

The Red Notebook Study Guide

The Red Notebook by Antoine Laurain

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Plot Summary

The Red Notebook by Antoine Laurain and Jane Aitken, begins with a young woman who is mugged on the way home from work. Her assailant knocks her in the head with a heavy object, she falls to the ground, and he runs away with her purse. People help her up, but she tells them that she is fine. She doesn't notice that she has sustained an injury to the back of her head. She tells everyone that she feels fine, but doesn't feel like going home. Instead, she goes into a nearby hotel and tells the kindly night clerk that she's been mugged and just needs a place for the night, that in the morning she will go to the police and file a report, then will be able to pay for the room. The man agrees and gives her the key to the room. She goes upstairs and promptly goes to bed.

In the morning the women working at the front desk reads the note from the night clerk telling them about the mysterious woman he's allowed to come in. They wait a good while, then decide that they better go and check on her. When they do, they find her lying unconscious in a pool of blood. She is taken to the hospital where it is determined that she is in a coma.

Meanwhile, a man named Laurent, a bookstore owner, goes out for a walk. He is not particularly happy with his life, and is wondering if he should break up with his domineering girlfriend, Dominique. He spies a woman's handbag thrown onto some garbage cans. He recalls how his wife, Claire, before their divorce, used to never part with her bags and he begins to suspect that this bag has been stolen. He investigates and discovers that it has been stolen. There's no wallet, but there are plenty of other things in it. He rescues it from the trash and takes it home.

At home he pulls out the contents and among them are a necklace with hieroglyphics on it, and a red notebook. There are also assorted odds and ends, like a lipstick, perfume bottle, a book signed by an obscure author, and some hair pins. He opens the red notebook and realizes that it is a woman's diary. He can't resist and starts reading it. As he reads it, he begins to know this woman, and finds that she is a kind, creative, witty, passionate woman, and is someone that he would really like to get to know.

Meanwhile, back at the hospital, in her coma, Laure is dreaming. She dreams that she is a child again playing in a beautiful garden. Then, her memories intrude upon her, and her former husband, Xavier, appears in the garden. Then, she is jerked out of the idyllic dream to the reality of his death. The government calling to say that he was killed while taking photos of the Iraq War. She refuses to stay in this memory any longer, indicating how painful it is, and instead, finds herself back in the garden, holding Xavier's hand.

Laurent has finished reading Laure's diary. Reading it makes him realize how Dominique pales in comparison to this woman that he's never met. Ironically, Dominique shows up at his doorstep and he hurriedly shoves all of Laure's stuff into her bag and hides it. When Dominique comes in she immediately bristles as she can smell another woman's perfume. He tells her that there is no other woman, and that no other woman has been there. She doesn't believe him. Later, they go to a party, and while there he



watches Dominique, but instead wonders how Laure would be at a party. He realizes that he is being unfair to Dominique and breaks up with her.

The next day Laurent's friend Pascal, tells him that he's a fool, since Laure is a figment, and Dominique is a sure thing. It is clear that Pascal is a player and wants Laurent to be the same way. They part ways and Laurent is even more determined to find Laure. He tries to turn the bag in at the police department but they tell him that the paperwork is lengthy, so he leaves. Next, he tracks down the author of the book that was signed (in Laure's bag). The author says that he doesn't remember her name, but he does remember what she looked like. As luck would have it, he has another author do a book signing at his store, who reads hieroglyphics and he is able to translate the necklace that is in Laure's bag. It is her full name. Laurent is ecstatic because now he knows her full name and he can try to find her.

To his dismay, he finds her. She's in a coma at one of the hospitals. When he arrives there is another man there named William. He is a colleague of Laure's and has been watching her cat. The doctor introduces him as Laure's brother, but Laurent (and the doctor) know that this isn't true. William assumes that Laurent is Laure's boyfriend, and he doesn't contradict him. Laurent feels slightly bad about lying about his relationship with Laure, but when William asks him if he will stay at Laure's house and watch her cat, he jumps at it.

Meanwhile, Laure is still enjoying her dream world, but more and more of the real world begins to drift in. She hears some nurses discussing a television show, and is aware that she is in a hospital. Still, she isn't ready to wake up.

Laurent stays at Laure's house for several days. He looks through her personal items such as photo albums, books, and collections. It helps him get to know her more fully. He begins to feel very guilty about what he's doing. Later that day he meets with his daughter Chloe. She asks him to pretend to be her boyfriend when her friends show up. This upsets him but he plays along, comforting himself with the fact that at least the other boys won't come near her if they think she has an older boyfriend. He tells Chloe about what he's been doing and his involvement with the red notebook. She finds it terribly romantic, but Laurent says that he feels horribly guilty about it all.

Laure wakes up from her coma. William is there, but Laurent is not. Earlier that day he dropped off the keys to Laure's house at William's office. When Laure goes home, she finds a note from Laurent apologizing for what he did. She is not upset by it, but very moved that he would have been so kind as to go through all of that trouble just to meet her. She begins her own search to find him.

Meanwhile, Laurent is morose. Chloe knows why this is and manages to convince her mother and stepfather that one of their picture frames needed to be touched up. She does this because she has learned from Laurent that Laure was a framer in the town. She goes to several framing stores until she finds the one where Laure works, and there tells Laure where she can find Laurent at work.



Immediately Laure goes to the bookstore. She approaches the counter and asks him about a book that features a woman whose handbag has been taken and a man who runs all over town trying to find her. Laurent realizes that it is Laure and rushes into her arms. They live happily ever after.



The taxi had dropped her on the corner of the boulevard

Summary

The book opens with one of the main characters, Laure, getting ready to return home. Before she gets the chance, she's mugged by an unknown man. Laure is terrified, and discovers that she had her whole life in that bag. She can't return home, so she decides to go to a hotel instead. She's able to convince the desk attendant that she was mugged and will be able to pay for her room once she's had the chance to get everything in order. He allows her to stay.

Analysis

Laure getting mugged is what sets up the main plot of the book. When she's mugged, she loses her prized handbag, and more importantly all of the items that are inside, including a red notebook. Laure is very sentimental and holds onto the items from her past, which becomes one of the themes of the book, which is Don't Forget the Past. This theme is explored largely through Laure's character, and comes up again in the chapters that focus on her life. Laurent, whom the reader will meet in the following chapters, eventually discovers the handbag, which eventually leads to them meeting and falling in love. Thus, the handbag is also symbolic in nature. It holds the key to Laure's past, as well as her future.

