

Those Who Save Us Study Guide

Those Who Save Us by Jenna Blum

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Plot Summary

“Those Who Save Us” draws together the life experiences of Anna and her daughter Trudy. Anna had lived through World War II in Germany. As a young woman, she conceived the child of Max, a Jewish doctor she had hidden in her home in an effort to protect him from the Nazis. Though her relationship with Max, Anna becomes involved in the Nazi resistance movement. After Max is turned into to the SS by Anna’s father, Anna flees to the home of the local baker, Frau Mathilde Staudt. Mathilde is also a member of the resistance and was working to have Max transported to Switzerland before he was captured. While living at the bakery with Mathilde, Anna delivers bread to the prisoners of the concentration camp.

After Anna gives birth to her daughter, Trudy, Mathilde is killed while attempting to deliver bread and rifles to the Red Triangles, political prisoners who are also part of the resistance. Alone and without a way to protect herself or her daughter, Anna becomes to mistress of the Obersturmfuhrer, a high ranking SS officer.

When the Americans finally defeat the Nazis, Anna finally leaves the Obersturmfuhrer, who no longer has power over her life. She soon meets an American soldier, Jack, whom she marries. The two move to the United States with Trudy. There, Anna wishes to leave the past behind her for good. She refuses to speak of her past, thinking that this will allow it to die with the war.

Anna’s daughter, Trudy, bears little memory of her time in Germany. She longs for connection with her mother, who remains silent in an effort to avoid the past. Throughout her adulthood, Trudy works as a Professor of German History for a university in Minneapolis. In studying German History, she wishes to develop a deeper understanding of her mother and of her self.

Throughout the novel, Trudy’s desire to reconnect with her past in Germany leads her to carryout a project in which she interviews volunteers who lived through World War II in Germany. Through this project, she wishes to develop a deeper understanding of her own childhood during the war.

In her final interview, Trudy speaks with a man, Mr. Pfeffer, who worked in the resistance with Anna. In his interview, Trudy finally receives the answers she has been searching for all her life. In this information, she is finally granted peace from the ghosts of her past.



Prologue-Chapter 7

Summary

“Those Who Save Us” ties together the life experiences of Anna and her daughter Trudy. Anna had lived in Germany during the war and had immigrated to the United States, followed by the ghosts of her dark past. Her daughter, who bears little memory of their time in Germany, longs for connection with her mother, who remains silent in an effort to avoid the past.

The Prologue begins in New Heidelberg, Minnesota at the funeral of Jack, Anna’s husband and Trudy’s father. The funeral is well attended despite the horrible cold outside. After the service, Trudy drives Anna home and the two do not speak, which is typical. At the house, the two women prepare for guests in silence. After hours of waiting, they realize none are coming.

In Chapter 1, the setting of the novel shifts to Weimar, Germany in 1939. At this time, Anna is a young adult living with her father, Gerhard. In the opening of the chapter, Gerhard feeds his dog, Spaetzle, table scraps despite Anna’s urging him to do otherwise. The dog starts to choke. Anna, fearing the dog will die before she reaches a veterinarian in the heart of town, brings the dog to a doctor nearby. Although the doctor is seeing a human patient at the time, he quickly dismisses her for Anna’s dog.

The doctor, Herr Doktor Maximilian Stern, makes a comment regarding his Jewish identity. It is only then that Anna realizes it is illegal for her to be visiting a Jewish doctor as she is of Aryan descent. The doctor removes a sanitary napkin from the dog’s throat and returns him to Anna, free of charge. Anna realizes then that he is the same doctor that treated her mother in her time of sickness. Gerhard, a Nazi sympathizer, had blamed the Jewish doctor for his wife’s death. Before leaving the office, Anna notices the doctor is in his mid-thirties and wears no wedding band.

On her way back to her father’s house, Anna thinks of how furious he will be to find she has not yet prepared dinner. On the way home, she stops into the bakery of Frau Staudt, an old widow who has long served as a motherly figure for Anna. Although the shop had already closed, Frau Staudt produces a few of Gerhard’s favorite desserts in order to save Anna from his wrath.

Anna returns home to find her father has not yet noticed her disappearance. She considers her affection for the doctor and reminisces on the time before the Reich when she would have been able to visit him freely without the fear of persecution. Remembering Doctor Max’s warning that chocolate is poison to dogs, she cuts a slice of chocolate cake and drops it for Spaetzle.

Chapter 2 begins with Anna’s visit to Max’s home. The two play chess and sheepishly flirt with one another. The conversation quickly progresses from small talk to more



personal topics when Max asks Anna about her family. As no one had directly brought up the death of Anna's mother prior, she was taken aback by the directness of his comments.

After their game, Max leads Anna into his backyard where she sees Spaetzle accompanied by many other dogs. Max informs her that the dogs belong to many of his Jewish acquaintances who have fled Germany in hopes of escaping the regime. Anna asks him why he has not left. He replies that it is his loneliness.

As Anna prepares to depart, Max kisses her unexpectedly. The kiss is much more violent than Anna would have imagined. He quickly pulls away saying that they cannot be together. He tells her not to return. Anna knows then that she will come back.

Chapter Three opens with Gerhard yelling at Anna, waking her up before dawn. Anna is especially perturbed when Gerard comes into the kitchen, invading her only personal space. He tells her that he is having guests over that evening and that she must go to the market to prepare. She knows the guests he speaks of are potential suitors for her. Anna considers the way the war has changed her conception of the future.

Once in the market, Anna sees the librarian, Herr Nausbaum, standing alone in the dark street, wearing nothing but a sign reading, "I AM A DIRTY JEW." Anna tries to offer him her coat, but can see that her presence is only hurting him as the SS is watching him through a window. She asks him the reason for his condition and he shares that there has been a Nazi raid of every Jewish home in town.

Anna quickly runs to Max's house and finds it destroyed. She enters the backyard and finds all but one of the animals killed. She picks up the dying dog and cradles it, overcome by the horror of her surroundings. She then realizes she must return home before her father realizes she is gone. She picks up Max's glasses from the floor and hurries home.

In Chapter 4, Gerhard is forced to cancel his dinner plans as Anna tells him that she has come down with a cold. Eventually, Gerhard leaves to go drinking with his Nazi friends. Anna then ventures outside to find Max in the bushes. Max apologizes for coming to her house but explains that he had nowhere else to go. Anna is glad to help and brings him upstairs to get a change of clothes.

After he has changed Max tells Anna that he had caused the raid, called Aktion. She asks how and he tells her he does not want to burden her with the details. After much pressing, he finally tells her that he is part of an SS resistance network. He has been holding film from the inside of a concentration camp as evidence for the violence of Nazis. He also tells her that Frau Staudt is part of the network. After sharing this information he tells her he must go. Anna will not allow it. She brings him into her room, saying her father never comes in. She tries to kiss him and he resists.

Unexpectedly, Gerhard comes upstairs. He is drunk and wants Anna to get him bicarbonate for his heartburn. Although he does not see Max, it is a close call. Anna knows she must find a better place to hide him.



Chapter 5 opens a week later, with Anna entering the Christmas closet to find Max. The closet, which Anna's mother once used for Christmas gifts, exists unbeknownst to Gerhard. The closet is so small that the Anna and Max barely fit together. Anna brings Max food although he can hardly eat out of fear.

Although Max did not want to involve Anna in the resistance, she begged him to allow it. She brings the film to Frau Staudt, who is working on getting papers together to transfer Max to Switzerland. Max tells Anna that he regrets involving her, she insists she wants to be involved. Then, Max kisses Anna with the same desperate intensity as before. He continues to remove her clothes and the two proceed to have sex. Afterward, Anna thinks about how differently she had imagined the loss of her virginity.

In Chapter 6, Anna and Max continue their affair into the warm spring. Although their relationship has become quite physical, Anna much prefers conversation to other forms of intimacy. Anna tells Max about the suitors her father keeps bringing home. In the dank closet, Anna begins to experience hot flashes and vertigo.

Later that evening at dinner, Anna plays her part as her father attempts to trade her off for a favor with the Nazi. Anna becomes increasingly nauseous throughout dinner, especially when attempting to make conversation with the gruff men. Towards the end of the meal, the guests hear a thumping from inside the walls. Knowing this is Max coughing, Anna begins to cough as well to distract the party. Still the men ask what the noise is about. Gerhard insists it is rats. One of the suitors insists Gerhard hire an exterminator to kill the vermin.

Chapter 7 opens with excitement in the streets of Weimar. The German army just had a successful blitzkrieg in London. The people of Weimar expect the troops will be home by Christmas. Disregarding this news, Anna is excited for her own reasons. She has just picked up the papers from Frau Staudt that will allow Max and her to flee to Switzerland. Seeing that her father is not home, Anna rushes right to the Christmas closet to tell Max the good news. To her horror, she realizes he is not there.

Anna waits all day for Gerhard to return home. When he does return, she confronts him on Max's disappearance. Gerhard openly admits to turning Max in to the SS and calls her a whore for her relationship with him. He tells Anna that she will marry the suitor Joachim tomorrow. She wonders how he could not have noticed that she is four months pregnant. Seeing no hope in arguing with him, she submits and returns to her bedroom. When she knows Gerhard is asleep, she packs her things and runs to the bakery of Frau Staudt.

Analysis

The attendance of Jack's funeral service as compared to the lack of visitors afterward symbolizes the hypocrisy of the town of New Heidelberg. Knowing that Jack had brought Anna over from Germany, the town always disliked her for her heritage.



Although the townspeople attend the service in order to appear as though they are doing the right thing, they make clear their lack of caring for the family afterward.

Chapter 1 includes the first flashback to Anna's life as a young woman in Weimar, Germany during the war. It sets the tone for the following segments depicting Anna's life at this time. The setting is dismal and frightening. Anna, although she does not agree with the Nazi regime, is forced to live life by their laws and lives in constant fear of the SS. The descriptions used in the first chapter allow the reader greater insight into the harsh reality of German life at this time in history.

The first chapter also plays an important role in characterizing many of the main characters of the novel. Gerhard is characterized as an angry and bitter Nazi sympathizer who exerts his power over Anna regularly. In contrast to Gerhard's harshness, Anna is gentle and is in stark opposition to his Nazi sympathies. In longing for the time before the Reich took power, Anna demonstrates that she will not allow herself to fall into the ways of those around her. Although she has little power as a woman at this time, she will resist the Reich in any way possible.

Frau Staudt is also introduced in this chapter in her relationship with Anna. Lacking a family of her own, she figuratively "adopted" Anna after her mother passed away. In this introduction of Frau Staudt, the integral relationship between her and Anna is foreshadowed.

In the opening of Chapter 2, the game of chess that Max and Anna share holds special symbolic significance. In the game, Anna's queen has lost her crown and is backed into a corner. This symbolizes her position in her relationship with Max. Although she holds great affection for him, she knows that the relationship cannot progress due to the conditions of the time.

When Max addresses the death of Anna's mother directly, she is at once shocked and comforted by his directness. For the first time in her life, someone has shown understanding for her loss. Not comfortable with this degree of emotional connection, Anna cannot respond. This marks the beginning of the intimacy that has been fermenting between Anna and Max.

When Max kisses Anna at the end of the chapter the kiss is much more violent than imagined in her fantasies. The violence and desperation embodied by the kiss symbolize Max's desire for human connection after having been deprived of these things his entire life.

In Chapter 3, Gerhard's entering into the kitchen violates Anna's conception of personal space. This symbolizes her increasingly lack of control over her life as the SS gains power in Germany. This lack of control is magnified when Anna sees Herr Nausbaum naked in the street and cannot do anything to help him.

In Chapter 4, Anna is characterized as brave and strong despite her circumstance. Although she has little power to resist the Nazi regime, she is willing to do everything in her power to help Jewish people. Although she could easily ignore the injustices around



her, she chooses to put her own life in danger in order to do the right thing. This bravery is further emphasized in Chapter 5 as Anna joins the resistance movement and hides Max despite the penalty that would follow if she were caught.

In Chapter 5, the stark contrast between Anna's fantasies and the reality of losing her virginity symbolize how far Anna has come from her girlhood conception of reality. The world has so changed that even to make love is a painful and desperate act.

In Chapter 6, Anna emphasizes how she prefers emotional to physical intimacies with Max. In this way, the reader sees that what Anna desires most is not physical but emotional affection. After losing her mother at a very young age and being left with her abusive father, Anna has lacked emotional closeness for most of her life. In her conversations with Max, she feels herself growing into a more emotionally complete person.

As Anna dines with her suitors later in the chapter, she feels as if she is playing the role of Gerhard's daughter. She has no interest in marrying any of these suitors and feels as if she is being auctioned off to the Nazis. Her nausea throughout dinner serves a dual purpose symbolically. First, it emphasized her sickness at the idea of being owned by one of these evil men. Second, it foreshadows the eventual revelation of her pregnancy.

When describing her suitors, Anna remarks that before the war, the men would have been low-ranking farmhands. Now, with the recent shift in rule, the men are praised members of society. This contrast emphasizes the valuing of physical strength over intelligence by the Nazi regime.

In the closing of the chapter, the suitor's comments about extermination of vermin suggest that he suspect Max's presence in the house. It also foreshadows Gerhard's eventual decision to turn Max in to the SS.

In Chapter 7, Anna's first glimmer of hope is quickly thwarted when she finds Max to be gone. This swift change from hopefulness to hopelessness embodies the spirit of the time, with all hopes dashed away by the reality of the Reich.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the author begin the novel with Jack's funeral? Why is this opening significant?

Discussion Question 2

Explain the symbolic meaning of the chess game between Max and Anna.



Discussion Question 3

Was Anna correct in hiding Max in her home? Was she putting Max in greater danger by having him cohabitant with Gerhard?

Vocabulary

sullen, excrement, clandestine, sartorial, calibrating, mercurial, volatile, conspicuously, dawdles, reveries, requisitioned, commandeered, chignon, docile, vapid, sonorous, modulated, sycophancy, foppishness, cravat



Chapters 8-17

Summary

The perspective shifts to Trudy, Anna's daughter, as an adult in the opening Chapter 8. Trudy is driving through New Heidelberg, Minnesota, contemplating the irony of its similarities with Weimar. She had fled from her home in Minneapolis to see Anna after receiving word that her mother had nearly burned down her home. Although she is not sure if the fire was intentional, she suspects it was.

