and is unable to cope with his own problems. Dottie asks Fleur for her advice as to what she should do and Fleur suggests that she write her autobiography and join the Autobiographical Association. That night when Fleur finally went to bed, it was with an inexplicable sense of sadness mixed with promise that she thought back on the events of the day.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The characters of the story that were introduced in the first chapter are beginning to take shape as the new characters, the members of the Autobiographical Association, emerge for the first time. Fleur rather enjoys the first meeting of the group, and the members as a whole seem to approve of the alterations she has made to their manuscripts. The character of Lady Edwina serves as a strong element of comic relief for the story. Although she is introduced as a rather unstable, eccentric old woman, this proves to be somewhat untrue as Fleur's relationship with her develops, and Fleur realizes that many of her eccentricities are merely put on before Beryl Tims and Sir Quentin. In reality, Fleur enjoys the woman's company, and her physical appearance, from her long, red nails to her abundant gowns sprinkled on the shoulder with remnants of her equally abundant makeup to her few green teeth, is an amusing addition the storyline.

Another development in this section is Fleur's relationship with her lover's wife, Dottie. It was clear through her description in the first chapter that she was not fond of the woman, however; their interactions toward the conclusion of this chapter seem like those of close friends.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Fleur notes that as she recounts her actions in 1949, she has realized how much easier it is with characters in a fiction novel that it is with characters in real life. In a novel, the characters are entirely up to the author's imagination, and he or she can invent and arrange them in any order that is convenient, while, when writing biographically, she has to tell whatever actually happened in the order in which it occurred. The primary elements of her life in 1949 included her dedication to her novel, *Warrender Chase*, as well as her interactions with the people around her. To Fleur, her work on her novel was performed with great dedication. The plot of her novel had already been formulated at this point and was in no way influenced by the events concerning the Autobiographical Association. However, in retrospect, Fleur realized that at the time, she was of the impression that it was the reverse, and in 1949, Fleur began to see Sir Quentin as Warrender Chase, and the members of the association as his unfortunate victims. In her novel, Fleur explains, the main character, Warrender Chase, was already dead by the end of the first chapter as the result of a car accident.

Fleur had noted that the four remaining members of the Association who had not been attending meetings were trying to avoid the group through correspondence, each of them with different excuses for not being able to attend, including the friend of Fleur's who had referred her for the job to begin with. Fleur identified a common weakness of character among all of the members of the Autobiographical Association, and at this point, Fleur had begun to suspect that Sir Quentin was up to something "quite dangerous in his evident attempt to get that group of weak people under his dominion for some purpose I couldn't yet make out." Fleur told Dottie of her suspicions before bringing her to the Association, warning her to simply use it a source of amusement to forget her troubles.

Dottie immediately began making friends at the Association, ignoring Fleur's warnings; the group served to successfully take her mind off of Leslie, and neither of the women had heard from him in three weeks. Dottie had continued to attend the group meetings, although she had not begun any writings of her own, instead having composed a piece about her sufferings over Leslie, but Fleur had torn it up, warning her against sharing it with the members of the group. When Dottie asked he why she had done this, Fleur replied that she was unable to explain at the moment but would be able to after she had written a few more chapters of *Warrender Chase*, saying she had to work it out through her own creativity. Dottie continues to ignore Fleur's warnings, saying she likes the people she has met in the group, telling her that if she feels the way she does, she should leave her job. Fleur replies that this is impossible because she is now involved and has to find out what us going on. Dottie accuses Fleur of being jealous that she is getting along so well with the members of the group.



That afternoon, at the Association's meeting, Fleur saw Dottie and Beryl Tims speaking in low tones to each other about Dottie's husband. Fleur had been working at the association for seven weeks now, and the members had seen great changes in their manuscripts. Sir Quentin, however, approached her one day and told her it was his opinion that her additions had been adequate thus far, but the time had come for him to take over her work, explaining it was his moral duty to do so. Fleur did not object; in her opinion, those who did something because they believed it was their moral duty to do so were attempting to justify themselves and were usually up to no good. Fleur, in reality, was mostly glad to be rid of her task of rewriting the manuscripts and using her creativity to try to liven them up, since the members had now begun to document their various romantic adventures, ranging wildly in their content.

Dottie tells Fleur that she has found a real friend in Beryl Tims and thinks it's unfair the way she has to run around after Lady Edwina. Lady Edwina had appeared at the most recent meeting of the Autobiographical Association dressed in grey velvet and abundant strands of pearls. She had behaved graciously until the new nurse who had been appointed to care for her arrived and bashfully informed her it was time to leave. Before she did so, however, she exclaimed to the group, "Well my dears, he's got you where he wants you, hasn't he? Ha! Trust my son, Quentin."

That evening, Fleur chatted with Dottie in her room and read her a piece of *Warrender Chase*. Dottie thought the Warrender Chase's funeral scene too cold, but this did not bother Fleur. She continues to describe the way Mr. Chase's surviving friends and family sort through his papers and the way each has reacted to his death. After reading the excerpt, Dottie exclaims that the character Marjorie is evil for seeming happy after the news of Warrender's death. Dottie tells her that she is not very womanly and that there is something harsh about her. Fleur became annoyed by this comment, and in order to show Dottie that she, indeed, was a woman, she tore up the pages of her novel, threw them into the trash and exclaimed loudly for her to get out. After Dottie's departure, Fleur went to bed peacefully, and the following morning she fished out the pieces of her manuscript from the trash and glued them back together.

That morning, on her way to work, she picked up a book for Maisie which she had promised her a while earlier and came across the *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* on the shelves. She explained that the find was like meeting an old friend and borrowed the book for herself and then, as she put it, "went on my way rejoicing."

Chapter 3 Analysis

The character of Dottie has begun to play a more important role in the story as her relationship with Fleur develops and she joins the Autobiographical Association. However, although Fleur had suggested for Dottie to join the group, it was during this period that she had begun to suspect that Sir Quentin was up to no good and warned Dottie not to become too involved. Fleur explains that although she strongly dislikes her job, she cannot leave because she has gotten this far and must now find out what is really going on. Her interest has been aroused, and it seems she will stop at nothing

before finding out what Sir Quentin's motives really are. The friendship that arises between Dottie and Beryl Tims is not surprising, since the two women had each been characterized as an "English Rose" by Fleur since they were both introduced; it seems natural given their similar personalities that they would confide in each other. Dottie has taken sides with Beryl Tims and seems to have made herself very comfortable at the Autobiographical Association, despite Fleur's fervent warnings not to become too involved or reveal any significant information about herself.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Towards the end of November, Fleur had begun taking Lady Edwina out on Sunday afternoons, not only because it solved the problem of who was to care for her when her nurse was off duty and Sir Quentin and Mrs. Tims were off in the country together, but also because she genuinely liked the woman and she fit in very easily with her lifestyle. Fleur and her good friend Solly Mendelsohn would frequently take her for walks with them. Solly was a journalist who usually worked at night and Fleur almost always saw him only during the day. Lady Edwina was delighted with the discussions that took place between Solly and Fleur, and Solly soon took a liking to the eccentric old woman. Solly had found a publisher willing to take on Fleur's *Warrender Chase*, but during one of their walks, they all decided the contract did not provide a very good offer and rejected it.

It was now the middle of December 1949, and Fleur had been spending many late nights working on her novel, and had already begun to form an idea for a subsequent one. She longed to leave her job at the Autobiographical Association, but this would prove impossible until she received a large enough sum of money from a publisher, which was a vague possibility at that point. In addition, Fleur admitted that the job had caught her interest. The events of the Association could have easily influenced her book; however, it did not. Instead, it wasn't until January of 1950, when she had finished with the novel, that she began to shed some light on Sir Quentin's intentions.

At the end of that January, Fleur had begun to notice the deterioration of all of the Association members. She had been away from work with the flu for two weeks, which proved to be a welcome opportunity to finish her book. When Dottie had caught the flu earlier that month, Fleur had taken care of her and noted that she was much more relaxed when she was ill, much less "English Rose," as she put it. Dottie and Leslie were no longer living together at this point, since he had moved in with the male poet. When it was Fleur's turn to be sick, Dottie took care of her. One evening, when she came to bring Fleur something to eat, she divulged that Beryl Tims was in love with Sir Quentin. Fleur had been writing a chapter in her novel earlier that day where her character Charlotte, her fictional English Rose, was proven to be madly in love with Warrender Chase. Her other fictitious characters included Warrender Chase's sensational mother, Prudence, and Proudie, an American scholar to whom Prudence had taken a great liking. In Fleur's book, Warrender Chase had been holding secret prayer meetings, which no one dared ask questions about.

Fleur had come up with the idea for the novel in the first place while out to dinner alone, and she had overheard a piece of a conversation from a nearby table, "They were all gathered in the living-room, waiting for him." This single sentence was all she needed to begin the story, and the rest of it sprung from these words. She had invented a distinguished war record for Warrender Chase's character, which she was later told, even by a genuine war veteran from Burma, that the war record was entirely realistic. In



her book, Fleur never divulged Warrender Chase's intentions, only portraying the effects of his actions. There was a genuine dichotomy between Warrender's personality when in public as compared to when he held his prayer meetings in private. The four women in his group were the main victims of his evil; Warrender Chase was a woman-hater. One woman committed suicide, two others went mad, and the fourth was on the verge of a mental breakdown when Warrender was killed.