Losing the handbag isn't the only plot point that is established in the beginning of the book. During the struggle, Laure is hit on the head. She thinks it's just a minor injury, which is supported by the fact she's able to walk around and get to a hotel. However, in a few chapters it is revealed that the injury was quite severe. This explains why Laurent isn't able to simply get in touch with her once he discovers her identity.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the symbolism of Laure's handbag.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of not forgetting one's past.



Discussion Question 3

What indicates that the hotel manager is kind, and thus demonstrates the theme of Kindness?

Vocabulary

abase, superintend, lea, browbeat, malady, memento, recuperate, transience, overreach, bias, digression



Standing in front of the bathroom mirror

Summary

The chapter opens with a man, Laurent, trying to get ready in his apartment. Laurent owns a bookstore right near his flat. While the job itself is convenient, he feels like he is trapped since his work and home life are so close. On his way to work, Laurent discovers a handbag on top of a trashcan. The handbag makes him think of his wife Claire, who always used to hold onto her handbags. He decides that it must belong to someone and wasn't meant to be thrown away, especially when he sees how filled up it still is. He tries to bring it to the police, but they tell him it will be a long wait to file it away. He decides to return later, since he needs to get to work.

Analysis

The other main character, Laurent is introduced. The majority of the book follows Laurent, since Laure ends up in a coma during most of the story. Several facts are established very early on about Laurent. Readers are given insight into his social life, which he feels is lacking. He dislikes how close his work and home is because he feels like it affects his personal life. This is a very telling detail, since the reader is soon introduced to his girlfriend, Dominique.

This early foreshadowing hints that Laurent unhappy with Dominique. Laurent's unhappiness with his life is part of what motivates him to find Laure. It's also established that Laurent used to have a wife. This is explored in more detail in the later chapters. Laurent discovers the lost handbag, which sets him off on his quest to discover who Laure is. It's this search that makes him develop feelings for her.

The theme of Kindness is exemplified in this chapter as Laurent takes the time to go to the police station with a complete stranger's handbag. This also indicates who he is as a character, and lays the foundation for later actions that he will take that are within keeping with this first example.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Kindness in this chapter.

Discussion Question 2

Talk about Laurent's character.



Discussion Question 3

Why do you think that Laure and Laurent's names are so significantly similar? What is the author trying to suggest about them?

Vocabulary

disdain, amicable, canny, capitulate, foster, frugal, intrepid, pretentious, sagacity, wary, spurious



At twelve-thirty

Summary

Two of the receptionists at the hotel become worried when they read a note saying that a strange woman had been let in the night before. It is now the afternoon, and the woman hasn't shown any signs of leaving her room. One of the receptionists goes to check on her. They find her in the bed, with blood on her pillow, unresponsive. They call an ambulance, and as the EMTs are taking her out, the receptionists hear them talking about her being in a coma.

Analysis

This short chapter sets up Laure as being in a coma. Being in a coma takes Laure out of the story for the majority of the book, but it also sets up the circumstance as to why Laurent isn't able to just get in contact with her much earlier. Being in the coma gives the reader a chance to learn more about Laure as well, since they get to see glimpses inside of her mind when she is dreaming. This ends up being important, since so much of Laure's personality is explored outside of her conscious and present character.

Again, the prevalent theme of Kindness is presented in this chapter. It is a continuation of the kindness that the night desk clerk at the hotel showed to Laure when she came in, and continues in the fact that the day desk help offered when they went to check on her. The author would seem to be suggesting that ordinary acts of kindness cost people, as a general rule, nothing, but - especially in Laure's case - it can mean the world. To Laure, it most likely saved her life.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Laure's situation.

Discussion Question 2

How could things have turned out very differently if the hotel staff hadn't been as kind?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Kindness.

Vocabulary

subtle, restrained, querulous, rancorous, inevitable, fortuitous, empathy, conundrum, brusque



In the boiling-hot shower

Summary

Laurent feels guilty, but he starts to go through the bag that he found. Inside is a red notebook, which he starts to read. It speaks about some of the details of Laure's life, the dreams she had and some of the things that she disliked. He keeps reading and going through the bag. He is surprised to find a book signed by an elusive author, whom he knows rarely signs books. After finding the autograph, Laurent finally knows part of Laure's identity, although he still doesn't know her last name or where she lives.

He keeps going through the bag, but he's interrupted by a text message from his girlfriend, Dominique, whom he had agreed to meet with earlier in the evening. Dominique remarks that there has been a woman in the room, having smelt the perfume from Laure's bag. Laurent assures her that wasn't the case, which was technically true. The two of them head off to bed, but Laurent finds himself thinking about Laure and her bag.

Analysis

Laurent expressed earlier that he was unhappy with his social life. This shines through at the end of the chapter, when he finds himself thinking about Laure and not Dominique. Laurent isn't even comfortable telling Dominique about the handbag that he found, another sign that things aren't well with his relationship. Being with Dominique does show that Laurent is at least interested in a relationship, which is something that drives and motivates him during the rest of the book.

This brings up another theme, that of Lying. While Laurent isn't technically lying about another woman being in the room, he is not telling Dominique the truth about finding the handbag. This indicates that he probably keeps other things from her as well. This Lying is forcing a distance between them, though he is not aware of it at the time.

Laurent gets his first glimpse into the kind of person that Laure is. This gives the reader a chance to learn a little more about Laure as well. The importance of many of the items that Laurent goes through is explained much later on when Laure comes out of her coma. Each item has an important significance and represents something from her past. In particular, in this chapter, is her red notebook, which is an almost diary. Of note is the symbolism of Laure's perfume. She is not physically in the apartment, and yet, her presence is there, through her notebook, and in the attention that she has commanded from Laurent. The smell of her perfume is a hint that she has entered his life.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Lying.



Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of Larue's perfume.

Discussion Question 3

Who is Dominique and why is she important to the story?

Vocabulary

arid, exemplary, florid, perfidious, ostentatious, intrepid, inconsequential, opulent, parched, superficial



Laurent turned over in bed and realized he was alone

Summary

Laurent wakes up in the morning, surprised to find that Dominique isn't there. He catches her as she's leaving. She's upset, since she found a hairpin belonging to Laure. Laurent tries to explain, but she doesn't believe his story and she angrily leaves. Laurent tries to call her, but she doesn't respond. He goes to work and checks his email, setting up a meeting with his young daughter, Chloe. Afterwards, he meets with his best friend, Pascal. They talk about the bag, and Pascal chastises him for being so interested in it. He tells Laurent he should focus on Dominique, since she's actually in his life and not just some mystery woman.

