

The Spy's Wife Study Guide

The Spy's Wife by Reginald Hill

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Plot Summary

The Spy's Wife by Reginald Hill is a mystery story as well as a character analysis. Molly Keatley is a comfortable, unassuming housewife whose life is turned upside with the revelation that her journalist husband Sam is, in fact, a spy for the Russian government. Set in the time of the Cold War, Molly must discover her own way to deal with the secret as well as more family troubles in order to keep her sanity and reach a place of emotional security. The Spy's Wife is an investigation into human strength amid a world of lies and suspense, written by a well respected mystery writer, someone regarded as one of the best in his genre.

Molly lives with her husband Sam, a well respected journalist, at their home in Weston Sea. They have been married for eight years and have no children, despite trying for some time. One day Sam strangely comes home in the middle of the day, and apologizes to Molly before abruptly leaving. Molly's world is then turned upside down when two detectives, Aspinall and Monk, arrive to inform her of her husband's secret life and treachery.

A flashback then takes place, giving useful information on the years of Molly's life leading up to her marriage with Sam. In her youth, Molly had been engaged to Trevor but had jilted him to come to London. Back in the present, Molly returns home to Doncaster where she was born and where her parents still live. She does not tell them of the news, and lies to Sam's boss, Iain, that Sam is ill. However, fearing for a news leak, Monk tells Iain the truth at his discretion.

In Doncaster, she is confronted with further uncomfortable details and revelations of Sam's past, including an affair, as well as having to hear the news that her mother has cancer. Causing further stress, she sees Trevor's jealous wife, Jennifer, whose presence causes tension. But Molly's parents and dog Danny aim to keep Molly happy. Feeling the need to express herself, Molly confides in Trevor, and begins an affair with him. Although the affair is quite meaningless to her, Trevor wishes to leave his wife and be with Molly again. Meanwhile, Molly is growing ever closer to Monk. Molly is forced to come face to face with Sam's mistress, Sally Anne, and each woman is equally jealous and uncomfortable in the presence of one another. A ruthless journalist named Wallace sets up the meeting and hounds Molly for news.

Sam sends Molly a flight package to Russia for her to come and see him. Wallace and Sally Anne follow her there. During the second day in Paris, Sam arrives at the hotel to talk to Molly. He gives her an explanation for everything and asks her to come and live with him in Moscow.

The next day is her last in Russia. She goes to see Sam, not knowing what her answer will be. Sam eventually turns up but is hit by a car in front of Molly, Sally Anne, and Wallace. Aspinall takes Molly back to England, and she returns to Doncaster where she gives birth to a son. It is unclear if the baby is fathered by Sam or Trevor. Molly becomes engaged to Monk, who ironically, must also move to Moscow for work.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The Spy's Wife by Reginald Hill is a mystery story as well as a character analysis. Molly Keatley is a comfortable, unassuming housewife whose life is turned upside down with the revelation that her journalist husband Sam is, in fact, a spy for the Russian government. Set in the time of the Cold War, Molly must discover her own way to deal with the secret as well as more family troubles in order to keep her sanity and reach a place of emotional security. The Spy's Wife is an investigation into human strength amid a world of lies and suspense, written by a well respected mystery writer, someone regarded as one of the best in his genre.

One early September morning, a housewife, Molly Keatley, is washing dishes in her kitchen when she hears her front door open. Aware that her husband has arrived, because she sees his blue Datsun parked in the drive, she is furious to see that he has carelessly ruined one of her rosebushes in the process of parking.

Her husband, Sam, then appears from upstairs. The reader is given a brief description of his physical appearance before Molly harasses him over her rosebushes. He is apologising profusely while running back into the car. Molly quizzes him about his great hurry, but her questions are dismissed with apologies.

Sam tells Molly that he loves her and he will be in touch before slamming the car door shut, trapping leaves in the door as he does so. He then speeds away down the drive, ripping a flowering shoot from the bush in his haste. The car speeds down the road, around the corner, and disappears from sight as Molly watches on. With the car gone, the road is now quiet and a dog and a milk float add to the normalcy.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The main character, Molly, is introduced in this chapter, as well as her husband Sam, another character central to the plot. Molly is portrayed as a stereotypical housewife who does the housework and is fond of her garden. Sam is portrayed as rather insensitive and distant. The chapter throws the reader into the plot from the outset. Within the first few paragraphs, it is already clear that something is wrong, due to the unusualness of Sam returning, and his uncharacteristic behavior. The first line of the book begins with a contrast, "morning of mist and promise". The mist suggests an uncertainty, that something is hidden, but there is still the promise of something, some hope somewhere.

The rosebush in this chapter represents the continuity and security of Molly's life. The way Sam disrupts the seemingly perfect house and garden is symbolic of how he is about to disrupt the continuity and security of Molly's life. At the end of the chapter, a calmness and stability returns to the rest of society and the only thing that remains

disturbed is the rosebush, showing that her life as she knows it has now permanently been disrupted. The chapter is extremely short, emphasizing the speed of this change.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Shortly after Sam's departure from the house, a young man arrives at Molly's door. The man asks if her husband is home and if he can come in. Molly mistakes him for a salesman at first, and is continually cool with him even when he says that he is not. Molly and the reader now learn that the man's name is Aspinall, as he shows his badge. Their conversation remains awkward for some time, as the man persists with questions about Sam. To her surprise, Molly's attitude is uncharacteristically cold, sarcastic, and unfriendly towards Aspinall. He urges her to tell him where Sam is, going as far as threatening to involve the neighbors. She eventually answers "yes", out of curiosity as to what has happened.

Aspinall asks to see the upstairs of the house and to use the phone. He leaves the room without obtaining an answer, closing the door on his way. Molly can hear his movements as he searches the upstairs. As he picks up the phone and begins to dial, having come back down the stairs, she comes into the hall to listen. Aspinall tells the person on the other end of the line that Sam has indeed come home and discusses details of his possible journey. After hanging up he encourages Molly to call her solicitor. Molly is aware that he is stalling for time, and horrible possibilities of Sam's crime begin to fill her thoughts.

Sensing her distress, Aspinall sits her down and makes her a cup of tea. While he is in the kitchen, Molly goes to the phone and threatens to call a newspaper. When he gently tries to stop her, her cold exterior finally erupts. She becomes both verbally and physically abusive towards him. She grabs him mercilessly by the hair with all her strength, and yells for answers. She only releases when a second man appears in the doorway. When the man speaks, the reader at last knows the secret—Sam is a spy and a traitor.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The second chapter introduces Aspinall, who initiates the confusion and drama about to envelope Molly's life. He is clearly a gentle character, who does not intentionally wish to inflict any suffering to Molly. His gesture to make the tea and his non-reaction to her physical abuse portrays this. He has golden hair which suggests he possesses purity.

There is much confusion in this chapter, and the reader is kept in suspense as to the man's purpose until the end. Molly's hostility towards Aspinall at the start of the chapter grows into anger and resentment at being in the dark regarding the strange events. To her, he represents the change. Despite Aspinall's nice personality, the reader still shares Molly's frustration, knowing as little as she does at this point. Her mind conjures up all



sorts of possible scenarios, and of all of them, infidelity seems the most comforting to her.

Monk is introduced at the end of the chapter, although the reader does not know his name yet. He is the one that reveals the truth, briefly and casually, as if it were something that Molly might hear every day.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

A flashback of Molly's past now begins in the chapter, starting at age twenty when she was growing up in Doncaster, South Yorkshire with her parents. She had worked as a typist and been engaged to a man she had known from high school. She shared an interest in sports with her fiancé, Trevor; however, she acknowledged that he looked "gawky" once off the sports field.

Molly's mother, Mrs. Haddington, was actively supportive of her relationship with Trevor, due to his ambition and good grades. Trevor offered Mrs. Haddington a flat in Brussels and talked of future opportunities. Molly also used these plans to patronize the other typists who had little on the horizon. However, as the wedding drew closer, Molly began to have doubts. Trevor was critical of her admirers rather than jealous, which did not soothe Molly's young ego.

One Saturday night, Molly abruptly rejected Trevor's advances, with more force than usual. She was curious, but there had always been a lack of desire, and now she was rejecting not merely for moral reasons as in the past, but also from tedium. A fight ensued, resulting in Molly handing back her engagement ring. The next morning, Molly ended her relationship with Trevor for good, much to his distress. Fearing that she may be talked into reconsidering, she called her cousin Rose, who had recently moved to London, and arranged to move in with her.

