

# In the Skin of a Lion



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL ONDAATJE

Born in Sri Lanka in 1943, at a time when the country was still called Ceylon and remained under British rule, Michael Ondaatje left the country at the age of eleven to study in England. He then left England for Canada at the age of nineteen. There, he developed his literary craft, which has allowed him to be considered one of Canada's most important contemporary writers. He initially focused on poetry, publishing various collections of poems to critical acclaim. Later, he became more famous for his prose, in particular his novel *The English Patient* for which he won the Booker Prize in 1992. Whether they are set in Canada, Europe, or Sri Lanka, his works are often concerned with delving deep into historical events. In his poetic works as well as his novels, he frequently uses collage-like, fragmented narratives to evoke different mind states and to stimulate the reader's imagination.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After experiencing a steady inflow of British immigrants throughout the 19th century, Canada experienced a second wave of immigration in the early 1900s, characterized by immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, many of whom were from Italy or Portugal. In the 1930s, the Great Depression, a worldwide economic recession, left many Canadians unemployed and homeless. During this period, foreign immigrants often lived in insalubrious conditions and were denied basic workplace rights. Fearing anarchist or communist revolutionary violence, police units known as "Red Squads" began targeting people involved in labor organizations, in particular foreign immigrants who wanted to fight for their rights. In Toronto, Police Chief Dennis Draper was responsible for much of the violent repression against immigrants and left-wing political units. In brutal ways, Draper disrupted strikes as well as protests by the unemployed, thus earning support from the business community who did not want its workers to fight for better wages.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Characters from *In the Skin of a Lion*, such as Hana and Caravaggio, will later become protagonists in Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*, set a decade later in Italy during World War II. *In the Skin of a Lion* also makes direct reference to Polish-British writer Joseph Conrad's work. Conrad's most famous novel, *In the Heart of Darkness*, shares some similar themes to *In the Skin of a Lion*. Set in Congo during

the period of colonization, the novel denounces the way in which an entire population—here, African natives—can be made powerless and subordinate to white colonizers. However, unlike Ondaatje's novel, Conrad's story does not directly give voice to the marginalized population, as its narrator is an English seaman who profits from colonization. In North America, the tradition of giving voice to members of the working class can be seen to date back to the second half of the 19th century. In the United States, Rebecca Harding Davis's short story *Life in the Iron Mills*, published in 1861, revolutionized literature by giving voice to the working class. Other American authors, such as Mark Twain and Stephen Crane, aimed to depict in a realistic way the lives of poor, marginalized characters traditionally left out of canonical literature. *In the Skin of a Lion* also takes its title from a line from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and the novel echoes that ancient text in a variety of ways.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** In the Skin of a Lion
- **When Written:** 1979-1987
- **Where Written:** Canada
- **When Published:** 1987
- **Literary Period:** Postmodernism
- **Genre:** Novel
- **Setting:** Canada in the early 20th century
- **Climax:** Alice's death, which leads Patrick to take part in actions of political protest
- **Antagonist:** The rich and powerful—represented by people such as Commissioner Harris and millionaire Ambrose Small—are the main oppressors in this novel, as they are concerned only with personal gain and keeping the working-class poor and vulnerable
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Ambrose Small.** Although millionaire Ambrose Small actually existed and disappeared in 1919, what *In the Skin of a Lion* recounts after this is fictitious. Small's body was never recovered and the case was officially closed in 1960.

**Brick.** In addition to being a writer, Ondaatje is also an acclaimed critic and editor. He currently edits the Canadian literary magazine *Brick* with his wife, Linda Spalding, a writer.



## PLOT SUMMARY

Through fragmented stories and evocative memories, *In the Skin of a Lion* recounts the story of its protagonist, Patrick Lewis, and his experiences as a member of the Canadian working class.

The novel opens as Patrick is driving with a young girl—whom the reader later discovers is Hana—toward Marmora, Ontario, and Patrick recounts his memories out loud. The girl is inclined to trust Patrick’s version of the story. Even if he were to tell her that there is a castle outside, she would have to believe him, because they are driving through the countryside in darkness, and she has no way of looking out to see for herself.

Patrick grows up in Eastern Ontario, where he helps his taciturn father, Hazen Lewis, with manual labor on various farms. In the winter, anonymous groups of foreign loggers come to Patrick’s town to cut down trees, and Patrick observes them from afar. After Hazen experiments with **dynamite**, he becomes part of the logging process himself, working as a dynamiter for companies in charge of taking logs down the river. Patrick accompanies his father on his dynamiting expeditions, helping him by diving into the freezing river to set dynamite onto jammed logs. In his free time, Patrick enjoys solitary, nighttime activities such as reading a geography book and observing the shapes and colors of moths. One night, Patrick steps out of the house and, attracted by specks of light, discovers the foreign loggers skating and laughing on the frozen river while carrying burning cattails. The sight excites Patrick’s imagination but he feels too shy to join them and walks back home, amazed by this magical scene.

In the meantime, in Toronto, Commissioner Harris presides over the construction of the Bloor Street Viaduct. There, workers take part in exhausting, dangerous work. One worker in particular, Macedonian immigrant Nicholas Temelcoff, distinguishes himself by his bravery and his talent. He takes part in the most acrobatic tasks, often working by hanging off the bridge. One night, when a group of lost nuns walks on the bridge, one of them falls off and Nicholas saves her, though everyone believes that the nun has disappeared forever. While the nun, who keeps silent throughout this entire episode, tries to mend Nicholas’s shoulder, which he has dislodged when he caught her, the two of them walk to Nicholas’s friend Kosta’s restaurant. There, they share an intimate moment in the empty restaurant. The nun vanishes the next day, transforming her habit into a dress and entering ordinary civilian life.

Patrick arrives in Toronto at the age of twenty-one. There, he finds work as a “searcher”: one of the many people employed to search for millionaire Ambrose Small, a predatory businessman who has disappeared without leaving a trace. Patrick’s investigations lead him to Small’s lover, the actress Clara Dickens, with whom Patrick soon falls in love. The two of them

begin a passionate love affair, although Clara repeatedly warns Patrick that she will one day leave him to return to Small. When they go to Clara’s friend Alice Gull’s country house for a few days, Patrick learns more about Clara’s past life, and in particular her erotic anecdotes, but he feels that a part of her will always remain out of his reach. When Alice joins them, Patrick is amazed by the friendship and complicity that exists between the two women.

Back in Toronto, Patrick tries to convince Clara not to leave him, but she decides to take the train to Ambrose anyway, after warning Patrick not to search for her and leaving him with her pet, a blind iguana. Unable to move on, Patrick spends the next two years of his life obsessed with Clara’s absence. When he runs into Alice one day and she later comes to his apartment, Patrick and she make love. However, Alice notices that Patrick is still overwhelmed by the memory of Clara and she tells him to go look for Clara, so that he can finally get rid of her dark influence over his life.

Patrick then discovers that Clara and Ambrose are hiding in the region where he grew up. Although he finds Ambrose’s house and tells him that all he wants is to speak to Clara, Ambrose believes that Patrick is interested in receiving the reward for his capture. Therefore, Ambrose tries to kill Patrick by setting him on fire. However, Patrick manages to wound Ambrose with his knife and escape. Back at his hotel, Patrick hears a knock on the door and discovers that Clara has come to see him. She explains that she did not think Patrick would be so affected by her departure. After she sends a doctor for him, the two of them make love, leaving bloodstains on the sheets from Patrick’s wounds. However, Clara leaves the next morning and returns to Ambrose’s house.

Back in Toronto, Patrick finds a job in the tunnels for the waterworks that Commissioner Harris is now building. In addition to routine manual labor, Patrick is sometimes called to **dynamite** large sections of walls, using the skills that he learned from his father. In the meantime, Commissioner Harris, focused only on the beauty of what he is building, shows absolutely no concern for the dangerous and unsanitary conditions in which his workers are forced to toil.

In the city, Patrick leads a solitary life, focused only on his work and his basic needs. His colleagues, as well as the members of the neighborhood he lives in, are mostly foreign immigrants he cannot communicate with. However, one day, when he explains to the Macedonian shop owners he buys food from that he has a pet iguana, the entire Macedonian community becomes extremely curious about Patrick’s life. Moved by the concern and friendliness around him, Patrick realizes that he misses having social relationships in his life. Feeling welcomed into a new community, he joins the Macedonians one evening for an illegal show at the waterworks. There, foreign immigrants of various origins watch skits that have strong political undertones. One of the shows depicts the story of an

immigrant who is abused by the police and who begins to bang on the stage in protest. Shocked at the intensity of this scene, Patrick rushes on stage to keep the actor from hurting himself. There, he discovers that the actor is a woman and, moved by her performance, he goes backstage after the show to look for her. When he finally finds her, she calls him by his name and he realizes that she is none other than Alice Gull.

Patrick and Alice then begin a romantic relationship that makes Patrick feel joyous and fulfilled in a way he has never experienced before. Alice has a daughter, Hana, from a lover who died while she was pregnant. Her lover, Cato, was a political activist who was killed by business leaders for trying to organize unions among Finnish loggers in the countryside. Through this story, Patrick discovers that the anonymous loggers he knew in his youth were Finnish immigrants. Patrick feels guilty for not knowing more about the Finns' history or about the history of labor organization in the region.

Patrick also discovers that Alice now has strong political opinions. She advocates against societal injustice, accusing the rich of exploiting the working class for their own advantage and believing in the necessity of a working-class revolution. Despite her belief in the grand ideals of equality and justice, though, she does not feel comfortable with the idea of ordering someone to kill for a political cause. This peaceful aspect of her personality makes Patrick fall in love with her, as he too believes that grand causes should remain moved by compassion.

Despite her frequent stories about her relationship with Cato, Alice refuses to talk about her past, focusing instead on her present and future. However, Patrick becomes intrigued by one of Alice's photographs of bridge workers and decides to investigate the topic. He thus learns that Nicholas Temelcoff, the baker whom Hana is friends with, was once a worker on the Bloor Street Viaduct. In addition, Patrick discovers that a nun once disappeared on this bridge. Tying together various pieces of information, Patrick concludes that Alice must have been this nun, and that this episode sparked her friendship with Nicholas, who later gave up bridge building to open a bakery.

Through Alice and Hana, Patrick discovers the intricacies of the Macedonian culture and language. He realizes that, despite being Canadian, he is an alien in this diverse neighborhood. In this way, the typical dynamic of immigration is reversed: even though immigrants are traditionally told to integrate into Canadian society, Patrick finds that *he* is the one who needs to adapt to his foreign neighbors and absorb their customs if he wants to fit in. This gives Patrick respect for the tight-knit quality of the Macedonians' community and for their historical role in building Toronto's infrastructure, through their participation in the city's various construction projects.

Patrick's peaceful life is cut short by Alice's death. Although the details of her last moments are not known until the end of the novel, Patrick later recounts that she died because she mistakenly grabbed a bag in the street that contained a bomb.

When it exploded, Patrick, who was nearby, ran towards her and held her in his arms while she died. Overwhelmed by grief and anger, Patrick decides to take revenge on the rich. Leaving Hana with Nicholas Temelcoff, Patrick goes to the seaside to try to burn down a fancy hotel, the Muskoka Hotel. He is arrested for this and spends five years in prison, where he meets the thief Caravaggio.