She arrives at the hospital to find that visiting hours have already ended and begs the secretary for access to her mother's room. The secretary warns her that her mother has not been speaking. Trudy remarks that this is nothing out of the ordinary. When the secretary finally allows her access to her mother, Trudy finds that Anna is not doing as poorly as she had assumed.

As Trudy stares at her silent mother, she wonders about all the secrets she has been keeping from her throughout her life. Trudy has long wondered about her mother's childhood and life in Germany during the war, things her mother would never share with her. Seeming as if she had sensed Trudy thoughts, Anna awakes at that moment. Trudy asks her if she had tried to burn the house down, but Anna offers no answer.

After leaving her mother's room, Trudy asks the secretary about her mother's status. The secretary informs her that her mother will only be in the hospital for a few days and that she should find a place for her to live afterward. The nurse seems judgmental of Trudy's unwillingness take her mother into her own home.

In Chapter 9, Anna leaves the hospital but is too weary to drive back home. She stays the night and returns to the hospital to make arrangements with an assisted living home the following morning. Afterwards, she begins her departure but has a nagging feeling she has forgotten something.

She returns to the farmhouse in which she grew up and sees a pot left on the stove, the source of the fire. She goes up to her mother's bedroom and into her underwear drawer, where she finds a small cigarette box decorated with a swastika holding a picture from her childhood. The picture shows Trudy as a baby with her mother and an SS officer she presumes to be her father. She thinks about the times she had asked her parents about her birth father. She received no answers, only reprimand. Trudy wonders why her mother would have been with an SS officer. She cannot imagine her mother had any affection for the man. Anna's past is all a mystery she has tried her best to conceal.

In Chapter 10, Trudy departs New Heidelberg for Minneapolis, hoping to return in time for her office hours. In Minneapolis, she works as a professor of German History and has to get some grading done before class. She finds, however, after grading the first paper that she is much too distraught to focus.



Towards the end of her office hours, Trudy's friend, Ruth, appears at her door. Ruth, the Director of Holocaust Studies, worries about Judy, knowing that she lives alone. Ruth tells Trudy that she has received funding for her Remembrance Project, a project in which she will record interviews with Holocaust survivors. Ruth asks Trudy if she would interview the survivors for her project. Trudy, feeling overwhelmed and unwilling to take on another responsibility, comes up with an excuse to avoid being part of the project.

In Chapter 11, Trudy arrives at her class located in the basement of the history department. Although she jokes about its location, she does not mind being hidden. By this point in the semester she knows all of her students' idiosyncrasies. She begins her lecture, which she has been dreading all day.

During her lecture, she tries her best to portray Nazi wives as victims of circumstance. When debating with students, she finds it hard to believe her side of the argument. At the end of the class, a girl Trudy refers to as "pretty girl" tells her that she is having a hard time understanding how the women could not be complicit in the actions of their husbands. Trudy has no answer. At the end of the chapter, Trudy realizes she cannot avoid her past anymore. She hurries to go find Ruth.

In Chapter 12, the setting again changes to Weimar in 1940. Anna is now living with Frau Mathilde Staudt. When Anna goes upstairs to ask Mathilde what day it is, Mathilde reminds her that she can still go to Switzerland. Anna, however, refuses to leave. She tells Mathilde that she wants to join the SS resistance. Mathilde does not believe that she is tough enough. Anna tries to prove her toughness. Mathilde explains that she gets away with special deliveries because she is invisible to the SS. She has an arrangement with the officers in which she brings them bread in exchange for resources. Seeing as she is fat and old, men pay no mind to her and hardly realize she is there when she delivers bread. Still, Anna will not relent. Matilda agrees to train her to deliver after the baby is born.

In Chapter 13, Monika, a girlhood friend of Anna's comes into the bakery and the two exchange pleasantries. When Monika exits the bakery, Anna hears her speak ill of her pregnancy from outside. Monika says that Gerhard has left town to escape the gossip Anna has brought onto the family. Anna is less concerned about Monika's duplicity, and more relieved that her father has gone.

Anna asks Mathilde what she has told people about her pregnancy. Mathilde reveals that she has been saying Anna was raped by a transient. When Anna thinks about raising the child alone, she realizes how detrimental loneliness can truly be. Mathilde, understanding, hugs her.

In Chapter 14, Anna dreams vividly, which is unusual because she usually experiences dreamless sleep. In the dream, she is waiting to marry Max. She can tell people are gossiping about her, but she pays them no mind. Although she and Max make no motion toward one another, just looking at each other is enough to comfort them. The next morning, Anna's baby is born. She names her Gertrud.



In Chapter 15, Anna fantasizes about life without Mathilde. Although she loves the old baker, she is getting fed up with her constant demands. She thinks about how drastically her fantasies have changed recently.

When Mathilde falls ill, Anna gets her wish. She is able to operate the bakery independently without the demands of her guardian and boss. Due to her illness, however, Mathilde misses her weekly delivery to the SS. An SS officer comes to the door and warns that it must be delivered or the baker will face severe repercussions. Although Mathilde at first resists, she eventually allows Anna to take the delivery.

After delivering the needed bread to the SS officers, Anna is determined to make the regular special delivery to the prisoners. She realizes when approaching the usual hiding place, inside a tree in the woods of the camp, that Mathilde has forgotten to factor in daylight savings into the plan. Mathilde had always been sure to make deliveries after dark, safe from view of the guards. Anna finds herself in a predicament. She is determined to deliver the bread yet knows she cannot do so without the guards taking notice. She waits for the sun to set. As she waits, she witnesses the brutal death of a prisoner by two guards.

In Chapter 16, rations have tightened even further. There are often pebbles in the flour delivered by the SS. Trudy is sick and Anna has no access to medicine. In an attempt to help heal her child, Anna steams the bathroom, using much more water than is allowed by the regime. When Mathilde comes home to see this, she is not upset. Rather, she gets into the tub to wash off.

Mathilde tells Anna that she has received a new message from the camp. She tells her a new crematorium has been built for the mass killings in the camp. Anna has no reaction. She has lost hope for Max. Mathilde asks Anna if she loved Max. She says that she did, very much. Mathilde explains that she never experienced this type of romantic love as her late husband, Fritz, was gay. Anna asks if her wanting to help gay men in the camps is what caused her to deliver bread to the camps. Mathilde had never thought of it that way. She just felt as though it was the right thing to do.

At the end of the chapter, the women talk about the possibility of a future. They have completely lost hope. Mathilde wishes Anna a Merry Christmas. Anna had completely forgotten the holiday.

In Chapter 17, Anna helps Mathilde load pistols into her van. The pistols, Mathilde says, are for the Red Triangles, political prisoners planning a revolt. Mathilde drives to camp to deliver bread to the SS and pistols to the prisoners.

After a while, Mathilde has not returned. Anna puts Trudy to bed and leaves to go check on her. She has a bad feeling something has happened to the baker. When she sees Mathilde's truck pulled over, she knows something has happened. She sees Mathilde lying next to the truck, shot in the head. Anna knows she had been caught making a special delivery. She runs home, knowing the SS will come for her next.



Analysis

In Chapter 8, Anna is characterized as being extremely quiet and even silent in recent years. Her physical beauty is again addressed, signaling its importance on the outcome of her life. The irony of the similarity between Weimar and New Heidelberg is that as hard as Anna tries, she simply cannot leave her past behind her.

Trudy's suspicion that Anna has purposely burned her home down alludes to a tension between the mother and daughter. This hint at tension is escalated by Trudy's unwillingness to take Anna into her home after the fire.

In Chapter 9, Trudy's returning to the farmhouse for the box emphasized her strong desire to reconnect with her past in Germany. Knowing nothing of her mother's life there or the conditions that led to her birth, she feels as if she has no sense of personal history. The box is the only thing she has that suggests the existence of a life before Minnesota. In returning for the box, Trudy makes an active decision not to leave the past behind her.

In Chapter 10, the awkward relationship between Trudy's and Ruth's areas of study mirror the strange relationship Trudy has with herself. Although she focuses on German history in her career, she suspects her father was an officer of the SS, complicating her conception of herself and her personal history. In avoiding the Remembrance Project, Trudy actively avoids coming to terms with her past and confronting the mysteries of her mother's upbringing.

In Chapter 11, Trudy tries to portray Nazi wives as victims of circumstance. In doing so, she tries to assume the best about her mother. When subjected to the counterarguments of her students, she can no longer believe her one side. She is finding it more and more difficult to believe and defend her mother's relationship with the SS officer. Although she wants to give her mother the benefit of the doubt, she cannot help but be suspicious about the relationship.

At the end of the lecture, "pretty girl" asks Trudy how Nazi women could possibly be innocent victims. Trudy had previously believed the girl to be dumb because of her good looks. This assumption mirrors the assumption many had made about Anna, allowing her to remain to be deemed innocent despite her involvement in the resistance. When the pretty girl explains that her family had helped harbor Jews during the war, Trudy is jealous of her righteous family history. As she is the product of an SS officer and his wife, Trudy cannot help but be ashamed of her history. It is then that she realizes she must finally begin to face her past. She runs to find Ruth.

In Chapter 12, the story flashes back to Anna's life in Germany. At the beginning of the section, the author includes a German poem. The poem speaks about the necessary ingredients to bake a cake. The last line of the poem speaks of adding eggs to make the cake gold. This symbolizes the gilded nature of all things in this time period. Although most of the country was living in poverty, the Nazi regime presented an image of progress, gilding reality in order to prevent rebellion.



At the beginning of the chapter, Anna is living in the basement of the bakery. Although her room is dark and damp, she prefers the seclusion to moving upstairs. This relates to Trudy's comfort in the basement classroom in which she teaches. Both women feel comfort in being hidden underground.

In refusing to leave Germany behind, Anna characterizes herself as brave and strong despite her circumstance. She is willing to do whatever she can to resist the regime. At this point that is brave and fearless having no one to protect but herself.

In Chapter 13, Anna and Mathilde grow closer as Anna's due date approaches. Fearing a life of loneliness, Anna for the first time realizes the reality of her circumstance. She will be raising a child alone, never again seeing his/her father. Mathilde, although rough on the exterior, is portrayed in her comforting of Anna as compassionate and motherly. Although Mathilde can be bossy and fierce in her place of work, she is at heart a loving and compassionate woman. Having been widowed early in life, she understands the loneliness Anna is facing.

In Chapter 14, Anna's dream of Max emphasizes her longing to be with him, although she knows it is impossible. Even to be in his presence, knowing he is still alive, would bring Anna comfort and hope. The next morning, however, she realizes her dream was just a fantasy. She names her baby Gertrud. She hopes the name will provide the baby comfort in the harsh, fatherless life she has before her.

In Chapter 15, Anna's fantasizing about life without Mathilde's bossiness foreshadows Mathilde's eventual demise. Truly, Anna loves Mathilde and does not really want her gone. Taking this for granted, she fails to realize how suitable the life they have together truly is. Anna thinks about how her fantasies have changed for escaping her father, to running away with Max, to escaping the rules of Mathilde. Her life has changed so drastically in so short a span of time. Anna feels lost and without hope for her future.

After Mathilde decides to allow Anna to make the delivery, she picks up Trudy and sings to her. In song, she recites the German poem that was introduced at the opening of the chapter. As the women have not seen real eggs or butter for months, the poem has an ironic tone. In their sorry state, even the most basic dietary staples seem like luxuries.

After witnessing the brutal death of the prisoner outside the camp, Anna wonders how any human could be so evil as to kill another. She wonders how they can be unaware that all humans are the same, regardless of race or status. Her high regard for life is juxtaposed to the sheer disregard for the value of humanity exhibited by the Nazis. In their society, even the most basic human rights are discounted for the gain of a select few.

In Chapter 16, Anna's lack of reaction to Mathilde's message from the camp reflects the desperation of the times. After seeing the gruesome attack outside the camp, Anna has lost hope in Max's survival. Seeing the truly evil potential of the officers, Anna has lost all confidence in life after returning to normalcy. This sense of desperation is used as a



tool of control by the Nazi regime. With all hopes dashed away, the Nazis are able to control the population by fear.

Anna's forgetting of Christmas emphasizes the lack of hope or happiness in the world at this time. Joyous occasions go unrecognized, as each day is a struggle to survive.

In Chapter 17, Mathilde's death marks a significant turning point in Anna's life. With the baker gone, she has no one to rely on. Anna is now more desperate even than before. She must do whatever it takes to provide for her daughter.

Discussion Question 1

Explain how Trudy's inability to defend the actions of German women reflects her relationship with her mother.

Discussion Question 2

Explain the significance of Anna naming her daughter Gertrud.

Discussion Question 3

What do you predict will happen to Anna when the SS come to the bakery? Defend your prediction.

Vocabulary

penitent, zeal, rutting, feigned, couriered, caustic, solicitude, ersatz, eludes, sycophancy, thrum, eviscerating



Chapters 18-25

Summary

In Chapter 18, the story shifts back to Trudy's adulthood. Feeling determined to finally face her personal history, Trudy prods Ruth to share her funding for the Remembrance Project. While Ruth interviews Holocaust survivors, Trudy will interview Germans from the same era, adding a multidimensional aspect to the project.

In order to find participants, Trudy posts flyers in German restaurants and bars. Although she does not expect many calls due to the approaching holidays, she is shocked when on December 20th she still lacks a single volunteer. When she has nearly lost hope, a German woman, Frau Petra Kluge, calls. Frau Kluge gives her address and bluntly states that Trudy should arrive for her interview the following day.

When she arrives outside Frau Kluge's apartment the following day, the cameraman, Thomas Kroger, is late. He reveals to Trudy that he is Jewish, which she hopes will not add a bias to his documentation. When they arrive at Frau Kluge's apartment they find that she has forgotten their appointment anyway. She lives in a sparsely furnished and dingy apartment in the ghetto.