Fleur's flu had worsened and came close to pleurisy by that night when Dottie came to see her and informed her that Beryl Tims was in love with Sir Quentin. In reply, Fleur sat up in her bed and exclaimed, "Oh, God!" since the idea that anyone could fall in love with Sir Quentin was beyond what she could conceive.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Fleur has been making steady progress as she nears the final stages of her novel, and the reader begins to draw parallels between the plot of Warrender Chase and the events in Fleur's life. The characters in the book also seem to parallel the people Fleur is associated with. Sir Quentin clearly resembles the main character, Warrender Chase, who seems to be busy brainwashing the attendees of his prayer meetings. Lady Edwina seems to take after Warrender's mother, Prudence, with her sensational ways. Charlotte is Fleur's fictional "English Rose," and Marjorie is relieved at the news of Warrender's death. The fictional characters are beginning to take shape, and the reader is informed of the unfolding plot in the fictional book as it begins to unfold along with the events in Fleur's life. The suspense surrounding the intentions of Sir Quentin is heightened as Fleur affirms once again that she is coming closer to finding out the man's evil doings, which is the primary reason she cannot leave her job at the Autobiographical Association; she must find out what is going on. Fleur does not reveal the intentions of the evil Warrender Chase behind *his* evil doings, rather she simply describes the effects of his actions, leaving the rest undisclosed. Warrender Chase's character is shrouded in secret, in a way that not even his friends dare to ask him about the goings on in his prayermeetings, and therefore no one ever seems to find out.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Right at the end of January 1950, just a week after finishing her book, was when Fleur noticed the real deterioration of the members of the Autobiographical Society. She was still weak from her flu but, at the same time, glad to have the book finished. Solly had been able to find her a new publisher by the name of Revisson Doe, a bald-headed man who thought the novel was rather evil, but that his company would carry it in the hopes that Fleur would produce better ones in the future. When the proofs of her novel arrived, Fleur decided she was so far removed from it that she could not bear to re-read it to look for errors. Instead, she brought it her friends Theo and Audrey, a married couple with some establishment in the literary field, to read the proofs for her, with strict instructions to look only for spelling errors and change nothing else.

Towards the end of January, Fleur had begun to notice the changes in the members of the Autobiographical Association, comparing them to the bombed-out buildings that could still be found along some London streets. Dottie, however, could not see any changes. Sir Eric Findlay approached Fleur one day to inquire if she thought Mrs. Wilks was in her right mind. During a meeting of the Association, the members discuss the additions to their manuscripts, and Eric interjects at one point in the conversation that "Sir Quentin insists on complete frankness." Later that evening, Fleur discusses the meeting with Dottie, and she says the exact same phrase. Fleur responded by looking at her as if she were a complete stranger.

Maisie Young had somehow located Fleur's home and paid her a visit. Fleur liked the girl, although her amazed comments about the compactness of Fleur's room revealed to her that she was entirely ignorant about the reality of being penniless and most realities in general to be more precise. The two discuss the possibility of Satan; Maisie says that Father Egbert Delaney believes Satan is a woman, while Maisie says she doesn't believe in Satan. She then goes on to say that Father Delaney is Satan himself and continues with the phrase about Sir Quentin who insists on complete frankness. Fleur becomes irritated with her for saying this and she tells her that frankness is always a mistake between friends. Maisie tells Fleur that she sees her as a cripple and a bore and only pretends to be happy to see her. Fleur tells her she thought no such thing and that frankness is usually a euphemism for rudeness, but Maisie disagrees, telling her she knows she is a cripple and a bore. Maisie then pulls out her copy of the book Fleur had borrowed for her from the library, John Henry Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* and read her a passage from it which basically spoke of the only two supreme beings: oneself and the creator, and Maisie told Fleur she believed it to be beautiful and true. Fleur was greatly irritated by this, believing Maisie had been completely misinterpreting the author's meaning. She spoke the phrase again of Sir Quentin's insistence upon frankness, and Fleur became desperate to rid herself of the girl, saying she had to make a phone call.



Maisie suddenly began to appear as if she were in a trance, and told Fleur that Father Egbert Delaney has said that Fleur had been spending so much time with Lady Edwina only so that the woman would write her into her will. Fleur laughed at this, but only artificially, and hoped that didn't show. Maisie and Fleur get into a small disagreement, and Maisie begins to get upset when they are interrupted by Gray Mauser, Leslie's homosexual lover, who has dropped by in hopes of finding Leslie. He eagerly went off to get a taxi for Maisie, and Fleur and Gray went off to a pub together. As they sat at their table, Gray told Fleur of his troubles with Leslie, who had gone to Ireland with Dottie, having left behind a consolation gift of a blue-spotted, gray silk tie which he wore. Although Fleur had little to say to him, she did recall that sitting in the pub with Gray that night relieved her rage at Maisie Young. They decided together that men were generally more sentimental than women were, while women were generally more dependable. Gray shared a poem about a sickle moon, which he had used as a sex symbol.

Fleur admitted that she had never thought highly of Gray, since there was simply so little about him to think anything much of, but after the two of them had parted ways that evening, Fleur thought how sane he was in comparison to the members of the Autobiographical Association. As she neared her home that night, she went on her way rejoicing.

The phrase about Sir Quentin's insistence on frankness stuck in Fleur's mind so that when she conversed with Eric Findlay a few days later and he spoke the phrase twice, Fleur became convinced that Sir Quentin had begun acting out his plan for the members of the Association. Calmed by her interaction with Gray a few evenings prior, she was able to control her panic.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The repetition of the phrase, "Sir Quentin insists on complete frankness," is impossible to ignore throughout this chapter, as it is repeated multiple times by members of the Autobiographical Association. Fleur takes note of it immediately, although when she brings it up to Dottie, she denies having noticed anything. The repetition of the phrase continues, however, and Fleur becomes convinced that it has to be as a result of Sir Quentin's plan. He has clearly begun to act out whatever strategy he has had in mind and, as Fleur put it herself, it is during this time when she begins to notice the deterioration of the members of the Association. Sir Eric and Fleur even discuss the possibility of the mental unsoundness of one of the members, Mrs. Wilks, although the reason for their questioning has not yet been explained. Fleur's suspicions seem to be confirmed with the conversation she has with Eric Findlay at the end of the chapter, and somehow manages to control her panic when she hears him speak the phrase twice during their dialogue.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Dottie returned from Ireland a week later than she was expected, and Leslie immediately left her once more for Gray, which distressed Dottie a great deal. Dottie tells Fleur that Leslie has begun writing a novel, which she had begun typing for him, and although Fleur was eager to learn about its contents, Dottie said she could only tell her its title, *Two Ways*. She tells her that is a very good novel and very deep, basically autobiographical. She then speaks the phrase about Sir Quentin's insistence on complete frankness. Fleur did not get upset at its mentioning, rather, continued on telling Dottie about her visits with Maisie and Eric Findlay. Fleur noticed that Dottie was being unusually quiet but continued talking to her about *Warrender Chase* and Sir Quentin's similarity to her character. Dottie stopped knitting for a moment to look at her, but then said nothing and continued her work. Fleur continued talking, telling Dottie her belief that the entire Association had become obsessed with having Sir Quentin's approval, mentioning a vulgar comment from Father Egbert Delaney concerning "Mrs. Wilks' tits," which had offended her. Dottie suddenly claimed that it was getting late, said good-bye, and left.

Fleur thought her silence during the visit to be unusual and phoned Dottie after giving her enough time to arrive home, and inquired if something was the matter. Dottie tells Fleur that she is suffering delusions and has begun to go mad, insisting that there is nothing the matter with her or any of the members of the Association, but that the only person with problems was Fleur. She goes on to say that *Warrender Chase* is a completely sick novel and that Theo and Audrey Clairmont think it's sick as well and were having a terrible time with her proofs.

Fleur responds to Dottie's rantings by changing the subject and mentioning something about a bad habit of Leslie's in his writings and telling Dottie to warn him about it in his novel. Fleur could hear Dottie crying, and Dottie told her she thought Fleur was out of her element in the world of the Association.

Fleur attended a party hosted by Lady Bernice "Bucks" Gilbert where the woman had unofficially employed her to take coats and pass out food. She ran into an old friend by the name of Wally McConnachie. She dragged him into helping her with Lady Gilbert's assigned chores, and succeeded in annoying her by eating their fair share of the food she had instructed her to pass to the guests. Lady Gilbert had passed by and told her that Sir Quentin would want her to help with her party, to which Fleur replied that Sir Quentin insisted upon complete frankness and, that quite frankly, she really was helping and the sandwiches were a big success. Sir Quentin arrived at the party and so did the other members of the Autobiographical Association. Fleur and Wally soon got away from the party and spent the whole night dancing. Fleur filled him in on a set of funny amusing anecdotes about the Autobiographical Association to Wally's great enjoyment. He thought he had heard Sir Quentin Oliver's name somewhere, although he was



unable to recall the place or time, and strongly urged Fleur to find herself another job, telling her she would be much happier if she did. Fleur replied that this was possibly true, but that she preferred to stay with the job. She thought to herself that she preferred to remain interested as she was with her current job than happy as she might have been at another, although she did not relate these thoughts to Wally. She did promise that he would soon meet the fabulous Lady Edwina.