Having quit her job and talked to her parents, Molly arrived in London to a vibrant social life. A couple of years later, she received the news that Trevor was now engaged to Jennifer Buxton, a pretty girl from a lower class. Molly ignored her pangs of jealousy, but she considered returning to Doncaster. At this time, she began working at The New Technocrat newspaper. It was here that she met Sam Keatley, Defense Correspondent at the paper, who was eleven years her senior. Molly and Sam married six months later and moved to an area called Weston on Sea.

Chapter 3 Analysis

This chapter breaks from the continuity of the story in order to provide the reader with background information. Molly's past begins to unravel itself in this chapter, enabling the reader to have more of an understanding of her character. The flashback also is used as a tool to create suspense, as both Molly and the reader have just learned of Sam's secret, but will have to wait to find out more.

As well as gaining insight into both of Molly and Sam's younger personalities, the reader is also given a brief introduction to the characters of Trevor, Jennifer, and Molly's parents, the Haddingtons. Despite Trevor's seemingly good prospects, it is clear that there is something also quite stale about him. They were due to get married in March

"for tax reasons", showing the practical quality and lack of passion surrounding their relationship.

The reader's impression of Molly has now changed drastically from the one of a quiet housewife at the start of the book. The chapter depicts a brave and spontaneous woman, throwing caution to the wind and not willing to settle for anything less than she believes she deserves. Her reaction to Sam's patronizing tone on their first meeting again shows a strong character, in accordance with the Molly that pulled Aspinall's hair in the first chapter. Molly also shows a lack of sentimentality about her, in that she feels no feeling to the person to whom she loses her virginity. Her quick courtship with Sam is also given very little prominence, which not only emphasizes the swiftness of this period, but hints at the lack of contemplation Molly had taken on the issue.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

The story has now returned from the flashback back to Molly's living room in the present day. Monk introduces himself to her as Aspinall makes tea. Molly states her disbelief in what Monk has told her and gives vague questions to his answers. Monk now calls Aspinall to question him on what he knows so far, and acknowledges that Molly had to find out sooner or later. Molly continues to beg for information, and responds hysterically to Monk's laid back approach.

Monk begins to explain the truth to Molly, who is somewhat incredulous at the news. He tells her that Sam is an agent, and they have his name from the Americans who got it from a KGB worker named Leskov. Continuing, he discusses Sam's inconspicuousness and highlights the irony that he himself once tried to recruit Sam. Molly, still disbelieving, receives the grim news that Sam has been watched, tapped, and photographed.

Monk leaves the room, while Aspinall tries to explain more to Molly. Molly, however, is more concerned with the fact that Monk has decided to snoop around upstairs. She ascends the stairs to find Monk on her bed. Molly questions Monk's rights to do this and threatens to accuse him of rape until he apologizes for his bullying tactics. He tells her they cannot keep a low profile for her sake if she does not help them.

Molly receives a phone call from Sam's boss at the newspaper, Iain Haddon. She lies convincingly about Sam being ill. Monk and Aspinall are very impressed with her performance. After the call, they continue to search the house.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The intelligence possessed by Molly starts to become abundantly clear during her phone call to Iain. According to Monk, her performance was first class for someone with no experience. She shows that despite her hysterical outbursts, she also has self control. Monk's character becomes quite established in this chapter, and he comes across to the reader as stubborn, mulish and headstrong. He is insensitive to Molly, and laid back to her plight. However, once he realizes this, he apologizes, showing the softer, gentler side of his nature. Iain Haddon himself appears caring and considerate at this stage, having been so understanding of Sam's illness.

More details of Sam's exploits are exposed in this chapter. By revealing these details so early on in the book, Hill is able to quickly move on with the story surrounding the repercussions of Sam's actions.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Molly refuses to let Monk out of her sight as he searches the house. As he searches her study, she watches on while sitting in Sam's old leather chair. The chair conjures up thoughts of her relationship with Sam and the past. Although they had made love in the chair, their experimentation had gone no further. She acknowledges their marriage was rather conventional, in contrast to what those in Doncaster pictured. Those people imagined her life and marriage to be glamorous, all theatre visits and cocktail parties. She almost believed this vision when she was in Doncaster. However, Sam was particularly domesticated and they had in fact moved away from the city. Molly thinks, without regret, how different life would have been if she had indeed married Trevor.

Pushing her thoughts aside, she questions Monk on where Sam is likely to be. He says Molly is unlikely to see Sam again in this country unless he is in prison, and speculates that Sam is most likely in Moscow. After taking a tranquilizer, Molly is able to think clearly again.

Monk, sensing that the news may break, calls The New Technocrat to inform the senior staff of the details, issuing them with a notice to make publication illegal. Iain arrives at the house later in the day with his wife, Jean, to the relief of Molly. Both are disbelieving of what they heard, but Monk dismisses their incredulity as a normal reaction. The questioning goes on for the next week, while Jean Haddon stays with Molly. Meanwhile, Sam's car is found, and there are no signs of a struggle. Molly needs tranquilizers to sleep, but refuses to stay at Jean's house, so as to retain a degree of control.

When Molly's mother Mrs. Haddington calls, Molly is forced to lie about Sam's whereabouts as to why he cannot make their plans that weekend. She agrees to come to Doncaster alone, much to the approval of Monk, who explains the story may be exposed by the Russians in the coming days just prior to a meeting regarding NATO. He suggests they may watch Molly in Doncaster, although she will know nothing about it. A neighbor's curtain is seen to twitch, suggesting that they are already suspicious of Monk being around Molly while Sam is away, as Molly has anticipated.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The reader is able to gain more of an insight into what life, and this marriage in particular, was like to Molly by seeing into her thoughts. Neither her life nor her marriage was what it appeared to be to the outside world. In contrast to the perceived opinion, both were rather stale, mundane, and distinctively ordinary. Molly almost enjoys the questioning and interrogation, emphasizing the boredom of her usual mundane routine. The evidence of Sam's secret life is beginning to make sense, such as his need to move to a quieter place outside of London.



Monk's personality is developed further, and he describes himself as "unimaginative", and says he cannot work out if Molly is very clever or very stupid. Crying, Molly expresses her concern for Sam's safety, and Monk relents to an extent. Monk is inept at comforting Molly and calls her doctor to come. He now comes across as a caring person, who simply lacks the ability to express this.

The character of Iain Haddon is delved into slightly further. He has so far seemed considerate and thoughtful, which is accentuated even further when he turns up upon hearing the truth. However, as realized by Molly, Iain's interest is not merely for her welfare, but also for a story. His wife Jean appears to be the one who solely considers Molly's plight. The reader is given a first glimpse of Mrs. Haddington, Molly's mother. Over the phone, she appears bossy and authoritarian, but only in ensuring her daughter's wellbeing.

Importantly, Sam's blue Datsun has been discovered. The color blue is often said to represent peace and tranquility; however, the car repeatedly causes moments of drama and ambiguity in Molly's world. This contrast metaphorically depicts Molly's way of life, which appears peaceful but is full of secrets and uncertainty. The car therefore stands for the insecurity and upheaval Molly is experiencing.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Molly arrives in Doncaster to be met by her mother, who looks pale and tired. Her mother discusses her dad's health and engages in gossip. Their dog Danny and her dad Ivor are enthusiastic to see her, illustrating her status in Doncaster. As Ivor stands to take the dog for a walk, he reminds Molly of Monk. During the walk, the park is filled with mist which Danny gets lost in.

Again, the reader is offered some background information, which discusses Sam's loss of sexual appetite while the couple was trying for a baby. Molly's mother liked Sam but found his time away from home inappropriate. It is during these thoughts that Molly realizes that she is starting to believe Monk's words.

Her dad interrupts her thoughts by telling her of her mother's poor health. She resents the fact that she may have to be concerned with anything other than Sam. Molly continues the walk with Danny while Ivor goes to his usual snooker club.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Jean immediately rebukes Molly's plans for a taxi, which illustrates her domineering temperament. Molly dismisses this and gets her own way, showing her newly found confrontational style. The audience learns more details about the personalities of Molly's parents here, with Ivor being very dependent on his wife. Ivor briefly reminds Molly of Monk, which suggests that the dependence she now feels towards Monk is almost paternal, and offers security.

Again the air is misty. This shows the cloudiness of both Molly's circumstances and her state of mind, highlighting the uncertainty of both the future and the present. Nothing in her life is clear at this time, and Hill uses this imagery to give emphasis to this point. The haziness has even followed Molly to Doncaster, her place of safety. Her confusions are accelerated with the new found uncertainty of her mother's health. It begins to turn dark during the chapter, which hints at the darkness which Molly suspects surrounds her future.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Molly and Mrs. Haddington go shopping in the town's largest department store. While drinking coffee in a café, they observe Molly's ex-fiancée Trevor with his wife Jennifer. Molly's mother criticizes Jennifer until the couple enters the restaurant. Jennifer exaggerates her happiness to see Molly, although Trevor is less enthusiastic. The foursome engages in idle and routine conversation. There is a degree of tension, particularly between Jennifer and Mrs. Haddington. This is virtually unnoticed by Molly, who is instead occupied with the fact that Aspinall is sitting at a nearby table, concealing himself with a newspaper. As their eyes meet, he wanders into the furniture store opposite the café.