The narrative then shifts briefly to Caravaggio's story, describing him as an adventurous, charismatic thief specialized in stealing paintings. In prison, Caravaggio was attacked by a group of men who insulted him for being Italian and cut his neck. As Caravaggio runs away through the countryside and hides in a cottage by a lake, he recalls various episodes of his life, including the moment he met his wife Giannetta while hiding in a mushroom factory after hurting his ankle during a robbery.

When Patrick is released from prison, he returns to Toronto and reconnects with Hana. This allows him to realize that loving relationships are what give meaning to his life. Although he initially wanted to stay in silence and avoid communication to mourn Alice's death, he now understands that it is his duty to protect the people around him and give them as much love as he can

At the same time, he does not lose track of his political goals. With his friends Caravaggio and Giannetta, he organizes an expedition to the waterworks to **dynamite** the building, in order to protest against the horrific conditions the workers are exposed to. Although Patrick succeeds in entering the heavily guarded building, he fails to make his dynamite explode. Instead, he takes part in a conversation with Commissioner Harris about the working class. Patrick's goal is to arouse compassion in Harris and make him aware of the responsibility the Commissioner has toward his workers' lives. However, Harris remains focused on trying to justify himself, invoking the beauty of the infrastructure he has built as an excuse for exploiting workers. In the end, though, Harris sets Patrick free, understanding that Patrick was less intent on taking his life than on making his voice heard.

After this episode, Patrick leads a caring life with Hana. One evening, Clara Dickens calls him, announcing that Ambrose Small has died and that she needs Patrick's help. When Clara asks who the young girl is who answered the phone, Patrick initially fails to define his relationship but ultimately tells Clara that Hana is his daughter. In this way, he finally accepts responsibility for Hana's life. He says he will go pick Clara up with Hana, telling the young girl that he will tell her about Clara on the way.

Patrick and Hana thus embark on a journey at dawn, taking the car for a four-hour trip to Marmora, Ontario, where Clara is waiting for them. On the way, Patrick prepares to tell Hana about Clara. Patrick's storytelling thus opens and concludes the novel, putting his memories and his narrative voice at the

forefront.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Patrick Lewis** – Canadian protagonist Patrick Lewis grows up in the countryside in Eastern Ontario with his taciturn father Hazen Lewis. Although Patrick enjoys socializing, he later demonstrates some of the reserved characteristics of his father. Throughout his life, he will enjoy solitary activities such as observing moths, reading, or watching other people. Through his romantic relationship with Clara Dickens, Patrick proves enthusiastic and warm-hearted, though he fails to open himself up entirely. It is only once he becomes romantically involved with Alice Gull that his social self reaches its full potential: he proves committed and open with Alice, loving with her daughter Hana, and he becomes curious about the Macedonian community's language and culture. His moments of political protest demonstrate his indignation about the terrible conditions in which the working class is usually forced to work. However, his compassionate outlook keeps him from becoming brutal, and he trusts that sharing workers' stories and making their voices heard is as important as taking a violent political stand. He trusts in the dignity of all human beings and believes that people are often more complex than what they might appear to be from the outside.

**Alice Gull** – Clara Dickens's friend and Patrick Lewis's romantic partner was initially a nun, whom Nicholas Temelcoff saved from falling off the bridge. However, she never talks about this period of her life, focusing instead on her acting career, her relationship with Cato, and her political beliefs. Outraged by the exploitation of the working and the indifference of the rich, she believes passionately in the necessity of a working-class revolution. At the same time, though, she does not truly support violence, as she believes that she could never tell someone to harm another human being. These characteristics reveal her to be a deeply thoughtful and empathetic human being, capable of influencing the people around her. She has high regard for friendship and considers that love is capable of radically shaping someone's identity. Spontaneous and open-minded, she lives in the present moment, making the most of the community around her.

**Clara Dickens** – The radio actress Clara Dickens is Ambrose Small's mistress before becoming Patrick Lewis's lover. Although she is affectionate toward Patrick, she remains more committed to Ambrose and does not think twice about leaving Patrick. Her view of romantic relationships is marked by ideals of passion and adventure. Following Ambrose's consumerist view of society, she believes that people can be replaced and can easily move on from one relationship to the next. She believes in the importance of creativity in people's lives and

enjoys taking part in fanciful activities such as spirit drawings with her friend Alice Gull.

**Nicholas Temelcoff** – Initially known as a fearless worker on the bridge, Macedonian immigrant Nicholas Temelcoff later leads a more peaceful life as a baker. He is deeply talented at manual work but remains reserved, preferring to keep to himself than to engage with his colleagues. He proves generous and capable of self-sacrifice when he saves the nun from falling off the bridge. This episode also allows him to reveal his romantic sensibilities, as he soon becomes enamored of the mysterious nun. He makes many efforts to integrate Canadian society, working hard to learn English, a process he enjoys but finds more difficult than his acrobatics on the bridge.

**Caravaggio** – Despite being a thief, Caravaggio is one of the novel's most immediately likable characters. An Italian immigrant, Caravaggio is particularly skillful at seducing the people around him, overwhelming them with his charm and good humor. He is deeply in love with his wife Giannetta, with whom he shares a respectful, cooperative relationship, as she often helps him in his work.

**Cato** – Alice Gull's lover is a political activist who never appears directly in the novel. His political work forces him to keep a secret identity, and all that is known about him is that Cato is his war name. Alice and he share an intensely passionate relationship, marked by the secrecy of Cato's work. He sacrifices his private life for the political cause he believes in, putting his own life at risk—and ultimately being killed—to organize unions and defend the rights of vulnerable members of the working class.

**Hana** – Alice and Cato's daughter is a particularly mature girl, showing pride for her father's work and helping Patrick integrate into Macedonian society by teaching him foreign words. She proves capable of taking care of herself when Patrick is sent to prison, accepting that Patrick's political actions have taken him away from her temporarily.

**Rowland Harris** – Commissioner Harris believes in the beauty of his work and trusts that the projects he is in charge of, such as the construction of the Bloor Street Viaduct and the waterworks, will be glorious additions to the city of Toronto. Despite these lofty ambitions, Harris proves indifferent to the plight of the many workers whose lives he presides over. He prefers to invent excuses for the workers' exploitation than to actually confront the problem head-on.

**Ambrose Small** – Millionaire Ambrose Small is characterized by his rapacious attitude toward business and, in general, toward life. He believes that everything can be bought and discarded, even his romantic relationships. At the end of his life, his lover Clara Dickens realizes that he has kept to himself many of his secrets and has displayed a façade of indifference that is not necessarily in line with his actual emotions.

**Hazen Lewis** – Patrick Lewis's father is a reserved, taciturn

person focused exclusively on his work as a dynamiter for a logging company. Although he often shows concern for Patrick's safety and well-being, he rarely talks, preferring to make himself understood through his actions. His concern for his work suggests that he feels pride in his skills and values his professional occupation.

**Giannetta** – Caravaggio's wife proves both generous and fearless when she helps him escape the mushroom factory where he is hiding after a robbery. She shares certain similar traits with her husband, such as a bold love of spontaneity and adventure. Devoted to her husband, she helps him in his profession as thief and accompanies him on their expedition to help Patrick dynamite the waterworks.

**Anne** – A woman Caravaggio meets at the lake where he is sleeping in somebody else's cottage illegally. Anne proves perceptive and courageous when she soon discovers that Caravaggio is a thief, but is not scared of him and instead tells him about her life. She is deeply introspective, as she appreciates writing and thinking by the lake in silence.

**Daniel Stoyanoff** – A member of Nicholas's village in Macedonia, Daniel Stoyanoff worked in Canada, where his arm was cut off during his time in a factory. He received large financial compensation for this and spent the rest of his life telling his story to the Macedonian youth, encouraging them to live a wealthier life in Canada.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Kosta** – Nicholas's friend Kosta is the owner of the Ohrida Lake restaurant, modeled after a courtyard in the Balkans. He is one of the political organizers of the community and proves friendly toward Patrick when they get to know each other.

**Emil** – A young bilingual boy that the Macedonian community asks to translate Patrick's English words. Emil is friendly and thoughtful, making sure not to rebuke Patrick or make him feel uncomfortable.

**Clara's Mother** – Clara's mother tells Patrick about Clara's past relationship with Stump Jones and gives him indications about where to find Ambrose and Clara. She also warns Patrick that he is reacting too strongly to Clara's departure and should forget about her.

**Pomphrey** – Commissioner Harris shares with English architect Pomphrey his great visions for the city of Toronto, and Pomphrey later designs the waterworks building.

**Elizabeth** – A woman Patrick meets at the Garden of the Blind on Page Island, when he is hiding from the police after setting fire to the Muskoka Hotel.

**Theresa Kormann** – Ambrose Small's wife, considered a rigid, morally upright woman.

**Alfred** – A young boy whom Caravaggio meets after escaping from prison who helps him get rid of the blue paint on his face.

**Briffa** – A friend of Ambrose Small's who never appears directly in the story but whom Clara Dickens mentions as a man of impressive creative vision.

**Arthur Goss** – The City of Toronto's first official photographer, known for his photographs of construction projects, such as the Bloor Street Viaduct.

**Elena** – The shopkeeper who sells vetch to Patrick for months before discovering that he uses it to feed his iguana.

**The Rich Wife** – Caravaggio seduces a rich woman at a costume party so that he can steal her boat to take Patrick to the waterworks. The woman is ostentatiously flirtatious and is clearly dissatisfied with her marriage—a situation that Caravaggio takes advantage of.

**The Rich Husband** – The rich wife's rough, uninteresting husband.

**Stump Jones** – A man Clara was briefly married to as a teenager.

**Alicia** – The parrot in Kosta's restaurant.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



### THE WORKING CLASS VS. THE RICH

*In the Skin of a Lion* depicts the cultural and political context of early 20th-century Canada, a period in which European immigrants played an important role in the Canadian economy. Protagonist Patrick Lewis and his fellow working-class colleagues, such as Macedonian immigrant Nicholas Temelcoff, put their lives and health at risk every day as they take part in arduous manual labor on dangerous bridges, underground tunnels, and tanneries. By contrast, the rich—people such as Commissioner Harris, an indifferent man in charge of large construction works, and Ambrose Small, a millionaire who only cares about accumulating wealth—live a seemingly carefree life, centered on consumerism and luxury. The novel highlights the cruelty of this class-based inequality, showing that the rich keep workers poor and disenfranchised in order to exploit them for their own interests. Although Patrick is initially drawn to violence to protest against these conditions, he ultimately accepts that no ideology can justify the destruction of human lives. Like Patrick, through its focus on individual struggles, the novel itself suggests that no grand plan or dream, however noble it may seem, should ignore everyone's right to dignity and respect. In Canada, while the rich enjoy sheltered lives, the working

class toils in extreme conditions to earn low wages. In this context, society's greatest projects—such as the building of bridges and waterworks—depend on the exploitation of vulnerable groups of people. Throughout the novel, workers are described as anonymous groups taking part in dangerous physical work. In Eastern Ontario, during Patrick's childhood, nameless loggers come and go with the winter, working in unsafe temperatures to cut and transport wood. In the waterworks tunnels, workers' tasks are compared to those of mules. During the construction of the Prince Edward Bridge, workers are so numerous and impersonal—as well as easily breakable and substitutable—that they are associated with tools: "A man is an extension of hammer, drill, flame." In these manual tasks, workers are exposed to great dangers and many of them die on the job (succumbing to pneumonia in the cold winter, falling off the bridge, etc.) or as a consequence of the hardships and toxic environments they are exposed to (e.g., sulphur in factories, salts and acids in the tannery).

