

The Happy Hooker Study Guide

The Happy Hooker by Xaviera Hollander

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Plot Summary

The *Happy Hooker* is the memoir of Xaviera Hollander, a woman who eventually became known as a highly successful madam, or head of a brothel, in New York. The book chronicles her life from her childhood in Holland through the early 1970s, when she lived in New York and was involved in a commission on corruption in the city's government and police force.

Xaviera is born in Indonesia to Dutch Jewish parents and lives through imprisonment in a Japanese concentration camp at a very young age. Her father, a doctor, exhibits the sort of sexual freedom and promiscuity that Xaviera will later display, while her mother insists that Xaviera remain a virgin until marriage. She shows an early interest in sexual experimentation with both males and females, including relatives. Xaviera loses her virginity to a boy at age seventeen and becomes sexually insatiable thereafter. After graduating from high school, Xaviera gains fame as the winner of a secretarial contest and works for a leading advertising agency. She begins experimenting with lesbianism at this time in her life.

Restless with what she believes are her home country's prudish tastes, Xaviera leaves Holland for South Africa to live with a stepsister. She falls in love with a man named Carl Gordon who lures her to New York on the promise of marriage and later rejects her, after which she becomes promiscuous to soothe her loneliness and depression and eventually transitions to a life of prostitution. She quickly moves up from turning tricks on her lunchbreak to working for some of the more well-respected establishments in the city. She loses two jobs in succession after being found out. She is blackmailed for photos of herself and Carl having sex and has her first experience with the seedier side of her new profession. She is arrested many times throughout her career but manages to get out on bail every time. She takes a trip to Puerto Rico after her boyfriend at the time, Paul Lindfield, breaks up with her after an arrest. She stays in Puerto Rico for several months, making money through prostitution and falling in with a crowd of young "hippies" who introduce her to mescaline and eventually steal all of her savings.

When Xaviera returns to New York, she is determined to make something of her life and sets out to become the most successful madam in the city. She learns how to recruit women for her brothel and becomes adept at handling her girls and her customers. Subsequent chapters are devoted to the everyday trials and details of life as a prostitute, from analysis into why women get into the profession to descriptions of the various types of "johns," men who hire prostitutes, and examples of the particularly bizarre fetishes some of them have. Xaviera talks about the business side of prostitution, explaining that she does it more for pleasure than for profit. She ends the book by going into detail about the toll her sexual appetites have had on her personal relationships and recounting the story of how her name became notorious through the machinations of a man named Abe the Bugger.



Chapter 1, Rubber Souls

Chapter 1, Rubber Souls Summary and Analysis

Xaviera Hollander begins the tale of her life as a prostitute with an account of being incarcerated and held in "the Tombs," a jail in New York. She and her high-class call girl cohorts are being ridiculed and provoked by streetwalkers, a type of prostitute generally considered lower class. Racial tensions flare as the streetwalkers accuse Xaviera, who has already become a madam or leader of a whorehouse at this time, of not employing any black women in her business. Just as Xaviera begins to protest, a black prison guard enters escorting another white prostitute who yells a racial slur at her, and a fight breaks out. Xaviera and the women she employs avoid the fight and are taken to see a judge. Xaviera pays for each of her girls but does not have enough money to pay her own bail. She is taken to Riker's Island, a newer women's prison, where she is again put in a room full of what she considers common criminals, people lower than her. She begins to wonder why she is considered no better than a common criminal by society at large. She recounts the story of her arrest in a flashback. Xaviera and her roommate Aurora were entertaining friends when a group of three persistent men called repeatedly, wanting to come over. Against her better instincts, Xaviera finally allowed them to. Once they arrived, it became immediately clear that they were undercover police officers. They announced the raid and searched the premises. Xaviera distracted them with a book of pornographic photos and hid her valuable black book of contacts and her cash records. The police arrested Xaviera, the prostitutes working for her at the time and her male friends—seven women and six men. After Xaviera is bailed out by her lawyer and her boyfriend Larry, she rides home with Larry, contemplating the pitfalls of what she considers an honest profession and professing that in spite of these, she loves the business of prostitution.



Chapter 2, A Family Affair

Chapter 2, A Family Affair Summary and Analysis

Chapter Two is Xaviera's account of her childhood years through the time she left Holland. She is born in Indonesia to a Dutch father and German/French mother. The Japanese invade the island on which the family lives and they are thrown into a concentration camp due to Xaviera's father's Jewish background. Xaviera and her mother are released after three years, but Xaviera's father is kept until the end of the war. He serves as a doctor in the camp while being held there and once treats Xaviera for a deep cut, not knowing she is his daughter. After the whole family is freed, they return to Amsterdam and her father rebuilds his medical practice.

During this period of Xaviera's childhood, an incident stands out in her memory from when she is about eleven years old. Her mother suspects that her father is having an affair with a patient that Xaviera calls the mustard girl because she is employed at a mustard factory. When her mother catches the girl performing fellatio on her father, she kicks Xaviera's father out of the house and threatens to divorce him. Xaviera notes that most such disputes between her parents are resolved "in bed." She mentions that her parents are particularly open about their sexuality and that nudity was not uncommon in their household. She goes on to talk about her curiosity about her parents' sex life and her fascination with her father in particular. She describes the extraordinary education she received from her father, including instruction in several languages and foreign travel to facilitate this learning, but complains of her mother's close watch on her during these vacations.

Xaviera develops an obsession with a friend from school named Helga. She becomes attracted to her sexually, though she is still attracted to boys. In fact, she has a boyfriend during this time with whom she conducts extensive sexual experimentation, but she remains fixated on Helga and plans to seduce her. The opportunity arises when Helga asks for advice regarding kissing on a first date with a boy and Xaviera responds by kissing her, removing her shirt and fondling her breasts, and achieving sexual satisfaction by rubbing herself against her unwitting friend. Xaviera finally loses her virginity at the age of seventeen to a boy named Dennis, despite her mother's urgings that she remain a virgin until marriage. She describes this event as an awakening, after which her sexual appetite became practically insatiable, directing itself toward practically anyone, even family. The taboo only excites her more, and this leads her to attempt to sleep with an uncle and successfully bed his son.

After graduating from high school, Xaviera gets a job at a leading advertising agency in Holland. She enters a contest being held by Manpower Employment Agency to find the best multilingual secretary in Holland and wins, propelling herself to a certain amount of fame in her home country and a new job at the agency. During this time she spends her weekends at Zandvoort, a beach resort frequented by gay men and lesbians, and begins experimenting further with the lesbian lifestyle. She meets a former



schoolteacher of hers, Betty, who confesses to having a crush on Xaviera in her high school days. Betty eventually sets Xaviera up with Elsbeth, a lesbian Xaviera dates but eventually regards as too "butch" for her tastes. Xaviera also becomes sexually involved with a heterosexual couple, Daedo and Sylvia, during this time, but eventually decides to leave Holland for new, hopefully more sexually uninhibited, surroundings. She decides to move to South Africa, where her sister lives. Before she leaves, she pays a final visit to Helga, who is now married and pregnant, and convinces her to have another sexual encounter. Helga's husband catches them and forbids Xaviera to ever visit them again.



