Suite Française Study Guide

Suite Française by Irène Némirovsky

Contents

Plot Summary

An unfinished novel by a brilliant author, Suite Française is written by Irene Nemirovsky about a period of history of which she, herself, will become a victim. As the German occupation of France develops, so does Suite Francaise, a novel planned to be divided into five parts, three of which are never completed.

Irene Nemirovsky is born in the Ukraine, but lives and successfully writes in Paris as a young adult. Jewish by birth, she converts with her husband to Catholicism, and plans to raise their two small daughters as Catholics. Nemirovsky's description of Paris in June in the first part of the book, entitled "The Storm," is unforgettably poignant and rich. The irony of the Nazi invasion of France in a particularly fragrant and balmy springtime is stark and realistic. The simple lives of Parisians have already been transformed by the sounds of sirens and the awareness of a dreadful war moving ever closer to their homes.

In Part One, Storm in June, we meet the Pericand family, whose eldest son is a Catholic priest and whose paternal grandfather resides with the family. They have five children and live a structured life of philanthropic affluence, taking care to always appear helpful, if not humble, toward those less fortunate. Facing the fact that Paris will soon be occupied and perhaps destroyed, the family prepares to flee. Young Hubert Pericand, ashamed at his country's defeat, wants to fight in the war. Gabriel Corte, a wealthy, delicate writer, also lives a luxurious life in Paris, and is forced to flee for his life. The Michauds, whose only son is missing in the war, are salt of the earth characters who both are employed by Monsieur Corbin, a local banker. With the promise of continued employment, they are expected to meet Corbin in Tours later, but due to the horrible conditions as France becomes occupied, and Corbin's obligations to his mistress, Arlette Corail, they both lose their jobs. In the pressing rush to escape Paris, with a shortage of fuel and food, we sense the leveling of the playing field among the rich and poor, since all the money in the world cannot buy what is not available.

In the second section of the book called "Dolce," we are introduced to Madame Angellier, her daughter-in-law, Lucile, and a local man named Benoit, as the occupation settles in. In the Dolce section of the book, after much hardship and terror and several deaths among the characters' families, the focus turns to the relationship between Lucile Angellier, whose husband is missing in the war, and the German officer who has been "billetted" to their household, Bruno von Falk. The intricacies of that relationship and the many taboos that prevent it from blossoming, dominate much of this section. Nemirovsky explores the irony of enemies living together and how, as much concealed hatred and resentment is masked by manners and deference toward the dominating force, there is a softening that takes place among the German soldiers and the townspeople, who come to see them as human beings. When a farmer, Benoit Sabarie, kills a German officer, everything changes and the tensions, suspicions and anger that promised to erupt at the beginning of the occupation resurface. The relationship between Lucile and Bruno comes to a screeching halt, even though they have acknowledged their love for one another.

The Germans finally leave France to invade Russia, facing more battle and loss, and their departure leaves a feeling of softness and sadness. Nemirovsky, although she made notes about what directions the rest of the story might take, never finishes the novel, since she is arrested and taken to Auschwitz where she is killed by the Germans. Shortly thereafter, her husband is also arrested and killed in the concentration camps. Their two daughters are able to save her manuscripts and notes for many years. Sandra Smith does a masterful job of translating Nemirovsky's beautiful, descriptive writing into English. So many years later, Suite Française is a masterpiece, and its lack of an ending makes a poignant statement about the author and her own unfortunate fate.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 1 and 2

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

In Paris, although it is still dark, the citizens are waking up to prepare for an air raid. Both rich and poor are somewhat concerned with the threat, however, it has not yet become real for them. The gunfire is audible in the distance and even though Paris is lovely, as ever, and the people have grown somewhat accustomed to the sounds of war, the city seems to be vibrating with anticipated danger as the war moves ever closer.

The Pericands are an upper middle-class family, whose eldest son, Philippe, is a Catholic priest.. Monsieur Pericand is curator of a national museum and employed by the French government, which explains their conflicted political feelings. His wife, Charlotte, a hard working but snobbish woman, is an organized and practical homemaker. She is a 47-year old mother of five children, who has also survived three miscarriages, referred to as "accidents."

Her elderly father-in-law who lives with them is heir to a considerable fortune, and Charlotte makes a point to be extremely kind and good to him, given his tendency to want to leave his fortune to a wayward children's home when he is not comfortable or well-served. We know he is precariously old since his hand is always "freezing cold, purple and shaking."

The younger children quote from their lessons, "The earth is a sphere which sits on absolutely nothing."

She and her staff of servants wonder how seriously to take the radio reports of approaching bombing of Paris. Her husband, Adrien Pericand returns home from work in a state of shock, and tells his wife privately that the family must leave their home for safety. Charlotte will make sure to pack up the silver, china, fur coats, food and medicine for their journey.

Their 17-year old son, Hubert, does not understand why the government has not called up troops to fight off this invasion. He decides he wants to stay behind and fight the enemy, but is overcome with tears of shame and frustration when he realizes France has already lost the war. Moreover, his mother does not show him any respect as an adult, but still clearly sees him as a child.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

In the first brief chapter, we see Paris as a city under threat, with windows blacked out and the people accustomed to preparing for air raids which, up until this point, has not happened yet in the city proper. However, the people are becoming accustomed to the noises in the distance and the surreal threat of impending doom as the Germans move closer.

Nemirovsky gives her readers the calm, comforting sense of life as usual in Pericand household, at the same time creating the rumbling foreboding of approaching disaster. The happy children, the basking cat, the beautiful weather and trees, and daily routines of homework, baths and caring for the children make the news of impending disaster almost surreal. There is some foreshadowing, not only with the slight confusion of the characters about how serious the war will become, but also symbolically, such as the passage about the cat with its bony piece of fish, not knowing whether or not to swallow the dangerous thing, but not able to spit it out.

We are aware that Charlotte Pericand portrays herself as a devout Catholic, although her strained patience with the "lower class" servants reveals that she is really quite haughty. In the same way that she treats her father-in-law gently for a reason, she treats her servants with feigned caring and "great kindness" to retain the image she has created. Since Adrien Pericand comes home very upset, we know the danger is imminent because his work is connected with the government, implying that he probably knows more about what is really going on. The children's homework topic lets us feel the dizzying possibility of everything about to come crashing down. The "tender June day," "full of love and regret" poignantly foreshadow the end of peace.

Teenaged Hubert is emotionally wrapped up in wanting to defend his country, rather than flee. He is too idealistic to give up the idea that perhaps the Germans can be defeated, but finally breaks down in childish tears realizing that France has lost the war. His opinions, although idealistic, are manly, but his emotions show that he is still a child, and his mother dismisses him as a child, as well.

Nemirovsky allows the characters to reveal their own personalities, as well as the dynamics among them as this family reacts to an uncertain future.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 3 and 4

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

The author introduces Gabriel Corte, a very wealthy writer who lives a luxurious life with his mistress(es) and his valuable possessions. He is quite self-absorbed, loves the color blue, and is described as somewhat effeminate or, at least affected in his mannerisms. His main mistress, Florence, serves him in every way, as though he were an honored king, feigning admiration and interest in his work. He expects her to keep up with his writing process and talks to her as if he is talking to himself about his work. Corte, who lives in peaceful seclusion, does not want to face the reality that the war is approaching, but is concerned more with his creative process. Corte has a penchant for champagne and fruit .

Their valet, Marcel, takes a call from Jules Blanc, who tells Florence that they must go to Brittany or the Midi, that the Germans have crossed the Seine. Marcel is disgusted that in his blind stupidity, Corte has not prepared in advance for this. He was there during the earlier war in 1914, and would have had this all done already. Florence packs her jewelry and Corte's manuscripts in preparation for their journey, of which the self-absorbed Corte is not even yet aware.

In Chapter 4, we return to the Pericand family. We learn that the revered eldest son, Philippe, has inherited the family trait for tuberculosis, but seems well for now. His mother hopes his exalted position will benefit her, and she feels he should be doing some thing more impressive than teaching small farmers in Switzerland. The Children's Home that his parents contribute generously to is well equipped for providing a good upbringing for unfortunate children, but they are referred to as "little inmates." The director of the home is described as a rat or tapir, with an animal's snout. Father Philippe has come to help evacuate the thirty boys from the Home, since the director purportedly has to go to his sick wife. Philippe learns he will be trucking the children to a vacant, donated chateau where they will camp outside. He will continue on back to his parish in Switzerland. He has come to oversee his family's evacuation, as well, and to pick up his brother Hubert.

Philippe does not like these children and feels no compassion for them. He is terrified by their "superficial obedience," and does not sense anything but evil in them, despite the religious atmosphere of the Home. Philippe preaches a short sermon to the boys, and they obediently and mechanically recite a prayer with him.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Again, the wealth of Nemirovsky's characters seems to overshadow their good sense or scruples. Corte is absolutely self-focused and refuses to even hear about the approaching dangers. He is a prima-donna, and Florence supports him in this, obviously

for her own reasons. Their manuscripts and the jewelry are the two most valuable things to her. The author notes that her makeup case takes up a lot of space, and that she is not a young woman. Corte even refers to her as a cow.

The champagne, fruit, motionless white dogs, cool paving stones, blue cineraria and the pouffe are skillfully used by the author to give a sense of the fluffy, surface-level life this man leads. She uses the word "delicate" in describing his hands. Ironically, the engraving on his desk implies that he is overwrought and burdened. We know Corte has connections in high places ,since he has received a call from the French Presidential office about the impending approach of the Germans.

In Chapter 4, Father Philippe Pericand has been volunteered by his father to take over the flock of orphans and get them to safety, but his good deed is tainted by his fear of them, and the implication that, although they seem "obedient," they have probably been mistreated. Obedience does not necessarily mean that the children are good in their hearts or humble and, in fact, implies the opposite. We learn that some of them were formerly imprisoned. The slimy director admits he teaches the rebellious ones how to behave and that the supervisors are "afraid." Philippe knows they are not good children, but has a glimmer of hope for them and plans to celebrate their First Communion with them. However, we learn they have "the thick hands of killers." This chapter is full of foreboding; the one boy who looks out the window during the prayer has a "bitter mouth, " they do not laugh when Philippe stumbles, Philippe has an "aversion," to them, and the author describes them as children of Satan who do not feel or desire "divine light." Philippe, ironically, preaches to the boys that the public misfortunes consist of private misfortunes, and this situation will allow them to feel solidarity. With the immense misfortunes these children have experienced, it is obvious his sermon falls on deaf ears. Finally, we are reminded that Philippe is vulnerable due to his weak lungs.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 5 and 6

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Paris is shutting down in preparation for the bombing. The Michauds, a husband and wife who are both employed at the same bank, are not wealthy but have a loving marriage. They wait to learn from the branch director, Monsieur Corbin, what they are to do. Corbin has a beneficial relationship with the Count de Furieres, and Madame Michaud entertains her husband with tales of their meetings and their "sour smiles." The Count invites Corbin to dinner parties, in exchange for which he is given ample credit at the bank, but he hopes to get into the coveted "jockey club," with the Count's help. Corbin who, for the most part hates women, has a dancer girlfriend, Arlette Corail, who "entertains" him at work. The dancer is arguing with Corbin about how she is going to get out of Paris; he has two cars, but he wants her to take the train. Corbin decides that the bank staff will move to their branch in Tours, and that Madame and Monsieur Michaud, along with the bank's files, will ride in the car. The Michaud's son, Jean Marie, has not been heard from in a week and they worry about his safety, but are grateful to be able to stay together.

In Chapter 6, the Pericand's car is almost hilariously filled, stacked and tied down with their valuable belongings, including linens, jewelry, silver, library, food, the cat, their bed, a pram, and a bicycle. Since the trains have stopped running, taxis are out of fuel, the Pericand's hire a van for the rest of their family, and Hubert will follow on his bicycle. Masses of people are trying to get their families out of town and there is a feeling of panic about losing their possessions, which is overtaken by indifference when they realize what is really important. The Pericand's servants are fearful, but doing their jobs loyally, even though they also need to leave. Philippe reassures his elderly Nanny that her boys will be alright. Poor old Monsieur Pericand, who seems to be teetering on the edge of dementia, is fragile and dependent, but knows what is going on. His servants have a major task carrying him down the stairs in his wheel chair. Once he is bundled up, wrapped up, gloves buttoned and in the car, he realizes he needs to use the bathroom, delaying them once more.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Clearly, Corbin is the self-centered, shallow character of this chapter. The fate of his employees rests in his hands, and he is portrayed as an opportunistic, over-fed, abusive and not particularly honest man, given the fact that he has been cheating on his wife for years. Although he claims that leaving Paris is not necessary, Corbin has already sent the bank executives to the countryside. The author describes him as "aggressive, rude and mean-spirited" in his relationships with women; he is clearly an unlikeable character. Arlette clearly feels she has sacrificed a lot for Corbin, who finally does not care an awful lot about her, although she, too is a user, using him for the wealth and

comfort he provides in exchange for sex—at least this is all implied in a very short few pages.

The Michauds, on the other hand, seem like very decent people who find themselves at the mercy of this man upon whom they have become dependent. They are a loving couple and love their only son, who is involved in the war.

The ruckus of trying to leave Paris with backed up trains, no gas for the cars and thousands of people trying to load their families and get out is described in chaotic terms. The absurdity of the wealthy Pericands taking so much of their wealth with them, while some cannot even find a way out of the city is a stark irony. We are reminded that it is still a beautiful time of year in Paris, the night starry and the smell of chestnut trees in the air, but the peaceful atmosphere is stirred up with the frantic activity of the exodus, adding the smell of suffering, and of petrol and dust that cracks "under your teeth like pepper." Nemirovsky describes the waves of shock that we can almost feel, as people at first try to save their things and then come to the realization that they are simply things, and their own survival is more important. The sense of being in a state of half-sleep, as if they are simply going on vacation, is an apt description of people who are under tremendous stress and shock.

The author's sense of humor about old Grandfather Pericand is sharp. He may be senile, but he has moments of great clarity. He almost seems to enjoy putting these folks through the trouble of taking care of him, knowing that they are depending upon his leaving a fortune to them. Perhaps just reluctant to leave home, he makes it hard for them to make the break, and suspects they will not make it, regardless.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 7 and 8

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Charles Langelet, a large man with a heart condition, carefully packs up his valuable porcelain himself, since his servants have fled Paris in fear. Surrounded by things he considers beautiful, his life is lived in a rigid routine and he considers himself cultured. His demeanor is one of accepting courage, unafraid of death. His friends consider him inimitable (probably facetiously) and miserly, but he is sure that they envy him. He owns other homes in safer places, but does not offer his friend shelter, and has finally resigned himself to leaving Paris, although he has waited until the last minute. He loves his things and is repulsed by the chaos of war, having lived a gentle life filled with art and expensive things. He feels superior and bitter toward the crudeness of humanity but he, himself, lives "in a universe of light and peace," and thinks he is simply destined to be hated and betrayed. This character is a true snob, and a stingy one, who invites the dislike of others, valuing his porcelain collection more than his friends.

In Chapter 6, the Michauds are carefully cleaning their humble apartment before they leave, out of respect for the years they have lived there. So worried about their son, they join the other bank employees who are being assigned numbers for the cars they are to ride in. Corbin has taken his wife's and mistress's jewelry for safekeeping. When the Michauds reach the car they are to travel in, Arlette and her dog are in their seats. Corbin and Arlette have an argument, and Corbin gives in to taking her in his car instead of the Michauds, since she promises to leave when they reach Tours, where his wife is waiting.

