

A Moon for the Misbegotten Study Guide

A Moon for the Misbegotten by Eugene O'Neill

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Plot Summary

A Moon for the Misbegotten was written in 1943 by Nobel Laureate Eugene O'Neil. It is commonly thought of as a continuation of the play Long Day's Journey into Night, written two years prior. The character of Jim is modeled after O'Neil's brother Jamie, who died November 1923, two months after the play takes place.

The play begins as Mike, the youngest Hogan son, runs away from home as his brothers had done before him, with the help of his older sister Josie. Their mother died giving birth to Mike, and now that he is twenty, he can no longer tolerate his father's domineering ways. Only Josie is equipped to stand up to him.

When Josie's father, Phil Hogan, learns that his son Mike has run away, Josie is able to calm him down. He is impressed for a brief moment, having thought Mike incapable of having the pluck. He also covers any emotions he may have about the loss by saying he never liked Mike anyway.

Josie tells her father Mike's suspicion that she and Hogan were concocting a scheme to get Jim Tyrone, their landlord, to marry Josie. She thinks it insulting and preposterous, but it stirs her father's imagination. Also, Hogan has concerns that Jim will sell the farm once his mother's estate is settled, but Josie has every faith that Jim will honor his word. Jim then stops by for a visit. He tells Josie and her father their millionaire neighbor Harder will be stopping by, because he has discovered that Hogan has been breaking the fence between Hogan's pig pen and Harder's ice pond. Since the neighbors have never met, Hogan and Josie look forward to the opportunity.

When Harder arrives he is clearly out of his element and not used to the rough banter he encounters. He'd expected respect shown to him and he encounters no such thing. Hogan beats him to the punch, telling Harder how horrible it is that Harder keeps breaking Hogan's fence- a fence that Hogan mends every morning. He then sends Harder off his property. Jim, who has been hiding in the house all this time, rejoins Hogan and Josie. He flirts with Josie and they make a date for later in the evening.

Later that night, two hours past the appointed time of the date, Jim has not shown and Josie is deeply disappointed. Her father comes home from the inn unusually drunk and unusually early. He is despondent. He tells Josie Jim is selling the farm to their neighbor Harder. At first Josie cannot believe it but she must face the facts. She jumps into action to save their farm, concocting a plan to Lure Jim to the house, get him drunk, have him pass out, and then for him to get caught in bed with her. The shame for Jim would be so great that he would do anything to keep the discovery secret.

Soon enough, though, Jim arrives at the house on his own. He is late for the date but he has shown up after all. As part of the new plan, Hogan leaves so Josie can be alone with Jim. She and Jim talk, and as the hours wear on it becomes clear that Jim is not selling the farm to Harder- he had been kidding around and her father had known it. It also becomes clear that Jim and Josie share love for each other but Jim is dead inside.



He has not been the same since his mother's death, drinking himself to oblivion, even missing his mother's funeral. His guilt is eating away at him. He is so damaged he cannot be saved. Jim receives comfort and forgiveness as he cries on Josie's breast, and he falls asleep against her. With a heavy heart Josie realizes that she will not see him again.

At dawn, Hogan returns. Josie is upset with him for having schemed for her to become close with Jim but he explains it wasn't about the money; he wanted her to be happy. He goes inside and Josie wakes Jim. At first he remembers nothing from the previous night but when he does remember, he is full of shame. Josie convinces him it is not shameful to receive love. They kiss goodbye, professing their love for each other but knowing they will never see each other again.



Act I

Act I Summary

It is a hot clear day in September, just before noon. Josie, twenty eight years old, emerges from a Connecticut farmhouse waiting for her brother Mike. She is relieved when Mike finally arrives. When Josie asks why Mike is late, he blames their father and speaks disrespectfully of him. For this, Josie slaps Mike. The force is more than intended and Mike stumbles back.

Josie is helping Mike run away. Mike is focused on virtue and purity, while Josie is not, but Josie is going to help him despite their differences. She acknowledges their father is overbearing and Mike cannot stand up to him.

Josie points out that their two other brothers couldn't stand up to their father either and Josie had helped them run away as well. Thomas is now a police officer in Bridgeport, and John tends bar in Meriden. Mike is heading to see Thomas now.

Josie gives Mike a roll of small bills that she had taken from her father's stash. She knows he'll be angry but both she and Mike agree that she, and she alone, can handle their father.