Analysis

The theme of Lying is focused on, again, during this chapter. Laurent tries to justify his lies to Dominique, arguing that he was technically telling the truth, just not providing all the details. This ultimately hurts both him and Dominique, and despite what he says to himself, he was lying.

Pascal is introduced, although this is the only chapter that he appears. Pascal might only have a brief appearance, but he's set up as a foil to Laurent. Laurent himself even points out that the two used to be best friends, but now they share very little as adults. Pascal is divorced, just like Laurent. Laurent is serious about finding a relationship, but Pascal doesn't care to go that way any longer. He focuses solely on finding new women to sleep with, something which Laurent doesn't approve of. It's implied that Pascal is doing this because he wants to avoid the pain of his past relationship.

Laurent is hurt by what happened in the past, but he doesn't try to bury that pain. Instead, he uses it as motivation. He wants to get into another serious relationship, and not just be like Pascal, who runs from person to person and ultimately never has a real connection. This briefly touches upon the theme of Not Forgetting the Past. Clearly, both are remembering their past, but each are reacting to it differently.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Lying.

Discussion Question 2

Compare Pascal to Laurent.



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Not Forgetting the Past.

Vocabulary

apprehension, discreet, sordid, discord, belittle, disheartened, antiquated, demean, hamper, animosity



A garden. Very much like the one of her childhood home

Summary

Laure is dreaming. She thinks that she's still a child, playing in a garden. In her dream, she thinks that as this child she has just had a nightmare about being 30 years old. She thinks about how in this "dream" she married someone named Xavier, a photojournalist. Unfortunately, this is really what has happened to her. The dream unfolds, showing that one day, Laure had gotten a call from the foreign ministry, telling her that Xavier had passed away while taking photos during the Iraq war. She becomes troubled, but outwardly she seems to be resting peacefully.

Meanwhile, out on the hospital ward floor, Laure can hear nurses discussing a television show, but she shuts the noises out and retreats back into her mind, where Xavier has joined her in the garden. In this portion of the dream, he isn't dead or gone and they are still happily married.

Analysis

This chapter is another insight into Laure's character. Laure dreams that she's a child, because she's tired of how hard it is to be an adult. It was hinted at earlier that Laure was having trouble, based on the few notes that Laurent had read in the little red notebook. This is explained in more detail during the dream. Laure remembers her husband, Xavier, who was killed while pursuing his dream of being a photojournalist. Two themes are introduced through Laure's dream: The Difficulty of Growing Up, and Following One's Dreams.

At the end of the chapter, it's implied that Laure is close to coming out of her coma. She can hear the sounds going on around her. Instead of trying to reach out for those sounds, Laure retreats more into her mind. This is another example of her being unhappy with her life as an adult. She feels safer as a child, and would rather stay in the fantasy garden she created, or live in a world where Xavier is still alive and taking pictures.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Following One's Dreams.

Discussion Question 2

Why doesn't Laure want to wake up?



Discussion Question 3

What indicates that Laure may be getting ready to wake from her coma?

Vocabulary

incessant, cogent, serene, deferential, shroud, resplendent, duplicity, rancor, decimate, culpable



At this time of year there weren't many people sitting outside the café

Summary

Laurent meets his daughter, Chloe, outside of a café. Two of her schoolmates come with her. Chloe gets her father to lie, saying that he is a boyfriend and not her father. He is upset with the lie, but he takes some measure of satisfaction that at least boys wouldn't be going after her if they thought she had an older boyfriend. They return to his house and he shows her the handbag. She can tell that her father is into Laure, and encourages him to try and speak with the author, Modiano, that had signed Laure's book. He thinks that's too extreme, but he does want to pursue a drycleaner's note that he has found. Chloe can sense that her father is interested in Laure, but he tries to dismiss her claims. Despite that, he later emails a colleague, asking about getting in contact with Modiano.

Analysis

The theme of Lying is brought up once again with Chloe's introduction. Chloe lies about who her father actually is. This upsets and hurts Laurent, although Chloe doesn't seem to care. This is very fitting for Chloe's character. She's shown to be very selfish and immature, and later on admits that she just cares about being right. Chloe finds out that Laurent is interested in Laure in this chapter, and she pushes him to pursue her. Laurent is still on the fence, but he ultimately ends up following Chloe's advice later in the chapter. Chloe's support of this relationship comes up later, and she ends up being a very important part of Laurent and Laure eventually getting together.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Lying.

Discussion Question 2

How is Chloe instrumental in her father finding Laure?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Laure intrigue Laurent so much?

Vocabulary

effusive, spendthrift, livid, meticulous, articulate, convoluted, palid, distraught, dubious, apathetic



“I’m not sure I can help you.”

Summary

Laurent set up a meeting with Modiano. He was hesitant to talk to the writer at first, but eventually he just asks him about Laure. Modiano claims he doesn't know much, but he is able to give Laurent a very thorough description. He doesn't know where she lives, much to Laurent's dismay. Laurent spends the following day going to all the drycleaners in the area. He finds the one that Laure went to, but the clerk doesn't know anything about her, either.

Analysis

This chapter exists just to push Laurent's search forward. Laurent runs into Modiano, which shows just how dedicated he actually is to finding Laure. Earlier, he had remarked that Modiano was an elusive writer, and it was very hard to actually get in touch with him. This is why he didn't want to take Chloe's advice. This is an example of the theme of Following Dreams, and how that can be difficult. Modiano helping out Laurent is a very minor example of why it's good to be kind to strangers. Modiano wants to help, even though he doesn't know Laurent and has no personal investment whatsoever in either Laurent or Laure. This examples the theme of Kindness, once again.

Additionally, Laurent's dogged pursuit of Laure is symbolic in itself. He is pursuing knowledge of this woman, but in essence, he is chasing love, connection, and in some way, his own self-knowledge.

Laurent's search continues at the end of the chapter, where he starts going to all of the drycleaners just to learn more about Laure. He ends up finding the one that Laure frequents, but he isn't actually able to learn any more information. This is just another example of how difficult the search is, and reinforces just how invested Laurent is.

Discussion Question 1

What is symbolic about Laurent's pursuit of Laure?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Following One's Dreams.