Although Commissioner Harris justifies his building projects by explaining that he creates jobs for people, he actually cares very little about his workers' health or well-being. When Patrick confronts Harris about the number of men who have died while building the tunnels, Harris only says: "There was no record kept." By using the lack of records as a justification to ignore people's deaths, Harris reveals that he does not care enough about his workers to keep track of their lives. His reply also suggests that having no record is convenient for him, since it keeps him from being publicly accused of killing men. Paying workers low wages, regardless of the life-and-death risks that such labor involves, thus allows him to build expensive projects and become rich. As various characters note, Harris's clothing and the materials he chooses for his construction projects cost more than the sum of many workers' salaries, proving that he is living a luxurious life the workers could never dream of.

Instead of protecting this weak population, the state reinforces the exploitation of workers, most of whom are recent immigrants. When the police chief proposes a new law prohibiting foreigners from organizing public meetings, for instance, he intends to stifle any effort for the working class to organize collectively to defend their rights. Therefore, this new law reinforces working-class immigrants' status as disenfranchised citizens, unable to protect their own lives. This blatant injustice leads some members of the working class to hope for the possibility of revolution. However, as the novel ultimately shows, even progressive ideologies can fail to take into account the value of individual human lives. True progress, the novel suggests, must always involve compassion and respect for people's dignity. Although a violently exploitative system might justify the use of violence to oppose it, violence can prove cruel and inhumane on either side of the political spectrum. When Cato, a political activist, is killed by businessmen who want to keep him from organizing workers

politically, he becomes a martyr for the working class's cause. However, ironically, Cato's former lover (and Patrick's current partner) Alice Gull dies in an equally violent way after she mistakenly carries a bomb likely designed by working-class activists. Although less systematic, working-class violence thus proves just as capable of killing innocent victims as violence perpetrated by the rich.

Patrick recognizes the danger of allowing ideology or any grand project to disregard the value of individual lives. "The trouble with ideology, Alice, is that it hates the private. You must make it human," he says. Despite Alice's belief in the validity of revolution, Alice herself recognizes this danger when she admits that she would never be capable of ordering someone to kill: "I don't think I'm big enough to put someone in a position where they have to hurt another," she humbly explains. Despite their anger toward the rich, both characters thus recognize the importance of respecting other people's lives and agency. After Alice's death, Patrick is so angry at this injustice that he sets fire to a fancy hotel and plans to blow up Harris's waterworks, but he ultimately proves less interested in inflicting human damage than in venting his rage against the upper class.

Patrick's injunction to make ideology more "private" and "human" can be seen as a plea to recognize the inherent humanity and equality of all beings, regardless of their social status, nationality, or wealth. When Patrick confronts Commissioner Harris about the workers who have died, he is pursuing this very idea: he is encouraging Harris to remember that the lives over which the Commissioner presides are just as valuable as his own. Through its focus on the intimate lives of the working class, *In the Skin of a Lion* upholds this goal, as it strives to bring depth and complexity to traditionally voiceless members of society: the working class. Even though the novel does not bring any clear indication of political progress, it suggests that empathy, solidarity, and respect for other humans' dignity are the most important vehicles of individual growth and, through this—since the private should not be separate from the public—of social progress.



## COMMUNITY AND IMMIGRANT CULTURE

Patrick Lewis, who grew up with a reclusive father in the harsh countryside of Eastern Ontario, is used to experiencing life on his own. Although moving to Toronto and becoming accustomed to the monotony of urban lower-class life initially reinforces these solitary habits, Patrick soon feels attracted to the vibrant community of European immigrants around him. As he takes part in local Macedonian social life, he realizes that, despite being Canadian, *he* is the one who must adapt to a new culture. This forces him to reevaluate traditional views about immigration, according to which new immigrants must assimilate into national culture. As Patrick becomes friends with his neighbors, he concludes that

everyone can learn from each other's cultural traditions, and that immigration can lead to mutual exchange instead of one-sided assimilation. He also realizes that his Macedonian friends have brought a positive contribution to society through their hard work on construction projects. The novel thus concludes that immigrant members of the working class should be celebrated for their participation in the development of the city and, in general, of modern society itself.

Patrick and his fellow workers, mostly European immigrants, share lives marked by rootlessness, as they all strive to survive in a city they do not fully belong to. In these conditions, the daily routine of life and work can become a solitary, impersonal exercise, keeping people apart instead of bringing them together. Early on in his life, Patrick feels as though he lives in a world not quite his own, because he feels detached from his own family. His mother is never mentioned and, although his father teaches him important dynamiting skills, the man remains an elusive figure, quiet and detached, taking more pleasure in solitary work than in interacting with his son. Patrick thus fails to develop a strong sense of identity, whether national or family-based.

When Patrick moves to the city at twenty-one, he is faced with a similar sense of estrangement: "Now in the city he was new even to himself, the past locked away." This new environment severs him from his past, forcing him to build an entirely new life for himself. However, Patrick does not seek company and accepts a monotonous, frugal existence. Although he lives in a diverse neighborhood peopled by many of his fellow workers, men who have recently immigrated from Europe, for a long time Patrick remains on the outskirts of this community. When he chats with local Macedonian store owners who know only that he lives alone and that he always orders peaches on Friday, he feels "ashamed they could discover so little about him. He had reduced himself almost to nothing." In its potential for anonymity, city life has thus made Patrick disconnected from the people around him, allowing him to live freely on his own but also, as a consequence, condemning him to isolation.

By contrast, even though European immigrants who reach Canada are faced with the difficult tasks of trying to learn English and to integrate into local society, these groups succeed in maintaining cultural cohesion through their many ethnic shops, restaurants, and gatherings. Many immigrants' weak knowledge of English forces them to live a marginalized life, as the prohibition for immigrants to organize public meetings and even speak a foreign language in the street further keeps them from becoming active participants in politics. However, they remain able to rely on their cultural community for solidarity and support. Their vibrant sense of community allows them to find relief from the harshness of urban working-class life.

Over time, Patrick thus realizes that, in this immigrant neighborhood, *he* is the one who will need to adjust to his

Macedonian neighbors. This reverses traditional views about the necessity for immigrants to assimilate into local culture. It suggests, instead, that members of a diverse, multicultural society might mutually learn from each other's presence, thus enriching the lives of everyone involved. Patrick soon discovers that, despite being Canadian, he is a cultural minority in his own section of the city. When the Macedonian store-owners become curious about Patrick's life one day, Patrick, who is used to spending so much time on his own, is surprised by the animation that surrounds him: "And suddenly Patrick, surrounded by friendship, concern, was smiling, feeling the tears on his face falling towards his stern Macedonian-style moustache." The Macedonians' friendliness fills a social gap that Patrick had not necessarily realized he needed to fill. In this moment, he realizes that the Macedonians are not necessarily the ones who will need to try to integrate into Canadian society. Rather, Patrick himself must learn to engage with their culture, since, "among these strangers (...) he was their alien." Patrick thus suggests that inclusion can happen both ways: as integration *into* Canadian society and as the embrace *by Canadians* of the recent immigrants' cultural traditions.

In addition, if the Macedonian community makes Patrick feel integrated into a warm, welcoming group, Patrick also highlights the importance of valuing each person's individual life, beyond the safety net of the community. Through his concern for individual histories, Patrick plays an important role in making marginalized members of society proud of their contribution to the Canadian nation. When Patrick shows Nicholas Temelcoff an old picture of Nicholas working on an important bridge in Toronto, Nicholas realizes that the work he performed was truly exceptional: "Patrick's gift, that arrow into the past, shows him the wealth in himself, how he has been sewn into history. Now he will begin to tell stories." Therefore, although community organization keeps the Macedonians from feeling lonely or estranged in Canada, Patrick sees beyond community into the lives of individuals. Instead of condemning lower-class immigrants to the margins of history, Patrick—and the entire novel—suggests that these people's actions have been essential to the construction of modern society. As such, the immigrant working class's labor should be celebrated as a crucial element in the development of Canada, of modern society, and of history itself.



### LOVE AND FAMILY

Patrick Lewis's early experiences of love with the actress Clara Dickens are marked by bitterness and disappointment. Although Patrick dreams of long-term commitment with Clara, Clara is more inclined to pursue pleasure alone and she ultimately decides to return to her former lover, the millionaire Ambrose Small. The failure of his relationship leads Patrick to withdraw into himself, accepting that he will never be able to fully connect with the human

beings around him. However, when Patrick begins a new relationship with Clara's friend Alice Gull, his views of love change radically. By learning more about the individuals in Alice's past, Patrick begins to feel linked to the people around him and to trust that love can generate solidarity and compassion. In this way, Patrick rejects the conception of love as a form of consumerism, in which individuals can easily be replaced, and embraces Alice's working-class ideals of solidarity and inclusion. The novel suggests that love can breed unity and interdependence instead of selfishness, interlacing people's stories in a network of interdependence.

*In the Skin of a Lion* initially depicts love as an element of consumerist culture, according to which a product (or, in this case, a person) can be bought or substituted. When Patrick meets Clara, Ambrose Small's lover, Clara warns Patrick that she will leave him one day to return to Ambrose. To reassure Patrick that he will be fine without her, she tells him: "Don't worry, Patrick. Things fill in. People are replaced." Clara's vision of love does not follow ideals of long-term commitment, but obeys the more transient logic of pleasure, which allows relationships to be fleeting and disengaged. In this way, her attitude toward romance follows Ambrose Small's general vision of life, centered on greed and personal gain, which Alice later describes in negative terms: "[Ambrose] was predatory. He let nothing cling to him, not even Clara." In upper-class society, Alice denounces, love can thus become part of a consumerist project, in which people are potentially interchangeable goods.

Although Clara's departure leaves Patrick overwhelmed by grief, unable to understand how Clara could prove so disconnected to him, over time he realizes that relationships can never be fully transparent, since each member of the relationship carries his or her share of mystery. Patrick finds himself forced to accept that he will never fully understand Clara: "He keeps finding and losing parts of her, as if opening a drawer to discover another mask." During his later relationship with Alice Gull, too, he must accept that parts of Alice's life will forever remain secret to him, since she takes on so many roles as an actress. However, throughout these experiences, Patrick does not realize that he is just as secretive as the people around him: "There was a wall in him that no one reached. Not even Clara, though she assumed it had deformed him."

Although he appreciates honesty in others, he does not grasp that parts of him will also remain invisible to other beings.

This mysterious "wall" in Patrick's character—what Alice later describes as Patrick's appreciation for solitude, his capacity to be emotionally "self-sufficient"—makes him feel detached from other people's lives. "Patrick has clung like moss to strangers, to the nooks and fissures of their situations. He has always been alien, the third person in the picture." He understands that his inability to insert himself into the human world around him forces him into the role of an external observer, someone who,

in the same way that Ambrose Small and Clara collect relationships, collects people's stories: "Clara and Ambrose and Alice and Temelcoff and Cato—this cluster made up a drama without him. And he himself was nothing but a prism that refracted their lives. He searched out things, he collected things."

