

The Nice and the Good Study Guide

The Nice and the Good by Iris Murdoch

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Plot Summary

Opening with a suicide at a government office, *The Nice and the Good* plunges the reader into a novel that explores the many aspects of love including obsession, disinterest and the secrets that individuals keep from one another. The novel revolves around the entanglements, secrets and relationships of one extended household. John Ducane, who has been given the task of investigating Radeechy's suicide, is involved with two women. One is a young woman named Jessica, who is obsessed with him and manipulates him to continue their relationship. The second woman, Kate Gray, is the wife of his co-worker, Octavian, and they have embarked on a platonic relationship within the view of her husband and family. As the novel progresses, Ducane's anxiety over the investigation, guilt over his relationship with Jessica and fear that the women will learn about each other swirl together.

The others in the household also experience entanglements and the consequences of hiding things from each other. Pierce, a young man who lives at the Gray estate in Dorset with his mother, pursues Kate and Octavian's daughter, Barbara. As Barbara rejects him, Pierce becomes more and more obsessed with both her and with swimming into Gunnar's Cave, which is only accessible during low tide. His mother Mary is troubled that neither of the two men living on the estate will confide in her about their secrets and longs for a romantic relationship. Octavian's brother, Theo, has come home from India under a cloud and Willy, a refugee scholar, refuses to talk to anyone about his time in Dachau. Paula, another woman living in the household, is tormented by the knowledge that a former lover is coming back to see her.

In his investigation, Ducane discovers that Radeechy had been engaging in some sort of "magic" in the vaults below the office. McGrath, the office messenger, has been providing items like pigeons, which were killed in the ritual, and his wife, Judy, for Radeechy's secret activities. Radeechy paid McGrath, in part to keep him quiet, and after Radeechy dies, McGrath attempts to blackmail Ducane about Jessica and Kate, eventually sending the two letters revealing Ducane's relationships with both of them. Ducane also discovers that Radeechy committed suicide, in part, because he had killed his wife. Richard Biranne, Paula's ex-husband, was having an affair with her and was present when Radeechy killed her.

As the characters' secrets begin to unravel, Pierce swims into Gunnar's Cave, followed by Ducane, who tries to save him from the high tide. The two spend a harrowing night in the cave, but survive. In the aftermath, Ducane reunites Paula and Richard after she receives a letter from her former lover that he is not coming after all. Jessica and Kate both end their relationships with Ducane, and Jessica begins to pursue Willy. Pierce and Barbara are united, and Theo receives a letter that makes him think about going back to India. Ducane and Mary realize that they love each other and they marry.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Octavian Gray, a head of department, hears a gunshot while he works in his office. He gets up, as the shot came from somewhere near his office and he knows that it was a gunshot from his years as a soldier. He walks to the door, but finds that he cannot call out. He turns back into his office to telephone someone about it when the office messenger, McGrath, arrives at Octavian's office.

Richard Biranne, one of Octavian's undersecretaries, also arrives and pushes McGrath out. Biranne tells him that Radeechy shot himself and that he is dead. Deciding that he needs to see, Octavian says they had better call Scotland Yard, but Biranne tells him that he has already done so. Octavian walks down to Radeechy's office and sees him lying with his face on the desk and a gun in his right hand. Biranne tells him that he found him that way, and that Radeechy must have pointed the gun into his mouth and pulled the trigger. Octavian notes that the fact that Radeechy did not leave a note is most unlike him, as he liked to write about minute details.

Octavian muses that they will probably have the police there for the rest of the weekend, just when he wanted to get away. Biranne offers to deal with them for Octavian and says that he must remember to tell the police that he touched the gun when he was checking on Radeechy. Saying that he will remain, Octavian questions why the man would have killed himself. They discuss that his wife died and that perhaps he had been depressed. When he arrives back in his office, Octavian calls his wife, Kate, and tells her about Radeechy, saying he won't be able to make it home that night even though their daughter, Barbara, will be arriving. He says that he will come in the morning and bring Ducane with him.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The opening chapter of *The Nice and the Good* starts dramatically with a gunshot. Immediately the reader is thrown into the thick of the action as Octavian tries to find out what is going on and what needs to be done. There is a hint of the mystery that will weave through the book when Octavian mentions that it is unlike Radeechy not to have left a note. Even while motives are discussed (his wife's death), there is a certain skepticism among the characters as they think about possible reasons. None of them seems to quite be able to explain why Radeechy would kill himself and why he would choose to do it in the office.

Yet the suicide of Radeechy is muted. The reader doesn't know any of the characters yet, including who Radeechy was. He is as much a mystery as his death. The characters do not seem overly grieved or upset over his death either. They seem somewhat surprised but any other emotions that they may have are unspoken. As it is

the primary event of the first chapter, there is a hint that his death will be important in the book, but there is little indication of how and why this will be.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Edward and Henrietta Biranne, twins and the children of Richard Biranne, are talking with Mary Clothier about some stones that they have brought into the house. She tells them that they need to be taken out. Theodore Gray, Octavian's brother, enters and asks where Pierce, Mary's fifteen-year-old son, is. The twins tell him that he is upstairs decorating Barbie's room with shells and argue that if Pierce is allowed to bring in shells that they should be able to bring in stones. Casie, the housekeeper, also enters the room and the debate. Mary says that she is not going to stop Pierce because it is a special occasion, as Barbie has been away at school since Christmas. The inhabitants of the room debate quickly, with conversation flying fast around the room.

Theodore asks where Mingo, the poodle-like dog, is, as the dog generally sits with him while he has his breakfast and tea in bed. The twins say that they will bring him in, and after a brief scuffle, they produce the dog. Theodore, the dog, and the twins mount the stairs. Theodore was an engineer in Delhi before but is now unemployed, having left India under some sort of cloud that no one really understood.

Downstairs, Mary asks Paula Biranne, the twins' mother and Richard's ex-wife, whether she must read at the table and Paula closes the book she is reading. Paula, Mary and Casie have their tea. The twins come back downstairs, bringing Montrose, the large cocoa colored cat, with them. They discuss what the largest bird is and how large a breastbone a human would need to fly. The adults remind the twins about the stones and make returning them to the garden a game in which the children become engaged.

Paula asks if Theo has been to see Willy, a refugee scholar who is living in a bungalow on the estate and who suffers from melancholia. Mary says that she hasn't been up, but that Pierce had been there and Willy was fine. They discuss the pending arrival of Ducane and the need for his room to be readied. As they talk, Kate Gray enters the kitchen and tells them that Octavian won't be coming that night because someone at the office killed himself.

Mary and Casie leave the kitchen to get Ducane's room ready. Mary thinks about how they all came to be on the estate. Mary and her son Pierce have lived on the estate for nearly four years. Kate and Mary had met while they were in school and when Mary was widowed, Kate suggested they come live at the estate. Kate and Octavian are well off and happily married. They are generous with Mary and Mary runs the house for them, but Mary knows that they give her more than she gives them. Paula was a college friend of Mary's and after her divorce, Kate suggested that Paula and the children come to stay. Octavian likes to joke about his harem of women, but the women are all friendly with one another and not jealous. The children also get along well, even though they each go away to different schools. When the children are at school, Kate often stays in



London at the Grays' house if she isn't traveling with Octavian. Mary thinks that she is satisfied with how things are.

As Mary passes the top corridor, she sees the twins on the front lawn, playing a game that they had made up. When she reaches Barbara's door, Mary sees Pierce occupied with decorating the surface of a large table with shells. Pierce notices his mother and turns slowly toward her. Thinking that the shell design doesn't fit with Barbara's arrival, Mary feels love and pity for her son. As they stand there, a shout comes from the lawn and Barbara arrives, talking quickly as she greets the inhabitants of the house.

Chapter 2 Analysis

From death and a rather emotionless office environment, the novel now shifts to the warmth and vibrancy of a home and family. Immediately, Murdoch introduces us to a number of characters, who make up a sort of extended family. The reader is told how each member of the family fits together, how they came to be there and what their relationships to the others are. Although not all related by blood, the group feels a great deal of kinship for one another. We also begin to see a bit of the characters' relationships with one another. Kate seems to be the catalyst drawing them all together in the house, although Mary takes care of household matters. The interactions also show that the people in the household feel themselves to be a family, if untraditional. The twins are parented by many of the adults throughout the chapter.

The reader also sees the hints of the secrets that will dominate the novel. Murdoch says that Theo left India under "a cloud" and the mention of Willy brings questions about his "refugee" status and his reasons for sadness. One also senses that the relationship between Barbara and Pierce is strained somehow. Mary thinks that Barbara will not like Pierce's present for her. However, it is apparent that he has gone through a great deal of trouble to create it for her.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

John Ducane is with Jessica Bird, his lover. She is a teacher and 28, fifteen years younger than John. Although she is a talented painter, she seems to John to be unintelligent. This is a problem for John, but as he is not prone to long affairs, the relationship has been somewhat doomed from the beginning. He has come to end things with her, as he has tried to do in the past, but as before, her tears and pleading are making it hard to John to stick to the plan. Jessica asks what she has done to make him leave her and if she has done nothing, why can't things go on. When he replies that the situation is just wrong, she tells him that she loves him and as there is little enough love in the world, he shouldn't try to kill her love for him. She keeps trying to extract a reason and he keeps trying to explain that ending the relationship is just best.

He knows, however, that something has happened to him that has made him want to end it: he has fallen in love with Kate Gray. Although he has known Kate for some time, lately his feelings for her and hers for him have deepened. He knows that Kate is married to Octavian and that she has probably told him about John's feelings for her. Ultimately, John feels that he doesn't want Kate to marry him or become his alone, but rather for John to become part of their family. It would be painful knowing she is married to another man, but she could make a home for him and he needs that. "He needed to be committed and attached at last and to be able to love in innocence, and he felt certain now that he could commit himself to Kate, and through her to her family and to her whole household" (pg. 27). However, in order for him to do this, John feels he has to end things with Jessica.

Later, he gets into his car. He has backed down once again, promising Jessica that he will see her next week. Despite how awful he must look, his chauffeur, Gavin Fivey, says nothing. Fivey is the first servant that John has had live in with him. Ducane practiced as a barrister for a while and now is a civil servant and the legal advisor to the Government department that Octavian heads. Yet he finds himself very much alone. As they drive on, John resists the urge to lay his hand on Fivey's shoulder, even though it would have brought him comfort.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Although he has been mentioned in both of the previous chapters, John Ducane is first glimpsed here. The chapter introduces us to several of the romantic entanglements that will weave through the novel. Ducane is involved with a young woman. He is trying to end the relationship but she refuses to let that happen. Jessica has a neediness and desperation that keeps her clinging to John, whatever the cost. He feels responsible for her and guilty for having an affair with her in the first place.



One sees that Ducane is involved with Kate, and here again, the situation is complicated. Kate is married to Octavian, and in the previous chapter, Mary described their marriage as a happy one. Yet, it seems that both Kate and Octavian are amiable to a platonic relationship between Kate and Ducane. Ducane wishes to have this relationship both because he likes Kate and because it will draw him further into the family life created at Trescombe.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

John goes to Octavian's office the day after Radeechy's suicide. Richard Biranne and George Droysen, a principal in the department, are also there. The press has gotten hold of some sort of story on Radeechy and the men think the story may be about blackmail and a woman called Helen of Troy. As the story hasn't appeared, the men don't know exactly what the story is about and they speculate about what the reporter might have found. The Prime Minister is concerned about the story and the possibility that Radeechy may have been passing on secret material, so he has asked for an official inquiry and he wants John to be in charge.

John reacts calmly to the news. He asks what his status and duties will be. The men fill him in on the details, but they all agree that Radeechy couldn't have been turning over secrets to anyone. They also speculate again on why he had killed himself. Droysen mentions that Radeechy was depressed over his wife's death the year before, but they agree that since none of them knew him well, it is all conjecture. John says that he will go to the police station and look over whatever they have.

Ducane asks Octavian if he still plans on going to Dorset. Octavian responds in the affirmative and tells him that he must come as well. Ducane stands up, followed by Droysen, but Biranne remains seated, looking at Octavian deferentially. Ducane curses himself that he forgot it was Octavian's office and Octavian's meeting. He is, however, angrier with Biranne for his action and for the memory it brought up. Years before, John had overheard Biranne talking badly about him and speculating about whether John was homosexual.

Chapter 4 Analysis

We begin to see a bit more of the mystery surrounding Radeechy's death in this chapter. Someone has sold a story to a newspaper claiming that Radeechy was being blackmailed and was somehow involved with a woman called Helen of Troy. There is also some speculation that he might have been selling secret materials. The Prime Minister and Octavian's office need to know what, if anything, was going on and whether any of these things are true. Ducane is given the task of finding out.

Although there was a suggestion in the first chapter that Radeechy's death may not have been completely straightforward, it is becoming clearer in this chapter. The group doesn't fully accept that Radeechy killed himself over his wife's death, although that would have been a reasonable assumption. The suggestion of blackmail and of a woman, possibly a prostitute, muddies the waters of the situation.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The twins, Henrietta and Edward, are with their mother, Paula, in her room. Edward tells his mother that she has received a letter and asks if he might have the stamp from it. He tells her that it is Australian. They go downstairs to the rosewood table where letters are always placed. Edward removes a book he has placed on the letter so that Henrietta could not see the stamp. Paula sees that the letter is from Eric. She tears the letter out of the envelope with trembling hands and gives the envelope to Edward. She puts the letter in her pocket and goes outside.

"She bowed her head, making a movement as if she were casting a veil about it, and bolted across the lawn and into the meadow and along the path beside the hawthorn hedge which led down towards the sea. Here the beach shelved steeply and she sat down, with a rattling flurry of pebbles, upon a crest of stones with the sea just below her" (pg. 37).

Paula had once been in love with Eric Sears, although she now does not remember the love itself, just the events and her own conduct. He had been the reason she and Richard had divorced. Although Richard had had many affairs, when he had found out about Paula's one indiscretion, he had divorced her. Paula thinks that she probably cared more for the lies that Richard had told her in trying to cover his affairs than about the affairs themselves, and she hates knowing that she also had lied in her relationship with Eric. A confrontation with Eric and Richard had somehow destroyed her love for Eric, even though Paula knows that Richard probably would have divorced her with or without the scene itself. Richard had attacked Eric and sent him to the hospital, although they had all pretended it had been an accident. Later, Eric had sent her a letter telling her he was going to Australia and once there, two years ago, he'd wrote that he was marrying someone.