Issuing a nasty threat to Michaud that he will lose his job if he does not become more dynamic, Corbin tells them to take the train, and warns them to meet him in Tours. The Michauds return to their apartment but, after briefly considering staying in Paris, they finally realize, with a sense of disbelief, that they must get to Tours, since they are dependent upon Corbin. They find the train station blocked by soldiers and a crowd, and ultimately are forced to walk to Tours. A woman ahead of them reminds herself to pray and be thankful it is not winter.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Nemiorvosky has given her readers yet another character whose shallowness makes him quite unlikeable, and whose values are clearly skewed. Langelet is a selfish, arrogant man who feels he is above all of this human drama. He is taking care only of himself, and his general dislike of people seems to be returned to him by his friends. He resents being in this position and plans to leave Europe altogether because he cannot stand the "demented mob." He feels too noble, sophisticated and special to stick around for anything so ordinary.

The Michauds, although more likable, are perhaps somewhat spineless in their desperate dependence upon jobs that imprison them under a man who is vicious and condescending. Corbin does not even look out for them when things get tough, but still gruffly expects them to be there to serve him. They do not see any other options besides trying to save their meager jobs and now find themselves, like many others, having to travel on foot. They keep their sense of humor when Corbin tells them off, rather than apologizing for failing to keep his word about giving them a ride. They represent the fine, working-class, salt of the earth types, who usually end up with the short end of the stick at the expense of those who have more.

The author gives us the sense that all of the people fleeing Paris who once had unique lives and problems and families are suddenly in the same unfortunate boat and in a devastated state of mind, regardless of the social class to which they belong. The Michauds may find it easier to maintain a sense of humor because they are the have-nots who are more accustomed to inconvenience and lesser conditions than the other characters we have met.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 9 and 10

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Gabriel Corte, being overly discriminate about where he sleeps, ends up sleeping in his car with Florence since the hotels are crammed full and his fame and position is ineffective in getting what he wants. The hotel room he turns down looks out on a petrol depot, and Corte is secretly afraid that they will be bombed if they stay there. He is appalled and in denial over being afraid but decides they will sleep in the car for one night. The roads are jammed with people trying to get out of the city, and the tenor is hushed in fear of an unexpected bomb. People are sleeping everywhere on floors and in the streets, their heads supported by suitcases. Their sadness about what is to come "lacked both courage and hope. This is how animals waited to die." Corte is so hyper-sensitive, he cannot stand the sight of unfortunate people with their belongings, a woman whose head is bandaged, an old prostitute, or even the sound of his servants chewing food. He attempts to maintain his little cocoon within his car, but even this does not work for him. Florence, finally pressed into having a moment where she is genuine with him, is accused by Corte of having a lack of decency, and he orders her out of the car. However, at that moment planes fill the sky. Looking at the desperation around him, Corte is unable to eat. Florence shares their sandwiches with the maid and driver of their car.

In Chapter 10, the Pericands' week-long journey has been fraught with certain calamities. Their car has broken down once, and they have been in an accident. However, due to their affluent family connections, they are able to stay with people who have food and large homes. They are forced by their failing auto to stop in a small town that is choked with hoards of Parisian refugees who have set up camp near the river. The residents of the town feel for the refugees, but there are too many of them and their needs are great. The townspeople do not really think the Germans will ever reach them. The Pericands, who are relatively well-supplied, share some of their snacks with another family who seems well-to-do, Charlotte Pericand in her Christian righteousness feeling quite charitable. After going to the local church to pray, she decides to shop for more biscuits and tea, but all supplies of food are gone from the stores. Hubert jokes that pearl crowns will soon be in demand, since everything else seems to be gone. Suddenly Madame Pericand realizes her children are still sharing their chocolate and snacks with other children, and she turns on them angrily, realizing that nothing matters now except for keeping her own children fed.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Gabriel Corte is a sad human being. He has so carefully insulated himself from the negativity of the world with beauty that he is unable to bear the ugliness of the reality in which he finds himself. His decision to stay cloistered in his car to protect himself from the coarseness of the refugees proves to be almost as difficult for him, since there are

other people in the car, as well. His small world is coming unraveled, and the true nature of Corte's shallow nature is being laid bare. He does not look at the refugees with compassion or concern, but with disgust and revulsion. His fear, which he cannot acknowledge, has tied him in knots and he is a man whose world is falling apart.

The Pericands still have not felt the full effect of their situation, since they are still well-stocked and have managed to keep their things with them. More fortunate than most, they have relatives to turn to and only when Charlotte realizes that the shops are empty, does she come to terms with her true feelings about her situation. The author on one hand shows us masses of humanity who all look the same and whose needs and questions are all similar. However, she then reminds us that each of these people is a separate personality and each has had their life disrupted. The prostitute and the people with chicken boxes filled with clothing are not attractive, but the women who are accustomed to taking care of their looks each day, who hang a mirror on the tree, and the little boy who is well-dressed but does not have enough to eat, give us a window into the fact that this is not simply a hoard of people, but is a collection of individuals.

The same disbelief and denial experienced by the refugees earlier is present in the residents of the small town, who feel overwhelmed and sad for the refugees, but still safe and secure in their own homes. They do not see that the refugees are people exactly like them whose situation became more dangerous.

Charlotte Pericand's charity and goodwill, as we have seen earlier, has its limitations and in reality, is only a facade she has constructed for herself and others to excuse her haughty arrogance. She undergoes an abrupt personality change when she realizes that her supplies may run short and suddenly, the less fortunate children mean nothing to her. The Christian values she has taught to her children suddenly do not hold water when her fear takes over. Her facade is flimsy and false and is only constructed to fool those around her.

The increasing desperation of their situation is bringing out the true nature of Nemirovsky's characters, with war being the catalyst that forces the truth.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 11 and 12

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Maruice and Jeanne Michaud continue on foot toward Tours, along with hundreds of others fleeing Paris. Nemirovsky describes the lucky, (or unlucky) as those having carts, wheelbarrows, bags, tattered clothing, sleeping children as those who do not know how to manage. Many help Jeanne Michaud when she becomes unable to walk, and her husband helps others carry their baggage. Maurice Michaud, not unhappy, has no inflated view of his importance in the world, and sees the bigger picture that historically, there have always been mass migrations and is not taking this personally.

Traveling in random small groups and passing by French soldiers, Jeanne Michaud often thinks she sees her son, whom she deeply loves, misses and longs for. Others also search the faces for missing relatives, and the moving hoard becomes confusing and exhausting, especially when they hear planes and hit the ground in anticipation of bombs. During one of these episodes, Jeanne sees a small pink flower growing and a white butterfly over their heads, which she will always remember. They begin to see casualties and, realizing that they, too, may soon be nothing more, Jeanne begins to cry.

Although seeing the French soldiers convinces some of the refugees that France is going to fight back, giving them hope, the Michauds do not really believe they will make it to Tours, and wonder if the bank even still exists. The Michauds must place their fate in God's hands. Jeanne momentarily thinks how good it would be if Corbin and his jewelry were buried beneath the rubble in Tours.

Chapter 12 brings the Michauds to a small town where the train is running to Tours. The Michauds find a house where the family lets them wash up at the well and as they prepare to wait for a train, the train station is bombed. Maurice and Jeanne are not hurt but there is death and carnage all around them. Jeanne proceeds to lead stray children to the cathedral and directs frantic mothers to find them there. The author notes that not one mother thinks to thank Jeanne. The train is still operational and when it stops, wounded soldiers are unloaded and piled into cars and vans. A military officer commandeers a truck from a priest who is transporting a group of orphans, and we can assume that this is Philippe Pericand. Jeanne has trouble breaking away from the soldiers, thinking she is going to see her son, but they finally are able to make it onto a small local train headed for Tours.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

These two good people are taking their hardship in stride as much as possible, given that they may have lost their son and they are being put to the most grueling physical test of their lives, just to get to a place where they can get their miserable jobs back.

Maurice Michaud, lucid and detached, seems to have an overview of the bigger picture, and sees himself only as a small part of another huge exodus, of which there have been many throughout history. He is a gentle rock for his wife, whose love for her son is ravaging her emotionally.

The masses of people are becoming delirious and disoriented with their lives being threatened constantly, and having to see those who have lost their own lives. It is clear they may lose their own lives any moment, and it becomes difficult to rationalize or make any sense of it. Their fear is even dulled, as they hit the ground waiting to be killed. The idea that seeing French soldiers means that France is going to fight back is a sad grasp at a final hope for these proud French people, who are watching their country be taken over. This is the same hope the young Hubert Pericand shows in his inability to grasp the idea that France has lost, that she is giving up.

It is interesting how Nemirovsky notes that the people tend to cluster into groups, even though they do not know one another. Again, she is emphasizing that in a situation like this, there is no distinction among classes of people, and we are all the same. These people, tired, dirty, disheveled, confused and afraid, have all begun to look alike, regardless of their backgrounds and social status. However, they continue to walk with diminishing hope, total loss of pride, dull fear and anticipation, simply in survival mode.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 13 and 14

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Jean Marie Michaud has been wounded and is in the bombed train when the wound reopens. He is not in good condition, but is traveling in a truck driven by a Major, but the truck runs out of fuel and Jean Marie is taken to a small farm where a kind family cares for him. The major gets the soldiers distributed and goes on bicycle to look for fuel, but is taken prisoner by German soldiers. The wounded never get to the local hospital.

Jean Marie is feverish and in and out of consciousness. A woman sitting with him hopes only that someone is taking just as good care of her own husband. A young girl of the house puts some fresh cherries next to his cheek, which soothes him.

Chapter 14 returns to Corte and Florence who are driving toward Bordeaux, Gabriel wanting to leave France for good. Florence is finally seeing the real lack of commitment from Corte and his weak, judgmental nature becomes clear to her. They see the car, again, that they saw earlier with a woman in a head bandage and a woman with a nursing baby, and Corte is incensed that the exodus cannot be more dignified and grand, and resents the debasing of the process by riff-raff. The bandaged woman tries to make conversation with Corte, but he is appalled by her. Gabriel Corte is hungry now, having refused Florence's sandwiches. Corte is looking forward to dining in Tours, eating pate, truffles, soup and meat.

As another beautiful day in France ends, Corte observes that there must be fish in the nearby small river. He remembers eating fresh trout. When they arrive in town, there is no food except for what is being given out at a food kitchen to a long line of people and now, even the food kitchen is out of food. Florence has a conversation with the bandaged woman. Corte believes he can find someone with food and that all he needs is to offer them money. He finally gets to a restaurant and reminds the owner who he is. The desperate owner tells Corte to meet him at the corner, and brings him a basket of food. As Corte and Florence make their way back to their car, a thief grabs their food basket, since Florence's hands are at her neck making sure her necklace is still there.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Jean Marie, close to death, is fortunate to have an officer who wants him to at least die somewhere other than on the road. This chapter is very brief, and illustrates Jean Marie's delicate and faint grasp on life, as he goes in and out of consciousness. Although the family who cares for him is kind, they have their own problems and cannot afford the time and labor it takes to nurse a soldier back to health. They also have someone of their own missing, but they sit with Jean Marie, just the same. The poignant

scene of the comfort that the fresh cherries bring to Jean Marie emphasizes how close to his core he has become, and how the smallest bit of life makes him feel content. We can assume that Jean Marie is transported on the truck that is taken from Father Philippe Pericand.

It is taking Gabriel Corte quite a while to come to some sense of humility. He is definitely afraid but, with all of the hardship and hunger, still clings to his inflated vision of himself and his haughty, condescending view of others. He is a shallow, mean man who has convinced himself he is special. Florence, who is no angel herself, is coming to realize that Corte is "despicable." The fact that Gabriel attributes the theft of their food to being trapped in a jungle illustrates that he sees the other refugees as animals, and feels that his finer sensibilities place him as being of some kind of higher status. Florence, assuming that someone wants to take her necklace, has also still not come to terms with the fact that everyone here is hungry, and everyone is the same.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 15 and 16

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

The small group of people observed occasionally by Corte and Florence—the woman with the bandaged head named Hortense, her nursing sister-in-law, Aline and her baby, and Hortense's brother, Jules are now eating Gabriel Corte's fancy food from the basket they have stolen from him. It includes champagne and foie gras. Hortense is extremely and automatically hateful and bitter toward the rich, having been a servant most of her life and recently having worked at an auto factory in her husband's place. Her husband has been conscripted to fight in the war, not having any "privileges, exemptions, connections" like those of the middle class. Hortense is familiar with Corte and Florence, having seen them when she worked for a countess. She calls Corte a madman. Hortense is highly capable and has worked since she was young; she now puts away the food, cleans up the baby and feeds the pet birds they have brought. When the group hears the rumor that the Germans marched into Paris that morning, Hortense cries with pain in her heart. She would even be alright with her husband's death if it means France not giving up. Although they take up gossiping about Corte again, they are somewhat softer about him, deciding that the rich simply do not know about life.

In Chapter 16, the Pericand family has found a large room to sleep in owned by two elderly women. The house is crowded with saddened refugees listening to the radio, weeping and in a stupor state. Distraught over what has happened to their country, the women try to console themselves, but young Hubert is in a rage of "patriotic anguish." He decides to leave that night, and one of the elderly spinster's nephews, Rene, wants to join him. The women are upset and beg the boys not to, but they are resolved. Young Jacqueline begins to cry because her cat has escaped and there are explosions in the distance. Madame Pericand takes a stand and tells Hubert that she is in charge, and that he will not leave unless it is over her dead body. Hubert feels that women are inferior and do not understand heroism, glory and sacrifice, but only debase such things.

Hubert misses his brother, Philippe. His mother still speaks to him as if he were a child, which he resents. Hubert escapes and meets up with Rene, whose beauty and friendship he values. He has been lonely without his brother. When Rene does not show up, Hubert gets a ride on a convoy truck full of French soldiers who plan to disable a bridge so that the approaching Germans cannot cross it.

As he observes the violent chaos around him, Hubert is feeling scornful toward humanity, his innocence quickly diminishing. He sees how people have been taking advantage of those less fortunate,and their unwillingness to help the soldiers; he observes the rich rejecting the poor, and is impressed by those who are courageous. He

doubts his religion and feels Jesus could never enter this hell without being torn to pieces. He watches the planes fire rows of ammunition on the people who have lept from their cars to the ground, some of whom do not return, leaving their cars and possessions abandoned.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Hortense, Jules and Aline are not the best of people, but are could certainly be considered victims of their culture. They have seen too much abuse of the poor by the rich and have worked hard, watching the rich who never had to work to get by. Their prejudices are ingrained and solid because they have seen too much, and they are proud, at least, that they have worked honorably for a living. Although Aline is somewhat alarmed that Jules would stoop to stealing food, he is practical and knows they must eat. Hortense supports his decision to steal the food because she feels these people deserve what they get, since she has had some exposure to them in the past.

Hubert is finally in the thick of the war, which is what he has been wanting. He knows his life has been sheltered and he wants more than to be treated as a privileged boy. His idealism drives him to abandon his mother and family, and his need to determine who he is fans the flames of patriotic zeal in him. In such a large family and surrounded by women, he is at an age where he needs to understand and develop his manhood, but there is no brother or father around for him to refer to. He fills this aching need by rejecting the emotional women and joining what he considers real men who might make a difference assisting France in her time of need. Nemirovsky has Hubert in passionate tears many times, but his courage and determination win out over his childhood fears and emotions.

The author portrays Madame Pericand as a strong woman, but one who does not really know how to handle a young son who is becoming a man. She continues to treat him with authority and talk down to him as if he is a child, which ultimately helps him make the decision to leave. Although Nemirovsky does not show disrespect for women, she is able to make us understand why a young man might not want to endure the emotions of a group of women when he could be out taking action.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 17 and 18

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Gabriel Corte goes to seek some authority or agency to which he can report the theft of his food but can find no one. They realize the town they are in has been evacuated. Fighting physically, the two are separated by soldiers, who tell them that the cars have all been moved out of town. Corte is beside himself because his manuscripts are gone, but the soldier tells him he will find them and that others have lost much more. Corte calls him a Philistine, the two are ushered off by the soldier who tells them that they are planning to blow up the station momentarily and the Germans are expected any time. After walking and finding no food, they sit on a bench near a church where they spend the night huddled together. In the morning a passing soldier gives Florence a bowl of soup, which she shares with a reluctant Corte. Corte offers the soldier a cigarette, recognizing him from the night before.

