

A Monstrous Regiment of Women Study Guide

A Monstrous Regiment of Women by Laurie R. King

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Plot Summary

This novel is the sequel to award-winning author's first book, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*. *A Monstrous Regiment of Women* is a novel where Mary Russell is a pseudo-apprentice to the Great Sherlock Holmes. In this novel, Mary Russell is investigating some mysterious deaths of women that are members of The New Temple, run by a woman, Margery Childe, who is a visionary. Mary Russell has her own thoughts on women's rights in London in the 20th century and so she becomes involved with some of the Temple's causes through Mary's friend from Oxford, Veronica Beaconsfield.

When the novel opens, Mary is about a week away from her 21st birthday. As the sole survivor of a car accident that killed her mother, father and little brother, Mary is also the recipient of her parents' wealth. Mary was living with her aunt, her father's sister, for the last six years. Her aunt gives Mary an allowance, but the aunt is in control of the money until Mary reaches the age of 21. Mary studies theology and chemistry at Oxford and is finishing her final paper when the novel opens.

Before Mary comes into her inheritance, one of her disguises is to dress as a young man. When she comes into her inheritance and realizes she has to get into the Inner Circle of the Temple to investigate how the Temple and the women's deaths are connected, Mary uses her inheritance money to rent a flat, hire servants, and have tailor-made clothes sewn. As the novel unfolds, not only is Mary transforming and adjusting into her new life, but she is also realizing that her feelings for Holmes go beyond that of mentor and teacher.

From information that Mary uncovers on her own and from information that Sherlock Holmes, and Holmes's brother Mycroft provide, Mary starts to connect the deaths of the women Temple members to those wealthy enough to bequeath substantial money and assets to the Temple. This leads Mary to believe that someone in the Temple, possibly the head of it, Margery Childe herself, is drawing wealthy women into the Temple in order to have them leave money and assets to the Temple, and then have the women killed.

During the investigation, Mary endures a few attempts on her own life and kidnapped. Her captors try to set her up to make it look as if Mary is a drug addict and involved in the mysterious deaths of the women at the Temple. By the end, with the help of Sherlock Holmes, Mary solves the investigation, but not without putting her life in danger several times in the process.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Chapter 1 opens with the narrator, Mary Russell dressing. Mary's 21st birthday is one week away. Mary lives with her aunt, who is Mary's legal guardian. Mary mentions she is going to be working with her mentor and tutor, Sherlock Holmes. It appears as if the Mary dresses as a man, rather than a woman, to go visit and work with Holmes. When Mary arrives at Sherlock Holmes's house, he is not there, but his servant Mrs. Hudson is there doing needlepoint in front of the fire. Mary leaves Holmes's house for London to try to find Holmes at the place he would rent a carriage if he is pretending to be a taxi driver. The carriage house owner says Holmes did rent out a horse and carriage to Basil Josephs, which is the alias that Sherlock Holmes uses. Mary waits on the street searching for Holmes, who appears to be acting as a carriage cab driver. When Mary finds Holmes, Holmes addresses the woman disguised as a young man as Russell. After Holmes drops off the passengers in his cab, he mentions Russell's advocacy of the emancipation of women. Holmes and Russell have an argument and Russell leaps from the carriage.

In Chapter 2, when Russell leaps from the carriage, she finds herself roaming the dark streets of London that she does not know very well. Russell wanders through the streets of London until daybreak, when she makes her way into a teashop for breakfast. When Russell is finishing her second plate of breakfast, she recognizes a familiar face. Mary sees Lady Veronica Beaconsfield, which is one of Mary Russell's schoolmates from Oxford. Veronica recognizes Mary even though she is dressed as a man. Veronica invites Mary back to her apartment. While Mary and Veronica are in Veronica's apartment, Mary sees despair in her friend's face and Veronica says she needs to talk to Mary about something, but since they have both been out all night, they decide to rest first and then talk. Veronica tells Mary about her ex-fiance and his battle with post-traumatic syndrome from the war and his getting mixed up with drugs. Veronica asks Mary and Sherlock Holmes to investigate things to see if there is anything they can do about Miles, Veronica's ex. Veronica invites Mary to a meeting led by Margery Child, but Mary changes from her Russell clothes to some women's clothing that Veronica lends Mary.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

It appears as if Mary's parents have left her an inheritance, which her aunt is in charge of managing until Mary turns 21. Mary insinuates that she has just finished school and that once she turns 21 that her fortune becomes her own to manage. When Mary describes her clothing, it seems shabby, old and worn out, which is ironic if she is about to receive an inheritance, but makes sense if he aunt is holding money back from her. Mary may be disguising herself as a man because of the case she is working on with Sherlock Holmes, or it may be because of the time in which the book takes place.



Because the book takes place in the 1920s, women fill different roles than men. Holmes mentioning Russell's advocacy of the emancipation of women explains why Mary dresses as a man, which is so she has the ability to work as an apprentice to the great Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock Holmes insinuates that Russell has come to find him to ask Holmes to marry him. This foreshadows a relationship between Holmes and the woman that dresses as Russell goes far deeper than that of mentor and apprentice.

The disguise of Mary Russell as a man is symbolic of how she feels about her presence with her family. It appears as if her parents are dead, which is why she is living with her aunt. It appears as if her family does not notice her coming and going anyway. The disguise that Mary Russell wears also permits her to live a life and access ways of life that she would be banned as a woman. From the conversation between Veronica and Mary, it appears that dressing like a man is not a new thing for Mary. Veronica's neighborhood is the direct opposite of that in which a woman who holds the title of "Lady" would live, which is a statement to her family that Veronica can and will live among those she is willing to help. Veronica having a need to talk to Mary foreshadows a case that Veronica needs Mary and the great Sherlock Holmes to work. Margery Childe coming into Mary's life suggests an uprising for women's rights is in the near future.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In Chapter 3, when Mary and Veronica walk into the meeting, the speaker, Margery Childe's is already on stage giving her speech. Margery is referring to a time in church when her preacher was talking about not giving women rights. When the meeting ends, Veronica offers to take Mary backstage to meet Margery.

