

The Last Good Paradise Study Guide

The Last Good Paradise by Tatjana Soli

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Plot Summary

Note: The page numbers in this guide refer to *The Last Good Paradise*, First Edition.

In *The Last Good Paradise*, by Tatjana Soli, Ann and Richard are married and living in Los Angeles. They are attempting to live society's version of the American Dream. Ann is a successful lawyer, looking to become a partner in the firm. Richard wants to make it big in the culinary field. He is currently in the midst of opening a new restaurant with his friend, the charismatic Ravi. Richard does not know that Ravi is Ann's former lover.

On the surface, the life shared by Ann and Richard looks great. However, behind the scenes, both face frustration. Ann hates her job, and Richard stresses over the struggle of opening a restaurant. As a couple, they want to have a child. So far, that has not happened.

Things get worse when Ann and Richard find out that Ravi has risked the money that Ann had invested in the business venture. Richard and Ann could lose their entire life savings. When Ann finds out that the court might block access to their bank account because of Ravi's actions, she withdraws all of the couple's money. She and Richard escape to an island resort with no means of communication. They are disconnecting from the rest of the world. Once there, they meet others who are attempting to escape something in their own lives. Fellow guests include Dex, Wende, Cooked, Titi, and Loren. Dex is the aging lead singer of a rock group that is past its prime, and Wende is his much younger muse. Cooked and Titi are island natives who act as a caretaker, a housekeeper, and a cook. Loren is an exiled Frenchman, who won the resort in a poker game. He is terminally ill with AIDS.

Ann soon becomes Loren's muse. She keeps him company and helps him find his daughter. She also promises Loren to help Cooked and Titi with the resort after he dies. Richard becomes the muse of Dex. He also gains Titi's trust in her kitchen. She even lets him cook in it alone.

During this period, Ann and Richard face various problems and misunderstandings as a couple: Richard thinks that Ann is having an affair with Loren, and Ann knows that Richard finds Wende attractive. Both Ann and Richard think that the other is about to leave. Both struggle with their professional lives. By the end of the novel, however, their bond is tighter than ever. Furthermore, they are living the American dream on their own terms.

Their island companions also find answers. Dex starts writing songs and reunites with his lead guitarist to create a new album. Wende agrees to marry Dex, but she does so on her own terms. Cooked and Titi get married and become owners of the resort, thus ensuring a better life for their children. In death, Loren reunites with his daughter.

Loren forbids using technology on the island. However, by the end of the novel, all of the guests are using the Internet and cell phones. No one seems to mind. Everyone has

learned that people have a need to connect. Running away to an island does not lessen that need.



Section 1, Porca Miseria! Pig of Misery! - Unnamed Atoll Somewhere in the Tuamotu Archipelago (Part 1 - 18)

Summary

In *The Last Good Paradise*, by Tatjana Soli, Ann and Richard, an up-and-coming couple in Los Angeles, are chasing power and success. Ann is working toward being a high-profile lawyer, and Richard wants to be a famous chef.

The book opens with Ann winning an arbitration settlement on her birthday. Afterward, she goes into an office and stuffs herself with candy bars, even though she knows her husband would disapprove of it. She takes off most of her clothes that cover a body full of hormones she uses to try to get pregnant. Then, she pulls out a book that she reads portions of as a reward. Voices interrupt her. They think that she is ruthless, but she says that she is not. She is only trying to be a big fish. She hopes that things will get better.

At the same time, Richard is at the restaurant he has just opened with his big-spending partner, Ravi. He is putting off calls from creditors and trying to figure out what to do with the newly delivered rabbits. Then, Ravi shows up with an expensive car. He convinces Richard to take a spin with him. The two end up spending the afternoon at another restaurant. When they return, Ravi deals with the rabbits, as Richard cannot deal with raw meat. Richard focuses on the cake.

Ann comes to the restaurant. Richard has sent Ravi away. While he is gone, she and Richard make love. Ravi returns. The three of them have dinner. Suddenly, there are no lights. At first, Richard thinks that a fuse might be the problem. However, the next morning, he finds out that the utility company has turned off the electricity because of an unpaid bill. There is another problem. Ravi's ex-wife has taken legal action against Ravi, which could freeze the restaurant's bank account. She has taken the action because Ravi's spending habits made her think that he is hiding money from her.

Richard tells Ann, and she confirms that the action is legal. Then, she withdraws their money before the bank freezes the account. She consults an old law school friend of hers who gives her advice. Part of the advice is to disappear. She and Richard go to a remote Polynesian island. The resort has no Internet, cell phones, or electricity. It does have an expensive price for accommodations. The finest sheets are on the beds.

A man named Loren, who won the island in a poker game, is their host. A musician and his muse and an author and his wife are also guests at the resort.



Analysis

This section introduces several of the novel's main characters. It also sets up the theme of following one's passion. Neither Ann nor Richard is happy, even though the couple seems to have followed the perfect plan to success. However, in following that plan, Ann did not follow her passion. Instead, she did what her family expected and became a lawyer. She is good at her job, but she hates it. Her relationship with her husband seems strained. Much to her husband's dismay, Ann stuffs herself with chocolate bars.

Some of Richard's problems arise because he is losing his confidence. His wife invests her money to make the restaurant happen. Richard's partner is a friend named Ravi. Ravi has the personality and talent to make them famous. Richard, on the other hand, cannot even cook meat. He loves to cook, but the pressure to be more than just a good chef is too much for him. As a result, he suffers physically from the effects of stress.

To add to Richard's stress, Ravi is irresponsible. He runs up bills, lies to his ex-wife, and puts Ann's investment at risk. This risk causes Ann to withdraw all of the money from the bank before the account is frozen. Then, she and Richard go to an island.

Moving to an island is similar to trying to buy happiness. Ann now has the chance to leave a job she does not like and start a new life. Richard goes along because he has no choice. Richard usually goes along with Ann's choices. Since neither Ann nor Richard is happy, the island seems like the perfect place for escaping their lives in Los Angeles. The island can provide a chance for renewal, too.

Discussion Question 1

Ann wants to be a big fish. How are her actions during the meeting similar to those of a predator?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Ann wants a baby?

Discussion Question 3

What do the reactions of Anne and Richard to their situation tell you about their characters? Do you think the two are compatible as a couple? Justify with textual evidence.



Vocabulary

sybaritic, leeches, arbitration, degradation, detrimental, abysmally, procreation, sarcophagus, antiseptic, votive, psychopathic, maudlin, parlance, litigation, vendettas, mortification, rogue, castaway, billowing, estranged



Section 2, Unnamed Atoll Somewhere in the Tuamotu Archipelago (Part 19 - End)

Summary

Section 2 begins with the guests on the island getting to know each other. Dex asks Ann about her job. She ignores the question, but Richard answers for Ann and himself. Ann can only think about lawyer jokes. Dex shows interest when he finds out that Richard is a chef. Richard talks about the restaurant, and Dex promises to visit the restaurant. To gain publicity for the restaurant, he will bring along reporters.

Dex thinks that he has met Ann before. She denies it. Ann gets to know more about Wende when they have a private conversation. As they talk, she realizes that she has misjudged Wende. Wende seems to be more together than she had first thought. Wende tells Ann that she can tell that Richard loves her and that he is afraid that she will leave him. Ann thinks that her words are reassuring, but she does not really believe what Wende says.

The writer and his wife leave the next morning. Ann gets a note from Ravi saying that Lorna bailed him out of jail and that he is thinking about asking her out. Ann tells Richard that the note is from Ravi. In the note, Ravi says not to worry. Later that morning, Cooked offers to take everyone snorkeling. Everyone agrees to go, except for Ann. Before they leave, Wende orders a take-out breakfast. Titi makes one for her, but she spits in it while preparing it.