As they begin walking from the town, German trucks come toward them, and the French soldiers open fire. When the Germans fire back, refugees get caught in the crossfire. Gabriel and Florence begin to run, but Corte suddenly has an "urgent desire" to save Florence's life As though being guided by an unseen force, Corte puts her head under his coat and takes her quickly over the bridge, which they know may blow up at any time. Down a little road they see their car and their servants waiting. Seeing his servants and realizing that he again has his possessions, his manuscripts and his life back, Corte reconfirms that he is, indeed, a privileged person, and no longer an ordinary man, but one protected from evil.

In Chapter 18, Hubert arrives at the Allier river with the soldiers and assorted volunteers, including many hopeful teenaged boys whose contagious enthusiasm to fight for their country has encouraged them to leave their fleeing families. They are still children and some are with fathers who fought in the earlier war in 1914. Hubert believes in the size and power of this army, not aware of all the roadblocks to their success.

Hubert has trouble finding ways to make himself useful among the soldiers and is told he is in the way. He watches the soldiers prepare the bridge for explosion, with tar, straw and petrol which they plan to detonate with firearms. All are hungry and thirsty . Hubert watches the German convoy approach the bridge, as the explosives are detonated. Having no weapon, Hubert can not help in the fighting, and finally realizes that the French soldiers have no ammunition. Feeling sure some strategic plans will begin to unfold, he finally sees the French soldiers abandoning their posts. Hubert feels he is in a defeat "worse than Waterloo," and that he will never see his family again. Hubert begins to run, and later awakens to silence, the small town on fire. He begins running away from this scene, trying to avoid Germans, assuming all of Europe is

falling, still maintaining his hope that France will regroup and battle them back. Hubert is afraid he will be captured by Germans, forgetting that he has no uniform on that would make them take him as a prisoner. He continues on into the countryside, his sanity vaguely returning. Finding a house and shelter, he recognizes three French soldiers who tried to defend the bridge. Hubert eats and, after hearing old war stories of earlier times, leaves for Cresange to contact his family.

In the street near a hotel, Hubert retrieves a lipstick for a woman who asks him to come upstairs to return it to her. Faint from exhaustion, he lies to her, saying he is eighteen. She is a dancer, Arlette Corail, (formerly the mistress of the banker, Corbin) who was caught in the bombing at Tours. They talk for a while, and Hubert eats. Arlette offers to arrange for a room for Hubert so that he can rest and rejuvenate there in the hotel where she is staying. She is obviously attracted to this boy, despite her own age.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Nemirovsky says that "the instincts of a former age were still at work in Gabriel Corte: when someone hurt him, rather than defend himself, his first reaction was to complain." We are not meant to like this character. Corte and Florence are actually called refugees in this chapter by another refugee. The sense of surrealism is exaggerated with gables, ancient stone walls, lopsided balconies, dark cul-de-sacs, and Corte's comment that it is like a "bad opera set." In this chapter, Corte literally runs ahead of Florence, and she loses all inhibition, now calling him a coward, bastard and pig, spitting at him and scratching him. Their undignified reaction to hunger and exhaustion is interesting in contrast with the reactions of the Michauds, and the kind soldier who breaks them up and later brings them soup is a much more civilized character than Corte perceives himself to be. However, when their lives are on the line, Corte's determination to save Florence tells us that he does have a conscience.

Nemirovsky again describes a beautiful spring day, with azure sky and new leaves, just before the dreaded Germans arrive. Corte, who has finally had a surge of compassion in his desire to save Florence, is guided, somehow, to find his car and servants in the face of huge, difficult odds. Instead of being grateful or humble, he decides this is a reconfirmation of his special status in the world. His stint as an "ordinary" man, hungry and suffering like so many others, turns out to be very short-lived.

Hubert, whose honorable intentions are clearly unrealistic, finds himself even more humiliated than he was being condescended to by his mother. He is too young and inexperienced to be of any real help, and the truth is, he is ultimately too afraid and sensible to stay on and give his life for a lost cause. He has grown, having now seen terrifying violence and experienced hunger and fear, but is still a bit sensitive about his non-role in the war. When he meets Arlette, who is a flirtatious middle-aged woman, there is something of a maternal connection for him, but she is perhaps more interested in him sexually. It is clear he is going to have successive experiences that will contribute to his maturity.

Nemirovsky develops Hubert's character well. He has been brought up with Catholic values, and wants to be a good, solid boy. He respects his brother, who is a priest, and is struggling to know what is right for him, and struggling for self-respect after being raised by a controlling mother. The reader can almost feel him growing up as he goes through one trial after another, both logistical and emotional.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 19

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 19 Summary

Arlette Corail is in the village restaurant as the town waits for the Germans. The mayor is staying, and there is news of an armistice. Arlette feels confident about her ability to survive and come out ahead. She recalls watching Corbin's belongings become buried in rubble and seeing the look of terror on his face. She takes his car and escapes to this village, where she has been living comfortably for several days. She is interested in Hubert because he is related to the wealthy Maltetes. She is irritated as she contemplates an apparently failed attempt to sedue Gerard Salomon-Worms, the Count de Furieries's brother in law. She takes stock of her assets - her jewelry, her property, her legs, figure and scheming mind, and is disturbed that it will be difficult now to get American makeup. She is a user of rich men, and wants this boring war to be over.

The first German arrives in the village on a motorcycle and the women are surprised to see how young he is. The German hopes the armistice has been signed, and the villagers are relieved he is human. When he leaves, things begin to return to normal in the village, and the traveling refugees have begun to return to Paris. Another peaceful, lovely evening is now interrupted by German trucks that rumble into the village, carrying hundreds of German soldiers who permeate the village, eating, drinking, playing billiards, cooking, greeting children, and enjoying their role as conquerors.

Hubert finally awakens after a long sleep to the noises. He is terrified to learn that the Germans have arrived. He watches them strolling the street and tapping doors, telling people it is time for lights out, and begins to cry as if his worst fears have come true. Arlette is there to comfort him, and wants to help him soothe his sadness with "love."

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 19 Analysis

Arlette Corail, ever the gold-digging treasure seeker, is safely tucked away in a comfortable hotel, working on her makeup and trying to hide her age. She has no qualms about the future, knowing she will continue to find wealthy men to seduce and opportunities to be supported in the lavish manner to which she is addicted. Her newest prey, the very young Hubert Pericand, is innocent, naive and, blinded by her well-preserved sexuality, has fallen like a fly into her web. The author takes us through the dramatic, troubled adventures that Hubert has chosen, only now to see him ensnared by another force of which he has no awareness. One feels that maybe, after all he has been through, Hubert deserves a little break, but this encounter with Mme. Corail is foreboding and will surely lead to trouble for the young Pericand and his family. We have already seen how Arlette attached herself to Corbin like a leech and would not allow him to leave her behind because she had so much dirt on him. She will surely follow this pattern with the virginal Hubert, either now or later.

The arrival of German forces is at once ominous and relieving. It turns out that the Germans are people, too. The soldiers are not robotic monsters, but young men who want to relax and party. They enjoy being in charge, but are not terribly unkind as of yet. The villagers' perceptions of them are modified accordingly. Although the occupation is one which has been dreaded, things are at least calming down a bit, now that everyone has a better idea of what it is going to look like.

The contrast between Arlette's nonchalant response to the occupation and Hubert's almost panicky response illustrates the preconceived notions held by the French. Arlette knows the Germans are only men, but Hubert is terrified of them.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 20 and 21

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 20 and 21 Summary

It is night time and the Pericand's small cat, Albert, is curiously moving around the room where the children and their nanny are sleeping. He is dreamy and curious, and not accustomed to all the natural smells of the country. He has been closely guarded by young Jacqueline, who has been afraid of losing him. Albert finally makes a long-awaited escape out the window and begins to explore things he has never seen heard, or smelled. The cat also can hear the sounds and vibrations of explosions, but is immersed in his discovery of the earth and all of its fascinating aspects. The cat catches a small bird and savors its flesh slowly. His hunger and curiosity sated for the night, he slips back through the window to Jackqueline's bed. " A few seconds later, the arsenal exploded."

In Chapter 21, We find the Pericands surviving the explosion, but watching the entire village burn. They think they are calm, but all is chaos. Jacqueline manages to save Albert; Madame Pericand's jewelry and money are all saved, as well as her fur coat and the family's silver. She takes stock of her children, having put them to bed half-dressed due to a premonition the night before. She is praying fervently that no more bombs drop and that her children will be safe. The family leaves the village on foot, with Nanny carrying her precious bonnet, much to Madame Pericand's disgust.

Offering to pay a man with a donkey and cart, she hopes to get the family to Saint-Georges in time to catch a train to Nimes, where she grew up and where her mother lives. The only thing that has not been saved are the linens in three suitcases, which Mme. Pericand decides she can do without, and poor old Nanny's trunk. They finally board a train heading toward Nimes, and she begins to think the war might be over. She is proud of all she has been able to save from disaster, but suddenly remembers that she has forgotten her father-in-law.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 20 and 21 Analysis

Almost whimsically and certainly symbolically, Albert experiences his own awakening into maturity and viciously eats the fruits that have been forbidden to him. This chapter is rather enjoyable, as Albert explores all of the little things about the night that we take for granted—sounds, animals, smells, leaves, vibrations, and the instinct to survive. He realizes his own power for the first time. Nemirovsky's shift in viewpoint to that of Albert is refreshing and a bit of delicious calm before the explosion.

Chapter 21 is a very poignant look at a woman who is so capable and conscientious that she does not allow for her own failings at a time of great trauma and disaster. She

is organized, and manages to make sure all of her children are dressed in case of a bombing and her treasures are ready to go. She is proud of her high-functioning personality and it has served her well in terms of survival of her family. However, to totally have forgotten one's own father-in-law has to be an extremely humiliating, horrifying experience, as well as a blow to her inflated sense of self-esteem. Madame Pericand has seen herself as being above all of the confusion and chaos, but the effects of being in the middle of an explosion takes its toll on anyone. Sadly, this man she claims to treasure and love never crosses her mind until she is too far away to retrieve him. Even the cat makes it through the nightmare, but not dear old Monsieur Pericand.

The author develops Madame Pericand beautifully, as to her determination, her class-consciousness and condescension, her controlling, organized ways with her children and her general arrogance. However, a consistent theme runs throught the entire story—war is a great equalizer. Madame Pericand does something that she considers only an ill-bred, unfortunate working-class person would do. The realization of her terrible mistake brings her ego crashing down.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 22

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 22 Summary

Charles Langelet has no complaints about his arduous journey to Montargis, and thinks that the common folks who discuss the horrors of their experiences are perversely thrilled by melodrama. He is "scandalised" when he realizes how many people are so highly uncultured, and he has deprecating thoughts of how they will describe their experiences later. He plans to under-react to it all, and thinks fondly of his precious porcelain crated up in his car. He prides himself on being focused on things like art and architecture, which he values above human life. Ignoring an auto accident, he avoids the main road, taking more obscure roads as he drives.

Running out of fuel, he finds himself stranded but afraid to leave his car. Passing motorists, predictably, do not have any petrol to share with him, and he realizes he must spend the night in the woods. Other refugees begin to arrive in the area, and Charlie remembers another place he stayed that turned into a campsite, where the ground became messy, filthy children approached him, women were laughing and crying. Charlie had thought, "All the men looked like bandits, the women like con artists."

But, instead, a young couple parks next to his car, and they somehow do seem like decent people to Charles. The young man, who has a deformed arm, tells Charles there is no petrol, and that he has just bought the last cans of it. The man has just enough to get his fiancee to safety in Bergerac. Their wedding has been delayed and the young man is clearly very upset, wanting only to save "Solange," his girlfriend.

Langelet uncharacteristically offers to watch their car while they sleep more comfortably on the grass. He becomes very accommodating. Trusting him, the two young lovers disappear under the trees, and with "exquisite pleasure," the same as the young cat in Chapter 20 who eats the bird, the highly sophisticated, judgmental, and superior Charles steals the young peoples' petrol and drives away.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 22 Analysis

The true colors of another very smug, snobbish person are revealed when the conceited Charles Langelet robs two he has, surprisingly, not judged as "dregs," of the most important possession they have, threatening their very survival. Not able to lower himself to any human emotions over the war, Langelet sees people generally as foolish and unenlightened. His superior attitude and his treasures are all he has to keep him company, since his servants left him and he is having to drive his own car to avoid the unpleasantness. Avoidance is important to Charles.

Interestingly, the author has taken to calling him "Charlie" in this chapter, as if he is just another guy like everyone else. Charlie even tries to elicit a bit of sympathy from these innocent people, telling them that they are lucky to be young, while implying that

someone as old and rheumatic as him may not make it. Then, stooping as low as possible, he draws their attention to the beautiful sound of a nightingale, using the pleasures of nature to lure the couple away from their gasoline. Charles is a true snake in the grass, and the reader can only hope he will get what is coming to him before the story ends.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 23 and 24

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

Poor old Monsieur Pericand is found in his bed and taken to a nursing home. He is only momentarily lucid and has a high fever. He calls out to his daughter-in-law to bring the Notary so that he can get his last wishes recorded, and is surprised to see her in a wimple, because she is, of course, not there and he is actually seeing one of the nuns who is attending him.

One of the young sisters, Marie, who is helping to tend to the home's fifteen patients, goes on the nursing home's bicycle to fetch the notary, Maitre Charboeuf. The notary goes to Monsieur Pericand, and asks a few people to witness the meeting. Monsieur Pericand has been looking forward to this moment when he can claim control over the family again by distributing his worldly goods, and has even planned his own funeral. Realizing that he is not with his family, he proceeds to dictate to the notary, leaving all his worldly goods to his son, Adrien, instructing him to deposit five million with the Penitent Children's home (the orphans of which are being transported by his grandson, Philippe). He instructs that the children's home is to commission an artist to paint his likeness. He leaves his Dunkerque property to his sister, and wants his chateau in Bleoville turned into a home for wounded veterans in memory of his two sons killed in Champagne in the last war. He directs his American stocks and bonds to be converted to French francs, and his gold to be sold. He leaves money to his valet, and requests that his great-grandchildren be named after him. Confused, but at peace with his memories of his wife, Monsieur Pericand dies.

In Chapter 24, Jean Marie Michaud is getting well. He is in a house where people seemed to be focused on the previous war rather than discussing the current defeat. An older woman and two young women named Cecile and Madeleine are tending to him, and young boys peek in at him. He reviews his memories of the recent past, being in battle without a weapon and in a burning train, none of which seems real. He learns this farm is in the middle of nowhere. When his mind goes quiet it returns to the awful recent events. When Madeleine's face comes close, he kisses her cheek, but forgets her name. He is in a trance-like state, determined to hang on to his life, but he is clearly suffering.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

Obviously, one of the reasons Charlotte Pericand wants to be with her father-in-law when he dies is to make sure he leaves his money to her and her family. Forgetting to save him from the bombing costs her much more than just her good conscience.

Even at the time of his death, Monsieur Pericand is a proud, arrogant man who wants to be remembered for his wealth, but he also wants his money to go to things that mean something to him. He seems to be aware that his family is cloying for and expecting his money and may want to shock them, somehow. However, sadly, the home for orphan boys is not at all what he thinks, and the veterans' memorial is at least one war too late. His American stocks and bonds probably will bring a fortune. Even in his altered, semi-lucid state, the author wants us to know that this old man is attached to his money, status and prestige almost as much as anyone else, and the vulnerability and weakness brought on by his old age has not really tempered his desire for power and control.