In the letter, Eric writes that he is sure that Paula is surprised to hear from him. His wedding fell through and he has been very unhappy. He feels that going to Australia was a mistake, as was leaving Paula. He has decided to return to England and to her. Despite the years, Eric feels that he is meant to be with Paula and he is sure that she feels the same. They have been bound together by the pain and their history. Paula owes him and he knows that she always repays her debts.

Paula crumples the letter in her hand and then tears it up into small pieces. She doesn't know if Eric is right that they can heal each other or that they should even try. She feels nausea at the thought of seeing him. Although Richard is a man capable of violence, Paula has never feared him as she fears Eric.



Chapter 5 Analysis

Almost every character will carry some secret during the course of Murdoch's novel and this chapter introduces Paula's secret. While the reader already knows that she and Richard Biranne are divorced, the cause of the divorce is revealed to be Paula's affair with Eric. Eric represents a danger to Paula. Although the secret of Eric is no longer a danger to Paula's marriage, no one else knows about the events of their divorce. There is the chance that the household will view her differently or judge her for her actions. Eric's motives are also unclear: is he coming back to claim Paula or to hurt her? His letter indicates that it is the former, but Paula wonders if that is a front for the latter.

Through Paula's reactions to Eric's letter, one sees her aloofness and separation. Although she is a part of the household, she is also separate from them. Like Willy and Theo, in particular, she keeps secrets that hold her apart from the other members of the family.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Edward and Henrietta talk about having a seaweed bath that night to test it out as a cure of Theo's rheumatism as Kate and Ducane walk by the kitchen door. They call in that they are going to see Willy. They discuss how Barbara and Pierce are not getting along well and Ducane suggests it's because they are growing up. They also talk a bit about Radeechy's suicide.

As they walk, Ducane thinks about many things: Radeechy, his scene with Jessica, the presence of Kate beside him, and at the lowest level, a consciousness of his surroundings and an extension of himself into nature. Kate says she thinks she will let John go in alone when they get to Willy's. John had first met Willy at a conference and it was John who had installed Willy at Trescombe Cottage. Willy suffers from depression and at times, he talks about killing himself. He had been a prisoner at Dachau, although he never talks about his experiences there with anyone. Willy often asks that the adults not come up to the collage but the children have free rein, running in and out as they please.

As they reach the woods, Kate suggests that they sit. They look at each other intently and then Kate kisses John. She tells him that he makes her happy and she asks if everything is all right with him, implicitly asking if he is okay with the situation as it is. He says that he is as he is very lonely and she is very generous.

John enters Willy's cottage. Willy is listening to music but he turns it off and goes to get tea. John asks Willy how everything is, but Willy evades the question. They discuss the idea of fate and love abstractly for a bit before John presses Willy on whether he is working. Willy tells him that he is not and John thinks in that instant that his visit is making Willy miserable. Willy asks about John's office but John decides that he can't tell Willy about Radeechy's suicide. Just then, the twins burst in carrying a tit's nest that they've brought for Willy. John leaves, thinking that he does not have the power that comes from understanding pain and suffering.

Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter introduces us to Willy Kost, a refugee scholar who lives in the cottage at Trescombe. Like Paula, Willy is separate in some ways from the rest of the household. He lives in a separate place from the others and also keeps secrets from the others, in this case, his experiences in Dachau. Many of the characters feel somewhat at a loss with Willy, thinking that they can't quite reach him emotionally.

The reader sees Kate and Ducane together for the first time in this chapter. Their relationship seems to make some sense for Ducane, who wishes to become a greater part of the family and believes that this can be accomplished through Kate. While he

also cares for Kate, the arrangement seems to work for him. Kate's involvement is a bit stranger, as she seems happily married to Octavian.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The twins, Barbara and Pierce are outside in the abandoned graveyard. Barbara tries to convince the other three to go bathe without her, as she is feeling too lazy to go. The twins go, but Pierce remains behind. The two snipe back and forth at each other.

Pierce wishes he could lie against Barbara. He tells her that something has gone wrong between the two of them. Barbara supposes that it is sex that has gone wrong with Pierce. The two argue some more. Pierce finally says that he is going and that he'll swim to Gunnar's Cave, a cave whose entrance is only accessible at low tide. He readies to leave and then apologizes to Barbara, who also apologizes to him. He touches her bare knee.

The following scene shows Octavian and Kate getting ready for bed. They briefly talk about the other members of the household and Kate tells him that she kissed Ducane. Octavian tells her not to make him fall too much for her but seems ok about the situation. They ponder whether Ducane is gay and about his past love life.

Chapter 7 Analysis

As the novel hinted at earlier, Barbara and Pierce's relationship is strained. They have grown up together in many ways, but now Pierce is interested in a romantic relationship with her. Barbara is not. She is annoyed by Pierce's interest in her and tries to drive him away through her words and actions. He continues to push her on this, following her and trying to get her to see him in a new light. Pierce's interest in Gunnar's Cave foreshadows the events that will take place later in the novel, as Pierce becomes overwhelmed by his love for Barbara and her rejection of him.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Ducane tells the office messenger, Peter McGrath, that he believes McGrath to be the person who sold information to the press about Radeechy. McGrath tells him that he indeed did it. Ducane asks him what the story is about. He says that McGrath's job is not in his hands, however. McGrath tells him that he doesn't have a copy of the story and he talked about a lot of stuff, so he's not sure what will be in it.

McGrath says that he liked Radeechy and used to do things for him, like running errands for Radeechy's magic. Radeechy would sometimes want things like feathers or certain herbs and McGrath would get them for him. McGrath states that Radeechy and his wife got along well and that Radeechy was sad when she died. He did know that Radeechy's magic girls got his wife down sometimes, though. Ducane pushes him on the topic of the magic girls and McGrath admits that they were tarts. Ducane asks him about Helen of Troy, but McGrath claims that he only vaguely remembers the name.

Ducane then asks McGrath who was blackmailing Radeechy. He claims that he doesn't know anything about that, saying that the journalists for the newspaper story were keen on that idea and that they started the talk about it. Finally, he admits that Radeechy had said that someone was getting money out of him and didn't tell him who.

McGrath leaves. Ducane is confused about the blackmail, thinking that while he had thought McGrath might be the blackmailer, he also couldn't see McGrath getting large sums of money from Radeechy. He thinks that the blackmail probably isn't about confidential material. The Radeechys, from all accounts, were loving and devoted to one another, so maybe Radeechy had killed himself over the loss of his wife.

As Ducane starts thinking about judging others and the power that gives someone, he starts thinking again about Jessica and how he has treated her. Does he have the right to quit seeing her, as he had muddled the affair from the beginning? As he thinks, he is interrupted by Biranne, who has come for information about Ducane's meeting with McGrath. He feels his dislike for Biranne again and consciously leaves him somewhat in the dark about his meeting.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The mystery surrounding Radeechy's death takes a turn with this chapter. Ducane has discovered that McGrath, the office messenger, is involved, and that Biranne knows more about Radeechy than he let on earlier. Radeechy is involved in some sort of magic that involves women as well. However, the suicide could just be as simple as Radeechy missing his wife. The chapter both deepens the mystery of Radeechy's suicide and provides glimpses of more secrets among the characters. Biranne has kept his

knowledge of Radeechy quiet from the rest of the office, save McGrath. McGrath also initially kept quiet about his involvement with Radeechy.

The chapter also illustrates Ducane's dislike of the position in which he has found himself. He has to sit in judgment of others when he himself is hurting another. He also has to deal with the involvement of someone that he dislikes. This creates a paradox for Ducane. He wants to be fair and do the right thing, but knows that in his personal life he is failing at this.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Ducane is again with Jessica, who is pleading with him not to leave her. He tells her that he shouldn't have let the relationship start, but she argues that it is the best thing he has done. After drifting around in indecision and confusion, she sees Ducane as the first certainty in her life. He has been the first serious event in her life and she feels that she loves him without reservation.

Ducane and Jessica have never really understood each other. Ducane might have prevented this by treating Jessica as a student and giving her instruction, but Ducane feared this and he avoided influencing her. In fact, doing so would have made Ducane reveal himself to her, making him vulnerable. Therefore, he had withdrawn from her in order to give her space.

She pleads with him to visit her again, thinking that she loves him so much. He tries to tell her no but she begins to scream. Later, they are lying intertwined together, although they are still dressed.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Ducane again faces Jessica, trying to convince her that they need to end the relationship. The reader sees again Jessica's neediness and her dependence on Ducane. In turn, Ducane is helpless to end the relationship because of the guilt he feels for entering the relationship in the first place. They are in a cycle of hurt, a scene that continues to play repeatedly. As Ducane cannot stand up to Jessica, she continues to grasp onto the relationship, refusing to let it end.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Mary hears a loud crash and runs up to Theo's room, where she finds him holding Mingo in his arms and Casie crying. His tea tray is lying on the floor with a mess of broken crockery and food around it. Mary sends Casie downstairs and then begins cleaning up the mess. Theo puzzles Mary, and she is surprised that no one else in the house seems to feel the same curiosity about him. She thinks that he paralyzes the others' concern about him and she ponders why that might be. She looks at Theo.

"Unlike his younger brother, to whom his resemblance was minimal, Theo was a gaunt man and rather tall. He was partly bald, with longish strings of greasy gray hair curling down his neck. He had a large brow but the features of his face were cramped and concentrated well to the front, as if the hasty hand of his creator had absently drawn them all towards the point of his rather long nose. So although he had a large head, his face looked small and poky and canine" (pg. 91).

Over time, Mary had found her curiosity for Theo fading. She had tried to question him about India and why he had left but she didn't get anything from him and she feels that she doesn't love him enough to see him clearly anyway.

As she leaves to get him some more tea, she is irritated with herself for her inability to reach out to Theo. She finds Casie already putting together Theo's tea so she goes outside, sitting down in the shade of the beech wood. She begins to think about Willy and how she has been increasingly distressed about her relationship with him. She feels some of the same failure with Willy as she does with Theo. Despite her and everyone else's assumptions that he will confide in her, Willy does not.

She goes to Willy's cottage, and after being let in, roams around the room. She notices that someone has brought him roses and wonders who has done this. She tries to get Willy to go down to see Theo but he is resistant. As they talk, he uses a German word, which irritates Mary. He had agreed to teach her German her first summer there but when it became clear that she didn't have the time, he had gently stopped. Then he and Paula had begun reading together and this makes Mary jealous. She looks out the window and sees Kate and Ducane in a boat together.

Mary thinks that she and Willy just make each other sad. When he asks her what she is thinking, Mary tells him that she loves him, wanting to somehow pierce him with her words. She sits down by him and begins caressing him. Willy catches her hand and lays it alongside his face.



Chapter 10 Analysis

We see in this chapter a better understanding of Mary. Although she has weaved through the earlier chapters taking place at Trescombe, here we see greater evidence of her centrality to the household. She runs many things around the house and seems to want to be the person who people go to when they need something or someone to confide in. Her disturbance that neither Theo nor Willy confide in her about their pasts illustrates this.

She is also protective of her position within the household. Although the family, for the most part, appears to get on well together, Mary likes to be the person that people come to when they need something. When others do things that venture into her role or territory, like bring Willy flowers, she becomes possessive of her role, feeling somehow that she has been usurped, if only momentarily, as the needed center of the family.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Kate and Ducane are floating on a coracle, after swimming. Nearby on the beach, the twins are examining stones, Theo is sitting beside Pierce's clothes and Pierce is lying half in and half out of the water. Paula and Octavian are walking along the beach.

Kate suggests that everyone is slightly afraid of Ducane, and Ducane is secretly pleased. She tells him that his company makes her very happy. They sit very close together, almost touching. Kate looks Ducane over and thinks how wonderful it is to fall in love with old friends, even if she is exactly not in love, just in the excitement of love with the condition of safety. Ducane reaches over and puts his hand on her knee.

The boat suddenly moves and Ducane removes his hand. Coming up unnoticed, Pierce is towing the boat behind him. Ducane is irritated, but hopes Pierce doesn't notice anything. His good mood is now broken and he goes back to thinking about Jessica. Their relationship is messy and he can't figure out what to do about it. When Jessica had screamed during their last meeting, he had given in and agreed to see her again. He wonders what right he has to be happy with Kate when he is making Jessica miserable. He is not in love with Kate, but he adores her and she makes him happy. She would never be a burden to him. His mind drifts further to think about Radeechy. He is apprehensive about meeting with McGrath again but knows that he must.

Kate calls to Pierce, asking where Barbara is. The three talk for a moment about Barbara, and Kate expresses her desire that Willy rethink his earlier decision and teach her German. Willy had refused to help her before with this. Pierce drops the towrope and swims toward the sheer cliff ahead, but promises that he won't go into Gunnar's Cave. Ducane and Kate head back and she shifts so that her leg is touching his.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Kate and Ducane are again together in this chapter. Their relationship seems almost child-like with small touches and words, but nothing beyond that. Yet, it also seems incongruous with the rest of the household. That they carry on in front of Octavian, Kate's husband, and Barbara, Kate and Octavian's daughter, seems strange, if not bordering on sadistic. At the same time, however, Octavian seems to accept the situation, Barbara seems oblivious, and the rest of the household doesn't really seem to question what is happening.

Ducane is tormented again by the positions he finds himself in: with Kate, Jessica and Radeechy's death. His indecision and unrest about these situations illustrate not only Ducane's desire to do what is right, but also his desire for the problems to take care of themselves without his interference or confrontation.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The household is together, having Sunday lunch. There was never a special seating arrangement; they just sat where they wanted when they arrived. They are all talking to their neighbors at the table about various topics. Pierce gets up abruptly and walks out the front door after watching Barbara and Ducane talk in French together.

Mary decides to leave also, but she doesn't go after Pierce. She thinks that she is making a fool of herself, giving way to self-pity. Perhaps she just needs a holiday or to get a proper job. As she is thinking to herself, Ducane joins her. He apologizes to her, saying that he didn't realize how serious things were for Pierce. She begins to cry and he tries to comfort her.

She tells him that she is upset about Willy, about how he holds her at a distance. They sit for a moment. Then, Ducane gets up and tells her that she should marry Willy. He says that Mary has power over them and she must wake Willy up, to surprise him. She thinks about this and decides that she will marry him.

Later, Pierce and Willy are talking. Pierce says that he just annoys Barbara. Willy tells him that he has no comfort for him and that Pierce must suffer through this.

