

While My Pretty One Sleeps Study Guide

While My Pretty One Sleeps by Mary Higgins Clark

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

While My Pretty One Sleeps Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2.....	5
Chapter 3.....	8
Chapter 4.....	10
Chapter 5.....	11
Chapter 6.....	13
Chapter 7.....	15
Chapter 8.....	17
Chapter 9.....	20
Chapter 10.....	23
Chapter 11.....	25
Characters.....	30
Objects/Places.....	37
Themes.....	43
Style.....	45
Quotes.....	47
Topics for Discussion.....	50



Plot Summary

A suit paired with the wrong blouse becomes a major clue in the murder of writer Ethel Lambston in the Mary Higgins Clark novel "While My Pretty One Sleeps". It is fashion designer Neeve Kearny who first feels Ethel's disappearance is suspicious. As she and her retired police commissioner father try to solve the crime, it is discovered that Neeve is also in danger of being killed. With the help of his new friend Kitty Conway, Miles is finally able to put the pieces of the mystery together in time to save his daughter. By solving the murder of Ethel Lambston, police also discover the same person had murdered Renata Kearny, Neeve's mother and Myles' wife, nearly twenty years ago.

Neeve becomes suspicious that something has happened to Ethel when her long-time customer cannot be found when it is time to deliver her latest purchase of clothing. She goes to Ethel's apartment to find that Ethel's hateful nephew, Douglas Brown, has taken up residence there. Douglas, who claims to have no knowledge of Ethel's location, quickly becomes a suspect in the crime once Ethel's body is located. Another suspect is Seamus Lambston, Ethel's ex-husband. Seamus has been paying Ethel one thousand dollars in alimony since their divorce. The two had a horrible fight about the alimony where Seamus punched Ethel the day before she disappeared.

Another suspect in the case is Gordon Steuber, a fashion designer who has recently gotten in trouble for running sweatshops and tax evasion. He is also arrested for importing drugs in the linings of his clothes, a crime it is suspected Ethel became aware of. It is believed that Steuber also takes out a hit on Neeve. It is Neeve who realizes that Ethel would not have worn the blouse with the suit she is wearing when her body is found. She also realizes that Seamus Lambston, who seems to be the favorite in Ethel's murder, would not have known how to put Ethel's outfit together at all.

It is not until Neeve is face to face with her would be killer that she finally puts together all of the pieces. She realizes the man she has known as "Uncle Sal" her entire life is the same man who killed her mother over ownership of a fashion design. Now, Sal plans to kill her to keep her from figuring out and telling what she knows about Ethel's murder. He has also killed Ethel because she learned that he had stolen the Pacific Reef design from Renata. Myles is able to step in just in time to save his daughter from the man whom he believed was his friend.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Ethel Lambston's killer drives to Morrison State Park to hide her body. The falling snow covers his footprints. He puts the body in a crevice behind a large boulder. He decides at the last minute to remove the plastic bag that he had covered her body with for fear that police forensic teams would be able to link the bag to him. He covers the body with rocks. He disposes of Ethel's luggage and purse in a lake then throws the plastic bag in a garbage bin. He returns the rented car back to the gas station that doesn't keep rental records.

When he returns to his apartment, he showers and has some bourbon. He thinks about the last minutes of Ethel's life. He believes that she'd known he was going to kill her when he got the antique dagger from her desk. He changes her clothes and packs her bags to make it look as if she had left willingly to go and write a book on which she was working. He makes the blood from the wound in her throat spurt over the clothes he dresses her in to make it look as if she died in them. He cleans the apartment and is careful to follow his normal routine the next morning. Instead of going to work, though, he goes to dump the body. He realizes, however, that he has made one mistake that a woman named Neeve Kearney will catch.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Many questions are raised in this opening section of the novel. Who killed Ethel Lambston? Why did he kill her? Who was Ethel? Who is Neeve Kearney? What clue did the killer leave behind that Neeve will pick up on?

Although the killer is very careful to cover all of his tracks, he realizes that he has made one mistake. He doesn't reveal what the mistake is. He has gone through the actions he had taken during the murder of Ethel and the work he has done to cover up her death. He plans for the snow to cover his tracks. He also intends for Ethel's disappearance to appear as if she has left early to start writing her book. He doesn't believe anyone will realize anything has happened to Ethel until it is too late and her body has already decomposed.

As careful as he has been, it appears that the mistake that he made in his plan will be a determining factor in the ability of police and others to unravel the mystery of Ethel's death.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter 2 begins with an introduction to Neeve Kearny. She wakes up to learn of the eight inches of snow that has fallen. She thinks through work arrangements since both of her fitters probably won't be able to make it to work. She still lives with her father, Myles Kearny, who is a retired police commissioner. He already has coffee fixed when she goes in the kitchen. He was forced to retire when he suffered a massive heart attack. As they talk, Myles tells Neeve that Nicky Sepetti, the man whom Myles believes murdered his wife even though the crime was never solved, will get out of jail.

Myles calls Neeve a cab to take her to work. On her way to work, Neeve thinks about the way her father is still upset about his wife's death. She feels that he will always feel the need to find out who was responsible for her death. The cab stops in front of Neeve's business, "Neeve's Place." Six years prior the clothing shop in that space had gone bankrupt and Anthony della Salva, her father's friend and a fellow designer, had convinced her to take over the business. Sal even lent Neeve the money to start her business.

Betty is already at work when Neeve enters the store. She is working on a large order for Ethel Lambston. For the past six years, Neeve has been in charge of organizing Ethel's wardrobe. Ethel who is a free-lance writer, admits to Neeve on their first meeting she has no time to invest in her wardrobe and wants Neeve to pull her together. Ethel had interviewed Neeve about an article that she is writing on the fashion industry. She claims that it is going to make many people mad. The last time Ethel had worked with Neeve, they'd had different opinions on only one suit. The designer was Gordon Steuber, whom Neeve doesn't like. Ethel insists on buying the suit.

As Neeve bags the clothes, she thinks about the information that she got from a Mexican about Steuber's sweatshops. She had canceled her orders with Steuber and sent the man a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning that helped change child labor laws in Britain. The editors of "Women's Wear Daily" print the poem next to Neeve's letter to Steuber. Anthony della Salva is upset with Neeve when he learns about her actions. By drawing attention to Steuber's sweatshops, Neeve has also drawn attention to Steuber's income tax troubles.

Ethel spends several thousand dollars a year on clothes. She tells Neeve she invested a settlement that she received from her divorce and also gets one thousand dollars a month in alimony. Her ex-husband is now remarried and has three children. Ethel resents her ex-husband because he never gave her a child. When Neeve calls Ethel to tell her the clothes are ready, there is no answer. Neeve waits until 6:30 p.m. for Ethel and decides to deliver the clothes. Ethel is not at home, so Neeve slips a note under her door. Inside the apartment, a man takes the note. He is looking for money that Ethel often hides around her apartment.



Meanwhile, Myles cannot shake the feeling that something bad is about to happen. He feels that he shrugged off the warning that Nicky Sepetti gave him. Now he doesn't want to ignore his gut feeling. As he thinks about Renata's death, he remembers the way they met. He had been in Italy in the Army. He had been injured by an explosion in a church he had believed was deserted. A child, Renata, had taken him to her home to care for his wounds. Thirteen years later, he returned to Pontici to thank the family. Renata remembered him, showing him a picture her father had taken of the two of them. They are married three weeks later. Myles is about to call the police to look for Neeve when she finally walks in with all of the boxes of Ethel's order. Myles remembers Ethel from a Christmas party at their house. Ethel had latched onto him when she realized he was single.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Since this is a murder mystery, the first thing that the reader should think about while reading are clues that could lead them to who has committed the murder and why. The first clue that the author gives to help solve the mystery is found in the first chapter. The murderer realizes that he has made a major mistake that Neeve Kearny will pick up on. In this second chapter, it is learned that Neeve's relationship with Ethel is basically that of her tailor. Neeve sells Ethel her clothes and organizes what should be worn with what. It can be safely assumed that the murderer made some mistake in dressing Ethel's dead body that Neeve will notice and realizes that Ethel did not dress herself.

Another question that is raised in the second chapter of the novel is the strange man who is in Ethel's apartment when Neeve slips the note under the door. One wonders if the killer has returned to Ethel's home to look for money. This is unlikely, though, since the killer was so relieved to be finished with Ethel. The person apparently knows Ethel and her habits, and is also familiar with her apartment as he knows that she hides money around her house and knows where to look for this money.

Other mysteries are introduced in this chapter of the novel. One of the mysteries involves the death of Neeve's mother. She was murdered years before as she walked through the park. Myles, Neeve's father, believes the murder is connected with Nicky Sepetti, a mafia boss whom he had put in jail. Since Nicky is getting out of jail, Myles' concern that Nicky will try to hurt his daughter begins to grow. Myles had a grandmother who seemed to have a sixth sense when trouble is coming. Myles wonders if he has this same sense.

One point of conflict between the characters is noted when the designer Gordon Steuber is mentioned. Neeve has learned that the man operates illegal sweatshops to make his clothes and for this reason has refused to buy his products. She has also written a letter to Steuber voicing her intents. The letter was posted in a well-known women's magazine. As this has also drawn attention to Steuber's income tax troubles, Steuber could be nursing a grudge against Neeve. Ethel has also written an article about the fashion design business which she believes will anger some people. It is possible that one of the people who was made angry by Ethel's article was the man who



killed her. If the article dealt with any of Steuber's transgressions, Steuber could have been the one with the grudge against her.

Meanwhile, the main idea of this chapter is the fact that Ethel is missing. Although the reader knows that Ethel is dead, Neeve doesn't know that. She only knows that one of her best customers is expecting a large delivery of clothes, but has suddenly disappeared. At this point, Neeve seems more irritated with Ethel than worried.

Another important topic that is mentioned in this chapter is the death of Myles Kearny's wife, Renata. Myles believes that Renata was killed by Nicky Sepetti, the head of the Sepetti mafia family whom Myles had put behind bars. He blames himself for not paying enough attention to Nicky's warning and taking extra pains to keep her safe. It is also in this section of the novel that the story of Renata and Myles meet. It appears they were destined to be together because as a child, Renata went into a church in her hometown of Pontici during the war on a hunch. Inside she found a wounded soldier, Myles, whom she took home with her. Renata and her family cared for Myles. Thirteen years later, Myles goes back to Pontici to visit and thank the family that took care of him. He and Renata are married three weeks later.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Although Denny Adler would rather be panhandling, he works a job at a deli so he can look legal when reporting to his parole officer. In three months, his parole will be finished. He gets a call from Big Charley Santino, a former fellow inmate, wanting to meet with him.