In Chapter 4, Mary and Margery are alone backstage. Margery asks Mary why she came to her meeting and Mary says because Veronica asked her to, because Veronica needed her. Margery and Mary talk about the purpose of the Temple, and Margery explains that she gives public speeches in the Temple three nights a week with each night touching on a different topic. She also says that the Temple speeches are just the tip of the iceberg. When Margery asks what Mary does, at first mistaking Mary for a journalist, Mary says she is a student at Oxford, studying theology and chemistry. When Mary leaves the Temple, she runs into Holmes on the street.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

It appears as if the meeting the Veronica has invited Mary to is a feminist meeting or a meeting to open up the rights women have to make women more equal to men. Mary becoming involved with Margery suggests that Mary, along with Veronica, will join a women's movement to emancipate women, just as Holmes predicted in the first chapter of the book. Margery asks Mary to stay behind to speak with after the other women backstage leave and Margery states that Mary will be joining them in their efforts.

Margery says that Veronica and Mary symbolize the polar opposites on a spectrum. Veronica is soft, generous, while Mary is strong and powerful. Margery suggests that these polar opposites tug at one another. The Temple is really a front for a women's revolution movement. The Temple provides education, health services, shelter for abused women and a political component to help get women the right to vote. The Temple is a symbol of women's causes.

Margery and Mary get into a debate on the analysis of the words in several bible passages. Mary points out that what the words say and the true underlying meaning are different and infer that there is a divine woman behind many of the verses, rather the symbol of God and Jesus that everyone sees and believes is a man. This leads Margery to believe that Mary has been sent to her so that Mary can teach her about the maternal side of the bible.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In Chapter 5, when Mary runs into Holmes in the street, she is wearing women's clothing that she borrowed from a box of clothes Veronica keeps on hands for helping women and families in need. Holmes removes his overcoat and puts it on Mary to help protect her from the rainy night. Holmes leads Mary to one of his "hiding places," which turns out to be through a crawlspace of a department store and through a wardrobe. This is the third of one of Holmes' hideouts that Mary has been in. Mary explains to Holmes her reason for being at the temple, starting with Veronica and ending with Margery Childe. Mary also asks for help for Veronica's ex-fiance, which also reveals that Holmes once had a son with a drug problem and the son died from it. Holmes leaves Mary in the hideout to rest.

In Chapter 6, Mary talks about when she met Holmes, which was when she was an adolescent and had just been orphaned by her parents' deaths. She also discusses that her apprenticeship with him has taught her many things, but her time studying at Oxford has also allowed her to live her life the way she wants. As Mary realizes she is feeling a sexual attraction to Holmes, she first ran him off by talking about his dead son's drug problem. Then, she herself ran away to the women's social club she belongs to, where they fed her, showered her, gave her a set of her nightclothes and put Mary to bed. Veronica shows up to meet Mary, at the museum, a little before one in the afternoon for their lunch date. When Veronica arrives, she looks disheveled and as if something is wrong. Veronica tells Mary that Miles' sister was murdered last night and that her throat was cut. Mary guides Veronica to the restaurant and Veronica tells her the story. After eating, Mary puts Veronica in a cab to the home of Miles' parents and Mary catches a cab to the Oxford library, which is four hours away.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Holmes symbolizes a sexual being and a father figure to Mary. Holmes always seems there to protect her as a father or a lover would. There is also a sexual tension or underlying sense of romance between Mary and Holmes. The fact that Holmes has numerous hiding spaces indicates a sense of paranoia, which may be valid or may indicate that he is a little on the crazy side. In a sense of irony, this hideout is the fanciest of Holmes' hideouts that Mary has been too, which reveals a domestic side of Holmes, with the room's paintings, furniture, and books. Mary tells her story of her time with Veronica and Margery Childe to gain Holmes' opinion on whether or not Margery is genuine or not. Holmes draws a parallel between Mary and himself because Holmes says he always asks for Watson's opinion for the same reason Mary is asking for his opinion. In essence, Holmes training Mary in his ways and the ways in which they are alike makes Mary the womanly symbol of Holmes. Mary finds irony in the fact there were very rich women present at Margery's meeting, that Mary owns the Temple and



the two homes that are used as women's shelters, and that there were some expensive pieces of furniture backstage at the Temple. All of this suggests that the façade Margery reveals is simply a means of getting money out of the wealthy and many not in fact really be going toward helping women.

Mary suggests there is a sexual tension that exists between Mary and Holmes. Ironically, in all the years they have known each other and even slept in the same bed together, nothing has ever happened between the two of them. Ever since their ride on the hansom cab and when Mary ran into Holmes when she came out of the Temple, her sense of sexual awareness of Holmes has heightened, suggesting that a romantic relationship may unfold as the novel unfolds. Because Miles' sister was a member of the Temple, her murder foreshadows Mary investigating the case and how the murder connects to the Temple and Margery Childe.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In Chapter 7, Mary talks about a paper she is writing on feminism in Jewish society. Mary says for two straight days her work at Oxford was smooth and uninterrupted. Thursday, however, Mary realizes that she came to Oxford to escape her true responsibilities and decides to return home. She sends telegrams to both Holmes and Veronica to announce her return and requests they contact her. First, Mary boards the train and heads to London so the tailors that once outfitted her mother can make her a new wardrobe as well. When Mary returns to her club, she has a telegram from Veronica inviting her to Veronica's house that afternoon and to the Temple that night. Mary then goes downstairs to the library to read the newspaper articles on the death of Miles's sister, Iris. When Mary arrives at Veronica's home, she finds a group of families inside in the middle of a squabble with Veronica and Veronica's assistant. When Veronica sees Mary, Veronica dismisses herself from the argument and they go to hail a cab to the home of Miles's parents because Miles has shown up after missing for a few days. When Mary and Veronica arrive at the Fitzwarren's home, they see Miles, who shows obvious signs of being a drug addict. Holmes arrives at the Fitzwarrens and offers Miles a chance to get clean, which Miles accepts and the two men head off to the Sanatorium.

