

Playing for the Ashes Study Guide

Playing for the Ashes by Elizabeth George

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Plot Summary

Playing for the Ashes is a novel by award-winning author Elizabeth George. In this novel, a popular cricket player is found dead in a country cottage where he was not supposed to be. As the detectives from New Scotland Yard investigate the crime and begin to put together the events of the victim's final night, another character tells her story. When it all comes to a conclusion, one of the inspectors will be left with a moral decision that could affect several lives. Playing for the Ashes is a mystery, but it is also a novel that studies human conflict in depth, leaving both a main character and the reader with a moral dilemma that will stick with them even after the last sentence is done.

The milkman discovers evidence of a fire in Celandine Cottage. When the police arrive, a body is discovered in the upstairs bedroom. However, the body found does not belong to Gabriella Patten, the young woman who has been living in the cottage, but is her lover, cricket player Kenneth Fleming. The police quickly begin investigating the fire, deciding almost immediately by the evidence that the fire was set intentionally. With this information, a murder investigation is launched and New Scotland Yard is called in to help.

Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley and his partner, Sergeant Barbara Havers, begin their investigation by visiting the cottage with Inspector Arderly, the fire inspector from Kent. Lynley and Havers then interview Mrs. Miriam Whitelaw, the owner of the cottage. From Mrs. Whitelaw, the inspectors learn that Gabriella Patten was staying in Celandine Cottage while separated from her husband. Mrs. Whitelaw then insists that Kenneth was not at the cottage, but on his way to Greece with his son, Jimmy. Mrs. Whitelaw shows the detectives Kenneth's room where they find two tickets to Greece in a jacket pocket.

Lynley and Havers continue their investigation, interviewing the captain of the English cricket team, Guy Mollison. This interview appears to lead nowhere, but when Mollison shows up at Lynley's townhouse the following day, he has information that could break open the case. Mollison knows where Gabriella Patten, who has been missing since the night Fleming died, is hiding. Gabriella tells the detectives about a fight she had with Fleming, in which he accused her of having multiple affairs. Gabriella claims that there was an angry confrontation and then she fled in Fleming's car. Lynley returns to the cottage and finds evidence to support Gabriella's story.

Lynley and Havers interview Fleming's wife and son, Jimmy. Jimmy is sullen and uncooperative; therefore, Lynley and Havers take him to New Scotland Yard to interrogate him. Jimmy confesses to the murder, but Lynley immediately recognizes inconsistencies in Jimmy's confession. Lynley brings Jimmy in on a second occasion and openly admits to noting the inconsistencies. When Lynley goes a third time to bring Jimmy in, Jimmy flees and ends up in the river. Lynley jumps in after him and rescues the young man. This leads to another confession in which Jimmy admits to having seen a woman at the cottage the night his father died. Jimmy believed this woman was his mother, but is assured that she was not.



Lynley has come to the conclusion that he knows who the killer is, but this suspect has an airtight alibi. Lynley goes to the killer's daughter and asks her to come clean about the events of that night, proving the alibi false. However, when the daughter comes forward with the truth, she also reveals several other truths that place Lynley in a position of making a moral choice between the law and basic morality.



Olivia and Chapter 1

Olivia and Chapter 1 Summary

Playing for the Ashes is a cricket term. When England lost to Australia in a test match series in 1882, an obituary for the English team appeared in a local newspaper. A year later, when England went to Australia for a rematch, it was said they were going to retrieve the ashes. When the team lost a second time, the bails were burned in effigy and the ashes presented to the team. Since that time, every time England plays Australia it is said they are playing for the ashes.

Olivia. Olivia is sitting on the deck of the barge where she lives with a young man named Chris Faraday. Olivia watches as Chris takes the dogs for a run. Chris has left Olivia on the barge to write out this story. Olivia begins with her father, a kind man whom Olivia is convinced was never truly loved by her mother. Miriam Whitelaw married her husband simply because he fit the role of good husband and provider, but he was such a boring man that Miriam put her focus on charities in order to fill her long, quiet days.

Chapter 1. Martin Snell delivers milk in the three Springburn communities. Among the homes where he delivers is Celandine Cottage. At this time the cottage is occupied by a beautiful young woman called Gabriella Patten. Stuck in a boring, passionless marriage, Snell has developed a crush on Gabriella, initiated the first time he saw her as she walked unclothed toward him to retrieve the cold milk. Now Snell always saves the coldest bottle for Gabriella.

On this particular morning, Snell is surprised to discover that Gabriella has not yet retrieved either her mail or her milk from the day before. Out of fear for Gabriella's safety, Snell begins to investigate. Snell moves around to the back of the cottage and looks inside several windows, finally spotting the dark smudges from a particularly smoky fire that appears to have started in the dining room.

Detective Inspector Isabelle Ardery arrives at Celandine Cottage and immediately begins investigating the scene. Inspector Ardery finds a cigarette and matches at the point of origin, an armchair in the dining room. The fire apparently smoldered for hours, creating a great deal of smoke and robbing the house of oxygen. However, once the oxygen was gone, the fire went out. However, it is clear to Inspector Ardery that the fire was set intentionally. Now Ardery is looking at not only an arson case, but a murder. The body of a man has been found in the upstairs bedroom, clearly killed by the carbon monoxide levels created by the oxygen consuming fire.

Olivia and Chapter 1 Analysis

In the first installment of Olivia's story, the reader learns that this woman has been encouraged by a man, presumably her boyfriend from the apparent affection she feels



for him, to write out this story. Olivia begins with her father, a man she describes as boring and a bit of a homebody. This was clearly not something her mother liked about the man she chose to marry. It is also clear in this telling that there is a great deal of animosity between Olivia and her mother. Where this will lead and what it has to do with the main part of the story, the reader is unclear about at this point in the novel.

The first chapter of the book presents the case that will propel the mystery to the conclusion of the novel. A man has been found killed in a cottage in the countryside of Kent. A fire was apparently set intentionally, clearly with the intent of burning down the cottage. However, the fire simply smoldered and went out when all the oxygen in the cottage was used up. This caused the sole occupant of the house, an unnamed man, to die of carbon monoxide poisoning as he lay sleeping in an upstairs bedroom. The mystery of who set this fire and why will propel the plot to its conclusion.



Chapters 2-4

Chapters 2-4 Summary

Chapter 2. Jean Cooper is still at work waiting for the repairman to repair the cooker when the police show up. They tell Jean that her husband, Kenneth Fleming, has been found dead in Kent and they want her to identify the body. Jean is adamant in insisting they call her by her maiden name even though she and Kenneth are still legally married. When Jean sees the body, she does not ask any questions but insists that they show her his entire body. Jean then asks the police to buy her a pack of cigarettes.

Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley goes to the home of his girlfriend, Lady Helen Clyde, with the intention of taking her to a concert and dinner. Lynley has planned this weeks in advance because he wants to ask Helen to marry him, but Helen has forgotten. As Lynley waits for Helen to dress, he receives a call from his supervisor's secretary informing him that they have a new case for him.

Chapter 3. Detective Sergeant Barbara Havers has recently moved from her family home to a small cottage in Chalk Farm, but she has yet to make any friends. Havers goes home late Friday night and finds a message from Mrs. Flo, her mother's caretaker. Havers feels guilty she has not visited her mother in weeks and plans a visit for the next day. However, this plan is delayed when Havers' gets a call from her partner, Inspector Lynley, informing her they have got a new case. When Havers arrives at New Scotland Yard, she finds Lynley in conference with Inspector Ardery, the Detective Inspector in charge of the investigation into the fire at Celandine Cottage. Lynley and Havers are to handle the London part of the investigation while Ardery is to control the Kent part of the investigation. Ardery explains the evidence thus far, explaining how the fire was set and why the cottage failed to burn down completely. When Ardery leaves, Havers learns that the victim in the case makes the case highly volatile because he was a famous cricket player named Kenneth Fleming.

