

# **Mercy Study Guide**

## **Mercy by Jodi Picoult**

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# Plot Summary

Mercy is a novel that explores the meaning of not only the word mercy, but love and loyalty, as well. The novel begins with a man confessing to the mercy killing of his wife who was suffering a painful and slow death to cancer. However, this man's story is second to that of the police chief, Cameron McDonald, who finds the love of his life five years after marrying the woman in his life. Cam is a man to whom responsibility is a suffocating burden he must bare. In rebellion against this weight, Cam breaks his loyalty to his wife and explores a relationship with a woman who has the freedom he craves. It is not until his wife learns of this affair that Cam finally realizes that he never really intended to leave his wife or the life they have built together. Mercy is a story of the tests that challenge people everyday and the mistakes that define a life.

Cameron McDonald goes to have lunch with his wife in her flower shop and finds himself face to face with a woman who makes his heart jump into his throat. Before Cam can even ask her name, he is called back to the police station. It seems a man wants to confess to murder and will only do it with the police chief, Cam. Cam finds Jamie McDonald, a cousin of his, waiting at the police station in his pickup truck. Jamie tells Cam that he killed his wife. Cam sends Jamie's wife to the funeral home where the local coroner works while he interviews Jamie. Jamie freely gives a confession, telling Cam how he held a pillow over his wife's face until she stopped breathing. Jamie says he did this, because his wife asked him to. Jamie's wife, Maggie, was suffering from an incurable cancer and was in a great deal of pain.

Cam does not want to charge Jamie, but because Jamie has scratches on his face and hands, he cannot be completely convinced that Maggie was a willing participant in her own death. Cam charges Jamie with murder, but then hires a local attorney anonymously to defend Jamie. Allie, Cam's wife, is fascinated with Jamie and Maggie's story and the idea that Jamie could do such a powerful thing in the name of love. Allie goes to visit Jamie and insinuates herself in his life.

Allie has hired Mia Townsend to work in her flower shop. Mia is new to town, but when Cam looks at her, he feels as though he has known her his entire life. The more time Cam spends with Mia, the stronger this feeling becomes. When Cam comes home early from work one afternoon and finds Mia snooping in his bedroom, he cannot help the feelings that overwhelm him. Cam kisses Mia. Guilt overwhelms him soon after, and he resolves himself to staying faithful to his wife. This resolve goes flying out the window, however, when Allie makes Jamie's case her only focus.

When Allie leaves town to help gather character witnesses for Jamie's trial, Cam begins an affair with Mia. At first, the affair is passionate and dangerous, adding an excitement to Cam's life that has been missing since he was forced to return home by his father's death. However, when Mia confesses her love for Cam, the affair becomes too serious. Cam ends the affair. A few days later, Mia leaves town without leaving a forwarding address. Cam cannot stop thinking about Mia. Cam begins to regret ending the affair



and decides to search for Mia. Cam hires a private detective to search for her. Within a few days, Cam finds Mia in a nearby town and convinces her to return.

Cam and Mia begin to see each other on a weekly basis. Cam lies to Allie often, but she is so involved in the preparation for Jamie's trial she does not see through Cam's stories. At Christmas, Cam arranges a weekend getaway for him and Mia. During the trip, Cam tells Mia that he has decided to leave Allie so that he and Mia can be together. Cam imagines that he and Mia will be free to travel the way he has always wanted to do. However, what Mia really wants is the life Cam has with Allie. When Mia realizes that this is not the life Cam is willing to offer her, Mia decides she must leave, this time for good. At the same moment Cam discovers Mia's disappearance, Allie discovers some pictures in Cam's luggage that reveal the affair. Allie has a massive yard sale, selling all of Cam's belongings. However, Allie does not ask him to leave. Instead, Allie tells Cam that she still loves him, she simply does not trust him.

Jamie's trial opens the morning after Allie's discovery. Cam gets on the stand and does little to help the defense. However, several character witnesses come forward who successfully convince the jury that Jamie's actions were based on a type of temporary insanity caused by his intense love for Maggie and her terrible pain. The jury acquits Jamie. Cam and Allie arrange for Jamie to remain in town until he can decide what he wants to do with the rest of his life. Cam and Allie also have decisions to make regarding their future and hope to make them together.



# Prologue

## Prologue Summary

Mercy is a novel that explores the meaning of not only the word mercy, but love and loyalty, as well. The novel begins with a man confessing to the mercy killing of his wife who was suffering a painful and slow death to cancer. However, this man's story is second to that of the police chief, Cameron McDonald, who finds the love of his life five years after marrying the woman in his life. Cam is a man to whom responsibility is a suffocating burden he must bare. In rebellion against this weight, Cam breaks his loyalty to his wife and explores a relationship with a woman who has the freedom he craves. It is not until his wife learns of this affair that Cam finally realizes that he never really intended to leave his wife or the life they have built together. Mercy is a story of the tests that challenge people everyday and the mistakes that define a life.

A woman has emptied out her house of a man's things, leaving only the feminine objects that at one time were overwhelmed by her husband's possessions. All his mug collections, his tools, and his clothing are now in liquor boxes out on the front lawn. The only things left that reminds her of him is a stain glass panel he had given her weeks prior. The woman takes this down and wraps it in newspaper, hiding it behind the toilet. She cannot get rid of this, but she cannot stand to look at it any longer either. It is a warm, clear day in winter. The woman has a yard sale, taking whatever she can get for her husband's belongings. The neighbors pick through her husband's things, buying underwear, socks, and even his police uniforms for pennies on the dollar. When everything but some travel magazines is gone, the woman hands them out like Playbills from a Broadway play. A little after five-thirty, her husband returns home. The woman refuses to speak to him when he asks about the sale. The husband goes into the house and within seconds returns to the front yard. The woman simply tells him that it is all gone, picks up the moneybox, and walks away.

## Prologue Analysis

A woman is introduced, but not named. She is not a happy woman. Apparently, her husband has done something to upset this woman. Methodically, the woman collects all of her husband's belongings and puts them in the front yard for sale. The woman shows little emotion as her neighbors pick over her husbands possessions, offering her money for things as mundane as underwear and as priceless as an antique fly fishing rod. When the woman's husband returns home and discovers what she has done, the woman does not apologize, does not explain herself. The woman simply picks up her money and walks away.

The reader will learn through the course of the novel who this woman is and what has set her off in such a way. However, at this point, the reader only knows the woman is terribly upset by her husband. The woman has the yard sale perhaps as a way of



hurting her husband, or perhaps as a way of moving him out of their home. Either way, this marriage is clearly not a stable one. Something has taken place that has caused a split between these two people and the curiosity the reader must feel as to what this thing is will spur the reader on to read the rest of the book.



# Part One, Chapter 1

## Part One, Chapter 1 Summary

Cameron McDonald is the police chief of Wheelock, Massachusetts. Wheelock is a small town that is the transplanted home of the Clan McDonald from Carrymuir, Scotland. About the time America was being settled, England was invading Scotland. The chief of the Clan McDonald made a deal with the army of Bonnie Prince Charlie to fight with them if they would agree to allow his people to go home safely. The chief, Cameron McDonald, thought he would die in the battle. However, when he survived the failed battle and was sent to prison, Cameron smuggled his people out of Scotland in front of the invading English. It was then that the clan settled in Wheelock. Cam is the direct descendant of this heroic chief and holds the now honorary title of chief of the Clan McDonald. Cam would have preferred to give the title up and become a travel writer, but this is his fate and he feels he cannot turn his back on it.

Cam is married to Allie. Allie has been in love with Cam since high school, though she is sure he never noticed her back then. It was as much a surprise to Allie as anyone else in town when she and Cam married five years before. Allie is convinced that one day Cam will wake and realize he has made a mistake, so she spends her days trying to make Cam happy. Allie anticipates every need Cam might have, keeping a perfect house, running his errands for him, even swallowing her own emotions in order to put Cam's first. Allie is a perfect wife.

Allie sneaks out of her flower shop to deliver some flowers to the police station. When she returns to the shop, Allie finds a strange woman arranging flowers at her worktable. Allie is too stunned by the imaginative arrangement to become angry. Instead, Allie asks the woman if she needs a job. A moment later, Cam comes into the shop to take Allie to lunch. Cam is stunned by the woman as well, but not because of her arranging skills but her beauty. Cam has never felt such a powerful reaction to a woman before. However, before he can ask her name, his deputy comes to the shop and tells Cam there is trouble at the station. Cam returns to the police station to find a man standing beside a pickup truck. The man watches Cam come toward him before he steps up to introduce himself. The man says he is James McDonald, a cousin of Cam's. James says his wife is dead, pointing to a woman sitting in the front seat of the truck. James then says that he is the one that killed her.

## Part One, Chapter 1 Analysis

Cam is the police chief but also the chief of the Clan McDonald, giving him some influence over the people in town that a typical police chief would not have. Cam's town is populated by the direct descendants of the Clan McDonald, once one of the most powerful clans in Scotland. Cam's namesake was the same chief who made a bargain with Bonnie Prince Charlie to save his people and then smuggled them all out of





Scotland to settle this small town. This is a huge legacy for Cam to live in the shadow of. When Cam reveals that he would rather be a travel writer, the reader is given insight into Cam's emotional state. Cam is the chief by default, not because it is something he wants. Not only this, but Cam would deeply love to be any where but this little town. Cam's feelings allow the reader to see how unhappy Cam is in his life and why.

Allie is Cam's wife. Allie is still unable to reconcile herself with the idea that Cam loves her. Allie has been in love with Cam all her life, but always believed he never knew she was alive. Now that Cam and Allie are married, Allie does all she can to provide the perfect life for him so that Cam will not realize what a mistake he has made by marrying Allie. Allie's life is all about Cam. Allie even chose the location of her flower shop so she can spy on Cam during the day. Allie's feelings toward Cam and her marriage present a picture to the reader of a woman who is more in love with her husband than he is with her. Allie's situation could present trouble for both herself and Cam, leaving the reader wondering how this situation will influence the development of the plot.

Allie finds a strange woman in her shop and is so impressed by her work that she hires her on the spot. When Cam sees the woman, he is instantly attracted to her. Cam's attraction suggests trouble for both Cam and Allie. However, before Cam can react to this woman any further, his deputy comes to the shop to tell him there is trouble at the station. Cam returns to the police station to find James McDonald, a cousin of his, waiting to confess to murder. James' confession leaves the reader with a bombshell, anxious to continue on to the next chapter to learn why this man would want to kill his wife.

## Part One, Chapter 2

### Part One, Chapter 2 Summary

Upon Jamie's confession, chaos breaks out. Several women who have gathered around the truck faint, while one man punches Jamie in the nose. When Cam sends his deputy over to check the woman's pulse, Jamie pushes the deputy out of the way and refuses to allow him to touch her. Allie, who followed Cam across the street, tries to comfort Jamie by promising that she will stay with his wife until her body can be dealt with properly. Jamie thanks her and allows Cam to place him under arrest.

Cam takes Jamie into the police station and asks him to explain his confession. When Jamie tells Cam that he smothered his wife with a pillow at the local hotel, Cam feels he has no choice but to place Jamie under arrest. Jamie continues his story, claiming that his wife, Maggie, was suffering from incurable cancer and that the pain was so intense she begged him to end her life. However, Cam notices scratches on Jamie's face and hands, suggesting a struggle. Jamie also says that he came to Wheelock as he knew that Cam, as the clan's chief, would make sure he got a fair hearing. Cam knows that by placing one of his own under arrest will be looked down on by the community, but he also knows as chief he will not be questioned. Cam feels that he must follow the letter of the law.

At the funeral home, Allie watches as the funeral director, who also serves as the coroner, begins his initial examination of Maggie's body. Allie feels physically ill when she sees the mastectomy scars and radiation burns on Maggie's body. The coroner tells Allie and the deputy that Maggie clearly died of asphyxiation, but that she clearly had also suffered from cancer. When Allie returns to the flower shop some time later, she finds Mia, her new assistant, has finished the arrangements for an order due that evening as well as a group of arrangements for Maggie's funeral. Allie realizes that Mia must not have a place to stay that night since the local hotel has been shut down due to Maggie's murder investigation, so she asks Mia to stay at her home. Cam is exhausted when he returns home that night. When he finds Mia sleeping on his couch, Cam is again overwhelmed by the feelings he had experienced when he first saw Mia in the flower shop. Cam rushes upstairs to his wife without saying a word to Mia.

### Part One, Chapter 2 Analysis

Jamie tells Cam that he killed his wife because she asked him to. Maggie suffered from cancer and there was little hope of her survival, something the coroner confirms before he even does an autopsy. Jamie's confession introduces the theme of euthanasia into the story, presenting the moral argument over who has the right to decide when a person dies as Cam struggles to decide if he should charge his own cousin with murder. Jamie has come to Cam on purpose, knowing that as the chief of the Clan McDonald, Cam will make sure Jamie is treated fairly. It is the definition of fairly that bothers Cam.