Discussion Question 3

How is the theme of Kindness, once again, demonstrated in this chapter?

Vocabulary

sodden, waft, volatile, loquacious, laudable, malingering, pervade, protract, cathartic, complacency, taciturn



It was a terrible idea

Summary

Laurent and Dominique attend a dinner together with some of their friends. Dominique isn't comfortable being alone with him. Laurent tells the guests about the handbag, which upsets Dominique. She later breaks up with him, saying they are growing apart and he is clearly obsessed with this Laure. Laurent confirms this the next day, when he mentions that he has a new woman in his life. An author is signing books at his store, and he is able to identify one of the customer's necklaces that had Egyptian hieroglyphics. Laurent recognizes the hieroglyphics from Laure's belongings. He brings it to the author, who is able to identify it. It is Laure's full name written in hieroglyphics: Laure Valadier.

Analysis

Laurent is finally honest with himself about how he feels regarding Laure. This means that he has to end his relationship with Dominique, something that he should have done earlier. This is actually another example of Lying being destructive. Laurent wasn't just lying to Dominique, but he was also lying to himself. For the rest of the book, Laurent is honest about what he wants, and that ultimately helps lead him to finding Laure.

Laurent gets a lucky break in finding Laure, when he discovers that one of the authors can read Egyptian hieroglyphics. Seeing the hieroglyphics reminds him about something he saw in Laure's bag, finally letting him identify her full name. This is when Laure's coma becomes especially relevant towards the plot, since without this plot device, the story would logically just end here with Laure and Laurent getting the chance to meet.

With the necklace being in an ancient language, the author is giving a nod to the notion that love is the oldest language human beings have. Though he doesn't realize it, he is in love with a woman he has never met. At this point in the novel, the reader gets the feeling that he is setting himself up for a potentially devastating first (and possibly last) meeting with Laure.

Discussion Question 1

What happens to enable Laurent to know Laure's full name?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Dominique break up with Laurent?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Lying.

Vocabulary

comely, infamy, disparate, credence, credulous, lithe, denigrate, valiant, pragmatic, atrocity



Silence is golden

Summary

William, one of Laure's coworkers has been visiting her at the hospital. He's spoken with the doctor, at first pretending to be Laure's brother. The doctor soon figures out William is lying. William doesn't mind, because he knows that Laure doesn't have any family left, he just wants someone to be there for her. William had been taking care of Laure's cat while she was away, and had become worried when she hadn't returned. He later found her in the hospital.

To William's surprise, a man named Laurent shows up during one of the feedings. Laurent has been calling Laure, trying to get in touch with her to return the bag. William mistakes Laurent as a recent boyfriend, a lie that Laurent goes along with. He's able to keep the story going thanks to all he learned about Laure. William explains everything that happened, and then asks Laurent if he can take care of the cat, since he has to leave to do a job in Germany. Laurent agrees.

Analysis

William is introduced in this chapter. He's a minor character, but he helps to move the plot along, since he essentially acts as a surrogate for Laurent and Laure while she's in the coma. The theme of Lying is explored again, technically twice. The first time is very minor between the doctor and William. The doctor can obviously tell that William is lying. He doesn't mind, but it just goes to show that lying wasn't doing William any good either. He could have just been honest and upfront and still been allowed to see Laure.

The bigger lie is when Laurent goes along with William's story. William mistakes Laurent for being the boyfriend that was previously with Laure. By lying, Laurent set himself up for failure, since there is no way he would have been able to remain with Laure if he had kept lying. Fortunately, he realizes this later on in the story and corrects his mistake. That all could have been avoided if he was simply honest with William from the start, and would have led to him meeting Laure much sooner.

This section also gives just a little more evidence about how infatuated Laurent has become. He's able to recite enough facts about Laure where he can convince William that he has been part of her life.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Lying in this chapter.



Discussion Question 2

Compare William to Laurent.

Discussion Question 3

Why does the doctor allow William to stay even when he knows he is lying?

Vocabulary

ambivalent, lucid, truant, exhaustive, truncate, amity, overt, sanguine, expedient, deter, sardonic



Looking for a woman to return a handbag was one thing

Summary

Laurent agrees to look after the cat. He has been staying at Laure's for several days, now. He feels strangely at peace in her home. He keeps exploring the house, trying to learn more about Laure. He discovers her family album, which includes pictures of her ex-husband. While he's staying there, Laurent thinks back to his time with Claire. He was originally going to be a lawyer, but he was unhappy with his life. He felt empty, and he was even thinking about ending his life. He broke up with Claire, deciding that he was going to open a bookstore, since reading was the one thing he felt passionate about. A call from Laure's actual boyfriend interrupts his thoughts. Her boyfriend doesn't know what happened, and believes that Laure is avoiding him. He says he won't call again, and Laurent decides to delete the message instead of leaving it on the answering machine for Laure.

Analysis

Laurent continues to learn more things about Laure. At the same time he's exploring her past, he's also reliving memories of his own. This gives the reader more insight into what his life was like with Claire. Laurent was unhappy because he wasn't following his dreams. This focuses on two themes, that Following One's Dreams can sometimes be difficult, and that it's important to Remember the Past. Laurent remembers his time with Claire, and most importantly what it was like to be in a relationship. Unlike Pascal, he doesn't try to hide from these memories, and he's willing to work towards another relationship, specifically with Laure.

Laurent shows his feelings for Laure by deleting the message from the man that is actually her boyfriend. This can also be seen as him trying to cover his tracks, just in case William or someone else from Laure's life happens by and hears the message. To the reader, this solidifies that Laurent wants to be part of Laure's life, but it is also laced with a hint of dishonesty, too.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Laurent erase the message from Laure's real boyfriend?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Following One's Dreams.



Discussion Question 3

Based on the theme of Remembering the Past, what is the author stating about the past and recalling it?

Vocabulary

alacrity, postulate, tractable, tranquil, allay, ruse, transgress, alleviate, transient, aloof, deplete



Helene...Helene, look...the line on the monitor's rising

Summary

Laure finally comes out of her coma. The doctors test her memory, but she seems to remember everything leading up to the night of the attack. William is back from his trip and asks her about Laurent, but she has no idea who that is. At the same time, Laurent is delivering the keys to William's workplace. He feels guilty about what he did. William is conflicted. The doctor insists that Laure's memory is fine, and Laurent must have been a stranger. William wants to believe that, but he can't figure out how Laurent knew so many things about Laure. William returns to work to tell everyone the good news, when he finds out that Laurent has dropped off the keys. Back at the hospital, Laure's doctor finishes clearing her, and remarks how someone must really care about her to feed her cat for so long.