Chapter 12 Analysis

With Ducane's suggestion, another relationship seems on the brink of changing. Mary thinks that perhaps she should marry Willy and that this will be good for both of them. This may be in part from her possessiveness over Willy or from her own loneliness. Within the household, Mary seems to be the only woman who wants to be in a relationship but is not. Kate has Octavian and Ducane. Paula remains aloof and apart, giving the impression that she doesn't need the same connection that Kate and Mary do.

Yet, Mary is also not as needy about this as Jessica is. Jessica clings to Ducane desperately, afraid of losing him, as her identity has come from him. Mary, while still upset that she can't reach Willy, is also content with the rest of her situation in the household. She has a greater purpose there, with or without the presence of an attached male.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Back in London, Ducane is trying to find where McGrath lives so that he can surprise him with a visit. His inquiry is so far getting nowhere and Octavian is getting nervous about giving a report to the Prime Minister. The newspaper hasn't printed the story, Helen of Troy can't be traced and permission to search Radeechy's house hasn't come through.

Finding the address, Ducane climbs the stairs and rings the bell. A woman answers and Ducane says he wants to see McGrath. He enters the door to find a tall woman with a dark complexion and a towel on her head. She looks Indian. She asks him if he is the police and then tells him that McGrath isn't there. She invites him to wait. Ducane feels at ease with her and after looking at her more thinks that she may be some sort of Celt. "Her complexion was rather dark and wisps of almost black hair could be seen escaping from the towel, but her eyes were of an intense opaque blue, the thick dark blue of a Northern sea in bright clouded light" (pg. 119). She introduces herself as Judy McGrath, McGrath's wife. She rambles on about her ancestry and McGrath, while Ducane sits down on the sofa. As he listens to her, he realizes that she is beautiful. She gives him a glass of wine and their hands touch. Judy takes the glasses, setting them down, and leans forward to kiss Ducane. She calls him Mr. Honeyman and tells him that she likes him.

Ducane detaches himself. He asks her about Radeechy but she doesn't tell him much. McGrath arrives and Judy leaves. McGrath says that he wasn't blackmailing Radeechy but that Radeechy did give him some money. As Ducane presses him, McGrath keeps repeating that it wasn't blackmail or extortion. He also tells Ducane that Biranne visited Radeechy. Ducane wonders why Biranne lied that he didn't know Radeechy well.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Ducane continues his investigation into Radeechy's death. In this chapter, he decides to pay a surprise visit to McGrath, hoping to get some information out of him, as Ducane is sure that McGrath is somehow involved. When he arrives, he meets Judy McGrath, who tries to seduce Ducane while they are waiting for her husband to return. Although Ducane doesn't realize it at the time, Judy will continue to play a part in the saga of Radeechy's death.

When McGrath finally arrives, Ducane doesn't get too much information out of him. He continues to insist that he wasn't blackmailing Radeechy. However, he does provide Ducane with an important piece of information: Biranne visited Radeechy often. This is interesting to Ducane because Biranne has said that he didn't know Radeechy well. It

also complicates the investigation as Ducane dislikes Biranne and Biranne is Paula's ex-husband.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Kate, Mary and Paula walk along the sea. They walk slowly, in single file: Paula, Mary and then Kate. Each is lost in thought. Paula received another post from Eric and she wonders what to do. She thinks that she never understood the situation between them or with Richard. She didn't fight for Richard when he decided to go, even though she now thinks she should have. She has told no one about Eric's letters.

Mary is thinking about Willy and the possibility of marrying him. She likes the idea of taking him away from here. Just Ducane's suggestion has already had an effect on her relationship with Willy. Although she can't picture herself proposing marriage yet, she thinks that things are changing. If she can simply love him, she is sure that he will open up to her.

Kate thinks about how wonderful everything is: the water, the blue of the sky, her life. She is amazed that Octavian isn't hurt by her friendship with John. She thinks that she will make both of them happy. She is happy to love and insists to herself that everyone will be happy with her.

Chapter 14 Analysis

This chapter focuses on the thoughts of the three main female characters: Kate, Paula and Mary. Their thoughts as they walk along the beach together illustrate their characters in many ways. Paula struggles with Eric's impending arrival, yet she remains alone in this struggle, having told no one about it. Even as she appears strong and distant, one also sees that she is and has been passive about her relationships with the men. When Richard Biranne divorced her, she didn't fight it and now she is quietly waiting for whatever Eric will bring.

Mary is consumed with thoughts about Willy, wondering if she could really marry him and if that would be good for him. Even while Mary is concerned for herself, her main thoughts are the effects this might have on Willy, believing that a relationship with her would better his life.

Kate's thoughts illustrate her happiness but also her naïveté. She believes that she can make both Octavian and Ducane happy and satisfied. Remaining oblivious to the possible outcomes in the situation, she is euphoric.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Theo comes into Willy's cottage and they each get a glass of whiskey. Theo tells Willy that he feels he is bad for him, but Willy argues that Theo is not. Theo again insists he is, saying that they always talk about metaphysics and that all metaphysics are devilish. They discuss this for a few minutes before Theo tells Willy about the suicide in Octavian's office. Theo says that they are all worried about telling him. He admits that he dislikes living in the house,

"I feel ill all the time now. And I can't stand it down there, that's why I cam up here to torment you. It's getting worse down there. They're all watching each other ever so sweetly. *Homo homini lupus*, Willy, *homo homini lupus*. They're all of them sex maniacs and they don't even know it. There's my dear brother, that perfect O, getting erotic satisfaction out of seeing his wife flirting with another man" (pg. 133).

Willy asks Theo what happened in India, but Theo says he won't say. He asks Willy if he will ever tell him about Dachau. Willy ponders this and says he might sometime, but Theo declares that he shouldn't. Theo puts his hands on Willy's shoulders and leans forward until his brow is touching Willy's hair. Willy puts his hands on Theo's.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Theo and Willy are in some ways very alike. Both are a part of the household yet at the same time apart from it. While they both cultivate relationships with the children, they both hold the adults at a distance. Willy has certain times when he allows the children to his cottage but not the adults. Theo, although living in the house, still has his retreat in his room.

Both men also keep secrets. Theo's experiences in India remain his alone and most of the family seems wholly unconcerned about what happened there and why he left. Likewise, Willy does not talk about his experiences in Dachau, although the family is more concerned that he doesn't speak of it.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Ducane goes to Octavian, telling him that McGrath told him that Biranne was often at Radeechy's house. He also says that when McGrath went to Radeechy's office after he heard the shot that Biranne had locked the door from the inside. Ducane says that he noticed something funny in the police photographs of the scene: Radeechy was left-handed but the gun was lying by his right. They discuss what this might mean: Biranne could have moved the gun while checking on Radeechy or Biranne might have killed him and not remembered that Radeechy was left-handed when he went to place the gun. Ducane says that he has gone by the police station and found that the prints on the gun were from Radeechy's left hand and that the gun was fired from close range. Biranne's prints were only on the barrel of the gun but they were also on Radeechy's collar.

They again ponder what this might all mean. Ducane says that if Biranne and Radeechy were in on something together, Biranne may have searched the body for incriminating evidence. He thinks that Biranne did not kill Radeechy but that he does know more than he has said. He tells Octavian that he doesn't want Biranne startled yet, but that he will eventually tell the police what he's learned.

Ducane heads home, sitting in the front seat with Fivey. He has told Jessica that he has evening conferences this week and can't see her. He longs to see Kate and is tempted to go to her, but he knows that this will disrupt everyone. Although there could be deep love and affection between them, he and Kate can share no times of passion. He is shaken up by the information about Biranne, particularly since he doesn't like him. He feels sorry for himself. As he thinks, Ducane carries on a conversation with Fivey about mundane matters. His hand moves to Fivey's shoulder and Ducane decides to leave it there.

Chapter 16 Analysis

More information has come to light about Biranne's involvement in Radeechy's death. Ducane now knows that Biranne moved the gun and that he touched Radeechy's collar. Ducane speculates about how these things may have come to be: did Biranne kill Radeechy, was he blackmailing him or did Biranne just happen to touch the man and move the gun while he was checking on him after the shot was fired? At this point, each of these possibilities remains and Ducane is more tormented about his position as the head of the inquiry than before.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Paula, Kate, Mary and Pierce are in town. They have traveled by train together and separated to go about their tasks for the day. Mary hasn't told anyone about where she is going. She walks along a road, remembering each house. As she reaches the end of the road, she sees the house she lived in with Alistair for the four years before he died. She thinks back to what the house looked like then and how they were together. She feels that she has shirked the past by not coming here before or talking about Alistair, particularly to Willy. Alistair had been writing a novel, but a publisher hadn't picked it up. She feels sick as she stands there. On the night Alistair died, they had quarreled and she had watched him go down the path and step off the pavement onto the road, where a swerving car had hit him. She cries and wonders why she came back.

Paula is in town to get some books for her and Willy. She decides to go to the National Gallery before meeting back up with Mary and Pierce. Inside, she thinks about Eric coming slowly toward her. She thinks about his hands; they always smell like clay. She wonders how Eric has ever forgiven her and if he is really coming back to kill her. She stops in front of Bronzino's "Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time," a favorite of Richard's. Richard had introduced her to the painting. The last time he had asked her if she had seen the picture, they had quarreled about Eric. On her way to meet with the others, she stops and dials Richard's office number but doesn't respond when he answers. She goes to their old house, surprised to see that it isn't run down and dirty. As she thinks about crossing the road to the house, an attractive woman stops outside the house and lets herself in using a key. Paula turns away, crying. She has assumed that Richard was alone without her.

Jessica has rarely been to Ducane's house, but she had not felt deprived or excluded. Now, with Ducane threatening to leave her, she has become obsessed by his place, thinking that the secret of it might help her know how to change his mind. She believes that she is harmless and powerless in the relationship, yet Ducane is having nightmares about her and feeling constrained. Ducane's letter about not being able to see her prompts her to visit his house. She thinks that Ducane is lying about having other things to do and she needs the comfort of doing something about the situation. She goes into the pub near John's house and sits by a window where she can watch it. Before long, an attractive woman stops by Ducane's house and is admitted into it. She thinks that Ducane is there and that he has lied to her, for the woman must be his mistress.

Kate walks to Ducane's house, rings the bell and goes in. She knows that he will not be there but she wants to learn more about his servant, Fivey. She tells him that she has some things to leave Ducane and asks Fivey for some paper to write a note. They sit at the table and Kate surveys Fivey, finding him unexpectedly handsome. She tries to write a note but decides not to leave one. When Fivey finally speaks, Kate realizes he is Irish and they talk for a moment about where each is from. They eat some of the things that



Kate has brought for Ducane while they talk. She lays her hand on top of Fivey's, softly caressing it. Fivey draws nearer.

Later, Kate and Octavian are talking. She tells him that she made a pass at Fivey and gave him money to visit his mother. Octavian laughs, amused at the situation. They agree that she should not tell Ducane, as it might hurt his feelings.

Chapter 17 Analysis

This chapter again shows us more about the four main female characters and their relationships and thoughts about love. By including all four, Murdoch shows how the women differ from one another in love. Mary is tormented by her husband's death, feeling guilty that she has quarreled with him and that she believed his novel was no good. She feels a sense of responsibility to him and to his memory. Paula similarly feels loss in this chapter. The reader finds that she misses Biranne and is pained when she realizes that he has been involved with another woman.

Jessica and Kate represent the opposite end of the spectrum. Jessica, in her obsession, watches Ducane's house, believing that he has lied to her. While Kate and Paula both had problems in their relationships, Jessica seems to take this to a whole other level with her desperation. She is unable to cope without Ducane and can't imagine life without him.

Kate is again baffling. It appears that love and sex are a game to her; one that she uses to make herself feel better. She recognizes that her behavior with Fivey could hurt Ducane but seems to feel little remorse that it happened. Interestingly, her reactions will be very different when she believes that Ducane has lied and misled her, even though her behaviors are not altogether different from his.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Pierce and Theo are down at the beach together. Pierce has been swimming and now lies outstretched on the beach. Theo sits next to him, fingering some beach stones. He begins putting them on Pierce's back in a little pattern. "The climax of this activity, to which Uncle Theo looked hungrily forward, and which he provoked himself by deferring, was the moment when he should oh so gently and lingeringly place a stone upon the summit of each of Pierce's buttocks" (pg. 164).

Suddenly, Edward and Henrietta burst on the scene, asking for Mingo. The twins talk quietly together and then Edward holds out a fossil to Pierce. Theo knows that the gift is a big sacrifice to the twins, who value their stones highly. Pierce takes it and then as the twins back up, he throws it into the ocean. The twins see, stop and then continue to recede. Pierce cries that he is miserable and that he hates everyone. Theo tells him that he shouldn't take it out on the twins. Pierce gets up and walks away. Theo goes to the twins and tries to comfort them.

As he walks, Pierce thinks that he needs to apologize to the twins and wonders why he threw the stone into the water. He has been unable to quit thinking about Barbara or to stop following her around, annoying her. He thinks that he will punish her somehow for her behavior and then drown himself in Gunnar's Cave.

Chapter 18 Analysis

This chapter foreshadows a number of events that will happen and secrets that will be revealed as the novel progresses. At the center is Pierce's growing discontent and pain at Barbara's rejection of him. Unable to handle this, Pierce lashes out at those around him, including the twins. He appears to be so caught up in the feelings that he is having that rational thought has almost disappeared; he acts on emotion alone. His idea of punishing Barbara and then drowning himself casts a sinister and dangerous light on the feelings that he is experiencing and sets the stage for the later events.

The reader sees a glimpse of Theo's secret in his desire for Pierce. It seems likely that some action on his part toward another man or boy is the root of the problem in India. Theo remains closest to the children and to the men in the household, seeming distant from the women, which reinforces this.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Mary follows Willy into the graveyard. She follows him but does not try to catch him, walking parallel to him. Willy lies down on the ivy. Mary sees that his eyes are closed and she sits down quietly nearby. They talk a bit about the people in the graveyard. Willy throws a semi-transparent piece of green glass to Mary, who catches it in her skirt. They laugh and Mary wishes that he would lay his head in her lap. She tells him that she wishes he talked more to her.

