

Petals on the Wind Study Guide

Petals on the Wind by Virginia C. Andrews

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Plot Summary

Petals on the Wind by V.C. Andrews is the second in the Dollanganger series. This novel picks up where the first, *Flowers in the Attic*, leaves off. The surviving Dollanganger children are on a bus bound for Florida, where they hope to become acrobats in the circus. However, Carrie becomes very ill on the bus and they are forced to get off the bus. A fellow passenger on the bus decides to take them to the home of her employer, Dr. Paul Sheffield, a small town country doctor. The children find warmth and acceptance in the home of Dr. Paul. However, Christopher cannot let go of his undying affection for Catherine, Carrie still does not grow as she should, and Catherine cannot let go of a need for revenge against the woman responsible for all their pain. *Petals on the Wind* is a novel of growing up in an all too real world and of the revenge that can only poison what is good and precious.

Christopher warns his sisters not to tell the widowed doctor the truth about their past, but Catherine sees no other way to get Carrie the help she needs. Despite Christopher's fears, Dr. Paul accepts their story and does all he can to remove the arsenic from Carrie's system, the source of her current illness. When Christopher decides it is time to move on, Dr. Paul insists on keeping them with him, telling them he wants to make them his legal wards through the courts. This will mean notifying their mother of his intentions, giving the children some hope that their mother might come and acknowledge them. However, Corrine Foxworth Winslow does not appear in court, ignoring the summons completely.

Dr. Paul has the children tested and placed in appropriate schools, doing all he can to help them move into a more normal life. Christopher begins an advanced program that will help him excel in college and medical school. Carrie goes to a boarding school. Catherine begins attending high school and a ballet school in the evenings and on weekends. All seems well for the Dollanganger children, but darkness lurks just around the corner. Carrie is tortured at school, left blindfolded on the roof of the building because one of the students thinks she looks funny with her big head and underdeveloped body. Dr. Paul comes to Carrie's rescue and removes her from that school, but the damage has already been done.

As Catherine studies ballet and looks to a bright future, she cannot stop looking back on the past. Catherine blames her mother for everything, including Carrie's health problems and Christopher's refusal to stop showing her inappropriate affections. Catherine knows only two things are important to her mother: her money and her young husband. Catherine knows she must become famous and rich herself in order to be in a position to hurt her mother, so she focuses all the more on her ballet career. This does not stop her, however, from keeping tabs on her mother's movements and sending her letters to let her know that her atrocities are not forgotten.

Through the ballet school, Catherine meets Julian Marquet, the son of her instructors. Julian is in love with Catherine and repeatedly attempts to talk her into moving to New York in order to dance with his dance group. Catherine puts him off, unsure she is ready



to leave the safety of Dr. Paul's house. In fact, Catherine has begun a sexual affair with Dr. Paul and hopes to one day become his wife, despite Christopher's concerns. Eventually, Catherine does agree to go to New York in order to improve her chances of becoming a prima ballerina, but she remains true to Dr. Paul, continuing to resist Julian's advances. However, this changes when Catherine learns that Dr. Paul has lied to her about the survival of his first wife.

Catherine marries Julian in a fit of outrage and hurt, but quickly learns her impetuous actions were made based on a half truth. Dr. Paul is devastated by Catherine's choice, but promises to remain her devoted friend. Catherine attempts to make her marriage work, but Julian's controlling behavior keeps her from the siblings she loves and prevents her from becoming the prima ballerina her talent demands. Catherine finally has enough and drugs Julian in order to escape his company and go to Christopher's graduation from medical school. During this break from her marriage, Catherine realizes she is in love with Julian and that she is pregnant with her child. Determined to fix what has broken in the marriage, Catherine goes back to New York. However, in a fit of anger, Julian stomps on her feet and breaks four of her toes, putting her career in jeopardy.

The same night Julian has a car accident that has the potential of leaving him paralyzed. Catherine tells him of the baby and tries to give him a reason to look forward to the future, but all Julian has ever known is ballet. Julian kills himself. Catherine returns to Dr. Paul to have her baby and plan her future. Catherine cannot imagine dancing again without Julian, so she focuses on the revenge she has plotted for so long. Catherine is not rich or famous, so instead she focuses on her mother's husband. Catherine goes to Bart Winslow to help her recover Julian's insurance money. This begins a relationship that will take Catherine to Virginia, through an intense affair with her mother's husband, and a pregnancy that has the power to destroy her mother's marriage.

In Virginia, Catherine buys a dance studio where she teaches young children. At home, Carrie has come with Catherine in order to care for her son, Jory. However, Carrie is emotionally weak and a chance encounter with their mother leaves her devastated. Carrie commits suicide using the same method that killed her twin, Cory. Further pushed beyond the edge, Catherine completes her plans of revenge by arriving at her mother's Christmas party dressed exactly how her mother dressed more than eighteen years ago the first Christmas Catherine and her siblings were locked in the attic. Catherine tells everyone at the party she is Corrine Foxworth Winslow's daughter, effectively breaking the stipulations outlined in the will and taking away her fortune. In her devastation, Corrine starts a fire in the attic, destroying Foxworth Hall and killing her own husband.

Catherine goes back to North Carolina and marries Dr. Paul, living happily as his wife for five years. When Dr. Paul dies of heart disease, Catherine turns to her brother, Christopher. They marry and move to California, where they raise Catherine's two sons, Jory and Bart, together.



Part 1: Chapters 1-3

Part 1: Chapters 1-3 Summary

Catherine Dollanganger, her brothers Christopher and Cory, and her sister Carrie were all held captive in a secluded room in Foxworth Hall that had access to the attic. After three years and nearly five months of captivity, Catherine, Christopher, and Carrie escaped. However, Cory died from the arsenic poisoning their mother fed to them to prevent them from escaping and letting the world know of their existence, breaking the stipulations laid out in their grandfather's will.

Free, At Last! Catherine, Christopher, and Carrie are on a bus traveling to Florida where they hope to get jobs as acrobats in order to provide for themselves without adult help. However, Carrie is very sick and the other passengers on the bus are beginning to complain. A kind woman comes to their assistance and directs the bus driver to the home of her employer, Dr. Paul Sheffield, who she promises will help Carrie. Christopher insists to Catherine that they have to lie, that they cannot let anyone know their true story. However, Catherine finds the doctor to be kind and gentle, and feels that she can trust him. Catherine tells the doctor their story, including the arsenic with which their mother attempted to poison them. The doctor not only agrees to treat their health, but invites them to stay at his home for as long as they need.

A New Home. Catherine and Christopher find it difficult to adjust to sleeping in separate bedrooms after sharing one room for so long. Carrie cannot sleep in a bed alone. The children continue to rely on one another as they have done in the past, but Carrie and Catherine slowly begin to accept Dr. Paul's kindness. Christopher is more reluctant to trust an adult, especially one who appears to be attempting to take his place in the lives of his sisters. Christopher continuously insists that they will move on when Carrie is well. However, a discussion with Dr. Paul reveals that he wants to become their legal guardian and care for them. At Carrie's insistence, Christopher reluctantly agrees.

Life's Second Chance. A few days before Christmas, Dr. Paul takes the children shopping and allows them to buy all the clothes they want. Catherine is thrilled to finally have clothing that fits. Carrie, however, becomes disgruntled when she realizes the only clothes that will fit her are designed for toddlers, due to her underdevelopment caused by a lack of sunlight during her captivity. To appease her, Catherine agrees to learn to sew in order to make her clothes herself. A few weeks later, the children go to court to become Dr. Paul's wards. The children cannot help but be disappointed that their mother does not come to fight for her rights as their parent. Catherine is filled with anger, both for her own hurt feelings and those of her siblings. When she turns to Christopher for comfort, Christopher tries to seduce Catherine. Catherine fights him off, insisting that a sexual affair between them is a sin.



Part 1: Chapters 1-3 Analysis

Readers familiar with the Dollanganger saga and the first book in the series, *Flowers in the Attic*, will realize that this book begins within days of the first one's ending. The children, who have only just escaped from a three year imprisonment in the attic of their ancestral home, are on a bus looking for a new future. The children have had to rely on one another for three years and they intend to continue doing so, understandably reluctant to trust adults. However, Carrie's illness, most likely caused by the same arsenic that killed her twin, forces them to rely on Dr. Paul Sheffield, a kind, widowed doctor in North Carolina. Christopher continues to be reluctant to trust anyone, but both Catherine and Carrie instinctively know that Dr. Paul will never do anything to hurt them. Christopher has always been the one in charge, the one the others looked to for the hard decisions; therefore it seems only logical that he would feel threatened by this new authority in the lives of his sisters.

Catherine is disappointed when her mother does not show up in court to fight for her and her siblings, something that makes her angry at herself because she does not feel as though she should care if her mother shows up. In fact, Catherine tells herself she should be happy her mother did not show up based on her past atrocities, but the child in her who still loves her mother cannot help her disappointment. This leads to a great deal of anger that will eventually have to have an outlet.

Carrie is small for her age. Carrie's head is of normal size, but her body is tiny because of the lack of sunshine she had during some of the most important years of her growing cycle. This not only shows the reader how harmful those years of imprisonment were for Carrie but also suggests a time when her size will become a source of difficulty for Carrie. Finally, Christopher shows the reader that he is still in love with his sister as the reader witnessed in the first book of this series. Christopher confesses that he will never love anyone else and only wants to be with Catherine. This places Catherine in a difficult position because she believes that incest is a sin. Catherine hopes that Christopher will get over her when he begins dating other girls, but Christopher insists this will never happen. This situation foreshadows difficulties between these two characters and suggests tension that will remain until this situation is resolved one way or the other.