Mike does not like that Josie helps their father sell sick animals pretending they are healthy. He hopes Josie will change this, as well as change her "shameless ways" with men, and get married instead. Josie wouldn't hear of it. Mike suggests Josie has been scheming to get Jim Tyrone to marry her, so she could be rich, and that it is their father's idea. Josie denies it. While Mike is against such things in general, he is supportive of this plan since he hates Jim and he would be glad for Josie to get all of his money.

Josie sees their father in the distance and presses Mike to leave. Mike runs off into the woods. Her father returns, full of rage. Phil Hogan, known simply as Hogan, is fifty-five years old. He is considerably shorter than his daughter. Hogan yells at Josie, convinced she knows where Mike is. They exchange harsh words. Finally Josie tells Hogan Mike has left home for good.

Hogan is surprised, and slightly impressed. He hadn't thought Mike capable of such a courageous act. Soon, though, his anger returns as it occurs to him that Josie had surely stolen his satchel, and his money, to give to her brother. Josie has a broom handle on hand to defend herself if need be. Hogan's anger turns to pride in his tough-as-nails daughter.

Hogan learns Josie had given six dollars to Mike. Josie says she figured her father would be happy to give six dollars to get rid of him. Hogan admits he never liked Mike, or his other sons either. They take after Josie's mother's family, but he does not like the pious; they have no time for drinking and sinning. He is glad Josie turned out more like him and Josie's mother who died while giving birth to Mike.



Josie tells Hogan Mike had gone on about her wayward habits with men. Hogan is uncomfortable with the discussion but he accepts that this is who his daughter is, particularly because if she had gotten married he would not have her company. Josie then tells Hogan about Mike's accusation that she and Hogan wanted to trap Jim Tyrone, either by getting him drunk and leading him to marriage, or by having Hogan catch him in the act with Josie, shot gun in hand. Hogan reacts as if these ideas have merit, but Josie cannot believe her father would consider such a thing.

Hogan keeps coming back to the idea of setting a trap for Jim, who is about to come into a considerable amount of money from his mother's estate. He gets more concrete with the details as he goes along. Josie tells her father it will never work. She says she is an "ugly overgrown lump of a woman" and even though Jim is a drunk, he could have his pick of "painted little Broadway girls." Hogan implies that he has seen Jim taking note of Josie's finer qualities but Josie doesn't believe him.

Hogan baits Josie into agreeing. He suggests that Josie would have no trouble reforming Jim as his wife. He also suggests Josie would love the money. Josie agrees with both points but does not give in.

Hogan tries a new tactic. He is scared that when Jim owns the farm outright, he'll sell it. And not to Hogan under terms already agreed-upon, but to someone else. Already someone has made an inquiry to purchase the land. Josie is sure Jim will honor his word and this will not happen. Hogan keeps at it, saying Jim may not honor his word when he is drunk. Josie holds her ground.

Josie wants to take care of the work Mike had left unfinished in the meadow, but Jim seems headed toward the house. Josie does not want to be present when he arrives and Hogan teases her that she is in love. She goes inside to check on the stew.

Jim Tyrone is in his early forties. He is taller than Hogan and slightly shorter than Josie. He is handsome, though his history of drinking has taken a toll on his face and body. He chats with Hogan and soon Josie emerges, tidied up. Jim alternates between flirting with Josie and being annoyed by her. The banter between the three people is playful and full of sarcastic wit.

Jim tells Hogan and Josie that their wealthy and powerful neighbor T. Stedman Harder will be calling on them in the afternoon. Simpson, the superintendent of his property, had informed Harder that Hogan kept breaking his fence near Harder's ice pond, located close to Hogan's pig pen. The pigs cross over and contaminate the ice pond.

Hogan jokingly says he should kiss Jim for bringing the good news and suggest Josie does it for him. Josie plays along and kisses Jim, and is surprised by the emotions it stirs in her. She covers it up with jokes.

Hogan supplies Jim with some alcohol. Soon they spot Harder heading in their direction. Josie urges Jim to get in the house so as not to be spotted. She sends him to her bedroom and they jokingly make a date to meet there later.



Harder, in his late thirties, is of a different world than Hogan. He has not dealt with people of Hogan's class and brashness before. He is of English descent. Hogan and Josie play up their Irish accents when speaking to him. They mock and tease Harder, to his confusion. When Harder sees the bottle Jim had been drinking, he concludes that Hogan is drunk. He says he'll return another time, or send Simpson, but Hogan holds his lapel and forces him to stay.

