

# **Master of the Game Study Guide**

## **Master of the Game by Sidney Sheldon**

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# Plot Summary

Master of the Game by Sidney Sheldon is an epic novel that tells the story of five generations of the McGregor family. The novel begins with Jamie, the patriarch, and ends with Robert, his great-great grandson. Jamie begins a company, Kruger-Brent, Limited, with the spoils of a theft and dreams of revenge. Jamie's daughter grows up to take over the reins, making Kruger-Brent an international conglomerate. Kate wants her own son to take over from her, but Tony has other dreams. When Tony becomes ill, Kate turns her attention to her granddaughters, only to be disappointed again. On the eve of her ninetieth birthday, Kate pins all her hopes on nine-year-old Robert, determined that Kruger-Brent remains in McGregor hands. Master of the Game is an adventure of epic proportions, exposing both the good and bad of human ambition.

Jamie McGregor leaves the safety of home to find diamonds in the deserts of South Africa. Jamie is successful in his endeavors, but is cheated by a con artist who prays on inexperienced prospectors. Jamie joins forces with Banda, a native man, to exact revenge on their common enemy. Jamie and Banda steal diamonds in a dangerous heist that should have left them both dead. Jamie takes the spoils of this adventure and puts into action a scheme to ruin his enemy, Salomon van der Merwe. Van der Merwe is a Christian man with an innocent daughter. Jamie seduces and impregnates this daughter, ruining Van der Merwe's reputation. Depressed from his bad fortune, Van der Merwe begins making mistakes in his business dealings, finding himself increasingly dependent on the local bank and the loans they offer him. Van der Merwe has no way of knowing Jamie owns the bank. When Van der Merwe has put up his final possession in collateral for the loans, Jamie calls them in, taking everything Van der Merwe ever had.

Van der Merwe's daughter, Margaret, gives birth in the weeks following her father's suicide. Margaret, aware of what Jamie has done, but still in love with him, schemes to win his affections. Margaret leaves her infant son with his father for a week, forcing Jamie to interact with the tiny boy. Jamie falls in love with his son and eventually consents to make Margaret his wife. However, Jamie treats the marriage as one of convenience and never acknowledges Margaret inside their home, except for one drunken night of passion in which Jamie mistakes Margaret for his mistress. Margaret gives birth to a daughter nine months later.

Jamie's business has become successful, expanding from diamonds to land to just about anything that will make money. Jamie still owns Van der Merwe's diamond beach. When an overseer on the beach becomes cruel toward the native workers, a riot begins. While Jamie attempts to settle the situation on sight, someone breaks into his home and steals his son. A few nights later, his daughter is taken. Banda tells Jamie that his son is dead, left alone to wander in the desert, but that his daughter has been returned. Jamie is so heartbroken over the death of his son that he suffers a stroke. For a year, Margaret finally has her husband's full attention.

Margaret takes over Jamie's company and runs it with his manager, David Blackwell. Together they attempt to make a young woman out of Kate, but when she resists their



efforts, Margaret sends her to a boarding school. During Kate's final year at school, Margaret develops cancer and dies. Kate goes on to business school and then begins to run the company with David. Kate is in love with David, and upon learning that he intends to marry someone else, Kate schemes behind his back to end the engagement and marry him herself. Kate and David have a happy marriage for several years, but David dies days before the birth of their only child, Tony.

Kate adores her son, giving him everything a child could desire. Kate hopes that Tony will take over the reins of Kruger-Brent, Limited one day, but Tony wants to be an artist. Kate relents and allows Tony to study in Paris with the understanding that if he fails, he will come back to run Kruger-Brent. When Tony feels confident enough to have a showing of his work, Kate arranges for an art critic to attend. The critic writes a scathing review, calling Tony's work amateurish. Tony returns to New York to work with his mother, but refuses to allow her to influence his life any further. When Kate attempts to pair Tony with the daughter of a Texas businessman, Tony chooses to marry the less exciting daughter of a German businessman, unaware that this lovely woman had been Kate's choice for Tony all along.

Tony's wife learns that a pregnancy can kill her and shares the news with Kate. Kate encourages the girl to get pregnant anyway. The same night Tony's wife dies giving birth to twins, he learns not only did his mother know about the possibility of death for his wife, but that she hired the art critic to pan his work and his girlfriend during that time to date him. Tony has a psychotic break and tries to kill his mother. While receiving treatment, Tony is given a lobotomy that leaves him unable to be a participating member of society any longer.

Kate raises Tony's twin daughters with the hopes that one of them will someday take over the reins of Kruger-Brent. Eve seems to be the ideal candidate, but Kate is unaware that Eve is a cruel girl, often plotting to kill her sister. As Eve matures, she begins to behave in promiscuous ways that threaten to damage the reputation of the Blackwell family. Kate disowns Eve, leaving Alexandra as her only possible heir. Eve is angered by this change in circumstances and begins to plot against her family. Eve joins forces with George Mellis, a sadistic man, to murder Alexandra. George convinces Alexandra he is a charming, suave man, and convinces her to marry him. Eve wants George to kill Alexandra after their marriage is secure and Kate has changed her will leaving everything to both Alexandra and George. However, before George can go forth with the murder, Kate forgives Eve. George is determined to go ahead with the plan anyway, hoping to inherit everything and then kill Eve. However, Eve turns the tables and kills George instead.

After George is gone, Eve finds herself trapped in marriage to a milquetoast plastic surgeon who learns about her role in the murder. After a time, the plastic surgeon disfigures Eve, leaving her permanently dependent on him. At the same time, Alexandra finds love with George's therapist. Alexandra and her new husband have a son who Kate hopes will be the future of Kruger-Brent, Limited, at long last.



# Prologue, Kate 1982 and Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 1-3

## Prologue, Kate 1982 and Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 1-3 Summary

Kruger-Brent, Limited is a company a thief started in the 1880s. It became an international conglomerate under the control of his daughter. More than ninety years have passed since the company's birth. Kate Blackwell is celebrating her ninetieth birthday and begins to look back on the beginning of the company as she looks forward to its future under the guidance of her great-grandson, a nine-year-old musician who has no intention of becoming involved in the family business.

In the prologue, Kate Blackwell is attending her ninetieth birthday party at her house in Maine called Cedar Hill House. Kate listens to the people around her talking about her as though she is a saint. She feels this is ridiculous because they know little about the truth behind the woman. Kate looks around and thinks about the man who tried to kill her and the kidnapping that took place before she was even a year old. Kate begins to think about the past.

Jamie McGregor, Kate's father, has just arrived in South Africa. Jamie spent nearly a year traveling from his family farm in Scotland, stopping in Edinburgh and London to work for the money he would need to get to Cape Town. Once in Cape Town, Jamie again stops to earn more money before continuing his journey to Klipdrift on the back of a mail wagon that leaves him sore and exhausted upon his arrival. After sleeping a full day, Jamie takes a tour of the small town that has built up around the dreams of hundreds of diamond prospectors. Jamie has no idea where to begin his own hunt, but decides he needs to buy supplies. Jamie goes to the local general store, where he meets the beautiful daughter of the owner. When Jamie tells her he has no clue to what he will need to find diamonds, she suggests he come back later to speak to her father.

Jamie stops to take a cold bath before having a meal at a local saloon. When Jamie strikes up a conversation with the bartender, he is told that the owner of the general store is the man to see if he needs someone to stake his hunt for diamonds. Jamie goes to see the man, Salomon van der Merwe, and is invited back for dinner. Over dinner, Van der Merwe suggests a partnership in which Jamie will go to a specific location known to have diamonds and search. When Jamie finds diamonds, he is to register the claim. Van der Merwe promises that he and Jamie will be fifty-fifty partners in anything he finds. Jamie signs a contract the next morning, even though the contract is written in Afrikaans, completely confident that Van der Merwe will keep his word. Van der Merwe then sets Jamie up with the equipment he will need, taking from him his last bit of money to pay for it. Jamie sets out on the long journey. Bad fortune strikes almost immediately when his mule dies. Jamie decides to continue his journey, moving everything he cannot live without into one pack and leaving the rest with the dead mule.



The journey is hard and Jamie becomes so sunburned that he can barely walk, but his determination to find diamonds keeps him going. Jamie stumbles into a village two days later and is taken in by a local woman who nurses him back to health.

When Jamie sets out again, he decides not to follow Van der Merwe's map because he has learned there are no longer diamonds there. Jamie instead heads east and then north, again pushing himself into a delirium brought on by exhaustion. Finally Jamie finds a place to dig and begins the search. Jamie finds a large diamond, then another and another. Soon Jamie has more than a dozen large stones. Jamie stakes out his claim and returns to the nearest town to register it. Jamie buys himself a horse and carriage, returning to Klipdrift in style.

Jamie returns to Van der Merwe's general store to tell him about his find. Van der Merwe is pleased to see Jamie. Van der Merwe asks a few questions and then gives Jamie a small sum of money. When Jamie asks what the money is for, Van der Merwe explains that it is Jamie's wage for finding the diamonds. When Jamie reminds Van der Merwe that they are fifty-fifty partners, Van der Merwe laughs in his face and tells him the contract says nothing about a partnership. The diamond find is Van der Merwe's and Jamie is only an employee.

Jamie is angry and goes to the local saloon where he complains to the bartender. The bartender tells Jamie that Van der Merwe owns the entire town, but he knows someone who can help him. The bartender tells Jamie to meet this man in a barn that night. When Jamie does, he is attacked and beaten viciously. When Jamie wakes, he is in the middle of the desert where vultures are beginning to feed on his open wounds. Jamie begins to crawl, thinking of Van der Merwe and how badly he would like to get revenge.

## **Prologue, Kate 1982 and Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 1-3 Analysis**

Kate Blackwell is introduced in the prologue. Kate is a successful businesswoman who is well respected by everyone, including the governor of her state. Kate's reputation tells the reader that she is successful, powerful, and smart. However, Kate herself does not completely agree with the assessment of the governor, believing herself to be a little less saintly than he makes her out to be. Kate mentions her father being a thief and how someone once tried to kill her. This adds adventure and excitement to Kate's character, drawing the reader in with the desire to know more about Kate and her past. Kate then begins to reminisce as she feels herself surrounded by ghosts of the past. This segues into the first book of the novel. Jamie McGregor is introduced in the first chapter. Jamie is barely eighteen, young, adventurous, and determined to become rich. Jamie has heard about diamonds in South Africa and spends a year traveling there in order to begin his own hunt for riches. The reader sees in Jamie's actions a naïve young man who is willing to work hard for what he wants, touching on the theme of ambition.