Molly leaves the café with her mother, and pretends to have left a glove, giving her the excuse to go back. Upon reaching Aspinall, she instantly questions him aggressively. He explains he is not watching her, but Monk wishes to see her. They arrange for her to meet Monk that night on the town field at eight. Molly spies Trevor and Jennifer sneakily watching her with curiosity and suspicion.

Later on, Molly and her mother relax at home in front of a coal fire. The room reminds her of past times with Trevor. After a brief sleep, Molly finds her mother in her room, quite weak and weary. She spots pills and raises the topic of this to Mrs. Haddington, who at first dismisses the idea. Molly threatens to call the doctor if she is not informed. To her surprise and horror, she is invited to come to the next appointment to speak with him personally. Mrs. Haddington reveals that she has suffered bleeding and is awaiting test results after a mix up. Molly is angry at the hospital and indignant for not being told sooner. As Mrs. Haddington carries on like normal, Molly is again left with a feeling of helplessness.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The reader now meets Trevor and Jennifer for the first time. There is undeniable tension, which does not affect Molly, whose mind is largely elsewhere. The spurious expression on Jennifer's face upon seeing Molly hints at the resentment and jealousy she possesses towards her deep down. Trevor is undeniably interested to see Molly, having made personal references to her on more than one occasion.

The bedspread that Aspinall is looking at has a design of the Union Jack. This is sufficient in establishing his political views. He may be a nice, caring person towards Molly, but his duties predominantly lie with his country. The reference to the flag brings the reader back to the main plot line and Sam's treachery, having momentarily been distracted by the Challengers.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Having sent her parents to her dad's club for the evening, Molly goes to meet Monk, as arranged. The reader is able to see into her thoughts which center on seeing Sam once again. She considers whether she even cares that her country has been cheated by him. She wonders what his motives were. To her, her mind is now in a state of clarity.

Monk arrives behind Molly, unnoticed. She immediately asks him of news of Sam, who has not been seen anywhere. The Russian cargo ship he was suspected of travelling on has had to stop in Greece due to engine trouble, making it easy for him to continue his journey unnoticed. Molly now questions whether Monk and his men have some involvement and are collaborating with Sam. This idea is rejected by Monk, who moves onto to question if Molly would inform them of Sam's whereabouts, should she find out. She is unsure. Monk is genuinely surprised when Molly angrily mentions the stranger from the previous night.

There are more surprises in store when Molly learns that Sam's old girlfriend, Sally Anne Hibbert, from college is missing. They were both involved in protests together and she now works for the American Embassy. Monk is suspicious that this woman may have informed Sam that Leskov had implemented him. Molly is told that Sally Anne had a baby by Sam, which had died. To Molly's fury, she then learns that Sam has had a vasectomy. When Monk leaves, Molly is confronted by the stranger she had seen the night before. He begged to know where Sam was in a Welsh accent. Hinting in anger at Russia she and Danny run away. The man seems satisfied, and leaves as Trevor now appears. Trevor walks her home, discussing old times. As they enter her parent's house, Monk phones apologizing for causing any distress. Molly and Trevor make love on the living room floor, watched by Danny.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Molly discovers that there is a "bitchy cynicism" within her that Monk seems to bring out in her. She is angry upon learning of Sam's further deceit. There is further ambiguity in this chapter, as both Molly and the reader are unsure of who the Welsh man is, creating an unsettling mood.

When Molly and Trevor make love, it is unromantic and there is no sense of intimacy or feeling on Molly's part. The act is watched by Danny, which adds to the sense of voyeurism surrounding Molly's life at present.

Molly mockingly refers to Aspinall as "Goldilocks". This is a reference to a character in a childhood story that appears innocent but is in fact mischievous. This suggests that, despite Aspinall's sweet and innocent demeanor, Molly subconsciously feels that he and his colleagues may not be as trustworthy as they appear to be. This appears more



feasible as in this chapter she questions the real position of Monk's men. The reference to a children's story may also simply be due to Aspinall's sweet childlike nature. As the comment is said mockingly, it does not appear to be an affectionate play on his golden hair.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Trevor interrupts the Haddington's family lunch. He tells her that he was stopped by police on his way home the night before, and that in the car was the man he had seen Molly with in the furniture store. After he leaves, Molly calls Monk angrily with threats of talking to the press. Monk is again surprised to hear of her encounter with the Welsh man.

The next day, Molly observes the Welsh man's photo in the newspaper. His name is Llewellyn, and he works for the research unit of the Ministry of Defense. He had been seeking asylum in Russia, but the journalist he had confided in leaked his story.

Molly accompanies her mother to the hospital. Mrs. Haddington is told that her tests results are positive; making it likely that she has womb cancer. Molly holds her hand while she is told she will need a hysterectomy. That afternoon, Mrs. Haddington is booked into the hospital ward. Molly reacts angrily to the bed not being ready and snaps at the nurse. Ivor shows distress at the uncertainty of the situation. When Molly and Ivor arrive for visiting hours, they find that Mrs. Haddington has taken over the whole ward, and is bragging about Molly and Sam and their glamorous life.

That night Molly receives a phone call at two am. The line is distorted and unclear. She can make out a woman questioning her in a foreign language. A man's voice then says hello, and the line goes dead.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Trevor's encounter with the police and Aspinall has a voyeuristic feel to it, which creates an uneasy mood. The reader is informed more about the Welsh man, but is still in the dark over how this will affect Sam. This overall adds to the suspense of the story.

Further problems are created for Molly with the news of her mother's cancer. The mistakes made by the doctor and the hospital reflect the way Molly has been let down by the ineptitude of figures in authority. She can no longer trust the police or the medical services. Molly's reaction to all the worrying circumstances in her life is one of anger, which the reader is told is uncharacteristic of her.

Mrs. Haddington is strong and defiant at the news of her illness. Her resilience is shown in the way she continues to act normally and her dominance over the other patients is almost comical, lightening the mood to a degree. Ivor takes the news badly, showing signs of weakness. The feeling of an uncertain future continues as a result of the illness, and Molly cannot escape this, despite having returned to a place which she thought would be safe.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Molly omits to pack her father's lunch as her mother normally would do, much to his disappointment. After Ivor leaves for work, Monk arrives at the house, expressing his concern for her mother's wellbeing.

The pair discusses Llewellyn, and Monk expresses the theory that he had been here to meet Sam, and not for the first time. Llewellyn had recognized Molly through Danny, as Sam had used dog walking as an excuse for the meetings. Monk fears for Molly walking the dog alone, and Molly sees him as sincere. She feels faint, and Monk takes care of her. He cooks her Irish stew to make her feel better, which leads to Molly warming to him slightly, and is able to open up to him about her childhood. Monk drives Molly to the hospital and squeezes her hand as she leaves.

Molly is scared to find her mother hidden behind screens and tranquilized due to her being distressed. However, upon unveiling the screen, Mrs. Haddington can be seen to be making herself up with a compact and looking happy. Leaving the bedside, Molly threatens the nurse that the operation had better go ahead on time, and makes an appointment to see the doctor to discuss it. When she returns, Mrs. Haddington is thoughtlessly telling a patient the end of the book she is reading. Molly and her mother hold hands and exchange a smile.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The emptiness of Ivor's lunch bag signifies the emptiness he feels at his wife being taken into hospital. The lunch exemplifies his reliance on her. The incident further places pressure and stress on Molly, stress that reveals itself with the dizziness she feels in front of Monk. Later, Molly snaps at medical staff, but is again comforted by her mother's show of resilience, which is comical and adds light relief to the story.

The reader is given another glimpse of Monk's inner caring side, which contradicts the cold insensitive exterior predominantly witnessed so far. He puts his arm around Molly and the gesture instantly calms her. This is the first sign of warmth and understanding growing between the pair. Their discussion gives Molly further vision into Sam's secret life. Sam had previously described his relationship with Danny several times, but was metaphorically talking about Llewellyn: "We understand each other. I won't crap on him if he doesn't crap on me". Again, Sam's secret life is unveiling itself in simple everyday scenarios.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Arriving home from the hospital, Molly is confronted with a man in a blue car, who wishes to discuss Sam. His name is Wallace and he is a journalist from the Telegraph. Iain has given him her parent's address. Molly confronts Iain over the phone. Despite the fact that he apologizes profusely, Molly is unimpressed. Wallace wants a story, but Molly acts ignorant to his claims.