Frau Kluge and Trudy share in some small talk. Kluge asks if Trudy is married. When she responds that she is not, Kluge assumes her husband is dead. Trudy corrects her, saying that she is divorced from the owner of a French restaurant. Frau Kluge compliments Trudy on being a "pure blood" German.

Chapter 19 is written as a transcript of the conversation between Trudy and Frau Kluge. Throughout the interview, Frau Kluge demonizes Jews, claiming they hoarded money when the rest of the country had none. She said that the maltreatment of the Jews has no impact on her. She also says that at the time of the war, she was a desperate woman who did what she had to do. She continued to describe a "friend" who turned Jews in to the SS for money. In doing so, she indirectly admitted to selling out innocent people in exchange for monetary gain, an action for which she claimed to hold no guilt.

After the interview, Trudy and Thomas exit the apartment quickly, unable to come up with the words to describe what they had just witnessed. Trudy does not want to go home alone. She asks Thomas if he would like to get a drink but he says that he has plans. Longing for company, she goes to Le P'tit Lapin, the restaurant owned by her ex-husband Roger.

Upon entering the restaurant, Trudy is greeted by Roger's new wife, Kim. Kim is young and bubbly in a way that annoys Trudy greatly. She is a former waitress of the restaurant. Kim tries to make small talk with Trudy and asks her about her love life. Trudy is relieved when Roger comes out, interrupting the conversation.



Kim leaves and Trudy tells Roger all about her German project and the interview she had just come from. Roger listens attentively to her detailed recollection. When she finishes, however, he asks her why she is avoiding therapy. He compares her to her mother, to which Trudy takes great offense. The two get in an argument and Trudy leaves in a huff.

In Chapter 21, Trudy returns home and considers the uncomfortable position the project has put her in. She cannot accept that all German women were Nazis. Yet, so far, the project is not helping her case. She thinks of her mother's unwillingness to discuss the past.

That night, Trudy has a vivid nightmare regarding her brief childhood in Germany. In the dream, a man in a Santa suit stands in her mother's kitchen, eating food from the refrigerator. He says Anna invited him. Trudy is immediately frightened. The man removes the Santa costume to reveal an SS uniform. He then unbuttons his pants to reveal his bloody pelvis. He says, "I am Saint Nikolaus, and I come whenever I please."

In Chapter 22, the story switches back to Anna's life in Germany. The high ranking Nazi, "Obersturmfuhrer", comes to the bakery after Mathilde's death to investigate. Anna wants to run but knows that she had nowhere to go. He questions Anna, who tells him that she knew nothing of Mathilde's resistance efforts. She claims to have been tricked by the old baker. Seeming to believe Anna, the Obersturmfuhrer comes on to Anna. Seeing no other choice, she leads him upstairs to Mathilde's old room. There, he has sex with Anna, causing her great pain. He says that he will return each week.

In Chapter 23, the Obersturmfuhrer continues his weekly visits the bakery. As he penetrates her, Anna imagines the other lives she may have lived had it not been for the regime. After sex, the Obersturmfuhrer opens up to Anna about his life. Anna remains silent, hardly listening. When he asks her about Trudy, she tells him her father died in the war.

One day, Anna tells the Obersturmfuhrer she is expecting her period. Although this is true, she also hopes it will be a way to avoid sex. Instead, he undresses and continues as usual. While they are having sex, Trudy comes upstairs, looking for her mother. Afterwards, Anna tells her the man is Saint Nikolaus and she cannot come upstairs when he is over, as he does not like to be seen.

Chapter 24 begins with the Obersturmfuhrer talking to Anna postcoitus. Anna only listens when the information he shares is relevant to the resistance. She learns that bringing bread to those in the camp is punishable by death.

One Wednesday, Anna returns from her weekly bread delivery to the prisoners and is shocked to find the Obersturmfuhrer in the bakery. He had always come on Thursdays previously, leaving Anna alone on the other days. He asks where she was and she tells him that she was getting medicine for Trudy. He does not believe her and chokes her in front of the child. After releasing her, he takes her upstairs. Finding her breasts still



produce milk, he drinks from her. Anna realizes then that it is no longer safe for her to deliver bread.

In Chapter 25, the Obersturmführer has Anna undress and play out his sexual fantasies, as he does every week. She feels she has lost complete control of her own body. She considers sewing herself shut to prevent him from having sex with her.

After two weeks away, the Obersturmführer returns to the bakery. He tells Anna that he has returned from Auschwitz in Poland. He describes the horrific human experiments carried out by Mengele, a Nazi scientist. Anna is sickened.

Analysis

In Chapter 18, when Trudy meets Thomas, she is immediately intimidated by his blue eyes. She always feels this way around light-eyed men. This symbolizes her subconscious relationship with her father, a light-eyed man. It also draws a similarity between her and Anna, who was also mesmerized by Max's light eyes.

Frau Kluge's complimenting Trudy on being a "pure blood German" is especially ironic because unbeknownst to her, her father was Jewish. Frau Kluge's false belief that she can tell a pure blood German contributes to the sense of ignorance surrounding the Nazis.

In Chapter 19, the transcript of Frau Kluge's interview serve as a shocking reminder of how inexplicably immoral the Nazis were. This interview adds to the author's portrayal of the harsh realities on Germany during the war. It also served as a troubling reminder to Trudy that perhaps the women of this time were not as innocent as she would have liked to believe.

In Chapter 20, Trudy's argument with Roger makes it clear why the two broke up. In this section, he is characterized as critical and somewhat harsh towards Trudy. Trudy is also further characterized as being obsessive and emotionally closed off, much like her mother.

This point is further emphasized in Chapter 21 when Trudy returns home to find her home is immaculately clean, just like Anna's always was. She considers her relationship with her mother. Her mother's unwillingness to discuss the past has always haunted Trudy. Although the project is caused Anna much emotional grief, she decides that she must carry it on. Unlike her mother, Trudy is determined to face the past.

Trudy's dream at the end of the chapter reveals crucial information about her childhood. Although she only faintly remembers the traumatic experiences of her past, memories start to appear to her in dreams as she revisits her history through the German history. This dream serves to foreshadow to following section, in which the real life identity of Saint Nikolaus is revealed. Saint Nikolaus' bloody pelvis and commentary at the end of the dream signify that this character was sexually abusive toward Anna.



Chapter 22 captures Anna's desperation. Seeing her good looks as the only thing that will allow her to escape the condemnation all those around her face, she submits to the Obersturmfuhrer's sexual advances. Although the incident and those following make her feel used and worthless, she sees them as her only chance of survival and protection from the regime.

In Chapter 23, the Obersturmfuhrer's having sex with Anna despite her period symbolizes a lack of respect for her personal boundaries or wishes. He fills his sexual desires regardless of her comfort or want for control over her own body. In this act, the Obersturmfuhrer removes all control from Anna.

When Trudy comes up the stairs, she is frightened by what she sees. Her mother explains that the Obersturmfuhrer is Saint Nikolaus as he brings her gifts. She tells Trudy that if she does not leave him alone, there will be no more presents. To Anna, her relinquishing herself to this man is the price she and her daughter pay for survival. This explanation reveals the source of Trudy's nightmare in the previous section.

In Chapter 24, Anna's selective listening to the Obersturmfuhrer shows that she retains her desire to serve the resistance, even as she gives her body to the Nazi. In this way, Anna is "playing the game" by allowing the Obersturmfuhrer to believe she is a Nazi in order to better conceal her resistance efforts. Anna considers how her action in the resistance gives her life purpose. Although her action is punishable by death, it is the only thing that makes her feel like she is morally worthy.

When the Obersturmfuhrer arrives at the bakery unannounced after her weekly bread delivery, Anna is shocked. In choking her, he scares Anna into submission. When he drinks the milk of her breasts, he treats Anna as an animal that is only there for his pleasure and sustenance. In this action, he symbolically sucks the humanity out of her. She is no longer her own person, but his possession. She can no longer take part in the resistance, the only thing that had saved her sense of self thus far.

In Chapter 25, when the Obersturmfuhrer touches Anna and cause her body to respond sexually, she feels as if she has lost complete control of her body to him. She is not longer a free individual. Rather, she is perpetually at the mercy of the Nazi, obliged to perform whatever and whenever he determines. This is further emphasized in Anna's disturbing attempt to sew herself shut in order to prevent the man from using her sexually.

When Anna hears of the horrific human experiment at Auschwitz, she realizes that all of the rumors she had been hearing about the camp were in fact true. Previously, she had thought that the atrocities she had heard of were too sickening to be true. In realizing that this belief was naïve, Anna becomes sick. She simultaneously realizes the true horror of the situation while realizing there is absolutely nothing she can do to stop it. She has completely surrendered.



Discussion Question 1

Is Frau Kluge's interview what you would expect? Defend your opinion.

Discussion Question 2

Is Roger correct in saying Trudy is like her mother? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think that Anna would still become the Obersturmführer's mistress if not for her desire to provide for Trudy? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

vertiginous, dilettante, ersatz, akimbo, conjectures, demigod, vaudevillian, blithely, modicum, reverie, adjutant, predilection, insolent, inoculation, abject, petulantly



Chapters 26-34

Summary

In Chapter 26, Trudy is extremely sleep deprived. She has been experiencing nightmares ever since her dream of Saint Nikolaus. She has been conducting more and more interviews, each of which she vows will be her last.

Trudy is called for another interview and arrives at the home over Mrs. Rose-Grete Fisher, an older woman who wears an eye patch. She reveals in her interview that her father had wanted to help the Jews during the war, but her mother would not allow it out of fear. She lived in a small village and for a while only heard rumors of the Nazis. Many Jews escaped through the forest to partisan bands. When the Einsatzgruppen finally came for the Jews, when she was a very young girl, many of the Poles in her town rejoiced, although her family was terrified. One day, her mother sent her to the market for raspberries. On the way back, she ventured into the forest and witnessed the Nazi systematically shooting Jews, who were lined up, naked, awaiting their deaths. Mrs. Rose-Grete sees a young girl she had had class with and feels the need to help her. She offers her raspberries and had her eye cut out shortly after by a Nazi officer. The interview was the first time in all her life Mrs. Rose-Grete had shared her story.

In Chapter 27, Trudy returns home to scrub herself clean, which has become a habit after these interviews. After her shower, she stares at herself naked for the first time in a long while and realizes the effects that aging is having on her body. She thinks of her mother's aversion to any type of nudity. As she is thinking of her mother, the phone rings. It is Ancy Heigelson from the Good Samaritan Center.

In Chapter 28, Trudy arrives at the Good Samaritan Center angry, the morning after she received the phone call. The secretary at first ignores her until she demands to speak with Ancy Heigelson. Anna had escaped from the center the night before. Trudy, accusing Mrs. Heigelson of criminal negligence, demands to see her mother. Mrs. Heigelson tells her that the center can no longer be responsible for Anna. Trudy considers how the town continues to shun Anna, even in her old age.

When Trudy comes to Anna's room to get her, Anna tells Trudy she is a bad daughter for leaving her in the center. Trudy tells her mother that she will be coming to live with her. She is happy to leave and takes back her insult.

When they arrive home, Anna finds Trudy's interview materials. Trudy says that they are for class. Anna is already invading her space on the first day.

In Chapter 29, Trudy makes dinner in an effort to impress her mother. After dinner, Anna insists on doing the dishes. She has been cleaning relentlessly since she arrived. In an effort to get away from her mother, Trudy enters her study and begins transcribing



interviews. She falls asleep while working. When, she moves into her bed, however, she is again plagued by the fear of nightmares and cannot sleep.

When Anna is finally able to fall asleep, she faces another nightmare about the Obersturmfuhrer. In this dream, he recites a German poem to her while trying to feed her cake. When she gets close enough, she realizes that her mother has been baked into the cake.

In Chapter 30, the story transitions back into the life of Anna in Germany. She is riding in the Obersturmfuhrer's car for the first time. He complains about a laundress who has burned his shirt. He assumes she is Jewish and plans to condemn her when he returns. Anna worries about the fate of the laundress but feels powerless to help.

Anna is going to spend a weekend in Berchtesgaden with the Obersturmfuhrer. As Anna is driven into the mountains, she recalls running through the churchyard on damp days with her childhood. She thinks of her childhood innocence so long ago. This is her first time leaving Weimar in five years.

In Chapter 31, Anna awakens from a repeating dream in which she continually falls up and down in a metal cage. She and the Obersturmfuhrer have arrived at the hotel. As they await check-in, a lower ranking SS officer arrives with a young woman. The two partake in erotic public displays of affection for one another. The Obersturmfuhrer approaches the front desk operator and has the two thrown out. The other officers present make fun of the Obersturmfuhrer for his excessive show of valiance. When checking in, he refers to Anna as his wife.

In Chapter 32, Anna and the Obersturmfuhrer go up to their room in the hotel. The decorations in the building are quite childlike, which Anna finds disturbing. As Anna sorts through her lingerie, the Obersturmfuhrer prepares for bed in the bathroom. He emerges in pajamas. Anna laughs uncontrollably. She expects him to want sex, but instead, he just wants to sleep. For the first time in their relationship, Anna feels respected. This feeling is quickly stolen from her, however, when the Obersturmfuhrer wakes her up forcibly in the middle of the night for sex.

In the beginning of Chapter 33, Anna straddles the back of the Obersturmfuhrer, massaging him while staring out at the dreary, grey mountains. The Obersturmfuhrer is upset that his plans to explore the mountains had to be cancelled due to the weather. She thinks about the feast she had had that morning at the hotel. The Obersturmfuhrer tells her about the lavish trips he had taken with the other officers. She remarks sarcastically, although he does not sense her tone. She finally tells him she finds the lavishness revolting. He responds with stories of officers who partook in far worse activities than he.

Out of inadvertent curiosity, Anna asks the Obersturmfuhrer if he is married. He replies, angrily, that he is married to a woman he does not love. Presuming this information has insulted Anna, he goes on to tell her how much she means to him. He says that she has saved him.