Seamus Lambston is emotionally spent after a tumultuous weekend where the check he sent the college for his youngest daughter's tuition bounced. The thousand dollars that Seamus pays Ethel each month for alimony is a point of contention between himself and Ruth. When Ruth learns that Ethel has signed a half-million dollar book contract and the college check bounces, Ruth demands that Seamus go to Ethel to try to convince her to stop requiring the alimony payments. When Ruth asks, Seamus says that he has talked to Ethel who has agreed to stop requiring alimony in order to keep her greediness from coming out.

On Saturday, Neeve takes Ethel's clothes back to her shop. Later that day, it is Denny who delivers her lunch from the deli. Neeve decides at the end of the day to take Ethel's clothes with her once more. Neeve and her father spend the day together on Sunday. Neeve calls Ethel only once about her clothes. Ethel's nephew is disturbed by the phone ringing when Neeve calls. His aunt has instructed him not to answer her phone. Now, she does not know that he has moved into her apartment.

When Denny meets with Big Charley, he is given an envelope with ten thousand dollars in it to kill Neeve Kearny. He is warned to not make the death look like a deliberate hit. Denny believes it will be the easiest job he has ever been paid to do.

Chapter 3 Analysis

In this section it is learned that Myles' sense that something bad is about to happen is not without warrant. Big Charley, a man whom Denny knew in jail, has just hired him to kill Neeve Kearny. Although Denny asks, Charley will not tell him who ordered the hit. Since Nicky Sepetti is out of jail is it not impossible that he has already organized the hit. It is doubtful, however, that Sepetti would be able to get together that much money on such short notice.

One possible suspect in Ethel's murder emerges in this chapter of the novel in the form of her ex-husband. Apparently Seamus Lambston's current wife has pushed him to confront Ethel after a check for their child's college tuition bounced. Of all the characters thus far, Seamus has been the last person to have seen her alive. It is uncertain what happened during the confrontation, but Seamus tells his wife that Ethel has agreed to let them stop making alimony payments.



It is also learned in this section that the person who was in Ethel's apartment when Neeve slipped the note under the door was Ethel's nephew. Although the nephew is disturbed by the ringing of the phone, his aunt has apparently instructed him not to answer it if he is ever at her house by himself. He observes her wishes by neither answering the phone or answering the door.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

On Monday, Neeve tries again to deliver Ethel's clothes. She runs into Ethel's housekeeper, Tse-Tse, who agrees to let Neeve into the apartment on the following day if she has still not heard from Ethel. As Neeve spends her traditional time shopping in the Garment District, she realizes that she feels vaguely distressed. After she finishes her shopping, Neeve goes to visit Anthony della Salva. Neeve passes Gordon Steuber as she walks. Steuber does not speak to her, but Neeve feels anger coming off the man. In Uncle Sal's office, Neeve admires the mural of the Pacific Reef motif on the wall. It is this design that made Sal famous. Sal asks how Myles is, then requests that Neeve have him over for dinner. Back at work, no word has been heard from Ethel yet. Neeve feels even more uneasy.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Uneasiness continues to be the tone as Neeve goes through her habit of spending Monday shopping for new fashion looks in The Garment District. She passes Gordon Steuber in the street. Even though he does not speak to her, Neeve feels anger coming from the man. This encounter raises the question of whether Steuber might be the one who has ordered the hit on Neeve. Neeve has stopped buying clothes designed by Steuber because she has learned that the clothes are made in illegal sweatshops. The letter she wrote to Steuber informing him of her decision has been printed in the magazine *Women's Wear Daily*. Would this boycott be enough for Steuber to want Neeve dead?

Another character who emerges in this chapter is Anthony della Salva, Neeve's "Uncle Sal." He is not biologically Neeve's uncle, but he and Myles grew up together as best friends. Uncle Sal is the one responsible for giving Neeve her start in the fashion design business. When Neeve enters Sal's office, the first thing on which she comments is the mural of his Pacific Reef motif that he has on one wall of the room. It is this design that has made Sal famous. While visiting, Sal requests that Neeve have him over for dinner to visit with Myles.

There is also no word from Ethel although Neeve's receptionist has been calling her all day long. It has been three days since Neeve began trying to deliver Ethel's clothes, a time span that compounds Neeve's feeling that something bad has happened to her customer. The chapter closes with Neeve thinking of the poem *Little Boy Blue*, where the little boy never returns for his pretty toys, a parallel to Neeve's fear that Ethel may never return for her pretty clothes.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

On Tuesday, when Tse-Tse lets Neeve into Ethel's apartment, they are surprised to find a man there. Tse-Tse recognizes the man as Douglas Brown, Ethel's nephew. Douglas says that he was supposed to meet Ethel there Friday but she never showed up. He tells Neeve he hasn't answered the phone because his aunt instructed him not to. He tells her that he must have gone out for food when Neeve came by on Friday. Tse-Tse asks Neeve if she thinks something might have happened to Ethel. Ethel's nephew does not seem to be concerned that his aunt is missing and tells Neeve she has pulled disappearing acts in the past. As Neeve hangs up Ethel's new clothes, she takes inventory of the contents of the closet. Some of Ethel's luggage is gone as well as some of her clothing.

Later that day, Neeve's nagging feeling that something has happened to Ethel returns when she talks to Toni Mendell at a cocktail party. Toni told Neeve that Ethel was supposed to be at the party. Toni tells Neeve about a book deal that Ethel had made with Jack Campbell and says she wouldn't be surprised if Ethel hasn't taken off to write the book. When Jack Campbell enters the room, Neeve asks him about Ethel but he doesn't know anything that helps Neeve. The night, Neeve wakes from a nightmare realizing that Ethel did not take any coats with her even though it was snowing when she supposedly left her apartment on Friday.

Nicky Sepetti realizes his children and embarrassed by him and his wife had made a life without him while he was in jail. Louie picks Nicky up. Ten men meet in a private room at a restaurant. Joey is happy to tell Nicky that there is a contract out on Neeve, one for which they are not responsible. Nicky demands they get it called off, then recognizes Carmen Machado as a cop. On the way home, Nicky warns Louie about Machado.

Seamus Lambston remembers his encounter with Ethel. He wonders if he is brave enough not to send Ethel her check. As he agonizes with his decision, Ruth mentions they will be able to breathe easier now that they aren't having to send the large checks. When he wonders if Ethel will go back on her word, Ruth slaps him.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Nicky Sepetti is ruled out as the one who made the hit on Neeve when he first meets with his gang after getting released from jail. He becomes angry when he is told there is a hit out for Neeve. He knows that if Neeve is killed, he will be the first person that the police will finger. The members of his group tell Nicky that the hit has been arranged by Gordon Steuber, the fashion designer from whom Neeve refuses to buy because of his sweatshops.



While in the meeting with his men, Nicky recognizes one of the newcomers, known to them as Carmen Machado, as a cop. Nicky has chest pains as Louie drives him back to his house. Even so, Nicky manages to warn Louie that Machado is a cop.

Although Seamus may appear to be a reasonable suspect in Ethel's murder at first glance, his behavior in this chapter insinuates that he may not be guilty. Although he tells his wife that Ethel has let them off the hook on alimony payments, he wonders aloud to her if Ethel will go back on her word. He stresses over whether or not he should send the check to her. His main concerns seem to be whether or not Ethel will drag him back into court if he does not present the check as required. He is fear does not seem to stem from the possibility that by not sending the check, this will give police the suspicion that he killed his ex-wife just so he could stop paying the alimony.

It is also in this chapter that there is a hint that there is a romance in the works for Neeve. Neeve meets Jack Campbell at a cocktail party. She looks him up to find out if he knows anything about where Ethel might be since she claims that he is publishing a book on which she is working. She vaguely remembers that she has seen Jack somewhere before but can't remember where until he reminds her of their meeting on a plane six years prior.

There is foreshadowing in this chapter as Neeve dreams she is standing in front of Ethel's closet doing an inventory of her clothing. In her mind, she realizes that all of Ethel's coats are still in place in her closet, an unusual discovery since it was snowing in New York when Ethel would have left the city.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Neeve tries to talk to Myles about her concerns about Ethel. He suggests to her that Ethel might have bought a coat elsewhere. Neeve continues to believe that Ethel did not do this. Meanwhile in Ethel's apartment, Douglas Brown is happy the area is clean, but is suddenly afraid that the maid might have found, and stolen, some of Ethel's hidden money. Doug, himself, has been stealing the one-hundred-dollar bills his aunt has her alimony payments changed into. He believed that Ethel might have discovered his thefts and was going to confront him about them when she asked him over on Friday. Now, he flips through her files marked "Important" and realizes that he is the sole heir named in her will. Feeling more - to his aunt, Douglas leaves a note for her after he straightens up the mess he's made by staying in her bedroom.

Neeve calls Tse-Tse to see if they can go back the Ethel's apartment the following day. Neeve is walking home when an officer hails her from a cop car. Denny has been following Neeve but gets on a bus when he sees the cops.

Kitty Conway has joined a riding class at the Morrison State Park stable. One day during a ride, her horse is startled. As she gallops along, Kitty gets an image of a flying piece of plastic and a hand coming out of a bright blue cuff. Kitty decides to stop riding after she falls when the horse comes sliding to a stop at the barn. As she relaxes in the bath that night, she tries to block out the image of the hand.

Ruth Lambston makes her husband write a letter to Ethel thanking her for not requiring alimony payments. They make a copy for their records. Seamus walks to the house with two envelopes. One has the letter. One has the alimony check. As he is heckled by the teenaged girl who lets him into the building, Seamus decides that he has to leave the check. When he returns home, however, Seamus realizes that he has left both the check and the letter.

Nicky Sepetti is suffering from heart pain when the officers come into his house. He knows they have come because of the undercover cop that was killed. He dies soon after they burst into his room. He is unable to tell his wife he did not order the hit on Myles Kearny's wife.

Just in case his aunt has gotten wise to him, Doug decides to withdraw four one-hundred-dollar bills from his account to replace what he has taken. He comes home in time to see Seamus leaving. Doug looks at the envelope that Seamus has left and wonders what he is up to.

That evening, Neeve begins cooking for the next evening's dinner. She uses her mother's cookbook which is complete with Renata's notes and even sketches. She remembers how irritated Myles was when he caught Ethel looking at the cookbook.