Once out in the water, Richard discovers that he loves being there and even wishes that he could be a fish, albeit one that it not going to be cooked at his restaurant. While he is in the water, the narrative goes back to an incident with Chloe, the woman who had taught him how to cook French food. The incident taught him that food was not enough to ensure love and that there was always the possibility of a second chance. The narrative flashes back to when Richard met Ravi in culinary school and when Richard started dating Ann.

The group continues to go snorkeling on the days that follow. Ann continues to stay behind. One day Loren mentions to Ann that her credit card payment was denied. The incident spurs the two going on a picnic together. During the excursion, Loren cuts himself. He will not let Ann help him. When Ann sees sores on Loren, she realizes that he has AIDS. She had seen the same type sores during a legal case. When Loren does not come out of his room the next morning, Ann goes to him. The two talk and drink together. Richard peeks his head in and sees Ann on Loren's bed. When he asks Ann what was going on, she gives a cryptic answer.

The narrative returns to the past to tell Loren's back story. He had been married and had two children. He had tried to get custody of his daughters when his ex-wife married



a violent man. When he was not awarded custody, he kidnapped the girls. Finally, the police took his daughters, and he was jailed. One night playing poker, he won the resort.

After a week on the island, Ann is more relaxed. During one of her days on the beach alone, the narrative goes back to the time she had an affair with Ravi. The affair happened because Ann had thought that Richard was cheating on her. Her thought was based on something told to her by Ravi. When the story returns to the present, Ann goes to a spot on the island that she thinks is isolated. She finds a camera there. She confronts Loren and finds out that the camera is a form of art that shows the experience of being on the island. People tune in just to look at the beach. It is also a memorial for someone, whose name is not given.

Analysis

This section gives readers a closer look at the novel's major characters. By doing so, it explores the themes of following your passion, cultural diversity, the ability to have a second chance, and self-discovery.

Ann's interactions mirror her dislike of her job, her sense of humanity, and her role in her marriage to Richard. For example, she dislikes being identified as a lawyer so much that instead of answering Dex when he asks what she does for a living, she thinks of how people characterize lawyers through lawyer jokes. She comes up with so many that they take up a page in the novel. Still, readers can see how her training is part of her. When she notices the sores on Loren's body, she realizes that he has AIDS because of a previous legal case. Her treatment of him afterwards shows that she is a caring person. She looks for him when he does not come out the next morning, and she keeps his secret. She realizes what he really needs, as she cryptically tells Richard, and gives it to him. Her self-assurance and strength allows her to do this, even when Loren protests. He does not want her attention. She's sure enough of herself, though, to continue.

In terms of her marriage, Ann takes control. She keeps information from Richard, such as what Ravi wrote in his note to her. More significantly, she does not tell him that Ravi is in jail in Los Angeles or that she has had an affair with Ravi. She also does not tell him why she was on Loren's bed. Instead of coming up with a reason that would have reassured Richard, her silence feeds his insecurities. On one hand, she tries to protect Richard. Then, she abuses him in a manner that shows her power over him. She can make him think she is having an affair, but she does not need to worry about him with Wende. She does not think he could ever go through with sleeping with Wende.

When it comes to his job, Richard loves it and readily embraces the fact that it defines him. He talks to Dex about it and even talks about the restaurant as if nothing is wrong with it. Ann is always trying to become a partner and does not want to talk about her job. As much as Richard loves food and cooking, he admits that no one ever mentioned how to make money when you follow your passion. Also, they did not mention that it would



require a lot of hard work. In terms of Ann's help, he feels as if he should not have taken money from her. He feels guilty. He had not let himself relax before coming to the resort.

His memories of Chloe and the fact that her husband left her, in spite of her good cooking, show that he knows that food alone is not enough to keep love. He also sees Chloe's situation. The fact that she tried to commit suicide but ended up finding a new love is proof that one can always have a second chance. The section paints Richard as someone, who, as he himself says, had hustled, but had done so in bliss. In his bliss, he thought that Ann was not aware of Ravi's presence.

When Richard thinks that Ann is having an affair with Loren, a small transformation starts to take place inside of him. He decides to go against the grain and flirts with Wende. He even tells her that he cooks. Cooking is not enough for Wende. Wende's rejection makes him aware that her type would never show an interest in him.

Loren's character is also explored in this section. Ann's discovery shows that much about Loren's persona is just an act. The back story about his children shows that he is a caring man. It's ironic that Loren ends up loving Ann, but it is not in the lustful way people assume.

Concerning Wende, she is not an innocent groupie. She is very perceptive. She does not respect people on the island. She comes down late, misses breakfast, and expects Titi to cook something for her. Wende does not make her request nicely. Titi, who is the member of a royal family there, spits in her food. The actions of Wende and Titi are inexcusable. Wende's action is evidence of the existence of cultural racism, and Titi's reaction is disgusting.

Discussion Question 1

Everyone on the island is trying to escape from something or someone. Is it possible these days to totally go undercover? Was it ever possible to do so? Explain your response.

Discussion Question 2

In your opinion, was it right for Titi to spit on Wende's pancakes? Justify your response. Why do you think she did it?

Discussion Question 3

When Richard asked Ann what she was doing in Loren's room, why did she give an ambiguous answer? Was her response appropriate? Support your answer.

Vocabulary

truncated, disdain, puritanical, prudish, piqued, aberrations, precursors, lecherous, cadaverous, mortified, appraising, ravenous, transcendent, futilely, communed, implication, nymphet, avant-garde, incongruity, burgeoning



Section 3, Rock 'n' Roll Will Save Your Life (Part 1 - 30)

Summary

"Rock 'n' Roll Will Save Your Life" begins with the backstory of Dex. Dex had gotten into music because he wanted to attract girls. His musical ability was the perfect outlet for someone like him who was a misfit at school and at home. The six months before his arrival had not been enjoyable. The band had been on tour, but they were always fighting. For the first time in 21 years, playing music felt like a job. Dex had lost track of how much time he had spent on the island.

At this point, the narrative returns to present day. Wende and Ann go with Cooked on a shopping trip in town. While they are there, Ann gets a partial tattoo of a shark. When Wende and Cooked go on a tour for a few hours, Ann finds a cafe and drinks some wine. She worries that she is becoming reckless when she realizes that she was not supposed to drink alcohol right after getting her tattoo. While sitting at the cafe, she thinks about Richard and realizes that she still loves him. She wonders if that is enough. She also feels bad that she is not daring enough to leave everything behind as the famous painter Gauguin had done. She thinks that men can drop everything and start again, but women cannot do that. She still thinks of herself as an associate at her law firm, but a lowly one. Ann grows sad as she thinks about returning to the law office. She also wonders whether she is taking out her anger on Richard. She admits to herself that they need to go back to Los Angeles or move forward soon.

Meanwhile, Wende goes to the home of Cooked. The two have sex. Afterward, she wants to ask him whether it is normal to bring a tourist home for sex in the afternoon, but she does not want to appear too imperialistic. As they eat, Cooked tells her that he is a revolutionary. Wende thinks about how she wants to experience the authentic life of the villagers. Cooked tells her about the injustices his people face with economic inequality and nuclear testing. The revolutionary side of Cooked makes him sexy to Wendy. Initially, she had been attracted to him, but he seemed boring. That is changing. The two of them have sex again.

Back at the resort, Richard stays with Dex as he recreates a song that had come to him the previous day. As he writes, Richard realizes that Dex has the magic. When he is done, Dex says that the current song is better than the old one.

When the girls return to the resort, everyone knows that Wende and Cooked have slept with each other. This angers Titi. She has been promised to Cooked since she was a child. He has had casual relationships with tourists before, but they never came to his home. That was taboo and bad for business.



Mealtime comes, and Titi serves the food wearing Wende's pendant. Wende protests when she sees it. Titi gives her a snide remark, saying that she thought they were sharing everything. Dex wants to share his new song with his guitarist, Robby. Ann retrieves the phone Ravi had sent earlier. Robby records the song.