Part 2: Chapters 4-7

Part 2: Chapters 4-7 Summary

Visions of Sugarplums. On Christmas Day, Dr. Paul takes everyone to a ballet performance of *The Nutcracker* because of Catherine's love of ballet. Afterward, they go backstage so that Dr. Paul can introduce Catherine to Madame Marisha Rosencoff and her husband, Georges. Madame Marisha seems interested in Catherine until she learns no one has ever told Catherine she is a great dancer. Christopher becomes angry and insists that Madame Marisha give Catherine a chance to prove herself. Madame Marisha agrees to allow Catherine to audition the following day. Catherine is horrified, afraid she is not in good enough shape to pass the audition. Christopher again tries to comfort her with kisses, causing another discussion about the sin of incest.

The Audition. Catherine's nerves melt away the moment she begins to dance at her audition. Unfortunately, Catherine begins to bleed profusely during the audition and has to be rushed to the hospital. When she wakes, Catherine learns she has had to have a medical procedure caused by her lack of menstruation for several months. At the same time, Catherine learns she has been accepted as a student by Madame Marisha.

School Days Renewed. The children have all been tested and enrolled in the appropriate grade. Both Carrie and Christopher will attend nearby boarding schools, returning to Dr. Paul's on the weekend, while Catherine will attend a local high school and Madame Marisha's in the evenings and on weekends. Carrie is unhappy about her new school, afraid to be apart from her siblings. However, Catherine makes her promises that help relieve the fear. Christopher, too, is concerned, afraid that Dr. Paul will make sexual advances on Catherine in his absence.

Enchantress...Me? The night before school is to begin, Catherine goes downstairs, unable to sleep, and finds Dr. Paul sitting in his chair in the living room. Catherine curls up in his lap and talks to him about her excitement. Dr. Paul asks Catherine about her relationship with Christopher and she admits to some inappropriate feelings, but insists they have never done anything wrong. Catherine attempts to kiss Dr. Paul, but he pushes her away, telling her he does not want to make any mistakes with her. Catherine begins school the next day, but what excites her more is her work in ballet class. Julian Marquet, Madame Marisha's son and professional dancer, makes multiple trips to Clairmont in order to be near Catherine, a fact that makes her feel both special and fearful. One night Julian drives Catherine home and asks her out on a date. Catherine agrees.

Part 2: Chapters 4-7 Analysis

Catherine has wanted to be a dancer since she was a little girl and she kept up her practice while locked in Foxworth Hall. Dr. Paul learns this and gives her the gift of a



night at the ballet, introducing her to the owner of the ballet school at the end of the evening. Christopher argues with the teacher, Madame Marisha, until she agrees to give Catherine an audition. Catherine wants to be a prima ballerina, has wanted it all her life, and this audition could mean the beginning of that dream coming true. However, Catherine is nervous, afraid she will not do well.

During the audition, which Catherine does exceedingly well in, she begins to bleed because her menstruation has been irregular. This episode is embarrassing for Catherine, but proves important for two reasons. First, it is important because it relieves Catherine of the fear that her one act of incest with Christopher might have left her pregnant. Second, it is an episode that will be remembered and come back to haunt Catherine later in the story.

School begins and everyone goes to a different place, beginning to live their lives separately after being together for so long. Catherine settles into her new life by attempting to seduce Dr. Paul. The reader finds this curious, wondering if Catherine's seduction of Dr. Paul is some sense of obligation on her part for all he has done, if it is really love, or if it is some sort of acting out on her part. Dr. Paul turns her down, but the reader suspects by his reaction before he turns her down that he might not take her up on it at some later date. At the same time, Catherine is being pursued by Julian Marquet, a dancer, suggesting a complication to Catherine's relationships with both Dr. Paul and Christopher.



Part 2: Chapters 8-10

Part 2: Chapters 8-10 Summary

My First Date. Christopher is angry when he learns Catherine has a date with Julian, but Dr. Paul seems to be indifferent. Catherine enjoys the date, the dinner and dancing, but becomes uncomfortable when Julian takes her to secluded spot and attempts to seduce her. Julian accuses her of being a child while at the same time begging her to come to New York to join his dance company. Julian confesses that he has a back injury, but her weight and size are perfect for him, not causing him the pain other dancers cause. Catherine puts him off, returning home just to argue with Christopher over his affections for her. Catherine blames her mother for Christopher's behavior. Catherine wants to hurt her mother the way she hurt them, but the only ways she believes she could hurt her is by taking away her fortune and her young husband. However, Catherine does not know how she can do that just yet. That night, Catherine is alone in bed when it begins to rain. Catherine goes in search of Dr. Paul for comfort. Catherine shares with Dr. Paul some of her anger at her mother. In order to discourage Catherine from her need for revenge, Dr. Paul tells her about his wife, Julia.

Dr. Paul married his high school sweetheart. On his wedding night, Dr. Paul discovered that Julia had an aversion to sex. Over the years, the only times Julia would have sex with her husband was when he forced himself on her. In an effort to find sexual satisfaction elsewhere, Dr. Paul had an affair with a woman in his office. The woman became pregnant and threatened to go public with the affair. Julia found out. Humiliated, Julia threatened to hurt Dr. Paul for his actions. On their son's third birthday, Julia took Scotty to the store for more supplies before the party. When they did not return home, Dr. Paul went in search of them. Dr. Paul found them at the lake. Julia had drowned Scotty and attempted to drown herself. Dr. Paul tells Catherine that he revived Julia, but she later died at the hospital. When he is finished, Catherine attempts to seduce Dr. Paul a second time, but again he turns her down, making her feel as though she is the Devil's issue, just like the grandmother always said she was.

Sweeter Than All the Roses. On Catherine's sixteenth birthday, Dr. Paul throws a surprise party. During the party, Christopher and Julian begin to argue over Julian's desire to take Catherine to New York. Afterward, Christopher confronts Catherine about Julian's affections for her, accusing her of sleeping with every man who offers her something she wants. Catherine believes that Christopher thinks she is just like their mother. In fact, Catherine has begun collecting articles in the local papers about her mother, as well as the Virginia paper, so she can keep track of her movements as she restores her husband's house in the nearby city of Greenglenna.

Owl on the Roof. Carrie has trouble adjusting to boarding school and her emotional health is not supported by her cruel roommate. The roommate makes fun of Carrie's big head and little body, causing a fight one night when she invites other students into the room to see the freak that Carrie is. That weekend, all the students involved are forced



to remain on campus, including Carrie. The first night, Carrie discovers the dolls from her mother's dollhouse have been stolen. Moments later, the other students serving punishment come into the room, blindfold and tie up Carrie, and then force her onto the roof in some sort of game of initiation. Carrie manages to fall through a trap door into the attic. The next morning, Catherine gets the call that Carrie is missing. Catherine interrogates the other students, finally leading a rescue party into the attic where they find Carrie hiding under a precariously stacked group of boxes. Catherine pulls her to freedom. Carrie has suffered a broken leg that forces Dr. Paul to cancel their summer vacation plans. Out of anger for all Carrie has suffered, Catherine sends a note to her mother, promising revenge.

Part 2: Chapters 8-10 Analysis

Catherine goes out with Julian, but she is not interested in him sexually. Despite this, Christopher becomes enraged that she would even consider dating anyone, showing the reader the depth of his affections for his own sister, illustrating the theme of sin. Christopher continues to show his displeasure when Julian shows up for Catherine's birthday, accusing her of being a user like their mother. Instead of falling for Julian, who is nearer her own age and shares her passion for ballet, Catherine continuously attempts to seduce Dr. Paul. Again the reader wonders what her motivation is in seducing Dr. Paul, but the longer it goes on the more it appears to be a genuine affection. However, the reader who recalls Catherine's one kiss with Bart Winslow might wonder if perhaps Catherine's affection for Dr. Paul might not be a misplaced desire to be with Bart.

Dr. Paul tells Catherine the story of how his wife drowned his son and killed herself over a sexual affair he had with someone else. This story appears to be a warning against the poison of revenge, suggesting to the reader that if Catherine were to ever get revenge on her mother it might not turn out well. This story is also important because the way in which Dr. Paul tells it will prove to be significant later as the plot continues to develop.

Carrie is struggling to get along with children her own age because her body continues to remain smaller than it should be and her head larger in comparison. Carrie is tortured by her schoolmates and ironically finds refuge in the attic. This experience shows the reader how difficult life is for Carrie, suggesting damage to her emotional health that might not be repairable. At the same time, Catherine uses Carrie's pain as another reason to hate her mother and to blame her for everything that has gone wrong in their lives. This only fuels Catherine's desire for revenge, a theme of the novel.



Part 2: Chapters 11-15

Part 2: Chapters 11-15 Summary

Momma's Shadow. A year and a half after escaping from the attic and coming to Dr. Paul, Catherine has discovered that the real world is nothing like what she imagined it would be. Catherine continues to add to her mother's list of wrongs and follow her movements through the gossip pages in the newspapers. Once, while walking through Greenglenna, Catherine sees her mother walking with a friend. Catherine follows them, filled with hatred, but her mother never notices her.