Analysis

William finally discovers that Laurent wasn't the man he claimed to be. This is confusing to him, since he can't account for how Laurent was able to list so many facts about Laure. While this is going on, Laurent finally realizes that he was wrong to lie to William in the first place. He returns the keys to Laure's apartment as a way of apologizing. This follows up on the Lying theme established when Laurent first met William. If he had been honest, he wouldn't have had to return the keys and retreat from Laure's life.

The doctor's comment could be taken two different ways. The first implies that Laurent must really care about Laure, something that the reader is already aware of. But, as the reader knows, Laurent wasn't the only one taking care of the cat. William has also been taking care of the cat for several days before Laurent arrived. The only reason he had to stop was he was going to be out of country for work. Even then, he was trying to find someone to take care of the cat.

On top of that, it makes more sense that the doctor would be talking about William, since William was the one he was interacting with the most. William was also the only person to show up when Laure was in the coma. In fact, he discovered it because he cared enough to investigate why she hadn't been showing up at work or responding to his calls. While William does care about Laure, it's revealed at the end of the book that he has his own love interest that he was motivated to reconnect with after seeing Laure and Laurent end up together. Until that's revealed, this could be seen as the writer foreshadowing a possible conflict between William and Laurent.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Lying.

Discussion Question 2

Why does Laurent finally realize his mistake?

Discussion Question 3

What is ambiguous about the situation with the cat and the doctor's statement?

Vocabulary

elusive, whet, emaciated, surly, bemoan, willful, contrition, wily, benign, guileless, wistful, emerge

Laurent sat at the desk by the entrance

Summary

Laurent is back at work, imagining what his life could have been like with Laure.

At her apartment, William is explaining everything that happened. He finds a letter from Laurent, apologizing for what he did. Laure is surprised, but flattered that someone was that interested in her. She spends the night thinking about Laurent. She realizes that nothing in her bag contains her address or last name, so she has to piece together how he was able to figure it all out. She thinks about her last boyfriend, and how little he seemed to care about her interests. She imagines that Laurent is the opposite, since he was able to piece so many little details together just to find her.

Analysis

This section mostly gives the reader another look into Laure's feelings for Laurent. Up until now, Laure had been in a coma since Laurent was introduced. The reader has been given plenty of opportunities to see how much Laurent cares for Laure, but up until now they've never had the chance to see how Laure feels about him, since she didn't even know he existed. Laure still only has a passing knowledge about Laurent, but she's clearly interested in him. Like the reader, she's had an opportunity to hear about all the things he was doing to find her.

Laure compares Laurent to her last boyfriend, giving a little more insight into why she appreciates Laurent. Her last boyfriend didn't seem to care about her at all, and didn't respect any of the things in her home. From what she knows, Laurent was very respectful of her home. This is important, since Laure has so many items in her house that have symbolic meaning to her because they represent her past. This is one of the reoccurring themes of the book, usually shown through Laure, and that is Remembering the Past. Also in this chapter is the theme of Kindness. She realizes what a tremendous act of Kindness Laurent showed by finding her bag, the tracking her down, and then taking care of her cat. She is deeply moved by this.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Remembering the Past.

Discussion Question 2

How is Laurent different from Laure's former boyfriend?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Kindness.

Vocabulary

abhor, kindle, talisman, abrasive, knotty, tangent, nuance, replete, tangible, enhance, credible



Chloe looked at her father

Summary

Chloe is disappointed when Laurent tells her that he has given up on Laure. She asks a few details about Laure. Meanwhile, while that is happening, Laure spends the day going from bookstore to bookstore. She keeps asking about Laurent, but she can't find him.

That evening, Chloe convinces her mother and stepfather that the frame of one of their portraits looks tarnished. She says they should go to a gilder, having learned earlier that that's what Laure does for a living. The next day Chloe goes to the studio and meets Laure, giving her the address of the store where Laurent works.

Analysis

Chloe displays some uncharacteristic selflessness during this chapter, showing that she really does care about her family. This is important, since throughout the book Chloe hasn't been displayed in the best light. This lets the reader know that, despite her selfish nature, she does still care about the people in her life. She goes out of her way to set things up between Laurent and Laure. This shows another theme of the book: Kindness. Her kindness leads to Laure and Laurent finally getting to meet and become a couple at the end of the book.

Laure's feelings for Laurent are shown to be returned. Their roles have become flipped since the beginning of the book; Laure is now the one that is trying to find Laurent. Just like Laurent, she has to search through multiple businesses. Both of their dedication to finding the other is shown to be tremendous. In this respect they are both illustrating the theme of Pursuing Dreams, as each believes the other to be 'the one'.

Discussion Question 1

How have Laure and Laurent's roles become reversed?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Chloe decide to help her father find Laure?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Pursuing One's Dreams as they apply to this chapter.

Vocabulary

abrogate, enigma, tangible, harangue, billowing, obscure, terse, hiatus, thwart, ponderous, largess



Wednesday 12 February

Summary

The final section of the book begins with Laure writing in a diary. She spends the next few days trying to work up the courage to speak to Laurent. She goes to the bookstore to watch him work, and she even shows up once at his apartment. One day, she finally decides that she's going to speak with him. She goes into the store and says she's asking for a book about someone who finds a handbag, but runs off before it can be delivered. He knows that it is her. Laurent is shocked, but feels like everything he dreamed about is coming true. Two days later, the two of them are sharing their first kiss at the spot where Laurent had discovered the missing bag. They return to Laure's apartment, and the book ends with them spending the evening together.

Analysis

Laure continues to go through a process very similar to Laurent's. She's nervous about approaching him, just like how Laurent was hesitant about trying to get in touch with her. Laurent is still clearly infatuated with Laure, even though he had given up the hope of actually meeting her. The two finally meet, giving a final example of dreams being hard to work towards, but ultimately worth it. The book touches on a few minor characters at the end, most notably mentioning that William has a love interest that he is pursuing, having been motivated by Laure and Laurent. Laure and Laurent are shown to have a successful early relationship, with both characters very confident about their future.

Discussion Question 1

How did this relationship hinge on the trail of kindnesses offered by strangers along the way?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Pursuing One's Dreams.

Discussion Question 3

What would seem to be the Author's purpose in writing this book?