Cam knows there are those in the community who will not believe Jamie should be charged with murder. However, Cam is not only the chief of the Clan but also the police chief and he must uphold the law. Cam decides, based on the scratches on Jamie's face and hands, that he has no choice but to charge him with murder.

Allie goes to the funeral home with Maggie's body as she has promised Jamie she will. Allie is sickened by the scene, but she stays until she is assured Maggie is well cared for. During the coroner's initial examination of Maggie's body, her struggle with cancer is clear in the mastectomy scar and the radiation burns. The coroner corroborates what Jamie has already told Cam, that Maggie was dying.

Allie has hired Mia to work in her shop. This proves to be a good decision when she returns to the flower shop to find that Mia has finished that night's order and a group of arrangements for Maggie's funeral. Allie asks Mia to spend the night at her home. When Cam returns home to find Mia there, he is again shocked by his attraction to her. Instead of acting on it, Cam runs upstairs to be with his wife. However, his initial reaction and hesitation suggest to the reader that there might be something to this and that Cam could be heading into danger.



## Part One, Chapter 3

### Part One, Chapter 3 Summary

Angus McDonald is Cam's uncle. Angus was left behind in Scotland to be the caretaker of Carrymuir, which remains in McDonald hands. Angus moved to Wheelock eight years ago when Cam approached him and asked him to take over as clan chief upon the death of Cam's father. Angus refused, but agreed to come to Wheelock to help Cam. Angus believes Cam needs his help now. Angus has had a dream about the original Cameron and believes it is a sign that Cam made a mistake by charging Jamie with murder.

The next morning, Cam comes downstairs to find Allie making breakfast for him, as she normally does. Allie talks about Jamie's crime as if it is romantic to her. Cam wants to know what she would do in the same situation. Allie says she would kill Cam, but then she would kill herself too, because she would not want to live without him. Mia comes downstairs after brushing her teeth, and snooping in the medicine cabinet, and she and Cam are finally properly introduced. Allie leaves the room, giving Cam and Mia a moment alone. Cam asks her if they have ever met before. Mia does not have a chance to answer, but thinks that perhaps she has known Cam all her life.

### Part One, Chapter 3 Analysis

The character of Angus McDonald is introduced in this chapter. Angus is an old man, Cam's uncle. Angus was once the caretaker of Carrymuir, the McDonald home village in Scotland. However, when Cam learned of his father's death, he went to see Angus and to beg him to take the role of Clan chief instead. Angus refused, because he was not in line for the role. However, Angus agreed to return to Wheelock to help Cam where he could. Angus takes this role seriously and believes Cam is making a mistake by charging Jamie. Angus has had a dream about the original Cameron and it is this dream that causes to believe Cam is wrong. However, this dream could have other meanings that Angus is not aware of at this point. It is important that the reader remember the dream and leave the meaning of it open to interpretation.

Allie tells Cam that she would kill him if he asked, but she would kill herself too so she would not have to live in a world without Cam. Allie's statement tells the reader how deeply her devotion to Cam runs, suggesting that losing Cam would ruin Allie's whole world. When Mia comes downstairs and Cam is officially introduced to her, his reaction tells the reader that he is not nearly as devoted to Allie as she is to him. In fact, when Cam asks Mia if he knows her, the reader gets the feeling that Cam would like to get to know Mia in a way that is inappropriate for a married man.

# Part One, Chapter 4

## Part One, Chapter 4 Summary

Angus visits Jamie at the jail before talking with Cam. Angus warns Cam that he might be heading down the wrong path, but Cam refuses to listen. At the flower shop, Mia teaches Allie how to work with bonsai trees, which is Mia's specialty. As they work, Allie asks Mia about herself. Mia reveals that she has traveled extensively since reaching adulthood. Mia's childhood was lonely, because her parents were so blindly devoted to each other they would often forget about Mia. Mia also confesses that she envies Allie because of the devotion she sees in her for Cam. Mia does not confess to feeling attracted to Cam, however.

Late in the day, Cam goes to Graham MacPhee's office. Cam really wants to speak to Graham's father, but since he is not there, Cam settles on Graham. Cam tells Graham he wants to hire him to be Jamie's lawyer. Cam explains that he cannot help with the defense and that he does not want anyone to know, especially Jamie, that he is the one who hired him. However, Cam wants Graham to do everything he can to make sure Jamie gets off. Graham is excited at the prospect, but nervous at the same time, because he has never tried a case in court. However, Graham's excitement will lessen when he realizes Jamie does not want to be defended, but would rather just go straight to jail.

Cam returns home after meeting with Graham and finds Mia in his bedroom, snooping through a box of pictures. Mia is so upset at being caught that Cam holds her in his arms to calm her. When Mia is no longer upset, Cam helps her pick up the spilled pictures. Mia picks up a picture of Carrymuir and says that she visited it once. Cam asks her details of the area, but Mia cannot remember them clearly. Cam then impulsively kisses Mia. Afterwards they are both filled with guilt. Cam insists on taking Mia back to the flower shop himself, unwilling to be separated from her just yet.

Allie has gone to the police station to visit with Jamie. Jamie is angry and does not want visitors. However, Allie insists. When Allie tells Jamie that she is married to Cam, Jamie asks if she is the one who loves more. Jamie has a theory that in every marriage, one person loves more than the other does. Allie refuses to believe this, however. Jamie thinks it is Allie because of the way she looks when she speaks of Cam. Jamie confesses that he was also the one who loved more. Later that afternoon when Jamie has his bond hearing, the bond is set at five dollars even though Cam suggested it be fifty thousand. When Cam leaves the courtroom, he finds Allie paying the bond for Jamie. Cam is angry by this and demands to know why. Allie tells Cam she did it for him.



## Part One, Chapter 4 Analysis

As Allie is getting to know Mia better, Cam is arguing with his Uncle Angus over his decision to charge Jamie with murder. Angus thinks Cam is wrong and that he is on the wrong path. Cam disagrees, but immediately goes to the local law office and hires a lawyer to defend Jamie. Cam's motivations in this are unclear at this point in the novel. Cam clearly believes Jamie to be guilty or else he would not have charged him. Hiring a lawyer to defend Jamie seems contradictory to this conviction, but the reader must also remember that Cam is the clan chief and it is his job to look out for all his people, even those who have done wrong.

Mia reveals to Allie that her parents were deeply devoted to each other, so Mia grew up feeling alone. Mia has traveled since she became an adult, moving from place to place, as if she is looking for somewhere that she belongs. Mia's history gives the reader more insight into her personality and her motivations, giving a reason why Mia might be attracted to Cam. To Mia, Cam represents solidarity, a stable life, everything she does not have. To Cam, Mia represents freedom, the ability to travel at will, something Cam no longer has. Cam and Mia's impressions of each other explain to the reader while they are attracted to each other.

The reader has wondered since their first meeting if their relationship would cross the lines of respectability. When Cam catches Mia snooping in his bedroom, the question is answered. Cam and Mia share a kiss, jumping over the thin line between attraction and inappropriate behavior. Now, the reader will wonder if this will continue, giving the reader motivation for reading the next few chapters.

Allie meets Jamie. Jamie tells Allie that in every marriage, one partner loves the other more. Allie does not believe this, but Jamie insists it is true, admitting that he loved Maggie more than she loves him. Jamie also suggests that this is the way it is for Allie. The reader has to agree with Jamie's observations based on Cam's attraction to Mia. Allie is put off by Jamie's attitude, but this does not stop her from continuing to believe his actions with Maggie are the height of romance. Allie bails Jamie out of jail. When Allie says she has done this for Cam, the reader is unsure what she means except perhaps to suggest that she too disagrees with his decision to charge Jamie and she is trying to soften public opinion against him. Perhaps this will be made clear later in the novel.



# Part One, Chapter 5

## Part One, Chapter 5 Summary

Cam goes to church to say a rosary in order to receive forgiveness for kissing Mia. However, halfway through the rosary, Cam realizes that he does not regret what he has done and that he would do it again if given the opportunity. The same day, Mia checks into the Wheelock Inn to avoid having to stay overnight at Allie's again. Mia cannot stop thinking about Cam. Mia takes out a piece of stationary and writes a short note to him. Mia then burns the note, knowing she could never really send it.

Allie goes to Angus's house, where Jamie is staying, in order to pick up Jamie. Allie has insisted that Jamie go with her to a book reading at the local library. Allie does not think Jamie should hide out until his trial. However, when they arrive at the library people stare and whisper behind Jamie's back. One person even has the nerve to tell him he should not be there. Jamie wants to leave, but Allie refuses to allow him to. Jamie is glad to have stayed when during the lecture he has an epiphany that explains why he was able to kill Maggie. Jamie was able to kill her, because he did not want to watch her deteriorate, to watch her die. Jamie begins to hate himself for this truth.

Graham is having trouble picking a defense for Jamie's case. Graham thinks he could go on a euthanasia defense, but it is so new that it would require a change in state laws and Graham does not want to attempt this. Instead, Graham decides that temporary insanity has a better track record and would more likely be the defense that will get Jamie off. However, this defense has its own difficulties. Graham cannot decide and he knows he must decide soon in order to save his client.

Cam decides to take his wife fishing in order to push Mia from his mind. Cam thinks if he spends the day with Allie it will help him to remember why he married her and end his obsession with Mia. Cam teaches Allie how to fly fish in their backyard before they take a boat out into the middle of the lake. They begin to fish, but Cam still cannot stop thinking of Mia. When Allie catches a fish, Cam helps bring it out of the water. Allie leans over to touch the fish and the sudden change in balance causes the boat to turn over. Allie comes up under the boat and hears Cam laughing at her.

Allie decides to remain hidden to give Cam a scare as punishment. When Cam realizes that Allie has not come up, he begins frantically searching the water. Allie listens for a minute before she comes out from under the boat. Cam is so relieved to see her that he holds her tight and stares into her face as if to memorize her features. Allie remembers what Jamie told her and begins to wonder if perhaps he was not right about the inequality of love in a marriage.



## Part One, Chapter 5 Analysis

Cam shows regret in having kissed Mia, but he cannot force himself to deny that given the chance again he would not want to kiss Mia again. Cam decides to spend the day with Allie, hoping it will cause the obsession over Mia to leave his mind. Instead, Cam finds himself thinking about Mia all day until Allie causes the boat to tip over and he cannot find her. Suddenly the reader sees Cam's deep devotion to his wife. The reader gets the idea that Cam would be devastated by Allie's death. Perhaps not as devastated as Allie would be to lose him, but devastated enough to prove there is some love between Cam and Allie. The reader must wonder, however, will it be enough to keep Cam from having an affair with Mia.

Graham is having trouble deciding what defense to use at Jamie's trial. Euthanasia would be the most obvious, but there is no precedence for this defense and Jamie's trial would almost have to result in the changing of state law. Graham also considers a temporary insanity plea, but this too has its pitfalls. At the same time, Jamie is at a lecture and finally finds some clarity in his actions. Jamie thought he killed his wife simply, because she asked and he would have done anything she asked of him. Now Jamie knows that he was able to kill her, because he did not want to watch her die. Jamie wanted to remember always the woman he married, the vibrant woman she was before becoming sick. This knowledge makes Jamie feel guilty and he begins to hate himself for this insight.





# Part One, Chapter 6

## Part One, Chapter 6 Summary

Jamie and Allie have a meeting with Graham. Jamie is despondent, because he has not felt Maggie since his arrest. Allie assures him he will soon. When Graham arrives, he begins to go over their defense strategy with them. Graham wants to gather character witnesses for Jamie. Allie volunteers to go to his hometown of Cummington and speak to his neighbors and friends. Jamie questions her ability to leave Cam that long, but Allie assures him she has no problem leaving Cam for a few days.

Ellen McDonald, Cam's mother, has embraced New Age ideas ever since her husband died eight years before. No one in town understands this behavior except for Allie who seems to be the only person who sees how happy these beliefs have made Ellen. Ellen does not believe in these things, because she thinks her husband's spirit is still hanging around, but believes, because a well-timed pamphlet helped bring her out of the grief that ruled her life in the days after Ian's death. Allie often provides herbs and unique flowers for Ellen to make potions that cure one ailment or another. On one particular day, they are making a concoction that is supposed to heal burns. They finish, but they have no burns to test it on. Ellen burns herself simply by thinking of her husband. The potion soothes the burn, but does little to soothe the heartache that caused it.