However, in the second part of the novel, Patrick's relationship with Alice proves that love can play an important part in connecting individuals to each other, allowing them to expand beyond their own selves. Alice highlights the way in which love can bring psychological healing. After her lover Cato's death, Alice relies on her friend Clara for mental support: "I love Clara. (...) I miss her. She made me sane for all those years. That was important for what I am now," she tells Patrick. Alice's decision to share with Patrick (Clara's former lover) her personal thoughts about Clara reveals that she does not feel jealousy toward Patrick's former relationship, but rather she hopes that their common knowledge of Clara might bring them together. Alice thus suggests that love is not a mere addition to a person's life—an act of collecting and discarding—but, instead, something that can radically alter multiples people's lives.

As Patrick becomes acquainted with the various characters in Alice's past, he comes to accept that he belongs to a network of interdependence. He understands that, by maintaining a relationship with Alice, he has now become part of the stories she tells and the characters who have marked her life: "He saw himself gazing at so many stories – knowing of Alice's lover Cato and Hana's wanderings in the baker's world. (...) His own life was no longer a single story but part of a mural, which was a falling together of accomplices." Through love, Patrick thus becomes part of multiple stories, expanding beyond the narrow limits of his individual self. Patrick's awareness of his integration into a network that links various people together moves him to take responsibility for the people around him. By the end of the novel, after Alice's death, Patrick declares himself Hana's father, taking on a role that does not conform to biological fact. This act of love reveals his conviction that he is now part of stories greater than his own, and that it is worth sacrificing part of his individual freedom to care for people he loves—people who, through this love, have become members of his family.



## LITERATURE, IMAGINATION, AND CREATIVITY

Patrick Lewis, who enjoys reading, believes that literature can provide comfort in difficult times, bringing order to a confusing present and preserving the past. However, when Patrick realizes that literature does not necessarily alter his life (for example, it fails to give him guidelines on how to renew his relationship with Clara or to bring his beloved Alice back), he realizes that literature belongs to a separate realm from the real world. Therefore, instead of



presenting art as something that might impact life directly, the novel suggests that creating art is a comforting process in itself, capable of providing an escape from the chaos and uncertainty of human life. In fact, *In the Skin of a Lion* applies this logic to its very own story, suggesting that readers should understand literary characters as full human beings who are capable of living beyond the limits of plot. In this way, author Michael Ondaatje encourages everyone—humans and characters alike—to revel in the freedom that art-making can provide, as it brings respite from the harsh reality of human life.

Throughout the novel, Patrick wants to believe that literature can bring order and structure to his chaotic life. However, he soon realizes that life does not follow the same rules as literature, and that he must accept the tumultuous pain and confusion that life brings. After Clara leaves Patrick for Ambrose Small, Patrick finds comfort in the traditional literary structure of love stories. “Patrick believed in archaic words like *befall* and *doomed*. The doom of Patrick Lewis. The doom of Ambrose Small. The words suggested spells and visions, a choreography of fate. A long time ago he had been told never to follow her. If Patrick was a hero he could come down on Small like an arrow. He could lead an iguana on a silver leash to its mistress.” Referencing traditional elements of storytelling, such as the concept of “doom,” Patrick tries to understand his life in terms of destiny. Imagining himself as a hero brings him comfort, since it gives him clear guidelines on how he is supposed to act. However, this moment of wishful thinking soon proves incompatible with reality, since Ambrose Small is not actually doomed (he has simply chosen to escape civilization) and Clara is not waiting for Patrick to come rescue her (rather, she has chosen to leave Patrick for Small). For Patrick, literature thus becomes a form of longing—a hope for an ordered life that proves at odds with reality.

In addition to organizing the future, Patrick believes that literature has the potential to preserve the past. After Alice’s death, Patrick searches through his memory as though he were turning the page of a book: “All these fragments of memory...so we can retreat from the grand story and stumble accidentally upon a luxury, one of those underground pools where we can sit still. Those moments, those few pages in a book we go back and forth over.” Although these brief moments of recollection bring Patrick joy and comfort, Patrick admits that he actually longs for a more radical transformation of his life: a return to a time when Alice was still alive. Patrick wants to “be given that gift, to relive those days when Alice was with him and Hana, which in literature is the real gift.” Like Patrick’s desire to plan the future according to literature’s tropes, his hope that he might return to the past as though life were a book also proves irreconcilable with reality. Patrick is thus forced to bear the grief and injustice that ordinary human life brings.

However, if literature and imagination are incapable of actually *influencing* reality, the act of creating art can serve as an *escape*

from reality. In this way, humans can learn to escape their potentially suffocating environments. Creativity does not need to impact reality in order to be valuable. On the contrary, the very act of creating art or imagining an alternative world can bring comfort to the chaos of everyday life. After telling Patrick that she plays the piano, Clara concludes that having a creative activity is crucial to life. “Everyone has to scratch on walls somewhere or they go crazy. And you?” she asks Patrick. She does not believe that playing the piano will influence her everyday life in any way. Rather, she believes that creating art is valuable in itself. Patrick later shows that he, too, believes in artistic performance for its own sake. He takes part in a strange performance: he blindfolds himself and runs around his room, lifting some objects and jumping over others with increasing speed. This behavior is not useful in any way, but it creates a special artistic and physical effect, allowing Patrick the space of a few minutes to create an alternative reality for himself.

Creativity, these characters show, thus allows them to escape their ordinary lives. In fact, author Michael Ondaatje himself suggests that artistic creations—for example, characters like Patrick and Clara—have a life beyond the novel. “In books he had read, (...) Patrick never believed that characters lived only on the page. They altered when the author’s eye was somewhere else. (...) Each character had his own time zone, his own lamp, otherwise they were just men from nowhere.” Through Patrick’s words, Ondaatje argues that his own characters are more complex than the lives he has given them. Through imagination, he suggests, the reader can give a new life to these characters, imagining scenarios beyond the limits of plot. This allows both the characters and the reader to escape their ordinary lives and immerse themselves in worlds as yet unknown. Ondaatje thus enjoins the reader to think of his characters—and, more generally, of art—in a vivid way, reminding readers that art is an integral part of human life. Experiencing literature in as inventive a way as possible, he suggests, only enriches one’s life, making the world seem a little more mysterious and magical.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



## DYNAMITE



Patrick’s father Hazen Lewis is the first person in their region to use dynamite to dislodge jammed logs in the river. Hazen becomes an expert at this task, taking meticulous precautions to keep both his son and himself safe. However, it is ultimately dynamite that kills Hazen, after a company asks him to use it in a feldspar mine, where he is told to go too far down. Patrick soon learns his father’s trade, thus

making dynamite a symbol of family legacy. Patrick uses it both for practical purposes on the job, as his father had, and also as a tool of political protest. By planning to make fancy hotels and expensive construction projects explode, Patrick aims to make a statement about the injustice that affects so many workers' lives—including his father's—as they are constantly exposed to dangerous, life-threatening situations. Therefore, although Patrick's dynamiting skills initially benefit an exploitative system (as dynamite plays an important role in building the waterworks), they ultimately turn against it, using the same tool to denounce the exploitation that oppresses workers. Dynamite thus makes Patrick feel connected to his childhood and his family identity, but also to a world beyond himself: grand ideals of justice and equality for all members of society.

interested in the interaction of cultures, a fascination with local customs that parallels his boyhood fascination with the names of far-away locations.

☞ He was born into a region which did not appear on a map until 1910, though his family had worked there for twenty years and the land had been homesteaded since 1815.

**Related Characters:** Hazen Lewis, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 10

### Explanation and Analysis

Before introducing Hazen Lewis, Patrick's father, the novel makes a brief mention of the history of the land where Hazen works. The fact that settlers were present on the territory for decades and that Patrick's own family worked there years before the region was recognized officially shows that the Canadian government has overlooked this region by for a long time. This isolation helps explain why Patrick does not feel nationalist in any way and considers himself a foreigner in his own land when he moves to Toronto.

This historical fact also brings to light the idea that work can take place without official recognition. This idea illuminates the novel's focus on the working class, whose work often goes unnoticed, as the workers' skills and knowledge are usually celebrated much less than the achievements of architects, engineers, etc.

☞ To the boy growing into his twelfth year, having lived all his life on that farm where day was work and night was rest, nothing would be the same. But on this night he did not trust either himself or these strangers of another language enough to be able to step forward and join them. He turned back through the trees and fields carrying his own lamp. Breaking the crust with each step seemed graceless and slow.

So at this stage in his life his mind raced ahead of his body.

**Related Characters:** Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 22

### Explanation and Analysis





## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *In the Skin of a Lion* published in 1987.

### Part 1: Chapter 1: Little Seeds Quotes

☞ He sits down at the long table and looks into his school geography book with the maps of the world, the white sweep of currents, testing the names to himself, mouthing out the exotic. Caspian. Nepal. Durango. He closes the book and brushes it with his palms, feeling the texture of the pebbled cover and its colored dyes which create a map of Canada.

**Related Characters:** Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 9

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick is a young boy, he goes to the kitchen some nights, while his father is sleeping, and looks at his geography book. This activity is a private one. He keeps it to himself, enjoying the secrecy and silent concentration it involves.

Patrick's curiosity about the world is aesthetic: he enjoys the interesting names of places, as well as the way they are represented on the maps. In this way, his interest in geography matches his curiosity about insects, which he finds beautiful and fascinating.

These early experiences define Patrick as a solitary, yet curious and open-minded explorer. As an adult, these qualities will allow him to join the community of Macedonian immigrants in Toronto, proving that he remains



When Patrick sees the foreign loggers skating on the frozen river at night, the spectacle is magical: the loggers are illuminated by the light of burning cattails, their movements fast and elegant, their laughter contagious. This is so different from anything Patrick has witnessed until then that it overwhelms him with its various sensations.

This episode marks a turning point in Patrick's life because it shows him that a group of men he had previously thought of only as poor foreign workers have a rich private life. This makes the workers more deeply human to Patrick's eyes and also makes him attracted by the idea of community. He will experience this fascination with community multiple times during the rest of his life. In Toronto, he will finally be confident enough to join the Macedonian immigrants, thus making the curiosity of his mind and the possibilities of his body coincide harmoniously.

## Part 1: Chapter 2: The Bridge Quotes

☞ So when customers step in at any time, what they are entering is an old courtyard of the Balkans. A violin. Olive trees. Permanent evening. Now the arbor-like wallpaper makes sense to her. Now the parrot has a language.

**Related Characters:** Kosta, Nicholas Temelcoff, Alice Gull

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 37

### Explanation and Analysis

After Nicholas Temelcoff rescues a nun who fell off the bridge, he takes her to his friend Kosta's restaurant. There, the nun—whom readers much later discover to be Alice—realizes that the entire restaurant is meant to imitate the atmosphere of a courtyard in the Balkans.



This description makes the immigrant Macedonian community in Toronto intimate and welcoming. It reveals the immigrants' nostalgia for home, their desire to have a place in the city where they can be fully themselves. In this subtle way, the scene highlights the fact that immigrants must feel uprooted, but also maintain pride in their native culture—two aspects of immigrant life that bring the entire community together.

The restaurant thus gives Macedonian immigrants respite from the harsh world around them: the difficulty of manual labor and the political exclusion they suffer from, as they are not allowed to organize in groups or speak their language in the street.

## Part 1: Chapter 3: The Searcher Quotes

☞ Now, in the city, he was new even to himself, the past locked away.

**Related Characters:** Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 54

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick arrives in Toronto, he realizes that the city is entirely different from the rural life he is used to, and that he is going to adapt to this environment in a radical way: by becoming a new person, with new habits and new experiences.