In Chapter 34, the Obersturmfuhrer drops Anna off at the bakery. Anna walks immediately to the butcher's house to pick up Trudy. Anna has told the butcher she was visiting her aunt for the weekend. It is Easter Sunday, so the streets are deserted. When she arrives at the home of the butcher, Frau Buchholtz, Trudy is ecstatic to see her. As Anna tries to make conversation with the butcher, she notices the woman's eyes avoid her own. Anna does not understand why the butcher is acting this way. Finally, she realizes that the butcher knows about her true location over the weekend. She is scared of Anna, due to her connection with the SS. Anna tries to overcompensate for the feeling with kindness, but it is no use. The fear cannot be broken. As Anna and Trudy leave, the child starts to ask for Saint Nikolaus. Anna is ashamed at the way the officer is beginning to impact her child.

Analysis

In Chapter 26, the nightmares Trudy experiences as she continues the interview process represent the past coming back to haunt her. The trauma she faced in Germany is unavoidable. Old memories begin to resurface as she delves deeper into her personal history.

Mrs. Rose-Grete serves as an example of a person who understands the moral implications of being a bystander during the war. Although she was just a young girl, she felt it was her moral duty to help the Jewish people. In doing so, she gave up an eye for a simple act of kindness. She sees the loss of her eye as punishment for turning a blind eye to the evil actions of the Nazis. Her testament lies in stark contrast to that of Frau Kluge, who felt no remorse for her acts of evil during the war.

When Mrs. Rose-Grete speaks of the shame that came with women and men being naked together, she emphasized the cultural aversion to sexuality held by the German women of that time. This point is reinforced in the next chapter when Trudy considers her mother's unwillingness to ever view herself naked.

In Chapter 28, Anna is thrown out of the Good Samaritan Center. Anna, who has always been shunned by her town based on her ethnicity, is once again shunned in her forced removal from the center.

In Chapter 29, Trudy has another nightmare about the Obersturmfuhrer. This is significant because it is her first dream about him since her first German interview. In bringing Anna into her home, Trudy had brought the past back to haunt her.

In Chapter 30, Anna's memories from the churchyard symbolize how far Anna has come from her childhood innocence. She recalls herself as a carefree youth. She cannot even remember the last time that life was good and free of worry. Anna has completely lost her innocence and now leaves Weimar with a completely different worldview than she held before.

In Chapter 31, Anna's dream that she is being repeatedly jerked in an iron cage symbolizes her position in her relationship with the Obersturmfuhrer. She lives in fear



and is continually thrown every which way against her own will. She has no control or say in which turn her life will take. She is trapped at the mercy of this violent man.

When the Obersturmführer is jeered by the officers, he is for the first time characterized as being less than intimidating. Although he uses his brute force to scare Anna into submission, he is not as well respected by his peers. He can even be seen as an outsider.

When the Obersturmführer refers to Anna as his wife, she, for the first time, realizes that he may have feelings for her. This inclination is reinforced in Chapter 32 when the Obersturmführer wishes to sleep with her without first having sex. She starts to see him as a person, rather than an authority figure. She is troubled by the sympathy she begins to develop for him. At the end of the chapter, as he lays on top of her, she can not distinguish his heart beat from her own. Symbolically, this represents the human connection Anna is beginning to form with him.

In Chapter 33, the Obersturmführer describes the lavish travels of he and the other officers. This, coupled with Anna's description of the lavish breakfast the two had shared that morning, juxtaposes life for SS officers with the lives of all other German citizens. In stark contrast to the hunger and poverty rampant in the country, the Nazis enjoy many indulgences.

When Anna tells the Obersturmführer that she finds the lavishes to be revolting, she is shown to retain her courage and resilience against the Reich despite her growing relationship with the enemy.

When the Obersturmführer describes the many inadequacies that have prevented his promotion in the Reich, Anna starts to feel somewhat sympathetic toward him. She quickly snaps out of it and contemplates shooting him in the back, a plan she know will accomplish nothing but her imprisonment. The mixed feelings she now holds for the Obersturmführer mirror the complexity of their relationship. Although she hates him, she cannot help but realize that he, too, is a human being, just like herself. At the end of the chapter, the Obersturmführer makes clear that he has feelings for Anna, further complicating the situation and adding a new emotional depth to his characterization.

In Chapter 34, Anna is able to see herself in a new light through her dealing with the butcher. This is the first time Anna senses someone fearing her for her relationship with the man. The people of Weimar have come to see Anna as connected with the SS and, therefore, just as dangerous as the officers themselves. The relationship has changed Anna's identity and place in society. It has invaded her life to the degree that she cannot have normal dealings with those she was once close to. This invasion is further emphasized when Trudy asks for the Obersturmführer. In her dealing with him, Anna has inadvertently allowed him to penetrate all aspects of her life, changing her into something she never wished to become.



Discussion Question 1

How does Anna's moving in with Trudy impact their relationship? How do you predict it will impact their relationship in later chapters?

Discussion Question 2

Is Anna's sympathy for the Obersturmfuhrer understandable? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Is Anna's continuing her affair with the Obersturmfuhrer morally permissible? Defend your answer with examples from the novel.

Vocabulary

wraithlike, acerbic, sibilance, detritus, ubiquitous, rapport, mottled, imperious, obstreperous, prodigious, monastic, repugnance, emissary, prurient, incorrigible, sardonic, diaphanous, galvanically, commiseration



Chapters 35-43

Summary

To begin Chapter 35, Trudy awakens to the smell of meat and cleaning products. Her mother has been cooking and cleaning incessantly since she arrived and it is driving Trudy crazy. When Trudy comes downstairs, she finds that her mother has hidden her coffee for the second time. Already running late for an interview, Trudy is annoyed. In an attempt to retrieve the, she looks for Anna and finally finds her in her study. She has the television on and is watching Trudy's interviews. Trudy sees this as her only opportunity to ask her mother about her past. Although she tries her best to get her mother to finally open up, she cannot crack her. She leaves for her interview.

In Chapter 36, Trudy arrives in Tanglewood, a neighboring city, to conduct an interview with a German man. She is twenty minutes late and Thomas has already set up. He comes outside to tell Trudy that the interview subject, Rainer Goldmann, is extremely angry.

She enters the house to find this is true. Mr. Goldmann is very rude towards her and begins the interview abruptly. Mr. Goldmann is a retired history teacher. In contrast to Trudy, who loves her students, Mr. Goldmann feels that his former students were intellectually inept. Rather than answer questions, he wishes to read aloud a statement he had prepared.

In the statement, he describes in vivid detail the atrocities of life for the Jewish people in Germany. He speaks of how discrimination elevated into their eventual mass killings in concentration camps. After his statement he tells Trudy and Thomas that his entire family was killed by the Nazis. He accuses Trudy of being a Nazi sympathizer and demands that she and Thomas exit his home.

In Chapter 37, Trudy exits the home, clearly disturbed and with tears in her eyes. Although Thomas tells her not to take Goldmann's comments to heart, she cannot help it. She heads to class, knowing she will arrive late.

When she begins her lecture, she is sloppy and awkwardly aware of her own unpreparedness. When she notices students making jokes in the back of the lecture hall, she becomes infuriated. She reprimands the students for laughing as she discusses a topic as serious as the Holocaust. She compares the students' privileged lifestyles to those of the Jews in Nazi Germany. She asks the students how they could possibly take such a serious topic so lightly. She ends her impassioned lecture when she notices a girl in the first row crying. She abruptly dismisses class.

Chapter 38 takes place later the same evening. Trudy returns to Mr. Goldmann's home with latkes she had spent all day preparing. When he opens the door, he tells her that she has interrupted his dinner. She says she just wanted to apologize and bring him the



latkes. Although he is cold toward her at first, he eventually invites her in and accepts the food. He tells her that his wife had been in a concentration camp and died of cancer many years later. He tells Trudy to call him by his first name, Rainer. As Trudy moves to leave, feeling she had overstayed her welcome, he invites her in for dinner. She accepts his invitation, saying she would be honored to dine with him.

In Chapter 39, the story again changes to that of Anna in Nazi Germany. She climbs into the car of the Obersturmführer, who she now refers to as Horst, his first name. Anna, followed by her daughter, is incredibly afraid as Horst has not disclosed the location of their excursion. When Trudy points out a picnic basket in the car, Horst shares that he is taking them on a surprise picnic for Anna's birthday. Realizing that it is, in fact, her birthday, Anna is incredibly relieved.

When they arrive at the park, the group eats while Horst plays Brahms on the phonograph, as he always does. After lunch, Horst and Trudy play in the water. Seeing how happy Trudy is, Anna considers her most recent fantasies in which she sometimes pictures Horst as her husband. Ashamed, she calls Trudy out of the water.

Horst asks Anna what she would like for her birthday. She asks him if he would spare the lives of 23 prisoners, one for each year of her life. He responds by shooting his gun into the distance, mimicking the way he has shot so many Jews.

Chapter 40 begins with Horst having angry sex with Anna. He is impotent and enraged about it. Afterwards, he storms around the room, punching a hole in the wall. Anna knows what has caused his issues. It has happened before with every German loss in the war. There have been multiple air raids and the Germans are near defeat. Anna and the other German civilians are deprived of rations and are slowly dying of starvation. Anna tries to get Horst to talk about the war in order to avoid sex. Her plan is foiled when he asks her to perform oral sex. As she does so, she imagines his penis is sausage and struggles to keep herself from biting it.

In Chapter 41, Anna struggles with self-hatred at the fact that she cannot help thinking of Horst constantly. After two and a half years as his mistress, she analyzes his every move. He consumes her every thought, as hard as she tries to prohibit it.

On Halloween, Horst brings Anna and Trudy venison as Anna has been begging him for food. Trudy and Horst talk about a rabbit family. She tells him the father rabbit's name is Horst. When Horst sends Trudy to bed, he and Anna go upstairs, where she undresses. To Anna's dread, he picks up his guns and stimulates her with it. When she is finished, he pulls the trigger. Anna fears for her life. He quickly tells her that he would never shoot her and tells her again how she has saved him. Hobbling in pain to the bathroom, Anna wonders again if Horst will kill her.

In Chapter 42, Anna considers how upset Mathilde would be were she still alive about the current condition of her bakery. The air raids have left the place in shambles. Anna takes in refugees daily, offering sheltering and food, in the rare case it is available. The



refugees offer their most precious belongings in exchange for shelter. Horst takes the belongings, though he has no use for any of them.

When Horst comes over, he makes the refugees leave. He plays with Trudy and begins to teach her Nazi marches. Anna, disgusted, tells him Trudy must go to sleep. He becomes angry and hits Trudy very hard across the face. Anna is terrified. She decides that she will no longer allow Horst to be a part of her life.

In Chapter 43, the air raids continue, much more frequently now. On the first of April, which is also Easter Sunday, Anna goes outside to find pamphlets falling from the sky. They are from the Americans and tell the German people to prepare for a peaceful surrender. Despite the rumors she has heard about the Americans, portraying them as evil and gruesome, Anna is not afraid.

After a month and a half away, Horst arrives at Anna's door. He is wearing civilian clothes for the first time and looks desperate. Horst tells her that he is deserting the Reich and heading for Argentina. He tells Anna she will come with him as his wife. Trudy, he says, will stay behind with a friend in Germany. No longer fearing him, Anna replies with a triumphant no. He motions to shoot her, but they both know he is bluffing. He leaves the bakery defeated.

Analysis

In Chapter 35, although Anna mainly keeps to herself in the house, she subversively takes charge with her obsessive housekeeping behavior. Trudy feels as if her home is no longer hers to live in.

When Trudy finds her mother watching her German interviews, she feels she has come upon her first opportunity to speak to her mother about her past. Although her mother has inadvertently revealed her continued interest in her past life in watching the tapes, she refuses to discuss her personal history with her daughter. This shows that her past does still haunt her, despite her unwillingness to speak of it.

In Chapter 36, Mr. Goldmann presents a very authentic and truthful, while upsetting, depiction of what life was like for the Jewish people in Nazi Germany. In doing so, he draws attention to the fact that those in Germany at the time were all guilty, in one way or another, for permitting the Nazis to rise to power. Although many people did this out of fear, Goldmann argues that there was no excuse. The things that were done to Jews at this time were inexcusable. He views Trudy's project as a way to provide excuses that cannot exist. In Chapter 37, Trudy begins to think that this is exactly what she is doing. In attempting to understand her mother's actions during the war, she may in fact be validating those who allowed these atrocities to take place. She no longer understands herself or her purpose in completing the project.

In Chapter 37, Trudy unleashes the rage she feels towards herself on her students. After listening to Mr. Goldmann's statement, she can no longer even come close to defending the side of the Germans at this time. After what she has just heard, she



cannot believe she ever had. She now finds herself completely lost in her area of study. She begins to see the world from Mr. Goldmann's point of view and begins to believe that her students do, in fact, lack passion and consideration for the lives of others.

In Chapter 38, Trudy brings Rainer Goldmann latkes as a peace offering the evening following their interview. Although he is at first standoffish, he comes to realize that Trudy is truly sorry and invites her in. In this chapter, Rainer begins to see Trudy as a complete person, which collapses his first impression of her. Just as he caused her to drastically change her way of thinking about her field of study, she causes him to change his way of thinking about those in her profession. In their interaction, the two realize that although they are different, they are really quite the same. Their connection undermines the Nazi regime's claim that people of different ethnicities are different from one another. They are a modern day example of human unity despite circumstance.

Chapter 39 further explores the complexities of the relationship between Horst and Anna. Horst shows his affection for Anna by surprising her with a picnic on her birthday. He plays lovingly with Trudy, resembling a man far different from who he actually is. In seeing these things, Anna begins to forget the fact that he is the hateful killer of innocent people. When she catches her fantasies embodying a future with Horst, Anna is disgusted with herself. In requesting that he spare the lives of prisoners, Anna retains her identity as the moral woman she once was. She realizes that her relationship with Horst is affecting her deeply and she cannot let her feelings for him grow.

In Chapter 40, Anna's desperation and madness at this point in the German war is exemplified in the uncontrollable thoughts she faces during sex. Having not eaten in days, she can no longer control her hunger. She hates Horst with his plump rolls. She wonders how he can remain fat as she starves. In fantasizing about his penis as a sausage, she fantasizes not only about eating, but about taking Horst's manhood.

