

Love Finds a Home Study Guide

Love Finds a Home by Janette Oke

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Plot Summary

The novel, "Love Finds a Home," tells the story of Belinda Davis' struggle to return to her hometown after serving as a private nurse for a wealthy Boston lady. Belinda has been living with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth as her personal nurse when the lady unexpectedly passes away. Belinda plans to return home but learns she must settle the estate, much of which has been left to her, first. At the lawyer's office that is handling the estate, Belinda becomes acquainted with an old love from her hometown. Despite a misunderstanding and temporary breakup, the two meet each other again in their hometown where they learn the truth about their misunderstanding and are married.

Even though Belinda enjoys her home in Boston, she misses her family back in the town where she grew up. Belinda gets a chance to go home when Mrs. Stafford-Smyth makes a trip to New York with a friend. Belinda cannot help but feel that she no longer fits in to the community that she grew up in. Belinda is happy to return back to Boston but feels she is getting too accustomed to being waited on and pampered. Meanwhile, Belinda has been praying for Mrs. Stafford-Smyth to accept Jesus Christ as her savior. Shortly before she dies, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth is saved and encourages her staff to develop a relationship with Him also.

Things are complicated for Belinda when Mrs. Stafford-Smyth leaves much of her estate to Belinda in her will. Belinda spends several months trying to settle the estate. She knows that she does not want to live in the house alone. She has also been instructed by Mrs. Stafford-Smyth to use the home as a ministry. Belinda decides to make the house into a home for the elderly. During the time that she has also been spending time with Drew, an old friend, who is now working at a lawyer's office in Boston.

When the estate is finally settled, there is a misunderstanding where Drew breaks up with Belinda. He believes that she wishes to stay in Boston while he plans to return home. Belinda, in turn, believes that Drew wants to stay in Boston. The two are surprised to meet each other back in their hometown where Drew has set up a law office. With the help of Belinda's brother, the two clear up the situation, and they realize that they love one another. At the conclusion of the novel, Belinda and Drew are married.



Stirrings and Aunt Virgie

Stirrings and Aunt Virgie Summary

The novel, "Love Finds a Home," tells the story of Belinda Davis' struggle to return to her hometown after serving as a private nurse for a wealthy Boston lady. Belinda has been living with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth as her personal nurse when the lady unexpectedly passes away. Belinda plans to return home but learns she must settle the estate, much of which has been left to her, first. At the lawyer's office that is handling the estate, Belinda becomes acquainted with an old love from her hometown. Despite a misunderstanding and temporary breakup, the two meet each other again in their hometown where they learn the truth about their misunderstanding and are married.

In the chapter "Stirrings," Belinda is awakened early by sunlight streaming in her window. She had left the drapes open the night before because she was watching the moon. When she gets up to close the drapes, she sees Thomas, the gardener, working outside and decides to join him. Although she misses her family, Belinda is grateful for the beautiful surroundings in which she works. She is also happy that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth, her employer, is recovering from a case of influenza. Although the older lady is her employer, the two are so close that Belinda calls her Aunt Virgie.

When Belinda enters the garden, Thomas' dog, McIntyre, comes to sniff her hand. She and Thomas talk briefly. Belinda asks to be allowed to pull some weeds and Thomas agrees. After they work for a few minutes, Thomas invites Belinda into his greenhouse to see his new rose. Belinda admires the new rose, saying she has never seen such a beautiful combination of colors. Thomas snips the first bloom off the rose and hands it to Belinda. Although she is surprised, he hands the rose to her, telling her it is fitting she should have the first bloom. He tells her the rose is named "Princess Belinda." Thomas tells her the honor is because she has been so kind to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth.

Belinda walks back to the house thinking about how kind Thomas has been to her. She recalls the many people she has come to love since she has come to Boston. Since she has given God the proper place in her life, Belinda realizes that she feels loved, protected and needed in the Stafford-Smyth household.

In the chapter entitled "Aunt Virgie," Belinda greets her employer for the first time that morning. She learns that Aunt Virgie has slept well for the first time since her illness. She tells Mrs. Stafford-Smyth that Thomas allowed her to go in his greenhouse and showed her his new rose. Belinda explains that the rose is named Princess Belinda, but that Thomas gave it that name because he cared so deeply for Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. She is moved that her gardener would think so kindly of her. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth decides she wants her robe and slippers so she can get out of bed for the first time since she has been sick. As the days move forward, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth continues to improve.



Stirrings and Aunt Virgie Analysis

One of the aspects that is most stressed in the first two chapters of this novel is Belinda's relationship with the people with whom she lives. She is nurse to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth but it appears the relationship between the two is much more close than that of an employer and employee. Belinda calls her employer "Aunt Virgie" indicating that their relationship is very close. In fact, Belinda notes that she feels strongly toward all of the people with whom she lives in the Stafford-Smyth house. The feeling appears to be mutual; as Thomas, the elderly gardener, has named his newest rose after her in honor of the great care that she has taken of Mrs. Stafford-Smyth while she was sick.

Although Belinda seems to be happy in her job, there is also evidence that she misses her family back home. This shows in the discussion that she has with Thomas about the way her mother used to work in the garden and grow food to feed the family. As Belinda dresses to go outside, she also thinks about her family and wishes that she could be a part of their lives again. Although it is not certain where Belinda's family lives, the text mentions only that she is from a prairie town, it is assumed the town is a great distance from Boston, the city in which she lives with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth.



Plans and Homeward Bound

Plans and Homeward Bound Summary

In the chapter entitled "Plans," Belinda is witnessing to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth in hopes that she will one day profess a faith in Jesus Christ. She yearns for someone with whom she can discuss spiritual matters. Belinda is also concerned about what will lie in store for Mrs. Stafford-Smyth when she dies.

When she feels well enough, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth plans a dinner party. The two ladies plan the dinner, and then tell the cook of their plans. Although the evening goes well, Belinda feels a tinge of loneliness after all of the guests leave. Later when she talks to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth about the evening, she learns that Celia Prescott has suggested that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth and Celia spend some time in New York with Celia's sister. Although Mrs. Stafford-Smyth seems excited about the idea of a trip, Belinda wonders what she will do while her employer is gone for six weeks.

Later when she is alone, Belinda decides that while Mrs. Stafford-Smyth is away in New York, she will go to visit her family. Belinda is unable to sleep because she is busy thinking about how exciting it will be to see her family again. As Belinda helps her employer pack for her trip, the lady surprises her by asking if she has finished her packing yet. It is not until Mrs. Stafford-Smyth tells her that the train leaves at 10, and Belinda tells her that her train doesn't leave until 4, that the two realize they had different expectations about the trip. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth has expected Belinda to go with her. She is afraid that if Belinda goes home she will want to stay home. Belinda assures her this will not be the case.

In the chapter "Homeward Bound," Belinda wonders what changes are in store for her when she returns home. As the train she is riding gets closer to her home station, Belinda becomes more and more agitated. She has told only her brother, Luke, that she is coming. He is to meet her at the station. Now Belinda worries that she may shock her family with the surprise. Luke meets Belinda at the station as planned. As they talk, Belinda learns that Jackson, a man who had tried to get her to marry him, is now engaged to Luke's nurse. Belinda is pleased and relieved by the news.

Plans and Homeward Bound Analysis

This section of the novel mostly focuses on Belinda's excitement at the idea that she is finally getting to go home. She has conflicting emotions. On one hand, she is happy at the prospect of her trip and seeing her friends and family again; and on the other hand, she is afraid of what might have changed in the time that she has been gone. Once she does reach her hometown, she learns that a man who had apparently been a special part of her life at one time has plans to get married. Belinda is happy for the man and

relieved, indicating that he might have had feelings for her that she did not have in return for him.

Also in this section, the reader gets an idea just how strongly Mrs. Stafford-Smyth loves Belinda. When she first learns that Belinda is planning to go home, she is afraid that the girl will not return but will instead choose to stay in her hometown. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth has become so accustomed to Belinda going places with her that she automatically assumes that Belinda knows that she is to go with her to New York. Once the misunderstanding is cleared up, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth wishes Belinda well on her trip to visit her family.