A Birthday Gift. On Dr. Paul's birthday, Catherine plans a nice dinner, but Dr. Paul is late getting home. When he finally arrives, Catherine yells at him for his inconsideration before joining him for dinner. They discuss a woman Dr. Paul is rumored to be seeing and Catherine's interest in Julian, as well as the mustache Dr. Paul has grown to please Catherine. Afterward, they sit before the fire and share a few kisses. Dr. Paul tries to brush Catherine off, but cannot this time. They spend the night together and Dr. Paul teaches Catherine about lovemaking. The following morning, Catherine feels as though she has betrayed Christopher, but hopes that now he can find someone else to love.

Foxworth Hall, from the Outside. Catherine wants to go to Foxworth Hall for her Christmas gift and search the surrounding area for Cory's grave. Christopher and Carrie are against the trip, but Dr. Paul reluctantly agrees. They search all the local hospitals and cemeteries, but cannot find a grave that might be Cory's or record of a child his age dying at that time in the area. Then they make a pass by the old house, surprised at how mild it appears from the outside. However, the house causes Carrie to cry for her mother, bringing only more pain to all three children.

Toward the Top. Julian returns to Clairmont and once again begs Catherine to go to New York with him. Julian promises Madame Zolta, his dance company instructor, can make her a star. Catherine hesitates because she is reluctant to leave Christopher and Carrie. Dr. Paul insists it is the right thing for her to do, but Catherine again falters when Carrie becomes hysterical upon hearing the news. Finally Catherine decides to go, crying on Julian's shoulder as she leaves her siblings behind for the first time.

New York, New York. Julian takes Catherine directly to Madame Zolta, who questions Catherine's devotion to dance. Catherine takes an apartment with two other dancers, one of whom is a resentful girl who fears Catherine has come to take her place in the company. As Catherine works with the company, she finds Madame Zolta too demanding, finally breaking down and quitting during one particularly difficult rehearsal. Madame Zolta apologizes, insisting she only needed to force Catherine to prove her spirit and her devotion to success. Seven months later, Catherine takes the lead role in *The Nutcracker* for a televised special. A short time later, Catherine takes the lead role in *Sleeping Beauty*. The whole family comes for the show. Afterward, Dr. Paul asks Catherine to marry him.



Part 2: Chapters 11-15 Analysis

Catherine sees her mother in Greenglenna, the sister town to the one where she lives with Dr. Paul, and is angered when her mother either does not notice her or chooses to ignore her. Catherine desperately wants her mother to acknowledge her and all she did to her and her siblings, but that is clearly not going to happen because her mother knows that if anyone finds out the truth about her children from her first marriage she will lose all her money. It has become clearer to Catherine with every passing day that money is more important to her mother than her own children. This leads Catherine down a continuing path of anger and a need for revenge, a theme of the novel.

Catherine begins an affair with Dr. Paul. This affair begins shortly after Catherine turns sixteen, suggesting to the reader that it is similar to the incestuous affair with Christopher that she is continuously fighting off. Dr. Paul has grown a mustache, an important symbol to Catherine whose first kiss from someone other than her brother was from Bart Winslow, a man who also sports a mustache. This again suggests that Catherine's true desire is to recapture the magic she felt with Bart. At the same time, Catherine makes the decision to move to New York, finally making a break from both Carrie and Christopher. A child raised in a normal home would find this break to be inevitable, a normal part of growing up. For Catherine and her siblings, however, this feels almost like betrayal because all they have ever known is each other. For Carrie, this is another blow to her fragile emotional health, foreshadowing a possible moment in her life when all these difficult emotional moments could add up to danger.



Part 2: Chapters 16-19

Part 2: Chapters 16-19 Summary

A Fighting Chance. Julian continues to pressure Catherine into a relationship, unaware of her engagement to Paul. They fight one day while riding in Julian's new Cadillac, causing Julian to leave Catherine by the side of the road. Catherine is forced to take a taxi and beg money from her roommate and fellow dancer, Yolanda. Yolanda forces Catherine to promise to set her up with Christopher for the money. They fight when Catherine refuses. Catherine moves out, insisting Madame Zolta pay her more so she can afford a small apartment on her own. With the news that the dance company would be going on tour in London, Catherine and Julian make amends.

Winter Dreams. Catherine returns home for Christmas, where Christopher gives her a gold locket and Dr. Paul gives her a fox coat. They watch *The Nutcracker* on television together. Catherine finds herself hoping her mother is also watching. The following day, Catherine and Christopher fight over her relationship with Dr. Paul. Christopher insists that Dr. Paul is too old to make her a good husband and she would be better off with Julian. Later, Dr. Paul takes Catherine into town where she wants to have a ring for Carrie resized. At the counter, Catherine finds herself standing beside her mother. Catherine is once again disappointed when her mother fails to acknowledge her. That night, Dr. Paul and Catherine celebrate their engagement with Carrie, but Christopher refuses to support their nuptials.

April's Fool. Catherine and Julian practice long hours for an upcoming performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Afterward, Dr. Paul's sister Amanda comes to see Catherine backstage. Amanda tells Catherine that Dr. Paul has had many affairs with young girls, during and after his marriage. Amanda also tells Catherine that Dr. Paul removed a two-headed baby from her womb the day she began to bleed during her rehearsal for *Madame Marisha*. Finally Amanda tells Catherine Dr. Paul's wife, Julia, is still alive, living in an institution in Clairmont. Amanda has pictures to prove it. Catherine becomes upset after seeing pictures of Julia, convinced Dr. Paul has been lying to her. Just before flying off to London, Catherine marries Julian.

Part 2: Chapters 16-19 Analysis

As Catherine's star begins to rise, she finds it difficult to deal with the anger and jealousy of other dancers, as well as Julian's continued insistence on a romantic relationship. In the end, Catherine moves into a place of her own to fight off Yolanda, her roommate and fellow dancer, but the reader suspects this will not be the end of this rivalry. At the same time, Catherine meets Dr. Paul's sister and learns a few things that cause her to marry Julian in a fit of anger and hurt. Catherine believes Dr. Paul has lied to her, so she uses Julian to get back at him. This act shows the reader that Catherine



is exactly as Christopher has accused her of being, a woman willing to use anyone to get what she wants, much like their mother.

Amanda tells Catherine that she had a miscarriage when she began to bleed during her audition for the Rosencoff Dance Company. From the night Christopher forced himself on her, Catherine was convinced she would give birth to something hideous, so this has the intended affect on her, but not for the reasons Amanda believes. At the same time, Amanda shows Catherine pictures of Julia, Dr. Paul's wife, proof that he lied about her death. Catherine cannot stand being lied to. So, impetuously she strikes out at Dr. Paul, using a revenge of sorts that touches on a theme of the novel, placing herself in a marriage that will be more punishment to her than it will ever be to Paul.



Part 2: Chapters 19-20

Part 2: Chapters 19-20 Summary

Labyrinth of Lies. Catherine and Julian fly with the dance company to London. Julian never gives Catherine a moment of space, insisting on being at her side at all times. Catherine tells Julian she is not sure she could ever love him, causing him deep hurt. Back in Clairmont, Catherine and Julian go straight to Dr. Paul's house. Catherine wants to tell Dr. Paul the truth, but she cannot find the words to hurt him. Finally, Catherine walks with Dr. Paul in the garden and tells him about Amanda's visit. Catherine learns that Julia was alive, but she died shortly before their affair began. Dr. Paul also assures Catherine that she did not miscarry a two-headed baby as a result of her one night with Christopher. In the end, Dr. Paul assures Catherine that her marriage to Julian is the best thing she could have done and that he will remain her good friend, as he always should have been.

Too Many Loves to Lose. Dr. Paul tells Catherine that Julian's father, Georges, is in the hospital. Dr. Paul drives them to the hospital where Julian is berated by his mother for not coming sooner. Georges tries to tell Julian something important, but dies before he can. Marisha is angry with Julian, but later confesses to Catherine that perhaps she and her husband were always too hard on Julian. When Christopher comes home a few days later, he tells Catherine she should have married Dr. Paul instead of Julian. Carrie becomes angry with Catherine for marrying and for leaving her once more. Catherine returns to New York, feeling as though she has hurt everyone she loves and has placed herself in a loveless marriage, one in which her controlling husband has forbidden her from seeing her two loves, Christopher and Dr. Paul, ever again.

Part 2: Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Catherine returns home to show Dr. Paul what she has done to punish him for his lies, only to learn the lies were not the truth she believed them to be. In fact, Dr. Paul only lied about when his wife died, but she was dead by the time he became engaged to Catherine. The abortion was a lie concocted by Amanda to hurt Catherine, hurting her more than she could have known because of Catherine's fear of bearing a monster child with her brother, Christopher. It is this fear that keeps Catherine from allowing Christopher to become her lover, a fear Amanda could not have known existed and yet one that played perfectly with her plot to destroy Dr. Paul's relationship with Catherine for her own bitter reasons.

Julian's father dies. Julian is heartbroken even though he and his father were never close and Julian claimed to hate his father. Marisha is angry with Julian for not being with her dying husband sooner, but understands that Julian never got the love and affection from his father he deserved. Marisha tells this to Catherine, but not to Julian, the one person who deeply needs to know it. This foreshadows trouble for Julian in the



future, who has made his whole life about dancing in order to win his father's love and then to show his father he could do it without him. The reader must wonder what might happen if dancing were somehow taken away from Julian.