In Chapter 8, Veronica returns to Mary in the library, after her meeting with Mrs. Fitzwarren, Miles and Iris's mother. Mary tells Veronica about Holmes coming for Miles and taking him to get cured. The girls leave the Fitzwarren home to head to the Temple.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Mary conducts a great deal of research to point out there is underlying feminine Divine figure in many of the scriptures of the bible. It represents the symbol that women were treated and seen as different beings, no matter what their talent was in divinity. Mary having a new wardrobe designed symbolizes the beginning of her new life, such as turning 21 and being released from the care of her aunt. Mary also foreshadows taking on a case that requires her to dress for the status she is rather than the hand-me-downs she has been wearing from her mother and father's wardrobe. As strong of a person as Veronica is, she ironically tells Mary that she does not know how she would deal with Miles and his sister's death with Mary's help. Holmes arrives at the Fitzwarren residence shortly after Mary and Veronica, which foreshadows Holmes helping with Miles's addiction.

In a twist of irony, Veronica admits to Mary that Veronica thinks that Holmes, who is almost 60, has sex appeal. Mary says Holmes is a symbol of the unattainable, liking it to a priest that a group of girls she traveled with to Italy fell for a priest there. During Margery Childe's speech on love, Mary realizes that Margery is someone who actually

speaks with God and delivers his messages. Margery symbolizes the reality of all of the research and study Mary does on theology.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In Chapter 9, Mary calls to Temple to arrange seeing Margery Childe, and Marie, Margery's assistant makes an appointment for the two women to have dinner together on Saturday night. Mary then finds a news story that the club Iris Fitzwarren was at the night she was killed was raided by Scotland Yard for various untoward behaviors. When Mary arrives at the Temple, Veronica meets Mary and gives her a tour of all of the inner workings of the Temple and Margery Childe. Veronica is called away to deal with one of the women having a problem with her husband and Mary is taken to Margery's inner circle room to have dinner with Margery.

In Chapter 10, on Sunday morning, Mary wakes to her 21st birthday. Mary goes to her lawyer's office to finalize the inheritance paperwork. Mary returns to her home and Sussex and watches as her aunt's belongings are removed, only leaving behind Mary's bedroom furniture. The following morning, Mary catches the train to pick up her new wardrobe. Mary sends a telegram to Holmes because she hasn't heard from him since he took Miles for treatment four days earlier. Mary goes to the Temple for her teachings with Margery and writes a donation check for Veronica's library book fund. Mary receives a telegram from Holmes to meet him at 8 p.m.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Mary realizes that the three weekly speeches Margery gives at the Temple is simply the precipice of Margery's work. The speeches may be a way of drawing in followers, but there is much more going on behind the scenes of these speeches from teaching women to read and taking care of their health to job training and a political angle on women's rights. Mary sees Margery as a 20th century London version of the visionaries and mystics that came before Margery. Mary and Margery disagree on the use of the funds that are coming into the Temple. Mary says she sees the funds being used in extravagance, but Margery says it is necessary to have some glitz and glamour in order to attract the people the Temple needs for its other causes. Mary also sees that there is not a line between church and "state" in the Temple because Margery is mixing religion with political undertones.

Mary's 21st birthday symbolizes the day when she comes into her inheritance and into her true independence. Mary requiring all of her aunt's belongings to be removed from the home and the airing out of the house symbolizes a baptism of the home, getting rid of the bad feelings between Mary and her aunt over the past six years in Mary's own home, when her aunt was acting as her guardian. Mary bringing in the decorators to change the house from top to bottom is a symbol of the beginning of Mary's new life; a life in which Mary will control. Mary hints at an incident where she was shot, but does not yet reveal the details.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

In Chapter 11, Mary and Holmes meet at the restaurant. Holmes tells Mary that Miles is through most of the physical effects of withdrawal and is now working on the emotional effects of addiction. After they eat, Holmes walks Mary to her social club and he heads off on a case with his brother, Mycroft. Mary's week then proceeds as planned and on Thursday, Mary and Veronica head to the Temple early to figure out how to establish Veronica's lending library before listening to Margery's "love" talk. When Mary and Veronica go to drop off some books Mary ordered for Margery, they find Margery locked in the chapel, and Margery's assistant outside saying that Margery was attacked by an intruder and has blood on her face. Margery will not allow the ladies in, so Mary peeps through the key hole. Mary goes through Margery's room to break-in to the chapel through another set of doors. When Margery emerges from the chapel, she goes on to give her speech, as if nothing ever happened. The following afternoon, Mary and Margery have their teaching session and Mary asks Margery how she was able to heal herself. Margery makes up excuses for each of her injuries and says her assistant and Mary are exaggerating what happened to Margery.

In Chapter 12, Mary returns to Oxford, which she decides is her true home, and decides to speak to a real estate agent about buying a home in the area. After a few days of drowning herself in work, Mary runs into a few of her friends at a nearby pub. They spend the rest of the afternoon eating, drinking and playing darts. The group also decides to walk as far as their feet will take them the following day, find an inn to stay in overnight and then return to Oxford the following day. In the middle of the night, the inn keeper wakes Mary up to say there is someone downstairs to see her. The person waiting for her turns out to be one of Holmes's messenger boys, Billy. Billy's instructions are to bring Mary back to town. Billy hands her a message that says Veronica was in a near fatal accident. When Mary arrives at the hospital, Watson is on guard by Veronica's bed. When Mary leaves the hospital, the street sweeper mumbles a message to her to meet Holmes at the nearby station. While Mary is reading the newspaper at the station, Holmes sits down beside her. Holmes tells Mary that someone was following Miles when he left the hospital and that he wants Mary to return to the Temple because the answer to what is happening is there. Holmes drops an envelope into Mary's newspaper before the police come and shuffle Holmes away in his homeless man disguise.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Ironically, Mary finds out that Holmes has been helping to care for Miles Fitzwarren and bring him through his withdrawals from his heroin addiction. When Mary evaluates Margery, Margery has been beaten, which shows with cuts and bruises on her face. When Mary looks under Margery's dress, Mary sees more marks and at least three broken ribs. During this time, Margery seems to be in a trance-like state and refuses to



see a doctor or cancel the evening services. Ironically, when Margery emerges from the chapel a little after Mary leaves her alone in the chapel, Margery looks and acts as if nothing happened. The marks on her face are gone, inferring that some sort of miracle took place, although Mary finds Margery's burned dress and undergarments in the fire of the chapel. The relationship between Margery and Mary has transformed from the time Margery was attacked to the end of Mary's teaching session the day following the attack. In so many words, Margery says that God healed her injuries.