After Neeve finishes cooking Myles has a call from Herb Schwartz telling him about the undercover cop placed in Nicky's group that was shot. He is still alive. He tells Myles that there is no contract out on Neeve. He also tells Neeve that Nicky Sepetti is dead. Meanwhile, the focus shifts to Tony Vitale as he lays in the hospital. He wonders if he conveyed the correct information about the contract on Neeve. He is afraid that he didn't.

Chapter 6 Analysis

In this section, Douglas Brown makes a couple of major mistakes that could be used against him later. First, as he is looking through his aunt's papers, he discovers her will which he looks at and sees that he is the sole inheritor. Next, he replaces the one-hundred-dollar bills that he had stolen from her. Since Douglas has just learned about his aunt's will, it is unlikely that he killed her for her money. He was not even aware of how much money she had. He does, however, often steal money from his aunt, a crime that he tries to cover up.

One important item introduced in this chapter is Renata's cookbook. Neeve has not looked at this book much since her mother died. It not only includes her mother's favorite recipes, but also her own notes and adjustments to recipes. There are also sketches drawn by Renata doodled in the margins of the book.

Myles' relief when he falsely learns that there is no hit out on Neeve is obvious. The current police commissioner Herb Schwartz gives Myles this information based on a statement made by Tony Vitale who was found nearly dead after he was shot by Nicky Sepetti's men. Vitale intends to tell the police that it was Steuber who has the hit on Neeve, not Sepetti. Instead, he has left police with the impression that there is no hit on Neeve at all.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

In Chapter 7, Tse-Tse and Neeve find no trace of Ethel when they check her apartment Wednesday. They look at her calendar and can tell that she had planned a trip but wasn't planning on leaving on Friday. On the day of the Christmas party at Myles' apartment, Ethel has attempted to copy one of Renata's sketches from her cookbook. The names of Toni Mendell and Jack Campbell jump out at Neeve as having special importance to Ethel.

Meanwhile, Myles talks to his psychiatrist about the recent changes in his life. On the way back home, he thinks about taking a job with the drug enforcement agency. He also walks to the place where Renata was murdered. For the first time, Myles feels a bit of healing at this site as he tells Renata that Neeve is safe. Myles has decided he is ready to go on with his life.

At the store, Neeve calls the people on Ethel's list. Most of the people are irritated about the article she has written. Gordon Stueber tells her he did not accept Ethel's call, and then hangs up on her. Jack Campbell agrees to a personal meeting with Neeve. He tells Neeve that Ethel had thought she had a story that would rock the fashion world.

Seamus heads for Ethel's apartment again. A woman leans out of an upstairs window and informs Seamus that Ethel hasn't been around all week. At home, Ruth accosts him with a suit she was about to take to the cleaners but has found a one-hundred-dollar bill in the pocket.

Kitty Conway is struck by an image of the hand she saw that day before when her horse ran away with her. It is at this point that she knows she saw a hand. She decides to walk back to the spot and see what she can find.

At dinner that evening, Myles is offended when Sal refers to Renata as his "pretty one." While he is preparing espresso, Sal burns himself on the pot and spills the espresso over the counter, and Renata's cookbook. It turns out the pot was a gift from Ethel. From here the talk turns to Ethel and Neeve voices her concerns about the lady. Sal suggests she should be worried about Steuber and not Ethel. Although Neeve wants to throw away the espresso pot, Myles tells her that he plans to try to fix it.

Chapter 7 Analysis

As a friend of Myles, Sal acts unusually when he comes for dinner that evening. First, he refers to Renata by Myles' special name for her "my pretty one," a name that Myles has asked Sal not to use. A few minutes later Sal excuses himself to go to the restroom but instead winds up in the kitchen where he burns his hand on an espresso pot and spills the hot liquid on Renata's cookbook. Those at the party see the incident as an



accident, but Ethel may have noticed something special about Renata's sketches because she tried to reproduce one of the sketches on her desk calendar.

In this section, the possibility that Ethel might have gotten too close to some knowledge that she wasn't supposed to have is suggested. Although she wouldn't tell Jack Campbell what it was, Ethel mentions to him that she might have run across a story that would rock the fashion world. Even though Jack's company does not agree to buy the book since Ethel will not give specifics, Ethel goes ahead and has it publicized that she has a book deal.

Although Neeve feels that he must have cancelled other appointments to see her, Jack Campbell arranges an appointment with her the afternoon that she calls him. Although he is not really able to help her, Jack finds himself searching for information about Neeve. He look for reasons to see her again. Neeve also finds herself attracted to Jack.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

In Chapter 8, Ruth Lambston has decided to confront Ethel. Douglas Brown is the one who opens the door when Ruth rings the bell incessantly. She sees the envelope sitting on a stack of mail and takes it. Outside the apartment, Georgette Wells asks Ruth for information about Ethel. Georgette tells Ruth that she thinks something has happened to Ethel and that Seamus has something to do with it.

On Friday evening, Kitty Conway heads to Morrison State Park. She tries to retrace her steps and is about to give up when she sits down on a large rock to rest. When she wraps her hand around the rock to get up, she feels fingers and looks down to see the hand from her memory, framed with a blue cuff.

Before he is due to be at work, Denny stakes out outside Neeve's apartment, hoping he can catch her walking to work. He doesn't. At 10:30 a.m. he is delivering coffee to Neeve.

After Ruth leaves, Seamus thinks about his argument with his wife, as well as his last encounter with Ethel. He dozes off and wakes to find Ruth standing over him. She wants to know exactly what he did to Ethel.

Gordon Steuber is angry when he reports to his office. He has made his fortune in the clothing industry with the linings in his clothes. He blames unions for his decision to open sweatshops. He thinks that he was about to close his shops because he found out where the real money lay. He thinks of Ethel snooping around and confronting him in his office. His reminiscing is stopped when agents from the United States Attorney's office arrive.

Meanwhile, Jack Campbell asks his secretary if she can get him a copy of Ethel's article for *Contemporary Woman*. Toni allows him to see a copy of the article, along with Ethel's notes.

Ruth and Seamus do not go to work on Friday. Seamus has told Ruth that he punched Ethel. Ruth feels that he has not told her the whole story.

When Denny delivers Neeve's lunch, he hangs around so that he can hear Neeve's plans for the coming days. As she is eating, Neeve calls Toni Mendell and requests a copy of Ethel's article. After Neeve and Eugenia read the article and are discussing it, Neeve gets a phone call from Jack Campbell. Not only does he want to see her, he also wants to share Ethel's notes with her.

The phone is ringing when Doug Brown returns to his aunt's apartment after work. He decides to answer it thinking that it might be Ethel. The voice on the other end tells him to warn Ethel she needs to let Seamus off the hook on his alimony payments. He



decides that he needs to tell Neeve about the call. Neeve suggests to him that he call the police but as he is about to pick up the phone, it rings again. It is the police.

Myles calls to check on Tony Vitale. Herb says the doctors think he'll make it. They agree to meet to visit him in the hospital. At the hospital, Rosa Vitale tells Myles and Herb that she thinks that Tony is trying to tell them something.

Over dinner, Neeve and Jack spend time getting to know one another. They discover that they have many similar ideas about marriage. As Neeve and Jack discuss Ethel's article, they agree there is nothing there to warrant her disappearance. Denny is waiting across from the Carlyle as Neeve and Jack eat. He feels sure that it will not be until Monday in the Garment District when he can make the hit. Once their cab arrives at Neeve's apartment building, she invites Jack up for a nightcap. Neeve senses something is troubling Myles, but doesn't learn what it is until the subject of Ethel comes up. Myles tells them that Ethel's body has been found. The main suspect is Seamus. The police also want Neeve to look at the clothes that Ethel was wearing when she died.

Chapter 8 Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Kitty Conway goes back to the spot in Morrison State Park where she believes that she saw the hand and confirms her fear. The body is identified as Ethel's. The main suspect in the murder is Seamus, Ethel's ex-husband. Ruth becomes really scared for her husband when Georgette, Ethel's upstairs neighbor tells her about the fight between Ethel and Seamus. She tells Ruth that she believes that Seamus killed Ethel. Although Seamus does not admit to Ruth that he killed Ethel, Ruth believes that he must have done something to kill her.

In this section of the novel, Sal is characterized as being an insecure adult, even after all of the fame that he has earned for himself. As they talk about Myles' childhood friends, Myles tells Neeve that no matter how much money Sal makes, he will always be trying to prove himself.

Evidence seems to be even stronger in this section of the novel that Ethel stumbled onto some information about Steuber in which she shouldn't have gotten involved. As Steuber fumes about his foul luck that Neeve blew the whistle on his sweatshops just before he was about to close them down, he seems the most angry about Ethel who had been snooping around. She had apparently confronted him about something that had made him so angry that he bodily threw her out of his office. Earlier in this same section, Steuber indicates that he had learned where the real money was in the fashion industry. Could Ethel had discovered something that would have been more dangerous to him than his sweatshops and tax evasion? If so, why would Steuber also put out a hit for Neeve when he had already planned to close his sweatshops?

It is highly coincidental that the first time that Douglas Brown answers his aunt's phone, it is a man threatening Ethel to stop collecting alimony from Seamus. The next phone



call is the one from the police telling him that Ethel is dead. After Doug gets the threatening call, he decides to use this call as a way to make friends with Neeve. Myles, however, does not completely buy Douglas Brown's story about the threatening phone calls. Another source of contention between Myles and Neeve is that Myles continues to not take Neeve's suspicions about Ethel, and what that the way she was dressed might tell them about her murder, seriously.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

On Saturday, Neeve goes jogging with Jack. Denny is waiting. Big Charley has given him a gun and has told him to get rid of Neeve any way he can.

Ruth hears the news of Ethel's death and wonders if Seamus is responsible. He goes to work in a haze and does everything that Ruth had advised him to do and say. Just after lunch, two officers come into the bar. They ask Seamus to come to the precinct. Meanwhile, Ruth goes to talk to Douglas Brown. She asks him to allow her to exchange the letter that Seamus wrote to Ethel for the alimony check. She tells Douglas that if he will not tell about the alimony check, she will not tell about Douglas' habit of stealing from his aunt. Ruth also picks up the antique dagger. Ruth goes home and cleans the apartment from top to bottom. She thinks about the best way to get rid of the dagger. She realizes the best place to leave it is at an Indian artifacts store with a display of similar letter openers.

As Myles watches the coverage of Nicky Sepetti's funeral, he calls Herb. Herb tells him Seamus is still the main suspect. During the funeral, Nicky's wife tells the cameras that her husband has told her on his deathbed that he was not responsible for the death of Renata Kearny.