Hogan goes on the offensive, accusing Harder of breaking his fence to encourage Hogan's pigs to visit the ice pond and die there. Hogan continues that he fixes the fence every morning, but Harder keeps breaking it. He says pigs have died in the pond and others have died drinking its unclean water. Prize pigs, worth a lot of money, he says. When he is done scolding Harder, Hogan kicks him off his land.

Jim emerges. He tells Hogan that the prospective buyer had been Harder, willing to pay steep sums just to rid himself of Hogan as a neighbor. Jim toys with Hogan, telling him he may just sell it, but Josie is sure he is only joking. Jim reminds Josie of their date later and compliments her breasts. Josie takes Jim's hand and the three go inside to eat.

Act I Analysis

The play opens with the third of three sons escaping from his father's home. Right away this reveals a lot about Hogan, who drove away three sons without trying. When Josie says Mike cannot stand up to their father, that none of the brothers could, this indicates their father is a powerful and domineering force.

That Josie, the only girl, is the only child who can handle her father is not typical and this is intentional on the part of the author. At the outset it is plain that Josie is strong, stronger than all of her brothers, stronger physically but mentally as well. She is equipped with the goods to get through life with Hogan.

This is proven in the next moment when Hogan is furious that Mike is gone, and with Josie's help at that. In no time, Josie has calmed her father down. She does this with a combination of physical intimidation and setting up opportunities for her father to keep his pride intact in the situation. She says, for instance, that she thought he'd be glad to pay six dollars to get rid of Mike. Hogan jumps on that and continues saying he never liked Mike anyway. Josie has guided him to a place where he can find a leg to stand on.

The discussion between Josie and her dad also reveals just how scheming Hogan is. When Josie relates Mike's suspicions of a scheme to trap Jim into marriage, rather than be outraged, Hogan immediately starts to weigh the idea as a possibility.

There is humor in Hogan's dislike for devout Christians, because it leaves them no time to drink and gamble. Josie shows this vein of humor, when earlier on, she indicates that Mike's piousness is a bad trait to have.



When Jim and Josie have a discussion, their way of communicating becomes clear to an outside observer. They needle each other but there is a strong flirtation and attraction underlying the exchange.

Harder's visit coming on the heels of Jim's visit juxtaposes two very different exchanges. While both Jim and Harder are wealthy, Jim has the ability to interact with his tenants in a natural way, having fun in their exchanges. Harder is a fish out of water when he meets Hogan. His unfamiliarity with the lower classes is painfully obvious. He expects to receive respect as a result of being wealthy, but Hogan purposefully treats him with hostility.

The end of the act introduces the element of Jim toying with Hogan and Josie about selling his property to someone other than them. Josie's faith in Jim's promise is unwavering, while Hogan is less sure.



Act II

Act II Summary

Act II picks up at 11pm that night in the living room. Josie has been waiting for Jim, who said he'd come by at 9pm. Instead, Hogan trails in, drunk and singing loudly. It is unusual for him to be coming home before the bar closes. They argue and Josie offers to fight her father, but they don't follow through.

Josie is impatient and preoccupied and orders her father to go straight to bed. She then notices her father is more miserable than usual. He finally tells her why. Jim is selling the farm to Harder. Simpson had come to the bar with an offer of ten thousand dollars and Jim agreed. They would settle the paperwork in the morning.

Hogan goes on with further details of the evening in the bar. Before the incident, he relates, Jim had confided in him his love for Josie, and Jim seems to believe Josie is actually a virgin. He didn't keep his date with Josie because he wouldn't be able to refrain from touching her and corrupting her in the process.

Josie knows the papers haven't been signed yet so she still has a window in which she can change the outcome. She plans to go to the bar, bring Jim back to her place, get him drunk enough that he passes out, place him in her bed with her and be caught there by Hogan and other witnesses. Josie hopes this will result in Jim signing a paper that he'll sell the farm to Hogan on the price they've already arranged.

Egged on by Hogan, Josie expands the desired revenge to include a ten thousand dollar payout to Josie. She is sure that Jim's desire to keep the incident quiet will be enough motivation for him to comply.

Josie goes to her room to check herself in the mirror before heading to the bar. Hogan's demeanor changes as soon as Josie is out of sight. He is not falling-down drunk at all but quite clear-headed. It is now clear he is concocting the story to have Josie go along with the plan to lure Jim. When Josie emerges from her room, Hogan returns to his drunken state.