Willy tells her that he will tell her about the most terrible thing that ever happened to him. Mary prepares to hear about his time in the concentration camp, but Willy tells her about a time when he was little on vacation at the Black Sea. Willy had gone out with his nurse to the public gardens to play. While he was there, a little girl and her dog came also. As Willy didn't really know how to play, being an only child, he petted the dog. The girl tried to teach him a game but Willy thought it was a game that required more people. Each day, Willy couldn't wait to get to the park to play with the girl and her dog. One day he persuaded his parents to buy a little ball so they could play fetch with the dog. When Willy arrived with the ball, he showed it to the girl and threw it for the dog. The dog ran after it, but the ball stuck in the dog's throat and he died.

Mary tries to ask Willy about what happened next, but when she looks up, she sees Willy is crying. She goes to him and draws him into an embrace. As she holds him, she asks him to marry her. Willy's face becomes radiant and he proclaims that no one has ever asked to marry him before.

Just then, Barbara arrives, calling for Montrose. The cat has disappeared and no one can find him. Willy goes with her. Mary searches for the green glass that she dropped when she went to Willy, but she can't find it.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Mary's relationship to Willy takes a turn with her marriage proposal to him. He seems happy at the prospect although he never really gives her an answer. The loss of the green glass seems a bad omen for their relationship. However, the two have also seemed to reach a greater level of intimacy, with Willy telling Mary about the worst thing that ever happened to him.

Willy's story indicates the reason for his reticence to engage in relationships. From his story and actions it appears that Willy believes that he will hurt those who come close to him, regardless of his motives and intentions. Willy selflessly bought the dog the ball, thinking that both the dog and the girl would like it. Instead, the gift became deadly and killed the relationship. This will be further reinforced when Willy does reveal a part of what happened to him in the past later in the book.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Ducane has returned to his home from an evening with Octavian. He thinks that he should be writing to Jessica to suggest a time to meet or drafting an interim report on what he's found about Radeechy. All attempts to find Helen of Troy have so far failed. Ducane's search of Radeechy's house has yielded nothing. He has found no evidence of magic or of the events that McGrath talked about. He thinks that Radeechy must have destroyed all evidence before he killed himself. Ducane wants to put off talking to Biranne, feeling that it is probably his last card. However, he just can't see Biranne having killed Radeechy. Before approaching Biranne, Ducane wants to have more information and he wants to surprise him.

Fivey announces that there is a man named McGrath downstairs to see Ducane. McGrath says that he has told Ducane everything he knows about the Radeechy affair but he hopes that Ducane will pay him the same small payments that Radeechy was paying him. Ducane replies that he's not going to pay McGrath any money. McGrath shows Ducane several photographs of letters in familiar handwriting. McGrath has taken several letters from Ducane's desk, one from Jessica to Ducane and one from Kate to Ducane. McGrath says that he will send the letters to the women unless Ducane agrees to pay him. Ducane tries to bluff, saying that the women know about one another, but McGrath says that he has called each of them and asked if they knew the other's name. Neither had.

Ducane reads through the letters, each of which shows the woman's love and affection for him. He thinks that he really does not want the women to see these letters. He believes that Jessica will think he has been lying about having a mistress and that Kate will feel that he has lied to her. Ducane tells McGrath that if he mails the letters, he'll go to the police. McGrath, however, says that he knows that Ducane wouldn't want the women's names dragged out in the papers. Ducane decides that he must play for time, letting McGrath think he'll continue to pay up until he has had a chance to think of something.

After Ducane says that he'll pay a modest amount, McGrath offers Ducane his wife Judy. Ducane tells him to leave, catching Fivey listening at the door as they walk out.

Chapter 20 Analysis

McGrath comes to Ducane, trying to blackmail him. He has stolen a letter from Kate and a letter from Jessica and he threatens to send them to each other. Although Ducane doesn't believe that McGrath is involved with Radeechy's death, McGrath's blackmail attempt doesn't surprise Ducane, having already sensed that the man is dishonest and out for his own advancement.



The situation puts Ducane in a difficult situation. He doesn't want to pay McGrath blackmail but he also doesn't want the women to find out about each other. He feels that he has already treated Jessica badly and doesn't want her to feel worse about the situation. He is also unsure of how Kate would react, implicitly believing that the double standard in their relationship is fine for Kate but not for him.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Paula is with Willy as Barbara comes up. Paula excuses herself. She thinks about how Eric's ship is coming toward her and how she mustn't say anything about his impending arrival to anyone. She cannot control or manage him and so she must face whatever will happen with courage. Paula sees Henrietta and asks where Edward is. Henrietta tells her that he is looking for Montrose, who is still missing.

At Willy's, Barbara tells him that she has learned a flute quartet. Willy tells her not to play it for him, as the music is too painful. She asks him why he won't teach her German, but he doesn't give her a reason. They talk a bit about Pierce and then that Willy is going to London for a few days and will be staying with Ducane. She tells him that Montrose is still missing and begins to cry. She wraps her arms about his legs, but Willy rises quickly and she leaves. He thinks that he shall have to leave the estate for it is becoming harder and harder not to take Barbara into his arms.

"He could not decide if was worse when she touched him or when she did not. There was a raw agony of yearning which was soothed by her touch. And yet at such moments the checking of the inclination of his whole body towards hers racked every nerve and muscle. To sit there inertly while she caressed his hair or stroked his knee required an exertion of physical strength which made him ache. And all the while vivid imagery of embracing her, kissing her passionately, taking her onto his lap, surrounded Barbara with a golden aura of pain" (pg. 191).

Willy thinks about Mary. He loves her deeply but is not in love with her. He was moved greatly by her proposal and wonders if it is too late for him to find happiness and mend the past. Willy lies motionless on his bed, ignoring the knock on his door from Theo.

Chapter 21 Analysis

The entanglements increase with this chapter. Willy desires Barbara, but does not believe that he can act on this. The reasons are not clear, but it could be their respective ages or that Willy is the guest of Barbara's family, and he doesn't want to jeopardize that. Mary's proposal is perhaps a way out of this, as they could go away together and maybe find happiness together, although neither is in love.

The situation with Montrose also continues in this chapter. The cat is missing and the members of the household, particularly the children, are growing concerned. Their concern and worry will set up events in later chapters surrounding the cat and Barbara and Pierce's troubled friendship.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Willy has arrived at Ducane's house. Kate and Octavian have gone on a vacation together and Willy and Ducane comment about how happy they are. They talk about the other inhabitants of the estate, worrying about Paula and the children because the cat is still missing.

Ducane spent the previous evening with Jessica, agreeing to go on seeing her but only once a week. She had asked him again if he had a mistress and he denied it again. Ducane also saw McGrath again, trying to bide for more time. He didn't want Jessica and Kate to see him as a liar or a trickster. He worries that maybe Kate will banish him from the estate if she finds out. He is also beginning to feel that Biranne was the key to the Radeechy affair and has been having dreams of pursuing him. Ducane feels a mounting anxiety and uneasiness about having to confront Biranne.

Willy tells Ducane that Mary has proposed to him. Ducane stops himself from saying that he encouraged her. Willy thinks that he may disapprove but Ducane tells him that he is happy for them and encourages Willy. Willy says that he will think about the proposal. Ducane thinks that he envies Willy, because Willy loves innocently.

Chapter 22 Analysis

The events in this chapter serve to further set up later chapters and introduce little new material. Willy has come to Ducane's and the reader sees the concern both of them have for the household members. Ducane also thinks about the things going on in his life, including McGrath's blackmail attempts and his relationships with Jessica and Kate. He is becoming more and more uneasy about these relationships and about having to confront Biranne about his involvement with Radeechy. His anxiety and disquiet over his professional and personal situations flow into one another, each increasing the other.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Jessica rings Ducane's doorbell. A small man opens the door and Jessica tells him that she is from the interior decorator's office and she needs to measure Mr. Ducane's bedroom. The man leads Jessica upstairs. Once alone, she begins to search the room, looking for evidence of Ducane's mistress. She believes that if a woman had been in Ducane's bedroom some sign of her would still be here, so she looks through his wardrobe, smells his pillow and goes through his drawers. However, she finds nothing in the bedroom or in the bathroom.

Jessica runs back into the bedroom, growing more and more desperate. She is certain that Ducane has a mistress. She begins to search the floor when she sees two male feet. The man from earlier tells her that he didn't think she was from the interior decorator's office and that he checked the phone book and there was no such firm. He asks why she is there. Jessica feels horrible about what she's done and is frightened. She begins to cry. The man comes to sit beside her, telling her that he doesn't want to frighten or hurt her. She stops crying and tells him that she is a jealous woman. She tells him about her relationship with Ducane and how she saw a woman come here and had to find out if she was his mistress.

The man introduces himself as Willy and asks her a few questions about her relationship with Ducane. As they talk about her jealousy, Willy tells her, "You wish to act out your love, to give it body, but there is only one act left to you that is truly loving and that is to let him go, and to let him go gently and without resentment. Put all your energy into that and you will win from the world of the spirit a grace which you cannot now even dream of" (pg. 205). He kisses her. Willy is holding on to her wrist, while his other hand touches her hair, and she holds on to his lapel. He tells Jessica that she is beautiful. He asks to kiss her again and they kneel slowly over the bed. Later, they lie heart to heart.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Jessica's obsession with Ducane has led her to show up at his house so that she can prove that he has a mistress. Her frenzied search of his room and bathroom suggest the level of unbalance that is occurring for her because of the relationship. She doesn't trust Ducane and feels sure that he is lying to her. However, she doesn't walk away from him or end the relationship based on that. Instead, she appears to want proof of his alleged indiscretion to hurt him with or to bind him more fully to her.

The pairing of Jessica and Willy is in some ways not surprising. She has desired a teacher, someone to lead her, in her relationship with Ducane. Willy is that: a teacher, instructor and leader. He can provide the strength that she needs and the reader sees this in the way that she reacts to him at Ducane's house.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Ducane is worrying about Biranne again, wondering how to trap Biranne into getting information from him. He knows that for anything he tries to pin on Biranne, Biranne can offer a reasonable explanation. Although he doesn't know much about what had happened, Ducane is certain that Biranne is guilty of something in the affair.

It is nine o'clock in the evening. He comes to the house, filled with anxiety, stopping several times to get his breath. He walks up and ponders whether to ring the bell. He decides to just walk in, hoping for the element of surprise. He walks through the house until coming to a semi-dark room. Inside the room is Judy McGrath.

She calls him Mr. Honeyman. He looks around but there is no one else present. It dawns on Ducane that she is Helen of Troy and when he says this, she acknowledges it. She stands in front of him, naked but awkward. Ducane says that he has come to see Biranne but that he wants to ask her some questions, such as why Radeechy killed himself. She says that she doesn't know and that she knows nothing about blackmail. When he asks her to tell him about Radeechy, she asks if he means what they did in the vaults in the office. They had started going there because at his home Mrs. Radeechy and the neighbors had been around. Mrs. Radeechy knew all about what happened though. She tells Ducane that she and Radeechy never made love that it was all spiritualistic and that McGrath was often there too. When she tells him that Radeechy never touched her with his hands, Ducane experiences a physical reaction and gets to his feet.

In Judy's hand, Ducane sees a riding whip. He jerks away from her and leaves the room. As he hurries out the front door, he nearly collides with Biranne. They look at each other before Ducane pushes past.

Chapter 24 Analysis

The mystery of Radeechy's death takes another turn as Ducane realizes that Judy McGrath is Helen of Troy and that she has been involved with both Radeechy and Biranne. In some ways, Judy and Kate are similar. Both are involved with other men outside of their husbands and both appear to have the blessings of their husbands in this. While Kate appears happy and euphoric, there is desperation about Judy, as though she is trying to get ahead and is using her body as a way of doing so. While Kate appears oblivious to the implications of her actions, Judy is well aware of what consequences might occur and she seems to choose deliberately to act in ways that will be of greatest benefit to her.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

The household is in the kitchen, talking and cooking. John has received a postcard from Kate, showing a picture of some veiled women. The women remind Ducane of Judy. He found himself disturbed not only by her but also by what she had told him. He decides that his next move should be to talk to McGrath and have him show Ducane the vaults. Not wanting to run into Judy, Ducane has sent a message to McGrath telling him to come on Monday. It has occurred to him that McGrath perhaps used his wife as a decoy for a blackmail victim, but it did not occur to him before that Judy and Biranne would be linked.

Montrose, the cat, is still missing. Barbara is in her room upset as Pierce told her that the cat has probably drowned. Ducane says that he'll go up and talk to her. On his way, he thinks that he needs to see Jessica soon. As he reaches the top of the stairs, he sees Pierce carrying a white dish and then opening the door to his room. Ducane suddenly realizes what he has seen and understands that Pierce is hiding Montrose. He walks into Pierce's room, takes Montrose and brings him to Barbara's room, which is empty. Pierce has followed and they face each other. Ducane reprimands him for hurting Barbara. Pierce says that if only Barbara had come to his room as she used to, she'd have found Montrose there. Ducane sees Barbara's whip and he grabs it, bringing it down on Pierce's hand. Mary is in the doorway and sees.

Pierce walks out. Ducane apologizes to Mary for hitting Pierce, telling her that he was angry because he discovered that Pierce was hiding Montrose. He is upset, thinking that Pierce will hate him. Mary says that she understands but Pierce is just as likely to love him for it. She tells him that she sees Ducane as trying to look after everyone. Ducane asks her about Alistair and although Mary thinks she can't talk about this, she does haltingly. She says that he wrote a novel and that it was no good. Although she has never told any of them the truth, she now tells Ducane about how Alistair died. Ducane tries to comfort her.

Chapter 25 Analysis

Pierce has taken Montrose and hidden him in his room, hoping that Barbara will come looking for him there. One sees in Pierce's actions desperation not unlike Jessica's. Both Pierce and Jessica are caught in a situation where the person they love is not in love with them. They both try desperate things to try to gain the love of that person but in the end, the most they are able to produce is annoyance and guilt from Barbara and Ducane. Pierce hides Montrose because he thinks that if Barbara will only come to his room like she used to, things will be the same and his feelings of pain will end.

One also sees some of the similarities between Mary and Ducane. The household leans on them. When one of them seems to be experiencing some trouble, the household assumes that Mary and/or Ducane should talk to them. They are viewed as trustworthy confidants.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Ducane and McGrath are descending into the vaults below the office. McGrath says that the door at the top was normally locked and he only came down to the vaults when Radeechy wanted him to ready or clean things. They descend into the blackness with only one torch. Ducane starts to worry about being down there without having told anyone else about it. He thinks that McGrath could murder him and no one would find him.