Chapter 4. Lynley and Havers begin their investigation at the home of Miriam Whitelaw, the owner of Celandine Cottage. Kenneth Fleming was living with Miriam Whitelaw at the time of his death; therefore, the investigators expect to find a young woman with whom Kenneth was romantically involved. However, they find instead that Miriam Whitelaw is an older woman in her mid to late sixties. Mrs. Whitelaw invites them into her home and answers their questions about the cottage. When the investigators tell her of Kenneth's death, Mrs. Whitelaw falls unconscious to the floor. Havers and Lynley quickly help Mrs. Whitelaw recover from her fall. Lynley carefully continues his questioning of Mrs. Whitelaw, asking her about Fleming. Mrs. Whitelaw insists that Kenneth left for a sailing trip with his son the night of his death. Mrs. Whitelaw also tells them about a phone call Kenneth received the night of his death from Guy Mollison, the captain of the England cricket team. Lynley and Havers then inspect Kenneth's room, finding the tickets to Greece in his pocket. They also learn that Kenneth was involved



with Gabriella Patten, the woman staying at Celandine Cottage, and that he hoped to divorce his wife and marry Gabriella.

Chapters 2-4 Analysis

The discovery of a body in Celandine Cottage has set off an investigation into the fire at the cottage. To begin, the body is identified by his wife, Jean Cooper. It is clear to the reader that Jean and Kenneth have been separated for some time, but the reasons are not as clear at this point. It is also clear that Jean has mixed feelings about her husband. Jean knows there are a whole combination of questions she should be asking about the death of her husband, but she finds it impossible to ask them. This not only gives some insight into the state of her marriage, but it also suggests that Jean is struggling emotionally, though the reader is unclear what emotion she is feeling at this point. This makes Jean a suspect in the murder.

The investigators Lynley and Havers are introduced in these chapters. Both are very different from one another. Lynley is a gentleman who clearly has a title or some social standing because his girlfriend is titled. Lynley enjoys classical music and expensive food. Havers, on the other hand, dresses almost shabbily, is living on her own for the first time, and has a mother who is very ill. This has caused Havers' social life to be somewhat stunted. Lynley, however, is about to ask his lover to marry him. These contrasts make for an interesting investigative team.

The reader learns that Kenneth Fleming was supposed to be leaving for Greece with his estranged son the night he died and that he was having an affair with Gabriella Patten, the woman living in the cottage where he was found murdered. This presents a strong case against Jean, suggesting she killed her husband out of jealousy. It also implies Gabriella's involvement, especially since no one has seen Gabriella since the night of Kenneth's murder. The reader is also introduced to Miriam Whitelaw, Kenneth's elderly benefactor, a relationship that is unclear and thus creates another suspect.



Olivia

Olivia Summary

Olivia. When Olivia was twenty and a student at university, she went out with her friends one evening and met Richie Brewster. Richie was a musician much older than Olivia. Olivia went home with him and found him exciting. Olivia chose to remain with Richie rather than return to school. Eventually, Olivia's parents were notified by the school that she had been missing classes. They quickly tracked her down to a seedy hotel where she was staying on Richie's dime. When her parents showed up, Olivia refused to leave, insistent on staying with Richie.

Olivia. Olivia learned that Richie was married. Olivia left Richie and returned to her parents' home. By this time Olivia was pregnant. Miriam Whitelaw arranged for Olivia to have an abortion. When there were complications, Miriam Whitelaw left her daughter alone at the clinic, more concerned with keeping her husband from learning the truth than with her daughter's health. When Olivia returned home, she and her mother fought. Richie called about that time and asked Olivia to come back to him. Olivia agreed, even though her mother threatened to cut her off if she did. Olivia and Richie lived together for a time, but she soon learned that not only did he return to his wife, but he had another girlfriend in another time. Olivia, by now hooked to drugs and suffering from a sexually transmitted disease, kicked Richie out and called her father to ask for help.

Olivia. Olivia began using drugs heavily and prostituting herself to get free drugs. One night Olivia was with a couple of guys, all of them high. They ran into Olivia's parents. Olivia began teasing her parents about sex and made sexually provocative movements against her father. Olivia's parents left a short time later and Olivia went home with her new lovers. The men stayed with Olivia for a couple of weeks, partying and doing drugs each night. One night a telegram came for Olivia, but she did not read it till the following day. The telegram was to inform her that her father had died and been cremated. It turned out Olivia's father died on the train moments after running into Olivia.

Olivia. As Chris returns to the barge with dinner and a rabbit he rescued from the park, Olivia continues her narration by looking further back into her past. Olivia can recall her mother mentioning Kenneth Fleming when she was barely fifteen, talking about him at the dinner table as though he were the second coming. Kenneth Fleming was a student in her mother's English class all those years ago, and a brilliant student at that. Mrs. Whitelaw saw a bright future for Kenneth and became instrumental in convincing him of his own intelligence. However, Kenneth had a girlfriend he had been with since grade school named Jean. Kenneth continued on in school even as Jean failed her exams and went to work in a diner. Then Jean became pregnant. When Kenneth came to tell Mrs. Whitelaw, she tried to convince him that the baby was more than likely not his. Kenneth refused to believe this. Mrs. Whitelaw then went to Jean and tried to convince her to have an abortion. Jean refused. Kenneth dropped out of school that summer and went to work to make money to support his young family.



Olivia Analysis

Olivia continues her story by telling the reader about her youth and her relationship with her mother. Olivia was resentful of her mother. This comes out in many ways as Olivia begins a relationship with musician Richie Brewster. This relationship, doomed to failure from the beginning, causes a rift between mother and daughter that is mostly one sided. It is clear to the reader that Mrs. Whitelaw wants Olivia in her life, but she wants her there under specific circumstances. Olivia cannot accept the demands her mother makes on her and refuses to behave in a way her mother expects. This leads Olivia to a life of drug addiction and prostitution.

Olivia has already informed her reader that she is responsible for her father's death. The reader is shown exactly what this means when Olivia describes her sexual behavior with her father the night they met. The reader can see that Olivia's behavior was unfortunate, but it came out of drug addiction and unhappiness, nothing more. Olivia is not responsible for her father's death, but her guilt about this situation will explain Olivia's actions later in the novel.

The relationship between Mrs. Whitelaw and Kenneth Fleming is explained more in depth in these sections. Olivia talks about Mrs. Whitelaw's obsession with Kenneth and her desire to see him excel in life. Jean stood in the way of that and Mrs. Whitelaw attempted to remedy that. This did not work and Kenneth slipped from Mrs. Whitelaw's fingers. This story too supports a motive that will come in question as the plot continues to develop.



Chapters 5-7

Chapters 5-7 Summary

Chapter 5. Jean Cooper watches the reporters who surround her house reporting on the death of her husband, cricket player Kenneth Fleming. Jean has already spoken to her younger two children about their father's death and attempts to speak with Jimmy, her eldest child, when he returns home. Unfortunately, Jimmy is sullen and refuses to talk about Kenneth. Instead, Jimmy wants to talk about Gabriella, Kenneth's lover. This upsets Jean, effectively ending the conversation.

Lynley and Havers continue their investigation by visiting the home of Hugh Patten, Gabriella Patten's husband. Hugh Patten admits to being aware of Gabriella's affair with Kenneth. Hugh suggests that Gabriella had multiple affairs during their short marriage. Hugh claims to have been at a club gambling the night of the murder.

Chapter 6. Lynley and Havers return to New Scotland Yard and briefly discuss what they have learned thus far. Jean finishes the last of the nervous cleaning she has been engaged with most of the night and climbs the stairs to bed, recalling one of the last times she spoke with Kenneth. In Jean's memory, she relives a fight with Kenneth in regards to his odd relationship with Mrs. Whitelaw and Kenneth's refusal to come home until he had found himself. This argument led to Kenneth admitting to his relationship with Gabriella Patten, the only relationship that truly threatened Kenneth's relationship with Jean. Back in the present, Jean checks on her children, finding her daughter compulsively finishing a knitted sweater for her father and Jimmy laying awake in a room littered with broken ship models Jimmy put together with his dad. Jean asks Jimmy about the trip he was supposed to take with his dad the night Kenneth was killed, but Jimmy refuses to answer.

Lynley stops by Helen's apartment on his way home. Helen is asleep, but wakes for a brief conversation before Lynley insists on returning to his own home. On his way out, convinced Helen is once again asleep, Lynley leaves an engagement ring on her bedside and asks her sleeping form to marry him.