As Hogan and Josie leave the house, they see Jim arriving. When Jim is in earshot, they start fighting loudly, for Jim to hear. As part of their scheme, Josie loudly sends Hogan away and tells him not to come home until he's slept off his drunkenness. Hogan heads back to the bar, singing as he goes.

Jim enters with eyes slightly glazed but not drunk. Josie leads him to sit down and he tells Josie he loves her. Josie teases him about being late and about his delicate treatment of her. Jim firmly says that he is not up for arguing or roughness with her tonight. He tells Josie to just be herself.



As Josie goes to get Jim a drink, it is clear she is having conflicting emotions. In the meantime, Jim is left alone in the living room, angry with himself, with a face full of guilt. He tries to light a cigarette but his hand trembles so much that he cannot.

Act II Analysis

Though Josie is tough as nails, she is vulnerable at the top of the second act. She puts on a show, even just for herself, but she is deeply disappointed that Jim has not kept his word. She assumes he went to the bar and forgot about the date, obviously insignificant.

Hogan returns home drunk. Later he reveals this is just an act, so when he first arrives, his manipulative tactics are quite visible. He intends to give her information the whole time, but instead of just offering it, he makes the information worth more by forcing Josie to pull it out of him, in increments. He knows his daughter so well that he knows just how to play her.

Once Hogan has laid the bait and Josie wants to seek her revenge, she is relentless. Josie is shocked that Jim would break his promise, and the cut is deeper because her faith in him had been so strong. Josie is determined to compromise Jim.

When Josie explains how her plan will work. It is based on her certainty that Jim would be ashamed to be caught in bed with her, being a far cry from the Broadway tarts that are his regular fare. This reveals a great deal about Josie's keen perceptions of the world around her and how it operates. It also reveals a devastating look at how Josie perceives herself, and the pain she carries daily due to her beliefs of how she is seen by others.

Working together in a scheme comes easily to Hogan and Josie, and things run smoothly when Jim shows up.

Jim is so expressive toward Josie that it throws her off-kilter. A moment ago she had a plan to destroy him and hate him for always, and now she is stuck in the thick of all of her emotions, not just the hateful ones.

At the end of the act, when Josie leaves to get a drink, Jim's guilt is apparent, yet the cause of his guilt is unknown.



Act III

Act III Summary

Act III picks up where Act II left off. Jim eventually manages to light his cigarette. He is on the verge of breaking down in tears but he steers himself away from this. He is immensely relieved when Josie returns with a bottle and glasses. Jim drinks and Josie uncharacteristically drinks as well. The two flirt and Jim reveals his passion for Josie. He tells her all of the qualities he likes about her. Josie in turn kisses Jim. His desire is roused but he explains he is determined to have a different night with Josie, unlike the many nights and dawns he has had with many women.

Josie tries to keep up the drinking rounds with Jim but at a point Jim knocks her drink out of her hands. He doesn't want to sleep with a "drunken tramp." He alludes to an incident when he got a woman drunk on a train but he abandons the story. He recognizes he should leave but Josie convinces him to stay.

They speak of Josie's father. Jim says that Hogan is the only friend he has left, along with Josie. Josie focuses on feeding more drinks to Jim.

Jim again warns Josie how horrible she would feel in the morning if she woke up beside him. He's seen too many of those mornings. Josie openly says that love could change that, could make it different. She says she's been in love with him since he told her he loves her beautiful soul. Preoccupied, Jim doesn't hear her. Jim returns again to the story on the train but once again loses the thread.

Jim then tells Josie about a joke he played on her father. When Simpson came with an offer to buy the land, Jim had said yes so that Harder would become confident, and tomorrow he will learn the truth that Jim will not sell. Jim says he tried to fool Hogan but he couldn't pull the wool over his eyes. Josie is relieved and kisses Jim passionately. It becomes clear to Josie that her father had been playing her. She is bitter but she does not want to tell Jim the truth about it.

Jim now explains to Josie that he knows she is a virgin. She plays it up too much, the guys that speak of being with her play it up too much as well, each lying to the other for not wanting to admit he'd been turned away where others had been permitted. Jim tells Josie that her father knows as well and finally admitted it to Jim tonight.

Josie comes clean and admits it, and now she wants Jim to be with her. Jim instantly changes, becoming rough and forceful, and Josie pushes him off. Jim says he'd wanted love tonight, not sex. He said now Josie could see what he really does, what he is really like. He also says that he is drunk, that for a moment he thought she was the woman on the train. Josie is devastated.