Mary returns to Oxford, not only to work on her presentation that she is giving on January 28th, but Oxford is also a symbol of refuge for Mary. Mary is running away from the unexplainable recovery of Margery from her beating and Mary is doing so by drowning herself in her work. Again, walking outside in the fresh air, hanging out with friends and staying overnight in the inn all represent Mary's need to escape the realities of life even if just for a day or two. The death of one of the women in the Inner Circle of the temple, an attack on the leader and a near fatal accident for Veronica infers that someone against the causes of the Temple is attempting to take out the Inner Circle members one by one. Watson tells Mary that Veronica fell in front of an incoming train in the Underground, but that Holmes does not think it was an accident.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

In Chapter 13, Mary returns to her social club with the envelope from Holmes, which she finds is disparate information about the Temple. The information reveals that several of the members of the Temple died in accidents and then left some or all of their money and belongings to the Temple. Mary calls her attorney to arrange to buy a flat and find servants to hire. She then goes shopping for some off the rack clothes. By the end of the day, Mary has a flat and servants. The following day, Mary sits with her new servants to tell them what she expects of them, bathes, dresses and heads for the hospital. After the hospital, Mary intends to go to Scotland Yard.

In Chapter 14, when Mary visits Veronica in the hospital, Mary tells Veronica that she thinks Veronica was purposely pushed in front of the train. Mary points out that all of the deaths of the Temple members relate to money or assets being bequeathed to the Temple, Veronica confirms that her will leaves \$20,000 to the temple. Veronica tells Mary that there is a filing cabinet in the Temple office, storage for the wills of the Temple members. Mary asks Veronica to give a statement to Scotland Yard. Mary also asks that when the hospital releases Veronica, she go into hiding while Mary finishes her investigation. Mary intercepts the Inspector she knows at Scotland Yard as he is leaving the office. Mary practically blackmails him into having a drink with her, saying she has some questions, and then saying she may have some information for him in return. The Inspector is looking for Miles Fitzwarren, but doesn't say why. Mary also finds out that the connection between the drug dealer they think killed Iris and Iris is a note to meet the drug dealer that Iris had in her purse. Mary then draws the line of connection between at least three of the murders of the women of the Temple and Veronica's possible murder attempt. Mary tells the Inspector that Miles is willing to provide information on his drug connections after returning from keeping Veronica safe.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

The information about the Temple seems to be an investigation that is presented in a way that Mary recognizes, indicating that it is someone Mary knows who wrote it. It turns out that Holmes's brother, Mycroft, has been investigating the Temple for several months and it is he who has provided the information for Mary. The "accidental" deaths, followed by money and possession being left to the Temple indicates that these women may have been killed rather than died in an accidental death. Mary is setting herself up as a "trap" for Margery to "woo" her so that Mary can continue to investigate the Temple.

Mary guesses that there are specific details to Iris Fitzwarren's death that Scotland Yard is holding back from the press. The Inspector admits that there were four other deaths, similar to Iris's, involving mutilation after death. Mary guesses that the mutilation is to the face, which foreshadows that the person who attacked Margery is the same person



who killed Iris and the others that were killed like Iris. Mary infers that she may know where Miles is, but will not relay the information until the Inspector answers her questions. Mary infers that she can help the Inspector solve his murders and possibly save another life, if he takes her to his office where they can talk in private. After reading the contents on Iris's purse in the order in which the constable removed them from the bag, Mary points out that there is a contradiction in where the items in Iris's bag were. Mary says it is as if someone took out incriminating evidence, shoved the contents back into the purse, and then placed the note on top to frame the drug dealer for Iris's murder.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In Chapter 15, Mary volunteers to take on Veronica's role in the Temple, while Veronica is recovering. One afternoon, when Mary and Margery are in a teaching session, Margery's assistant brings her a note that one of the Temple members is in need. Mary offers to walk with Margery to the home of the member. While the two women are walking, Mary hears footsteps approaching from a run behind them, so she pushes Margery out of the way and Mary finds herself face to face with a man yielding a knife. The man stabs Mary while she is defending Margery. Mary breaks the nose of the man with her head and wrenches the knife from the man's hands. Mary then breaks the man's arm. As Mary leaves the police station, she runs into Holmes as she is walking home to her flat. Holmes takes Mary to one of his hideouts, feeds her and sends her to bed.

In Chapter 16, when Mary awakes the next morning, Holmes tells her the assailant was killed in his hospital bed. After Mary dresses and she and Holmes have breakfast, they leave the hideout so Mary can return to the police station to sign her witness statement.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

When the police question Mary and Margery at the police station, the police go to check on the attacker. Ironically, the police also find that the address Margery was beckoned to does not exist. The woman who sent for her does not exist either. It seems as if Margery was led out into the night so that the attacker could attempt to kill her.

The assailant is presumably murdered so he cannot be questioned by the police. This helps to hide the real reason for the attack on Margery and the person that is behind the attack. When Mary arrives at the Temple, Margery seems in denial about the attack the previous night, suggesting it was just a fluke and not a planned attempt to murder her.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

In Chapter 17, Mary catches a train back to Oxford. A man in an obvious disguise enters Mary's train car pointing a gun at her. He gives her the option to drink a mixture and be their prisoner for a few days or to be shot. Mary chooses to drink the mixture and starts to doze off just as another disguised man enters the train car. When Mary wakes, she is in darkness, sick and lying on cold stone. She falls back to sleep and wakes to the same circumstances some time later. Mary then begins to search her dark cell, where she finds a bed, some bread, water and odds and ends she may be able to use as weapons when her captors come to tell her what they want with her. Mary also realizes that she has an injection site on her arm, so the captors must have injected her with more of the sleeping potion as they transported her to her current prison. Mary's captors enter the room and she tries to break free from the room, but several men hold her up against the wall, cut her hair and inject her. This injection routine continues for the next nine days.