Jean Marie's life is hanging by a thread, but he does not question whether he should go on, instinctively willing himself to live. The girls and the farmhouse with all the talk and pictures of an earlier war and an earlier time in history are surreal to him, and to the reader, who is hoping he will survive. The small bits of life that he intermittently notices and appreciates make it seem as though he will live. However, if we have learned anything from Nemirovsky at this point, it is to not expect things to be fair or just.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 25

Part 1 ,Storm In June: Chapter 25 Summary

Father Philippe Pericand is trying to avoid the dangerous Loire area and is leading his group of orphaned boys on a footpath in the woods. One of the boys heartlessly killed a lizard and pretends not to know it was harmless. Philippe still does not like these children and feels their souls are cut off and closed. It is difficult for him to feel love for these poor orphans, and he knows he should.

He attempts to pray or meditate, and hopes to unlock the souls of the boys, but he knows they are hopeless. Philippe wants badly to experience holiness through some sacred act, but knows all he can do is try to save the bodies of these children. They arrive at an abandoned village with well-tended cottages and beautiful gardens. After eating strawberries from the gardens, they go on to find a large chateau on a hill with a lake and meadow, where they will camp for the night. Philippe reminds them that they must be respectful, but the boys are very interested in what might be inside the house. Once they have eaten and settled into their beds on the ground, the children appear to be asleep. Philippe chastises himself for his negative thoughts about them, and he rests and prays.

Hearing two of the older boys sneaking up the house, Father Philippe follows them and goes inside. They turn on him and attack him like animals hitting him on the head with a heavy pedestal table. The others follow, and the frenzied pack of boys destroys the house, singing and pillaging. They continue to injure Father Philippe, finally throwing him into the lake. He tries to get out, but the children throw stones at him. Becoming stuck in the mud, waist-deep in the water, he is stoned to death.

Part 1 ,Storm In June: Chapter 25 Analysis

This chapter is very disturbing. Nemirovsky clearly perceives that children, deprived of love and raised in a highly structured, strictly authoritarian environment have the potential to be raging animals once they are left to their own devices. There is also an earlier implication that the children have been mistreated, so their rage has been waiting for the right moment to burst through and actually cause them to be murderers. These are not just everyday vandals, but monsters who have been in hiding. Whether Philippe's dislike for them and his inability to recognize their goodness contributes to their behavior is not clear, but it is clear the children are accustomed to stronger disciplinary walls around them than Philippe is able to provide.

An interesting facet of this chapter is that Philippe Pericand is actually inadvertently victimized by his own parents. His mother pushed him to do something more impressive with his career, and his father volunteered him to chaperone the orphans out of Paris. He is the Pericands' prized child, the one who represents to the world what a good

family they are. However, his extreme moments of doubt about the humanity of these children leads one to wonder whether Philippe is just like his mother, wearing a pious facade for the world to disguise his true nature. In any case, the orphan boys are budding criminals, spawned by an institution that appears to offer benevolent care, but which hides ugly secrets and where children are shown no compassion.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 26

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 26 Summary

Madame Pericand and her children arrive at her mother's home in Nimes. Although her mother is a Craquant, as she once was, she loyally observes the Pericand rituals—since the Pericand family into which her daughter has married has even more money than the Craquants. The two women plan to attend a mass for the deceased. Madame Craquant has an eating problem and is quite obese.

They learn of the elderly Monsieur Pericand's death and Charlotte reads the letter from the nursing home describing his last wishes. Madame Pericand is also informed of Philippe's death, and is told that Hubert has been killed at the battle of Moulins. Madame Pericand is upset but is very proud of her sons, and can already imagine the "black veil fluttering around her." She considers Philippe to have died a Christian death and feels "the radiance of his soul reflected back on to her." As to Hubert, she needs to restructure the story of Hubert's service to France and somehow make it work for her, because it is no longer alright that she had not proudly sent her son off to war, but that he had escaped in the night and run away from home. Her hometown of Nimes is sympathetic about her loss, but she does not see the value of their support.

Charlotte's mother is eating heavily and Charlotte does not seem concerned. Madame Craquant now has a full house and cannot take in any refugees whom, although they were welcome in Nimes, are becoming a source of concern for the townspeople. As they prepare for the services, framed pictures of the two killed sons are delivered, and Charlotte reminds the crying children that the boys are martyrs, good Frenchman and Christians, and not to forget the unfortunate children who died with Philippe. Her mother reminisces about a day when Charlotte was very impatient and punished Hubert, but Charlotte does not remember.

As they begin to leave, Hubert appears. Charlotte almost faints, and begins to scold him about leaving and for losing his bicycle, and calls him a little idiot. Charlotte continues to cry and finally has to tell Hubert about his brother, Philippe. Hubert's presence at church gives hope to mothers of missing soldiers. However, Hubert is deeply grieved over the loss of his brother, and angry at the human race for all of the injustice and cowardice he has seen. He also experiences hatred toward his family for their hypocrisy associated with their wealth and their contradictory loyalty to the French government. In his sorrow, he receives a reminder that his family did produce Philippe, and that only God can count the sacrifices and measure the blood and tears. He has a realization that all of his beliefs and feelings will now be his very own. He has seen and felt so much of life during this war, that he is finally forced to grow up and claim his life for himself.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 26 Analysis

Charlotte Pericand is genuinely upset about losing her sons, but Nemirovsky does not want us to sympathize with her too much, since she is still preoccupied with herself, how their deaths will look to others, and how they will affect her. Absentmindedly encouraging her obese mother to eat more is an subtle indication that Charlotte does not really even care about her mother. These folks are so entrenched in their social status that it seems to mean more to them than family members themselves.

Charlotte, of course, knows her father in law died without family around him because of her, but there is no indication that anyone else besides Nanny knows that she forgot him. His will is not so much of a blow to her, and might even soothe to her conscience. Charlotte manages to stay focused on what it means to be the mother of a dead martyr and a fallen hero, rather than being devastated over what her sons must have gone through. Of course, everyone concludes Philippe was killed by the enemy, which is assumed to be the Germans. Charlotte feels turmoil trying to imagine her chubby, childish Hubert dying as a courageous hero, and has to "rewrite the past" to make sense of it.

When Hubert shows up in good health, Charlotte is relieved, perhaps, but still mentions disrespectfully that this "boy" will be the death of her, reminding us of whom she thinks first. She then proceeds to chide him like a child and tells him to wash his hands for church, not being sensitive enough to show him some respect for having been through a major experience.

Hubert has finally reached the point of not crying over everything that disturbs him, and he is bluntly honest about not being too upset about losing his grandfather. However, the loss of Philippe, the person he respected and loved most, is a blow for him. His grief draws him through a series of thoughts that range from hatred and rage to peace and acceptance. There is irony in the townspeople commenting that Hubert has not changed at all.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 27

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 27 Summary

Gabriel Corte and Florence find a luxury hotel that is still intact, with hot water, cocktails and a full staff. They are again recognized by people here and treated in the celebrated manner they have come to expect. Inattentive to all the loss and ravaged people they have seen, Corte sheds a tear over the art that is dying along with France.

Florence, her makeup a mess and her age showing, asks her maid to prepare a facial and arrange for her hair and nails to be done. She bravely plans her clothing and and contemplates the huge impact these events will have for generations.

Corte, too, is concerned about the future and about what will become of "Art." He knows there will be changes and dreads having to change his own personal style a third time. The thought occurs to him that he is obsolete. He is further disturbed to hear that Jules Blanc, the politician who helped to make him famous and provided him with many opportunities, has fled to Portugal. Corte sees Blanc as a "necessary cog" in his own career, and is extremely depressed at his departure.

Corte has his servant dry and dress him, and facing all of the changes he knows must come, heads down to the hotel lobby, where a fresh batch of refugees is wandering. He sees good people desperate for a room; Spanish women who escaped Spain's war and fled to France, now indignant at having to go through this again. The man in the bar is an old acquaintance of Corte's, which gives him some comfort, then the celebrities begin to come into the bar, including playwrights, academics, industrialists, and others whom he feels are more his kind. Corte is tremendously relieved that his old world still exists. The men discuss France and plan their own ways of capitalizing on the present situation Corte deduces that the world is not having a cataclysm after all, but simply a series of human events which do not affect him and the other privileged people. He becomes lost in a discussion with the playwright about their respective work.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 27 Analysis

Gabriel Corte and Florence have changed due to the hardship, danger and coarseness they have experienced, but they have not changed much. Their hearts have not opened to the less fortunate, nor have they made any lofty plans for helping anyone but themselves. Their utter relief at being back in a state of luxury and comfort illustrates a momentary lapse of faith in their own social standing, but now that it seems to be restored to them, they will go on just as they always have.

Florence's faithful servant is sure Florence will forget the awful experiences because Florence has so much else to think about. The servant, however, never will forget. The servants fall back into step just as Corte and Florence have. Florence has to summon

"all her meagre strength" to work on her beauty and wardrobe. She is relieved to actually get a chance to wear a new little hat.

The progression from physically fighting and starvation to having his man dry him and dress him, is as absurd as a life can get. However, Corte is pleased to return to it, not seeing the imbalance or discrepancies, but only the value of his own contributions, and feeling the craving to be treated as a celebrity. Outside the bar there is chaos, with traumatized people ready to give their last franc for a room, but Corte is again snug in his cocoon of wealth and privilege, and this is where he wants to stay. The Fall of France does not necessarily mean the fall of Gabriel Corte, whom he often refers to in third person, as if he is an icon rather than a man.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 28

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 28 Summary

The Michauds, having never made it to Tours, return to Paris, astonished to find their apartment still intact with the exception of a broken elevator. News of the armistice brings a bitter feeling to Maurice, who was injured in the war of 1914. Jeanne is thrilled to return to her humble home, even though her son is missing. It occurs to Jeanne that they both may have lost their jobs at the bank, and they agree that their employers are the worst bastards, but they decide to just enjoy being home. They fall asleep holding hands.

The Count de Furieres, unscathed by the war and married into the very wealthy Salomon-Worms family, had accepted the position of Director of the Corbin bank. Although he and Corbin do not necessarily like one another, having come from very different classes, they get along well enough to run the bank.

The Count has returned home to his family, while his chauffeur is taken prisoner. Corbin and Furieres now try to pull all the pieces of the bank back together, with employees and records scattered across France. They argue about their differing perspectives on the war, and Corbin bitterly remembers being almost buried in the rubble of a bombing. Corbin is disgusted with the staff members who did not meet him in Tours, as instructed, calling them a bunch of drips, promising to fire them. Corbin's wife is in the free zone, her maid having placed a picture of a naked Arlette Corail in Mme. Corbin's bag.

Corbin is in his usual form, abusive and condescending to his only two employees, and reacts to a letter from the Michauds saying he assumed they had resigned when they did not show up in Tours. He sends them two months pay and, along with insulting them, lets them know they no longer have jobs. The Michauds are running out of resources, and Jeanne realizes she needs Jeanne Marie. Maurice simply considers Corbin a harmful specimen, and recalls that they chose to work for him. Maurice says he is happy because deep inside, he is free. Jeanne decides to go to Furieres and explain why they did not make it to Tours. Furieres agrees to pay them six months of their salary.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapter 28 Analysis

The good Michauds are happy to be home and now that Furieres has given them some money, Jeanne has time to really grieve and long for her son. Although they are spared the devastation of their apartment, the Michauds continue to suffer in a noble sort of way, without feeling sorry for themselves. While Maurice is a practical man who does not blame anyone for anything, Jeanne is one who wants to take action, and they decide things have worked out for them when Furieres helps them.

The Count, although he has had a privileged life, has children and a wife and is a better man than Corbin, who comes from a poor background and whose scruples are more questionable. They tolerate one another to run the bank.

This chapter has its lighter moments, when we learn Corbin's wife has finally left him because of Arlette. It is also comical when the Michauds agree that the bankers are bastards, and snuggle down for a nap holding hands.

Corbin is a weasel of a man who abuses his power and is hateful toward those he considers inferior to him. Nemirovsky's contrasting characters make a clear statement that money does not make people good or moral, and that poverty does not always mean weakness. Ultimately, the rich do not always come out ahead, and the poor do not always come out behind. However, as Maurice Michaud says, there is no one to blame, just an indifferent universe in which basic laws are exercised automatically, affecting everyone differently. He sees it all very pragmatically, and accepts the bigger picture as being simply the way it is.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 29 and 30

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 29 and 30 Summary

Charlie Langelet is home with his porcelain unbroken. He has no servants, and the concierge is doing all the cleaning. He has a renewed sense of thrift, and knows his frozen assets will be valuable later. He realizes he loves nothing that death can take. He enjoys some good wine and heads to an elite bar where he had been a regular. The other old regulars all arrive, apparently unscathed by the war, and they pick up their shallow conversations like before. He is cheered by the sight of a small sable-skin hat worn by one of the women he plans to meet for dinner. Langelet goes home to get ready for dinner when a woman comes to his house looking for work as a maid. Her name is Hortense Gaillard (Hortense is the sister of the person who stole food from Corte while they were on the road) Charles is happy to hire her, and leaves to meet his dinner companions. Walking in the dark, he gets hit by a car and killed. The car is driven by the woman in the little sable hat, Arlette Corail. Back at his home, the concierge accidentally knocks over his prized statue.

Jean-Marie is actually happy despite all of his terrible suffering and isolation from his family. He has been demobilized by giving a false address, so he cannot be taken prisoner, but the Germans have not bothered anyone in this small village yet. The farm family plans for years ahead, but does not make any assumptions about tomorrow. They feed him well and the woman hopes, in exchange, for the safe return of her own son. The men are all older and rehash their memories of the earlier war. They feel the younger generation is to blame for the current predicament of France, and they avoid discussing the current war.

Life on this farm is simple and healing, and the men will not let Jean-Marie help in the fields. He spends time with the horses and writes stories about his experiences. When the mail is operational again, Jean-Marie is quick to write to his parents, but the townspeople are receiving mixed news about their loved ones.

Jean-Marie and Madeleine are sad that he will leave, and he promises to remember her. She thinks she might marry Benoit, the son of the farm, if he returns. Jean-Marie hears from his parents and leaves the little farm, and Benoit does return, saying he escaped with his friends.

Part 1, Storm In June: Chapters 29 and 30 Analysis

Charlie is planning to take up his life just as he left it, except that he will be even more miserly. He is still smug and has not really changed at all. Small ironies surface in Nemiovsky's story, such as Langelet being killed by Arlette. At first it seems that the

woman in the small hat whom he sees in the bar might be Florence, who has mentioned wanting to wear her little hat, but it turns out to be Arlette. Ironic, too, is the destruction of his Venus statue, which he has carefully placed on the table. He has thought to himself that nothing he loves can be taken by death, but clearly he has now lost everything. Hortense showing up in search of a job is ironic, since we have seen her on the road earlier with her brother, enjoying food stolen from Corte. Nemirovsky shows us what a small world it really is, and how one action plays into the next, that we are all just a giant network, moving in, around and about one another.

The placid, simple life on this peaceful little farm is fraught with undelivered communications and unexpressed feelings among these simple folks, who are resigned to making their living in this isolated countryside. They have their own culture, and are very reserved with one another.

