

Out of the Easy Study Guide

Out of the Easy by Ruta Sepetys

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Contents

Out of the Easy Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 – 12.....	4
Chapters 13 – 24.....	9
Chapters 25 – 36.....	14
Chapters 37 – 48.....	18
Chapters 49 – 59.....	22
Characters.....	25
Symbols and Symbolism.....	28
Settings.....	30
Themes and Motifs.....	32
Styles.....	36
Quotes.....	37



Plot Summary

“Out of the Easy” is a young adult novel by Ruta Sepetys which follows 17-year-old Josie Moraine’s efforts to get out from under the shadow of her mother’s work as a prostitute, to leave New Orleans, and to attend college in Massachusetts. When the novel begins, Josie has saved up a few hundred dollars to put her plan into action. She earns money from Willie Woodley’s brothel in the French Quarter where she works as a housemaid, and from working at Marlowe’s Bookshop with the owner’s son, Patrick. Josie has lived in a small but cozy apartment over the bookshop since she was young, provided by Patrick and his father so Josie could stay away from her mother.

Josie has a poor relationship with her mother, who is quick to hit and resents being a mother, blaming Josie for dragging her life down. As a result, Josie does her best to stay away from her mother, especially because her mother is dating a violent criminal named Cincinnati. Josie does her best to focus on getting out of New Orleans, and takes comfort in her friendship with Patrick which often seems like it might be more. Josie has long wondered about who her father might be, and imagines that it must be a man named Forrest Hearne who visits the bookshop on New Year’s Eve. Forrest is a gentleman and purchases a book of poetry for his wife, and the Dickens novel “David Copperfield” for himself. Forrest asks Josie if she’ll be attending college, and believes she seems familiar to him. Neither Josie, nor Forrest, can understand why –though it is later imagined that Forrest may have actually been Josie’s father.

Josie is stunned to learn the next day that Forrest has died. His death is initially ruled natural, but an autopsy and the theft of his personal possessions reveals that he was murdered. Josie has a cruel encounter with her mother and Cincinnati, who reveal they are suddenly leaving for California. This makes Josie happy, and causes Willie – the madam at whose house Josie’s mother works – to tell Josie to truly cut off all ties with her mother. Willie even agrees to send Josie to college if Josie remains local. But a chance encounter and subsequent friendship with a visiting Smith College freshman named Charlotte encourages Josie to apply.

Ultimately, Josie comes to learn that her mother was involved in Forrest’s death, and that she borrowed money from local mobster Marcello to buy an alibi. But her mother’s debt has now passed on to Josie. Josie experiences soon after suffers heartbreak as she learns that Patrick does not want her because Patrick is gay. As a result, Josie grows closer to her friend, Jesse, instead. He and Josie end up in a relationship, while Willie pays off Josie’s inherited debt. Willie dies of a heart attack soon afterwards, leaving much of her wealth to Josie. This enables Josie the chance to attend college if she is accepted. When the novel ends, Jesse drives Josie up to Massachusetts for an interview.



Chapters 1 – 12

Summary

Chapter 1 – Josie Moraine’s mother, Louise, is a prostitute, having taken up such work after she and Josie moved back to New Orleans from Detroit when Josie was seven back in 1940. Josie remembers how her mother promised her a doll if she behaved and did as she was told. Josie recalls how she and her mother were driven to Madame Willie Woodley’s brothel on Conti Street in the French Quarter by Cokie, a dark-skinned taxi driver, who gave Josie Mary Jane molasses candy. Josie recalls her first impressions of the inside of the house being gaudy, with paintings of nude women, cigarette smoke, and stale perfume. She also recalls how Willie was at first concerned to have Josie around, deciding that Louise would have to stay elsewhere because Josie was so young.

Chapter 2 – It is New Year’s Eve, ten years later. Josie is now 17 and works at the bookshop owned by old family friend Charlie Marlowe. Josie hates how everyone whispers about her mother’s profession, and how they pretend to feel sorry for Josie. Josie, however, knows she is her own person. She is saving up money to leave New Orleans. On her way to the bookshop, Frankie, one of Willie’s information men, lets Josie know that Cincinnati is around. Cincinnati supposedly works for local mobster Carlos Marcello, and is supposedly in love with Louise. Josie and Willie both hate Cincinnati because the last time he was in town, he got drunk and beat up Louise. To stop him, Josie had thrown hot coffee on him, prompting him to threaten Josie.

As Josie continues to Marlowe’s Bookshop, Jesse Theirry says hello from his motorcycle. Jesse is edgy and striking which makes Josie uncomfortable. Josie arrives at the bookshop, now run on a day-to-day basis by 21-year-old Patrick, Charlie’s son, due to Charlie’s mental condition. Patrick hands her a note from Cokie, which Josie reads in a small, upstairs apartment that Charlie and Patrick made for her. The note says “Cincynatty” on it.

Chapter 3 – Josie runs across the street to Sal’s Restaurant to call Willie to let her know about Cincinnati. Willie reports that Louise has been giggling all morning, and that now it makes sense why. Willie orders Josie to stay in, and not to come around until morning.

Chapter 4 – Back at the bookshop, Josie reads the society pages of the paper, which Patrick teases her about. A gentleman from Memphis named Forrest Hearne comes in to the bookshop seeking a volume of poetry by Keats. Hearne explains he is an architect and a developer, and is in town for the Sugar Bowl, and played wide receiver for Vanderbilt back in the day. He is glad to learn that Josie wants to go to college. Hearne believes Josie seems familiar, but neither of them can figure out why. Hearne purchases Keats for his wife, and a copy of “David Copperfield” for himself. He and Josie both share they have had rough childhoods, and take comfort in the book. Even



though the store does not officially take checks, Josie accepts a check from Hearne for the books. Hearne then wishes her a Happy New Year and leaves.

Chapter 5 – Josie stares at the check and the man’s address from Memphis. She pulls out a list of names of men who have come into the bookshop who she thinks might be her father, and adds Forrest Hearne to the list. She also adds his reading interests as she has for the others as well. She thinks about how Forrest Hearne asked her about college while her own mother didn’t even attend her high school graduation the year before. It also makes her think about the engraved Tiffany’s locket given to her as a graduation gift by Willie, who told Josie that all engraved things eventually come back. Josie settles in to read, but then Patrick and a friend enter the shop to get a book. This startles Josie, who is in her nightgown and who thinks at first Patrick may have been Cincinnati. She hits him with a book but is glad to learn that Patrick is only Patrick.

Chapter 6 – The next morning, Josie works her other job, cleaning and tending to Willie’s brothel. The place is a mess from the New Year’s celebration. Josie begins by cleaning Sweetie’s room. Sweetie is a “quarter negro” like Cokie, is young, and very pretty. Josie then moves on to Dora’s room. Dora is a redheaded beauty with massive breasts. Josie then cleans Evangeline’s room. Evangeline is a tiny, young, petite girl who plays an innocent schoolgirl but is very mean and a reformed thief. Josie then cleans her mother’s room, and then moves on to others. Sadie, a mute cook and laundress, tends to the kitchen. As Josie cleans, she finds various personal possessions that Willie returns or keeps for their owners. Among them is a .38 caliber bullet which startles Willie and Josie. Josie asks Willie if a man named Forrest Hearne visited the brothel. Willie explains he did not, but that Forrest Hearne is dead.

Chapter 7 – Cokie explains to Josie that his friend, Eddie Bones, bandleader at the Sans Souci club on Bourbon Street, said that around four in the morning, Forrest Hearne keeled over at his table and died. Josie is horrified, and asks Cokie to go to the coroner and find out what happened. Josie knows something isn’t right because Forrest was wealthy, seemed clean, and seemed healthy. Josie then goes to visit Patrick and his father. Patrick’s face is bruised from the book from the night before. Josie feels horribly about it. Patrick is stunned to learn of Forrest’s death from Josie. Patrick tells Josie he saw her mother with a man in an ill-fitting black suit. Josie knows this must have been Cincinnati, but denies knowing who the man was.

Chapter 8 – It is January 2. A beautiful girl named Charlotte Gates comes into the shop seeking a book for her father. She explains she is a freshman at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and that the book she is seeking is “Fabulous New Orleans” by Lyle Saxon. Charlotte and Josie discuss literature, including Ethan Frome, which causes Charlotte to recognize that Josie is intelligent and modern. She encourages Josie to apply to Smith. Charlotte explains she is part of a new group on campus called the Student Progressives, who promote opportunities for women and minorities. Charlotte encourages Josie and Patrick to attend a party her uncle and aunt are throwing Uptown on Prytania Street. Patrick says they will attend, but Josie is very nervous.



Chapter 9 – Patrick heads out to purchase books while Josie stocks shelves, thinking about attending Smith. Suddenly, Josie is confronted by Cincinnati, who says he has a score to settle. He grabs Josie, but Cokie arrives with a tire iron and orders Cincinnati to let Josie go. This gives Josie the chance to reach under her skirt to pull out her revolver and level it at Cincinnati. Cincinnati tells Josie not to be crazy, and that he is merely there to tell her to meet her mother at the Meal-a-Minit at three. He then leaves, telling Josie he'll be waiting to see her again. Cokie tells Josie that the coroner, Dr. Moore, said that Forrest died of a heart attack. Patrick then returns to the bookshop, causing Josie to pull out her gun again.

Chapter 10 – Josie heads into the Meal-a-Minit diner to wait for her mother just as Jesse pays for his food and leaves. She is accompanied by a hired thug named Sonny, paid for by Willie. Louise then arrives, and urges her daughter to get out and live before she is past her prime. She explains that Josie was named after a high-class madam, and that Josie herself could be a good madam. Josie tells her she has no such interest. Louise reveals she and Cincinnati are headed to California, and that Louise hopes to have a break in Hollywood. Josie tells her mother she is too old, to which Louise responds that Josie is just jealous. Louise tells Josie the best years of her life were ruined by Josie, and that she won't ever be coming back. Louise then leaves.