Patrick's separation from his past makes him feel detached from his own self—an alienation that only increases as he joins the monotonous routine of urban lower-class life. At the same time, it also suggests that people have the capacity to reinvent themselves and change radically. Other characters, such as Alice (a former nun) and Nicholas (a former bridge builder) demonstrate this.

This flexibility in people's identities suggests that identity—whether cultural, social, or political—is not necessarily fixed, but is in constant flux, changing according to circumstances. As Patrick later realizes, only storytelling—the very act in which he is taking part by telling his story to Hana—is capable of piecing the various fragments of a person's life together.

☞ I loved the piano. It was something to get lost in. My exit, my privacy. He had his money, gambling, he had his winning elsewhere. I had my radio work and my piano. Everyone has to scratch on walls somewhere or they go crazy. And you?

**Related Characters:** Clara Dickens (speaker), Patrick Lewis, Ambrose Small

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 70

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick and Clara take a vacation in the countryside, they exchange information about their lives. In particular, Patrick asks Clara questions about Ambrose Small, and she tells him a variety of anecdotes. She tells Patrick that one of



the reasons she stayed with Ambrose might have been that he gave her a piano. Clara then describes the way in which the piano allows herself to escape from her ordinary reality, which she considers crucial to her sanity.

This conversation suggests that creativity is central to people's lives. Even though Patrick says he does not know if he does anything creative, his curiosity often expresses itself in artistic ways—for example, through his childhood admiration of bugs, and later through the strange performances he takes part in, as he blindfolds himself in his room.

This suggests that even Patrick's seemingly monotonous, ordered life contains fanciful moments in which he lets his imagination roam free. In the context of the novel, it suggests that everyone—even the most marginal characters—probably has a rich imaginative life that remains difficult for outsiders to see.

☞ There was a wall in him that no one reached. Not even Clara, though she assumed it had deformed him. A tiny stone swallowed years back that had grown with him and which he carried around because he could not shed it. His motive for hiding it had probably extinguished itself years earlier. . . . Patrick and his small unimportant stone.

**Related Characters:** Clara Dickens, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 71

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick and Clara are on vacation in the countryside, Clara shares many anecdotes about her past with him, whereas Patrick does not open himself up in the same way. Clara thus concludes that Patrick is somehow unable to share memories of his past because something has scared or traumatized him.

The novel never clarifies what exactly could have happened in Patrick's life to make him secretive about his past. This mystery at the core of Patrick's identity suggests that some parts of people's lives might be hidden, obscure even to themselves. In terms of the characters in the novel, it suggests that the plot does not necessarily reveal everything there is to know about a given character. Rather, readers, like Clara, must imagine for themselves what Patrick's mysterious "stone" could be.

☞ Patrick believed in archaic words like *befall* and *doomed*. The doom of Patrick Lewis. The doom of Ambrose Small. The words suggested spells and visions, a choreography of fate. A long time ago he had been told never to follow her. If Patrick was a hero he could come down on Small like an arrow. He could lead an iguana on a silver leash to its mistress.

**Related Characters:** Ambrose Small, Clara Dickens, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 83

### Explanation and Analysis

After Clara leaves Patrick, he feels overwhelmed by grief and dreams of her coming back to him. Influenced by the many books he has read over the course of his life, he hopes that he might punish Ambrose Small, Clara's lover, and rescue Clara, like a typical hero in a novel.



This moment of wishful thinking reveals Patrick's desire for order and clarity in a moment of emotional confusion. It also suggests that traditional literary tales are not necessarily helpful as a practical model of how to lead one's life.


Indeed, reality proves infinitely more surprising, since what Patrick does not yet see, from this moment in time, is that Clara—the very person he believes he is meant to be with—has played an important role in allowing him to meet the woman who will later become his most trusted partner: Alice. This suggests that real life might be more chaotic than literature, but has the same capacity to make a hero find true love.

## Part 2: Chapter 1: Palace of Purification Quotes

☞ Nobody else wants the claustrophobic uncertainty of this work, but for Patrick this part is the only ease in this terrible place where he feels banished from the world. He carries out the old skill he learned from his father—although then it had been in sunlight, in rivers, logs tumbling over themselves slowly in the air.

**Related Characters:** Hazen Lewis, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 107



### Explanation and Analysis

In the waterworks tunnels, Patrick performs the same manual work as the other men, but when they come across a large wall of rock, he is in charge of dynamiting it alone. Although this work involves considerable risk, since an explosion that is too big risks letting in the waters above them and killing them all, Patrick takes pride and pleasure in this skill. He knows that it defines his very identity, since it is a concrete trace of what his childhood and his father have left behind.

Over the course of the novel, other members of the working class prove just as talented and passionate about what they do, such as Nicholas Temelcoff and Patrick's father Hazen Lewis. Their skills and thoughtful attitudes give prestige to manual labor, which is often considered less important than intellectual work—such as the tasks that the architect or the commissioner performs. This suggests that the working class, too, should be celebrated for the bold, innovative tasks they take part in.

Patrick felt ashamed they could discover so little about him. He had reduced himself almost to nothing. He would walk home at dusk after working in the lake tunnel. His radio was on past midnight. He did nothing else that he could think of. (...) And suddenly Patrick, surrounded by friendship, concern, was smiling, feeling the tears on his face falling towards his stern Macedonian-style moustache.

**Related Characters:** Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 113

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick shows the Macedonian shop owners his iguana, which explains why he has been buying so much vetch from them, they prove extremely curious about him. He then realizes that these people, whom he has known for many months, know very little about his life—precisely because his life is uneventful, focused only on work and basic necessities.



Before Patrick can formulate the thought consciously, his tears indicate that he has isolated himself from the rest of human society and that he misses the feeling of companionship that people can bring. Even though Patrick looks like the other immigrant workers (as his “Macedonian-style” moustache indicates), he does not benefit from the

community that defines them.

From this moment onward, Patrick's life changes radically, as he becomes part of a group that welcomes him and teaches him new customs. Instead of living alone, Patrick discovers that he can combine strenuous work with collective engagement, which makes him feel more rooted in the human world.

He thought, I am moving like a puppet. He touched an arm in the darkness not fully realizing it was human. A hand came from somewhere and held his wrist. “Hello, Patrick.” He turned on the flashlight. She was waiting for the light, like a good actress, ready to be revealed.

**Related Characters:** Alice Gull, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 120

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick joins the immigrants at the waterworks one evening for a secret meeting, he discovers that they watch various kinds of shows on a makeshift stage. Moved by a puppet show, in which the main actress represents the hardship of being an immigrant, Patrick looks for the actress after the performance and discovers that she is none other than Alice Gull, Clara's friend.


This meeting between the two characters appears just as dramatic as the puppet show itself, since Alice's apparition seems calculated, a planned performance. The fated, magical quality of this scene suggests that Patrick and Alice were meant to meet again and begin a new life together.

Scenes like these emphasize the affinity between elements of the novel's plot and the literature that Patrick enjoys reading, in which the hero and his lover are always reunited. In this way, *In the Skin of a Lion* suggests that life can prove just as romantic and surprising as literary tales, allowing magical moments to form part of people's ordinary lives.

- Compassion forgives too much. You could forgive the worst man. You forgive him and nothing changes.  
- You can teach him, make him aware . . .  
- Why leave the power in his hands?

**Related Characters:** Patrick Lewis, Alice Gull (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 123

### Explanation and Analysis


When Patrick and Alice discuss societal injustice, they both agree that the working class is exploited and unfairly treated. While Patrick believes that the powerful can be taught to recognize their mistakes and show compassion to the workers, Alice believes that compassion is an inadequate mechanism. Instead, she wants direct action that would remove power from the rich and powerful, giving more weight to the working class.

This strategy advocates violence to bring change to the world. Although Patrick does not initially agree with such means, after Alice's death he becomes so angry that he tries to burn down a fancy hotel and dynamite the waterworks to remove economic power from the rich.

However, he ultimately abides by his vision of compassion as an essential aspect of life, as he proves unwilling to actually kill other people for political purposes. Even if this does not radically alter the political and economic state of affairs, it allows him to remain faithful to his principles.

●● Come on, Patrick, of course some make it. They do it by becoming just like the ones they want to overtake. Like Ambrose. Look at what he became before he disappeared. He was predatory. He let nothing cling to him, not even Clara.

**Related Characters:** Clara Dickens, Ambrose Small, Alice Gull, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 123

### Explanation and Analysis


As Patrick and Alice discuss the possibility of upward social ability, Patrick shows optimism that ordinary people can succeed economically in life. However, Alice argues that Patrick is too naïve and does not realize that, to succeed in this consumerist, capitalist world, one needs to be cruel. She uses Ambrose as an example, arguing that his greedy attitude extended beyond consumer goods themselves, affecting his human relationships.


Through these arguments, Alice suggests that only a radical

overhaul of this system could bring greater justice and fairness. She does not necessarily fault rich individuals for their actions, arguing instead that the system corrupts everyone. This explains why she puts so much emphasis on destruction, and also why she respects alternative systems so much, such as the cooperation that can be found among the members of the Macedonian community.

●● I don't think I'm big enough to put someone in a position where they have to hurt another.

**Related Characters:** Alice Gull, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 125


### Explanation and Analysis

Pursuing their conversation on social injustice and the possibility of a working-class revolution, Patrick asks Alice if she would ask him to kill someone else for the purpose of her political cause. Breaking with her previous imperative to destroy everything, Alice is forced to admit that she does not actually believe in killing other human beings and would not want to be in a position of power herself.

Patrick later reflects that this moment made him fall in love with Alice, as it proved that she put people's lives and dignity before a theoretical, social-political ideal. This gesture reveals her tenderness and humility, and makes her more human to Patrick than her former lover and political activist Cato was, even if Cato sacrificed his life for the cause. It also shows that Alice is lucid enough to remain aware of the practical limitations of some of her revolutionary ideas, since she knows she would not want to take them to an extreme.

●● He remembers his father once passing the foreign loggers on First Lake Road and saying, "They don't know where they are." And now, in this neighborhood intricate with history and ceremony, Patrick smiles to himself at the irony of reversals.

**Related Characters:** Hazen Lewis, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 133



### Explanation and Analysis

After spending time at Kosta's house with Alice, Patrick realizes that he does not understand most of their conversation, carried in various foreign languages, and that he feels like a foreigner in his own neighborhood. He recalls his father commenting on how lost the foreign loggers must feel in Eastern Ontario, and realizes that he is now in the same situation as these loggers: an alien to the people around him.

Patrick is not troubled by this estrangement. Rather, he enjoys learning about his Macedonian neighbors' customs and allows Hana to teach him new words. This situation thus brings to light the idea that cultural exchange between foreign immigrants and Canadian locals can be peaceful and friendly, despite the government's suspicious stance toward working-class immigrants.

“The trouble with ideology, Alice, is that it hates the private. You must make it human.”

**Related Characters:** Alice Gull, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 135

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick and Alice share a conversation about societal injustice and the possibility of a working-class revolution, Alice reads Patrick a passage from Joseph Conrad's letters in which the author defends people's right to fight for an ideal. However, Patrick is skeptical of such an ideal. He concludes that fighting for an ideal often takes place at the expense of people's private lives.

Unlike Alice, who believes in revolution, Patrick is more inclined to believe that people can change through compassion. Even though he uses dynamite as a form of protest after Alice's death, he ultimately proves more interested in sharing his anger with Rowland Harris than in destroying human property or lives. Patrick's goal is to show the Commissioner how cruel he has been to the workers in his construction projects, not to bully him into submission.