In Chapter 41, Anna analyzes Horst. She thinks of how well she knows all of the intimate details of his life. She even thinks she may know him better than she knows herself. Even so, many aspects of his life are enigmatic to her. He serves as a symbol for hypocrisy in his lifestyle and relationship with Anna. While he claims perfect allegiance to the Reich, he pursues an affair with Anna, who he treats however he wishes to depending on the circumstance. Anna wonders if he will kill her.

When he plays with Trudy, his power over Anna's family is again emphasized. When he stimulates her with his gun, Horst perpetrates his ultimate act of power over Anna. In exerting his sexual power over Anna while she fears for her life, he plays the ultimate mind game, leaving her questioning his motives and her safety in continuing the affair. She feels as though she has been left forever unclean.

In Chapter 42, Horst's sheer greed and lack of morality is portrayed as he takes the last valuables of the desperate refugees, although he has no use for any of them.

As Anna watches Horst teaching her daughter the ways of the Nazis, she is disgusted. In a final effort to take back her life, she tells Horst Trudy must go to sleep. Even as



Horst ignores her, she does not relent. When he eventually hits Trudy, Anna is shocked and scared. He threatens to leave forever. Anna is not sure what is more frightening: the prospect of Horst staying or the prospect of starving to death without the things that he provides. She decides she would rather starve than have him invade her life any longer. In this chapter, the true desperation of Anna is captured. Her ability to remain strong and resilient despite her desperate nature characterizes Anna as a hero, although this identity is unbeknownst to Trudy.

In Chapter 43, the messages from the Americans of Easter Sunday are symbolic of resurrection. After the symbolic death of the nation of Germany, the desperate people are finally going to be saved by the United States. This mirrors the celebration of Jesus' rising from the dead on Easter Sunday in order to save the world from sin. Despite the moral errors of many of the Germans throughout the war, they are being granted salvation by the American troops.

In the final scene before the Obersturmfuhrer leaves for good, Anna has a final triumph over him. In this way, good finally prevails over evil. This metaphorically mirrors the happenings of the war, as the Allies finally seize victory over the Germans. In her final victory, Anna proves that despite her desperation and self-doubt, she is still the same strong resilient woman she had been before the war. She does not allow herself to fall victim to the evil around her.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Trudy feel so obliged to make peace with Rainer?

Discussion Question 2

Analyze Anna's feelings for Horst. What causes her to experience these mixed feelings?

Discussion Question 3

Examine the symbolic meaning of Easter Sunday in the novel.

Vocabulary

acid, mellifluous, wainscoting, acerbically, temerity, abetted, truncated, sojourn, sage, stupor, assiduous, brusque, copulation, lathing



Chapters 44-51

Summary

In Chapter 44, the story transitions back to the adult life of Trudy. Anna, still living with her daughter, has been baking feverishly since the beginning of the Easter season. Trudy is somewhat worried about her mother's compulsive baking, but leaves her alone so long as she is keeping busy.

Trudy visits Rainer, as she has been doing habitually since her first visit. She complains to him about her mother. He does not seem too worried about it. Eventually, he senses that something more is wrong with Trudy. He confronts her on it, knowing there is something deep down she is ashamed of. She refuses to tell him what she is truly upset about. He speaks of her study and knows that there is a deeper reason for her fascination with German history. When she tries to leave, he grabs her wrist. Trudy smiles at his physical touch, yet leaves without revealing her secrets.

In Chapter 45, Trudy enters her home humming Brahms and is pleased to see that Anna is nowhere to be found. She suspects she has gone to bed, leaving Anna the home to herself. She goes to her study, wanting to watch Rainer's interview in order to see him one more time before bed.

When Trudy arrives in her study, she finds her mother is already there, viewing Rainer's interview. She sees this as a final opportunity to ask her mother about the Obersturmfuhrer. She tells Anna that she remembers and often dreams of him. She accuses Anna of having had feelings for the man. Anna slaps Trudy. Anna refuses to speak of him except to say that all she did at the time was for the benefit of Trudy. She then storms off to bed. Trudy stands outside her door, trying to apologize.

In Chapter 46, Trudy dreams of her childhood in Germany. She is surrounded by refugees in the bakery. A schoolteacher is teaching her to read. Soon, however, the Obersturmfuhrer throws the refugees out. He then begins teaching her to march and recite Nazi chants. Anna asks him to stop and put Trudy to bed. He turns on her screaming and slaps Trudy across the face. She cries in pain. Her mother hugs her. Suddenly, all of the belongings of the refugees start to fall from the ceiling. Anna protects her from their fall.

In Chapter 47, Trudy arrives at Rainer's house in the middle of the night after waking from her dream. She knows that he, too, is an insomniac. When Rainer lets her in, she instantly confesses what it is that has been bothering her entire life. She tells Rainer that her father was an SS Officer and she has carried the shame of this her whole life.

When Trudy has completed her confession, Rainer shares his own. When he was a child, his mother sent him and his brother to the city to live as "u-boats," or Jews living on American papers. This, she hoped, would protect them from the Nazis regime. One



day, he and his brother observed from a window as his mother was led with many other Jews to the train station by the Nazis. Rainer knew what was happening. His brother ran off to his mother and, despite her efforts to protect the boy, he was shot and killed by an SS officer. Rainer held the guilt of witnessing this and doing nothing to stop it, although he knew that he could have. At the end of his revelation, the two go upstairs to Rainer's bedroom.

In Chapter 48, the story returns again to Anna's wartime life. At this time, "Null Hour" has descended upon Germany. They have completely surrendered to the Americans. It is a beautiful spring day outside, but Anna has learned that the most horrible things can take place on the most beautiful days.

At this time, Anna has been baking rapidly. Since the U.S. has taken control, the bakery has been provided clean flour for the first time in years. Anna has been forgoing sleep in an effort to keep up with the demand for bread. Still, she cannot feed all the hungry who come to her door.

Just after Anna has removed fresh loaves from the oven one afternoon, a drunken American soldier enters the bakery. At first, Anna thinks he has come for food. Then, she realizes he has come for her. He pins her down to the counter and attempts to rape her. Before he can get away with it, another American soldier pulls him off, saving her. Yelling racial slurs, the first officer leaves.

The officer who saved Anna, Jack, tries to comfort her. The whole time, however, Anna can tell he is drawn to her physically. She hates her physical beauty, feeling she is never free from the male gaze.

In Chapter 49, the American soldiers round up the people of Weimar and begin leading them in line through the city. As the Americans have been friendly captors up to this point, the German people are surprised. She is also surprised by how large the group of remaining Weimarians is. As they trudge on, it begins to rain. Anna carries Trudy although she is much too heavy. When the Germans realizing they are being led into the woods, they begin screaming that they will be shot.

Eventually, the American officers end the march at the concentration camp. The officers open the gates and one begins an impassioned speech on the atrocities that went on there. As the officers herd the Germans through the gates, they resist. Frau Hochmeier screams and points at Anna, shouting that she was a Nazi whore. Many of the other Germans join in, jeering at Anna. The officer, Jack, leads Anna off, seeing she is in danger of her own people. He assures her that the Germans are not in danger. He takes Trudy, promising to keep her safe while Anna progresses with the crowd. She trusts him.

Chapter 50, which takes place later that evening, begins with Jack's returning Trudy to her mother at the bakery. Jack puts Trudy to bed while Anna waits. She is still covered in mud from digging graves that morning. She wants nothing more than for Jack to leave.



Jack returns from the bedroom, urging Anna to come up with him. She scorns him for expecting sex from her. He then corrects her, embarrassed. He has drawn her a bath and wishes for her to have it while he cares for Trudy. In an attempt not to be rude, she accepts the bath.

After a while, Jack enters the bathroom. He has begun to worry about Anna as she has been bathing for quite some time. He actively avoids glancing at her nudity as he washes her hair for her. After a month, the two are married. Within four months, they will leave for America.

In Chapter 51, Anna prepares to depart for America. After her wedding, she and Trudy had moved in with Jack, leaving the bakery behind. Just before their departure, Anna returns to the bakery to gather belonging she may need. She walks around the place, remembering nothing but the Obersturmfuhrer. He has removed the sentimental value from the place. She decides to take nothing with her to her new life in America. Just as she is about to leave, however, she grabs the cigarette box the Obersturmfuhrer had given her. She feels as if her hand acts independently of her mind when grabbing the box and placing it in her pocket.

Analysis

In Chapter 44, when Anna bakes bread, she is reenacting the events of her life in wartime Germany. Just as she had baked bread feverishly for the starving people of Weimar after the Americans came to Germany and provided the first clean rations they had seen in years. As the American victory had begun on Easter, the coming of Easter cause Anna transition into her previous German persona.

In questioning Trudy on her true connection to Germany, Rainer confronts the woman for the first time in her life on her true identity. In doing this he begins to break down the barrier she has held up throughout her entire life. In resisting to share her secret past with Rainer, she acts just as her mother always his. In this way the two women are characterized as being quite similar despite their generational differences.

In Chapter 45, Trudy, after finally being confronted on her past, decides to confront her mother on hers. In doing so, she realizes that her mother did, in fact, carry out her affair for the benefit of her daughter, rather than for personal gain. Trudy is immediately filled with guilt. Anna's slapping Trudy's face is reminiscent of the Obersturmfuhrer's doing so many years ago in Germany.

In Chapter 46, the slap Anna had given her daughter evokes a memory of the Obersturmfuhrer doing the same to her. In the dream, which mimics events in her real life, Anna protects her after the man's crushing blow. In this way, Anna is shown as Trudy's brave protector, emphasizing the reasoning for her affair she had shared with Trudy in the previous chapter.

In Chapter 47, Trudy's final revelation of the truth of her past serves as a catharsis for her. After having finally confronted her mother, as she has wished to for her entire life,



she is ready to let her own burdens go. For the first time in her life, she has found someone that she is comfortable enough to share the truth with.

In revealing his own secret, Rainer reveals the reason behind his perpetual sadness. He has lived his whole life with the guilt of his past and feels it is right that he pay for his sins. He will not allow himself to be happy, as he does not feel he deserves happiness. In sharing this information with Anna, he is not releasing his burden. Rather, he is simply sharing it with the first person he feels can relate.

In Chapter 48, Anna's compulsive baking mirrors her actions when she comes to live with Trudy. In being reminded of her past in Germany, Anna continues this compulsive behavior, returning to her former self. Symbolically, this shows a return to her former identity brought on by her daughter's reconnecting her with the past.

When the American soldier attempts to rape Anna, she is immediately brought back to her interactions with the Obersturmfuhrer. Rather than fighting back, she submits, as she had become accustomed to doing his the Obersturmfuhrer. For her, the act of sex is an act of relinquishing power. She feels powerless to the men who have sex with her. She feels that she has no choice in the matter and that she must submit to the men who desire her sexually. She hates her physical beauty, as she sees it as being responsible for the sexual abuse that has happened to her. In this way, Anna has developed an unhealthy and irreparable view of sexuality.

In Chapter 49, although Anna does not trust the Americans, she is emotionless throughout the march to the camp. With all the atrocities that she has endured in her life, she has become immune to pain. The war has ruined her life to the point that she no longer fears losing it. She has experienced an emotional death with the many physical deaths she has witnessed in the war.

When Frau Hochmeier turns on Anna, she exemplifies the irony of the people at this time. In turning on one another, they hope to save themselves. They condemn others, yet in doing so attempt to condemn their own people to death.

When Anna learns that the German people will be working in the camp, she is relieved to find that she can finally serve a sort of penance for her actions throughout the war. She hopes that being forced through the camp will make it easier to accept the wrongs she has done throughout the war. This shows Anna's unending guilt regarding her wartime actions.

In Chapter 50, Anna's initial assumption that Jack expects her to have sex with him reemphasizes the emotional scars of her past. She can no longer trust men or expect them to see her as anything more than an object to be used for sex.

In Chapter 51, Anna decides to bring nothing with her from Germany. Subconsciously, her hand seems to grab the cigarette box the Obersturmfuhrer had given her and place it in her pocket. This subconscious action is symbolic of Anna's inability to leave Germany behind, no matter how hard she tries. She will always carry a piece of her life there with her, even though she wants nothing more than to leave the past behind.



Discussion Question 1

Explain Anna's compulsion to bake bread in Trudy's home. What does this action symbolize?

Discussion Question 2

Examine Rainer's role in Trudy's life. Why is this character significant?

Discussion Question 3

Explain the symbolism behind Anna's taking the cigarette box in Chapter 51.

Vocabulary

appropriated, pabulum, regurgitate, pinioning, bludgeoned, braceleted, expatiation, admonition, boughs, enameled, striations, repugnance, adjutant



Chapters 52-58

Summary

In Chapter 52, the story transitions back to Trudy's adulthood. Trudy is happier than she ever has been in her life. She and Rainer have transitioned their friendship into a romantic relationship.

One morning, they wake up together and Rainer dresses. He tells Trudy to do the same and goes downstairs. He packs lunch and ushers Trudy out to the car. He does not tell her where they are going. They end their journey at the Lake of Isles. Here, Rainer exits the car and begins eating. He tells Trudy to do the same. She thinks that he is being ridiculous but eventually comes out to meet him. When the two are out on the ice together, Rainer urges her to look into the distance. When she says that she cannot see anything, he urges her to stop thinking and just be.

In Chapter 53, Trudy happily enters her classroom, humming a song Rainer likes to sing in shower. She wishes her class a good morning and soon realizes they are too tired to be productive. She dismisses class early, to the shock of her students.

After class, she goes to Ruth's office. Ruth is surprised to see her and even more surprised to learn she has cancelled class. She asks Ruth for pamphlets from the tropical vacation she had recently taken with her husband. When Ruth asks why she would like the pamphlets, Trudy is happy to share the details of her relationship. After listening to Trudy's happy descriptions of her new lover, Ruth shares that she is worried. She spoke to Rainer on the phone for the project and thought him to be very rude. Trudy remembers that Ruth had set her up on many blind dates after her divorce. Trudy attributes Ruth's disapproval to her annoyance that Trudy did not end up with any of the men she had suggested.