Jean-Marie.is one of the more lovable characters in this book, perhaps because he is one of the Michauds, but more likely because he is a more emotionally stable young man. It is a relief that he is getting well and thriving in this beautiful setting. His writing talents are developing, and he has the time and space to explore his creativity. Although he is attracted to Madeleine, it is probably better that she stays with Benoit, since Jean-Marie is of a different culture altogether, having been raised in the city.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 1 and 2

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

The Angellier family prepares for the Germans' arrival and the third occupation of their village of Bussy, which is now on German time. Troops arrive regally during Easter Sunday church services. Gaston Angellier is a prisoner of war, and his mother and wife are at home, at odds with each other. Anything of value is packed and locked away. Madame Angellier is disappointed in her daughter-in-law, Lucile, whose family fortune has failed and who has not produced any children with Gaston. She feels Lucile does not love Gaston as much as she should, and is a bitter woman.

The Germans have lodged themselves, and are wandering the streets among the propaganda posters, enforcing curfews, radio and firearms bans, punishable on pain of death. The villagers enjoy cheating the German soldiers for substandard goods, which they buy because they have been away from civilian life for so long. Slick and flirtatious, their numbers overwhelm the town. They are in a celebratory mood, playing billiards and drinking champagne. Although they are enforcing newly imposed rules and curfews, they do not seem particularly unpleasant or unkind to the villagers and, in fact, may be a bit uncomfortable thinking of themselves as the new "masters" of the village.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The arrival of the rumbling cannons, trucks full of soldiers and their truck full of black loaves of bread is ominous and frightening. The people perceive the soldiers as arrogant, illustrated by the one who picks a branch from the peach tree and the assumption that they will drop ashes on the rug. The villagers assume these soldiers are scoundrels, but notice the "magnificent, well-fed horses," and acknowledge the Germans' fine taste in things such as good sheets. Madame Angellier is particularly bitter toward them since her son is a prisoner of war and these young men are almost jolly. Her pale, transparent, thin-lipped angry demeanor implies that, although she is raging inside, she is probably quite fragile physically. She is in so much grief over her son that she resents the very air his wife breathes. She has suffered in her life, perhaps more now than ever. She is not pleasant, but she is to be pitied.

The occupation of the village seems uneasy, as the Germans walk in formation around the town. Their political stance is posted, as if to convince the French they are correct. The new regulations make it clear these people are no longer free. In exchange for the Germans' presumptuous actions as the new "masters," the French are passive aggressive, getting back at them the only way they can, through cheating them out of money. The reader gets a sense of how totally the village changes with their imposing presence, but the people start to notice that these soldiers are merely boys. The bar maid is secretly pleased by the attention they give her. It seems inevitable now that some of the villagers will become romantically involved with the German solders.

Nemiorvsky contrasts the billiards, belts, pistols helms and ammunition with the sound of the church bells, which symbolize the villagers' former life, and their faith.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 3 and 4

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

The Angellier's German officer boarder, Bruno von Falk, has moved in. Lucile Angellier is not in love with her husband, having been raised in an entirely different culture. She knows Gaston had a long-term affair with a woman who bore his child, but is indifferent. Von Falk is young and "lovely." Lucile contemplates his feelings about them, and compares him to the bedraggled French soldiers.

The Germans bring new life to the village. They are not sure how the French feel about them, but they are good to the children. They are expected to stay for three months. The French carry on their Easter Sunday activities, in spite of the Germans.

In Chapter 4, we learn the Angellier house is exquisitely beautiful and the nicest one in the village. Spring is around the corner, but it is still cold enough for a fire. Lucile imagines the officer is reviewing his battles; she contemplates whether he might have a girlfriend or be married, as she watches him in the garden. He requests a key to the library and to the piano. He paces the floorboards at night, reads and plays the piano. Lucile tries to stay negative about his presence in the house.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

There is a definite air of awkwardness with the Germans in town, but the French try to live their lives as usual. Elderly women seem the most upset, especially those whose loved ones have been affected by the war. We learn that Lucile is better liked by the townspeople than her mother-in-law because she is not stuck-up, and there is already a hint that she is attracted to the German officer, since the description of him is delightful and we know she feels empty inside and is not in love with her husband. This is a colorful chapter, with the villagers going to vespers and visiting the cemetery, the children and the goats, and the Germans setting up a table in the square.

Chapter 4 describes fertile valleys and the promise of peach blossoms - everything indicating that Lucile will be falling in love with this German soldier. Even though she is somewhat appalled at his presence, she finds herself thinking and wondering about him, whether he might play the piano, why he does not wear slippers, whether he is having a drink, what he thinks and feels. His piano playing sounds like a bird singing. The author is giving every indication that there will be a romantic link between these two.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 5, 6 and 7

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 5, 6 and 7 Summary

Madeleine Sabarie is married and has a small child by Benoit, though she still misses Jean-Marie. A German officer of French ancestry arrives. He is named Kurt Bonnet and is billeted to their farm. Madeleine knows Benoit will not be happy with his presence. Benoit, a humble farmer, is jealous of Madeleine's interest in manners and fashion or anything outside the farm. Bonnet is young and can be cruel or kind, depending upon how "things struck him," and mercilessly shot lagging French soldiers during the retreat but has an ironic compassion for animals. Otherwise, any kindness is dependent upon how people affect him. He sees this scene with Madeleine as similar to Flemish art. Cecile and Benoit return home, Cecile proud and glad to be in her Sunday clothing.

In Chapter 6, the villagers in Bussy are beginning to know the names of the soldiers, as well as the families they are billetted to. The strong soldiers politely help the women with their water buckets; the women tend toward being sociable to them but their husbands do not. The town is peaceful, even with all of the soldiers and all is well. Young girls are interested in them and those with loved ones killed or captured curse them.

In Chapter 7, the smug and arrogant Viscountess de Montmort is leading a drive to help local prisoners' families. She feels superior to the ignorant farmers' wives, and tries to help them understand why they going through this, thinking she should have been a preacher. She hates the un-baptized teacher's lack of religion, and preaches charity wearing 850-franc shoes. Cecile Sabarie butts heads with the village women, claiming they are taking all the food and coupons, while the village women suggest they are selling on the black market. Bringing the discussion back to the prisoner, the women agree to find something to donate. The Viscountess is mortified and disgusted by the vulgarity of these simple people and forces herself to touch them as they leave.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 5, 6 and 7 Analysis

Madeleine Sabarie is obviously straining to break out of her boring and constricted life as a farm wife, whether she realizes it or not. She is still obsessed with Jean-Marie. She has grown up with Benoit, who is Cecile's brother; her love for him is not passionate; since he is an escaped prisoner, he is somber and tense. It seems Madeleine might be just as attracted to Bonnet's masculine qualities as anything. He is kind but can be ruthless, like the other men in her life. However, Bonnet is more poised, better groomed and much more sophisticated than the men she is accustomed to. She does not yet realize Bonnet is egocentric.

There is an almost halcyonic mood in Bussy, now that things have calmed down and people are becoming used to having the German soldiers in town. The weather is beautiful and one gets the sense there is much more laughter in the village than before.

Also, the author does not mention this, but they are no longer afraid of being bombed, making the occupation a tremendous relief of that tension and trauma. She does mention they feel light-hearted and do not know why, but the reader knows their situation is better than what it might have been, and the soldiers are actually somewhat pleasant.

The three classes are well represented at this meeting of the Viscountess's charity effort. The farmers, villagers and ultra-rich feel the vast differences in their resources and privileges, and they all resent it, the rich resenting having to even deal with the rest of them. The viscountess is self-righteous and hypocritical, ironically saying, "You have to go to so much trouble to instill a glimmer of love into these sad souls...," an obvious projection of her own personality. She is hateful, while pretending to be charitable.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 8 and 9

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 8 and 9 Summary

Benoit brazenly discusses the war with Bonnet, openly showing his hostility. Benoit is concerned that Madeleine, having been adopted as a child, may have come from the middle class, which would explain her ease around lady-like things, her love of beauty and her boredom with the farm. Benoit realizes Madeleine does not really like him; Madeleine feels Cecile is keeping him worked up, perhaps over the past with Jean-Marie in the house while he was gone. She whispers to Benoit that he needs to hide his shotgun, as it is verboten and he could be shot for not turning it in. He admits he killed Germans to escape. The landowners, the Montmorts, and the Sabaries have been enemies for generations, and Benoit shares with Madeleine that he steals from the Viscount. The viscount thinks it is the soldiers' fault for France's defeat; Benoit thinks Montmort licks German boots. Benoit admits to his jealousy of Jean-Marie, and now of Bonnet.

On a beautiful spring day, Lucile and her German officer strike up a friendly conversation. They share information: he is married, he comes from another province. They discuss her beautiful home here in Bussy. They agree that absence and war changes people. Lucile returns to her room, but later finds her mother-in-law in a tearful rage, having overheard the amiable conversation with the German. Madame Angellier is sure Lucile does not love Gaston, and she is tortured by the loss of her son, feeling that if Lucile loved him, she would not be able to tolerate the German. Lucile finally blurts out that Gaston is supporting a mistress and child in Dijon, much to his mother's horror.

Viscountess de Montmort pays a visit dressed in peasant clothing to feign humility. She is dramatic over the current situation, and hates Germans as well as any other foreigner. She needs a special kind of grain for her prize chickens from Madame Angellier, who asks if she might arrange for some coal for her in return. The Viscountess is passionately angry, hearing French woman flirting outside with German men who may be responsible for the deaths and imprisonments of their fathers and brothers. As a sermonizing, moralizing Christian, she is an angry, unattractive, frustrated woman.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 8 and 9 Analysis

Benoit is undoubtedly headed for trouble. The pressure building inside of him includes his hatred of Germans, jealousy of Madeleine's attraction to gentlemen, and his stress over being an escaped prisoner. We know now that he has already killed two German soldiers, and is angry enough at the Viscount to steal from him. He refuses to hide his gun and brazenly challenges their German officer. He senses Madeleine forming a friendly bond with the officer and knows she is not attracted to him. It is clear he is going off the deep end. However, as always, they both get up the next morning to their usual routine, even though everything has changed.

Lucile knows Bruno is attracted to her, which may give her the courage to tell her mother-in-law about Gaston's long-term affair in Dijon. She also realizes that this man is probably nicer than her own husband, even though he is the "enemy." Lucile feels sympathy for Madame Angellier, but she has been alone in her own way a long time, as well. She feels alive in Bruno's company, evidenced by the vibrant descriptions of the springtime petals and sky. She is also no longer intimidated by him, thinking he is childish as he talks to his dog and understanding that the war has affected him deeply, as well. The beautiful country lanes, cottages and gardens are in stark contrast to the Nazi ammunitions store with its grave warning signs.

The visit from the Viscountess is interesting since she is not humble at all, but dresses the part partially out of scorn for the poor. Her problems are nonsense compared with the problems of the villagers and farmers. She professes sympathy for those who suffer, but in truth feels so superior to them, it is all just a show. Like Madame Pericand, she wants to look good for God and others, but her actions reveal that she is not a very good person, and her judgment of others serves to make her even more obnoxious.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 10 and 11

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 10 and 11 Summary

Lucile decides to ignore the German officer, and no longer speaks with him.

The old cook, Marthe, is glad to take his gifts of fruit and bread, but resents that he has them to give. Madame Angelllier has made sure Marthe always remembers that her job could be gone at any moment.

Marthe calls Lucile to see that, outside, Benoit Sabarie is sitting with an enormous fish he has stolen from the Viscount's lake. Benoit has come to get help from Bruno because Benoit thinks the soldier billeted at the Sabaries farm is chasing after his wife, Madeleine. Bruno tells him there is nothing he can do because he has no rank over the other officer. Benoit leaves, angry. Marthe makes coffee for Lucile and Bruno, who says he will be leaving for Africa when he returns from leave. They talk until Madame Angellier arrives home, and they are forced to sneak out to avoid her notice.

In Chapter 11, Madame Angellier makes a visit to her farms to be sure they are behaving and not possessing too much in the way of food and comforts. Lucile visits the dressmaker, who has been sleeping with a German soldier. The dressmaker's rationale for her actions makes sense, but Lucile warns her it is dangerous. Young children play in a beautiful garden, abandoned by its owners, and Lucile observes that the children are the only ones who are truly free.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 10 and 11 Analysis

Lucile wants Bruno's friendship, but that, too, is "verboten." She tries to tell him good-night in German, and feels light-hearted after they talk. Marthe wants to hate him, the proper behavior for a French woman, but he is likable and she alternates between mothering him and disliking what he stands for. Although she is related to Benoit, she is acting as an accomplice by helping Bruno and Lucile have coffee together. Bruno ironically notes that the Angellier house is like a prison, and symbolically asks Lucile how she will get back in. This may imply that once the ice has broken between them, it will be difficult for her to pretend it has not.

The darker aspect of this chapter is Benoit's visit, and his jealous anger. The author notes that Benoit is extremely strong, Since he is related to Marthe, he brings a fish to the household, which he has stolen from the Viscount's lake. He is angry at anyone he feels may have an advantage, and especially over his wife's attraction to people who are more sophisticated. He leaves without being helped by Bruno, and that enrages him even more.

Madame Angellier is not a generous woman, and is mean-spirited toward her farmers, whom she treats as her possessions. She is not rich or cultured enough to be gracious,

but is selfish and angry. Lucile's encounter with the dressmaker provides a warning to her by helping her define the dangers of becoming involved with the Germans. However, it also helps her realize that she is not a free woman. Even though the children are destroying the Perrin's garden, she envies their freedom to do so. The "morose" house is described as being "whipped by the rain," reinforcing the mental image of a prison.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 Summary

Lucile learns the Michaud's son has returned safely. She housed them briefly during their exodus.

The rain seems relentless. Bruno is smoked out of his room by a fire lit in a dirty fireplace. Lucile invites him to work in the dining room instead. She learns Bruno's leave has been canceled. He tells her about his mother and his wife. He laments the life of a soldier. It is gray and rainy, they are both sad, and Lucile asks him to play the piano. He plays beautiful music he has composed, and tells her of the imagery associated with it. The music brings out tender emotions about loneliness, the war and their situation. Bruno promises to return after the war is over and take her away. They prepare to have wine together. Bruno warns her that Bonnet might become involved with Madeleine. Bruno suggests he and Lucile are momentarily in the eye of a storm; she feels safe, peaceful and happy with him, temporarily forgetting everything else,

Chapter 13 brings the Perrin women back to the village. Madame Angellier feels a kinship with them, since they, too, are landowners, thrifty and middle-class, and materialistic. The Perrins hope Bruno can recover some of their belongings from their home which has been taken over by the Germans, and they have brought a list. They stay for snacks, and the older women discuss their poor health. It is still raining.

Knowing she is being watched, Lucile asks Bruno about the Perrin's things. She goes with him to the abandoned house, and they are watched from a window by the Perrins. The two enter the beautiful, but run down, garden and find German soldiers and French children inside relaxing. Seeing the damage to the home, Bruno tells Lucile that French soldiers laid waste to a home of his parents' during the last war, and Lucile likes his temporary vulnerability. He scolds the soldiers and makes them put the house back in order. The village children are safe in this garden because German soldiers will not allow French police on the property. A little girl overhears snatches of conversation - Bruno begging Lucile, holding her hand and saying he will never forget her; Lucile telling him it is impossible to have anything between them. She sees them both shaking and upset, and when they come back to the present, she hears stifled sobs. As the two walk behind the soldiers rolling the Perrin's belongings, their faces are white and cold. The townspeople interpret their expressions to mean that Lucile has stood up to the German and rebuked him for the state of the Perrin's home. An older woman cries out of patriotism, thinking Lucile has been brave to do this.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 Analysis

It is clear that Lucile will fall in love with Bruno and he with her. They find refuge in one another's company, and he gives her a long-absent sense of comfort and self-esteem.

Their opinions about the reasons for war do not clash, and although Lucile feels quite melancholy, she is comforted by the beauty of his music, his kindness and Bruno, himself. His love and concern for his mother is touching. His discussion about being married too young to a woman who remains a child is revealing. He symbolically hands her his wedding ring so he can play the piano.