Part 3: Chapters 21-24

Part 3: Chapters 21-24 Summary

Dreams Come True. Catherine settles into her new life as Julian's wife. Christopher comes to visit once, but Catherine feels it necessary to hide this fact from Julian, who would not approve. Carrie visits for the summer when she is fifteen. Julian does not have a problem with Carrie; in fact, he appears to like her a great deal, so this provides a good time for the two sisters. After more than five years of marriage, Catherine and Julian are on vacation in Spain. Their careers have not taken off as they should have, in part because of Julian's difficult behaviors and fickle choices regarding material. Catherine is beginning to feel imprisoned by his controlling ways and his affairs with young girls. When Christopher invites Catherine to his medical school graduation, Catherine wants to attend, but Julian refuses to allow her. Catherine slips a drug into his morning coffee and escapes. The graduation is a magnificent affair and Catherine is overjoyed for her brother's accomplishment. At dinner that night, Catherine gives Christopher an antique microscope his father once promised to give him upon his graduation.

Gathering Shadows. Catherine knows she must return to New York to begin rehearsals for a televised production of *Giselle* she and Julian are supposed to perform, but allows herself to be talked into staying a few days in Clairmont. Once there, Catherine reads in the paper that she has been replaced in the production by Yolanda, her old roommate. Catherine is not concerned because she believes this is just Julian's way of punishing her. Catherine visits Madame Marisha, who tells her how hard she and Georges were on Julian and that she should take him back and love him as he deserves to be loved. Catherine realizes she does love Julian. Catherine decides to go to New York and takes Christopher along at his insistence. Catherine and Christopher go directly to the theater and watch the rehearsals for a few minutes, amused at the trouble Julian is having lifting Yolanda. Catherine then goes back stage, dons her dance clothing, and takes Yolanda's place. Julian is unhappy to see her and they argue even as they dance the piece perfectly. Suddenly, Julian stomps on Catherine's feet, injuring her for leaving him.

The Thirteenth Dancer. Christopher takes Catherine to have her feet x-rayed. Catherine has broken three toes on one foot and one on the other. The doctor says it is possible she will dance again, but they must wait and see. Christopher takes Catherine back to the apartment she shares with Julian where Catherine insists she must allow Julian to make amends. Christopher wants Catherine to come home with him, but she refuses. During the night, Catherine gets a phone call telling her that Julian has been injured in a car accident. Julian has a broken neck. Julian will live, but it is doubtful he will ever dance again. Julian is saddened by the news, certain there is no life without dance. Catherine tells him she is pregnant, hoping to give him a reason to live, but he tells her he does not want the child. The next morning, Catherine goes to check on Julian only to discover he has taken his own life. Julian is buried next to his father in Clairmont and



Catherine returns to Dr. Paul's home, convinced that Julian would never have died if she had gone to him unsoiled, untouched by both Christopher and Dr. Paul.

Interlude for Three. As Catherine awaits the birth of her baby, she turns her focus from ballet to revenge. Catherine continues to write notes to her mother to remind her she has not forgotten. At the same time, Christopher and Dr. Paul enter a sort of rivalry, both wanting to be the father to Catherine's unborn child. The child, a son, is born in February. Catherine names him Julius Janus Marquet for his father, but will call him Jory for her own lost brother, Cory.

Part 3: Chapters 21-24 Analysis

Catherine becomes a victim to Julian's controlling behaviors as his wife. Julian controls her career, picking and choosing the dances she will dance, while also controlling who she sees and spends time with. Julian is jealous of Catherine's affection for both Christopher and Dr. Paul, so he limits the time she spends with them. Julian is not threatened by Carrie, however, and she spends a whole summer at their apartment. This becomes significant to the reader when Catherine admits that she knows Julian has had multiple affairs with young girls, leaving the reader wondering if Julian ever did anything inappropriate with Carrie.

Catherine finally shows her independent spirit by forcing Julian to allow her to go to Christopher's medical school graduation. Christopher's achievement is very important to all the Dollanganger children because of what it signifies in regards to their escape from Foxworth Hall. However, this episode causes Catherine to irreparably damage her marriage, leaving her pregnant and alone when Julian's own behavior results in his death. Catherine does not see Julian's death as a result of his parents' lack of affection toward him or his own obsession with ballet. Catherine sees Julian's death as a product of her mother's actions against herself and her siblings. Catherine believes that Christopher falling in love with her and forcing himself on her created a situation that caused Catherine to be incapable of loving Julian properly, therefore leading to his death. Now Catherine is more focused on revenge against her mother than ever before. The birth of her child, Jory, whom she has named for both Julian and her dead brother, Cory, only becomes a symbol of that desire for revenge.



Part 4: Chapters 25-28

Part 4: Chapters 25-28 Summary

My Sweet Small Prince. Jory becomes the focus of everyone in Dr. Paul's household, but especially for Carrie. Carrie has become disillusioned, convinced she will never marry or have children even though she longs for a house full of babies. Carrie has gone to work for Dr. Paul, continuing to lean on him as she has since the day they came to him. At the same time, Christopher's medical career is progressing and he is offered a spot at the Mayo Clinic. Christopher wants Catherine to go with him, but once again she refuses to allow him even a pinch of hope. Instead, Catherine takes a job with Madame Marisha, teaching dance.

Opening Gambit. Catherine moves into a small cottage despite Dr. Paul's desire that she remain with him, refusing both the men who love her. Bart Winslow has a small law practice in Greenglenna. Catherine goes to Bart with help getting Julian's insurance to pay out. Not only does Bart get the insurance to pay out, but he also informs Catherine that his wife, Corrine Foxworth Winslow, is a big fan of hers. Catherine does not believe this. In fact, Catherine has attempted to blackmail her mother into paying her a million dollars, but has yet to receive a reply. Bart later takes Catherine to dinner and she learns that he intends to return to Virginia to live at Foxworth Hall because the grandmother has suffered some strokes. Catherine, who has had a falling out with Madame Marisha over whether or not Jory is to be taught to dance, decides to move to Virginia. Catherine insists that Carrie go with her, even though she is twenty and reluctant to go.

The Siren Call of the Mountains. Upon arriving in Virginia, Catherine buys a small cottage near Foxworth Hall and a dance school with the promise of many local children already enrolled. Within weeks of arriving in Virginia, Carrie meets a young man who asks her out on a date. Carrie is shy, but exciting that someone is interested in her despite her strangely tiny body. Paul comes to visit and Catherine spends a few hours in his arms. Later, however, Catherine has a nightmare of the grandmother and she runs to Carrie's room to protect her.

Carrie's Bittersweet Romance. Carrie blossoms in her romance with Alex. However, when Alex asks her to marry him, Carrie suddenly becomes depressed. Alex wants to become a minister and he believes that Carrie is perfect, would be a perfect minister's wife. Carrie begins to wonder what Alex would think of her if he knew the truth about her past. As Catherine attempts to console Carrie and reassure her that she is a good person despite all the grandmother told them, Carrie confesses that Julian molested her when she was fifteen and that she liked it. Catherine tries to convince Carrie that love can overcome all obstacles, but Carrie is stubborn in her belief that there is something wrong with her and that is why she looks the way she does. A few days later, Catherine comes home to find Carrie deathly ill. Carrie is hospitalized and both Dr. Paul and Christopher come. Catherine tells Christopher that she found arsenic and powdered



donuts in Carrie's closet. Catherine also shows Christopher a letter Carrie wrote that says Carrie saw their mother in town one day and that Corrine Foxworth Winslow pretended she did not know who she was. Carrie dies a few days later and is buried in Clairmont near Dr. Paul's small son.

Part 4: Chapters 25-28 Analysis

Catherine has two men who want to be the father of her child, Christopher and Dr. Paul. Catherine turns Christopher down because he is her brother and she still believes their love is a sin, which will result in monster children. Catherine turns Dr. Paul down because she believes the time has come to get revenge on her mother, and her only method of doing so is to seduce Corrine's young husband, Bart. Catherine begins this by using Bart's legal services to get the money she is due from Julian's insurance. It seems to the reader that Catherine, who still believes herself to be in love with Dr. Paul, has turned him down to prevent the hurt that would result when he learns of her affair with Bart, suggesting deep down she is a better person than her mother is.

Catherine moves to Virginia, dragging her sister along to live in the shadow of Foxworth Hall. The reader is already aware that Carrie has a lot of emotional baggage associated with her time being held captive in Foxworth Hall; therefore, it is most likely a bad idea to bring her back there. However, Carrie appears optimistic when she finally finds a man who wants to love her as she is, small body and all. Unfortunately, Carrie is once again forced to wonder if she is truly an abomination against God when she learns her new love is going to be a minister. Carrie feels she is not good enough for this spiritual man. At the same time, Carrie is rejected publicly by her mother, leaving her feeling even more unworthy. To top all this off, Carrie was sexually abused by Julian, Catherine's husband. All of this combines and causes Carrie to commit suicide. Once again, Catherine has another reason to hate her mother and to desire revenge.



Part 5: Chapters 29-32

Part 5: Chapters 29-32 Summary

The Time for Vengeance. Catherine returns to Virginia in the aftermath of Carrie's funeral and begins placing herself in Bart Winslow's way. Bart confronts Catherine one day in a diner and confronts her with the blackmail letters. When Catherine tells him to ask Corrine about the letters, he tells her that he knows his wife has secrets. Bart tells Catherine that Corrine often looks at an old blue photo album, one Catherine immediately recognizes as an album containing pictures of her and her siblings before their father's death. Catherine tells Bart she is a niece of Corrine's, the product of an affair her grandfather had. Bart believes her and takes her for a drive where they discuss Bart's unhappiness in his marriage and the fact that his wife can never bear him children.