Later, Dex finds out that Robby has betrayed him by talking badly about him. The group is dissolved. Robbie, however, has the new song by Dex. Since it was created under the umbrella of the group, he has licensing control over it. When Ann explains this to Dex, Dex says that Richard had said she was a "cold one."

When Dex decides that he wants to go back to Los Angeles, Richard thinks that he is ready to go back, too. However, he does not go when the rest of them board the boat.

Wende has stopped looking like the hot muse. It took a lot of time to pull it off anyway. She leaves for the boat with Dex and Cooked. Dex had proposed to her. They are in the water when Ann sees Wende stand up. She is holding the small valise they had taken aboard the boat. Wende falls overboard. Ann gets everyone's attention. They save Wende and come back to shore. The valise is gone.

Analysis

This section provides readers with an insight into characters Dex, Titi, and Wende. It also further explores the themes of following your passion, self-discovery, and cultural diversity.

The background of Dex helps explain his insecurities. He was a misfit in school. His older brother was the star in his family. The one thing he had was musical talent. Since girls like musicians, he chose that path. In his case, it was not a calling that told him music was the thing he needed to follow. In this respect, he is unlike Richard who felt drawn to the culinary field. Still, Dex is good at what he does. Richard realizes just how good as he watches Dex compose his song. Dex, however, does not have faith in his abilities because no one, except fans, ever validated him. He knows that fans are fickle. Dex is passionate about music. Writing songs and performing had never felt like work, until recently. Like many creative people, he deals with his art, but not the business side. He thinks that Ann is cold when she tells him the importance of signing the right business contracts and paying attention to what he does from a legal side. If he had, he would not have faced Robby's betrayal.

It is interesting that Dex had followed his calling, even though his parents did not approve of it. He was a success, even though he felt insecure. Ann had followed her father's wishes. She did not do it exactly they way he would have liked because she had gone to a different school so that she could take care of her sick mother. Nevertheless, she allowed her father to influence her choice. Ann is good at what she does, but she hates her job. She feels she did not have any other choice but to follow the path she took because she is a woman. As a man, Dex had a choice. In the end, both of them are successful, but neither is truly happy.



The only person who is happy following his passion is Richard, when he practices it on his terms. Even though he cannot cook every kind of food, he is still confident about his culinary skills.

Looking at Richard and Dex, one can see that there are two types of people who follow their passion. There are those who do it for pure reasons and those who have an ulterior motive. In the end, both may have problems along the way. However, those who do it with pure intentions will enjoy the journey more. Richard lives in bliss, while Dex lives with insecurity.

A lot of betrayal goes on in this section. Robby betrays Dex, just as Ravi betrays Richard and Ann. Robby knows that Dex is a magical song writer. Ravi knows that Richard and Ann provided the funds to back the restaurant. Yet, both Robby and Ravi try to discredit their partners for their own benefit. This is another commentary on following a passion. Once creativity becomes a business, corporate rules apply. Dex and Richard may think that Ann is cold, but someone must look after the dreamy creatives.

Wende betrays both Dex and Titi. Up to this point in the story, it seemed that she was a smart, innocent girl trying to find herself. Now, she appears calculating. Wende has spent a lot of time and money creating her look. She's ready to transform into something else. How authentic is her desire to find a cause? Is she just interested in an action-packed life and will be with anyone who gives it to her? In other words, is she just an opportunist and a hypocrite? She's willing to fight against those who are harming the islands, yet she takes advantage of the islanders herself. She repays Titi's hospitality and hard work by sleeping with her fiance. Earlier, she ordered breakfast from her as if she were a servant. She wants to ask Cooked if he always takes female tourists to his home, but she doesn't want to seem like an imperialist. She wants to live in an authentic way, yet she lives in luxury at the resort. Her main complaint is boredom. She does not seem concerned that living at the resort is not an authentic lifestyle. In truth, she is just as bad as the people she and Cooked want to fight. She is using him to get her "authentic vacation" and to have fun. It is easy for Wende to play a game and then leave. It is different for Cooked and Titi. Cooked could end up in jail, and his behavior could ruin the resort.

This section shares how "paradise" is for the real inhabitants. Cooked tells Wende they are wage slaves and victims of radiation testing. He does not want this for his kids. However, he is weak in his resolve. He is impressed by the attention he gets from the women who are part of the group he is supposed to hate.

Titi, on the other hand, is wise. She stays true to the island's traditions, and she remains loyal to Cooked. The foreigners do not lead her astray, and she stands up to Wende and anyone else who mistreats her. She even stops cooking. As food is a symbol of love and togetherness, the rift is serious when she stops feeding her guests.



Discussion Question 1

What do you think would have happened to Dex if he had not found success with music? How important do you think he is to the band? Support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Of the the three women, Ann, Titi, and Wende, whom do you like the best why? With whom do you most identify? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Ann suggests that Richard cook them a meal. Why you think she does this? Is it good for Richard or is she manipulating him? Explain your answer.

Vocabulary

refuge, astronomical, categorically, conquistadors, pyrotechnics, renunciation, capricious, obsolescence, egomaniac, reprieve, coddling, infuriated, unequivocal, jealousies, splayed, licensing, communal, zealously, incarnation, perpetual



Section 4, Rock 'n' Roll Will Save Your Life (Part 31 - End)

Summary

In the second half of the chapter "Rock 'n' Roll Will Save Your Life," a strong storm descends on the island. As everyone goes to higher ground, Richard protects Ann. Later, Ann says that she has never been so hungry in her life. Richard responds by saying "food." When Dex expresses the wish to record what he is feeling, Ann shows them the web camera that records the beach in an effort to keep them from wanting to leave. Against Ann's wishes, they build a bonfire.

The group finds an angry Loren upon their return. The number of hits on the web cam's link has spiked, but that is not relevant. It is no longer pure. Loren later tells Ann that it was for his daughter Lilou. He had hoped that she had been watching it all along. He tells Ann the story of what had happened to his children. He also tells her that Titi had told him that Wende and Cooked had planned to bomb the main hotel.

Ann gets up the next morning and finds Dex and Wende at the beach with the web camera. There is another bonfire. Dex starts burning his latest song. He thinks that the sinking of the boat was a sign that he needs to stay on the island. His statement makes Wende mad. She says that he does not appreciate his gift of music. Now that he is involved other people, throwing it away is not an option. She also defends Robby. Dex had planned to leave Robby to go out on his own a few years ago. Unfortunately, Robbie does not have the advantage of a trust fund to back him up. After Wende leaves, Ann and Dex talk. Dex tells her about his father and his brother. Ann admits that she had misjudged him. She likes him, and she likes that they met. She finds that she is attracted to him as she had been attracted to Ravi. Before anything can happen, Wende comes back. Ann leaves.

After lunch, Dex writes a summary of his past marriages and wonders whether he truly loves Wende. He leaves the summary for her to read. He goes out and then returns to write the song again. However, he is not inspired. He looks for the person who is his new muse, Richard. He finds him cooking. Richard is already tiring of being Dex's muse, but he agrees to help him if he agrees to be a sous chef for him. Dex agrees. As they work, Richard wants to know what it is like to be on stage. Dex only talks about how it felt during the good times. Then, he tells Richard that it is like loving the right woman and Richard should know about that.

When Ann returns after the interaction with Dex, she uses her legal skills and intervenes in areas that no one else would have. She goes to talk to Wende who is upset because she thinks Dex is settling for her. It was supposed to be the other way around. They talk about the plans of Cooked. Wende wants Ann to get Loren to forgive Cooked. Titi wants the same. Ann goes to talk to Loren who tells her that he is leaving the resort to Cooked



and Titi so that they will settle down and get married. He thinks that Cooked will give up his revolutionary ideas once he has something to lose.