After he learns of Ethel's death, Gordon Steuber tries to cancel his latest order from Korea but learns it is already being loaded at the airport. Mary, his secretary, has come in to catch up on some work. He warns Mary to keep quiet about his dealings with Ethel.

Nicky Sepetti's widow's comment that Sepetti had nothing to do with the murder of Renata bothers Sal and he calls Myles. Sal tells Myles that he thinks that Sepetti didn't want his children to think that he was a murderer; Myles believes that a deathbed confession would have been more Sepetti's style.

Later that day, Neeve, Jack and Myles meet at the apartment. Myles briefly asks Jack if he knows anyone who can restore Renata's sketches in her cookbook. They then go to the District Attorney's office in Rockland. Myra Bradley, the DA, tells them they know the body was moved from where Ethel was killed, but don't know where that place might be. Bradley tells the group that she believes whomever killed Ethel did not intend for her to be found, or identified. As Neeve looks at the clothes, she realizes something is wrong, but can't put her finger on what it is. Neeve asks if she can talk to the woman who found Ethel's body. Kitty Conway tells them about her discovery of Ethel's body. It is when Kitty describes the outfit that Ethel was wearing that Neeve realizes what was wrong. Neeve believes that Ethel would not have worn the blouse that came with the suit. Neeve asks if there is any way they can determine if Ethel's body was dressed after she died.



Douglas Brown is surprised when the detectives come to search Ethel's apartment. When the detective's find Ethel's will, he decides to tell them that he didn't know anything about it. The detectives fingerprint the will. Doug first confirms, then denies that he knew about the money stashed around the apartment. He is told Neeve will be coming to the apartment to take an inventory of the clothes.

As Tony Vitale comes into and out of consciousness in the hospital, he remembers the name Gordon Steuber being said as the one who was responsible for the hit on Neeve. Meanwhile, Seamus waits to be questioned by the cops. Seamus remembers the evening of his last argument with his ex-wife. He remembers the feeling of her blood on his hands. Seamus lays his head down on the table and begins to cry. He asks for a lawyer. Ruth scrambles to get Robert Lane to represent her husband. He and Seamus leave when the police admit they are not prepared to press charges.

Herb calls Myles to tell him that they believe Seamus was Ethel's killer. As Neeve questions her father about the call, she has an ominous feeling. Her father tells her that he believes the killer's calling card is the bruise on Ethel's jaw. Neeve tells him that he is wrong. As the two talk, Jack realizes that what happened to Ethel isn't over, and that Neeve is somehow involved. When Neeve and Myles return to their apartment after dinner, Denny is waiting across the street. For a moment he has a clear shot of Neeve. As he is about to pull the gun from his pocket, a woman walks out of the door next to him on her way to walk her dog. The moment is lost.

Chapter 9 Analysis

As the police try to tighten in on Ethel's killer, Gordon Steuber worries about what might be in the article that Ethel was writing. It is important to keep in mind that so far the only people who have seen the article who are not associated with the magazine are Neeve, her assistant, and Jack. Steuber is still unaware what might be in the article. He tries to cover his tracks by closing his sweatshops and telling his secretary not to tell police about any encounters that he had with Ethel. Interestingly, he also tries to cancel his incoming shipment of clothes. He learns, however, that it is too late to do so. He is worried how much information Ethel put in her article about him and how many of her threats were just a bluff.

Meanwhile, Neeve and her father disagree about the murderer's calling card. Myles believes the calling card in this instance is the bruise that was left on Ethel's cheek when Seamus punched her. Neeve believes he is wrong. She believes that it has something to do with the way that Ethel was dressed when her body was found.

It is interesting the way the author continues to return to Renata's death. Is there some connection? Although Myles had been certain that Nicky Sepetti had killed his wife, he isn't so sure after his wife contends at the funeral that her husband has told her on his deathbed that he had nothing to do with Renata's murder. Remember that although Nicky had wanted to tell his wife that he didn't have Renata killed, he is unable to at his point of death. Because Myles believes that Nicky Sepetti would probably have given a

deathbed confession if he had been responsible for Renata's death, he is now uncertain if he fingered the right person.

Note also in this section that Sal is known as being the creator of the Pacific Reef look. Although that design has been wildly popular, his latest collections have not been very popular at all. Also keep in mind that Sal seems to be troubled by the insistence from Nicky Sepetti's widow that her husband had nothing to do with Renata's murder.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

On Sunday, the police call Neeve requesting Tse-Tse's phone number. Neeve tells Tse-Tse that she has to tell the police about Ethel's threat to disinherit him. After they hear the story from Neeve and Tse-Tse, the detectives ask Tse-Tse to go with Neeve to see if anything else is missing from Ethel's apartment. Douglas Brown is hateful to them when they enter the apartment. Meanwhile, Myles thinks to himself how much mob money is laundered through the fashion industry. He wonders if Ethel might have gotten caught up in that. Jack and Neeve discover that the only clothes missing are winter clothes. Meanwhile, Tse-Tse has noticed that the antique dagger is missing. Douglas tells the police the only person that has been in the apartment has been Ruth Lambston.

Meanwhile, when Lane brings Seamus home from the police station, he tells Ruth that Seamus needs a good criminal lawyer. The lawyer tells Ruth that Seamus admitted to hitting Ethel, cutting her cheek with the knife and hiring someone to make threatening phone calls to her, but did not admit to killing her. Ruth admits to the lawyer that she believes her husband killed Ethel but she wonders how a man who faints at the sight of blood could have killed Ethel. She wonders if by stealing the letter opener if she had tampered with evidence that might have pointed police to a different suspect. She decides to try to get help from the Kearnys. Ruth asks Seamus if he had anything to do with Ethel's death. He swears that he did not. That afternoon, Ruth has convinced Seamus to go and talk to the Kearnys with her.

In their apartment, Neeve asks Myles why he would not talk to the Lambstons. Myles tells her that he did the best that he could for them by calling the lawyer Pete Kennedy. Kitty Conway calls just as the news is going off to tell Neeve that Myles left his hat at her house. Myles playfully admits that he left the hat there on purpose. Before Jack leaves Neeve for the evening, he warns her to be careful as murderers often don't hesitate to strike again if someone gets in their way.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Through this chapter, Neeve continues to get feelings that her life is winding down. As she is washing dishes with Jack, for instance, she feels as if she is getting a glimpse of something that she may never get to fully enjoy. Jack also seems to get the same ideas about his girlfriend. At the conclusion of the chapter he warns Neeve to be careful. He has fleeting moments in which he wonders what it would be like to lose a loved one as Myles and Neeve did. Meanwhile, Myles is starting a relationship with Kitty Conway. He has purposefully left his hat at her house so that she will have to call him back. Kitty has realized when she finds the hat that Myles had intended for her to call him.



Seamus is the prime suspect as identified by the police. By his actions, he appears to be a guilty man. He breaks down and cries at the police station when they try to question him. Even his wife does not completely believe that he is innocent of Ethel's death. The one thing that puts doubt in Ruth's mind that her husband is a killer is that fact that Seamus faints at the sight of blood. She remembers him trying to be in the delivery room when one of their children was born and having to leave because he fainted when he saw blood. Knowing this about her husband, she wonders how he could have killed Ethel, hidden her body and cleaned the apartment.

In her attempts to protect her husband, Ruth does a good thing by going to the Kearneys for help. They are able to put her in touch with a good criminal lawyer. It is not so good when Ruth goes back to Ethel's apartment to change the alimony check for Seamus' letter. She halfway threatens Doug to keep his mouth shut about the swap, which he does not do. While she is in the apartment, Ruth also picks up the murder weapon believing that this action will also protect her husband. She realizes later that if her husband were not the killer, she might have destroyed evidence that would have pointed police to another suspect, thus hurting a case in favor of Seamus' innocence.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Monday is Denny's day off from the deli. He builds an alibi that he is sick with the flu. He prepares a punk rock wig and grey sweat suit to wear as his costume, believing that he will blend in with the other messengers. He plans to follow Neeve when she leaves the store for her 1:30 appointment.

Officers are waiting as a Korean flight brings in the latest shipment of clothes for Gordon Steuber Textiles. The officers slash the linings of the clothes and pure, uncut heroin pours out. Orders are made for Steuber's arrest. At his office, Steuber appears outwardly clam, but is raging at Neeve on the inside.

Douglas Brown is haunted by bad dreams of his aunt, and the police Sunday night. The next morning he gets a call from the medical examiner asking what is to be done with Ethel's body. He orders cremation. Later, he is called to the police office for questioning. He is surprised when he is read his Miranda rights. Thinking about the money, Doug decides to be cooperative.

Myles wonders why his relief from the death of Nicky Sepetti is fading. Before Neeve leaves for work, she asks Myles if he plans to ask the medical examiner if there was a chance that Ethel's clothes were changed after she died. She also tells him they need to ask Seamus what Ethel was wearing the last time he saw her.

Peter Kennedy, the lawyer whom Myles has recommended to the Lambstons, listens to their story. Kennedy gets the feeling that the couple is not telling him the whole story. He makes the point that he cannot help them if they are hiding something. Ruth admits that she may have thrown away the murder weapon. Seamus and Ruth both agree to a lie detector test.

Anthony della Salva is finishing up the final details for his fall fashion line which features miniatures of his Pacific Reef design. When he hears of Steuber's arrest, he calls Myles asking if he had known in advance what was happening. He seems concerned because it was Neeve who called the attention to Steuber's activities. He suggests that Myles hire a bodyguard for Neeve. When Myles asks about his hand, Sal says that he is sorry about the book. He makes a point to tell Myles that he will have someone come to get the cookbook when Myles mentions that Jack is searching for someone to restore it.

After Ruth and Seamus pass their lie detector tests, Peter Kennedy suggests that they go immediately to the police department for lie detector tests there. He warns them that if they decide to hurry the lie detector test, they will have to allow the results to be used at the trial. Seamus agrees to the test.

Detective Gomez calls Neeve at work asking about Neeve's hunch that Ethel was dressed after she was killed. He has noticed a run in her stocking that was started when



the hose was caught on her toenail. He, like Neeve, does not believe that Ethel would have gone out with that run in her hose. After she finishes that call, she is to help a customer. When she walks the customer out of the store, she notices a man across the street that seems familiar, but she doesn't pay much attention. When she leaves the office for the day, Neeve does not notice the man in the grey sweat suit get into a cab also.

Although Douglas contends that he knew nothing about Ethel's will, his fingerprints are found all over it. As detectives continue to question him, Douglas begins to feel uncomfortable. It is when the detective suggests that Doug killed his aunt that Doug gets angry and walks out.

