

Still Life With Bread Crumbs Study Guide

Still Life With Bread Crumbs by Anna Quindlen

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Plot Summary

Still Life with Bread Crumbs was written by Anna Quindlen. The story revolves around sixty-year old Rebecca Winters, who believes she has little left in life after the evaporation of her photography career. Divorced, Rebecca is the mother of a grown child named Ben. She also cares for her elderly parents. Strapped for cash, Rebecca rents her Manhattan apartment and travels to Squamash, a small mountain town in upstate New York. She takes possession of a ramshackle cottage there and meets a man named Jim Bates who oversees the repair of her roof. Rebecca begins going on hikes and discovers a series of white crosses and small objects, such as old photos and yearbooks. She begins to photograph the crosses and objects and signs with a new agent. Her work begins to sell again, restoring her finances. Rebecca later learns the crosses were put up by Jim's mentally-challenged sister named Polly. Polly was putting to rest beautiful parts of her life in preparation for dying. Jim and Rebecca end up dating one another. Eventually, they move in together.



No Outlet - Family of Origin

Summary

No Outlet - Family of Origin

No Outlet

Rebecca Winter wakes up startled from a deep sleep by what she thinks is the sound of a shotgun, though she has no idea what a shotgun sounds like in person because she has grown up and spent most of her life in West Manhattan. It gets her thinking about the places where a shotgun would go off. It also gets her thinking about the places she and her husband Peter have vacationed, such as Long Island, Tuscany, and Provence. Rebecca now lives in a small home desperately in need of work on a road, the name of which she does not know, in the middle of nowhere. She realizes that what she hears is not a gunshot, but an animal trap. She remembers the conversation with Jim Bates, a roofer, who explains there is a raccoon in her attic, able to get in and out by way of a hole in the flashing. Bates puts in a trap for the raccoon. Rebecca wonders how on earth she ended up where she is.

How She Wound Up There: The Inspirational Version

Just before turning sixty, Rebecca learns that she is the winner of the J. P. Bradley Prize for photography. She is both the first female and the youngest winner ever. Rebecca knows now that she is over the hill, for the Bradley is awarded to old people. Twenty years ago, she is at the height of her career with sold out shows and a dotting fan base. But slowly, over time, her work fades out of popularity, until she is all but forgotten. She lets her agent, Tori Grzyjk, whom everyone calls TG, know about the prize. Sarah attends the dinner with her friend Dorothea who is unhappy the prize is only for a thousand dollars, but Rebecca is thrilled to have even that much now. It is also on this fateful night she decides to rent what is being described as a "charming country cottage." By renting out her New York apartment, she will be able to help pay for her mother's nursing home care, her father's rent, and her own health insurance. She can also give money to her son Ben to pay for the cabin. She will still be able to put away a little for emergencies and retirement. So many people depend on her, and she does not want to let them down.

Not Inspiring

Sarah Ashby is impressed to meet Rebecca Winters because her mother had one of Rebecca's poster prints on her fridge. It makes Rebecca feel a hundred years old. Rebecca knows she will have to get adjusted to the small town in which she now lives. She believes it to be stereotypical small town America. Sarah and her husband Kevin run the coffee shop in town, Tea for Two (Or More). Jim Bates returns to handle the raccoon. Rebecca asks to see it before he gets rid of it because she is a photographer.



Jim then kills the raccoon as his workers begin repairing the roof. Rebecca then goes to ask Sarah where she can find the supermarket, and to order food for breakfast. Rebecca receives her meal for free because Sarah always gives new residents their first meal for free. Sarah does, however, want Rebecca to autograph a poster for her mother.

How She Wound Up There: The Money Version

Rebecca tries to remember what photographs were turned into a poster. She remembers photographing her struggles as a mother in her thirties. They became iconic photos. She has never been sure of herself as a photographer, only photographing what already exists. She thinks about her one photograph, "Still Life with Bread Crumbs," of dirty glasses and plates, some bread, and a dish towel. That series of photographs, the "Kitchen Counter Series," launched her into fame. For years, her photos are purchased for use on magazine covers, postcards, t-shirts, and so on. The poster had been the idea of her then-agent, Stephen's. The poster launches Rebecca into even more fame and success. She does a follow-up series on her son Ben, as a baby. While they sell, the Kitchen Counter Series continues to sell even better. But, the success weighs heavily on Rebecca, who feels more unsure of herself, feeling like anything new she photographs only is a poor copy of something she's done before. Soon after, she divorces Peter for his adultery. Over time, Rebecca's finances dwindle as her expenses increase and her sales decrease. Rebecca resolves to live in the cottage, recover her finances, and return to New York one day.

Knew It When She Saw It

Rebecca likes to live life planned, knowing what comes next. Coming to the cottage and its small town, she does not know what comes next. She comforts herself by surrounding herself with familiar things, such as an old cast iron frying pan that she has had since graduate school. She begins her mornings at Sarah's to use the wireless, and she responds to emails. Ben is working as a grip on a film production on Long Island. As July rolls around, Rebecca goes hiking up a mountain and discovers a small white cross near a girls' volleyball trophy, near a rotting fallen tree near a stream. Without disturbing the scene, she photographs it. She sees a fawn and its mother looking at her through the trees.

Knew it When He Saw It

Two days later, Jim comes to the same clearing, sees the white cross has fallen over, and puts it back up. Rebecca will not discover that the cross says RIP until she sees the photos on her computer.

So Here's the Deal

Rebecca prefers to work in black-and-white to the extent that all of her clothes are black, gray, and white. While out walking, she comes across a second cross, at the base of which is a blue leather-bound book. Central Valley High School is written in a seal on the book's cover; RIP is clear on the cross. Rebecca thinks about her finances,



which, after all is said and done, leaves her with \$500 a month to survive on. Sarah comes across Jim Bates attempting to shoot a bald eagle out of the sky. Jim explains he is using a tracking gun, not a real gun, because he works for the State Wildlife Service on weekends. Jim agrees to trade the expense of the raccoon removal and roof repair for a photo of the dead raccoon's paws.

She Knew It

It is now August. Sarah puts up the poster of "Still Life With Bread Crumbs" in the shop. Jim is very impressed with the photo. Jim puts up a white flag over the house, which Rebecca says fell off during a storm. She wonders if it is an advertising ploy for Jim. Rebecca later finds two more crosses: one with a first-prize blue ribbon, and another with a birthday card. The next day, the cross with the birthday card both disappear.

Family of Origin

In an anthropology project for college, Rebecca reports her mother, Beatrice Sophia Freeman, was born in 1925 in New York City. She is an only child and was educated in music. Her father Oscar Winter was born in 1920 in Brooklyn. He is the son of Jacob and Leah Winter, both New Yorkers. He has a high school education.. He is a business owner, and his wife is a homemaker. Rebecca has no siblings.