When Ivor gets home it is raining hard, and Jennifer phones to say she has told Trevor to drive them to the hospital that night. Molly and Trevor speak outside of the ward and Molly is surprised to see him flirt with the nurses. She nicknames him the "Don Juan" of Doncaster, and tells him she left him because no one else was interested in him and he could not make her jealous. He reveals that he thinks he could have gone much further if he had married her rather than Jennifer.

Chapter 11 Analysis

The media overall are represented in the story as ruthless, insensitive, and selfish. Both Iain and the new character Wallace have been ruthless and insensitive to Molly's feelings while in search of their stories, and a journalist has betrayed Llewellyn. Wallace depicts this devious image perfectly. Wallace's car is blue like Sam's, the color again representing trouble rather than peace

Molly's imagery of an island is interesting in the way it expresses her inner turmoil. Everything looks calm on the outside, but is "raging" on the inside. The stormy sea not only represents the chaos in her life, but also emotional turbulence that she is suffering. While taking Danny for a walk, it begins to rain, and again the weather is used to show the turbulence in Molly's life. "Dark clouds" had also settled over Ivor; this time the stormy imagery also reflects Ivor's emotions.

The conversation between Molly and Trevor exposes a lack of interest by Trevor towards his wife. He is not ashamed of his infidelity and makes his marriage sound rather stale.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Molly is awoken at four am from a nightmare, causing her to oversleep the next day. Ivor is forced to make his own breakfast. Wallace arrives and takes her to meet Sally Anne Hibbert at a nearby hotel. Molly shows her distrust of journalists when she sends Wallace out of the hotel room to talk alone with her.

Sally Anne tells Molly of her recent affair with Sam and admits disclosing the information to him that he was wanted. She goes on to explain her association to Wallace, whom she calls "Freddie". When Wallace arrives back, she questions his motives for bringing her here. He explains his wish for a story and Sally Anne's desire either to get near to Sam or to have complete closure. Molly glances at her wedding and engagement rings, which make her smile and then laugh hysterically. After humiliating Sally Anne, she waits for Wallace in the bar. They drive home in silence.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Sally Anne Hibbert materializes in person for the first time in this chapter. At first glance, she appears to be younger looking and more attractive than Molly expected. Sally Anne is shocked by Molly's sharp tongue and attitude, having had the impression of her that she is a quiet housewife. Sam had not told Sally Anne of this side of Molly, which emphasizes the change in her. Molly understandably shows a lot of resentment and bitterness towards Sally Anne, but holds onto the fact that she was the one wearing a ring.

There is a large degree of hypocrisy on Molly's part as she has slept with Trevor while he is married to Jennifer. The only difference is that Sally Anne is in love with Sam, but Molly does not feel this way about Trevor. This latest act of infidelity adds to lies and secrecy which surround the overall story. At first it seems that Molly is merely jealous due to a feeling of ownership. However, it becomes a bit more evident as the meeting goes on that she still loves Sam enough to be hurt. This is especially shown from her vicious derision towards Sally Anne as she leaves the room. The whole scene is full of tension, and the reader is not given a chance to unwind from previously uncomfortable scenes.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Molly engages in an appointment with her mother's doctor. He explains that the cancer has progressed due to the delay in approaching a doctor. A hysterectomy will now be the best option. The old lady in the bed next to her mother's is undergoing an operation at that moment.

Trevor arrives unannounced that evening to drive Molly and Ivor to the hospital. Afterwards they take Ivor at his club and go for a drink a few miles out of Doncaster. She confesses her secret to him in some detail and he has no trouble believing it. On the way back, they make love in a country lane on the front seat of Trevor's car. The experience is different from the last time and is described as "wild and exhilarating". Molly offers her affections this time. They step out of the car, leaving the doors open to remove any traces of scent. Trevor expresses his delight at the good fortune Sam's actions have given him, and expresses his feelings to Molly. Molly, however, is back to her sharp ways. A police car arrives, ends their conversation, and the officer asks to see Trevor's license. The officer offers a subtle dig at Mr. Challenger's marital status as he is leaving.

The next morning, Molly, for the first time, wakes in time to make Ivor's breakfast and prepare his lunch. When he has left for work, a package arrives addressed to her. Inside is a travel brochure depicting the attractions of Bucharest. It also contains both an airplane ticket and flight documentation. The flight will be departing at two-thirty pm the next day.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The skies were clear that evening for the first time, suggesting the present lucidity of Molly's mentality. In a strange way, meeting Sally Anne has almost lifted a burden from Molly, who no longer really feels that she owes anything to Sam. She now feels more liberated, which is expressed in her love making to Trevor, although she still does not reciprocate his feelings.

Molly becomes more aware of the change in her in this chapter and questions it. She has rapidly transformed from a tidy, orderly, respectable woman into one who is messy, sharp-tongued, and uninhibited, and she is unsure as to the cause. She is conscious, however, that it may be to avoid the pain her old self would be feeling. The chapter ends with the ambiguity of the travel package, and the assumption that Sam has indeed made it to Russia safely.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The old lady next to Mrs. Haddington survives her operation. Molly leaves the visiting hour early to pick up her dad's dinner from the supermarket, and then strolls idly through the streets. Here she unintentionally meets Jennifer, who inquires on Mrs. Haddington's health. There exists a degree of awkwardness between the two women, and Jennifer explains that Trevor will not be able to take Molly to the hospital that evening as they have guests for dinner. The conversation turns from awkward to subtly confrontational.

Molly is disappointed to learn that she would not be seeing Trevor that night, but merely because she needs a confidante. She wishes to talk about the travel package she has received. She calls Monk, intending to discuss the package, but instead tells him of Sally Anne and Wallace. Monk informs her that Llewellyn is due to give a press conference that night. Molly cries when Monk mentions her mother. He is genuinely sympathetic but does not push her to say more than she wants to.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The obvious tension between Jennifer and Molly creates ambiguity as to how much Jennifer knows of her husband's infidelity. The tension in the situation rubs off on the reader. Molly describes the streets of Doncaster as homely rather than beautiful. This is similar to Hill's description of Molly herself, illustrating her resemblance to Doncaster. The place is a part of her.

Molly finds herself longing to be near Monk for security, and finds this thought hilarious. She exhibits her first sign of weakness and emotion while talking to him, showing how comfortable she is able to feel around him. She describes him as paternal, although she is not sure why, showing her unconscious attachment to him for stability.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

The night before Mrs. Haddington's operation, Molly takes Ivor to the pub opposite the hospital for a drink. He says he dreamed that his wife was dead, but they turn the conversation into one which is light-hearted. At home, Ivor takes Danny for a walk, and Molly makes some tea.

When he leaves, Wallace appears the door with Sally Anne Hibbert, who is drunk. She angrily accuses Molly of turning her into the police. Wallace claims that his story and Molly's welfare are inextricably linked. Wallace explains the angle of his story, which exposes the UK as wasting billions of pounds to discover things that the Russians and Americans already know. He says that if she lets him speak to Sam, he will present him in the fairest light possible.

Sally Anne expresses her wishes, not only to see Sam but also to cash in on her story, which she claims is more interesting than Molly's. Molly realizes even when this woman looks ugly and drunk, she is still jealous of her. The two women become involved in a brawl. It is extremely violent, and Sally Anne even aims a knife at Molly. Wallace eventually arrives to break it up.

After throwing Wallace and Sally Anne out of the house, Ivor arrives home, disappointed that no tea had been made. He finds the travel package and Molly explains that she may go to see Sam for a few days when her mother is better. She knows that there is a chance that Wallace has seen it too, but she does not care.

Chapter 15 Analysis

The dream world is expressed and not for the first time. Ivor's dream signifies fear, but the conversation is turned into a joke. This shows the desire to ignore any pessimistic opinions on what may happen, and this method may be seen as either strength or weakness by lack of acceptance.

Journalists are again portrayed in a negative light in this chapter, and are described as "tarts". Wallace aims to appear charming, saying his motives are as much for Molly's welfare as his own. Overall, the press is rendered almost vulture-like.

Sally Anne's character is contrasted to her prior appearance. Previously, she was portrayed as beautiful and as possessing a cool, laid-back quality. Now the reader witnesses her drunk, which not only renders her unattractive but also hysterical.