In Chapter 54, Trudy arrives at Rainer's home, eager to tell him about the trip she has planned for the two of them. When she arrives at his home, she is surprised to find that he is not answering the door. She waits for a while in his yard. Soon, she becomes nervous about his whereabouts. Seeing as he is older than she, she worries for his health. Eventually, she lets herself into his back door, which she finds open.

When she enters the home, she finds Rainer packing. He was not expecting her. He tells her that he is going to Florida to see his daughter and he does not know if he will return. He tells her that she makes him much happier than he deserves to be. Thus, he cannot stay.

In Chapter 55, Trudy returns home, extremely upset. She goes immediately to her study and reads through her transcripts. She can no longer find pleasure in her work. Suddenly, Anna comes into the study. She knows that Rainer is gone. Trudy is shocked



to find that Anna knew she was dating, much less that the man was Rainer. Anna comforts Trudy with cake and coffee.

In Chapter 56, the story shifts back to that of Anna in her new home in America. She considers how out of place she feels in this new country. Anna feels that she is not accepted by the people of the town and thus tries to keep to herself as much as possible.

On Christmas Eve, however, Jack insists that the family attend church. Anna feels as though she cannot say no to this request. When they arrive at church, the parishioners turn to stare at the family, making them feel out of place and unwelcome.

After the mass, the congregation gathers for a reception. This is the part of the evening Anna has dreaded most. At the reception, the women talk amongst each other while the men do likewise. Without Jack by her side, Anna feels even more awkward than she had previously. Although some of the women act polite towards Anna, she hears them talk rudely about her when they think she is not listening. When the family finally leaves the reception, Anna sees that the cake she had brought is the only one that remains uneaten.

In Chapter 57, Jack, Anna, and Trudy enter Jack's car and prepare to leave church. The car will not start. Sensing Anna's lasting discomfort about the evening, Jack tries to make her feel better. He assures her that the attitudes of the women are not to be taken personally. He blames their rudeness on the freshness of the war. Knowing she will never be accepted, Anna begins to cry.

From the back of the car, Trudy asks her mother when Saint Nikolaus is coming. Anna corrects her, saying Saint Nikolaus will not come; in America Santa Claus comes to children.

When the family returns home, Jack puts Trudy to bed. After a few minutes, Anna enters her daughter's room. She warns the child never to mention Saint Nikolaus again, shaking her face for emphasis. She then ventures off to her own bedroom, wishing that her child will retain no memory of Germany.

In Chapter 58, Trudy comes into Jack and Anna's bedroom to wake them on Christmas morning. Her parents send her downstairs to open gifts. In the bedroom, Jack presents Anna with a silver locket. The locket contains a picture of Anna, Jack, and Trudy. It bears striking resemblance to the cigarette box given to her by the Obersturmfuhrer. Although this upsets Anna, she assures Jack that she loves his gift.

After he gives her the gift, Jack motions to make love to Anna. She begins shaking, experiencing flashbacks of the Obersturmfuhrer. Jack then asks Anna if she was truly the mistress of an SS officer. She tells him that she was. He asks her if she loved the man. When she does not respond, he storms out to the farmhouse.

At the end of the chapter, Anna comes outside to find Jack watching Trudy ride her new bike. She tries to speak to him but he ignores her. When Jack goes inside, Anna



follows, leaving Trudy to play outdoors. Lacking a way to explain herself to him, she leads him upstairs to make love.

Analysis

In Chapter 52, Trudy feels extremely connected to Rainer in their romantic relationship. She feels a connection she has never felt before. In their mutual guilt over their past, they share a sympathy and understanding for one another. This sentiment is one that they have never been open to sharing with others before. In her relationship with Rainer, Trudy feels understood. She feels that she can finally put the shame of her past behind her.

When Rainer urges her to just be, he urges her to put aside all of the overanalyzing that has caused her such strife throughout her life. With Rainer, she can finally be free and alive. No longer plagued by her conception of herself, she can finally be happy.

In Chapter 53, Trudy's newfound happiness is again exemplified in her interactions with Ruth. She cannot wait to tell Ruth about the man who has caused her such happiness. Even when Ruth shows doubt in her new partner, Trudy refuses to share this sentiment. The happiness she feels is unrivaled by any emotion she has felt in the past. She refuses to believe anything can take this happiness away from her.

In Chapter 54, Rainer leaves Trudy because he feels he does not deserve the happiness she brings him. Seeing himself as the cause of his family's death, he feels he should live his life in perpetual sorrow as penance for his sins. This mirrors Anna's unwillingness to let go of her past or find happiness. These characters cannot forgive themselves for their wartime actions and feel that it would be unfair for them to be allowed happiness when others have suffered.

In Chapter 55, Trudy finds it difficult to become invested in the area of study she once loved so much. She now finds the area empty. Before Rainer, she had used the study of German history to fill a part of herself she felt was missing. In Rainer, she had found this missing piece. In finding someone with whom she could share her shameful past, she finally received the comfort she had been longing for all her life. She realized that the understanding she was searching for could only be provided by another person.

Anna knows without being told the source of Trudy's pain. This shows that despite their silence, Anna still possesses the innate ability to read her daughter. Just as she could sense her emotions as a child, she does so now in her adulthood. Although Trudy is shocked that her mother still knows her so well, she is simultaneously comforted by her mother's understanding and warmth.

In Chapter 56, the attitude of the people of New Heidelberg toward Anna emphasizes the xenophobia within the American people of this time. Although they know nothing of Anna personally, they identify her with the Nazi regime. Their refusal to eat the cake she brought to the reception symbolizes their refusal to accept her as a member of their community.



When Anna experiences the way she is treated by the American people, she understands that her past is not dead. As much as she wishes she could leave her past behind, it has followed her to the United States. The Nazis have destroyed her home and made it impossible to build a home elsewhere given her past experiences.

In Chapter 57, Jack tries to comfort Anna by assuring her that the malice of the American women toward her is not to be taken personally. He blames their rudeness on the freshness of the war. In saying this, he defends the prejudice of these women toward Ann. In this way, Jack is representative of the attitude of the United States toward Germany. Although they appear to be accepting and helpful, they hold in inherent fear and lack of understanding for their people. Only Anna can understand the isolation she faces in this new nation.

When Trudy asks for Saint Nikolaus, Anna panics, fearing her past will inevitably invade her new life. She enters into her child's room, warning her never to speak of the past in Germany. In doing this, she attempts to hide her past, allowing the memories to fade away with time. The issue with this strategy, however, is that Trudy shares the memories of Germany with her memory. Although Anna wishes to conceal the past, her daughter does not. In this way, Anna's past can never truly die as it lives on in the memories of her daughter.

In Chapter 58, Anna, alone in her room, considers how taking away her ability to love is the worst thing the Obersturmfuhrer has done to her. When asked by her husband if she ever loved the Obersturmfuhrer, she cannot respond. The truth is that she did grow to love the officer, as "we come to love those who save us." In saving her and her daughter from death by the Nazis, the Obersturmfuhrer did inadvertently receive Anna's love. She is ashamed with herself for feeling this way for the man. Still, she cannot deny her love, just as she cannot deny the existence of her past in Germany. When she makes love to Jack at the end of the chapter, she continues to play the role of his wife, accepting that he will never truly understand her and that she in turn will never truly love him.

Discussion Question 1

Does Rainer deserve happiness? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Is Rainer's decision to leave Trudy alone selfish? Explain your reasoning.

Discussion Question 3

Is Anna right in telling her daughter never to speak of the past? Would life have been better for Trudy if her mother had confronted the past rather than hiding it?

Vocabulary

astriquent, funereal, sanguine, preemptory, facsimile, fission, shrapnel, guileless



Chapters 59-62

Summary

Chapter 59 shifts back to the perspective of Trudy's adult life in Minneapolis. It is a beautiful spring morning. Trudy is in Thomas' van, driving to an interview in a neighboring town. She has not held an interview since Rainer's departure and has lost the motivation to carry on the project.

During their drive, Thomas tells Trudy that he is sorry about Rainer. He tells her that he lost his wife this time of year in a car crash. Trudy appreciates his sentiment but is disturbed that he knew about Rainer.

The two arrive at their destination to find that the subject of their interview resides in a huge, obviously expensive home. Trudy recalls that he was very vague when asked about his occupation.

Trudy and Thomas enter the home and meet the subject of their interview, Mr. Pfeffer. Mr. Pfeffer is very friendly and insists that Trudy cannot be single as she is so entirely charming.

Mr. Pfeffer reveals he is from Weimar, just like Anna. She also shares that his business ventures during the war saved him from the fate faced by so many of those around him. For this, he considers himself entirely lucky.

Chapter 60 includes the transcript of Trudy's interview with Mr. Pfeffer. In the interview, he reveals that he was an antique wholesaler during the war. Through this business, he worked for the resistance, selling the possessions of fleeing Jews and arranging for their immigration into other nations. He also sold drugs to the Nazis, which awarded him their favor and lack of suspicion for his business. He mentioned that others operated in this way as well. He mentions that Frau Staudt provided the Nazis with bread while also working to provide Nazi prisoners with bread.

He continues to share that his enterprise took a turn for the worst when a Nazi officer had a bad reaction to the cocaine he provided. He was imprisoned in the Buchenwald concentration camp in the Weimar woods because of this. He goes on to describe the harsh conditions of the camp. He tells Trudy that he and the other prisoners would never have survived had it not been for the charity of the "Bakery Angels" the women who left bread for the prisoners behind the camp.

Trudy asks Mr. Pfeffer to describe the Bakery Angels. He shares that one of them was Frau Staudt. He says that he does not know the identity of the other but had seen her once from inside the camp. He said that she was beautiful and he would always remember her face. He suspected she was the lover of Doktor Max Stern, a Jewish man in the camp who had conceived a child he never saw. Realizing Mr. Pfeffer had just described her parents, Trudy calls for Thomas to stop the tape.



Trudy pulls a photograph of her mother from her wallet and asks Mr. Pfeffer if she is the other Bakery Angel. He tells her he is fairly certain it is. She asks if he will come to her home to confirm her mother's identity. He says that he will. Before they depart, Trudy asks him what became of Doktor Max Stern. He tells her that he was hanged at the camp.

In Chapter 61, Mr. Pfeffer and Trudy arrive at Trudy's home. Trudy tells Anna that she has brought Mr. Pfeffer over to see her. When Mr. Pfeffer asks Anna about her time as a Bakery Angel, she denies it. Still, Mr. Pfeffer knows that Anna was the woman who had saved him. He decides to let the subject rest, content just to be in the woman's presence.

In Chapter 62, Trudy drives Mr. Pfeffer home after his long afternoon with Anna. Trudy thanks Mr. Pfeffer. Before entering his home, he asks Trudy if it would be all right if he saw her mother again. Trudy tells him that she believes Anna would like that. Mr. Pfeffer is pleased. Trudy watches him walk away and begins her drive home. Driving back, she feels as though a weight has been lifted. She considers how similar her home in the United States must be to the German cities in which she grew up. She is finally at peace.

Analysis

Chapter 59 opens with a description of lilac time in Minneapolis, a brief spurt of beauty the lies in stark contrast the usual cruelty of the climate. In this description, lilac time is symbolic of the emotional connection Trudy spent with Rainer. In spending her entire life lacking real love, Trudy feels that her brief encounter with understanding caused her more pain than it did joy. She views lilac time as a cruel trick of nature on the people of Minneapolis.

Trudy's being uncomfortable when Thomas speaks of Rainer emphasizes the control issues she has developed as a result of her relationship with her mother. Rather than embrace his attempt to connect with and comfort her, she is disturbed by what she views as an invasion of her privacy.

Mr. Pfeffer's instant affection toward Trudy foreshadows his connection to her parents. As Trudy sees no reason why he should be particularly drawn to her, the answer must lie below the surface. It is suggested that his affection for Trudy lies in her resemblance to Anna and Max, both of whom he relates with during the war.

In Chapter 60, Trudy is shocked to find that Mr. Pfeffer had known her parents. He is overwhelmed and relieved by the fact that her father was not in fact a member of the SS, but a Jewish prisoner. In gaining this knowledge, Anna is finally provided with the answers for which she has searched her whole life. In asking Mr. Pfeffer to come to her home to identify her mother, Trudy indicates that she cannot truly believe the news until it is proven to her. The shock is too great for her to accept at first. It is if her life's greatest wish has finally come to fruition.



In Chapter 61, Anna's refusal to admit to her past in Germany, despite Mr. Pfeffer's wishes to thank her, speak to her adherence to her coping mechanism. Having been stripped of all power during the war, she sees retaining her silence as her only way to maintain power. Although Mr. Pfeffer offers her an opportunity to face her past in a positive light, she is still unable to relinquish power.

In Chapter 62, Mr. Pfeffer's eagerness to see Anna again suggest that she may finally find connection in someone who can understand what she went through in Germany. After living her life subject to the solitude her past brought with it, Mr. Pfeffer represents an opportunity at human connection.

At the end of the chapter, Trudy drives home and considers the similarity of Minnesota and Germany. With her newly gained information on her family history, Trudy is finally at peace. Her past is no longer frightening, but familiar. She can finally come to terms with her history and, thus, herself.

Discussion Question 1

Examine the metaphor of lilac time in Minneapolis.

Discussion Question 2

How is Mr. Pfeffer characterized in the novel? Provide examples to support your characterization.

Discussion Question 3

Do you predict that if the novel were to continue, Anna would eventually admit to her past? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

punitive, forsythia, clerestory, rapacious, prophylactics, urbane, serrated, inviolable, postprandial



Characters

Anna

Anna is one of the two main characters in the novel. Throughout the novel, focus shifts continually between the life of Anna in Germany and the life of her daughter, Trudy, as an adult. Anna's story gives the reader insight into the lives of women in Nazi Germany. The narration of the novel allows the reader to understand the desperation and resilience of women at this time in history.

