

Prodigal Summer: A Novel Study Guide

Prodigal Summer: A Novel by Barbara Kingsolver

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Plot Summary

"Prodigal Summer" is a novel about members of a community in Appalachia, specifically focusing on the lives of Deanna Wolfe, Lusa Landowski, and Garnett Walker. These main characters are introverted and solitary individuals who have unique and strong views about their natural surroundings. Throughout the course of a spring and summer, their lives change drastically and they realize that they, like other creatures, are not solitary. They are a part of a complex web that connects all living beings.

Deanna is given the first chapter, and each of her subsequent chapters are titled "Predators." Her story begins with her life in the Zebulon National Forest as a forest ranger. She has had this career for two years and created the job herself through her college thesis on protecting wildlife, specifically coyotes. Her peaceful solitude is disturbed by the appearance of Eddie Bondo, a hunter/sheep farmer from Wyoming. Although there is a strong attraction between these two characters, their beliefs about protecting species, predators in particular, are vastly different. Much of their dialogue consists of discussions and arguments about the relationship between humans and other wildlife. This theme is repeated in the lives of the other main characters as well. Their story ends with him leaving her as well as the coyotes alone; in a note he says he has met his match. She will never forget him, for she has her memories of his touch as well as the child she is carrying. In her final days on the mountain, she realizes how faulty the belief in solitude is, because all creatures are connected; she is headed back to civilization to live with her father's former girlfriend, Nannie Rawlings, to raise her child.

The second main character mentioned is Lusa, and her chapters are titled "Moth Love." She is an entomologist from Lexington who is lonely in her new home and marriage. She and her husband frequently argue, and she feels like an outsider in his family's home and the community. Soon into her story, Cole is killed in an automobile accident, and she spends the rest of the book dealing with his death, becoming part of his family, and finding her place in this small community in Zebulon County. Cole's life becomes a string of stories to learn more about his life, as well as the history of his entire family. She has become part of this family, when she and the family let their guards down and get to know each other. Also, she falls in love with her dying sister-in-law's children and prepares to adopt them. This adoption gives her a place in this family, and it keeps the family home in the Widener family for another generation.

The third chapter title is "Old Chestnuts" for another main character, Garnett. He is an elderly widow living in solitude in the home in which he had grown up. He spends his days mulling over the difficulties his neighbor, Nannie Rawley, causes him. He grows some produce, as well as his beloved chestnut trees. He believes that pesticides are the only way to protect his crops and trees, which is in complete contrast with Nannie's organic methods. They spend much of Garnett's story bickering over the relationship between man and nature and how to work in harmony with nature. By the end of Garnett's story, they have learned a great deal about one another and have learned to

listen to and compromise with each other. They have also found a mutual affection for each other in their old age.

The final chapter is different from all the other chapters. It is from the perspective of the coyote. This coyote travels through the valley and back up the mountain. It hints at the growth of her family and the new families that are arriving.

These characters, like all creatures, are connected. There are several large connections between these characters. Deanna's father is also the father of Nannie Rawley's daughter. Garnett is the grandfather to the children Lusa adopts. Both Deanna and Lusa care about the coyotes living on the mountain, as well as the forest behind the Widener home. There are many other smaller details that attach one character to another, including personality traits, the nature that surrounds them, and the growth that takes place in their lives over the course of two seasons.



Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

This book tells the separate yet faintly connected stories of Deanna, Lusa, and Garnett through a spring and summer in a small region in Appalachia. They all experience loneliness and loss but realize the importance of human interaction and the connection between all creatures.

In Chapter One, a solitary woman is silently moving through the forest, following tracks of a creature of which she is not yet sure. For the past two years she has been free to be unself-conscious and herself. When she comes across where the animal has marked its territory, she sniffs and realizes, although it is not what she hoped for, it is a somewhat rare bobcat. She stands and he is looking directly at her. He seems to be a hunter and introduces himself as Eddie Bondo. He is much younger than her and has a northerner's accent. He notices she is not much of a talker, which he finds unusual in women; she agrees that she is not like most women. When he asks if he can follow her, she quickly says no. She tells him she is tracking, and when he asks why she does not have a gun, she tells him that this is National Forest land, and they are inside a game-protection area in which it is illegal to hunt. As quickly as he arrived, he is gone.

For two days she could not stop thinking about Eddie Bondo. When he shows up again, it is the same spot as last time. This time he does not carry a rifle. As before, she is squatting by the stump looking for signs of an animal, which she is now sure is a canine. When she stands up and sees Eddie Bondo, she feels as if she willed him to appear, and her heart is racing. He is more determined to follow her while she is tracking. She points out the three-day-old cat tracks and tells him to walk in front along the animal's path. She lets him continue along the bobcat's trail, while she silently heads to one of the Forest Service trails. She wants to return to her recent discovery but would not return on this day, the eighth of May. When Eddie Bondo finds her, he asks her what she is really tracking and she replies, "coyotes." When his eyes widen, she mentions several other carnivores to try to cover up the coyotes. When he asks why she is so interested in predators, she replies, "they're the top of the food chain, that's the reason." Eddie Bondo gives her a big, heart-melting grin and compliments the intelligence she must have to be hired in a job such as this. He continues to ask her about her job and life in the wilderness. The conversation leads back to carnivores, specifically coyotes and wolves and how certain breeds have practically gone extinct.

They come to the end of the trail at the edge of a cliff she remembers vividly almost falling over when she first was hired. The place still takes her breath away. He points out the small town below, Egg Creek, and asks if that is where she is from and she says yes. He asks about her life in that town, and she gives very little. It is known through her own silent thoughts that she had been married at one point in time. In her own thoughts she remembers the coyote family that she had stumbled upon, and how one farmer in



the valley had supposedly killed a family of coyotes. This was most likely the family or at least what remained of it.

The touch of Eddie's jacket brings her back to reality, and she is surprised how she had lost all memory of human touch; the divorce had not been her choice. Eddie holds her hand, and she invites him to stay in her cabin for the night if he would like. They walk through the woods holding hands and she thinks how she is not sure if she could stand having him in the cabin with her all night long, wanting him but not touching him. This reminds her of the last moments of her marriage when even her naked body did not draw her husband's attention. She cannot stop herself from laying her hand on his jaw and they kiss passionately, lay on the ground, and slowly roll down the hill. They finally stop and stand up. She points in the direction of her cabin as well as the direction out of the forest, if he would rather escape. They begin to peel off layers of their clothing as they make their way to her cabin, trailing various layers behind them. She finally removes the pistol she had hidden for protection, removing her fear. They "completed their introduction on the floor of her porch." He finally asks her name, and she replies that it is Deanna.

Deanna was a modest and very shy girl. When she headed off to college she was attracted to older professors and finally married one. She continues to wonder what kind of a man Eddie Bondo is, but as he is shaving and whistling around her cabin, she decides that he is not a criminal. Like the moth hanging outside her window, she suddenly feels the urge to flee from this risky venture with Eddie. She has learned he is a sheep ranger from Wyoming and must have a fierce hatred for her beloved coyote. The only thing that could have brought him to Appalachia is the Mountain Empire Bounty Hunt.

In Chapter Two, Lusa is reading a book when a familiar scent stops her. The scent of honeysuckle pulls her away from a book on moths by Charles Darwin, which are her passion. Lusa's husband is on the far edge of the hayfield and cutting the small branch of honeysuckle that is sending its powerful scent all the way to Lusa's window. Lusa and her husband Cole have had the worst of their many fights that morning. She is a foreigner from Lexington, surrounded by Cole's siblings who she feels cannot accept her as part of the family, and she feels so alone. She met Cole at the University of Kentucky while he was there for a workshop on pest control and she is a postdoctoral assistant interested in moths and other pests. She is also of Arabic and Polack descent, which is highly unusual in the small valley in which she now lives. Lusa is attracted to Cole not only because of his looks but because he makes her feel beautiful and womanly, a way she has never quite felt before.

Ten days later their marriage ends. Cole is killed in an automobile accident as he is driving a tractor trailer to earn more money. This morning was like many mornings when Cole was out driving; Lusa felt free. When she gets the news of Cole's death, she thinks that everything will be different from now on, but this would not be true. Her decisions had actually changed the day she had received the scent-filled message from Cole across the field.



Chapter Three introduces a widower of eight years, Garnett; he is still sometimes disoriented by the loss of his wife, so he has turned to God for support. He has grown up and still lives in this valley in the Appalachian Mountains. As an old man he needs these familiar views of home as much as he needed a chestnut in his pocket to rub for good luck as a young boy. Garnett has a knowledge of birds and notices the mating calls of several species.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

Chapter One tells the tale of a woman, named Deanna, who has been divorced by a husband who does not appreciate her for who she is. She has left human contact, possibly to avoid being hurt again, to become a forest ranger in the wilds of the Appalachia Mountains. She is more comfortable around the flora and fauna of the Zebulon Mountain, and has forgotten in the two years that she has been living here what it is like to communicate with humans. She can distinguish one carnivore from another simply based on their tracks and the scent of the urine. When birds are singing all around her, she can tell one from the other with ease. This attraction to and love of nature has been with her since childhood and fills her mind. Much of her silent thoughts throughout this chapter are descriptions of what she sees, smells, and hears around her. It is spring and a time for renewal, and her thoughts reveal the sensuality and sexuality surrounding her and heightens the events that take place between Deanna and a stranger.

What fills her thoughts the most, though she tries to suppress them, is the family of coyotes that she has recently discovered. Coyotes are exceptionally rare in this part of the Appalachians, and Deanna is upset, though not surprised, to hear that a local farmer has been bragging about killing a family of coyotes. She is assuming those she has found are either the coyotes he thought he had killed or members of the family who were able to escape. Her purpose as a ranger, since finding this coyote den, is to protect this family. Contact with a stranger may endanger her precious creatures, as well as her sense of self and purpose on this mountain.