They go into a fifteen-foot room and Ducane gets the sense that the room had had something to do with the war. McGrath lights a candle on an elaborate silver candlestick and then on three more in identical holders. There is also a silver chalice with jewels and McGrath pours some wine into it. He also spreads out some slices of black bread and nuts. McGrath offers them to Ducane, but Ducane thinks that the food may be poisoned. On one of the tables in the room, there is a black mattress and McGrath says that this was where the girl went. As McGrath lays out some other items, Ducane looks at them and finds poppy, hyssop, hemp, sunflower, and so on. There is also a packet of table salt, a bell, a Bible, sticks of incense, and a tau, or reversed cross. McGrath also puts on a vast cope of yellow silk, which has embroidered black fir cones on it, and a tall headdress.

Ducane comments about the horrible smell in the room. McGrath points under a trestle table and says that it's probably the birds. Ducane finds a cage with some dead pigeons in it. Radeechy had wanted them alive and he used to kill them in his ceremony. McGrath tells him that blood was everywhere after that. He would catch them from the wild and bring them down here for Radeechy. When Radeechy died, he didn't think to come down here for the pigeons.

Ducane looks around the room, seeing the altar, the mattress, and the blood stained cope. McGrath tells him that he's seen it all, but encourages Ducane to look at it all himself. Returning to face McGrath, Ducane sees that he is holding a whip. He senses the evil in the room and tries to imagine what it had looked and felt like with Radeechy here. Ducane notices some things written on the wall, including some pentagrams and hexagrams. There is also a word puzzle of sorts that makes no sense to Ducane.

McGrath again turns to discussing his payments from Radeechy, and how he hopes Ducane will carry that on. He says that he is a useful man and he would like to serve Ducane if Ducane will just give him four pounds a week through a banker's order. Ducane is now angry and laughs that he was just stringing McGrath along until he could find out what he knew. Now that he does, he's not paying McGrath anything else and McGrath can tell the women if he wants.



Chapter 26 Analysis

The mystery surrounding Radeechy and his activities deepens with the revelations of this chapter. Ducane descends into the vaults with McGrath, who shows him the various things that Radeechy used in his "magic." Ducane realizes that Radeechy has been performing some sort of ritual in the vaults, which included killing pigeons and various herbs and oils. The rituals seem to center around some sort of occultist belief or activity, judging from the foods and other things present. Although Ducane has expected something more involving the women, the reality of Radeechy's actions is no less perverse or shocking to him.

Ducane also sets into motion the consequences of refusing to pay McGrath. Laughing that he was only stringing McGrath along, Ducane has signed his death warrant in terms of the women, who will now likely see the letters and understand that he has been seeing both of them. Ducane is not unafraid of this but knows that it is all he can do.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Jessica writes three letters to Ducane and tries to decide which one to send him. She doesn't know how much he knows about what happened between her and Willy. Therefore, she doesn't know if she should pretend that nothing happened or apologize. Willy had said that he wouldn't tell Ducane, but could she trust him? She thinks about Ducane,

"John did not really know his own heart. He was a hopeless Puritan who could not have a love affair without feeling guilty. He had broken things off because he was too guilty to be happy. But he was gradually discovering that without Jessica his life was empty. He had made conscientious efforts to reduce their love into a friendship, but he could not stop thinking about her. One day he would realize that he could not cease to love her; and then the idea would come to him that the way to stop feeling guilty with somebody is to marry them" (pg. 239).

Jessica also thinks about Willy. She looks in a long mirror and can't decide if she is beautiful or not. She has no significance without Ducane. She decides that she is beginning to look old. She hears a sound downstairs and realizes that it's the post. She hurries down, but finds no letter from Ducane. There is a brown envelope, which she absently opens. Inside is a short letter and another envelope addressed to Ducane. The short letter is from a "well-wisher" who thinks that the letter will interest her. She reads the letter, which is from Kate to John. She sits down in shock. After five minutes, she rereads the letter.

She is certain that the letter is from Ducane's mistress from its tone and references. She thinks that the woman sounds happy and loved. She gets the last letter she received from Ducane and rereads it. In it, he mentions preoccupying matters and she thinks about how different the letter reads now that she knows the truth. She thinks to herself that it is over now that she knows that Ducane has lied to her. She is tired now and sits down. When she stirs, it is evening. She walks to the table where the letter is and this time looks at the postscript, which contains the name Willy Kost.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Here, the reader again sees Jessica's obsession and denial where Ducane is concerned. She believes that if she can only get Ducane to stay with her, that he'll eventually come to love her and realize that he can't live without her. Yet, she is also worried about her encounter with Willy. She doesn't know if she can trust him not to tell Ducane. If he does, Ducane may leave her. However, as obsessed as she is with Ducane, Willy also intrigues her.



Jessica receives Kate's letter to Ducane from McGrath. She is upset, believing that Ducane has had a mistress for some time and has not told her. She rereads Ducane's letters to her in a new light, seeing evidence there of another woman. This appears to have finally cured her of her obsession with Ducane.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Biranne has come to Ducane's house. Ducane is already fairly certain from seeing the vault that Radeechy was probably not selling secret material to anyone. If he had been up to something like that, he wouldn't have risked bringing the girls to the office. Everything would make complete sense if Ducane hadn't known that Biranne was somehow involved. He had tampered with the body but Ducane also doubts whether Biranne holds the key to Radeechy's suicide. Regardless, Ducane wants to talk with Biranne and is excited that he has come.

Ducane tells him that he knows Biranne has come to tell him about Radeechy and wants to ask him some questions. Biranne tells him that he touched the body only to see if Radeechy was still alive and he pushed the gun out of the way in the process. When Ducane asks him about Helen of Troy, Biranne smiles and says that he knows that Ducane has had an encounter with her. Ducane becomes angry, feeling that the interview is not going as it is supposed to.

Ducane thinks that Biranne has come to find out what he knows and he has virtually informed Biranne that he doesn't know anything. Biranne questions him about McGrath's blackmail attempt. Ducane tries to bluff through, saying that he is using McGrath and only making him think that he'll get the blackmail. The two women know about each other, he says, and that he has a letter and a tape recording with McGrath trying to exploit him. Biranne tells him that McGrath doesn't know anything more because if he did, he'd have told Biranne. He thinks that Radeechy was just crazy with a weird interest in the occult and odd tastes in sex.

Ducane says softly that he knows Biranne is lying about not being more involved. He knows that Biranne took something off Radeechy's body and that while he might not know everything, he knows enough to make trouble for Biranne. Biranne says he is leaving but makes no move to do so. Ducane tells Biranne that he might be able to keep whatever it is quiet and away from the police. Biranne takes a deep breath. He has not killed Radeechy. He gives to Ducane a note in Radeechy's handwriting, his suicide note. In it, Radeechy admits to killing his wife by pushing her out a window. His motive was her affair with Biranne, who was present when the murder occurred.

Ducane is surprised. Biranne tells him that everything in the note is true: he was having an affair with Claudia, Radeechy's wife, and he did see Radeechy kill her. Biranne hadn't intended to use this against Radeechy but he thinks that Radeechy must have thought that's what he'd do. Radeechy had fallen for Judy, and although Claudia had tolerated the other girls, Judy had proved too much. Claudia began flirting with Biranne and had an affair with him. The night of the murder, all three were drunk and were talking about the affair. They were all arguing and Radeechy seized Claudia and pushed her out the window. They ran down and saw that she had broken her neck. Radeechy



told Biranne to go away. McGrath didn't know anything at first, but he guessed what had happened and told Radeechy that he knew. Since he also had pictures of Radeechy in the vaults with the girls, Radeechy began paying him. Radeechy had summoned Biranne to his office and killed himself in front of Biranne. Biranne was scared that if any of it came out that he'd be charged with murder.

Biranne asks what Ducane will do to him. Ducane admits that he doesn't really have a plan. He's not sure if he can protect Biranne because of the suicide note, which points to Biranne as an accessory to murder. Ducane promises him that he won't do anything for a couple of days and that he'll see Biranne before he does anything.

After Biranne leaves, Ducane finds a message from McGrath that one of the letters has been sent. McGrath won't send the other letter if Ducane agrees to give him the money. Ducane doesn't know which letter has been sent. He hesitates and then tears up McGrath's note. He walks upstairs to find Judy McGrath in his bedroom.

Chapter 28 Analysis

This chapter solves many of the mysteries surrounding Radeechy and his death. The reader learns that Radeechy's wife and Biranne were having an affair. Radeechy killed his wife by pushing her out of a window while Biranne was present. Although Biranne wasn't blackmailing Radeechy, Radeechy thought that he might at some point and this was part of the reason that he killed himself. He also summoned Biranne to watch him kill himself. Biranne tells Ducane this, even though Ducane is still in the dark about much of this. He guesses that Biranne took something off Radeechy's body but doesn't know what that contains. It is almost as if the secret of what happened is too much for Biranne to keep.

Now that Ducane knows, he is faced with having to make a decision about Biranne. At the same time, his personal life is beginning to unravel as McGrath has sent one of the letters. As before, the anxiety he feels from his professional and personal life intertwines. He has the power to end Biranne's career while at the same time, he remains powerless in front of the blackmail threat. One of the letters has been delivered and he can't stop it from happening.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Judy is naked in Ducane's bed. Ducane tells her to leave, but she continues to try to get him into bed with her. She gives him a whiskey and tells him that she married McGrath when she was very young, because she thought he would be someone. She calls Ducane Mr. Honey and says that she feels different since she met him. She thinks he can save her and she doesn't know where else to turn. Ducane thinks that he mustn't pity her because she could do him harm. He tells her that he can't do anything for her, but he begins to look at her body. He wonders what would happen if he had sex with her, but he knows that he won't touch her. Ducane tells her to get up and put some clothes on. He goes into the bathroom until she has finished. As he is leading her downstairs, he sees Fivey and tells him to take her home.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Ducane has found Judy in his bed. She again makes a play for him, believing that he can save her from her life. However, Ducane sees the danger that she poses for him. She has proven not only to be untrustworthy but also to use men for her own purposes. As she can no longer use Radeechy and Biranne, she appears to have set her sights on Ducane. Ducane resists, however.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Edward and Henrietta are talking in the kitchen. Mary sends them off with Mingo. Kate and John also leave, going outside. Kate and Octavian have just returned from their vacation and Octavian is in London today. Ducane also arrived the night before. Kate tells him about Tangier, where she and Octavian went. She tells him that she bought him a Moroccan hat. She says that everyone seems nervy and upset to her this morning. Kate thinks that she will have to attend to her family, who seem out of sorts. They talk a bit about the cuckoos that are around the house.

Theo walks past, seemingly ignoring them. Ducane and Kate call to him and finally get him to respond. Kate thinks he is upset about Mary and Willy. The two talk for a moment about Mary and Willy and how lucky they are and good for each other. They see the twins going down to bathe.

Kate is a bit dismayed that no one seems to be rejoicing that she is back among her people. She again thinks that she must go around, see everyone and find out what they are all preoccupied about. She and Octavian had a wonderful week in Tangier. However, she did not plan to tell Ducane that they had spent a great deal of the week in bed together. She wonders if perhaps Ducane knows; if he somehow senses it. She feels that she and Ducane are out of tune with each other but thinks that it will pass after they get used to one another again.

Kate asks Ducane if he minds if she looks through the letters that have come while she is gone. He becomes suddenly interested, leaning forward to inspect the letters. He picks up a brown envelope and turns to face Kate, who becomes alarmed. Ducane asks her not to read the letter because it contains something unpleasant from his past. Kate only becomes more interested, however. She says that she thinks it will be better if she reads the letter because if she doesn't, she'll just be wondering endlessly. She snatches the letter from him, retreats a little way away and opens it. The first note was from a well-wisher telling her that the enclosed letter will be of interest to her. The second letter is addressed to Ducane from Jessica, who professes her love for him and says she sees a future with him. Ducane tries to tell her that it's from a woman who he had an affair with in the past and that she just won't let go. Ducane gets up and tells her that he'll give her some time to digest it all. She asks him to explain but he refuses and leaves.

Chapter 30 Analysis

This chapter again points out the discrepancies in Kate's behavior. She has been on a vacation with her husband and they have spent a great deal of time indulging in one another. She wonders if Ducane can sense this but feels that they just need to get in



tune with one another. On the other hand, when she learns of Jessica, Kate's attitude toward him changes. At first, this may seem like an issue of trust and truthfulness and that is probably part of it. However, Kate has also flirted with Ducane's chauffer and has hidden this fact from him.

Kate appears again as slightly oblivious to how her actions affect others and as wanting to be the center of attention. She believes that she can solve everyone's problems and uneasiness by talking with them. Kate being back in the house will cure the household's problems.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Pierce announces that there will be a happening. It is after Saturday lunch and the household is sitting around talking. Mary and Ducane ask about this happening but Pierce is vague. Barbara declares that he is boring and leaves to play with the twins. Mary and Ducane leave a few minutes later for the kitchen. He asks Mary if he can help but she declines. She places a white cloth on a basket of raspberries and they begin walking up to Willy's.

Ducane agrees to talk to Pierce and Paula about what is troubling each of them. He thinks that the effect of Jessica's letter was to draw Kate and Octavian closer together. He now feels a sexual jealousy of Octavian. Kate has avoided being alone with Ducane since the letter. He has been trying to get in touch with Jessica but she is avoiding him too. He wishes that he had slept with Judy. He is muddled with all of this and he has to sit in judgment of another man as well. He isn't sure how he can let Biranne off, yet, he also finds the idea of ruining him distasteful.

Mary asks Ducane if he is okay. He says yes; he just had bad dreams the night before. She questions him about Kate, wondering if they have had a fight. He tells her that he has to make a decision about a man and the decision will affect the man's life. He feels bad having to make the decision. He feels calmed by Mary's presence.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Relationships within the household have now changed and will continue to do so. Kate and Octavian have drawn closer together in light of Ducane's revelation. His relationship with Kate is ending and Jessica is avoiding him. He finds that Mary's presence comforts him even though he doesn't fully confide in her.

Pierce's statement, like others he has given before, foreshadows the events that will happen in the ending chapters. Although one does not yet know what the happening will be, something is going to happen and the atmosphere surrounding it is ominous.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Mary is with Willy. She's put the raspberries in a bowl and is washing up. Paula isn't coming up today to read the *Aeneid*. They talk a little bit about where Willy and Paula are in the book. They get on the topic of descending to the underworld and Mary asks whether Dachau taught him anything. He responds,

"But very few ordeals are redemptive and I doubt if the descent into hell teaches anything new. It can only hasten processes which are already in existence, and usually this just means that it degrades. You see, in hell one lacks the energy for any good change. This indeed is the meaning of hell" (pg. 295).