Sally Anne looks gothic when drunk, and Molly likens her to a vampire after she cuts her finger and sucks the blood. This reference may not be as simplistic as appears. Vampires traditionally, while being seen as killers and monsters, are often portrayed with



a romantic and sexual image, which is often seen in horror movies which were generally made in the 1950s. It is unclear whether Molly subconsciously sees Sally Anne in this light, or whether she merely tries to envision the way in which Sam saw her. However, during their fight, the women are described as rolling around like lovers, showing a possible sexual overtone. Molly is still jealous of her, despite her present appearance, but the feeling is clearly mutual, as seen by the viciousness of Sally Anne's attack. The theme of jealousy therefore appears from all angles.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Molly discusses the current situation with Monk, omitting the story of her fight. Neither Molly nor Danny wants Monk to leave them. When he does, Trevor arrives at the same moment that Molly's phone rings. A hateful voice on the other end abuses Molly mercilessly. Trevor's face tells Molly that he has left Jennifer, and laying down the phone, she shows him her irritation.

Trevor is hurt, and displays deep emotional attachment to Molly. He has told Jennifer of their affair and left her to marry Molly. Molly ridicules the idea and is sarcastic and defiant in her attack. He is angry and hurt. He begs Molly to leave with him but she tells him to go home to Jennifer. As he leaves, she offers him a slight bit of hope for the future but then closes the door on him.

Chapter 16 Analysis

The jealousy felt by Jennifer towards Molly now reaches its peak. Jealousy as a theme is overall becoming more intense and extensive. Trevor has evidently much passion for Molly, although this not reciprocated. He expresses his love openly, although he is desperate.

Again, the length of the chapter is short in comparison to its surrounding counterparts, emphasizing the quickness of Trevor's decision to leave Jennifer.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Molly and Ivor are waiting virtually in silence while Mrs. Haddington has her operation until Ivor praises Sam. Molly steps out of the hospital, and says out loud "I can imagine no possible good", causing surprise to a man who is passing. She experiences a feeling of despair, which is also enlightening to her. Upon returning to the ward, she discovers her mother has come through the operation well.

She tells her parents that, now her mother is okay, she would like to visit Sam for a few days. She tells Ivor to that if anyone should ask of her whereabouts, he is to tell them that she has returned to London. As she leaves the house at four am the next morning, Ivor tells her to keep hold of Sam, reiterating his belief of Sam's good nature.

Arriving on the plane, Molly is grateful to see it is virtually deserted due to the strike. However, she spots the faces of Sally Anne and Wallace sitting behind her and watching her closely. She ignores them and relaxes.

Chapter 17 Analysis

It is at first unclear how Mrs. Haddington's operation will result, which further works towards the theme of ambiguity. Both Molly and the reader are left in the dark for as long as possible with regard to the outcome of the situation. Molly's distress and pain at the beginning of the chapter is again unsettling for the reader, as the language creates a stressful mood. Doncaster is perceived as mundane from Molly's point of view, with the people "going about their dismal business".

The use of language such as "doom" and "dismal" adds a depressing tone, reflecting Moll and Ivor's moods, as well as that of the location they are in—the hospital. The fact that Molly feels she shares the unhappy future as these people shows her need for change, as her life cannot continue the way it has been. In a strange way, this epiphany allows her to gain further inner strength and clarity.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Fatigue consumes Molly on the plane and she takes the chance to sleep. She is awoken by Wallace. Her first sleepy reaction to this disturbance is to wish for something harmful to happen to Sally Anne. Wallace shows genuine happiness over Mrs. Haddington's positive medical assessment. He explains that he had not expected Molly to come to the flight. Wallace anticipates that that Sam will soon be revealed, and wishes for Molly to deliver the message to him that he would like to talk to him and will get him the best possible press. When Wallace leaves, Sally Anne comes to apologies for the fight. Sally Anne is horrified to learn of her drunken behavior.

Molly's room at the hotel overlooks a small garden. She spots a blue car similar to the one owned by Sam, except that this one possesses a large black stripe, and Molly sees the owner, who shouts at local boys. She shares a buffet table for lunch with an elderly talkative couple. To avoid this couple at dinner, she opts to sit with Wallace and Sally Anne. After dinner, Sally Anne begins drinking heavily, which causes Molly to leave the room to avoid another attack.

The next morning, Molly attempts to leave Russia. However, the hotel staff informs her that there are no flights until the next day at noon. Wallace arrives, and after hearing her decision, he questions the hotel for a flight home for himself. A different member of staff tells him a flight at noon on the same day. Before the pair can assess what this means, Wallace is called to help Sally Anne. When he and the hotel staff leave, Sam appears in the doorway.

Chapter 18 Analysis

There is a disconcerting voyeuristic tone to this chapter. Wallace and Sally Anne have seen Molly board the plane, and it is unclear how long Sally Anne watched Molly's conversation with Wallace. Molly engages in voyeuristic activity herself, watching the man outside her hotel room argue with young boys. Ambiguity is present as to the motive and cause of the incorrect flight information.

Molly realizes that she is in a better position than Sally Anne, who is facing a far more uncertain future than she. Wallace is slowly becoming more likeable, and the reader is able to see a more humorous and pleasant side to him, due to his light-hearted storytelling over dinner and his previous heartfelt concern for Mrs. Haddington.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Sam walks ahead Molly, leading her to a quiet area where they may talk. They walk most of the way in silence. They pass a modern street and arrive at a cafe located in a smaller, quieter road. She cannot identify with him at first, until he makes familiar gestures such as running his fingers through his hair. Molly removes her hands from the table to avoid physical contact with Sam.

They discuss Wallace and Sam is scornful at hearing his message. Molly asks about Sally Anne and Sam looks at her, expressing guilt on his face. He apologizes and she says it is not one of her concerns. Sam explains that he slept with Sally Anne merely out of necessity, as he thought her to be watching him. Molly loses her temper and reacts loudly and angrily to the fact that he misled her about his vasectomy. Sam takes her hand and tells her that he had the operation reversed when he met her.

Sam says he does not care about Sally Anne, and offers the proof that he does not wish to see her in Bucharest. He informs Molly that the Russians want him in Moscow but he has delayed in order to see her. The conversation continues awkwardly.

Chapter 19 Analysis

The reference to the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice may have several connotations. Orpheus (Eurydice's husband) may initially be seen as her rescuer; however, he is the ultimate reason for her downfall. It is he who unintentionally, but stupidly, forces her back to the Underworld by turning to look back at her. Molly, in likening her experience to this myth, may be showing deep resentment for the troubles Sam has caused her. The fact that Sam does indeed turn to look at her may highlight her view of selfishness on his part. The mention of the Underworld creates a sense of darkness, leaving an almost morbid mood throughout the chapter.

The reader now meets Sam in more detail for the first time. He comes across as quite charming and caring, as well as clever. This is contrast to the bumbling character who appeared in the first chapter, and closer to the one who has been described by others throughout the book. The fact that at the end of the chapter Molly sits in the shade while Sam is in the sun implies that she is no more enlightened having spoken to him. She is still in the dark, in the Underworld, as a result of his stupidity but through no fault of her own.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Sam begins to explain his story to Molly from the beginning. He tells her he was more careful after he had met her, but she is starting to get bored. The conversation quickly moves onto their future. Sam says that his real deception was not showing his love sooner. He asks her to stay with him in Russia and leave everything else behind. Molly is horrified that Sam gets up to leave, as she does not wish to give her answer yet despite knowing what it is.

They arrange to meet at ten the next day. Molly voluntarily touches him and checks he is well. He tells her he will not return to Britain, leaving no other options of how they can be together. She does not watch him leave. Molly then spends the rest of the day as a tourist, visiting parks and buying souvenirs. She flirts with local men, and verbally abuses them when they respond. She is in a trance-like state during this period. Returning to the hotel she meets Wallace. He is angry, and accuses her of sending the KGB to question him and Sally Anne so that she can see Sam.

Sitting in a scented bath in her hotel room, Molly thinks of Sam. She is glad that they did not complicate their meeting with talk of her mother or Trevor. She knows she must go back to England, and cannot be persuaded otherwise. She had responded with affection to his declaration of love. But she knows that her instincts had caused her to make mistakes regarding both Sam and Trevor. She leaves the bathroom to find her bedroom door open and that Sally Anne has entered.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Sam's romantic, idealistic side is now exposed. He is willing to express his true feelings for Molly. Strangely, Molly does not react to this as one might expect. She is still peculiarly cold with him; even though she eventually touches his arm, she does not watch him walk away. The reader is left in suspense as to what Molly's answer will be, even though the character knows this. It is the first instance in which Molly knows information that the reader does not.