Maggie McDonald is buried in the McDonald plot at the Wheelock cemetery despite Cam's objections. At the graveside, Jamie becomes inconsolable, falling to his knees during the service. Jamie begs Allie to take him away before the service is over, but before leaving, he goes to the coffin and whispers, 'mo chridhe'. Afterward Mia goes to Cam and asks what the words mean. Cam does not tell her, but he knows it means, 'my heart.'

Angus wakes in the from a dream in which he once again saw Cameron McDonald as he was when he fought against the English with Bonnie Prince Charlie's army. Angus goes to check on Jamie and finds he too is struggling with a bad dream. Angus climbs onto the bed and wraps Jamie in his arms in order to calm his anxiety. Across town, Allie is concerned that she and Cam do not speak often enough or spend enough time together. Allie tells Cam they should talk more, but finds they have little to say to each other. Allie is concerned about this, especially since she suspects Cam is angry with her for helping with Jamie's defense, but Cam seems unconcerned.

Cam and Mia run into each other at the local diner. Cam finds out that Mia once worked in a café in Venice about the same time he was there. Cam thinks this is an amazing coincidence and wonders what might have happened if they had come face to face all those years ago, if their lives would have turned out differently. When they separate, Cam goes to his office to imagine this life with Mia while she returns to the Wheelock Inn and writes him a note. Mia knows the note could be the beginning of something, but she cannot stop herself from sending it.



## Part One, Chapter 6 Analysis

Allie decides to help with Jamie's defense by going to his hometown and speaking with his friends and neighbors. Touching on the theme of love, Jamie questions Allie's ability to leave Cam alone, since Jamie thinks Allie is the one in her marriage who loves too much and knows how he would have felt if he had been asked to leave Maggie. Allie assures him she can handle it, however, suggesting she is either trying to prove that she does not love too much or that perhaps she truly does not love him so much that she cannot leave him for a few days. Either way, Allie's decision to go leaves Cam with some time alone in which he could find himself getting into trouble.

Cam's mother is introduced in this chapter. Ellen is into New Age beliefs, using them as a crutch to help her forget her grief over her husband's death. Ellen likes to make potions and Allie often helps, believing if it makes Ellen happy then it is worth it. Ellen burns herself by thinking of her husband in order to try out one of these potions, providing the first of several magical moments in the novel. The situation implies that Ellen's deep love for her husband and terrible grief over his loss is what has physically burned her. This gives Ellen's pain a physical outlet, paralleling Jamie's actions towards Maggie, causing his own deep grief. Later, the reader is invited to Maggie's funeral where Jamie becomes so deeply grief stricken that he falls to his knees. Jamie's reaction is important because, not only does it prove his love for Maggie, but also it shows the depth of his pain at her loss, underscoring the idea that he loved her enough to kill her rather than the idea that he disliked her and this motivated his actions.

Allie is concerned that she and Cam do not talk enough. At the same time, Cam is having conversations with Mia and discovering how their paths crossed several times in the past. It seems Cam and Mia were somehow meant to meet, only they met too late for Cam. Cam is entranced by this idea, convinced Mia is his soul mate. Mia must agree, because she sends Cam a note that suggests she wants more than a friendship. The note leaves the reader anxious to read the next chapter in order to learn Cam's response.



# Part One, Chapter 7

## Part One, Chapter 7 Summary

Cam receives Mia's note at the office. Cam prays that God will intercede and give him a sign that he should not respond. When God does not answer, Cam sends a response to Mia's note, asking for a meeting. At home, Allie is making a fancy meal for Cam and Mia to thank them in advance for picking up her responsibilities while she is out of town. Cam is immediately uncomfortable having Mia in his house with Allie there. However, this does not stop Cam from helping Mia with the dishes, taking advantage of Allie being out of the room to finalize their plans to meet.

Across town, Jamie is remembering the night before Maggie got sick when he took measurements of her to make her an image in one of his virtual reality programs. Jamie owns a company that creates virtual reality programs for their clients and he needed a female model for a program he was creating for an architectural firm. Maggie thought it was silly, but Jamie thought she was perfect for the job. Jamie could not think of any woman more perfect than Maggie.

Mia is at Glory in the Flower, Allie's flower shop, dreaming of Cam. Mia feels guilty and jumps when the phone rings, but this does not stop her from making a bouquet to place under the windshield wiper on Cam's car, assured that he would know what it means. Cam does know what it means, arriving at the flower shop at exactly seven-thirty. Cam and Mia barely speak before they make love on Allie's couch. At the same time, Allie is visiting with Maggie's doctor where she learns that Maggie was in terrible pain and there was no hope for her survival. Afterward Allie goes to Jamie's house where she has been invited to stay the night. Allie snoops through the house, trying to get a feel of the couple who lived there. Allie also tries on Maggie's clothes and wears her perfume.

## Part One, Chapter 7 Analysis

Cam takes the leap and returns Mia's note, asking that they meet. Cam and Mia both know what this means and it causes tension between them that night when they have dinner together at Cam and Allie's house. The tension is thick, but it does not keep Cam from stealing a few moments with Mia and confirming his desire to be alone with her. Allie's trip away could not come at a better time, giving Cam and Mia the opportunity to consummate a relationship the reader has seen building since the first chapter. The next day, when Allie leaves town, despite their nervousness and guilt, Cam and Mia come together for the first time in Allie's flower shop. The irony of the location of their first time together is not lost on the reader. Neither is the betrayal that the reader suspects would kill Allie should she find out. Cam and Mia's actions open the theme of loyalty, showing how each feels about their loyalty to Allie.



At the same time, Allie is investigating Maggie's past in order to help in Jamie's defense. Allie learns that Maggie was indeed in a great deal of pain just as Jamie has said. Allie also learns how someone else saw Maggie and Jamie's relationship when she hears the doctor say that leaving Jamie was one thing that bothered Maggie the most. Allie has romanticized Jamie and Maggie's relationship because of what Jamie did. Now Allie shows the reader how she envies Maggie when she tries on Maggie's clothes. Allie envies Maggie, because she can see how deeply Jamie loved her and she wants to be loved like that. Allie knows that Cam does not love her that deeply and perhaps she is just now coming to realize just how different Cam's love for her is from Jamie's for Maggie and even Allie's for Cam.



# Part One, Chapter 8

## Part One, Chapter 8 Summary

At Jamie's preliminary hearing, Graham announces his intention to use temporary insanity as his defense. Jamie is mildly impressed with Graham's behavior at the hearing and begins to build some trust in his lawyer. At the same time, Jamie meets the prosecutor and dislikes her on sight because of her overbearing manner and her name. The prosecutor's name is Campbell and Campbells have always been enemies of the McDonald clan.

Mia is in Allie's flower shop fantasizing about Cam when Ellen walks in unannounced. Mia is embarrassed and afraid of being caught, especially when Cam shows up with lunch for two. Ellen sees the tension between Mia and Cam, so she invites herself to lunch. Later, Cam and Mia spend their third night together in the shop. While they are talking, trying to get to know each other a little better, Cam asks Mia what her darkest secret is. Mia confesses that she loves Cam. Cam is shocked by this response since this is a phrase he expects from Allie, not Mia. However, this shock does not stop Cam from sharing the same sentiment with Mia.

Allie wanders into the spare room of Jamie's house and finds his home office, complete with a virtual reality computer station. Allie does not know what it is, but thinks she ought to shut it down to save electricity. However, when Allie tries to shut it down, she activates the system. Curious, Allie does as the program asks and puts on the virtual reality glove and helmet. Allie finds herself inside a program in which Maggie is one of the images she can use to move around. Allie does this and finds herself fascinated to be in Maggie's skin.

The following morning, Cam is at the coffee shop having breakfast when he realizes that Jamie is sitting beside him. Jamie attempts to make polite conversation, but Cam wants nothing to do with Jamie. However, when a religious zealot comes in and attempts to kill Jamie for his crimes, Cam finds himself forced to save Jamie's life. That night, while in the flower shop waiting for Mia to return with dinner, Cam is reading the paper to entertain himself and finds an article about a soldier who beheaded his wife's lover after finding out about their affair. This causes Cam to think about his role as clan chief and to reevaluate his decisions with Mia. When Mia returns, Cam announces that he cannot continue the affair and he walks out.

Allie speaks with Jamie's neighbors in Cummington, a nice retired couple who run a little country store out of their house. The couple is so nice that Allie cannot make herself tell them the truth about Jamie's predicament. Instead, Allie says she is a distant relative who has come on a surprise visit and found Jamie and Maggie were not home. The couple tell Allie how in love Maggie and Jamie were by relating a story in which Maggie stopped breathing due to some medication and Jamie had walked her to the ambulance stark naked, unaware of his lack of clothing due to his concern for his wife.



On Sunday, Cam tries to go to church for the first time in quite a while. However, when he arrives at the church and sees Mia on the steps, Cam cannot make himself go inside. Cam runs away. Later, Mia sits in her room at the Wheelock Inn and thinks about Cam. Mia knows she is in love with Cam, but also knows he cannot be hers. Mia decides to leave town without leaving a forwarding address.

## Part One, Chapter 8 Analysis

Jamie's lawyer announces his intention of defending Jamie with the insanity plea. Jamie is impressed with Graham's show in court and begins to trust him. At the same time, Cam's dislike of Jamie has grown. Cam does not like what Jamie represents and is angry every time he even thinks about Jamie. When Cam is forced to protect Jamie from a murderous religious zealot, he resents Jamie even more. Cam's feelings, exploring the theme of love, appear to stem from his knowledge that Jamie loved Maggie more than Cam loved Allie and is allowed to love Mia. Perhaps Cam is jealous of Jamie's ability to love so deeply.

Allie, who established her envy of Maggie in a previous chapter, finds a way to actually step into Maggie's body. Later, Allie visits with a neighbor and learns again how deeply Jamie loved his wife in the story of how Jamie walked naked to an ambulance in order to never leave his wife's side. This further allows Allie to romanticize the relationship between these two and helps her envy of Maggie grow.

At the same time, Cam has realized that his relationship with Mia is wrong. Cam wants to be with Mia, but her saying to him that she loves him has changed things, made the relationship less exciting, less temporary. That, on top of Cam's fear of discovery due to his role as clan chief, causes him to end the relationship. However, Cam and Mia are both clearly heartbroken over the broken affair as shown by Cam's inability to attend church knowing Mia is there and Mia's decision to leave town. Thanks to Ellen, the reader learns in this chapter that discovery is not only possible, but also inevitable as exemplified by Ellen's instinctual need to stay for lunch at the flower shop when she sees Cam and Mia together. It is lucky Cam has ended the affair. However, the reader should wonder if this is really the end or simply a hiatus.



## Part Two, Chapter 9

### Part Two, Chapter 9 Summary

Allie visits Pauline Cioffi, Maggie's best friend. Pauline tells Allie that she knew Maggie wanted to die. Not only this, but Pauline admits that Maggie told her she intended to ask Jamie to kill her. Allie is excited by this news, because it can only help when they go to trial. In Wheelock, Cam goes for a drive in his car to clear his head and try to focus on Allie. Cam pulls his car to the side of the road and thinks about a time when Cam took Allie on a picnic near this area. Allie became upset that she had forgotten a blanket. In the process of consoling her, Cam begins to make love to Allie for the first time. Afterward, Cam realized it had been Allie's first time with a man. Cam became angry that she had not told him, because her first time should have been special, but Allie assured him that she did not mind as long as it was with him.

Full of guilt, Cam continues his drive until he comes to a neighboring town. Cam stops at one of the many tourist shops to buy Allie a gift. Cam does not see anything appropriate in the shop until the owner takes him out back and shows him a stain glass panel that features three daffodils on a blue background. Cam thinks it is perfect and buys it. The next day, Cam brings the panel with him to work, because he is expecting Allie home and does not want her to find it without him. While sitting at his desk, Cam goes through the mail and finds a note from Mia. The note tells him she has left town. Cam races to Mia's room at the Wheelock Inn and finds it empty. Defeated and rejected, Cam returns to his office to find Allie looking at the stain glass panel.

### Part Two, Chapter 9 Analysis

Allie learns that Maggie told her best friend she intended to ask Jamie to kill her. Maggie's statement confirms what Jamie has been saying all along and gives Graham a witness he can put on the stand. Allie is happy with this revelation and the reader can see how this witness can be a great help to Jamie later in the novel when he is put on trial.

Cam goes for a drive to refocus on Allie. Cam thinks about the first time he made love to Allie and how he discovered she had been a virgin. Their first time together had been traumatic to Allie and made Cam feel guilty for not paying more attention to her. The story is a metaphor to Cam and Allie's relationship now. Cam did not pay enough attention to Allie to realize that she was in pain. Cam still does not pay enough attention to Allie to see that she is growing as a person and pulling away from him, while she still loves him more than he will ever love her. Perhaps if Cam were aware of the changes in Allie he might not be so obsessed with Mia.