The following morning, Fleur stayed in bed and called in sick to Sir Quentin's office, telling Mrs. Tims to go to hell when she asks if Fleur has a medical certificate. Fleur's houseboy knocked on her door to bring her a bouquet of roses and told her that Dottie had been by the night before to see Fleur, and had waited in her room for the better part of an hour before leaving. Fleur was pleased when she discovered there were fourteen roses, not twelve, explaining that a dozen flowers seemed to her so commonplace but that fourteen were something that had taken more thought.

That afternoon, Fleur received a phone call from the Baronne Clotilde du Loiret, who told her that Sir Quentin was worried about her and that he insists on complete frankness. The Baronne Clotilde mentions that the affairs of the Association seemed to be falling apart and that she thinks Lady Gilbert to be a bit much. She tells Fleur that Sir Quentin had introduced to them a sort of prayer meeting, which had been very embarrassing, adding that she is terrified of Sir Quentin because he knows too much and begins to comment about Maisie Young when Fleur interrupts her to ask why she doesn't give up the Association completely. She replies that she cannot explain, but that she does believe in Sir Quentin and is sure that Fleur agrees with her. Fleur replies that she does, and almost feels as if she had invented him. The Baronne Clotilde adds that she believes there is something special going on between Quentin and Mrs. Tims. The chapter ends with the Baronne Clotilde asking Fleur if it's true that she has written a novel about the Association.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The Baronne Clotilde's suggestion that Fleur could have written a novel about the Association is entirely significant because, up until this point, the only parallels between Fleur's book and the events occurring in her life had been drawn by Fleur only. The phrase "Sir Quentin insists on complete frankness" continues to arise and is even adopted for a moment by Fleur when speaking to Lady Gilbert at her party. Another moment of significance comes during Dottie and Fleur's phone conversation. The possibility that others besides Dottie have the opinion that *Warrender Chase* was an evil novel was one that had not arisen before and therefore comes as a great surprise both to Fleur and to the reader. In addition, Dottie's accusation that Fleur is the one out of her mind and that she and the other members of the Autobiographical Association are normal conveys that if Sir Quentin is indeed attempting to brainwash his clients, he has done so successfully. Dottie serves as firm proof: she is in firm belief that Fleur's accusations come from an unsound mind, since hers and those of the rest of the members of the Association could not possibly have been tampered with.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Fleur was aware of a lot of activity with the Autobiographical Association and its members at this point. When she ran into Mrs. Wilks, she was surprised to see that the woman had lost a considerable amount of weight and had lost the happy appearance she so clearly had when Fleur was introduced to her. She implored Fleur to change her name to Miss Davids in her documents, insisting that she must remain "*incognito*" from this point on because the Trotskyites had been sending agents all over the world to find her and assassinate her. As she began to rant, Sir Quentin suddenly sent Fleur on an errand, and Mrs. Wilks was gone when she returned. When she asked Sir Quentin what was wrong with the woman, he replied only that she had been fasting too strictly and then changed the subject.

Fleur's job at the Association had changed from altering the manuscripts to dealing primarily with Sir Quentin's day-to-day business affairs, including composing seemingly unnecessary letters to old friends, some of which Fleur had reason to believe he never even sent. He wrote about some business he apparently had in South Africa as well, but Fleur believed that he did not really need her assistance at all except that she proved to be of help when the members occasionally dropped by or telephoned, which seemed to be occurring much more frequently. Fleur wondered what the use would be of the members' extremely dreary autobiographies, especially now that they were in the hands of Sir Quentin.

Fleur discloses that it was not until much later that she became aware that Sir Quentin had been handing out small, yellow pills by the name of Dexedrine to each of the members to help them with the so-called purifying fasts he enforced on them.

Sir Quentin tells Fleur that his mother is a problem to him and has always been a problem. He then tells her that since she is not sound of mind, she can disregard any promises she may have made to Fleur about any inheritance. This infuriated Fleur, and she retorted by saying that she was well provided for in the future and that as for the past, present, and future, she does not accept payment for friendship. Sir Quentin inquired if she had any marital prospects, to which Fleur replied that she had written a novel that was going to be a great success and would be published in May. She had no idea why she had replied this way, only that she had been completely possessed by rage at Sir Quentin's comments. At this point, the new novel she was working on, *All Soul's Day*, had taken precedence in her mind, and she had much higher hopes for it than she did for *Warrender Chase*, which she had seemingly put aside in her mind. To Fleur's furious retort, Sir Quentin asked her, "Now my dear Miss Talbot, let us be perfectly frank. Don't you think you have delusions of grandeur?" At that moment, Fleur became aware of four things at once: the sound of Beryl Tims' heels approaching as she opened the door and told Sir Quentin that Lady Bernice was waiting, Sir Quentin opening a deep drawer on the right-hand side of his desk, the repetition in her mind of



Sir Quentin's words, and finally, the realization that this quote had been taken directly from the manuscript of her *Warrender Chase*.

As she caught a glimpse of the contents of Sir Quentin's drawer, she saw a bundle of folded proofs inside which would have been approximately equal to one novel. Everything happened very quickly, and Fleur, still fuming, refused Sir Quentin's offer for her to be seated. She noticed Beryl Tims fingering the brooch she had given her, as Sir Quentin informed the woman that she was in the presence of an authoress of a best-selling novel. By this point, Fleur had gathered all of her belongings and, ignoring Sir Quentin's protests, she left, still too enraged to speak. On her way out, she saw Lady Bernice standing in the drawing room doorway looking very upset, with her clothing unsettled and makeup smudged. That was the last time she saw her.

Immediately upon arriving home, Fleur looked at the place in her cupboard where she had kept her original manuscript of *Warrender Chase* and discovered it to be missing. She turned her room upside-down looking for it, but to no avail. She contemplated how it could have left her room, and finally decided that it must have been Dottie, when the houseboy had let her in that evening to wait for her the night she went dancing with Wally. She began to read *Cellini* in order to ease her worries, and as she flicks through the pages, relating the passages she reads, the final one ends with the phrase "I am now going on my way rejoicing," which is a phrase Fleur has used frequently to describe herself throughout the novel.

It was after two in the morning when she jumped out of bed, got dressed and headed to Dottie's house, determined to discover the whereabouts of her manuscript. The head she witnessed, however, peek out of Dottie's window was not hers; in fact, she was sure she recognized the head as belonging to the bald-headed publisher Revisson Doe. Fleur contemplates the possibility that Dottie has been sleeping with the man and decides that it is rather unlikely, but possible.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Up to this point, the parallels between Fleur's novel and the events of her life surrounding the Autobiographical Association have been clear, as have been the strange behaviors of the Association's members which are believed to be the result of Sir Quentin's evil. Now, however, there has been a direct, physical connection between Fleur's life and her novel in the form of the disappearance of her manuscript. Sir Quentin's quotation from *Warrender Chase* in his conversation with Fleur, as well as her glimpse into his desk drawer revealing a manuscript both indicate the strong possibility that Sir Quentin has somehow gotten his hands on Fleur's novel. Perhaps he has imparted the contents of it to the members of the Association, which would have explained Baronne Clotilde's question to Fleur earlier. Sir Quentin's motives are clearly evil; however, it remains unclear exactly what they are. The reader has learned, though, that he has been distributing drugs to the Association's members and encouraged them to fast. These facts alone suggest a similar brainwashing scheme to that of *Warrender*

Chase in Fleur's novel, and the possibility arises that Sir Quentin may be forming his own actions based on those of the fictitious character.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The following morning, Fleur receives a letter from Revisson Doe informing her that a small problem had arisen in regards to her novel and that it would best be discussed in person. He asks her to make an appointment as soon as possible so that they can meet to discuss the matter. The letter upset Fleur a great deal, and she called the company that morning to make an appointment, after having read the letter over and over and analyzing it sentence by sentence. Revisson Doe sounded rather unfriendly and nervous and refused to give Fleur any information about the matter over the phone and she made an appointment for three-thirty that afternoon. Fleur supposed he wanted her to change some important part of the novel, and resolved to herself to refuse to change any part of it. She then wondered if Theo and Audrey had given her novel negative reviews when they had sent back her proofs to her publisher. Fleur went to see the couple but was told by their maid that they were both busy in their studies and couldn't see her.

That afternoon, Fleur went to bed and then went to her interview with Revisson Doe, almost looking forward to seeing him so that she could discern once and for all if it was his head she had seen poking out of Dottie's window the preceding night. She looked up his birth date at the library and calculated that he was sixty-six. When she saw the man in his office, she became certain his was the head she had seen in Dottie's window and wondered for a brief moment if he would recognize her, but he gave no sign. Revisson Doe told Fleur that he had been informed that she was working on a new novel. Fleur replied that she was and told him the title when he inquired about it. He told her it didn't sound like a selling title but that it could be changed, and Fleur replied that the title would remain as it was. Revisson Doe then informed Fleur that he would not be able to publish *Warrender Chase* because Sir Quentin had threatened to sue his company on the grounds of libel if he published it, claiming that it had been based on him and his Association and that Fleur had portrayed him in an evil manner. He had asked for a copy of the manuscript and Revisson Doe has supplied him with one. Fleur insists that she began the novel before she met Sir Quentin, but Revisson ignores her, saying that since Sir Quentin is an important man and he and his company cannot risk a libel suit. Fleur never saw Revisson Doe after their meeting that day.