Molly's drunk and dream-like state when walking through the town is indicative of her confused mentality at present. Even later, when she begins to think more clearly, she is still unsure of where her life will lead her. The reader's new opinion of Wallace grows, as despite being angry with Molly, he is still concerned for her welfare. Interestingly, the color of Sam's escorted car is white, a color which is often symbolic of innocence and purity, which are traits that have not quite been portrayed by either Sam or Molly.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Molly stands naked in front of Sally Anne, unashamed and purposeful. She harshly reveals Sam's words about Sally Anne, who retaliates. Sally Anne then takes it back, although Molly does not do this immediately. Sally Anne admires Molly's body but does not view it as a threat to her. She then reveals that the child conceived by her and Sam did not die but was adopted. Her motive in telling this to Molly is to try to see Sam.

Molly joins Wallace and Sally Anne for dinner. Wallace presses Molly for information, but she tells him what Sam has said about him. This does not put him off, and he questions when she will see him again and what her decision is. Molly simply notifies him that she will be leaving at twelve-thirty the next day. To her surprise, Sally Anne sticks up for her. Wallace apologizes, but Molly leaves to check on her flight details, having become worried because of Wallace. Molly locks the door of her room, wondering if Sam will make an appearance that night.

Chapter 21 Analysis

There is an element of female bonding emerging between the two women, despite the jealousy and resentment they feel towards each other. Sally Anne feels she has a slight advantage over Molly due to the fact that she has had his child. The theme of secrets and lies appears again as the both reader and Molly learn of Sally Anne's deception regarding the adoption of her and Sam's child. The theme has appeared from all positions, creating hypocrisy. Both the victims and perpetrators have both lied and been lied to. There are no characters who have been fully informed on all aspects of the story from the outset. Wallace again seems like a ruthless reporter, although he does apologize for his actions. Molly, however, recognizes that he is merely doing his job.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Sam does not come during the night. Molly leaves the hotel at seven-thirty am, displaying a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door. After an hour of walking at speed, she stops at a café. The locals lose interest when she makes it clear that she is not intimidated. She walks the streets peacefully and contentedly until ten, when she arrives at the café to meet Sam. When Sam does not arrive after nearly an hour, she begins to worry.

Possible scenarios cross Molly's mind, and she angrily stands up to leave. A white car speeds along the road and into the narrow street where the café stands. Sam steps out, waves, and looks left and right before crossing the road to greet her. Molly starts to walk towards him. Sam, however, abruptly stops in annoyance. Behind Molly are Wallace and Sally Anne. Wallace calls to Sam who smiles at Molly before turning and running back to his car.

A bright blue car appears, speeding. The car runs Sam over and speeds away. Sam is lying in the road, twisted, with blood running from his forehead

Chapter 22 Analysis

The weather is described as perfect. This is significant in how calm and strong Molly feels. Her emotions are in complete contrast to her earlier ones in Doncaster. The overall tone of the chapter is one of calm. This is ironic considering Sam's fate at the end of it. The calmness of the weather and Molly's mental state allows the reader to relax, causing them greater shock at such a dramatic moment. Ironically, the color of the car that kills Sam is blue like his Datsun. Again, a representation of tranquility has created drama and trauma.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Molly screams and Sally Anne kneels by Sam, but Wallace is busy taking photographs of the lifeless body. Aspinall arrives and urges her to leave the scene with him. He takes her to the airport. As the plane leaves Russia, a mist returns in the air. With much venom in her voice, Molly accuses Aspinall of killing Sam. She did not speak or listen to Aspinall for the rest of the flight.

Monk meets them at the airport and on the way home he talks casually about her parents. He has changed out of his usual suit. Molly says the car that killed Sam was the same one she had seen in the parking lot the day she had arrived. Monk questions her, and offers theories as to who may be responsible for Sam's death. Crying, Molly can no longer recall if it was indeed the same car.

Monk takes her home to the house she had shared with Sam. He stays the night in another room to offer comfort. The next morning Molly cries and sees no point in getting up. However, once she hears voices, she washes and dresses. Iain arrives in support, although she misinterprets his motives. Molly is shocked to see the story of the previous day on the front page of the newspaper, although it is a small article. Monk has thoughtfully already informed her father.

Molly dismisses Iain, having remembered his previous conduct. She learns that Wallace and Sally Anne are being held on suspicion of being connected to Sam's killing. Iain offers for her to stay with him, but she refuses. She tells him to make sure she is not bothered by anyone and to arrange things for her financially.

Chapter 23 Analysis

The mist returns on the way home, showing that Molly is again confused. However, her anger and directness towards Aspinall, Monk and Iain returns. Molly is strong, as evidenced by the defiant way she refuses to stay down. She picks herself up to present herself without weakness. The article in the newspaper is described as small and merely covers Sam's death, showing the irony that his death has actually saved him from being shamed and exposed.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

The scene begins with children playing and Jennifer speaking to Mrs. Haddington. There is again hostility between the two women, although it is not intensely malicious as before. Molly has a baby son named Sam, and as Mrs. Haddington had now recovered, she is fully fit to spoil him. Molly is unsure whether the baby was Sam's or Trevor's, but she decides that this does not matter. Trevor was hopeful of having Molly upon learning of Sam's death, while Jennifer was fearful. The animosity between Molly and Jennifer settles, however.

Molly is back in Doncaster, and she rents her former home. Sam had taken no life insurance, and Molly writes a cheeky letter to the Russian Embassy for a settlement, to which she receives no reply. Molly learns that she is pregnant on the day of Sam's funeral.

Molly becomes engaged to Monk, and she starts calling him by his real name, Morris. During this chapter, they make love for the first time. The sex lacks passion and intimacy, but Molly feels pleasantly comfortable. Monk then reveals that his work requires him to move to Moscow.

Chapter 24 Analysis

The final chapter is not written chronologically and regresses to explain the present situation. Molly's mind wanders during the lovemaking, but afterwards she feels relaxed, suggesting stability has returned to her world. Her peaceful existence is then once again thrown into speculation when Monk ironically tells her they must move to Moscow.

While there is some clarity in the chapter, such as the fact that the reader learns Monk's real name, the theme of ambiguity prevails. The reader does not know the reason Sam was killed, or who the baby's father is, keeping the theme running even after the book has ended.



Characters

Molly Keatley

Molly is the lead character, and the plot follows her journey upon her learning that her husband is a spy. From flashbacks, the reader learns that Molly is originally from the small town of Doncaster, where she born and raised with her parents. Molly gets engaged to her childhood sweetheart, Trevor, at an early age. However, when she reaches twenty, she leaves him to move to London and start a new life. She is seeking something more than Trevor can offer her and does not want to be stifled. In London, she lives with her cousin Rose and works in various jobs temporarily, including one at the newspaper, The New Technocrat. Here she meets Sam, a man twelve years her senior, and they wed after six months. The couple move to Weston on Sea to begin their married life.

The story begins eight years after these events, when Molly learns that her husband is a spy. Sam has fled the country and Molly must deal with this revelation. She returns to her parents' home in Doncaster, where she must also cope with the news of Sam's affair, her mother getting ill with cancer, and her ex-fiancée Trevor. The story revolves around Molly's ability to cope and the way in which her character develops throughout the book. As the story goes on, Molly proves herself to be a survivor; she is strong and resilient, and she has an impact on almost everyone she meets. Molly is described as not being beautiful, but as having a charming attractiveness. This is evidenced in the effect that she has on several of the male characters. Eventually she becomes engaged to Monk, which shows that after all her adventures she is ready to settle down.

Sam Keatley

Sam is Molly's husband. He is in his forties and works as journalist for The New Technocrat newspaper, but he is secretly a spy for the Russian government. Sam appears in the first chapter of the book and then towards the end, but his presence and influence over the plot make him a lead character. He is constantly discussed, and causes the majority of Molly's upheaval. The effect he has extends to many of the other characters' lives and careers, including Sally Anne Hibbert, Wallace, Monk, Aspinall, and Iain. Sam is integral to Molly's character development, which is one of the main themes of this story.

Sam is described as short and stocky, with thick grey hair and blue eyes. The reader's overwhelming opinion of Sam throughout the story is one of a selfish and thoughtless man who has repeatedly lied to Molly and puts her in danger. However, when Sam appears towards the end of the book, he presents himself as quite charming, humorous and likeable, with a deep love for Molly. Sam is killed at the end of the book, and the reason for his death, like much of the activity in his life, is ambiguous.