Analysis

When Anna Quindlen's novel *Still Life with Breadcrumbs* begins, Rebecca Winters is a late-middle-aged woman who believes her best days are behind her. She is content with doing whatever she can in order to get by. In the heyday of her forties, she is a brilliant and well-loved photographer who thrives with what she does. She is happy with married life and happy with her son. But, nothing lasts forever. Her marriage disintegrates due to her husband's adultery. Her photography career slows and fades, and Ben grows older and moves out on his own. Rebecca ends up being the sole source of financial support for herself, fills in gaps for Ben, and supplements the income of her parents so her mother can remain in a nursing home. In order to make this possible despite her dwindling money, Rebecca rents out her apartment and travels to Squamash in upstate New York in order to save money and financially support the people who depend on her.

The cottage she rents is a mirror of Rebecca: Older, run down, seemingly past prime, but still with a beauty to it. Rebecca is much the same way. She is beautiful, though she feels broken and rundown. Her arrival signals a new beginning for the cottage. It also signals a new beginning for her, but she doesn't realize it at first. The new beginning comes about through Jim Bates repairing the roof of the house and removing the raccoon from the attic for Rebecca.

The irony of Rebecca's former fame is that she never intended to be famous in the first place. She had merely taken photos of some dishes and some half-eaten bread, to create what becomes an iconic image of motherhood and womanhood with the title of the "Kitchen Counter Series," especially the photograph that becomes known as "Still



Life with Breadcrumbs.” Rebecca’s photography following a few more successful series does not seem to add up to the success of her first; and she begins to wonder if she is any good anymore. While hiking through the mountains around her cabin, Rebecca comes across white crosses arranged with various objects and mementos, and decides that these are worthy of photographs.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Rebecca believe that her best days are behind her, both professionally and personally?

Discussion Question 2

What is the primary reason that Rebecca leaves New York for a cottage in Squamash?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Rebecca begin photographing the white crosses? Why do you believe these crosses have been left in the woods with little objects or mementos?

Vocabulary

Superannuated, monogram, egress, impedimenta, minutiae, exorbitant, apropos, stanchion, staccato, contemptuous, arbitrariness, aphorisms, quiescent, detritus, miserly, juxtaposition, impervious, pathos.



Family of Origin - Woman Without a Man

Summary

Family of Origin - Woman Without a Man

Family of Origin

Rebecca's mother, Beatrice, or Bebe, stays at the Jewish Home for the Aged and Infirm. From the roof, the river and the Statue of Liberty can be seen. Rebecca remembers never wanting to be a mother. Her generation either carefully avoided having kids, or had been thrilled to become mothers. Rebecca is somewhere in between. While she is not sure several children would have thrilled her, she is very happy with Benjamin Freeman Symington. Rebecca watches her mother play the piano beautifully, hoping she will be able to continue to supplement her mother's ability to stay in the place. She next goes to visit her father, cared for by the seventy-year-old housekeeper named Sonya, who has been with the family for years. She allows her father to believe she is still living in her apartment. That gives him one less thing to worry about. He is now nearly ninety. She wonders if her father and Sonya are sleeping together, or if she should care. After she visits, she heads home, with Oscar telling her that she has made his day.

The Dog Arrives, and Leaves Again

While Rebecca is on her way back from New York, a dog comes onto her property. He is hungry, as his nominal owner cares for him haphazardly. He has lived with four different owners since being born in an old shed. For the time being, the dog is called Jack. His owner calls for him, and he disappears before Rebecca returns home. Rebecca is not a dog person. She and Peter never had a dog because Peter was allergic. Rebecca feels sad as she comes home, wondering again how her life has come to what it has.

Enter Tad, a Big Fan

Early in September, \$380 suddenly shows up in Rebecca's account. At the coffee shop, Sarah points out Tad, a professional clown. While Tad orders food, Rebecca goes over the photos of the crosses, wondering if they are a local tradition of some kind. Rebecca wonders about selling the Mary Cassatt watercolor her mother owns, in order to make some quick cash. Tad interrupts Rebecca's thoughts by sitting down with her. He introduces himself as Theodore Brinks. He reveals he is an admirer of her work. He explains he likes her action figures series the best. Tad reveals he is the Magnificent Mo Mo. As he leaves, Sarah explains Tad is the saddest or second-saddest story in town. He is an amazing singer, having even once performed at the Vatican. He even made a record. He was seen on TV and heard on the radio. But, as he has aged, his voice has



changed. He is unable to continue on with what he loves. He can still sing, just not like he used to do.

Get a Job

Rebecca begins hiking earlier in the mornings to avoid the heat. She finds another cross with a photograph of a woman and a young girl, six or seven years of age. Rebecca can feel the emotion in her cross photographs. Rebecca decides she will get a job.

Sitting in a Tree

Rebecca begins sitting in the tree stand with Jim Bates. Rebecca will be taking photos of wildlife for \$200 a day on weekends to go with the maps the State Wildlife group is putting out, hoping to increase funding for the agency. Bill and his son come walking by scouting deer trails, and Jim asks for Bill's wife Janice. Rebecca asks about hunting, and Jim explains deer season begins after Thanksgiving and that some people stock up so well they can last the winter without buying meat. The land they are on, Jim explains, is owned by the water company. Jim gets a call from his sister, who asks him to come and help her with some creature that has gotten into her bathroom. Jim explains to Rebecca he is not married anymore. Jim invites her over for lunch.

A Good Grilled Cheese Sandwich

An hour later, Rebecca sits in Jim's 1960s-era kitchen waiting for him to make her lunch. Jim explains his mother was an amazing cook, but she died after he turned eighteen. So, he begins cooking grilled cheese sandwiches for his sister. They talk about their parents and the things their parents said. Rebecca recalls her father saying once, "Man plans, God laughs."

Cucumber Sandwiches

Sarah highly respects and loves Jim in a friendly way. She is forever trying to set him up with a woman because not only are they friends, but he helped to save her business from failing. When Sarah was young, she had longed to live in England. After meeting Kevin, she decided that she wanted to be a mom and have some kind of English business. But the town, Squamash, isn't ready for cucumber sandwiches, Jim explains, but that she could have an English selection on her menu. Kevin doesn't like Jim Bates, for reasons which Sarah does not know. The reason includes Jim Bates telling Kevin to stop making fat jokes about Sarah in front of strangers at a bar. Sarah considers fixing Jim up with Rebecca, but then she decides against it because Rebecca is too old for Jim and too sophisticated. But, she is pretty enough to look like she should be in her forties, and Sarah believes she has a beautiful face and a good mouth.

Rebecca's Mouth

Jim Bates also admires Rebecca's mouth. A portrait made of Rebecca when younger makes her mouth look too good, Rebecca believes. Jim likes Rebecca, including her



mouth, and believes she is like a deer, and must be approached slowly or else she would run.