Jamie arrives in Klipdrift and immediately realizes he knows nothing about hunting for diamonds. Jamie turns to a man who appears respectable, the local general store



owner. This seems like a reasonable thing to do to the reader as well as Jamie. This man has been in town a long time and the bartender at a local saloon says that he has helped many other prospectors in the past. Jamie has no reason to doubt this man's reputation. Jamie enters into a contract with Van der Merwe, even though the contract is written in a language he cannot understand. The reader begins to wonder if perhaps there is not something wrong with this situation due to the strange language of the contract, but accepts along with Jamie that it is written in Afrikaans because that is the country they are in. Jamie thinks nothing of it and nearly kills himself to find diamonds. This again speaks to Jamie's character, his determination to become rich and to make a good life for himself.

When Jamie learns that Van der Merwe has swindled him out of his share of the diamonds, he is angry and again turns to the kind bartender. Jamie once again trusts what this bartender has to say, showing the reader that Jamie is still a trusting soul despite his bad experience with Van der Merwe. However, trust once again hurts Jamie when he is lured into a beating that leaves him stranded in the desert. The reader is afraid for Jamie, afraid he will die this time. However, Jamie is strong and he fights to stay alive, filling his mind with hatred for Van der Merwe. Jamie's anger, touching on the theme of revenge, foreshadows a future for Jamie if he can survive his current situation.



# Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 4-5

## Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 4-5 Summary

Banda has rescued Jamie and brought him to Cape Town to heal in secrecy. Banda worked at Van der Merwe's store and was part of the group of men who beat Jamie. Banda saw in Jamie a man who might be strong enough to exact revenge on Van der Merwe, the man Banda has been waiting several years to find. Banda dislikes Van der Merwe as well. Banda once worked on a diamond beach owned by Van der Merwe. While Van der Merwe was visiting the beach, his daughter Margaret nearly drowned. Banda saved her and was reluctantly rewarded with a job at the store. A few months later, Banda's sister came to visit him and Van der Merwe raped her. The girl died giving birth to Van der Merwe's child. She was only eleven.

Jamie and Banda begin plotting revenge against Van der Merwe. When Jamie hears about the diamond beach in the Namib Desert, he begins thinking of ways he and Banda might steal diamonds from there. Banda says it is impossible, that there are reefs off shore and guards, dogs, and land mines on the beach side. Jamie is determined to find a way. Jamie suggests that a raft might work. It would have a flat bottom, making it possible that it will ride over the reefs without harm. Banda thinks it might work.

Jamie and Banda travel to a small village down the coast from the diamond beach and begin building their raft in secret. When it is ready, they sneak away in the middle of the night. It is a long journey to the beach, but they arrive just before dusk. Banda and Jamie wait until the middle of the night when there is no one around. Jamie sails the raft over the reefs, but they get caught on the razor sharp edges and the raft is torn to pieces.

Jamie decides they should collect diamonds even though their escape path has disappeared. Jamie assures Banda he will think of something. When morning comes, Banda and Jamie can hear the guards leading the workers to the beach. Banda is frightened, sure they will be found out. Within seconds, one of the guards sees them and calls for them to stop.

Jamie glances out to see and can see a great fog, or mis, coming toward them. Jamie tells Banda to run, and they run directly into the thick fog. Jamie leads Banda up the beach toward the mine field, the whole time listening to the guards calling to each other in the fog, Kruger, Brent. Banda is frightened, afraid to attempt to cross the mine field in the fog. Jamie suggests that if they cross the field on their bellies they will not set off the mines because they will distribute their weight too evenly to set them off. Banda agrees because they have no choice. Jamie and Banda begin to move again. Jamie is suddenly attacked by a dog. Banda beats the dog off him and they continue to move.





Suddenly the fog begins to lift as suddenly as it came. Jamie can see that they are only a few yards from the gate. Jamie leads Banda to the gate and walks boldly up to the guard, asking for a job. The guard, believing Jamie and Banda came through the gate with the other workers, sends them back out and orders them to board a wagon for the nearest town with more than a million dollars in diamonds.

## **Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 4-5 Analysis**

Revenge is the clear theme of these next few chapters. Banda, one of Van der Merwe's employees, saves Jamie with the hopes that Jamie can help him exact revenge on Van der Merwe for the death of his sister. Jamie wholeheartedly agrees. When Jamie learns of Van der Merwe's diamond beach where there are miles and miles of beach covered in diamonds, Jamie decides to begin his revenge there. It seems like an impossible task, stealing these diamonds, but Jamie is determined that this is what he will do. Jamie thinks about the heist for weeks before finally deciding on a plan. Jamie and Banda will ride a raft in and out of the beach without anyone ever knowing they were there. Unfortunately, the raft does not make it over the razor sharp reefs.

Jamie's character comes through once again when he decides to collect diamonds anyway, determined to find a way out. An act of God covers Jamie and Banda's escape and the simple audacity of Jamie's confidence talks their way out of the front gate. Jamie is a strong, confident man who seems to have the angels on his side. Banda, too, is a courageous man. Banda saved a white man from sure death and hid him in his home despite the fact that racial tensions are building in South Africa. Banda loved his little sister and is determined to get revenge for her death, allowing himself to trust the only white man he knows who hates Van der Merwe as much as he. It is a risk Banda took trusting Jamie, showing the reader how deep Banda's hatred of Van der Merwe goes.



# Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 6-8

## Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 6-8 Summary

Jamie returns to Klipdrift in style, depositing one hundred thousand pounds in the local bank. No one recognizes Jamie because his hair has turned white because of his ordeal and the beating left his face scarred. Jamie tells everyone his name is Ian Travis. Van der Merwe hears about the deposit Jamie made at the bank and immediately sets out to befriend him. Van der Merwe invites Jamie to dinner and tells him about some investments he might be interested in making. Jamie implies interest in Van der Merwe's suggestions, but does not commit. Jamie also begins asking Margaret, Van der Merwe's daughter, to take him on tours of the town. Van der Merwe would not normally allow this because it is improper for a young, unmarried woman to spend time alone with a man, but does allow it because of Jamie's potential financial windfall toward Van der Merwe. Jamie easily seduces Margaret, and before long they become intimate. Jamie also approaches the bartender who led him into Van der Merwe's trap twice and tells him the truth about who he is. Jamie then tells the bartender that he will pay double what Van der Merwe pays to stake needy prospectors.

Margaret comes to Jamie and tells him she is pregnant. Jamie immediately takes Margaret to Van der Merwe and tells him not only is his daughter pregnant, but pregnant by Jamie McGregor. Then Jamie publicly refuses to marry Margaret. Van der Merwe immediately kicks Margaret out of his home. Van der Merwe's reputation is ruined, he even finds himself unable to attend church any longer. Van der Merwe becomes so depressed that he stops opening his store. Margaret begs Jamie to reconsider marrying her, but Jamie can only see Van der Merwe and his hatred. Margaret takes a job at a local boarding house and endures the shame of her situation with the hopes that the child will be a boy and his birth will bring Jamie back to her. At the same time, Jamie begins to build his empire, staking local prospectors, buying land, and the local bank. When his business manager asks what he should call his business, Jamie names it Kruger-Brent, Limited after the guards on the diamond beach.

As Van der Merwe begins to fall into financial trouble, Jamie instructs his bank manager to loan him anything he needs. Jamie waits patiently for Van der Merwe to put up all his assets as collateral for the loans, especially the diamond beach. At the same time, Margaret is shunned throughout town, winning her the sympathy of the local madam and her prostitutes. The madam and her girls invite Margaret to their home for a baby shower. Margaret attends, touched by the kindness of these unfortunate women.

Jamie has finally bought out all of Van der Merwe's partners and Van der Merwe is forced to put up the diamond beach as collateral for one final loan. Jamie has his bank manager call in all of Van der Merwe's loans. Van der Merwe commits suicide the day the bank takes his store. Only Jamie and Margaret attend the funeral. A short time later,



Margaret gives birth to a son. Margaret names him Jamie. When Jamie refuses to see her or the child, Margaret leaves the baby at his house and leaves town for a week. At first Jamie is unhappy to have the child in his house, but as he spends time with him he decides he wants his child. Jamie offers to pay Margaret to give up the child, but when she refuses, he reluctantly marries her.

## **Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 6-8 Analysis**

Revenge is again a heavy theme in these chapters. Jamie returns to Klipdrift and convinces Van der Merwe that he intends to invest with him in some of his scheme, when in reality Jamie is searching for other, more honest ways to invest. Jamie then begins to see Van der Merwe's daughter. It becomes clear to the reader that Jamie plans to ruin Van der Merwe's Christian reputation by soiling his daughter, despite the fact that Margaret never did anything to hurt Jamie. Jamie justifies his actions by telling himself that Margaret attempted to point him in Van der Merwe's direction the first time he met her. Jamie's actions present a new part of his personality, a cold hearted part that was not evident before Van der Merwe's scheme. Jamie has changed as a result of his experience and this change leaves a young woman pregnant and alone simply because she trusted Jamie much the way he once trusted Van der Merwe. Margaret proves herself to be a strong woman as well. Margaret suffers the humiliation of having a child out of wedlock with grace and charm. Margaret never gives up on the idea of having a life with Jamie and schemes to convince him to marry her. Margaret and Jamie are surprisingly similar, both using tricks and schemes to get what they want.

Jamie finally gets the revenge he wanted, but finds that it leaves him hollow. Jamie has begun to build the empire he always wanted, ironically naming it after the two guards on the diamond beach who once wanted to kill him. However, even this company does not fill for Jamie the hole that has come to consume him. Jamie misses the adventure and the companionship he had before. When Jamie meets his son, that hole begins to fill in. Jamie falls in love, not with Margaret, but with the child. Jamie marries Margaret, fulfilling her desire to be with him, but only to have the child. This leaves the reader curious what kind of marriage they will have and if Margaret will ever win his love, touching on the theme of love and obsession.



# Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 9-11

## Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 9-11 Summary

Jamie treats his marriage as one of convenience, never acknowledging Margaret as his wife inside the home. Jamie spends all his free time with Jamie, Jr., taking him fishing and camping, devoted to the child. Jamie learns from Banda, who has settled down on a small farm and had two children, that there is trouble between the natives and the overseer on his diamond beach. Jamie sends David Blackwell, a young American he is grooming to be his manager, to the beach to work out the problem. David finds the overseer to be cruel and dangerous, and warns him to change his ways or lose his job.

Time goes by and Jamie's company expands. When Jamie is not traveling on business, he is with his son. When he has been married six years, Jamie gets drunk one night while arguing with his mistress. Jamie goes home and mistakes his wife for his mistress, making passionate love to her. The next morning, Jamie acts as though nothing has happened, even though Margaret was hoping it was a sign that Jamie has finally realized he loves her.