Family and Seeing Pa

Family and Seeing Pa Summary

In the chapter "Family," Luke's wife Abbie is happily surprised to see Belinda. Thomas and Aaron remember their aunt. Aaron wraps his arms around her and cries because he is so happy to see her. Belinda has to wait to see Ruthie because the child has gone, without permission, to visit a neighbor's dog. Ruthie was only a baby when Belinda left and does not remember her aunt. When the children learn that their grandparents don't know that Belinda is in town, they beg to be allowed to go along to see the surprise.

When Luke's buggy finally reaches her parents' drive, Belinda is surprised by how small and simple the house looks. When the buggy stops, Marty, Belinda's mother comes to the door. Belinda hides behind Luke and Abbie as her mother greets the children. Marty does not notice her youngest daughter until Ruthie points the visitor out to her. Marty refers to Belinda as "her baby" as she hugs her daughter. Belinda notes that her mother looks almost the same as when she left. Thomas runs to tell Clare and Kate that Belinda is home while the others wait for Clark to come in from the fields. Kate brings her family and they catch up. Belinda learns that Rand has moved and has also gotten married. She is pleased that she doesn't have to worry about having an argument with him during her visit. Belinda catches her mother's wondering glances during the conversation and - to her that she will be going back to Boston.

In the chapter entitled "Seeing Pa," Belinda cannot stand another game of surprise, so she goes out to meet her father. He is pleased to see her but also understands she will be going back. Once she is back inside the house, Belinda realizes as she helps her mother get things ready for dinner that things are still in the same places as she remembers them. She wonders if it would be possible for her to slip right back into her old life. Arnie and Anne are invited to come for supper and the four families combine efforts to get together enough food for all of them.

After the rest of the family leaves, Belinda learns from her mother that Arnie has worked out his problems with his bitterness. His son, Abe, has had three surgeries on his arm, but it is doing much better and is no longer twisted as it was after he was attacked by the bull. Marty is disappointed that Belinda will be leaving them in six weeks. She says that she wishes that Belinda had a man in Boston. Belinda admits to her parents that she is often lonely. In her old bedroom that night, Belinda believes she will sleep soundly, but does not do so. It is nearly two hours before she is able to fall asleep.

Family and Seeing Pa Analysis

On the train on the way to her hometown as well as throughout the evening, Belinda wonders if she made the right decision by deciding to surprise her parents with her visit. On one hand, she is afraid she will stress her aging parents by the surprise, but on the



other hand, she wants her visit to be a surprise. Luckily, her family takes the surprise well, and no one is overtaken by shock. Marty does tell Belinda she wishes that she had known she was coming so that she could have made some of her favorite dishes. Belinda tells her there is plenty of time in her visit to enjoy all of her favorites. Clark mentions to Belinda that if he had known that she was coming, he probably would not have been able to sleep well as a result of the excitement that seeing her again would bring. For this reason, Belinda is glad that she chose to surprise her family.

In many ways, things at home are much the same as when Belinda left. Her parents don't seem noticeably older or more frail. Belinda also notes that the kitchen is still set up in the old familiar way and she is able to find things easily, just as if she had never left. She notes to herself that she had always thought her home was quite large, but now seems very small and plain in comparison to Marshall Manor. She also notices how plain her bedroom seems after three years away. Although she believes she will sleep soundly in her old bed, even the mattress does not accommodate her as she had believed it would.



Adjustments and Memories

Adjustments and Memories Summary

In the chapter "Adjustments," Belinda is awakened by the sounds of the farm. The first thing that she remembers is that there is no bathroom in her childhood home as there is in her Boston home. When she dresses in one of her old dresses that she finds in her closet, it doesn't seem to fit right. She also sees the dresses now as childish and simple. She wonders if she has gotten "proud" while in Boston. Her mother is pleased to see her in a familiar dress when Belinda does come downstairs. Belinda finds using the old, outdoor bathroom disagreeable, but is pleased to walk to the spring to get her father for breakfast.

As they walk back from the spring together, Clark mentions Drew to Belinda. He tells Belinda that Drew had visited Marty and Clark while in town recently. Back at the house, Belinda and her father wash up together and share a towel, an experience that has become unfamiliar to Belinda. She is also dismayed by the amount of food that her mother has prepared and wonders how she will eat all that her mother expects her to. Belinda enjoys sharing in devotion and prayer with her parents after the meal is finished.

Although Belinda wants to help with the dishes, her mother tells her to go and get acquainted with her home. She first heads to the spring to finish raking and to think. As she rakes she thinks about the young man named Andrew Simpson who had kissed her years ago when they were children. She admits to herself that she had cared for Drew. She wonders if they were to meet today if they would still have the same feelings for one another.

In the chapter entitled "Memories," Belinda heads next to her father's barn. She climbs into a loft and finds a litter of kittens. The babies are so unaccustomed to humans, however, they won't allow her to play with them. She also goes out searching for hen's nests, then reads a book for awhile. She misses Amy Jo and Melissa and wonders why things have to change. As Belinda wrestles with her feelings of not really fitting in at home anymore, she wonders what is wrong with her. When she returns to her mother, her mother asks her if anything has changed. Belinda admits that it just seems that it is the people who have changed. Marty indicates she believes she understands what Belinda is feeling as she talks about the little house in which she and Clark used to live. As time has moved on, the people have moved away from the house, leaving it alone and empty. Marty says she believes she knows how the house feels, even though she wouldn't change her life. Belinda thinks about her mother's words as she goes to invite Kate to tea. She realizes that pain is part of loving, but in order to love someone, you must let them go their own way even if it causes pain and loneliness.

During her visit, Belinda makes a trip to see the little house that Marty had mentioned. It is empty and Marty thinks perhaps it should be torn down. Although she doesn't really



want to, Belinda goes to the house that used to be Amy Jo's. She passes through the kitchen and family room, amazed that the areas are so small. She moves on to Amy Jo's room, closing her eyes and imagining as it was with furniture in it. Belinda opens her eyes to see the room as it is now. A shiver passes through her. As she walks back to her parents' house, the only thought in her mind is that she no longer fits in her old life. Everything has changed.

Adjustments and Memories Analysis

During Belinda's visit to her hometown, she realizes how much she has changed while in Boston. She has become used to pretty, fashionable clothes and having a bathroom inside. She wonders at herself for becoming so proud and so different from the person whom she used to be. The dresses that she had loved so much before she'd left for Boston now seem childish and simple. Her bed is not as comfortable as she had imagined it and the house nowhere near as big or as fancy as she had remembered it.

The biggest change that strikes Belinda is the way that the people have changed. An analogy is made by Marty between life and the old house where she and Clark first lived when they were married. The house sheltered their children as they were growing up before they built and moved into a new house. After that, the house had been home to Kate and Clare and their family, including Belinda's friend Amy Jo. Now that family has grown up and gone away, too. Kate and Clare also have built a newer, more modern home. Now the old house sits alone and empty, much like a person after the ones they love have moved away in their search for a career or have died, leaving them alone. Belinda's new realization that she feels as if she does not fit in anywhere makes her feel lonely and troubled.



Return to Boston and Back to Normal?

Return to Boston and Back to Normal? Summary

In the chapter "Return to Normal," the only part of her hometown where Belinda feels that she fits is at her church. Before she leaves to return to Boston, Belinda confides with her parents that she is concerned about Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's spiritual health. One day before she is to leave, Luke picks her up to go with him on a house call. On the way to the house, Belinda finds out from Luke that Drew has changed in some ways, but not in others. He indicates that he doesn't believe that Drew will ever come back to his hometown. Luke does tell Belinda that Drew had asked about her. Belinda also explains her feeling of no longer belonging in her hometown. Luke tells her that he, also, didn't feel like he had belonged when he moved back home, but that he had made a place for himself to fit. Belinda also pays a visit to Ma Graham before she goes back to Boston.

The day Belinda returns to Boston is cold. Her parents hug her tightly before she boards the train. As the train leaves, Belinda thinks to herself that she is going back to the place where she belongs. She wonders, though, if she really feels she belongs in Boston, why she is so sad to leave the town where she grew up.