Monk

Monk is the leading detective, heading the hunt for Sam. His physical appearance is described as similar to Sam in some ways, but thinner. His character originally comes across as insensitive and tactless; however, as the story moves on, this view changes. His later gestures cause him to be perceived as caring and compassionate. This is due to the way he cares for Molly during her low points. He becomes Molly's rock, and she turns to him when she is confused or stressed. Molly observes that Monk wears the same crumpled blue suit every time they meet. The suit symbolizes continuity and dependability, and this is what he offers Molly. This is one example in the book where blue does in fact represent tranquility, although only to an extent. Monk is likened to Molly's father, showing his paternal characteristics. He becomes engaged to Molly at the end of the book, which signals the start of true peace and stability in her life.

Trevor Challenger

Trevor is Molly's former fiancée and is now married to Jennifer. As a young man, Trevor had been seen as one of Doncaster's most eligible bachelors. He had been sporty and full of prospects and future plans for living abroad. However, Molly begins to view Trevor as "gowkish", and cannot see her life with him. He never gets over Molly, and his decision to marry Jennifer was clearly made while on the rebound, as evidenced by his numerous affairs. His affairs and reputation as a "ladies man" surprises Molly and makes him more attractive in her eyes. Trevor does not come across as a likeable character. The reader has an impression of him from Molly's flashbacks as rather arrogant and it is hard to lose this image of him. He gains some sympathy for being hurt at Molly leaving, but loses this due to his affairs and blatant disregard for his wife. He blames Jennifer for never leaving the area, which makes him appear as a bit of a coward. His pursuit of Molly also makes him come across as quite desperate and needy.

Sally Anne Hibbert

Sally Anne is a former girlfriend of Sam's from when they were at university together. Sally Anne Hibbert is a former girlfriend of Sam's from university. Molly has found out from Monk that Sam had a child with Sally Anne that died. When Molly meets Sally Anne, she is surprised to discover she is pretty and does not look her age. Sally Anne has blue-black hair, dark eyes, and Spanish-American bone structure. However, on close inspection, her skin is beginning to show wrinkles and other signs of aging.

Sally Anne has recently re-started an affair with Sam again and has fallen back in love with him. Sally Anne is fundamental in the theme of envy that runs throughout the book. Not only does she spark strong feelings of jealousy within Molly, but she also reciprocates this perhaps even more strongly. She is not pleased to see that Molly has a nice body, and she makes several callous remarks towards her, which she apologizes for. Sally Anne is not as strong as Molly, and this is shown by their differing reactions.



Sally Anne repeatedly drinks heavily in trying to block out her emotions. This provokes a certain degree of sympathy, which is often revoked by her needlessly cruel remarks. She is also naive enough to be shocked by the coldness shown to her by Molly.

The reader learns that Sally Anne is being detained at the end of the novel, but does not find out her eventual fate. There is further ambiguity as to her status throughout the book. It remains unclear whether she genuinely cared for Sam, or if she was working against him.

Ivor Haddington

Ivor is Molly's father. He is described as a placid, laid-back man from the outset. His reactions to things are somewhat slow, and he is married a domineering woman. His wife takes charge of every situation and he relies on her for basic survival. When she goes into the hospital, he becomes a broken man. He is aware of this, and while he does not try to deny the situation, he subconsciously tries to maintain some aspects of masculinity. Going to play snooker may be seen as an example of this, and the snooker cues can be viewed as a phallic symbol, with which he tries to keep hold of some authority.

Mrs. Haddington

Mrs. Haddington is a character who is strong and domineering. Even at her weakest while in the hospital, she takes complete control over the other patients with whom she shares a ward. Her strength is emphasized by her ability to deal with her cancer and to fight it. Mrs. Haddington's greatest pleasure is to use Molly and Sam's marriage and lifestyle to make herself seem better than others. She also enjoys a frosty relationship with Jennifer, whom she looks down on. She is always referred to as Mrs. Haddington rather than by first name, and the title enables her to appear superior and almost regal in comparison to others. Underneath, however, she cares unconditionally for Molly and Ivor, and is a loving grandmother.

Wallace

Wallace is a journalist who works for The Telegraph newspaper. He is in his thirties. Physically, Wallace is thin faced with black hair. He is ruthless in getting the story he wants, and due to this is insensitive to Molly. He comes across as nasty at first, although the reader later sees a kinder, softer aspect to his character. Sam describes him as a "chancer", however, which reinforces the view of ruthlessness about him. Wallace is held with Sally Anne at the end, and his fate is also unknown. The theme of ambiguity continues due to the question of his involvement in Sam's death, as well as the confusion over his personality.



Jennifer Challenger

Jennifer is Trevor's wife. She is understandably jealous of Molly and resents her greatly, viewing her as a rival. Physically she has dark colouring, which is from her gypsy roots. As a young girl she was described as pretty, but has since become a stereotypical frumpy housewife and mother. Jennifer does not get on with Mrs. Haddington, which leads to some comical scenes. Despite the jealousy towards Molly, they are able to maintain a civil relationship by the end of the story. She too, is not as strong as Molly, as she repeatedly overlooks Trevor's affairs.

Aspinall

Aspinall is Monk's colleague and is of a lower ranking. He has golden hair, and is referred to by Molly as "Goldilocks", which may be seen to highlight his childlike innocence. He remains calm and kind through testing moments such as Molly's early physical abuse. Despite his nice personality, Aspinall always represents a moment when something dramatic and bad is about to happen by appearing at these times; for example, he appears at Sam's death.

Iain Haddon

Iain is Sam's boss at The New Technocrat and he and his wife Jean are close friends with Molly and Sam. Like Wallace, he is a ruthless journalist and attempts to cover up his story with seemingly insincere gestures of kindness to Molly. He is not a bad person, but is not particularly likeable as he unleashes Wallace onto Molly. He is a further example of the negative light in which the story portrays members of the press.



Objects/Places

Doncaster

Doncaster is in Yorkshire in the north of England. This is the place where Molly grew up and where her parents live and she returns here for stability.

Weston on Sea

Weston on Sea is the location of the home shared by Sam and Molly near Southend.

Sprotbrough

Sprotbrough is the next town along from Doncaster where Trevor and Jennifer now live and is seen as a higher class of area than Doncaster.

Fulham

Fulham is an upper class, lively area of South London where Molly moves to at the age of twenty.

Bucharest

Bucharest is a modern city in Russia and where Sam flees to. Molly visits him here.

Moscow

Moscow is the capital city of Russia where Sam hopes to move to with Molly. Subsequently, and ironically, it is also where Monk's job requires him to move to.

Brussels

Brussels is the capital city of Belgium. It is where Trevor tells Molly he will take her to after they are married.

The Datsun

The Datsun is the type of car that is owned by Sam.

The New Technocrat

The New Technocrat is the newspaper which Sam worked for and where he met Molly.

The Telegraph

The Telegraph is the broadsheet newspaper that Wallace works for.

The Union Jack

The Union Jack is the flag of the whole United Kingdom, incorporating the flags of all the British nations as one. Aspinall stares at a design of it, showing his allegiance.



Themes

Secrets and Lies

The majority of characters in the book are guilty of keeping a secret or telling a lie. These range from minor cover-ups used to protect people, such as Mrs. Haddington keeping her symptoms quiet, to Sam's deception to Molly and the rest of the world. Intent is important here, as it provides a clearer outline of the personality of the character who is lying. Mrs. Haddington's lie and her secrecy was used for a good purpose: she wanted to protect the feelings of her family. This shows her maternal nature, not only to Molly but also to Ivor. Although Sam's deception was on a much larger scale, it may be argued that his reasons were similarly to protect Molly.

Infidelity is a sub-theme here. Trevor is the guiltiest character of this, but it also appears in the affair between Sally Anne and Sam. Molly is rather hypocritical in her hatred of Sally Anne, as she has done the same thing to Jennifer without a second thought. Sam and Molly are therefore both victims and perpetrators of infidelity. All of this indicates lack of trust between characters, which additionally causes the reader to feel uneasy due to the fact they do not know which characters they can rely on. This helps them to identify with Molly, who is also faced with such dilemmas.

Strength of Character

This theme is most important in relation to Molly. Her character develops as the story goes on and her knowledge grows. She becomes strong to the point where nothing can hurt her. She talks of survival, and her ability to cope is impressive to both the reader and the other characters. Her strength is emphasized due to the comparison with other characters such as Sally Anne, who finds it difficult to cope.

Molly's character also changes from being quite easy-going to angry and sharp-tongued, and she begins to express her strength with anger. Although her outbursts surprise her, there have already been hints of her underlying forcefulness earlier in the story, such as her exasperation at Sam ruining her rosebushes. Sam has clearly seen Molly as unaggressive as this is how he describes her to Sally Anne, who is shocked to discover the real Molly. The reader is also aware of her spontaneity, having left Trevor not knowing what is ahead of her. This shows Molly to be independent, and also shows that from early on she is not afraid to follow her instincts. This makes Molly an admirable heroine, and the reader likes her and understands her frustrations. It is clear that Molly has inherited her strength from her mother, who copes admirably with her illness. Ivor is shown to be the weaker of Molly's parents, as he cannot cope in this way.