Vocabulary

portend, adversity, tome, advocate, hone, riddled, rife, affable, officious, rigor, postulate, ogle, robust



Characters

Laure

Laure is a strong secondary character, even though she is in a coma for the most of the novel. It is through her red notebook, and various items in her handbag, that the reader and Laurent is able to learn more about her.

Laure works as a framer, in particular, a gilder (adding metallic accents to frames). It is on her way home from work that she is attacked. In fact, after she picks herself up off the ground, she doesn't even realize that she's sustained a head injury. However, she's a distance from home, it is dark, and she is tired. She manages to talk the hotel clerk into trusting her for a room for the night.

While in the hospital, and experiencing her coma, she has vivid dreams. Through these dreams the reader learns that she was married to a photojournalist named Xavier, who was the love of her life. He was killed in Iraq and she's not really gotten over him. She currently has a boyfriend, but it is a matter of convenience, not of affection.

When she wakes from her coma and learns of the kindness that was extended to her by Laurent, she makes a point of finding him, in much the same way he tracked her down in the first part of the book.

Laurent

Laurent has not historically had great relationships. His first marriage resulted in a child, but a loveless marriage. After they parted, due in large part because he didn't want to become a lawyer (opting to own a bookstore instead), Laurent met and became involved with a woman named Dominique.

At the time of the novel, he's been with Dominique for a while, but is unfulfilled. When he spies a woman's handbag in the garbage, he suspects that it doesn't belong there and investigates. His reaction to the bag reveals his character and the reader learns that he is a very kind and decent person.

After having no luck at the police station with the handbag, he takes it home and begins looking through the contents hoping to find some identification. He doesn't find any, but does find a diary, a red notebook, which he begins to read. As he begins to 'know' the author of the diary, he finds himself moved to find her.

His journey of self discovery, and eventually finding the love of his life, comprise the bulk of the story, and through him, the themes of Kindness and Remembering the Past are offered.



William

William is a co-worker of Laure's at the framing shop. He has been taking care of Laure's cat. He is the only one that comes to visit her in the hospital, and is the one that gives Laurent the keys to her house to watch the cat while he goes out of town on business.

Xavier

Xavier is Laure's husband who died while taking pictures during the Iraq War.

Dominique

Dominique, when the book opens, is Laurent's current girlfriend. She is very vain, high maintenance, and obviously doesn't truly care for Laurent.

Chloe

Chloe is Laurent's daughter (his and Claire's). For the first part of the novel, Chloe is shown to be very immature and self centered. However, toward the end of the novel, it is her interference and assistance that allows Laure to find Laurent.

Claire

Claire is Laurent's first wife.

Pascal

Pascal is Laurent's best friend from school. It is obvious when they meet one another for drinks that Pascal is a foil to Laurent in the way he views women and relationships.

Nurses

The nurses at the hospital are having conversations all of the time around Laure, and as a result some of what they are discussing inserts itself into Laure's coma dreams.

Doctor

The doctor is Laure's doctor at the hospital. When William comes to visit Laure, he knows that William isn't her brother, but doesn't say anything. He is kind and compassionate and is just glad that someone is there for Laure.



Symbols and Symbolism

Laure's Handbag

Laure's handbag contains nearly all of her personal items. Each one has a story to Laure, and reminds her of people she lost or events in her life. When Laurent finds it, he remembers the relationship that he used to have with his wife, Claire.

Red Notebook

The titular red notebook is a diary that Laurent finds when he's going through Laure's bag. The notebook contains details about her life, and just general musings from Laure. Laurent feels an instant connection to her, and to him the notebook represents the woman that he wants to be with.

Chloe's Cat, Putin

Laurent describes Chloe as always being able to get her way. She wanted a cat, even against the wishes of her parents. Putin is a grumpy cat that is mean towards everyone else, but is complacent to Chloe, proving that she really does get what she wants.

Laure's Coma Dream

When Laure is in a coma, she dreams that she is a child with her family. Her dream later shifts to include her deceased husband, Xavier. Laure's dream represents her general unhappiness in life, and how she wishes that her reality was different.

Hysterical Laughter

Laurent overhears Chloe laughing hysterically with one of her friends. He gets nostalgic, since it reminds him of a younger time. In his mind, people are only able to laugh like that when they're young and innocent, but as they get older they lose that ability.

Book Titles

Throughout the course of the book, Laurent constantly references different books. The title of each book relates to something that is going on during the course of the book, or sometimes he will quote passages that convey the situation. For example, one of the earlier books he references is *Invisible Girlfriend*, referring to his feelings for Laure, who he had never even met.



Laure's Flat

When Laurent is feeding Laure's cat, he lingers in her apartment. When he's there, he feels like he's home, a comfort that he's lacking in his own apartment.

Laurent's Bookstore

When Laurent was younger, he was trying to become a lawyer. He was miserable with his life, and he wanted to do something that he was passionate about. Laurent cared about reading, and his bookstore is a direct representation of his dreams and passion.

Cat Reacting to Laurent

After Laure gets out of her coma she returns home and discovers everything about Laurent. Her cat, Belphegor, trusted Laurent. She's reminded of her last boyfriend, who had scared her cat. She took that as a sign that she could trust Laurent, even though he was a total stranger.

Laure's Necklace

This necklace holds the key to Laure's identity for Laurent. He has it translated and finds out who she is. This leads him to her in the hospital. It represents one of the most ancient and primal of emotions: love.

Laurent's Pursuit of Laure

Laurent's dogged pursuit of Laure, and then her pursuit of him, suggests that they are both chasing after a lasting, real, and deep relationship. That they feel they can have that with each other remains to be seen, but the idea is something they both passionately pursue.

Laure's Perfume

The perfume lingers on her handbag and is in Laurent's apartment when Dominique comes over. She accuses him of having another woman. Though he will not admit it at the time, the idea of Laure, like the perfume, was there.



Settings

The Street

The initial action in the novel happens on the street. This is where Laure is mugged and hit over the head. This is also where the handbag is stolen, then it is later dumped.

The Bookstore

This is where Laurent works. It was his passion to open up a bookstore instead of becoming a lawyer. This is where he finds out many of the clues that help him find Laure. It is also where Laure finally finds him.

The Cafe

This is where Laurent meets with his daughter, Chloe. He also meets his friend, Pascal there later on in the day.

The Hotel

When Laure was hit over the head she goes to a nearby hotel and asks for a room for the night. When she doesn't come down the next morning the staff finds her comatose in her room.