Margaret learns she is pregnant once again. Jamie is unimpressed with the news and takes no part in the pregnancy. When Margaret gives birth, she names the child Kate because she thinks it is a strong name. A short time later, a riot breaks out at the diamond beach because of the cruelty of the overseer. The natives have taken the overseer and the police cannot find him. Jamie rushes to the beach to calm things, promising the natives they will not be harmed for their actions and that he will make sure conditions at the beach are made better. When Jamie arrives home, he finds that his son has been kidnapped. Baby Kate too is taken in the middle of the night. Banda visits Jamie and tells him that his tribe took Jamie and left him to die in the desert. Banda himself took Kate to protect her and has returned her. Jamie is so filled with grief over the loss of his son that he has a stroke at the age of twenty-eight.

Jamie lives a full year after his stroke. Margaret takes care of his every need, keeping him at her side day and night, talking to him about all the things that matter to her. It is the happiest year of her life. Margaret takes a role at Kruger-Brent, Limited alongside David Blackwell. In 1899, war breaks out. David joins with the Boers and advises Margaret to leave South Africa. Margaret refuses. When the British invade Klipdrift, Margaret and Kate are placed in a prison camp where their every day is filled with a sense of helplessness. When the war ends, Margaret and Kate return to Klipdrift where Margaret turns her attention to Kruger-Brent, allowing Kate to grow up practically unsupervised.



## Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chapters 9-11 Analysis

As the reader might have suspected, Jamie is never able to get past the idea that Margaret had something to do with Van der Merwe's scheme to leave him to die in the desert. Although Jamie marries Margaret, he never acknowledges her as his wife inside their home. It is a marriage of convenience, although Margaret lives for years hoping he will see her for the loving wife she is. Margaret puts up with disrespect and coldness because she loves Jamie, illustrating the theme of love and obsession. Margaret finally gets her wish when Jamie suffers a stroke and is left helpless, allowing her to finally care for him the way she has always wanted to do.

Kate is conceived during a drunken night of passion in which Jamie confuses Margaret with his mistress, Maggie. The ironic similarity in their names is not lost on the reader, who wonders if Jamie is in love with Margaret despite his determination not to feel anything for the daughter of his enemy. Kate's conception and then her kidnapping shortly after her birth suggest an unusual life for this little girl. When Kate spends time in a prison camp during a war, she feels such a sense of helplessness that she becomes determined to have power someday. Perhaps this suggests a motivation for some of Kate's future actions. Kate is then allowed to grow up practically without guidance, suggesting a wildness of spirit that could explain the confidence in the ninety-year-old woman the reader met at the beginning of the novel.



# Book Two, Kate and David, 1906-1914: Chapters 12-15

## Book Two, Kate and David, 1906-1914: Chapters 12-15 Summary

Kate is working late at Kruger-Brent, Limited's offices when a group of cops come along to search for a wanted killer. Kate successfully keeps them from finding the wanted man, who turns out to be Banda, wanted for killing a guard during a prison break. Banda did not kill the man, but the police want to kill him because he has begun rallying protest against racial discrimination. Banda fights the white government because he holds them responsible for the death of one of his sons. Kate sneaks Banda out of her office and onto her private train car, riding with him to Cape Town. Kate helps Banda because she got to know him as a child and he told her stories about his adventures with her father, a man Kate never knew.

Kate is an unruly child who often gets into fights with the children of servants and creates chaos in the classroom. Margaret is eventually forced to send Kate to boarding school. Kate is angry about this decision and particularly upset when she comes to believe that David is behind it. Kate is in love with David and plans to marry him someday, so his betrayal is particularly painful.

Kate finds the boarding school unbearable. Kate's only pleasure during these long years is the infrequent visits from David. On school vacations, Kate manufactures excuses to spend time with David, often going on visits to Kruger-Brent's diamond mines with him. Kate continues to nurse her crush on David and dreams of the day they will marry. During Kate's final year at boarding school, David arrives to bring Kate home because her mother is dying of cancer. Kate finds her mother eager to die in order to be with Jamie once again. After her death, Kate finishes school and returns to South Africa to attend business school before taking over the reins of Kruger-Brent.

Kate finds business school exciting and takes the reins of Kruger-Brent with an eagerness born of a desire to have power. As Kate and David work side by side, Kate continues to hope for a future together. On a trip to America on business, Kate visits Dark Harbor Maine and falls in love with a house there. Kate buys the house with the hopes of sharing it with David. However, when she returns home, David announces his plans to marry.

David begins an affair with the daughter of a client. When David announces his feelings to Josephine, they agree that they cannot remain in South Africa. Josephine dislikes the country. David cannot move to America without job prospects, however. Josephine tells David about a new idea her father has patent to transport frozen food in trucks. Josephine's father needs someone to run his new company for him. David agrees to run the company and vows his life's savings to finance the new business. When Kate



returns, David tells her his plans. Kate hides her disappointment and attempts to support David by helping him find a replacement. Before a replacement can be found, David learns that his future father-in-law has sold his invention and no longer has a company for David to run. David ends the engagement. Over the next six months, David and Kate grow closer, finally deciding to marry. David will never learn that Kate owns the company that bought out the invention that was to be David's future with Josephine.

## **Book Two, Kate and David, 1906-1914: Chapters 12-15 Analysis**

Kate's childhood and early adulthood is covered in this section. Kate has grown up unruly and difficult because of her mother's attention to the business rather than her child. To Margaret, it is more important to nurture Jamie's business than his daughter. Kruger-Brent is Jamie's legacy. It is this attitude that makes the company almost a character all its own in the plot. Kate seems to have the same need to nurture the business, turning to it as a source of power to elevate the feelings of helplessness that have been a part of her life since her time in the prison camp during the war.

Kate is in love with David Blackwell, even though he is more than twice her age. David is the manager of Kruger-Brent and a close friend of the family, practically a surrogate father to Kate. David does not see Kate as a possible source of romance, and in fact finds her crush on him to be amusing. David turns his attentions elsewhere, becoming engaged to a woman who offers him not only companionship and affection, but the chance to be the president of a new company that is set to revolutionize the way food is transported from place to place. Kate uses her newfound power to take that chance away from David, leaving him with no choice but to spend the rest of his life with the one woman who is obsessed with making him her husband. Not only does this explore the theme of love and obsession, but it shows the reader how much like both her parents Kate is. Kate has used her power within the company to get what she wants, which is exactly what Margaret did with her son to trap Jamie into marriage and what Jamie did to get revenge on his enemy, Van der Merwe.





## **Book Three, Kruger-Brent, Ltd. 1914-1945: Chapters 16-17**

### **Book Three, Kruger-Brent, Ltd. 1914-1945: Chapters 16-17 Summary**

Kate and David have a wonderful honeymoon despite David's insistence that they do not have time to vacation. When rumors of war begin to circulate, David dismisses them out of hand, but is proven wrong. When America enters the war, David decides to enlist. With David gone, Kate is left in control of Kruger-Brent. Despite the fact that she knows David would not like it, Kate begins manufacturing armaments for the Allies. Kate's decision makes Kruger-Brent one of the fastest growing conglomerates in the world. When David returns home, he is unhappy with what Kate has done despite the money she has earned both them and the company. David makes Kate wonder if she would have made the same decision if David had not gone to war.

Kate decides they should move the headquarters of Kruger-Brent to New York City, a place that is quickly becoming the leader in international business. Kate has an office building built on Wall Street while also building a mansion on Fifth Avenue. Kate spends a great deal of time working, making David believe she is working too hard when exhaustion begins to overwhelm her. Kate goes to the doctor, a new young doctor named John Harley, and learns that she is pregnant. Kate and David are thrilled with the news. David hopes it will mean that Kate will work a little less, but she does not. In fact, Kate fully intends to work up to the moment of delivery. Two months before the baby is due, Kate learns that David was killed in an explosion in one of their mines. Kate goes into premature labor, delivering a son she names Anthony James, after David's father.

Kate becomes aware of the growing racial tensions in South Africa. Kate wants to help, so she goes to visit Banda, who has become a leader in the black movement against the government. Banda tells Kate the only way she can help is to supply money, so she pledges to give all she can. Tony grows up quickly while Kate dedicates herself to Kruger-Brent. When Tony is twelve, he begins to stutter. Kate is deeply concerned about this, taking him to doctor after doctor, who suggest the problem is in Tony's head. Kate refuses to believe it. Kate sends Tony to boarding school and is assured he no longer stutters. However, when Tony comes home, the stutter returns.

At Kruger-Brent, Kate works closely with her manager, Brad Rogers. When Brad begins dating a woman who takes his attention away from business, Kate seduces him. Kate never again sleeps with Brad. Tony develops a love of art in childhood, often spending hours reproducing the great artists Kate has hung throughout their homes. When Tony tells Kate he wants to be an artist, she refuses to discuss the idea because she is determined Tony will take over the helm of Kruger-Brent one day. Tony agrees to attend business school for two years, but at the end of those years, he quits. When World War





It begins, Tony enlists, telling his mother he intends to go to art school when the war is over.

## **Book Three, Kruger-Brent, Ltd. 1914-1945: Chapters 16-17 Analysis**

Kate and David begin their marriage on a happy note, but soon it appears that Kate's passion for Kruger-Brent will cause them some trouble. David is set against manufacturing armaments, but Kate does it anyway. Kate's decision is a good one for the company, but it goes against David's morals. The decision also leaves David wondering if the company is more important to Kate than their marriage. This at first seems unlikely when the reader realizes how hard Kate worked to get David, but her power hungry actions before and after David's death make the reader realize that power is more important to Kate than anything else.

Kate gives birth to a son whom she immediately begins to groom to take over Kruger-Brent. Kate believes she is a good mother, devoting much of her free time to her son. However, Kate's son is clearly unhappy in the shadow of Kruger-Brent. Tony stutters when around his mother, clearly affected by the pressure she places on him to become interested in business. Tony wants to be an artist. Kate is against this, but believes she can convince Tony to change his mind. Tony, however, is related to his mother and remains stubborn on his demands. Tony wants to become an artist. The reader is left wondering how Kate will react to Tony's determination, aware of her past manipulations of people who went against her will, namely David.



# Book Four, Tony 1946-1950: Chapters 18-22

## Book Four, Tony 1946-1950: Chapters 18-22 Summary

Tony arrives in Paris and rents a small apartment that he takes joy in filling with flea market items. Tony applies to an exclusive art school and is shocked to be accepted. Tony joins his first year class, a drawing class that emphasizes anatomy. Tony is warned few people will advance to the second year class. Tony makes friends among other students and spends a great deal of time at museums and meeting successful artists. Tony is happy, feeling as though he is now in his element. Tony is one of only eight to advance to the second year class. This class is painting live models. One of the models is a very attractive young woman whom every man in the class has asked out on a date, except Tony. One day she asks Tony why he has not asked her out and then she asks him out. Tony and Dominique quickly become lovers. Dominique invites Tony to move into her more luxurious apartment. When he refuses, Dominique moves into Tony's small apartment.