Chapter 7. Lynley and Havers take Mrs. Whitelaw to Celandine Cottage. On the drive, Mrs. Whitelaw tells them about her daughter Olivia, claiming to have not seen her in ten years. At the cottage, Havers and Mrs. Whitelaw search the house for anything that might be missing. Lynley reviews the crime scene with Inspector Ardery, angering Ardery with his apparent disrespect for her efficiency. Under questioning about access to the cottage, Mrs. Whitelaw shows them where there should be a key in a pot in the garden shed. However, the key is missing. Mrs. Whitelaw tells them that anyone could have taken the key, from members of Kenneth's family to workers who had come in the past to repair things in the cottage. Among this list is Olivia Whitelaw.



Chapters 5-7 Analysis

As Lynley and Havers continue their investigation, Jean Cooper deals with the loss of her husband. Jean tries to talk to her sixteen-year-old son about the death, but finds the boy sullen and uncooperative. Jimmy does admit, however, to knowing about his father's affair with Gabriella Patten. Jean, too, it turns out knew about Gabriella, having learned from Kenneth himself. Jimmy shows a great deal of anger because of his father's relationship with Gabriella, suggesting a motive for murder.

Lynley and Havers interview Gabriella's husband, another person who might have had motive for murder. However, Hugh Patten seems resigned to his wife's infidelity and has clearly moved on himself. Lynley and Havers then go to the cottage itself with Mrs. Whitelaw and learn about Olivia. Olivia becomes another suspect when it is discovered that Kenneth would have inherited all of Mrs. Whitelaw's money and that Olivia had access to a spare key.

As all this is going on, Lynley proposes to his girlfriend as she lay sleeping. This event should be a happy one, but it is overshadowed by the other relationships in the novel, leaving the reader wondering if any marriage can truly be happy.



Olivia and Chapters 8-9

Olivia and Chapters 8-9 Summary

Olivia. After dinner, Olivia returns to her writings. Olivia talks about her move into prostitution. Olivia preferred to keep older men as her clients because these men seemed truly grateful for her actions. One of these men liked to meet Olivia on a street corner where she would wait in a costume suitable for his fantasies. One afternoon, this man failed to show up, but as she continued to wait, Olivia ran into Chris Faraday. Olivia attempted to sell her services to Chris, but instead he invited her to dinner. Afterward, Chris invited Olivia to his home, a barge he was in the process of building in Little Venice. Instead of having sex with Olivia, however, Chris paid her to help him build the barge.

Olivia then begins to relate how she believes her mother became involved with Kenneth Fleming a second time. After her father died, Olivia believes that her mother became active at his printworks just to have something to do. Kenneth worked there as a result of a request she made of her husband when Kenneth first quit school. Kenneth was a mediocre worker, but Mrs. Whitelaw quickly promoted him so that they were soon working together in a managerial capacity. Then Olivia believes her mother won over Kenneth's trust and convinced him to fight for his dream to become a professional cricket player.

Chapter 8. Lynley takes Mrs. Whitelaw home and then goes to speak with Olivia Whitelaw in Little Venice. Lynley gets the impression from Chris Faraday and Olivia Whitelaw that they had been expecting the police to come for some time. Olivia is sullen and difficult, confirming only that she has been estranged from her mother for the past ten years. Olivia also tells Lynley that she was home alone the night of Kenneth Fleming's death. While Lynley is interviewing Olivia, she begins to have spasms in her legs. It is then that Lynley discovers that Olivia only walks with the aid of a walker, making it nearly impossible for her to have been Kenneth Fleming's killer. However, Lynley also notices that Olivia has been tracking the case in the papers closely.

Chapter 9. Havers visits Jean Cooper at her home in the Isle of Dogs. Jean is unhappy with the visit, but agrees to talk for a short time. Jean admits to being aware of Kenneth's relationship with Gabriella Patten, but insists that she thought Kenneth would eventually change his mind. As they talk, Jean's brother, Derrick, comes into the room and begins to rail against Kenneth and Havers for interviewing his sister. Havers is forced to ask Derrick to leave. Havers then asks about the trip Kenneth was to take with Jimmy, but Jean insists that she was not home when Kenneth canceled the trip.

Jimmy has taken his brother and sister to Island Gardens Station where he uses some money his mother gave him to buy them snacks. Sharon, Jimmy's sister, tries to talk to him about their father, but he refuses to respond. Stan, Jimmy's little brother, wants to play cricket. This reminds Jimmy of his many games of cricket with his father when he



was little. Afraid of upsetting his siblings further, Jimmy settles down to play the game with Stan.

Olivia and Chapters 8-9 Analysis

Olivia tells how she came to meet Chris Faraday one day while she was waiting for a john on the streets. This story highlights Chris's kind heart and pension for picking up strays. At the same time, Olivia suggests ways in which her mother more than likely wormed her way back into Kenneth Fleming's life. This story, taking place after the death of Mr. Whitelaw, seems to suggest that Olivia feels some guilt in Kenneth's death because of the role she feels she played in her mother's unhappiness and obsession with Kenneth Fleming. This foreshadows the purpose of this written autobiography that Olivia is writing.

Lynley and Havers continue their investigation separately. Lynley visits Olivia where he finds that she suffers from some sort of illness that causes her to be unable to walk without a walker. This illness is not defined at this point, but appears to remove Olivia from the list of suspects. It does not, however, exclude her boyfriend Chris Faraday from this growing list. In fact, the will of Mrs. Whitelaw and Olivia's apparent illness only seem to give more weight to the idea that Chris could be the culprit, along with his suspicious behavior.

Havers interviews Jean Cooper and learns that she knew about Kenneth's relationship with Gabriella Patten, but that she was hopeful that he would come back home one day. At the same time, Havers begins to wonder about Jimmy's motive or the possibility that Jean was unhappy with Kenneth's treatment of his children. As they speak, Jean's brother comes into the room and becomes quite angry, adding himself to the growing list of suspects. In the end, the reader sees Jimmy with his siblings and is shown how deeply affected each still is from their father's long term absence from the family before his death. This again seems to support a motive for Jimmy as the killer, or even Jean as the killer.



Chapters 10-11 and Olivia

Chapters 10-11 and Olivia Summary

Chapter 10. Lynley and Havers have a meeting with Detective Constable Winston Nkata, who has checked on Hugh Patten's alibi. The alibi appears solid. Lynley then arranges for Nkata to head a group of officers to watch the Fleming house and the barge in Little Venice, and to canvass the neighborhood where Mrs. Whitelaw lives.

Lynley and Havers go to the home of Guy Mollison to interview him about Kenneth Fleming. At first Mollison seems intent on forcing them to remain in the hallway, out of respect for his pregnant wife, but Lynley encourages him to invite them inside. Inside, they learn that Kenneth and Mollison had a fight one night while out drinking that ended with a physical encounter. However, Mollison called Kenneth and apologized the night he died. Mollison also admitted to knowing Gabriella Patten, but denied knowing her current whereabouts.

Chapter 11. Havers returns home that Saturday night to discover that the refrigerator she bought has been delivered to the wrong home and she cannot move it herself. A little girl living in the flat where the refrigerator was delivered comes out and speaks to Havers, eventually convincing Havers to allow her a tour of her tiny cottage. The little girl promises to ask her father to move the refrigerator for Havers. Havers also gets a call from her mother's caregiver, learning that her mother's illness appears to be resolving itself.

Lynley goes to Helen's flat to find her gone. At his own home, Lynley learns from his valet that Helen has made him dinner, something Helen has never done before. Lynley finds Helen asleep in his library. Lynley wakes her and they spend an intimate night together.

Olivia. Olivia finds herself reminiscing about Chris as she continues her story. After breaking her of her drug addiction, Chris kept Olivia on his barge to help care for his animals and work on the barge. In time, Olivia learns about Chris' side project, rescuing animals from research labs. In time, Chris trusted Olivia with the truth and began pulling her into the organization with him. Olivia got a job at London Zoo where she gained access to information about where the zoo sent their surplus animals.