The Hospital

This is where Laure is for most of the novel. While there she is in a coma and a dream-state, though she also begins to hear bits and pieces of conversations on her floor. This is where William and Laurent meet, and where Laurent gains access to Laure's home.



Themes and Motifs

Kindness

This theme is demonstrated very early on in the book, and is a common thread throughout the rest of the novel. The basis of the story hinges on Laurent going out of his way to be kind towards someone that he doesn't even know. While he ends up falling in love with Laure, he was only able to meet her because he saw that there was a missing handbag and he wanted to see it returned to the proper owner. He only started to develop feelings when he went through the handbag, but he still spent that first day just trying to be a good person to help a stranger. In the end, his kindness was rewarded, since this dedication is what won Laure over.

The theme is shown again through the character of William. William is one of Laure's coworkers, the only one who visits her when she's in a coma. Not only that, but William goes out of his way to take care of Laure's cat. At one point, the doctor implies that William was doing this because he was interested in Laure.

This ends up being provably incorrect by the end of the book, when it's mentioned that William had a previous partner that he's interested in seeing again. William was just trying to help out a friend. His kindness led to him witnessing the growing relationship between Laure and Laurent, which motivates him to repair his own relationship.

The theme is shown in more subtle ways through Laurent's interactions with other characters, most notably his friends. Laurent briefly visits his childhood friend, Pascal. Pascal is divorced, and spends the majority of his time meeting women on dating sites. He lies about his profiles and constantly finds ways to manipulate the women he meets there. Laurent is appalled by this behavior, and it's made clear that Pascal keeps looking because he's unhappy. This is in stark contrast to Laurent, who remains kind and faithful throughout the book and ends up happy.

Lying

At first, this might not seem like a theme, since Laurent ended up with Laure despite all of his lies. When William first met Laurent, he was less than honest about his relationship with Laure, implying that they were already dating and that's how he knew her. Laurent feels guilty about this and eventually comes forward with his dishonesty.

If Laurent had been honest from the start, he wouldn't have had to wait for so long to meet Laure. After all, it was his kindness that attracted her to him in the first place. It's even implied that if he had kept following through with the lie, it would have likely scared off Laure.

The theme is demonstrated again through Chloe and Pascal. Both Chloe and Pascal are shown to lie throughout the book. Pascal's main trait is that he lies to women just



because he wants to sleep with them. Chloe lies because she feels she always has to be right. Chloe's lies are shown to get her in trouble, making her cover them up with even more lies. Laurent is hurt and upset when she lies when he's first introduced at the café. As previously mentioned with Pascal, his lies are the reason he'll never be able to get into another relationship.

Laurent shows the theme early on in the book as well. Laurent didn't just lie to William, but he also lied to himself. When Chloe recognized his feelings for Laure, he tried to deny them. When he was with Dominique, he kept telling himself that he wasn't interested in Laure, despite his obvious attraction.

Laurent kept lying to himself about his feelings, which led to him trying to reconcile with Dominique. The two broke up a few days later, and Laurent realized he was unhappy with her. In the end, the author suggests that lying, even if presumably justified, is still nonetheless destructive.

Growing up is Difficult

This theme is first hinted at very early on in the book. When Laurent is with Chloe, he notices the way that she laughs when she's talking with her friend. He refers to it as hysterical laughter, and laments that he hadn't laughed like that since he was a child talking to Pascal. He thinks that hysterical laughter is something that only younger people can experience, since they're still innocent and not so cynical.

The theme is demonstrated again through Laurent's recollections of his time with Claire. When he was younger, Laurent was going through law school because he thought it would be a successful career. Laurent was miserable, and he didn't know what he wanted to do with his life. Becoming an adult seemed like more than he could handle, to the point where he was even considering suicide.

Instead, he decided to find something that he was passionate about and try to make that into his life. While he was successful with his bookshop, it came at the cost of his marriage. This also ties into the earlier theme, about lying being bad. Laurent wasn't honest with himself about what he wanted when he was growing up, which is why he was pursuing a career in law in the first place.

The theme is shown once more through Laure's coma dream. In her dream, she imagines herself as being a child again. She calls herself crazy for thinking that she could have possibly been an adult. As she explores more of the dream, she explains why she didn't want to be an adult. As an adult, she had to deal with the heartache of not only losing her family, but also losing her husband.

Don't Forget the Past

This theme is first clearly demonstrated when Laure is waking up from her coma and fretting about her bag. William tries to dismiss it, because in his mind it's just a handbag.



Laure starts to list all of the items that are in the bag. It's filled with different relics of the past that she carries with her. Each one has a good memory and is responsible for shaping Laure into the woman that she is.

During the beginning of the book, Laurent briefly mentions his past with Claire. When he first finds the handbag, he was reminded of everything that the two of them shared together. Things didn't work out with Claire, but Laurent had fond memories of being with someone else.

He knew how important relationships were, which is what motivates him to go after Laure. Unlike Pascal, he doesn't try and let go of the memories from his past relationship. Pascal wants to dull them, but Laurent has accepted them and is motivated by them.

The theme is explored once more, very briefly, through William towards the end of the book. Earlier, it was hinted that William might have feelings for Laure. This ended up being incorrect. William was shown to still have feelings for a past partner. He had been trying not to think of it, but seeing Laurent and Laure get together gave him the motivation he needed to look back into his past and try to reconnect with his partner.

Pursuing Dreams

This theme begins at the very start of the book and continues up until the very end. Laurent is clearly someone that wants to be in a relationship. He misses the connection that he used to have with Claire, and that's part of why he becomes so attached to the idea of Laure.

Once Laurent accepts his feelings for Laure, he begins to pursue her. Of course, he doesn't have anything besides a first name, but he doesn't let that stop him. He can feel that she's the right one for him, so he keeps chasing every lead that he can.

Laurent doesn't just show this theme through his relationship with Laure. When Laurent was younger, he knew that he was unhappy in law school. He needed to find something that he was passionate about. He liked reading, and decided that he wanted that to be part of his life. This forced Laurent to make a difficult decision, and while he was able to get his bookstore, it came at the cost of his life with Claire.

The theme is repeated with Laure at the end of the book. In a very similar fashion to Laurent, Laure only has a name to go off of in her search. She keeps going from bookstore to bookstore, trying to find Laurent. This isn't the only time Laure brings up the theme. In the past, she was married to Xavier, who wanted to be a photojournalist. Xavier was successful, but pursuing his dreams led him to war and ultimately cost him his life.