Tiger by the Tail. Christopher comes to Catherine's for the weekend and asks to move in with her, but Catherine refuses. A few days later, Catherine meets Bart on a jogging trail and teases him by running as fast as she can, forcing him to keep up. Catherine falls, so they stop and talk. Catherine asks about the old woman who lives with him in Foxworth Hall and learns the grandmother's name for the first time. It is Olivia. Catherine then invites Bart to dinner.

The Spider and the Fly. Catherine dresses provocatively and attempts to seduce Bart, but intending to keep him at arm's length. However, Bart sees through her games and forces himself on her, practically raping her on the floor of her bedroom. They argue and Catherine throws him out, but Bart promises to return the following day. Bart sends Catherine roses the following morning and arrives for dinner that evening. Catherine greets him in old clothing and feeds him beans and wieners for dinner. That night Bart is gentle when he makes love to her.

The Grandmother, Revisited. Through Bart, Catherine learns that Corrine is out of town until Christmas and learns the routines of the nurse who cares for the grandmother.

Using the key Christopher made while they were prisoners in the attic, Catherine sneaks into Foxworth Hall one afternoon when she knows no one will be about. Catherine intends to whip the grandmother as she once did Catherine and Christopher, as well as placing tar in her hair as she once did to Catherine. However, when Catherine sees the grandmother she finds a shriveled up, frail old woman. Catherine attempts to whip her, but after one strike she loses her nerve. Catherine then attempts to put wax in the woman's hair, but feels like a bully. Catherine leaves without exacting her revenge, but feels somewhat revenged when she sees the tears on the old woman's face. Later, Bart tells Catherine that someone attacked his old mother-in-law and the mark on her back will not heal due to poor circulation. A short time later, Corrine returns to Foxworth Hall after losing thirty pounds and having undergone a face lift.



Part 5: Chapters 29-32 Analysis

Carrie's death leaves Catherine more determined than ever to exact revenge on her mother, touching on the major theme of the novel. Catherine begins an affair with Bart. The affair does not begin well. Bart rapes Catherine and she discovers that he is going to be harder to control than she thought, but it never occurs to her to back off. Instead, Catherine goes ahead full steam, determined to become pregnant with Bart's child because her mother cannot, due to the stipulations of her father's will. Corrine will lose her entire inheritance and be forced to pay back what she has spent if it ever comes out that she had children with her first husband or has children with her second husband.

Catherine also wants to exact revenge on the grandmother who kept her captive, who whipped her for allowing Christopher to see her naked, and who placed hot tar in her hair to remove this object of Catherine's beauty. Catherine tries to whip the old woman and put hot wax in her hair, but feels like a bully for treating a fragile old woman like that. Catherine berates the woman, listing all her wrongs, and leaves. However, when Catherine returns to retrieve something forgotten, she finds the old woman crying and feels avenged. This foreshadows Catherine's revenge against her mother, but the reader doubts it will go smoothly despite all Catherine's careful planning.



Part 5: Chapters 33-35

Part 5: Chapters 33-35 Summary

Stacking the Deck. Catherine tells Bart she is pregnant. Bart is horrified because he wants to be a father but does not want to lose his wife. Catherine promises to disappear, but Bart cannot allow her to do that, begging for time to think things through. At the same time, Catherine has a dress made to be an exact replica of the green gown her mother wore the first Christmas Catherine and her siblings were locked in the attic, a Christmas when Catherine and Christopher were allowed to spy on the party from a cabinet on the second floor. Catherine then has her hair cut and styled like her mother's was on that same night, eighteen years before. Catherine prepares to attend the party despite a lack of invitation and the fact that she knows Henny is sick and needs her.

Revelations. Catherine lets herself into Foxworth Hall through a back door and sneaks upstairs. Catherine first goes to her mother's room and remembers the night she snuck a kiss from Bart, a kiss that would remain in her memory forever. Then Catherine goes to the room where she and her siblings spend three years and nearly five months. The room looks the same, as though they never left. In the attic, the paper flowers remain, though they have faded, and the words Catherine wrote on the blackboard in the schoolroom are still there. Catherine does some more exploring, looking for the other entrance into the attic that Bart told her about on the front stairs.

When it is time, Catherine goes downstairs to join the party. Catherine announces to the entire party that she is Corrine Foxworth Winslow's daughter. Corrine reacts physically while Bart tells the party goers that Catherine is enacting a joke he paid her to play. Bart then takes Catherine and Corrine into the library where the grandmother is sitting alone. Bart insists on knowing the truth. Corrine denies Catherine's claims at first, but then admits them, blaming the whole thing on her own father until Catherine points out that her father died eight months before the children escaped. Then Catherine tells Corrine that she found Cory's body in the attic, near the larger entrance at the front of the house. Corrine rushes from the room moments after Christopher arrives. A fire breaks out as Christopher is telling Catherine that Henny has suffered a stroke. Once outside, Corrine sends Bart back for her mother. Bart and the grandmother are both killed, leaving Catherine devastated with the knowledge that the one man she has loved all her life has died.

Reaping the Harvest. Four years have passed. Catherine is happily married to Dr. Paul and raising her two sons, Jory and Bart. Dr. Paul suffered a heart attack attempting to save Henny and has been ill since. Dr. Paul tells Catherine she should leave him and marry Christopher now that the possibility of a pregnancy is no longer an issue due to complications with her pregnancy with Bart. Catherine refuses, determined to remain loyal to Paul. However, Dr. Paul dies a short time later. Catherine and Christopher sell Dr. Paul's house to his sister and move to California where they live as man and wife, raising her two sons together. They visit their mother a few times a year where she



resides in a mental hospital. Although Corrine lost her inheritance when Catherine made her revelation, she got it back when her own mother died due to the fact that the money reverted to Olivia Foxworth who then left everything to Corrine. Only occasionally does Catherine find herself thinking of locking her children in the attic.

Part 5: Chapters 33-35 Analysis

Catherine reaches into the past in order to hurt her mother by not only revisiting the rooms she lived more than three years in, but also by dressing like her mother on that first Christmas. Catherine's announcement that she is Corrine's daughter is not taken seriously at first by anyone despite their similarity in looks, but Bart slowly comes around as Corrine clumsily tries to defend herself. Corrine blames everything on her dead father, but it is clear from the events that took place those three years and the grandmother's obviously shocked reaction to these revelations that Corrine is only attempting to make herself look good to her disillusioned husband. Corrine cracks and lights the house on fire, most likely over the body of her dead child.

Bart is killed in the fire, leaving Catherine with the belief that the only man she has ever truly loved has died, resolving some thought that Catherine was only attracted to Paul because of his resemblance to Bart. Catherine goes back to Dr. Paul and marries him, living happily for a few years before he too dies, succumbing to the same illness that ironically took the grandfather all those years ago. Ironically, Corrine lost all the money she fought so hard to win and keep, but gets it back almost in the same instant when her mother dies. It seems Corrine should have been patient and she would have had all she wanted without harming her children. Finally Catherine goes with Christopher, giving in to his desires when the possibility of a pregnancy is gone. Catherine appears to finally have found happiness, but there is still the subtle desire to repeat her mother's mistakes that keeps the reader curious to read the next installment in this saga.



Characters

Catherine Dollanganger Dahl Marquet Sheffield

Catherine Dollanganger escapes from the attic of Foxworth Hall with her brother and sister and attempts to reach Florida, but the arsenic she and her siblings ingested during their imprisonment causes them to have to cut their trip short in North Carolina. There the children are taken in by a kind, widowed doctor who is more than willing to share his home and his heart with these wounded, desperate children. Upon their arrival, Catherine is determined that it will only be for a short time, long enough for Carrie to recover from the illness that ended their journey. However, a normal life with a guardian who clearly loves them sways Catherine and helps her move the focus from running to surviving.

Catherine embraces the normal life of a teenager, wearing normal clothes that actually fit and going to school every day. However, unlike a normal teenager, Catherine struggles with sexual desires that developed under difficult and unusual circumstances. Catherine's brother, her ally during their imprisonment, continues to insist that he is in love with Catherine and will never be able to love anyone else. At the same time, Catherine finds herself curious about older men, men who remind her of the stepfather she once stole a kiss from. At the same time, Catherine burns with anger at her mother, blaming her for all the pain and angry residue of her imprisonment. Catherine wants to fulfill her dream of becoming a famous dancer in order to become a celebrity, hoping that this celebrity will aid her in taking revenge on her mother. Unfortunately, Catherine's dance career is sidetracked by the jealous violence of her young husband, forcing Catherine to change her tactics.

Catherine has matured in a world separate from reality. Catherine can no longer separate her experiences in her attic prison from the reality of the world around her. When her sister dies at her own hand, Catherine plots revenge against her mother by purposely becoming pregnant with the child of her mother's husband. To top off this revenge, Catherine dresses as her mother did at that long ago Christmas party Catherine and her brother observed from their prison and announces to the entire group that Mrs. Corrine Winslow not only has children, but that she tried to kill them while keeping them hidden from the world in the attic. No one believes Catherine, but she is eventually able to convince her stepfather, Bart Winslow, of the truth. Catherine has found her revenge, but now must spend the rest of her life fighting the same weaknesses in her own personality that drove her mother to such a horrible act of betrayal against her own children.