In the chapter, "Back to Normal?," Belinda arrives back at Marshall Manor the day before Mrs. Stafford-Smyth does. She looks forward to indoor plumbing again as well as a good bath. The staff seems happy to see Belinda back. She realizes as they wait on her how pampered she has become. Belinda oversleeps the next morning but with the help of the staff gets ready in time to meet Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's train. They greet one another. Although Mrs. Stafford-Smyth says that her trip went well, Belinda suspects something is wrong. The lady tells her that she was worried the entire time that Belinda would not come back.

Mrs. Stafford-Smyth comments to Belinda that she is happy that things can get back to normal, but Belinda still isn't sure what normal is. The winter closes in and Belinda wishes for spring. She and her employer invite those needing a place to go to Christmas dinner again. Belinda notices that as she and Mrs. Stafford-Smyth spend time studying the Bible during the winter season, her employer seems to be getting more sensitive to spiritual matters.

Return to Boston and Back to Normal? Analysis

The longer that Belinda stays in her hometown, the more she feels as if she no longer fits in with her old life. She asks her brother if he had the same feelings when he returned to the town after becoming a doctor. Luke explains that he understands how she is now feeling. Luke explained that although he didn't feel as if he still belonged in the town, he made up his mind and decided to make his own place.



In a way, Belinda is relieved to return to her life in Boston. She still wonders what is normal for her life and struggles with her desire to be both with her family and in Boston with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. One thing that holds Belinda in Boston with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth is her knowledge of how much the lady needs her. Belinda is also concerned about Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's spiritual position. She is happy when she notices that Belinda seems to be becoming more sensitive to spiritual matters after she returns home from New York.



An Exciting Event and The Bend in the Road

An Exciting Event and The Bend in the Road Summary

In the chapter "An Exciting Event," Belinda continues to witness to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. One Sunday morning as the two ladies leave church, Belinda feels as if the sermon was especially lacking in feeling. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth, however, believes the sermon was wonderful. She tells Belinda that it was during this sermon that she finally understood completely the story of salvation. She has been saved. She wants Belinda to read through the scriptures again now that she really understands the full meaning of them. In fact, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth suggests to Belinda that they involve all of the staff in their morning devotionals from now on.

In addition to sharing her faith with her staff, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth also decides to have a dinner party to talk to her friends about her new salvation. As they prepare for the dinner, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth admits to Belinda that she has no idea how she will introduce the idea at the dinner party, but she believes that God has a plan for that. After the guests are gathered, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth has Belinda read from the Bible for them and then leads the group in a prayer. The discussion at dinner involves the scriptures and the meaning of salvation.

In the chapter, "The Bend in the Road," Celia comes to visit Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. Belinda takes a walk in the garden so the two can have time together alone. Belinda returns after she hears Celia's carriage leave. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth tells Belinda they need to pray for Celia because she is struggling. Windsor, however, is touched by the dinner party discussion and is saved.

One morning, Windsor calls for Belinda to come because something is wrong with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. Belinda realizes quickly that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth is dead. The next week is a haze of grief for Belinda. After the funeral, Belinda asks for no dinner, wanting only to go to her room. Later, Windsor brings her some tea. He tells Belinda that although Mrs. Stafford-Smyth loved Belinda deeply, she would not have wanted Belinda to mourn for her as she is doing. He also thanks Belinda for seeing to it that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth was ready to meet the Lord when she died.

Belinda, as well as the other members of the staff, wonder what will happen now that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth is gone. Belinda realizes that she is no longer tied to Boston and is now free to go home. Once she decides she will make a new spot for herself in her old hometown, Belinda feels at peace. Belinda is preparing to write home to make arrangements when Ella knocks on her door. A magistrate is there who needs to see Belinda about Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate. The man reads the will, surprising Belinda when she learns that the house, bank accounts and investments have been left to her.



An Exciting Event and The Bend in the Road Analysis

A lot of events occur in these chapters. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth professes her faith in Christ. This profession and new point of view make her want to share with others so she joins forces with Belinda to not only witness to the staff, but also to her close friends. As Belinda watches the transformation in her employer, she prays that God will forgive her for believing that it was up to her to "convert" Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. Belinda had taken on the incorrect notion that her actions could cause the lady to make a profession when instead it is Christ who must perform this change in a person.

Oke witnesses to her readers through this section of the book as she spells out the plan of salvation through her characters. The story is well told, focusing on the idea that everyone sins, not just those who have committed "big" sins. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth believes that because she has been a good person and has tried to help others, she will gain admittance into heaven just because of her good deeds. In addition to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth being saved, Windsor is also saved as a result of his employer's witnessing.

The novel takes on a sad timbre as the staff wakes one morning to find that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth has passed away in her sleep. Belinda is overcome with grief. She does not know what to do until she realizes that she is now free to go home as she has always wanted to do. This decision fills her with peace but the peace is soon broken when she learns that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth has left her the house and investments in her will.



Decisions and The Task

Decisions and The Task Summary

In the chapter "Decisions," Belinda is shocked by the news that the property has been left to her. The lawyer agrees to give her time to think and says he will come back the following day. As Belinda sits in the garden, she realizes what a short time any one person has to make a difference in the world. Although she realizes Mrs. Stafford-Smyth did not intend the house to be a burden, Belinda feels trapped by her new responsibility. After some time, she calls for Windsor to summon the staff. She tells them that the house has been left to her and that although she is unsure how to manage the large house, none of the staff will lose their positions. It is when Windsor addresses her as "m'lady" that Belinda realizes she is now the mistress of the household.

As Belinda wonders about her future and how she should handle the estate, Sarah comes to her with a letter she found in Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's Bible. It is addressed to Belinda. In the letter, she tells Belinda that she does not want the house to be a burden to her, but rather used as a way to minister to others. Belinda suddenly realizes that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth had not intended her to stay in the house alone, but instead find some way to help people with it. That evening, she tells the staff that she intends to find some way to use the house as a means for ministry.

Belinda tries to speak to Mr. Dalgardy, the lawyer, about her ideas, but doesn't seem to be able to make him understand what she is hoping to do. The only option he gives her is to sell the house and donate the proceeds to charity, and option Belinda does not like because it would displace the staff. She realizes the man is not willing to help her, and leaves.

In the chapter, "The Task," Windsor suggests to Belinda that she try another law firm. The two try soliciting help from other lawyers, but no one seems to understand what Belinda is trying to do. They continue their efforts until the pastor of Belinda's church comes to visit her. She explains her trouble to him and he tells her that he will see if he can find a lawyer to help her. Three days later, a lawyer visits the house, sent by the minister. Belinda tries to explain her dilemma to the lawyer but feels as if they are both confused. She decides to try again over tea. After Mr. Keatts has looked at the papers, he tells Belinda that since the papers are in order, she is free to do whatever she'd like with the house. He promises to return with some ideas about what she might be able to do with the house as a form of ministry.

Decisions and The Task Analysis

In this section of the book, Belinda is pulled between her desire to go home and her need to stay and take care of her friend's property. It is not until she is given a letter that had been tucked away in Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's Bible that Belinda realizes she was not



given the house so that she would have to stay in Boston, but instead so she could use it to minister to others. When she considers her inheritance from this point of view, the house seems like less of a burden to her. Belinda really wants to return home and get back to her roots. She has no intention of living by herself in a big house being waited on by servants the rest of her life.

Belinda's challenge now is to find some way to use the house to help others, a task that no lawyer seems willing to take on to help her. The lawyer who is in charge of the estate simply turns Belinda away. He has no intention of helping her determine how she could use the house to help others. His only suggestion is to sell the house and donate the profit to charity. Other lawyers are just as useless in providing the information that Belinda wants. Finally, the minister at Belinda's church sends a lawyer to help her who agrees to see what he can do, even though he also seems wary of the situation.



Dinner and Arrangements

Dinner and Arrangements Summary

In the chapter entitled "Dinner," Belinda is invited to dinner at Celia Prescott's home. Belinda thinks for a moment she should decline the invitation but Windsor advises her that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth would not want her to do so. Windsor admits that he misses his employer very much also.