Chapter 3, South Africa

Chapter 3, South Africa Summary and Analysis

Leaving Holland, Xaviera moves to Johannesburg, South Africa to live with her stepsister Mona, her father's daughter from his previous marriage to a Russian ballerina, and her husband Dan. On the flight to Johannesburg Xaviera spends hours talking to and eventually having sexual relations with the Italian businessman seated next to her. Mona, Dan and a girl named Deenie meet Xaviera at the airport. Deenie and Xaviera had corresponded through Sylvia, half of the heterosexual married couple Xaviera had experimented with in Holland. She and Xaviera exchange numbers, planning to meet later.

Xaviera settles in with Mona and Dan, where she lives a life of luxury and eventually boredom. She becomes sexually restless, as she had become used to regular sex in Holland but knows no one in South Africa. She mentions that Mona and Dan's seven year old son Jonathan becomes sexually curious about her and states that she has no interest in this possibility. Xaviera is attracted to Dan and eventually seduces him one day as they lounge near the pool. Though she finds him an exciting partner, she considers him inexperienced and proceeds to teach him various sexual techniques, for which she thinks Mona should have been grateful had she known. Eventually this secrecy becomes awkward for Xaviera and she decides to move out into an apartment. In the interim between living with Mona and Dan and moving into the apartment, she stays with Deenie and the two women begin a sexual relationship that lasts for about two months. After this, Xaviera begins a period of promiscuity within the privileged white community of Johannesburg. She finds this social group tiresome and hypocritical and eventually gains a negative reputation for sleeping around in the somewhat insular group.

Through a male friend named Aubrey, Xaviera eventually meets an American man named Carl Gordon at a party. At the time of their meeting, Carl has a girlfriend named Elly. Since she is interested in Carl and wants to talk to him, Xaviera gets Elly drunk at the party. Her plan works: Elly passes out, drunk, and Xaviera swoops in, making a date with Carl for the following Sunday. After a few dates they have sex, and though Xaviera feels that Carl needs to refine his sexual technique, she approves of his athleticism and larger-than-average penis. They begin dating exclusively and Xaviera is thrilled when, after a few weeks, Carl says he loves her and asks her to marry him. They move to the oceanside city of Durban and live a happy life together for two months before he moves back to America. He stops in Holland to meet her parents and Xaviera's mother gives Carl her hearty approval. Xaviera's father has had a stroke and is unable to speak or move. Xaviera then travels back to Holland, where she finds her father gravely ill after a second stroke. She discovers him in his bed after he has attempted to commit suicide by slashing his wrists with broken glass from a clock. Xaviera feels remorse for being absent during this trying time for her parents. When Xaviera is only a week away from leaving to join Carl in America, he calls her from Jamaica and asks her to delay her trip,

saying he must stay in Jamaica for reasons he does not explain. Xaviera is suspicious, but is placated by Carl.



Chapter 4, Dutch Treat

Chapter 4, Dutch Treat Summary and Analysis

Xaviera arrives in New York and is picked up at the airport by Carl, who treats her very coldly. He takes her to his penthouse in the East Seventies neighborhood in New York, which she notes is barely decorated and does not appear very lived-in. Carl says he must meet his mother and leaves, promising to return at six. When he does not return until ten she is extremely upset but takes no action. He leaves early for work and still has not returned by ten that evening when the phone rings. Xaviera answers and discovers that the woman on the other line is Rona Wong, Carl's secret second fiancée, a woman from Jamaica. Xaviera goes to Rona's apartment to talk with her and discovers that Carl had convinced Rona to move to New York to marry him, and then began ignoring her once she arrived. Xaviera is surprised that Carl would be interested in a woman of mixed Asian and Jamaican descent because, as she puts it, "Carl had been something of a racist in South Africa" (p. 58). They call Carl and urge him to come over and explain himself. When Carl arrives, Rona tells Xaviera of the time she decided to introduce herself to Carl's parents and his mother thought she was there to apply for a servant position. Carl is asked which of the women he intends to marry and he replies that Xaviera is his "official fiancée" (p. 59), to which Rona replies by attempting to throw a stone ashtray at his head. Xaviera notes that Carl seems sexually aroused by the prospect of danger.

Xaviera chooses to accept Carl's explanation for this situation and agrees not to bring it up again. She goes with Carl to meet his family a few days later. Though she likes Carl's father, she has an immediate dislike for his mother, Mrs. Gordon, whom she characterizes as an alcoholic, a gossip, and a phony. She also meets Jimmy, Carl's younger brother, whom she likes, and Mrs. Gordon's dog Dudley.

Xaviera takes a job at the Dutch foreign consulate because she needs a visa to continue living in America without marrying Carl. Also, she discovers that Carl is not quite as wealthy as he had represented himself to be in South Africa. She stops bringing up the topic of their postponed marriage because it angers Carl. Xaviera becomes more and more aware of Carl's undesirable traits. Though his family is of Jewish descent, they changed religions and last names to hide it, and he is ashamed of Xaviera's Jewish heritage as well. She finds out that he got divorced from a previous marriage only just after meeting her. When Xaviera believes she might be pregnant, Carl insists that she get an abortion despite her wishes and she realizes that he does not truly love her. She takes sleeping pills and contemplates throwing herself off of the building, but Carl stops her.

At a weekend retreat in the Hamptons that Xaviera and Carl take with his parents, Xaviera and Mrs. Gordon finally get into a fight when Mrs. Gordon accuses Xaviera of moving in with Carl just to live off his resources with no intention of marrying him. Xaviera responds by telling Mrs. Gordon that Carl is the one holding off the engagement



and insults her regarding her alcoholism, sex life, and grating personality. Mrs. Gordon slaps Xaviera across the face and tells her she hopes she gets deported. Carl and Xaviera go back to their apartment, where he gets angry with her for fighting with his mother and threatens to strike her with a coat hanger. Xaviera retaliates and begins beating him, noting again that he seems sexually aroused by the threat of bodily harm.