The Perrins have perhaps heard gossip about the attention Bruno pays to Lucile, but decide to use it to their advantage to possibly retrieve their possessions. Madame Angellier seems relieved to have someone she relates to to visit and even instructs Lucile to talk persuasively to Bruno about their things - things are what matter to this class of people. They agree, ironically, that the war is due to the pervasive "desire for pleasure." The author notes that Ms. Perrin's daughters eat their shortbread "discreetly," which tells us that they all know more gossip than they are letting on.

In Chapter 13, the love between Lucile and Bruno blossoms, but they are miserable because she does not see their relationship as possible. We do not know if he is pleading with her to run away with him, or just wanting to set something up for later, but she is clearly rejecting his proposal and they are both unhappy about it. During this sad and desperate interchange, Nemirovsky has brings humor into the story as she describes the stuffed dog in the house and the children putting Grandfather Perrin's false teeth in its mouth. It is touching that Bruno orders the soldiers to restore the house, including cleaning and waxing the floors. He is obviously very much in love with Lucile and because of his position, is able to be more courageous than she. Lucile is a torn woman, lonely, lost and imprisoned with a bitter old woman. She wants nothing more than to be with Bruno. However, her life is run on propriety, and to admit her feelings for him would be scandalous. The little girl blowing the ladybug into the wind is symbolic of the gust of emotion that carries Lucile and Bruno away from reality. The fact that the rain stops and sun comes out, gives the sense that these two finally burst through their reservations and are able to communicate about their feelings. They know, now, they are in love with one another. However,, just as Lucile could not possibly be seen by the town with a blossom in her hand, she is not able to allow herself the pleasure of this man.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 15 and 16

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

The strain between Madame Angellier, the German officer and Lucile is palpable. The elder woman wishes him only ill will and is upset that Lucile is looking vibrant and happy, but because she sees him as a monster, she cannot imagine that they could be in love. She is glad when Bruno injures his arm and becomes ill. The older woman spends most of her time in her room where she cannot hear anything, reliving moments from Gaston's childhood and pretending he is there with her, lost in her grief. She comes upon Lucile reading to the officer, and decides to stay away from her from that moment on, so long as the German is in the house.

In Chapter 16, the odd Viscountess de Montmort has severe insomnia, and discovers, on her moonlight walks, that she is being robbed. She has been hoarding food for her friends, refusing to sell it to her farmers, who therefore, steal fish, chickens and vegetables from her. Since she is the pious one and holds the family's purse strings, her husband, the mayor, supports her war against the poachers. Considered a mad woman and hated by the villagers, she continues in her attempts to educate the disrespectful villagers, whom she dubs "Bolsheviks."

The villagers resent the class distinctions more and more and desire equality; they are not feeling inferior enough for Mme. Montmort. She sees the Germans as more civil and docile. When she catches Benoit Sabarie stealing vegetables, he confronts her about refusing to sell to the poor, trying to starve them to death and only giving to them out of charity. He claims he is stealing corn for a woman he wants to help, and calls the Viscountess heartless and stingy. He accuses her and her husband of socializing with the Germans; she threatens that she will have the Germans come after him for poaching. She is angry that poachers do not beg for mercy like in the past, but they now have money. She realizes Benoit must have an illegal gun, and wants her husband to protect himself from any accusations, so he decides to go to German headquarters.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Madame Angellier is so unpleasant that locking herself in her room is a relief to others in the household. She spends bitter moments imagining the death of Germans and is consumed by her grief and desire for her son. Due to these extreme emotions and her age, she has begun to play-act like a child, pretending he is home and all is well. Even though she is now aware of the problems in his marriage, when she sees Lucile reading to Bruno, it is the last straw for her—she can no longer cope. Withdrawing to her room, possible since she has servants, is the only solution for her, in her desperation.

Viscountess de Montmort is a mentally twisted woman who has such low self-esteem that she uses her money and power to elevate her ego. She and her husband cannot

take a real stand against the Germans, because they are, to an extent, complicit with them, and they owe them for favors. She will now use her association with the Germans to punish Benoit, since she cannot intimidate him as in the old days. Like other characters in the story, she constructs a facade that is absolutely false, feigning piety and charity toward those whom she despises.

it is interesting to note that at this point in history, the farmers are no longer dirt-poor, but have money to buy what they need. The fact that the Montmorts will not sell to them what is simply coming from the fat of their land and, in effect, try to starve them, dooms them to dealing with increased hostility. She and her husband, the mayor, are doing a dangerous "dance" with the Germans, playing both sides to get what they want, at the expense of the farmers and villagers. We get a different look at Benoit in this chapter, who is trying to help someone else, and whose rage is not so personal in this case, but is more logical and well-founded. So long as the farmers are humble and begging, the Montmorts do not mind them, but when they assert their rights and use their brains, they are threatened and angry.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 17, 18 and 19

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 17, 18 and 19 Summary

The Germans are requisitioning horses from the villagers and farmers. They have already taken their bread, flour, potatoes, petrol, and cars, and now they want horses for half the going price.

Lucile would like to be free of everything except her time with Bruno; she wants the freedom to decide her own future. Her true self is emerging, but the taboos and the will of her mother-in-law (and everyone else) do still affect her, as she questions her own feelings. Even playing the piano is interpreted as disrespectful to her husband. She and Bruno are in love, but do not even kiss. Bruno is an expert at waiting patiently, and she now waits for him, wanting to tell him how she feels about him.

In Chapter 18, Madeleine Sabarie comes to Lucile and tells her the Germans came to arrest Benoit for having a gun, but when Benoit picked it up, he shot both Bonnet and his dog, and escaped. They will shoot him if they catch him. Madeleine thinks Bonnet set Benoit up. Benoit is hiding at a neighbor's but the neighbor's children are friends with the Germans. Madeleine asks Lucile to hide Benoit. Since Marthe is related to him, she will not be a problem, and Madame Angellier does not come out of her room, so Lucile agrees to hide Benoit upstairs.

In Chapter 19, a public announcement is made by German Headquarters. Earlier an announcement of this kind ordered everyone to get rid of their rat poison for health reasons. This time, they warn that anyone caught providing the murderer of the German soldier with shelter will be executed. The Germans sense the solidarity among the French, feeling that everyone must be helping Benoit avoid capture, and the bond that has been building between the French and Germans is compromised. The French feel that occupation is worse than war, because they all get used to each other, but they are enemies forever.

Madame Angellier watching out her window notes that all of the important people in town have yielded to the Germans. Most of the aristocratic families are collaborators, many with foreign blood in their own veins. Late at night Madame Angellier is spying on Lucile, whom she now hates, as well as the German officer, whom she despises. After the funeral of the officer, she does not hear anyone in the house, and goes downstairs. She finds out about Benoit, and wants him to hide in her own dressing room. She is elated, and makes up his bed with her best sheets.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 17, 18 and 19 Analysis

Bruno has no particular feelings about the Germans taking horses from the French, since this is just his job. It makes Lucile unhappy, but she is in love with Bruno and continues to rationalize her relationship with him. She does not agree with the hive

philosophy and does not want to be a slave; her personality is blossoming with the influence of Bruno in her life, although she is forced to continue to play the "lifeless ghost" when he is not there. She longs to leave this house, and waits every day for Bruno to return home, and wants to give herself to him. This transformation in her is interesting, since she has been little more than a quiet mouse up until now, accepting her fate and her bad marriage and her mother-in-law.

Lucile is surprisingly willing to hide Benoit, even though her life will be in danger and it will be a direct betrayal of Bruno's trust. She has a moment of despair, questioning the value of her own life. The bad weather helps hide Benoit and mask him from the Germans.

It is interesting how the cordial relationships between the German soldiers and the French are suddenly compromised, when they realize, or remember, that the French really do hate them, and that, in spite of all of the bonding and appearances of friendship, they will protect their own. This changes the very tenor of the village.

It seems Benoit's tobacco smoke might be the thing that betrays his hiding place, since Madame Angellier has already smelled it, and Lucile has warned that Bruno will notice it. Madame Angellier has finally come back to life, with a real opportunity to express her overwhelming hatred of the Germans.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 20 and 21

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 20 and 21 Summary

The French and German admit their faults as races: Germans lack empathy and tact; French have short memories. The Germans have been planning to celebrate their arrival in France, but the French are not told the truth about the reason. The soldiers politely borrow fine linens and precious belongings for their party, which will include champagne, music and fireworks. French women want to come and ask the soldiers to ignore the curfew for one night. Bruno is secretly humbled and "terrified by the magnitude of his task" of serving the German government.

Bruno and Lucile try to ignore and forget their circumstances and focus on the harmony and understanding between them. When Bruno tries to seduce her, she doubts her feelings and, since she has undertaken to hide Benoit, decides that she is imprisoned by the situation and cannot feel anything for the perplexed Bruno. She is torn, but feels she has no choice.

A huge feast is prepared outdoors for the party, the French women pitching in to help. The officers have spent generously at the local shops and everyone seems happy. The French women watch the young soldiers as they head for the chateau and, later, all of the villagers gather there, listening to the music, dancing, and watching the Germans celebrate. The French are grudgingly glad that the Germans are having a good time and at least it is not war. They light torches when the sun goes down, and the Germans sing together. However, the party comes to an abrupt end, the word spreading that Germany is now at war with Russia.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapters 20 and 21 Analysis

These two chapters take Bruno and Lucile through the stages of being in love, almost consummating it, and becoming estranged. Lucile's decision to hide Benoit takes precedence over her love for Bruno, and snaps her back to the reality that she is a French woman and the Germans are the enemy. It is ironic that the French do not realize that this huge party is intended to celebrate the occupation of their country by the Germans. As Nemiorvsky points out, happiness is contagious,and the French enjoy the soldiers' celebration, in spite of the recent trouble with Benoit and the murdered soldier.

A contrast between the Germans and French is that the Germans seem to be more organized, efficient and well-to-do . For instance, their uniforms are perfect, their grooming and manners are perfect, their horses are well-cared for and trained, they are educated in the arts and their confidence is remarkable. She mentions many times their straight white teeth, shiny hair and strong physiques. They look down on the French, who seem to be behind the times in their simplistic way of life, but they appreciate them,

nonetheless. Being in the position of conqueror, of course, contributes to their arrogance, but Nemirovsky highlights the reasons for their implied superiority as if she really does recognize and appreciate it. The French cannot be said to be fond of the German soldiers, but they do see their humanity and they are happy to see them enjoy themselves, in spite of the circumstances. While many novels focus on the inhumane treatment dealt to the Jews during this period, this novel pays a lot of attention to the fine qualities of the Germans, and how the French seem to relax, in spite of themselves, during the occupation.

Lucile's change of heart is surprising, but she is forced to revert to her former self, the newer more sensuous self representing too much danger. Her decision to hide Benoit clinches this for her, as she cannot become too close to Bruno now. Both characters think at different times that the waste of these feelings and opportunities is a shame.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapter 22

Part 2, Dolce: Chapter 22 Summary

The Germans leave the village on July 1, 1941, ending friendly relationships and leavng the villagers to wonder what is next. Benoit wants to reconnect with his communist friends in Paris, and Lucile remembers the Michauds, who will house him. Bruno is packing up to leave and gives Lucile a painting. Lucile ponders how we do not really know people until we see them in dire circumstances. She bravely asks Brunot for a travel pass and petrol coupon for a farmer to see his ailing daughter in Paris. One of Bruno's fellow officers volunteers the pass and coupon, and as Lucile prepares to leave, she realizes how much she will miss these men, especially Bruno. She does love him, and asks him to be careful with his life; he tells her his uncle in Paris will help her in any way.

A warm bond binds the "conquered and the conquerors." The soldiers, outfitted in heavy field dress and gas masks, assemble near the chateau to parade through the village. There is a sense that there will be terrible losses for them in Russia and the soldiers are not upbeat. Goodbyes are said and tears are shed, and the reality of the occupation — the soldiers, their artillery, their truck full of black bread, strikes the hearts of the villagers as the Germans leave the town, singing.

Part 2, Dolce: Chapter 22 Analysis

The ending of this story is bittersweet. It is ironic that Bruno tells Lucile, "The happy times are over."

We do not know whether Nemirovsky planned to have Bruno and Lucile meet again, or Benoit reach the Michauds' home in Paris. The interlacing of her characters' lives is incomplete when she is forced to stop writing. The Appendices reveal the author's notes taken while writing the book. Although she writes deeply and poignantly about human beings and their feelings, Nemirovsky is also very politically-minded and astutely observes the gap between the rich and poor, the power of patriotism and the fall of tyrants. Her notes reflect changes she made to the text, and ones she never completed. Her stories are so vibrant, her characters so alive and real, it is difficult to not feel sorrow over Irene Nemirovsky's untimely and unnecessary death at the hands of those whom she actually did not hate. As her characters note in the book, it is "a shame" to have lost her before she was able to finish her work.

Characters

Madame and Monsieur Pericand

The Pericands are a very wealthy family, primarily due to the elderly Pericand's family connections with the Maltete family fortunes. The Pericands have one daughter and four sons, as well as an elderly father-in-law and a number of servants. Their son, Philippe, their pride and joy, is a Catholic priest. The younger son, Hubert, is a soft, sensitive teenager who cries easily and is drawn by patriotic fervor to wanting to join the French army, ashamed that the French have capitulated to the Germans. When they are forced to leave Paris for safety, the family and their servants and belongings ride out in cars, making their way through crowds of less fortunate people who cannot get petrol or trains.

Madame Pericand is organized, busy and highly efficient in her running of the family's affairs, including the manners and education of the children. Her primary goal is to look pious, righteous and generous, but internally she is petty and feels superior to those less wealthy. She pushes her older son Philippe to do something more noticeable in his priesthood. She is rude and degrading to her young son, Hubert, and does not respect his idealism about the war, but instead treats him like a child.

Her greatest outward failing is that she forgets to bring her elderly father-in-law when she and her children escape to safety. She treats her son Hubert with disrespect, and is not as glad as a mother should be when he turns up alive after she has been told he was killed. She is concerned with outward appearances, such as how successful her sons will look, how she will look in her black mourning clothing, and the martyr and hero status of her sons. She is extremely class-conscious, as well as being very loyal to France.

Monsieur Pericand is employed by the French government, so the couple have mixed feelings about their loyalties. On one hand, they are ashamed and tired of the government and speak out against it, and on the other hand they entertain government officials with false smiles and feign loyalty to them. We do not know a lot about Monsieur Pericand's character, except that he is concerned for his family and makes sure they get out of Paris as quickly as possible; he is also the one who volunteers their son, Philippe, to transport the orphans out of Paris on his way back to the mountains, even after he tells his wife that Philippe cannot leave Paris.

Jeanne and Maurice Michaud

This married couple is happily in love and probably the most stable family in the novel. They are both employed by Monsieur Corbin's bank, in jobs which they are afraid to lose. They live very simply. Their son, Jeanne-Marie, is injured in the war, although for much of the story, they watch for him and hope to hear from him, unaware of his

whereabouts. Together they go through hell trying to escape Paris so they can meet with their employer in Tours. Corbin goes back on his word to drive them there; the trains are stopped, and there is no petrol. They set out on foot, walking many miles and coming close to being killed and injured in bombings along the way.

During one horrible bombing scene, Jeanne organizes the children who are separated from their mothers, helping the parents to find the children. She is genuinely a good woman, whose love for her son and faith in God keeps her going under these miserable circumstances. Later, she works up her courage to go over the head of Corbin to get paid the money she feels the bank owes them after they lose their jobs. She is courageous, yet humble, and is rewarded eventually with the return of her son.

Maurice Michaud, an accountant, walks through the exodus from Paris seeing himself as a minor player in an historical movement which will have little impact in the bigger picture. He is very matter-of-fact about his position in the world—he does not see himself as insignificant, but does not see himself as any more important than any other person. He loves his wife and is solid and strong for her. He is not as able to confront what he perceives to be "authority," as she is, but their relationship works because of their differences.