Jim is leaving as Josie finds a way to forgive him. He stays and they apologize to each other. Jim is racked with sorrow and Josie encourages him to talk about it. He warns her



that she won't be able to forgive him if he tells her the story, though if anyone were ever able to forgive him for it, it would be Josie.

Jim was sober for two years, and then his mother got sick and went into a coma from which she would never emerge. This got him drinking again. After she died, he tried to stay in a perpetual state of drunkenness. He couldn't bring himself to cry - he felt nothing - but he put on an act for those who expected him to react.

When Jim took his mother's body back east by train, he was tortured and drunk and losing his mind. He found a woman and he paid her fifty dollars nightly to visit him. And then back home, he was too drunk to go to his mother's funeral.

While Jim shares the story, Josie becomes more and more removed. Jim sees the effect it has on her, but Josie denies this. She says she can forgive him. He wants to go to town, catch the last trolley, but Josie says he should get what he came for- to cry about his mother and feel her forgiveness. Jim falls asleep crying against Josie's breast.

Josie is devastated to realize that even her love will not be enough to save Jim.

Act III Analysis

The act begins with Jim fighting back tears. He is clearly verging on the edge of falling apart, and the only resource he knows to cure that is alcohol. He drinks as soon as the alcohol is presented to him.

Josie, who does not drink, does so here, so as to not raise Jim's suspicions of her trying to get him drunk. Since she is not used to the alcohol, it affects her a great deal, though she does not drink that much. When Jim knocks the drink out of her hands, it is the first time he reveals a dangerous volatility to Josie. He connects the drink in her hand with a moment that has been pushing up to the surface in him for some time. It is this moment he has been battling with, driving him to the edge of falling apart.

When Josie learns the truth, that Jim is not selling the farm, her first reaction is relief that she can keep her faith in him, that she can still love him. Only as an afterthought does she process that this means her father manipulated the situation.

Not wanting to seem weak or delicate, Josie has fostered a bad reputation around town. That Jim can see the truth of her virginity is surprising and deeply moving to Josie. He knows her well enough to understand the situation. That her father has never shared with her his suspicions that she is a virgin is sweet and strikes Josie as surprising. In the same way that she offers him the opportunity to maintain his ground, Hogan has allowed her to keep her pride about her sinful reputation.

Both Jim and Josie are seeking something more meaningful than what they've had. Her elaborate construct of being with many different men, and his repeated nights with repeated dawns all produce the same after-effect of a horrible, regretful, unsatisfying experience.



When Jim switches from someone who loves Josie to someone who wants to control her body, it happens in a flash. He says the drink is to blame but even then he admits that a part of him always knows what he is doing when he is drinking. It is possible that Jim wants to steer Josie away, and wants to show her his true colors. And it works, for a brief time. Josie is shocked, disappointed, angry and ultimately hurt. Yet she works hard to find it within herself to see beyond this and forgive him.

The guilt eating away at Jim has caused him to go somewhat dead inside. He had quit drinking for his mother, yet when she got sick he went back to it. He feels much guilt about this, so much so that he believes even though she was in a coma, his mother saw he was drunk in the last moments of her life. And the guilt continues, for his drinking and despicable behavior on the train. He had kept digging his rut deeper, ultimately missing his mother's funeral. He cannot accept this behavior in himself. He is aching for forgiveness but has not been able to find it.

Josie recognizes that it is not just her who needs to forgive Jim, but that Jim needs to feel his mother is forgiving him as well, so he can move on, and Josie offers this, with all of her love, as a gift to him.



Act IV

Act IV Summary

It is now dawn. Josie has not moved, and Jim is still asleep, his head against her breast. Hogan creeps in but Josie sees him. She wants to talk to him but asks that they speak quietly so as not to wake Jim.

Hogan had gotten so drunk at the bar he forgot to bring witnesses home with him. Josie tells him to stop his lies. She knows that he was sober last night and had been scheming. He'd used everything he knew about her, her hurt about Jim not showing up, her love for Jim, everything, to scheme his way into this plan to get Jim's money. Josie tells her father she is leaving the farm as her brothers had done before.

Hogan says the money was not his motivation. He had done this so Josie could have a chance at happiness. Josie doesn't believe him. She sends him into the house.