After she got home, she realized that he had the only typescript of *Warrender Chase* but she didn't want to ask him to give it back before consulting Solly, for fear that she would jeopardize her contract. Fleur still had a glimmer of hope that Solly would be able to find a way to change their minds, although she realized at the time, she couldn't deal with the company anymore. She called the office and the secretary told her that her typescript had been destroyed. Fleur spoke to Solly about the matter the following night, and he assured her they would find another publisher and that she needs to get the typescript back, which is hers by legal rights. Fleur went to bed that night, unable to conceive of



the possibility that all copies of her manuscript had been destroyed and, in essence, her *Warrender Chase* no longer existed.

Fleur received a telephone call from Lady Edwina's nurse with the news that Lady Bernice Gilbert had committed suicide and Lady Edwina was in laughing uncontrollably in hysterics and had been asking for Fleur.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The news that Lady Bernice Gilbert has committed suicide comes as a shock. The reason is primarily that this is precisely the way the character in Fleur's *Warrender Chase* died, and therefore, the possibility that her novel is, indeed, unfolding itself in real life has become that much more real. The situation is compounded by the missing manuscript of the novel and the stress Fleur feels at not being able to locate a physical copy of it. The whereabouts of a copy of her manuscript could be anywhere, which means it could be in the hands of anyone who could be putting it to any sort of use. The possibility that her manuscript may no longer exist in physical form is greatly distressing to Fleur, although the news of Lady Bernice Gilbert's suicide jumps to the forefront of her preoccupations as soon as she hears the news, since this has much more startling (possibly more life-threatening) consequences.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Fleur had been overwhelmed by the determination to become a victim of whatever Sir Quentin was up to. The news of Lady Bernice Gilbert's suicide both shocked and strengthened her. She returned to Sir Quentin's flat the following morning and felt sure that Sir Quentin had been using his influence to not only keep her novel from being published but that he was also using and stealing from it. Fleur was sure that Dottie was the one who had stolen her manuscript and she turned out to be correct in her assumption. She scolded herself for having been so free with her novel, telling herself she should never have made it known to Dottie in the first place, much less read any of it to her, though this was the custom of literary life at the time. When she arrived at Sir Quentin's flat, she was greeted by Mrs. Tims who asked her where she had been the day before and told her that Sir Quentin had been very distressed. She abruptly asked where she was, and when Mrs. Tims told her had to go out, Fleur went straight into the study, shutting the door behind her firmly. She went straight to Sir Quentin's desk to search for her manuscript but found nothing.

Next, Fleur went to see Lady Edwina, who stated, "Suicide. Just like the woman in your novel." Fleur sat on the edge of the woman's bed and telephoned Park and Revisson Doe to ask for her typescript. She was told that the copy has been destroyed and that Mr. Doe had put it on his desk for her to take, and when she hadn't done so, he had assumed she didn't want it. Fleur was sure the manuscript had never appeared on the man's desk. As Fleur sat munching on a piece of toast, she realized it would be impossible for her to rewrite *Warrender Chase*. She didn't tell Edwina that it had been her son's fault she had lost her proofs because, even though she knew she was aware her son was up to no good, she didn't want to rub it in. Fleur then thought of the courage Edwina showed at her son's funeral.

Beryl Tims left to join Sir Quentin that afternoon and, at Fleur's insistence, Mrs. Fisher, her nurse, took the afternoon off, leaving Lady Edwina and Fleur in the flat alone. She phoned Solly Mendelsohn, and upon hearing her urgent voice, he immediately agreed to help Fleur. He arrived at the flat soon after, bringing with him a large, brown bag. Sir Quentin and Beryl Tims were still at the Coroner's Inquest of Bernice Gilbert's suicide, which had been determined to have occurred as a result of her being of unsound mind. Although Fleur was unable to locate the proofs of her novel, she opened the secret cabinet and placed all of the manuscripts inside it into the bag Solly had provided her, having decided to take them as hostages for her manuscript. She had noticed while flipping through one of the manuscripts that Sir Quentin had been taking sheets of notes, both typed and handwritten in Sir Quentin's handwriting, directly from *Warrender Chase*.



Chapter 9 Analysis

It has become entirely clear at this point that Sir Quentin has been using Fleur's novel directly as she observes in the manuscripts, he has gone as far as to have taken entire passages and added them into the memoirs of the Association's members. The extent to which Sir Quentin has taken the events of *Warrender Chase* in his actual life and in his leadership of the Autobiographical Association is still unclear. It is important to note that not only was Lady Gilbert's suicide similar to the one that occurred in Fleur's novel, but it was also determined by the coroner to have occurred as a result of her being of unsound mind. This is similar to the women in *Warrender Chase* who were driven mad as a result of their association with Warrender Chase himself and his secret prayer meetings. Fleur has been unable to locate a copy of the manuscript of her novel, and therefore steals the autobiographies from Sir Quentin's secret cabinet and uses them as ransom in hopes of the possible receipt of her manuscript in the near future. Lady Edwina, throughout the entire ordeal, remains completely supportive of Fleur and her plans.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Fleur discloses to the reader that her essential purpose now is to convey how Sir Quentin Oliver tried to destroy *Warrender Chase* and took the contents of her novel for his own use. She tells that she can show how he actually plagiarized her text, and her purpose now is to write about the cause and effect of these circumstances.

Fleur remembers, as a child, having been instructed to write in her copy book a series of maxims including "Necessity is the mother of invention," "All is not gold that glistens," "Honesty is the best policy," and "Discretion is the best part of valor." In retrospect, although she was not able to grasp it at the time, Fleur has learned that the sayings are actually quite true. Since necessity is really the mother of invention, the first thing Fleur did after returning home with the bag she had taken from Sir Quentin's home was to call a number of her friends to tell them she was in search of another job. She then put the pile of manuscripts at the bottom of her clothes cupboard and began to formulate plans for retrieving her stolen manuscript of *Warrender Chase*. Although she was tempted to call Dottie and confront her with the theft, her remembrance that discretion is, indeed, the best part of valor, she restrained herself from doing so with some difficulty. Fleur felt at this point that Dottie was no longer the same as the Dottie she had been friends with; she had changed, no doubt, because of Sir Quentin.

Finally, Fleur decided on a plan of action: since she didn't believe Dottie was yet so far brainwashed by Sir Quentin to have actually destroyed her manuscript, although she didn't want to alarm her and give her a chance to do so, she was determined somehow to retrieve her manuscript from Dottie's flat. To do this, she would need a key to her flat and someone to deter Dottie for a few hours to give her time to get inside for the search.

Part of Fleur's indignation at having been accused of libeling the Autobiographical Association was, in fact, that she had formulated the characters and plot of her novel before she even began working there. After working through several possibilities in her mind, Fleur receives a call from Wally and agrees to go out with him. They discuss Bernice "Bucks" Gilbert, and Wally says he feels rather guilty that she had phoned him and left a message that he had never returned after he had seen her at her party. She had sounded awfully frantic, which had put him off since she was a clingy person, and he wasn't up to dealing with it. Wally tells Fleur that she had called up some other friends during the days between the party and her death, but in each case, they had either made an excuse or not returned her call. After agreeing to go out for a drink with Wally, she stopped by her room first to make sure the memoirs she had taken from Sir Quentin were still there and saw they were. Before joining Wally, she reminded the houseboy not to let anyone into her room during her absence before joining Wally. While they were out that night, Wally and Fleur were joined by Gray Mauser. Leslie, it seemed, had gone to Ireland for three weeks and had left the key to his flat on the dresser in the



home he shared with Gray. Fleur told him that she wanted to leave a surprise for Dottie in their flat, and Gray agreed to let her borrow the key.

The following morning, Fleur had decided to employ Lady Edwina as her accomplice, instructing her to insist that Dottie care for her tomorrow evening while her nurse is away and to feign ill, insist that Dottie call a doctor, and to do anything, including wetting herself as many times as necessary, to keep her there for three hours. Lady Edwina agreed with a gleam in her eye as she took in Fleur's instructions.

The following day, Fleur arrived at Dottie's flat fully prepared. She searched until she found the manuscript at the bottom of Dottie's black knitting bag. She removed it, took a ream of typewriter paper from her desk and placed it at the bottom of the bag to replace the now missing manuscript. Both Gray and Lady Edwina had adhered to their parts in Fleur's plan, and she had retrieved her manuscript successfully. She headed home, as Fleur put it, she "went on her way rejoicing."

Upon arriving home, Fleur admitted that she was dying to go through the manuscripts that she had taken from Sir Quentin but, instead, she set about making typed copies of her manuscript; she was determined not to let it out of her sight until she had three typed copies of it. When Fleur told Solly she had retrieved her manuscript, he swore he would find her a publisher if it was the last thing he did. Fleur then phoned Sir Quentin's flat to see how Lady Edwina was doing and was curtly informed by Mrs. Tims that she had had a bad day.