The novel itself takes up this task, as it aims to give a complex, human face to all of its working-class members. This allows their struggles to appear first and foremost as a fight for human dignity before acquiring political

significance.

“In books he had read, even those romances he swallowed during childhood, Patrick never believed that characters lived only on the page. They altered when the author's eye was somewhere else. (...) Each character had his own time zone, his own lamp, otherwise they were just men from nowhere.”

**Related Characters:** Nicholas Temelcoff, Alice Gull, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 143

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick tries to investigate Alice's past by researching the history of a picture of hers, which depicts workers on a bridge, he discovers that Nicholas Temelcoff used to be a bridge worker and that Alice is probably the nun Nicholas once saved. Patrick's belief that characters have a life beyond the author's plot thus extends to his own life, showing him that everyone might have hidden lives and potentially extraordinary pasts that are not easily visible to the people around them.

Patrick's reflection about books allows Michael Ondaatje to suggest to the readers that all of his characters exist in part in their own imagination, and that readers should feel free to keep on thinking of these characters in new situations, reflecting on their stories and personality. This imbues the characters with new complexity, suggesting that they can be considered as rich and as unpredictable as real people.

“His own life was no longer a single story but part of a mural, which was a falling together of accomplices.”

**Related Characters:** Cato, Hana, Nicholas Temelcoff, Alice Gull, Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 145

### Explanation and Analysis

When Patrick reflects on the possibility that Alice might have been a nun, he realizes that this story is part of a web of interconnected relationships, since Alice's past as a nun would explain why her daughter Hana is such good friends

with Nicholas Temelcoff—the man who saved the nun from falling off the bridge. Patrick also realizes that the stories Alice had told him about her past have now become dear to him, since he cherishes her memories. For example, her love for Cato makes Patrick interested in him, and Patrick's later actions are reminiscent of Cato's dedication to political activism.

In this way, Patrick feels his life expand beyond himself. Even though he has often felt detached from other people's lives, he now realizes that he is connected to all the stories of the people he knows—and, through this, that he is deeply embedded in human society.

This allows Patrick to use his love and memory as the basis for a feeling community. His belief in interconnectedness allows him, at the end of the novel, to call himself Hana's father and take responsibility for her life, trusting that his love gives him the right to insert himself in her story—and, through this, in the stories of the people she loves.

indifference to these men's lives. Even though Harris does genuinely believe that he is advancing civilization through grandiose infrastructure, he has no compassion for the people who actually build it with their own hands. Patrick's indignation thus falls on deaf ears, as Harris is more interested in protecting his reputation—by claiming ignorance about the workers' deaths—than in defending the truth and protecting his workers' dignity.

Harris's point of view confirms Alice's cynical belief that the rich will always exploit the poor because it is beneficial to them. Patrick, however, still believes that Harris might learn something from him, and that he might instill in the Commissioner some sense of compassion, an awareness of his responsibility over other human beings.

●● You must realize you are like these places, Patrick. You're as much of the fabric as the aldermen and the millionaires. But you're among the dwarfs of enterprise who never get accepted or acknowledged. Mongrel company. You're a lost heir. So you stay in the woods. You reject power. And this is how the bland fools – the politicians and press and mayors and their advisers – become the spokesmen for the age.


### Part 3: Chapter 2: Maritime Theatre Quotes


●● - You watch, in fifty years they're going to come here and gape at the herringbone and the copper roofs. We need excess, something to live up to. I fought tooth and nail for that herringbone.

- You fought. You fought. Think about those who built the intake tunnels. Do you know how many of us died in there?

- There was no record kept.

**Related Characters:** Patrick Lewis, Rowland Harris (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 236

#### Explanation and Analysis

After Patrick sets dynamite in the waterworks to make the building explode as a political protest, he goes to Commissioner Harris's office to confront the man about the morality of his construction projects. Harris tries to defend his work by explaining that, through these grand projects, he is contributing to the beauty of the city, but Patrick reminds him that this beauty hinges on exploiting vulnerable workers, many of whom have died while at work. Harris's reply that there was no record kept reveals his

**Related Characters:** Rowland Harris (speaker), Patrick Lewis

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 238

#### Explanation and Analysis

After Patrick turns off the light in Commissioner Harris's office, Harris knows that he needs to keep on speaking as long as possible so that, when dawn arrives, he might grab his pistol and keep Patrick from destroying the waterworks.

Harris thus launches into a speech in which he argues that workers like Patrick are just as important to society as the rich and powerful, since, because of workers' participation in grand construction projects, they contribute to the glory of the city. Harris concludes that the only reason workers do not become powerful is because they secretly hate power and are loath to become public figures.

Although Harris says something about Patrick that is reminiscent of Alice's own views—namely, that Patrick feels contempt for people who are only interested in money and power—Harris's point of view is largely hypocritical, aimed at exculpating himself for contributing to social injustice.



Indeed, what Harris does not mention is that an important reason why workers are so disenfranchised is that both the state and businessmen keep them from taking on a political role and fighting for their rights. Workers thus never actually have the opportunity to put themselves in a

position of power and make their voices heard.

*In the Skin of a Lion* aims to fill that void and recount the stories of those whom official historical narratives have often cast aside.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## PART 1: PROLOGUE

Driving through the Canadian countryside in the dark hours of the morning, a man tells a young girl the story of *In the Skin of A Lion*. The girl listens to the man carefully and chooses to believe everything he says, even if he were to say there is a castle outside—after all, neither of them can see anything because of the darkness. The man tries to communicate his various emotions to her, in the attempt to make her see what he is recounting. Meanwhile, the girl keeps him company during the four-hour trip to Marmora.

*The reader will discover at the end of the novel that these two mysterious characters are none other than Patrick and Hana, on their way to pick up Clara. This time loop from one end of the novel to the other points to Patrick's belief that literature is a preserver of memory, capable of freezing time in the pages of a novel. It also highlights the importance of storytelling in relationships, as Hana now becomes privy to Patrick's personal history.*



## PART 1: CHAPTER 1: LITTLE SEEDS

In early morning, a boy can see groups of loggers out in the cold, anonymous men who carry lanterns and already seem exhausted before the day has begun. When the men cross a farmer taking his cows to the milking barns, the farmer nods, finding some comfort in knowing that he is not alone outside so early in the morning. The boy sees the loggers pass by, and imagines them later swinging their axes against trees that are as hard as metal. He pictures their sweat and fatigue, and also knows that some of them die of pneumonia or the chemicals in the factories where they work in other seasons.

*The fact that Patrick is not immediately given a name preserves an aura of mystery, emphasizing his childish curiosity and powers of observation instead of a narrowly specific identity. Similarly, the workers are never defined with specific details. In this way, through their names and their actions, they are shown to be a group at the margins of society. It is only once Patrick will discover (much later in the novel) that these men are Finnish immigrants, that they will finally have an identity and a history.*



The men have little contact with the town, and neither the boy nor his father has ever entered the temporary shacks they set up for the winter while the river is still frozen. The loggers only enter the town when they skate along the river, making skates out of old knives.

*The townspeople's lack of contact with the loggers emphasizes the loggers' cultural exclusion from ordinary society. It also highlights the economic precariousness of their situation, as their jobs depend on seasonal conditions.*



During summer nights, the boy loves turning out the lights and, while his father is sleeping, looking at a geography book in the kitchen, where he leaves a light on. He repeats the exotic names of places to himself, appreciating the book cover, a multicolored depiction of the map of Canada.

*Patrick's approach to the atlas reveals his artistic, fanciful approach to the world, as he seems less interested in the actual geography than the beauty of the words and pictures. It also suggests that national identity is arbitrary, barely represented by a mix of colors on a map.*



Fighting off sleep, the boy puts the book back on the dark living-room shelves and returns to the kitchen, where he hopes that insects, attracted by the light, will have stuck to the screens. He examines the various types of insects, fascinated by their shapes. Later, he will discover the true names and characteristics of the bugs he invented fanciful names for. He no longer tries to open the screen and capture the bugs, because when he did it once the scared insect moved around wildly, in turn terrifying the boy. Instead, in the kitchen light, the boy, called Patrick, examines their jaws and wings with fascination. He wonders if they can hear anything and if they are silently trying to show him something by returning so often to the kitchen screen.

The region Patrick has grown up in has only recently become official. Even though settlers have been there since 1815, the area was only named in 1910, two decades after the boy's family began working there. It is only thanks to logging that the river will be named Depot Creek, after the French "Deep Eau."

Patrick's father does manual work on a few farms. One day, Patrick and his father search for a missing cow, which they find in the frozen river. Using a rope, Patrick and his father try to move the cow forward. This involves perilous operations, such as diving beneath the ice and working as fast as possible so that neither the cow nor they will freeze. They succeed in tying two ropes around the animal and, when Patrick looks up, he is amazed to notice the blue sky, feeling grateful for—and surprised at—such beauty after the dangerous rescue he has been immersed in.

When Patrick's father attaches the ropes to the horses, the horses move forward and succeed in pulling a seemingly bored cow out of the water. Even though Patrick's father has often insisted that rope is precious and knots must always be untied instead of cut, he does not succeed in untying the knot around the cow and thus decides to cut it, which surprises Patrick, who sees this as an extravagant act. As the cow begins to run back home, Patrick says that he will not save her a second time and his father agrees, laughing.

That night, Patrick's father allows the boy to sleep in the same bed as him, sharing warmth, and they sleep without acknowledging the proximity of their bodies. Looking at the fire, Patrick imagines himself in the summer, burning caterpillar tents through fields, and then falls asleep.

*Patrick's imagination as a child is attracted to a variety of stimuli, whether artistic and intellectual (as the atlas suggests) or part of the natural world (as his fascination for bugs reveals). This suggests that art and nature are complimentary, as Patrick's fascination is in large part an interest in the insects' beauty. It suggests that, with the right disposition, anyone can find beauty and magic in the world around them. Patrick's humble interest in these insects' minds also foreshadows the respect and compassion he will demonstrate toward human beings as an adult, as he tries to respect everyone's lives.*



*The gap between the official narrative and people's actual lives shows that, for decades, Patrick's family has lived at the margins of official society. This will impact his detached (even skeptical) attitude toward national identity and government intervention.*



*This episode suggests that foreign workers such as the loggers are not the only ones taking part in strenuous, potentially dangerous physical labor. The need for Patrick and his father to risk their lives to save a single cow highlights their modest means. It also suggests that the primary bond between the two family members is work itself—not conversation or expressions of love.*



*The cutting of the knot shows that Patrick's father calculates all of his movements, even his most seemingly outrageous ones, as he determines what is superfluous and what is necessary. This moment of laughter is the only episode in the entire novel in which Patrick is seen laughing and conversing with his father. It suggests that, even though Patrick's father seems deeply unemotional, the two of them still share a strong bond, defined by mutual respect for their work.*



*Patrick's father's gesture is both loving and practical. Allowing Patrick in his bed shows that he is making an exceptional gesture of inclusion, at odds with his reserved nature, but also follows a practical consideration: to keep Patrick's body from suffering from their earlier dive in the frozen water.*



Patrick remembers his father, Hazen Lewis, practicing using **dynamite**. Hazen would draw the outline of Patrick on a table and practice blowing out a section of wood where the head was. A recluse uninterested in socialization, Patrick's father focused on his work exclusively, even treating horses as though they were inanimate vehicles.