Chapter 11 – Josie heads to Willie's to iron her blouse for the party. Sweetie, Dora, and the other girls are excited to learn that Josie is going with Patrick. Sweetie loans Josie her pearls for the party. Willie worries about Josie attending the party, but also wonders if Josie has seen Louise. Josie explains she has seen Louise, but lies and says that Louise only wanted money from her. Josie then meets with Patrick, and the two head to the home of John and Lillian Lockwell.

Chapter 12 – Josie is amazed by the Uptown neighborhood. It is spacious, beautiful, and quiet. She and Patrick are further amazed by the Lockwells' Greek Revival mansion. Charlotte is thrilled that Josie and Patrick have arrived. John and Lillian are happy to meet Josie and Patrick, but are a little taken aback to learn that they live in the French Quarter. When they learn that Patrick can play the piano, they encourage him to play. Charlotte then brings Josie and Patrick to the library, where they are joined by Charlotte's father. Charlotte's father and Patrick then head back out so Patrick can play the piano. Elizabeth Lockwell, daughter of John and Lillian, rushes in and asks if Patrick is single, or if she is the girlfriend of what her mother called the "sad-looking waif from the Quarter". Josie quickly leaves the room.

Analysis

"Out of the Easy" is a young adult novel by Ruta Sepetys which follows seventeen year-old Josie Moraine's efforts to get out from under the shadow of her mother's work as a prostitute, to leave New Orleans, and to attend college in Massachusetts. From the start, the reader is exposed to each of the themes that will ultimately come to be seen throughout the book. Josie's very existence, and her life in New Orleans, is owed directly to her mother's life as a prostitute. Josie's own early life has been arranged



around the prostitution of the French Quarter, where a blind eye is turned toward the crime. Josie must live with daily humiliation that her mother is a prostitute, let alone with the lack of a relationship with her mother at all.

Josie's mother is cruel and unkind, and the family love between them is severely lacking. Indeed, Louise believes her life has only been made difficult by Josie's appearance in it and is only too happy to tell Josie she is leaving for California. With a lack of family to depend upon, Josie reaches out to her best friend, Patrick, and commits to attempting to learn just who her father may have been while helping Patrick to care for his. The reader should note the appearance of Forrest Hearne, an upper class gentleman who is both moral and kind. The reader should therein note that Josie and Forrest appear to have something of a connection between them, though neither one can place it.

It may well be that Forrest is actually Josie's father, or that both have recognized a kindred soul in the other. Regardless, this underscores how important stability is for Josie, and underscores how she aspires to get out of New Orleans to be successful like Forrest. Indeed, Forrest's death becomes traumatizing for Josie because, in the short time that she knew Forrest, he assumed she was going to college – something which touches her deeply. He had known her for all five minutes and already believed in her – something which she does not have with her mother.

And what Josie aspires to rise above is the criminal background in which she has grown up. Crime becomes an important theme herein. The kinds of criminals that populate New Orleans – especially the French Quarter – range from run-of-the-mill small-time crooks, thieves, and informants like Frankie to dangerous rogues like Cincinnati to brutal mobsters like Marcello. Prostitution also presents a massive arc of crime in the novel, one which the police and law enforcement has tended to look over since the heyday of prostitution is gone, and because they have more pressing things to attend to.

What Josie aspires to be is a member of another class. The class divide becomes an important theme in the novel, as already the reader can see divisions among people based on their stations in life. Whereas social mobility is very possible in a place like America, the European class-system of France still heavily influences New Orleans in ways no longer mattering elsewhere. The prostitutes and criminals are considered of the lowest order, while the working class people like Patrick appear just above them.

Patrick's father, a self-made man as a writer and bookshop owner fits comfortably into middle class, while Charlotte and the Lockwells are of the upper class. Generally, except for sex or business, the upper class does not mix with the lower class. Both classes generally look upon each other with disdain or jealousy. In Josie's case, it is ambition that she looks upon the upper class with. She sees in Charlotte everything she herself wishes she could be. Yet the labeling of Josie as a "waif" by Mrs. Lockwell humbles Josie in a very bad way, making her feel horribly about herself.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Josie want so badly to leave New Orleans? What are motivations for leaving? What does she wish to do when she leaves? What obstacles stand in her way?

Discussion Question 2

How does meeting Charlotte change and improve Josie's plans for leaving New Orleans? Does this seem like a realistic goal for Josie? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Josie have such a bad relationship with her mother? Why does Josie's mother seem to have such little concern or care for her daughter? Can Louise be faulted for this? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

opulent, gaudy, courtesan, harlot, pretentious, sacrilege, sophisticated, debutante, agape, ingrate, boisterous



Chapters 13 – 24

Summary

Chapter 13 – As Josie and Patrick prepare to leave later, Charlotte apologizes for her relatives. Josie says it isn't necessary. As Josie and Patrick head outside, they overhear a drunken woman sobbing about a cheating husband, about how Forrest Hearne did not actually die of a heart attack, and that the French Quarter should be burned to the ground. They also encounter Elizabeth's older brother, Richard, who says he saw Patrick on New Year's Eve and tells Elizabeth to stay away from Patrick. Cokie then picks Josie and Patrick up, telling them that rich people might have all the money and luxury in the world, but that their souls are broke. Cokie also warns them against Richard, saying Richard once hung four baby kittens in the Quarter, and that Richard isn't right in the head.

Chapter 14 – Josie buys two pink lilies from Jesse, who works his grandfather's flower cart. Jesse explains he is now in his first semester of college at Delgado. At Willie's, Josie learns that Willie is off to see a lawyer, and has learned the truth about Louise. Willie is upset that Josie has lied. Willie tells Josie to never end up like her mother, and to let her mother go. She tells Josie never to let her mother back in again. Evangeline then appears and tells Josie to move all of her things into her mother's old room, and to clean the room thoroughly. Josie resolves to get out of New Orleans as fast as she can.

Chapter 15– While cleaning out her mother's room, Josie comes across a never-filed police report from when Cincinnati beat Louise. The report lists Louise as being far younger than she actually is, and that Louise has no children. This hurts Josie deeply. Dora comes in to talk to Josie, having heard about the argument with Willie. Dora says that Willie has been cranky lately, and not to worry about it. Dora tells Josie her life is not meant to be one of prostitution. Josie confesses she wants to go to college. Dora doesn't think this is possible, but does think Josie has other good options such as being a hatcheck girl. Josie then returns to cleaning, discovering a sock under her mother's bed. In the sock is a gold watch, engraved with Forrest Hearne's name.

Chapter 16 – Josie brings the watch home with her, and hollows out an old copy of "Passage to India" by E. M. Forster in which to hide the watch. Josie then meets up with Frankie to ask where her mother was on New Year's Eve. Frankie reveals that Louise was with Cincinnati at the Roosevelt, but will not confirm her mother was at the Sans Souci. Frankie refuses to accept any money for the tip, telling Josie to keep it because he has heard she is starting up a college fund. Cokie then arrives to pick up Josie, telling her that she is to be driven out to Shady Grove for a couple days at Willie's request. He then gives Josie a copy of "Commercial Appeal", a newspaper from Memphis obtained by a friend. Cokie explains there is important information in the paper in an article about Hearne's death. Josie swings by the bookshop to let Patrick know she'll be gone a few days. She encounters Patrick's friend from New Year's Eve in the shop. The man introduces himself as James Marshall.



Chapter 17 – Josie learns important things from the newspaper article about Hearne, including that he had come to New Orleans with three friends to see the Sugar Bowl game. As Josie waits for Cokie at Willie's, she bumps into John Lockwell on his way out from visiting Evangeline. They are startled to see one another. Josie pretends she is merely delivering books to Willie. Josie realizes she now has an advantage, and asks that John – a successful businessman – write her a letter of recommendation to Smith College. He agrees and tells her to come by his office. Josie feels badly about it afterwards, and worries Evangeline may give her away – which would in turn get back to Charlotte. Willie tells Josie it is a good idea she wants to go to college, but that she needs to go to school locally. Willie explains that Josie is salted peanuts, while Northeasterners are petits-fours. Willie says she'll pay for Josie's college if Josie stays local, and thinks that Josie only threatened to go North so Willie would pay.

Chapter 18 – Shady Grove is a quiet, countryside cottage on twenty acres of land purchased for Willie by an unknown man as part of an unknown deal. The closest neighbors, Ray and Freida, are half a mile away. Josie loves the area. Josie spends her time taking walks, relaxing, reading, and shooting with Willie. It is revealed that in the past, Cincinnati robbed Patrick's house, beating his father up. Patrick has no idea it was Cincinnati, but believes the beating is what truly sent his father over the edge mentally. Word comes that Patrick needs to see Josie.

Chapter 19 – Josie rushes to Charlie's house. She learns from Patrick that Charlie seems to have snapped, doesn't recognize him, and goes crazy whenever he sees Patrick. The entire house has been upended. Josie goes in to see Charlie, who mistakes her for his dead aunt, Lucy. Josie gets Charlie to rest. Patrick explains he can't find his father's medicine, but Josie says she'll have Willie call Dr. Sully since the druggist is currently closed. Patrick tells Josie he doesn't know what he'd do without her. Patrick tells her he wishes to tell her something, but doesn't want to scare her away. Josie says she tells Patrick all kinds of things that should scare him away, and then confesses about her encounter with John Lockwell. Patrick is impressed, but then does not reveal what he wanted to tell Josie. Josie makes a call. A short while later, Patrick falls asleep on the couch while Cokie arrives with medicine from Dr. Sully. Josie kisses Patrick on the forehead as she leaves.