At Celia's home, Belinda is introduced to her nephew, Morton Jamison. The young man seems shy and uncomfortable. She learns he is studying at Yale, but has not yet chosen a major. Belinda notes that the young man is not attractive and decides to do her best to set him at ease. The three are the only ones eating. As the meal progresses, Belinda realizes that Celia has planned the dinner in order to set her up with Morton. She suggests that Belinda should be married and the Morton would be capable of handling the affairs of the house. She suggests Morton could accompany Belinda around town if she wished. Belinda makes mention of the time she spent touring Boston with Pierre. At that time, Celia had scolded Mrs. Stafford-Smyth for letting her grandson go about with a member of the staff. Now, Celia is trying to do the same thing to her nephew. As his aunt continues to insist, Morton realizes Belinda is trying to politely turn down the offer and finally breaks in and reminds her that he will be going back to college that next week. Belinda smiles her thanks.

In the chapter entitled "Arrangements," Belinda's lawyer discusses some possibilities for Marshall Manor. Many of his ideas required converting the house, something that she really does not want to have to do. Belinda finally gets the idea on her own to set the house up as a home for needy elderly people. The only change to the house would be that an elevator would have to be added. Belinda decides to talk the idea over with the staff before settling anything.

She has the staff meet in a relaxed setting on the back veranda. As Belinda presents her plans, the group is accepting and becomes more and more relaxed as she explains her intentions. The staff, with the exception of Sarah who plans to get married, agrees to stay and help Belinda with her proposal for the house. The lift is installed as planned and it is decided that Marshall Manor has room to house ten adults.

Dinner and Arrangements Analysis

In an unusual twist, Celia invites Belinda to her home to meet her nephew and propose that the two need to get acquainted. It is obvious that Celia would like to see the two married. Belinda politely reminds her of the time that Celia spoke to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth because Belinda and Pierre were being seen around town together. At the time, Celia had thought this behavior was not proper because Belinda was a member of the staff. Now that Belinda is no longer a member of the staff, but instead an heiress, Celia would



like to see her happily settled down with her nephew, who would profit greatly from the arrangement. This attempt on Celia's part to fix Belinda up with her nephew gives the reader some insight into Celia's hypocritical and self-promoting personality.

Also during this section, Belinda finally gets an idea of what she can do with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's house to make it useful without changing it drastically. It is decided to make the home into a place to house the elderly who have nowhere to go. Belinda asks the staff their opinion of her plans and keeps them fully engaged in her plans. While Belinda could have taken charge of the idea without regard to the members of the staff, her considerate personality comes through as she takes in mind the way the staff might feel about what she plans to do to a place that will be their home also. She is concerned that they are happy with the plans that she has made.



The Unexpected and Friendship

The Unexpected and Friendship Summary

In the chapter entitled "The Unexpected," Belinda heads to the lawyer's office to sign more papers. It is fall in Boston. Belinda hopes that she will soon be back home in her prairie town. When she arrives at the lawyer's office and the lawyer discovers that Belinda does not intend to be living in the house and making bank withdrawals herself, he suggests that they set up a board to administer the estate. This will require more paperwork. As Belinda leaves the office, she sees someone in the office whom she recognizes. It is Drew. He works in the lawyer's office. They learn they have been living in the same town together for three years without realizing it. The two go for a cup of tea and catch up. When they finish talking, Drew writes down Belinda's phone number so the two can stay in touch.

In the chapter entitled "Friendship," Belinda wonders on her way home if Drew might still have feelings for her. Belinda tries to contain her excitement and plans for her friendship with Drew until he calls. When the phone rings that evening Belinda is so startled she drops the needlework she is doing. The two make plans to go to a concert that coming weekend. Saturday drags slowly as Belinda tries to find tasks to keep herself occupied. Belinda calls Ella to help her get ready that evening. As preparations are made, Belinda talks to Ella about her plans for the evening.

The Unexpected and Friendship Analysis

In these chapters, Belinda makes an exciting discovery when she learns the Drew, her friend from her hometown has been working in a lawyer's office just down the road from her for the past three years. She is surprised that he has been this close all this time, and dismayed that she did not run into him sooner. Recall from the chapters where Belinda visited her hometown that Drew was a topic of conversations between herself and her parents. Belinda also spent time thinking about Drew while she was at home. It is known that the two had some sort of friendship that seemed to scare them when Drew kissed Belinda. Belinda remembers that it was after this kiss that the two seemed to begin to avoid one another. When Belinda sees Drew in the lawyer's office, she recognizes him because one of the sleeves of his coat is pinned up. This indicates that Drew had lost an arm or part of an arm. There have also been hints that Luke had to perform some sort of surgery on Drew that Belinda assisted with. There has also been some indication that Drew was unhappy with Luke for what he did which could have been the amputation of the arm. Despite these mysteries, however, Belinda is excited to see Drew again and wonders if they might still have feelings for one another.



The Concert and Disappointment

The Concert and Disappointment Summary

In the chapter entitled "The Concert," Belinda and Drew enjoy the concert and each other's company. Afterward, Belinda invites Drew to attend church with her and have dinner the following day. As they walk to Marshall Manor the next day, Belinda tells Drew how she came to meet Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. Belinda explains that she is staying in Boston to settle the estate. Drew is surprised when Belinda leads him to Marshall Manor. During their dinner, Drew asks Belinda why she does not eat her meals with the staff. She explains that they do not believe that is proper behavior. Drew notices, and comments on the fact that Belinda looks at home at Marshall Manor.

They have dessert on the back veranda and Drew is as amazed by the garden as by the house. Drew tells Belinda that he couldn't imagine living as she does. As they continue to talk, Belinda explains that she won't be selling the house, but wants it to be kept up as it always has been. Drew is surprised to learn that the entire estate had been left to Belinda.

In the chapter entitled "Disappointment," Drew believes that Belinda's wealth is a barrier between the two of them. Belinda explains to him that she plans to invite the elderly to share the house with her. As she takes him on a tour of the house, Drew becomes more and more dejected. He reminds her of her promise to visit his mission church with him. Belinda agrees to do so and makes him allow Windsor to drive him home. On the way to his home, Belinda realizes that she plans to go home while Drew will probably be staying in Boston. They both finish the ride in silence.

During their next visit, Mr. Keatts and Belinda decide to set up an independent board to oversee the administration of the estate. As Belinda considers that the estate will be settled very soon, she considers that she could stay in Boston. Belinda realizes, however, that she must go home and get back to her simple roots. Although both know their relationship can go no further than friendship, they continue to see one another. As they do, their feelings grow more intense.

Belinda finds five residents for her house. She also decides to contact Drew's mother about assisting Mrs. Potter at Marshall Manor. When she talks to Drew about this possibility, he agrees it is a good idea. Belinda sends train tickets and cash to Mrs. Simpson and Sid for them to make the trip back to Boston. Belinda meets the Simpsons when they arrive in Boston on the train. When they arrive at Marshall Manor, Belinda turns the Simpsons over to Mrs. Potter. The next morning, Drew will be coming to visit his mother and brother.



The Concert and Disappointment Analysis

In this section, Belinda and Drew both seem to realize that they cannot have a relationship with one another though they never discuss their reasons with one another. Drew seems to believe that Belinda's wealth is a barrier between the two. Belinda, on the other hand, knows that she must return to her hometown. She also believes that Drew intends to remain in Boston. For this reason, both Belinda and Drew believe that even though they continue to see one another and their feelings grown stronger and stronger, they believe they don't have a chance at having a relationship with one another.

Also in this section of the novel Belinda finally begins to see Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate proceedings beginning to come to an end. She has located five people to live in Marshall Manor. She has also arranged for Drew's mother and brother to come to Boston and work in the house. Although Belinda will be glad for these proceedings to be finished, she also realizes that the sooner they are finished, the sooner she will have to leave Drew.



Final Preparations and Christmas

Final Preparations and Christmas Summary

In the chapter "Final Preparations," Belinda had hoped to have all of the work on Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate finished by Christmas but soon realizes that won't be possible. Two people come to live at Marshall Manor on December 6. Belinda learns from Mr. Keatts that the board is in place to administer the estate. Mr. Keatts agrees to try to find a physician who will be on call for the residents of the house but he will not agree to try to find a chaplain for the residents. Belinda decides to turn this responsibility over to God. Mr. Keatts does suggest to Belinda that she might consider staying at Marshall Manor to work as a nurse. Although Belinda briefly considers this idea, but realizes she would only be staying in hopes that she and Drew might have a future together.