When Patrick is fifteen, his father takes the only risk he ever took in his life: he blows up a tree with **dynamite** instead of chopping it with an axe. From that moment, he decided to become a dynamite expert. Mr. Lewis then goes to the local timber company, demonstrating his skills, and receives a job with them along Depot Creek and Napanee River. The longest speech he ever gives in his life are his words to the company's staff explaining that, according to him, the only judicious jobs in logging are being a dynamiter or a cook.

In the winter, loggers work all day along the chain of Depot Lakes to cut down trees. In April, when the lake ice begins to melt, they take part in the most dangerous task: moving the trees down the river. Logs that remain jammed in narrow stretches of the river need a **dynamiter** to dislodge them. In these cases, Hazen Lewis and Patrick arrive. After taking off his clothes, Patrick covers himself in oil and swims among the logs, making signs to his father every thirty seconds to reassure him. Patrick then catches the charge and lights the powder. He walks back to his father, dries himself, and the two of them ride away without looking behind them at the explosion that takes place.

During river runs, Patrick watches the cook bring loggers food and drift back down the river to camp. In the meantime, Hazen dreams of dynamiting someone's body by attaching the fuse to someone's pants. He remains brooding and uncommunicative and teaches his son nothing besides what Patrick can observe. When Patrick shows disregard for his father's habit of washing his clothes carefully to remove any trace of explosives, Hazen Lewis throws his shirt in the fire. There, the shirt explodes, thus giving Patrick a lesson.

Later, Patrick realizes that he learned important things during this period, but always through distant observation, by watching his father's behavior. He recalls the emotionless way in which his father sometimes sang at square dances, and remembers repeating the same lyrics softly to himself the next day.

*Unlike Patrick's fascination with the natural world, his father is uninterested in any aspect of life that is not purely practical. At the same time, Hazen's experiments with dynamite are eerie, suggesting a desire to take someone's life and a possibly more complex, darker side of his personality.*



*Even Hazen's most daring action remains purposeful and well calculated, as it increases Hazen's job opportunities. The fact that his longest speech relates to his work shows how narrow his interests are, as it becomes obvious that his entire life revolves around work. At the same time, it also highlights that, for Hazen, such manual labor is also a source of creativity and pleasure.*



*The description of the loggers' difficult tasks highlights the repetitiveness of this type of manual labor, as well as its many dangers. Patrick's time swimming to help his father foreshadows his later political actions, in which he will use his skills as a dynamiter to express anger against the rich. However, at this point in Patrick's life, neither his father nor he seems discontented with their position in life. Rather, they seem to derive pride and pleasure from the precision and efficiency of their actions, instead of their actions' consequences.*



*Hazen's thoughts about killing another human suggest that rebellion might be brewing underneath the surface and, perhaps, that he does not accept his position in society as easily as it seems. Once again, Hazen's lack of communication with Patrick is not meant as disregard for his son's well-being, since Hazen means to protect his son's life, even if his affection does not express itself through words.*



*Patrick's imitation of his father's behavior suggests that he admires Hazen, even if he does not demonstrate it openly. It also reveals that Patrick is likely to follow in his father's footsteps—as his later career as a dynamiter indeed demonstrates.*



One winter night when Patrick is eleven, he decides to walk out of the kitchen to follow a moth that has caught his attention. Initially thinking he will not stray far, he soon finds himself walking farther in the snow than expected. When he notices flickers of light in the distance, he feels compelled to keep on walking, although he knows that it could not be fireflies because the last one died in one of his handkerchiefs. Years later, this fact will come back to his mind while Clara and he are making love in a car and she throws his semen-incrusted handkerchief out the window.

As Patrick walks, he sees the lights become more definite, hears laughter, and finally reaches the lake, where he sees the loggers skating around, carrying torches made of plants. As the men chase each other and sometimes create sparks when their lanterns collide, the scene strikes Patrick as otherworldly and magical. Although he feels a sharp sense of identity with this river and he yearns to take part in the men's game, finding it romantic, he trusts neither himself nor these foreigners enough to join them. He begins walking home, feeling that at this point in his life his mind seeks things that his body does not yet follow.

## PART 1: CHAPTER 2: THE BRIDGE

At dawn, a truck carrying tar moves through central Toronto to take workers to the half-built bridge. Once they are near the viaduct, the men jump off and walk quickly to fight off the cold. The innovative bridge, which will carry traffic, water, electricity and, later, trains, requires the constant work, day and night, of men who climb on wooden plank structures to perform their tasks. After the electricians place lights on the bridge, it is finally completed in 1918 and called the "Prince Edward" or Bloor Street Viaduct.

Later, during the bridge's opening ceremonies, an unauthorized person avoids the guards and circles the bridge twice by bicycle, enjoying the bridge's emptiness. Although this person might be the first member of the public to be seen on the bridge, the evening before the workers took part in an unofficial ceremony of their own, walking on the bridge while carrying candles to honor the workers who died during the bridge's construction.

*Patrick's unexpected night expedition in the snow suggests that following one's imagination (in this case, his fascination for insects) can lead to magical discoveries. The mention of Patrick's later romantic relationship with Clara represents an abrupt switch to adulthood, but suggests that the enchanted, carefree quality of childhood can expand beyond childhood itself, through love and spontaneity.*



*This magical scene brings softness and playfulness to Patrick's life, which seems largely regulated by the harshness of seasons and the rigor of manual labor. In turn, the men's game makes them seem more complex, more fully human than their role as loggers might allow. It suggests that behind each anonymous worker lies a curious, energetic soul waiting to express itself. Patrick's yearning to become part of this community foreshadows his later appreciation of the Macedonian immigrants in Toronto.*



*This description of the bridge shows that the grandiose, state-of-the-art bridge relies on a much less grandiose set of workers: men who perform manual work in extreme conditions. This contrast suggests that, while the bridge will be admired in years to come, the workers—who are only described as anonymous groups of men—will be long forgotten, their participation in this project overlooked.*



*Although the workers will probably never receive the official recognition they deserve for their service to the city, their awareness of the fact that they form a community, as well as their pride in the long project they have taken part in, expresses itself through honoring the dead and recognizing that the bridge was built through exertion and self-sacrifice.*



While workers pour tar onto the mud roads leading to the bridge, the foreman calls a man named Caravaggio, who feels exasperated at the prospect of having another fight with the foreman. While the men work with the tar, nearby children sometimes put bits of tar in their mouths to chew for fun, and the workers themselves heat their cans of beans over the hot surface.

During the bridge's construction, Commissioner Harris always comes to look at the bridge in the evening. Harris has dreamed of this bridge for a long time. He took a passionate part in the planning and was the person who imagined that trains, in addition to cars, could pass on it. He is also fascinated with water and wants to bring water from the outskirts to the center of the city. Sometimes accompanied by Pomphrey, an English architect who later designed Harris's greatest achievement, the water filtration plant, Harris walks on the bridge toward the workers even though most of them do not speak English.

Harris enjoys seeing the bridge at night because it allows him to concentrate on its general shape and to dream of his grandiose plans, which he sometimes shares with Pomphrey. In April 1918, on a night of heavy wind, after attaching themselves with harnesses, Harris and Pomphrey are shocked to see five nuns walking on the bridge.

Watching the nuns, Harris concludes that they must have lost their way at night and become attracted by the fire on the bridge around which workers gathered. On the bridge, the heavy wind makes them lose their balance. Although some men grab the nuns, one of them is soon lifted up and pushed off the bridge. Everyone looks at the scene in awe and horror, and Commissioner Harris concludes that his first creation has already become a murderer.

Although everyone is convinced the nun is gone forever, one of the men working in a lower arch, attached by a rope, sees a figure fall and catches it. The sudden weight forced onto him causes the man to scream and his shoulder to fall out of its socket, as he holds onto a metal pipe to steady himself. The man sees a girl's face and notices her habit. Terrified, the girl cannot speak, but the man, Nicholas Temelcoff, unable to yell because of the pain, tells her that she should scream to call for help.

*Caravaggio's presence on the bridge suggests that, before becoming a thief, he took part in this legal, strenuous physical work. It also suggests that, beyond the details readers learn about Caravaggio throughout the novel, he might have gone through a wealth of experiences that the reader can only imagine. This gives him greater complexity as a character.*



*Harris is more concerned with the beauty of his project and the advance of technology than with the lives of his workers, from whom he is separated by language and culture. Throughout the novel, he will show little regard for his workers' lives, considering their work necessary but unworthy of his sincere attention. At the same time, though, his project will probably benefit the city as a whole, bringing it more efficient transportation services and profiting generations to come.*



*Harris's attitude toward construction projects is one of aesthetic fascination. These projects constitute a creative outlet through which he believes he makes the world a better, more beautiful place. The nuns' presence makes this scene even more magical and surreal*



*Commissioner Harris's realization that the bridge kills people is hypocritical: he cares about the nun, but does not realize that multiple workers have already died on the job. This highlights how segregated this society is in terms of class, as the lives of members of the working class are not considered as important as those of higher classes.*



*Nicholas's extraordinary rescue elevates the seemingly routine work that the men perform on the bridge, suggesting that some individuals are particularly skilled and courageous. This episode thus makes a hero out of a mere bridge worker, a traditionally marginalized member of society, suggesting that social class or status is unrelated to individual valor.*



Nicholas evaluates the situation and decides that they will need to swing to a higher level. Therefore, he takes the nun in his arms and tries to swing toward the bridge's structure, feeling responsible for this person's life. When they finally reach the lower level, the woman is still in shock, her clothes and hair disheveled, and Nicholas is so exhausted that the girl herself saves him from falling back. She holds him as they walk on the bridge.

On a higher level, the workers and the nuns are still agitated, as they are convinced that the nun who flew off the bridge—a girl known for being clumsy and unlucky—is gone forever. In the meantime, Temelcoff and the girl walk off the bridge without attracting any attention. They walk through a cemetery and the girl holds him, showing him that he should keep his arm rigid. She then pushes underneath his arm forcefully, which makes Temelcoff groan in pain and feel as though he is about to faint, and she uses her veil to maintain his shoulder in place.

Finally, Nicholas shows the nun the direction to the Ohrida Lake Restaurant, where his friend Kosta opens the door and he tells him to go back to bed. He goes to look for a bottle of brandy and the nun waits for him in the dark, empty restaurant. As Nicholas gestures her to sit at a table, he realizes that she has not said a single word, since even the scream on the bridge was his own.

Nicholas is known on the bridge for being exceptionally talented and fearless. He is given the most dangerous tasks, which involve diving off the bridge while being attached with a rope. He is so agile that it is easy not to spot him on historical photographs of the bridge's construction, where he appears as nothing but a distant dot.

Nicholas's solitary, risky work allows him to be paid one dollar per hour, whereas other workers are paid only forty cents. However, everyone prefers to leave these dangerous tasks to him. He knows the bridge so intimately that he could perform his tasks while blindfolded.