Dottie arrived to see Fleur that evening, and Fleur made no attempt to hide her manuscript as she continued to type it. Dottie didn't recognize it at first, instead, relating to Fleur what a terrible time she had had with Lady Edwina that afternoon, but that the real reason she had come was to tell her that Sir Quentin wants the biographies back, that she needs to work on them and asks her please to hand them over to her. She then adds that she needs some typing paper because she seems to have run out while typing Leslie's novel, though she could have sworn she had an extra ream. She had to finish typing the novel since Leslie was to return from Ireland the following day and Revisson Doe would probably publish his book. When Dottie recognized the manuscript on Fleur's desk, she asked how she got it, but Fleur brushed off her question as if it meant nothing and asked her about her affair with Revisson Doe. To this, Dottie explained, that sometimes women had to make sacrifices for a man. She then told Fleur that she was hard and evil and suggested she see a priest.

They began a small argument, and Dottie threw the remainder of her whiskey all over Fleur's typed pages and Fleur attempted to blot them out as best she could. Dottie then informs Fleur that Sir Quentin is a genius and born leader and asks her again for the biographies. Fleur tells her that she can leave, but the biographies will stay with her until she has had time to study them, that a lot of her *Warrender Chase* had been transferred to them and as soon as she had extracted what was hers, she would return the remainder. Dottie tells her she is a fiend.



Fleur asks Dottie if she is taking any drugs, to which Dottie replies that she only takes them for reducing her weight and gets them from a friend. Fleur gave her half a ream of typing paper and told her she was a fool. Dottie replies that she is just furious that she has taken her job, and Fleur retorts that she is even more of a fool for having anything to do with the Autobiographical Association. Dottie tells her she enjoys sleeping with Revisson Doe. Dottie then suggested to Fleur that she give up being an author, telling her everything used to be all right between the two of them and that Leslie was her friend as well until that novel *Warrender Chase*. She begins to tell her what Sir Quentin has to say on the subject when Fleur interrupts her and sternly tells her to get out.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Fleur's plan to get back her manuscript comes with the guidance of the maxims she remembers from her childhood copy book, sayings she has realized in her adult life to be entirely true and have proven useful. Fleur's retrieval of her manuscript comes as a great relief to her. Her discussion with Dottie that night reveals that Dottie has been sleeping with Revisson Doe in an attempt to convince him to publish her husband's book. She has clearly been made a victim of Sir Quentin's brainwashing of his members, which is evident in her acceptance of his hunger-suppressant pills and her seeming internalization of all of his words, regarding him as a genius and born leader. Fleur's relationship with Dottie is Fleur's closest relationship to any of the members of the Association, and therefore serves not only as a friend, but at this point, primarily as a window into the goings-on of the Autobiographical Association and the effects of Sir Quentin.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

It wasn't long before Dottie discovered that Fleur had stolen the manuscript from her apartment. Dottie called Fleur demanding to know how she got into her flat, but having already returned the key to Gray Mauser, Fleur simply hung up the phone. Dottie called back an hour later telling her that Sir Quentin is anxious to speak with her. Fleur had stayed up all night going through her *Warrender Chase* and had realized its shortcomings, but they were unfortunately of the type that changing them would require changing the entire book, and so Fleur decided to let the book stay the way it was. Solly took two copies of Fleur's manuscripts: one to take to a publisher and another to keep in the safe in his office.

Fleur intended to remove the pieces of her work that had appeared in the memoirs she had taken from Sir Quentin and return what was left. The phone rang as she began work on this and was told by Mrs. Tims that Lady Edwina was not well and had been asking to see her. She asked to speak to Lady Edwina but she was told this was not possible. The nurse was with her sister, and Lady Edwina wanted only to see her. She asked to speak to Sir Quentin who told her that he did not want to come between her and Lady Edwin and urged her to come, saying it was urgent that she did. Fleur bundled the autobiographies, placed them back into her clothes cupboard and locked it. Although she was suspicious of the safety of the autobiographies and the legitimacy of Lady Edwina's urgent need to see her, she continued to Sir Quentin's flat. Upon her arrival, Sir Quentin informed her that Lady Edwina had fortunately dropped off to sleep and asked to see her in his study, taking her by the arm and propelling her inside. He tells her they have a few things to discuss, and Fleur replies that if he is referring to the files of the Autobiographical Association, she will discuss them after she has studied them better and that as far as she knows, he has plagiarized her novel and tells him that she will sue. Sir Quentin assures her that he knows nothing about her novel and doesn't doubt why she was unable to give her full attention to her job there while she was scribbling novels at the same time, mentioning again her "delusions of grandeur."

At that moment, Lady Edwina's shrieks at Mrs. Tims can be heard outside the room, but Sir Edward continues, telling Fleur that it is he who will sue. Fleur raised the question of why Bernice Gilbert took her life, and Sir Quentin began his threat to sue again. Fleur jumped up then and ran toward the hallway, where Lady Edwina was trying to get rid of Mrs. Tims and then followed her into her room while Sir Quentin exclaimed in vain at his mother for her interruption.

Before leaving Sir Quentin's flat, Fleur had collected her pay and employment cards, and Edwina had pulled an envelope out of her pillowcase and shoved it into her coat pocket. Fleur promised to come back and see her again very soon. As Fleur headed home in a taxi, her thoughts went to Warrender Chase and Sir Quentin. It was her belief



that if Sir Quentin intended to enact Warrender Chase's destiny he, too, would die as the character had, in a car crash while a group of people wait for his arrival.

When she arrived in her room, Fleur discovered that the biographies were missing from her clothes cupboard. It was clear from the way the events had transpired and the lack of evidence of an intruder that Sir Quentin had hired a professional for the job.

In the envelope that Lady Edwina had given her, Fleur found a series of torn-out pages from Sir Quentin's diary which documented in detail his befriending of Dottie and her subsequent theft of Fleur's manuscript. The pages detailed his reading of the manuscript, his visit to Revisson Doe where he convinced the man not to publish the book, though he asked him not to document their meeting, etc. The final entry dated May 2 was straight out of *Warrender Chase*, which infuriated Fleur more than the contents of the other entries.

The following morning, Fleur had an interview at the BBC for a job she did not get. The interview involved her sitting at a long boardroom table with many men and women asking her questions. Although she didn't receive this job, later on in her life when Fleur's luck had changed and she did receive a job at the BBC, the file in which her prior interview had been recorded became a source of merriment.

Fleur typed up a copy of the Sir Quentin's diary entries and took them with her to his flat. Upon arriving, Beryl Tims informs her that Lady Edwina is sleeping, but that she need not come see her anymore for it was recently discovered that her fortune was really a myth and that she would leave nothing behind her when she died. Fleur, however, had known this for a long time. Lady Edwina had told Fleur and Solly one afternoon that she had married for money, and her husband had married her for the same reason. She told them they had been a devoted couple with two things in common: expensive tastes and no money. Lady Edwina's annuity covered only her expenses and paid for her nurse, and would leave not a penny more after her death, Beryl Tims explained.

Fleur went in to see Sir Quentin, finding him at his desk staring blankly into space. Fleur presented him with the typed versions of his diary entries and told him to read them, telling him the originals are in a bank vault and she had had the help of a professional. Sir Quentin tells her this diary was a little joke of his and that there was really nothing serious in it. Fleur responds by telling him that he will see a psychiatrist and adjourn the Autobiographical Association and if he does not do both by the end of the month, she will make a fuss.

Fleur went in to see Lady Edwina, and Sir Quentin followed with his leather diary in hand, informing his mother that Fleur had had a professional break into the house and instructed the maid to make sure Lady Edwina's jewelry was intact. Lady Edwina responded by standing up and wetting the floor. Sir Quentin then tells Fleur that he must ask her to leave the house, to which Lady Edwina replies that she pays the rent here and his home is in the country.



Sir Quentin calls Fleur a fiend, telling her that John Henry Cardinal Newman had formed under the influence of a circle of spiritual followers who were devoted to him and that he should therefore be able to do the same. Fleur responded by telling him that he was out of his head, and he had this desire to possess people before she had come along and introduced the existence of Newman and tells him again to see a psychiatrist. The Baronne Clotilde and Father Delaney had come to visit and they both looked extremely gaunt and unhealthy, although she did not pity them, saying those two had always been both arrogant and insolent in their foolishness.

Mrs. Fisher confides in Fleur, telling her she is concerned about the Dexedrine Sir Quentin is distributing to his clients, saying that it can be dangerous in high doses and affects the brain. Fleur takes no pity on the members, saying they are not children.

The following morning, Dottie appears at Fleur's door to tell her that Sir Quentin is taking the members of the Autobiographical Association to Northumberland on a kind of retreat, telling them they were being persecuted here in London. Dottie adds that he believes Fleur is a witch and an evil spirit who has been sent to bring ideas into his life. He believes it is his mission to turn evil into good, and Dottie adds she thinks there is a lot in what he says.

Dottie regrets her inability to attend the meeting in Northumberland, adding that all the other members are planning to attend. Fleur asks if Beryl Tims will attend, and Dottie replies that of course she will; Mrs Tims acts as High Priestess at the rites. Dottie tells Fleur that Lady Edwina will leave nothing behind her when she goes, to which Fleur replies (although she admits she doesn't know why she said this) that she may outlive her son and inherit his estate.

After Dottie's departure, Fleur turned to read a passage from Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, and then another passage from her beloved *Cellini*. She admired them both, adding that she would one day write about all of the events in her life surrounding the Autobiographical Association as Cellini had instructed. In fact, she adds, in one form or another, she has written about them ever since.