After this event, Xaviera moves into an apartment with another Dutch girl named Sonia. She says that she still loves Carl but feels that moving out is her only recourse at the time. Carl is frequently gone on trips, and Xaviera soothes her sadness by sleeping with a lesbian occasionally. Carl announces that he plans on attending the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, and Xaviera mentions that, though she did not make the connection at the time, an Indonesian friend of hers named Penny also planned to attend the Olympics. While Carl is gone, Xaviera has an affair with a woman from the Dominican Republic. She tells Carl upon his return and he says that they can never get married since he cannot trust her to remain faithful while he is away. After this, they still stay together and Carl's sexual demands get more and more kinky. He asks to be beaten and mistreated in various ways and Xaviera becomes fed up with it. Carl announces to her that his job is transferring him to Brazil, that he will leave in February and that she should plan on joining him there in May, when he promises that they will finally get married. The night before Carl leaves, though, Xaviera figures out the combination to his briefcase, opens it, and discovers a love letter from Penny referencing a tryst the two had in Mexico City. The letter also includes Penny's response to a marriage proposal from Carl. She says she accepts and will see him in Brazil.



Chapter 5, What's A Girl Like Me?

Chapter 5, What's A Girl Like Me? Summary and Analysis

After Carl moves to Brazil, Xaviera becomes despondent and consoles herself through sexual encounters with men. Her roommate Sonia becomes annoyed with this behavior at times. Eventually, to Xaviera's relief, one of the men she is sleeping with invites her to Miami for a long weekend. She feels refreshed after getting away from New York and meets a charming Englishman named Evelyn St. John on the flight back. He invites her to dinner and she ends up staying at his hotel for the week he is in town. She is surprised when he gives her a hundred dollars before he leaves. He tells her to give it to her parents and gives her a lecture about having greater self-worth. He says she deserves to have men take care of her financially. Xaviera is smitten with Evelyn and thinks she is in love with him, but goes back to her promiscuous ways after he leaves town.

One day a Dutchman named Dirk calls the consulate Xaviera works at to have his passport renewed. He and Xaviera become attracted to each other over the phone and have lunch, and decide to meet after work. They have what Xaviera considers a rather odd sexual encounter at her apartment and he pays her \$150, advising her that she needs to connect with the right people to make money this way. He introduces her to Pearl Greenberg, a friendly black madam who immediately has her come over and service a patron of her establishment. Pearl is impressed with Xaviera's willingness and skill and immediately employs her. Pearl's establishment is rather low-class in Xaviera's estimation, but she likes Pearl and the work. Xaviera makes the mistake of having customers come to her apartment, though, and one day a man posing as a policeman shows up at her door, comes in, and steals compromising photographs of Xaviera and Carl. She does not notice this until he has gone, and though he demands payment for not arresting her, she refuses. Soon, Xaviera reveals her new profession to Sonia, who moves out.

One of Xaviera's customers, Jim Watney, introduces her to two madams named Madeleine and Georgette. She agrees to work for Madeleine one night when a customer requests more girls than Madeleine employs. Xaviera impresses Madeleine by performing cunnilingus on another of Madeleine's girls and arousing the customers. She becomes a regular at Madeleine's and leaves Pearl's permanently. She is fired from her work at the Dutch Consulate after her boss listens in on a conversation with a customer, but soon gets a job at the United Nations mission. A man named Murray whom Xaviera hires to help her move into a new apartment warns her that, as a prostitute, she may need protection, and gives her his phone number. A coworker at Xaviera's new job suspects she is a prostitute and spreads the rumor, much to Xaviera's annoyance. To avoid being fired, Xaviera sleeps with her boss, which seems to work

until one day she arrives at work to discover that her desk has been searched and her book of men's addresses confiscated. She is fired.



Chapter 6, Shakedown

Chapter 6, Shakedown Summary and Analysis

While Xaviera is still working at the United Nations mission, she receives a letter from blackmailers involved with the man who stole pictures of her and Carl from her previous apartment. The letter also contains a Polaroid of the pictures. She calls the number listed in the letter and the man she speaks to demands \$5000 in exchange for not revealing her illegal activities to her employers. He tells Xaviera that he expects this payment in 48 hours and will call her at 7:00 PM on Wednesday. Unable to raise the money from friends or clients, Xaviera calls Murray the Mover out of desperation. He tells her to cancel all her dates before Wednesday and says he will come over that night to help her. When the blackmailers call, Xaviera tells them Murray is her uncle and that he will be representing her. The blackmailers tell them to meet at the Queens Cemetery that night with the \$5000. Murray makes a cryptic call, which frightens Xaviera. They drive out to the cemetery, and during the drive Murray reveals that he is involved with the Mafia. They meet a young man who Xaviera suspects is the same man who delivered the letter to her apartment based on her doorman's description. He is accompanied by another man who remains in a car—this turns out to be Mac, the false policeman. Murray and the young man negotiate outside of the car and agree on a fee of \$4000. Murray returns to the car and goes back to the young man with a bag that in fact conceals a gun with a silencer. As Xaviera watches, Murray appears to shoot the young man three times with this gun, after which he and Xaviera speed off in the car. He explains that the other man in the car will be dealt with by Murray's associates, who are hiding out in the cemetery waiting for him to exit his car. Xaviera is horrified.

Murray drops Xaviera off at her apartment, and soon after, a lawyer she had been unable to cancel a date with arrives at her door. They go to a restaurant and she tells him part of the blackmail story, leaving out the murder. He pays her without asking for sex in return. The next morning Murray arrives at Xaviera's apartment with the missing photographs. He describes how his business partners, hiding out in the cemetery, grabbed Mac as he exited his vehicle and got him to hand over the photos. Mac also revealed that a lawyer was responsible for the blackmail of Xaviera and many other prostitutes. Murray's men killed Mac and the lawyer. After telling this story, Murray leaves, but later demands money from Xaviera and sends friends of his over to her for free sex. This continues until a man from the F.B.I., Bill Tillman, comes to Xaviera's apartment to interrogate her regarding Murray. He tells her that they are not looking to arrest prostitutes but warns her not to employ underage girls or to violate the Mann Act, which involves transporting people across state lines for immoral purposes. Later, Murray calls her and tells her that the "murders" in the cemetery were an act and that he simply intimidated the young men into giving him the photos. Xaviera is not sure whether or not to believe him.



Chapter 7, Arrests

Chapter 7, Arrests Summary and Analysis

In Chapter Seven, Xaviera details several times when she is arrested for prostitution. She states that though there are ways to avoid being caught by the law as a prostitute, arrest is practically inevitable, because any number of people can turn you in for any number of reasons. First she recalls the story of an incident in which she is reported by a man she had banned from her brothel. The police investigate her finances and report that she is the biggest madam operating in New York at the time. Her lawyer gets the charge reduced and she is ordered to pay a fine. A prior arrest also happens at her house, and she describes that incident in greater detail. A man calls her house claiming to be friends with a current customer. Xaviera invites him over and he brings several friends, asking her to call out for more girls. Once the girls arrive, the men insist on paying in advance, then arrest Xaviera and the other women. Her lawyer argues that this is entrapment and she pays a fine to get out. Xaviera then recalls the story of her very first arrest. While working one night at Georgette Harcourt's brothel, Xaviera is asked to stay for two clients who call in. They turn out to be policemen who caught an outgoing customer and threatened to call his family if he did not lead them back to the brothel. The policemen arrest Xaviera and the other women in Georgette's brothel and take them to the police station, where they are questioned individually. Xaviera calls Paul Lindfield, a man she has been dating for months, and tells him she has been arrested, to which he responds that she should take his name out of her contact book. She and the other women are then taken to the Tombs, the location described in Chapter One. This is Xaviera's first experience being in the Tombs, and she is disgusted by what she calls the "human dregs" (p. 122), lower-class prostitutes from whom she first learns about pimps. Xaviera, Georgette, and the other women from the brothel are taken to the courthouse where the case is dismissed. Carter, a banker whom Xaviera serviced at Georgette's before the raid, is there to meet them, and Xaviera enlists him as her banker from that point forward.