Lucile Angellier

Beautiful Lucile Angellier is a quiet, withdrawn and sad young woman who has given up on her life. She lives imprisoned with a bitter mother-in-law, whose only focus is the misfortunes of her son. The two do not like one another at all, so Lucile, childless, is mostly alone in a very large, opulent chateau, with an occasional disapproving comment from Madame Langellier. Lucile is married to Gaston, whom she does not love and whom she knows loves someone else. Up until a German officer is billeted to her home, she is depressed and desperate.

Although she despises her mother-in-law for her closed-minded loyalty to Gaston, Lucile's adventure into the unknown world of love with von Falk makes her realize that she, too, is primarily a French woman, and that she cannot give herself to von Falk because her pride and patriotism is, surprisingly, too strong. She is an interesting character because she has accepted her husband's affair and only hopes for his safe return. She is not angry with him or with his mistress, but has a good heart. She has never had anyone to love, and that aspect of her life has been sad and empty. Her love for von Falk is reserved, quiet and guarded, although she does finally admit that they are in love and she enjoys his company. However, when it comes down to the possibility of the relationship turning intimate, Lucile's love turns hard and cold, and the von Falk she has loved turns back into the hard Nazi soldier she once despised. Lucile cannot cross that barrier and it becomes clear that her first love is for France and her people, as she hides Benoit and arranges for him to escape to freedom.

Bruno von Falk

A handsome, vibrant and talented German officer, von Falk is able to rationalize the actions of his army because he believes in the "hive" theory, that everyone is an important cog in the wheel, whether it be the conquerors or the conquered. He is somewhat idealistic in this respect, and has a hardness that comes through when he is performing his duties as a soldier. However, he is a gentle man and a gifted musician who will never be able to develop his talents as he would like. Bruno is the picture of the ideal Nazi soldier—blonde, strong, clean, well-groomed and dressed, educated and kind, but dominant and fierce when required to be.

Bruno loved his wife when they were very young, but feels he has changed so much from his experiences as a soldier, that she still seems a child. He is very much in love with Lucile, and becomes quite emotional over her, even though his normal demeanor is not emotional. He tends to his job loyally, conducting maneuvers, requisitioning horses and other army business. However, in the evenings he spends time in the garden and tries to spend time with Lucile, enjoying playing the piano and hearing her read to him. Nemirovsky ironcially develops Bruno as a mirror-image of how the Nazi Germans saw themselves—superior, and therefore entitled, and a more evolved race, who simply were doing the right thing in ridding the world of its inferior population. Bruno is not a monster at all, but sincerely believes in his cause. He is disturbingly likable for a Nazi and, given the fact that the Nazis capture and kill the author and her spouse, Bruno's character becomes even more ironic.

Madame Angellier

Madame Angellier is so bitterly insane over the loss of her son that she can only see through eyes of hatred and resentment. She resents her daughter-in-law, not only for not being distraught enough over Gaston, but for being healthy and safe while Gaston is not. She is passive aggressive, only making small comments and faces, clearly showing her disgust with Lucille and the Germans. She despises Bruno, who shows her only polite respect and kindness. She wishes a death by fire for him, and imagines him dying in all sorts of ways, at times wanting to believe that he alone imprisoned her son. She is understandably upset at having her home taken over by a German, who has also taken over her missing son's office for his work. When she realizes that her daughter-in-law is actually developing a friendship with Bruno, it is more than she can take, and she locks herself in her bedroom. In her deteriorating state, Madame Angellier play-acts, pretending Gaston is home, re-living moments of his childhood. Her lightest, most alive moment comes when she has the opportunity to hide Benoit Sabarie, who runs from the Germans after having killed one of their officers. Madame Angellier is devoutly patriotic, and willing to endanger her own life to help a fellow Frenchman, regardless of what he has done. We get the sense that this is the crowning achievement in her life, since her mood lightens, her energy returns and she has a surge of uncharacteristic happiness.

Gabriel Cortes and Florence

Gabriel Cortes is a famous, wealthy writer whose opinion of himself goes far beyond what is rational. He is a self-serving man who feels he is entitled to special treatment in the world. He has been given a lot of attention by the public, and expects it. He finds most common people vulgar, boorish and not worthy of his respect. He treats his mistress well, but expects her to be subservient and to follow along in his writing process, as if it were a magical journey for her, as well. He is much too taken with himself and is not a kind man. When he and Florence become lost in a bomb-wracked town, unable to find their car, they actually begin to fight physically, losing all sense of the decorum and sophistication they are normally so proud of. However, they finally find their car, their servants and his beloved manuscripts, and eventually come upon a luxury hotel where he is recognized and treated in accordance with his perceived rank. Clearly, Florence is with him for his money, but she is good at putting up with him, since he is an ego-centric fussy child-man.

Florence pounds her backside and complains of a hurting arse—a real breakdown in her poise, and one that makes Cortes bring up the issue of her lesser background and lack of sophistication. Her facade also temporarily breaks down when they fight after being unable to find their car.

This is one of Nemirovsky's examples of people who do not change, no matter what they go through. We get a glimpse of their true nature only a couple of times when they are hungry and desperate, but they very quickly return to their old ways. After finally finding good shelter and safety, Florence immediately becomes engrossed in what she will wear, getting a manicure and her own personal appearance in the common areas of the hotel. Gabriel has a luxurious bath, has his servant dress him and is happy to meet with people who are at his own perceived level of wealth and intelligence. He experiences only a brief moment of introspection, but it is related to what might become of him, his fame, his legacy—nothing else.

Charles Langelet

This delicate, sick little excuse of a man is completely and entirely engrossed in his material possessions. He crates up and carries his valuable porcelain collection in the trunk of his car throughout his escape from and return to Paris. He is a fancy man, whose windows are decorated in pink and blue. His hands are delicate, having never worked. He lives in a refined, quiet atmosphere of material wealth and fanatical avoidance of the real world. When he sees a terrible accident on the road, he takes a short cut to the country. He avoids the thousands of people who are in the same situation as he is, seeing them as riff-raff. His servants leave him early when they hear that the bombings are coming close; he has no friends because he is stingy, not only with his wealth but with his care for others. He feels he is just doomed to be hated by everyone, and has made sure that the only things he loves are things that cannot experience hurt. A friend calls him, desperate for a place to go, but he deliberately does

not invite her to a home he owns in a safer place. He has no particular loyalty to anything, and hopes to leave Europe entirely because he is revolted by the war. When he returns to Paris and once again finds a group of snobbish peers, he is killed by a car while walking to meet them for dinner.

Jean-Marie Michaud

Jeanne-Marie Michaud, seriously injured, is moved to a farmhouse by an officer who is trying to get him to a hospital in Blois. The simple farm family who cares for him sees their efforts as an offering toward the safe return of their own soldier. Jean-Marie goes in and out of consciousness, but is a good patient and is easily soothed. When he feels better, he wants to help on the farm but the older farmers will not let him, so he enjoys his time in nature, writing about his experiences. He is a very good-hearted man who appreciates his life and everything around him. He knows that Madeleine, the family's foster-child, is in love with him, but does not try to force a relationship on her, knowing that their two cultures are an unlikely mix. Like his parents, he is solid, steady and one of Nemirovsky's more likable characters. He eventually returns home to his grateful parents.

Philippe Pericand

Philippe Pericand is a Catholic priest, and the pride of the Pericand family. He wants very badly to be a holy man, but is a disappointment to his mother, who wants him to become well-known. He has been working, instead, in a small town in Switzerand. His father volunteers him to escort a group of orphans to safety, since they are from a charitable home supported by his family. Philippe tries, but is unable to extend any Christian love to the children, since they seem vacant and mechanical. The orphans, whom Philippe suspects to be lacking souls, turn on him and brutally murder him en route.

Hubert Pericand

Hubert is a chubby-faced, sweet adolescent who has glorified ideas about defeating the Germans. He escapes his family at night to go join the French army. When he finally arrives where there is military action underway, he is too immature and young to help the soldiers, but he tries. He realizes that the French army, although determined, has a severe shortage of arms and ammunition, and their defeat is inevitable. He becomes slightly injured, and runs through the forest to safety. He eventually meets up by chance with Arlette Corain, a dancer who seduces him. He returns to his mother more of an experienced young man, but his mother still sees him as a baby.

Objects/Places

Paris

The novel begins in the city of Paris, France, where the people are having a difficult time believing the war will reach them. They have been enduring air raids, blackouts and the distant noise of bombs, but when their beautiful city begins to be bombed, swarms of Parisians begin an exodus to the countryside in cars, on foot, on trains and bicycles. Paris and its outlying towns, farms and villages are the primary locations in the novel.

Tours

The town where Corbin expects the Michauds to meet up with him to re-establish his bank. The Michauds never reach Tours.

Orleans

The city where Gabriel Corte, during the exodus from Paris, manages to get a friend to deliver a basket of food to him. The basket is stolen from him by Jules, the brother of Hortense Gaillard, who later applies for a job as Charles Langelet's servant.

Chateau

The Monmorts and Langelliers both live in chateaux—the Montmort's resembles a castle. The chateau indicates the home of a land baron who usually owns substantial land around the dwelling and employs the locals as farmers and servants .

Boche and Fritz

Degrading nicknames given by the French to German soldiers.

Billet

During the German occupation of France, German soldiers were assigned, or "bllleted" to the homes of French citizens, who were required to provide them with shelter if asked. Officers were generally billeted to the more lavish homes.

Verboten

Verboten is the dreaded word used by the Germans occupying France in 1940. The word is German for "forbidden," and it is used to enforce all of the new rules, regulations and curfews imposed on the French.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a concept promoted by the Germans in France, who suggest that the French, rather than resist the occupation by German soldiers, instead work with them and show an attitude of partnership and camaraderie.

Dolce

The name of Part 2 of the novel, "dolce" implies sweetness, gentleness, and refers to the almost idyllic time of the German occupation, when, although it was difficult for the French, no bombs were falling and no shots were being fired.

Armistice

The French are relieved when their government signs an armistice, or peace treaty, with Germany. However, they are disappointed as well, since it means that France has surrendered.

Petrol

Gasoline is a huge issue in the first part of this novel, and the dearth of it often affects the haves and have-nots equally. The shortage of fuel forces thousands of people to flee Paris on foot, clogging the roads and trains. Those fortunate enough to have gasoline find themselves stuck in barely-moving traffic, often running out of gas before they can reach their destinations. Philippe Pericand is forced to turn his truck over to the army so they can transport wounded soldiers. Lack of fuel makes the wealthy Charles Langelet stoop to robbing an innocent young couple.

Themes

We Cannot Know People Fully Until They Are Put to the Test

Irene Nemirovsky illustrates the consistent theme that the true nature of people comes through in the heart of extreme stress, trauma or disaster. We may return to our normal state, changed only slightly by a traumatic experience or, perhaps, forever changed, but at a moment of extreme challenge, our true colors emerge.

Each character is faced at some point with something that pushes their self-imposed reserve or limitations. Madame Pericand, whose demeanor is friendly, generous and saintly, quickly and severely scolds her daughters and sends them inside when she realizes that a food shortage may occur. Her daughters have been, with her encouragement, sharing chocolate with other children. Madame Pericand also, in her haste and fear for her children's lives and her own, actually forgets to take her elderly father-in-law with her, accidentally leaving him to die alone. Her son, Hubert, who has been overly-sensitive and babyish, easily moved to tears, comes home from his first-hand experiences of war feeling stronger and more grown up. However, his mother, who has always considered him a baby, and who has been grieving over his death, immediately returns to her old disrespectful ways and scolds him for losing his bicycle.

Charles Langelet, who sees himself as the most refined and cultured creature in the world, stoops to stealing gasoline from a sweet young couple, turning into a lying jackal to get what he desperately needs. Father Philippe Pericand, who wants to be pious and holy, cannot bring himself to even like the orphans he is transporting. The orphans, whose outward behavior is that of mechanized obedience, turn into animals at their first taste of freedom.

Gabriel Corte and his long-time mistress, Florence, are extremely wealthy and put forth a sophisticated aura of elitism and superiority. However, when confronted with danger, hunger and desperation, they physically fight with one another like animals, returning later to their luxurious lifestyles, as if they never left.

Madame Langellier is angry, depressed and resentful. Her son is presumably a prisoner of war, and her daughter-in-law is developing a relationship with a hated live-in German officer, about whose death Madame Langellier fantasizes. She is bitter and mean-spirited and eventually withdraws completely from her home, choosing to lock herself in her room. However, when the opportunity arises to hide a Frenchman who has shot a German officer, Madame Langellier lights up, becomes young and high-spirited, offering her own bedroom for his safety and undertaking a delighted demeanor. She will always be angry and bitter, but the opportunity to get back at the Germans temporarily changes her.

People Can Get Used to Anything

When the German army first rolls into Bussy, it is a terrifying and appalling scene. The heavy artillery, the rigid manner of the soldiers, the huge truck full of black loaves of bread are foreboding and intimidating to the villagers. The solders are assigned to live in peoples' homes. They initiate and enforce curfews. They police every part of town, and take over the tavern and town square. They are assigned to live in peoples' homes, and the villagers are required to acomodate them. Knowing that their own soldiers are being held as prisoners and have been killed by Germans, the French are very disturbed, afraid and angry at the presence of the Germans, and resent having their lives turned upside down by this conquering force. Everything in the village changes. The Germans practice maneuvers and thunder by the villagers' homes. The Germans requisition all of the French horses for their own use and to send on to Germany and Russia, leaving only cattle to pull the farm wagons. The French in Bussy are violated in so many ways that their lives are forever changed.

However, over time, the Germans begin to seem like real people. Although the villagers still talk secretly about them and withhold from them, cheating them whenever they can, a certain kinship develops between conquered and conqueror. France is humiliated and buckles under this force, and the Germans recognize that the French are angry, but they start to recognize each other in the street, they do business together, and they begin to know whom has which soldier in their homes. They learn a little German, as the Germans learn to speak French. The children love the soldiers and spend hours playing with and round them. After a time, the people begin to trust the soldiers, who make a point of showing respect for their pride of country and their culture, even though they consider their own culture superior to the French.

Although moving in and occupying this small town makes everything less convenient, more stifled in some ways and more humiliating in many ways, people learn to live together in a semblance of harmony. Many German soldiers develop relationships with French girls, and when the soldiers finally leave for an unknown fate in Russia, there are tears, sadness and melancholy, because the French have grown used to having them there. Lucile Angellier will miss the sounds of the spurs. When the heavy artillery, troops and all their accoutrements march out of town, there is an ironic sense of sadness and nostalgia, because change is difficult, even in these circumstances.

The Rich Get Richer

Nemirovsky portrays the class distinctions in her story brilliantly, from Madame Montmort, the ultra-wealthy, to Madame Angellier, the mid-wealthy, to Benoit Sabarie, the lower class. Madame Montmort owns the most land and is basically in control of all of the farms and people in the area. Under her control are the castle, lake, hunting grounds and many acres of rich crops, not to mention her control and influence over the people of Bussy. She is selfish and will not even sell to the poor, because she wants them to continue to regard her as a superior and to honor her control over them. In her

capacity as Viscountess, she feels it is her duty to guide the spiritual lives of these poor heathens, and she works on sermons and lessons for them, and tries to involve them in charitable activities, knowing they cannot afford such things. She is bitter about being homely and unloved, and knows that her husband married her for her money, but is appalled at the thought of giving, or even selling, her goods to anyone but a small group of important friends. Her husband, because of their wealth, is the mayor and is therefore granted privileges and favors that others are not.