Chapter 20 – Josie receives Smith College application materials from Charlotte, as well as Candace Kincaid's book "Rogue Betrayal". Josie goes to see John Lockwell who agrees to give her a letter of recommendation if he never sees her again. The letter will be delivered to the bookshop. As Josie heads home, a police officer stops her, saying Detective Langley wishes to speak with her.

Chapter 21 – Josie meets with Detective Langley. Langley asks Josie about her encounter with Hearne, and asks if Josie knows anything about an expensive watch he was wearing. Langley explains the family is concerned about the watch. He is then called on to other business, and ends the interview.

Chapter 22 – Josie knows she can't keep the watch, so that night, she puts in her purses and heads out. As she walks, Jesse catches up with her and asks her to go into



soda shop. Inside, Jesse asks Josie if she ever thinks of leaving New Orleans. Josie avoids the question and asks about Jesse. Jesse says his father is an average crook, in jail more often than he is not. Jesse plans to get out of New Orleans one day. When two girls come into the shop and hit on Jesse, Josie sits on Jesse's lap to annoy them. Josie then goes down to the river, intending to throw the watch in, but begins to cry instead.

Chapter 23 – Josie has a nightmare of her mother serving as the elevator operator to Hell. At the bookshop, she reveals her encounter with Lockwell to Patrick. Frankie comes in, looking for Josie. He asks if Josie has anything for Willie, which Josie says she does not. Frankie then asks Josie how long she has been seeing Jesse Thierry. Josie says this is not true. Frankie tells Josie to remain close to Willie. When Frankie leaves, Patrick explains an old romantic friend of his father's, Miss Paulsen, who teaches at Loyola, will be in the bookshop later in the week to pick up a book and answer Josie's questions about college. Josie is thrilled and hugs Patrick.

Chapter 24 – Josie worries about whether she will meet or exceed the requirements for admission into Smith. Josie especially worries about finances, because she doesn't nearly have enough money to attend school. Josie wonders how she'll make enough money to attend. She will need \$8,000 total for four years. Miss Barbara Paulsen then arrives at the store, and immediately begins asking Josie about her grades, academics, and character. Miss Paulsen says she won't be able to write Josie a letter since she already written such a letter for another young woman. Josie recognizes this as Paulsen's admission that Josie's case is hopeless. Josie then goes to get Miss Paulsen's requested book for her, at which time Miss Paulsen sees "Passage to India" and asks to look at it.

Analysis

The attitudes of class are on clear display again as Josie and Patrick leave the Lockwells' party. Cokie explains that many of the rich people have the most miserable and soulless lives imaginable. They may have money, but they do not all have morals. Apart from the insulting way in which Lillian speaks of Josie, Josie overhears a brokenhearted woman blaming her family's ills on the lower classes of the French Quarter. Josie knows that that sex is the primary reason some of the men of the upper class visit the French Quarter at all, and has now experienced firsthand the destructive consequences of the choices that prostitutes and their customers make. As the reader will recall from earlier chapters, even Josie –whose own mother and some of her closest friends are prostitutes –is panicked that someone as classy as Forrest may have visited something as low-class as a brothel, but is relieved to learn that he never did.

Prostitution is, after all, a crime –one which has received greater scrutiny with Forrest's killing. Josie becomes involved in the crime of Forrest's killing following the departure of her mother and the finding of a bullet and Forrest's watch. The bullet is symbolic of the danger into which Josie has now descended; and the watch that Josie decides to hold onto seems to stem from a mixture of genuine compassion for her mother that she



might somehow be involved in Forrest's death; and to hold onto a piece of Forrest, the man who never knew her before but found instant cause to believe in her.

Josie clings to what family she has, which comes by way of her friendship to Patrick and her friendship with Willie. Josie continues to help Patrick to care for his ailing father, especially through his latest bout of mental disability. Indeed, Josie's closeness to Patrick seems to alternate here between friendship, mild romance, and family. The confusion is not without purpose, as Josie will come to romantically pursue Patrick in future chapters. At the same time, Willie becomes something of a surrogate grandmother for Josie, bringing Josie along with her to Shady Grove and constantly urging Josie to stay out of the prostitution circuit. Willie sees promise in Josie, and so it is only natural that Willie should make Josie promise never to become a prostitute.

Josie, however, is not above resorting to lower-class tricks to ensure she gets out of New Orleans. Her encounters with John Lockwell to encourage him to write her letters of recommendation based on her silence about his visiting Willie's should be noted by the reader as both desperation and an abandonment of Josie's character. She is better than how she is behaving, but the reader still finds himself or herself in Josie's corner, because readers know Josie's situation is difficult at best. At the same time, the reader should note that Josie is worried about meeting the requirements for acceptance into Smith College, and whether she will live up to them. This can be seen as metaphorical for whether or not Josie will live up to her own standards ethically and morally. The class difference again shows in Miss Paulsen's condescending interview of Josie in the store, underscoring Josie's desperation to get into Smith College at all costs. Yet, in keeping with the class-conscious language employed by Willie, Josie is behaving much more like a salted peanut than a petits four.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Josie take such time and effort to help Patrick care for his father? Why does Josie place such emphasis on her friendship with Patrick?

Discussion Question 2

What important things about class does Josie learn from her visit to the Longwells' mansion? Why does Josie aspire to become a prominent member of society if so many of her experiences with the upper class have been so negative?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Josie betray her own moral compass to blackmail John Lockwell into writing her a letter of recommendation for college? Regardless as to whether or not you believe Josie's decision is a necessary one, do you believe it is a morally right one? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

flouncing, inventory, blatantly, deceitfulness, salvageable, sauntered, benefactor, flexible, diluted



Chapters 25 – 36

Summary

Chapter 25 – Josie thinks of herself as a liar, from telling Miss Paulsen that “Passage to India” is under restoration to denying she knew who her mother was with to Patrick. As Josie thinks about everything around her, she realizes that Forrest Hearne believed in her in the few moments he knew her; and that someone who was with Forrest had also been to Willie’s. As Mardi Gras approaches, Willie’s house gets filthier and filthier. Willie explains she has made \$3,000 from the House in one night – enough, Josie realizes, for more than a year of college. It is then that Willie reminds Josie it is her 18th birthday. She gives Josie a beautiful Lady Elgin watch as a gift, reminds her that she can be arrested now that she is 18, and then tells Josie to get the hell out.

Chapter 26 – Josie calls John Lockwell to see about her letter. He sounds drunk, and tells her to come over at six in high heels. Josie agrees, but she has a bad feeling about it.

Chapter 27 – Josie examines her watch. It is engraved with “Jo is 18. – Willie.” Cokie buys Josie a thermos for her birthday for the coffee she’ll need for the long trip up to college. He and his friend Cornbread have even plotted out a route for her to follow. Josie begins crying and admits she might not make it. Cokie tells her that she is not meant to be around the naked crazies of the Quarter, and that she should not let fear stop her from going North. Cokie then passes along another newspaper from Tennessee, in which Memphis officials have decided to do their own autopsy on Forrest’s body.

Chapter 28 – Josie goes to see Patrick, who asks Josie to finish up the accounting for tax season, and asks her to watch after Charlie for a few hours so he can deliver books. He also points up to Josie’s window flowerbox, where Jesse has left her a bouquet of pink lilies.

Chapter 29 – Josie goes to see John Lockwell, but tells him she will not put on the high heels until she sees the letter. John says he hasn’t written the letter yet, but is impressed by her toughness. He offers her a job, but Josie says she would rather go to college first. John agrees to give her two sheets of letterhead to type up a letter and then bring it by for him to sign.

Chapter 30 – Josie types up the letter using Charlie’s typewriter. Afterwards, she coaxes Charlie to type up something. Charlie types the letter B, then stops. Josie decides he needs a haircut. She retrieves scissors, then goes to get a comb. When she gets back, Charlie has begun carving up his body with the scissors. Josie cuts herself trying to get the scissors away from Charlie, then rushes to put pressure on the worst cuts. It is then that Patrick returns home and screams. Josie orders him to get it together and help her tend to his father. Cokie arrives to help, followed soon after by a drunk, young Army



doctor named Randolph. Randolph has Josie slap him to sober him up, then commits to stitching up Charlie.

Chapter 31 – After Charlie is put to sleep, Patrick tells Josie she had better leave. Randolph is taken to Willie's by Cokie to receive his payment for the emergency job. It is then that Josie learns that John Lockwell's Lincoln Continental has broken down near Willie's. John asks Cokie what can be done. Josie says she can have Jesse fix the car if John agrees to sign her letters. John agrees. Jesse returns with Josie to fix the car, after which time Josie explains the situation with John. As Jesse leaves, he tells Josie he knows she likes him, even if she doesn't know it yet.

Chapter 32 – Josie cries herself to sleep thinking about Charlie, the lies she has told, and her life in general. The next day's paper declares Forrest Hearne's death a murder, coming from knock-out-drops known as Mickey Finn. Josie then meets with Willie, who praises Josie for handling the Charlie situation so well. She asks about Jesse, but Josie says she and Jesse are just friends. Willie then explains that Forrest Hearne's murder, and the arguments between Memphis and New Orleans over the handling of the investigation will lead to a call to clean up the Quarter. Willie says things are going to get tough.

Chapter 33 – Josie sleeps through Mardi Gras after mailing off her Smith application. Charlotte writes her about the goings-on of the Progressive students, and tells Josie she can't wait for her to join them. Josie wants very much to join them. She tells Jesse about her application. Jesse nearly kisses her, but Josie pulls back. Jesse quickly apologizes, telling her that she'll need a winter coat in Massachusetts. At the bookshop, Miss Paulsen arrives and demands to know what is going on with the Marlowes.