Chapter 8, Puerto Rico

Chapter 8, Puerto Rico Summary and Analysis

After Xaviera's boyfriend Paul Lindfield breaks up with her during her arrest, Xaviera decides to travel to Puerto Rico as many of her New York friends like to do in the winter. She decided to spend a three-day weekend there and catches a plane to San Juan. On her third day there she meets a man named Harry Curtis who invites her to stay with him during his week vacation. She moves in with Harry, feeling madly in love with him, and they spend the week together. When Harry leaves, Xaviera decides to stay and begin working in Puerto Rico as a prostitute. The next day, she sees a man named Mr. Schwartz on the beach who had recently written her a bad check in New York and demands the money from him, threatening to tell his wife he enlisted her services. He pays her the money. The next night she decides to attempt to pick up customers in the casino of the hotel she is staying at. After a first attempt aborted due to her overly scandalous clothing, she returns and has greater success, eventually making \$200 to \$300 per day. Her days consist, she says, of seducing young men of about age 17 in the daytime, picking up one or two customers in the early afternoon, and picking up another two in the evening, with a goal of four customers a day, though she recalls an incident featuring eight men all at once.

Soon, Xaviera feels that the hotel she is staying at has started to catch on to her business dealings and she decides to move out. She meets David, a 28 year old, who invites her to go sailing on his rubber raft. She accepts and afterward meets his three roommates, Ricky, Brian, and Hood, who like Xaviera and invite her to move into the guest house they all share. She accepts and they have an orgy to celebrate, during which she catches the landlady's 45 year old daughter spying on them. Soon after the landlady and her daughter sneak into Xaviera's room and discover pornographic pictures of her and her male roommates, but leave without saying anything when confronted. Xaviera meets an insurance adjuster named Larry Dreyfus at the casino and entrusts him with several thousand dollars to take back to New York. One day David convinces Xaviera to try the hallucinogenic drug mescaline. They and the other roommates spend the day high and naked on the beach until they are interrupted by a group of black men and later a group of schoolchildren. After three months in Puerto Rico, Xaviera decides to go back to New York. She goes to see David, the only roommate still living in their beach house, and discovers her room has been robbed and David has flown the country. A mutual friend confirms that David was in fact the thief.



Chapter 9, Call Me Madam

Chapter 9, Call Me Madam Summary and Analysis

After Xaviera returns to New York from Puerto Rico, she spends two months as an independent call girl, but eventually decides to become a madam and run her own brothel. She rents a one-bedroom apartment in the East Fifties and begins to recruit prostitutes for her staff. She hires a street hooker named Misty but finds that she treats the customers badly and dismisses her. She hires a girl named Leonora who is the only girl with a pimp who Xaviera ever felt it was not a mistake on her part to hire. She explains that it is best to avoid girls with pimps because "sooner or later they try to move in on your business" (p. 148). She recalls the story of a girl named Greta whose pimp was sent to jail but who still managed to keep control over her using men who worked for him.

Xaviera elaborates on different ways she uses to find girls to work for her. In one method, she approaches a lesbian in a gay bar and attempts to get her to join the business, a tactic she observes another madam named Janet using. Xaviera tries to get a lesbian virgin named Jenny in the business with no luck. Xaviera is invited to a weekend at a nudist camp by her friend Norman, where she recruits several free-spirited nudist women for her brothel. After two months of operating her brothel in a one-bedroom apartment, the volume of her clientele forces Xaviera to move to a three-bedroom apartment in the East Sixties. Shortly after moving, Xaviera receives a call from Madeleine, who says she is retiring and offers to let Xaviera run her business. Xaviera instead pays her \$10,000 for her client books and phone lines. Xaviera makes the mistake of hiring a hooker with a pimp, partly because of her college degree, whom she catches attempting to steal customers from her black book. She describes the trouble she has leaving town for vacations because she is unable to find girls competent enough to run the place while she is gone. She also says she misses the intimacy she felt with men before she became a madam, when she did not feel rushed with clients.



Chapter 10, The Oldest Profession Updated, or, Behind Open Doors

Chapter 10, The Oldest Profession Updated, or, Behind Open Doors Summary and Analysis

In Chapter Ten, Xaviera attempts to back up her argument that prostitution is a perfectly respectable and necessary profession through a series of examples of clients she feels have benefited from her services. In Story one, a psychiatrist sends her a young man who is twenty-nine, still a virgin, and afraid to have sex. Xaviera manages to give him such a good first experience that he remarks, "I never knew making love to a woman could be so beautiful" (p. 171). In Story Two, Xaviera converses with a married woman who confesses that she would rather her husband cheat on her with a prostitute than with a full-time mistress. In Story Three, a man named Robert marries a woman only to find out that she is more interested in his money than in him. He goes to Xaviera for sex, saying he would rather pay an honest prostitute than sleep with his dishonest wife. A prostitute, Xaviera says, must be different things for different men in order to satisfy their varying needs. She describes the variety of girls within her brothel and talks about how they are expected to dress and behave. She describes methods of both speeding up and delaying a man's sexual climax. Xaviera discusses the hygienic standards her girls are expected to adhere to and professes that she has never come across a venereal disease in all her years of prostitution. Xaviera talks about her gynecologist and about birth control methods, solutions for continuing to work while menstruating and the product, new in those days, called K-Y Jelly. Finally she talks about the types of girls who become prostitutes and why, focusing on girls who stay in prostitution only long enough to make the money they need, she admires them the most. She counters the saying that prostitutes make the best wives with the argument that most girls are unable to ever leave the lifestyle behind completely.



Chapter 11, Different Strokes for Different Folks, or, Wall Stree and Me

Chapter 11, Different Strokes for Different Folks, or, Wall Stree and Me Summary and Analysis

Xaviera spends the entirety of Chapter Eleven categorizing the different types of customers, or johns, that she has seen in her years of being a prostitute. First she categorizes based on profession, saying that stockbrokers and bankers are some of her best customers. The stock market has an effect on the amount of business she gets, she says. She recounts two stories of how reliable the business of bankers is, then notes that they, predictably, are concerned with the fairness of the deal. She characterizes brokers as particularly rowdy and postulates that this may be a result of their typically Irish backgrounds. She goes on to characterize the behavior of many ethnic groups she has dealt with over the years, including Italian-Americans, American Jews, Greeks, British, Dutch, French, Germans, Israelis, Hungarians, Austrians, Italians, Spanish, Latin Americans, and "Orientals." Xaviera then makes characterizations of johns by age, saying that men in their thirties and forties are generally the favorites of prostitutes. Last, Xaviera lists the general types of johns she has observed over the years based on their behaviors and what they ask of the prostitutes.