A Woman Without a Man

On October 2, 1980, Rebecca Grace Winter of Manhattan and Peter Soames Symington of Oxford are married. Rebecca is a graduate of Holyoke College and a member of the Arts Students League. Symington is a professor who studies medieval erotica, has written on the subject, and is previously divorced.

Analysis

As Rebecca's new life unfolds, her old life is brought back by a series of ruminations and flashbacks, courtesy of Rebecca and old newspaper clippings. She is married to a professor from England who studies medieval erotica and has a son by him. The son is named Ben. She deeply loves Ben and detests Peter after everything he has done. At the same time, her life begins to restart. She begins a friendship with Sarah at Tea for Two, and Sarah fills Rebecca in on the things that go on in small town American life. The saddest story in town, perhaps the second-saddest story –is that of Tad, the clown, who gave up a singing career when his voice changed. No longer useful as a soprano, he did the next thing he could. He became a clown.

As time goes on, Rebecca continues coming across more and more crosses, and photographs those as well. She wonders whether they are some kind of local tradition. Yet she is unsure. She is also unaware of the fact that Jim also knows about the crosses, and takes great pains to make sure that they remain standing. Jim later helps Rebecca get work with the State Wildlife Agency, getting her \$200 a day to photograph birds.

Jim is a good man, who is well-respected in town, especially by Sarah. Sarah loves Jim like a brother because Jim helped to save her failing business by steering her menu in a different direction. Jim's goodness is also revealed in other ways to the reader by the narrator, though certain kind acts done by Jim are not revealed to either Sarah or Rebecca. Such an act is when Jim confronts Kevin over making fat jokes about his wife in front of strangers. This leads to bad blood between the two men, but neither of them voices anything about it in front of others.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Rebecca begin getting together with Jim? Why does she agree to take on work doing photography for the State Wildlife Agency?



Discussion Question 2

Why do you believe the reader is privy to information about Jim, such as the confrontation between Jim and Kevin at the bar, whereas the characters themselves, such as Sarah and Rebecca, are not?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sarah have so much respect for Jim? How does she take care of Jim in response?

Vocabulary

Peripatetic, intonations, tendentious, redolent, nominal, pragmatic, obligatory, ineffable, calibrate, intricate.



Fish, Bicycle - This is How These Things Happen, Part 2

Summary

Fish, Bicycle - This is How These Things Happen, Part 2

Fish, Bicycle

The last time Rebecca remembers seeing Peter, now near seventy, was at Ben's college graduation. He is balding and it makes Rebecca happy. She is not mad that Peter betrayed her by sleeping with another, but betrayed the family –specifically, Ben – by doing this. Peter dominated the marriage, being very controlling and careless. Originally, she had met him at a party when she was nearly thirty. At the wedding, Rebecca's grandmother was unhappy that Peter didn't break a glass, consistent with Jewish tradition. Peter does not like things remaining the same. He wants an exotic wife, which he believes Rebecca to be, but she isn't. After ten years of marriage, followed by divorce, Peter, at age fifty, marries a university colleague. At sixty, Peter becomes involved with a graduate student named Piper. While Peter hated the mundane stability of their married life, Rebecca loved it.

On Turkey after Another

For Thanksgiving in 1956, Bebe hires a black woman from Harlem to make Thanksgiving dinner for their family, and for others in the apartment. In 1966, Rebecca and her family begin having Thanksgiving Dinner at the Berkshire Hotel. Later, Peter dislikes celebrating Thanksgiving. In 1990, Rebecca and Ben have Thanksgiving dinner at the Delray Beach and Tennis Club in Florida with her parents, in the middle of her divorce.

Thanksgiving 2010

Ben and his young girlfriend Amanda visit Rebecca for Thanksgiving. Ben is in and out of relationships. Rebecca invites Tad for dinner, but he will be with his relatives. Ben is impressed with his mother's white cross photos, including the most recent one featuring a cross and a plaster hand cast. Ben says he went to see Oscar, but hasn't gone to see Bebe since she can't recognize him or anyone at all. Rebecca explains to Amanda that Bebe has some form of dementia. Ben, Amanda, and Rebecca have a wonderful dinner.

Leftover Turkey

Jim comes to see Rebecca on Saturday. She offers him leftover turkey, but Jim reveals that Sarah made him an entire turkey. They head out to track birds and take pictures. When they get back, Ben asks about Jim, and Rebecca explains she is taking photos of birds for the state wildlife authorities. Ben is annoyed by the fact that Jim shot the



raccoon found in the cottage months before. Ben suspects something of a relationship between his mother and Jim.

The Dog Returns, and Stays

On Monday, the dog returns. Rebecca is sad that her son has left. Jim cautions her to stay close to home with the beginning of deer season, or to wear orange if she has to go out. Around her, she can hear scattered gunfire. She comes across another cross with a baby doll. The dog appears on the back steps, and stays. Rebecca feeds the dog some leftover turkey. She calls her son to ask if he wants a dog, but he declines and tells her she could use some company by way of the dog.

Sitting in a Tree, Again

In December, Rebecca runs out of firewood. She buys three cords from Kevin. Jim tells her not to buy anymore firewood, because he can take care of it for her, especially because he has a wood splitter. Rebecca buys herself long underwear for Christmas. She sends her son some money and buys some hiking boots as some of her photographs sell. Jim gets two deer, and gives away a lot of the meat, including to Rebecca. Rebecca tells Jim she now has a dog, and Jim tells Rebecca he looked her up online. She says at one point she was famous, but not anymore, that people have one life for a time, and then another. Jim says it happens to everybody. Rebecca feels a little better after this. Jim explains that twenty years before, he was in the service in South Carolina, married to a girl named Laura. His father dies of a heart attack and falls off a ladder; his mother dies soon afterward of breast cancer. Jim says family is the most important thing. Jim's brother, Jack, dies of meningitis at age seven. His sister, Priscilla, called Polly, is eight years younger than Jim. Polly is dealing with breast cancer and other issues. Jim explains that Laura hated the cold, and moved to Florida.

Safe as Houses

Jim later confronts Kevin and tells him to never again sell Rebecca, or anyone, cheap firewood as good firewood. As a child, Jim is told by his mother that houses have personalities. Jim comes to believe that people look like their houses. Jim doesn't think Rebecca's house does her justice. He remembers coming to live up north with Laura, who hated the cold, didn't like the small town lifestyle, and didn't feel comfortable with a teenaged Polly running around. Jim becomes a parent to Polly, and Laura doesn't like this, either. They never have kids, and Jim always regrets it. Laura is now remarried with four kids in Florida.

Merry Christmas!