Envy

Envy persistently occurs throughout the story. It appears at the outset, in relation to the jealousy felt by Doncaster residents towards Molly. They believe her to have a glamorous life that is out of their reach. Their view proves to be far from the truth and is dismissed by Molly early on. Instantly in this story envy is seen to be unfounded and unnecessary, and therefore the writer's feeling on this emotion is perfectly clear from the outset.

This feeling also occurs before Molly even leaves Doncaster, as the girls in the town are jealous of her prospects with Trevor. Ironically, although Molly enjoys being envied, she is later forced to experience it herself. This happens first with the news of Trevor and Jennifer's engagement, and later upon hearing about Sally Anne. It is fitting that she must later feel envy for Trevor, as one of her reasons for leaving him in the first place was the fact that he never truly made her jealous. It is interesting that the envy Molly felt towards Sally Anne does not disappear even when Molly witnesses her looking unattractive. This shows how strong the feeling really is. Unknown to Molly, however, is the fact that Sally Anne is also jealous of her. Envy occurs in several other characters, such as Jennifer and Trevor. This portrays the insecurity and lack of fulfillment in these characters lives, and allows the writer to create tension.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity is an important theme in the book, as it creates a rather mystifying overtone to the story. Again this theme incorporates both trivial and main scenarios. Nothing in the story is clear cut, and the reader is in the dark about the majority of issues, as is Molly. From the very first page of the story it is already ambiguous as to why Sam has come home and why he is in such a hurry. This continues throughout the narrative, and there are no chapters where the theme is not present. Molly is not allowed a break from the confusion, even at her sanctuary in Doncaster, due to the uncertain outcome of her mother's illness. Almost every character experiences an ambiguous situation and it is ironic that Monk, the one who creates most of the ambiguity, appears to be in the dark about several issues, although it is even unclear as to how much he really knows. At the end of the story, the reader is left with no conclusion as to who killed Sam, and one is not assured that Molly definitely intends to go to Russia with Monk. This leaves the reader to continue to feel uncertain even after they have finished the book.

Overall, this leads the reader to experience a sense of helplessness which has also been felt by characters such as Molly and Ivor. This theme allows the reader to feel the confusion and darkness that is being experienced by Molly and others. It is important to consider the relevance of the Cold War setting in regard to ambiguity. This was a period in history where there was much tension and confusion, and the setting itself therefore incorporates the theme of ambiguity.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person narration. This method is used to keep Molly's viewpoint as the most dominant in order to establish her as the leading character. This viewpoint is important in engaging insight into Molly's state of mind, while at the same time retaining a degree of subjectivity towards the rest of the story. It is a reliable source of her feelings, but does not restrict the reader from seeing other character's points of view in the way that a first person narration would. The point of view is important in displaying the change of Molly's character as the story goes along, which is one of the most important themes in the book.

The story is told in a mixture of ways, through both dialogues and exposition. The dialogue between characters exemplifies their personalities, which allows the reader to make judgments as to their likeability and motives. The story is mostly told chronologically, using the occasional flashback interruption. The reason for telling the story chronologically is so that the reader is following events at the same time as Molly, and only knows what she knows at each stage. Through this style, the reader empathizes with Molly's situation and feelings, establishing a closer bond with the character by experiencing what she does. The flashbacks serve as both useful background information, and also as a way to create suspense as they briefly deviate from the action in the present. Suspense is integral to this genre of literature.

Setting

The setting of the book is predominantly in England in the 1970s, during the period of the Cold war. The different locations the characters find themselves in all have different meanings. Doncaster is where Molly has grown up, and is represented as being safe and homey, while at the same time it is seen as a working class area, one where the residents have few prospects. Molly has a safe life here with her betrothed, Trevor, and is one of the few people in the town with a bright future. Although Trevor tells Molly he will take her abroad, Molly is unsatisfied and is restless for something new.

Molly moves to London in the 1960s, a time seen as lively and wild. She experiences parties, alcohol, and men, but surprisingly is still unsatisfied. London is where she meets Sam, but she is happy to move outside of the city at his suggestion. His reasons for relocating to a quieter area later become clear. When Molly arrives in Doncaster, it does not seem as safe as it once had, as there are people watching her every move. It is also the place where she is attacked by Sally Anne.

In Russia, the theme of ambiguity is strongly present. It is here that Molly gains some insight from Sam, but there are still many unanswered questions. Returning home to



Doncaster, Molly eventually finds that stability has returned to the town and to life in general.

The Cold War setting is relevant in adding to the mood of tension which is cast over the story. It was a period of uncertainty, and this reflects Molly's circumstances.

Language and Meaning

The language of the book is largely formal, with some lighthearted language used sparingly. A lot of the dialogue is expressed in a short, sharp style, to emphasize the point and tone of the words that are being spoken. Much of the language used is metaphoric and symbolic, used to reflect the character's mood and state of mind. A good example of this is the many descriptions of the weather. These not only reflect an individual emotion, but also the overtone of the scene. For instance, mist is used to portray confusion and ambiguity. The general use of language is effective, both in establishing the personalities of each character and in setting the tone of the chapter.

Structure

The book comprises of twenty-four chapters, which vary in length. The opening chapters are short, which throws the reader into the story. This relates to the way in which Molly's life is so quickly altered. The chapters are unnamed, and generally include both exposition and dialogue. Some parts of the story are fast paced and others are more slow and descriptive. This serves several purposes. The fast paced scenes are necessary to the genre, but the descriptive parts of the book give necessary information while creating suspense by delaying the action in the present.

Overall, the story is easy to read and it is easy for the reader is able to become engrossed in the plot. The flashbacks are necessary and, despite delaying the action, they are entertaining to read as they offer some character analysis.



Quotes

"Now only the bright wound on the rosebush told her Sam had been home." Chap. 1, p. 6

"She was not a secretive woman but had inherited a strong sense of 'her own business' from her mother." Chap. 5, p. 29

"Sam was an easy person to like". Chap. 6, p. 37

"Only a couple of weeks ago the thought of having to tell a waiter that he had brought the soup when she'd ordered the melon would have caused an agony of embarrassment. Now she could hardly open her mouth without having a go at someone." Chap. 9, p. 69

"'You're on an island Mrs Keatley. But you can't stay there. And don't imagine you're alone.'" Chap. 11, p. 85

"Those who survive are those who most want to survive." Chap. 12, p. 91

"Journalists were tarts, publicity was their sex, and they used it both as goods and as weapon." Chap. 15, p. 118

"But when the storm breaks, anyone foolish enough to be caught without shelter must bear the full onslaught." Chap. 16, p. 125

"It was more like stepping through the looking glass, and realizing just how fast the human race had to run to keep on the same spot, and knowing it wasn't worth it." Chap. 17, p. 129

"He a little ahead of her, glancing round from time to time and smiling encouragingly, like Orpheus leading Eurydice out of the Underworld". Chap. 19, p. 145

"'I'm Samuel Keynes of Wellington, Salop, all right. You're genuine Shropshire Lad.'" Chap. 20, p. 152

"I'm thirty four and I've got a baby and there won't be many offers." Chap. 24, p. 193



Topics for Discussion

In literature, the weather and the natural elements are often used metaphorically to describe the feelings of characters and the severity of their situations. Describe the way in which weather provides an analytic view of the characters and circumstances in *The Spy's Wife*, using examples.

Persistent confusion and unrest can make or break a person's character, depending on the individual's personal strength. Discuss the levels of ambiguity in the story with detailed examples. Name three characters that suffer from ambiguity and examine the effect it has on them.

Compare and contrast the characters of the men in Molly's life: Sam, Trevor, Monk, Ivor, Wallace, and Iain. Does the pain caused by any of them have a positive effect on her?

Do you like the ending of the novel? Explain your reason for liking/disliking the ending using examples of character analysis and themes. Would you have ended the novel this way? If so, explain why in a clear discussion, using advantages and disadvantages of this ending. If not, please state an example of an alternate ending, and why it is more effective.

Compare and contrast the characters of Molly, Jennifer, and Sally Anne. Do they have similarities that Molly would rather not see?

Explain the point of view of the narration. How does the point of view have an effect on the reader's understanding of the characters? How would the effect change if it was written from a different point of view?

Explain Danny's importance to the story. Does his presence have any relevance to the major themes? Give examples for your answers.