Cam buys Allie a stain glass panel. The reader might recall that this panel was mentioned in the prologue. Now the reader knows who the woman in the prologue was



and might suspect why she is so angry with her husband that she sells all of his things in a yard sale. Later Cam waits at work for Allie to come home and learns instead that Mia has left town. Cam is devastated by Mia's disappearance. However, Allie is back and Cam must pretend that her disappearance does not mean anything to him.



## Part Two, Chapter 10

### Part Two, Chapter 10 Summary

Cam goes to a private detective who has worked for the Wheelock police department several times in the past. As Cam describes his desire to find Mia to the detective, the man lets slip that he twice worked for Cam's father in personal matters in the past. The detective tells Cam that his father hired him to track Cam's movements when he was traveling through the world. Then the detective tells Cam that his father once hired him to find his mother. Angry, Cam goes to his mother and demands to know why his father had his movements traced. Ellen tells Cam that it was her idea, because she was worried. Cam then asks why she once ran away. Ellen tells Cam that before she and Ian were married, she became pregnant. Ashamed and unwilling to force Ian into a marriage he might not want, Ellen ran away. Ian found her through the detective and made her marry him. Then he refused to speak to her for a week.

Jamie is at Graham's office. A package has arrived for Jamie and they open it together. Inside is a Bible that the sender hopes will help Jamie ask for forgiveness for his sins. Jamie thinks about the night Maggie asked him to kill her. Jamie woke in the night and found Maggie missing. When he went looking for her, Jamie found Maggie hooked up to his virtual reality program in which he used her for a model. Maggie walks through the program looking for a mirror so that she can see what her body looked like before the cancer. Maggie finds it and stares at herself for a moment. Jamie came up behind her and closes her robe before holding her in his arms.

### Part Two, Chapter 10 Analysis

Cam goes to a private detective to find Mia and ends up learning some secrets about his parents. First, he learns that his father had his movements traced when he was traveling the world. Cam resents this, because it is like learning he has never truly been alone even when he thought he was free. Cam also learns that his mother was pregnant before she married his father. Ellen's story is another about love and how one person attempted to sacrifice for the benefit of her partner. Perhaps this is meant to be a lesson for Cam, but his determination to find Mia suggests that he misses the point.

Jamie thinks about the night Maggie asked him to kill her. Maggie revealed her deep unhappiness with her body and her disease by trying to see herself as she once was in his virtual reality program. Jamie felt bad for her and tried to soothe her emotions by holding her in his arms. The reader might also wonder if this episode is not part of what caused Jamie to decide to help Maggie die.



# Part Two, Chapter 11

## Part Two, Chapter 11 Summary

Audra Campbell takes Jamie's case to the grand jury. Jamie knows the grand jury will return an indictment and is convinced he will go to jail. Angus tries to soothe his fears by telling him about his wife and assuring him that the only thing that matters is that she died how she wanted to die. Across town, Audra interviews the coroner, who almost ruins her case when he attempts to soften the evidence in Jamie's favor. The coroner nearly forgets to tell the jury about the skin under Maggie's nails and focuses a great deal of his testimony on her cancer scars. Audra puts several deputies and Cam on the stand as well. Each testifies to exactly what happened the day Jamie confessed to murdering his wife. At the end of the testimony, the jury returns an indictment against Jamie.

The private detective Cam hired has found Mia in a nearby town. Cam goes to her new apartment and waits for her to return home from work. Mia is not as thrilled to see Cam as he had hoped, but his feelings for her have not changed. Cam asks her to come back to Wheelock. Mia says no good will come of her return, but she does not say no. Cam goes home afterwards in a terrible mood, taking it out on Allie. In typical Allie style, she refuses to rise to his bait and begin a fight, despite the fact that Cam desperately wants her to fight with him. Cam is still in a bad mood a few days later when he drops Allie off at a church to set up flowers for a wedding. Allie has several garlands she needs to drape on the pews to indicate the family's reserved seating, but little time to do it. As if she heard her prayer for help, Mia walks into the church.

## Part Two, Chapter 11 Analysis

Audra Campbell takes Jamie's case to the next step, placing the evidence in front of the jury. With the exception of the coroner's forgetful testimony, the evidence is laid out in black and white terms. Audra leads Cam and his deputies through the testimony and makes it appear as if Jamie killed his wife for no particular reason except malice. This testimony ends in an indictment, which is no surprise to Jamie. Jamie is expecting this result. The indictment means a trial, showing the reader where the next few chapters will take the plot development.

Cam finds Mia and begs her to return. When Mia does not give him a clear answer, Cam returns home and tries to pick a fight with Allie. Cam feels as if a fight with Allie will help alleviate some of his guilt. However, Allie refuses to take the bait. Allie has spent her entire married life trying to make Cam happy. Allie, therefore, has trained herself to be patient and to put Cam's feelings first. Due to this habit, Allie does not become angry at Cam when he is short with her, instead she does all she can to soothe his feelings. This behavior serves only to irritate Cam more. Then, when neither Cam nor Allie

expects it, Mia returns to Wheelock. The reader sees this return and begins to think that perhaps Cam's guilt is not bad enough to keep the relationship from continuing.



## Part Two, Chapter 12

### Part Two, Chapter 12 Summary

Cam returns to the church to give Allie a ride back to the flower shop and finds Mia there. Cam cannot speak to Mia as he wishes because of Allie, but when they arrive at the shop, Cam steals a few moments alone with Mia while Allie carries supplies into the store. Cam even steals a kiss, unafraid that someone might see them or that Allie might return and catch them. Mia is visibly rattled when Allie returns and pretends it is remorse for having spilled Allie's supply case. In the weeks that follow, Mia refuses to see Cam. One afternoon Cam corners her in the flower shop and demands to know why. Mia denies she is avoiding him and agrees to a walk when Cam assures her that their relationship could continue on a friend's only basis.

The trial date for Jamie's case is set. A flurry of motions begins to pass between the two sides, including Graham's official notice of the insanity defense. Audra also presents a motion asking that the word mercy or mercy killing not be allowed in the courtroom. The judge agrees, much to Graham's chagrin. Graham is becoming nervous about the case, uncertain he can provide a proper defense since he is an untried lawyer. Jamie is having a difficult time with the trial preparation. Jamie knows he will most likely go to jail and accepts that fact. However, Jamie feels as though Maggie has abandoned him and his grief is shrouding him in a cloud of depression.

Cam has to work on Thanksgiving despite the fact that Allie has invited his entire family to dinner. Cam drives through town with little enthusiasm, thinking of Mia. When he gets a call of a robbery in progress, Cam arrives at the convenience store with no thought to his own safety. Cam can see two men holding the clerk at gunpoint. Cam goes in and is nearly relieved of his weapon when he misjudges the robbers' firepower. However, one of the robbers slips in some milk and gives Cam the time he needs to take out the other man before taking both men into custody. When the whole event is over, Cam is shaken and needs comfort. Instead of going home, Cam goes to Mia who welcomes him warmly.

### Part Two, Chapter 12 Analysis

Mia has returned and, from the moment Cam sees her, it is clear to the reader that he wants to continue the affair. Cam kisses her in his car, in the middle of town, with Allie only a few feet away. This risky maneuver leaves him open to being caught. Cam does not seem to care. In fact, it seems as though Cam might like to be caught. However, Mia is not ready to be caught and refuses to see Cam for the first few weeks she is back in town. This upsets Cam deeply. When Cam is in a dangerous situation in regards to his job, his first thought is not to go home and draw comfort from his wife and family, but to go to Mia. This time Mia welcomes him back into her arms. The reader now knows that



the plot development will include the growth of this relationship, leaving in question the health of Cam's relationship with Allie.

Jamie has been indicted and seems to have accepted his fate. However, Jamie is looking for a sign that Maggie is still with him and still loves him, but has failed to see any indication that this is true. Jamie is no longer as angry as he was at the beginning of the novel, but is now beginning to fall into a grief driven despair. Jamie's depression and his acceptance of his fate make his future look bleak. However, the trial is yet to begin so the reader must realize there is still hope he will walk away from the criminal charges. Graham is not as confident, however. Graham is concerned about his choice of defense. Graham's job has been made more difficult by the judge's decision to keep the word mercy out of the courtroom. Success is no longer a given fact, adding suspense to the story.



# Part Two, Chapter 13

## Part Two, Chapter 13 Summary

Graham wants Cam's help in his defense, because Cam is the strongest witness the prosecution has. However, Cam is unwilling to help. Graham decides to enlist Allie's help, hoping she can keep Graham informed as to Cam's frame of mind regarding Jamie. Cam does not like the idea of Allie helping Jamie in any way. However, when Allie tells Cam she will be making several day trips to Cummington, he is thrilled. This means Cam will be able to spend more time with Mia. Cam has restricted his time with Mia to Wednesday nights when Allie thinks he is working a late shift, but now he will have much more time.

Graham goes around interviewing all of the prosecutions key witnesses. The coroner is one. In this interview, Graham learns that Maggie died with a peaceful look on her face, contrary to how most murder victims appear. The coroner also says that Jamie was the most grief stricken widow he had ever seen at a funeral. Graham speaks with the Spitlicks, Jamie's neighbors, and learns that Maggie told the gentleman that she would not want to die a lingering death. Graham also speaks to Pauline Cioffi and Maggie's doctor, who both tell him the same things they told Allie. The doctor adds that Maggie and Jamie insisted on a second opinion when he informed them that death would be inevitable. The doctor also says that Maggie came to see him just days before her death and at that appointment they once again spoke about her bleak future, including the fact that her cancer would continue to spread and might appear almost anywhere at any time.

Angus arranges to get a photograph from Carrymuir that depicts Cam and Jamie playing together as children. Allie shows the picture to Cam and tells him that she intends to give it to Jamie for Christmas. Cam becomes angry and orders Allie not to give it to Jamie. When Allie argues with him, Cam tears the picture into small pieces. Allie is so angry that she goes to Ellen's house to calm down. Eventually Allie returns home where she apologizes and agrees not to give the photo to Jamie. Cam again argues with her and insists she goes ahead and gives the photo to Jamie, causing a stalemate between them.

While Graham and Allie are in Cummington, Jamie visits a court appointed psychiatrist. Jamie is aware that the psychiatrist is not interested in what he has to say and has already made up his mind about Jamie's mental status, so when he becomes enraged by the process he simply leaves the room. Cam and Mia are also taking advantage of Allie being out of town. Mia has moved in with Cam in the home he shares with Allie, spending the nights in Allie's bed and the mornings making Cam's breakfast. One morning they are trying to make waffles when Cam decides he must have Mia right there. Unfortunately, Ellen chose that moment to walk through the door, intending to leave Cam a casserole since everyone knows Cam does not cook. Ellen does not comment on what she sees, but simply walks away.



Graham decides it is time that he hears the complete truth from Jamie. Graham takes Jamie into the hills and instructs him to confess everything regarding Maggie's death. Jamie tells Graham how Maggie asked him to kill her back in January and how he blew it off. Then Maggie asked again that Friday after her doctor's appointment. Jamie argued with her, suggesting she find a way to do it herself, but Maggie insisted she needed to feel his hands on her when she died. Finally, Jamie agreed after making Maggie promise they would spend the entire weekend together first. Jamie and Maggie had a picnic on their roof, went to a movie, crashed a wedding, and went for a long walk in the woods. Finally, they went to Wheelock and checked into the Inn, spending the night talking about their plans and making love for the final time. The next morning, Jamie held the pillow over her face, whispering words of love to her even as she struggled.

## Part Two, Chapter 13 Analysis

Graham enlists Allie to help in his preparation for the trial, hoping to use her primarily to get a feel of Cam's state of mind. Allie agrees, excited to be able to do something to help Jamie. Allie's choice to spy on Cam, however, shows that Allie's loyalty, a theme to the novel, has been compromised somewhat, just as Cam's to her has. Allie's betrayal is much smaller than Cam's, but it does not change that Allie has chosen to betray her husband in a small way, suggesting that her need to cater to Cam in order to keep his love has changed.

Cam has been seeing Mia on a regular basis and is excited at the idea that Allie will be out of town on several occasions so that Cam and Mia can spend even more time together. This relationship should appear to make Cam happy, but when Cam is with Allie, he appears to be tense. Allie and Cam have an argument when Allie shows him a photograph she intends to give to Jamie as a gift. Cam blows up at Allie, tearing the photograph. The reader is curious if Cam's anger is about Jamie and his dislike at being constantly reminded of Jamie's situation, or if his anger is really with himself because of the guilt, he feels at betraying Allie. It seems that Jamie's circumstances only deepen Cam's guilt, perhaps reminding him that he has failed Allie by not loving her enough to do what Jamie has done for Maggie.