Olivia also thinks about her mother and Kenneth, hypothesizing how her mother encouraged the creation of a cricket team to represent the printworks and she encouraged the team to choose Kenneth as their captain. Olivia also hypothesizes how Mrs. Whitelaw brought in Harold Rashadam, the ex-cricket player who coached and helped Kenneth gain his position with the Kent cricket team.

Olivia. Olivia continues her hypothesis on her mother's relationship with Kenneth. Olivia suggests it was her mother's idea to have Kenneth live in Celandine Cottage while he



was on the Kent cricket team. This would have forced Jean to remain in the city with the children while Kenneth had a taste of freedom.

Olivia then returns to her narrative regarding Chris. Olivia remembers how Chris welcomed her onto the assault team and slowly moved her up to operations. Olivia recalls her first operation in which she helped to rescue a group of cats from a spinal research facility. These cats had such devastating things done to them that Chris had the team vet put them all down as he and Olivia held them.

Olivia. Olivia recalls being angry with Chris after that first operation, an anger that inspired her to begin sleeping with every man in the unit. Chris put a stop to it, but continued to make it clear to Olivia that he never wanted to have a sexual relationship with her. At about the same time, Kenneth got a position on the England team and moved back to London. This move should have reunited him with his family, but with Mrs. Whitelaw's encouragement, he decided to remain apart from his family. Kenneth moved in with Mrs. Whitelaw instead. As Mrs. Whitelaw developed a closer bond with Kenneth, Olivia grew more involved with Chris's cause after rescuing some dogs from a puppy farm.

Chapters 10-11 and Olivia Analysis

Lynley and Havers talk with Guy Mollison and learn that he and Kenneth had a fight a few days before Kenneth's death, a fight Mollison called to reconcile over the night of Kenneth's death. This seems to give Mollison a motive for murder, but there appears to be something missing from his confession.

Olivia continues her story by telling the reader how she became involved in Chris Faraday's organization to rescue abused and scientifically tested animals. As she tells this story, Olivia parallels it with the story of how Mrs. Whitelaw once again became close to Kenneth Fleming, pulling him away from her family to have him all to herself in her home. This suggests a sexual relationship between the two, but the reader suspects this relationship, like Olivia's with Chris, was unrequited. However, it does seem to give Mrs. Whitelaw motive for murder because of her deep desire to have Kenneth all to herself. Mrs. Whitelaw attempted to save Kenneth from one woman years before; it is possible she might have done the same years later.



Chapters 12-15

Chapters 12-15 Summary

Chapter 12. Lynley wakes in the morning and instantly gets into a quarrel with Helen over why he loves her. They are interrupted by Lynley's valet, who has come to tell them that Guy Mollison is insisting on seeing Lynley. Lynley instructs him to call Havers. Lynley finds Mollison having breakfast in his drawing room. Mollison tells Lynley and Havers that he had an affair with Gabriella Patten two years ago and that was the real reason for his fight with Kenneth Fleming. Mollison also tells them that Gabriella called him the night of Kenneth's murder and he hid her in an apartment he and some of his friends use for their extramarital relationships.

Lynley and Havers visit with Gabriella Patten, finding her to be a highly seductive woman who clearly has no qualms about her choice of lovers. Gabriella describes for them a fight she had with Kenneth Fleming the night of his murder, insisting that when she left the cottage he was alive and well. Gabriella also tells them that she took his car because it was blocking hers in. Gabriella also tells them that she called Mrs. Whitelaw that night to tell her about her break up with Kenneth, insisting that it was news that Mrs. Whitelaw would have taken as good news.

Chapter 13. Lynley and Havers discuss this latest bit of information and discuss where they should go next. At the same time, Olivia asks Chris to take her to her mother's after a brief argument brought on from their awareness of the police watching the barge and questioning their neighbors.

Chapter 14. Lynley and Havers return to Celandine Cottage, where Lynley verifies Gabriella's story with physical evidence at the cottage. Ardery then shows Lynley the reports that have come in over the weekend and the section of fence in the garden where investigators found both a footprint and a piece of denim pants. On the denim, the lab has identified some kind of oil, possibly motor oil. Ardery then tells them her team also found a footprint on a path that leads into the village of Lesser Springburn. When they follow the path, Havers finds evidence of a vehicle parked behind the local bar in the form of some motor oil.

Chapter 15. Jean Cooper makes a nice tea for her children, but Jimmy, who has been stuck in the house all day because of the police watching the house outside, refuses to join them. Jean goes to Jimmy's room and tries to talk to him about his father's death again, but all Jimmy wants to talk about is Kenneth's relationship with Gabriella. As they talk, Sharon comes to the door to tell them the police have come. Jean insists on being present as Lynley and Havers interview Jimmy. However, it quickly becomes clear that Jimmy will not say anything in front of his mother. Lynley decides to take him in to New Scotland Yard, advising Jean to call her lawyer.



Chapters 12-15 Analysis

The case begins to take an interesting turn when the investigators are able to interview Gabriella Patten. It turns out that Gabriella is the type of woman who needs a man, any man, and she has had a great number of lovers. Kenneth found this out previous to the night he died, explaining why he was at Celandine Cottage. It also explains why no one knew where Kenneth was going to be. Kenneth's pride would not allow him to share this information with anyone, even Mrs. Whitelaw. This could be what led to Kenneth's death.

Lynley and Havers go back to Celandine Cottage to review the evidence again, as well as verifying Gabriella's story with physical evidence. This leads to Havers finding evidence that someone parked a motorcycle in Lower Springburn and walked a path to the house, watching it from the garden for an unknown reason. This seems to point directly to Jimmy. The reader has seen how sullen and uncooperative Jimmy has been with his mother; therefore, the reader begins to wonder if maybe Jimmy killed his father out of a sense of betrayal due to Kenneth's relationship with Gabriella Patten. Again, Jimmy seems to have motive and opportunity, leaving both the reader and the detectives wondering if he might not have acted on it.



Chapters 16-17 and Olivia

Chapters 16-17 and Olivia Summary

Chapter 16. The press jumps on Jimmy and the detectives as soon as they walk out of the house, capturing everything but Jimmy's face. At the police station, Lynley interviews Jimmy. Jimmy immediately offers a full confession, but he is vague on the details. Lynley has Nkata take Jimmy's boots and a DNA sample before Jimmy's lawyer can get there. Later, on his way home, Lynley stops by Little Venice to ask Chris Faraday and Olivia Whitelaw about their alibis once more. The detectives sent to interview the neighbors learned that Chris and Olivia left together late on the night of Kenneth's death. Chris gives Lynley information on a stag party he went to while Olivia admits that she did leave the barge that night to visit with her mother. Olivia claims she went to ask permission to have her ashes placed with her father's upon her death.

Chapter 17. Havers and Lynley have an expensive Italian dinner together. Lynley is pensive throughout the meal, which Havers finds out of character. As they discuss the case, Havers expresses the opinion that the case is closed because of Jimmy's confession, but Lynley appears to have doubts. At the same time, Jean Cooper learns that her son has given a confession to the police. The lawyer Jean arranged for with Mrs. Whitelaw's help suggests that Jimmy is trying to cover for someone close to him. Jean attempts to speak to Jimmy about his confession, but finds Jimmy just as sullen and angry as before.

Olivia. Olivia recalls the day she fell as she was getting out of her van at the grocery store, a symptom that marked the beginning of her illness. This led to a limp that Olivia did not even notice until someone else pointed it out. Chris had Max, his group's vet, take a look at Olivia and he recommended a trip to the doctor. Olivia went through dozens of tests before the doctor finally revealed she had ALS. Olivia, refusing to believe this bleak diagnoses, went to another clinic, but received the same news. Olivia continued to work and go on operations with Chris, determined to be the one in a million who could survive. However, the disease continued to progress and has recently moved into her arms. At the same time this was happening to Olivia, she became aware of the tabloid stories of her mother and Kenneth's relationship. However, Olivia can only speculate, like the press, as to the exact nature of their relationship.