Mary laments that she can't share anything with Willy. She walks to the window and gazes out, seeing the sea, and Ducane and Paula talking on the beach. Willy asks Mary to come to him, telling her that he can't marry her. She says that they will be as before but she can't help but be hurt. She thinks that a certain joy that she has found in him will never come to her again. She begins to cry, moving back to the window to hide it from him. Then, she turns to Willy and tells him that something is happening down at the beach.

Chapter 32 Analysis

Willy and Mary's relationship also changes. Willy tells her that he cannot marry her, sending Mary into a downward spiral. She feels that she will never find what she found in him. Yet, the two continue to hide things from one another. Willy does not tell her about his encounter with Jessica, even though this probably played a role in his decision. Mary tries to hide from Willy how deeply this has hurt her.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Ducane sits with Paula on the beach. She is thinking about Eric steaming toward her, and how she will meet him in London. When Ducane tries to gain some information about what is bothering her, she finally breaks down and confesses about her past affair. She tells him that Richard divorced her over the affair and that Eric is coming back to see her. Ducane asks about what happened and she explains that Richard and Eric had a fight.

Richard had said that he was going to Paris and so she had invited Eric over. They were talking, preparing to leave, when they realized that Richard was in the billiard room listening to them. Eric tried to talk to Richard, but Richard sprang at Eric, pushing him against the wall. In the process, the billiard table had overturned onto Eric. She and Richard had pulled it off him after great effort, but Eric had later had his leg amputated. They all pretended it was an accident. Paula says that she couldn't go back to Richard and she couldn't stay with Eric. Eric went away after that, writing that he had met someone on the boat to Australia and would be getting married. Then, Paula had received the letter about four weeks ago, telling her that he hadn't been married and was coming back to see her.

Ducane talks with Paula about the situation, asking whether she thinks she can do anything for Eric or whether she might love him again. Paula says that she doesn't think she can do anything and doesn't know what will happen next week when he arrives. As they talk, Theo comes up with the mail and gives Paula three letters. One of the letters is from Eric. Paula opens and reads it. She gives it to Ducane to read. Eric writes that he has met someone on the boat and won't be coming to see Paula after all. He and the woman are going to the United States. They are getting married and they will probably live in San Francisco after their wedding.

Ducane looks at Paula. She is transformed, relaxing and laughing. Ducane laughs with her. They talk a bit about the letter, and Paula thanks Ducane for helping her. He asks if she still loves Richard. Without hesitation, she says yes. They see the twins and Barbara running to them. They cry that Pierce has swum into Gunnar's Cave, saying that he is staying there and not coming out.

Chapter 33 Analysis

Paula finally confides in someone about the situation with Eric and the way her marriage ended. Her secret has now been shared with someone else, helping to lighten her load. Her discussion with Ducane will also set in motion later events, as Ducane has to decide Biranne's fate. He learns that Paula still loves Biranne in spite of everything that happened between them.



The letter from Eric announcing that he won't be coming lifts a weight from Paula. She is transformed from the woman she has been for most of the novel. Instead of her aloof anxiety, she is now relaxed and happy.



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

It is quiet inside the cave. Pierce swims with quiet strokes through the water, farther into the cave than he has ever been before. His desire to spend the duration of the tide in the cave has become obsessive. He glides in total darkness, the light from the entrance faded. He fumbles for the waterproof torch that he had tucked into his trousers. He looks around in the dim light from the torch, seeing two caverns, one going to the left and the other to the right. This unnerves Pierce, as he hadn't imagined having to make any choices. He chooses the right, turns off the torch and swims on.

After swimming a little while, Pierce comes across another division in the cavern. He thinks that he might survive the tide only to become lost in the cave. He questions whether he has time to swim back and get out. However, he continues. Coming into a wider space, he sees a sloping shelf on the wall and climbs on it, perching uncomfortably. Looking around, he sees that the four caverns leading off from the one he is in all have descending roofs.

Pierce hears a noise in the water. He looks over the water with his torch, seeing Mingo splashing in the water near him. He slips down the slope, losing the torch into the water, sending him into total darkness again. He reaches out and grasps Mingo's collar. Pushing the dog up onto the shelf and following himself, Pierce lays his head on Mingo and begins to cry.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Throughout the novel, Murdoch has hinted that Pierce would swim into the danger of Gunnar's Cave. His anxiety and pain over Barbara's rejection are transferred into an obsession about staying in the cave through high tide. His desire for this action seems without reason or thought. The action is compulsive. As such, the knowledge that he could die in the cave is not present in Pierce's mind until it is too late. He also does not consider how his actions will affect the others.

It is not until Pierce encounters Mingo in the dark of the cave that reality sets in. Suddenly, he is faced with the reality that his actions have affected another innocent being, in this case, Mingo. Now that he and Mingo are trapped in the cave, there is little that Pierce can do. He doesn't know how to get out in the dark and even if he did, he would also have to get Mingo out.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Ducane and Paula anxiously discuss what they should do. Barbara tells them that Pierce went in over fifteen minutes ago. Ducane tells Paula to sound the alarm, ringing the coast guard and the village, and to try to find a motorboat. Ducane is going to swim to the entrance of the cave and hopes to meet Pierce there. Paula and the children run off and Ducane runs into the sea, swimming toward the cave.

He enters the cave, only fifteen minutes before the mouth of the cave would close off. He doesn't really have a plan and now that he is in the cave, reality seems to recede. He calls for Pierce, allowing the water to carry him farther into the cave. Seeing something that looks like a hole, Ducane swims toward it, entering the blackness. He calls out again and hears a faint cry in reply. He imagines that Pierce is in the blackness, perhaps with a cramp or hurt or trapped, and he sees Mary's face before him. He swims on, feeling panicked as the darkness surrounds him. He thinks that he must get back, but the current carries him on. He fights his way to the wall and back the way he has come, but the light has faded and the entrance covered.

Ducane swims for a while, feeling cold and tired. He moves farther into the cave, calling out to Pierce but not receiving a reply. Finally, he hears Pierce and he follows his voice to him, finding ground to rest on. Pierce's shaky voice apologizes. Ducane tries to warm himself a bit and they discuss where they should go. They think that water is running through the holes in the rock, and they shuffled forward on the rock. The ground seems to rise beneath them, but they can't tell how much or where it is going in the darkness. They realize that they must keep going, as water is filling the cavern. They shuffle on, but soon they are becoming unable to stand. Pierce says that they have come to the end. They move back a bit, feeling around for other openings. The water is rising fast and they think that they are doomed.

Suddenly, Ducane sees what appears like a light above and he thinks the air is fresher. They find a hole in the ceiling. Pierce hoists himself up and calls down that there is a shelf. The hole is a chimney of sorts and he had to shimmy up. Pierce comes back and gets Mingo, hoisting him up and then pushing him until the dog is on the shelf. Ducane doesn't know how to get himself up there. He is afraid, both of the water and of the confined space above him. He feels tired and unable to continue. Pierce encourages him and Ducane tells him to take his pants and vests and create a rope with them. Pierce, on the shelf above, helps to pull Ducane up the chimney to the shelf. They are safe for now, but they can't tell if they are above the high tide line.

To ward off the cold, they put on Pierce's jersey together and pull Mingo up between them. The water has started to rush into the chimney below them. They lie on the shelf. Pierce cries. Ducane thinks of everything that has been going on, promising that if he



gets out, he will be no man's judge. He shifts and feels limpets on the rock and hopes that Pierce has not found them.

Chapter 35 Analysis

Almost without thinking, Ducane enters the cave to try to rescue Pierce. His actions are selfless, thinking of no one but Pierce and his safety. Ducane also does not give up within the cave. At one point, he could have still made it out of the cave before the tide covered up the entrance but he continues to look for Pierce.

Finding him, the two try to find a safe place. In both, one sees a mixture of bravery and fear. They know that they may not make it out and even if they find a place above the water, they may still die from exposure. Ducane almost does not make it up to the shelf. Pierce ends up saving both Mingo and Ducane by getting both onto the shelf above the water. Mingo saves both by keeping them warm and Ducane saves Mingo and Pierce by forcing them onward and providing calm for them. All three work together to survive the ordeal.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

A hushed voice asks how much longer and a hushed reply answers a few minutes. Two boats float near the cliff and most of those who had gathered from the village earlier have left. Silent and remote, Mary is sitting in the stern of one of the boats with Willy and Theo. Her thoughts are strangely remote, perhaps protecting her from the agony of hope. She wonders what it is like to be dead.

"Death happens, love happens, and all human life is compact of accident and chance. If one loves what is so frail and mortal, if one loves and holds on, like a terrier holds on, must not one's love become changed? There is only one imperative to love: yet how can one endure to go on loving what must die, what indeed is death?" (pg. 331-2).

The police launch has come back and it shines a bright light on the cliff. At the entrance of the cave, a faint streak appears. Mary shudders, a sharp hope twisting within her. They wait as the tide recedes further. In the other boat, people begin to whisper. Nothing is happening.

Suddenly someone cries. Something is splashing about, moving out of the cave. It's Mingo and Mary, crying, stares at the cave hole. There is another movement and Pierce appears. He is hoisted into the second boat. Theo holds awkwardly on to Mary. They wait again. Finally, Ducane appears and he is pushed into the boat with Mary. She takes off her overcoat and wraps it around him.

Chapter 36 Analysis

The atmosphere outside the cave is tense. The household waits with the police launch for the tide to go down. They spend an agonizing night on the water, watching the entrance even though the tide wouldn't go down for hours. Theo and Willy, who have been the most distant from Mary, try to comfort her. She is despondent and drifting away from reality, unable to focus on the situation yet not able to forget it.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Biranne is meeting with Ducane, who is sitting beside his fire at his house. Fivey is absent and Ducane wonders where he is. Ducane feels chilled, but the doctor had told them that Mingo had probably saved both his and Pierce's life. Telling Biranne to sit, Ducane asks him about Judy. Biranne responds that he dropped Judy as Ducane had told him to do. Ducane then asks if Biranne still loves his wife. Biranne tries to deflect and avoid the question, but he finally admits that he does and that he thinks about returning to her.

With Biranne puzzled, Ducane tells him that Paula still loves him. He has decided that he will keep quiet about Biranne's involvement in the Radeechy affair if Biranne will at least try to work things out with Paula. Biranne turns away as Ducane speaks,

"It isn't that I want to play God, I've just had this business forced upon me and I've got to do something about it. I really want to get it right out without doing any damage. As for the inquiry, I'm certain about the answer to the question and I shall say so without the details. The things about Paula just came as an inspiration, an extra, a felicitous conjecture. She certainly loves you, so why not try it? I'm not sentencing you to succeed, I'm sentencing you to try" (pg. 338).

Biranne decides to try, given that he has little choice. However, he asks Ducane to tell Paula the outline of the facts to pave the way. That way, if Paula chooses not to see him, it will end there. Ducane gives him Radeechy's confession and he leaves.

Back in the house, Ducane wonders again where Fivey is. He no longer thinks badly of Biranne and some of the tension between them relaxes with their meeting. Ducane no longer needs Biranne and with Biranne and Paula together, they will both avoid him. He wants someone to comfort him, someone like Mary, and he wants something to look forward to.

Ducane sits down and begins looking at the letters he has received. There are three letters: one from Kate, one from Jessica, and one in an unfamiliar writing. Ducane opens the last one first. The letter is from Judy, who tells him that she has run off with Fivey to Australia. Jessica's letter states that she feels there is no reason for them to meet anymore as Ducane has lied to her about Kate. She is hurt but she wishes him well. He opens Kate's letter. She writes, "I confess that I have found this revelation of another relationship hard to bear. As I said at the time, of course I have no *rights* where you are concerned. Yet maybe just this was our mistake, to think we could have this *something* without some degree of possessiveness" (pg. 343). She tells him to feel free to come to Trescombe as he did before.



Thinking about the letters, Ducane picks up the piece of paper on which he had written the odd cryptograms from Radeechy's vault. He finds that the one has "tenet" in the middle T. The other cryptogram has the first two letters of the Lord's Prayer in Latin in the shape of a cross. Ducane is disappointed. He gets up and walks around the room, thinking that an era in his life has ended. Sitting, he writes a resignation letter to Octavian.

Chapter 37 Analysis

The events in the cave have transformed Ducane in many ways. The anxiety over deciding Biranne's fate has faded and he is focused on trying to make the situation right rather than following a legalistic notion of what he should do. Whereas before he didn't know how to complete his report without mentioning Biranne, he now throws caution to the wind, deciding that Biranne will be spared. He wants to give Biranne and Paula another chance together.

His anxiety over Kate, Jessica and Judy has also dissipated. Judy has left with Fivey. Kate and Jessica have both ended their relationship with him. Ducane seems oddly relieved about the situation. He is free from the trouble that has followed him.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

Paula is at the National Gallery, waiting to meet Richard. He had suggested on a postcard to her that they meet here to talk. Having arrived early, Paula is anxious and faint. Richard comes in and sits beside her in front of the Bronzino picture. Telling her that he'd like to start businesslike, he asks her if Ducane has told her about the Radeechy affair and whether she thinks he should give himself in. After they have discussed this, he says, they can talk about what they will do personally.

Not having expected to make any judgments about the events, Paula thinks for a moment, but tells him that she doesn't think anything else is necessary. With that ended, they turn to their relationship. Richard says that he wants to come back if Paula wants him back. She says yes, but their yeses are inconclusive. Still tentative, Paula asks him about the woman she saw go into his house. Biranne tells her that it is over and with Eric now out of the picture, they can move on. They can't change the past but they might be able to do something together now. Paula questions him about whether he'll go on having affairs. He answers, honestly, that he doesn't know but that he will not lie anymore to Paula about them if they were to happen. They touch, profess their love and run from the Gallery as a group of tourists looks on.

Chapter 38 Analysis

Paula and Richard Biranne are united in this chapter. Paula has been released from her anxiety about Eric coming to see her, and Biranne has been released from his anxiety over what Ducane would do with the information. Ducane has made it so that they are free to explore the possibilities of restarting their life together. While they begin an almost businesslike discussion about whether Richard should still turn himself in, they move to a more emotional level when discussing their relationship.



Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Mary and Ducane are having a drink at Ducane's house. They talk about the other members of the household, especially how happy Richard and Paula seem. Mary asks him what it was like in the cave, as Pierce won't tell her anything. With Ducane avoiding her questions on this and on the recent decision he had to make, Mary bitterly says that she doesn't even know him. She gets up and prepares to leave, thinking to herself that she has fallen in love with Ducane after all these years, putting her in a terrible position.

"Realizing that one is in love with someone in whom one has long been interested is a curious process. What can it be said to consist of? Each human being swims within a sea of faint suggestive imagery. It is this web of pressures, currents, and suggestions, something often so much less definite than pictures, which ties our fugitive present to our past and future, composing the globe of consciousness. We think with our body, with its yearnings and its shrinkings and its ghostly walkings" (pg. 357).

She had not been in love with Willy, although she had loved him. Great love, as she had for Ducane, is inseparable from joy and from pain. However, she decides that he must never know, as she is much too plain an object to be visible to him. Ducane contemplates Mary as she is preparing to leave, thinking that he has undeniably fallen in love with her. He couldn't tell when this had happened; rather, it seemed as if he had been turning to her for so long. She is a mother goddess and he thinks that he has encouraged her to marry Willy out of fear of his own failure. He thinks that she must never know about his feelings, and once she is married to Willy, he will avoid the couple.

Ducane asks her when she and Willy will be married. Mary snaps that they aren't, that Willy doesn't want to marry. Kate had told everyone that it was happening. He tells her that he won't be seeing Kate, as she had found out about his entanglement with Jessica. Mary starts again to go.

Thinking quickly, Ducane tosses her a glass paperweight, which lands in her lap. She bursts into tears and as Ducane comforts her, she tells him that she loves him. He tells her that she must stay. He'll open a bottle of wine and they'll talk over dinner, as he has the other half to tell her.

Chapter 39 Analysis

In the novel, Ducane has remained somewhat passive in regards to his love life. He continued to see Jessica even though he didn't want to and when the blackmail letters are delivered, he leaves it up to both women to interpret them and choose the fate of their respective relationships. Even when he realizes that he loves Mary, he is willing to sacrifice that so that Mary will marry Willy. However, when he finds that they aren't and



that Mary loves him, he begins to assert himself, telling her to stay and have dinner so they can talk.

Mary and Ducane represent a good match for each other. They both care for others and are used to others confiding in them. In the next chapter, Ducane will think, "But it is in the nature of love to discern good, and the best love is, in some part at any rate, a love of what is good" (pg 359). Out of all the women in the novel, Mary is good. Her motives are pure and she loves with her whole heart. While Ducane has made some mistakes along the way, he has tried to do what is right, not wanting to hurt Jessica. The reader also sees Ducane's goodness when he decides to reunite Paula and Biranne rather than turning Biranne in.



Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

Barbara and Pierce have had sex. They talk about the experience and that it isn't a sin because they love each other.

As they prepare for bed, Octavian and Kate are talking about Mary and Ducane. They decide that they will forgive Ducane for his deception and hope that the two won't regret their relationship. They think that Ducane also had something to do with Richard and Paula reuniting. After Ducane's resignation, they expect that he'll do some research and teaching, but more than anything try to get on with his life. Lamenting, Kate cries that they've lost all their people, but Octavian reassures her that they'll get more people to fill the household. Kate tells him that she feels it is wonderful that they tell each other everything, but Octavian thinks that *he* doesn't tell *her* everything, particularly his late nights with his secretary.

Theo and Willy are at the cottage. Willy tells him that in London, he made love to a woman but that he doesn't anticipate seeing her again. Trying to encourage him to live life, Theo tells him to forgive Hitler. Willy tells him it's not about forgiving Hitler, it's about forgiving himself because he betrayed two people and they died. Willy begins to tell him about it, but Theo decides that he doesn't want to know, so he thinks about other things while Willy talks. When Willy finishes, they go into the kitchen and Theo sees a woman coming up to the cottage. Seeing that it is Jessica, Willy sneaks out to hide in the graveyard, but Theo tells her where to find him

Mary and Ducane have married. They are at Trescombe, gathering their things. No one else is around, except for Casie and the animals. Ducane introduces her to his new chauffeur, Peter McGrath.

The twins have brought Theo a letter with an Indian stamp. He opens it to find that the old man is dead. Theo thinks that he never revealed to the family that he had taken Buddhist Monastery vows, but had fled after an incident with a young novice who later drowned in the Ganges. He thinks that he may go back and perhaps die in the green valley there.

The twins are lying on the cliff edge, watching a flying saucer in the sky. They are happy about having their father back. As it starts to rain, they decide to go swimming.

Chapter 40 Analysis

The purpose of this chapter appears to be to wrap up the loose ends of the novel. Pierce and Barbara are united. Theo learns he can return to India. Willy tells Theo about Dachau and the two people he betrayed, ending his silence on the topic. Jessica comes to see Willy. Mary and Ducane have married. The one surprise of this chapter is

between Octavian and Kate. Octavian has been having an affair with his secretary. Although their relationship seemed the happiest and most solid throughout, in reality, secrets pervade it too.



Characters

John Ducane

Ducane is forty-three and has round blue eyes, a hooknose, and is starting to get gray hair. He visits the Trescombe estate from time to time, although he lives in London. He is an attorney and the legal advisor to the government department that Octavian heads. He appears in the novel as an intelligent, thoughtful man, although he is somewhat tormented by the events that are going on. He seems to dislike confrontation and at times passively accepts the situations with Jessica and Kate.

Octavian and the Prime Minister ask Ducane to head up the inquiry into Radeechy's death. Ducane learns about McGrath's involvement in bringing Radeechy items for his rituals in the vault. He also learns that Biranne was involved with Radeechy's wife and was present when Radeechy pushed her out the window, killing her. McGrath tries to blackmail him by threatening to send letters to Kate and Jessica, informing them of one another.

Ducane is involved with both Jessica and Kate throughout the novel, until they receive word of each other through McGrath's blackmail. He wants to end things with Jessica but feels guilty about starting the affair in the first place. With Kate, Ducane hopes to be drawn further into the life of the household so that he will have a family around him. When they find out about one another, both leave Ducane. Ducane, however, realizes that he is in love with Mary, and he marries her.

Jessica

Jessica is a twenty-eight-year-old teacher. She is pale, thin, and has long brownish-gold hair. She has been involved with John Ducane for some time. They met at a party and Ducane tried to end their affair eighteen months ago. Jessica, however, had pleaded with him and got him to agree to continue to see her as friends if they could not be lovers anymore. She loves him and continues to use his guilt over her to bind him to her.

Jessica is obsessed with Ducane. She watches his house at one point and even goes so far as to enter his house to search his bedroom for signs of another mistress. She believes that he will eventually realize that he loves her and can't live without her. As a result, she refuses to let Ducane end things with her, using tears and begging to get him to see her again.

Jessica eventually receives the blackmail letter from McGrath containing a note that Kate has written to Ducane. Believing that he has lied to her about not having a mistress, she ends things with Ducane. She then turns her attention to Willy Kost, whom she sleeps with after she searches Ducane's bedroom.



Mary Clothier

Mary has straight dark hair and the air of a governess. She runs the house, cares for the children and is always there for the others. Her husband, Alistair, died years ago, leaving her with little money and their son, Pierce. She came to Trescombe four years ago to live, having known Kate since they were in school. Although Kate brings the happiness and warmth to the family, Mary cares for them and takes care of the day-to-day activities and issues.

Mary feels distress over not being able to reach some members of the household, especially Willy and Theo. Although everyone expects the two men to confide in her, they do not. She worries about the other family members when they seem to be having trouble with something. When Ducane suggests that she marry Willy, she is excited by the prospect and eventually proposes to him. Willy thinks about it but ultimately turns her down.

Mary is forced to wait outside the cave when Pierce and Ducane are trapped in Gunnar's Cave. After they have been rescued, she appears to realize that she loves Ducane and by the end of the novel, they have married.

Willy Kost

Willy is a refugee scholar who lives in the cottage at Trescombe. He suffers from depression and the household is somewhat afraid that he might kill himself someday. Although the children are allowed to visit at any time, the adults are turned away sometimes when Willy does not wish to see them. He is a small, delicate man, with longish white hair and narrow brown eyes.

Willy had been in Dachau although he has never talked about it with anyone in the household. He remains separated emotionally and physically from the family by the cottage and his reluctance to have them visit. When Mary proposes, Willy wonders if he might still be able to find happiness. Yet, while at Ducane's in London, Willy sleeps with Jessica and this seems to turn his decision. He tells Mary that he cannot marry her.

At the end of the novel, Willy reveals that he betrayed two people and they died. He tells Theo about it, but Theo turns his thoughts elsewhere while Willy talks, so that he doesn't have to know. He tries to hide when Jessica arrives, but Theo tells her where to find him.

Kate Gray

Kate is Octavian's wife, Barbara's mother, and Ducane's lover, although not sexually. She has a bright round face and her hair is a golden fuzz. She has a slight Irish accent. Kate has brought the members of the household together, asking Mary and Paula and their children to come live with them. Mary thinks of Kate as "eternally and unreflectively



happy" (pg. 18). At times, Kate seems oblivious to the effects that her actions may have on others. Although warm and generous, she also seems somewhat self-centered at times.

Kate is proud of the fact that she and Octavian share everything and believes herself to be happily married. Kate and Ducane have embarked on an affair of sorts, although they do not have sex with each other. Kate tells Octavian about Ducane and how he kisses her. She also makes a pass at Ducane's chauffeur, Fivey, but only tells Octavian about it, thinking that it would hurt Ducane to know. When she finds out about Ducane's affair with Jessica, she ends their involvement.

Paula Biranne

Paula is the twins' mother and Richard's ex-wife. She moved with the twins to Trescombe after her divorce. Within the household, Paula is somewhat aloof and distant. While she interacts with the other members, she often holds herself away from them. In part, this may be that her personality is more introverted and cool as compared to Mary and Kate. She often leaves the parenting of the twins to Mary or the other household members. She is thin, with a narrow head and cropped brown hair.

Paula had an affair with an artist, Eric, during her marriage. When Richard found out, he attacked Eric and divorced Paula. Eric and Paula ended their affair afterward and Eric left for Australia. During the events of the novel, Paula receives letters from Eric telling her that he is coming to see her. Paula is filled with anxiety and dismay over this. She feels guilty about what happened to Eric but she does not love him anymore and doesn't think that she can do anything for him. She is resigned to meeting him though. Finally, she receives a letter from Eric saying that he has met someone else and won't be coming to see her. Paula is relieved and transformed into a relaxed, happy person. Ducane, learning that she still loves Biranne, arranges for the two to be reunited.

Richard Biranne

Biranne is one of Octavian's undersecretaries and is also Paula's ex-husband. He divorced her after he found out about an affair she had, although he had had many affairs before that. He and Paula unite at the end of the novel through Ducane's intervention.

Biranne was present during Radeechy's suicide. It takes Ducane a while in his investigation to find that Biranne was involved with Radeechy's wife and was present when Radeechy killed her. Radeechy summoned him to his office to watch him kill himself. After the suicide, Biranne searched the body and took Radeechy's suicide note from the body, leaving his prints on the gun and Radeechy's collar.



Peter McGrath

McGrath works an office manager in Octavian's office. He has red hair and pale blue eyes. When Ducane begins his investigation, it becomes clear that McGrath was involved somehow with Radeechy. He finds that McGrath was working for Radeechy, getting him objects and pigeons for Radeechy's rituals. He also provides his wife, Judy, for Radeechy.

McGrath tries to blackmail Ducane by stealing two letters from Kate and Jessica and threatening to send the letters to the women. When Ducane refuses to pay him, he does this. Ducane eventually forgives him and makes McGrath his new chauffeur.

Pierce Clothier

Pierce is Mary's son. His father died some years ago and he and Mary came to live at Trescombe. Pierce has brown hair and a brown complexion, with a large nose and a serious staring gaze. He looks bookish and intellectual, although this is somewhat misleading. He tends to move and speak slowly.

Pierce is in love with Barbara and spends the novel trying to get her attention and love. He arranged a shell design in her room, hid Montrose, and finally entered Gunnar's Cave. He is tormented by her lack of reciprocal feelings and her annoyance with him, making him strike out, not only at her, but also the other members of the household. He is a boy transitioning into a man and as such, is unsure of how to behave in the situation he has found himself. After escaping from Gunnar's Cave, he and Barbara end up together.

Edward and Henrietta Biranne

Edward and Henrietta are twins, the children of Paula and Richard Biranne, and they are nine years old. They live at Trescombe with their mother. The twins often erupt into questions and conversations about a variety of topics, from flying saucers to birds to stones. They are curious and full of life.

The twins are given free rein within the household. They are free to enter Willy's cottage whenever they wanted and even Theo connects to them. The household allows the twins to express themselves but still gives them limits.

Barbara Gray

Barbara is Octavian and Kate's daughter. Although Murdoch does not give us Barbara's age, she has entered young adulthood and inspires desire from both Pierce and Willy. She goes to school in Switzerland and comes home at the beginning of the novel. She



looks like her mother with the same round face and golden hair. She is long-legged and her complexion has an apple-like shininess.

Barbara appears at times as a selfish, self-centered teenager. She seems to hurt Pierce deliberately, even though she knows that he loves her, and lets him know that he annoys her. After Pierce escapes from the cave, they make love and profess their love for each other.

Octavian Gray

Octavian is a lazy, fat man whose wife refers to him as a perfect sphere. Octavian exists at the edges of the novel. He is married to Kate, has a daughter, Barbara, and heads up the office where Radeechy killed himself. Octavian puts Ducane in charge of the investigation into his death.

Octavian appears to love his wife, although he also engages in an extra-marital affair with his secretary. He accepts, and seems to find pleasure in, his wife's sexual flirtations with Ducane and Fivey.

Theodore Gray

Theo is a tall, gray-haired partly bald man. He has a bulging brow engraved with lines, and clever thoughtful eyes. He had been an engineer in Delphi, India and had come home to England under a cloud of mystery. Although he doesn't talk about it, the members of the household don't seem overly interested in what happened. At the end of the novel, we find that he had been involved with a young novice at the Buddhist monastery where he had taken vows.

Theo, while a member of the household, exists almost outside of it. He interacts mostly with the twins and at times with Willy. This separation may come from Theo not having attachments to any of the women in the novel as the other male characters do. He appears as the older bachelor figure.