In Chapter 18, Mary hears a racket above her cellar prison. When the door opens, she hears Holmes's voice calling out for her. Holmes goes to find some clothing for Mary so she can go upstairs and identify the men who have been arrested. Holmes brings her tea and biscuits while he starts a shower for her and arranges to find her own clothing. Mary goes into the bathroom and Holmes's brings in her clothing and glasses while she is bathing. Holmes's tells Mary that the criminals are saying that Mary is a drug addict that came every so often to lock herself in the cellar and do drugs. When Mary goes down to speak with the police, one of the thugs is saying Mary injected herself, but Holmes points out that what the thug says is impossible because Mary is left-handed, there are bruises on her arms that reveal she was held down and one of the thugs has bite marks on one of his hands. Mary gives her statement to the police and then she returns to her flat.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Mary sees her escape from London as an escape from the problems that both Holmes and Margery symbolize for Mary. Oxford represents tranquility and peace. London represents chaos and problems. Mary believes the assailant on the train to be the former lover of Margery Childe, as he was described by Veronica, and even though Mary has never seen him before. The fact her captors did not kill her and gave her food and water indicates they have a need to keep her alive. The euphoric feeling Mary describes after being injected suggests that she is being injected with heroin. This foreshadows that her captor may have something to do with the drug dealer that Scotland yard believes has something to do with Iris's death, the Temple, and even Miles's drug connection.



Ironically, to stave off the symptoms of withdrawal Mary is exhibited, Holmes injects Mary with a dose of the heroine. Holmes does this so that Mary can answer the constable's questions without presenting herself as the person the criminals have made her out to be. It seems as if Mary is being set up for something, possibly the murders of the women from the Temple and the attacks on Margery and Veronica.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

In Chapter 19, Mary focuses on recovering from her ordeal. Holmes comes to Mary's flat and drags her out for a walk. During the walk, he tells Mary that a will was filed under her name bequeathing money to various parties, including her aunt, college, cousin and farm manager. Her belongings were bequeathed to the Temple. Holmes says the signature was a forgery, but a good forgery. Mary plans to go back into the Temple wearing a disguise as a prostitute beat up by her pimp. Holmes is wearing the disguise of a woman selling baubles outside of the Temple.

In Chapter 20, Mary checks into the refuge for women and children that the Temple runs. At one in the morning, Holmes joins Mary in the refuge for their investigation of the rest of the Temple buildings and rooms. Mary finds the safe in Margery's study, hidden in a corner by the fireplace. It is a combination lock, so it takes hours for Mary to get the safe open. Mary finds two marriage certificates for Margery and a death certificate for her first husband. Mary also finds a will for Mary bequeathing her possessions to her second husband and the will of her second husband bequeathing everything to Margery. Mary also finds love letters to Mary signed by C, which Mary connects with her captor, Claude.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

The irony is that the physical wounds and withdrawal symptoms Mary feels are not nearly as bad as the emotional ones. The filing of the fraudulent will adds fuel to the fact that the investigation into the Temple involvement in the murders and accidental deaths is valid.

The good lock on the door of Margery's study indicates that this is where the information Holmes and Mary seek is stored. The evidence Mary finds in Margery's safe implicates Margery in the scheme to get people to will their money and possessions to the Temple and then have them killed in what look like accidents. Mary uses her instincts to determine there must be a secret passageway into and out of the study, explaining how Margery got into the chapel after her first attack. Mary finds the secret passageway in the study that then leads her the street and back to Holmes.



Chapter 21 and Postscript

Chapter 21 and Postscript Summary

In Chapter 21, when Mary and Holmes reach Mary's flat, Holmes makes Mary rest and drink some teas. Mary tells Holmes what she found in Margery's safe. Mary asks Holmes how he found Mary in her basement prison. While Holmes is telling Mary, the phone rings and it is two men that work for Holmes, alerting him that Margery and her assistant left the Temple and are heading toward the river. Mary and Holmes go to the river in Mary's car that is driven by her male servant. Mary and Holmes follow Margery on foot, but lose her after she crosses the bridge and enters into a doorway of a building there. When Mary and Holmes go in the door after Margery, they find a bund man that Mary recognizes as one of her captors. When Mary and Holmes break through the door, Claude shoots Margery in the shoulder and disappears through a trap door. Mary and Holmes chase him to the river. As Holmes prepares to swim to meet the boat of Claude's escape, someone knocks Mary over the head to keep her from joining Holmes. When Mary comes to, she sees in the river below that Holmes is trying to board Claude's boat and there are shots firing. Mary watches as a barge plows into the boat carrying Claude and Holmes and there is an explosion. Mary then sees something stir below her feet in the river and Holmes asks her to help get him out of the river.

In the Postscript, Mary and Holmes eloped and are now married. Veronica calls Mary to tell her that her and Miles are getting back together. Veronica and Miles marry and have a child. Three years later, Miles dies from a sniper bullet in Ireland.

Chapter 21 and Postscript Analysis

As Mary and Holmes make their way upstairs, Mary recognizes the female voice as Margery and the male voice as her captor and Margery's husband, Claude. The argument Holmes and Mary overhear indicates that Margery did not know that Claude was responsible for Mary's disappearance, but has since put it together. Margery has also pieced together that Claude is responsible for both of her attacks and the killing of the assailant. Then Margery pieces together that all of the wills were fake and all of the accidental deaths murders. When Mary sees the explosion, she assumes that Holmes is dead and prepares herself to start sobbing. Holmes takes Mary by surprise by kissing her and proposing to her. Mary questions in her own mind how Holmes knew that she loved him.

When Mary sees the explosion, she assumes that Holmes is dead and prepares herself to start sobbing. Holmes takes Mary by surprise by kissing her and proposing to her. Mary questions in her own mind how Holmes knew that she loved him. Two people from the Temple were charged with the crimes, along with the men working for Claude. Ironically, Margery is not convicted and Margery returns all of the money and

possessions left to the Temple to the women's families. Margery leaves the Temple and goes to work in Africa until she dies from cholera.