Denny gets a cab and follows Neeve but his cab misses a red light. He chooses to get out and walk. As he sees the numerous people milling in The Garment District, Denny believes that it will be the perfect place for a hit.

Jim Greene is the detective assigned to guard Tony Vitale's bed at the hospital. A nurse goes to check on him, then waves to Jim to come into the room. Tony is whispering the name of Neeve Kearny. On a hunch, Jim asks Tony if he is trying to tell them that Nicky did not have a contract out on Neeve but someone else did. Tony signals yes. Jim does not understand Tony's whispered response but the nurse believes it sounds like Steuber. Tony nods and squeezes Jim's hand.

After Doug runs out, the detectives agree that Doug was probably stealing from his aunt, but they share the belief that Seamus killed Ethel. Gomez reasons that if it were Seamus or Douglas who killed Ethel, they would have wanted her body found. Later, for the police commissioner, Schwartz listens as O'Brien builds his case against Seamus. Schwartz's secretary comes in and calls Herb out for a moment. When he comes back he tells the two that it is believed that Gordon Steuber has put out a contract for Neeve. Since they believe Ethel may also have learned of Steuber's drug activities, it is possible that he may have been involved in Ethel's death. He advises his detectives to go ahead and take the deal offered by Seamus' lawyer. He wants them to have the polygraph done that day.

Later that day both Steuber and Seamus are being questioned. Steuber admits a hit on Kearny would have been a great idea, but says he didn't put one out. Seamus, meanwhile, is feeling he made a mistake in agreeing to the lie detector test. Peter Kennedy knows that Seamus has failed the test before he even gets the results.

Meanwhile, Herb has stressed over whether or not to tell Myles there is a contract out on Neeve. Herb is worried that this information might trigger another heart attack for his friend. He also realizes there is little possibility to stop the hit. With the knowledge that Seamus failed his lie-detector test, Schwartz asks O'Brien to go over his case against the ex-husband one more time. Gomez breaks in about the questions that Neeve has about the outfit that Ethel was wearing when she died. When Herb looks at the evidence photos of Ethel, it is the cut on her throat that strikes Herb. He realizes he has seen that cut before. He orders a file from the archives.



Neeve does not have her mind on buying clothes as she moves through stops. She wishes she could go home but remembers she has to look for a specific dress for Mrs. Poth. As she heads to another seller, Neeve gets a glimpse of a man in a grey sweat suit and feels a sense of alarm. In his office, Jack Campbell also has the feeling that something is wrong. Ginny senses his worry and suggests she might be able to help. She says she heard the conversation between the two and there was nothing that he missed. He asks to look at Ethel's notes again.

Jack looks through Ethel's notes until he finds those on Gordon Steuber. Jack notices a line about Steuber earning more money through his linings and wonders if Ethel had learned about his drug smuggling. On Ethel's last version of her article, she had also written a note to check the date that Anthony della Salva had visited the museum and seen the aquarium display. Ethel had also copied a sketch from Renata's cookbook onto the file. As Jack realizes what Ethel was on to he calls the museum and demands to speak to the curator. He confirms Jack's fear and tells him that a woman named Ethel Lambston had also called with the same question about a date.

Myles has met that day with a Presidential aide asking for his answer about the job with the DEA. Myles asks for another 48 hours. At home, a pigeon flies into the apartment. Myles recognizes this as a sign of death and immediately begins to worry about Neeve. Sal calls and tells Myles that he, too, is worried about Neeve. Myles finally decides it is a good idea to hire Neeve a bodyguard. He prepares for his date with Kitty, then settles down to work on the broken coffee pot. As he examines the pot he realizes the handle did not come off because of loose or broken screws.

When Kitty Conway arrives at Myles' apartment, she realizes something is wrong. He welcomes her into the house but tells her that he is finishing up something important. He thinks aloud that the handle had been forced off the pot. Kitty walks up to stand by Myles. She takes a magnifying glass to look at the sketches that Renata had made, mentioning that Neeve must have been the first child to wear the Pacific Reef look. Myles jerks to attention.

Neeve finishes her shopping then moves on to visit Sal. The guard is not in his usual spot but she steps into an elevator. As the doors close, she gets a glimpse of a messenger in a punk rock hairstyle and grey sweat suit. She realizes this is the same man she's seen a couple of other times during the day. She runs to Sal's office to tell him someone is following her. Sal tells her that they should leave the door open to see if the man is really following her. He tells her to get behind a mannequin and he will stand where he can see the man if he comes in the door.

As Neeve stands behind a mannequin dressed in the Pacific Reef motif, she recognizes the pattern from one of the mother's sketches. She suddenly realizes why Sal tried to destroy the sketches. Denny enters the room. Sal calls his name, and then shoots him in the forehead. Neeve is shocked at the killing but Sal contends he was protecting her. He takes Denny's gun and walks toward Neeve. Neeve accuses him of knowing about Denny. Sal's smile turns into a glare as he tells Neeve that he started the rumor that Gordon Steuber had a hit out on her. It was actually he who had ordered the hit. He tells



Neeve that he slit Renata's throat for the Pacific Reef idea, then killed Ethel when she found out about the murder. He now tells Neeve that he has to kill her because she is too smart.

Meanwhile, Myles has realized that it is Sal who is the threat to Neeve. When he tells Kitty they may be together now, she suggests they use her car. On the way to Sal's office, Myles calls Herb. Herb comes on the phone to tell Myles he believes there is a connection between Renata's death and Ethel's. Myles suddenly knows that his wife wasn't mugged, but thought she was meeting Sal in the park for what she believed was a friendly meeting. Myles tells Herb that Sal is the murderer and Neeve is with him at his office.

Jack tries to determine why Sal might have lied about his visit to the aquarium. He suddenly realizes that it could have been Sal dressed Ethel as she was after the murder. When he learns that Neeve is at Sal's office, he runs for a cab to get to Neeve.

As Neeve looks at Sal, she wonders if this was how her mother felt before she died. She asks why he couldn't have shared the design with her mother to which he answers that he doesn't share when he sees genius. She shouts at Sal, hoping to cover the sound of footsteps, then screams at Myles to run. Myles does not run, but demands for Sal to give him the gun.

Although Myles told Kitty not to get out of the car, she joins Jack when he pulls up at the building. The one elevator is gone and Jack demands for the guard to unlock another elevator as the police pull up. Jack and Kitty make it to the twelfth floor in time to hear Myles ask Sal for the gun. Sal drops the gun and drops to his knees, telling Myles that he didn't mean it.

Herb tries to convince Myles that even if Renata had showed him her Pacific Reef motif, he wouldn't have recognized the genius. Sal admits to the murder of Ethel Lambston. Herb decides to give Seamus and Ruth a break and not press any charges for assault or tampering with evidence.

Devin Stanton is in the middle of a meeting about his appointment as Cardinal when the news that Sal had been arrested for the murders of Renata, Ethel and Denny, and the attempted murder of Neeve. Ruth and Seamus also hear the news from the television. They stare at each other in disbelief.

Douglas Brown is also relieved. He thinks of calling a receptionist a work, but then changes his mind and calls Tse-Tse. When Tse-Tse recognizes his voice she tells him to drop dead, then hangs up.

Dev watches as Jack holds Neeve in her father's apartment. He hopes that Renata knows of their happiness. Meanwhile, Myles is trying to decide how to thank Kitty for her part in Neeve's rescue. He believes that if she had not recognized the sketches in the cook book, he would never have gotten to Neeve on time. She cannot find her wine glass so Myles fills his to the brim and offers it to her.



Jack explains to Neeve how he came to be at Sal's office after he looked at Ethel's notes. He'd put things together. As they stand together, Neeve knows that she has found the man with whom she is supposed to spend the rest of her life.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Everything finally comes together in this last, long chapter. Anthony della Salva was responsible for the murders of both Renata and Ethel. He had also put out a hit on Neeve and started the rumor that it was Gordon Steuber who had done so. In his eagerness to be a success and prove himself to his childhood friends and the world, he had stolen a design from his friend's wife and then killed her. This explains why he invited himself to Myles and Neeve's apartment for dinner, and why the handle was forced off the coffee pot. Sal had done so in an attempt to destroy the images in Renata's cookbook so that no one would realize that he had stolen her design. One person, however, had already realized Sal's crime, Ethel. It is for this reason that he kills Ethel. After he returns to his own apartment, he realizes too late that he did not dress Ethel in the outfit as Neeve had specified that Ethel should wear it. Sal knows that Neeve will recognize this mistake and will, at one time or another, connect the mistake to him.

As both Myles and Neeve enjoy their new relationships at the conclusion of the novel, it seems that everything has turned out well. The police have chosen to let Seamus and Ruth off the hook for any crimes they have committed. They are now free to enjoy their lives with no alimony. Doug, also, now has free right to his aunt's money. He gets what is coming to him, though, when he tries to ask Tse-Tse out on a date but instead gets told off.



Characters

Neeve Kearny

Neeve Kearny is the daughter of Renata and Myles Kearny. She is a fashion designer and owner of Neeve's Place, a successful fashion boutique. Ethel Lambston is one of Neeve's special customers. When Neeve cannot contact Ethel in order to deliver her latest clothing purchase, Neeve begins to suspect that something is wrong with her customer. Even before others, Neeve begins to put together the clues in Ethel's disappearance. In the first chapter, Ethel's killer realizes that he has made a major error in covering up Ethel's murder that Neeve will pick up on. It is at the conclusion of the novel that Anthony della Salva, whom Neeve has known all of her life as "Uncle Sal" tells Neeve that he must kill her because he realizes that she will eventually realize that he was the one who killed Ethel. Neeve is saved at the last minute by her ex-police commissioner father Myles and boyfriend Jack Campbell. She realizes that Jack is the special man for whom she has been waiting.

Ethel Lambston

Ethel Lambston is the eccentric loner and author who is murdered in the beginning of the novel. Before she was killed, Ethel had been researching a book on crime in the fashion industry. It becomes evident that she learned that Gordon Steuber was making his money by importing drugs. After she saw Renata's sketches in the cookbook at Myles' apartment, she also realized Anthony della Salva was not the real creator of the Pacific Reef design. Sal kills her in order to keep her quiet about the discoveries that she has made.

During her lifetime, Ethel was married to Seamus Lambston. Seamus was so relieved to get divorced from Ethel that he agreed to pay \$1,000 in alimony on a monthly basis. When Seamus remarries and has children, the amount of alimony that he is required to pay becomes a major point of contention between himself and his new wife. When his wife pushes him to confront Ethel about the alimony, Seamus becomes so angry with his ex-wife that he punches her in the face.