Christopher Dollanganger Sheffield

Christopher is Catherine's older brother and was her only source of support during the three and a half years they spent locked in the attic of Foxworth Hall. Christopher feels



responsible for his two young sisters and this burden causes him to resist the help of Dr. Sheffield when he opens his home to the three orphans. However, Carrie and Catherine both talk Christopher into staying long enough for him to realize that his only chance to become a doctor is to remain as Dr. Sheffield's ward. Christopher is reluctant to leave his sisters in order to attend school, especially Catherine, with whom he believes himself to be in love, but he goes in order to fulfill in himself the one thing that kept him sane during his imprisonment.

As Catherine becomes a popular ballet dancer, Christopher works his way through college and medical school, finishing at the top of his class. However, at home Christopher is often angry and jealous, aware of Catherine's many relationships with men, including their guardian Dr. Sheffield. Christopher tries on multiple occasions to convince Catherine to let go of the past and to embrace the future with him. Catherine still clings to the idea, however, that incest is wrong and indulging in it would prove what the grandmother always told them, that they are the Devil's issue. Christopher believes differently, but he stands back and allows Catherine to work out her anger and her fears. Eventually Catherine comes back to Christopher and they marry, living out the rest of their lives in California.

Carrie Dollanganger Sheffield

Carrie Dollanganger Sheffield is Christopher and Catherine's younger sister, the surviving twin of a set of twins who were only five when their imprisonment in Foxworth Hall began. Carrie is small for her age, her growth impeded by the lack of vitamins and sunlight during her imprisonment. Carrie is often ridiculed for her appearance and feels inadequate around other people, including her beautiful sister Catherine, who appears to have everything she could possibly want. Carrie also suffers from a deep sense of grief, a result of the death of her twin brother, Cory, just months before the children were able to escape Foxworth Hall.

When Catherine finds herself a widowed mother, she decides to take Carrie and move to Virginia where she will live in the shadow of Foxworth Hall and finally get her revenge on her mother. Carrie takes this move hard, wanting instead to remain with Dr. Sheffield, her guardian. Carrie has never been comfortable remembering the past and becomes emotionally distraught every time she sees Foxworth Hall or is reminding of that time. Fortunately, Carrie meets a kind young man and falls in love shortly after arriving in Virginia. This young man eventually asks Carrie to marry him. However, the young man wants to become a minister, a profession that brings back to the surface some memories Carrie has buried in which the grandmother insisted she was the Devil's issue. At the same time, Carrie runs into her mother in town and tries to speak to her, but Corrine pretends she does not know her.

Carrie buys some rat poison and begins eating it on some powdered donuts, much the same way her mother fed the same poison to her and her siblings, resulting in the death of her twin, Cory. Carrie becomes very sick, eventually requiring hospitalization. By the time Catherine and the medical personnel realize what is causing Carrie's illness, it is



too late to reverse the poison's effects. Carrie dies, giving Catherine yet one more reason to hate her mother.

Dr. Paul Sheffield

Dr. Paul Sheffield is a young, widowed doctor who works out of his own home in North Carolina. Dr. Paul's housekeeper, Henrietta, meets three orphaned children on a bus and brings them to Dr. Paul because one of them is sick. When Dr. Paul learns the story of these children's horrific past, he takes them in and makes them his wards. Dr. Paul enrolls each child in school once their health improves and offers them all the unconditional love their mother could not give them after the death of their father.

When Catherine is sixteen, she begins a sexual affair with Dr. Paul, convinced that she is in love with him. They eventually become engaged to be married. However, before their wedding, Catherine learns that Dr. Paul's wife is still alive and living in a convalescent home. Catherine marries another man before telling Dr. Paul what she has learned, only to discover that Dr. Paul's wife, who was in a coma for many years after drowning Dr. Paul's only child and attempting to drown herself, died when his affair began with Catherine. Catherine regrets her actions, but is determined to be a faithful wife to her new husband. Several years pass and Catherine finds herself a widow with a child on the way. Dr. Paul takes Catherine in once again, but she ignores all his attempts to seduce her again.

Catherine finds herself constantly turning to Dr. Paul every time there is a crisis in her life. Finally, when her mother has gone insane and her revenge is finished, Catherine marries Dr. Paul. However, by this time Dr. Paul is an old man suffering from heart disease. Dr. Paul tells Catherine she should let him go and marry Christopher. Dr. Paul assures Catherine that her love for Christopher is not a sin or a sign that she is the Devil's issue, but a product of her unusual childhood, an innocent love that God will forgive. Shortly afterward, Dr. Paul dies.

Julian Marquet

Julian Marquet is a ballet dancer and the son of the owner of the dance studio where Catherine goes to become a famous ballerina. Julian finds Catherine exotic and falls deeply in love with her. However, Catherine is not interested in Julian except for the advantages he might offer to her budding career. It is because of Julian that Catherine goes to New York and begins dancing with an up-and-coming dance group. When Catherine learns that Dr. Paul lied to her, she turns to Julian, marrying him to hurt Dr. Paul. The marriage is a difficult one. Julian is controlling and he refuses Catherine access to her family and controls her career, keeping her from becoming the prima ballerina she always dreamed of being.

Julian refuses Catherine the right to go to her brother's medical school graduation, so she drugs him in order to go alone. When Catherine comes back to her, Julian is so angry that he stomps on her feet, breaking four of her toes. That night, Julian is in a car



accident that has broken his neck, leaving him with the possibility of spending the rest of his life in a wheel chair. Julian chooses to take his own life rather than face a life without dance.

Henrietta 'Henny' Beech

Henrietta Beech is Dr. Paul's housekeeper. Henrietta cannot speak due to a genetic defect; therefore, she is forced to speak to people through sign language. This causes a great deal of confusion when Henrietta meets the Dollanganger children on a bus bound for Florida. Henrietta is able to get her message across to the children, however, and lead them to the home of her employer, Dr. Paul Sheffield, where the children become wards of the doctor and live for many years.

Henrietta teaches Catherine how to cook and how to care for a home, all skills her mother should have taught her but did not. It is Henrietta that Catherine often turns to in times of crisis and Henrietta who has the strong advice that a mother should have for her children. Unfortunately, Catherine picks and chooses what she listens to and does not take Henrietta's advice not to pursue her ideas of revenge.

Mrs. Corrine Foxworth Winslow

Corrine Foxworth Winslow is the daughter of a very rich businessman named Malcolm Foxworth. When Corrine was a teen, she ran away and married a man she knew was her half-uncle. This marriage caused a rift between Corrine and her parents, leaving her isolated when her husband died. Corrine turns to her parents anyway and agrees to hide her children away in their attic to keep her father from knowing about them in the hopes of convincing him to return Corrine to his will. Corrine is so desperate for the money she will inherit upon her father's death that she goes a step further and attempts to kill her own children in order to keep the world from knowing they ever existed, resulting in the death of one child. However, three others escaped into the world and were taken in by Dr. Paul Sheffield, a fact Corrine was made aware of by the court, but she chose to ignore.

Corrine spends fifteen years trying to ignore letters she receives from Catherine on a regular basis and to pretend she never had any children. However, the reader eventually learns that Corrine often spends hours crying over a family photo album that features pictures of her children and that she would often go to the ballet shows her daughter starred in. These things do not change what Corrine did to her family, however. Catherine cannot forgive her mother for what she has done and she spends a great deal of time plotting revenge. When Catherine finally confronts her mother with the truth, Corrine lies to make it appear that her part in the imprisonment of her children was a result of her father's cruelty.



Bartholomew 'Bart' Winslow

Bartholomew Winslow, or Bart, is a young lawyer that Corrine Foxworth married shortly after moving into her parents' home in the hopes of being put back in her father's will. Bart was in love with his wife once, but now finds her a changed person, a dark, secretive person he does not know anymore. Therefore, when he meets a young woman who looks like his wife once did and has the open, friendly personality his wife one had, he falls deeply in love. This woman is Catherine Dollanganger, his wife's daughter, but Bart is not aware of this blood connection. When Bart learns that Catherine is pregnant, he finds himself in a position where he must choose between a childless life with his wife, or leaving all the benefits of his wife's money for a life as a father and husband. Before he can make this choice, Catherine tells him the truth about her mother. That same night, Bart is killed when Foxworth Hall burns to the ground.

Olivia Foxworth

Olivia Foxworth is Corinne Foxworth Winslow's mother. Olivia was the grandmother who locked the Dollanganger children in the attic and starved them for two weeks after she caught Christopher staring at Catherine's naked body. When Catherine learns of the grandmother's debilitating stroke that has left her bedridden, she breaks into Foxworth Hall to exact revenge on the old woman. Catherine hits the old woman with a switch and pours hot wax in her hair. However, Catherine does not feel the sense of satisfaction she thought she would in doling out these punishments, so she stops before she has completed the punishment.

Julius Janus 'Jory' Marquet Sheffield and Bart Sheffield

Julian Janus Marquet is the child Catherine gives birth to just months after the death of her first husband, Julian Marquet. Catherine calls the child Jory to honor her dead brother, Cory. Both Christopher and Dr. Paul want to marry Catherine and be a father to Jory, but Catherine resists them both as revenge continues to be her main focus. Catherine takes Jory to Virginia to be close to her mother and her stepfather, leaving the child feeling lost and looking for a father figure. The one constant in Jory's life besides his mother is his Aunt Carrie, but Carrie takes her life after running into her mother in town and being rejected.