Three more residents move into the house on December 10. On December 21, a minister and his wife, who have been displaced by a house fire, join the group of residents. She asks the man to be the spiritual leader of the house, and he agrees. As Christmas gets closer, Belinda asks Potter if she would like help planning Christmas. She agrees to the idea and the two women make their plans together. Drew is included in the guests who will attend the party. Belinda has already decided that she and Drew will sit at the staff table with Drew's mother and brother.

As she prepares for Christmas, Belinda continues to worry because she has not found a nurse for her home. She hears the doorbell ring and to her surprise the lady asks for Miss Davis. The lady is a nurse and needs a job. Her husband has just died in a Boston hospital and the lady wants to remain close to his grave. She needs to know that day if she can have the job so that she can return home on the train the following day. Belinda looks over the lady's credentials and decides to hire her.

In the Chapter entitled "Christmas," the residents of the house are up early on Christmas morning, excited like children. All of the residents decide to attend the Christmas service. They all pile into two big sleighs and go to the church. As the day progresses, Drew takes the opportunity to tell Belinda how much he thinks of her unselfishness in allowing needy people to share the house that she has been given. He tells her how he always admired the way that Clark, Belinda's father, demonstrated the Christian faith. The rest of the day is filled with cheer and happiness.

Final Preparations and Christmas Analysis

In this chapter, both the staff and residents at Marshall Manor have a wonderful Christmas together. Belinda enjoys the day as she is able to spend it with Drew and his family. During the month of December, Belinda has filled her house with elderly residents as she had hoped that she would be able to do. Her prayers for a minister are answered when a minister and his wife are displaced from their home by a house fire.



While Belinda is happy that the Lord has sent a couple to tend to the spiritual needs of her tenants, the elderly minister is happy that he has been placed where he can be of service to others.

Belinda's best surprise for Christmas comes on Christmas Eve when a woman who is a nurse knocks on the door seeking a position. Her husband has just passed away in a Boston hospital. Although the woman could go back home, she wants to stay close to her husband's grave. Belinda is grateful that this last position in the home is filled before she goes back home.



Farewell and Settling In

Farewell and Settling In Summary

In the chapter entitled "Farewell," Sidney drives Belinda and Drew to drop Drew off for the evening. They talk first about how wonderful the day was. Belinda voices the regret that she did not offer to take the new nurse to visit her husband grave, but Drew tells her that Windsor took care of that for her. As they get closer to Drew's house, he tells Belinda he has something that he needs to talk to her about. He brings to mind a day when they were children and he had spooked Belinda's horse when he shot a rabbit. Drew tells her that he fell in love with her that day. He then explains that he was so angry when he found out that she and her brother were responsible for amputating his arm that he could not accept her. He says that Belinda's father and God helped him work through his troubles with the loss of his arm. Then he had the opportunity to kiss Belinda. Drew said he wanted to call on Belinda at that time, but felt he needed to make something of himself first. He describes meeting Belinda in Boston as a dream and says that he still loves her. Although Belinda tries to respond, he does not seem to give her time. Drew says that he feels that he still doesn't have the right to ask for her love. He also can not longer go on being just friends with Belinda, he says, so he feels that it is best if they part ways. Belinda wonders if Drew is saying goodbye because he has heard she is going home instead of staying in Boston, but doesn't ask. She decides not to put Drew in the uncomfortable position of asking for an explanation. That night, Belinda cries herself to sleep.

The next morning, Belinda begins packing as soon as she wakes. Ella comes to check on her and is disappointed to learn that she is still planning on leaving. Belinda plans to leave by the end of the week. On the day of her departure, she tells only Windsor that she needs to be driven to the station. After she finishes packing, Belinda takes one last walk through Thomas' garden. She looks for the elderly man in his greenhouse. When she finds him, Belinda tells him that she has come to say goodbye. As a going away present, Thomas gives her a Princess Belinda rose. He warns her to be careful and not let the plant freeze. The good-byes with the residents and staff of the house are hard for Belinda. When the time comes to say goodbye to Windsor, he comments on how deeply he noticed that she loved Mrs. Stafford-Smyth, a love beyond duty that made him love Belinda. He then confides in Belinda that he, too, loved the lady dearly.

In the chapter entitled "Settling In," Belinda is able to get her emotions under control during the train ride back to her hometown. No one meets Belinda at the station, as she has told no one that she is returning home. She walks to Luke and Abbie's house. Abbie tells her that her mother has had the flu and is still in bed. Belinda is in a hurry to get to her mother and hires a team to take her to the house. Luke is still at the house when she arrives and in her worry, she doesn't even bother to knock. She surprises both her father and brother. Her mother is still sleeping, so she leaves her alone after checking on her.



It is three weeks before Marty is able to be up and around again. Once her mother is feeling better, Belinda decides that it is time for her to move into town in her own place. She plans to help provide nursing care for Mrs. Jenkins, the post master's wife. Although it is not a perfect life, Belinda is content and busy.

Farewell and Settling In Analysis

Belinda's perfect day is crushed when Drew tells her that he can no longer go on just being friends with her, but feels they also cannot go any further in their relationship. Belinda does not ask Drew what make him come to this decision. She does not want to put him in a position where he will have to explain himself. She is only silent as he tries to tell her how much he loves her, but that he feels that it is best that they no longer see one another. Because of this lack of communication, neither has any idea what the other is thinking. They have not discussed any plans for the future because at the beginning of their friendship, Belinda promised not to talk to Drew about her arrangements with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate as the case was being handled by another person in his firm. Because she has not talked to him, Belinda is also not aware of Drew's plans for the future. She only assumes that he plans to stay in Boston, especially since his mother and brother are now living there also.

Belinda starts packing and preparing to go home the day after Christmas. The staff tries to convince her to stay with them, but Belinda is determined to go home. As a going away gift, Thomas gives Belinda one of his hybrid roses, the Princess Belinda, that he named after her.

Although Belinda's parents want her to stay with them when she returns home, she decides that she needs to live in a place of her own. To her mother, this is a sign that her daughter will never marry and is happy living on her own. Belinda is content in her new life, but is very lonely despite her busyness. She is working as a personal nurse for the postmaster's wife, and is also active in her church. Belinda still feels however that something is missing.



A Happy Ending

A Happy Ending Summary

In the chapter entitled, "A Happy Ending," Belinda receives a letter from her lawyer informing her that she needs to sign more papers. The papers have to be signed in the presence of an attorney, so Belinda is just about to tell Mr. Jenkins that she will have to make a return trip to Boston when Mr. Jenkins informs her that they now have a lawyer in town. He says the lawyer has been in town about a week. Belinda makes plans to go and see the man that evening so she can take care of the paperwork.

When Belinda enters the simple office there is a man bending over the file drawers. When he tells her that he will be with her in a minute, Belinda recognizes the voice as Drew's. Belinda apologizes, then runs out of the office. Drew catches up to her but she will not talk to him. Belinda goes to her room where she stays until about eight that evening when Luke knocks on her door. He tells her that Drew had just been to visit them. Belinda explains the story from her point of view. Luke then tells her that Drew had assumed that Belinda would be staying to Boston while he planned to return home to practice law. Luke suggests to Belinda that she and Drew try really talking to one another. Although Belinda tells her brother she is afraid it is too late, he informs her that Drew is outside the door, waiting to be let in. When Drew is allowed in, he tells Belinda that he loves her and asks if she will marry him.

During the spring as the days grow warmer, Drew and Belinda sit together on her parents' front porch on afternoon talking to Marty. The two have found a small house to rent and are busy fixing it up and making plans for their life together. One day before they move into the cottage, Belinda can no longer wait to plant the rose that Thomas gave her. She tells the rose that she hopes that it will bloom this year. If not, though, she feels able to wait and as if she is finally settled into her place in life.

The wedding is set for August. When Drew's mother and brother arrive from Boston, he asks Mrs. Simpson why she did not tell him that Belinda had gone home. She says only that she didn't know what had happened between the two and that she didn't want to invade Belinda's privacy. As Clark waits with Belinda just before her wedding, he comments that he is surprised that after all the years of waiting, it was she and Drew who wound up together. Belinda is not surprised, she just believes that God knew she needed time to grow up.