Her surprise at seeing Eddie Bondo is intensified by the fact that the only contact she has had with humans has been infrequently with someone from the National Park bringing her food and supplies. He is both seducing and frightening her. Although she is not completely sure if her attraction to him is because she has not seen a man in two years (the boy bringing supplies does not count) or because he truly is beautiful, she cannot stop looking at him or thinking about him. From the moment he sees Deanna he wants to track with her. The reason for this is not yet known, but considering he is a Wyoming hunter, and, according to Deanna, these hunters tend to have a strong hatred for coyotes, it can be assumed that he is hunting the coyotes Deanna is working to protect. This mutual attraction and this severe contrast in purpose gives a sense of anxiety to the interactions between these two characters. Deanna knows what kind of a man he must be, but she is unable to stop herself from being drawn to him.



In Chapter Two, Lusa feels trapped in her new marriage. She has been labeled as a city girl and an outsider. Her husband seems to be unsympathetic to her loneliness. His surprising death is shocking and extremely unexpected. It is not sure what will happen to Lusa from this point on. It is not even clear how she feels about this news. What is known about Lusa and her feelings is her love of moths. Like Deanna in the last chapter, Lusa's thoughts are filled with names and vivid descriptions of the creatures she loves. A theme that seems to be developing in this book is a respect and love of nature but not by the majority of the population. These two women feel and have always felt unusual and odd; others do not understand them and they have both purposely removed themselves from society because they have felt pressure to conform. Also, these two women have had experiences that have brought them back to society. Only time will tell how this will affect them.

Chapter Three is a brief chapter that introduces the reader to Garnett, an old widower. He is still aching for his wife but finds comfort in God and the familiar world around him. He too has a knowledge and love for nature.



Chapters 4, 5, and 6

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Summary

In Chapter Four, Deanna is sitting on the porch listening to this prodigal summer, a time of "extravagant procreation," and the songs of males singing for their mates. Eddie Bondo has left, saying he will return, but Deanna does not believe him. She could go and see if the coyotes were still in their den; it is very possible that these wary animals had left for a new home. She had been to the den where she had last seen them and waited. When she had seen no sign of the family, she decided it was time to leave. She had created this job for herself as part of a thesis inspired by a trip the Tinker's Mountain Zoo near Knoxville where a single coyote was kept in solitude. She now is living in a part of Appalachia that, once heavily poached, is becoming a healthy ecosystem again. She finds fresh canid tracks and sees his feces. She learns about his diet by dissecting this scat and realizes he has been eating the birdseed she had put just outside her cabin. On the nineteenth of May, Deanna begins writing in her green field notebook all that she has seen and realizes she has ignored her notebook for the nine days Eddie Bondo had been there and was thoroughly disgusted by her laziness and lack of concentration. She is craving something much stronger than food but does not want to name it. She eats a can of cold ravioli and tries to ignore her body's yearning. She sees a luna moth that she believed might be at the end of its life, which she had first seen as a child. After seeing this frightening event, she had not stopped loving the luna but realized that once a mystery is caught and observed up close, it loses some of its beauty. In the evening as she is readying for bed, Deanna senses something outside. She finally hears the cracking of underbrush and points a flashlight outside. There he is—not a human, but a coyote.

In Chapter Five, Lusa is at her husband's wake watching her nephews zigzag like moths through the chairs. She is in a daze, wearing a borrowed black dress, and observes the many guests arriving to say final goodbyes to Cole. She is surrounded by her sisters-in-law, Hannie-Mavis and Mary Edna at the moment and later by Lois, Emaline, and Jewel. The evening passes like a dream, and two days later Lusa still had not slept and had decided, like a defiant child, to stay at the farm. Nights were both blessings and curses; she was not surrounded by family and guests, but her sisters-in-law were staying downstairs, so she was trapped with insomnia upstairs. Jewel gives her a sleeping pill, and, for the first time, Lusa sees a wise and compassionate woman in the usual shy and timid face of Jewel. She falls asleep and has a strange dream of a moth making love to her. She wakes and makes sure she is still herself, smells the scent of honeysuckle and is reminded of Cole's silent message those few days before. What she loved was still here, if she could just find it.

In Chapter Six, Garnett is remembering his boyhood days and a giant hollow chestnut log in which he would play. For the first time, he realizes that the man who had chopped that tree down could easily have been his grandfather, the man who had named the mountain. Nannie Land Rawley is Garnett's neighbor, a woman who believes in organic



produce and puts a "No Spray" sign in his yard every time the spray truck is to drive by. Besides the fact she has made the front of his lot a mess of brambles, she also had a child out of wedlock, and bore that child proudly. He blames this odd woman for the Japanese beetles that attack his apples and his embarrassing front yard. Seeing her "No Spray" sign in his yard again, he sets out to remove it. On the way his left leg becomes heavy and, thinking he is having a stroke, he calls out for help. Nannie comes to his rescue, only to find that a fifteen pound snapping turtle has attached itself to his boot. Garnett is so embarrassed and irritated to see Nannie that he drags himself and the turtle home. When he yells to Nannie that her "No Spray" sign had fallen in the weeds, she said that was fine; the truck had already gone by that morning.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Analysis

In Chapter Four, Eddie Bondo has left and Deanna is trying to adjust to her old habits. She is upset with herself for slacking in her work for the nine days Eddie had stayed with her. She is reminded of why she has chosen this quiet, solitary life by the songs of the males looking for their mates and memories of Nannie asking how she can live such a life. She finds the tracks of the male coyote, as well as his feces, and she realizes he has been near her cabin eating her birdseed. This foreshadows the events at the end of the chapter when Deanna finds him outside of her cabin.

Although Deanna is wanting to enjoy her peaceful life, her body is aching for Eddie Bondo. She chooses to ignore her body's desires and tries to concentrate on her work. This aching will be rewarded in a later chapter with the reappearance of Eddie. Her conflict between wanting to do her job in quiet solitude and desiring Eddie's companionship will grow stronger when he returns. The quiet, peaceful life she has chosen is now permanently altered.

Lusa is moving in a dreamlike state at her husband's wake. The children moving through the chairs reminds Lusa of moths, as they pick up scents and move in the direction of that scent. She wonders if the children can sense the grief in the room and are moving from one feeling of grief to another.

It is reinforced how much of an outsider Lusa is when guests barely acknowledge her, not because they do not feel sorry, but they do not know her. Their condolences are saved for the family members to whom they are close.

Lusa is suffering greatly from the loss of her husband, and Jewel comes to her rescue. More is learned about Jewel and the husband that had left her; she is one person who truly understands Lusa's loss, and Lusa sees Jewel truly for the first time. This glimpse into Jewel's personality foreshadows the relationship that is to develop between these two women who have both suffered similar losses.

Lusa's odd dream about having sex with a luna moth is very strange, although fitting with Lusa's personality. She has studied and is drawn to these moths and felt a similar, wordless connection with her late husband. This might be some kind of manifestation of



her husband in moth form. There is no other mention of this dream later in this book. Another silent message from her husband was the branch of honeysuckle he had cut for her; she sees this as a sign that what she loves is still here, if only she can find it. This silent communication once again reflects her interest in moths and her understanding of pheromones that attract one member of a species to another, what she felt connected her and Cole to each other.

Garnett is an old retired man who is obsessed with the next door neighbor he finds to be irritating. He is obviously a religious man, yet not comfortable in allowing others to make their own decisions about their lives. He is uncomfortable and irritated that Nannie Rawlings had a child out of wedlock and then kept the child. He also seems set in his ways, which include spraying for pests. He cannot accept that Nannie Rawlings is against pesticides and finds something else that is odd and annoying about her. It bothers him even more, because he blames her organic methods for the pests on his produce.

Although he is so irritated and fed up with her odd ways, he is incapable of explaining this to her. When he has tried, he has failed. She always seems so good-natured, which he finds to be even more annoying. At the end of this chapter, Nannie seems to win again; she has once again kept the spray truck from spraying on Garnett's lawn. As a reader, one can only imagine how this makes Garnett feel. This passive aggressive relationship is intriguing. What will happen next?



Chapters 7, 8, and 9

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 Summary

In Chapter Seven, Eddie Bondo suddenly reappears, saying Deanna is an easy, sweet trail to follow; Deanna is reminded of being able to turn heads in Knoxville on the middle day of her cycle and the power of pheromones. She had finally had no thoughts of Eddie that morning, but here he is, the man that gets her heart racing. He wants to follow her wherever she is headed, which is to a hollow tree that he had already found. Deanna is territorial about this spot but soon forgets when he pushes her inside the tree and they make love. Afternoon had arrived and Deanna's plans for the day were wasted. She suddenly becomes very angry at his power and ease over her, so she starts to hit him. He wakes and subdues her quickly and asks her if she did not want him to come back. She despises him for making her want him to come back to her. She had been content and free of Eddie that morning. Now he was in the hollow tree that she had loved and thought was hers. The magic of this secret place was now gone.

In Chapter Eight, Lusa is listening to the rhythm of the rain when her brothers-in-law, Herb and Lois' husband, Big Rickie, arrive to tell her when they will come to plant tobacco. She is perturbed that they would assume they could tell her what to do, and she is not fond of planting tobacco. When she tries to come up with other crops that could be planted and wishes she could ask advice from someone who would not laugh at her suggestions. She tells the men that she will think about whether or not she wants to plant tobacco, and they leave. She is left sapped of strength from standing up to them. Jewel arrives to deliver more canning jars to make cherry pie filling and jam. Lusa is glad to have her there for the company. Lusa learns of some of the rumors spreading around about her. Lusa and Jewel talk and set each other straight about how the family feels about Lusa and Lusa's feelings now that she is a widow. Jewel and Lusa become closer during this time together. Lusa also learns about her husband as a young boy; he was so different from what she had imagined. Her anniversary passes by with no acknowledgment, and it seems the rain will never end.