Bart Winslow Sheffield is Catherine's second child. Bart is the result of an affair with Bartholomew Winslow, her stepfather, that Catherine had in her attempts to get revenge on her mother. Bart is born several months after his father's death in the fire that destroyed Foxworth Hall. Bart will be raised for the first few years of his life as Paul Sheffield's son, but then will become the child of Christopher Sheffield when he becomes Catherine's husband.



Objects/Places

Letters to Corrine

Catherine writes many letters to her mother over the fifteen years after she and her siblings escape Foxworth Hall. At first the letters are just to let her mother know that Catherine knows where she is and what she is doing, but later they become an attempt to blackmail Corrine into sending Catherine some much needed money.

Scrapbook

Catherine keeps a scrapbook full of clippings that chronicle her mother's life over the fifteen years between them escaping the attic and when Foxworth Hall burns to the ground.

Green Party Dress

Catherine has a green party dress made as a replica to the one she saw her mother wearing at a party in Foxworth Hall the first Christmas she and her siblings were locked in the attic at Foxworth Hall.

Music Box

Dr. Paul gives Catherine a music box meant to replace the one her father gave her shortly before his death.

Rat Poison and Powdered Donuts

After Carrie becomes fatally ill, Catherine finds rat poison and powdered donuts in her bedroom closet. Carrie has attempted to kill herself in the same manner in which her twin brother, Cory, was murdered while the children were kept locked in the attic.

The Lake

There is a lake near Dr. Paul's home. This lake is where Paul's wife drowned their only child, Scotty, and attempted to kill herself in revenge for Dr. Paul having multiple affairs during their marriage.



Dr. Paul's Garden

Dr. Paul has an elaborate garden at his family home that he has decorated with many valuable statues. Catherine often finds pleasure in this garden and she attempts to recreate it when she and Christopher begin their lives anew in California.

Secluded North Wing Bedroom and Attic

Catherine visits the secluded north wing bedroom where she and her siblings were held captive for more than three years in Foxworth Hall on the night she plans to exact her revenge on her mother. In the attic, Catherine finds most of the flowers and objects she and her siblings left behind undisturbed.

Library

The library in Foxworth Hall is a large room that includes a desk where Bart Winslow works while at home, like Malcolm Foxworth before him. In the library is a small room where Malcolm Winslow lived out his final days and where his wife now lies, stricken by several strokes.

Foxworth Hall

Foxworth Hall is the family home of the Foxworth family. This home is where the Dollanganger children were kept captive while their mother attempted to have herself become the sole heir to her father's fortune. Later, the children escaped after learning their mother had been attempting to poison them. As an adult, Catherine comes back her for revenge and finds her brother Cory's body in the attic. The house burns down later that night in a fire started in the attic by the mother.

Catherine's Cottage

Catherine buys a small cottage just a few yards from the road where Foxworth Hall is located in order to allow Bart Winslow to slip unnoticed in her back door while they are conducting an illicit affair.

Dr. Paul's House

Dr. Paul Sheffield has a large home that is his family's ancestral home in Clairmont, North Carolina. This is where the Dollanganger children come for help when Carrie becomes deathly ill and later become wards of Dr. Paul.



Clairmont, North Carolina

Clairmont, North Carolina is where Dr. Paul Sheffield lives and where the Dollanganger children will call home for many years after their escape from the attic.

Greenglenna, North Carolina

Greenglenna is the sister city to Clairmont and the ancestral home of Bart Winslow. Catherine subscribes to the Greenglenna newspapers and learns that her mother, Corrine Winslow, is renovating Bart's family home for their frequent visits to the area.



Themes

Revenge

Catherine was once held captive in a secluded bedroom and the attic of her family's ancestral home, Foxworth Hall. Catherine's captivity was orchestrated by her mother as a way to keep her own father from learning of the depth of her incestuous behavior in regards to her marriage to a man she believed to be her half-uncle. However, the children, who remained in the attic partially because they believed in and trusted their mother, would learn that after her father's death, their mother learned she would lose all she had inherited if it was ever discovered she had had children or if she had children in the future. Therefore, the mother tried to kill her four children by lacing their donuts with arsenic. One child succumbed to the poison.

Catherine has escaped and has found a life with Dr. Paul Sheffield, a kind country doctor who was widowed young and who has taken these children in as his own. However, Catherine finds herself filled with memories of the years locked in the attic of Foxworth Hall and constantly fighting off her brother's affections, which she believes are a direct result of her mother's actions. Catherine begins keeping track of her mother's actions, reading in the paper about her trips abroad and the luxury in which she lives, while Catherine and her siblings continue to suffer the after effects of their imprisonment. Catherine wants revenge, but she believes she must be richer, famous, and more powerful than her mother to achieve it. In the meantime, Catherine sends her mother many letters warning of her revenge while working to become a prima ballerina.

When Catherine's ideas of fame die with her first husband, dancer Julian Marquet, she changes the focus of her revenge plans. Catherine decides the next best way to hurt her mother is by stealing away her husband. Catherine begins an affair with Bart Winslow, her mother's second husband and a man Catherine once kissed during a stealing expedition while she was still trapped in Foxworth Hall. Catherine purposely becomes pregnant with Bart's child, aware that Bart will never have children with her mother, and then plots to destroy her mother's reputation. Catherine dresses like her mother dressed during a Christmas party at Foxworth Hall more than eighteen years before, Catherine's first locked in the attic, and announces her relationship to her mother to the entire party.

Catherine is forced to defend her accusations to both Bart and her mother as her mother tries to deny their relationship. Eventually Corrine admits her relationship to Catherine and her part in locking her children in the attic, but she denies trying to kill them with arsenic or intending to leave them up there inevitably. In fact, Corrine attempts to blame her father for the entire ordeal. However, Catherine refuses to believe her and the grandmother appears to disagree, even though she cannot speak to refute Corrine's claims. Eventually Corrine can see she is losing the argument, so she runs from the room. Moments later, the house begins to burn down from a fire Corrine apparently started in the attic. Catherine has gotten her revenge, but Bart is killed in the



fire, leaving her with the realization that her revenge has killed the one man she truly loved.

Love

Everyone loves Catherine. Christopher, Catherine's older brother, has been in love with her since he began puberty, locked in a room alone with his beautiful sister and tiny twin siblings. On several occasions while locked in the secluded room Christopher found himself reaching for Catherine, wanting to experience love with her, only to be pushed away. Finally, the night he learns of Catherine's innocent kiss on the lips of their stepfather, Christopher forces his affections on Catherine, convincing her of the depth of his emotion. Catherine is ashamed, however, and refuses to allow Christopher to touch her again, even though he tries on more than one occasion after their escape from Foxworth Hall. Christopher will remain in love with Catherine, promising he will remain so until his death no matter how hard she fights him.

Catherine's first husband, Julian, falls in love with her the moment he sees her. Julian begins making many trips to Clairmont in order to be near Catherine, attempting to convince her to go to New York with him where she can join his dance group and become a star. Eventually Catherine goes with him for the dance opportunity, but she continues to resist Julian until she learns the one man she thought she could trust lied to her. Catherine marries Julian, but their marriage is a volatile one in which Julian attempts to control Catherine's every move. Eventually Julian's anger causes him to break several of Catherine's toes, threatening her ability to ever dance again. Soon after, Julian suffers a car accident, leading him to take his own life rather than spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

Dr. Paul falls in love with Catherine the moment he meets her. However, Dr. Paul is Catherine's legal guardian and as such he must remain distant. However, Catherine seduces him, enticing him into taking her into his bed. They become lovers when she is only sixteen. Eventually Dr. Paul proposes marriage, but before they can wed, Catherine learns that Dr. Paul's first wife, a jealous woman who drowned their son and attempted to drown herself, is still alive. Catherine marries another man out of revenge, only to learn the first wife died when her affair with Dr. Paul began. Eventually, Catherine will return to Dr. Paul, but not until after she has exacted revenge on her mother for all the sins that have brought Catherine to a place where she cannot trust anyone who claims to love her.

Bartholomew Winslow is Catherine's stepfather. While still locked in the attic of Foxworth Hall, Catherine sneaks into her mother's room one night to steal petty cash to fund her escape. When Catherine enters the bedroom, she discovers her stepfather asleep in a chair. Out of curiosity, Catherine plants a kiss on Bart's lips. Years later, Catherine begins an affair with Bart in the hopes of becoming pregnant and stealing him from her mother. However, when Bart is killed the night Foxworth Hall burns down, Catherine realizes she fell in love with Bart the night of the kiss and that he was the man



she had been searching for all her adult life. Bart is Catherine's one love and her need for revenge has taken him away.

Sin

While locked in the attic room, Catherine, Christopher, and Carrie were lectured about sin by their grandmother and warned that they were the Devil's issue and anything they might touch will become evil. Catherine remembers this every time Christopher tries to touch her and she becomes convinced that their love is not natural, that it is sinful, and it should be avoided at all cost. In fact, Catherine blames her mother for the pain Christopher feels every time she pushes him away and prays that he will one day find another woman to share his love with. However, he never does. Eventually Dr. Paul convinces Catherine that Christopher's love for her is not unnatural given the circumstances under which it was born and that she should embrace any man who could love her so completely.