Chapter 12, Whipped (S)cream

Chapter 12, Whipped (S)cream Summary and Analysis

Chapter Twelve deals exclusively with the various sexual aberrations and sexual kinks Xaviera has dealt with over the years. She lists several types before focusing on sadists and masochists for most of the chapter. She defines the terms then gives examples of several of the more interesting customers she has served over the years, including several wealthy and even famous customers (whom she gives aliases). In one scene she and Laura, the black prostitute from Madeleine's brothel, extensively beat the beautiful actress wife of a film producer to the delight of the couple. Xaviera describes two different men whose sexual fantasies involve Nazi concentration camp settings, one of whom is named Abraham. She also describes the elaborate masochistic fantasies of a famous New York disc jockey (William H. Levy) and a television personality (Marco Polo). Xaviera says that she generally avoids performing any acts that might cause a person real damage, however. She then goes on to recount the story of a time when she is savagely beaten and almost killed by a man named Larry Lener, a sadist Xaviera fails to identify as such until it is too late. Adding insult to injury, the doctor who treats her wounds tries to proposition her in the hospital.



Chapter 13, An Adult Tale, or, Fantasy and Me

Chapter 13, An Adult Tale, or, Fantasy and Me Summary and Analysis

In Chapter Thirteen, Xaviera discusses the more elaborate scenes she has staged for johns. Some of these involve storytelling; others involve painstaking scene-setting, paid "extras," costumes and unusual acts such as wrestling, urination and even defecation. She gives examples of specific johns and notes that men who desire such elaborate scenes are usually willing to pay extravagant amounts to have them created. She expresses outright disgust toward the men whose obsession centers on what she calls "filth," things such as urination and defecation.

Chapter 14, The Business of Pleasure

Chapter 14, The Business of Pleasure Summary and Analysis

Chapter Fourteen deals with the monetary concerns of operating a brothel. Xaviera gives specific values for every aspect of the business, from what she typically charges different johns based on their incomes and requirements to the typical income a madam can take in per week. She says that she can generally trust her employees to be honest about how much they charge, partly because the johns will later volunteer that information. Xaviera receives rent from the girls who live in her brothel, which helps her pay her expenses. She keeps a red book detailing the johns she serves, which girls they see, and how much they are charged and has Larry, her boyfriend, collect on bounced checks. One of her main expenses is bounced checks that are never paid. Even greater than that is the expense of getting raided by the police, which entails paying bail money, paying off police, and moving her brothel. Xaviera also details some of her smaller expenses such as lingerie and paying to buy her black book of contact information back from the police, without which her brothel could hardly function. Xaviera says that she pays some of her expenses through trade for sex, which is extremely common for prostitutes. Xaviera ends the chapter by laying out her argument that prostitution should not be considered a crime, as it is a useful and necessary service.



Chapter 15, For Pleasure More Than Profit

Chapter 15, For Pleasure More Than Profit Summary and Analysis

In Chapter Fifteen, Xaviera recounts the story of her relationship with Paul Lindfield, who was mentioned in earlier chapters as the boyfriend that breaks up with her upon hearing she has been arrested. She meets Paul in Miami during a particularly lonely spell and from the start he makes it clear that theirs is a casual relationship, though Xaviera wants it to be more. While Xaviera feels that she is in love with Paul, she always senses a distance between them, possibly because her profession disturbs him. Eventually Xaviera resorts to involving other parties in their lovemaking to hold his interest, but she soon becomes dissatisfied with this arrangement and loses the feelings she has for Paul.

Xaviera's relationship with Paul Lindfield echoes her earlier relationship with Carl. She is initially attracted to his good looks and has a satisfying sexual relationship with him at first, even feeling that she has fallen in love, but it soon becomes clear that his feelings for her are not as serious. He is remarkably selfish both monetarily and in the bedroom and demands more and more of Xaviera while offering little in return. Though Xaviera enjoys the "swinging lifestyle" of partner-sharing, she realizes that Paul's interest in it reflects a lack of interest in her.



Chapter 16, Ships in the Night

Chapter 16, Ships in the Night Summary and Analysis

In Chapter Sixteen, Xaviera explains her feeling that love and sex are completely separate activities through the story of her complicated relationship with her boyfriend Larry. Though she claims to love Larry, she constantly cheats on him and is fairly upfront about it. Regardless, Larry is jealous of this, but he stays with her in spite of her wandering. She stays with Larry only in order to have the constant, reassuring presence a boyfriend provides, and she acknowledges that she does not want to spend the rest of her life with him. She reassures him that the affairs she has with other men are like "ships passing in the night" (p. 267). She tries to engage Larry in swinging at a nudist camp but angers him when she breaks their promise not to climax when sleeping with others. While vacationing in Puerto Rico, Xaviera and Larry get in a physical fight that almost turns deadly after he catches her cheating on him. She falls in love with a man named Skip and tells Larry, who rationalizes this through the belief that Skip is a paying customer while he is not.

Xaviera has trouble getting her steady boyfriend Larry to see her point of view regarding sexual relationships. Larry is possessive but passive, and Xaviera seems to respect him less for not being "manly" enough. She cheats on him with many partners and is not always honest about this, and it angers Larry to the point of violence at times. Though she tries to represent herself as forthcoming, it is obvious that Xaviera is deceiving Larry in some way, be it regarding the nature of their relationship, the feelings she has for him, or what their future might hold. In this chapter, we see that Xaviera's easygoing attitudes toward sex can lead her to dysfunctional relationships that she is unable to deal with or get out of easily. Finally, Xaviera falls in love with a Greek man named Takis and convinces Larry to be in a three-way relationship, though it is obviously a thoroughly unsatisfactory arrangement to him.