In Chapter Nine, Garnett is admiring the side of his barn; he has always admired chestnut wood and believes his ancestors to have been "chestnut people." Unfortunately, the blight killed most of the American Chestnuts, so Garnett, now a retired teacher, plans on spending the rest of his days attempting to restore the American Chestnut by crossing and backcrossing it with the Chinese Chestnut. Nannie Rawley is still a pest, but Garnett realizes there is no point in trying to talk to her about his problems with her odd habits and their effects on him. He decides to go to town to buy supplies and have dinner. He changes into his nicer shirt, takes a look at his body, which will sadly never know the the comfort of human touch, and assumes that is part of growing old. Garnett wonders what his life would have been like without Nannie Rawley. She had given birth to a child with Down's syndrome that she named Rachel Carson, after a woman who discovered the dangers of DDT. Everything in her life changed from the birth of this child.



Garnett drives into town, passing the Amish market at which he would love to stop, if only Nannie were not there selling her produce. The children remind him of his son who he misses greatly. In Little Brothers' shop, he realizes he has forgotten his shopping list. When he goes down the aisles trying to remember what he needs, he walks Nannie, who talks to the brothers about a snapper. This is too much for Garnett, who heads out the door, to his truck and gets all the way home before he realizes he had shoplifted a bottle of malathion from the store in his hurry to leave.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 Analysis

In Chapter Seven, Eddie has returned, and Deanna is having mixed feelings. She is both happy to see him and upset that he has such control over her. What she seems to fear is not having complete control over decisions she makes and her reactions to what takes place around her. For two years she had lived a contented life, not being self-conscious or worrying about people at all. Now, she had just adjusted to Eddie's leaving and he has returned. Once again, she cannot control her desire for him and gives in to him. She despises him for this. This gives a sense of foreboding to their relationship in the future. Currently Eddie seems calm and understanding with her ranting but he may soon tire of this if she cannot find a balance between her solitary life and her relationship with Eddie.

In Chapter Eight, Lusa's brothers-in-law assume that they will be running the farm as before Cole's death, but Lusa sees it as them trying to control her. She is surprised when they do not ask what she wants. This seems to verify her belief that the family wants their home, and she is just a guest that has worn out her welcome. This feeling that the family wants her back in Lexington continues to grow when she learns from Jewel that the family assumes she is leaving.

The truth is that Lusa does not know what she wants, and she shares her fears and uncertainties with Jewel. Their interaction in this scene reveals a great deal about both of these characters, including Lusa's family's heritage and Jewel's life without her husband. They can both sympathize with one another, which helps seal this bond of friendship. They both realize there have been assumptions made on both sides, Lusa's and the Widener family's, and this new friendship may help close the gap between Lusa and her husband's family. If she stays, as she says she is, this family could be very important to her.

In Chapter Nine, more is learned about Garnett's connection with the American chestnut. He believes "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away," yet he will spend the rest of his life trying to bring back this chestnut tree. He believes that his plan is also God's plan. This desire to bring about a rebirth of chestnuts explains some of the hostility he feels towards Nannie Rawley. He blames her organic garden for the pests destroying his produce and trees. This animosity he feels for her does not stop at her odd farming techniques. He does not approve of her being a Unitarian and practicing godless witchcraft. He has let his solitary life, with God as his only companion, to influence his opinion of others, specifically Nannie. He is very hardheaded and set in his

ways and beliefs, that he does not truly attempt to understand this neighbor of his that he finds to be such a nuisance. He only tries to make her see his point of view. His belief in himself and his views are reflected in his farming tactics; he believes that what he wants is what is what God wants.



Chapters 10, 11, and 12

Chapters 10, 11, and 12 Summary

In Chapter Ten, Lusa is milking a cow, when she is startled by the appearance of Little Rickie, who had come to tell her that his dad would not be coming on Saturday to plant tobacco. Lusa assumes she is being punished, but Little Rickie tells her that Dad had not been able to get set from Jackie Doddard and there was probably none left in the county. Lusa does not know how she will earn a living, and vents on seventeen-year-old Rickie. She learns Little Rickie had been a little brother to Cole, and he tells her about her family. She shares her Jewish and Muslim heritage and reminisces about the religious feasts that focus around goat as the main dish. She decides to make a traditional Muslim dish for the family and is looking for a cheap goat or two. Lusa realizes, and is mortified, that Little Rickie is attractive. Little Rickie assures her she is not old and his friends think she is hot. Ricky advises Lusa to call Garrett Walker, the former 4-H livestock adviser, for suggestions on breeding goats. Lusa learns that the family is actually shy and somewhat jealous of her, and learns that Rick, as Lusa calls him, has a newfound respect for her, since her family has a farming background. She wants to raise slaughter goats for Muslim feasts. He thinks people will think she is crazy, especially when she asks him to keep this plan a secret. She replies that that is not a problem, considering they already think she is a city girl who has lost her mind.

In Chapter Eleven, Deanna wakes to the sounds of Eddie moving around her cabin, collecting firewood, and starting a fire in the stove. She is liking the idea of not having to get up in a cold room and starting her own fire. She had tried to run him off, but here he stays. When Deanna pulls back the covers, she sees Eddie trying to catch a moth but not very successfully. This leads into a discussion of moths and Deanna's father and his relationship and child with Nannie. Deanna tries to learn something about Eddie, but he keeps returning the conversation to her life. Deanna asks him what brought him down the mountain and he does not respond at first. He is a sheep farmer from Wyoming, and is here to kill coyotes to protect livestock. He teasingly says he is in bed with an animal lover. She surprises him by explaining how she cares for all animals but no individuals, especially if they hurt an ecosystem. She continues trying to convince him that killing a predator is dangerous to the entire ecosystem, but he refuses to understand. He knows she has been tracking coyotes from his first day. He also knows she would never give away their location and has accepted that. He ends the conversation. Deanna catches the luna moth struggling in the corner in a cup and takes it to the porch and releases; in moments it is caught by a phoebe.

In Chapter Twelve, Garnett writes Nannie Rawley a letter using the Bible to explain his beliefs about how humans should act towards one another, as well as towards nature. He states that if a creature goes extinct to serve man's purpose, then that is okay, because they were given to man to use as he sees fit. He walks to the mailbox and puts it in.



Chapters 10, 11, and 12 Analysis

Chapter Ten reveals what Lusa could love about this new home of hers. Her goat raising idea combines her family's heritage, it helps those in Egg Fork, and it will hopefully pay her bills. This goat project is already proving to be pulling Lusa out of the deep depression she had been in since moving to Egg Fork. Lusa is also making a friend in Little Rickie, a boy who she learns had been a little brother to her husband. As in previous chapters, Lusa is learning more about her husband after his death than she had before, which she compares to a moth flying in a zig zag motion. She feels that she cannot follow a straight path, but maybe she is not meant to. She has always been different, with her interest in entomology and her mixed heritage, so it is fitting that she would do things a little backwards and maybe a little more moth-like.

In Chapter Eleven, Deanna and Eddie Bondo finally discuss the coyote issue that they have been avoiding since the moment they met. Deanna tries to convince him that it is wrong to kill coyotes or any other predator; it is more devastating to an ecosystem than it could ever be to a farm. He cannot accept this idea as it is too ingrained in him to hate animals that kill livestock. This gives a sense of uncertainty to their relationship, and although he says he accepted that he would not learn from her the location of the coyotes, he will likely still try to find them on his own. The moth fighting for its life in the corner of the room is eaten moments after it is free. This reflects Deanna's understanding of how nature works, but it also could be an analogy for Deanna's purpose as a ranger. She believes that her actions help the ecosystem but there is a possibility that she could do something, although well-meaning, that could be harmful to it as well.

Garnett's letter to Nannie Rawley in Chapter Twelve explains exactly how he interprets the Bible regarding animals. This explains why he believes in using pesticides to protect his produce, but it also contradicts his efforts to bring back the American Chestnut; hadn't he said in the letter that it is okay if a species goes extinct? This seems to be the ramblings of an old man who only has himself for companionship. There is no one around to bounce ideas off and no one to tell him that his beliefs may be a little skewed. This letter will surely be responded to by Nannie Rawley and hers is a letter that will be exciting to read.



Chapters 13, 14, and 15

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 Summary

In Chapter Thirteen, Eddie and Deanna are hiking through a maze of horizontal trees. They are searching for mushrooms, which Deanna knows are not in season, but it is what Eddie wants to do. While Eddie is here she will do what he wants and use this as an excuse to ignore her work. They suddenly hear a noise, a man in a tree above them. It is Sam Hill, someone with whom Deanna had gone to high school. He is obviously hunting and knows he has been caught. She feels sorry for this overweight version of the basketball player he had once been. She is kind but firm and he finally leaves. Eddie has hidden himself this entire time and comes out of hiding, impressed with how she handled the situation. Eddie has a hard time picturing Deanna living a normal life and she says she misses the library, her favorite food, her dog, and music.

They lay down in the leaves with their minds focused on one thing, so they decide to head back to the cabin. On the way they spot a coyote catching a small rodent; they do not speak the rest of the day and especially about what they have just seen. By evening Deanna cannot stand to be near the silent yet restless Eddie, so she invents a reason to leave. While she is gone she thinks she hears men talking. As she gets closer, she realizes the voices she hears are those of coyotes talking to the pups. The rodent they had caught earlier was not for them but for the coyote pups. The next day she leaves to see those pups with her own eyes. She threatens Eddie that should he follow her, he would be exiled from the mountain. He agrees to stay away. When she arrives at the den, at first she sees the females, then finally somewhere between six and twenty pups, playing. These coyotes feel like family.

In Chapter Fourteen, Garnett is sore from working in the field, preparing the soil for his chestnuts. He hears the phone ring while in the shower, grabs his towel, and answers it. The caller is Lusa Landowski asking about goats. Garnett, like Rick, tells her to put an ad in the paper. While on the phone, he hears a knock at the door. After ending his conversation with Lusa, he goes to the door to see who might have stopped by. He sees a pie and under it a letter from Nannie Rawley. The pie is forgotten for the moment. The letter politely contradicts Garnett's take on the Bible and God's will and explains her point of view on nature and man's role on this planet. She also tells him her comments about the Snapper are about her tractor, not Garnett's run-in with a snapping turtle. This relieves him, but he quickly is angered by her opinion of his beliefs and her backward view of life. He writes her another letter, very angry this time; he now sees himself as a "Soldier of God."