Josie tries to waken Jim. Half-asleep, he confuses her for the countless other women who have woken up with him, and he says he needs more sleep. Josie pushes him away, saying she's had all she can bear. When Jim realizes he is with Josie, he feels bad that she'd let him sleep against her. He also says he's had a good sleep, without nightmares. Josie tells him not to apologize, she enjoyed the evening with him.

Jim forgets the events of the evening and asks Josie to tell him what he'd said. She tells him he did nothing to regret. She tells him he stressed he wanted the night to be different. Now Jim confirms that it was, for he doesn't feel the way he usually feels the morning after, with tarts.

Josie pours Jim a drink and says she has to get to her morning chores. When Jim drinks, it brings back the full memory of last night. He becomes embarrassed and tries to leave immediately. Josie stops him, because she knows they will never see each other again. She wants Jim to be glad for the love she'd shown him, not ashamed. At first he resists but then he embraces the memory. He kisses Josie passionately and tells her he will always love her. Jim then turns and heads down the road, not looking back.

Hogan emerges from the house and explains to his daughter that he really had been seeking her happiness. She believes him this time and assures him she won't be leaving the farm. Soon they are back to their friendly jibes. Hogan goes in the house for breakfast. As Josie goes inside, she takes one last look down the road to Jim, who is far off now, and says she hopes he soon dies in his sleep, so he can be in peace and forgiveness forever.



Act IV Analysis

When Hogan returns, he is glad to find the image of Jim sleeping against Josie. He knows there will be fallout for his actions, but, he says it was worth it.

Josie feels deeply betrayed by her father. It is one thing for the two of them to scheme and swindle others, but for her father to have manipulated her is a severe abuse of their relationship. She feels so strongly about this that she is prepared to leave him and the farm and not return. But right now her attention is on Jim and the goodbye that is waiting to happen.

Once Hogan is safely inside, Josie wakens Jim without knowing if he will remember, what he will remember, and how he will feel about everything. When he shows signs of having forgotten everything, she feels a mixture of relief and sadness. She feels relief for not having to deal with the awkwardness of having spilled his secrets and having shared such intimacy. She feels sadness for learning that all of his words about her and about his feelings were no more than the words of a drunk. But even before he remembers, Jim assures Josie he finds her beautiful, and that his love for her is sincere.

The drink triggers Jim's memory, he is ashamed of having been weak, of having exposed so much of himself, both the rough parts of him and his guilt-ridden, sorrowful sensitive parts. Josie does everything she can to make this okay for Jim. She provides love and accepts that they will not see each other again. This is something they both know and understand without having to discuss it.

Softened by her exchange with Jim, Josie is now ready to believe her father set up the plan for her benefit. She assures him she will stay with him. And just like that, they slip into their familiar tones of needling each other, a sign that life will go on as it did before.



Characters

Josie Hogan

At twenty-eight years old, Josie is exceptionally large and strong for a woman. She is 5'11", broad, and sturdy. She is not mannish though, she is all woman. While she is not pretty, she has attractive deep blue eyes and a charming smile.

Josie is no-nonsense. She has an inner strength that matches her physique. She knows how to handle her father far better than her brothers do. Josie has found ways of protecting her inner core. She is a virgin, yet she doesn't want the world to see her as soft so she's constructed a believable reputation of being sexually promiscuous.

Josie wants love but is scared of being rejected. She is sure that someone like Jim would be too embarrassed to actually be with her, even if he did hold feelings for her.

Mike Hogan

Mike Hogan is twenty years old. Though durable, he is not as sturdy as his sister Josie. He is a staunch and self-righteous Catholic. It is time for him to escape being under the thumb of his father, and he runs away, with his sister's help.

Phil Hogan

Phil Hogan is Josie and Mike's father. At fifty-five years old, he stands shorter than his daughter but he is a tough Irish man who enjoys fighting. He dislikes pious people, and he has a long history of bending the truth to sell 'healthy' animals when in fact they are far from healthy.

Hogan manipulates the situation in order to bring his daughter closer to Jim, to perhaps find happiness with him. It is not clear what his actual motivations are, likely both his daughter's happiness and the substantial funds that would come his way if Josie were to marry Jim.

James Tyrone Jr.

Jim Tyrone is in his early 40s. He is a hard drinker and his face and body show it. He had been sober for two years but when his mother died a year ago, he started again and hasn't stopped since. He is in town settling his mother's estate. He plans on selling the farm to Hogan, for a low price.

Jim lives in a world of late hours, later mornings, and a steady stream of women passing through his bed. He is tired of this life and is hungry for something he can feel.