Olivia. Olivia recalls shortly after her diagnosis that Max suggested Olivia tell her mother of her illness, so that Miriam Whitelaw might offer some financial support in the final stages of the disease. Olivia balked at this idea at first, but soon came to realize the burden she would present for Chris as she got sicker. At one point Olivia attempted to leave Chris, but he refused to allow her to leave, confessing to a deep love for her that went beyond the physical. It was then that Olivia decided she would ask her mother to allow her to move back home in the latter stages of the illness.



Chapters 16-17 and Olivia Analysis

Lynley proves that Jimmy Fleming was at Celandine Cottage the night his father was killed with the oil from his motorbike and the boot prints that match his Doc Martens. However, when Jimmy confesses to the murder, his details are so vague that the reader can see almost immediately Lynley's doubt. Havers is ready to send Jimmy to jail, but Lynley hesitates, making the reader wonder if maybe Jimmy is only protecting someone as his lawyer suggests.

Olivia relates how she came to be aware of her illness. Olivia is dying and will need someone to care for her on a constant basis. Olivia would like Chris to be the one, but Chris does not love Olivia in the romantic sense as she does him. In fact, Chris has another lover. This makes Olivia feel as though she is in the way, a burden that would be best removed. This leaves Olivia with only her mother to care for her in her dying days. A nine year rift makes this situation nearly impossible, but it does explain why Olivia would have gone to her mother's house the night Kenneth was killed. This appears to create an alibi for Mrs. Whitelaw and Olivia both, taking them off the suspect list. However, it also leaves a few unanswered questions.



Chapters 18-21

Chapters 18-21 Summary

Chapter 18. Before going home, Lynley stops by Mrs. Whitelaw's house and asks her about Olivia's suggestion that she was with her mother the night Kenneth was killed. Mrs. Whitelaw admits it is true, saying that she did not mention it to protect Olivia's privacy. The next morning, Lynley reads through all the papers, paying special attention to all the articles and pictures of Jimmy Fleming. Lynley's boss asks if perhaps he should stop releasing information to the press, but Lynley insists it is important to the case. A short time later, Lynley interviews Jimmy again. Later, a lab report reveals that the brand of cigarette used in the crime is different from either Jimmy or his mother's brand.

Chapter 19. The lawyer tells Jean that Jimmy appears to want to talk to the police and that she should try to find out why. This causes Jean to recall a conversation she had with Kenneth in which she tried to convince him the children needed him at home more. Kenneth balked and walked out on her, insisting that he still needed space to find himself. Jean goes up to talk to Jimmy and is shocked to find him laughing hysterically. Across town, Havers has learned that Kenneth filed for divorce, but Jean failed to mail off her reply in time. Nkata then comes in and tells them that the movies Chris Faraday claimed to have watched at his stag party the night of the murder are movies that he or his friends have taken out from various video stores on multiple occasions in the span of five years. It appears that the movies are a carefully planned alibi.

Chapter 20. Lynley goes to see Chris Faraday again. Chris admits that he was not at a party the night of the murder, but with his lover. Chris even gives Lynley his lover's name and address so he can verify it. That night, Lynley insists on driving Havers home and he stays to have dinner with her, after moving her wayward refrigerator into the kitchen. Over dinner, Havers insists that Jean has the best motive for murder, but Lynley insists that they bring in Jimmy Fleming once more.

Chapter 21. Lynley interviews Jimmy Fleming again. This time Lynley tells Jimmy that he knows he is lying. Later in the afternoon, Havers and Lynley are discussing the case when they are called to the boss's office. Lynley is told he has leaked too much to the press and if he does not have results soon he will be removed from the case.

Chapters 18-21 Analysis

Lynley speaks to Mrs. Whitelaw again. Their conversation goes well and nothing seems amiss. However, the reader will notice one thing amiss and this thing, the phone call from Gabriella, will become a red herring as the novel continues to progress.

Lynley also questions Chris' alibi after discovering that it is a well planned alibi that has more than likely been used on multiple occasions. Chris insists that he was with his



girlfriend and this alibi holds up, proving that Chris could not be the killer. The list of suspects is growing smaller and smaller. Now the reader also knows that although Jimmy was at the cottage that night, he could not have committed the crime. The cigarette used was not Jimmy's brand and Jimmy himself cannot come up with enough evidence to support his part in the crime. Now the reader is left with a very small group of suspects and time quickly running out.



Chapters 22-24 and Olivia

Chapters 22-24 and Olivia Summary

Chapter 22. Jean begins to realize that she is just as much to blame for the trouble her children have had since Kenneth's desertion as Kenneth himself. Jean tries once more to remedy this by forcing Jimmy to tell her the truth about the night of Kenneth's murder, but again he refuses. When the police show up at the house, Jimmy takes off running down the street. Lynley follows, chasing Jimmy all through the neighborhood until Jimmy finally jumps exhausted into the river.

Chapter 23. Lynley jumps into the river to save Jimmy, but struggles to find the boy in the quick moving current. Lynley finally finds him and makes it to shore where they are met by Havers and local cops. Lynley accompanies Jimmy home where he finally gets him to admit he has been lying to protect his mother whom he thought he saw at the cottage that night. However, Lynley and Jean are able to convince him he saw someone else who just happened to driving a similar car. Afterward, Lynley and Havers go to their separate homes. Havers is visited by her young neighbor and her father. Havers agrees to go to the young girl's birthday party the following weekend.

Olivia. Olivia lied to Chris about making prearranged plans with her mother to meet at her home the night of the murder. When Chris dropped her off, the lights and music were on, but no one was home. Olivia waited alone until nearly dawn, answering the phone once to speak to an angry woman. Olivia then fell asleep and woke to the sound of someone entering the house.

Chapter 24. Several days pass and there is no movement in the case. As Havers prepares to attend the child's birthday party, Lynley makes a visit to the barge where Chris and Olivia live. Lynley tells Olivia that he knows she is covering for the murderer of Kenneth Fleming and that he hopes she will do the right thing. When he leaves, Chris and Olivia argue over what Olivia should do next.

Chapters 22-24 and Olivia Analysis

Jimmy runs when the police come to speak to him again, but Lynley is finally able to stop him and get a true confession. Jimmy thought his mother was responsible for his father's death. This explains the sullen behavior and his refusal to tell his mother the truth about what happened that night. It explains a great deal, and it also removes Jimmy and Jean officially from the suspect list.

Olivia went to her mother's home the night of the murder and found the house empty until the few dark hours before dawn. This removes Mrs. Whitelaw's alibi. The phone call Olivia admits to taking that night also offers an alibi for Gabriella Patten. For these reasons, it is clear to the reader that Mrs. Whitelaw killed Kenneth Fleming. The motive is not quite clear until the reader recalls how Mrs. Whitelaw attempted to protect



Kenneth from Jean Cooper years ago and failed. Perhaps she took a different tactic this time in her attempt to protect Kenneth from Gabriella Patten. However, it backfired because Mrs. Whitelaw was unaware that Kenneth went to the cottage that night to break it off with Gabriella, making Mrs. Whitelaw's actions unnecessary. Not only did Mrs. Whitelaw kill the wrong person, she did it for no reason.



Olivia and Chapters 25-26

Olivia and Chapters 25-26 Summary

Olivia. Olivia says she was awoken by footsteps in her mother's house and was relieved to find it was her mother returning home. Mrs. Whitelaw claimed to have been at the airport all night with Kenneth waiting for a delayed flight. Olivia and her mother made amends and had a nice talk.

Chapter 25. Lynley returns home and finds Helen waiting for him. Lynley and Helen talk for a time and finally Helen agrees to marry Lynley.

Olivia. Olivia says that when she learned of Kenneth's death, she began trying to figure out ways her mother could have been telling her the truth, but soon came to the realization that she was not. Olivia then went to see her mother after the murder and found her inconsolable. Finally, after calming her mother down, Olivia insisted on knowing the truth. Mrs. Whitelaw described how she rented a car at the airport and drove to the cottage, setting the fire and returning late in the night. Then Mrs. Whitelaw insisted that it was up to Olivia whether or not to turn her in to the police.

Olivia. Olivia writes in her statement to Lynley that she has given him incriminating evidence on both Chris and her mother, the only two people in the world she loves and who love her. Olivia wants Lynley to decide which should go to jail and which should remain free to care for her in the final days of her life.