Characters

Mary Russell

Mary Russell is the narrator of the novel. Mary Russell is also the female version of Russell. Russell is Mary's alter-ego or disguise as a young man so that she can work on cases with Sherlock Holmes. When the novel opens, Mary has just finished her last paper for her degree and she is about one week away from turning 21.

Mary Russell attends Oxford University. At Oxford, she is studying religion and chemistry. Mary also has a strong interest in the women's rights' movement, otherwise known as the suffrage movement. It is her interest in the suffrage movement that initially draws Mary to the organizations that Margery Childe runs to help women.

When Mary turns 21, she receives her inheritance. Mary lost her mother, father and younger brother in a car accident six years before the novel opens. Mary's aunt is her guardian and living with Mary in Mary's parents home until Mary turns 21 and can take over her home and inheritance. Throughout the novel, Mary Russell struggles with whether or not she is in love with Sherlock Holmes or if they are simply friends or co-workers. By the end of the novel, Mary Russell realizes that what she feels for Sherlock Holmes is love. Mary and Sherlock end up marrying, even though Sherlock Holmes is significantly older than Mary.

Margery Childe

Margery Childe is the leader of the Temple. She is in her 40s. Margery combines her religious teachings at the Temple with numerous charities to help women. One of Margery's primary focuses is on women's rights, such as the right to vote. Margery Childe is a mysterious woman. Although she spends a lot of time in the limelight, she also has a very private life behind closed doors. Margery Childe becomes the primary suspect in Mary's investigation of the mysterious deaths of the members of the Temple.

Margery Childe is a very complex and secretive woman. This is ironic since she is a public speaker and the supporter of so many organizations to help women in various aspects of their lives. It turns out that Margery has been married twice, with her latest marriage still valid and have taken place just a few months prior to Mary Russell meeting Margery.

While Mary Russell believes that Margery Childe is the prime suspect in the mysterious deaths of the Temple women, it turns out that it is Margery's second husband who is responsible. As strong of a woman as Margery comes across as being, Margery allows a man to take advantage of her and use her to embezzle money. While Margery Childe is very successful in the professional area of her life, she is very unlucky when it comes to love.



Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes is a private investigator that works on cases. Holmes is in his 60s and works on cases from time to time with Dr. Watson. Holmes is also the teacher of his informal apprentice, Mary Russell.

Basil Josephs

Basil Josephs is the name Sherlock Holmes uses when he works some cases. He particularly uses the name when he pretending to be a carriage cab driver. This is but one of the many disguises and personas that Holmes takes on throughout the novel while solving his own investigations and while helping Mary to solve her own investigation into the New Temple.

Mrs. Hudson

Mrs. Hudson is the housekeeper for Sherlock Holmes. When the novel opens, Mary, dressed as Russell, goes to visit the home of Sherlock Holmes. Mrs. Hudson says that Holmes is not home. Mary spends some time with Mrs. Hudson before Mary leaves to find Holmes.

Lady Veronica Beaconsfield

Lady Veronica Beaconsfield is an old classmate of Mary Russell's from Oxford. Veronica has a duke for an uncle, a grandfather that was an advisor to Queen Victoria, three barrister relatives, one high court judge, a father that is a big shot in the city and a mother that devotes her time to the arts. Veronica has her own causes as well, including teaching women to read and the prevention of maltreatment of cart horses. Veronica is the one that gets Mary involved in the Temple, which leads to Mary's investigation.

Russell

Russell is the name that the narrator uses when she dresses as a man. She uses this disguise to get into the places that women are not typically welcome in the 20th century in London. The disguise allows her to conduct investigations and uncover information that would normally be difficult for a woman to uncover because women's rights are not instituted fully in London at this time.

Miles Fitzwarren

Miles Fitzwarren is a Lieutenant in the London military. Miles is also the former fiancée to Veronica Beaconsfield. When Miles returns from the war, he becomes a heroin addict, so Veronica breaks off the engagement. When Mile's sister, Iris, who is a Temple



member, is murdered Miles reappears. Upon Mary's request, Holmes steps in to help Miles overcome his heroin addiction and get well.

Iris Fitzwarren

Iris Fitzwarren is a member of the Temple. Outside of a nightclub one night, Iris dies from her throat being cut. When Mary finds out that Iris is one of several women connected to the Temple that have had accidents or mysterious deaths and have bequeathed money or assets to the Temple, it sparks Mary's investigation.

Claude de Finetti

Claude de Finetti is the second husband of Margery Childe. Claude is also the person who kidnaps and holds Mary captive. Claude is the one who is responsible for creating fake wills for the wealthy women of the Temple and then killing them. He is using Margery and the Temple as a way to embezzle money from the wills and from his illegal drug business as well.



Objects/Places

London

London is the city where Mary's primary home is and the home that belonged to her family before dying in the car accident. Mary continues to live in the home with her aunt as her guardian until Mary turns 21. When Mary inherits her family's wealth, Mary makes her aunt move out and redecorates the entire home, except for Mary's room. Mary goes back and forth between her life in London and her life at Oxford.

Oxford

Oxford is where Mary studies theology and chemistry. As a fellow student, Oxford is also where Veronica and Mary met. Mary is still working on her final paper and presentation throughout the novel in preparation for her final presentation of the paper on January 28th. Oxford is also a place of respite for Mary, where she can escape the chaos of her life in London and drown herself in her studies and research.

The Vicissitude

The Vicissitude is a social club that Mary is a member. Throughout the novel, Mary stays at a room The Vicissitude, using the club for food, bathing, and fresh clothing.

The New Temple of God (The Temple)

The New Temple of God (The Temple) is the temple where Veronica takes Mary to hear Margery Childe speak. The Temple offers religious services, but also has several charitable organizations set up to help women, including medical care, a home for battered women and children, a literacy program, and a division that devotes itself to women's rights. The Temple becomes the center of Mary's investigation when wealthy women in the Temple start dying of accidental deaths and murders.