Chapter 11 Analysis

A great deal of information is relayed in this chapter and Fleur's narrations from the present as she looks back on the events of the past become more numerous. Dottie's complete submission to Sir Quentin and his teachings at this point is evidence of the submission of the other members and their equal dedication to Sir Quentin. Lady Edwina has proven to be a reliable accomplice to Fleur's plans, and the relationship between the two, however unusual, is one of mutual trust and respect. Sir Quentin's mental state has begun to deteriorate from what the reader sees of his wild attempts to verify his evil behavior with Newman and Warrender Chase. However, despite his mental incapacities, which are evident to Fleur, it is far too late for his followers who are all eager and willing to follow him to Northumberland at Sir Quentin's suggestion that they are being persecuted in London.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The last day of June 1950, right in the middle of the twentieth century, was the day Fleur marked as the changing point in her life. This goes back to the day she sat in the graveyard, working on her poem, when she was approached by the friendly police officer who chatted with her for a while. Fleur asks him if she were committing a crime as she sat on that gravestone, what crime would it be? The policeman's final suggestion of possible crimes was "Loitering with intent." At this point in her life, Fleur was well into her second novel, *All Soul's Day*, and was forming the idea for her third, which would be entitled *The English Rose*. She was attempting to avoid bumping into her landlord, Mr. Alexander upon returning home, for fear he would try to convince her again to take a larger room in the house, although she could barely afford the one she had. Her savings were beginning to run low, and she was badly in need of a full-time job. However, despite her bad luck, Fleur said this day she felt more than she ever had how good it felt to be a woman and an artist in the twentieth century. Although she had been depressed for the preceding six weeks, her depression was lifted now.

Fleur describes her weekend visit to Wally's cottage in Marlow to celebrate the lifting of the gasoline rationing to be quite a disaster. The maid had not been to clean up the cottage, and they arrived to find the remnants of Wally's last visit, which had been another weekend for two. Although Fleur admits that she did have a soft spot for Wally, his mind had been inexplicably preoccupied by *Warrender Chase*, and she decided to try to force it out and began to tell Wally about her subsequent novel, *All Soul's Day* and she believed him to have been fairly interested. Fleur described their time in bed as "simply no good," and Wally told her it seemed he had had too much beer, and Fleur took slight pity on him.

After returning to the city, Fleur went home, and at about midnight, Dottie came to Fleur's door to inform her of the news of Sir Quentin's death in a car crash on his way to meet his group in Northumberland. It had been a head-on collision, and after Fleur's questioning, she learned the people in the other car had all died as well. Dottie says this proves her *Warrender Chase* to be valid, but Fleur tells her this has nothing to do with her book. Fleur does admit to herself that the theme of her book, however, was valid.

The next morning, Fleur went to see Edwina who had taken the news with courage. At the funeral, Beryl Tims had used almost the same words as Fleur's fictional character Charlotte had at Warrender Chase's funeral.

From that day forward, Dottie kept Fleur well informed about the former members of the Autobiographical Association. They had wondered what had happened to the biographies they hadn't had a chance to finish reading, and Fleur told her that Edwina had destroyed them. Eric Findlay had gone back to his wife, Maisie Young had had a nervous breakdown and recovered, Clotilde du Loiret went to find her soul at a convent



in France, and Dottie frequently went to wrestling matches with Father Delaney, who was still taking Dexedrine, and Mrs. Wilks, although she had gone back to her family, visited Sir Quentin's grave daily where she conversed with him.

The day after that special day in the graveyard was the first of July, which marked the beginning of her new life. She received a letter from the Triad Press, a respectable publishing company known for publishing books of good quality, requesting her to make an appointment with them at her earliest convenience. Fleur did just that and was offered publication of *Warrender Chase*, and Fleur graciously accepted the contract, which contained an advance on royalties of a hundred pounds, which was practically unheard of. Fleur shared with them her ideas for her subsequent novels, and everyone in the room was excited at the prospect of further projects.

In the meanwhile, Wally married, and English Rose and Leslie's novel, *Two Ways*, was published and received feeble reviews. For the first two weeks after it was published, nothing seemed to happen to *Warrender Chase*. Fleur was saddened by this, but not to a great extent because her hopes had not been high to begin with. One afternoon, however, she went to visit Solly who had promised to lend her money while Fleur waited to be paid for some reviews she had done. She had begun to accrue debts to a dentist, whose receptionist was beginning to become frustrated with her. Fleur had avoided the ringing telephone all day, sure it was her. When she arrived at Solly's house, she told him how much she disliked having to borrow money and assured him she would pay him back soon, but Solly replied with a smile. There were several newspapers spread open on his desk and on his chair. Reviews of *Warrender Chase* had suddenly sprung up everywhere.

When Fleur arrived home, Mr. Alexander greeted her with a copy of the newspaper and a congratulations, inviting her to have a drink with his wife, but Fleur said it would have to be another time. Leslie paid her a congratulatory visit that evening as well, and she had received numerous telephone messages. When she returned Dottie's call, she accused her of having planned it all and that she had known what Fleur was doing all along. Fleur replied that she had been loitering with intent and planned to leave for Paris in the morning.

In reality, Fleur stayed with Edwina for a few weeks, unsure of how to handle her newfound success. During those weeks, Triad sold the American rights, the paperback rights, the film rights, as well as most of the foreign rights for *Warrender Chase*, and Fleur was able to say good-bye to her poverty at the same time she said good-bye to her youth.

Fleur continued to write ever since. Lady Edwina passed away at the age of ninety-eight, and her good-natured manservant Rudder married her nurse, Ms. Fisher, and they inherited her fortune.

Maisie Young opened a successful vegetarian restaurant under the management of Beryl Tims. Father Egbert Delaney was arrested for exposing himself in the park and sent to rehabilitation. Sir Eric Findlay died on good terms with his family, the Baronne



Clotilde du Loiret died, according to Dottie, in her sixties and in the arms of her religious sect leader in California. Mrs. Wilks' fate remains unknown. Solly remains in Hampstead Heath, while Dottie was divorced and married so many times Fleur can't remember her name anymore. Fleur lives in Paris, and she was just recently paid a visit by Dottie and her current husband with their children, the ugliest Fleur says she has ever seen, but Dottie seems to love them.

The novel ends with Fleur coming out onto the courtyard and watching some young boys playing football. The ball came flying towards her and she kicked it by chance of grace, no better than she would have been able to if she had concentrated on the task, right into the young boy's expectant hands. The boy grinned and Fleur explains this is how she has entered the fullness of her years, "from there by the grace of God I go on my way rejoicing."

Chapter 12 Analysis

The novel has come full circle at this point, creating a satisfying conclusion. Fleur provides information about all of the remaining members of the Autobiographical Association through Dottie as well as herself. Having circled back to the fateful day which began the novel, the reader is finally able to learn what happens to Fleur on the other side of the chunk of her life that had ended on that day, having just learned the extent of the chunk that occurred before it. Fleur had begun and ended this first chunk of her life as a content but penniless, struggling author, and finally seems to receive the acknowledgement she really deserves for her writing. Each of the former members of the Autobiographical Association seem to have reached a future that was fitting for each of them, and in Fleur's case, it seems fitting that she finally be recognized for the writing into which she put so much passion and hard work. She is finally able to bid farewell to her penniless days as well as her youth, and as the novel closes, she seems content with her position in life, as she uses the words of her beloved author, "I go on my way rejoicing."



Characters

Fleur Talbot

The main character of the story; the novel is told through her eyes and is written as her memoirs. Fleur is an avid reader and up-and-coming writer who lives in a tiny room filled with books. She is content with her place in life and makes the best of her position at the Autobiographical Association by making comical additions to the members' memoirs. Throughout her employment, Fleur has been working on a novel she calls *Warrender Chase*. The novel is her pride and joy and she works on it faithfully until it was completed. Fleur takes great pride in her writing and everything else in her life seems to take a backseat to her work, having told Beryl Tims that the reason she doesn't intend to get married is because marriage will interfere with her writing. Fleur has been having an affair with a married man by the name of Leslie, although she is friends with his wife, and assures her that since she is only with him when he doesn't interfere with her work, and since she is beginning a new novel, she will most likely not be seeing very much of him. As the novel develops, Fleur's choice of words in her narration of the events serves as a characterization of her. Her style is very straightforward, although not without the use of some elevated vocabulary as well as inventive metaphors to convey her feelings, which would have been typical of the writer and avid reader that she was. Fleur seemed, on the whole, indifferent to matters that seemed to make Dottie, for example very distraught. When she learns that Leslie has taken on a homosexual lover, for example, she tells Dottie she is not surprised and simply wondered how he made time for the three of them. Fleur is, however, infuriated when it comes to matters concerning her work, including when she finds out her publisher refuses to publish her book, when her manuscript is stolen, and when Sir Quentin plagiarizes her work. Fleur's primary friendships, aside from the one she shares with Dottie, include a close relationship with Solly Mendelsohn who provides her with a great deal of support in her endeavors and the eccentric Lady Edwina, to whom Fleur takes an instant liking and the two proceed to have a uniquely eccentric, mutually beneficial relationship. Fleur's character grows as the novel progresses, beginning penniless and poor as a struggling writer and comes to a conclusion with Fleur enjoying great success from her writing, saying good-bye to her monetary problems, as well as to her youth.