In Chapter Fifteen, Lusa has invited the entire family for the Fourth of July, and they have all agreed to come. Although Lusa is a little nervous, she is put more at ease when she realizes that Cole's sisters are as mean to their husbands and each other as they had ever been to her. She finds the men drinking home-made alcohol the women have nicknamed *Serpent*, and they tease her about her goats and anti-tobacco sentiment.



Lusa is surprised to be the center of attention. When seeing Lois being affectionate with her husband, she feels a pang of sadness and loneliness, but the flirtatious behavior of Big Rickie makes her both guilty and hopeful, and she forgets to be sad for a minute.

She realizes that she is ovulating and fertile, which makes her laugh at how the men had been fluttering about her like a moth. Jewel's children come running down to her after an argument and a small scratch of Lowell's leg occurring. Although not very comfortable dealing with children, she manages quite well, according to Jewel. They talk for a time about ghosts around the house and hint at Jewel's illness.

Lusa walks to the pond to look at the moon and mourn the loss of her husband, when she hears Little Rickie say, "sssst." He is in the barn, and she joins him there. They smoke cigarettes and discuss Lusa's goat project. Her grief is growing smaller as the moon rises, and she thinks of all the things she enjoys about this farm. Rick addresses Lusa by her first name without "Aunt" in front of it, which halts the conversation momentarily. They talk some more about the ghosts that Lusa sees, specifically Jewel and Cole as children, and Jewel's illness, which seems to be cancer. Lusa begins to cry and Rick puts his arm around her. As she cries and Rick comforts her, he seems to become more mature in Lusa's eyes. She apologizes for her behavior and he tells her it gave him an excuse to put his arm around her. He quickly kisses her, to her shock. He apologizes profusely, but she tells him she has been lonely, and it felt good to have his arm around her; she thanks him for being there for her.

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 Analysis

In Chapter Thirteen, Deanna and Eddie happen upon coyotes for the first time. Neither know how to speak to one another about this; what will Eddie do now that he knows there are coyotes on this mountain? So far, he listens to her and does nothing, but will that last? Deanna knows that she is not sure if she can protect these coyotes, knowing what her mate intends to do when he sees this family, but she decides to search for the family anyway. The chapter ends with Deanna watching the coyotes, like a child, unself-consciously and bursting with joy. This is why she has spent two years on this mountain, to see a pack of coyotes that she loves as much as one would love a family. Although this is a joyful and exciting moment, there is a sense of unease: will Eddie be able to keep himself away from this family? Will Deanna, in her haste and desire to observe them, lead Eddie directly to them? What will happen then?

In Chapter Fourteen, Garnett helps Lusa begin her hunt for goats, which finally physically connects one main character to the next. There has been talk about the various characters knowing one another, but this is the first time that one has had some sort of contact with another in this story. It is mentioned that Garnett, who is related to the Wideners by marriage, did not attend Cole's funeral due to some "considerations" between the two families. The meaning of this statement is not clarified, and Lusa does not even notice what he has said. This will be explained later, and will reveal more about his son, who he has thought of only for a short moment in this story.



The other half of this chapter are letters from Nannie and Garnett to one another. Nannie is polite, yet strong in her argument against Garnett's beliefs. She tries to explain why his take on the Bible is incorrect, but Garnett will not get past being told he is wrong. His letter is purely out of anger and spite; it does not hold the valid remarks and opinions that are found in Nannie's letter. This exchange between the two characters continues to reveal Garnett's inability to understand others and accept differing viewpoints.

In Chapter Fifteen, Lusa comes to the realization that Cole's family may actually like her. Without having any siblings, she had just not understood the teasing and bickering that often takes place between siblings. She has been trying to find how she can be happy here. With her goats, the smells and nature surrounding her, and now a family that accepts her, her sadness and loneliness, although it pops up unexpectedly, is slowly fading.

Her ovulation with the moon is attracting all of the men, including Little Rickie. Like Deanna, it seems Lusa also has the power to attract younger men. Little Rickie's kiss is both shocking and embarrassing to both of them, but it also shows how close they have become and how much they seem to need each other. A woman's cycle has been discussed earlier in a chapter about Deanna and will be brought up again in a later chapter. This cycle fits with the feeling of sexuality and reproduction that is in the air and surrounding the characters in this book. It also is a part of nature and life, which is a major focus of this book.



Chapters 16, 17 and 18

Chapters 16, 17 and 18 Summary

In Chapter Sixteen, Deanna is stopped in her tracks by a copperhead. Soon the copperhead slithers into the grass, and Deanna heads back to the cabin. It is starting to rain. On her way she hears a vehicle. It is only the Forest Service jeep and its occupant, Jerry. He gives her a ride back to the cabin, with her wondering the entire time if Jerry had met Eddie while he was there dropping off her mail and supplies. As they arrive at the cabin, Jerry tells Deanna he had met her boyfriend. When she says he is not her boyfriend, Jerry reminds her of the condoms laying on her bed and she is mortified. Jerry says he is glad she is not alone, that he and the other park employees worry about her. After she has given Jerry her requisition list, she goes in the cabin, angry with Eddie. She is angry and upset for several reasons: Eddie had not stashed to condoms, she does not understand what their relationship is, she's sure she is menopausal, and she is ashamed she is so old and he is so young. She feels like she is just an observer in this forest, with no real purpose. She crawls into bed and he holds her until she falls asleep. When she wakes up, Eddie says he thinks she is sick as she'd sneezed in her sleep and was burning up. She feels tired but not sick. She tells him about marrying a professor and hating her job as a seventh grade teacher. As they continue talking, they begin to have sex. This is stopped when a sound is heard in the attic above, a snake. Eddie is fearful of snakes, and Deanna speaks and strokes him to calm him down. Soon they return to their previous "conversation."

In Chapter Seventeen, Garnett sees that a large oak has fallen from Nannie's yard into his. He decides to talk to her about having it chopped into firewood. He finds her in an apple tree and she comes down to talk as she also has a bone to pick with him. She is tired of him spraying harmful pesticides which she fears will make her sick, hinting that maybe those sprays had caused Ellen's cancer but quickly apologizing. She explains to him how dangerous those pesticides are and how the chemical companies trick farmers into buying their products. They continue to banter over God's purpose for His creatures and their thoughts on evolution, farming, and the nasty letter Garnett had written her. They also discuss Garnett's son, who had become addicted to drugs and was no longer considered part of the family, which upsets Nannie, because her only daughter had died at the age of fifteen. They both realize the grief that they bear and apologize to one another. Nannie reluctantly agrees to have the tree cut down and then says she wants the firewood. Garnett wonders about the mindset of a woman.

In Chapter Eighteen, Lusa gets to try out her parenting skills on a very tough subject, Chrys. Lusa learns about the difficulties Chrys has had to face in her young life, her father leaving, being a tomboy, and her mother's illness. Their day together changes both of their lives. Chrys enjoys herself and, for the first time in the book, lets down her guard. Lusa sees that children are not as scary as she had once thought. Besides this new relationship with Chrys, a visit from Hannie-Mavis reveals the truth about the family's reason for not wanting Lusa to have the family farm. They know that when Lusa



remarries, the farm will go to her husband, and will not stay in the Widener family. Lusa is relieved to learn it has absolutely nothing to do with her. Hannie-Mavis gives Lusa the news that Jewel is not getting better, and so Lowell is invited to stay with Chrys and Lusa. The chapter ends with Chrys and Lowell sitting on the steps of the house in the same place Lusa had seen the ghosts of her brother and Jewell months before.

Chapters 16, 17 and 18 Analysis

In Chapter Sixteen, Deanna is still distraught over her relationship with Eddie. She is ashamed that their age difference would keep her from feeling comfortable being with him in public, although they have no reason to be away from their private life in the woods. She is still torn between her feelings for him and wanting her life back the way it was, easier. She also fears she is menopausal, since she has not had her period in some time. This, along with her feelings of exhaustion, fever, and sneezing and Eddie's comment about her having maternal instincts, foreshadows later events in the story. For the first time, Deanna is realizing that the world around her is living and procreating, and she is just an observer. She seems to be on the brink of a decision, possibly to make changes in her life, but is not sure which way to go, like Lusa and her moths.

Chapter Seventeen brings a sort of truce between Garnett and Nannie Rawley. For the first time Nannie is somewhat able to get through to Garnett about the consequences of using pesticides, and Garnett catches himself hanging on her every word. Nannie also learns about the grief from which Garnett still suffers for his wife and son. Nannie now realizes that Garnett had not easily given up on his alcoholic and drug-addicted son. His son's counselor's had said that he needed to want to get better, and no one could force it upon him. This meeting between neighbors is a break-through. They have obviously spent quite a bit of time making assumptions about one another. In finally discussing it face to face they realized how wrong they were. Their relationship will never be the same, and the compromise about the tree (Nannie agrees to have it cut down if she can have the wood) represents this change in their relationship. They may not always understand one another, but they respect each other enough to listen to what the other has to say and to be willing to compromise.

Chapter Eighteen, like Chapter Seventeen, is a lesson in understanding. Lusa shows compassion and understanding to Jewel's tomboy daughter, Chrys. Chrys has finally found someone who cares about her and understands her. When Hannie-Mavis arrives, Lusa learns that the family never hated her for living in the family home; they feared the day when she would remarry and the farm would pass onto her children and out of the Widener name. She now understands that their feelings towards her ownership of the farm had nothing to do with her. Lusa also realizes that she is good with children and actually enjoys their company. The chapter ends with Lowell's arrival and the reunion between brother and sister, similar to the ghosts that Lusa had seen of Cole and Jewel. This has brought the story full-circle for Lusa. There are Wideners in the family home, and she is now a mother of sorts to these children. Lusa has a role to play in this family; she belongs.