After several months of romance, Dominique convinces Tony that he is ready to show his art. Dominique arranges for Tony to meet a small gallery owner who agrees to give him a show. When Kate learns about the show, she promises to arrange for a noted art critic to attend. Tony is very excited about the show, especially when all his paintings sell. The following morning, Tony opens the paper to discover that the art critic has written him a painfully poor review. Tony decides to quit art and return home to work at Kruger-Brent. Tony is unaware that his mother paid the critic to write the bad review.

Tony settles to his job at Kruger-Brent, but he is unhappy with it. After two years, Tony sees Dominique in a magazine and calls the modeling agency to track her down. Tony learns that Dominique works for an agency Kruger-Brent owns on recommendation from Kate. When Tony sees Dominique, he learns that his mother hired Dominique to keep an eye on Tony. From that point on, Tony no longer trusts his mother and demands she stay out of his life.

Kate learns that Banda has been arrested. By the time Kate arrives in South Africa, Banda has been killed in what is publicly described as an escape attempt. A short time later, Kate becomes interested in acquiring two companies for Kruger-Brent. Both companies are privately owned by an individual who is unwilling to sell, making each a challenge. Kate decides she can only acquire one, but sets out to seduce them both. Kate invites both owners, Frederick Hoffman and Charlie Wyatt, as well as their daughters, to a conference in Washington. Afterward, Kate invites both men and their daughters to Cedar Hill House for the weekend. At every opportunity, Kate pushes Tony and Lucy Wyatt together, rudely ignoring Hoffman's daughter, Marianne. Tony sees that his mother hopes to use a marriage between him and Lucy to acquire Wyatt's business, so he becomes determined to not to fall under her spell. In fact, Tony finds himself



spending time with Marianne after he returns to New York, blowing off a business trip to Canada to be with her. Tony flies out to Texas for a party at the Wyatt home, but in the middle of a barbecue, Tony finds himself thinking about Marianne. The following day, Tony calls his mother and tells her he has married Marianne Hoffman. Kate is pleased because Marianne is the bride she had in mind for Tony all along.

Kate learns that Dr. Harley has told Marianne a pregnancy could be dangerous for her because of a previous aneurysm she suffered as a child. Kate encourages Marianne to ignore Dr. Harley's advice and have a baby anyway. Marianne becomes pregnant a few months later. The night she goes into labor, Tony runs into Dominique in the hallway. Dominique's boyfriend tells Tony that Kate paid the critic to write the bad review about his paintings. A few minutes later, Tony learns from Dr. Harley that Kate knew Marianne could die if she got pregnant but encouraged her to do it anyway. Marianne has died giving birth to twins. Tony goes to his mother in the depths of a psychotic break and tries to kill her.

Dr. Harley is called to Kate's home and saves her life. Word of the shooting never reaches the press, thanks to Dr. Harley and Brad Rogers. Dr. Harley tells Kate that Tony blames her for Marianne's death, but Kate believes Tony behaved as he did because he is weak.

## **Book Four, Tony 1946-1950: Chapters 18-22 Analysis**

Tony goes to Paris to attend art school as he told his mother he was determined to do. Tony falls into a society that accepts him for who he wants to be, and Tony's mother seems content to allow her son to follow his own dreams. Tony even falls in love. However, Tony should have understood that his mother does not give up that easily. As the reader has seen Kate do before, she manipulates Tony to force him to come back into the company where she believes he belongs. Kate pays a man to convince Tony his art is amateurish, unworthy of success. Tony returns to his mother and the company only to learn a few years later that Kate hired Dominique to be Tony's girlfriend so that she could keep an eye on him. Tony is offended by this and demands that his mother keep out of his personal life. Again, the reader wonders if Tony simply misunderstands his mother's obsession with power.

Kate manipulates her son again, guiding him into falling in love with and marrying the woman she chose due to the company she could buy as a result of the marriage. When Tony's wife is told not to have children, Kate cannot bear the idea of not having biological grandchildren to carry on with Kruger-Brent. Kate encourages her to have a baby anyway and also keeps her from telling Tony the truth. Marianne becomes pregnant and dies. At the same time that Tony learns of his mother's role in Marianne's death, he also learns about her role in the critic's review of his work. Tony is so upset by this revelation of his mother's manipulations in his life that he has a psychotic break. Tony tries to kill his mother, and only her company, her power, and her friendship with the family doctor save her life.



Kate is saddened by Tony's actions, but realizes that he is weak, just like Jamie and Margaret McGregor were before him. This entire episode shows the depths of Kate's personality to the reader and the distance she will go to get what she wants. Kate lives and breathes for Kruger-Brent. Kruger-Brent is her only motivation, suggesting that Kate will continue to fight for the future of this company in a way that will affect the surviving members of her family, Tony's twin daughters.



# Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 23-26

## Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 23-26 Summary

Kate agrees to allow doctors to give Tony a lobotomy in order to cure him of psychotic thoughts. Tony will never again be able to leave the sanitarium. Kate raises his daughters, Eve and Alexandra. Eve is jealous of Alexandra and tries to kill her for the first time the night before their fifth birthday by lighting her nightgown on fire. Alexandra is only saved by the early arrival of the housekeeper. Over the years, Eve tries many times to kill Alexandra, leaving the adults around them with the impression that Alexandra is a clumsy child.

Kate is so convinced that Alexandra is too clumsy, too docile, that she begins to pin her hopes for the future of Kruger-Brent on Eve. Kate sends both girls to a boarding school in South Carolina in order to give Eve the education she needs to become the leader of a international conglomerate. While there, Eve tries to kill Alexandra by placing a piece of metal under her horse's saddle, then blaming it on an innocent groom. The second year at that school, Eve becomes pregnant. Eve claims she was raped by her English teacher. The English teacher claims Eve seduced him. Kate believes Eve and removes the girls before buying the school's mortgage and foreclosing.

Eve begins romancing every man she comes into contact with at her new school in Switzerland. Eve never loves any of the men; in fact, she has no interest in most of them unless Alexandra loves them. Eve works her way through half of the boys and most of the faculty of a nearby boy's school. When the headmistress of the school hears the rumors about Eve's activities, she expels Eve from the school. Eve lies to Alexandra, convincing her that she is leaving because she is unhappy. Alexandra decides to return home with Eve, telling their grandmother that they mutually decided they did not like the school. When Kate confronts Eve regarding rumors she has heard about her sexual behavior, Eve blames the whole thing on Alexandra, claiming Alexandra slept with all those boys using Eve's name.

A few years later, Eve becomes acquainted with a man at a dinner party who is rumored to have never cheated on his wife. Eve decides she wants to seduce the man for the challenge it presents. When Eve leaves the hotel after her seduction of this man, a woman sees her and calls her grandmother. Kate confronts Eve and realizes that Eve is an immoral person who could bring scandal on the Blackwell name. Kate disowns Eve and throws her out of the family home.

Eve begins to realize what it will mean living on a strict allowance and unable to use the Blackwell name. Eve tries to get a loan against her trust fund, but discovers that her grandmother's power is stronger than her sexual appeal. Alexandra is confused as to



what caused the fallout between her grandmother and sister, but suddenly finds herself the center of her grandmother's attention. Eve discovers that she can still use her sex appeal to get the money she needs by having affairs with married men willing to shower her with gifts. Eve is determined to get what is rightfully hers, however, sure that she deserves to inherit Kruger-Brent more than Alexandra.

Eve tries to keep up appearances, which includes attending a weekend party at the home of an ex-classmate. During this party, Eve meets George Mellis, a great looking man who is the son of a Greek business tycoon. Eve invites George back to her room that night, but a night of passion turns into a violent attack that leaves Eve bruised and humiliated. When George leaves her room, he steals a diamond necklace. The next morning, George acts as though nothing has happened, even when faced with the bruises on Eve's face. Back in New York, Eve learns that like her, George has been disowned by his family for his sado-masochist behaviors. Eve invites George to her apartment that night and offers to make him a partner in a scheme to kill her sister and steal the family fortune.

## **Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 23-26 Analysis**

Tony is lost forever in his mental illness, so Kate turns her attention to her granddaughters. Eve is a lot like her grandmother from the beginning. Eve wants power, and she wants to be the only one in the spotlight. Eve is jealous of her sister and does not like sharing the limelight with her, so she spends most of her childhood trying to kill her. When that does not work, Eve puts her energies into seducing every man who comes her way and blaming the unpleasant rumors on Alexandra. Kate believes her because she wants Eve to take over Kruger-Brent someday. When Kate finally learns the truth, rather than seeing herself in Eve, she is outraged and sends her away. Kate feels like a woman who has faced more than her share of disappointments in life. It never occurs to Kate that she has any responsibility in the events that have led to these disappointments.

Eve is determined not to let her grandmother's actions hold her down. Eve knows the only thing that stands in her way of having all the power she wants is Alexandra. Once again, Eve turns her energies toward plotting Alexandra's death. Eve figures if Alexandra dies, she will be the only competent person who can inherit her grandmother's estate. When Eve meets George Mellis, rather than feeling ashamed and outraged at the sexual attack he perpetrates against her, she decides to use him to get what she wants. Again, Eve proves she is just like her grandmother, willing to manipulate people to get what she wants. The difference is that Eve is willing to kill, whereas Kate only indirectly caused a woman's death.



# Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 27-30

## Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 27-30 Summary

Alexandra decides she wants a job, so Kate arranges to have her take a job at an advertising company Kruger-Brent owns. Alexandra is unaware that a person was fired to make room for her, so she does not understand the hostility she faces her first few days on the job. Alexandra decides to quit, but before she does, she changes the names on the intercoms, causing an afternoon of mass confusion. When her coworkers learn what she did, Alexandra is finally accepted at the agency.

Alexandra calls Eve to make a lunch date. While they are out, George comes by and is introduced to Alexandra. Alexandra finds him exciting and hopes he will ask her out when she learns he asked for her number. When George does ask her out, it is the best night of her life because George uses everything Eve told him about Alexandra to give her an enjoyable evening.

Alexandra waits for George to call, but he does not. Just as Alexandra gives up on ever hearing from him again, George calls and tells her he had to rush to Athens to be with his father after he suffered a heart attack. George and Alexandra begin an exciting courtship. Alexandra is happier than she has ever been and George is counting the days until he can hurt Alexandra the way he desires.