Loren announces his plan at dinner. Richard wants to prepare the wedding feast, but Titi's family must do that. He is allowed to make the cake. Cooked is not happy because he feels as if he is betraying his people. As they talk, they come up with a plan to recast the story Cooked wants to tell.

Titi calls her family and invites people to the wedding, Richard emails Ravi to tell him that he feels guilty for enjoying everything while he cannot do the same and that he will be making the wedding cake. Loren talks to Steve, who is mad that he is leaving the island to Titi and Cooked. He says that they need professionals to run it.

The plan that Wende comes up with to recast the cause of Cooked is to make it look as if Dex was kidnapped by a lost Polynesian cannibal tribe. They think that they will just use it as a PR vehicle to bring attention to the situation. It snowballs and becomes big news. The American and French governments get involved. In the end, they make it look as if Cooked had negotiated the release of Dex. Cooked makes a speech stating his cause. As he does so, he understands why this way is better than violence. Titi had already told him this fact. During the whole speech, Ravi arrives.

Analysis

This section addresses the themes of self- reflection and self-discovery. Dex takes the time to think about his past and his present. He also tries to warn Wende about what she is getting into by marrying him. In addition, he realizes that she is no longer his muse. The muse is now Richard. Ann finally admits that the two of them had met. She also shares what had happened. Dex tells her about his family.

Ann is using the skills she used at the law firm to intervene in areas that no one else would have been brave enough to do. In fact, everyone comes to her to get things done. Both Titi and Wende turn to her. Wende goes so far as to say that Loren will listen to her because she is his muse. In addition to intervening, she offers her legal services. She tells Dex that she will draw up a prenuptial agreement if he and Wende get married. Even though Ann is discovering that she relishes using her skills, she shows her weakness during the storm and allows Richard to shelter her. When the storm is over, she says the words he needs to hear, "I've never been so hungry." His response is the word food, which symbolizes love to him.

Wende, who has been looking for her own turn around, has now found it as the director of a public relations film by Cooked. It is interesting that everyone is at the resort to recover from the choices they made in life and the stress that it eventually caused them. Wende is young and just starting out, but she is already adopting a hard, Machiavellian-like stance. Will she be like the rest of them when she gets older?

The willingness of Dex to throw away his work so easily symbolizes throwing away a natural gift. Wende points this out to Dex, and this raises the question of whether or not



a person should try to figure out how to use whatever gift they possess. Is it wrong to squander it in any way? Using it may involve applying it in its purest form; or, the gift might need to be incorporated in another way.

The themes of cultural diversity and racism are exemplified in this section. Wende continues to use Cooked for her benefit. In her own way, she is exploiting him just as much as the foreigners they are fighting against. While she does have an interest in the cause, she is doing it to promote herself. In the end, it becomes her film, and she takes it seriously. She does not pay the actors herself. Ann does.

Steve shows the racism of the Westerners. He does not even want to give Titi and Cooked a chance. He automatically assumes that they won't be professional enough to run the resort. Both had gone to college, only leaving to help Loren. Yet, he acts as if they have no brains.

Discussion Question 1

The first wife of Dex was scared of the band's success. Do you think that Dex would have been happier and had fewer wives if the band had not become so successful?

Discussion Question 2

Ann offers and uses her legal skills often in this section. How do you think she feels about using her skills? Has anything changed since the beginning of the novel? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Cooked does not want his children to be slaves to a wage paying job. However, he feels as if he is selling out if he takes over the resort. Titi is happy with owning the resort. Do your feelings mirror those of Cooked or Titi? Give reasons for your answer.

Vocabulary

pelted, sequestered, attenuated, camaraderie, taskmaster, repercussions, commandeering, seminal, marooned, reconnaissance, copious, calamities, pathological, narcissist, absurdity, somnolent, enthralling, libidinous, anarchic, scrupulously, expunged



Section 5, Fare Tini Atua

Summary

In the chapter "Fare Tini Atua," the boat travels toward the nuclear testing island. Titi is glad that Cooked had been sent off well. She notices Richard and Ravi physically fighting on the beach. The reason for the fight had occurred earlier. When he arrived, Ravi asked Richard where Ann was going. When Richard told him, Ravi told Richard that he loved Ann and that she should have left Richard years ago.

The narrative switches to the outrigger. When they first left the resort, Cooked had felt brave. He begins to feel fear again. The group continues with their plan. The police intercept them as they approach the island and take them into custody. While the police hold them, Robby shows up with lawyers to help them. Ann feels pride when Dex tells him to wait for them on the other island as he has his own lawyer. Before Robby goes, Cooked escapes from the police trawler. Robby picks him up, and the police release Dex and Ann.

Everyone treats Cooked as a hero when the group returns to the resort. Titi welcomes him and tells him that she is proud of him. Titi and Cooked know that everyone expects them to fail when they start running the resort. Then, they will sell the property for a cheap price. Titi says not to worry about that now. She tells him that he is her hero.

Ann does not get the same welcome from Richard. He confronts her about her affair with Ravi. He decides to leave her, and it is not because of the affair. He knows his role in the culinary world. He could not live if he disappointed Ann.

As the wedding party continues, Dex and Robbie start rehearsing for a benefit concert that is Wende's idea. She thinks that it will breathe new life into her production. The concert will donate money to radiation victims and start a legal fund for victims who want to sue the government. Ann gets Wende to finish her shark tattoo.

Titi and Cooked finally get married. During the ceremony, Richard lets Ann take his hand. His cake is so good that Ann knows that he has reached his inner peace. She tells him that it is good. He tells her that he had sex with Wendy, which is a lie.

After the ceremony, Loren asks Ann to try to find his daughter, Lilou, for him. Completing assignments quickly is another one of her skills. She finds Lilou and talks to her, but Lilou ends the conversation saying that Ann was kind to have called. Later, Loren asks Ann to promise that she will help Cooked and Titi. He knows that everyone will be going after them.

After all the wedding guests leave, Loren says that he needs to see Steve. Before he leaves, he goes to the beach that has the web camera. He holds up a message for Lilou. Then, he gets a dive boat from Steve and commits suicide. On the same day, Lilou arrives. When they cannot find Loren, they send out a search party. Quickly, they



realize that he is dead. Cooked and Richard are the ones who find the dive boat. While they are on the site, sharks appear. Cooked tells Richard about the belief that the souls of their ancestors are in the sharks. The sharks are either protecting them or welcoming Loren. As everyone thinks of Loren as family, the wedding party comes back for his funeral. Ann creates a drawing in the sand to send him off. Steve comes, too, but only to try to get the resort.

After the funeral, Ann and Richard reconcile. Lilou learns things about Loren that she never knew. Titi admits that she burned the letters Liolu had written to Loren because she was afraid that he would ignore her if Lilou came back into his life. Lilou sees her father in a new light and says that it makes all the difference. She is proud to be his daughter.

Richard and Dex have a conversation about their business partners. Then, Robby and Dex conduct an interview announcing their next album.

After dinner, everyone starts to pack. Titi tells Ann that she is pregnant. Ann also finds out that Cooked can paint and that Loren had given him lessons, Loren was so mad at Cooked because Cooked was squandering his gift. Titi gives Ann a painting of Loren on the beach.

Everyone lets Ravi cook the last meal on the island, but it is a disaster. Richard steals the live pig that is to be their meal. The meal makes everyone sick.

When the boat arrives to take everyone back to the main island, Steve asks if he can get some lunch. Richard asks Ravi to fix it. While he eats, Steve tries to bully Cooked and Titi about the resort. Once again, Ann steps in and tells Steve that she is the resort's legal counsel and that the resort is booked for the next five years. The bookings are due to the appearance of Dex on the live web cam. She breaks the news that she is not leaving the island. This is good news to Richard, who wants to stay, too..