Douglas Brown

Douglas Brown is Ethel's spoiled, selfish nephew. He was contacted by his aunt that she needed him to run an errand for her on Friday, but was not at the apartment when he arrived. He believes that she has gone off on one of her odd trips and is not really worried about her. In fact, he doesn't really seem to be that attached to his aunt until he learns that he has been named as the sole heir in her will.

Douglas makes trouble for himself when he finds and then reads his aunt's will, and then lies to police, saying he has no knowledge of the will. He also tells the police that



he has not bothered any of the money stashed around the apartment. Both of these claims are found to be false when the police fingerprint the will and the bills. Douglas tries to be cooperative with the police but gets angry and walks out of questioning when the officers suggest that he killed his aunt. At the conclusion of the novel, Douglas tries to ask Tse-Tse out on a date, but Tse-Tse tells him to drop dead.

Ruth Lambston

Ruth Lambston is the name of Seamus' second wife. Although she was a quiet, sweet lady when she married Seamus, her life of scrimping because of the amount of money they pay Seamus' ex-wife for alimony. It is Ruth who has pushed Seamus on the day that he goes to Ethel's apartment to talk to her about relieving them of the alimony payments and he winds up punching her. Ruth also pushes Seamus the day that he accidentally puts both the alimony check and the letter informing Ethel they will be paying no more alimony in the same envelope.

Ruth confronts Douglas Brown at Ethel's apartment to get back the check that Seamus had left for Ethel. While she is there, she also takes the antique dagger used to kill Ethel because she believes at that time that her husband had killed Ethel. It is Ruth who hires the first lawyer for her husband when he is taken to the police department for questioning. She also convinces her husband to go with her to ask the Kearnys for help.

Myles Kearny

Myles Kearny is the father of Neeve and husband of Renata. He met his wife when he was on duty with the Army in the Italian city of Pontici. He has blamed himself for not protecting Renata enough and allowing her to be murdered. For this reason, Myles is especially careful when it comes to the safety of his daughter, Neeve. In addition to his concern for his daughter, Myles has to contend with the gut feelings that he gets as an ex-police commissioner. He was forced to retire from his position because he had a major heart attack, but still has police work in his blood. Although Neeve comes up with rational conclusions about Ethel's death, Myles mostly dismisses his daughter's ideas as being unmerited. One such idea is Neeve's insistence that it is important that Ethel did not take a coat from her closet. Myles believes this fact is unimportant.

Seamus Lambston

Seamus Lambston is Ethel's ex-husband. He is bound to Ethel because he agreed to pay her \$1,000 in alimony each month as one of the terms of their divorce. The night before Ethel disappeared, Seamus went to confront her about the alimony and the two had a huge argument. A neighbor in Ethel's building is convinced that Seamus is responsible for Ethel's death. In reality, Seamus did not kill Ethel, he only became so frustrated with her that he punched her. His fear and guilt in the remainder of the novel comes from the fear that his ex-wife will have him arrested and charged with assault. When Ethel's murder is solved and it is learned that Anthony della Salva was the one to



kill Ethel, the police commissioner chooses to let Seamus off the hook and not charge him in Ethel's assault.

Gordon Steuber

Gordon Steuber is a fashion designer who owns Gordon Steuber Enterprises. Neeve refuses to buy clothes from the man because she learns his clothes are sewn in sweatshops. The last suit that Neeve sells by Gordon Steuber is the suit that she sells to Ethel. It is this same suit that Ethel is dressed in when her body is dumped. Neeve assumes that because the suit is paired with the original blouse instead of the blouse she sold Ethel to wear with the suit that it might have been Gordon Steuber who killed Ethel. Anthony della Salva has also started the rumor that it was Steuber who put out the hit on Neeve. Steuber is arrested because he is importing drugs into the country by hiding them in the linings of his clothes.

Tony Vitale aka Carmen Machado

Tony Vitale is the undercover cop who is placed in Nicky Sepetti's gang to keep an eye on him. Although they know him as Carmen Machado, Nicky recognizes the man at first sight as a cop. He warns the group that Carmen is a cop. They shoot the man numerous times and leave him for dead in an alley. Despite his injuries, Tony fights for his life in the hospital.

He tries to tell fellow officers that Nicky Sepetti did not have a hit out for Neeve but Steuber did. He is not able to get his thought out correctly and leaves them believing there is no hit for Neeve at all. It is almost a week later when he is able to communicate that he has heard that Steuber has a hit out for Neeve.

Nicky Sepetti

Nicky Sepetti is the Mafia leader whom Myles Kearny is responsible for putting in jail. Nicky makes a threat against Myles wife and daughter while Myles believes is proof that Nicky was responsible for Renata's death. Nicky gets extra time in jail because he is associated with Renata's death. When he does finally get out of jail, Nicky is old and sick. At his first meeting with the Mafia, he becomes angry when he is told there is a hit out on Neeve. He also warns them that Carmen Machado is an undercover police officer. Police are coming to question Nicky about the shooting of the undercover officer when he has a heart attack and dies.

Renata Rossetti Kearny

Renata Rossetti Kearny is the wife of Myles Kearny and mother of Neeve Kearny. She is the Italian child who saves Myles from a church in Italy during the war. Her family cares for Myles until he is reunited with his Army detachment. Thirteen years later Myles



visits Renata and her family. The two are married three weeks later. It is Renata who comes up with the idea for the Pacific Reef design. She takes her idea to Anthony della Salva, a man who is a childhood friend of her husband, believing that he will give her advice on what to do with her idea. Instead, he cuts her throat, takes the idea and presents it as his own.

Anthony della Salva aka Uncle Sal

Anthony della Salva turns out to be the killer of both Ethel Lambston and Renata Kearny. Sal, whom Neeve refers to as Uncle Sal, has been a friend of her father since they were children. It was Sal who gave Neeve in her career as a fashion designer by loaning her the money to start her business. Even so, Sal arranges a hit on Neeve because he is afraid that she will find out what he did to her mother and customer. In order to protect himself, Sal starts a rumor that it was Gordon Steuber that put out the hit on Neeve. Sal killed Renata because he wanted to use her Pacific Reef design as his own. He later has to kill Ethel because she is close to figuring out that he was the one who killed Renata.

Jack Campbell

Jack Campbell is an editor for Givvons and Marks, the company to which Ethel tries to sell her book idea. Neeve and Jack met momentarily on a plane six years prior to the time that this novel is written. Neeve is impressed by Jack's fashion sense. Although he has only known Neeve a few days, Jack quickly becomes attached to Neeve and worries about her safety. He wonders what it would be like to lose her as Myles lost his wife. It is Jack who realizes that Anthony della Salva lied about getting the idea for the Pacific Reef design from the Chicago Aquarium as it was not even open yet when Sal claims that he got his idea.

Herb Schwartz

Herb Schwartz is the police commissioner at the time of Ethel's murder. He is friends with Myles Kearny. He was Myles' deputy commissioner when Renata was murdered. Herb is at the scene before Myles and asks Myles not to look at Renata there but is unable to stop Myles. Herb later tries to convince Nicky will not be able to do anything to Neeve as he has his cops watching him. He also shares with Myles that Tony Vitale has told him that Nicky did not have a hit out on Neeve. It is Herb who first realizes that the way that Ethel's throat was cut was the same pattern as the cut on Renata's throat.

Tse-Tse

Tse-Tse is the aspiring actress who cleans Ethel's apartment for the extra money. She agrees to let Neeve into Ethel's apartment so that Neeve can deliver the new clothes that Ethel has purchased. Tse-Tse is with Neeve when they discover Ethel's nephew



living in the lady's apartment. It is also Tse-Tse who notices that the one-hundred-dollar bills that Ethel is in the habit of stashing around the apartment have disappeared, then reappeared, since Ethel has been gone.

Kitty Conway

Kitty Conway is the widow who gets a glimpse of Ethel's hand when the horse that she is riding runs away with her. She later goes back to convince herself that it was actually a hand that she saw. Myles and Neeve meet Kitty when they ask the district attorney if they can go and talk to the woman who found Ethel's body. Myles is impressed with Kitty and leaves his hat there so that she will have to get in contact with him. It is later Kitty who helps Myles make the connection between Renata's sketches and the Pacific Reef design.

Detectives O'Brien and Gomez

Detective O'Brien and Gomez are the main detectives working on the Lambston case under Herb Schwartz. The two believes they have narrowed the suspects to Seamus Lambston, Ethel's ex-husband, and Douglas Brown, Ethel's nephew. O'Brien seems dead set on the idea that Seamus killed his ex-wife while Gomez seems open to the idea that someone else might have been responsible for the murder. Gomez even goes so far as to contact Neeve about the run in Ethel's hose to discuss what this run might mean.

Dana Wells

Dana Wells is the daughter of Georgette Wells. She heckles Seamus when he comes into the lobby of Ethel's apartment building to put the envelope containing the letter in Ethel's box. She informs him that he is the laughing stock of the entire apartment complex. Her treatment of Seamus rattles him enough that he accidentally includes both the letter and the alimony check in the same envelope.

Ginny

Ginny is Jack Campbell's secretary. He asks her what she knows about Neeve when he first happens upon Neeve again in New York. It is also Ginny who helps Jack get a copy of Ethel's article for Contemporary Woman before the article actually comes out for public. Ginny also tells Jack that she heard his conversation with Ethel and that he did not miss anything important that she said during their conversation.



Father Devin Stanton

Father Devin Stanton grew up with both Myles Kearny and Anthony della Salva in the Bronx. Devin is one of the three friends who gather at Myles' apartment the evening that Sal burns his hand and damages Renata's cook book with the espresso pot. Devin is in line to become a bishop.

Toni Mendell

Toni Mendell is the editor in chief of Contemporary Woman, the magazine for which Ethel writes her fashion article. Toni is also one of the names that jumps out at Neeve on Ethel's calendar. Toni allows Jack to see a copy of Ethel's article before it is printed. She also gives Jack Ethel's notes for the article.

Denny Adler

Denny Adler is on probation, working at a deli for minimum wages when Big Charley Santino offers him the job of killing Neeve. Although Denny follows Neeve closely and has a plan laid out to kill Neeve, it always happens that he doesn't get a chance to kill her. At the end of the novel, Denny is shot by Anthony della Salva.

Peter Kennedy

Peter Kennedy is the criminal lawyer that Myles Kearney suggests to Seamus and Ruth Lambston. Pete does not fully believe the story that Seamus and Ruth tell him. When they both pass the lie detector test at his office, he tries to get a deal for Seamus to clear his name but Seamus fails his lie detector test at the police department.