Eve encourages George with information about Alexandra's likes and dislikes. Eve makes George wait to meet Kate until Alexandra is firmly under his thumb. When George does meet Kate, Eve coaches him through the meeting, telling him exactly how he should act. When George and Eve learn Kate wants to do a check on George's finances, he steals a million dollars worth of stocks from the company where he works. That night, George tells Kate he plans to marry Alexandra and those stocks are his gift to her. Kate calls off the financial check and George returns the stocks to the company vault. Alexandra and George are married in a small ceremony in the Blackwell mansion. Afterward, George slips out to see Eve, who demands he make love to her before consummating his marriage.

Alexandra and George go on a honeymoon. When they return home, Kate buys them a new home. A short time later, George manipulates Alexandra into drawing up a new will, making him her sole heir. On Alexandra's twenty-third birthday, forty-nine percent of the shares in Kruger-Brent are transferred into her name.

On their birthday, Eve insists George come over to her apartment to celebrate. George is forced to make an excuse to leave Alexandra's birthday party. Eve forces George to eat a meal similar to the one served at Alexandra's party and then insists he make love



to her. In bed, Eve tells George that if he kills her, there is a letter that will expose him to world. George becomes so enraged, he beats and rapes Eve. When it is over, Eve has George call Dr. Harley. Eve lies to Dr. Harley and makes him promise he will not call the police. Dr. Harley arranges for Eve to go to the hospital and be treated by a leading plastic surgeon, Dr. Keith Webster. Before this, however, Dr. Harley tells George he must go to a therapist or he will call the police. Eve tells George that she wants to continue with the plan despite his slip. George is grateful for Eve's apparent forgiveness for his actions. Eve's recovery takes several weeks, but when it is over, there are no signs of the horrible beating she suffered.

## **Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 27-30 Analysis**

Eve orchestrates the seduction of her sister by George Mellis, a man she knows is a sado-masochist who has been disowned by his own family because of his behavior. Eve wants George to marry her sister and then kill her so that Kate will die from her grief and leave her empire to George, and subsequently Eve. The plan seems like a good one on the surface until the reader realizes that the plan depends on George's willingness to give Eve her due when it is all said and done. George is insane, a man who gets his kicks from sodomizing and beating people. The reader sees that the chances are good that George will not give Eve what she wants.

George marries Alexandra and does everything Eve has told him to do, convincing everyone he is a charming, suave man. However, when Eve pushes him too hard, he beats her within an inch of her life. This could end the whole charade, but Eve protects George and arranges for her own care through the family doctor in hopes that he will be concerned enough to protect the family name that he will not report the attack to the police. Eve is right, but the doctor does insist that George go to a therapist, opening a door that could lead to discovery of Eve and George's plan.





## **Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 31-35 and Epilogue, Kate 1982: Chapters 36-37**

### **Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 31-35 and Epilogue, Kate 1982: Chapters 36-37 Summary**

George is being forced into seeing a therapist by Dr. Harley. Eve sees this as an opportunity to help their scheme and tells George to talk to the therapist, Peter Templeton, about Alexandra's recent depression and desire to commit suicide. George does, leaving Templeton skeptical, especially when he learns the truth about the beating George gave Eve. The following morning, Eve goes to Dr. Harley and tells him she is concerned for Alexandra. The following day, Eve again goes to Dr. Harley, but this time she claims to be Alexandra and complains of depression. Dr. Harley gives her medication he hopes will help.

George continues to see Templeton, who tries to get George to admit to his sadistic side. However, George continues to play the innocent. Eve's plastic surgeon has developed a crush on her and asks her out. Eve finds the date enjoyable, but Keith is not the type of man she normally finds attractive. Templeton is becoming concerned with the things George is telling him and decides to talk to a friend in the police department. Templeton is afraid for Alexandra's life, but has no proof that George plans to harm her. Templeton learns from his friend that George was suspected of killing a young boy in Athens and is most likely the cause of his family disowning him. As a result of this information, Templeton contacts Alexandra and asks her to lunch. Templeton finds Alexandra so attractive that he is unable to tell her about his concerns before George unexpectedly shows up.

Kate visits Dr. Harley because of her dizzy spells. Dr. Harley tells Kate about Eve's brush with death. Kate immediately visits Eve and forgives her. Eve is shocked by this turn of events and tries to call off her scheme with George, but he refuses. George plans to kill Alexandra that weekend while they are at Cedar Hill House on a romantic getaway. George has Alexandra give all the servants the night off to give them privacy. When George arrives at the house, he finds Alexandra waiting for him. They change and go out to the yacht. Just as George is about to throw Alexandra over the side of the yacht, she stabs him and he realizes she is not Alexandra but Eve.

Alexandra arrives at Cedar House Hill late because she was stuck at the airport waiting for Eve. When Alexandra arrives, she is shocked to find George has not arrived. Alexandra calls the house in New York and the office, looking for George. When she cannot find him anywhere, Alexandra calls the police. The following day, the police begin a search for George. The investigators cannot find proof that George ever came to Dark Harbor because he did not come by ferry or plane, the only two ways into the



area. When George's body is found in the water at Dark Harbor, the police are more confused than before. Dr. Templeton's friend becomes involved, investigating the murder on his own. The friend, Nick Pappas, comes up with a theory. At the same time, Keith Webster visits Dr. Harley and learns about Eve's visit to him with a small scar on her forehead. Webster knows Eve did not have a scar, so he uses this information to blackmail her into marrying him.

Eve and Keith Webster marry. At the same time, Nick Pappas visits Kate, hoping to get her support in his theory that Eve killed George, but instead Kate gives Eve an alibi. Dr. Templeton becomes a source of support for Alexandra. After a while they begin to date. At the same time, Eve is miserable in her marriage to Keith and wants an annulment, but he threatens to take his information about her role in George's death to the police should she leave him. Eve's young lover begins to criticize her appearance, so Eve asks Keith to fix the lines on her face. Keith agrees, leaving Eve disfigured after the procedure.

Time passes quickly. Kate continues to go to work daily. Alexandra marries Dr. Templeton and has a son. Eve becomes dependent on Keith, making him a happy man. Kate speaks to Robert, Alexandra's young son, and tells him how Kruger-Brent will one day be his. Alexandra insists that Robert wants to be a musician, but Kate is determined that he is the future of Kruger-Brent.

## **Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chapters 31-35 and Epilogue, Kate 1982: Chapters 36-37 Analysis**

George is forced to go to a therapist to keep Dr. Harley from calling the police on him. Eve turns this to their advantage, using both doctors to establish a pattern of depression so that when Alexandra turns up dead it will appear to have been suicide. However, it appears to backfire as one of the doctors, Dr. Templeton, begins to suspect that Alexandra's life is in danger. Dr. Templeton begins to make waves, causing George to become anxious to finish the deed. When Kate forgives Eve and welcomes her back into the family, Eve wants to call off the deal. George is determined to inherit Kate's empire himself, so he refuses. In an ironic turn of events, Eve kills George, saving her sister's life and putting herself in danger of once again being disowned by her grandmother. In fact, when Kate learns of Eve's involvement, she plans to punish her, but someone else does it first. Once again, the reader sees how alike Kate and Eve are. The only difference is that Kate's actions were never all out malicious like Eve's.

Eve is found out by a cop and Dr. Webster, her plastic surgeon. The cop cannot find enough evidence to hurt Eve, but Dr. Webster has enough to blackmail Eve into marriage. Keith Webster is a milquetoast of a man who is talented in the operating room, but not very exciting anywhere else. Webster knows that Eve will never truly be his because she is too beautiful and too spoiled. However, when Eve wants plastic surgery, Webster sees his chance. Webster disfigures Eve and leaves her dependent on him. Eve has finally met her match and will live the rest of her life dependent on a man she treated poorly and never cared for. Alexandra appears to be the only winner in

all of this. Alexandra is blissfully unaware of the man her first husband was or the maliciousness behind her sister's love for her. Alexandra lives a happy life with a man who adores her and with the minority share of one of the largest international conglomerates in the world.



# Characters

## Jamie McGregor

Jamie McGregor is a Scotsman who grew up the son of a farmer. Jamie gives up his share in the family farm at eighteen to travel to South Africa where he hopes to find diamonds. Jamie has dreams of becoming a wealthy man. When Jamie arrives in Klipdrift, South Africa, he has no idea how to go about searching for diamonds. Jamie meets a local man who owns a general store. The man tells Jamie that he will make him his partner if Jamie will go in search of diamonds in a distant stretch of desert. Jamie agrees, only slightly discouraged when the contract the businessman has him sign is written in Afrikaans instead of English. Jamie has a hard time arriving at the location in which the grocer told him to go, but eventually finds diamonds. Jamie stakes out the area and makes a claim on it in both his name and the name of the grocer, Salomon van der Merwe.

When Jamie returns to Klipdrift in fine style, he tells Van der Merwe about his discovery. Van der Merwe is thrilled, until Jamie attempts to keep him to his word of a fifty-fifty partnership. Van der Merwe informs Jamie that the contract did not make them partners, that Jamie was simply an employee. Van der Merwe pays Jamie what his work is worth, less than a quarter of the values of the diamond find, and sends him away. Jamie is angry and wants to involve the law, but Van der Merwe owns most of the town. When Jamie complains to a local bartender, he is attacked, beaten, and left to die in the desert. Banda saves him, taking him to Cape Town to recover from his injuries in hopes that Jamie will help him seek revenge against Van der Merwe. Together, Jamie and Banda scheme of a way to make Van der Merwe pay for his crimes.

Jamie and Banda steal diamonds from a beach Van der Merwe owns and then Jamie uses the money in a scheme to ruin Van der Merwe. Jamie gets Van der Merwe's daughter pregnant, ruining his Christian reputation, and then works to bankrupt Van der Merwe and take all his investments. Jamie is not as happy in his revenge as he thought he would be. When Margaret, Van der Merwe's daughter, gives birth to a son and leaves him with Jamie for a short time, he falls in love with the child and agrees to marry Margaret in order to get custody of the child. Jamie treats Margaret with disdain, never accepting her as his wife. Jamie and Margaret never share a bed, although Jamie does go to Margaret one drunken night after a fight with his mistress. Margaret becomes pregnant and gives birth to a daughter. Shortly afterward, Jamie and Margaret's son is killed in revenge for managerial problems at the diamond beach in the Namib desert. Jamie is so grief-stricken that he suffers a stroke and dies a year later.

## Banda

Banda is a native man who meets Van der Merwe while working at his diamond beach in the Namib Desert. Banda saves Van der Merwe's daughter Margaret from drowning,



so Van der Merwe gives him a job at his store in Klipdrift. While working in Klipdrift, Banda's eleven-year-old sister comes to visit him. Van der Merwe rapes her and she dies giving birth to his child. Banda is outraged and wants revenge, but as a black man he has few rights. When Banda sees the strength in Jamie's character, he takes the risk of rescuing him after a savage beating and asks him to help get revenge against Van der Merwe. Jamie quickly agrees.