Analysis

This section wraps up the characters' stories. It demonstrates how each has come to terms with a personal path that works. Cooked succeeds in bringing attention to his cause without violence. He comes to see the value of words, something that will help him as co-owner of the resort. He also settles down and marries Titi. As Loren's life ends, there is new life beginning with the baby being carried by Titi. Cooked wants a different future for his child. The novel ends on a hopeful note that he will get his wish.

Running the resort will present a challenge for Titi, but it is something she wants. With the help of Ann and Richard, it is more than likely that she will be fine.

Dex accepts that he needs Robby. Robby seems to accept that he needs Dex. Robby comes to help Dex, and the two perform the benefit concert. Then, they return to Los Angeles to start a new album. They know their place in the music industry and accept it without opposition. Opposition and fighting had only depressed them in the past. Now



that Dex has assessed his previous marriages, he may be a better husband. Wende has come a long way from being just a muse. She is now a budding director. Even though she agrees to marry Dex, she does it on her terms.

Loren dies, but his memory leaves a strong impression on Lilou. She says that she is proud to be his daughter.

Richard and Ravi part ways. Since they want totally different things, this is how it must be. After all that has happened between the two, Ravi accepts his new role while on the island. He cooks for Steve when Richard asks him to do so. When he leaves, he tells them to accept his calls next time. Ravi may not have changed much, but he has the necessary personality to survive in Los Angeles.

Ann finds her place as the legal counsel for the resort, and she is proud of it. Richard has found his place in the resort's kitchen. Both of them have found their place with each other.

There is another example of someone squandering their talent. Cooked, who can paint; chooses to do nothing with his artistic gift. His case is different from the case of Dex. The only person who knows about his talent of Cooked is Loren. This brings in the theme of pursuing a passion. If a person has a talent that is not a passion for them, should the talent lie dormant? Should it be treated as a hobby?

The themes of cultural diversity and racism appear in this section. Steve is still trying to get the resort from Titi and Cooked. The only person he will listen to is another Westerner, Ann. For Titi and Cooked to succeed, a shark like Ann will have to be there to protect them and keep danger at bay.

Discussion Question 1

Ravi tells Richard he loves Ann. Do you think that is a true statement? Give textual support for your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Loren chooses to end his own life. In your opinion, is this the right decision for Loren? Justify your response.

Discussion Question 3

How does the drawing Ann sends Loren off with differ from the one the two of them drew at the beginning of the novel? What do you think is behind the change?

Vocabulary

migration, quenched, tailspin, denotation, disreputable, imperturbable, perverse, contemplated, congregation, emancipation, haranguing, dismembered, forlornly, concession, sublime, debauchery, err, oblivious, effervescent



Characters

Ann

Ann is the novel's central character. She is from a family of lawyers. She has continued the tradition. Her mother, however, exposed her to a different world that excited Ann. Thus, deep down, she wants to leave the law firm she works for and become an artist. She has put her desire on hold to help her husband, Richard, achieve his dream of opening a restaurant.

The beginning of the novel paints a picture of a strong, smart, and successful woman. The opening scene shows that she is very intelligent. It also displays her shark-like tendencies. She sits silently, observing her opponents to size them up. Then, she attacks. She is also strong in her personal life. Her money symbolizes part of her strength. When her investment in the restaurant is put at risk, she rushes to save it. Money, especially cash, is power. She finds this out when her credit card no longer works and she negotiates paying in cash with Loren.

Throughout the novel, Ann does not shy away from her abilities. She learns how to channel them for the good of others. She becomes a confidante to Loren. Wende notes that people love Ann. Titi accepts her from the beginning.

Ann returns Richard to his love of the culinary art. She learns to accept and take pride in her abilities and to use her skills on her own terms.

Richard

Richard is Ann's husband. He is a sensitive man who loves to cook. He equates good food with love. He tries to make sure his wife eats good food.

While he appreciates the fact that Ann has sacrificed herself, he also resents her and some aspects of her behavior. For example, he resents her for making them leave Los Angeles and go to the island, instead of staying to deal with the situation Ravi created. Part of his resentment might stem from his inability to stand up to Ann. He seems to take the easy way out when a decision needs to be made by the couple. He just goes along with what Ann wants.

He goes through two transformations when he is on the island. During the first transformation, he heals himself. His ailments go away, and he literally cleanses himself in the water. During this time on the island, he is not cooking.

The second transformation comes once he starts cooking again. He realizes that cooking is more than just a passion. It is his identity as a person. At the same time, he acknowledges that he must do it on his own terms. This means not having a fancy restaurant. This is so important to him that he is ready to leave Ann. At this point, he



begins to stand up for himself. He becomes vindictive toward those who have hurt him, both Ravi and Ann. His stolen pig is the reason behind the terrible meal that Ravi cooked. He tells Ann that he slept with Wende, even though he did not. His need to inflict pain eventually subsides. By the end of the novel, he has found a way to be successful in a way that works for him and his marriage.

Loren

Loren owns the resort that Ann and Richard escape to. On the surface, he plays the role of a womanizing Frenchman. In reality, he is a tortured soul who is dying of an AIDS related illness.

He is a kind soul whom people misunderstand. His daughter blames him for the life she and her sister have led with their mother. She does not realize that he is an artist. Richard is jealous of him. He is unaware that Loren is dying.

He commits suicide because he does not want to burden others with his care as he comes closer to death. In death, the natives accept him as one of theirs, as does his daughter.

Dex

Dex is the lead singer of a rock band called Prospero. He is facing a decline in the band's popularity and the relationship between its members. He escapes to Loren's resort with his muse, Wende, to literally get away from it all. He's creative and has feelings. He finds out that he truly loves the attention fame gives him.

Wende

Wende plays the role of Dex's muse when she first comes to the island. She's both a calculating and intelligent woman. Her looks cause men to lust after her. People tend to think that she's empty-headed. She spends a lot of time and money to create that image, however. She is bored on the island and is perceptive. She correctly analyzes Dex and makes the astute observation that men lust after her, but everyone loves Ann.

She tires of playing the role of the empty-headed muse and decides to find a cause that she can stand behind. During the process, she decides she wants to be a director and starts spinning stories to suit whomever it is she wants to suit. Wende is an astute woman. Once she figures out what she wants, she is able to morph into the kind of personality she needs to get it. When she decides she wants to make films, she figures out how to leverage the current situation to suit her needs. She even lies to Loren's daughter, telling her that Loren comforted her after a fight with Dex, when it was really Ann who was the comforter. Wende has a Machiavellian streak that becomes more evident as the story unfolds.



Ravi

Ravi and Richard met when they were in culinary school. Ravi is a good cook. He is also good looking and charming. He has the charisma Richard lacks; so he and Richard open a restaurant. Unfortunately, Ravi also has some negative traits. He's reckless and spends money that he doesn't have. He also twists the truth to make himself look good. While he honestly sees Richard as a brother, Ravi is the irresponsible brother who needs to have all the attention. He makes it sound as if the money for the restaurant is his own money. This backfires when his ex-wife starts legal action to get money from him that she thinks he has been hiding from her. He sleeps with Ann, even though he knows that their relationship is based on a lie that he told her.

He stays and pays the consequences for his actions, but he does not learn anything from it. He still thinks of sleeping with every woman he sees and tries to steal the attention from Richard when he arrives on the island. He goes back to the mainland with the same nonchalant attitude he's always had.

Cooked

Cooked is an island native. He and Titi were promised to each other as children through an arranged marriage agreement by their families.. Loren had taken Cooked and Titi in when they were young. Cooked never really had the same connection as Titi with Loren.

Compared to Titi, Cooked is simple-minded. He spends his time lusting after other women. In an effort to make something of himself, he takes on the cause of trying to fight for his people's rights against those who are poisoning the islands. His efforts are not well planned. They are likely to cause harm and land him in jail. When the team on the island come up with a plan to help him, he gets nervous. In the end, however, his people see him as a hero. So does Titi. They are married, and Cooked is happy to come home to Titi.