Oscar Winter and his neighbor, Levine, go to see the new James Bond film. Sonya has dinner with her sister and her family in Queens. Ben has a buffet supper at Amanda's parents' apartment. Kevin's family comes over to their house for dinner. Tad does a party in the children's cancer center in Nasserville's hospital. Jim gives Polly a beautiful white angora sweater. Rebecca almost misses the day and gets a text from Ben. Bebe plays Handel's "Messiah" the Jewish Home for the Aged and Infirm.



This is How These Things Happen, Part One

Rebecca begins calling the dog, Dog. Dog begins following her around everywhere she goes, including on her hikes. Dog takes an instant liking to Jim. One morning, Rebecca awakens to discover the ground around her covered in so much snow, she has to let Dog out to use the bathroom by way of a window. Rebecca goes to work, printing out some of her cross photographs. Just before four, the power goes out, and Rebecca doesn't have any candles.

This is How These Things Happen, Part 2

After dark, Jim arrives. He brings Rebecca a Coleman lantern. He breaks out a bottle of Tullamore Dew whiskey. Jim has been out plowing around, and on advice from Tad, goes up to see how Rebecca is getting along. With a little drink in them, Jim and Rebecca kiss. She pushes him away. He is forty-four; she is sixty. He doesn't care about the age difference. She says it is ridiculous. Jim considers leaving, but then kisses her several more times, and they go into her bedroom.

Analysis

As Rebecca's new life continues to unfold, so does her old life and all of the paths that brought her to her current situation and location in life. Much more becomes readily apparent about her, bolstering the idea that she was never after fame and limelight. This is especially clear when it is revealed that Rebecca loves the domestic life and is happy with a mundane, everyday routine. Her husband Peter is not, and this launches him into further adultery. Rebecca is mostly angry at Peter not for his betrayal of her, but for his betrayal of the family, in particular, Ben. Peter has proven to be a poor father and a poor excuse for a man. Jim continues to stand out as a good man, confronting Kevin over selling people, including Rebecca, cheap fir as real firewood.

Rebecca grows closer to Jim. As she does, she learns more and more about Jim, including the fact that Jim himself has had something of a difficult life. His parents both die, leaving him to care for his sister, who has no one else to care for her. Jim's own wife Laura ends up leaving him for the warmer climate in Florida. In a way, this brings the two of them closer together. Neither of them is perfect, but their vulnerability makes them infinitely more human and allows them to more deeply understand and care for one another.

The arrival of the dog named Jack at Rebecca's house signifies loyalty in some small way. Jack presents Rebecca with an unconditional loyalty that she presently lacks in her life. Her son is loyal, but he is not always around. Jack is loyal, and he is always present. He becomes a friend to Rebecca quite quickly and remains with her, tagging along on hikes and sleeping inside the house.



Discussion Question 1

In what ways are Jim and Rebecca able to bond? Why is this possible?

Discussion Question 2

How do each of the characters in the novel spend Christmas? Select three and explain how their celebrations of Christmas reflect their identities as characters.

Discussion Question 3

Why is Jim so incensed that Kevin is selling cheap fir wood as good firewood? What does Jim do about it?

Vocabulary

Mortifying, exile, truncated, archaic, agrarian, indefatigable, demurred, haughty, apprehend, symphonic.



What Came Next Her - Papa Gone

Summary

What Came Next Her - Papa Gone

What Came Next: Her

Rebecca wakes up happy the next morning. She feels like a million bucks. She is even happier remembering how happy Jim looked with everything. He leaves a note on the table saying he will be back that night with lasagna. But, he does not come back.

What Happened Next: Him

Jim goes to see his sister Polly. He is thrilled with the night before. The reason Jim recognizes the dog is because the dog moves from place to place. He had stayed at his sister's for a while. He will not say a word to Polly or to Rebecca. He finds his sister dead in the snow.

Polly Bates

Polly Bates had been a beautiful girl. She was only ten when her mother had died. She was twelve when Jim joined the Marines. She was sixteen when their father died. Polly became known as the town bicycle, sleeping around with everyone she can, giving everyone a ride. She was into alcohol and drugs. Jim sent her to rehab, where she recovered. It was then that it became clear that she was mentally unbalanced. Jim jealously protected his sister following this. For two years, a mix of pills helped to settle Polly down, but it didn't last. She tried to commit suicide three times, but failed. Often, she would go onto the roof to look at the stars. She carried with her the studded pink bear that was won at the Blueberry Festival by Jim. On this particular time, she freezes to death in the snow.

The Storm

Rebecca tries to work, read books, and get along after Jim does not come back. She photographs Dog and worries about running into Jim somewhere in town. She goes hiking in the woods and always ends up near the tree stand. While going over which photos she should send to TG, she gets pink balloons for Valentine's Day from Tad. Tad thanks her for helping to inspire him to change his life, which he will let her know about when it happens. She will be teaching at Carnegie Mellon for a semester. She begins looking at houses in the area. She and Dog take longer and longer walks. Without much to do, she thinks too much about everything from her son's failure to achieving world recognition while young to having decent sex with Peter. She feels lonely.

What in the World Was That?



Rebecca buys a space heater to help warm the little house. She remembers fires caused by space heaters long ago and her mother's remarks that the poor never learn. She imagines her father would be opposed to a space heater. While shopping for a space heater, a woman tells Rebecca she knows who she is. Rebecca wonders what it was all about.

What in the World Was That?

Rebecca accepts an invitation to speak at an event called "The Women's Art League Presents an Afternoon With Rebecca Winter" with an honorarium sufficient to cover her mother's nursing home fees for a month. She journeys into New York to give the talk. When she gets home, Dog is very happy to see her.

Lying Low

Sarah comes to visit with coffee and pound cake because Rebecca hasn't been around in a while. Sarah tells Rebecca that Kevin has gotten a DWI, that Jim Bates doesn't come in regularly anymore, and that Tad wants to talk to her. The next week, Rebecca returns to Two for Tea.

Dog Pictures

Six of Rebecca's dog pictures on display in Tea for Two sell for \$1200. Sarah is thrilled for Rebecca, who persuades Sarah to take a \$100 commission. TG is angry about this, telling her that it devalues her work. Rebecca demands to know when TG last sold anything. TG responds that the problem is the product, not the salesperson. Rebecca fires her.

Papa Gone

Rebecca receives an email from Sonya. It reads, "Papa Gone."

Papa Gone

The New York Times publishes an obituary for Oscar Winter, former President of Freeman Foundations of New York City, survived by his wife, daughter, and grandson.

Papa Gone

Rebecca, Ben, and Sonya go over funeral plans for Oscar. Sonya explains her father coughed and fell while watching Family Feud. Oscar was very clear in that he did not want a Shivah. Nearly all of the people Oscar worked with at Freeman Foundations, a girdle company, attend the funeral service. Rebecca recounts the dog pictures episode and firing TG. She asks Ben if he knows anyone who would like to represent her. Ben says it will be easy because she is Rebecca Winter. Rebecca responds that she was Rebecca Winter. Ben says she will always be Rebecca Winter, and it makes her cry. At the cemetery, Ben recites the burial Kaddish. Tad attends the service with Sarah and sings, causing Bebe to cry. Ben is very impressed. Sarah explains she would have told



Jim if Jim had not been dealing with his own problems from the death of Polly. This is the first time Rebecca hears of Polly's passing.