Jim Greene

Jim Greene is the detective hired to stand watch over Tony Vitale at the hospital. It is while Jim is on duty that Tony gains enough consciousness to tell him that there is a hit out for Neeve, ordered by Steuber.

Dr. Adam Felton

Dr. Adam Felton is the psychiatrist to whom Myles goes for sessions after his heart attack. When Myles tells Felton that the man whom he believed had killed his wife is dead, Felton asks Myles what he plans to do with the rest of his life.



Robert Lane

Robert Lane is the original lawyer whom Ruth hires to represent Seamus. When he brings Seamus home from the police department, Robert tells Ruth that they need to get a good criminal lawyer.

May Evans

May is Gordon Steuber's secretary. Although she knows what has happened between Gordon and Ethel, Gordon warns her not to tell what she knows. On Neeve's advice, May goes to the police with what she knows about her employer.

Big Charley Santino

Big Charley Santino was a man who was a fellow inmate with Denny Adler. He is the one who meets Denny and gives him the money to kill Neeve.

Georgette Wells

Georgette Wells is the nosy neighbor who confronts Ruth about the fight that Seamus and Ethel had the night before Ethel disappeared.

Rosa Vitale

Rosa Vitale is Tony Vitale's mother. She believes that there is something else that her son wants to tell police.

Myra Bradley

Myra Bradley is the District Attorney from Rockland County who requests Neeve come talk to her about Ethel's murder.

Senator Moynihan

Senator Moynihan is the senator who encourages Myles Kearny to take a job as leader of the Drug Enforcement Agency.

Marcy, Linda and Jeannie Lambston

Marcy, Linda and Jeannie Lambston are the names of Ruth and Seamus' children.



Objects/Places

Morrison State Park

Morrison State Park is the place where Ethel's killer dumps her body.

An Entrance Behind a Boulder-Sized Rock

It is inside this entrance the killer has found behind a boulder-sized rock that he hides her body.

Ethel's Purse and Luggage

Ethel's killer throws her purse and luggage into a lake where he doesn't believe anyone will ever find it.

A Garbage Bin

A garbage bin is where Ethel's killer deposits the bloody plastic bag that her body had been wrapped in.

A Gas Station on Tenth Avenue

The killer rents a car to dispose of her body from this place that doesn't keep records on rented cars.

Antique Dagger

It is this antique dagger that is used to kill Ethel. Ruth later hides this dagger in an Indian shop when she believes that it was Seamus who was responsible for Ethel's murder.

Run in Ethel's Hose

It is this run in Ethel's hose that leads Detective Gomez to believe that Ethel did not dress herself.



An Old Terrycloth Robe

It is Neeve's old terrycloth robe that Myles tells her would keep her customers from buying her clothes if they saw her in it.

New York's Legendary Police Commissioner

Myles Kearny is known as New York's legendary police commissioner.

Neeve's Place

Neeve's Place is the name of the clothing store owned by Neeve Kearny.

Contemporary Woman

"Contemporary Woman" is the magazine for which Ethel writes the article which she believes will anger many designers. It is also during the research for this article that she stumbles upon the realization that Anthony della Salva was not the true creator of the Pacific Reef motif.

Alimony

The thousand dollars a month that Seamus is required to pay Ethel each month is a major source on contention between the two. It is when Seamus confronts Ethel, at the insistence of Ruth, that he becomes so angry that he punches her.

Pontici

It is when Myles Kearny was serving in the Army in this country that he met Renata as a child.

'84 Black Chevy

Denny is instructed to meet Big Charley in this '84 Black Chevy and is given orders for a hit.

Bryant Park

Bryant Park is the place where Denny waits for Big Charley.



Ten Thousand Dollars

Ten thousand dollars is the amount of money that Denny is given in advance of his job to kill Neeve. After the job is done, he will get another ten thousand dollars.

Schwab House

The Schwab House is the name of the apartment house in which Neeve and her father live.

The Garment District

The Garment District is the area through which Denny follows Neeve on the day that he believes he will finally be successful in killing Neeve.

Pacific Reef Motif

The Pacific Reef Motif is the design for which Anthony della Salva is known but it is later learned that the design was not his but instead one by Neeve's mother. It is for this reason that Salva kills Renata.

Coty Award

Anthony della Salva wins the Coty Award for his Pacific Reef design.

Poem Little Boy Blue

This poem, Little Boy Blue, comes into Neeve's mind as she thinks about leaving Ethel's new clothes in her apartment. She realizes the little boy never came back for his toys.

Cosmic Oil Building

The Cosmic Oil Building is where Douglas Brown works.

Belle Harbor

Belle Harbor is the place where Nicky Sepetti and his wife own a house. It is to this house that he returns after he gets out of jail.



One-Hundred-Dollar Bills

Ethel has her alimony checks changed into one-hundred-dollar bills which turn up hidden around Ethel's apartment. Her nephew finds these bills and steals them but later replaces them after he learns that she has been spreading the word that she is aware he has been stealing them.

Sketches in Renata's Cookbook

Renata has drawn sketches of Neeve in her cookbook. Ethel has attempted to reproduce this sketch on her calendar, then again on her notes for her article. The sketch clues her off that Anthony della Salva was not the real creator of the Pacific Reef look.

Espresso Pot

Anthony della Salva claims the handle on this espresso pot breaks, causing the sketches on Renata's cookbook to be ruined. When Myles later examines the pot, he finds that the handle was forced off of it.

Blue Cuff

When Kitty Conway's horse runs away, she sees Ethel's hand, framed by this cuff, during the ride.

Linings

It is these linings that have made Steuber his fortune in the clothing business. It is in the linings of his clothes that Steuber is importing illegal drugs into America.

Seamus' Letter

Seamus writes this letter to Ethel at his wife's insistence as a written way to assure that Ethel allowed him to stop paying alimony. Seamus accidentally puts both the letter and the check in his ex-wife's mailbox.

Prahm and Singh

It is at the Indian store Prahm and Singh that Ruth Lambston hides the antique dagger used to kill Ethel.



A Coat

It first strikes Neeve as being strange that Ethel did not take a coat with her as cold as it has been.

A White Silk Blouse

A white silk blouse is the blouse that Neeve had gotten for Ethel to wear with her Gordon Steuber suit. Ethel is not wearing this shirt when she is killed. Neeve later finds it shoved into Ethel's closet, not at the cleaners as her father had suggested.

Korean Cargo Plane, Flight 771

This Korean Cargo Plane is the flight that brings Gordon Steuber's drug laced clothes into America.

Long Island City Warehouses

These warehouses belong to Gordon Steuber but are not listed anywhere in the company's records.

Heroin

Gordon Steuber has been importing the illegal drug heroin into the country in the linings of his clothes.

Multicolored Light Wool Caftan

It is this caftan that Neeve believes that Ethel was actually wearing when she died.

Original Blouse for Ethel's Ensemble

It is the original blouse for Ethel's Gordon Steuber ensemble that her killer dresses her in, but Neeve had actually suggested a different blouse for her to wear with the outfit. It is this clue that leads Neeve to believe that Ethel did not dress herself in the clothes she was wearing when her body was found.

Lie Detector Test

Seamus passes the lie detector test at his lawyer's office, but fails it later at the police department.



1972

1972 is the year the Anthony della Salva claims that he got his inspiration from the Chicago Aquarium for his Pacific Reef look but it is first discovered by Ethel that this is a lie because the aquarium exhibit was not open at that time.

A Pigeon

When Myles returns home on Monday, a pigeon has flown into the apartment. His mother had always told him that a pigeon in the house was a sign of death.



Themes

Killer's Calling Card

One of the ideas that recur in the novel is the idea that every killer leaves a calling card. It is believed that once police discover this calling card, it will lead them to the killer. Myles and Neeve, however, disagree as to the nature of the calling card in Ethel's death. Myles believes that his police experience gives his ideas about the case more weight than Neeve's ideas, even though she was the one who created Ethel's outfits and knows there was something wrong with the way Ethel was dressed.

Myles believes that the calling card was the punch that Ethel received to her face from her ex-husband. He has researched Seamus' background and knows he was a boxer in his youth. He suspects that Seamus might not have intended to kill Ethel, but was perhaps so angry at the lady that he hit her harder than he meant to, then cut her throat.

Neeve does not believe that Seamus was Ethel's killer simply because of the way that her body was dressed. She believes that someone else dressed Ethel after her death because the woman was wearing a blouse that was originally intended to go with the suit that Ethel was wearing but that Ethel had never worn with it. She instead wore a blouse that Neeve had picked and suggested looked better with the suit than the original blouse. Neeve's idea gains credibility when one of the detectives in the case notices a run in Ethel's hose that was started when it was caught on her toenail. He, also, does not believe that Ethel would have left the house willingly with a huge run in her hose.

It turns out that Neeve is right about her suspicions regarding Ethel's clothing. It is even noted in the first chapter of the book that the killer had realized that he had made a mistake when he killed Ethel, one that Neeve would pick up on.

Impending Doom

Another theme that is echoed again and again in "While My Pretty One Sleeps" is the feeling of impending doom. Myles, Neeve and Jack all report feeling this same fear that something that is out of their control is happening. All three feel that whatever it is has something to do with Neeve. The final straw for Myles is when he walks into his apartment to find a pigeon, the symbol of death, in his house. The day that Neeve comes face to face with Sal, she realizes that she has a headache, an ailment that she almost never suffers with. The pain and feeling of helplessness is so strong that Neeve wants to go home, but feels that she must finish her work.

This feeling of coming doom is compounded by the constant reminders of Renata's murder that are included in the novel. Myles and Neeve feel helpless because they were unaware Renata was in danger until it was too late. Although Myles had felt sure it was Nicky Sepetti who orders his wife's death, he is not longer sure after Nicky's widow



claims that her husband had sworn from his deathbed that he did not kill Renata. Not knowing who killed Renata or why they killed her only heightens the sense of doom for Myles. He also feels doubly unable to help his daughter.

Appearances

Since this is a novel about the fashion industry, it makes sense that appearances would figure highly into the story line. In fact, it is the very man who does not appear to be a killer, but instead a friend of the family, who is indeed the one who killed Renata, Ethel and put the hit out on Neeve.

Notice also the amount of weight that the writer puts into describing people's appearances. Myles, Jack, Neeve, and Kitty are all described as well kept, attractive people. All of them, with the exception of Myles, has an eye for fashion that Neeve admires. Seamus, Ruth and Nicky Sepetti, on the other hand, are described as being unattractive. In fact, it is the bare face of Seamus and Ruth's plainness that leaves Neeve to believe that neither of them could be Ethel's killer. She believes they would not have the sense to recognize a matching outfit, much less dress Ethel in it.