Chapter 17, Abe the Bugger

Chapter 17, Abe the Bugger Summary and Analysis

In Chapter Seventeen, Xaviera is introduced to a man she calls Abe the Bugger by Robin Moore, one of the coauthors of *The Happy Hooker*. She allows Abe to install listening devices in her apartment at Robin's suggestion, supposedly to record dialogue to be used in the book. Abe repeatedly deceives her, installing extra recording devices that she cannot turn off and even video recorders without informing her. After Abe is threatened by the FBI for accidentally broadcasting a group sex scene that occurred at Xaviera's, he admits that he has often sold information to the FBI and other crime-investigating organizations. He then convinces her to participate in an escalating amount of monetary payoffs in order to protect her business and to keep from being deported. Xaviera also agrees to cooperate with a committee called the New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Crime, Its Causes, Control, and Effect on Society in exchange for help with immigration issues. A detective named Bill Phillips agrees to help Xaviera, as well, but Bill and Abe instead conspire to extort money out of Xaviera and keep most of it for themselves. When Xaviera's boyfriend Larry needs to go to court involving an insurance matter, Abe convinces him to take on a lawyer named Ed Carmino and fix the outcome of the case via a payoff so that Abe might report the payoff to a crime commission and indict the judge. It comes to light that Abe has been working for an entirely different commission, the Knapp Commission, appointed by Mayor John Lindsay to investigate government and police corruption.

This chapter details Xaviera's rise to infamy through her entanglement with the Knapp Commission. She unwittingly provides information to the committee through the actions of Abe the Bugger. Due to issues involving the process of receiving a Green Card, Xaviera is very vulnerable to threats of deportation, leading to payoffs and other shady dealings with various individuals. At the time that *The Happy Hooker* was published, the events in this chapter had happened only recently, so Xaviera makes references to the reader having heard of them in the news. It is through these involvements that she becomes famous and gains the audience for *The Happy Hooker*.

Epilogue, Thirty Years Later

Epilogue, Thirty Years Later Summary and Analysis

Xaviera ends the book on an optimistic note, concluding that the rights and general status of prostitutes has improved since her time in the business.



Characters

Xaviera Hollander

Xaviera Hollander is the main character and narrator of *The Happy Hooker*. She is born in Indonesia to Dutch Jewish parents and is raised in Amsterdam. Xaviera adores her father and even seems sexually preoccupied with him. She shows an interest in sexual experimentation from a young age and experiments with both men and women and even some family members. She shows a strong competitive drive and works herself to the top of any endeavor she participates in, from being a secretary in Holland to becoming a highly successful madam in New York. She is strung along and eventually rejected by her fiancé, Carl Gordon, and begins her life in prostitution after seeking solace through promiscuity. She becomes a successful madam due to her good business sense, shrewdness, and genuine love for the work. Her need for variety in her sex life keeps her from establishing a traditional relationship, but she has many lovers and falls in love easily. She becomes involved in various bribes and payoffs in trying to maintain her business and keep from being deported, but manages to avoid much jail time. Xaviera repeatedly argues that prostitution is not a shameful profession and that it should be as respected as any other, as it is just as necessary. This edition of *The Happy Hooker* includes a section written in 2002, after Xaviera has left the United States and returned to her native Holland.

Carl Gordon

Carl Gordon is Xaviera's eventual fiancé whom she meets in South Africa before she has gotten into prostitution. Xaviera and Carl meet at a party when he is still dating another woman. Xaviera chooses to ignore this fact and soon lures him away. She is initially attracted by his good looks and wealth. He asks Xaviera to marry him shortly before being transferred from Johannesburg to Durban and she accepts. Carl even goes so far as to meet Xaviera's parents in Holland to get approval for the marriage, but following their move to New York he seems to lose interest in Xaviera and cheats on her with Rona Wong, his secret second fiancée from Jamaica, and eventually proposes to a third girl named Penny. Toward the end of their relationship, Xaviera notes that Carl insists on non-traditional sex involving violence. Carl sides with his mother when she and Xaviera get into a fight over Xaviera and Carl's seemingly endless engagement. Xaviera is disturbed by the fact that Carl's Jewish family has changed their name in an attempt to deny their heritage. Xaviera and Carl sometimes get in physical fights toward the end of their relationship, but stay together, Xaviera says, because they are so sexually compatible. Xaviera even forgives him for being simultaneously engaged to her and Rona, but when Xaviera finds out that Carl has invited Penny to meet him in Sao Paulo, she finally ends the relationship.



Xaviera's Father

Xaviera was influenced heavily by her father in her formative years. He is sexually free-spirited, intelligent, successful, and generous. He is also a Jewish doctor, and survives the Japanese concentration camp the family is thrown in when Xaviera is a baby only because they value his medical skills. Xaviera's father values education highly and teaches her several languages in his free time. He cheats on Xaviera's mother, possibly more than once, but most notably with a patient Xaviera refers to as the "Mustard Girl." Xaviera learns from her parents, however, that most marital disputes may be solved through sex. Xaviera regularly sees her father naked as a child and is intrigued by his body. Xaviera idolizes her father to the point of obsession and readily admits that she would marry a man simply because he reminds her of her father. Xaviera's father becomes ill during the period when she is engaged to Carl Gordon and attempts suicide, which Xaviera discovers on a visit. Once she starts making money as a prostitute in New York, Xaviera regularly sends money to her parents to pay for her father's huge hospital bills.

Larry

Larry is Xaviera's boyfriend at the time of her arrest in Chapter One. She entrusts him with the key to her safe-deposit box so that he can bail her out of jail. The two share a complicated relationship wherein Xaviera seems mainly attracted to his willingness to stay with her no matter what happens. She cheats on him repeatedly even though it makes him hurt and angry. Eventually, Xaviera and Larry reach an agreement where she is in a relationship with both he and Takis, her Greek lover, at the same time.

Murray the Mover

Murray the Mover is a man who helps Xaviera move into a new apartment and gives her his contact information in case of emergency. He eventually turns out to be connected to the Mafia. Xaviera calls him for help when she is blackmailed for nude photos of herself and Carl and Murray orchestrates the possible murder of her blackmailers in order to retrieve the photographs. He later tells Xaviera that he did not actually murder anyone, but simply intimidated them into faking it and giving him the photos, but she is unsure whether or not to believe him.

Paul Lindfield

Paul Lindfield is a jeweler Xaviera meets in Miami and dates for a few months until she is arrested while working in Georgette's brothel. She calls him for help and he tells her to take his name out of her contact book. Their relationship is much like Xaviera's earlier relationship with Carl: he becomes more and more selfish and is never willing to commit to Xaviera in any way, and she eventually loses interest in him, even before he breaks up with her.



Helga

Helga is Xaviera's childhood friend who unwittingly becomes the object of Xaviera's lust and affection. This culminates in a sexual encounter that Xaviera coaxes Helga into. This encounter is not followed up on until years later as Xaviera is about to leave Holland, when she talks a now pregnant and married Helga into allowing her breasts to be suckled. Helga's boorish husband catches them and forbids Xaviera and Helga to see each other ever again. Though Xaviera never loses her affection for Helga after this, she considers her a lost cause after this.

Xaviera's Mother

Xaviera's mother is the second wife of Xaviera's father. She has a mixed German and French background and lives in Holland with Xaviera's father. She is described as opposite in personality to Xaviera's father and warns the young Xaviera to save her virginity and not move in with a man until marriage.