Sir Quentin

Fleur's boss at the Autobiographical Association. He is very devoted to his work and takes the entire project very seriously, on multiple occasions, reminding Fleur that her work is entirely confidential and top-secret. As the novel progresses, Sir Quentin takes on the character of Warrender Chase, the main character in Fleur's novel, and Fleur soon realizes that he has been using the manuscript of her novel to add to the memoirs of his clients in the Association and has personified Fleur's character almost identically. He has not only gotten hold of her manuscript but gotten in touch with her publisher and threatened to sue on the grounds of libel if he agreed to publish the book, claiming that



Fleur had based the characters and events of the novel entirely on him and the Autobiographical Association and portrayed them in an evil light. Sir Quentin sees his mother as nothing but a nuisance, and Lady Edwina reacts by acting out and making his life as difficult as possible, appearing quite unstable. Sir Quentin's manipulative hold on the members of his Association grows as the novel develops. He begins distributing a hunger-suppressant to each of the members and teaching them to fast so they can cleanse themselves. In the end, he urges them all to meet him in the country for a type of retreat, which turns out to be his demise. Just like the character he emulates in Fleur's novel, he dies in a car accident on his way to meet the members of his group who are all waiting for his arrival. In the end, he leaves his entire estate to Lady Edwina, the mother he despised so much.

Dottie

The wife of Fleur's lover. Fleur realizes in the first chapter that she has a great deal in common with Beryl Tims. She had characterized each of these women as an "English Rose," and soon finds out that this is the exact same name of Beryl Tims' lipstick color and the name of Dottie's perfume. Dottie and Fleur maintain a somewhat unorthodox relationship considering they share Leslie; however, the relationship they share adds a great deal to the development of the story. It is through Dottie that Fleur learns much of the goings on of the Autobiographical Association after she leaves and sees through her words and actions the effects of Sir Quentin's brainwashing on his members.

Lady Edwina

Sir Quentin's mother. Lady Edwina is an extremely eccentric old woman with a few green teeth, long, red nails, a great deal of jewelry and copious amounts of makeup, who is always dressed in abundant satin gowns. Although Sir Quentin and Beryl Tims consider her an annoyance, she and Fleur take an instant liking to each other and become good friends. Also she is seen by her son and the housekeeper, Beryl Tims, as being quite out of her mind. It becomes clear upon further inspection that she is not as mad as she appears. In fact, she behaves quite well with Fleur and her friends and proves she is entirely capable of controlling herself. It seems she behaves erratically while at home simply to distress Mrs. Tims and Sir Quentin, both of whom she clearly does not like. As the novel progresses, her friendship with Fleur grows, and when Fleur discovers her missing manuscript, Lady Edwina becomes her accomplice when she steals it back. Lady Edwina also, completely on her own accord, steals pages from her son's diary and smuggles them to Fleur on one of her visits. The contents of these pages clearly incriminate Sir Quentin in the crime of stealing Fleur's manuscript and using it for his own purposes. Lady Edwina is supposed, at first, to be rich; however, it is soon learned that when she dies she will leave nothing behind. The situation changes, though, when Sir Quentin is killed in a car accident; Lady Edwina takes the news bravely and inherits everything he left behind. She lives to be ninety-eight years old, continuing her friendship with Fleur until her death.



Beryl Tims

Sir Quentin's housekeeper. When Fleur is introduced to Beryl Tims for the first time, the woman immediately dislikes her, and Fleur thinks she is stupid and awful. Fleur calls her an "English Rose," the name of the category in which she places her lover's wife Dottie. This proves to coincidentally be the name of Beryl Tims' lipstick color and the name of Dottie's perfume. Beryl Tims continues in her position as Sir Quentin's housekeeper throughout the story, and her affiliation with the Autobiographical Association remains strong. As the story progresses, so does her relationship with Sir Quentin, and the two begin a romantic relationship; Dottie even describes Mrs. Tims as serving as "High Priestess" in the rites of the Autobiographical Association. Beryl Tims dislikes Fleur from the moment she meets her, Fleur returns her sentiments and the two remain somewhat at odds for the duration of the novel.

Solly Mendelsohn

A good friend of Fleur's. He and Fleur take Lady Edwina for walks together on Sunday afternoons, and Solly soon takes a liking to the old woman. He is a journalist who works primarily at night and so Fleur only sees him during the day. He is clearly a very loyal friend to Fleur, having located a publisher for her novel, and then a second time after the contract from the first one was discarded. He also aids Fleur later on in her attempt to get revenge on Sir Quentin for stealing her manuscript by helping her steal the manuscripts of the Autobiographical Association from Sir Quentin's home. His appearance in the novel is a good while after Fleur had begun her job with Sir Quentin; however, it is clear he and Fleur had been friends for a long time. Solly plays an important role in the development of the story, providing Fleur with a great deal of useful advice and support for her writing.

Leslie

Fleur's lover. When he is introduced in the first chapter, it is during Fleur's recollection of her conversation with his wife, Dottie, when she had confronted her with accusations of their affair. To this, Fleur had replied that she loved him on and off, as long as he didn't interfere with her writing, and that since she was beginning to write a novel, which requires a great deal of poetic concentration, and since she conceives everything poetically, that it would probably more off than on with him. Leslie makes one main entrance in the plot of the novel which occurs during Lady Edwina's first visit to Fleur's room. Fleur is originally annoyed with his behavior towards the woman, but he soon warms up to her and eventually offers to take the woman home. After that night, Fleur is approached by Dottie, Leslie's wife, who is very disturbed by the information that he has begun a homosexual affair with a young poet, an affair which continues throughout the rest of the story.



Wally McConnachie

An old friend of Fleur's whom she meets at a party hosted by Lady Bernice Gilbert. The two rekindle their friendship and go out a few times, although Fleur finds herself unable to share all of her thoughts and plans with him for fear he will disagree or think her suppositions about the Autobiographical Association are sensational and unrealistic. She contemplates including him in her plan to retrieve her manuscript of *Warrender Chase* from Dottie's flat but decides against it. At one point, she mentions her belief that Lady Gilbert's suicide was linked to the suicide of the character in her novel and Wally tells her the idea is completely unrealistic and she finds herself regretting sharing her thoughts on the subject with him. He and Fleur go off on a weekend together, but it proves to quite a disappointment to Fleur, who admits that she had looked forward to it too much and found the weekend to be, on the whole, quite unromantic.

Revisson Doe

A publisher who originally plans to publish Fleur's first novel, *Warrender Chase*; however, he backs out of the agreement when he is approached by Sir Quentin who threatens to sue the man on the grounds of libel if he prints the manuscript, claiming that Fleur had based her novel on his Autobiographical Association. Revisson Doe is an older man, balding, and it is with great surprise that Fleur learns Dottie has been sleeping with him. Although Dottie claims that she enjoys sleeping with the man, it seems likely she is doing so in an effort to convince the man to publish her husband Leslie's novel, which he eventually does.

Gray Mauser

Leslie's male lover. Gray plays a small role in the story; he is a quiet man who joins Fleur at the pub a few times. He is the primary source of information of Leslie's whereabouts besides Dottie and becomes visibly distraught when his lover is away. The most important role he plays is to provide Fleur with the key to the flat Leslie shared with Dottie, which gives Fleur the opportunity to get into the flat to retrieve her stolen manuscript for *Warrender Chase*.

Mr. Alexander

Fleur Talbot's landlord. At the beginning of the story, Fleur introduces him neutrally, stating her only trouble with him was his insistence that she rent a larger room in the house. He plays a very small role in the book. He and his wife are usually in the background simply to make a comment when Fleur or her friends have caused a disturbance at night. He does greet Fleur with congratulations when he reads in the paper about the success of her first novel, and he and his wife offer her a drink, which she declines, saying that she will have to take them up another time.



Objects/Places

Sir Quentin's flat (Hallam Street)

This is where Fleur first begins her job at the Autobiographical Association, where the group's meetings are held, and, technically Lady Edwina's home, where she resides. Fleur finds herself returning to the flat even after ending her employment with the Sir Quentin as a result of her disputes with him, as well as to visit Lady Edwina.

Warrender Chase

This is the title of Fleur Talbot's first novel, which she works on for the bulk of the novel, as well as this novel's main character. The novel serves as a central part of the plot as the fictitious events from the story begin manifesting themselves in Fleur's life.

Fleur's room

A small, book-ridden room where Fleur contentedly lives. The small room serves as a characterization of Fleur, portraying her as the avid reader and writer that she is and showing these as her priorities, as well as serving as a meeting place for Fleur and the characters with whom she interacts.

The "English Rose"

This is the term is coined in the beginning of the novel when Fleur introduces Dottie and Beryl Tims for the first time. Fleur has invented the category for a specific type of woman and has placed the two women into it having associated them as having similar personalities. The name, as if to reinforce this, happens to be the name of Beryl Tims' lipstick color as well as the name of Dottie's perfume.

Auld Lang Syne

The song is used as a signal between Fleur and her friends, but primarily between Fleur and Dottie. Instead of knocking on the door at night and waking the landlord and other members of the household, Dottie sings this song outside Fleur's window as a signal for her to come downstairs and open the door for her and vice versa.

The Autobiographical Association

A group led by Sir Quentin consisting of adults who have begun to write their memoirs with the intention of leaving them locked up for seventy years until all the people

mentioned in them are no longer living. This group eventually falls victim to Sir Quentin's evil manipulation.