Chapters 19, 20 and 21

Chapters 19, 20 and 21 Summary

In Chapter Nineteen, Deanna is woken up from a now regular afternoon nap by a shot. She assumes it is Eddie shooting her coyotes. He returns, to her relief, with a male turkey. Deanna is excited about this feast, and, as Eddie notices, she seems to be a little anemic and in need of protein. As the turkey is cooking over the pit fire, Deanna and Eddie once again get into their debate about the importance of the life of a predator. That evening Deanna is dealing with insomnia, another new symptom she attributes to menopause, and decides to take a walk. She becomes upset when she sees the snake from the attic has killed all the baby phoebes she had been so careful to protect. She is frustrated, feeling emotional and crying yet again. She notices the moon rising behind her and thinks about the coyote pups growing when she is unable to create her own children and new growth.

In Chapter Twenty, Garnett is heading to the site of the oak tree to meet Nannie and Oda Black's son, Jarondell, who will be felling the tree. He finds her chatting away to Jarondell. She thinks that while Jarondell is here they should cut down other trees that are leaning. He and Nannie argue over who will receive the firewood. They take a walk, and Nannie tells Garnett how the church is facing a honey problem after killing the bees living in the walls of the church. She also gives him exciting news about American chestnuts surviving on her property. Nannie helps rid Garnett of dizziness from which he has suffered for years. This womanly touch affects Garnett, and he realizes how starved he is for human contact. At the end of the chapter, Nannie gives Garnett permission to use her chestnuts in his development of a blight-resistant species. He is guiltily reminded of the shingles in his garage that Nannie could use for her home.

In Chapter Twenty-One, Lusa cherishes sleep and her dreams of Cole and her strange dream involving a Luna moth. Chrys has been spending more time with her and was starting to open up. While Lowell is napping on the couch, Chrys and Lusa spend an afternoon hunting for bugs, enjoying nature, and getting to know one another.

Chapters 19, 20 and 21 Analysis

In Chapter Nineteen, Deanna is still worried about Eddie killing the coyotes, and she has every right to worry. Although she attempts again to convince him to leave the coyotes alone, he is adamant in his belief that he can protect sheep farmers' lambs by killing coyotes. She explains to him that the more coyotes are hunted, the larger the population grows and gives him the possible reasons for this growth, yet he still seems skeptical and not ready to change his view of these lamb killers. Yet again, another example of the delicacy of the ecosystem is discussed and how easily humans can disturb it.



Deanna also is having strange symptoms, such as insomnia, anemia, and strong emotions that she attributes to menopause. This is leading to a surprising revelation to come later in the book, which is the opposite of what she believes is happening.

In Chapter Twenty, Garnett and Nannie grow closer as friends and neighbors when they meet to watch the felling of the oak tree. As in many of the other chapters, an example is given reinforcing that people understand the delicacy of the ecosystem. It also connects these neighbors with the Wideners. The church is overflowing with honey, now that the bees have been exterminated, and Mary Edna had called Nannie for help.

For the first time in many years, Garnett has an eager audience for his chestnut research. Nannie listens to Garnett's progress and mentions her two American chestnuts. She had assumed he knew about them. This news excites Garnett as nothing has in a long time. Nannie also helps cure him of his dizziness using a trick she had used when her daughter suffered from the same illness. This communication and compassion shown between these long-time neighbors is beneficial for both of them. It represents what could take place between neighbors and acquaintances anywhere. Human interaction is important, as it is with any species. Humans are social creatures and can only benefit from having friends and family nearby.

In Chapter Twenty-One, Lusa has a recurring dream involving a Luna moth with which she has intercourse. It seems to be a stranger and says "I know you." This dream has not been explained, and the chapter then jumps to an afternoon with Chrys. Chrys is becoming more and more comfortable around Lusa, and they have a lot in common. They are both tomboys and have suffered from loss and isolation and are beginning to heal by spending time together learning, teaching, and enjoying each other's company.

Jewel seems to be getting worse, and it is only a matter of time before she passes away. Not much is discussed about her other than the comments Chrys makes about the poison the doctors give her and Lowell sleeping a lot. Fortunately for both of these children, they have Lusa who is the one adult with whom they feel comfortable and can be themselves.



Chapters 22, 23, and 24

Chapters 22, 23, and 24 Summary

In Chapter Twenty-Two, Deanna is trying to keep herself busy with work, but she cannot stay focused. Eddie is reading her thesis, which makes her as nervous as when her professors read it. She does not know what he will do or what she wants him to do when he is done reading the thesis. What does she want him to do? That was the big question. She is still very emotional for no reason and quickly exhausted. When she hears thunder, she heads back to the cabin in time to watch the snake from the attic slither out and disappear into the grass. At this, her questions stopped; it did not matter what answer she would come to. Creatures live, mate, and die, like the seasons pass. They would go their own ways when it was time.

In Chapter Twenty-Three, Garnett decides to tell Nannie about the shingles and heads out to find her. She asks about his dizzy spells, and, remembering her hands on his head, he is filled with an adrenaline rush that he had not felt in years. He also notices the cut-off pants she is wearing and how nice her legs look for her age. These two discuss old age, which Nannie finds to be unnatural. Garnett is upset by her theory on old age and leaves, but returns an hour and ten minutes later with an asphalt shingle in his hand. After he throws it at her feet and tells her there are two hundred more in his garage, she says that, although she had never believed in these before, it is a miracle.

In Chapter Twenty-Four, Jewel comes to pick up her children and finds Lusa in the garden with more vegetables and fruits than she can handle, but part of the garden had been planted by Cole, and she feels like every time she collects the produce, he is giving her a gift. Jewel becomes very ill and goes into the house to rest and take pain medication. She sits in Lusa's green reading chair and they discuss Jewel's feelings about her imminent death. Lusa asks if she could adopt Chrys and Lowell. At first Jewel seems upset by it, but her demeanor changes when Lusa says she does not want to adopt them out of obligation but because she loves them. Jewel has already had papers written up to give to her ex-husband so that she can have complete custody of her children. This is a wonderful way for Lusa to fit into the family.

Chapters 22, 23, and 24 Analysis

Chapter Twenty-Two shows Deanna still having these odd feelings, which will be revealed shortly. She is nervous, both about Eddie reading her thesis as well as about what she wants him to do when he is done. When she sees the snake slithering out of her cabin, she thinks about how creatures live, breed, and die. This brings her to the conclusion that she and Eddie would go their separate ways when it is time.

In Chapter Twenty-Three, Garnett decides to tell Nannie about the shingles in his garage but gets sidetracked by her thoughts on old age. He also is realizing he has



feelings for her and is embarrassed with the way his body is responding to seeing her. These two continue to bicker as usual, but it is a much friendlier and warmer banter. Not only are they friends, but Garnett has feelings for her he has not had since his wife passed away. These feelings foreshadow a deeper relationship to come between these two characters.

In Chapter Twenty-Four, Jewel and Lusa have a serious talk about Jewel's cancer and little time left. When Lusa proposes that she adopt Chrys and Lowell, Jewel seems a little upset, but soon it is realized that she had assumed Lusa felt obligated to make the request. She very well might have also felt jealousy that she would not be the one to raise her children for much longer. Her acceptance and relief that Lusa truly loves her children and will raise them well shows how much trust she has in Lusa. Their friendship has grown greatly in only a few short months. Who would have thought in May that this is where these two characters would be by the end of the summer?

Another connection is made between two of the characters. The chairs that both Lusa and Deanna cherish are from the same place, the Widener parlor. There are various hints at connections between the various characters woven into this story such as their feelings about nature and moths, familial connections, and the changes taking place in their lives over the course of this summer.



Chapters 25, 26, and 27

Chapters 25, 26, and 27 Summary

In Chapter Twenty-Five, the first cold, fall-like day, Deanna would remember for eternity; she is rejoining the world of the living but would never forget the touch of Eddie Bondo, not only for the feelings she had for him, but because she realizes she would soon be having his child. She does not know how she did not see the signs in her body, but she can partially blame it on never having a mother and only a brief discussion about the birds and bees with Nannie Rawley. Deanna writes a letter to Nannie Rawley asking if she and another could stay with her starting in September.

In Chapter Twenty-Six, Garnett is driving home from town and sees what looks like a dog cross the road in front of him, only it is no dog. He continues to drive and is flagged down by a green Forest Service jeep. He stops his vehicle, a little confused, and the ranger comes over to him. He asks about where to find Nannie Rawley and Garnett points to her mailbox. Garnett is very curious and watches Nannie's shocked reaction when given the letter. Garnett thinks about the lady with the goats and how strange it was to be in that house. Now there are two children, instead of just the one that Ellen had wished she had gone to see. When Garnett goes to look out the window again, he sees a strange man leaning against the fence by Nannie, which begins to raise Garnett's blood pressure. He is agitated, wondering why that man had nothing better to do than watch Nannie pick tomatoes in her short pants.

In Chapter Twenty-Seven, Lusa is still swamped by her work in the garden and is given a welcome break by Jewel. Shel had signed the custody papers, and Lusa is astonished to see that Shel is short for Garnett Sheldon Walker, IV, Garnett Walker's son. Although it may seem that Jewel would have been better off if she had never met Shel, she also would never have had her children. She tells Lusa to never assume one has all the time in the world, and she wants Lusa to tell Chrys and Lowell that she would never trade them for one hundred years of life. Early in the afternoon, Little Rickie comes over to help Lusa with giving the goats their worm vaccines. While they work, they spot a coyote, which Lusa would prefer to leave alone. More flirting takes place between Lusa and Rick. He admits to having a crush on her and asks her to sleep with him. Although she is tempted, she turns him down and explains that he is too young, a relative, and reminds her of Cole. He is not offended. They decide to go out dancing, as friends. The family now considers Lusa a saint for taking in Jewel's children. Their opinion of her has changed drastically since the beginning of the summer.