Picklock Kit

One of the primary tools that Mary uses is her picklock kit. The kit contains tools that allow Mary to get through doors and into rooms to conduct her investigation. Mary uses the picklock kit to break into the chapel, where Margery locks herself in after the first attack on Margery. Mary also uses the picklock kit to break into Margery's study, where Mary finds a hidden safe that contains secret information about Margery's life.



Safe

The safe in Margery's study is hidden inside of the wall near the fireplace in the room. Mary spends hours trying to figure out the combination lock to open the safe. When Mary opens the safe, she finds some paperwork that reveals the real life of Margery Childe. One of the documents is a marriage certificate, which is two-months old, that shows Margery is married to one Claude de Finetti. The safe also contains a will for Margery, leaving everything to Claude and a will for Claude leaving everything to Margery.

Boltholes

Boltholes are the various hideouts Holmes has in various places. The boltholes are typically accessible through hidden doors and walls. The hideouts tend to have light furnishings, food and clothing. Holmes uses these hideouts for rest and to change when he is involved in an investigation. Throughout the novel, Holmes takes Mary to several of these hideouts for rest, food, and a change of clothing.

Wills

The wills of several of the wealthy women bequeath money and other assets to the Temple. The Temple office has a drawer in a filing cabinet to hold copies of the wills. The wills of all of the women who are murdered or that die in mysterious deaths have wills that bequeath money and assets to the Temple, which leads Mary to believe that there is a connection between the deaths and the money.

Cellar in the Sussex House

The cellar in the house in Sussex is where Mary is kept as a prisoner. When Mary was held captive, her captors continuously injected her with heroin. It is an attempt to paint Mary as a drug addict that is involved in the embezzlement of the money scam going on at the Temple and even the murders of the women Temple members. Holmes rescues Mary from the prison, which also leads to them finding out who is behind the embezzlement scheme.

Disguises

Holmes wear numerous disguises throughout the novel. The disguises allow Holmes to move about freely during his investigations, without people identifying him as the great Sherlock Holmes. The disguises allow Holmes to pass along information to Mary that is pertinent to her investigation. Even Mary dresses as a young man and a prostitute in the novel to help aid in her investigation.



Themes

Women's Rights

The novel is set in the 20th century in London. During this time, women still do not have the full rights of men. Some of the women, those who took over men's jobs while the men were away at war, receive voting rights. The women who did not do this still do not have voting rights. Mary Russell, the main character is a firm believer in women's rights and she works in the ways that she can to help to women's suffrage.

The New Temple of God (The Temple) is a religious front for women's rights. The leader of the Temple is a woman, which is slightly unusual for this time in London. While Margery Childe, the woman in charge of the Temple, is using the religious services and speeches as a front, the true purpose of the Temple is to help women. The Temple offers health services to treat women and teach them about birth control. The Temple also has a literacy program to teach women how to read and write. Another behind the scenes organization is a battered women and children shelter. Finally, the political aspect of the Temple is to help institute the right to women that men have.

Religion

Religion is another one of the major themes that runs throughout the novel. First, theology is one of the primary focuses of Mary's studies at Oxford. Mary is looking for the symbols and clues in various religions that point to a woman as part of the Divinity of each religion. Religious teachings, especially when it comes to how women play a role in religion, is how Mary becomes a teacher to Margery Childe in the novel.

At the same time, Margery Childe uses religion as a front for all of her work that the Temple does for women. Mary even questions whether Margery is a mystic, someone God speaks to and uses to deliver God's messages to the world. Mary even claims to witness a miracle after the first attack on Margery. When Mary sees Margery inside of the chapel, Margery has a cut on her face, bruises and broken ribs. When Margery emerges from the chapel a little later, her face cut-free and looks normal, so Margery shows no signs of injuries. At the end, before Margery leaves for her work in Africa, Mary asks if she witnessed a miracle that day. Margery confirms that Mary did in fact witness a miracle.

Love

An underlying, but running theme in the novel is also love. Throughout the novel, Mary questions whether she is in love with Holmes, or whether she simply loves him as she would love a friend or family member. By the end of the novel, Mary realizes that she is in fact in love with Holmes and that Holmes is in love with Mary. In addition, the couple marries by the end of the novel.



The love that Veronica has for Miles Fitzwarren helps her to stand by him, even when Miles turns into a drug addict after he returns to London from the war. Victoria's love leads her to ask Mary and Holmes to help Miles kick his heroin addiction. Eventually, the love between Miles and Veronica leads to marriage and the birth of their only child before Miles dies in Ireland from the bullet of a sniper.

Love also led Margery Childe to create the Temple and all of the women's services the Temple sponsors. The love for her second husband, Claude, is also Margery's downfall. Allowing Claude into her life, allows Claude to misuse Margery's love for Claude to infiltrate the Temple and use it as a way to embezzle money through the Temple from Claude's drug and other illegal businesses.

Style

Point of View

The novel is in the first-person point of view, from the perspective Mary Russell. The novel occasionally points to previous incidents that have put the characters in the positions they are in now. The primary focus of the novel is the present, which in this case is in late 1921 and the beginning of 1922.

The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with the main character, Mary Russell. The book written in this manner allows the reader to get inside Mary's head, thoughts and inner struggles. The reader cares what happens to the narrator even though she struggles between good and evil. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Setting

The novel is set primarily in London during the end of 1921 and the beginning of 1922. The novel seems to cover the years between 1952 and 1955. The main characters of the novel are in the investigation the deaths of the women members of the Temple that die under mysterious circumstances and are wealthy enough to live substantial money and assets to the Temple.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot because the plot includes the great Sherlock Holmes, who is a well-known investigator in the history of London. At first, the reader is not aware that the character is woman dressing as a man in disguise, Mary Russell. The reader also does not know at first that she is the apprentice of Sherlock Holmes, but instead appears to be a college student at Oxford. However, as events unfold, the investigation into the Temple is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters and even the outcome of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The author, however, interjects many words and phrases that are popular in London in the 1920s, but are longer in use. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations, but makes inferences that require the reader to draw their own conclusions in some matters. This may be because this is the sequel to a previous novel. Overall, however the language is modern enough for the reader to figure out what is going on and what the outcome of the novel is.