A Happy Ending Analysis

It is in this final chapter that Belinda and Drew finally realize the consequences of not discussing their plans for the future with one another but instead assuming what the other planned to do. Drew seems as surprised to see Belinda in their hometown as she is to see him. Belinda runs away in a cloud of hurt and anger even though Drew tries to



talk to her. It is Luke who finally encourages Belinda to talk to Luke and tells her the real story behind what had happened. Because Drew believed that Belinda wanted to stay in Boston and live in style of wealth, he did not want to put her in a position where she felt that she had to return to the small prairie town. Belinda assumes that he breaks off their relationship because he plans to stay in Boston and does not want to leave his family. Either way, Luke advice to the two to "really talk" is good advice that will hopefully be taken to heart throughout the course of their marriage.

Also, fittingly, after Drew and Belinda decide to get married, they rent a small house. One of the first things that Belinda does at the house is to plant her rosebush, the hybrid rose that Thomas gave her as a going-away gift. This planting of the rose symbolizes that Belinda has finally found a place to put down roots. Though it has taken her longer to settle down than her brothers and sisters, Belinda believes it is because God knew that she needed time to grow up before she started a serious relationship.



Characters

Drew Simpson

Drew Simpson is a boy whom Belinda has loved since she was a teenager. The two were friends in their prairie hometown. Belinda remembers Drew spooking her horse when he shot and rabbit and being thrown from the horse. She also remembers Drew kissing her when she was sixteen. Looking back on the experience as an adult, she realizes that the kiss did not bring the two of them closer, but seemed to push them apart. Drew admits to Belinda later that he felt he was not worthy of her until he made something of himself so he did not come to court her even though he wanted to. At some point Drew has an accident or illness that causes one of his arms to be amputated. Luke is the one who operates on Drew's arm. Belinda helps him with the surgery. Drew is angry about the surgery and for some time cannot be around Belinda because he can't bear the pain of what has happened to him.

When Belinda meets Drew again in Boston, he is working in a lawyer's office and she is trying to settle Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate. Drew and Belinda renew their friendship, but Drew is obviously uncomfortable with the position in which Belinda is living. Drew does not tell Belinda that he is planning on going back home to open a lawyer's office. He also does not ask her plans and does not realize that she also plans on moving back to the same town and does not intend to remain in Boston. Because he is unaware of her plans, he breaks off their friendship, believing that she will not want to go back to their prairie town with him.

Drew opens his law office in his hometown. One of his first clients is Belinda but she walks out when she realizes who the new lawyer is. Drew realizes how badly he has upset Belinda and calls upon Luke to help him explain what has happened to his sister. After the two realize what has happened between them, they confess their love to one another. Drew asks Belinda to marry him that day.

Belinda

Belinda is the main character and heroine of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Belinda is working as the private nurse and companion of a wealthy lady in Boston. The lady considers Belinda to be the daughter that she never had. Although Belinda likes Mrs. Stafford-Smyth and enjoys her life in Boston, she misses her family at home. Belinda gets an opportunity to visit her hometown when Mrs. Stafford-Smyth takes a trip to New York with a friend. Belinda wants to return to her roots, but while she is at home, she feels like she doesn't fit in with her old life any longer. When she returns to Boston and realizes how much Mrs. Stafford-Smyth missed her, Belinda realizes that she cannot leave the lady while she is still alive.



Meanwhile, Belinda has been witnessing to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth and encouraging her to attend church. Shortly after the two return from their trips, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth is saved. Belinda is grateful and watches as Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's faith grows. The elderly lady shares her faith with everyone one whom she meets. Windsor is saved as a result of Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's witnessing. When Mrs. Stafford-Smyth dies, she leaves the majority of her estate to Belinda. Before her death, the lady had written a letter to Belinda telling her that she did not want the house to be a problem for her but instead wants her to find some way to use the house as a ministry to others.

Virginia Stafford-Smyth (Aunt Virgie)

Virginia Stafford-Smyth is the elderly woman for whom Belinda works as her nurse and personal companion. The two have a very close relationship. The elderly lady has asked Belinda to call her Aunt Virgie. During the course of the novel, Aunt Virgie is saved, an action for which Belinda is grateful. After she makes her profession of faith, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth makes it her goal to see that the members of her staff and her friends are also given an opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ as well. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth leaves Belinda most of her estate in her will. Although Belinda at first believes that this inheritance will put a halt on her plans to move back to her hometown, she learns that her benefactor intended her to use the house as a way to minister to people.

Mrs. Potter

Mrs. Potter is the administrator of Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's home. She is in charge of the staff and taking care of the home. Mrs. Potter is described as being stern faced and distant. She does not like for people to be late. It is noted in the book that Potter had taken a dislike to Belinda at first because Belinda notes that at one point in their relationship, Potter would have enjoyed waking up Belinda even though she knew she was tired. Now, however, Potter has developed a respect for Belinda and treats the girl kindly.

Thomas

Thomas is the elderly gardener who takes care of the gardens at Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate. At the beginning of the novel, Belinda learns that Thomas has named one of his hybrid roses after her because of the great care that he has taken of Aunt Virgie. Thomas only request when Belinda tells him that elderly people will be living in the home is that none of the people will be allowed to mess in his gardens. When Belinda leaves Boston to go back to her hometown, Thomas gives her one of the rose bushes that he named after her.



Mrs. Tupper

Mrs. Tupper is the lady who comes to Marshall Manor on Christmas Eve to tell Belinda that she is looking for a position as a nurse. Mrs. Tupper has been in Boston because her husband was sick and in the hospital there. He has passed away, but Mrs. Tupper wants to stay close to his gravesite. She needs to return home the following day if she is not hired for the job. Belinda checks Mrs. Tupper's credentials and decides to hire the lady as her nurse. Windsor takes Mrs. Tupper to visit her husband's grave on Christmas Day.

Morton Jamison

Morton Jamison is Celia Prescott's nephew. Celia tries to set her nephew up with Belinda after Belinda inherits Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate. Belinda describes Morton as being unattractive with a sharp chin, long nose and large mouth with stiff hair and glasses. He is also obviously uncomfortable with his aunt's dinner party. He does get Belinda's hint that she is not interested in dating him and finally discourages his aunt from pushing the matter further by reminding her that he will be going back to school.

Windsor

Windsor is Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's butler. Although there is never a relationship between the butler and employer besides a professional one, Windsor admits to Belinda that he had always loved Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. After Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's death, Windsor tries to help Belinda settle the estate by contacting lawyers. When Mrs. Stafford-Smyth witnesses to her employees after she is saved, Windsor is saved.

Ma Graham

Ma Graham is the one person in her hometown who Belinda says that she would like to visit during her trip west. Ma Graham is an elderly lady with whom Belinda had attended church. She has gotten elderly and doesn't get out much because she has trouble with her gallbladder. One of the first babies that Belinda helped deliver was one of Ma Graham's grandchildren.

Mrs. Simpson

Mrs. Simpson is Andrew Simpson's mother. Mrs. Simpson lives with her younger son, Sid, in the same town in which Belinda grew up. Later when Belinda needs more employees for Marshall Manor, she invites Mrs. Simpson and Sid to come to Marshall Manor where they can both have jobs.



Mr. Dalgardy

Mr. Dalgardy is the original lawyer who handles Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate. When Belinda tries to get him to help her find some way to minister through the house, Mr. Dalgardy will not even consider helping her. He suggests she either live in the house or sell it.

Miss Mitton

Miss Mitton is the second woman to join the residents at Marshall Manor. She had never married and taught piano lessons as a way to support herself. She became bitter and cynical when she had to move from her nice apartment to a shoddy one because her number of students dropped.

Mr. Rudgers

Mr. Rudgers is one of the residents of Marshall Manor. He is described as a tall, thin man with an untidy mustache and a twinkle in his eye. His humor keeps things lively at the house. He pesters Miss Mitton and appears to have a crush on her. He is the prankster of the group.

Mr. Lewis

Mr. Lewis is one of the residents of Marshall Manor. He is described as being bent and wizened. He seems to be sorrowful from the trial of life. He is content with little and appreciative of what he gets. On Christmas Day, Mr. Lewis surprises the other residents of Marshall Manor by bringing out an old violin and playing Christmas carols.