Radeechy

Radeechy works in Octavian's office. He kills himself at the beginning of the novel. Through his investigation, Ducane finds that Radeechy killed his wife by pushing her out a window. He was also participated in some sort of occultist ritual in the vaults below the office. These rituals involve killing pigeons, various oils and herbs, and women, including Judy McGrath. Octavian thought Radeechy was intelligent but eccentric.



Gavin Fivey

Fivey is Ducane's chauffer. He is a Scotsman and has been in jail. He has reddish-brown hair and he has large freckles over his face and hands. Fivey eventually runs off to Australia with Judy McGrath.

Mary Casie

Casie is the housekeeper at Trescombe. She appears to get along with everyone well.



Objects/Places

Willy's Cottage

The cottage is on Octavian's estate. It is a rectangular brick building, with one large sitting room, a kitchen, bathroom and small bedroom. The walls are covered with bookshelves.

Trescombe House

Trescombe is Octavian and Kate's estate in Dorset, England. It is close to the beach and the sea. The family often goes down to walk along the water or swim in it.

Gunnar's Cave

This is the cave that is located in the cliff near Trescombe House. Pierce swims into the cave near the end of the novel. John Ducane swims in after him and the two, along with Mingo, spend the night in the cave during high tide, barely surviving.

The Vaults

The vaults are located beneath Octavian's offices. Radeechy used the vaults for his rituals. McGrath takes Ducane down there during his investigation.

John Ducane's house

The house is located in London. Ducane meets with both McGrath and Biranne there at various points in the novel, often in his drawing room near the fire.



Themes

Secrets

Virtually all of the characters in *The Nice and the Good* carry with them some secret during the course of the novel. The keeping and discovering of secrets carry the events of the novel along. Willy keeps his time in Dachau a secret; Theo keeps secret why he left India. Paula doesn't tell anyone that Richard divorced her and that Eric is coming for her; Octavian is having an affair with his secretary. Ducane is involved with both Kate and Jessica, Kate made a pass at Fivey, and Biranne witnessed Mrs. Radeechy's death. Pierce is hiding Montrose and McGrath helped Radeechy set up the vaults for his rituals. The characters spend a great deal of time thinking about their secrets and plotting how to keep them from the others. The secrets are almost all about love or sexual affairs as well. The characters keep secrets from their lovers or keep secrets about their lovers. They are afraid of what others will think of them, should the truth be revealed, and fear the end of romantic and platonic relationships.

The secrets become destructive throughout the novel. In some cases, the secrets destroyed lives. Radeechy kills himself from the burden of knowing he killed his wife. In others, the secrets force the characters to change their lives in some way when they come out. When Kate and Jessica find out about each other, both reassess their relationships with Ducane and choose to end them. Although he escapes punishment in the end, Biranne also stands to lose his career and livelihood should it come out that he witnessed Claudia's murder. Other secrets force characters to deny a part of themselves. Willy hides his attraction to Barbara just as Theo hides his attraction to Pierce. Paula hides the reality of her relationship with Eric and denies to herself that she still loves Richard.

In the end, Murdoch appears to argue that secrets have a way of coming out and that this may be a cathartic process. Several of the characters find themselves in better places after the truth comes out. Ducane marries Mary and Willy, after telling Theo about his betrayal, is pursued by Jessica. Biranne and Paula are reunited after they admit what is troubling both of them. The constant need to hide something from others took a toll on the characters both mentally and physically and when the secrets are revealed, they are able to focus their energy on better and more productive areas, making their lives better in the process.

Love

Love is a central theme in the novel. The characters are searching for love in their family and in romantic partners. One aspect of the love theme in the book is romantic love and dealing with the entanglements of love gone wrong. At the center of this is Ducane, who has found himself involved with two women, one of whom is married and the other obsessed with him. Although he loves both of them, he is not in love with



either. He is searching for commitment and stability, not realizing that love would bring those things to him in the form of Mary. However, he is not the only character who searches for romantic love. Pierce, Mary, Theo, Willy, Jessica, Biranne and Judy all search as well. Their searches, like Ducane's are confusing and troublesome because they are often searching with an ulterior motive. Mary wants to be able to comfort Willy. Willy wants to find happiness. Judy wants to escape her life. Jessica wants someone to complete her. Until the characters begin to search with their hearts and to let go, love is elusive.

This search for love in the wrong places leads to a number of entanglements and problems. Ducane becomes caught between Kate and Jessica, powerless in either situation. He has to wait as they each receive the blackmail letters and decide what to do. Pierce also struggles with his desire for Barbara, hiding Montrose, lashing out at the others and swimming into Gunnar's Cave. Theo's involvement with a novice led to his departure from India, even though he wants to be back there.

Love is also expressed through the relationships of the household. Ducane states that he wants to become involved with Kate, even though she is married, because she can draw him into the family life. The characters provide love for each other, as well as being concerned about each other's welfare. They care for each other, giving each other gifts and spending time with one another. Mary, at one point, thinks that loving other is the most important thing that a person can do.

Obsession

Murdoch also shows through several of the characters the development and consequences of obsession, particularly as it relates to love. Jessica's obsession for Ducane is the most obvious in the novel. Although their affair had stopped, she pleaded with him until he agreed to continue to see her. Her life became wrapped up in seeing him and waiting to see him, everything revolving around his presence or absence. When he threatens to leave her, Jessica becomes despondent, sad and desperate, clinging to him until he agrees to continue with her. She believes that she needs him in her life for her happiness, not seeing how miserable her existence has become. Her obsession culminates when she watches his house and when she goes into his house to search for the mistress she believes he has. Murdoch describes Jessica as engaging in a frenzied search, tossing items around and crawling on the floor looking for evidence. She is so caught up in the search that she doesn't even hear Willy approach.

Pierce also suffers from an obsessive love for Barbara. In the beginning of the novel, he creates a design on her table with shells. However, as he continues to try to get close to her, following her and trying to talk to her, Barbara just becomes annoyed. Unlike Ducane who gives in to Jessica, Barbara continues to hold Pierce at a distance. Pierce reacts by lashing out at the others, including the twins, and by hiding Montrose from the household. He explains that he simply wants Barbara to come to his room as she used to; when she doesn't, he continues to keep Montrose hidden. Pierce's obsession culminates with his trek into Gunnar's Cave. His obsession over Barbara becomes

intertwined with an obsession of Gunnar's Cave and seeing if he can survive high tide in the cave. Rational thought exits his mind, he swims in, determined to explore the cave knowing that he will be trapped there as the water rises.

Both Pierce and Barbara are released from their obsessions by the end of the novel. Jessica is loosened from the bonds when she receives the blackmail letter, her suspicions about Ducane confirmed in her mind. She turns towards Willy, who will provide her with the stability and instruction that she needs. Pierce survives the cave and Barbara returns his love. They embark on a relationship together.

Style

Points of View

The Nice and the Good is written from a third person perspective and focuses on the members of the Trescombe household. This allows Murdoch to explore the thoughts and feelings of many of the characters throughout the novel. We see what the characters think and feel about one another as the novel progresses.

The story is told through a mixture of dialogue, description and the inner thoughts of the characters. Murdoch employs the third person narrative in order to move through the complex story lines and multiple characters. In this way, we are privy to the thoughts and feelings of all the characters, getting all sides of the story. We understand Jessica and Ducane's affair, for example, through both of their eyes. Through the dialog, we can see how the characters interact with one another and the motives behind their actions are shown through their thoughts.

The third person narration also allows the reader to make their own judgments about the characters, identifying and having empathy for those who maybe closest to their own experiences. The reader must interpret the actions and motives of the characters.

Setting

The Nice and the Good opens in a London government office with Radeechy's suicide. From there, the novel's events shift back and forth from London to the Dorset coast and the Trescombe estate of Kate and Octavian.

In London, the novel takes place between the office and its vaults and houses of the characters, including Ducane, Jessica, McGrath and Biranne. As much of the London scenes revolve around Ducane, the settings increase the feeling of Ducane being enclosed, trapped and powerless against the events that are happening there. The meetings that take place in his home indicate how his professional life is crossing into his personal one through his anxiety and McGrath's blackmail attempt.

In Dorset, the scenes vary from the main house to Willy's cottage to Gunnar's Cave to various other outside venues including the graveyard. The setting is one of sand and sunshine, mirroring the appearance and personality of Kate. The household, in many ways, has fled to Trescombe to escape the unpleasantness of events outside its borders. Yet, during the novel, this unpleasantness threatens them, mainly through the post as both Paula and Kate receive troubling letters there.



Language and Meaning

Murdoch uses simple language throughout the novel, making it accessible for most readers, although the themes are geared toward a more adult audience. The author uses strong language several times, but overall, the book is free from strong or vulgar language.

Although much of the novel is concerned with love, obsession and sex, all of the love scenes happen outside of the reader's gaze, jumping from the beginnings to the after effects. Similarly, Radeechy's suicide and the violence of his rituals in the vault are discussed in such a way that they are neither sensationalized nor gruesome. The actual violence happens outside the novel, although it is discussed within.

Structure

The Nice and the Good consists of forty chapters. It also contains a list of other books by the author.

The plot of the novel is linear, with flashbacks to previous events seen in the characters' dialog or inner thoughts. The book shifts back and forth from London to Dorset and from one character to another throughout. Although the primary focus of the book appears to be Ducane and the struggles he is facing, other characters receive a great deal of attention.

Murdoch uses a mixture of dialog, description and the characters' inner thoughts to move the plot along. She also uses the text of letters in various chapters, either for characters who are not present in the novel or to more fully show a character's thoughts in relationship to their actions.



Quotes

"A head of department, working quietly in his room in Whitehall on a summer afternoon, is not accustomed to being disturbed by the near-by and indubitable sound of a revolver shot." Chapter 1, pg. 1

"The front door was wide open, framing distant cuckoo calls, while beyond the weedy gravel drive, beyond the clipped descending lawn and the erect hedge of raspberry-and-creamy spiraea, rose up the sea, a silvery blue, too thin and transparent to be called metallic, a texture as of skin-deep silver paper, rising up and merging at some indeterminate point with the pallid glittering blue of the midsummer sky." Chapter 2, pg. 15

"He became gradually and sadly aware that she did not share his new-found liberty. He had not set her free. She was still in love with him and indeed still behaved as if she were his mistress. Her time consisted of seeing him, waiting, seeing him again, of presence, absence, presence." Chapter 3, pg. 24

"Pierce sat down on the ivy with his back against the tombstone. He wanted to lay his head against Barbara's biscuity brown legs, a little above the knee, and moan loudly. He also wanted to destroy something, everything, perhaps himself." Chapter 7, pg. 58

"Mary constantly told herself how lucky she was to live with so many people whom she loved and that surely so much love was enough to fill a woman's life. She knew perfectly well, with her heart's blook as well as with her mind, that living people was the most important of all things. Yet she know too that she was deeply discontented and she sometimes suffered fierce feral moods of confused yearning during which it seemed to her that her whole life was a masquerade and that she was piously acting the part of a kindly affectionate serviceable woman who was just not herself." Chapter 10, pg. 93

"How lovely it is, thought Kate, to be able to fall in love with one's old friends. It's one of the pleasures of being middle-aged. Not that I'm really in love, but its just like being in love with all the pain taken away. It's an apotheosis of friendship, it's something one thought possible when one was young and then forgot about." Chapter 11, pg. 102

"Jessica had not felt deprived or excluded. Now, however, especially since he had spoken of leaving her, Ducane's house had become in her mind a place both mysterious and magnetic, as if it contained, in the form of some talismanic object, the secret of his change of heart." Chapter 17, pg. 153

"Jessica began to look into corners, to search the floor. Some tiny thing, a bead, a button, a hairpin, must be hiding somewhere in the carpet. She lifted the skirts of the bedcover and crawled underneath the bed. There, as she lay full length, feverishly combing the carpet with her fingers, she became aware that the room had darkened." Chapter 23, pg. 202.



"He thought, Innocence matters. It is not a thing one just loses. It remains somehow magnetically in one's life, remains as something quick and alive and utterly safe from the mechanical and the dreary." Chapter 25, pg. 216

"First there were a number of well-corked clearly labelled glass jars such as one might find in a kitchen. Ducane looked at the labels: poppy, hyssop, hellebore, hemp, sunflower, nightshade, henbane, belladonna. The black bread and a pile of walnuts were laid next to them. There followed a large packet of table salt, a small silver-gilt bell, a Bible, a battered Roman missal, some sticks of incense, an elongated piece of silver on a stand with a cross-bar close to the foot of it, and a slim black whip." Chapter 26, pg. 227

"Well, there was that little business of ours, you know. You were kind enough to help me out with a little money, if you remember, sir. And I was able to oblige you about the young ladies' letters. I'd be most grateful, sir, if we could now put this little matter on a proper business footing and then we can both forget all about it, see? I like you, sir, I won't make any secret of it, I like you, and I want us to be friends. Mr. Radeechy and I were friends like, and you and I could be friends, Mr. Ducane, sir, and that's what I'd like best." Chapter 26, pg. 233

"A shiver of panic went through Pierce like an electric shock and he began at once to feel cold. He thought, Supposing I were to swim very fast back the way I came, would I be in time to get out of the cave before the tide covered the entrance?" Chapter 34, pg. 311

"The water was boiling at the bottom of the shaft, rushing up it and then retiring with a noise like a cork being withdrawn from a bottle. Ducane thought, At any rate we shall know pretty soon, one way or the other." Chapter 35, pg. 328

"No love is entirely without worth, even when the frivolous calls to the frivolous and the base to the base. But it is in the nature of love to discern good, and the best love is, in some part at any rate, a love of what is good." Chapter 39, pg. 359



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Ducane's relationships with Jessica and Kate. How are the relationships similar to or different from each other. Why is Ducane in each of these relationships?

Why does Murdoch title the novel *The Nice and the Good*? What does this indicate about her belief in love?

Why does Pierce swim into Gunnar's Cave? How does this experience change both him and Ducane?

Choose one relationship in the novel and describe its course through the novel. What secrets are kept within or from the relationship? How does the relationship change?

Kate and Octavian's marriage is described by Mary as a happy one. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Judy McGrath weaves through the novel. How is she connected to the other characters? What is she looking for in her experiences with the other characters? Why does Ducane reject her?

Willy's secret is the only one in the novel that is revealed but yet still unknown. Why do you think Theo chose not to listen to Willy's story? Why do you think Willy tells Theo when he has not confided in anyone else? How do you think this does and will affect their relationship?

Why does Mary and Ducane's relationship succeed when the others that they were a part of during the novel do not? What is different in this relationship?