Structure

The novel contains 21 chapters and a postscript. The length of each chapter is ranges from 2 pages to 20 pages long. The chapters tell the story in both exposition and dialogue. The narrator injects her own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing his opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows women's rights and how the suffrage movement is the primary focus of the Temple. One subplot is religion, with an underlying theme that women play a big role in all religions, but the involvement of the Divine men seem to over shine that of the women. Another subplot is the inner struggles of love. Mary and Holmes have inner struggles as to whether they are in love with each other. Veronica struggles with the love she has for Miles when he comes back from the war and turns into a heroin addict. Love betrays Margery Childe when she finds out that her second husband only married her to use the Temple for embezzling money.



Quotes

"Come now, Russell, you are a great proponent of the emancipation of women; surely you can manage to carry out your intentions in this little matter" (Chapter 1, p. 12).

"She's an amazing person, very sensible and yet, well holy somehow. I go to the meetings sometimes, if I'm free. They always make me feel good—refreshed, and strong. Margery's been very helpful" (Chapter 2, p. 30).

"I think we may be seeing something of you" (Chapter 3, p. 39).

"I like you Mary Russell. Please, do come and teach me. I think I shall learn a great deal from you. Even if it isn't about Hebrew or theology" (Chapter 4, p. 56).

"I shall begin with Veronica Beaconsfield, rather than Margery Childe, not only because she led me into contact with Miss Childe but because she can be taken as the foundation upon which Miss Childe's movement is being built. Without Ronnie, and women like her, there would be no Margery Childe" (Chapter 5, p. 66).

"Miles's sister died last night. She was a member. You met her, in fact—Iris. Tall. marcelled hair" (Chapter 6, p. 77).

"Lieutenant Fitzwarren, you can be helped" (Chapter 7, p. 97).

"I think that was the most amazing church service I've ever witnessed. Was that her standard treatment for a Thursday night?" (Chapter 8, p. 113).

"You feel uneasy at the misuse of funds. I do understand. Were it strictly up to me, I would take the gifts given me and feed my sisters. However, there is a Biblical precedent for using the expensive oil rather than selling it, as Judas would have wanted" (Chapter 9, p. 128).

"It's hardly an all-or-nothing proposition, Margery. Remember Akiva - you can at least read" (Chapter 10, p. 142).

"What you balk at is believing the evidence of your eyes, that God can reach out and touch a single human life in a concrete way" (Chapter 11, p. 161).

"Still, Holmes seemed to think it mightn't have been an accident, so I'm playing nursemaid for a few hours" (Chapter 12, p. 171).

"A place where you can take anyone, no matter their station, without them feeling out of place, that sort of thing?" (Chapter 13, p. 183).

"She is the common link between three dead women and a fourth who got lucky. She knows everything about her inner circle of followers. She knows that Veronica Beaconsfield and the others willed money to benefit the Temple. She has a friend on the



staff of the Clarion, and this person would have known about the mutilations of the other victims" (Chapter 14, p. 212).

"He was trying to kill you, Margery" (Chapter 15, p. 225).

"I have not to this point considered you a stupid woman, but I am rapidly changing my mind. You obviously don't care about your own skin, but what about mine? I could have been killed" (Chapter 16, p. 238).

"Miss Russell, you have two choices: I can shoot you here and now, or you can swallow a mixture I have with me and become my prisoner for a few days" (Chapter 17, p. 242).

"Miss Russell is left-handed. It is quite impossible for her to have repeatedly injected her own vein—a delicate operation, you will admit—using her right hand" (Chapter 18, p. 269).

"Would it interest you to know that nine days ago Sommerset House received, and registered, a will for one Mary Judith Russell, signed, witnessed, and dated the previous Friday? I thought it might" (Chapter 19, p. 278).

"I have other things to attend to, but I shall see you in the morning, Annie. I hope you sleep well" (Chapter 20, p. 294).

"I never asked you, Holmes. How did you find me...in that home in Essex?" (Chapter 21, p. 307).

"Margery, tell me. The healing. Did I see it?" (Postscript, p. 325).



Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Mary Russell? Why has she chosen to dress as young man when the novel opens? Why does she seem to transform from a young lady of no means to a woman that is very wealthy? Why is he so resistant to returning to London when she is at Oxford? What really keeps drawing Mary back to London?

Discuss the relationship between Mary and Holmes. Are they friends, co-workers or really in love? Is their true competition in their relationship? How does Mary feel about Holmes? How does Holmes feel about Mary? Why does Mary think she is in love with Holmes? What does she do about it? What happens with Holmes? Discuss the relationship between Mary and Holmes. Are they friends, co-workers or really in love? Is their true competition in their relationship? How does Mary feel about Holmes? How does Holmes feel about Mary? Why does Mary think she is in love with Holmes? What does she do about it? What happens with Holmes?

Who is Margery Child? Is she an opportunist or do you really think she is a mystic or a woman of God? Why do you think the Temple members are so drawn to Margery? Why do you think Margery keeps her marriage to Claude a secret and never talks about her personal life? Why does Margery decide to leave the Temple after she finds out the truth about Claude?

Who is Sherlock Holmes? Is he a brilliant investigator or he is a figure of the imagination of the writer that writes about Holmes in a London magazine? Why does Holmes agree to teach Mary Russell about being an investigator? Do you think Holmes waits to tell Mary how he feels about her until she turns 21? Does the age difference between Holmes and Mary seem to make a difference in their relationship? Why or why not?

Why does Watson play such a small part in the novel, when he seems to be the primary sidekick of Holmes in the Sherlock Holmes' novels? What role does Watson play in the novel?

How do you think Claude and Margery met? Did Claude seek Margery out because of her involvement with the Temple? Did Claude really love Margery or did he simply want access to the Temple for embezzlement purposes? If Holmes did not rescue Mary from the cellar of the Sussex home where Claude held Mary captive, do you think Claude would have killed Mary or was he using Mary as a scapegoat for the murders?

Discuss the rights of women in London in the 1920s, or the lack of them. What impact does the suffrage movement have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives? Does the suffrage movement have anything to do with the actions against members of the Temple? How does each character learn to deal with the movement?