Jim's connection to Josie provides a window into his inner workings. He is tormented by guilt, he is dead inside, and he is broken and wants to be repaired. He seeks peace.

T. Stedman Harder

The millionaire neighbor of Hogan, Stedman Harder is in his late 30s. He is upper crust. He has been coddled his entire life. He has no sense of humor, which makes things more challenging when he visits Hogan, since humor is Hogan's principal form of communication. Harder is intimidated by Hogan and leaves when he is told.



Objects/Places

The Farm

Hogan has been living on the farm for more than twenty years. Jim's mother was the landlord and now Jim will inherit it. The plan is for Jim to sell the land to Hogan for a reasonable sum. This arrangement appears to be thwarted by a plan for Harder to purchase the farm, with the meager intent to rid himself of Hogan, who is a pesky neighbor.

Broom Handle

While Josie is a strong woman and could probably take on her father on her own in a physical altercation, she keeps a broom handle by her side when she knows there may be trouble, and she is not afraid to use it.

Alcohol

Both Jim and Hogan are heavy drinkers. Their behavior is exaggerated and extreme when under the influence. Mike does not drink at all, nor does Josie. Josie is willing to drink though, on the night when she intends to take revenge on Jim.

The Inn

The men in the area spend their evenings at the inn, where they drink and carouse.

The Fence

Harder's fence keeps being broken by Hogan, in order to access Harder's ice pond. It is a point of contention between the neighbors and actually brings them to meet for the very first time.

Pitchfork

Mike leaves his pitchfork behind when he runs away. When Hogan asks Josie if she's seen Mike, he spots Mike's pitchfork.



Train

Jim's mother died while he was away with her. He had to transport her body back east, and the long train ride was difficult for him. On the train he turned to drink and women, seeking consolation.

Satchel and money

Josie gives Mike their father's satchel and his secret stash of money, \$6. Later, she tells Hogan that she thought Hogan would spend \$6 to get rid of Mike.

Moon

The moon in this play is seen as a romantic element. At times Jim feels the pull of the moon but at other times he says he prefers the lights of Broadway.



Themes

Deception

A Moon for the Misbegotten examines deception. The major point of deceit in the play is when Hogan lies to Josie about Jim breaking his promise. This is an intentional act of deception. There is nothing accidental about it. In order to achieve his goal, Hogan uses everything he knows about his daughter and manipulates things accordingly so she will react exactly how he wants her to react. His motives may be noble but does that make the deception valid?

There are other points of deception throughout the play. Mike does not leave in the open. He runs away in secret. It is easier for him to avoid facing his domineering father and slink away.

Josie deceives everyone - possibly herself - about her being with many men. She is in fact a virgin, yet she has sculpted such a tale that even the men whom she rejects feed into the tale, complicit in the deception. She holds on to this so strongly. It is the characteristic that defines her the most, yet it is a fallacy.

Forgiveness

Jim is desperate to find forgiveness for his handling of his mother's death. His behavior has become everything she would have detested and he cannot find his way to forgiving himself. Jim believes Josie holds the key. She acts as mother and priest, forgiving him and encouraging him to forgive himself.

There are repeated examples of Josie forgiving Jim for infractions- when he showed up two and a half hours late for their date, when he knocks the glass out of her hands, when he grabs her and becomes forceful. All of these acts she forgives. And the distasteful story of the train carrying his mother's coffin, she forgives that as well.

Josie also forgives her father for intentionally deceiving her.

Another aspect of forgiveness worth noting is that this play can be seen as an act of forgiveness from one brother- Eugene O'Neil, to another brother, who died two decades before the play was written. He is finally being forgiven for his actions.

Family

O'Neill is writing about his own family in the character of Jim, modeled after his brother Jamie. This is a clue that family is key in the play.

The opening scene examines familial bonds between siblings, even when they don't particularly like each other. It also examines Mike's need to get away from his father to become his own man, and Hogan's reaction, although angry, which is mixed with pride for his son having stepped up to do that. Hogan deceives his daughter even though he is risking their relationship, but he does it with the hopes of improving her life.



Style

Point of View

A Moon for the Misbegotten is a play. Each of the five characters speaks lines for themselves, so the story is portrayed objectively. There is no voice filtering any of the characters' own voices.