Chapter 26. Lynley reads Olivia's statement with Helen and decides that he will arrest Mrs. Whitelaw, but allow Chris Faraday to remain free.

Olivia and Chapters 25-26 Analysis

Olivia admits to knowing her mother killed Kenneth. Olivia even recounts her mother's full confession and the power her mother willingly placed in her hands. However, Olivia refuses to make a decision. To Olivia this is more than a choice between right and wrong. This is also a choice between who will care for her in the final days of her life. Olivia gives Lynley her mother, but she also gives him evidence against Chris. If Lynley wanted to, he could arrest both Chris and Mrs. Whitelaw, leaving Olivia to depend on the state for care in the final months of her life. Instead, Lynley chooses only to arrest Mrs. Whitelaw.

On the personal side, Lynley has become engaged and Havers has found something of a personal life for the first time in her life. This is encouraging and also leaves the reader with the hope that there will be another book featuring these two characters.



Characters

Olivia Whitelaw

Olivia Whitelaw is the adult daughter of Miriam Whitelaw. As a child, Olivia and her mother failed to get along. As Olivia grew up and made choices her mother did not agree with, the rift between the two grew. Olivia resented her mother and her decision to spend the majority of her time helping the less fortunate rather than spend time with her only child. This caused Olivia to behave in ways in which she knew her mother would not approve.

In her early adulthood, Olivia became involved with a musician who introduced her to drugs. As Olivia's drug addiction grew, her behavior worsened. In time, Olivia turned to prostitution to pay for her drug habit. One night, Olivia ran into her parents while in the company of two of her paying customers. Olivia acted sexually and inappropriately with her father. When her father died of a heart attack within minutes of this encounter, Olivia blamed herself, causing a permanent rift between herself and her mother.

Olivia continued to live as a prostitute for several years until she met Chris Faraday. Faraday, an animal rescuer, took Olivia in and cared for her. Olivia stopped taking drugs and joined Faraday in his crusade against animal testing. Unfortunately, Olivia soon learned that she had ALS, a disease that would take her mobility and then her life. The night Kenneth Fleming dies, Olivia is at her mother's home attempting to make amends. Olivia needs her mother to care for her in the final stages of her disease. This leaves Olivia as her mother's alibi in the death of Kenneth Fleming.

Kenneth Fleming

Kenneth Fleming was a brilliant student despite his living in a poor section of the city known as the Isle of Dogs. One of Kenneth's teachers was Miriam Whitelaw. Mrs. Whitelaw took special interest in Kenneth and attempted to help him advance to higher education. Unfortunately, Kenneth's girlfriend became pregnant and he decided to end his education in order to marry her and care for the child. This upset Mrs. Whitelaw. Mrs. Whitelaw attempted to first talk Kenneth out of this action, then she talked with his young girlfriend. In the end, however, Kenneth chose to marry Jean.

Mrs. Whitelaw arranged for Kenneth to get a job at her husband's print shop and apparently put him out of her mind for several years. However, when her husband died and Mrs. Whitelaw took over the printing business, she once again became involved in Kenneth's life. Mrs. Whitelaw made Kenneth a manager and encouraged his desire to become a cricket player. Mrs. Whitelaw even arranged for a private cricket coach to train Kenneth and help him secure a position on the Kent cricket team.

Kenneth separated from his family when he took the cricket position in Kent, at first visiting them every chance he had, but slowly losing touch with his wife and children.



Kenneth builds his cricket skills and is eventually given a chance to play for England. Kenneth becomes a popular cricket player. After four years of separation from his wife, Kenneth files for divorce so that he might marry his lover, Gabriella Patten. However, Kenneth is found dead in Mrs. Whitelaw's cottage in Kent before divorce or marriage takes place.

Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley

Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley is a man of privilege. Inspector Lynley has a title separate from his job and a relationship with a woman who is also titled. Inspector Lynley is given the case of the murder of Kenneth Fleming on the same night he had intended to propose to his girlfriend, Lady Helen Clyde. Inspector Lynley throws himself into the investigation, quickly coming to a conclusion that leads him to believe Miriam Whitelaw is the killer, but that she committed the perfect crime. The only way Lynley can force a case against Mrs. Whitelaw is to force her daughter, out of a sense of guilt, to come forward with the truth about Mrs. Whitelaw's alibi. In the end, when Lynley has all the information, he finds himself forced to make a choice that will affect the lives of multiple people.

Detective Sergeant Barbara Havers

Detective Sergeant Barbara Havers is a young woman who has spent the majority of her adulthood caring for her ailing parents. After the death of her father, Havers has placed her mother in a care facility and moved into her own home for the first time. Havers is consumed with guilt over her mother because she has difficulty finding time to visit her. Havers' mother is suffering from Alzheimer's and rarely knows who her daughter is. However, this does little to assuage Havers' guilt, but in fact makes her feel worse.

Havers works with her partner, Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley, on the Kenneth Fleming case. Havers is an old fashioned investigator who focuses on a suspect and refuses to be budged. Havers is unhappy with her partner's uncommon techniques, playing the devil's advocate to his methods.

Miriam Whitelaw

Miriam Whitelaw is a privileged woman who has had money all her life. Miriam marries late in adulthood a man who is something of a bore, a homebody who prefers a quiet life. To compensate for the boredom of her marriage, Miriam Whitelaw puts a lot of energy into her career as a teacher and her charity works. As an English teacher in the Isle of Dogs, Miriam Whitelaw becomes obsessed with one of her students, Kenneth Fleming. Kenneth is the same age as Miriam's daughter, Olivia, which causes Olivia some resentment when Miriam becomes obsessed with Kenneth and talks about him constantly.



After Kenneth impregnates his girlfriend and quits school, Miriam loses track of him for a time. However, after the death of her husband and her estrangement from her daughter, Miriam once again takes notice of Kenneth. Miriam manipulates Kenneth in order to give him what she believes he wants, a career as a cricket player. Miriam also manipulates Kenneth so that he separates from his wife and comes to live with Miriam herself. Miriam is happy with Kenneth until he begins an affair with Gabriella Patten. Miriam can see that Gabriella is going to do the same thing to Kenneth that Jean did with her pregnancy, so she decides to kill Gabriella. However, Miriam does not know that Kenneth learned of Gabriella's prior sexual history and gone to the cottage to end their relationship. Kenneth is killed by the fire Miriam started to kill Gabriella.

Jean Cooper Fleming

Jean Cooper Fleming is Kenneth Fleming's wife. Jean grew up on the Isle of Dogs with Kenneth and quit school when she failed to be promoted to the next class at the age of sixteen. Jean became pregnant with Kenneth's child a short time later, causing him to decide to quit school himself and marry Jean. Jean and Kenneth remain married for eleven years and have three children together. However, when Kenneth takes a position on the Kent cricket team, he moves to Kent and leaves his family behind. Four years later, Kenneth asks for a divorce, even though he and Jean have continued to have a sexual relationship.

Jean is devastated by her husband's death. Jean is also a suspect in the initial investigation because of her odd reaction to her husband's death when she is taken to identify his body. However, focus quickly turns to Jean's son, Jimmy, causing Jean to be caught between the police and the possible killer of her beloved husband.

Jimmy Fleming

Jimmy Fleming is a sullen sixteen-year-old boy. Jimmy was to go sailing in Greece with his father for his birthday, but this event was cancelled at the last minute. Out of hurt and anger, Jimmy went to Kent to confront his father's lover, only to become an unwitting witness in his father's murder. Jimmy confesses to the murder and tries to convince the police to end the investigation. However, it later comes out that Jimmy saw a woman at the cottage, but as he was not wearing his glasses, he misidentified the woman as his mother. Jimmy thought he was protecting his mother but was really protecting Miriam Whitelaw.