Also haunted by their grandmother's teachings is Carrie. Carrie recalls being called the Devil's issue and she becomes convinced that she is evil when her boyfriend informs her that he intends to become a minister. Carrie cannot find happiness in the possibility of being a minister's wife, afraid that her birth and her sinful genetics will bring disaster down on all who love her. Carrie commits suicide soon after becoming engaged.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person point of view. The narrating character is Catherine Dollanganger, the first daughter of four children. Catherine and her siblings were once held prisoner in their ancestral home, Foxworth Hall, while their mother schemed her way back into her father's good graces and his will. The children would later learn that their mother attempted to poison them because if the world learned of their existence, she would lose all she inherited. Catherine tells her story of revenge for those acts in this novel, written as though a memoir of an older woman looking back on her life from the comfort of experience.

The point of view of this novel works well with the plot because it gives it some authenticity, giving the reader the sense that the novel is almost a work of nonfiction that has been fictionalized to protect the survivors. The plot is a difficult one to believe because of the horror perpetrated against four children, leaving one dead and three others dealing with dark emotional scars; therefore, it needs a sense of authenticity to keep the reader involved, from rejecting the plot as too unbelievable. Therefore, the first person point of view works well, allowing the reader to connect with the point of view character and see the events of the plot through her eyes, adding to the believability of the plot.

Setting

The novel is set in several locations. The first location is Clairmont, North Carolina. Clairmont is the home of Dr. Paul Sheffield, the widowed doctor who takes in the Dollanganger children shortly after their escape from Foxworth Hall. For Catherine, Clairmont becomes a safe haven, a place she can go when the events in her life become too overwhelming. The second location is New York. In New York, Catherine becomes a member of a dance group that promises to make her a star. Catherine's life in New York is busy, dangerous, and full of dark, controlling characters. New York is the perfect backdrop for this life because the city itself is a place of contrasts, a big, dangerous place that makes Clairmont look even smaller and quaint than it seemed before. Finally, the third setting is Virginia. In Virginia is Foxworth Hall, the sight of the Dollanganger children's captivity. This location is a quiet, wealthy area that immediately causes Catherine, a dance studio owner, to appear out of place and unwanted. Catherine has come here for revenge, a revenge that no one involved wants to see happen, and leaves Catherine grieving for two people she loved more than life.

The settings in this novel are varied and contrast with each other in a way that makes them work well within the plot. Clairmont is a small town that features a simple, quaint kind of atmosphere. The children find safety in this place, so much like the little town where Foxworth Hall lies, leaving them waiting for the darkness to appear around each



corner. It never does, however, and Clairmont becomes a safe haven for all three children. New York is a big city that is supposed to be filled with dangers, and sure enough Catherine finds heartbreak here. Each setting is unique on its own, but filled with a contrast that adds to the overall plot of the novel without overwhelming it or becomes a character on its own. Therefore the setting works well with this novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is English. The novel's language is written simply so that even the youngest readers will be able to understand it. However, the grammar tends to be a little formal, especially within the dialogue, leaving the dialogue stiff and sometimes difficult to follow. There are no foreign phrases used in the novel except for the language associated with both ballet and medicine. In these subjects, the author uses many words associated with these professions, lending some expertise and authenticity to the plot.

The language of the novel is appropriate to its writer. Catherine is a self-educated woman who is well read, therefore her grasp of the English language is strong. However, Catherine's education comes from books of a bygone era, including some books written before the turn of the century in which the dialogue was often stiff. This could account for the writer's choice of a stiffer grammar associated with much of the dialogue that appears in the novel. Finally, Catherine is a student of ballet; therefore, there are many foreign phrases pertaining to that profession in the novel that the reader might not be familiar with, but which are easily understood due to the context within the novel.

Structure

The novel is written in five parts. Each part contains multiple sections, each section entitled not by a number but by a phrase that refers to some event or person important to that section. There are no breaks between sections, only the title to let the reader know they are beginning a new section. The novel is told in a linear fashion, beginning with the Dollanganger children riding a bus headed to Florida, and taking them through the rest of their childhoods and into adulthood. The novel is told in both exposition and dialogue, with the author offering a great deal of internal monologue as Catherine explains her actions or feelings in relation to some important development within the plot.

The novel contains one main plot and many subplots. The main plot follows Catherine as she plots revenge against her mother for locking her and her siblings in the attic of Foxworth Hall, resulting in the death of one child and on lingering health and mental problems in the surviving siblings. The subplots follow the many romances Catherine has throughout her adolescence and young adulthood, including an affair with her stepfather that is designed to bring about revenge on her mother. Most of these subplots are concluded satisfactorily as the main plot comes to its climax.



Quotes

"How young we were the day we escaped." Part 1: Free, At Last!, p. 3

"Carrie decided. We stayed." Part 1: Life's Second Chance, p. 34

"Later, as I lay alone on my bed with my eyes open, I realized from the hopeless, flat way I felt that even in a valley without mountains the wind could still blow." Part 2: Visions of Sugarplums, p. 55

"The guilt would be all mine. And Chris would hate me and turn, as he had to, to someone else." Part 2: My First Date, p. 102

"Steel, covered over with frilly, silly tulle tutus!" Part 2: Sweeter Than All the Roses, p. 111

"I was like a mole coming out of darkness only to find the brilliant days weren't at all like I had supposed they would be." Part 2: Momma's Shadow, p. 135

"I had the blinding precognition that he was going to be my loving keeper, my jailor, and I'd be as imprisoned with him as I'd been in the locked room in Foxworth Hall!" Part 2: Too Many Loves to Lose, p. 231

"Angel, saint, Devil's spawn, good or evil, you've got me pinned to the wall and labeled as yours until the day I die. And if you die first, then it won't be long before I follow." Part 3: Dreams Come True, p. 250

"As the baby grew within me, I began to find the identity I had lost, for the ballet kept the real me always in an embryo state, enclosed by my desire to dance and succeed." Part 3: Interlude for Three, p. 279

"If ever a child was born into a palace of adoring worshipers, it was my Jory with his blue-black curls, his pale creamy skin, and his dark, dark blue eyes." Part 4: My Sweet Small Prince, p. 289

"Color all her days black! Every last one!" Part 4: Carrie's Bittersweet Romance, p. 335

"I was appalled by her stupidity to scheme in such a dangerous way. Then I guessed it was all a lie, just an excuse to satisfy Bart who was staring at her in the oddest way." Part 5: Revelations, p. 423



Topics for Discussion

Who is Catherine Dollanganger Dahl Marquet Sheffield? Why does she hate Mrs. Corrine Winslow so much? Why does Catherine constantly send Mrs. Winslow letters? What is the intended result of these letters? Why does Catherine attempt to blackmail Mrs. Winslow? Why does Catherine not act on her threats? How does Catherine intend to eventually get her revenge?

What profession does Catherine intend to pursue at the beginning of the novel? Why this profession? What experience does Catherine have prior to the beginning of the novel? How was this experience hampered by the actions of Mrs. Corrine Winslow? Why does Catherine eventually decide to go to New York to pursue her dreams? Who has encouraged her to go to New York? For what reason? Why does Catherine never really fulfill her dreams to the extent she had hoped to achieve? Who is responsible for Catherine's inability to become everything she wants to become? Why does Catherine eventually stop pursuing her dreams?

Why does Christopher initially not want to remain with Dr. Paul? Why does Catherine agree to remain? Why does Catherine attempt to seduce Dr. Paul? How does Dr. Paul react? Why does Dr. Paul eventually relent? Could this be considered incest? Why or why not? Is Catherine truly in love with Dr. Paul? Explain. Discuss the mustache Catherine asks Dr. Paul to grow. What does this say about Catherine's true feelings? What does this say about the effects of the attic on Catherine's ability to fall in love?

Why is Christopher in love with his sister? Is Christopher aware that his love for Catherine is unnatural? Why does Christopher not want revenge against his mother? Why is Christopher able to put his mother's horrific crimes behind him, but not his sexual obsession with Catherine? Why does Christopher continually pressure Catherine into sleeping with him? What does Christopher want from his relationship with his sister? What eventually happens between them? At whose urging?

Discuss Carrie. Why does Carrie's head grow bigger than her body? Why did the attic not affect Catherine and Christopher in the same way? Why does Carrie's body never grow? Why is Carrie ill when the book begins? What does Dr. Paul do to help her? What cruel act do her schoolmates perpetrate against Carrie? How does this affect Carrie's self perception? What crime does Julian commit against Carrie? How does Catherine feel about this? How does this crime compare to the incest Catherine has committed with both Christopher and Dr. Paul? Why does Carrie balk when her fiancé calls her perfect? Why does Carrie kill herself? Why does Carrie choose the method she does for her own death?

Discuss Bart Winslow. Why does Bart confront Catherine with the blackmail letters? Why does Bart not go to the police? Why does Bart begin an affair with Catherine? Why does Bart force himself on Catherine the first time they are together? Is this rape? Why does Catherine continue to see him? Why does Catherine become pregnant? When



Bart dies, why does Catherine believe that he is the man she has been in love with all her life? Is he? Does Catherine feel this way about all her lovers?

Discuss Corrine Foxworth Winslow. Why does Corrine lock her children in the attic? Why does she continually ignore them in public? Did Corrine cause Carrie's death by refusing to acknowledge her? Why does Corrine blame her father for her acts against her own children? Is this true? Do you think Malcolm Foxworth knew about the children in the attic? What about the grandmother's reaction? What do you think the grandmother might have said had she been able to speak? Why did Corrine start the fire at Foxworth Hall? Did she send Bart back into the house on purpose? Why? Why did Corrine go insane?