When Anna's story begins, she is a young adult in Germany, living with her father, a Nazi sympathizer. Though her father aims to marry her off to a Nazi officer, Anna falls in love with a Jewish doctor. When the doctor, Max, is found out by the Nazis, Anna hides him in her closet until he is eventually turned over to the SS by Anna's father. Throughout this experience, Anna is characterized as brave and moral despite the circumstances. Although being married to a Nazi would allow Anna protection during wartime, she refuses to sacrifice her morals for her personal well being.

Pregnant with Max's child, Anna leaves her home to live with the local baker, Frau Staudt. Frau Staudt is an active member of the Nazi resistance movement. In living with the woman, Anna becomes a member of the resistance as well. The two women provide bread for prisoners of the concentration camp, although this is considered a crime punishable by death. Again, Anna puts her morals above her personal safety.

When Anna becomes a mistress to the Obersturmfuhrer, she becomes heavily conflicted about her actions. Though she knows she and her daughter would be killed should she refuse the man's sexual advances, she also feels immoral and worthless in connecting physically with the man. When she begins to develop feelings for the Obersturmfuhrer, Anna is disgusted with herself. Although she sees the affair as her only way to survive the war, she can never morally accept her relationship with the evil man. Still, she knows she must do whatever is necessary to protect her daughter.

Scarred by her experience in Germany, Anna comes to the United States, eager to leave the past behind her. She finds, however, that her past will never truly die. The guilt and shame of her actions in Germany, however forced, will continue to haunt her for the rest of her life. Her only defense is to remain silent about the past. In doing so, she feels as though she is containing the influence of her past on her present life. Still, she remains isolated in silence, feeling no one will ever understand her action or the situation that led to them.

Trudy

Trudy is one of the two main characters in the novel. Throughout the novel, focus shifts continually between the life of Anna in Germany and the life of her daughter, Trudy, as



an adult. Trudy's perspective emphasizes the effects her brief childhood in Germany and her mother's silence have had on her life.

Trudy was born in Germany when her mother was working in the bakery with Frau Staudt. Because Trudy was young when she came to the United States, she retains little of her experience in Germany to memory. Still, she is plagued by the mystery of her past and her mother's unwillingness to discuss her history with her.

Trudy is a German History Professor. For her, the study of German history is the closest she can come to facing her personal history. Having found a photograph of her and her mother with a Nazi officer at a young age, she believes she is the daughter of a Nazi. She is ashamed of this and devotes her life to trying to rationalize her mother's choice and better understand the memories of her youth that continue to resurface.

When Anna moves in with Trudy after being thrown out of the Good Samaritan Center, Trudy's memories of her childhood begin to become much more predominate. She decides that she must confront her mother on her past. She finds her mother still unwilling to speak of the past. This leaves Trudy feeling isolated. Unable to understand her self, she feels it impossible for anyone else to understand her.

Throughout the novel, Trudy conducts a German History project in which she interviews German citizens who lived in Germany during the war. In doing so, she hopes to find a deeper understanding of the history she and her mother share. In her final interview, Trudy finds out the truth about her mother and her father. With that, the baggage she has carried throughout life is gone. In facing her past rather than running from it, Trudy finds peace and acceptance of her identity.

Doktor Max Stern

Max is a Jewish doctor in Weimar. Since the beginning on the war, his successful medical practice has suffered a great loss as those of Aryan decent are prohibited from using his services.

Prior to the war, Max had taken care of Anna's mother before her eventual death. When Anna's dog gets sick, she takes him to Max's office, thinking little of the laws that prohibit her from using the practice. Anna is immediately attracted to Max and begins visiting him regularly.

Max is an important part of a Nazi resistance group. He has hidden film from the concentration camp, which he hopes to publicize so that other nations will be made aware of the atrocities of the Reich. Although he risks his life in partaking in the resistance, Max knows that it is the only way to defeat the Nazis.

As the war continues, the Nazis force Max out of his home. He takes refuge in a closet of Anna's home. While he is living there, he and Anna take part in a romantic relationship. She is eventually impregnated with his child, Trudy. When Anna's father



realizes Max is in the house, he turns him into the SS. Max is then imprisoned in a concentration camp, where he eventually dies.

Obersturmfuhrer (Horst)

The Obersturmfuhrer, whose first name is Horst, enters the story after the killing of Mathilde. He first comes to the bakery in order to arrest Anna, assuming she was also involved in the resistance movement. Seeing Anna's physical attractiveness, he chooses instead to make her his mistress. For the survival of her daughter, Anna submits to him.

The Obersturmfuhrer is symbolic of hypocrisy and contradictions. Although he claims to be loyally devoted to the Reich, he spends much of his time with a mistress, which is heavily condemned within the Nazi party. He lives lavishly while speaking of the scarcity of good and resources caused by the war. In the end of the war, he exemplifies the ultimate contradiction in deserting the cause when he knows the Germans have been defeated.

The contradictions displayed by the Obersturmfuhrer emphasize the contradictory feelings Anna holds for the man. He repeatedly abuses her sexually, asserting his power and masculinity over her. Due to his control over her body, Anna feels powerless and damaged in a way she can never recover from. She hates the man for all he has done and all she has taken from her. Simultaneously, however, she begins to feel sympathy for the man. She is confused and disgusted by the feelings. At the end of the novel she describes her feeling for him in saying, "We come to love those who save us." Although she wants to hate the Obersturmfuhrer, she cannot, as he is the reason she and Trudy survive the war.

Frau Mathilde Staudt

Frau Mathilde Staudt is the baker with whom Anna lives after she flees from her father's home. Mathilde cares for Anna throughout her pregnancy and helps her raise her daughter, Trudy, after the child is born. Although Mathilde is characterized as being stern and demanding, she is also nurturing and selfless at heart.

Frau Staudt plays a key role in the resistance movement. At the beginning of the war, she was offered a deal by the Nazis. In this deal, she would provide officers with bread in exchange for money and resources. This deal won her favor with the Nazi and allowed her to more easily provide resources for the prisoners of the concentration camp.

When Mathilde is killed by the Nazi for attempting to deliver food and weapons to the resistance members within the camp, Anna considers Mathilde's innate pull toward suicide. She thinks that Mathilde may have purposely sacrificed herself when making the delivery, seeing death as her only way out of the Nazi regime. Mathilde is symbolic of the hopelessness of morality during the war.



Rainer Goldmann

Rainer Goldmann is a Holocaust survivor who signed up for Trudy's German history project, disguising himself as a German citizen. From the beginning of their interactions, Rainer seems cold and disapproving toward Trudy. Instead of answering interview questions, he reads a prepared statement about the atrocities committed to his Jewish family during the German war. He accuses Trudy of trying to condone the actions of the Germans who allowed such atrocities to be committed.

After the interview, Trudy returns to his home to apologize for the interview. He invites her in for dinner. From there, the two become friends and eventually romantic partners. After Trudy reveals her family history to Rainer, he reveals his history to her. He had watched his mother and brother be killed by the SS and done nothing to stop it. For this he is forever guilty. Toward the end of the novel, Rainer leaves Trudy, as he cannot allow himself to be happy. He feels he does not deserve to be happy after allowing his family to die. He feels his perpetual sorrow is the only thing that can make up for what he did during the war.

Gerhard

Gerhard is Anna's father. He is a Nazi sympathizer whose main goal during the war is to marry Anna off to a Nazi officer. When he realizes that Anna is hiding a Jewish man in his house, he turns him in to the SS.

Ruth

Ruth is Trudy's friend from the university. Trudy specializes in German History while Ruth specializes in Holocaust studies. The contrasting areas of specialization create an inherent awkwardness in their friendship. This awkwardness mirrors that strangeness of Trudy's relationship with her own family history.

Jack

Jack is an American soldier who saves Anna from being raped at the end of the war in Germany. After saving her, he falls for Anna. The two marry after a month and move, with Trudy, to the United States. Jack is described as being a kind and quiet man. However, she refuses to show understanding for Anna after learning she was the mistress of an SS officer. In this way, Jack is representative of Anna's experience in the United States. Although inviting at first, the American people shun and distrust Anna for her past.

Mr. Pfeffer

Mr. Pfeffer is the last person Trudy interviews in the novel. Mr. Pfeffer is from Weimar Germany, like her mother, Anna. In his interview, Mr. Pfeffer reveals that he was part of the resistance network with Anna's mother and father. This final revelation finally sets Trudy's mind at ease. Mr. Pfeffer provides her with the answers to her past she has spent her entire life searching for.



Symbols and Symbolism

New Heidelberg and Weimar

The vast similarities between New Heidelberg and Weimar emphasize the irony of Anna's life. Throughout the novel, Anna repeats the phrase, "The past is dead, and better it remain so." Although Anna wants nothing more than to leave her wartime identity in the past, she cannot seem to do so. Even in New Heidelberg, her wartime persona, follows her. In addition to similarities in climate and physical appearance of the locations, Anna is faced with the same societal shame she had faced in Germany. New Heidelberg seems to be a new Weimar in a different location. As much as she wishes the past to be dead, it is very much alive and incessant.

Chess Board

In the beginning of the novel, Anna and Max play chess with one another. Anna's queen is described as being backed in a corner and without a crown. Max seems to stare knowingly over the board. Still, the two continue to play the game, knowing they will fail. This scenario serves as a metaphor for the place of the two characters in the war.

Anna, in love with a Jewish man whose child she will later conceive, knows that the odds are stacked against her in life. Although she must carry on an affair with an SS officer in order to survive, she remains an active member of the resistance against the German government. In doing so, she "plays the game" of life, earning the favor of those in power while simultaneously defying them in pursuit of her ideals.

Similarly, Max plays an important role in the resistance although he knows he will probably be killed as a result. Although he knows he will lose his life in the end, he plays the game for all it is worth in order to help save the lives of others.

Saint Nikolaus

Throughout Trudy's young childhood, Anna referred to the Obersturmführer as Saint Nikolaus. Although he was quite abusive toward Anna, she did not want her daughter to live in fear of him. Anna told her daughter that she must not come upstairs when Saint Nikolaus was at the bakery, as he did not like to be seen. If she followed these rules, he would bring her gifts.

When Anna comes to live with Trudy in her adult life, the closeness of the two women causes Trudy to have recurring nightmares about Saint Nikolaus. Repressed memories of her childhood begin to resurface in these dreams. She begins to remember Saint Nikolaus for what he was, an SS officer who abused her mother. In this way, Saint Nikolaus comes to symbolize the secrets Anna tried to keep from her daughter and the inevitable resurfacing of the past.



Berchtesgaden

Berchtesgaden symbolizes a loss of innocence for Anna. After two and a half years of serving as the Obersturmführer's mistress, Anna is brought to Berchtesgaden for a weekend trip. Though she has spent a significant amount of time as the Obersturmführer's mistress before this, Anna has never spent any time alone with the man. On her way to the mountains, Anna realizes that she has not left Weimar since she was a child. In stark contrast to her trips with her mother, this trip brings Anna fright and confusion about her sense of self. On this trip, Anna begins to think of the Obersturmführer for the first time as a human being with whom she shares a connection. She is shocked and disgusted to find that she is beginning to feel sympathy for a man who has killed so many and abused her. In Berchtesgaden, Anna begins to wonder if she is a willing participant in her affair with the Obersturmführer.

Nightmares

As Trudy conducts interviews with Germans who experienced the war, she begins to have more and more nightmares about her brief childhood in Germany. These nightmares symbolize her past coming back to haunt her. As hard as her mother, Anna, has tried to shield Trudy from the horrors of their past, it continues to unavoidably resurface.

Blind Eye

When Trudy interviews Mrs. Rose-Grete, she notices that she wears an eye patch over one of her eyes. She tells Trudy that her eye was struck out by the Nazis when she tried to help a Jewish classmate facing death. Rose-Grete felt that the loss of her eye was symbolic of the blind eye she had turned to the atrocities of the Nazis as they rose to power.

Brahms

Throughout the novel, the music of Brahms serves as a recurring symbol. The music symbolizes German history and heritage. When Horst listens to the music, he feels joyous and carefree. This mirrors his feeling for Germany as he is in a position of power. In contrast, when Rainer plays Brahms, it serves as a constant reminder of the sorrow of his past.

Iron Cage

On her way to Berchtesgaden to spend a weekend with Horst, Anna has a recurring nightmare of being propelled up and down in an iron cage. This iron cage symbolizes



the lack of control Anna has over her life as she embarks on her trip with Horst. Given with power and control over her fate, she is subject to his every cruel whim.

Easter Sunday

In the end of the novel, Easter Sunday coincides with the day the Germans fully surrender to the Americans. This represents a rebirth for the German people. After years of torture and starvation, the German people are finally receiving a second chance at life.

Cigarette Box

When Anna leaves Germany for the United States, she decides to take nothing with her. In doing so, she attempts to leave her past entirely behind her. When she returns to the bakery for the final time, she picks up the cigarette box Horst has given her, almost subconsciously. This action represents Anna's inadvertent inability to leave her past in Germany behind her.



Settings

Weimar, Germany

Weimar, Germany is the location for most of the sequences encompassing Anna's life as a young adult. Weimar, Germany is Anna's hometown. It is where her daughter, Trudy is conceived and later born and where the mother and daughter reside throughout wartime in Germany.

New Heidelberg, Minnesota

After Anna meets an American soldier, Jack, at the end of the war in Germany, the two marry and move to new Heidelberg, Minnesota. New Heidelberg is strikingly similar to Weimar. When she arrives in New Heidelberg, Anna is faced with xenophobia. Trudy recognizes this throughout her childhood and leaves the city as soon as she can, feeling she and her mother are never truly accepted.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

After growing up in new Heidelberg, Trudy moves to Minneapolis as an adult. There, she works as a Professor of German History. Much of the sequences of the novel concerning Trudy's adult life are set in Minneapolis.

Berchtesgaden, Germany

Berchtesgaden is located in the mountains of Germany. During her affair with the Obersturmführer, Anna is brought to a hotel in Berchtesgaden. Here, Anna first realizes she may be developing feelings for the SS officer and is ashamed and confused. The trip to Berchtesgaden symbolizes a loss of innocence for Anna as she is beginning to identify with the Obersturmführer.