Analysis

The relationship that develops between Rebecca and Jim seems to burn out quickly, mainly due to pride on the part of Rebecca. Jim, discovering the death of his sister, is preoccupied with her final arrangements and grief. Rebecca, believing Jim has ditched her, refuses to even seek him out or ask Sarah about him. Her wounded pride does not allow her to try to understand what could possibly have happened to Jim. She focuses on herself, her own life, and her own problems, in a very New York way.

Yet, Rebecca's self-pity doesn't last too long as she discovers that her father has passed away. This now preoccupies her time as she gets her father's funeral in order. This comes on the heels of firing TG. Also, Sarah had shown true friendship when she came to visit Rebecca after Rebecca had stopped coming in to Tea for Two. Sarah goes even further showing real friendship by attending Rebecca's father's funeral. She brings Tad along. She also brings the news that Jim's sister Polly has died. Rebecca had not yet heard of Polly's death before Sarah told her. Rebecca is stunned.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Rebecca refuse to try to contact Jim following his sister's death?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Jim does not reach out to contact Rebecca following the death of Polly?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Rebecca fire TG? Is her decision to do so justified? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Domesticity, denuded, derivative, patina, caustically, fortuitously, elated, utilitarian.



Shivah - Still Life With Tin Roof

Summary

Shivah - Still Life With Tin Roof

Shivah

Tad and Sarah eat at an Italian place on East Twenty-First Street. The waiters sing. Tad says his heart belongs to New York, while Sarah says she could never stand to live in New York since there is so much going on and all the girls are thin. Meanwhile, Ben and Rebecca eat lunch elsewhere. He questions her about not knowing about Jim, saying New Yorkers mind their own business. Rebecca says she doesn't know if she is a New Yorker anymore. As Tad and Sarah leave, he takes one of the restaurant's business cards.

More Shivah

Rebecca begins writing letters to Jim, but none of them seem to say what she wants to say. She finally settles on a line which says that she is sorry about his sister. Then, she realizes that she does not know his address.

A Young Agent, an Old Photographer

Paige Whittington is the agent Ben recommends to his mother. Maddie Becker, a painter friend of Ben's, recommends Paige to Ben for Rebecca.

What Happens Next

Paige meets Rebecca at Tea for Two. Paige's mother is English, and she loves English food. So, she is thrilled to order Sarah's cooking. She is very impressed by it. Furthermore, Paige loves Rebecca's new work. Rebecca agrees to be represented by Paige, who sends Maddie flowers and takes Ben out to dinner. Later, Paige has Ben move in with her.

The White Cross Series

A review of the white cross photos calls them enigmatic and heartbreaking.

Mysterious and Heartbreaking

The opening is in Williamsburg in Brooklyn. The party and opening are attended by hip, young people, as well as older people. Friends come out of the woodwork to congratulate and celebrate with Rebecca. Even an Episcopal priest attends the opening. People appreciate the edgy, religious take of the photographs. In a quiet moment, Ben and Rebecca talk. Sonya will be going back to Poland once Oscar's



things are handled. In the swirl of activity, she briefly sees Jim Bates, but then he is gone.

The Flag

Sarah is the one who convinces Jim to go to the opening because she is unable to go. She asks if Jim will show Rebecca the flag.

Struck by Lightning

Rebecca and Dog go for a walk. She finds Jim Bates in the tree stand. She tells him he owes her lasagna. She asks him if he liked her photos; he says he did not. He tells her the dog is named Jack and belonged to Polly. She apologizes to Jim and then leaves, with Jack following.

Not Mysterious

Jim Bates shows up at the door an hour later and says the photos aren't mysterious. Jim explains in tears the crosses and the mementos were from happy parts of Polly's life, and they had been placed there by Polly. He had been going around collecting the mementos. There were more than what were photographed by Rebecca. Jim explains that Rebecca's pictures aren't just pictures, but they are real. Rebecca then gives him the little note she wrote for him, for which he thanks her. Rebecca realizes now that Polly was putting to rest parts of her life. She has Jim lie down on the couch, where he falls asleep. She considers photographing him, but then feels ashamed for considering it.

The White Cross Series: The Reviews

One review of the White Cross series calls it Rebecca's masterwork.

The White Cross Series: The Present

Only three of the White Cross photos sell, but Paige and Rebecca are not worried.

(The White Cross Series: Much Later)

The Griefers, arguably the biggest fans of Rebecca's work, bequeath a complete set of White Cross photos to the International Center of Photography in time to tour the US and Europe in 2018.

Lasagna at Last

Early in June, Jim shows up with lasagna. It is delicious, It is from a place called Mario's Rancho in Bentonville, which makes Mexican and Italian food. Jim explains the flag he put up on Rebecca's house was a signal to Polly that the house was a good house. Polly could see Rebecca's place from hers, sometimes. Jim admires the Mary Cassatt painting hanging in the cabin, but Rebecca reveals it is only an imitation, as it turns out.



She reflects on the eighteenth-century American desk her father purchased and worked at for years. It sells at auction for \$548,000. Jim doesn't care that the Mary Cassatt is a fake because it is still beautiful. Jim tells her not to go to Pittsburgh to be a visiting professor. He asks her to stay the night. Rebecca agrees. Jim looks up and says thank you.

A Second Chance

Jim gets up early to make breakfast, but Rebecca brings him back to bed. They believe Jack has eaten the bacon.

Later

Tad gets a job as a singing waiter at the Italian restaurant in New York. Kevin is later crushed to death by a tree while cutting one down. Jim tells Rebecca that one night Kevin tried to steal money from Sarah's lock box. A year later, Sarah adopts a baby girl from Guatemala whom she names Alice. Sarah begins dating a nurse named Jim who tends to Alice. Dorothea visits regularly, and ends up moving nearby. Ben makes an indie film that wins a prize. He and Maddie stay together. A book of dog photographs by Rebecca is published, which is well-received.

Still Life with Tin Roof

Jim comes to Pittsburgh with Rebecca. She later buys the cottage in which she lives when the rent is jacked up on her. She converts the cottage into a studio, and builds a new house with three bedrooms to live in. Jim suggests a tin roof. A huge tract of property is included with the purchase of the cottage. A cave is on the property, where they discover two white crosses, a Bible, and a sleeping bag, as well as a photograph of Jim and Polly. The cave has long since collapsed. Ben and Maddie have a child they name Oliver, while Sarah and Jim have a baby as well. Rather than go to the fire hall for a chicken dinner, Jim and Rebecca stay home to eat salmon.