Banda and Jamie rob Van der Merwe's diamond beach together, then separate. Banda takes only enough money from the theft to buy a farm. Banda wants nothing more than to settle down and have a few children. However, the political climate of his country and the prejudice against his people force Banda to take a stand behind a political radical attempting to get more freedoms for the blacks. Banda becomes hunted by the police, who make up false charges against him. Banda fights for his life and the rights of his people for many years, occasionally seeking the help of Jamie's daughter, Kate. Eventually the police catch up with Banda and he is killed.

## David Blackwell

David Blackwell is a young American who comes to work at Kruger-Brent, Limited with his father at the young age of sixteen. Jamie takes notice of David and gives him a job in his office, noticing how reliable the young man is. As David grows older, Jamie gives him more responsibility, eventually making him manager of the company. When Jamie dies, David runs the company beside Margaret. As a result, David becomes a regular visitor to the McGregor home. Kate is a restless child and David attempts to take her under his wing to help Margaret. Kate falls in love with David and convinces herself she will one day marry him.

David remains with the company after Margaret dies, running it until Kate is old enough to take over the reins. When Kate finishes business school, David continues to work for her. However, when David meets a woman he believes he can love, he announces to Kate that he is leaving Kruger-Brent, Limited to run a business with his future father-in-law. Kate pretends to be happy, but schemes behind David's back to buy the business from his future father-in-law. In the aftermath of this sale, David ends the engagement. Six months later, David and Kate are married. They have a happy marriage until David is killed in an explosion in one of Kruger-Brent's mines.

## Kate McGregor Blackwell

Kate McGregor is conceived on a drunken night when Jamie mistakes his wife for his mistress. Kate is kidnapped before she is a year old. Jamie dies a year later, leaving Kate to be raised by her mother and his company's manager, David Blackwell. Kate is left on her own the majority of the time, allowed to play with boys and run wild in the streets of Klipdrift. When Kate is a teenager, her mother sends her to boarding school with the hopes that the structure will help her become more of a proper lady. Unfortunately, Kate does not calm down, she simply learns to channel her energies into



more constructive areas. Kate's final year at boarding school comes to an early end when her mother becomes ill with cancer. Kate returns home to be with her mother in her final hours.

Kate goes to business school in preparation in taking over Kruger-Brent, Limited. Kate and David work closely together for the next few years. Kate intends to marry David, but David believes she will outgrow her affections. Kate does not, however, and schemes to end David's engagement to another woman in order to convince him of her love for him. David and Kate marry and have a son before David is killed in an explosion in one of their mines. Kate puts all her energy into the company after David's death, with the hopes of one day passing it on to her son. When Kate's son, Tony, decides he wants to be a painter, Kate schemes to convince him he is not good enough to make a living at art. Kate tricks Tony into coming back to the company and then tricks him into marrying the woman she has chosen for him. When Kate learns that her daughter-in-law could die if she becomes pregnant, Kate encourages her to ignore this advice and become pregnant anyway. When his wife dies and Tony learns of his mother's involvement, he tries to kill her while in the throes of a psychotic break.

Kate raises Tony's twin daughters, Eve and Alexandra, after he is committed to an asylum. Kate pins her hopes for the future of Kruger-Brent, Limited on Eve. When Eve turns out to be of immoral character, Kate disowns her and turns her attention to Alexandra. Eve schemes to have Alexandra marry her partner in crime and then for this man, George Mellis, to kill Alexandra so that Kate will die from grief and leave everything to Eve. However, when Kate unexpectedly forgives Eve, she changes her mind and murders George instead of allowing him to kill Alexandra. Afterward, Eve's plastic surgeon learns about her role in the murder and blackmails her into marriage, disfiguring her so that she will forever be dependent on him. Alexandra marries George's therapist and has a son who dreams of being a musician. Kate, however, pins the future of Kruger-Brent, Limited on Alexandra's son.

## Tony Blackwell

Tony Blackwell is Kate Blackwell's son with David Blackwell. Tony is a quiet child, much like his father, and is so intimidated by his mother that he stutters whenever he is around her. Tony knows his mother wants him to take over the reins of Kruger-Brent someday, but he is not interested in business. Tony recognizes that the company and its power has taken over everything for his mother and he does not want that to happen to him. Tony wants to be a painter.

After serving in World War II, Tony tells his mother that he wants to go to Paris to study to be an artist. If he does not become successful at it, Tony tells her, he will return to Kruger-Brent. Tony spends a year in Paris, studying at one of the best schools in the country. When he has enough paintings, Tony's girlfriend arranges for him to have a showing at a small gallery. Kate arranges for an art critic to attend. When the critic writes a terrible review, Tony agrees to return to New York to help his mother run the company. A short time later, Kate introduces Tony to two women, making it clear to him



which she wants him to marry. Tony chooses the other woman in an act of defiance, unaware that Kate really wanted him to choose that particular woman.

Shortly after the wedding, Tony's wife becomes pregnant, despite warnings from the doctor that a pregnancy could kill her. Kate is aware of these warnings and encouraged the woman to get pregnant anyway. The night his wife gives birth to twins, Tony learns that his mother paid the art critic to pan his work, that she paid his girlfriend to keep an eye on him, and that his mother knew his wife could die if she got pregnant. Upon the death of his wife, Tony has a psychotic breakdown and tries to kill his mother. Tony is put into an institute where a lobotomy leaves him unable to be a participating member of society.

## **Eve Blackwell**

Eve Blackwell is Tony's daughter. Eve is jealous of her sister, Alexandra, almost from the cradle. Eve tries to kill her sister many times, beginning with a fire the day before their fifth birthday. As Eve grows older, she becomes sexually active, taking many partners and posing a possible risk of scandal for the Blackwell family. When Kate learns the truth, she disowns Eve and sends her away, penniless. In retribution, Eve schemes with a sadistic criminal, George Mellis, to steal her family empire from both Kate and Alexandra. Eve helps George seduce Alexandra and eventually marry her. Eve then plans for George to kill Alexandra in the hopes that Kate will die of grief and leave Kruger-Brent to her only remaining heir, Eve.

Eve is beaten and nearly killed by George one night when she pushes him past his limits of tolerance. When Kate learns of this incident, she accepts Eve back into the family. With this unexpected turn of events, Eve wants to call off her plan with George, but he refuses. Instead, Eve kills George, ironically protecting her sister from their murder plot. When her plastic surgeon learns about Eve's role in George's death, he blackmails Eve into marrying him and then disfigures her to force her to be dependent on him.

## **Alexandra Blackwell**

Alexandra Blackwell is the daughter of Tony Blackwell. Alexandra is raised by her grandmother, Kate. Alexandra's sister, Eve, is jealous of her and does not like sharing the spotlight with her. Eve tries on many occasions to kill Alexandra, but Alexandra never sees the malice in these attempts. Alexandra loves her sister and refuses to see the darkness in her. When Eve blames Alexandra for the rumors surrounding her escapades with boys at another school, Kate finally sees through her innocent façade and disowns her. Alexandra feels sorry for Eve and tries to make peace between her and Kate, but to no avail.

Alexandra meets George Mellis while having lunch with Eve. Alexandra believes George is a charming, suave man who adores her. Alexandra never learns the dark truth about her husband. When George disappears, Alexandra raises the alarm and she





is the initial suspect when his body is discovered. However, charges are never brought against her. Later, Alexandra begins seeing George's therapist, who is aware of George's dark side, and they eventually marry, having a son together whom Kate hopes will one day run Kruger-Brent, Limited.

## **Salomon van der Merwe**

Salomon van der Merwe is a business man in Klipdrift. Van der Merwe appears to be a humble store owner, but in truth he owns shares in many diamond claims. Van der Merwe also owns most of Klipdrift. Van der Merwe likes to swindle prospectors out of their claims. Van der Merwe makes young, innocent Jamie McGregor one of his victims. However, Jamie does not remain innocent and teams up with Banda to get revenge against Van der Merwe.

Van der Merwe is a religious man who plays a large role in his church. Therefore, Van der Merwe's reputation is ruined when Jamie impregnates his innocent, unmarried daughter. Jamie continues with his scheme, allowing Van der Merwe to borrow lots of money from his bank until Van der Merwe uses his diamond beach as collateral. Jamie calls in all of Van der Merwe's notes, taking every possession he has. Van der Merwe kills himself that same day.

## **Margaret van der Merwe McGregor**

Margaret van der Merwe is Salomon van der Merwe's daughter. Margaret is an innocent who has no idea what it is her father is doing to poor prospectors. Jamie does not believe her to be innocent, however, and has no qualms about using her to hurt Van der Merwe. After her father is dead, Margaret gives birth to a son she names Jamie Jr. Margaret hopes the child will convince Jamie to marry her, so she leaves the baby with Jamie for a week after his birth. Jamie does fall in love with the baby and eventually agrees to marry Margaret, but he treats the marriage as though it is one of convenience, never going to her bed except for one drunken night when he mistakes Margaret for his mistress.

Margaret is devoted to Jamie, believing one day he will see her for the woman she is and fall in love. When Jamie has a stroke while suffering the grief of his son's death, Margaret sees it as her chance to be the wife she has always wanted to be. Margaret takes care of Jamie for a year, doing everything for him and refusing the help of a nurse. When Jamie dies, Margaret is heartbroken. Margaret takes over Kruger-Brent and continues to make it the successful company Jamie had always envisioned it to be. When Margaret becomes ill from cancer, she is grateful because she knows death will bring her and Jamie together again.





## Jamie McGregor Jr.

Jamie McGregor Jr. is the son of Jamie and Margaret McGregor. Jamie was conceived in a plot to ruin his grandfather's reputation; however, after his birth, his father comes to love him deeply. Jamie spends every free moment with his son, often taking him camping and to see the mines that they own through their company, Kruger-Brent, Limited. When a dispute breaks out between the workers and managerial staff of Jamie's diamond beach, members of the native tribe kidnap Jamie Jr. and leave him alone in the desert. Jamie is so heartbroken over his son's death that he has a stroke that will eventually lead to his death.



# Objects/Places

## Paintings

Tony Blackwell dreams of becoming an artist. Tony receives training at a respected Paris art school. When Tony has enough paintings, his girlfriend arranges a showing of his paintings. The show is attended by an art critic who writes a scathing review of the show and ends Tony's hopes of being an artist. Later, Tony learns his mother paid the critic for his bad review.

## Van der Merwe's Store

Jamie McGregor goes to Van der Merwe's store to buy supplies for mining diamonds, but ends up signing a contract with Salomon Van der Merwe to find diamonds with him. When Van der Merwe cheats Jamie, Jamie schemes to get revenge on him.