Chapters 25, 26, and 27 Analysis

Chapter Twenty-Five reveals what Deanna's body has been trying to tell her for weeks. When she looks over the cliff and realizes that when he first mentioned how beautiful it was, she agreed, thinking he was talking about the mountains and nature. Instead,



Eddie was looking at the sheep farms. This represents the vast differences in their viewpoints, and a long-term, committed relationship would never be possible. Deanna realizes this and has moved on by writing a letter to Nannie to see if she could stay. For awhile Deanna has been feeling restless and unsure about her life and purpose on the mountain. Now she is filled with renewed energy and a sense of purpose with birth of a child. She will now be like the animals she loves so much, bringing life into the world and leaving someone in her place.

Chapter Twenty-Six shows that the coyotes are now leaving the mountain and can be protected by Deanna no longer. Also, Garnett is now thoroughly attached to Nannie. He has become very protective of her, as well as jealous. This man that stands and watches Nannie will reveal how poor Garnett's eyesight really is.

Chapter Twenty-Seven reveals that Shel is Garnett's son, so yet another connection is made between the characters in this story. Although Jewel has had a rough life since meeting Shel, she would not change it for anything and gives Lusa the same advice. As in the rest of the story, nature has its course, and there is no room for regret, only the present and plans for the future.

Later in the chapter, Little Rickie comes to assist Lusa in giving the goats their vaccines. As before there is sexual tension between these two. Rickie admits to having feelings for Lusa and she clearly is attracted to him. Although part of this is because he reminds her of Cole, there is much of Rickie to which Lusa is attracted. She comments that if they were both two years older and had randomly met, she would want to date him, and this cheers him up. She also invites him out dancing, as friends. Although they are related, by marriage, and he is only seventeen, one would not be surprised if these two characters could not stop their attraction for one another in later years. Like Deanna and Eddie, the difference in age will not be forgotten but the attraction may outweigh the age factor. Like the wildlife in this story, what seems to be of importance is the attraction and desire and nothing else.



Chapters 28, 29, 30, and 31

Chapters 28, 29, 30, and 31 Summary

In Chapter Twenty-Eight, Garnett is obsessed with the strange man watching Nannie Rawley's tomatoes, whether she is there or not. He gets his rifle to scare off the vagrant, calls to the man, and realizes as he comes closer to the man that it is just a scarecrow. He feels lucky no one else is around. He sets his rifle down and Nannie finds him. She tells him that Deanna is coming, so now she will have a grandbaby. Garnett tells her, to her surprise, that his two grandchildren are coming over on Saturday for a visit. Nannie notices the shotgun, and Garnett admits to being angry with the man that was staring at her in her short pants. She lays her head on his chest and hugs him. It takes him a moment, but he hugs her back. He feels this is what he has needed.

In Chapter Twenty-Nine, Deanna is panicking in the middle of a terrible storm, alone in her cabin. She tries to comfort herself with the radio, with which she struggles; she realizes how much she will have to adjust to in her new life. Eddie has gone, and she has kept her pregnancy a secret; she has decided it is what is best. He had left with his mind unchanged, but he also left her and the coyotes. He leaves a note for her saying that he had met his match, her or the coyotes? She decides this does not matter. She feels trapped in this cabin and realizes that solitude is a mistake by humans; isolation does not truly exist. As the chapter and the storm end, Deanna hears the coyotes begin to howl.

In Chapter Thirty, Lusa has found the book she had been reading the night of Cole's death; she has no plans to speak of, but when people ask, she says she will finish what she has started. She now thinks of Cole as another childhood, along with her own. All of the Cole stories are a part of a larger collection of anecdotes about the history of his family and its life on their land. It is now her story as well. Her plan for her goats seems to be going well, but she knows she will have to be creative and inventive the rest of her life. Her new plan is to possibly be a grass farmer, and she knows she will be a woman that all the men will talk about. She has hired Little Rickie to be a part-time assistant farm manager, and she is excited to get out of the house and working in the yard. She gets to work on the honeysuckle taking over the garage. It is a foreign plant that does not belong there, as Cole had known. She also knows it will be back by next summer.

Chapter Thirty-One follows a female coyote along her night time travels through the mountain, as well as her thoughts of her home. She is uncomfortable in the valley, with the livestock, humans, and smells of chemicals. She feels most safe and at home on the mountain or in Nannie's chemical-free orchard. She smells the scent of a male she does not know, and her family realizes there is another family coming from the north. By next spring they all should know each other. If a man saw her, he would believe she was a solitary creature, but he would be wrong. Only humans have a concept of being alone. Every creature is tied to another by a fragile thread that connects all creatures, predator and prey, to each other.



Chapters 28, 29, 30, and 31 Analysis

In Chapter Twenty-Eight, Garnett's jealousy of the stranger turns into action, but the man turns out to be a scarecrow. He and Nannie both have grandchildren they are excited about seeing. Old age seems to have its advantages now, with knowledge that their families and life will continue after them. This seems to be an important point of this book, offspring for all creatures exist to replace the old, and this is one of the miracles of life.

Garnett admits his mistake regarding the scarecrow, and Nannie hugs him. In one summer their relationship has gone from hostile and almost non-existent to a close and possibly romantic relationship. This represents the need for love and companionship that is in all people throughout all decades of life.

In Chapter Twenty-Nine, Deanna is spending one of her last nights in the cabin in a severe storm. The cabin has become claustrophobic, and this storm seems to be a message from nature, sending her on her way. She realizes during this storm all that she will have to adjust to and remember about civilization. This storm serves as a reminder of all that she has forgotten about life outside of the woods.

Eddie has gone with only a note saying that he has met his match. It is not known if he means Deanna or the coyotes or both. Deanna knows that this is best for all of them. This makes the reader wonder what Eddie would think of this decision made by Deanna. Although he did not seem interested in reproducing, his mind might be changed by this news. Deanna hopes he gets off the mountain before the storm but never allows herself to think of him again. With the cleansing done by the storm, Deanna has attempted to cleanse herself of her solitude and Eddie. Like nature, she may require more cleansing.

In Chapter Thirty, Lusa is adjusting to life in the Widener family. Although she still misses Cole, he is becoming more of a string of stories that represent the history of the family, a family of which she is now a part. This chapter has a feeling of contentment and excitement for the future. Lusa has finally found her place in the world as an Appalachian farmer. She may now use her knowledge of insects and other wildlife, her love for nature, and her resourcefulness to survive as a farmer.

Chapter Thirty-One, unlike the other chapters, follows a coyote along her path in the moonlight. Her thoughts reflect the mindset of Nannie, Deanna, and Lusa. She is focused on her family and nature. The chapter ends by wrapping up the purpose of this novel; all creatures in nature are connected in a delicate ecosystem. Only humans have a concept in solitude, and they are wrong in believing they are alone. Every choice that creatures make, including humans, affects the lives of those surviving creatures.



Characters

Deanna Wolfe

Deanna has been living in the Zebulon National Forest in the Appalachian mountain range, working as a ranger on Zebulon Mountain. She spends her days keeping an eye on the forest, especially the predators. She searching for a coyote trail when she comes across Eddie Bondo, a hunter from Wyoming. She can guess why he is there, to hunt coyotes, so she keeps it secret that she has found a rare coyote den. He spends a night with her and she wonders why she is risking having a mate such as this. Eddie and Deanna's attraction is very strong, but their conflict in ideas about the relationship between man and nature, specifically predators, causes them to frequently argue and debate.

Deanna had been married to her college professor and worked, unhappily, as a teacher. He decides that she is not the type of woman he wants and divorces her. It took her many years to accept her true passion, the lives of coyotes. She finally goes back to college and writes her thesis on the lives of coyotes and creates her job as a forest ranger. Eddie later reads her thesis, but it is not known how he responds to it, other than he says he has met his match and leaves for good.

At the end of the book, Deanna realizes she is pregnant with Eddie's child but chooses to keep this secret from him; she has decided this is what is best for all of them. She is excited about being a part of nature and rebirth, rather than just an observer, as she has realized she has been during her two years in the forest. She plans to move in with Nannie Rawley to raise her child.

Lusa Maluf Landowski

Lusa is a newly-married woman who has been transplanted from Lexington, where she is a post-doctoral assistant with degrees in entomology. She is lonely and unhappy living in her husband Cole's family home, surrounded by his relatives and only her love of moths for comfort and a reminder of home. She and Cole had met while he was attending a pest control workshop at the University of Kentucky. They had not been quite sure then what had attracted them to one another and it is reflected in their many arguments early in their marriage. Lusa's life begins to change the day she smells honeysuckle that Cole picks for her and is forced to change when he dies tragically in an automobile accident.

Lusa spends the rest of her story dealing with her grief over her husband's death and learning how to become a member of a large family, the Wideners. She befriends her dying sister-in-law, Jewel, as well as her handsome nephew, Little Rickie, and Jewel's tomboy daughter Chrys. Through them she sees how the family views her, as well as the many false assumptions she had made about this large, outgoing family. Through



these relationships, the family also learns about Lusa and how she is not as different as they had first thought.

Her story ends with her choice to adopt Jewel's children, Chrys and Lowell, to the family's relief. She has hired Little Rickie to help her with the farm, and she is making plans for next year, now that her goats have been sold to her butcher relative in New York City for the religious holiday seasons. Although she does not have any definite plans, Lusa finally is seeing that she has a place in this community and this family.

Garnett Sheldon Walker III

Garnett has been a widow for the past eight years and is still mourning the loss of his wife. He has turned to God for comfort, as well as the familiar surroundings of his entire life. He, like Deanna and Lusa, has an interest in the creatures living around him. He has a strong interest in the American chestnut, which had been very important in his family's monetary success until the blight that killed most of these precious trees. He plans to spend the rest of his life crossing and backcrossing American chestnuts with Chinese chestnuts to create a species that is blight-resistant.