Chapter 34 – Based on the agreed-upon story with Patrick, Josie tells Miss Paulsen that Charlie is out of town visiting a sick friend in Slidell. Josie feels sick because of this, and because Patrick hasn't been to the shop in days. When Patrick finally comes in, Josie is happy and worried to see him. Josie later sees Richard Lockwell outside the shop with a friend. Patrick then kisses Josie deeply, leaving her stunned by the fact she didn't try to stop him. She doesn't know what the kiss means. When Patrick leaves, Josie thinks of how happy Patrick makes her, and how much sense they'd make together in life. Frankie comes in a short time later, asking Josie if she is alone. Josie confirms she is. Frankie then says that his contact at the telegraph office says that Louise is being brought back to New Orleans for the murder of Forrest Hearne.

Chapter 35 – Josie runs to see Willie. Josie knows her mother is cruel and stupid, but cannot believe she is a murderer. As Josie goes up to see Willie, Evangeline warns Josie to stay away from John Lockwell. Willie tells Josie she will be sent out to stay at Shady Grove until everything blows over. Josie heads back to her apartment. On the way, John Lockwell stops his car to ask if Josie has heard about Smith, yet. Josie says no. John compliments the lipstick on her, then drives away. Josie wipes off her lipstick.

Chapter 36 – Josie knows she must do something with Forrest's watch and the check he wrote. For now, she keeps it hidden under a floorboard. Josie then goes to see



Patrick, who is getting dressed for James's birthday party that his girlfriend is throwing. Patrick asks Josie to watch Charlie while he is gone. Josie agrees, and is disappointed that Patrick only kisses her quickly, does not compliment her, and stays out longer than expected. While watching Charlie, Josie sees that he has typed a second letter on his typewriter, now spelling "BL". When Patrick returns, he explains Truman Capote was at the party. He also opens a letter from Miss Paulsen, who demands a letter from Charlie in Slidell, or she'll know something is wrong.

Analysis

As Josie's life becomes further unraveled, she realizes how easily lying now comes to her. She realizes her own character has been morally deficient, that she is fast becoming a part of everything she is trying so hard to get away from. Lying, after all, is a critical skill among the criminal lower class. Still, Josie's desperation to get away outweighs her ethics, so she continues to insist on her letter from John Lockwell. John, however, views the entire situation as a sexual exercise, in which he taunts Josie with her letter in exchange for her sexualizing herself. Josie, in desperation, agrees to dress as requested after she receives the letter.

As time passes, love seems to become possible between Josie and Patrick. As Josie considers it, it would only be natural for her and Patrick to begin dating, marry, and ultimately have a life together because they have essentially grown up together, because they get along so well together, and because they have so much in common. However, the accident with Charlie leads to a great distance between Josie and Patrick which only seems to be overcome by the kisses that Patrick gives Josie. Josie is floored by these kisses, and finally feels loved and wanted. Josie also finds herself the center of attention as far as Jesse is concerned, but at the moment, she seems more taken with Patrick.

Crime continues to be a major theme in the novel as it is learned that Forrest was indeed murdered, and murdered by a drug known as Mickey Finn. Josie is horrified by this, and even more horrified to learn that her mother is being extradited to New Orleans under suspicion of the crime. Willie determines, quite rightly, that Josie must go and spend time at Shady Grove until much of the chaos and drama surrounding the extradition and Louise's return either dies down or fades completely. Willie demonstrates both familial, grandmotherly love and friendship in her desire to protect Josie and to keep her as far away from the criminal world of New Orleans – and away from Louise.

The publicity of the death of Forrest is the final straw for the upstanding residents of New Orleans. A call is formed to finally clean up the Quarter once and for all. The police begin taking on new recruits, and plans are being made to drive out crime. Willie notes that the purge that is coming will be like the kind of decades before in which they managed to stay one step ahead of the law – but that this time, she is older, and the world has changed dramatically in only a few decades. The heyday of prostitution and



Quarter crime is long gone, and the last gasp of life of the criminal nature of the Quarter has been had.

Discussion Question 1

Despite Josie's recognition that her morality is slipping, she continues to seek out John for letters of recommendation, even when she knows it is not consistent with her character as a person. Why?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Willie want to send Josie out to Shady Grove? What does Willie hope this will avoid and do for Josie?

Discussion Question 3

What broader implications does Forrest's murder have for the French Quarter? Why does Willie worry about these implications?

Vocabulary

deviate, miasma, return on investment, discreet, synaptic, erratic, pedigree, enlightenment, decipher, warble, antiquarian, negligence, assailed, diligence, affluence, unashamedly, bewildered



Chapters 37 – 48

Summary

Chapter 37 – Josie and Cokie head out to Shady Grove. Cokie is continuing to plan Josie's route to the North with Cornbread. Cokie also warns Josie not to let her guard down, to be prepared for people who might try to get at Louise through her. Cokie leaves Josie with Willie's shotgun. Josie worries as Cokie leaves.

Chapter 38 – Josie passes the nights with Ray and Frieda, who sleep days and stay up at nights because they are both afraid of the dark. Through a phone call with Patrick, Josie learns that her mother has returned, has posted bail, and is staying at the Town and Country Motel, a place owned by Carlos Marcello. Jesse then arrives to visit, having been given directions by Willie. Jesse reveals he has seen Louise around with Cincinnati, then reveals his own father killed his mother in a drunk-driving accident.

Chapter 39 – Jesse and Josie go for a motorcycle ride to the local grocer. Josie feels safe cruising around with Jesse, and is excited by the ride. The grocer has a letter for Josie from Patrick. The letter talks about Charlie and Louise, but mentions little about missing Josie. This upsets her. Jesse tells Josie to forget about Patrick. Jesse brings Josie back to the cottage, then heads home.

Chapter 40 – Josie finds herself torn between wanting a letter from Patrick and a visit from Jesse. Josie goes about cleaning the house to keep busy, and finds three old family photos, including one of Willie as a 10-year-old kid. Josie wonders how such a happy kid could come to be a madam. Josie buries Forrest's check by the crepe myrtle out behind the cottage. Cokie then arrives with news that Charlie is dead. Josie feels horrible she wasn't there at the end for Patrick, or for Charlie. Cokie explains that Willie has given permission for Josie to come back for the funeral. She goes straight to see Patrick. Josie and Patrick hold one another and cry themselves to sleep. Josie tells Patrick she will be there with him every step of the way.

Chapter 41 – Josie helps Patrick through the funeral. Willie pays for everything. Josie meets James and his girlfriend, Kitty, who says Patrick considers Josie like a sister. This stings Josie deeply. Josie is annoyed and disturbed to see her mother at the funeral. Her mother is taking Dexedrine to lose weight, and is very thin. She applauds Josie for seeing both Jesse and Patrick at the same time. Louise also explains that she had nothing to do with the death of Forrest, and that she only had a drink with him. It is then that Miss Paulsen approaches Josie to say hello at the funeral. Josie is forced to make an introduction, during which time Louise tells Miss Paulsen who Josie was named after. This humiliates Josie.

Chapter 42 – Elizabeth Lockwell comes to the bookshop looking for Patrick and the new Truman Capote book. Her father follows her in but refuses to let her purchase the book, calling it trash. Cokie arrives a little while later bearing an envelope of cash for Josie to



attend college, containing money he made from gambling and paychecks, and with money from Sweetie and Sadie. Josie says she can't accept it, but Cokie insists. Josie hugs and thanks Cokie, who tells her she is going to Boston.

Chapter 43 – Josie goes to see Patrick, who is having difficulty putting away his father's things. Josie tells him it is understandable, then sees that Charlie had typed in another letter, spelling out "BLV". Patrick explains it is the title to the first chapter –"Be Love" –of Charlie's unfinished manuscript. Josie goes to kiss Patrick who confesses he would choose Josie if he could. Josie then realizes that Patrick must be in love with Kitty. Patrick begins to cry.

Chapter 44 – Josie wishes Patrick would choose her, but knows she is not the sophisticated girl he deserves. Detective Langley approaches Josie outside the bookshop to ask her some additional questions. Detective Langley asks Josie about a check that Forrest wrote that never cleared. Josie panics and explains that he probably wrote the check before seeing the sign in the store that says "no checks", and paying in cash. Langley then asks Josie if she knows where her mother was on New Year's Eve. Josie explains she and her mother are estranged. Langley asks if Josie went out with Patrick and his friend on New Year's. She denies this, saying Patrick can vouch for her. After Langley leaves, Cincinnati confronts Josie. He pulls out a knife and forces Josie to come with him to a bar where her mother is waiting where he reveals that Josie was talking to Langley. Josie explains that Forrest was in the store and bought two books, and that is what Langley was curious about. Josie's mother asks about the watch Willie purchased for her eighteenth birthday, which causes Cincinnati to become angry about the watch Louise had promised him. When a police officer arrives at the bar for dinner with a friend, Josie takes the opportunity to flee.

Chapter 45 – Josie tells Willie about her meeting with her mother. Willie explains that Cincinnati is not the hotshot he thinks he is, that he is marked by the mob. Josie then thanks Sadie for her contribution. Sadie waves it off with a smile. At the bookshop, Patrick apologizes for being such a mess. He says he will be going to Trinidad to stay with his mother, who has remarried. Patrick is also considering joining the Army, as the United States may soon be at war in Korea. While Patrick is away, he will keep Josie afloat financially by selling part of the shop's inventory to James at Doubleday Books. Upstairs, Josie realizes her room has been broken into. Her gun, watch, and cash are gone.