Analysis

Slowly, the different aspects of Rebecca's life that were in disarray come back together, stronger than ever. Her new agent, and her new photographs, signal a meteoric rise back to fame and a stable living; indeed, the cross series of photographs are declared to be Rebecca's masterworks. At the same time, Rebecca is thrilled to see that Ben is finally settling down with Maddie and that Peter is going bald. Perhaps, the best thing to happen with Rebecca is the reconciliation with Jim. The two begin a committed relationship. Eventually, they move in with one another. The cottage that had served as Rebecca's home will become her studio, and she will build a new, larger house on the same property beside the cottage.

By the end of the novel, the lives of each of the people who have populated Anna Quindlen's book all seem to have some sort of happy ending. Tad decides to pursue his dream of singing once more, though in a slightly different way by becoming a singing



waiter. Kevin is killed by a falling tree, freeing Sarah from his chains. She goes on to adopt a baby girl, meets and marries a nurse named Jim, and has another baby with him. Jack continues to live with Jim and Rebecca, and Rebecca comes to understand that her photos aren't just pictures. They are real things with real emotions. They mean something to so many people. She finally comes to understand as well that her life is far, far from over, and she is not a has-been.

Discussion Question 1

What does it take to convince Rebecca, both personally and professionally, that her life is not over?

Discussion Question 2

What does Rebecca learn about photography through Jim and the white crosses?

Discussion Question 3

Why do Rebecca's dog photos sell so well as opposed to the white cross photos? Does Rebecca find this a positive or a negative thing? Why?

Vocabulary

Variegated, batik, immutable, enigmatic, tableaux, begat, maniacal, exquisitely, iteration.



Characters

Rebecca Winters

Rebecca Winters is the sixty-year old main character and principal protagonist in the novel *Still Life with Breadcrumbs* by Anna Quindlen. Reeling from a divorce and a faded career and under the weight of financial troubles, Rebecca leaves New York for the upstate town of Squamash where she takes an old cottage to save up money. Apart from her own bills, her parents and her son Ben depend on her for financial support. Rebecca soon meets and befriends Sarah, the owner and operator of the local coffee place, Tea for Two, who admires Rebecca's photography.

Rebecca also meets and befriends a roofer named Jim Bates who repairs her cabin,. Jim helps Rebecca get work taking photos of birds for the State Wildlife Agency, and the two become friends. Later, they are romantically involved. While staying at the cottage, Rebecca begins photographing a series of white crosses and mementos that she finds, which launch her into renewed success, along with a new agent. She discovers that the crosses and mementos were left behind by Jim's sister Polly and were her way of saying goodbye to the past. Rebecca learns then that the pictures she takes aren't just pictures, but they are real things with feeling and meaning to them.

Jim Bates

Jim Bates is a local resident of Squamash, New York, and a US Marine veteran. While in South Carolina, he meets and marries a beautiful girl named Laura, who travels with him to New York when his father and mother both die, leaving Jim to raise his sister, Polly. Ultimately, Laura leaves Jim and they divorce. Jim becomes an important and well-liked member of the community, defending Sarah's honor against her husband, Kevin, for example. Jim later meets Rebecca while repairing her roof, and the two ultimately begin a romantic relationship. When Jim discovers his sister dead, it crushes him, and he is shocked to learn that Rebecca has been photographing the white crosses left behind by his sister. He helps Rebecca to understand that the photographs she takes are of real things, with real meanings behind them. Later, Jim and Rebecca move in together.

Sarah Ashby

Sarah Ashby is the owner and operator of the Squamash, New York coffee shop, Tea for Two, which boasts American and English fare. Sarah is married to Kevin, and is overweight. As such, she is the target of jokes by Kevin. However, she remains a loyal and dutiful wife to him. Sarah is defended by Jim Bates. She comes to highly respect him for his business advice and friendship. When Rebecca moves to town, Sarah and Rebecca become fast friends. Sarah begins selling Rebecca's photographs at her shop. She sells quite a few for Rebecca. Kevin ends up killed by a tree, and Sarah ultimately



remarries, adopting a baby girl and having one with her new husband, a nurse named Jim.

Ben Symington

Ben Symington is the son of Peter Symington and Rebecca Winters. Presumed to be in his late twenties, Ben is a college graduate who is on and off-again employed, struggling to make his way in the film industry. He goes through girlfriends like water, but deeply loves his mother. He helps to bolster her confidence in her darkest hours. He is asked by Rebecca if he knows any agents, and Paige Whittington is recommended through Maddie. Maddie and Ben end up dating, and Ben ultimately wins a film festival award for an independent film he makes.

Peter Symington

Peter Symington is the ex-husband of Rebecca Winters. English by birth, he is a professor of medieval erotica. He marries Rebecca, thinking that she is wild; however, she is not. Bored with the domestic life, Peter commits adultery which leads to a divorce. He continues going through a string of wives and affairs. By the end of the novel, he is old and balding.

Paige Whittington

Paige Whittington is arts agent who represents numerous artists and painters. She is thrilled to be taken on by Rebecca Winters, having been recommended by Maddie and Ben. She loves Rebecca's work, and gets behind her one-hundred percent.

Tad

Theodore "Tad" Brinks is considered the second-saddest story in Squamash. When younger, Tad had a beautiful soprano voice, but as he aged, so did his voice and his career. He becomes a clown, but Rebecca inspires him not to give up. He decides to become a singing waiter at an Italian restaurant in New York.

Polly

Priscilla "Polly" Bates is a young woman in her thirties. She is the sister of Jim Bates. Younger by eight years, Polly is a wild teenager, sleeping with men all over town, and becoming seriously involved with drugs and alcohol as she gets older. Jim comes home to care for her with the death of their parents, and ultimately sends her to rehab. It is then discovered that she is mentally unbalanced. Jim continues to care for her, and Polly begins traveling around the woods, planting white crosses and leaving behind objects and mementos from her life, saying goodbye to them. Ultimately, during a



snowstorm, Polly heads outside to look at the stars on her roof, falls asleep, and freezes to death.

Maddie

Maddie is a painter and a friend of Ben's who recommends Paige Whittington as an agent for Rebecca. Maddie and Ben ultimately end up in a relationship and move in together.

Jack

Jack is a dog who travels around between owners throughout Squamash. He is a mutt, owned at one point by Polly and later owned by Rebecca.

Symbols and Symbolism

Cameras

Cameras are used by Rebecca for photography. She carries them around with her on her travels and on hikes, and uses them to create series of photographs, including her Kitchen Counter, Dog, and White Cross series. She takes good care of them, for they are her livelihood, and cannot be damaged because she will not have enough money for repairs, or for new ones.