Takis

Takis is the young Greek lover that Xaviera takes on while dating Larry. She describes him as lazy and says that he used to date another madam in Canada who took care of him financially. Larry is jealous of her relationship with Takis, but eventually the three begin a three-way relationship, though it is not entirely satisfactory to any party involved.

Abe the Bugger

Abe the Bugger is the man responsible for Xaviera's infamy, as he involves her in the Knapp Commission, an investigation into corruption in New York. Once the commission exposes the information it has gathered, her name is plastered all over the news. Abe talks Xaviera into allowing bugs in her home and paying him bribes which he supposedly gives to judges and other influential people in her defense.

Pearl Greenberg

Pearl Greenberg is the first madam that Xaviera works for. Xaviera likes Pearl but feels that her establishment is too low-class for her tastes, and she eventually moves on to higher-class, higher-paying madams.

Mac

Mac is the man who, posing as a policeman, enters Xaviera's apartment and steals nude photos of her and Carl which he later uses to attempt to blackmail her. He may or may not be later murdered by Murray the Mover.



Evelyn St. John

Evelyn St. John is the first man who explicitly pays Xaviera for her company. Though she is shocked and offended at first, he talks her into accepting the money by saying she should send it to her parents. He tells her that she should allow men to support her financially.

Rona Wong

Rona Wong is Xaviera's fiancé Carl Gordon's secret second fiancée in New York. She is Jamaican and of half Asian descent and Xaviera characterizes her as less attractive than herself. The two women confront Carl at Rona's house after a chance meeting over the phone.

Sonia

Sonia is the Dutch girl Xaviera moves in with after moving out of Carl's apartment following her fight with Mrs. Gordon. Sonia eventually moves out of the apartment that they share after Xaviera reveals that she has become involved in prostitution.

Penny

Penny is Xaviera's Indonesian friend in New York who has an affair with Xaviera's fiancé Carl Gordon. Carl proposes marriage to her and invites her to live with him when he moves to Brazil. This is the final event that breaks up Xaviera and Carl's engagement.

David, Ricky, Brian, and Hood

David, Ricky, Brian, and Hood are the four young men Xaviera meets in Puerto Rico and moves in with. All four are law school graduates except David, the leader of the group, a dropout who enjoys stealing and eventually steals all of Xaviera's money before leaving Puerto Rico.



Objects/Places

New York

Most of *The Happy Hooker* takes place in New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Xaviera moves to New York at the behest of Carl Gordon in order to marry him and begin a life there, but he strings her along without ever actually marrying her. After Carl leaves her, Xaviera becomes a call girl and quickly works herself up the ranks to become the madam of her own brothel.

Indonesia

Xaviera is born in Indonesia and lives through internment in a Japanese concentration camp with her parents. Before their imprisonment they live a luxurious life, with two large homes run by servants.

Holland

Xaviera grows up in Holland after her family leaves Indonesia. She eventually grows bored with what she considers Holland's prudish sexuality and moves to South Africa after graduating and working as a secretary for a while.

Amsterdam

Amsterdam is the city in Holland in which most of the action in Xaviera's early life takes place. She grows up and attends school in Amsterdam, becomes a semi-famous secretary, and is involved in many different relationships in her youth there.

Zandvoort

Zandvoort is the beach resort near Amsterdam where Xaviera meets her old teacher Betty, who reveals that she is a lesbian and harbored a crush on Xaviera in her high school days. Xaviera spends her weekends there and quickly becomes part of the gay and lesbian scene in the area, dating a woman named Elsbeth.

Johannesburg

Xaviera moves to Johannesburg, South Africa in search of adventure after becoming bored with life in Holland. She moves in with her father's daughter from a previous marriage for a short time in Johannesburg and has an affair with her husband. After moving out, she soon meets Carl Gordon, the man who becomes her fiancé.



Durban

Carl is transferred from Johannesburg to Durban soon after meeting Xaviera. Durban is an oceanside city famous for its surfing.

Miami

Xaviera goes to Miami the Christmas after Carl leaves her. It is there that she meets Paul Lindfield, the jeweler who eventually dumps her over the phone when she gets arrested.

Sao Paulo

Xaviera's fiancé Carl Gordon moves to Sao Paulo with his mistress Penny, telling Xaviera to meet him there after a few months so they may finally get married. At this point, Xaviera gives up on Carl and stays in New York to continue her life without him.

Puerto Rico

Xaviera goes to Puerto Rico for a long weekend and ends up staying for several months after she realizes her new profession can be practiced anywhere. She moves in with a group of young men who eventually steal all her money.



Themes

Prostitution is a Respectable Profession

Xaviera repeatedly argues that prostitution is as legitimate a profession as any, citing instances in which she has helped men with sexual dysfunction, sometimes even at the request of a psychologist, in addition to the services she provides normal customers. Xaviera is outraged at the fact that prostitution is illegal in the United States and that prostitutes are persecuted, having to pay bribes and bail to stay in business. Xaviera cites many instances in which the services of a prostitute are necessary and even therapeutic. She points out that men who enjoy particularly unusual sexual practices are afraid to ask for them, knowing that it is unlikely that their wives or girl friends will agree to them. Men who are disabled may find it a relief to be able to pay for sexual relief. She asks the wife of a customer whether she would prefer her husband cheat on her with a prostitute or a mistress, and the woman chooses the prostitute because the level of attachment is relatively low. As long as a prostitute is honest and businesslike, Xaviera argues, the transaction can be mutually beneficial to the john and the prostitute and even, as in this case, the john's wife. Xaviera even argues that the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases when working as a prostitute is exaggerated by people who aren't involved in the business and swears that she has never seen a case of STD transmission in all her years working. In the Epilogue, Xaviera reflects on what she sees as advances in public acceptance of the business of prostitution, including increased organization and cooperation between sex workers.

Love and Sex are Not Necessarily Related

Though she is engaged to Carl and does plan to marry him before their breakup, Xaviera never seems to totally settle down sexually. She uses sex for recreation, therapy, and as a livelihood. The men she falls in love with are usually sexually attractive to her immediately, but she makes a clear distinction between love and sex. The men she is with do not always understand this attitude, but she remains dedicated to it. She seems to have inherited this attitude from her father, who loves her mother very much but has a roving eye and can appreciate many different types of women. The lesson that love is separate from sex is made clear to her at an early age when her mother catches her father receiving fellatio from a patient. Though this causes a fight between her parents, Xaviera is not concerned that they will divorce, because she knows that her father loves her mother and does not love the patient he cheated on her with. "Cheating" in the traditional sense seems like a foreign concept to Xaviera—she has no qualms about sleeping with married men or women and regularly has several partners at a time, whether or not they approve of this practice. She is quite open about her sexual freedom in spite of the disapproval of some others. The late 1960s, when much of *The Happy Hooker* takes place, are a watershed time for this attitude in America, so Xaviera's convictions fit well into her time and place. Non-traditional

relationships are just beginning to gain exposure and acceptance, and *The Happy Hooker* is a part of that movement.