Graham interviews several of the potential witnesses in the trial. One is the coroner who tells Graham that Maggie appeared to have died peacefully as opposed to terrified like many other murder victims. Maggie's doctor, another of Graham's witnesses, tells him that Maggie visited his office just a few days before she died, suggesting that the doctor's grim prediction of her future spurred Maggie to want to die. Finally, Graham speaks to Maggie's best friend who reiterates her conviction that Maggie wanted to die and she wanted Jamie to do it. The neighbor also adds to Pauline's testimony by relating a time when Maggie expressed an aversion to the idea of dying a slow death. All of this testimony seems beneficial to Jamie's defense and gives the reader some optimism for Jamie's fate.



Jamie visits a psychiatrist but the session does not go well, because Jamie becomes angry when the doctor appears to have preconceived ideas about Jamie's level of sanity. Jamie's attitude toward the doctor could cause him difficulties at trial if the psychiatrist says that Jamie was uncooperative or otherwise suggests that Jamie has a temper. Cam, across town, is caught in an intimate position with Mia. Cam has tempted fate several times before, once in front of Ellen, so it is no surprise to the reader that he has finally been caught. All that remains now is for the reader to wonder how this will influence Cam and Mia's relationship and if it will lead to Allie learning the truth.

Finally, Jamie finally tells Graham and the reader the events leading up to Maggie's death. Jamie and Maggie spent a romantic weekend together, doing things they had never done before, like crashing a wedding. They then went to the Wheelock Inn to spend their final hours together before Jamie killed Maggie. It is a romantic notion, but the reader is aware of the cynicism of juries and must wonder if this story will have the impact on the jury that it has on the reader who has developed a connection with Jamie.





## Part Two, Chapter 14

### Part Two, Chapter 14 Summary

Ellen is upset about Cam's behavior, but promises that she will not tell Allie or make judgments. In fact, Ellen gets Cam a Christmas present that is meant to bring happiness to a new relationship. However, Ellen refuses to spend Christmas with her son and Allie. Mia is not as happy about the situation, however. The moment Ellen left, Mia packed her things and went back to the Wheelock Inn, leaving behind several articles of clothing in her rush. When Cam finds these things, he hides them in his underwear drawer.

Graham hires a psychiatrist for the defense who is known for his pro-euthanasia sentiments, hoping he will be able to support the temporary insanity defense. The doctor is not happy that Graham is not using euthanasia as a defense, but agrees to help. After only one session, the doctor suggests that Graham use Jamie's unusual depth of love for Maggie and her power over him as part of the defense.

A few days after Christmas, Allie presents Mia with a gift of a scarf with the McDonald tartan on it. Mia finds herself jealous of Allie and her relationship with Cam. Mia wants to be the one who can buy Cam presents that he can proudly show off, but she cannot. Mia has a difficult time finding something she can give him that will not cause questions from Allie. Finally, Mia settles on a paperweight globe. Cam does not have such qualms. Cam presents Mia with a trip to New Hampshire for an entire weekend at a bed and breakfast. Cam has already told Allie that he is going to a police conference.

Graham goes out on a blind date his mother has set up for him. Graham is unhappy with the date, but finds that he can use it as a sounding board for his defense for Jamie. Later, Graham and Allie visit a sociology professor who is going to help them pick their jury. For the next few days, Allie and the professor's assistance will call registered voters in the area to get a feel of the type of people who will be sympathetic to Jamie's case. Graham finds other ways to research potential jurors though, driving around town to their homes and taking note of the decorations in their yards. A few days later on New Year's Eve, Allie is home alone and becomes drunk. Allie stages a seduction for Cam, but when he is late returning home from work, Allie begins to reorganize his drawers. Allie finds Mia's clothes, but decides Mia must have left them when she stayed at their home months before and she washed them, putting them in Cam's drawer by mistake.

### Part Two, Chapter 14 Analysis

Ellen is unhappy with Cam's behavior, but she does nothing to cause him discovery. On the contrary, Ellen gives Cam a gift for his new relationship. Ellen's behavior shows the reader that her loyalty, a theme of the novel, lies with Cam rather than Allie despite their friendship. Cam, on the other hand, is clearly not put off by Ellen's discovery. In fact,



Cam plans a weekend away with Mia that suggests that he is taking their relationship to a new level.

Graham is trying to plan his defense as best as he can. Graham enlists the help of a psychiatrist who is a proponent of the euthanasia movement. The psychiatrist is not happy that Graham is not challenging the laws regarding euthanasia, but he agrees to help and even gives Graham some ideas on how to proceed with his defense. Graham then gets help from a local sociologist to pick the jury. The sociologist polls locals who could be part of the jury about their beliefs in order to make a list of the types of people who would be more sympathetic to Jamie's side. Graham uses his own way of making this determination, leaving the reader wondering which will work better.

Allie becomes drunk on New Year's Eve while Cam is working. Allie sets up a seduction but becomes bored while waiting for Cam. Allie begins to organize his drawers, finding Mia's clothing. However, Allie does not think anything of it, assuming she put the clothes there herself. Allie's mistake gets Cam off the hook one more time and leaves the reader wondering if Allie will ever find out about Cam and Mia.



## Part Two, Chapter 15

### Part Two, Chapter 15 Summary

Every year, Allie and Cam celebrate Valentine's Day early, because Allie's flower shop is swamped that time of year. Every year Cam forgets and does not get Allie a gift until later in the day. Once again, Cam forgets, only to be reminded when Allie gives him his gift first thing in the morning. Cam plans to get her a box of candy and a nice card, but he becomes so busy at the station that he has little time to shop before he is supposed to meet Mia for their trip to New Hampshire. Cam rushes into the card store and buys the first card he sees, unaware that it is a card for a father. Allie is disappointed by this, trying to see the humor in the mistake, but finding it difficult. Cam does not feel bad about his mistake, because he is too occupied over his worry about being late for Mia. Cam leaves and drives up to the bed and breakfast with Mia, registering them as Mr. and Mrs.

Graham is working in his office on his defense when he thinks he sees Maggie's ghost. Later, Graham receives a report from the psychiatrist he hired telling him that he cannot say that Jamie was insane at the time of the murder. Jury selection starts soon after. The sociologist does not like most of the potential jurors, but Graham uses his own instincts to make his selections. By the end of the day, the jury is chosen and they are ready to proceed to trial. Afterward, Graham warns Jamie for the first time that the trial might not go their way, something Jamie has believed from the very beginning. The next day, Allie takes Jamie to a nearby town to buy a suit. Jamie remembers how he and Maggie once went shopping for clothes together and falls once more into a depression.

In New Hampshire, Mia and Cam are ice-skating. Mia does not like it, however, and finally breaks down and tells Cam that she is not the outdoor type. Cam takes it better than Mia had thought he would. However, back in their room Mia begins to realize that Cam wants a life with her that is opposite to what she wants. Cam talks to her about leaving Allie and traveling with Mia. Mia would rather have what Cam has with Allie, roots and respect. Mia listens to Cam talk and concludes that she must leave him, this time for good.

### Part Two, Chapter 15 Analysis

Cam forgets Valentine's Day with Allie, because their early celebration falls on the day Cam is leaving town with Mia. Allie is not surprised since Cam has forgotten before. However, Allie is upset when Cam gives her a card he obviously did not read first. Allie puts it down to Cam being overworked, but she has more trouble making excuses for Cam this time. The reader might think that maybe this episode might alert Allie that there is something unusual going on in her marriage. Cam does not seem to give it a second thought, however. Cam is too busy checking into a bed and breakfast with Mia to give Allie any thought at all.



Graham thinks he sees Maggie in his office, illustrating some of the more mystical aspect to this novel. Jamie has been waiting for Maggie to appear to him and instead she appears to his lawyer. The reader should wonder what this means for Jamie. Later, Graham picks the jury, choosing to go with his instincts rather than the sociologist's careful analysis. The reader hopes that this proves to work for Graham rather than sealing Jamie's fate.

Cam and Mia are in New Hampshire doing the things that Cam likes to do and Allie does not. However, it turns out that Mia does not like these things either. Cam takes this information well, happy to simply be with Mia. The longer the day goes on, though, Mia begins to realize that she and Cam want two different things from their relationship. Mia wants respect and roots, Cam wants freedom to travel. Cam is willing to leave Allie for Mia, but suddenly she knows that she cannot allow him to do that. Mia decides it is time to end the relationship once and for all, leaving the reader curious if this will end things without Allie having to find out.



## Part Two, Chapter 16

### Part Two, Chapter 16 Summary

At eight on Monday morning, several things happened simultaneously in Wheelock. First, Mia packed her things and checked out of the Wheelock Inn, leaving behind only her prized bonsai tree. Allie began to unpack Cam's luggage and found photographs of him and Mia. Jamie and Graham are preparing for opening remarks at Jamie's trial. Thirty minutes later, Ellen is out for her daily walk and sees Cam going into the Wheelock Inn. Ten minutes after that Cam learns that Mia is gone. There is nothing Cam can do now. He has to be at a legitimate police conference.

Allie goes into town and gets some boxes at the liquor store before returning home. Allie packs all of Cam's things in the boxes and sets them out in the front yard, preparing to sell everything that belongs to her husband. Allie watches as her neighbors pick over Cam's things, feeling no regret or remorse as every thing is sold. When there is nothing left, Allie sits back and waits for Cam to come home.

### Part Two, Chapter 16 Analysis

Just as Allie is discovering the truth about her husband's affair, Mia is packing up to leave town. Finally, what the reader has expected since Cam and Mia's first kiss has happened. Allie is not upset, she does not cry. However, her rage is clear when she gathers everything her husband owns and sells it to her friends and neighbors. Allie's actions are a public humiliation, involving the whole town in what Cam has done to her. This is not the reaction the reader has expected of Allie, despite the prologue that gave the reader a good guess what Allie would do upon discovering her husband's deceit. Allie has always done everything she can to make Cam happy. This is not going to make Cam happy. Perhaps Allie has grown as a character, or perhaps she has simply found the one thing about Cam she cannot ignore and take with blind devotion.

Cam learns about Mia's second disappearance minutes after she left. Cam is not happy about it, as seen when he runs up to her room to make sure she really is gone. All Mia has left is her bonsai tree, telling Cam that she is clearly serious this time. The reader does not know what Cam will do now, however. Cam could search for Mia again, track her down and bring her back. However, Cam does not know that Allie knows. Cam's intention before this morning was to leave Allie. If Cam still wants to do that, now could not be a better time. The reader will have to read on to find out, however.



## Part Three, Chapter 17

### Part Three, Chapter 17 Summary

After Cam returned home, Allie walked away without anything but the receipts from her yard sale. Now Allie is in a bar, trying to get as drunk as possible. When a man comes up and starts to flirt, Allie decides to indulge him. After a time, Allie finds herself in a hotel room with this man, finally crying for everything Cam has ruined. At home, Cam is left alone to inventory everything that he no longer owns. In the bathroom, Cam finds the stain glass panel he bought for Allie and decides to re-hang it, knowing it would be more punishment for him to have it remain in the house.

Jamie's trial opens the next morning. Ellen and Angus leave a space for Allie, but she never shows up. Audra gives her opening statement, outlining all the reasons the jury should convict Jamie of first-degree murder. Graham gives his statement as well, never saying the word mercy, but nevertheless leaving the jury with the impression that what Jamie did for Maggie was mercy. The first witness for the prosecution is the coroner who once again gives the details of the autopsy, including the skin that was found under Maggie's nails. When Graham cross-examines the coroner, who is also the local funeral director, he testifies about Jamie's overwhelming grief at Maggie's funeral. After the trial ends for the day, Cam is at home drinking. Allie comes home without making excuses for where she had been all night. Cam asks if she wants a divorce, and Allie surprises him by saying no.

### Part Three, Chapter 17 Analysis

Allie goes out to a bar and finds herself going back to a hotel with a strange man. Allie thinks that Cam already broke their wedding vows, why should she not do the same thing. However, Allie has never been with anyone but Cam. The emotional impact of this action is so great that it causes her to finally cry the tears that have been building since she discovered Cam's deceit. Allie is devastated by her husband's infidelity. However, when Allie returns home that night, she tells Cam she does not want a divorce. The reader, on the other hand, knows that this is exactly what Cam had intended to ask himself before Mia left. The reader now wonders if Cam will ask anyway and hire a detective to find Mia as he did once before. A little doubt is cast on this theory, however, when Cam re-hangs the stain glass panel thinking it would punish him to keep it there. This punishment, the reader will recall, is because Cam bought the panel out of guilt and because the blue in the background reminded him of Mia's eyes.