Chapter 46 – Josie is stunned and angered, screaming at the top of her lungs. Patrick rushes up. Josie collapses, unable to do anything. Patrick handles the shop and shields Josie from visitors. He asks her to come to his house for the night, but she refuses. Josie asks him if he kissed her out of pity. He says it was nothing like that at all.

Chapter 47 – Josie does her best to avoid everyone she can for the next few days. Jesse comes by to see Josie with bottles of Coca-Cola. Josie confesses she has been robbed and explains what has been stolen by her mother and Cincinnati. Jesse then tells her that word on the street is that Cincinnati is in on Forrest's killing. When Jesse



leaves, a car parked down the street turns on its headlights, and drives by the bookshop slowly before speeding away.

Chapter 48 – James comes by to pick up the books. He is stunned to learn that Patrick will be going to Trinidad. He becomes emotionally distraught, causing Josie to realize that Patrick and James are in love. Josie and Cokie see Patrick off at the bus station. Patrick kisses Josie long and hard, and tells her he will see her at Christmas.

Analysis

Josie's romance with Patrick ultimately comes to nothing because Patrick is gay. While the clues have been there all along – from his friendship with James to Richard's warnings to his sister to stay away from Patrick to his unwillingness to wholly commit to Josie except to kiss her in front of other people like Richard – Josie simply didn't think twice about the possibility that Patrick did not like her as a matter of sexual preference.

While the door with Patrick has been closed, the door with Jesse has opened even further now. It is clear that Jesse is in love with Josie, for he drives hours out of his way just to visit Josie for part of the day; and Jesse always seems to be the one that Josie calls on in her darkest moments. Indeed, Jesse himself suspects that Josie likes him, but simply doesn't know it yet. Indeed, it is Jesse who manages to comfort Josie in a way that Patrick never could, from both visiting her to mere sharing soda with her outside the bookshop.

Although Willie has tried to keep Josie out of trouble by keeping her at Shady Grove, trouble quickly sets in on Josie with the return of Cincinnati and Louise. The police continue to ask questions about Louise and Forrest; and Cincinnati sees this all unfold. He brings Josie to Louise, who insists that she had nothing to do with Forrest's murder, and merely had a drink with him. However, it is clear from her conversation with Cincinnati that she did, indeed, have something to do with his death. Just what that may have been, or what motive she may have had to kill him remains unknown. Nevertheless, it is par for the course of the criminal world in which Louise has involved herself. (It is possible, though speculative, that Forrest was indeed Josie's father, and that Louise's desire to kill Forrest was based on his impregnating Louise and "ruining" her life in some way, shape, or form – perhaps refusing to claim the child as his own if he even knew about Josie.)

Josie's mother and Cincinnati do not stop there. They rob Josie of the money she has been saving for college, and steal what few personal possessions and valuables she has – including her Lady Elgin watch and revolver. This stuns Josie beyond comparison, who never would have thought that her mother and Cincinnati would steal from her in such a fashion. While Louise has stolen money from Josie in the past, those thefts were mild in comparison to the current theft, due to the fact the items stolen were of such meaning to Josie, and were emblematic of her desire to begin a new life.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Josie's relationship with Patrick not work out? Why has Josie been unable to read the signs pointing to the reason that Patrick could not be with her?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Josie's mother and Cincinnati insist on a meeting with Josie? What does Louise insist she has which renders her innocent of Forrest's death?

Discussion Question 3

Why does the robbery of Josie's apartment hit her so hard and so deeply? Who manages to comfort Josie most effectively in this moment? Why?

Vocabulary

adrenaline, solemn, condolences, postmortem, surreal, alibi, insidious, controversial, nubile, remnants, metaphor, raucous, elaborate, infuriating



Chapters 49 – 59

Summary

Chapter 49 – John Lockwell comes in to see Josie at the bookshop to offer Josie employment again. Josie says she'll think about it. After he leaves, a strange, scary man enters the bookshop looking for Louise, saying she owes the boss money for an alibi. The man says because Louise cannot be found, the loan, plus interest –totaling \$5,000 – is now owed by Josie herself. Josie has seven days to pay the man –Tangle Eye Lou –who can be found at Mosca's on Highway 90. He leaves. Josie is sickened and stunned. She asks Jesse to board up the shop, but won't tell him why. She then goes to Willie's, who reports more police are being hired for the Quarter. Josie considers that she may have to steal money from Willie.

Chapter 50 – Josie calls John Lockwell to talk about employment. He tells her to meet him at his place on Saint Peter. Jesse boards up the shop, but asks what is going on. Josie won't tell him, causing Jesse to become angry. Jesse says all he wants is an answer, and that he goes to great lengths to always help Josie out. Josie goes to see John, who realizes she must be in need of money. He agrees to front her \$1,500 if she dressed up well and agrees to a private sexual arrangement. Josie agrees, realizing she will have to steal more than \$3,000 from Willie. John gives her \$50 to go and buy a proper dress and shoes.

Chapter 51 – Willie's place is raided. Josie is called in to clean up. A letter arrives from Smith College, rejecting her application. Josie is devastated, wondering why she ever even dared to hope. A second letter accompanies the rejection letter, asking for the employment of a housemaid at the recommendation of Miss Paulsen for Ms. Mona Wright in Northampton. Josie realizes she is not good enough to attend their college, but good enough to scrub their bathrooms. Josie goes out, buys a gun, and then buys clothing and dresses up as directed by John. Josie believes like David Copperfield, she is now falling into disgrace. On her way to John's, she runs into Jesse and his friends. His friends tell him to ask her out. Jesse says it is clear that someone already has. Josie feels insulted.

Chapter 52 – Josie arrives at John's apartment on Saint Peter. John pours them champagne, gets Josie to dance with him, and begins trying to touch her. He calls her a whore, which causes Josie to jump back and pull a gun on him. She makes him sit on the floor, then rushes out into the night.

Chapter 53 – The next day, Josie finds her 24-hour notice from the mob – a black handprint on a white paper stuck in her shutter. Josie knows she will have to steal from Willie. Josie decides to create a cover story about needing to pay for the brothel's liquor shipment, which will give her access to the safe. Only later, Josie considers, will she tell Willie the truth, and spend years and years working off the debt. When Jessie goes to see Willie, Willie confronts her with the truth gleaned from her own informants. Josie



explains she didn't want Willie to be involved or be in danger. Josie also denies that she actually went through with sleeping with Lockwell. Willie fronts the money, which she, Josie, and Cokie then deliver to Tangle Eye.

Chapter 54 – Josie thanks Willie again the next morning for everything. She says she will work off the debt. She also confesses the robbery of her goods. Willie then collapses, suffering a fatal heart attack. Dr. Sully arrives too late.

Chapter 55 – Dr. Sully gathers everyone together to make arrangements. Josie and the girls are to write a death note and plan the funeral while he checks into legal papers. Josie feels horrible, and blames herself for Willie's death. Only on the walk back to her apartment does Josie begin to cry.

Chapter 56 – Cokie picks up Josie for the funeral. She wonders what life will be like now without Willie in it. The memorial service at the restaurant Galatoire's goes from being quiet and subdued to large and celebratory in honor of Willie's life, just like she would have wanted. Jesse and Josie then head out on their own.

Chapter 57 – Jesse and Josie hop in the old Mercedes that Jesse is restoring, even though it doesn't run yet. They pretend they are driving to Swindell Hollow. Josie comes clean about the situation with Marcello and her mother. Jesse explains that Willie already told him about it. Josie then confesses to Jesse the truth behind her name. Jesse explains he was named after Jesse James, and isn't proud of it. Jesse then puts his arm around Josie and tells her that he really wants to kiss her.

Chapter 58 – Josie, Cokie, and Sadie meet with Willie's lawyer, Edward Rosenblatt. Ed says he grew up with Dr. Sully and Willie, and was very fond of Willie, wanting to marry her at one point. As they got older, Ed explains, they drifted apart. Ed then goes into Willie's will. The brothel house now belongs to Cokie and Sadie, while Shady Grove belongs to Josie. The car goes to Josie, while the jewelry is to be split between Josie and Sadie. All those in Willie's employ will receive \$100 annually for each year of employment, while all cash remaining will be evenly split between Josie, Cokie, Sadie, Sully, and Ed. Cokie is stunned and begins to cry in happiness. Josie then asks about changing her last name.

Chapter 59 – In Alabama, Jesse mails home the watch of Forrest. He is traveling north with Josie in his Mercedes, for Josie has given Willie's old car to Cokie. With Patrick's insistence, Miss Paulsen has secured an interview for Josie at Smith. Jesse explains that as soon as he finishes college, he will be coming up to join Josie. At Jesse's insistence, Josie has spilled out her entire life history to Charlotte – who has responded that she cannot wait to see Josie.

Analysis

The love of family and friendship that exist between Josie and Willie shines through in Josie's most dangerous time. The debt inherited, courtesy of Louise, is something which takes Josie to her moral breaking point. She very nearly sleeps with John Lockwell for



the money that she needs, only deciding rightly at the last possible moment that she cannot become what her mother is. It is through Willie that Josie's financial issues are settled, as Willie pays off the debt that Louise has stuck Josie with. That debt is just one of the many dangers of the criminal world, and the world that Josie seeks to escape.

Josie's inability to get into Smith College is part of what drives her to the very edge of her morality, believing she will never be good enough to get out. But Willie, Jesse, Cokie, and others remind her otherwise. Indeed, the money that Willie ultimately bequeaths to Josie will pay for Josie's college. Miss Paulsen has been prevailed upon to arrange an interview for Josie up at Smith College, undoubtedly at Patrick's insistence. Josie finally has her ability to escape the world of crime in the Quarter.