Themes

Warrender Chase

Fleur's novel proves to be central to the development of the story. Before beginning her job with the Autobiographical Association, Fleur has begun writing the novel and has already formulated her characters. She continues to work on it and eventually finishes the book, which is primarily focused on the manipulations of the main character, Warrender Chase, on the other characters who have become his followers. The novel itself, however, becomes a recurring theme not only its physical manuscript form but in a more figurative sense when the events of the novel seem to come to life. Although it was not her intention, some of Fleur's fictitious characters appear to model some of the real life characters in her life. Sir Quentin, for example, takes after Warrender Chase himself. Sir Quentin arranges for the manuscript to be stolen, reads it, and seemingly models his life after the events in the story. He attempts to take after the evil main character and succeeds in brainwashing the members of the Autobiographical Association into believing his every word. The events that follow the story include the suicide of one of the Association's members and the eventual death of Sir Quentin, which occurs the exact same way as the death of Warrender Chase: in a car accident with his followers waiting for him to arrive. The death of Sir Quentin puts an end to the madness he has created, and the series of events that mimicked *Warrender Chase* are put to rest.

Evil, Manipulation

The primary sources of evil in this story are Sir Quentin and Warrender Chase, who both seem to have a knack for professing it. Fleur begins to suspect Sir Quentin's evil ways, and her suspicions prove to be correct when she discovers how he is manipulating the members of his Association. The evil and manipulation in the novel seem to go together: the main evil stems from the leaders of the groups who then manipulate their followers. Fleur notes from the beginning of her employment at the Autobiographical Association that the lives of its members, judging from their memoirs, border on pathetic, and their weak characters make them easy targets for manipulation. In the end, each of the six members of the Association, Dottie and Beryl Tims have all fallen under the evil spell of Sir Quentin, following his every command, even to the point of endangering their own lives, believing him to be a genius. Manipulation is performed by the evil characters in the novel, but only successfully on the characters who submit themselves to be manipulated, those of weak character.

Strength of Character

"Well, what I found common to the members of Sir Quentin's remaining group was their weakness of character. To my mind this is no more to be despised than is physical



weakness. We are not all born heroes and athletes. At the same time it is elementary wisdom always to fear weaknesses, including one's own; the reaction of the weak, when touched off, can be horrible and sudden." (Chapter 3, Page 63) These words document Fleur's initial reaction to the members of the Autobiographical Association. Their weakness of character is proven not only through their pathetic memoirs and through laughable subject matter at meetings, but also in their willingness to obey Sir Quentin as he begins to brainwash them into becoming his followers. They adopt his words as their own, which becomes clear to Fleur as she begins to hear the phrase "Sir Quentin insists on complete frankness" so many times from each of the members in all seriousness, she begins to realize the extent to which they have allowed themselves to be manipulated by their lack of character strength.

Style

Point of View

The novel is primarily told in first person; Fleur is the narrator throughout the story. It is told in retrospect; however, the story begins with an introduction from her and then goes back in time ten months in order to explain Fleur's feelings at the present time by detailing the events of the past. The story goes on to be told in first person, as if Fleur's thoughts, feelings, and actions were in fact happening in the present, interjected with short interludes of her thoughts as she looks back on the events during this time. This is the most appropriate way to tell this story since it provides the reader with Fleur's insight into the events as she looks back on them, as well as a conclusion to Fleur's life before and after the events. The reader learns a great deal about the character of Fleur Talbot through these interjections. One sees how her character has developed and grown from the time she began her work at the Autobiographical Association to the time where the novel begins and ends, after all of the events surrounding her employment there have ended and she is enjoying success as a writer. The way the introduction and conclusion take place in the same setting, once the reader has learned of the events that occurred in between, gives the novel a sense of conclusion.

Setting

The novel takes place in London through the years 1949-1950. The bulk of the story takes place in 1949, and the introduction and conclusion take place in 1950. This time was characterized by the recent ending of World War II, and this is subtly made clear in the novel with the mention of certain items such as clothing, food and gasoline having been on and off of the ration list. Descriptions of the clothing worn by the characters in the novel are also characteristic of the time period. The class differences are evident as well between Fleur, for instance, and some of the members of the Autobiographical Association who are described as wealthy through their appearance in expensive and fashionable clothing in comparison to Fleur's simple wardrobe. In general, the setting does play a role in the novel; however, its main events are such that they could conceivably have occurred in another setting.

Language and Meaning

The language used by Muriel Spark in *Loitering with Intent* is colloquial with a slightly elevated vocabulary which makes it that much more believable, since the story is told from the point of view of Fleur Talbot, an avid reader and author. The language fits into the time period in which the novel takes place, though, not to the extent that it would not make sense if it were lifted out of 1950 and told in a different setting. The language serves as a characterization of sorts of the novel's main character, Fleur Talbot, by conveying her personality through her choice of words and literary devices, including

sarcasm, situational comic relief, metaphors and similes, and her overall realistic attitude toward the world.

Structure

The novel is separated into twelve chapters, each comprised of a relatively equal portion of Fleur's life. The first scene takes place in 1950 as Fleur sits in an old graveyard in London working on a poem and she is approached by a friendly police officer. This first scene, however, gives way to the rest of the story, which is introduced by Fleur as having taken place ten months prior to this event. The story then continues with her receipt of a letter from a friend with the news that she may have a job for her, and goes on to describe her interview and details about her time at the Autobiographical Association and the events that followed the completion of her first novel. The novel then concludes with Fleur back at the same graveyard working on the poem, the same way it had begun, which gives the reader a complete outlook on Fleur's life from 1949-1950.



Quotes

"I was aware of a daemon inside me that rejoiced in seeing people as they were, and not only that, but more than ever as they were, and more, and more."

Chapter 1, Page 10

"Fleur was the name hazardously bestowed at birth, as always in these cases before they know what you are going to turn out like. Not that I looked too bad, it was only that Fleur wasn't the right name, and yet it was mine as are the names of those melancholy Joys, those timid Victorias, the inglorious Glorias and materialistic Angelas one is bound to meet in the course of a long life of change and infiltration; and I once met a Lancelot who, I assure you, had nothing to do with chivalry."

Chapter 1, Page 11

"How wonderful it feels to be an artist and a woman in the twentieth century."

Chapter 1, Page 26

"The story of life is a very informal party; there are no rules of precedence and hospitality, no invitations."

Chapter 3, Page 59

"Well, what I found common to the members of Sir Quentin's remaining group was their weakness of character. To my mind this is no more to be despised than is physical weakness. We are not all born heroes and athletes. At the same time it is elementary wisdom always to fear weaknesses, including one's own; the reaction of the weak, when touched off, can be horrible and sudden."

Chapter 3, Page 63

"I wasn't writing poetry and prose so that the reader would think me a nice person, but in order that my sets of words should convey ideas of truth and wonder, as indeed they did to myself as I was composing them."

Chapter 4, Page 80

"When people say that nothing happens in their lives I believe them. But you must understand that everything happens to an artist; time is never redeemed, nothing is lost and wonders never cease."

Chapter 7, Page 116



"The true novelist, one who understands the work as a continuous poem, is a myth-maker, and the wonder of the art resides in the endless different ways of telling a story, and the methods are mythological by nature."

Chapter 9, Page 139

"People often ask me where I get ideas for my novels; I can only say that my life is like that, it turns into some other experience of fiction, recognizable only to myself. And part of my indignation at having been accused of libeling the Autobiographical Association in my *Warrender Chase* was this: that even if I had invented the characters after, not before, I had gone to work at Sir Quentin's—even if I had been moved to portray those poor people in fictional form, they would not have been recognizable, even to themselves—even in that case, there would have been no question of libel. Such as I am, I'm an artist, not a reporter."

Chapter 10, Page 151



Topics for Discussion

The novel is told as if they were Fleur's memoirs, in retrospect, as she looks back on the events of the time she was employed by the Autobiographical Association and directly afterward. How would the story have been different if it had been told as Fleur was experiencing these events for the first time in the present?

Fleur has an unorthodox friendship with her lover's wife, Dottie. How does their relationship impact the development of the novel?

Fleur and Lady Edwina take an instant liking to each other and become good friends although Sir Quentin and Beryl Tims seem to believe she has gone mad; Fleur disagrees. What is your opinion of Lady Edwina's true mental state? Do you think her eccentricities served as effective comic relief?

Describe the similarities between the characters of the novel associated with the Autobiographical Association to their corresponding characters in Fleur's novel, *Warrender Chase*.

Throughout the story, Fleur makes a few comments that reflect her view of America. What were these comments, and what do they reveal about her attitude toward Americans?

The time period in which the story takes place (London, 1949-1950) is made clear through Fleur's narrative mentioning of the date in order to clarify the time between the present and her recollection of the events she describes in the story. What else is mentioned in the story that makes the reader aware of when and where it took place?

Does the time period affect the development of the novel? If so, how? Would it have been possible for the events to unfold in the present?

What is the first trigger that causes Fleur (or the reader) to suspect that her novel, *Warrender Chase*, seems to be unfolding before her eyes.

What does the size and set-up of Fleur's unique room reveal about her personality and lifestyle? How does this serve as a characterization of the main character?

Throughout the story, Fleur continues to place Dottie and Beryl Tims in a category she has invented called "English Rose." What are the characteristics of these women that cause Fleur to categorize them in this way? What does "English Rose" refer to?