Besides his love of chestnuts is his annoyance with his neighbor, Nannie Rawley. She seems to be his complete opposite, with her strange farming methods and odd clothing and behavior. He considers her the bane of his existence until they finally are so angry and irritated with each other, that they tell each other how they feel. This is a major breakthrough in their relationship, and from then on they are more easily able to discuss their differences and learn about and from each other.

His story ends, like the other characters, very differently from how it begins. He is rejoining the Widener family for the first time since his son left his wife, Jewel, by spending time with his grandchildren. He and Nannie have also become good friends and have a mutual affection for one another.

Eddie Bondo

Eddie Bondo is a hunter from Wyoming who comes across Deanna in the woods. He hopes to follow her as she tracks predators, but she does not tell him she is tracking coyote, for which it is assumed he has come to hunt. He is attracted to her, and they spend an evening in her cabin. He has a carefree personality, and is a muscular man in his late twenties, according to Deanna.

He accepts Deanna for who she is and will not harm her coyotes, but he is unwilling to change his opinion that coyotes and other predators must be killed to protect livestock. He eventually permanently leaves Deanna with a note saying that he has met his match. What that means is never discovered.



Herb and Mary Edna Goins

Mary Edna is Cole's sister, and Herb is her husband. Mary Edna, first known as Menacing Eldest by Lusa, is a big-boned, loud-mouthed woman with a strong opinion and a taste for gossip. She, especially early on in the story, is feared by many in her family. Herb is a farmer who is mentioned in a few scenes in this book, but his wife's personality often overshadows him.

Deanna's Husband

Deanna's husband is a professor that Deanna had married. He divorces her because she is not like most women. At the end of their relationship, he hardly notices her, even her naked body.

Hannie-Mavis and Joel Sexton

Hannie-Mavis is Cole's sister, and Joel is her husband. She is known as Makeup Handy by Lusa and always dresses like she is going out and wears thick blue eye-liner. She and Lusa grow closer when she comes to check on Lusa and the children, after returning from taking Jewel for chemotherapy in Roanoke.

Lois and Big Rickie Bowling

Lois is Cole's sister and Big Rickie is Lois' husband. Lois, known by Lusa as Long-haired and Loud, is hard on Jewel's children. She cuts up Chrys' favorite corduroys and makes her wear dresses. Big Rickie flirts with Lusa at her Fourth of July party.

Nannie Rawley

Nannie Rawley does as she pleases, loves to visit with anyone, and is an organic farmer. She is a woman known by both Deanna and Garnett but in different ways. Garnett sees her as the annoying neighbor who refuses to use pesticides and will not allow him to use them. She also had a child out of wedlock and proudly raised the child. To Deanna, she is the kind woman who was her father's girlfriend and mother to her half-sister, Rachel. By the end of the story, Garnett appreciates and cares for Nannie, and Deanna plans to move in with her to raise her child.

Little Rickie Bowling

Little Rickie is Big Rickie and Lois' seventeen-year-old son. He has a crush on his Aunt Lusa, who feels slightly embarrassed and shocked to be attracted to him as well. He is a kind, young man, who often acts and speaks as if he is years older. He helps Lusa recover from her grief, care for her goats, and become part of the Widener family.



Jewel

Jewel is a shy, quiet woman and is Lusa's sister-in-law who she thinks of as an Empty Vessel. Lusa slowly realizes Jewel is a compassionate woman as the story progresses. Jewel is dying from cancer and allows Lusa to adopt her two children when she dies.

Lowell and Chrystal (Chrys) Walker

Lowell and Chrys are Jewel's young children who have dealt with many hardships in their few years of life. Their father has left them and their mother is dying from cancer. They will be adopted by their Aunt Lusa, who is the one family member who seems to understand that their behavior is due to the pain from which they suffer and just need to be loved and feel accepted.

Emaline and Frank

Emaline is one of the Widener sisters and Lusa's sister-in-law. She is known to Lusa as Emotional. Frank is Emaline's husband.

Little Brothers

Little Brothers own the hardware shop in town.

Jarondell Black

Jarondell Black is Oda's son who cuts down the leaning trees in Nannie and Garnett's yards.

Garnett Sheldon Walker IV

Known as Shel, Garnett Sheldon Walker IV is Garnett's son who became addicted to alcohol and drugs, married Jewel, had two children, and left them. He signs off and gives his ex-wife full custody of his children. He does not know of her illness or that Lusa will be adopting them.

Sam Hill

Sam Hill is a hunter who is caught by Deanna. He and Deanna had attended high school together, and Deanna feels sorry for this overweight man who used to be a star basketball player.



Oda Black

Oda Black is the town gossip.

Zayda Landowski

Zayda is Lusa's grandfather and a clarinet-player who left his wife for a coat-check girl. Lusa hears his music when the rain hits the roof of her home.

The Landowskis

The Landowskis are Lusa's parents who had her late in life and never seemed to know what to do with her. Her mother has suffered a stroke and her father is still bitter about his family being forced to leave their farm in Poland and his father leaving his family and starting a new family with an American woman.

Rachel Carson Rawley

Rachel is Nannie Rawley and Ray Dean Wolfe's daughter who has Down's syndrome and dies from a hole in her heart at fifteen.

Ray Dean Wolfe

Ray is Deanna's father who has passed away. He had been Nannie's boyfriend and the father of Nannie's daughter, Rachel.

Jerry

Jerry is the Forest Service employee who drives his green jeep to deliver supplies to Deanna and collect her requisition list every month. He also delivers her letter to Nannie Rawley.



Objects/Places

Appalachian Mountains

This is the mountain range in which Zebulon Mountain and Valley as well as the town of Egg Fork exist.

Zebulon Mountain and Valley

This mountain and valley are the setting for the stories that take place in this book.

Zebulon National Forest

This is Deanna's employer as well as her home.

Egg Creek, Bitter, Goose, Walker, and Black

These creeks come together at the town of Egg Fork.

Egg Fork

Egg Fork is the small town located in Zebulon Valley at the base of Zebulon Mountain and the setting for much of the story.

Wyoming

This is the home state of Eddie Bondo.

Lexington

This is the hometown of Lusa.

The Widener Farm

This is the ancestral home of the Widener family where Lusa lives, now alone, after her husband's tragic death. She feels the ghosts of relatives trying to rid her of their property and the pressure of those relatives that are alive for her to return from where she has come.



Pinkie's Diner

This is where Garnett goes on Friday's for their all-you-can-eat fish special.

Little Brothers' Hardware

This is the hardware store found in Egg Fork.

Kroger

This is the large grocery store where many shop and where Jewel works.

Black's Store

This is the Black family's general store, although many people have now started shopping at Kroger's.

Themes

Respect For and Understanding of Nature

A theme that seems to be developing in this book is a respect for and understanding of nature. The three main characters in this story spend much of their time studying and thinking about the nature that surrounds them. The author begins the book by giving detailed descriptions of the various flora and fauna that surround the characters during the rebirth and renewal taking place in an Appalachian mountain spring season. She then continues with the same amount of detail and analysis of the natural world throughout the rest of the seasonal cycle.

The characters make different choices regarding the nature that surrounds them in Zebulon Valley or on Zebulon Mountain, but they all show a great amount of respect and understanding for the world around them. Their lives revolve around the crops, wildlife, and weather of this small space of Appalachia. Some are focused on protecting their homes, families, and livelihoods, while others live to protect and understand the natural world, but all realize the importance of the land they live on and the creatures that inhabit this land.

At a time when global warming and extinction are true threats to our planet, this theme shows how truly amazing and complex nature is, as well as how easily it can be tragically altered. This small piece of land in the American south reveals only a small portion of the amount of species that exist on this planet, as well as how little effort it takes from mankind to destroy it. This theme is something that all people must keep in mind as they go about their days on Earth. How can mankind undo what has been done? What must everyone know about the land they inhabit? How can we as a species protect what surrounds us and includes us?

Solitude and Loneliness

A theme that seems to be developing in this book is a feeling of solitude as well as loneliness. The first two main characters who are introduced are two women who feel and have always felt unusual and odd. Others do not understand them and they have both purposely removed themselves from society because they have felt pressure to conform. Garnett, like the women, also seems lonely, with the loss of his wife.

Solitude and loneliness are experienced by everyone at some point in his or her life. These characters represent the ways people can respond to this solitude. Deanna, after being divorced by her husband, has chosen a life of solitude when becoming a forest ranger. She feels at home with the wildlife of Zebulon Mountain and is happy after two years on this mountain. When Eddie Bondo comes into her life, she realizes how much she had missed interacting with other people. Her time with him is both precious and irritating. She is torn between her feelings for him and her companionship with nature.



Lusa marries Cole and moves from her home and friends in Lexington to become a farmer's wife, which she had always thought she would love. What she does not enjoy is the constant criticism she feels she gets from Cole's family. She feels they see her as an outsider and one who is somewhere she does not belong. It is not until after Cole's tragic death that she begins to see the role she had played in her own loneliness, as well as how she had misunderstood her husband's family. She had always seen herself as different, both in her interests and her culture, and although her new family may not have been welcoming like she thought they should have been, Lusa does make assumptions about their feelings for her based on how she views herself.

Garnett lost his wife eight years ago and is still mourning her loss in many ways. He has turned to God for comfort, but in turn makes assumptions about his neighbors based on his strong religious beliefs. These assumptions and his religious hardheadedness keep him from a friendship and companionship with his next door neighbor. Although he does not seem outwardly to need human contact, he does grieve for it but assumes this sadness is expected in old age.

These characters reflect how humans often pull away from others but at the same time desire human companionship. It also shows how humans often make assumptions about others based on their own biased opinions about themselves and the world around them.

Man vs. Nature

The characters in this story are surrounded by nature in the mountains and valleys of Appalachia. How they will either help to restore and protect nature and its balance, or protect their farms, crops, and livestock is constantly on their minds. It represents a disagreement between humans about our role on this earth. Are we here to protect nature in the way it exists, aid in restoring it to the way it had been, or use it for our own purposes and desires?