Titi

Titi is an island native with royal blood. She is to marry Cooked, based on an agreement made when she was a child. She is like a daughter to Loren. She is loyal to those she likes. She watches after Loren, even though he treats her like a servant at times. She decides she likes Ann from the beginning and later decides that she likes Richard. In the end, Ann and Richard stay on the island and help her with the resort. She is loyal to her home and the fact that she is to marry Cooked. She stays loyal to him, even as he fools around with other women. She follows the island's rules.

Still, she has a dark side. She kept Loren's daughter's letters away from him because she feared that the return of his daughter in his life would cause him to replace her. She has no problem spitting in Wende's food.



In the end, she gets her heritage from Loren who leaves the resort to Titi and Cooked. This is when she realizes that modern day success on the island means balancing the needs of her people and doing the activities necessary to run a business in the modern world.

Lorna

Lorna is Ann's daring, unconventional friend, who is also a lawyer. Lorna and Ann were in law school when they met Dex. Lorna had French- kissed him. When Ann becomes daring herself and takes her money out of the bank, she calls Lorna for advice. Lorna helps her and gets all of them through the legal situation.

Steve

Steve is the manager of the main resort on another island. Loren has a loose agreement with him to provide the resources Loren's resort needs. During Loren's lifetime, he keeps Steve in check. As soon as Loren dies, Steve goes to the island and tries to gain control of the resort by intimidating everyone. Though Steve is a bully, he backs down when Ann stands up to him for Titi.

Robby

Robby is a member of the band Prospero. There is conflict between him and Dex to the point that Dex feels that he is pushing him out. When Robbie goes to the island, the two start working together again. Dex realizes that he might not really like Robby, but Robby is a necessity when it comes to the band's success.



Symbols and Symbolism

Food

Food is a symbol of love and togetherness. Richard tries to feed Ann as a way to show his love. Ann often rejects his offering, however. She stuffs herself with candy bars as she tries to find fulfillment through empty calories. She even tells Richard that she is tired of fancy food. This is like slapping him in the face.

Once Ann and Richard leave Los Angeles, food still plays a dominant role in bringing everyone together. The guests on the island eat together as a way to get to know each other. The writer and his wife do not participate on the night when everyone really starts to talk to each other. The next morning, they leave.

Titi uses food to convey a message different from love. When Wende insults Titi by ordering take-out. Titi displays her dislike for her by spitting in Wende's food. When Titi is mad, she stops cooking.

After Titi stops cooking, Richard takes her place. Then, Ravi comes to cook, but no one likes him. His food makes everyone sick.

Food appears as a symbol throughout the novel.

The Island

Since islands are places of escape, the island resort symbolizes peace and happiness. Of course, that is the reason that Ann, Richard, and the other guests go to the resort. The idea of an island being paradise is so strong that people tune in to watch Loren's web cam stream just to dream of being able to escape and spend time in such a place.

Ann's Fear of Storms

Storms are a force of nature that no one can control. Ann, who likes to be in control, is afraid of storms. This symbolizes the fact that she is afraid of situations that she cannot control. It is ironic that Richard, who otherwise is meek compared to Ann, rises up in such cases to protect her. Richard, unlike Ann, has the ability to deal with what's thrown at him, as he has to do in the kitchen or a restaurant where one may have to improvise.

The Ocean

The ocean represents peace and the ability to let go and relax. Richard takes to the ocean in the beginning because he is willing to try letting go. Once he gets stronger, he no longer needs the ocean as much.



Ann, on the other hand, never really enjoys being in the water. She is not willing to lose control or let it take her into the same dream-like state that Richard experiences there. As close as she gets to relaxing is letting herself be free on the beach. Even then, however, she is not able to relax once she finds the web camera.

Sharks

There are two parts to a shark's character. One is that of the predator who circles and then attacks its prey. The other is the mythical character who is a deified ancestor guardian who drives fishes to the fishermen's nets and keeps danger at bay. In the novel, Ann compares herself to a shark. The opening scene in the novel shows how she circles, assesses, and then goes in for the kill. At the same time, she protects those whom she cares for from danger, such as Loren. In the end, she protects Titi and Cooked from Steve (danger). She also tries to protect Richard by keeping information from him and helping him with the restaurant.

Flask, Flask, Gardiner, Bulkington, Bartleby, and Peleg

Ann's law firm represents a kind of job that people do for the sake of making a lot of money. With comfortable offices and large incomes, people who work just for the sake of money look like they have it all. Without some degree of passion for their job, most are miserable..

Music, Art, the Culinary Field

Music, art, and the culinary field are the creative areas that people usually reference when they talk about their passion. In the novel, the characters who follow their passion do not work less. They are not necessarily any happier than those who work just for money.

Robby and Ravi

Creative efforts tend to begin to suffer from the same trials and tribulations one finds in the corporate world once a passion turns into a business. Both Robby and Ravi example this, with Robby being in the musical world of Dex and Ravi being in the culinary world of Richard.

Dex does not like Robby, and Richard does not like Ravi. Dex remarks that Robby and Ravi are the "rough edges" that make him and Richard smooth. One must deal with people like Robby and Ravi in many situations. They might not be totally likable, but they are a necessary part of an endeavor.



The Messages From Ravi

The almost instant messages which Ann gets from Ravi symbolize that there is no escape from problems. She and Richard are supposed to have run away to an island with no form of outside communication and where no one would find them. Yet, Ravi not only contacts them instantly, but he also keeps them abreast of what is going on at home with him and the restaurant.

Wende' s Name

in German, the word "Wende" means "the change" or "turn-around." In the novel, the character Wende seems to make a complete change from being a muse to being someone who is looking for causes to support and films to produce. The fact that everyone calls Wende by the nickname "Windy" shows that people do not take her seriously. They see her as someone who blows in the wind.

The meaning of Wende's name applies to everyone on the island because they all undergo some sort of change or turn-around while they are there. There are several examples. Ann and Richard realize they love each other and stay together. Ann learns to appreciate the fact that she is a lawyer and uses her skills in a way that makes her happy. Richard learns how to do the same in his field. Dex gets his "groove back." Cooked settles down, and Taiti finally becomes the wife of Cooked. She and Cooked inherit the resort from Loren. Even Loren's daughter undergoes a change as she learns to appreciate her father.



Settings

The Offices of Flask, Flask, Gardiner, Bulkington, Bartleby, and Peleg

Ann works in the sterile law offices of Flask, Flask, Gardiner, Bulkington, Bartleby, and Peleg . She is on track to become a partner. On the surface, it is the perfect place for a rising attorney to work. In reality, it represents everything Ann dislikes about practicing law and makes her ashamed to say that she's a lawyer. She longs to quit. The only benefit is that she makes the money there necessary to invest in Richard's restaurant.

El Gusano

El Gusano is the restaurant Richard opens with Ravi as his partner. Richard loves to cook. The restaurant should be an ideal place for him. Instead, it is making him physically ill due to stress.

Richard, Ravi, and Ann celebrate Ann's birthday at the restaurant. Also, it is there that Richard finds out that Ravi's ex-wife has initiated orders to block the restaurant's bank account.

Loren's Resort, Sauvage

Ann and Richard meet Loren, Dex, Wende, Titi, and Cooked at Loren's resort, Sauvage. Sauvage is a place where people go to escape. It turns out that all of the guests are dreamers looking for happiness, something their current life is not giving them. The guests are not supposed to have access to cell phones or the Internet. Yet, some find ways to avoid the rule. they remain connected to the mainland.

Loren, the owner of Sauvage, asks guests to leave technology behind while they are at the resort. Ironically, he has a web camera on the beach and a computer.

Titi's Kitchen

Tit's kitchen is where Richard finds himself again. It is also here that he stands up to Ravi. Once Ann and Richard decide to stay. Everyone knows that the kitchen will be his domain.