Anthony Keats

Anthony Keats is the lawyer that finally agrees to work with Belinda on her estate. Although he does come up with some ideas for the house, it is Belinda's idea to make a home for the elderly. Keats helps Belinda complete the needed paperwork to make her idea for the home work. It is also in Keats' office that Belinda meets Drew.

Reverend Arthur Goodbody

Reverend Arthur Goodbody is the minister at the church that Belinda attends in Boston. It is he that sends the lawyer, Anthony Keats, to help Belinda with her problems with the estate.



Mrs. Bailey

Mrs. Bailey is one of the first two women to move into Marshall Manor. She is a widow. Her three children have also passed away. Mrs. Bailey is pleased to see the library available to her at Marshall Manor.

Sid Simpson

Sid Simpson is Mrs. Simpson's youngest son and Drew's brother. Sid travels to Boston with his mother to help out at Marshall Manor and attend school. Sid is the one driving the sleigh on the night that Drew breaks up with her.

McIntyre

McIntyre is Thomas' dog. The elderly dog is losing both his hearing and eyesight so Thomas speaks to the dog and tells it where he is going each time he moves. Thomas has a pallet for McIntyre just inside the greenhouse.



Objects/Places

Influenza

Influenza is the disease that sickens both Mrs. Stafford-Smyth and Belinda's mother.

Pink Rosanna

The Pink Rosanna is one of the hybrid roses that Thomas grows.

Princess Belinda

The Princess Belinda is a blended color rose of cream, yellow and apricot. Thomas names this rose after Belinda because she has been so kind to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth.

Little Log House

While she is at home, Belinda visits this little log house where her mother and father lived when they were first married. Her niece, Amy Jo, also lived in this house at one time.

Blue Robe

It is this warmest blue robe that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth asks for when she decides to get out of bed for the first time since she has been suffering with influenza.

Envelope with Belinda's Name on It

Sarah finds this envelope with Belinda's name on it while she is cleaning Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's room. It is in this envelope that Mrs. Stafford-Smyth has included a letter to Belinda explaining what she hopes that Belinda will be able to do with the house.

Marshall Manor

Marshall Manor is the name of the estate that Belinda inherits from Mrs. Stafford-Smyth.

Formal Invitation

Belinda receives a formal invitation to have supper with Celia Prescott at her home.



A Lift

A lift, or elevator, is the piece of equipment that Belinda needs to add to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's house in order to make it into a home for the elderly.

Opera Hall

It is at the opera hall that Drew and Belinda meet for their first "date."

Needlework

Belinda is working on needlework when Drew calls her on the phone. She drops her work when the phone rings.

Keats, Cross and Newman

Keats, Cross and Newman is the lawyers office where Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate is handled. It is also at this office that Drew works and where the two of them meet again in Boston.

Letter with Two Train Tickets

Belinda sends this letter and tickets to Mrs. Simpson in the hopes that she and her younger son will come to live and work at Marshall Manor.

December 21

This day is significant because it is on this day that a displaced minister and his wife come to live at Marshall Manor. Belinda had hoped to have a spiritual leader in the house and the minister agrees to fill the role.

The Piano

Miss Mitton, one of the new residents of Marshall Manor is pleased to learn that there is a piano in the home that she can play.

A Violin

On Christmas Day, Mr. Lewis surprises the other residents of Marshall Manor by bringing out an old violin and accompanying Miss Mitton playing Christmas carols on the piano.



A Rosebush

The Princess Belinda rosebush is the gift that Thomas gives to Belinda before she leaves Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's home in Boston.

New Lawyer's Office

It is in this new lawyer's office in her hometown that Belinda meets Drew again and realizes that he has moved back home.



Themes

Finding One's Home

One of the major themes of this novel is the idea of finding one's home. Belinda knows that she does not want to live in Boston for the rest of her life, but feels compelled to stay with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth until her death. It is for this reason that Belinda originally stays in Boston with the people whom she considers her Boston family. Although she loves her life in Boston, Belinda misses her own family and the town that she has always considered as her home. Belinda first feels torn when she returns to her hometown on a visit. Though she has pleasant memories of the places she visits, she is haunted by the idea that the people who once lived there have moved on with their own lives. Belinda also feels as if she has changed since she last lived in that town. She almost feels as if she no longer has a place that she fits in her old life.

When Belinda returns to her home in Boston she feels more torn because she enjoys the servants and pampering that she receives, but at the same time, doesn't want to live in this type of situation all of her life. When Mrs. Stafford-Smyth passes away, Belinda feels that she has no reason to stay in Boston until she learns that the lady has left much of her estate to Belinda. At first, Belinda is afraid she must either live in the house herself, an option that she does not want, or sell the house, which she also does not want. Belinda discovers, however, that her benefactor wanted her to find some way to use the house to minister to others. After much paperwork, Belinda is able to turn the house, which isn't home to her, into a home for 10 elderly people who did not have an adequate home.

After Belinda finally settles Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's estate she is able to return to her hometown, but doesn't really feel as if she is at home. She makes a place for herself and is content, but she is lonely. It is not until Belinda and Drew finally settle their differences and they decide to get married that Belinda finally feels as if she is at home.

Lack of Communication

Although it isn't a major theme, a lack of communication causes problems for characters in this novel in two different instances. The first instance of this lack of communication occurs when Mrs. Stafford-Smyth decides to visit New York with her friend Celia. Although Mrs. Stafford-Smyth does not communicate her idea to Belinda, she had in mind that Belinda would be going with them from the start. Belinda, who is at a loss about what she should do while Mrs. Stafford-Smyth is gone, decides to visit her hometown. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth is upset to learn that Belinda will be going home because she is afraid she will not come back. For this reason, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth does not have an enjoyable time while in New York. It is not until she returns home and finds that Belinda is there that she is able to believe that Belinda did not decide to stay home.



Another major lack of communication takes place in the relationship between Drew and Belinda. Drew is planning to return home and work in a law office there. He assumes Belinda wants to stay Boston in the lovely house that she has inherited. He, however, does not feel comfortable in that environment. He breaks up with her because he believes that he would be asking her to give up her home and staff to go back to their relatively primitive hometown. Belinda, however, believes that Drew wants to stay in Boston and practice law. While she would be agreeable to stay in Boston if Drew asked her to marry him, Belinda actually also wants to return to their hometown. It is not until the two run into each other in their prairie town, that they realize they actually had the same plan for their future in mind.

Importance of Salvation

Another theme that is stressed in this novel is the importance of one's salvation. Her relationship with Jesus Christ is a very important aspect of Belinda's life. She wants to share this relationship with Mrs. Stafford-Smyth, her employer. She is worried the elderly lady will get sick and die before she is able to accept Christ as her savior. Before Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's death, Belinda is able to see Mrs. Stafford-Smyth get saved and share her salvation with those around her. The plan of salvation is outlined through the course of the novel. Through Belinda's witnessing to Mrs. Stafford-Smyth, the reader observes Belinda's mistakes which show that even those who know Christ well are not perfect. Belinda forgets that it is only Christ who can change Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's heart so that she desires salvation, Belinda cannot do this. The idea that just being good is not enough to get one saved is also stressed in the novel.



Style

Point of View

The story is told from the third-person point of view of an uninvolved narrator. The story is told from Belinda's point of view and the narrator has an omniscient view into her thoughts and actions. The narrator follows Belinda through her growth as she develops from a young lady who serves as a personal nurse in a strange town to the executor of an estate back to a home town girl, to Drew's wife. The impact of Belinda's growth would not be as strong if the story was told from any other point of view. The third person point of view keeps the reader from becoming too emotionally connected with the characters but still keeps the reader engaged in the action of the novel.

The narrator appears to be reliable regarding the information he gives about Belinda, her thoughts and her actions. The actions of the other characters, however, are screened through what Belinda observes. This becomes extremely important in connection with Belinda's relationship with Drew. The reader knows no more about why Drew has broken up with Belinda than Belinda does. Hence, the reader is as surprised as Belinda when she learns that Drew has returned to their hometown to work as a lawyer.

Setting

There are two main settings in this novel. The first major setting is the city of Boston. It is in Boston that Belinda lives in Marshall Manor, the house that belongs to her employer, Mrs. Stafford-Smyth. This house is a major setting in the novel as Belinda receives the structure as part of her inheritance. With the help of a lawyer, Belinda decides to turn the house into a home for the elderly.