Appearance is also a factor in Gordon Steuber's role in the novel. He appears to be a successful fashion designer. He has made his money, the novel says, in the linings that he puts in his clothes. What the author does not say right away is that Gordon is making his money with the drugs that line the linings of his clothes. Although Gordon's business is honest in appearance, he is actually making his money through forced labor and drug trade.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view of an omniscient narrator. The narrator not only tells the actions of all of the characters but also shares their thoughts and emotions with the reader. Had this story been told from only one character's point of view, there is no way that the entire story could be told. Note that since this is a murder mystery, the author does not tell what is going on in the minds of all of the characters all of the time. By doing this, she would give away the ending of the novel. For instance, Denny's actions and thoughts in developing an alibi for himself and given by the author but Sal's activities in calling Myles and requesting that he get Neeve a bodyguard are not described as being a way to cover his tracks. It is this selection of which thoughts and emotions to include in the writing and which ones to leave out that made the ending of this novel such a shocker.

The novel is probably about 70 percent exposition and 30 percent dialogue. The narrator uses these stretches of exposition to detail the thoughts of the characters as they try to piece together the clues in Ethel's murder, make a plan to kill Neeve, or prove their innocence in the case. It is through the dialogue that characters share their knowledge with each other to determine what might have happened to Ethel.

Setting

This novel is set during a series of consecutive days in the month of April in New York. One of the more visited scenes in the novel is Ethel Lambston's apartment. It is in this setting that Anthony della Salva murders Ethel then changes her clothes. Neeve visits this scene several times as she tries to deliver Ethel's new clothes. She later returns to help the investigators compile a list of the clothes missing from Ethel's closet. Douglas Brown, Ethel's nephew, takes up residence in Ethel's apartment beginning a couple of days after she is killed. It is in this apartment that he is confronted by Ruth who is trying to get the alimony check as well as the letter that she forced Seamus to write to Ethel back. Although the encounter happens before the novel starts, it is also in Ethel's apartment that Seamus has a fight with and punches his ex-wife.

The rocky embankment in Morrison State Park is another important scene in this novel. It is here that della Salva hides Ethel's body with the intention that no one will find it until it is too decomposed to identify. The body is discovered more quickly than he intended when Kitty Conway's horse is spooked and runs through the area. She believes she sees a hand, and then goes back later to make sure that was really what she saw.

Other important settings in the novel include Neeve and Myles' apartment, Kitty Conway's house, Seamus and Ruth's apartment, Anthony della Salva's office, Neeve's Place and The Garment District of New York in general.



Language and Meaning

Since this novel is a murder mystery, what Clark chooses not to write is perhaps as, if not more, important than what she does write. She gives a sprinkling of vague clues throughout the entire novel as to who the real killer might be, but points the finger in her writing at other characters who seem to have more of a motive to want Ethel dead. It is not until the characters begin to put the clues together that they, and the reader, realize that the true danger lies behind a man who would never appear to be anything but friendly and solicitous. He has given Neeve the money to start her business. In the light of Ethel's death and Neeve's role in Gordon Steuber's crimes being discovered, Sal suggests that Myles get a bodyguard for his daughter. In reality, Sal is only trying to cover his own tracks.

One aspect of Clark's writing is her use of clichés. Although writers are generally encouraged not to use these common sayings, Clark does not use them enough that they appear trite. For instance, Clark terms the alimony payments that Seamus is forced to pay to Ethel as a "bone of contention" between Seamus and Ruth. She goes on to note that Ruth gnaws on this bone constantly, bringing to mind the picture of a dog worrying a bone, just the way that Ruth probably worries her husband about his financial obligation.

Structure

This novel is comprised of eleven chapters. The chapters start fairly short with the first chapter being eight pages. The final chapter is the longest of all of the chapters. At 63 pages, it is nearly 20 percent of the entire novel. Notice also that each chapter represents one day in the development of the murder case of Ethel Lambston. It makes sense that as more characters, suspects and situations are added to the mystery, the chapters will get longer. The only chapters in the novel that are shorter than those before them are Chapter 4 and Chapter 10.

Although she gives clues about the identity of the real killer, author Clark leads her readers toward believing another suspect is responsible for Ethel's death. It is also late in the novel before the connection is made between Ethel's death and Renata's death. The main plot of the novel is the investigation of Ethel's murder. This main plot is interwoven with a variety of sub-plots. Seamus and Ethel's alimony fights, Gordon Steuber's crimes as a drug importer, the murder of Renata Kearny and the discovery of the identity of the real creator of the Pacific Reef motif are all interwoven into the story of Ethel's murder.



Quotes

"Certainly the cops had no reason to even think about the contents of his trunk, no reason to suspect that under a pile of luggage a plastic bag containing the body of a prominent sixty-one-year-old writer, Ethel Lambston, was wedged in a space-defying squeeze against the spare tire." Chapter 1, pg. 10

"It was just as he was draining the last warming sip of bourbon that he realized the one ghastly mistake he had made, and knew exactly who would almost inevitably detect it. Neeve Kearny." Chapter 1, pg. 16

"It was the one unfulfilled need in his life— to find that killer, to make him and Sepetti pay for Renata's death." Chapter 2, pg. 23

"In the last six years, Ethel Lambston had become a valuable customer. She insisted Neeve pick out every stitch she bought as well as choose accessories and compile lists to tell her what went with what." Chapter 2, pg. 27

"Someone in Steuber's office had tipped off Women's Wear Daily. The editors printed the poem on the front page next to Neeve's scathing letter to Steuber and called on other retailers to boycott manufacturers who were breaking the law." Chapter 2, pg. 29

"Take your time. It gotta look like an accident or a mugging. Follow her around in one of those panhandler outfits of yours." Chapter 3, pg. 51

"All I need to do is make a no-name-given call to the cops and you won't get to deliver another baloney sandwich. Don't make me a crime-stopper, Denny." Chapter 3, pg. 52

"There was a throbbing pain somewhere in her psyche, like an emotional sore tooth. She grumbled to herself, Before long, I'll really be one of those superstitious Irish, always getting a 'feeling' about trouble around the corner." Chapter 4, pg. 59

"They passed each other without speaking, but it seemed to Neeve that anger emanated from his persona." Chapter 4, pg. 61

"But, for some reason, Neeve's irritation did not last. Instead, the nagging, persistent feeling that something was wrong about Ethel's sudden departure stayed with her." Chapter 5, pg. 76

"Ethel had turned in her article on Thursday. No one had seen her on Friday. Both days had been windy and miserably cold. There'd been a snowstorm on Friday. But every one of Ethel's winter coats was still in place, in her closet...." Chapter 5, pg. 79

"We all know how you feel about sonofabitch Kearny. Wait till you hear this. There's a contract out on his daughter. And it's not ours. Steuber is gonna waste her." Chapter 5, pg. 85



"When Neeve Kearny went down, forty thousand New York cops would be on a manhunt." Chapter 6, pg. 99

"Neeve had caused an uproar a few months ago when she pulled the plug on a designer who had kids sewing in sweatshops. Neeve could be a fighter." Chapter 7, pg. 136

"Herb phoned a couple of hours ago. A body was found in Morrison State Park in Rockland County. It answered Ethel's description. They brought Ethel's nephew out and he identified her." Chapter 8, pg. 191

"'Am I?' Ruth asked. 'I'm giving you a break. You give Seamus a break. We'll keep our mouths shut about your being a thief, and you keep your mouth shut about the letter.'" Chapter 9, pg. 200

"If I'm right, Neeve is saying that Ethel Lambston would not have deliberately dressed in that outfit as it was found on her." Chapter 9, pg. 223

"Whatever happened to Ethel isn't finished, Jack thought, and it has to do with Neeve." Chapter 9, pg. 233

"The book Ethel had proposed to write. There was plenty of mob money being laundered through the fashion industry. Had Ethel stumbled on that?" Chapter 10, pg. 242

"When you told me you had punched Ethel, that she'd been nicked with the letter opener, that you'd paid someone to threaten her, I believed that you had gone one step further. I believed that you had killed her." Chapter 10, pg. 250

"The point is, murderers don't hesitate to kill again if someone gets in the way." Chapter 10, pg. 254

"Ten minutes later, the first crate had been pried open. The seams of an exquisitely tailored linen jacket were slashed. Pure, uncut heroin poured into a plastic bag held open by the chief of the task force." Chapter 11, pg. 259

"Meaning that if Ethel's clothes were changed after she died, there is no way that ex-husband is responsible for her death." Chapter 11, pg. 264

"It's one thing for Neeve to blow the whistle on him because of workers without green cards. It's a hell of another proposition when she's the indirect cause of a hundred-million-dollar drug bust." Chapter 11, pg. 268

"Now the picture was so clear in his mind: Joey telling Nicky that Steuber ordered the hit." Chapter 11, pg. 280



"That Ethel Lambston was some judge of character. Her ex-husband is a wimp; her nephew is a thief. But of the two scumbags, I say the ex-husband wasted her." Chapter 11, pg. 281

"Had Ethel discovered several weeks ago that Steuber was smuggling heroin in the linings and seams of his imports?" Chapter 11, pg. 291

"The point,' he said, thinking aloud, 'is that this handle didn't just come loose. It was forced off the pot.'" Chapter 11, pg. 299

"The word is out that Steuber ordered you hit. What nobody knows is that I'm the one who started that word and I'm the one who gave the contract." Chapter 11, pg. 304

"How do you thank a woman for saving your daughter's life? If Kitty had not connected the sketch to the Pacific Reef look, he would not have reached Neeve on time." Chapter 11, pg. 316



Topics for Discussion

Why does Ethel's murderer choose to dress her in the Gordon Steuber suit?

What are clues Neeve notices (unusual items) about Ethel's disappearance?

Discuss the theme of love as it is presented in the novel. Choose at least one couple and discuss how Ethel's death brings them together.

Discuss the meaning of the title of the novel.

Why do you think Clark chooses to set her novel against the background of the fashion industry? Why does this theme work well?

Myles and his daughter fight over the importance of the fashion industry. She feels he belittles her job. He feels that she sells overpriced clothes. How does this bantering between the two add to the novel? Does it distract from the story? What is its significance in the larger scheme of the novel?

What clues are hidden in the novel that point the reader to the killer. Did you notice these clues as you read the novel the first time? Why or why not?

Since it is obvious at the end of the novel that Uncle Sal hates Neeve's family so much, why do you think that he loaned her money to start business?