Sometimes a character relates information that happened offstage or prior to the onset of the play. Jim relates a few stories, about winning at horses and finding it unsatisfying, to revisiting his behavior on the train following his mother's death. Josie passes on information about the two brothers that left years before this moment in time. Hogan speaks of his evening at the inn, when Jim agreed to sell the property to Harder.

Setting

A Moon for the Misbegotten takes place September 1923, in a run-down home in Connecticut on a farm. The house has not been painted in a long time and there is an addition tacked on to the building that is not attractive. While not visible on stage, there is a meadow, and apple orchard, and a cluster of woods nearby. This is not a wealthy farm.

Act I takes place at noon on a sunny day, in front of the house. Act II occurs at 11pm that night, both in front of, and inside, the house. Act III continues from Act II without interruption, but this time all of the action takes place outside. The final act occurs at dawn the next morning.

Language and Meaning

Eugene O'Neill wrote in a time when there was great change on stage. Using plain English the way that working class people would speak was fairly new in theatre, and O'Neill was one of the playwrights introducing a working-class dialect in their plays.

Josie, Mike and Hogan do not have higher education. They speak simply. Jim, who is wealthier, also speaks plainly. What they also all share is a love of wit and of sarcasm. Harder is of a different sort and as such, has a different vocabulary. He hardly speaks at all in the play- a way for O'Neill to visibly demonstrate that his focus is on the farmers and not the upper class.

Structure

The play is divided into four acts, all of which take place between noon on one day and dawn the following day. The first act is long and expansive and introduces all of the



characters. It shows their relationships. It also brings the idea of conning Jim into play, piquing the curiosity of the audience.

The next act tips the scale from everything being okay to nothing being okay. Jim's promise has been broken.

The third act is intimate, allowing for an exchange between just two characters, late at night. While it restores Josie's faith in Jim keeping his word, it breaks another door open, and now Josie can see Jim is damaged.

The fourth act is short and neat, restoring the world to how it was before, except Josie and Jim will never be the same.



Quotes

Josie: "And I didn't hit you, or you'd be flat on the ground. It was only a love-tap to waken your wits, so you'll use them." (Act I)

Josie: "You're worse than decent. You're virtuous." (Act I)

Josie: "I've often suspected you sneak out of bed in the night to pick your own pockets." (Act I)

Josie: "Your gab has bothered my mind. I need hard work in the sun to clear it." (Act I)

Jim: "This being out in the moonlight instead of the lousy Inn isn't a bad bet, at that." (Act II)

Hogan: "By Christ, Josie, for all his Broadway wisdom about women, you've made a prize damned fool of him and that's some satisfaction!" (Act II)

Jim: "Yes. Take a big drink of moonlight instead." (Act III)

Josie: "Everything is far away and it doesn't matter - except the moon and its dreams, and I'm part of the dreams - and you are too." (Act III)

Jim: "There is no present or future - only the past happening over and over again - now." (Act III)

Josie: "I understand now, Jim darling, and I'm proud you came to me as the one in the world you know loves you enough to understand and forgive - and I do forgive!" (Act III)

Jim: "I may not remember much, but I know how different it was from the way I feel now. None of my usual morning-after stuff - the damned sick remorse that makes you wish you'd died in your sleep so you wouldn't have to face the rotten things you're afraid you said and did the night before, when you were so drunk you didn't know what you were doing." (Act IV)

Josie: "I thought there was still hope. I didn't know he'd died already - that it was a damned soul coming to me in the moonlight, to confess and be forgiven and find peace in the moonlight." (Act IV)



Topics for Discussion

Why is Mike leaving home? Why is Josie helping him? Why are they doing this in secret? What are Hogan's feelings when he learns Mike is gone? How does Josie calm him down?

What are the similarities between Josie and her father? What are their differences? Who has the power? Do they each have power in different ways, and what are those ways?

What is Jim's relationship with Hogan and Josie? What is his history with them? Why does he come to visit them?

Why does Harder visit Hogan? What is their dispute about? How does Hogan handle the situation and how is the meeting resolved?

Why does Hogan lie to Josie about Jim selling the house to Harder? Why does she find it so hard to believe? What is Josie's plan of action so they can keep the farm?

How does Josie feel about Jim? How does Jim feel about Josie? How do they express their emotions? How well do they know each other? What does each of them get from the other person?

What does Jim share with Josie when he is drunk? Why does he tell her? What is he seeking, and does he find it? Why does Josie understand they will never see each other again?

Why does Josie lie about being a virgin? Why does she forgive her father for lying to her? How will Josie be changed by the events in the play?