Still Life with Breadcrumbs Poster

The “Still Life with Breadcrumbs” poster is a mass-produced print of her most famous photograph of some dirty dishes and half-eaten bread. It becomes an iconic image of motherhood and womanhood, and inspires countless people. It is a mark of the height of her career in her forties. Sarah's mother has a copy of the poster, and Rebecca signs it for her.

White Crosses

White crosses are placed in the ground all over the woods and mountain near where Polly and Rebecca live. They are planted by Polly, photographed by Rebeca, and are Polly's way of saying goodbye to the past parts of her life. They help Rebecca to understand that photos aren't just pictures of things. They are real and have real meaning.

Tin Roof

A tin roof is put on Rebecca's new house. It is suggested by Jim for the house that they will both come to live in. The house with a tin roof is built beside the cottage, which will become Rebecca's photography studio.

Laptop

A laptop computer is used and carried by Rebecca in order to respond to emails. She also uses it to review, edit, and print out photographs. Rebecca accesses the internet using the laptop and the wireless internet connection at Tea for Two.



White flag

A white flag is placed on top of Rebecca's cottage by Jim. Rebecca has no idea why Jim would put a flag on top of her house at first. She later learns that it is Jim's way of letting his sister know the house was a good house and that there were no bad guys in it. His sister would not be afraid of the house or Rebecca.

Tracking Gun

A tracking gun is used by Jim Bates for his work in the State Wildlife Agency on the weekends. He spends his days in a tree stand, using the gun to track bald eagles and other birds.

Symbol/Object 10

Symbol/Object 9

Symbol/Object 7

Symbol/Object 6

Settings

Squamash

Squamash is a small, rural mountain town in upstate New York, not far from the city. It is a friendly, welcoming town. It is host to the coffee shop Tea for Two (or More), run by Sarah Ashby. It is also the home of Jim Bates, his roofing company, and his sister Polly. It is also the location of the cottage that Rebecca rents. She is so enamored with her new life in Squamash that she decides to relocate there permanently.

The Cottage

The cottage is located outside the town of Squamash, New York. It is rented to Rebecca, who moves there in the summer, believing it to be a charming woodland place. The cottage is a little rundown, but Rebecca makes the best of it, turning it into a home for herself. When her career takes off again, she buys the cottage, converts it into a photography studio, and builds a new house beside it.

Tea for Two or More

Tea for Two (or More) is a coffee shop and restaurant owned and operated by Sarah Ashby and her husband, Kevin, in Squamash, New York. The restaurant features American food with a selection of English food as well. It is a hotspot for locals like Jim, and new residents like Rebecca always receive their first meals free. Tea for Two becomes host to Rebecca's photography, where it sells frequently.

Manhattan

Manhattan is one of the five boroughs of New York. It is the wealthiest area. It is where Rebecca originally lived in an overpriced apartment. Rebecca still travels there for business and to visit family after she relocates in Squamash. In the past, Rebecca attended parties and gallery showings with her ex-husband and friends in Manhattan.

The Tree Stand

The tree stand is where Jim spends his weekend days tracking birds for the State Wildlife Agency. Located near Rebecca's cabin, the tree stand is on land that belongs to the power company. Eventually, Rebecca joins him there, doing photography for the State Wildlife Agency. The tree stand becomes a meeting place for them to eat and talk about life. It becomes a comfortable location for them both.



Themes and Motifs

Coming of Late-Middle-Age

Coming of late-middle-age is a dominant theme in the novel *Still Life with Bread Crumbs* by Anna Quindlen. Coming of age includes the spiritual, emotional, moral, and character growth. Usually grounded in real-world experiences and events, it is the evolution and maturation of one or more individuals. In this case, the coming of age has to do with later-middle age. It primarily revolves around the character of Rebecca Winters.

When the novel begins, Rebecca Winters is sixty years old. She believes that she has reached the end of her life professionally and personally. Her career as a photographer is seemingly over, as most of her best work has been done decades before. She has since faded in name and popularity, and she feels that any new work she does is a cheap replication of something she has already done. Likewise, she has no personal, emotional investment in the work that she does. She simply takes pictures. Personally, she is divorced and alone. She believes at her age she will probably not find anything close to love again. She consents to relegating her role in life as that of a financial provider for her mother and her son.

Rebecca's time in Squamash changes everything as she comes into contact with Jim. First, they become friends. Later, a romantic relationship develops between them. It is through Jim and the photographs of the white crosses left behind by Polly that Rebecca comes to understand that she is not just taking photographs. Her pictures are much more than just photographs. They are real things with real meaning to them. This enables Rebecca to understand that she can emotionally invest in her work, and not just photograph things she happens to find. That Jim, sixteen years younger and in the prime of his life decides that Rebecca is worth a committed relationship also does wonders for her personally, as she feels loved and desired once more. As such, her self-confidence grows, both in herself, and in her art.

Friendship

Friendship is a major theme in the novel *Still Life with Bread Crumbs* by Anna Quindlen. Friendship involves mutual, platonic feelings of affection, compassion, as well as loyalty and emotional, spiritual, and physical support between two or more individuals. Friendship in the novel is seemingly something new to Rebecca, and it has a tremendous impact on her life.

While at her father's funeral, Rebecca is stunned to learn from Sarah that Jim's sister, Polly has died. Ben sums up the way that Rebecca has lived her life, saying that New Yorkers keep to themselves, so it is only natural that she would not know what had happened. However, Rebecca counters that she doesn't believe she is a New Yorker – at least in that way – anymore. The reason primarily has to do with the fact that she has

changed, and that Sarah and Tad came all the way down to New York to attend her father's funeral simply for the sake of being there for her.

When one lives in a small town, there is a sense of community in the way that is not common in a larger city. People tend to know one another, including the things that go on in their lives, as well as their habits and customs. Rebecca and Sarah quickly become friends when Rebecca moves to Squamash, and Rebecca quickly becomes a regular at Sarah's coffee shop.

Following the death of Polly, and the absence of Jim, Rebecca falls into depression. In New York mode, she isolates herself, but it is Sarah who shows up unannounced and uninvited, breaking through Rebecca's isolation. Sarah brings food and coffee, as well as her friendship and love, and is able to convince Rebecca to return to the world. Sarah's friendship is enough to get Rebecca back on her feet, and helps her to realize that friendship –real friendship –matters. The death of Polly is no longer Jim's business, but Rebecca's as well. Reaching out to Jim will pave the way for their relationship.

Art

Art is a major theme in the novel *Still Life with Bread Crumbs* by Anna Quindlen. Art – which can take the form of fine art, such as paintings, sculptures, and drawings, photography, music, literature, or theater –is a product of a society or nation's culture and consciousness. Traditionally, fine art is meant to capture beauty and bring consolation to mankind through the passion and love of the work by the artist. In the contemporary world, it is also meant to convey messages or ideas. In the novel, the principal form of art presented is that of photography.