Styles

Point of View

The Red Notebook switches between points of view throughout the novel, focusing primarily on two characters: Laure and Laurent. Laurent's point of view takes center stage for most of the novel, with Laure's view showing up during her coma dreaming scenes, and at the end when she wakes up and goes looking for Laurent. This is a particularly good way to tell this story, as it is a love story, with much of the action taking place internally. Having access to the internal wonderings of the characters adds to the depth and scope of this novel's landscape.

Language and Meaning

This book was originally produced in French, but has been translated quite well. There are only a few places where the phrasing is more European than American.

Structure

The structure is fairly linear with the exception to flashbacks and dream sequences. The chapters are short, with no superfluous filler material added in.



Quotes

It would be streets away by now, snatched, flying on the man's arm as he ran; he would open it and inside he would find her keys, her identity card, her memories. Her entire life."

-- Laure (The taxi had dropped her on the corner of the boulevard paragraph 4)

Importance: Laure losing her handbag is what sets up the plot of the book, with Laurent discovering the missing handbag and ultimately falling in love with Laure. This also explains why Laure was obsessed with the handbag, because it contained so many important items in her life.

What was the moral course of action now: to take it with him or to leave it where it was? Somewhere in the city, a woman had almost certainly been robbed of her bag and in all probability had given up hope of ever seeing it again."

-- Laurent (Standing in front of the bathroom mirror paragraph 9)

Importance: Laurent discovering the bag is what sets him onto the path of discovering Laure. The fact that he cares enough to find the owner also gives some insight into his character, showing that he's thoughtful enough to care about whether a stranger finds their bag or not.

On those rare occasions, Laurent saw that there were woman who noticed that the bag belonged to a female, but he had never seen any suspicion in their glances, just amusement. He was obviously a man waiting for his wife."

-- Laurent (Standing in front of the bathroom mirror paragraph 12)

Importance: This section reveals a very important part of Laurent's back story, that he used to be married to someone named Claire. The book explores his relationship with Claire in later detail.

Half an hour later, Laure was wheeled out on a folding stretcher, pushed thirty metres along the pavement and lifted into the back of the red vehicle. The words 'haematoma', 'head injury', and 'coma' were mentioned."

-- Laurent (At twelve-thirty paragraph 9)

Importance: Laure going into a coma is another major plot point, and sets up why Laurent wasn't able to simply get in touch with her.

As he embraced her on the bed, Laurent could not help turning his head towards the wardrobe where he had hidden the bag, and, as Dominique kissed him, the phrase 'I'm scared of red ants' seemed to take root permanently in his brain."

-- Laurent (In the boiling-hot shower paragraph 53)

Importance: Laurent is starting to obsess over Laure, even when he's lying in bed with Dominique. His feelings for her continue to grow even stronger as the plot progresses.



Laurent turned over in bed and realized he was alone. He looked at the clock: it was six in the morning. Even when Dominique got up early, she never left before seven, and not without saying goodbye.”

-- Dominique (Laurent turned over in bed and realized he was alone paragraph 1)

Importance: Dominique is obviously aware that Laurent was lying to her previously. Even if he hasn't realized his feelings for Laure, she has, and her leaving early foreshadows their eventual breakup.

It was almost time for lunch, at some point in the early eighties, and the clocks had stopped ticking then. The last thirty years had fallen away. Laure had only dreamt she had become an adolescent and then a grown-up, that she had a job and a flat and service charges to pay.”

-- Laure (A garden. Very much like the one of her childhood home, paragraph 3)

Importance: Laure is clearly struggling with being an adult, which represents one of the themes of growing up being difficult. It also suggests that she's subconsciously choosing to stay in the coma, as supported by the end of the chapter.

The tone of voice that told Laure that her life was about to collapse. Like those ice sheets weighing several tons which break off icebergs with the first thaw and slide into the frozen waters of the Antarctic. The void said: Something has happened to your husband in Iraq, something serious, very serious...”

-- Laure (A garden. Very much like the one of her childhood home paragraph 5)

Importance: This is a very defining moment in Laure's life, and one of the first insights given to the reader about what she might be trying to run away from.

He settled down under one of the gas heaters which were dotted around the terrace to keep customers warm. Black jacket, white shirt, Levi's and a blue scarf Claire had given him ten years ago; everything exactly as Chloe had asked.”

-- Narrator (At this time of year there weren't many people sitting outside the café paragraph 1)

Importance: Although just a minor character, Chloe ends up influencing the plot and is responsible for Laure and Laurent ultimately getting together. This passage shows off her controlling nature, and how she always gets everything that she wants. More specifically, it also shows the influence that she has over her father. This comes into play later on, as she's ultimately the one that convinces her father to take more steps in finding out Laure. Had it been anyone else, Laurent might not have listened, but he always does what Chloe wants.

I'm scared when I don't understand. I don't understand why I'm here. I'm scared when I don't know where I am, and I don't know where I am. I don't know 'when' I am. I'm scared when William talks to me and I can't say anything back.”

-- Laure (Silence is golden paragraph 25)



Importance: This passage follows up on Laure's earlier desire to stay in her dream world, away from reality. The coma is finally starting to scare her, and with William around she's forced to confront reality. These fears also seem to apply to her life as much as they do the coma, since it's been heavily implied that Laure was having a difficult time with life before this, which is one of the reasons she ends up feeling like she needs Laurent in her life.

I like the idea of a man going to so much trouble to find me (no one has ever gone to so much trouble for me before). How many booksellers in Paris are called Laurent?"
-- Laure (Laurent sat at the desk by the entrance paragraph 55)

Importance: For most of the book, the reader has been seeing the view of Laurent, since Laure is in a coma. This is the first real sign to the readers that she has feelings for him as well, and that she approves of his past actions. It also sets up the challenge that she faces in tracking Laurent down, since she doesn't have a last name or an address to work from.

The thing he had not dared expect but had hoped for all the same had happened: Laure Valadier had turned up in his bookshop. How on earth had she tracked him down? It didn't matter, she was here- and a lot of other things, like closing time or the leaky pipe, didn't matter either."

-- Laurent (Wednesday 12 February paragraph 44)

Importance: Laurent and Laure finally get the chance to meet in person. This passage also shows that, despite his efforts, Laurent had been unable to just give up on Laure, and she was still the woman of his dreams.