Good Samaritan Center

When Anna nearly burns down her home, her daughter, Trudy, check her into the Good Samaritan Center in New Heidelberg. Here, the women of the town treat Anna with the same overt xenophobia they have throughout her entire life. The Good Samaritan Center serves as a microcosm of the town as a whole, emphasizing its prejudice and hypocrisy.



Themes and Motifs

Past

The inescapable nature of the past serves as one of the predominate themes throughout the novel. As the novel changes perspectives in order to address both Anna and Trudy's lived experiences, images of the past draw the stories together.

After Anna leaves Germany, she wishes for her past to remain behind her. She repeatedly dismisses her daughter's attempt to bring up her past life in Germany. She tries to assure herself that the past is dead, although she knows in her heart that this is not true. She cannot escape from her German identity. Her new city in the United States bears many resemblances to her home in Germany. She is also faced with xenophobia from the women in town and thus excluded from social situations. As much as she would like to leave the past behind her, it has followed her to her new country, seeping into all aspects of her life.

The impact of the past progresses even further when Anna's daughter, Trudy, takes her into her home. Having been born in Germany, Trudy is haunted by the few memories she has of her wartime life and the mysterious identity of her father. She suspects that her father was an SS officer and is plagued by the shame this belief causes her. When Anna moves in with Trudy, Trudy's memories of Germany begin to strengthen to the point she can no longer bear. She is forced to confront her mother on her mysterious past.

When Trudy finally does confront her mother on their shared past, Trudy will not reveal any details. After holding an interview with a man from Weimar at the end of the novel, Trudy finally learns the truth Anna has been holding back. In this way, Trudy realizes that the past belongs to the one who lived it. In the end, there is no way to escape it. One just learns to deal with it. While the past is inescapable, what one does with it or her past is for that person alone to decide.

Mother Daughter Relationship

The mother-daughter relationship between Anna and Trudy serves as a dominant theme throughout the novel. The novel is organized in such a way that the story's focus alternates that of Trudy's adult life and Anna's life as a young woman in Germany.

Throughout the novel, the reader is able to see how Trudy's personality and point of view is shaped by the influence of her upbringing in Germany. Her career choice is deeply impacted by her curiosity about her past. Her relationships are also impacted by her inability to effectively communicate with her mother.

Anna's choices throughout the war were impacted by her desire to protect her daughter. In order to keep her daughter alive, she carried on an affair with an SS officer that she



came to regret for the rest of her life. In an attempt to protect her daughter from the pain of the past, he refused to speak of their life in Germany.

German History

German History serves as a predominate theme throughout the novel. Throughout the novel, the segments dealing with Anna's life in Germany give the reader a deeper understanding of the reality of life in this country during the war. In the segments dealing with Trudy's adulthood, German history is seen through the pint of view of an American woman with little recollection or understanding of her German past.

In the segments of the novel dealing with Anna's life in Germany, real life events are combined with the fictional account of Anna's life. In this way, the reader is given a realistic representation of the harsh realities of life at the time. By including historical accurate references, the author conveys a convincing account of the anxiety and desperation of the German people of this historical era.

As Trudy is unable to speak with her mother about the trials of her past in Germany, she has been left with a convoluted representation of the horrors she faced in her young childhood there. For this reason, she become obsessed with the study of German History. In studying this topic so fanatically, she aims to develop a deeper understanding of her mother and of herself. For Trudy, the only salient connection to her personal history she has is through her academic pursuits.

The lives of both of the protagonists, Anna and Trudy, are deeply impacted by their lived experiences of German history. In this way the novel serves as a work of historical fiction based on Germany in World War II.

Death

Death plays a huge role throughout the novel. The novel begins with the death of Jack, the husband of Anna and father of Trudy. This death sets the tone of despair and hardship for the novel. In this death, the characters are faced with a tremendous loss, foreshadowing the many losses that are suffered throughout the novel.

Throughout Anna's life in Germany, she is continually surrounded by death and destruction. Fearing the death of her daughter, she becomes the mistress of a high ranking SS Officer. Although Anna herself becomes desensitized to death, she cares only that her daughter survives the horrors of the war.

The death of Frau Mathilde Staudt also adds significance to this theme. In delivering bread and rifles to the Nazi resistance during the daytime, Mathilde puts herself in a situation in which it would be likely she would be caught. In doing so, she personifies a pull toward death. Faced with the atrocities of war and seeing no hope for a better future, Mathilde allows herself to be killed to avoid the horrors of wartime life.



At the end of the novel, the Americans defeat the Nazis on Easter Sunday. Easter Sunday is symbolic of the death of the evil regime and a chance for new life for the people of Germany. In this way, the novel begins with images of death and ends with an image of death defeated.

Power

Power and control serve a significant role throughout "Those Who Save Us." Through their reign of terror, the Nazi regime controls and paralyzes the people of Germany through fear and corruption. Anna is deeply affected by the control of the Nazis over her life and the lack of freedom she is given as a result.

Fearing the death of her daughter, Trudy, Anna enters into a sexual relationship with an SS officer. Throughout the entire relationship, the officer uses his place of power and masculinity to use and abuse Anna for his own satisfaction. In sexually abusing Anna and forcing her to cater to his every whim, the Obersturmführer exerts his power over Anna repeatedly, leaving her feeling worthless and without choice.

Throughout her affair with the Obersturmführer, Anna comes to feel that she is worthless. The Obersturmführer strips her of her humanity in treating her as if her only value is that of an object of sexual desire. Anna also knows that if she rebels against the Obersturmführer, he will kill her and her daughter. Due to his place of power in society, he can do so without punishment. In this way, Anna's lack of power and control over her own life strip her of her humanity and sense of self.

After the war, Anna seeks to regain control of her own life by remaining silent. She refuses to acknowledge her life in Germany or to speak to her daughter about what happened there. She also develops obsessive tendencies, such as cleaning and baking far past the point of necessity. In engaging in these behaviors, Anna seeks to regain the control over her life that was taken from her during the war.

Styles

Point of View

The novel was told from a third person omniscient point of view. In this way, the author was able to provide insight into the thoughts and feelings of the characters while simultaneously providing an unbiased image of the characters' situation.

In "Those Who Save Us," the narration of the story shifted between describing the events of Anna's life in Germany and Trudy's life in the United States. In shifting the focus of the story in this way, the author was able to provide insight into the minds of both Anna and Trudy at different points in the women's lives. In this way, both characters were given emotional depth. The reader was able to understand the actions of each woman on a deeper level due to the narration style chosen by the author.

Language and Meaning

Through third person omniscient narration, the narrator was able to offer insight into the thoughts and emotions of the characters. In the segments of the novel that centered on the life of Anna in Germany, harsh language was used in order to convey the atrocities done unto the German people of this time. German phrases were also used throughout the narration in order to create an air of historical authenticity. The reader was able to become more deeply engaged in the story through use of German phrases and historical references.

In the sections of the novel dealing with Trudy's life, the language used describes Trudy's feelings toward her mother and her own identity. Much of Trudy's story was told using language that conveyed her introspective nature.

Structure

The novel contains a Prologue and 62 chapters and was written from the third person omniscient point of view. Throughout the novel, chapters are segmented in sections. The sections alternate focus between the story of Anna's life in Germany as a young woman and the life of her daughter Trudy in Minneapolis as an adult.

As the sections alternate, the author includes captivating transitions between viewpoints that give the story fluidity and depth. As Trudy's adulthood progresses in certain sections, the reader is given key details about her mother's life in alternating sections. This setup allows the reader to simultaneously become invested in the lives of two unique women whose lives overlap and affect one another. This way of organizing the novel also gives the characters emotional depth as the reader is given equal detail on the life of each woman at different phases of her life.



Quotes

Anna frowns at the chessboard, at the constellation of battered pieces on their cream oak square. This set, Max has told her, belonged to his father, and his father before him. One of the original black pawns has vanished, replaced by a stub of charcoal and the queen is missing her crown. She is also boxed into a corner.”

-- Narrator (chapter 2 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote is significant as it describes Anna in her relationship with Max. Although she does not agree with the laws of the Reich, she is forced to live by them. In breaking the laws she is viewed as tainted and criminal by those in power. In her relationship with Max, she craftfully avoids submission to those in power for as long as she can. However she knows that even in doing so, she is “backed in a corner,” powerless against the pervasive German government.

It amazes Anna: she spends much of her time in this dim, elongated box, dusty with years of disuse and the unlovely exhalations of Max's chamber pot, and so, on a physical level, Anna's life has shrunk to its confined proportions. Yet here, in the dark, she feels herself expanding.”

-- Narrator (chapter 5 paragraph 11)

Importance: This quote is significant because it describes Anna's first experience of emotionally connecting with another person. Although she spends much of her time hidden away with Max, she feels that in the secret life she is much more complete that she was in her life outside. Although confined to the closet, she is free, on an emotional level, to be the person she truly desires to be.

The past is dead, and better it remain so.

-- Anna (chapter 21 paragraph 5)

Importance: This quote, which is repeated throughout the novel, signifies Anna's way of dealing with her past. Although her daughter, Trudy, is aware that she had a life in Germany during the war, she continually refuses to speak of it. This unwillingness to share the details of her past leaves Trudy with a distorted understanding of her own history. Although Anna believes that avoiding the past will allow her to forget its pain, her bottling up of secrets only cause greater damage to her relationship with her daughter.

Anna thinks that this is true. And that perhaps it is at these moments that she hates him the most, for robbing her of her own familiar flesh by making it respond in such a way, as though it is no longer hers to command.

-- Narrator (chapter 25 paragraph 2)

Importance: In this quote, the author describes Anna's feeling of continued surrender to the Obersturmfuhrer. As he has turned her into a lifeless object of sexual desire, she has exchanged her conception of her own identity for the ability to survive in Nazi



Germany. This quote captures Anna's desperation and lack of ability to control her own outcome.

She has slept on her back, her arms flung above her head, in a position of abject surrender."

-- Narrator (chapter 215 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote describes the complete surrender faced by Anna after the Obersturmfuhrer reveals the reality of Auschwitz to her. Since the Obersturmfuhrer has entered her life, Anna has been completely stripped of her identity. She can no longer take part in the resistance and she has become the property of the Nazi. In realizing the horrible rumors she had heard of the Auschwitz concentration camp are true, Anna becomes completely powerless to the horror that surrounds her. She has surrendered completely, her only hope now being the survival of her daughter.

Not only is the past not dead, it has come back to roost."

-- Trudy (chapter 28 paragraph 15)

Importance: This quote describes Anna's thoughts when Anna comes to live with her. Although Anna has tried her best to hide her past from her daughter, the past becomes ever more obvious in Anna's assessment of Trudy's study materials. As their two lives begin to intersect, it is no longer possible to ignore Anna's history and the way that it had affected her daughter's life.

Anna is unable to take a full breath; she can't tell whether the heartbeat that thuds against her ribs is the Obersturmfuhrer's or her own.

-- Narrator (chapter 32 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote describes Anna's thoughts as she begins to form a human connection with the Obersturmfuhrer. Rather than seeing him as just an oppressor, she is beginning to see him as a human being that she is partaking in a relationship with. Her inability to discern his heart beat from her own shows the connection the two begin to share as her way of thinking about their relationship changes. This way of thinking is dangerous to Anna as she can no longer separate herself from the relationship like she was once able to.

Yet in other aspects the Obersturmfuhrer is an enigma to Anna, a study in contradictions.

-- Narrator (chapter 41 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote reflects Anna's confused feeling about the Obersturmfuhrer. In the previous paragraph, Anna considered how she was coming to know the Obersturmfuhrer even better than she knew herself. Then, when realizing his inexplicable and unpredictable behaviors, she realizes that, in his hypocrisy, he is completely impossible to understand. This quote draws together the many mixed feeling Anna experienced for the Obersturmfuhrer throughout the novel. It is her first realization that she will never be able to understand his ways as he is completely devoid of morals.



In knowing this, she knows that to continue the affair will be to put her own life and the life of her daughter at risk.

Anything I ever did, it was all for you.”
-- Anna (chapter 45 paragraph 5)

Importance: In this quote, Anna finally addresses the mysteries of her past. He finally tells her daughter, Trudy, that all she will say of her relationship with the Obersturmfuhrer is this. She has carried out the relationship in order to provide for Trudy and to save her from condemnation of the Nazis. Upon hearing this, Trudy is completely filled with guilt. She had not previously considered herself as the reason for her mother's affair. This quote embodies the true love Anna has for her daughter. She was willing to sacrifice her self for the survival of her daughter.

She would like to claw her face with cracked nails, all the better never to elicit this kind of attraction in a man's eyes ever again.
-- Narrator (chapter 48 paragraph 8)

Importance: Anna feels that her physical beauty is to blame for all of the sexual abuse she has suffered in Germany. She is disgusted to see that the man who had rescued her from being raped, Jack, is still attracted to her. Anna cannot separate benevolent sexual attraction from violent sexual abuse. This has happened as a result of the abuse she has suffered from the Obersturmfuhrer. In using her for sex, he has taken away her power and caused her to form an unhealthy view of sexuality.

They are the very antithesis of fresh, the rites between men and women; age-old and rotten to the core.
-- Anna (chapter 48 paragraph 6)

Importance: This quote describes Anna's feelings toward sexuality. After having suffered years of sexual abuse from the Obersturmfuhrer, she can no longer view sexuality in a positive light. Instead, she sees it as an assertion of male dominance of females.

We come to love those who save us.
-- Anna (chapter 58 paragraph 9)

Importance: When Jack asks Anna if she loved the Obersturmfuhrer, she cannot respond. When Jack storms off, Ann considers silently the impact the Obersturmfuhrer has had on her life. She realizes then that through his sexual abuse, he has taken away her ability to love another. For that she hates him. Still, she cannot deny that she also loves him as “we come to love those who save us.” In saying this, Anna explains the ambivalence she felt for the man throughout their relationship. As much as she desired to hate him, she could not help but love him as he saved her and her daughter from death by the Nazis.