Rebecca Winters is a famous photographer, having seemingly stumbled into stardom by accident. She never sets out to be famous. She merely photographs her life while raising Ben as a child. Her work is then seen as iconic and representative of motherhood and womanhood. It catapults her into fame. Rebecca begins photographing things she finds, never quite understanding how photographers can be considered brilliant. Indeed, she uses photography as a way to stand apart from life, while others use it as a way to keep close to life.

Yet, it is through her documentation of the white crosses and her relationship with Jim that Rebecca comes to understand that photographs are not just pictures, but are of something real, and of something with meaning. As such, she should not be afraid to become emotionally invested or connected in the things that she is photographing in a way that does not set her apart from life. Art is meant to be felt, whether it is for the love of beauty or a message conveyed. Rebecca comes to understand this as she actually feels the cross photographs.

Theme/Motif 4

Theme/Motif 5

Styles

Point of View

Anna Quindlen tells her novel *Still Life With Bread Crumbs* from the third-person omniscient perspective. While the novel is primarily about Rebecca, the third-person omniscient narrative allows the writers to make sure the reader is fully aware of everything going on in the world of the novel, sometimes before the character is aware of the events. For example, Sarah has no idea why Jim and Kevin hate each other, but the reader learns it is because Kevin insults his wife with fat jokes in front of strangers at a bar. Jim confronts him and calls him out on it. The reader also learns that Jim's sister Polly has died. For that reason, Jim does not come back to Rebecca's house. Rebecca, however, believes Jim has ditched her. This omniscient understanding of events in the novel increases frustration and adds drama as Rebecca makes false assumptions and her pride gets in the way of her reaching out to Jim to see what has happened.

Language and Meaning

Still Life With Bread Crumbs is told in language that is simple and straightforward. Given her target audience of busy, world-experienced adults, the author writes pointedly and clearly in order to tell a story and make resoundingly make her points (such as the idea that photographs are more than just pictures). This simple and straightforward language also allows the readers to clearly understand and respect the complexity and depth of the characters she has written, strengthening the plot and the messages contained therein.

Structure

Anna Quindlen divides her novel *Still Life With Bread Crumbs* into unnumbered, but titled chapters. They are mostly chronological and sometimes appear as newspaper clippings or internet reviews rather than as part of the plot. This allows the writer to tell the story as both a progression and a recounting. On the one hand, Rebecca's life is advancing, but she consistently reflects on, and is caught up by, the past. The fact that some chapters are newspaper articles or reviews of her work adds an interesting touch, giving the reader a perspective other than that of the narrator's. It allows for greater context to the overall plot. For example, an anthropology project of Rebecca's clearly introduces her family, while the narrator does not do so.

Quotes

How did I wind up here? Rebecca thought. How on earth did I wind up here?
-- Narrator/Rebecca (No Outlet paragraph 33)

Importance: When the novel begins, Rebecca has had to leave her posh New York apartment behind for a broken-down cottage in the mountain town of Squamash in upstate New York. Since Rebecca is a famous photographer, she and the reader can only wonder how she went from Manhattan to a mountain.

Talking about art requires artists to sound purposeful and sure of themselves, but she'd never felt that way.
-- Narrator (How She Wound Up There: The Money Version paragraph 5)

Importance: Rebecca, as a photographer, does not feel confident in her abilities. But, she cannot exactly understand why she lacks the confidence. It will only be later that she discovers she has been using photography as a way to stand apart from life, rather than embracing it. She also learns that she hasn't been truly passionate about what she does in a way that other artists are passionate. This begins to change with both the white cross series and Jim's revelation that photographs mean something more than being just a picture.

Rebecca never hung her own work in her home. She felt it would be like talking to herself. Which she did a fair amount in the cottage these days. Otherwise she would never speak to anyone. (Knew It When She Saw It paragraph 10)

Importance: Sometimes, artists refuse to hang up their own work in their homes for various reasons. For Rebecca, it would feel as if she were conversing with herself about things she has seen and photographed. That is unnecessary for her to do because she wants to separate herself from life. Rebecca's sense of humor shows by the fact that she talks to herself at the cottage.

That's what she felt when she looked at the cross photographs... She just felt them.
-- Narrator (Get a Job paragraph 6)

Importance: Rebecca has long been a photographer who observes, rather than a photographer who participates. She admits she has used her photos as a way to step away from life. However, the cross pictures she is taking now are transforming the way she deals with her art. She is beginning to actually feel her subjects in a way that she never has before.

It's a funny thing, hope. It's not like love, or fear, or hate. It's a feeling you don't really know you had until it's gone.
-- Narrator (The Storm paragraph 3)

Importance: Rebecca has been depressed and lonely for so long that she doesn't even



recognize how quickly Jim becomes important to her. His presence fills her with life and hope and vitality. Yet, it is only when he is gone that she realize how influential and how much of an impact he has had on her. This sends Rebecca into a spiral of depression and isolation. With Jim gone, so is Rebecca's hope.

You will always be Rebecca Winter.
-- Ben (Papa Gone paragraph 43)

Importance: Following the funeral for her father, Rebecca sadly reflects on her life and asks Ben if he knows of anyone who would represent her, though she is not what she used to be. Ben tells her that she will always be Rebecca Winters. Nothing will ever change that. Ben's words mean so much to Rebecca that she cries with happiness.

I just want you to understand what you were taking pictures of. I want you to know what they were really were. They're not just pictures. They're real.
-- Jim (Not Mysterious paragraph 22)

Importance: Whereas Rebecca has approached the cross photographs with the same sort of passive nature she had with "Still Life with Bread Crumbs," she is beginning to feel something for what she is photographing. Yet, she admits she uses photography as a way to stand apart from life. But Jim reminds her that photography is not just about taking pictures, but about feeling, about meaning, because the photographs she takes are of real things, and that means the photographs themselves are real things.

Other people used photographs as a way to keep close to the events of their lives; she had used them as a way to stand apart.
-- Narrator (Not Mysterious paragraph 34)

Importance: The narrator is explaining the problem with the philosophy of Rebecca's photography. Rather than using photography to embrace life, she has used it to keep life away. Her attitude will change with Jim and the White Cross Series.

They are still married. Until death do us part. Their marriage remains a mystery to me. But it was probably mysterious to them as well. Perhaps all marriage is.
-- Rebecca (Sitting In a Tree Again paragraph 48)

Importance: Rebecca, speaking with Jim, reflects on how frail their marriages have been. Both are divorced. But, she reflects with amazement at her parents, who have been married for decades, and still are. Too often, people try to make sense out of things to make them work, rather than leaving things up to the beautiful mystery of what happens naturally. Seeking perfection is sometimes the most imperfect thing to do. Leaving things to happen naturally might work best. Why things work sometimes and not at other times is a mystery.

Quote 11

Quote 12

Quote 3