Loren's Hut

Loren's hut is where Ann and Loren get to know each other. She learns that he is a painter, and they share his special drink together. He does not let everyone inside the



hut. The fact that Ann joins him there shows that the two of them have a special relationship.

The hut is also where Richard finds Ann on Loren's bed, which raises suspicions. In that respect, it is the symbol of a possible threat to Ann's marriage.



Themes and Motifs

Following Your Passion

When someone is trying to determine their career, they may or may not face a struggle. Some have a passion that lines up with what people expect them to do and what they want to do. Hopefully, that passion can earn a good living for them.

Those who are not so lucky might have the ability to do the job that society expects them to do. They might even excel at it. Deep down, the person wants to follow their passion. However, they ignore that calling and perform their daily work like a dutiful zombie.

Then, there are those who do follow their passion. Some passions are related to the arts. Artists and writers have that kind of passion. The world usually sees jobs related to the arts as hobbies, not income worthy. Usually, following a passion has the downside of struggling to make money. For that reason, most creative people struggle financially, which is a type of job stress.

In the novel, Ann's siblings' passions match the family's expectations. Ann is different though. She followed the family career plan and performed well in her job. However, she would have preferred to be an artist.

As the novel progresses, Ann realizes the skills that made her valuable to the law firm are valuable outside the firm, too. She uses her legal expertise to help her new island friends. Her skills help her find Loren's daughter and help Titi and Cooked. On a more basic level, her knowledge from one of her previous legal cases helps her identify Loren's illness.

While Ann loves art and marvels at the art work she sees on the island, her legal skills make an impact. She is able to apply her skills in an area that makes a difference. By the end of the novel, she has figured out how she can have it all. She can live in her dream world and apply her skills to make the statement she wants to make in a field that she previously disliked.

Richard's story is different, but he is not any happier at the beginning of the novel. He had actually followed his passion. Then, he found out that being passionate about a job is not necessarily enough. While he is good at what he does, he must do it his way. The issue is that his way is never going to make it in an industry that is just as cut-throat as that in any corporate American job. Dex has the same issue with his music. Both Richard and Dex are talented, but they end up taking on business partners who cause problems. The partners are considered necessary for Richard and Dex to be successful.



Cultural Division, Diversity and Racism

The novel explores the interaction between people from different cultures, races, and economic standings. This is displayed in the initial interactions between Ann, Richard, and Loren and the way the French and other outsiders treat the natives on the island.

The Americans have a stereotypical view of the French that manifests itself when they meet Loren. They quickly form an opinion of him that is partly based on the fact that he's French. Later, they find out that they had misjudged him. Ann still holds her views of French people, however. When Lilou arrives, Ann notices how natural she looks and grudgingly thinks that she must be French. Throughout the novel, Richard makes comments about how the French treat food. It is not to his liking.

Ann is much kinder to Titi when she meets her. However, foreigners invade the islands and treat them much like Wende does by giving orders and treating them as servants in their own home. Loren does not do much better and regrets his behavior in the end. He does right by willing the resort to Titi and Cooked. Others do not accept this. If it were not for Ann standing up for Titi and Cooked, they might have ended up without their inheritance from Loren.

Once they do get control, though, they have to learn how to act in the Western way to be successful. This is difficult for them, more for Cooked than Titi. When Cooked finally has a chance to take a stand, he gets scared. Even though Titi devotes herself to him, Cooked shows himself to be weak. He lets others rule him.

Looking at Titi's and Cooked's stories, the natives are different. They have different traditions and what makes them happy is different. Thus, they do not need to explore like the non-islanders. They do not need to marry foreigners to get off the island. They want to be in control of their own fate, and they want to live peacefully on their island. When dealing with foreigners, they do need help because the two cultures are so vastly different.

Throughout the novel, money talks and tries to control the natives. It even threatens to corrupt them as seen by the fact that Tit has to repay debts and may be forced to hire people she does not want to hire. Have they learned from the foreigners, or is this just human nature?

Some foreigners do integrate, however. The islanders accept Loren as one of their own in his death. Ann and Richard also accept the natives and are accepted by Titi. The others leave the island.

Self Discovery

When the novel begins, Ann is unhappy with her job and is trying to get pregnant. She thinks that that having a baby will enhance her life. Trying to get pregnant involves her having to take hormones that have a negative impact on her moods. They have caused



her to gain weight. She thinks that she should not be a lawyer and dreams of quitting her job and becoming an artist and helping Richard with the restaurant.

Richard is struggling with the opening of the restaurant. He is so unhappy that he is making himself sick. He is as unhappy as Ann.

During their time on the island though, they learn about themselves and rediscover their love for each other. Richard comes to terms with the fact that he is a chef and loves to cook. He has to do it on his own terms and that means foregoing the glitz and glamour of the high-profile restaurant industry. He is so sure that this is what he wants that he is willing to leave Ann as he thinks his choice will disappoint her. Finally, he comes into his authentic self in his relationship with Ravi. Richard finally stands up to him and takes a stand when it comes to his dislike of cooking meat by saving the pig.

Ann and Richard are not the only characters who undergo a change during the novel. Dex also comes to terms with who he really is. When he came to the island he was burned out and was escaping what the band had become. In the end, he's writing songs again and gets caught up in the media hype that follows his "kidnapping." He realizes that he enjoys the attention and this is who he is.

Wende goes through various changes. She is first a muse. Then, she becomes someone who wants to produce films, have a cause, and remain Dex's fiance, indefinitely.

Cooked learns more about himself and how to deal with situations as well.

Lilou learns about her father. Since he is part of her, she also learns more about herself.

The Ability to Have a Second Chance

All of the guests in the novel are in limbo. Ann refers to it as treading water. They do not want to go back to the same situation they left, but they do not know where to go. They find out that people can have a second chance.

Richard believes this to be true because he saw it in action. When the husband of a woman who taught him how to cook French food leaves her, she tries to commit suicide, She heals, however, and marries again.

Throughout the novel, both Ann and Richard wonder if their marriage will have a second chance. In the end, they get that chance when they realize the lessons they have learned about their own selves and each other. Their bond has grown stronger.

Dex thinks that he is a has been. However, he gets a second chance, too. He starts writing good music again and goes back to Los Angeles to make a new album.

Even though Loren does not live to see it, he gets a second chance with Lilou. She learns about him and moves from pushing him away to being proud to be his daughter.



The message in each of these instances is that second chances in life do happen. One must continue on without giving up. If any of these people had given up, they never would have had that second chance. Those who give up will never have a second chance because they won't be there to participate in it or even grab it when it comes.

Greed

Greed causes problems. The novel shows different forms of greed.

The most obvious form of greed is wanting to get more money. Steve is an example of this. As soon as Loren dies, he is at the resort trying to cheat Cooked and Titi out of it. Greed causes him to treat them badly, and it is greed that causes the natives to be wage slaves. The various resorts charge the tourists a lot of money, but the wealth doesn't flow down to the people who truly own the islands, the natives. The reason is that the resort owners and managers, like Steve, are greedy.

Dex's band suffers from greed as well. Greed for money is part of it, but the band members are also greedy for success and attention. This greed causes them to forget the music, and each other. They want more and more success. When it does not come, the band fails to function as a whole.

Wende is greedy for power. She is dangerous because she believes that the ends justify the means. Ann realizes this and tells Dex that if he needs a prenuptial agreement when he marries Wende, she will draw one up for him.

Technology in Society, Good or Bad

The appeal of Loren's resort is the lack of technology. There is no Internet. The guests are not allowed to have cell phones. There is no electricity. Yet, whenever something interesting happens, the guests wish that they could talk to someone who is not there. Ann wishes she could tell Lorna about Dex. Dex wishes he could talk to Robby when he writes his song. As soon as Richard finds out that he can email people, he emails Ravi.