Ironically, the last gasps of crime in the area come and go. The police step up their presence and their raids in the Quarter, rooting out criminals, prostitutes, and other illegal activities. Willie's death is seen here as symbolic of the end of an era; and her death by heart attack is symbolic of the death of the very thing for which she has lived her life –managing a house of prostitution. The reader should note, however, that in death, Willie gives those whom have worked for her a new chance at life by providing them pensions for each year of service, with the hope that these pensions will allow those she employed to begin their lives all over again. It is a new era for all those associated with Willie, and a new era for New Orleans.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Willie agree to help Josie pay off her inherited debt to Marcello? What arrangement do the two come to regarding the repayment to Willie? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Willie leave money behind for all the girls who have worked for her, and why does Willie leave behind such large amounts in her estate for Josie, Sadie, and Cokie?

Discussion Question 3

What is ironic about the time at which Josie finally manages to get free of New Orleans? Do you believe Josie's ability to be free is directly related to, or has nothing to do with this? Explain.

Vocabulary

bookbinding, cesspit, substance, concoct, a capella, sterile, ritzy, bereaved, bequests



Characters

Josie

Josie Moraine is the teenaged narrator and main character of the novel “Out of the Easy” by Ruta Sepetys. Turning 18 in the novel, Josie is a sweet, pretty girl who dreams of getting out of New Orleans by receiving an education at Smith College in order to start her life all over again. Josie is the daughter of Louise, a prostitute, and becomes a granddaughter figure to Willie through the course of the novel. Josie hates her mother’s line of work, and has a horrible relationship with her mother who blames her problems in life on having Josie. Josie does her best to be a morally just person, staying above the crime life of New Orleans even though she lives among it. She earns money honestly by cleaning the brothel and working at the local bookshop.

Josie has a near romantic relationship with her best friend Patrick, which doesn’t work out because Patrick is gay. Josie almost falls into prostitution herself when her mother robs her and leaves her with an inherited mob debt. Josie refuses to become what her mother is at the last moment, going instead to Willie, who reaches out to help Josie get ahead of the inherited debt. When Willie dies, she leaves Josie enough money to leave New Orleans and go to college. Josie herself ultimately ends up dating Jesse, who drives her up to college at the end of the novel.

Patrick

Patrick Malone is the son of Charlie Malone, a celebrated writer, and the best friend of Josie. Patrick runs his family’s bookshop, where he works with Josie. Patrick is secretly gay, and stages an almost-romance with Josie in order to hide this fact. He struggles to care for his father, both indulge in and hide his homosexuality, and to care for Josie however he can. Following the death of his father, it becomes too much for Patrick to handle. He heads to Trinidad to spend time with his mother and her new husband, and to consider joining the Army to fight in Korea.

Jesse

Jesse Thierry is a local kid of 18 or 19 who rides a motorcycle, dresses edgy, and who has grown up through the school system with Josie. Jesse is quiet and kind, and has strong romantic feelings for Josie. Jesse is the person Josie always calls on in an emergency and can depend on when no one else can be counted upon. Jesse spends much of the novel respectfully pursuing Josie romantically, until she finally falls for him. At the end of the novel, Jesse drives Josie up to college, promising to come and be with her when he finishes up college himself.



Louise

Louise Moraine is the mother of Josie, and the boyfriend of Cincinnati. Louise is a cruel and unkind person who blames all the ills of her life on having Josie. Louise is a prostitute who is under the delusion she has the potential to become a movie star, and gets caught up in the murder of Forrest. She skips town with Cincinnati, buys an alibi, robs Josie, and allows Josie to inherit the debt. After her extradition and return to California, Josie never hears from Louise again.

Willie

Willie Woodley is the madam of Willie Woodley's, a brothel in the French Quarter. Willie is a tough-as-nails woman who seems to be in her seventies, but who harbors grandmotherly affection for Josie. Willie sees in Josie something of herself, and what she might have been. Willie does everything she can to keep Josie from falling into prostitution, including paying off Josie's inherited debt and bequeathing a large sum of money to Josie.

Cokie

Frances "Cokie" Coquard is the African-American driver for Willie Woodley's. He acts both as personal chauffeur to Willie, and a cab driver for Willie's clients. Cokie is immensely intelligent and kind, and becomes something of a fatherly figure to Josie, always watching out for her and helping to gather money together to send her to college. When Willie dies, Cokie is bequeathed the house and is given Willie's old car by Josie.

Cincinnati

Cincinnati is a thug and low-life criminal who specializes in robbery and murder. Cincinnati fancies himself a major player in Marcello's world of the mafia, but is in reality merely a runt. He physically abuses Louise, and poses a physical and sexual threat to Josie. Cincinnati and Louise ultimately run afoul of the mafia for taking out a loan for an alibi, but not paying it back. He and Louise disappear in California. As is later learned, it is believed both Louise and Cincinnati had something to do with Forrest's death.

Charlotte

Charlotte Gates is the niece of John and Lillian Lockwood, and is visiting them in New Orleans on break from college with her own parents. Charlotte is a member of the upper class, is very kind, gentle, pretty, and a member of the Student Progressives at Smith College in Massachusetts. Charlotte quickly befriends Josie and Patrick, seeing them as people rather than mere representations of the classes to which they belong. It is



Charlotte who encourages Josie to apply to Smith College. Even after Charlotte learns the truth about Josie's upbringing, Charlotte continues to be friends with, and to look forward to Josie's arrival in Massachusetts.

Forrest Hearne

Forrest Hearne is an architect and developer from Memphis, Tennessee, who travels to New Orleans with three friends for the Sugar Bowl. Forrest is happily married, is morally upright, kind, and gentle. He is a scion of the upper class, and the kind of person Josie looks up to. He and Josie have an instant connection at the bookshop, perhaps stemming from the fact that he might be Josie's father, but definitely from the fact that both have similar backgrounds. Forrest's murder hurts Josie deeply, for in those few moments with Forrest, Josie felt as though someone believed in her.

John Lockwell

John Lockwell is the uncle of Charlotte, the husband of Lillian, and the father of Richard and Elizabeth. John is a businessman and a pillar of the upper class of New Orleans. While he appears upright and moral, secretly, he enjoys visiting brothels and hiring young prostitutes. John enjoys evenings with Evangeline, especially. When John is discovered at Willie's by Josie, Josie blackmails him into writing her a letter of recommendation which John ultimately provides. John later attempts to hire Josie as his private prostitute, but she ultimately recoils, pulling a gun on him until she leaves.



Symbols and Symbolism

Revolver

Josie almost always carries a small revolver with her under her skirt wherever she goes. She does this in order to protect and defend herself against criminals and would-be rapists. Josie's revolver is ultimately stolen by her mother and Cincinnati, so she ends up buying a new revolver. Josie uses the new revolver to stop John from attempting to sleep with her when Josie almost becomes a prostitute.

Lord Elgan watch

A Lord Elgan watch, inscribed to Forrest Hearne from his wife, is worn by Forrest on his trip to New Orleans. The watch demonstrates both class and wealth, and is envied by Josie in an ambitious, rather than a jealous way. After Forrest is murdered, Josie finds his watch under her mother's bed, providing evidence that Louise had something to do with Forrest's death. Josie holds onto the watch seems to stem from a mixture of genuine compassion for her mother that she might somehow be involved in Forrest's death; and to hold onto a piece of Forrest, the man who never knew her before but found instant cause to believe in her. At the end of the novel, Josie and Jesse mail the watch back to Forrest's wife.

Lady Elgan watch

A Lady Elgan watch is purchased for, and inscribed for Josie for her 18th birthday by Willie. Josie is thrilled with the watch, which is a sign of the grandmotherly affection Willie has for Josie. Josie treasures the watch greatly, and is horrified when her mother steals the watch from her.

\$8,000

\$8,000 is the approximate cost of tuition for four years of school at Smith College in Massachusetts. Josie is several thousand dollars short of having enough money to attend. But through saving and the charity of others, including Cokie, Swety, and Sadie, Josie is able to save enough to pay for some of the tuition.

\$300

Josie is able to save up some \$300 by the time she applies to Smith College. She knows the money will be crucial in being able to attend Smith, but also knows she is still thousands of dollars away from this being possible. Josie is later devastated when this money, which she has struggled to earn honestly, is stolen by her mother.



Inherited debt

An inherited debt of \$5,000 is bestowed upon Josie by Marcello's mob through Tangle Eye Lou. The debt of \$5,000 consists of the money borrowed from the mob by Louise for an alibi, and interest as calculated by the mob in the time that Louise has not paid it back. Because of this, Josie is expected to pay off the debt. Josie is given seven days to come up with the money, which she alternatively considers raising by prostitution and theft, but which is ultimately provided by Willie in exchange for Josie's agreement to work it off.

Black handprint

A black handprint on a white sheet of paper is the calling sign of the mafia which means imminent danger and/or death. A black handprint on a white sheet of paper is found in Josie's shutter by Josie 24 hours prior to her paying off her inherited debt. Josie is terrified by the handprint, knowing that her very life hangs in the balance.

Bullet

A stray .38 caliber bullet for a revolver is found by Josie in Willie Woodley's brother on New Year's Day morning. The bullet is symbolic of the danger into which Josie has now descended as she becomes involved in Forrest's case through the keeping of his watch, and the involvement of her mother. The bullet, symbolizing danger, also comes to serve as a symbolic omen of death, representing the fact that Forrest was actually murdered.

Smith College application

A Smith College application and associated materials are mailed to Josie from Charlotte in Massachusetts. Josie anguishes over filling out the application, hoping she is good enough to get in. She mails off the application, along with a \$10, and later learns that she is rejected from Smith College.