Call Girls are Better than Street Hookers

Even though she is herself a prostitute, Xaviera expresses disapproval of other women in the profession, namely those who do not act in what she considers a professional manner. This includes the types of prostitutes who walk the streets looking for johns and who often have pimps. Xaviera seems to consider these women "lower class" than call girls like herself. The first chapter of *The Happy Hooker* begins with an encounter between Xaviera's expensive call girls and lower class streetwalkers in a New York jail, and Xaviera recounts that the scene almost becomes violent before she and her girls are taken out of the cell. Every experience she recounts that deals with a street hooker or prostitute with a pimp ends badly, and eventually she makes a policy of not employing them in her brothels. At heart, though, Xaviera seems to disapprove of lower class street prostitutes because they are not business-savvy. Being a highly motivated and competitive individual, Xaviera cannot understand people who do not take advantage of every opportunity they are presented with.

Style

Perspective

The *Happy Hooker* is written from the point of view of its author, Xaviera Hollander. She uses the first-person perspective for the entire book. The entire book is written in the past tense except for the Epilogue, which is written in present tense. For the bulk of the book, Xaviera recollects events that happened to her in the years directly prior to the writing, the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first few chapters deal with her childhood. The epilogue is set in the present, which is 2002 at the time of the writing.

The story is told through a mixture of exposition and dialogue, with exposition making up the bulk of the action. Quotes are used if particularly important or memorable, but in most cases Xaviera just writes her recollection of events without attributing much dialogue to other characters. Some chapters deal more with lists and essay-like explanations of Xaviera's point of view on different topics. Such chapters include exposition only in the form of illustrative stories and take on an almost persuasive tone as Xaviera attempts to legitimize prostitution as a profession.

The timeline of *The Happy Hooker* is uncertain in places, as chronology is not always made explicit. Xaviera flashes forward and backward in time as necessary to illustrate her points, though generally the action is proceeding in the order in which events happened in Xaviera's life.

Tone

Xaviera uses a very casual language in *The Happy Hooker*, peppering her writing liberally with curse words and graphic descriptions of sexual acts. This is appropriate to her subject matter, as she is a prostitute herself and is familiar with the slang terms used in that profession. Normally taboo acts are treated with nonchalance through Xaviera's extremely straightforward wording. The few bits of dialogue included are used to illustrate the personality of a character or to spice up a description of an event. Xaviera is a biased narrator, as the events in *The Happy Hooker* occurred in her own life, and expresses her opinions of the events she recounts through her wording and choice of quotes. In addition, she often directly expresses her opinions about people and events.

In the parts of the book that do not involve the ongoing narrative of Xaviera's life, she assumes an authoritative tone, acting as an instructor for the reader. In these chapters, which all occur in the second half of the book, Xaviera uses examples from her experience to generalize about different aspects of the life of a prostitute, from the different types of johns to the typical business expenses of a madam. It is obvious that she would like for *The Happy Hooker* to be as much an instructional volume as a memoir.



Structure

The Happy Hooker has seventeen chapters and an epilogue. Chapters average around fifteen pages each. The titles of the chapters are usually puns or humorous references to events or concepts contained within the chapter. The chapters are fairly short and either tell a complete story or use several shorter stories to illustrate a point.

Characters in The Happy Hooker, and their stories, come and go as necessary for Xaviera's purposes. A character we only hear about in passing in the first part of the book becomes the focus of a later chapter in which they illustrate one of the author's points.

Chapters One through Nine proceed more or less chronologically, telling the story of Xaviera's journey from childhood through her time as a successful madam in New York. Chapters Ten through Seventeen are each about various aspects of life as a prostitute or madam in New York and use chronologically ambiguous stories to illustrate these aspects. The Epilogue was written thirty years after the rest of the book and is the author's reflections on the text and the current state (circa 2002) of prostitution in public opinion and in practice.

After Xaviera gives the story of her background, explaining how she came to be one of New York's top madams, she focuses on the sorts of stories and generalizations that would catch the interest of the casual reader, who might only be interested in her story for its more scandalous aspects. This is further evidence of her good business sense, which is also shown in her success as a madam.



Quotes

"My mother used to tell me, when I was a bit older, that the secret of a successful marriage was to sleep in a double bed." (17)

"As I grew older, I became more and more attached to my father, and my ambition was to be as intelligent and respected as he was throughout his life. Freud was dead right in my case: if I were to meet a man who reminded me of my father, I would doubtless fall madly in love with him." (18)

"I couldn't care less who I did it with, even my relatives. In fact, the idea of sampling forbidden fruit made incest all the more exciting. The only taboo against it was we don't make babies, that's all." (24)

"I desperately needed warmth and reassurance, and an obvious easy way was to hear men praise me as a lover." (73)

"As has been established, I daresay, I was never very inhibited about sex." (76)

"Love can elate you in a way that a month of early nights never can." (76)

"In my opinion, no brothel can operate more than a year in New York without being raided at least once by police." (114)

"I was lucky that I was in a profession that allows me employment no matter where I am." (127)

"Call me mercenary. Or call me madam. As I tell my customers, I don't care, just call me any time!" (167)

"It so happens I love the work I am doing." (165)

"When the stocks go up, the cocks go up!" (189)

"My ability to spot a masochist is uncanny. I can recognize a slave in any environment, and often before he knows it himself, because I can read eyes the way palmists read hands." (213)

"In my opinion, it is ridiculous that prostitution should be treated as a crime. How can it be a crime when there is no victim?" (254)

"If I didn't have my heart literally in my work, or sometimes fall in love, I would go crazy." (255)

"As I've said before, I am an emotional person. I have my ups and downs, and if my boyfriend weren't there, safe and sure, and if I didn't occasionally fall in love, I would get very depressed and couldn't keep my head straight." (267)



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Xaviera's early sexual experiences. How do they shape her future as a prostitute and madam?

Discuss Xaviera's relationship with and feelings for her father. What does she learn from her father?

Discuss Xaviera's relationship with and feelings for her mother. What does she learn from her mother?

How are Carl Gordon and Paul Lindfield alike? What does this indicate about Xaviera and her relationships with men?

Discuss the concept of "free love" as it was understood in the 1960s in America and how this concept compares to Xaviera's ideas about love and sex.

Why does Xaviera argue that prostitution is just as legitimate as any other profession? Cite some examples that she gives of instances in which prostitution may be useful and beneficial.

Do you believe that Xaviera Hollander paints a somewhat rosier picture of the business of prostitution than she actually experienced? Is she really "the happy hooker" or is she focusing on the more pleasant aspects of prostitution (freedom, easy money, for example) while downplaying its negative aspects (disease, abuse)? Why would she do this?