Deanna has spent the last two years observing the Zebulon National Forest as a ranger. She feels that her job is to allow the wildlife to live uninhibited by humans and their destructive ways, yet she is also willing to help in ways that she feels would be effective in preserving as many species as possible. Deanna runs into conflict with Eddie Bondo, to whom she is both attracted and angered. Being a hunter and sheep farmer, he only understands protecting his own. If that means killing all the coyotes in existence, then he is willing to do it. He listens to what Deanna has to say about protecting all creatures by focusing on the predators, but he cannot accept her beliefs. He seems to be of the belief that man is in charge of the rest of nature and may do with it as he pleases.

Similarly, Garnett spends his time protecting his precious chestnuts and other various vegetation from pests by using an array of chemicals. Like Eddie, he cannot understand his neighbor's point of view, that man must work with nature so both may survive. Nanny Rawlings's compost heaps and other natural tactics at protecting her organic produce

seems to be the focus of Garnett's days. He believes God gave nature to man to use as he wishes. If a creature goes extinct so man may do what he wants, then so be it.

Lusa, as an entomologist, has an interest and respect in the small and almost invisible creatures. She does not seem as interested in farming but does care about trying to live in harmony with nature. As a farmer, she, unlike many in the county, would rather grow and sell something that is truly useful to mankind, unlike the tobacco that is grown by many in the area. Her choice in raising goats for religious feasts reflects her desire to provide people with something that is good for them, both physically and spiritually.

These various characters play out the conflicts regarding man versus nature in this small backwoods country in Appalachia. It can be assumed how the author feels about this conflict, but she is good about giving many viewpoints, allowing the reader to decide for him herself what should be done in regard to the relationship between man and nature.

Style

Point of View

The point of view switches from first person to third person. The person speaking and thinking changes, based on whose story is being told. For all of the chapters titled "Predators," the third person narrator focuses on what Deanna is thinking and feeling. The narrator does not know how the minor characters feel or what they think, so the reader has only the characters' dialogue to tell the reader how the characters feel or what they think. There is dialogue between Deanna and other characters, but the focus of each of these chapters is on her and her thoughts and feelings.

Like Deanna's chapters, the chapters titled "Moth Love" and "Old Chestnuts" use a narrator and dialogue between the various characters to tell the story. The focus for "Moth Love" is Lusa's story, and "Old Chestnuts" focuses on Garnett. The narrator describes other characters, but, like "Predators," he or she cannot see into the minds of the minor characters.

The last chapter narrates the path of a female coyote at night and is from her perspective. There is no dialogue in this last chapter.

The transitions from first person to third person are very smooth and understandable. Either the narrator is describing the character and his or her thoughts and feelings, or the various characters are speaking to one another. It is somewhat frustrating to not know what the minor characters are thinking, but this leaves some aspects of these stories to be filled in and assumed by the reader.

Setting

The setting of the "Predators" chapters takes place on Zebulon Mountain in the Zebulon National Forest. The characters are either wandering the woods and meadows observing the wildlife and one another, or they are in or near Deanna's cabin. The author is very specific and gives a great deal of scientific explanations for the flora and fauna of this forest. She is very knowledgeable on what the various creatures look like, as well as how they behave and grow in their natural setting. The cabin in which Deanna lives reflects her life as a solitary ranger with little need for human comforts. The cabin consists of a few pieces of simple furniture, cabinets filled with food and other supplies, and a radio that Deanna rarely uses. The room is lit by a gas lamp and candles; Deanna has no need of electricity.

The setting of the "Moth Love" chapters is the Widener family farm which is home to Lusa. The home has been in the family for over a century and is a constant reminder to Lusa of her husband's family. All of the decorations and supplies are as they were when the mother and father had been alive. The Widener children know the home better than



the home's owner, Lusa. Besides the house, various scenes take place in the pastures, barn, garage, and forest behind the farm.

The setting for "Old Chestnuts" is mostly Garnett's home, his property, and the property of Nannie Rawley, his neighbor. Many aspects of his home are reminders of his deceased wife, and his property reflects his desire to have control over nature. Nannie's property is very different, with her compost, organic apple orchards, and bee hives. Other scenes do take place on Highway Six and in the town of Egg Fork, as Garnett travels to town for supplies and a fish dinner special at Pinkie's Diner.

The last chapter's setting is the entire landscape in which the coyote lives. She travels through the night and sees the various valley farms, focusing on Nannie's chemical-free property, as well as her beloved mountain.

The setting as a whole exists in Zebulon County in Appalachia, near Knoxville.

Language and Meaning

The author extensively uses the language and dialect of those who live in this part of the Appalachian mountains. To assist the reader in recognizing this specific dialect, she puts words in italics and mentions how the character's phrasing would compare to "regular" English. She also uses language to enhance the differences between Eddie Bondo, from Wyoming, and Lusa Landowski, from Lexington. The author points out how different their accents are compared to the locals of Zebulon County. She also uses subtle differences in the various local characters to show the differences in accents and dialects found within this specific region. For example, Chrys is the most difficult to understand, most likely because she has not spent a great deal of time speaking with adults and learning grammar rules. These various accents and slang used by the author enhances the story and adds another level of authenticity to the novel.

Structure

The story is organized into thirty-one chapters, all about the same length. The first thirty chapters are titled either "Predators," "Moth Love," or "Old Chestnuts." The chapters alternate from one title to the other, usually in this same sequence. The "Predators" chapters are about Deanna and her time on Zebulon Mountain, "Moth Love" tells the story of Lusa and the Widener family, and "Old Chestnuts" is about Garnett, his chestnut trees, and his relationship with Nannie Rawley.

Initially each chapter is exclusively about a specific main character and his or her experiences, but as the chapters progress, connections and similarities can be found between the various characters' stories. This structure supports the idea that, although humans may think there is such a thing as solitude, all creatures are actually connected and form an ecosystem. The separation of characters' stories at the beginning and the slow realization of connections from one story and character to another reflects the realization that each character is not as alone as he or she first thinks.

The final chapter is different from all the other chapters. It is from the perspective of the coyote. This coyote travels through the valley and back up the mountain. It hints at the growth of her family and the new families that are arriving.

This structure is very organized, and each characters' part of the story is easily understood. What is brilliant about the way the author has structured her book is the small connections and details that are threaded through each story.



Quotes

"Her [Lusa] decision and all the rest of her days would turn not on the moment when she understood that Cole was dead, but on an earlier time at the same window when she'd received his wordless message by scent across the field." Chap. 2, Moth Love, p. 48

"She [Deanna] needed to listen to this: prodigal summer, the season of extravagant procreation. It could wear out everything in its path with its passionate excesses, but nothing alive with wings or a hear or a seed curled into itself in the ground could resist welcoming it back when it came." Chap. 4, Predators, p. 51

"If the thought caused him [Garnett] sadness - that he would never again know the comfort of human touch - he sensed it was merely a tributary to the lake of grief through which an old man must swim at the end of his days." Chap. 9, Old Chestnuts, p. 135

"I'm [Lusa] like a moth, Rickie, flying in spirals." Chap. 10, Moth Love, p. 163

"She [Deanna] kept herself still and tried to think of coyote children emerging from the forest's womb with their eyes wide open, while the finite possibilities of her own children closed their eyes, finally, on this world." Chap. 19, Predators, p. 330

"It's like rolling two dice together: you can get a lot more numbers than just the six you started with. And that's called sex." Chap. 25, Predators, p. 389

"I [Lusa] was mad at him [Cole] for dying and leaving me here...But now I'm starting to think he wasn't supposed to be my whole life, he was just the doorway to me. I'm so grateful to him for that." Chap. 27, Moth Love, p. 412

"What a trip. From devil-worshiper to saint in one short summer." Chap. 27, Moth Love, p. 419

"She [Nannie] laid the side of her face against his frail old heart, where the pink shell of her ear could capture whatever song it had left." Chap. 28, Old Chestnuts, p. 427

"He'd [Eddie] left his mind unchanged. If anything hurt Deanna, it was that she'd made no dent, had never altered his heart to make room in it for a coyote." Chap. 29, Predators, p. 432

"It's hard for a man to admit he has met his match. E.B." Chap. 29, Predators, p. 432

"She [Lusa] saw it [the honeysuckle] now for what it was, an introduced garden vine coiling itself tightly around all the green places where humans and wilder creatures conceded to share their lives." Chap. 30, Moth Love, p. 440

"Solitude is a human presumption." Chap. 31, p. 444

"Every choice is a world made new for the chosen." Chap. 31, p. 444



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Deanna's role as a forest ranger. How has she received this job? What does she enjoy about this job? How does this job reflect her interests and personality? How has her time as a ranger affected the wildlife around her?

Discuss the relationship between Deanna and Eddie Bondo. How do they meet? What attracts them to one another? What makes their relationship difficult? Why do Deanna have such differing opinions about the relationship between man and nature? Why does the relationship end?

Discuss Lusa's move to the Widener home. Why does she move here? What surprises her about this move? How does she feel in this new community, family, and home? Why does she feel this way? How does she change as her story progresses? Why does she change?

Discuss the relationship between Lusa and the Widener family. How do they initially feel about one another? Why? How does this relationship change? Why does it change? How does this change in the relationship change Lusa from an isolated person to one surrounded by other creatures?

Discuss Garnett's widower lifestyle. How does he still grieve for his wife? How has this isolation affected him? How has he dealt with the loss of his wife? How does this affect his relationships with others?

Discuss the relationship between Garnett and Nannie. How is their relationship at the beginning of this story? Why is it this way? How does it change? Why does it change? How does this affect Nannie and Garnett's quality of life?

Discuss the last chapter of the book. How does it differ from the rest of the novel? Why has the author ended the book this way? Is this an adequate ending? Why or why not?