Letter of recommendation

A letter of recommendation from John Lockwell is sought by Josie to accompany her Smith College application. The letter from John arises as a result of Josie blackmailing John after seeing him at Willie's brothel. Josie writes the letter herself, having John sign the letter as payment for Jesse's fixing his car engine.



Settings

New Orleans

New Orleans, known as the Big Easy and the Crescent City, is a major southern port located on the Mississippi River at the southern end of Louisiana. New Orleans has a rich mix of history, and the city itself is infamous for his brothels located in the French Quarter. New Orleans is among the most old-world of American cities, still retaining heavy traces of its former life under French control. This influence is seen especially in the caste-like class system of the city, and in the prevalence of prostitution in the Quarter. It is to New Orleans that Josie and her mother move some years after Josie's mother left; and it is from New Orleans that Josie seeks to flee.

The French Quarter

The French Quarter is the most notorious section of New Orleans, replete with mild crime that lingers from its heyday some decades before. The French Quarter is where the lower class and some of the working class live, and is frequented by tourists and wealthy residents for various reasons, often in the solicitation of prostitutes. Josie lives and works in the French Quarter, and does her best to remain distinct from the vices and crimes that occur around her. The New Orleans police turn a blind eye to the French Quarter, as they have bigger issues at hand. However, the death of Forrest in the Quarter leads to a renewed campaign against crime in the area. This in turn spells the end of what remains of the brothels and small criminals.

Willie Woodley's

Willie Woodley's is one of the most well-known brothels in the French Quarter. Willie's brothel appears from the outside to be nothing more than a large house, but inside plays host so numerous girls and young women who serve as prostitutes –including Louise. The inside of the house is decorated in a gaudy fashion reminiscent of the 1920s, including reds, golds, and countless paintings of nude women. Josie takes on work at Willie's as a housemaid, cleaning up each morning, especially after wild nights such as New Year's Eve and Mardi Gras. Willie's is ultimately shut down when Willie dies, and the house is given to Cokie and Sadie to do with as they will.

Shady Grove

Shady Grove is a quiet, countryside cottage on 20 acres of beautiful, pastoral land purchased for Willie by an unknown man as part of an unknown deal. The closest neighbors, Ray and Freida, are half a mile away. Willie uses Shady Grove as a retreat, and as a place to come and spend time with Josie. Josie loves Shady Grove for how quiet and peaceful it is. When the trouble with Louise arrives, Josie stays at Shady

Grove, receiving letters and calls from back home, and a visit from Jesse. When Willie dies, Josie becomes the owner of Shady Grove.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts is one of the United States located in the region of New England (or the American Northeast). Massachusetts is home to the cities of Boston and Northampton, and is home to Smith College. Massachusetts becomes the goal destination of Josie to get away from New Orleans, for Josie sees it as a place of progressive living and tolerance. At the end of the novel, Josie and Jesse are on their way to Massachusetts for an interview Josie has secured at Smith.



Themes and Motifs

Friendship

Friendship is an important theme in the novel “Out of the Easy” by Ruta Sepetys. . In the novel, friendship influences events in the plot in very important ways, especially when it comes to Josie. While Josie does not have a wide network of friends, the friends she does have are diverse but loyal.

Josie’s friendship with Patrick is very important to Josie herself. She has essentially grown up with Patrick, helping to manage his family’s bookshop, and helping to care for Patrick’s mentally-disabled father. Josie and Patrick take comfort in one another, and tell each other their deepest secrets – except for Patrick’s homosexuality. Patrick protects and cares for Josie, and is there for her at some of her darkest moments, including when she is robbed. It almost appears as if Josie and Patrick are poised for a relationship, until Patrick comes out as gay.

At the same time, Josie has grown closer to Jesse Thierry, whom she has gone through school with. Jesse is already in college, and proves to be the friend that Josie can depend upon no matter what. She runs to Jesse in some of her worst and most important moments, such as when the mob comes to collect an inheritance and when Jesse’s ability to fix John’s car leads to letters of recommendation. Ultimately, the friendship between Josie and Jesse blossoms into romance, leading Jesse to drive Josie up to Massachusetts for her college interview.

Josie’s friendships with others prove invaluable as well. Josie has an unusual friendship with Willie, who alternatively considers Jessie a friend and a granddaughter-like figure. Willie, along with most of the other prostitutes at the house, do their best to care for and encourage Josie, especially when it comes to staying out of their line of work. Cokie, Sadie, and Sweetie pool their money together to provide college tuition for Josie. Willie herself provides emotional encouragement, advice, and later provides money for Josie to stay out of trouble based on the inheritance courtesy of Louise. Even criminal informants like Frankie are not above gestures of friendship, such as when Frankie refuses to accept money from Josie so she can save it for college.

Love

Love is an important theme in the novel “Out of the Easy” by Ruta Sepetys. Love appears in the novel in different ways, but most notably in romantic and familial forms. Love is important in terms of the plot as well, for love – and the search for love – influence events in crucial ways.

When the novel begins, Josie does not feel loved, either familial or romantic. She lives alone above a bookshop, while the extent of her social circle outside Willie’s consists of Patrick and his disabled father. In Patrick’s father, she sees something of family, and



comes to love him for his kindness in allowing her to live above the bookshop and in taking care of her in the early days. In Patrick, Josie at first sees a good friend, but then comes to look at him romantically. Except for Patrick's homosexuality, Josie and Patrick both know they would be dating.

Josie's relationship with her mother is just as strange, if not downright cruel. Josie's mother clearly does not love Josie, but considers herself obligated as a mother to have something to do with Josie at all. This includes letting Josie know that she and Cincinnati will be traveling to California. At the same time, Josie's relationship with Willie grows deeply, as Willie becomes something of a grandmotherly figure for Josie. Indeed, Josie does come to love Willie as family, as Willie has come to love Josie as family. Willie's advice, emotional encouragement, and even financial support are all indicative of the familial love Willie has for Josie.

Josie herself ultimately comes to have feelings of romantic love for Jesse, whom she has known for years. It is evident that Jesse has long had feelings for Josie, but Josie has been reluctant to get involved with anyone due to the reputation of her mother, her desire to leave New Orleans, and due to the fact that she was unable to win Patrick's affections. Slowly, Josie's friendship with Jesse blossoms into love as he makes sure to always be around when Josie needs him and when she doesn't expect him. His patience, understanding, and steadfastness ultimately win Josie over, and the two end up in a relationship. As the novel concludes, Jesse is driving Josie up to Massachusetts for a college interview.

Prostitution

Prostitution is an important theme in the novel "Out of the Easy" by Ruta Sepetys. Prostitution involves the selling of sexual relations for money or gifts. The novel, which occurs in 1950, deals with the very end of organized, criminal prostitution in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

Josie's mother has spent her life as a prostitute, having apparently begun in Willie's house before moving to Detroit where she lived for several years and gave birth to Josie. Following Detroit, Josie's mother returns to New Orleans where she again comes to work for Willie. While prostitution is illegal, many turn a blind eye to it because it appears to be one of the less dangerous crimes. In the past, Willie notes, the city was more proactive against prostitution, and raids were frequently conducted. That is not the case anymore.

Willie keeps several girls at her house, including Dora, Sweetie, Evangeline, and Louise. These and other girls and women spend each night having sex with male customers in exchange for money paid to Willie, of which the prostitutes themselves receive a cut. Willie does incredibly well financially, for many of her clients are upstanding members of Uptown, including John Lockwell. Many of the wives of these husbands ignore these indiscretions for various reasons, including that it keeps their homes stable and because



men are seen as dominant in society. Not all women accept this, however, and some begin to fight back against the affairs of their men.

These women are given added power with the murder of Forrest Hearne, since it directly involves Louise. A new anti-crime movement in New Orleans sweeps the city, including against prostitution in the Quarter. Raids become common once more, meaning Willie has to keep her girls on alert to get away on a moment's notice if needed, and that the house must be made to look as though it was a simple residence. With Willie's death, her house of prostitution is permanently disbanded. Her girls and employees are given pensions for their years of service.

Class

Class is an important theme in the novel "Out of the Easy" by Ruta Sepetys. Thematically, class involves not only the level of society to which one belongs (upper, middle, working, lower), but the attitudes, customs, and overall culture of those levels of society themselves. In the novel, class matters greatly to some, and not at all to others.

Due to her mother's work as a prostitute, Josie belongs to the lowest class in New Orleans, which includes blacks, people of mixed race, criminals, and anyone outside of the overall cultural mainstream. Cokie, Sadie, Frankie, Cincinnati, and Marcello are other examples of the lower class. Josie dreams of getting away from New Orleans, and aspires to be in the company of the middle and upper classes because it means getting away from the crime and the small-town atmosphere of the French Quarter. However, many outside the lower class – and indeed, many in the lower class – consider themselves almost in a caste system, in which social mobility is impossible. The reader should note that the French Quarter, and New Orleans, was heavily influenced by French culture – thus explaining more thoroughly the rigid, Europeaneseque class structure which is at odds with American social mobility at large. Many in the lowest class look upon members of the upper class with disdain, writing them off as ritzy, immoral, and elitist.

The working class is represented by Patrick, and to some degree, Cokie and Sadie. Cokie and Sadie, though relegated to the lowest class by virtue of their skin color, can be seen to be members of the working class because they make an honest living beyond crime. Patrick himself has disdain for the upper classes, and takes great pride in working to make a living at his father's bookshop, while Patrick's father may be considered middle class. Charlie has worked hard to become a famous writer and bookshop owner, things done legally and morally through his own talents and capabilities. The middle class is generally respected by the upper class for their aspirations, honesty, and work; and the middle class general respects the other classes as well, excepting the criminal elements of the lower class.