## Diamond Beach

Van der Merwe owns a beach in the Namib Desert where there are diamonds lying on the sand. Jamie goes to this beach and steals diamonds to fund a scheme to get revenge on Van der Merwe for cheating him and leaving him to die in the desert.

## Sanitarium

Tony is confined to a sanitarium after he has a psychotic break following the death of his wife.

## Trust Fund

Eve and Alexandra have trust funds from their grandmother. Eve is forced to wait nearly ten years to inherit her trust fund after having a falling out with her grandmother.

## Minority Shares of Kruger-Brent, Limited

After her son has a nervous breakdown, Kate pins her hopes on Eve to take over the reins of Kruger-Brent, Limited. When Eve proves to be an inappropriate choice, Kate gives the minority shares of the company to Alexandra.



## **Private Train Car**

Kruger-Brent Limited owns a private train car which first Jamie and then Kate use to travel to business meetings and company mines throughout South Africa. Kate also uses this car to smuggle Banda out of Klipdrift in the middle of manhunt attempting to locate him in order to charge him with murder.

## **Kruger-Brent, Limited**

Kruger-Brent Limited is the company Jamie forms after stealing diamonds from Van der Merwe's diamond beach on the Namib Desert. Jamie named the company after the two guards who searched for him and Banda as they attempted to escape in the cover of a mis.

## **Cedar Hill House**

Cedar Hill House is a home Kate buys in Dark Harbor, Maine. This house is the site of Kate's ninetieth birthday party as well as the murder of her grandson-in-law, George Mellis.

## **Klipdrift, South Africa**

Klipdrift is a small town in South Africa that came into existence and continues to grow because of diamond prospectors. Jamie establishes the headquarters of Kruger-Brent Limited in Klipdrift because this is where he came to search for diamonds and was cheated by Salomon Van der Merwe.

## **New York City**

Kate moves the headquarters of Kruger-Brent Limited to New York City because she believes that South Africa is too far from the heart of modern business.

## **Paris, France**

Tony Blackwell goes to Paris in order to become a painter. After a disastrous review of his work by a renowned art critic, Tony returns to New York to take his place at Kruger-Brent Limited. Later Tony learns his mother paid the critic to disparage his work.



# Themes

## Ambition

Jamie McGregor is determined to be a rich man. Jamie gives up his shares in his family farm to travel halfway across the world to South Africa in order to search for diamonds. Jamie is young, naïve, and he believes the world is his for the taking. Jamie learns quickly, however, that he cannot trust anyone but himself. Jamie enters into a contract with the owner of a local store and is cheated. Jamie is beaten when he attempts to right this wrong and is left to die out in the desert. If not for the kindness of a native man, Jamie would have died. Jamie decides he must take revenge on this cruel man. Jamie steals diamonds and finances a rouse to trick the daughter of his enemy into becoming pregnant with his child. After ruining his enemy's reputation through his daughter, Jamie sets out to ruin the man financially. In the process, Jamie builds a company that will become the biggest employer in Klipdrift as well as several communities spread throughout South Africa.

Jamie's daughter, Kate, conceived after a night of drunken passion, continues her father's vision. Kate is a woman who always gets what she sets her mind to. Kate takes the reins of her father's company, Kruger-Brent Limited, and turns it into an international conglomerate. Kate lives and breathes for Kruger-Brent, especially after the unexpected death of her beloved husband. Nothing matters more to Kate than to expand the reach of her company. Kate is constantly on the lookout for deals that will give her more power. When Kate's only child tells her that he has no intention of working for Kruger-Brent, Kate schemes to pull him in rather than face the possibility that Kruger-Brent could fall into the hands of strangers. Unfortunately, Kate's plans backfire when her son has a psychotic break upon the death of his wife.

Eve Blackwell is more like her grandmother and great-grandmother than Kate would ever be willing to admit. Eve wants to be the shining star, the focus of everyone around her. Eve fights from an early age to stand out against her twin sister. However, Eve becomes a little too interested in the sexual side of her growing maturity and threatens to bring shame on the Blackwell name. Kate disowns her granddaughter and refuses to allow her to be connected to Kruger-Brent in any way even though Kate had initially believed that Eve would be the future of the company. Eve is not one to be told no. Eve hatches a scheme with a sexual sadist to destroy her sister and become Kate's only option for the future of Kruger-Brent. The scheme backfires, however, when Eve's partner begins to have ideas of branching out on his own. Eve kills her partner, but is found out by a lovesick plastic surgeon. Ambition is a strong motivator in this novel, but it is a dangerous motivation that leaves three major characters in a place they never saw themselves going, making ambition a theme of the novel.



## Revenge

Jamie McGregor is cheated by Salomon Van der Merwe. Jamie attempts to fix this misunderstanding by speaking to Van der Merwe, only to find himself the victim of a vicious beating, left to die in the middle of the harsh South African desert. If not for the help of a man with more reason than Jamie to hate Van der Merwe, Jamie would have died. Banda, a native man who worked for Van der Merwe, is deeply committed to finding a way to exact revenge on Van der Merwe for the rape and death of his little sister. Banda rescued Jamie in the hopes that the white man would be willing to help him in this endeavor. Jamie quickly agrees. Together, Band and Jamie steal diamonds from a diamond beach that Van der Merwe owns. Jamie takes the money and launches a scheme to humiliate and ruin Van der Merwe.

Jamie goes back to Klipdrift and convinces Van der Merwe that he is an investor who wants to put a great deal of money into any investment Van der Merwe recommends. Van der Merwe is so happy with the idea of stealing all this money from Jamie that he allows the young man to go around town unescorted with his young daughter. Jamie seduces the young woman and impregnates her, a humiliation that destroys Van der Merwe's reputation as a good Christian man. Jamie abandons the young woman and sets out to ruin Van der Merwe financially. Eventually, Jamie comes into possession of all of Van der Merwe's investments. Van der Merwe commits suicide when he is evicted from his store.

Eve Blackwell, Jamie's great-granddaughter, is disowned by her grandmother, Kate. Eve is angry about this, feeling as though she deserves the money and power that her grandmother had always intended to give her despite her indiscretions. Eve has a twin sister whom she has always disliked and tried to get rid of. As a result of her grandmother's actions, Eve launches a scheme to get rid of Alexandra, her sister, and return to her grandmother's good graces. Unfortunately, Eve picks a sadistic partner and finds herself in a position where she must kill her partner and save her own sister. Eve's scheme of revenge leaves her sister still alive and Eve married to a milquetoast of a man, proving that revenge is not always sweet, and making revenge a theme of the novel.

## Love and Obsession

Jamie humiliates his enemy, Salomon Van der Merwe, by seducing and impregnating his young daughter, Margaret. Jamie then leaves Margaret to her own devices, refusing to have anything to do with the daughter of his sworn enemy. Margaret, however, is deeply in love with Jamie and determined to convince him of his love for her. Margaret leaves her son, Jamie Jr., with his father for a week shortly after his birth. Margaret hopes Jamie will come to love the baby and as a result wish to make a family with her and the child. Jamie does fall in love with the baby, but refuses to marry Margaret because of who she is. Eventually Margaret wears Jamie down and he does marry her, but the marriage is one of convenience.



Margaret is a perfect wife, but Jamie refuses to share her bed or to even acknowledge her position in his life. Margaret remains deeply in love with Jamie, allowing him into her bed one drunken night when he has a fight with his mistress, resulting in the birth of their daughter Kate. However, Jamie continues to deny any emotional attachment to Margaret. A short time later, Jamie and Margaret's son, Jamie Jr., is killed after a dispute between the workers and management at Jamie's diamond beach. Jamie is so heartbroken from the loss that he has a stroke. Margaret spends that last year of Jamie's life caring for his every need, refusing help from anyone.

Kate, too, falls deeply in love with one man early in her life. Kate loves David Blackwell, the manager of Kruger-Brent. Kate is only a child when she first confesses her love for David, leaving him convinced it is simply a crush. However, Kate continues to fan the flame of love for David throughout her childhood and early adulthood. When Kate learns that David is to be married, Kate is crushed. However, Kate schemes to break up the relationship. When Kate learns that David's engagement is based on the prospect of running a new business for his fiancé's father, she arranges to buy the new business, and in doing so, taking away David's new position as president of the new company. David ends the engagement and marries Kate instead.

Eve Blackwell, Kate's granddaughter, is a strong-willed woman who loves men, many men. Eve prefers her men young and rich. When a milquetoast of a doctor falls in love with Eve, she finds it amusing at first, but then tedious. After Eve kills her brother-in-law, George Mellis, the doctor finds out about her role in the death and uses it to blackmail her into marriage. Eve resents the marriage and the man, going out of her way to make the man's life miserable. One day, Eve is told by her young lover that she is beginning to look old at the ripe old age of twenty-five. Eve demands her husband give her plastic surgery to make her look younger. When the doctor operates on his wife, he disfigures her. Eve is left with a lack of self-esteem that turns her into a weak, devoted wife to her milquetoast husband. It is these three strong-willed women who loved, or were loved, so deeply that it bordered on obsession that makes love and obsession a theme of the novel.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person omniscient, including many passages of story told in the authorial voice. As an epic novel covering four generations of one family, the narration of the novel changes through the decades, beginning as a third person point of view and moving at times into a more authorial voice in order to cover large sections of time in the lives of several characters. The first part of the book follows Jamie McGregor through his adventures as he becomes a diamond prospector and then seeks revenge on a man who cheated him out of his share of a diamond discovery. In this part, the point of view moves among several characters, including Jamie, his friend Banda, and his wife Margaret. After Jamie's death, the narration shifts to his manager, David Blackwell, and his daughter, Kate. When Kate has a child, the narration again shifts to follow her son's story before moving on to tell the story of Kate's granddaughter's, Eve and Alexandra.

The point of view of this novel works because it allows the reader to feel a certain amount of intimacy with some of the important characters, specifically Jamie McGregor, while still finding a way to cover large periods of time in a few short paragraphs. The third person point of view allows the reader to see events through the character's eyes, such as Jamie's daring theft of diamonds on a diamond beach, and allows the reader to see the thoughts and emotions of these characters in a way that another point of view might not allow. The authorial voice opens the narration enough to allow the passing of time to happen quickly, without taking away the intimacy the reader must develop with key characters in order to care about the outcome of the story.