Madame Angellier controls "her" farms, and is just as concerned about controlling those around her as Madame Montmort, but she does not have quite as much influence. For instance, she is not exempt from housing a German officer, while the Montmorts have managed to avoid that because of their connections. Madame Angellier has never allowed her cook of many years to have a key to her pantry, and she keeps a tight, strict hold on her material possessions. Her biggest concern is outward appearances. She too is demanding, and visits her farms to make sure the people are not getting too comfortable, that the women are not buying too many luxuries. She almost senses a danger that the inferior farmers might improve their standard of living.

Benoit, who has worked hard to get by, is uneducated and all too aware of the imbalance of wealth. Not even allowed to buy what they need, Benoit is forced to steal from the Montmart's estate and is in danger of being held as a criminal. He is in an untenable position and does what is necessary to get what he and his family need.

On a larger scale, the French live more simply and humbly than the Germans at this time in history, still ensconced in an old caste system. The Germans have everything, however, much of which they have taken from others. Their horses are shiny and brilliant, their possessions are expensive, they drink the best wine and eat the best foods, taking the best from the less fortunate as they move through Europe. The merchants, of course, who already are in a better situation than the farmers, profit from the Germans' business, but the poor loose their horses and their freedoms and become even hungrier as the Germans continue their feeding frenzy.

Love is Unpredictable

Nemirovsky has her characters in unlikely loving relationships to illustrate that love can be as powerful as our social structures, politics, and cultural ties. Lucile Angellier and Bruno von Falk are unlikely lovers. They are from entirely different backgrounds. Von is highly educated and cultured, a gifted musician and a fierce warrior. Lucile leads a guarded life, not travelling much outside a small area of France. She marries into a wealthy family and has some education, but her life is cloistered and vacant. The two develop a strong bond, despite the mild language barrier and the fact that Lucile is expected to hate this man, who is indirectly responsible for the imprisonment of her husband.

Lucile's husband Gaston is obviously in love with a hatmaker in Dijon. Lucile never loves him but he marries her because her father seems to have investments, which

turned out to be unsuccessful. She marries him because her father wants her to. The only love in this marriage is for people outside the marriage.

Middle-aged Arlette Corain is a "dancer" and mistress to the awful Corbin for many years. She becomes strongly attracted to the chubby-faced, tearful young Hubert for some reason, and helps him grow up. Gabriel Corte's mistress, Florence, comes from a lesser background than Corbin, but adjusts well to being wealthy. She serves him like a slave, not realizing that he is actually an ego-centric, rather sleazy and arrogant child.

Madeleine Sabarie is terribly in love with Jean-Marie Michaud, but for some reason settles for Benoit because she has always expected to. She is attracted to Jean-Marie in many ways, but having grown up with Benoit, she pulls back her feelings and marries Benoit as a matter of course.

Charles Langelet is at least clear enough to admit that he has never allowed himself to love anything that can be hurt. His only love is for his porcelain and the value of his possessions.

The elderly Monsieur Pericand, although dependent upon his daughter-in-law for many years, reveals at his death that his only real concern is being able to manipulate and control his family; he wants children named after him, portraits painted of himself, statues sculpted of his likeness and his name to be placed where he will be remembered. It turns out he does not much care about the family members, but only how he will be seen when he is gone.

Style

Point of View

Irene Nemirovsky writes her novel from an omnipotent point of view, allowing the reader to see into each character's thinking and conversations through dialogue and prose. We are able to look through the eyes of Jean-Marie as he recuperates and observes the farm family, and even through the eyes of the Pericand's cat as he escapes his basket and tastes fresh blood for the first time. She is able to take her readers in and out of different characters' mindsets, as well as their environments, through rich description and meaningful dialogue.

The author puts herself in the minds of her characters and not only lives temporarily as the characters themselves, but also describes them as she sees them, sometimes blatantly and sometimes through implication. An example is the description of Jeanne Michaud's experience of hitting the ground waiting for a bomb to drop. We see the scene as it is, then we see the tiny pink flower near Jeanne's eyes on the ground, and the small butterfly near her head, then we see her again from the author's point of view, getting up and replacing her hat. This is the kind of writing that consistently takes the reader through the experiences from the outside in, and back again.

Setting

This novel allows the reader to experience springtime in France, even through the descriptions of bombing and devastation. The flowers, the sweet air and smells of everything from hay and strawberries to the burnt smell of bombed buildings are brought into stark relief, allowing the reader to know how lovely France is in the spring, and how horrible war is, no matter what time of year. The story emanates from the city of Paris, where swarms of people are forced to evacuate along country roads and through small towns and villages. The village of Bussy is particularly quaint and beautiful with walled-in gardens and chateaux of the Montmorts and Angelliers. The Sabarie farm in the country is relatively untouched by Germans in the beginning, and Jean-Marie experiences the incredible beauty of nature there, as well as the simplicity of life lived by elderly French farmers. The reader is able to experience the palatial mansions and hotels where the wealthy spent their time, shielded from the coarseness of the outside world. In the second part of the book, the quiet, huge and and mostly empty Angellier home is a lovely place where the ghostly Lucile spends so much time alone.

In a somewhat horrifying chapter, we watch as French soldiers set up a bridge explosion to hold off the German army in Moulins. Then, we watch as Hubert Pericand makes his way through the woods and countryside and eventually ends up in Cressange, a battered but still partially intact village where he smells bread and coffee. The author takes the readers to parks and areas choked with refugees, some with

mirrors hung on the trees, camping out in groups. Philippe and his group of orphans come upon a beautiful garden full of strawberries and a chateau with grassy hills and a lake.

Language and Meaning

This novel is translated from French to English by Sandra Smith, who admits to making minor assumptions, corrections and small revisions. She captures beautifully the spirit of Nemirovsky's writing, which is made clear through consistently beautiful description and dialogue. Nemirovsky usually sets up the environment and all of its aspects, often including feels, smells, color and nature, then intersperses dialogue into her writing, and decides, herself, what the characters are thinking and feeling. This combination of devices makes the novel a smooth, graceful ride through a time in history that was not so smooth.

Since most of France is Catholic at this time, many of the references in this novel are Catholic in nature, such as the masses for the dead, the daily vespers, the Easter church services and celebrations, Philippe Pericand's prieshood,and many other references. Although the author was born a Jew in the Ukraine, she converts to Catholicism and considers herself a French woman and her writing is immersed in that culture.

Structure

Originally intended to be a five-part novel, this unfinished story is divided into two major sections. The first section, A Storm in June, deals with the exodus from Paris as the German army makes its way closer and closer to the heart of France. This section is primarily concerned with the exodus and its effects on an array of characters, some of whom we, unfortunately, do not hear of again, since the novel is never entirely finished.

The second section of the novel, "Dolce," deals with the occupation of France by Germany, and describes a relatively peaceful and sweet time in which the French are able to breathe a sigh of relief in spite of their circumstances, occupation being preferable to air raids and bombings. Dolce is primarily focused on the Angellier household and Lucile Angelier's relationship with Bruno von Falk. However, Nemirovsky also weaves in characters from the earlier section, such as Benoit and Madeleine Sabarie, and a mere mention of the Michaud family.

It is fascinating to read the Appendices that contain Nemirovsky's notes made during the writing of this novel. Clearly, the author intends to ironically weave all of her characters together eventually, but is never able to finish the novel, which stands alone in its unfinished state as a fascinating account of a dismal period of history.

Quotes

"Beautiful fat pigeons cooed; swallows wheeled; sparrows hopped peacefully in the deserted streets. Along the Seine each poplar tree held a cluster of little brown birds who sang as loudly as they could. From deep beneath the ground came the muffled noise everyone had been waiting for, a sort of three-tone fanfare. The air raid was over," p. 20.

"The Pericands were a cultivated family: their traditions, their way of thinking, their middle-class, Catholic background, their ties with the Church (their eldest son, Philippe Pericand, was a priest), all of these things made them mistrustful of the government of France. On the other hand, Monsieur Pericand's position as a curator of one of the country's national museums bound them to an administration that showered its faithful with honors and financial rewards.
A cat held a little piece of bony fish tentatively between its sharp teeth. He was afraid to swallow it, but he couldn't bring himself to spit it out either," p. 21.

"Depending upon the day he was either Lord of the Heavens or a miserable writer cursched by hard work and labouring in vain. On his desk he had had engraved, 'To life such a heavy weight, Sisyphus, you will need all your courage,'" p. 37.

"'Oh, they're good boys. We get them into shape, teach the rebellious ones how to behave. But without wishing to seem proud, I'm the one who keeps everything going here. The supervisors are afraid. In any case, the war has claimed one of them and as for the other...' He pouted. 'Excellent if he follows a rigid routine, but incapable of taking any initiative whatsoever, one of those people who could drown in a glass of water. Anyway, I was wondering which Saint to pray to in order to evacuate these boys when your good father told me you were passing through, leaving tomorrow for the mountains and that you wouldn't refuse to help us,'" p. 50.

"The metallic shudder of falling iron shutters was the only sound to break the silence, a sound familiar to anyone who has woken in a city threatened by riot or war," p. 55.

"Whether beautiful or ugly, young or old, he treated all his female employees in the same aggressive, rude and mean-spirited manner. His odd little voice emerged from a head that sat on top of a fat, heavy, well-fed body; when he got angry his voice became as high-pitched and feverish as a woman's," p. 58.

"The old man had had an operation a short while ago. He was wearing a complicated bandage and, given the cold night air, a flannel girdle so big and so wide that his body was swaddled like a mummy. Auguste buttoned his old-fashioned boots and pulled a light but warm jumper over his head. As he put on his jacket, Monsieur Pericand, who until now had wordlessly let himself be manipulated like an old, stiff doll, seemed to wake up from a dream and mumbled, 'Wool waistcoat...' 'You will be too warm, Sir,' Auguste remarked, trying to pay no attention. But his master stared at him with his pale, glazed eyes and repeated more loudly, 'Wool waistcoat!'" p. 66.

"When he was twenty he had worn a ring with an inscription inside: This thing of Beauty is a guilt for ever (Monsieur Langelet happily spoke English to himself: the language, with its poetry, its force, suited certain of his moods). It was childish and he had got rid of this trinket, but the maxim remained with him and he remained faithful to it," p. 71.

"He wasn't cut out for this. He wasn't made for the world that would be born of this rotting cadaver, like a worm emerging from a grave. A brutal, ferocious, dog-eat-dog world. He looked at his beautiful hands, which had never done a day's work, had only ever caressed statues, pieces of antique silver, leather books or occasional a piece of Elizabethan furniture. What would he, Charles Langelet, with his sophistication, his scruples, his nobility — which was the essence of his character — what would he do amid this demented mob? He would be robbed, skinned, murdered like a pitiable dog thrown to the wolves. He smiled slightly, bitterly, imagining himself as a golden-haired Pekinese lost in a jungle. He wasn't like ordinary men. Their ambitions, their fears, their cowardice and their complaints were foreign to him. He lived in a universe of light and peace. He was destined to be hated and betrayed by everyone," p. 74.

"She wasn't afraid, but she was short of breath and her heart was pounding so violently that she pressed both hands to it and pushed it down against a stone. She could feel a bell-shaped pink flower brushing her lips. Later, she would remember that while they were stretched out on the ground, a small white butterfly was lazily flitting from one flower to another," p. 103.

"The glass roof shattered and exploded outwards, wounding and killing the people in the square. Panic-stricken, some of the women threw down their babies as if they were cumbersome packages and ran. Others grabbed their children and held them so tightly they seemed to want to force them back into the womb, as if that there the only truly safe place," p. 107.

"Langelet took a bite of the omelette he'd just been served, pushed it away mumbling 'inedible,' asked for his bill and left. He got a kind of perverse pleasure from depriving these good souls of the satisfaction they hoped to attain by questioning him, for they—vulgar, vile creatures that they were—imagined they were feeling compassion for all mankind, while in reality they were merely thrilled by base, melodramatic curiosity. 'It's unbelievable how much vulgarity there is!' Charles Langelet thought sadly. He was always pained and scandalised when he encountered the real world full of unfortunate people who had never seen a cathedral, a statue, a painting," p. 197.

"'What? They're going to blow up all the bridges?' 'That's what everyone's saying. They're going to fight along the Loire.' 'So you think there's no petrol at all?' 'Oh, I'm sure of it! I would have been glad to let you have some but I only have just enough for myself. I have to get my fiancee to safety at her parents' house. They live in Bergerac. Once we've crossed the Loire, it will be easy to find petrol, I hope.' 'Oh, so she's your fiancee?' Charlie said, while thinking of other things," p. 204.

"'But where you have you been? What have you been doing these past two months? We were told you'd been killed in Moulins.' 'Well, you can see that wasn't true since I'm

right here.' 'But you did go and fight? Hubert, don't lie to me! Did you really have to go and do that, you little idiot. And what about your bicycle?' 'Lost.' 'Of course! This boy will be the death of me! Well, come on, speak, tell us, where were you?' 'I was trying to find you.' 'You would have been better off not leaving us in the first place,' said Madame Pericand harshly," p. 261.

"All the staff were in place. Despite the manager's insistence that they were short of everything, the coffee was delicious, the cocktails were mixed with crushed ice and the taps poured out as much water as you liked, cold and boiling hot. At first everyone had been worried: the unfriendly attitude of England made them fear that the blockade would remain in place, thus depriving them of fresh supplies of whiskey, but they had a large quantity in stock. They could wait. As soon as they set foot on the marble floor of the lobby, Gabriel and Florence felt they had been reborn. Everything was calm. You could barely hear the distant whirring of the great lifts. Through the open baby windows, misty shimmering rainbows created by the hotel's water sprinklers hovered over the lawns. They were recognised and surrounded," p. 269.

"These posters were of various types. Some depicted a smiling German soldier with fair hair and perfect teeth giving out jam sandwiches to a group of French children gathered around him under the caption, 'Abandoned citizens, trust in the soldiers of the Third Reich!' Other posters used drawings or caricatures to illustrate world domination by the English and the detestable tyranny of the Jews. But most of them began with the word Verboten—Forbidden," p. 360.

"'I'm thinking that people shouldn't be sacrificed like this. I mean none of us. Everything has been taken away. Love, family... It's just too much!' 'Ah! Madame, this is the principal problem of our times: what is more important, the individual or society? War is the collaborative act par excellence, is it not? We Germans believe in the communal spirit—the spirit one finds among bees, the spirit of the hive. It comes before everything: nectar, fragrance, love...'" p. 476.

"'Tell me, do I talk to you like that, do I? Take your plants,' said Benoit, throwing them down on the ground where they lay scattered in the moonlight. 'Didn't we offer to pay for them? Do you think we don't have enough money to buy them? But every time we ask you for a favour—not that it would cost you anything—no! You'd rather see us starve to death!'" p. 525.

Topics for Discussion

Discuss the elder Monsieur Pericand's dementia. What is his most pressing problem?

Discuss Madame Percand's view of the lower classes, and how she deals with them. Is she a genuine character? What are her highest priorities?

Maurice Michaud is a seemingly stable, well-balanced man. Discuss his outlook on life. Does he have emotions?

Discuss the behaviors of Gabriel Corte and Florence, both when they are hungry and have nowhere to go, and when they arrive at the Grand Hotel.

Discuss the cultural peculiarities of Madelaine Sabarie and her small farm community.

Hubert Pericand is patriotic, but there are other reasons he runs away to join the war effort. Discuss these, as well as if and how his experiences change him.

In Chapter 29, what is it about the small, sable-skin hat that cheers Charlie Langelet and reassures him?

In the Occupation section, the German soldiers are often described as physically beautiful in several respects. Discuss this perception and why it was important enough for the author to go into such detail. How is it important to the story?

Nemirovsky often uses animals or other aspects of nature to mimic the situations of her characters. Discuss some examples of this, and why it is effective.