The trial opens. Graham and Audra give their opening statements, outlining exactly what each of them thinks the outcome of the trial should be. There are no surprises here, as there are not any surprises in the coroner's testimony. The reader hopes, however, that the coroner's statements will help Jamie because, by this point, the reader

has developed such a concern for Jamie that it would not seem right if he were convicted of murder.



## Part Three, Chapter 18

### Part Three, Chapter 18 Summary

Cam testifies for the prosecution the next morning and gives his account of the events the afternoon of Maggie's death clearly and without compassion. However, Allie is sitting in the courtroom. Cam spends the entire time he is on the stand staring at her with a look of profound sorrow on his face. Jamie recognizes the look and begins to wonder what is happening between Cam and Allie. During a recess, Jamie convinces Allie to tell him what has happened. Allie confesses the whole story, from her discovery of the affair through her night with the stranger from the bar. Jamie listens to her and suddenly gains insight into his own relationship with Maggie. By reacting the way she did to Cam's affair, Allie has changed the dynamics of their relationship. Jamie wonders if he had refused to kill Maggie, if it might not have done the same thing in their relationship.

Cam continues his testimony after the recess. Graham asks him questions about his role as clan chief, pointing out to the jury that Jamie came to Wheelock intentionally to fall under Cam's jurisdiction. After he finishes, Cam walks over to Allie where she is talking to Jamie. Jamie grabs Cam and threatens to hit him for what he has done. Cam suddenly has insight into Jamie, realizing how different the two of them are despite their similarities. Jamie has the same insight into Cam, but is less impressed than he once might have been. At the same time, Allie is having coffee with Ellen. Ellen spills coffee on herself intentionally in order to slip an herb into Allie's coffee while she is distracted that Ellen hopes will help Allie forgive Cam. It seems to help as Allie allows Cam to drive her home.

### Part Three, Chapter 18 Analysis

Cam testifies, doing little to help Jamie's case, until Graham begins to ask him about his honorary title of clan chief. Cam admits that Jamie came to Wheelock because of Cam. However, it is unclear to the reader how this information will help Jamie except to the extent that it reveals a desire for clemency. During the recess, Allie tells Jamie what Cam has done. Jamie listens and suddenly realizes that Allie has changed the dynamics of her marriage. In the beginning, Allie was the one who loved Cam more than he loved her. However, now Cam is in the position to prove his love to Allie, making him the one who loves more. Jamie is amazed by this and wonders if he had stood up to Maggie if that might have also changed the dynamic of their relationship.

Cam later learns that Jamie has found out about his indiscretions and finds himself almost admiring Jamie for his moral base. Jamie has upset Cam from the beginning because of his blind devotion to Maggie, something Cam knew he did not have for Allie. Now Cam has come to appreciate Jamie's devotion to Maggie and to understand what it means to love someone enough to do anything to make them happy. Cam has grown as a character. However, the reader must wonder if it is too late, as does Ellen who sneaks



a potion into Allie's coffee in an effort to change the course of Allie and Cam's relationship.



## Part Three, Chapter 19

### Part Three, Chapter 19 Summary

When the defense begins their case, the first thing Graham does is make a motion to dismiss the case. The motion is denied. Before Graham can continue, however, the judge adjourns the case for the day, because his daughter has broken her leg. At home, Cam brings Allie dozens of flowers from another flower shop, hoping to show her how sorry he is and how much he still loves her. Cam has resigned himself to remaining with Allie and has stopped thinking so much about Mia. However, Allie is not so ready to forget the hurt. Allie refuses to talk to Cam most of the time, but when she does speak to him, she wants to know details about the affair. Cam is honest with her most of the time.

After court, Allie takes Jamie home. Jamie talks to her about his fear that Maggie will never forgive him for killing her and that is why he has not seen her since her death. After she drops him off, Allie goes to her store and burns laurel leaves, believing in the old myth that doing this will bring her lover back to her. Allie also accidentally burns a vine of morning glory which myth suggests that a loved one will die soon. That night, Angus passes away in his sleep.

### Part Three, Chapter 19 Analysis

Graham's motion to have the case against Jamie is denied. Graham takes this defeat in stride. However, Graham is deathly afraid that this will not be the only defeat Jamie will suffer. Before Graham can begin to present his case, the judge adjourns for a personal emergency. This gives the jury overnight to continue to think about Audra's case and hopefully forget some of the bigger details. Jamie, through all the drama of his trial, is more focused on Maggie. Jamie has expected to see Maggie in some way, but has failed to do so. Jamie is afraid this means that Maggie is mad at him for killing her. It is this punishment that Jamie is afraid he cannot live with. Compared to this, jail will be a breeze.

Cam tries to win back Allie's affections with flowers. Cam has decided that Allie is his future, not Mia. Cam is not going to look for Mia, answering one question that has remained in the reader's mind. Cam has finally realized what he had with Allie, and he wants to get it back. Allie is still not receptive to Cam's apologies, however. Allie is still focused on Cam's affair with Mia, asking questions about details she really does not want to know. However, the reader gets the impression that Allie is open to taking Cam back when she burns the laurel vines.



## Part Three, Chapter 20-21

### Part Three, Chapter 20-21 Summary

The next morning, Graham asks for a continuance until after Angus's funeral. The continuance is granted. When Graham is finally able to begin his defense, he calls Bud Spitlick to the stand. Bud tells the jury what he told Allie and Graham before, about how Maggie expressed distaste at the idea of dying a long, lingering death and how Jamie was so concerned about Maggie that he once stood out in his front yard naked rather than have her taken in an ambulance alone. Maggie's doctor is the next defense witness. Again, the doctor tells the jury what he has already told Allie and Graham, mentioning the fact that Maggie's cancer would have spread and it would have shown up in places that could have caused unpleasant side effects. Pauline takes the stand next, talking about how Maggie told her she would ask Jamie to kill her. When Audra asks Pauline if Jamie had the right to take Maggie from her, Pauline says that she fully supports Jamie and his decisions.

When Jamie takes the stand, Graham begins by asking him why he is wearing his shirt inside out. Jamie says that he accidentally put it on that way this morning and he did not fix it, because he was told by Angus that it would cause all his luck to turn around. Jamie then begins to tell his story, talking about how he met Maggie while she was cleaning out a neighborhood pond, simply because no one else was doing it. Jamie also talks about when Maggie broke her ankle, and they found out from the x-rays about her cancer. Jamie details Maggie's medical decline, her request that he speed her death, and their final days together. Finally Jamie talks about how he killed her, how Maggie smiled when he placed the pillow over her face, and how he waited nearly five hours to turn himself into the police, because he was hoping she would still wake up.

Allie allows Cam to take her to lunch during the court recess where they discuss the case. Cam still believes that Jamie broke the law and should go to jail. In response to his belief, Allie brings up Mia, asking if they ever slept in her bed. Cam lies and tells her no. Later that night, Allie dreams about the day she lost her virginity and wishes that Cam had been more sensitive to her that day. The next day, Jamie returns to the stand so Audra can cross-examine him. Audra attempts to put a whole in Jamie's story by asking why he did not stop when Maggie began to struggle. Jamie quietly says that he made a promise that he would not stop once he began and that's what he did.

### Part Three, Chapter 20-21 Analysis

The defense begins with witnesses the reader has seen earlier in the book. Each witness repeats stories that the reader has already read, presenting it to the jury for the first time. The reader reads this testimony and imagines how the jury is taking each story, hoping that they will vote in Jamie's favor but afraid they will not. This testimony builds suspense in the plot, making the reader anxious for Jamie's future. When Jamie



takes the stand, he begins to tell the story of his relationship with Maggie. The story is a romantic one full of all the affection that everyone either wants or imagines they want. The reader cannot help but smile when Jamie describes how he met Maggie or feel his pain when Maggie asked to be killed.

Allie is watching all of this and the romance of it no longer affects her the way it once did. Allie once imagined that Jamie's love for Maggie was the most powerful love that exists. Allie also believed she had that kind of love for Cam. However, Allie has been brought back to the real world and she has begun to see the cracks in Jamie's story. Allie's new insight into Jamie's story shows growth in her character. Allie's behavior toward Cam, allowing him to take her to lunch, suggests to the reader that she is beginning to thaw toward him. However, when Allie asks about Mia again and Cam lies, the reader sees that Allie is still not ready to forgive. The reader also sees in Cam's lie that he knows the truth will only hurt Allie and there is no point in doing that. Cam is showing concern he might not have shown earlier in the story, again proving he has grown.



## Part Three, Chapter 22-23

### Part Three, Chapter 22-23 Summary

Allie allowed Cam to come back to their bed last night, but when Cam wakes, he finds her gone. There was once a time when Allie would not go to the backyard without leaving a note for Cam. Cam misses that Allie. In court, both psychiatrists are called to the stand and they seem to cancel each other out. Graham rests his case. However, it is Friday so closing arguments are put off until Monday. On Sunday, Graham calls Jamie and tells him not to drive himself to the courthouse in case the jury does not rule in their favor. Graham gives his closing argument first, emphasizing all the testimony that spoke of Jamie's deep love for Maggie and Maggie's own statements in regards to her desire to die. Audra does the same, underscoring all the facts of the case that make Maggie's death a murder. Then the judge gives the case to jury.

Graham wants to go for a walk, but there are so many reporters he and Jamie end up hiding upstairs on a floor where the administrative offices are located. Graham leaves Jamie alone to go find some food. Jamie wanders the hallway and finds himself in the copy room. There Jamie sees Maggie, as real as she was the first time he set eyes on her. Jamie finally realizes Maggie was always with him, he just did not allow himself to see her. Downstairs, Allie and Cam are waiting for the jury to come back. Cam starts talking about renewing the lease on Angus's house for Jamie in hopes of distracting Allie. Allie finds the conversation annoying, but is touched that he would attempt to ease her tension.

The jury returns with a verdict after a short time. Everyone files into the courtroom, nervous about the outcome. When the jury reads their decision, they announce that Jamie is not guilty based on temporary insanity. Everyone is happy, especially Jamie. Now life can return to normal. Allie drives Cam home. Cam has a dream where Mia is standing in his driveway and Allie is waiting for him at the front door. Cam closes the door on Mia.

### Part Three, Chapter 22-23 Analysis

Graham and Audra present their closing arguments, emphasizing the main points of their cases. The case goes to the jury. Everyone is anxious, except for Jamie who seems to have accepted his fate. Jamie's main concern is not prison, but Maggie. When Jamie is left alone in the courthouse, however, he finds Maggie in the copy room. Now Jamie knows that she never left him and that she still loves him. Now, no matter what happens, Jamie has been released from his personal prison. A short time later, the jury comes back with a not guilty verdict.

Allie and Cam wait together for the verdict. Cam does a trick Allie once used to use with him, trying to distract her with senseless chatter. Allie finds it annoying, as Cam always



did, but appreciates his concern. Allie and Cam have exchanged roles and this proves that better than anything else does thus far. Cam is trying to make things right. After the verdict is read, Cam has a dream where he turns his back on Mia. This symbolism proves that Cam has chosen Allie. Whether Allie chooses Cam, the reader is left with an idea that she will, but that their marriage will be drastically different from what it was before.



# Characters

## Cameron McDonald

Cameron McDonald is the clan chief of the remaining McDonald clan that settled in Wheelock Massachusetts. Cam is not happy being the clan chief. Cam wanted to be a travel writer, traveling to distant lands and having adventures everywhere he went. However, when Cam's father died unexpectedly he inherited the honorary role of clan chief as well as the real job as chief of police. Cam feels trapped in this town and overwhelmed by the responsibility implied in his honorary title. Cam's prison only feels as though it is growing tighter when he marries Allie. Cam loves Allie, but her blind devotion to him is suffocating and leaves him wishing he could leave everything behind and return to his travels where he had no responsibility to anyone but himself.

Cam cannot leave Wheelock, because it would disgrace his entire family, especially his father's memory. Cam was close to his father and does not want to hurt his memory. However, when a beautiful stranger comes to town, Cam cannot help being drawn to her. Although his loyalty to the town cannot be shaken, Cam's loyalty to Allie seems to mean little to him. Cam begins an affair with this new woman, Mia, drawn to her as much by her beauty as her freedom to travel when and to where she wants. Mia is living the life Cam has always wanted and he needs to be close to her in order to feel as though he could be a part of that life once again.