The upper class are represented by John Lockwell and Charlotte Gates. While some members of the upper class have respect for all classes beneath theirs, such as Charlotte, and while some members of the upper class have respect for some of the



classes beneath theirs, such as John (who is impressed with Patrick's talents and abilities, for example), overall, the upper classes do not mix or associate with the lower classes. Consider that the Lockwells aren't thrilled to have Josie at their party, and that John's wife calls Josie a "waif" from the Quarter. The lower class is seen as expendable – such as the alarming number of upper class men who visit the Quarter only for sexual purposes – though the working class, at least, has the respect of the upper class – such as when John allows his young daughter to pursue Patrick.

Crime

Crime is an important theme in the novel "Out of the Easy" by Ruta Sepetys. Crime involves the committing of immoral and illegal acts, and range from theft to prostitution to murder. In the novel, crime forms an important component of the plot, for it is entirely within the criminally-ridden lower class that Josie has spent her early life, and it is from this world of crime that Josie seeks to escape.

In New Orleans, the French Quarter is considered among the most crime-ridden areas. Prostitution is rampant, mafia influence is extensive, and thievery, robbery, and other petty crimes are commonplace. Willie owns and operates a house of prostitution, an immoral and illegal activity in the city. While there is some corruption in the police force, their being overburdened compels the police to turn a blind eye to prostitution in favor of pursuing harder criminals. Even then, it is difficult for the police to get ahead, such as in the case of pursuing Forrest's murder.

The criminal themselves range in the nature of their crimes and even ethics. Frankie, a low-level criminal who sells information, has enough of a moral compass to tell Josie to keep her money for college rather than paying him for information given to her. Dora, Evangeline, and the other prostitutes may sell themselves for money, but they have good hearts as demonstrated by their care and concern for Josie. Willie, who is tough-as-nails and runs a prostitution house, also has a soft spot for Josie and realizes that Josie is a morally just and ethical girl who deserves a chance to get above the criminal lower class. However, people like Cincinnati, Tango Eye Lou, and Marcello and his mafia have no compunction about becoming violent to collect money, debts, and to enforce their rule.

Forrest's murder is a crime too far, and provides the reasoning for a larger and more proactive police force. The prostitutes, their brothels, low-level criminals, criminal organizations like Marcello's, and others are rooted out. The crackdown on crime leads to Louise's extradition from California, and lead the police to double-down in their efforts to find Forrest's killer. Symbolically, Willie dies of a heart attack just as the criminal underworld comes to an end. One's heart is associated with one's life and one's passions, so Willie's death by heart attack is symbolic of the death of her life's work.

Styles

Point of View

Ruta Sepetys tells her novel “Out of the Easy” from the first-person limited-omniscient perspective in past-tense. The story is told from the point of view of main character and principal protagonist, Josie, who recounts her experience working to get out of New Orleans. The first-person is important because Josie has few trusted friends and who often keeps her feelings and thoughts to herself. The first-person allows the reader privileged access to her thoughts and emotions. The limited-omniscient aspect of the narrative lends a sense of mystery and drama, creating an atmosphere of suspense around the truth behind Forrest’s killing, and what Josie will do to pay off her mother’s debt with the mob. Given the fact that Josie appears to be telling her story sometime after it has occurred to a trusted friend – perhaps Charlotte – the language naturally takes on the past-tense.

Language and Meaning

Ruta Sepetys tells her novel “Out of the Easy” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least two reasons. First, the narrator of the novel – Josie – is a teenaged girl who turns 18 partway through her story. Given her upbringing and lack of higher education, it is only natural that Josie use language fitting to her character and her age. Second, the simple and straightforward language is geared toward a target audience of contemporary young adults (in the 2010s). It is only fitting that the language employed in the telling of the novel be reflective of the age range and level of education of that audience.

Structure

Ruta Sepetys divides her novel “Out of the Easy” into 59 consecutive, linear, and chronological chapters arranged and numbered from 1 to 59. Each of the chapters usually numbers only a few pages in length, and deal with only one or two primary situations or events. This gives the book a fast-paced feel in that chapters, like the events of the novel, are quick and to the point. The simple and straightforward approach to the construction of the novel is reflective of the young adult genre in general, and reflective of the target audience of young adults in particular.



Quotes

They didn't need to feel sorry for me. I was nothing like Mother. After all, Mother was only half the equation.

-- Josie (Chapter 2 paragraph 2)

Importance: As Josie heads to work at the bookshop – or as Josie heads around anywhere in town – people whisper behind her back to call her mother a whore and to pretend that they feel sorry for Josie. This angers Josie tremendously, both because she is her own person, and because the pity expressed for Josie is fake. Josie has been saving up money so that she can leave New Orleans, and have her own life.

I was getting out of New Orleans. My plan included bus fare and cash reserves to cover a full year of living expenses, enough time to get me on my feet.

-- Josie (Chapter 2 paragraph 22)

Importance: Josie reveals that she has secretly been saving up money so that she can leave New Orleans. She is tired of having to deal with her mother's reputation and how everyone seems to know everyone and everything about everyone in New Orleans. Josie believes leaving New Orleans for Massachusetts will give her the fresh start she needs.

Engrave your pieces, Jo, and they'll always find their way back to you.

-- Willie (Chapter 4 paragraph 16)

Importance: When Josie graduated from high school, Willie gave Josie an expensive, engraved Tiffany's locket. Willie's explanation that this ensures the piece will always come back to her is not merely a statement about jewelry, but a statement about life in general. The influence people have in shaping one another's hearts are like jewelry engravings. They always bring others back around in some way, shape, or form. In terms of engraved jewelry, this is true of Hearne's watch.

Let me tell you something 'bout those rich Uptown folk... They got everything that money can buy, their bank accounts are fat, but they ain't happy. They ain't never gone be happy. You know why? They soul broke.

-- Cokie (Chapter 13 paragraph 42)

Importance: Cokie explains to Josie and Patrick that money isn't everything. While the people Uptown may have money and luxury, they don't all have good lives. Money does not make a good life. The rich can be just as miserable as the poor. This is important information for Josie, who dreams of entering the upper class.

Jo, you listen, you ain't one of us. You're different. Willie knows that.

-- Dora (Chapter 15 paragraph 22)

Importance: After the fight with Willie and the departure of her mother, Josie feels



horribly. Dora comes in to console Josie, reminding Josie that she isn't one of them, that Josie is better, and that Josie's life isn't meant to be one of prostitution. Josie is comforted by this, and goes on to tell Dora that she wishes to attend college.

You're salted peanuts, and those people out East are petits fours.... There's nothing wrong with salted peanuts. But salted peanuts aren't served with petits fours.
-- Willie (Chapter 17 paragraph 47)

Importance: Willie tells Josie it is a good idea for Josie to go to college, but cautions her about where she will go. Willie explains that, based on Josie's upbringing – including where and with who, she is salted peanuts to the petits fours of the Northeast. Willie says there is nothing wrong with petits fours, but that they aren't meant to be served together. In such a way, Josie will be unable to fit in or be in the company of Northeasterners, who will probably never accept her.

I wanted to join them, to work on something important and meaningful.
-- Josie (Chapter 33 paragraph 8)

Importance: Josie mails off her application to Smith and hears from Charlotte. Charlotte tells her about the goings-on of the Progressive students, and tells Josie she can't wait for her to join them. This gives Josie something hopeful to look forward to, and reminds her of how desperately she wants to get out of New Orleans and begin all over again.

Yes, Mother was stupid. And greedy. A murderer? I didn't want to believe it. The thought scared me too much.
-- Josie (Chapter 35 paragraph 1)

Importance: Josie comes to learn through Frankie that her mother is being extradited to New Orleans where she is to be questioned about the murder of Forrest Hearne. Josie is stunned by this news and reacts with horror. She knows her mother is cruel, unkind, greedy, and stupid, but cannot imagine her mother is also a murderer. Things are about to get even more dramatic for Josie, as the reader comes to find out.

Patrick wanted someone else. I wanted him to be happy, but why couldn't he be happy with me?
-- Josie (Chapter 44 paragraph 1)

Importance: Josie learns that Patrick does not have feelings for her after all. She comes to believe that Patrick instead has feelings for Kitty. This makes sense to Josie, because she knows she is not sophisticated the way that Patrick is. In reality, it is because Patrick is gay.

That's called inheritance... With juice, you owe five thousand. I'm here to collect.
-- Josie (Chapter 49 paragraph 22)

Importance: Tangle Eye Lou comes to see Josie, telling her that her mother owes his boss \$5,000 for an alibi, but she cannot be found and has no paid up. As such, the debt



now falls to her family – Josie. Josie will have seven days to pay up. Josie is stunned and sickened.

Why had I allowed myself to dream that it was possible, that I could escape the smoldering cesspit of my existence in New Orleans and glide into a world of education and substance in Northampton?

-- Josie (Chapter 51 paragraph 13)

Importance: Josie learns with shock and sadness that she has not been accepted into Smith College. She is truly devastated by the news, hating herself for daring to hope or to think she might actually make it out of New Orleans. Josie's depression only worsens from the accompanying letter seeking a housemaid, leading her to take greater risks.

Can't wait to see you!

-- Charlotte (Chapter 59 paragraph 25)

Importance: As the novel comes to a close, Jesse encourages Josie to write a letter to Charlotte, revealing the truth of everything about her own life. Josie worries as to how Charlotte will respond. But much to Josie's relief, Charlotte couldn't care less. She merely says she looks forward to seeing Josie up in Massachusetts, and this gives Josie great happiness and confidence.