## Setting

The novel is set in key places all over the world. The most important settings, however, are Klipdrift, New York, and Cedar Hill House. Klipdrift is a dusty town that sprang up in the middle of the South African desert in the late nineteenth century when diamonds were discovered near there. When Jamie arrives, Klipdrift is nothing more than a collection of saloons and diamond appraisers, almost like a set from an old John Wayne movie. Later, Klipdrift grows into a major city and Jamie's company, Kruger-Brent, Limited is the heart of its commerce. When Kate, Jamie's daughter, takes over the company, she moves its headquarters to New York City, which is just becoming the heart of international business. Kate builds an office building for her headquarters right on Wall Street, a street that remains the hubbub of international commerce. Finally, Kate buys Cedar Hill House in Maine as a refuge, a place for her and her husband, David, to relax on their rare breaks from the office. Cedar Hill House will become an important setting for the major events in Kate's life, including the introduction of her son to the woman who will become his wife and Kate's ninetieth birthday party. Cedar Hill House will also be the setting for the murder of Kate's grandson-in-law, George Mellis.



The settings of this novel are almost as exciting as the plot that unfolds around them. Klipdrift is like the setting to an old Western, a rough, unlawful place where almost anything can happen. The inhabitants of this town are con artists, prospectors, and prostitutes, as well as the good Christian woman who would become the wife and mother of two of the most ambitious characters in the novel. New York is young and new, a place of dreams, making the reader feel as though they are witnessing the birth of an icon. Cedar Hill House is the embodiment of luxury, the kind of place people dream of when they dream of what it would be like to be successful, to have power and money to own luxury. The settings of this novel are the perfect backdrop to the story, placing the characters in the places they belong and surrounding them with the luxuries, or lack of luxuries, that fuel their ambitions and dreams.

## Language and Meaning

The novel is written in simple English. The story moves through international settings, most particularly South Africa. Due to these international settings, the language of the novel includes some foreign words. The beginning of the novel includes words native to the African tribal people who populate the South African setting, including words for fog and thunderstorms that the reader may not recognize or understand. The novel also has a character spend some time in France; therefore, there are some French words included in the dialogue at this point in the plot.

The novel is written in simple, easy to understand language. The novel includes some foreign words that are often explained within the text or through the situation in which they are presented. The foreign words are not a hindrance to the flow or comprehension of the novel. In fact, the foreign words enrich the dialogue, giving the reader the sense of authenticity in the settings of the novel. The language of this novel works well as the writer uses the appropriate combination of simple English and foreign words and phrases to give the reader an authentic experience within the plot of the novel.

## Structure

The novel is divided into five books, a prologue, and an epilogue. The books and epilogue are then divided into thirty-seven chapters. Each book is named for a person or thing that features prominently in the following chapters, giving the reader an idea of what each section will cover. Most of the chapters are fairly long, covering twenty to thirty pages and often spanning years of time. The novel begins in the latter years of the nineteenth century and continues to cover more than a hundred years in the lifespan of one family. The novel begins with Jamie McGregor and continues to tell the story of his daughter, Kate, her son, Tony, and his children, Eve and Alexandra.

There are many stories in this one novel, each one centering on the theme of ambition. Jamie McGregor begins the story by deciding to search for diamonds in South Africa. Jamie is cheated out of a diamond claim, but gets revenge by ruining his enemy and creating a company that will far outshine anything his enemy ever dreamed of owning.





Jamie dies and leaves his empire to his daughter, Kate. Kate turns the company into an international conglomerate, but becomes so obsessed with power that she loses her only child. Tony wants to be a painter, but Kate ruins his dreams by convincing an art critic to write a terrible review about them. Tony joins the company, but has a psychotic break when his wife dies and he learns that his mother schemed to allow it to happen. Tony leaves behind two little girls, Eve and Alexandra. Kate pins the future of the company on Eve, but changes her mind when Eve turns out to be an unscrupulous woman who threatens to bring shame to the Blackwell name.



## Quotes

"Bloody hell! Kate thought. No one knows me. He sounds like he's talking about a saint. What would all these people say if they knew the real Kate Blackwell? Sired by a thief and kidnapped before I was a year old. What would they think if I showed them the bullet scars on my body?" Prologue, p. 15

"The trip back to Klipdrift was easy and comfortable, and when Jamie thought of the hell he had gone through on this same journey, he was filled with a sense of wonder. That's the difference between the rich and the poor, he thought. The poor walk; the rich ride in carriages." Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chap. 2, p. 51

"Jamie was unable to sleep that night. He kept visualizing thirty-five miles of sand sprinkled with enormous diamonds belonging to Van der Merwe. He thought of the sea and the jagged reefs, the dogs hungry to kill, the guards and the land mines. He was not afraid of the danger; he was not afraid of dying. He was only afraid of dying before he repaid Salomon van der Merwe." Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chap. 4, p. 69

"Salomon van der Merwe had no idea what was happening to him. He knew that somehow, through no fault of his own, his life was being destroyed. God had chosen him—as He had once chosen Job—to test the mettle of his faith. Van der Merwe was certain he would triumph over his unseen enemies in the end. All he needed was a little time—time and more money. He had put up his general store as security, the shares he had in six small diamond fields, even his horse and wagon. Finally, there was nothing left but the diamond field in the Namib, and the day he put that up as collateral, Jamie pounced." Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chap. 8, p. 128

"Margaret stood staring after him in stunned bewilderment, and then slowly turned to look at herself in the mirror. The mirror told her that she had never looked as beautiful, but when she looked closer she could not recognize the eyes. They were the eyes of a stranger." Book One, Jamie 1883-1906: Chap. 9, p. 156

"Jamie McGregor lived for exactly one year from the day he was taken ill, and it was the happiest time of Margaret's life. Jamie was totally helpless. He could neither talk nor move. Margaret cared for her husband, tended to all his needs, and kept him at her side day and night." Book One, Jamie 1882-1906: Chap. 11, p. 165

"David's assurance that Kate would grow out of her high-spiritedness showed no signs of coming to pass. If anything, she grew more willful every day. She flatly refused to take part in any of the activities that other girls her age participated in. She insisted on going into the mines with David, and he took her hunting and fishing and camping. Kate adored it."

Book Two, Kate and David 1906-1914: Chap. 12, p. 184



"Kate hesitated a moment, then returned the papers to the safe and locked it. David belonged to her now. He had always belonged to her. And to Kruger-Brent, Ltd. Together, they would build it into the biggest, most powerful company in the world. Just as Jamie and Margaret McGregor would have wanted it."  
Book Two, Kate and David 1906-1914: Chap. 15, p. 218

"But long after d'Usseau had gone, Kate sat at her desk, filled with a deep sadness. She loved her son so much. If he ever found out...She knew the risk she had taken. But she could not stand by and let Tony throw away his inheritance. No matter what it might cost her, he had to be protected. The company had to be protected. Kate rose, feeling suddenly very tired. It was time to pick up Tony and take him home. She would help him get over this, so he could get on with what he had been born to do. Run the company."  
Book Four, Tony 1946-1950: Chap. 18, p. 271

"Everything I have done has been for you, my son. All my dreams were for you. How could you not know that? And he hated her so much he had tried to kill her. She was filled with such a deep agony that she wanted to die. But she would not let herself die. She had done what was right. They were wrong. Tony was a weakling. They had all been weaklings. Her father had been too weak to face his son's death. Her mother had been too weak to face life alone. But I am not weak, Kate thought. I can face this. I can face anything. I'm going to live. I'll survive. The company will survive." Book Four, Tony 1946-1950: Chap. 22, p. 313

"George lay awake the rest of the night. He was thinking about Eve and the way she had screamed and begged for mercy. He felt her bones crunch again beneath his fists, and he smelled her burning flesh, and at that moment he was very close to loving her."  
Book Five, Eve and Alexandra 1950-1975: Chap. 30, p. 418

"Her head was beginning to hurt. The room was slowly filling with ghosts. Jamie McGregor and Margaret—looking so beautiful—and Banda smiling at her. And dear, wonderful David, holding out his arms. Kate shook her head to clear it. She was not ready for any of them yet. Soon, she thought. Soon." Epilogue: Chap. 37, pp. 494-495



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Jamie McGregor? Why does Jamie enter into a contract he cannot read with Salomon Van der Merwe? How does Van der Merwe cheat Jamie? What does Jamie try to do about it? Why does Jamie not go to the police? Why does Jamie seduce Van der Merwe's daughter? Why does Jamie not marry Van der Merwe's daughter when she becomes pregnant? Why does Jamie continue to ruin Van der Merwe financially? Does Jamie feel satisfied with his revenge? Why or why not?

Who is Banda? Why does Banda save Jamie's life? Why does Banda hate Van der Merwe? Why does Banda not seek revenge on his own? Why does Banda not take the money Jamie offers him after their adventure on the diamond beach? What does Jamie do with the money? How does this help satisfy Banda's need for revenge? How does Kate know Banda? Why does Kate try to help Banda? Why is Banda wanted for murder? What did Banda do? Why can Kate not save Banda in the end? Does Banda want to be saved? Why or why not?

Who is Kate? What impact do the circumstances of her birth have on her character? What does Kate's obsession with David show about her personality? Why does Kate scheme to end David's engagement? What might have happened had David learned the truth? Does this scheme backfire? What about the scheme Kate uses to get her son to participate in the family company? Does this scheme backfire? How? What do all these schemes say about Kate's motivations? How do these motivations form Kate's personality?

Who is Tony Blackwell? Why does he stutter around his mother? What does this stutter say about Tony's feelings toward his mother? What does Tony want to do with his life? Who is standing in his way? Would things be different for Tony had his father lived? How? Why does Tony think his mother wants him to marry the daughter of a Texas' businessman? Is this why Tony marries German businessman's daughter? What happens when Tony learns that his mother paid a woman to be his girlfriend in Paris? Why does Tony's wife die? How does Tony react to this death? Why does Tony try to kill his mother? Is it morally justified?

Who is Eve Blackwell? Why does Eve dislike her sister? Why does Eve try to kill her sister? What does Eve do to make Kate disown her? Why does Kate disapprove of this behavior? Why does Eve feel that her behavior is none of her grandmother's concern? Why does Eve conspire to have George Mellis marry her sister? What does Eve hope will result from this marriage? Is there a chance that Eve's plot will work in her favor? Why does Eve change her mind and kill George instead of allowing him to kill her sister? How is this situation ironic? How does this murder leave Eve disfigured and married to a plastic surgeon?

What is Kruger-Brent Limited? How was the company named? How is the company a symbol of Jamie McGregor's ambition? What does Kate do with the company? What does the company symbolize to Kate? Why is Kate worried about dying without a family



member to take over the company? How does Kate allow the company to motivate her actions with her own son? How does the company lead to Tony attempting to kill Kate?

Compare and contrast Margaret Van der Merwe McGregor and Dr. Keith Webster. How are these two characters similar? How do these two characters conspire to force someone to marry them? How do these marriages affect their lives? How does illness play a part in these marriages? How are these two characters different? How does the writer use these characters to illustrate the weaknesses of other characters within the story? Compare these characters to David Blackwell. How is David similar to these two? How is he different? How does David's marriage compare to Margaret and Jamie's? To Keith and Eve's?