Cam and Mia have a torrid affair, sneaking moments together whenever they can. At Christmas, Cam arranges for him and Mia to travel to New Hampshire in order to spend an entire weekend together. During this weekend, Cam makes the decision to leave Allie. However, Mia comes to realize that Cam wants her, because he feels stuck in Wheelock, not because he wants to give her what she wants, the solidarity of the small town life. Mia leaves without telling Cam where she is going. Cam discovers Mia's absence the same day Allie learns of the affair. Now Cam has lost both the women in his life. Cam misses Mia, but he decides to fight for Allie. Allie is Cam's reality despite the fantasy that was his relationship with Mia.

## Allie McDonald

Allie is a simple, small town girl. Allie has been in love with Cam since she was in high school, and her marriage to him is a dream come true. Convinced that Cam will some day wake up and realize he made a mistake, Allie spends her every waking minute trying to make Cam happy. Allie anticipates Cam's every need before he even knows what he needs. However, when Jamie comes to town Allie begins to realize what can happen in a relationship that is not equal. Allie sees that Jamie loved Maggie more than she loved him and in this Allie sees herself and Cam.



Allie helps find character witnesses for Jamie's trial and through the process, she learns things about their marriage that hit too close to home. Allie begins to see Cam through new eyes, realizing that he fails to love her the way she loves him. Cam forgets Valentine's Day and does not put effort into his gifts for her. Cam would never make a meal for Allie or do any of the many things she does for him on a daily basis. Cam does not appreciate Allie. Allie slowly begins to see this. When Allie finds out that Cam is having an affair, she becomes deeply enraged, showing emotions she has never shown Cam before. Allie has changed, become more forceful, changing the entire dynamic of her marriage with Cam. When Cam sees this, he changes his behavior as well and the two begin to chart new waters in their marriage.

## Mia Townsend

Mia Townsend is new to Wheelock. Mia moves around a lot, never staying in one place for longer than it takes to make enough money to move on. Mia comes to Wheelock and gets a job in Allie's flower shop by showing her creativity in flower arranging. Allie and Mia hit it off right away and Allie takes Mia under her wing. Allie even invites Mia to spend the night in her house. Allie does not see the way Mia looks at Cam or that Cam is returning the look. Mia falls in love with Cam from the beginning because of his good looks and because of the solid life, he lives in Wheelock. Mia has always lived a migratory life, but Cam has roots and gives Allie a life that is full of love and respect. Mia wants that.

Mia and Cam begin to have an affair despite their guilt over Allie. Mia likes Allie, but she believes that she and Cam are soul mates. Mia tries to end the affair after it begins by leaving Wheelock, but Cam tracks her down and brings her back. Mia cannot stay away from Cam. However, when Cam tells her that he is leaving Allie so that he and Mia can travel the world as he has always wanted to do, Mia begins to realize that the life she wants to have with Cam is not the life he wants. Mia leaves again. This time Cam does not try to find her.

## Ellen McDonald

Ellen McDonald is Cam's mother. After the death of her husband eight years before, Ellen became interested in mystical sciences, including herbal potions and dowsing rods. Cam finds this behavior embarrassing but indulges her, because he loves and respects her. Allie, on the other hand, likes this side of Ellen, because it makes her happy. Allie helps Ellen as often as she can, supplying the herbs and flowers Ellen needs for her various healing potions. Ellen is the only person in town who knows of Cam's affair with Mia before Allie finds out. Ellen does not tell Allie even though they are close friends, because she wants happiness for her son and she does not want to hurt Allie. Ellen tells Cam that if Mia is what makes him happy, then it is what he should do. However, Ellen also warns Cam not to do anything without making sure it is really what he wants. Ellen's knowledge of the affair does little to stop Cam from continuing, however.





## Jamie McDonald

Jamie McDonald is Cam's cousin. Jamie does not live in Wheelock, but a neighboring town. However, when Jamie's wife, Maggie, asks him to kill her because of the pain of her incurable cancer, Jamie takes her to Wheelock in order to commit the act. Jamie believes that going to Wheelock is important, because it is the home of the remaining Wheelock clan and it is where Cam, the clan chief, is the police chief. Jamie takes Maggie to the Wheelock Inn, spends the night with her, and then smothers her with a pillow in the morning. After spending some time mourning his wife, Jamie puts her in his truck and drives to the Wheelock police station.

Jamie tells Cam what he has done to his wife. At first Cam does not arrest Jamie, believing that there is some reasonable explanation for Jamie's confession. However, when Jamie tells his story, Cam feels he has to book Jamie for murder when he notes scratches on Jamie's hands and face. Cam cannot understand why someone would ask to be killed and then struggle during the act. Jamie stands trial where his lawyer, who was hired by Cam, argues temporary insanity rather than argue euthanasia and attempt to change the laws of the state. Jamie wins his case and is set free. However, by this point Jamie has realized that killing his wife was not something he had to do to prove his love for her. Jamie must now spend the rest of his life with the knowledge that he killed the one woman he loved more than his own life.

## Maggie McDonald

Maggie McDonald is Jamie's wife. While ice-skating a year or so before the opening of the novel, Maggie breaks her ankle in a fall. Jamie takes her to the hospital where an x-ray shows evidence of bone cancer. Soon after, Maggie and Jamie learn that Maggie has breast cancer that has spread to her bones. Maggie undergoes treatment for the cancer that includes both surgery and chemotherapy, but the cancer continues to spread. When the cancer spreads to the optic nerve, Maggie becomes depressed and begins to ask Jamie to kill her. At first, Jamie refuses. Then Jamie asks why she does not do it herself. Maggie tells Jamie that she wants to feel his hands on her as she dies. Jamie finally agrees. After spending a weekend together, Jamie and Maggie check into the Wheelock Inn. There they discuss the method of death and then Jamie smothers Maggie with a pillow.

## Angus McDonald

Angus McDonald is Cam's uncle. Angus is the last in the line of men who were left to watch over Carrymuir when the McDonald clan left Scotland. Angus was still living in Carrymuir when Cam went to him to ask him to take the role of clan chief. However, Angus refused the role, saying it was tradition that Cam take it and it belonged to no one else. Cam finally relented, taking his inherited role, under the condition that Angus returns to Wheelock with him. Angus agreed, leaving Carrymuir in the hands of the Scottish Trust. Now Angus is an old man, living out his days as the local dogcatcher.



When Jamie is arrested and charged with murder, Angus begins to have dreams about the first Cameron McDonald. Angus believes these dreams are telling him that Cam has made the wrong choice and it is his place to fix the situation. Angus takes in Jamie, allowing him to live in his house. Angus attends the trial every day and does all he can to help Jamie. However, the dreams appear to have another meaning. Angus wakes one morning to find himself in Cameron's Carrymuir. That night, Angus dies peacefully in his sleep, a week or more before Jamie is acquitted of murder.

## **Graham MacPhee**

Graham MacPhee is Jamie's lawyer. Graham is a young, untested lawyer who has never handled a trial case before. Graham is hired by Cam and sworn to secrecy. Graham works hard on the case, determined to do well not only because of his career, but to prove to Cam and his father that he can handle things. Graham has many choices as to the defense to present, such as temporary insanity and euthanasia, but is getting little input from his client. Jamie believes that he will go to jail no matter what defense he mounts, so he does not care. Graham decides on temporary insanity, because he does not feel that this is the appropriate case to attempt to change the state laws. Graham uses Allie to help him with the case and to keep an eye on Cam, who will be the prosecution's best witness. At trial, Graham puts on a solid case and wins an acquittal.

## **Chief Cameron McDonald**

The first Cameron McDonald, of the 1700s, was a brave man. Cameron knew that Bonnie Prince Charlie's army did not stand a chance against the English. Cameron made a deal with the Prince's command promising to fight with them if they would let his clansmen go home. It was agreed. Cameron thought he would die in battle, but when that did not happen he realized he had to get his clansmen out of their home of Carrymuir before the invading English arrived. From prison, Cameron had each of his people smuggled out of Carrymuir to America, leaving behind one trusted man to watch over their homeland. This strategy created the town of Wheelock and the tradition that has Cam stuck in his role as chief of the McDonald clan.

## **Ian McDonald**

Ian McDonald is Cam's father. Ian was clan chief before Cam. Ian was proud of his heritage and tried to instill that pride in his only son. However, Cam wanted to travel. In order to protect his son, and to keep his wife happy, Ian had Cam traced by a private detective in order to assure his safety in his travels. When Ian died in a car accident, Cam was called to come home to assume his role as chief. Cam was not happy with that decision, but because Cam loves his father and his heritage, he came home. Cam now feels trapped in that life and does not want to remain in Wheelock. It is this

unhappiness that leave Cam susceptible to the charms of Mia, a young woman who comes to town at the same time Jamie arrives.



# Objects/Places

## Bonsai

Bonsai are small trees that can be trained to grow in unusual shapes. Mia specializes in training bonsai and teaches Allie how to do it, as well.

## Glory in the Flower

Glory in the Flower is the name of Allie's flower shop. It is here that Mia seeks a job the first day she is in town and also where her affair with Cam begins.

## Allie and Cam's House

Allie and Cam have a nice house in Wheelock. It is here that Cam and Mia continue their affair and are caught by Cam's mother.

## Police Station

Cam is the chief of police of Wheelock. Cam spends a great deal of his time locked in his office at the police station during the course of the novel, often thinking about his affair with Mia and his unhappiness at being the chief of the Wheelock community. It is here that Jamie comes to turn himself in after killing Maggie.

## Angus's House

Jamie goes to live with Angus when he is released on bail pending his trial. When Angus dies, Cam decides to extend the rental contract on the house so Jamie can live there as long as he wants.

## Pickup Truck

Jamie arrives at the police station in Wheelock in his pickup truck. Jamie has Maggie's dead body sitting in the truck with him when he arrives to make his confession.

## Pictures

Allie finds a group of Polaroid pictures in Cam's suitcase when he returns from a trip to New Hampshire. The pictures are of Cam and Mia, exposing their affair to Allie.



## **Yard Sale**

Allie throws a large yard sale upon learning of Cam's infidelity and sells all of his belongings.

## **Wheelock Inn**

The Wheelock Inn is the scene of Jamie's crime. It is at the Wheelock Inn where Jamie and Maggie spend their final night together and where Jamie takes her life. The Wheelock Inn is also the scene of Cam's crime. It is at the Wheelock Inn where Mia has a room and where she and Cam continue their affair.

## **Pillow**

Jamie smothers Maggie with a pillow.

## **Wheelock, Massachusetts**

Wheelock is a small New England town where the citizens of Carrymuir settled when they came to America.

## **Carrymuir, Scotland**

Carrymuir is a small village in Scotland that was the home of the clan McDonald. Cameron McDonald snuck his clan out of Scotland to save them from the invading English.

# Themes

## Love

Jamie loves Maggie so deeply that he kills her in order to take away her pain. Jamie loves Maggie more than she loved him and confesses to Allie that he believes that all marriages are not fifty-fifty, but sixty-forty or seventy-thirty. Jamie thinks his marriage was normal, that it is normal for one partner to love the other more. However, as Jamie grieves for his wife he begins to see his marriage the way others saw it. Maggie loved Jamie, he does not doubt that, but she never thought about what might happen to him if he helped her to die. This is not the love that Jamie had for her, because Jamie would have thought of Maggie before himself. It is this thought process that caused him to do what he did in the first place. Jamie finally comes to realize that perhaps the best way to show Maggie his deep love for her would have been to insist that she continue to live in order to share what was left of her life with him and to protect him from prosecution. The marriage should not have been seventy-thirty, but fifty-fifty, with Maggie thinking of Jamie as much as he did for her.

Allie loves Cam more than her own life. Allie fell in love with Cam in high school and never believed that he would ever notice her, let alone fall in love with her. When Allie and Cam married, Allie was so convinced that Cam would wake one morning and discover his mistake that she devotes her life to making him happy. However, this causes Cam to feel suffocated and leaves Allie exhausted. Allie meets Jamie and begins to learn his story, seeing in him her own insecurities and doubts about Cam. Slowly, through the process of helping Jamie defend himself from charges of murder, Allie begins to realize that she has lost herself in her eagerness to make Cam happy. Allie begins to stand up for herself, successfully throwing Cam off his feet and forcing him to put more of himself into their relationship in order to save their marriage.

Cam is an unhappy man. Cam has always wanted to travel, but his obligations to his hometown have forced him to remain in Wheelock. Cam married Allie, because she was there and she was appropriate to the role of the wife of the chief of the McDonald clan. When Cam meets Mia, he feels an instant connection with her and feels as if she is the woman he was meant to marry. However, as their relationship goes from platonic to intimate, Cam slowly comes to the realization that what he loves about Mia is that she is living the life he has always wanted to live. Mia can travel wherever she wants, can move freely without the responsibilities of a family and community who rely on her. Mia has what Cam wants. This realization causes Cam to question his motives in having an affair. When Allie learns about the affair, Cam is full of remorse even though hours before Cam had been intent on leaving her. Cam fights for his wife and his town, finally coming to realize that love is the only thing that really matters.