When the guests are forced to deal with each other before they find out that there is Internet access, they communicate more than they would have ever done in Los Angeles. As a result, Ann finds out that she has misjudged almost everyone. Without lights, they are almost forced to stay together in the evening. This presents more time spent together to get to know each other without the interruptions of cell phones or Internet.

The theme of the merits of technology in society questions whether Internet and cell phones are doing more harm than good in relationships. Even though people can contact people no matter where they are in the world, how meaningful are these connections? Are people talking just to be talking and ignoring the people with whom they should be communicating? Is it possible to go back to a time where people focus on trying to understand each other on a personal level, or is it too late? If people want to

get back to this point, they must do it side-by-side with technology. There is no way to truly disconnect in a connected world.

Styles

Point of View

The novel is written in third person from the point of view of the main characters. Their respective stories and observations enable readers to learn about them. This technique coincides with the themes of self-discovery and the ability to communicate without technology.

As the novel progresses, the characters learn about themselves. This self-knowledge helps them grasp a second chance. Readers see how they grow by learning about their past and seeing their present. Each character must share their own past because they did not know each other prior to coming to the island.

The characters do not communicate with each other, at least in the beginning. Ann does not want to tell Dex that she is a lawyer. She avoids socializing by staying at the resort when everyone else goes snorkeling. She does not really talk to Richard, her husband. For these reasons, Ann is the only one who can tell her story.

The more time the guests spend on the island, the more they start to talk and reveal their personal stories to one another. Without individual points of view, the characters would remain a mystery to the other guests and, perhaps, to their own personal selves..

Language and Meaning

Dex, Ann, and Richard have separate professions. From time to time the language reflects the jargon of their respective careers. Legal terms tend to be long, impersonal, and dry. They mirror Ann's view of her profession. Words related to cooking, however, convey the opposite sense, unless Richard is talking about something that he doesn't like to deal with like meat. Then, the language becomes gruesome.

On the island, the language takes on another quality. It becomes lyrical at times to reflect the beauty and serenity of the location. This is especially true when the characters are in the water. The language reflects the same dream-like state they feel when they are there.

Structure

The book's structure features one relatively short chapter at the beginning of the novel and then several long ones. The first chapter takes place in Los Angeles, a place both Ann and Richard want to escape. Ann wants to escape the law firm where she works, and Richard wants to escape the pressures of the restaurant. Once they leave and go to the island, time continues on to the point that it's easy to lose track of how long they have been at the resort, as Dex does. He knows that he's spent a lot of money. Major

events seem to mark the time. For example, the shift from the focus on Dex to the focus on Loren's death is marked by changes in chapters.

Within the chapters, there are separations marked by the various characters' points of view and the backstories that define the characters. The characters eventually share some of their stories with each other. For the most part, readers get to know a character through a backstory. This is ironic because they are happy to be able to contact the outside world and share information, thoughts, and successes with people there. However, the island guests rarely converse with each other. At the end of the novel, Richard does not even know Ann wants to stay until she tells everyone else. Thus, the novel's structure makes a comment about communication in today's world. People want to be seen by others and communicate with those outside of their family, but they don't communicate with those who are close to them.



Quotes

Real life would finally begin. She wouldn't allow for the thought that perhaps she didn't have talent, because why would someone have a desire for something that she wasn't good at?

-- Narrator (1 (Porca Miseria! Pig of Misery! -- Section 9) paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote shows how Ann leads her life. She is not living it. It is on hold until she can quit the law firm and pursue her dream of being an artist. The quote also raises a good question.

She loved the idea of making people happy, even if it was as temporary a fix as a good meal.

-- Narrator (1 (Porca Miseria! Pig of Misery! -- Section 9) paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote foreshadows Ann's role at the resort. She moves from person to person trying to make people happy. For example, she tries to make Richard happy by giving him the money for the restaurant.

The law had shown Ann that people rarely change.

-- Narrator (1 (Porca Miseria! Pig of Misery! -- Section 15) paragraph 12)

Importance: People think that Ann is cold. Her legal training is one reason for this perception. This quote is interesting though because the people on the island bring this statement into question. Do they change while they are on the island or do they just learn how to adapt their situations to themselves?. Did they lose their real selves somewhere, only to find themselves again?

Food was love and Richard lavished it on her, brewing her espresso in the morning and making her freshly baked brioche.

-- Narrator (2 (Unnamed Atoll Somewhere in the Tuamotu Archipelago -- Section 6) paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote supports the theme of food as love. It is important because this is the way Richard shows Ann his love and readers can tell the health of their relationship by the way she responds to it. When things are not going well between them, she tells him that she is sick of fancy food and eats junk food candy bars. When they are close, she compliments him on his food and tells him that she's hungry.

Salvation finds us wherever we are hiding.

-- Narrator (2 (Unnamed Atoll Somewhere in the Tuamotu Archipelago -- Section 9) paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote is important because it supports the idea that if you are destined to do something, you will do it. Thus, if you have a passion and are destined to do it, no matter how bleak the possibility is that you will ever do it, you will.



Ann understood that houses, like marriages, were about process, that one never truly finished.

-- Narrator (2 (Unnamed Atoll Somewhere in the Tuamotu Archipelago -- Section 18) paragraph 1)

Importance: The importance of this quote is that Ann does seem to understand this about houses. Her house is the same, but she doesn't seem to understand this about marriages. When she thinks Richard is having an affair when he comes back from Paris, she runs to Ravi. Later on the island, she acts as if her marriage is over several times. She does not willingly let it go through the process. Still, it does and she benefits from it.

Underwater there was no blame. Underwater there was no possibility of talking to Ann about their troubles.

-- Narrator (2 (Unnamed Atoll Somewhere in the Tuamotu Archipelago -- Section 22) paragraph 9)

Importance: This quote shows how Richard feels about his life. He and Ann have problems that he does not like to talk about. He feels guilty and is afraid of being blamed for something -- perhaps, for not living up to Ann's expectations. He is free of it all and allowed to relax in the water. Another interpretation is that the water covers his failures, so he can relax.

Maybe now you'll have to become her.

-- Wende (3 (Rock 'n' Roll Will Save Your Life -- Part 3) paragraph 15)

Importance: This quote is important because it shows how uptight Ann is trying to change and become more daring. This is something that she does not believe responsible people do. Wende tells her that people can change. Ann gets the tattoo.

Why was it that while separated she felt her love more clearly.

-- Narrator (3 (Rock 'n' Roll Will Save Your Life -- Part 4) paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote shows the lack of communication between Ann and Richard. Away from him she feels love, but they do not communicate their feelings to each other. It also supports the idea people want most what they cannot get. Ann wants Richard when he is not there, but she acts as if she is neutral about him when he is around.

Ann wished she had known in advance so that she could have enjoyed the time more.

-- Narrator (3 (Rock 'n' Roll Will Save Your Life -- Part 26) paragraph 6)

Importance: This quote shows how Ann views her life. Instead of just relaxing and living for the moment, she is thinking about the price. If she had known it was free, she could have enjoyed it more.

Here on this island, she felt that sense of usefulness returning.

-- Narrator (3 (Rock 'n' Roll Will Save Your Life -- Part 36) paragraph 1)



Importance: This quote echos an earlier quote in which Ann thinks about how she likes to help people. This is a passion for her and a foreshadowing of what will make her happy. She appreciates art, but her true passion is to be able to help people. Once she can put her legal training to use helping those who really need help, she will be proud to be a lawyer.

...but Ann thought if you pursued the wrong kind of happiness, it eventually grew stale on you, disappointing, like crackers that were already soggy when you opened the cellophane wrapper.

-- Narrator (4 (Fare Tini Atua -- Part 45) paragraph 36)

Importance: This quote is important because it sums up why everyone on the island came there unhappy and burned out. They were pursuing the wrong type of happiness for their individual selves. Though it might have been the right kind for someone else, it did not work for each of them. By the time the novel is over, the guests have found the kind of happiness that works for them.