Another important setting in the novel is the law office where Drew works and where Belinda meets up with him again. Other settings include the church where Belinda and Mrs. Stafford-Smyth worship, the small mission church that Drew attends and the opera house where they go on their first outing. Mrs. Celia Prescott's home is also a setting in that Belinda visits while in Boston.

In her prairie home town, settings that Belinda visits include Luke's medical office, Ma Graham's house, the little log cabin that Marty and Clark used to live in, the spring and Marty and Clark's home. When she returns to home to stay, important settings include Drew's law office, the boarding house room that Belinda rents, and the cottage where Belinda and Drew plan to live. It is here that Belinda plants the rose that Thomas gave her.



Language and Meaning

The most interesting aspect of the language of this novel is the way that the different characters' backgrounds and personalities are captured through their dialogue. For instance, Belinda's country parents speak through their dialogue with a country accent. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth and Windsor, however, have Boston accents. Belinda, however, along with her educated brother, who is also a doctor, and Drew have probably what could be considered a Midwestern accent with pronunciation of their words that is considered "proper."

Another interesting aspect of the language of this novel is the way the characters refer to each other. For instance, it is not until Windsor calls Belinda m'lady, that she realizes she is the one in charge of Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's home. Before this point, Belinda had been called "miss" or even just by her first name. For most of the staff, Belinda refers to these people by their first names. This holds true for Ella, Sarah, Thomas and Windsor. It is interesting, though, that Potter, the administrator of the home, is neither referred to by her first name or by a title. As she is described as a distant and authoritative person, this could be done in order to underscore her personality. Notice, however, that all of the elderly residents of the house are called by a title, Miss Mitton, for example, along with their last name. This manner of referring to the residents shows the respect that Belinda has for the people who will live in her home.

Structure

This book is the eighth book in the Love Comes Softly series by Janette Oke. Although it is part of a series, the book does well as a stand-alone story. Any significant background information needed to understand what is happening in this story is given to the reader through conversations between characters or Belinda's personal thoughts.

The book is divided into twenty-five chapters. The average length of a chapter is nine pages. The story is told through about 75 percent exposition and 25 percent dialogue. The story is told in a linear fashion with no flashbacks. Much of the information from previous novels that the reader needs to understand this novel are given through Belinda's conversations with other characters and through her own remembered thoughts and circumstances.



Quotes

"Her people, her family, were the reason her yearning thoughts so often turned toward home. And thinking of them, as lately she seemed to do almost constantly, her heart ached for a chance to be a part of their lives again" (Stirrings, p. 10-11).

"'Aye,' the old man nodded. 'Tis my thanks to ye fer bein' so kind to m'lady'" (Stirrings, p. 15).

"No, she told herself, it isn't the flower—pretty as it is. It is a person who has brought joy to my heart. Thomas. A dear old man—just a gardener in some folks' thinking—but a beautiful person" (Stirrings, p. 16).

"Oh, she knew others her own age might pity her, being 'stuck in a houseful of the elderly,' but Belinda didn't feel shut in, restless, and forgotten. Not since she had given God the proper recognition in her life" (Stirrings, p. 16).

"'You know, one gets to thinking sometimes that one is really of no worth at all. Life could just go right on without you, and no one would scarcely notice.' She sighed, then went on. 'Heah I lie day aftah day, no good to anyone. And then . . . then a deah old friend, a gardenah, shows you he cares'" (Aunt Virgie, p. 20).

"And though lately she seemed more interested in matters of faith, she never expressed to Belinda her true thoughts on the subject" (Plans, p. 24).

"Seeing the color gradually return to the older woman's face, Belinda realized just how much it meant to her to have Belinda's company here in the big, lonely house" (Plans, p. 34).

"There had been a time when Mrs. Prescott had assumed Belinda to be unnecessary and ill-equipped to care for the well-being of her dear friend, Virginia Stafford-Smyth" (Homeward Bound, p. 36).

"It was nice to come home and find so many things - and people - unchanged" (Seeing Pa, p. 54).

"But after three years the bed seemed reluctant to mold to her unfamiliar form, and tired as she was, the clock downstairs had chimed twice before Belinda was finally able to forget the events of the day and settle down to sleep" (Seeing Pa, p. 59).

"Belinda had never been conscious of fashion before living in Boston, and even during her time there, she had been unaware that she had developed an eye for style" (Adjustments, p. 61).

"You don't fit. You don't fit, her shoes seemed to squeak with each step that Belinda took along the path back to the big house. She had a hard time to keep from running" (Memories, p. 76).



"She was especially anxious for every scrap of information she could gather about Amy Jo and Melissa. Without consciously realizing it, she found herself expecting that the two girls would still be there at the farm, now that she was home" (Return to Boston, p. 79).

"So it seemed like the only thing to do was to make myself a new place, a new 'fit.' One of my very own. And I set to work doing that. I feel quite comfortable in my little spot now . . . and Abbie and the kids, they seem happy, too" (Return to Boston, p. 83).

"But Belinda could not help feeling that the woman did not really capture the true significance of the Christian faith. Mrs. Stafford-Smyth seemed to feel that if one tried to be good—was more good than sinful—then hopefully God's scales would tip in the person's favor" (An Exciting Event, p. 97).

"You must allow her the honor of dignity, miss. Even in her dying" (The Bend in the Road, p. 112).

"I'll do as Luke said, she decided. I'll find a new spot for myself. I may not fit where I once was, but I need to find my roots again. I'll find a new place of service. It might take me a while to sort it all out— but with God's help, I'll do it" (The Bend in the Road, p. 113-114).

"This is not to be an 'albatross' but a means for ministering" (Decisions, p. 121).

"Belinda stood looking down into the empty fireplace. Ashes, she thought. Only ashes where once there was a warm and living flame. It's rather symbolic. Oh, I miss her" (Dinner, p.135).

"She would do it because she didn't want to lose all the worthwhile things her small-town roots had given her. Family. Deep friendships. Faith. Love. Acceptance. A regard for fellowmen not based on position or possessions. Belinda longed to return to the simple absolutes that had framed her growing up years" (Arrangements, p. 154).

"Is it possible, she finally allowed herself to wonder, that after all this time Drew might still feel something for me? Is it possible that I still feel something for him" (Friendship p. 163).

"When she was well enough to travel on home, she asked me to accompany her. I did because I was...well, bored, I guess, and had never seen anything but our little town" (The Concert, pg. 175).

"Drew politely followed Belinda on the guided tour. The more he saw, the more dejected he became" (Disappointment, p. 183).

"Drew would be coming in the morning to greet his mother and brother. Belinda could foresee another heart-wrenching day - the emotional trap to keep her here in Boston at odds with her desire to return to her roots" (Disappointment, p. 188).



"And on December 21, a marvelous thing happened. A retired minister and his wife came to the manor. Their home had been destroyed by fire and they had no means to rebuild. Belinda sorrowed for their loss, but she felt the couple was God's answer to her prayers" (Final Preparations, p. 194).

"'You know, you are really something,' he said quietly. 'Who else but you would take this...this beautiful inheritance and...and share it with a whole houseful of other people? You amaze me, Belinda. You are the most unselfish person I've ever met'" (Christmas, p. 205).

"I was waiting for you! Belinda's heart cried, though she made no comment. I know that now...but I didn't know it then" (Farewell, p. 212).

"Maybe the clothes will be washed and the rooms cleaned, but that doesn't mean that you aren't needed. You make this place seem...more like a home...to all of us" (Farewell, p. 215).

"Belinda was touched. 'You see, m'lady,' and Windsor leaned forward slightly in a confidential way, 'I've never told this to a living soul before, but...I loved her, too. Always!'" (Farewell, p. 219).



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the relationship between Mrs. Stafford-Smyth and Belinda.

What are some of the things that bother Belinda while she is at home visiting her parents?

Why is Belinda torn between her desire to stay in Boston and her desire to stay at home?

Why does Belinda not choose to stay in Boston and handle Mrs. Stafford-Smyth's house herself?

Under what circumstances do Belinda and Drew meet in Boston? What causes the end of their relationship in Boston?

How is the rose that Thomas gives Belinda on the day she leaves to return to her hometown significant?

How does lack of communication affect the characters in this book?