## Loyalty

Cam is forced to come home from his travels abroad to become chief of Wheelock when his father dies. Cam is young and full of an adventurous spirit. Cam wants to be a travel writer, spending his life without roots, moving from place to place. However, Cam is the heir to an honorary title of chief of the McDonald clan of Carrymuir. Cam is expected to take his father's place in this honorary role as well as taking his place as chief of police. Cam does not want this and tries to talk his uncle into taking his place, but the uncle refuses, knowing that no one belongs in that role but Cam. Finally, Cam accepts his role and takes on the responsibility, but spends a great deal of his time fantasizing about the life he had wanted.

Cam is married to Allie, a sweet young woman who runs the local flower shop. Allie is devoted to Cam and does all she can to make him happy. However, Cam is not happy. Cam feels uncomfortable in his life and wants something different. When a new woman comes to town, Cam falls in love with her instantly, acting on these feelings despite his affection for his wife. The affair is exciting despite the guilt that laces their every moment together. Cam has been loyal for so long, that he finally needed an escape from his responsibilities. Cam could not leave his town or his role as chief, so he destroyed the loyalty he had with Allie. Cam decides he wants to be with Mia forever, that he will leave Wheelock and become the travel writer as he had always intended, taking Mia with him. However, Mia becomes frightened at the thought and leaves town the same day Allie learns of the affair. Now Cam has lost both his loves and must decide what it is he really wants. Cam chooses Allie, but discovers that Allie might not want him anymore.

## Euthanasia

When the novel opens, Jamie McDonald comes to the Wheelock police station and confesses to the murder of his wife. Jamie says he smothered her with a pillow, because she was suffering from an incurable cancer. Jamie claims that Maggie wanted to die and begged Jamie to do it. However, when Cam interviews Jamie, he cannot help but notice scratches on Jamie's face and hands. Cam wonders why Maggie would fight Jamie if she had wanted him to kill her. Jamie is arrested and put on trial for the murder of his wife.

Euthanasia is the act of killing someone who is dying and requests to be allowed to die before their disease takes them. Maggie has asked Jamie to kill her even though she is still well enough to take her own life if she should want to. Maggie does not want to take pills or kill herself in a way that would cause her to die alone. Maggie wants Jamie touching her when she dies. Jamie agrees, because he loves Maggie and does not want to see her in pain any longer. Jamie does not think of the consequences until afterward and then resigns himself to the idea of life in prison, because he feels as though life without Maggie is a prison of its own. However, through his grief and the process of the trial, Jamie comes to realize that the prison was his love for Maggie and that he did not have to kill her in order to prove his love. Jamie finally realized that

Maggie needed him to stand up to her, to prove his love by forcing her to continue to live in order to enjoy their final moments together without the violence of euthanasia.





# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. The novel's plot encases three major story lines, requiring the use of several main characters in order to share with the reader an intimacy within each of the story lines. Jamie, Cam, Allie, and Mia are the characters most often used as the point of view characters, sharing the story with the reader through their unique insight. The author allows the reader not only to hear a story through these characters, but to also share their emotions and internal thoughts, making the point of view omniscient. This builds a connection between the reader and the characters that might not be achieved with another point of view.

The point of view in this novel works not only because of the great need to include a large number of characters, but because it allows the growth of intimacy between characters and the reader. This novel's plot is highly emotional and requires closeness between the characters and the reader in order to exact the impact the author intends. If the reader did not care about the characters, then it would not matter how the plot's climax came about. However, because there is that emotional connection between reader and characters, the reader is invested in the climax, keeping the reader not only interested in the book, but also unable to put the book down until the final pages. This intimacy is reached through the point of view, because it allows the reader to see the novel's fictional world through the eyes of each important character, as well as through the eyes of some of the minor characters, making their world and their dilemma matter to the reader in a personal way. Therefore, the third person omniscient point of view is extremely important to this novel.

## Setting

The setting of this novel is the Massachusetts town of Wheelock. Wheelock is a small town that was settled by the clan members of the Scotland village of Carrymuir. A hundred years before the opening of this book, the chief of the McDonald clan smuggled his clan out of Carrymuir in order to protect them from the invading English. The clan chose this small town because of its close resemblance to Carrymuir and named it Wheelock because of the small river, or wee lock, nearby. Wheelock remains close to its Scottish heritage. Many of the residence have the last name of McDonald, and more than a few of them still know many phrases of Gaelic. Wheelock is also a tourist attraction because of its proximity to the Brookshires. Many tourists come to Wheelock in the fall in order to see the vegetation change colors. Overall, Wheelock is a sleepy New England town with a close, small town feel to it.

The setting of the novel is important because of the rich history of the town. Wheelock was created by the survivors of a powerful Scottish clan, creating a small piece of Scotland in New England. This is important to the story, because Cam is the



descendant of the heroic clan chief who smuggled his clan out of Carrymuir. Due to this heritage, Cam is not only the police chief of Wheelock, but he is also the chief of the clan. This honorary title gives Cam more responsibility than an average police chief, placing his every behavior under scrutiny as well as his decisions in regards to the townspeople who come to him for help. This responsibility places a lot of pressure on Cam, motivating him to behave in ways he perhaps not have done had he been allowed to live his life free of responsibilities such as these.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is common English with many slang phrases used within the dialogue. The novel contains a few technical phrases when speaking about Jamie's virtual reality business. The novel also uses a few phrases of Gaelic, an ancient Scottish language that was spoken by the McDonald clan when they lived at Carrymuir. These unique phrases are used to further enhance the authenticity of the subject matter. Overall, the language of the novel is simple English that a reader of any age or education level would find easy to understand.

The way the author uses language in this novel only serves to enhance the overall quality of the story. There are sections of the novel in which one of the characters is writing in a diary of sorts to another character in the book. The language in these writings is full of romantic ideals and fantasy descriptions, used to prove one's love for the other. The love is forbidden and intended to remain unsatisfied, adding to the power of the words written in each sentence. The meaning of the language is often unclear at first, as each sentence has a double meaning, until the end of the novel when the writer and intended audience is made clear. This use of language is exciting and adds to the overall suspense of the novel as the reader waits to learn the fates of each of the main characters.

## Structure

The book is divided into twenty-three chapters with a prologue. The prologue is detail on a chapter that will happen late in the book, giving the reader a peek at the plot waiting to unfold within the chapters. The novel is written in equal amounts of exposition and dialogue, telling its story through intimate thoughts, observations, and conversations. At the beginning of many of the chapters, a handwritten excerpt from a letter or diary talks of a love between two people who must have been deeply in love. However, the author and intended audience are not revealed until the end of the book when certain details in the writing reveal to the reader who these people are.

The plot of the novel revolves around three major stories. The first is that of Jamie and Maggie. Jamie comes into the book as he arrives at the police station in Wheelock to turn himself in for killing his wife, Maggie. Maggie suffered from cancer and asked her husband to kill her. However, due to scratch marks on Jamie's face, Cam decides to arrest him and allow him to be put on trial. At the same time, Cam meets and falls in



love with a strange woman who has just come to town in order to work in his wife's flower shop. Cam and this woman have an affair that ends when Cam's wife learns the truth. Finally, the third story line follows Allie, Cam's wife. Allie is a woman who once thought she loved her husband enough that she could do what Jamie has done for Maggie. However, as Allie watches Jamie go through the ordeal of a trial, she begins to realize that love does not have to be completely one sided, as hers for Cam has been up to this point.



## Quotes

"When she had packed all the artifacts that made up their personal history into liquor store boxes, the house became strictly a feminine place. She stood with her hands on her hips, stoically accepting the absence of old Boston Celtics coasters and the tangle of fishing poles, the old dartboard from a Scots pub, the toolbox and downhill skis, the silky patterned ties which sat in the base of one box like a writhing mass of snakes. Without these things, one tended to notice the bright eyelet curtains, the vase filled with yawning crocuses, a needlepoint pillow."

Prologue, pg. 1

"In the moments before, she laid a hand on his arm. 'No matter what,' she said, giving him a look, 'you cannot stop.'" Part One, Chapter 1, pg. 7

"Allie had trouble convincing herself that the reason they had gotten married years later did not have anything to do with the fact that after college, they were two of the few who had come back to Wheelock. Cam had returned because it was expected of him, Allie because there was nowhere else she really wanted to be." Part One, Chapter 1, pg. 13

"But Jamie McDonald had specifically come to Wheelock, Massachusetts, to kill his wife because he wanted to commit a murder in a place that was under the jurisdiction of the chief of Clan McDonald. He was not expecting special treatment, but he knew he could count on being listened to, understood, judged fairly." Part One, Chapter 2, pg. 36

"Cam thought of the total-immersion technique in which people learned languages by speaking them exclusively, living in the origin country, sleeping with Berlitz tapes murmuring beside their heads. He knew people who had done this successfully and had come to love the language. And with this in mind, he took the next day off from work and asked his wife to go fishing."

Part One, Chapter 5, pg. 90

"The moon sat cross-legged on the windowsill, its white skirt reaching to the plush bedroom carpet. It turned Allie into a creature of light, someone she would not recognize in a mirror; someone who was as sure of her worth as she was of her beauty." Part One, Chapter 7, pg. 127

"Mia felt awful, so she knew she was in love. Her head swam, her shoulders ached, her skin no longer seemed to fit." Part One, Chapter 8, pg. 162

"Why is it that only in the very beginnings of a relationship are you aware of the heat coming from inside a person, of the number of inches you would have to move for your shoulders to brush as if it were an accident?" Part Two, Chapter 12, pg. 213



"Then she straightened imperceptibly, just enough for the muscles and the marrow in her bones to realize she had taken the first step toward separation." Part Two, Chapter 15, pg. 298

"Allie remembered once hearing a song that said the first person you fell in love with stole your heart. The first person you made love with stole your soul. And if these were one and the same, you were damned." Part Three, Chapter 17, pg. 309

"She started up the steps, leaving Cam on the couch holding the words she had tossed him like fluttering, nested birds. He glanced up the dark stairwell, but he could not see his future."  
Part Three, Chapter 17, pg. 322

"Cam turned Allie around to face him. 'So,' he said, and it was a question. But to Allie, the word sounded like a beginning. 'So,' she answered slowly, and she set them free." Part Three, Chapter 23, pg. 400



## Topics for Discussion

Define Mercy. Why is the novel called Mercy? What does this word have to do with the plot? Is it called mercy because another phrase for euthanasia is mercy killing? What about Cam and Allie? What does the word mercy have to do with them?

Discuss Jamie. Why does Jamie kill his wife? Did Jamie love Maggie more than she loved him? How does this impact their relationship? How does Jamie's work as a virtual reality programmer parallel their relationship? What are the similarities between the two? In the end, Jamie realizes he could have proved his love to Maggie better by refusing to kill her. How is this true? How does this parallel Allie's decision to remain married to Cam?

Discuss Cam. Why does Cam feel cheated by his role as chief of the McDonald clan? Why does Cam not resign and return to his travels? What keeps Cam in Wheelock? Do you think Cam loves Allie? If not, why does he remain married to her? Why does Cam fall in love with Mia so easily? Does this love have anything to do with Cam's feelings for Allie? Why does Cam choose to stay with Allie in the end? Does this have more to do with his responsibility to Wheelock than his love for his wife? Do you think Cam stopped loving either Mia or Allie at any point in the novel?

Discuss Allie. Why does Allie spend so much time trying to make Cam happy? Is Allie afraid of losing Cam? Is this why Cam has an affair? If so, how much of the affair is Allie's fault? Why does Allie become such a big supporter of Jamie? What do they have in common? Is Jamie the reason Allie's personality changes at the end of the novel? If so, how? Why does Allie decide to remain married to Cam?

Discuss Mia. How did Mia's parents influence her life? Did their blind love for each other affect the way Mia views love? Do you think Mia loved Cam? Do you think Cam and Mia's relationship could have survived without the excitement of an affair? Why did Mia leave town the second time? Who was she trying to protect, herself, Cam, or Allie?

Define loyalty. How does loyalty relate to the novel? Was Jamie's act about loyalty or love? Would it have meant Jamie loved Maggie less or more if he had refused to kill her? What about Cam? What about his life is a definition of loyalty? Why was Cam loyal to Wheelock but not to Allie? Did one have anything to do with the other?

Discuss euthanasia. Do you think it should be legal to kill someone if they ask you to do it? Do you think Maggie's request of Jamie was self sacrificing or selfish? Should Maggie have found another way to take her life? Should Maggie have continued to live with the pain of cancer? Who has the right to say when a person should die?