Gabriella Patten

Gabriella Patten is the wife of one of the sponsors of the England cricket team. Gabriella is a highly sexual woman and she has seduced a great many men in her five year marriage. One of these men is Guy Mollison. Another is Kenneth Fleming. Kenneth Fleming believes Gabriella loves him and he wants to marry her. However, when he has a drink with Guy Mollison one night, he learns that Mollison and Gabriella also had an



affair. Kenneth decides to postpone a trip to Greece with his son to confront Gabriella at Celandine Cottage where she has been living since her separation from her husband. A violent argument takes place at the cottage, ending with Gabriella taking Kenneth's car and leaving the cottage. A short time later, Miriam Whitelaw comes to the cottage and finds Gabriella's car in the garage. Miriam starts a fire with the intention of killing Gabriella, unaware that Kenneth is asleep in the bedroom upstairs.

Guy Mollison

Guy Mollison is the captain of the England cricket team. Mollison had an affair with Gabriella Patten two years before the opening of the novel. A short time before Kenneth's death, Mollison tells him of his own affair with Gabriella. This leads Kenneth to confronting Gabriella at Celandine Cottage where he will later die from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Chris Faraday

Chris Faraday is a young single man who rescues animals from research facilities. When Chris sees Olivia Whitelaw on the streets one day waiting for one of her clients, he picks her up and takes her home like one of his rescued animals. Chris helps Olivia break her addiction to drugs and enlists her help in his crusade against animal testing. When Chris and Olivia have been living together for several years, Olivia is diagnosed with ALS. Chris becomes Olivia's sole caretaker. In the end, Olivia tells Lynley about Chris's illegal activities as well as her mother's to force Lynley to make a choice between the two criminals.



Objects/Places

Ring

Inspector Lynley leaves an engagement ring at the bedside of his lover, Lady Helen Clyde, in an attempt to propose marriage. Lady Helen begins wearing the ring, but does not give Lynley a response to his question until days later.

Cigarette and Matches

Detective Inspector Ardery finds a cigarette with several matches at the point of origin in the Celandine Cottage fire. Ardery believes this is a rudimentary ignition device that the killer used to ensure the fire would start, but not until he/she was far enough away to escape injury.

Armchair

The fire at Celandine Cottage was begun in an armchair in the dining room of the home. The chair was moved for some unknown reason, but Inspector Ardery believes this was to ensure the fire would travel up the stairs to kill the occupant of the house.

Kittens

Gabriella Patten had two kittens living with her at Celandine Cottage. The investigators cannot locate these kittens when they begin their investigation, suggesting the killer released them from the home.

Eyeglasses

Jimmy Fleming requires eyeglasses, but he dislikes wearing them. Jimmy is not wearing his eyeglasses the day his father is killed.

Refrigerator

Detective Sergeant Havers has recently moved into her first home, a small cottage. The cottage has no refrigerator, so Havers buys one that is delivered to the wrong home, leading Havers to meet her neighbors for the first time after four months.



Motorbike

Jimmy drives a motorbike that is old and leaks oil. Oil found near Celandine Cottage is matched to the oil from Jimmy's bike, proving that he was at the cottage the night his father died.

Doc Martens

Jimmy wears Doc Martens boots. Footprints at Celandine Cottage are matched to Jimmy's boots.

Blue Cavalier

Kenneth Fleming bought his wife, Jean, a Blue Cavalier to transport their children. On the night of the murder, Miriam rents a Blue Cavalier at the airport, a car that was seen by Jimmy Fleming, leading him to confess to the crime in an attempt to protect his mother.

Benson and Hedges

The lab identifies the cigarette used to light the fire at Celandine Cottage as a Benson and Hedges.

Celandine Cotage

Celandine Cottage is a cottage in Kent owned by Miriam Whitelaw. Kenneth Fleming lives in this cottage for the two years while he plays for the Kent cricket team. Later, Miriam allows Gabriella Patten to live in the cottage during her separation from her husband. It is for this reason that Miriam believes Gabriella is the sole occupant of the cottage on the night she starts a fire in the cottage and kills Kenneth Fleming.

Isle of Dogs

Isle of Dogs is a poor section of London where Kenneth and Jean Fleming live.



Themes

Unrequited Love

Unrequited love is romantic love that is never sexually consummated. In this novel there is one, and possibly two, examples of unrequited love. Olivia Whitelaw is a confused young woman who falls in love with a musician. This affair turns out to be an extramarital affair that leads to disaster. Olivia is unaware that her lover is married at first. When she learns the truth, Olivia goes home to her mother where she is received with impatience and scorn. Olivia returns to her lover with the idea that he has left his wife. Later, however, Olivia learns that her lover has returned to his wife and has another lover in another town. Olivia finally kicks her lover out, but by this time she has become addicted to the illegal drugs he once gave to her.

Olivia begins a life of prostitution to pay for her drug addiction. This leads to a permanent estrangement from her mother when seeing her with a couple of johns causes her father to die of a heart attack. Several more years pass before Olivia meets Chris Faraday. Chris Faraday is a kind young man who takes her in like the many animals he has rescued from research labs. Olivia falls deeply in love with Chris Faraday, but he refuses to become her lover. Chris explains to Olivia that he loves her, but not in a sexual way. This causes a great deal of pain for Olivia, who soon becomes dependent on Chris due to her illness, ALS. Olivia also becomes aware that Chris has a lover, a fact that drives her insane with jealousy. For this reason, Olivia tells Inspector Lynley about Chris' illegal activities with the animals as well as the truth about her mother's alibi on the night of Kenneth Fleming's death. This forces Lynley to make a choice between justice and morality.

Miriam Whitelaw, Olivia's mother, also is involved in a relationship that is more than likely an unrequited love. Miriam Whitelaw met Kenneth Fleming when he was only fifteen and she was his English teacher. Miriam did all she could to ensure that Kenneth would go to university, but her plans were foiled when Kenneth impregnated his girlfriend. A few years later, after the death of her husband, lonely Miriam again reunites with Kenneth and she attempts to help him fulfill all his dreams. In time, Miriam convinces Kenneth to leave his family and come to live with her. For a time, the press speculates on their relationship. Many come to believe that Miriam and Kenneth were lovers, but as the reader learns more about Kenneth, they come to believe that Kenneth and Miriam were simply roommates, despite Miriam's deep love and admiration of Kenneth.

In the end, Miriam took it upon herself to stop yet another woman from stealing Kenneth from her and her intentions for him. Miriam lights a fire in the cottage she owns in order to kill Gabriella Patten, Kenneth's lover. This leads to Kenneth's death, however. Kenneth is alone in the cottage, having just hours before ended his relationship with Gabriella. Had Miriam not loved and wanted to control Kenneth, he might yet be alive.



Marriage and Desire

Kenneth and Jean Fleming married as teenagers after the birth of their first child. Together they settle down to the same middle class life their parents had before them. In ten short years, the Flemings have three children together. Kenneth works in a printing company, a career that appears dreary and endless until the owner of the plant dies and his wife, Kenneth's ex-teacher, takes over. When this happens, Kenneth is quickly promoted to manager. Miriam Whitelaw begins spending a great deal of time with Kenneth, eventually manipulating things to allow Kenneth to achieve his desire to be a cricket player.

Kenneth and Jean find themselves separated as Kenneth pursues his dreams. Jean does not want Kenneth to be a cricket player, she wants him to be a father and husband, a good provider. However, Kenneth decides he needs to be apart from his family to find himself. For two years, Jean and the children visit Kenneth in Kent and attempt to keep their family together. However, when Kenneth comes back to London to play for England, he chooses not to return to his family home. This causes a great deal of turmoil in the Fleming home.

Jean is angry and hurt with her husband's actions, especially when he begins an affair with Gabriella Patten. Kenneth tells everyone he wants a divorce from Jean and he even files the appropriate paperwork. However, it is later revealed that Kenneth has continued to have a sexual relationship with Jean. Kenneth wants the excitement of cricket and Gabriella Patten, but he still loves his wife and wants to be with her. This creates a conflict that could be a motive for murder.

Protecting the One's You Love

Jimmy Fleming is accused of killing his father when it is discovered he was in Kent the night his father was killed. Jimmy is taken to New Scotland Yard and interrogated. During this interview, Jimmy admits to his own guilt. However, Inspector Lynley quickly sees inconsistencies in Jimmy's confession. Lynley sets out to force Jimmy to tell the truth while using the confession in the press to flush out the real killer.

Jimmy is taken to New Scotland Yard a second time where he again insists that he killed his father. Jimmy is told that his confession does not fit the evidence, but he refuses to back down. Inspector Lynley attempts to take Jimmy to New Scotland Yard a third time, but Jimmy runs away and eventually ends up in the river, forcing Inspector Lynley to save him. After this ordeal, Jimmy admits he was in Kent and he saw his mother at Celandine Cottage.

Jimmy has confessed to protect his mother because he believes his mother killed his father. However, it is later proven that Jean could not have been there because she was at work. Jimmy did not see his mother, but he saw another woman he mistook for his mother because she drove a similar car and he was not wearing his glasses; therefore, he could not see her face.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written with two separate points of view. The bulk of the novel is written in the third person point of view. These chapters are seen through the narration of multiple characters, including Inspector Lynley, his partner, Sergeant Havers, and Jean Cooper Fleming. These chapters follow the investigation and explore not only the evidence related to the case, but the relationships between the various characters. Along with the regular, numbered chapters there are chapters in the novel titled Olivia. These sections are first person narrations of the life of Olivia Whitelaw that includes the confession of Kenneth Fleming's killer.

The point of view of the regular chapters is third person omniscient, allowing the reader to build a relationship with the various characters of the novel and to know certain events that the reader might not otherwise know. The sections of the novel titled Olivia are written in the first person point of view. These sections appear unrelated with the rest of the novel and tell the story of Olivia Whitelaw, the daughter of Kenneth Fleming's friend and former teacher, Miriam Whitelaw. In the end, however, it is proven that these sections are the most important part of the novel. The point of view hides this point until the end, building suspense in the novel.

Setting

The novel is set in London, England. The novel begins in Kent, a countryside county outside of the main city. However, the bulk of the novel takes place in the city because this is where the victim and the suspects all made their lives. The investigators will spend the bulk of the novel moving throughout the various areas of London, going from the rich neighborhood where Miriam Whitelaw lives to the poorer area where the Fleming family has lived for most of their lives. The novel also goes to the fascinating area of Little Venice where Olivia Whitelaw lives with Chris Faraday among the writers and artist who live on the surrounding barges.

The setting of the novel is important to the plot because the victim of the crime that propels the plot is a cricket player. This is a career that is unique to England. Also important to the setting is the fact that those investigating the crime are from New Scotland Yard, England's premier law enforcement agency. If the novel were set anywhere else, these elements of the plot would be either out of place or forced to change. The setting complements the events and the characters in the plot.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is simple English. The language includes slang that is common in England, such as the word bangers for a type of food. A reader who is not



familiar with English slang might be confused by some of these references, but the overall language of the novel is simple.

The language of this novel reflects the characters and settings of the novel. The language of some of the poorer characters includes a great deal of slang, but it is slang that is commonly used in England, not the type of slang used on the streets or confined to specific areas of the country. For this reason, it is not difficult for the reader to understand the language of the novel, even those not familiar with the slang of England.

Structure

The novel is divided into multiple chapters. There are twenty-six numbered chapters that follow Lynley and Havers on their investigation into the murder of Kenneth Fleming. There are also multiple chapters entitled Olivia in which Olivia Whitelaw tells her story. These two separate plots come together at the end of the novel with the revelation of the killer.

The novel has several plots. The main plot follows the investigation into the murder of Kenneth Fleming. This investigation takes Lynley and Havers toward the various suspects, including Kenneth's estranged family, his sponsor Miriam Whitelaw, his lover Gabriella Patten, and the captain of the England cricket team, Guy Mollison. A subplot of this novel follows the relationship between Jean Cooper and her son, Jimmy Fleming, as Jean tries to learn what Jimmy is hiding in regards to the murder of his father. Another subplot follows the relationship between Miriam Whitelaw and Kenneth Fleming. In Olivia's chapters, the plot follows Olivia's relationship with Chris Faraday as well as her mother, and her struggle against ALS. At the end of the novel, all these plots come to a satisfying conclusion.



Quotes

"The story begins with my father, actually, and the fact that I'm the one who caused his death."

Olivia, p. 3

"Less than a quarter of an hour before Martin Snell discovered the crime scene, he was delivering milk."

Chap. 1, p. 7

"Ask them questions, she told herself. Ask them the questions anyone would ask. You got to. You must."

Chap. 2, p. 31

"Some things one knows through osmosis, Sergeant, through exposure to a common cultural experience that slyly becomes part of one's stockpile of knowledge. I call it subliminal assimilation."

Chap. 4, p. 59

"You see, I was something of a disappointment in my parents' lives although who I was and what I did affected my mother far more than Dad."

Olivia, p. 75

"It's odd to think how things work out."

Olivia, p. 95

"Mrs. Whitelaw attempted to help them in their search, but it was clear that her thought processes were muzzy at best."

Chap. 7, p. 157

"I imagine Kenneth Fleming kept his deepest and most heart-felt wish a secret from his wife, born as it was from the midnight joining of hope and fantasy."

Olivia, p. 283

"He should have felt a sense of vindication, but instead Lynley felt only regret."

Chap. 15, p. 385

"She dwelt upon what bright spots there were, although she called ALS a disease and did not use the more palatable word, disorder."

Olivia, p. 429

"But despite her efforts at playing the role she'd decided she was supposed to play, Jeannie now saw that the end had been that she'd caused her kids as much grief as their dad had done, because her mulish commitment to getting on with things had required an equal getting on from them."

Chap. 22, p. 521



"Decide, Inspector. He could almost hear Olivia's voice. Decide. Decide. And then live afterwards with the decision. As I will. As I do."

Chap. 26, p. 621



Topics for Discussion

Who is Kenneth Fleming? Why is the discovery of his body at Celandine Cottage such a surprise to everyone? Where was Kenneth supposed to be? Who knew he was at the cottage? How did Kenneth Fleming die? For what reason? How could this have turned out differently for Kenneth? What could Kenneth have done differently?

Who is Miriam Whitelaw? How did she first come to meet Kenneth? Why did she become infatuated with him? What kind of relationship did they have at first? Did this change? Why did Miriam try to talk Jean out of marrying Kenneth? Did this attempt work? Why not? When did Miriam come into contact with Kenneth again? What kind of relationship did they have? How did Kenneth feel about Miriam? Miriam for Kenneth? How did Jean feel about this relationship?

Who is Jean Cooper? Why does she insist on calling herself Cooper? What does this say about her relationship with Kenneth Fleming? Why does Jean not ask all the appropriate questions about Kenneth when she identifies his body after his death? How does Jean feel about Kenneth's death? Was Jean in love with Kenneth? What was their relationship like before his death?

Who is Gabriella Patten? What was Kenneth's relationship with her? How did this impact his family? Why did Jean refuse to give Kenneth a divorce? How did Kenneth feel about this? How did Kenneth feel about Gabriella? What did he learn about Gabriella shortly before his death? How did this impact their relationship? How did Kenneth's relationship with Gabriella lead to his death?

Who is Jimmy Fleming? Why does he confess to the murder of Kenneth Fleming? Why did Jimmy go to Celandine Cottage the night Kenneth Fleming died? What did Jimmy see? How does this point to the real killer? What does the car Jimmy saw that night say about the killer? Who was the killer attempting to set up for the murder? Why? What does this say about the killer's morality? Who did Jimmy think he saw that night? Who did he really see?

Who is Olivia Whitelaw? Who is her mother? What was their relationship like? Why does Olivia feel the need to explain to Lynley her relationship with her mother? Why does Olivia come to live with Chris Faraday? How does Olivia feel about Chris? Why does Olivia reveal Chris' illegal activities to Lynley? What choice does Olivia want Lynley to make for her? What choice does he make? For what reason?

Who is Lady Helen Clyde? What is her relationship with Inspector Lynley? Why does Helen refuse to accept Lynley's marriage proposal in the beginning? What does this say about Helen? Why does Helen insist that Lynley tell her why he loves her? What does Lynley say? Why does the author delve into Lynley's personal life? How does this relationship parallel some of the other relationships in the novel? Is this intentional? Explain.