*Nicholas's decision to risk his own life to save an unknown woman—and, in turn, the woman's concern for keeping him from falling—reveals the beauty of human empathy and cooperation. It also highlights Nicholas's noble character, presenting him as an archetypal literary figure: the noble fighter who saves a damsel in distress.*



*The two characters' decision to avoid the crowd suggests that Temelcoff is not interested in being seen as a hero and, perhaps, that the nun is happy to escape and give up on her former life, as the removal of her veil indicates symbolically. Their intimacy and physical contact, as the nun apparently succeeds in pushing Temelcoff's shoulder back into its socket, serves as a prelude to their shared attraction. Much later in the novel, Patrick will discover that the nun was none other than Alice, who has maintained a lifelong friendship with Nicholas.*



*The nun's silence reveals her shyness and gives her an aura of mystery—which Alice will later retain, as she will avoid speaking about her past. It also emphasizes what will later appear to be the cultural gap between the two of them—a gap in language and culture that is bridged, nevertheless, by their mutual interest and curiosity.*



*Nicholas's tasks reveal how impressive workers' talents can be, and how little his work is valued in the public eye. The public, like Harris, focus more on the beauty of the construction than on the skills of the people who are building it.*



*Although Nicholas is paid better than his colleagues, the workers' salaries are extremely low, especially considering the life-and-death danger of the work they perform. However, like Patrick's father, Nicholas has a lot of respect for his own expertise.*



In the restaurant, Nicholas walks past a parrot called Alicia to search for brandy. When he returns, he offers some to the nun, adding that she does not have to drink it if she doesn't want to. He then thanks her for his arm, which prompts her to indicate that he still needs medical help. However, Nicholas says that he prefers to drink and rest for the moment, to alleviate the pain. He stands up to turn on the radio and sits back down next to her, telling her that he is in pain but that he feels alive. The nun then picks up her glass and drinks.

Noticing a scar on the nun's nose, Temelcoff asks her about it and encourages her to speak, despite her apparent diffidence. Wanting her to stop feeling shocked, he tries to start a gentle conversation and tells her about his own scars, while showing them to her. While Temelcoff talks incessantly, the woman hears a song she enjoys on the radio and listens to it while observing Temelcoff's intense stare into her face. This is the first time she has been alone in a bar with a man and, as she looks around, she realizes that this Macedonian restaurant is meant to imitate an old courtyard in the Balkans.

As Temelcoff keeps on talking, mixing words of English—which he learned by listening to songs on the radio—with his native language, the nun looks alive and interested, looking around the room and tapping her fingers to the music. He admires her brown eyes and her short brown hair, and realizes that he wants to touch it. He then tells her that he loves her hair and thanks her for her help, as well as for accepting the drink. The woman looks intently into his eyes and feels as though she wants to say something, although she realizes she does not even know his name. Temelcoff then closes his eyes and, exhausted, falls into a deep sleep from which nothing can wake him.

Left alone in the darkness, the nun feels as though she is the only person alive in the building. She walks to the sink to wash the bad taste from the alcohol in her mouth and looks at herself in a mirror. She passes her hand through her hair, as Temelcoff had wanted to do, and puts her face on the cold surface of the counter. She then returns to Temelcoff and, in a whisper, asks him what his name is before kissing him.

*Later in the novel, Patrick realizes that Alice took the parrot's name as her new identity, abandoning her former life as a nun after being saved by Nicholas. What Alice's motives might be in making such a radical decision remain unexplained. However, her decision to drink the alcohol Nicholas handed her, which it later becomes apparent she is not used to doing, suggests that she is choosing to change her life completely and abandon her former habits.*



*The nun (or Alice)'s silence allows her to observe the world around her without needing to participate. This makes communication difficult, but allows Temelcoff, usually so solitary, to express himself. Both characters' attitudes contrast starkly with how they will behave later in the novel: Alice, as a voluble political believer, and Nicholas as a reserved baker who does not usually tell stories about his past. These apparent contradictions give depth to these characters, proving that they can display a variety of attitudes according to shifting circumstances.*



*This moment of intimacy between Alice and Temelcoff proves that, unlike other workers such as Patrick's father, Nicholas is interested not only on his work, but also in his emotions and in sharing deep interactions with other human beings. This scene also shows that two strikingly different characters can overcome their superficial differences, such as language and culture, to connect on an intense level—in this case, without even needing to speak or know each other's particular identity.*



*Alice's apparent attraction to Temelcoff is given no more detail. Later in the novel, Patrick will try to understand what exactly happened between the two characters, but Alice refuses to talk about her past, thus leaving Patrick—and the reader—to imagine for themselves what happened after this first meeting.*





On the bridge, in mornings of fog, the men stay close to each other, feeling as though they are trapped in a new space from which everything outside seems foreign and invisible. However, Temelcoff walks off on his own, entering steel and wood cages hanging unstably on the bridge. He directs the movement of steel bars from a hanging platform, from which structures called “travelers” handle the steel. Since travelers have already collapsed twice, Temelcoff attaches his rope to the permanent structure of the bridge. His movements are so sharp and forceful that he soon feels as if all of his bones are broken.

From his hanging position, Temelcoff calls out to the driver handling steel. Once, he was doing this when a traveler collapsed and he was forced to swing in various directions to avoid heavy pieces of wood and metal. The person working before Temelcoff was killed by such flying objects, his body sliced in two by a sharp piece of steel. At eight in the morning, after working for two hours, Temelcoff looks down at the river, the railway tracks, and the valley, while speaking English to himself.

When the nun leaves Ohrida Lake Restaurant at dawn, she abandons her former identity. Although, a few years earlier or later, the woman would have smelled the flour in Temelcoff’s hair, what she now remembers is the roughness of the man’s callused hands.

Even though Commissioner Harris has never spoken to Nicholas Temelcoff directly, he sees how Temelcoff listens attentively to the engineer’s instructions, never looking the engineer directly in the eye but focusing instead on tools. Nicholas seems oblivious to the people around him and does not realize that many workers watch him in awe, as though Nicholas were an extraordinary being, as fearless as a child.

Tied to a rope, Nicholas steps off the bridge without marking a pause, feeling the pressure of the rope against his chest. Sometimes men can hear him hum songs to himself, as though Nicholas were not aware that other people could hear him. Nicholas enjoys learning English, even though it feels more difficult to him that performing physical tasks. He also proves particularly knowledgeable about people’s movements, recognizing Commissioner Harris by his walk and his expensive coat, which costs more than the sum of five bridge workers’ weekly salaries.

*Although not much is said about individual workers’ relationships with each other, the workers demonstrate solidarity and a shared desire for protection. The fog serves as a symbolic element that both unites workers and emphasizes their separation from the rest of society, which they cannot see and which cannot see them.*

*Temelcoff’s actions once again highlight how dangerous his work is, and how skilled he needs to be not only to work well, but to survive.*



*The horrific fate of Temelcoff’s predecessor provides a terrifying visual image of the life-and-death situations workers find themselves in. The fact that Temelcoff speaks English to himself, even though English is not his native language, reveals his eagerness to learn the local language and integrate society—a desire common to many new European immigrants.*



*This mysterious reference to Alice’s past and future remains largely unexplained, since it remains ambiguous whether Alice was ever romantically involved with him, but the mention of flour in Nicholas’s hair refers to his past and future life as a baker.*



*Despite Harris’s usual indifference to his workers’ lives, he is curious about Nicholas, who is such an extraordinarily fearless and talented worker. Nicholas’s humble attitude and enormous talent contrasts with Harris’s goals, which are more self-centered, aiming to promote his own achievements even if he is never directly involved in the construction itself.*



*The contrast between the ease Nicholas experiences at the bridge and his difficulties with English is symbolic, suggesting that participating in the local economy, where he represents cheap labor, might prove easier than his integration into Canadian society. The difference between Harris’s wealth and the workers’ precarious situation denounces a class-based injustice, according to which workers are forced to toil to finance other people’s wealth.*



In Macedonia, Daniel Stoyanoff, a member of Nicholas's village of Oschima, bragged about his experience in North America. After losing an arm in a factory, he received financial compensation from the company that has allowed him to come back home and live a wealthy life. Although no stitches can be seen on Stoyanoff's good arm, he tells everyone that that one too was cut off but that one of his colleagues, a tailor, sowed it back for him. His stories make him a hero to the children in the region.

*Daniel Stoyanoff's positive assessment of his experience in America relies only on financial compensation, whereas his body has literally been destroyed by the work he was made to do there—an irony that he, like others, seems entirely aware of. This situation reveals the poverty of the regions from which many immigrants come, as they—like Stoyanoff—will prove willing to sacrifice their own physical health and put their lives at risk to earn money.*



When war erupts in the Balkans, Nicholas is twenty-five. After his village is destroyed, he leaves with three friends to reach Switzerland through Greece. All of them dream of reaching America and, although they have to spend a week in a factory basement to recover from illness (since no ill person is allowed to cross Switzerland into France), they finally reach Le Havre, a port where they find a boat travelling to New Brunswick, a Canadian province.

*The difficulty of the journey only highlights many of these immigrants' desperation and hope, as they assess that the possibility of living a better life in Canada and the dangers of life at home are more important than the insecurity such a voyage entails. The young people's determination also overcomes the fear of the unknown, as their expectations of Canada might prove at odds with the reality there.*



When Nicholas finally arrives, after two of his friends died on the journey, he sees Canada as a wild, primitive land. After the passengers pick lice off each other, Nicholas is finally admitted into Canada, showing a few coins to prove that he will not be dependent. He initially works in a bakery in Toronto while going to school to learn English.

*Paradoxically, even though Canada treats its immigrants as second-class citizens, Nicholas is not initially impressed by Canada's sophistication or superiority but, rather, by its bareness, which might open the door to many possibilities.*



Most immigrants learned English by imitating songs or actors on stage, to the point that knowledgeable immigrants could play an entire actor's part. When Nicholas began working on the bridge, he kept to himself, muttering sentences in English to himself to practice, according to his model, the jazz musician Fats Waller.

*The fact that immigrants can imitate famous actors' speeches is ironic and symbolic. Unlike these rich, famous actors, workers are largely invisible in Canadian society. This emphasizes the economic and social gap between workers and actors, even though they might share similar skills.*



In the restaurant, Nicholas is woken up by a doctor taking care of his arm, while Kosta watches on. As the doctor comments that Nicholas somehow managed to put his shoulder back into its socket, he looks at the veil that the nun has left. As Nicholas chats with Kosta about the girl and discovers that she told Kosta to call a doctor for him, Nicholas is curious about the girl's speech, wanting to know how her voice sounds. When Kosta asks what Nicholas knows about her, Nicholas mentions her black skirt. Later, he sees a piece of clothing and realizes that she cut off her habit to make a dress for herself.

*The nun's appearance and disappearance make her seem quasi magical, as she seems constantly out of reach. Her decision to cut off her habit confirms that she no longer wants to live life as a nun but is ready to integrate society. In this way, her situation is similar to many immigrants', as she needs to give up on some of her former customs to become a new member of society. In fact, for a long time, Patrick will remain entirely unaware that Alice even had a former life as a nun.*



The day after his accident, Nicholas feels that the city's streets look new to him and he searches for the nun everywhere in the city. Nicholas's "courtship" with the girl remains a silent one. When he remembers being asleep in the restaurant—since he always needs to drink himself to sleep, being terrified of the act of falling asleep—he recalls the woman asking him about his name.

A week later, once his shoulder is healed, Nicholas returns to the bridge. He ignores people's stories about the nun who vanished and, instead, focuses on his work. He knows the landscape of the valley better than anyone else, even the engineer, the architect, and Commissioner Harris, as though Nicholas were a bird. He looks around him and longs for the absent nun. One year from then, he will open a bakery with his savings.

## PART 1: CHAPTER 3: THE SEARCHER

When Patrick Lewis arrives in Toronto, he feels as though he is entering a new land that is vastly different from the one he has known until now. In the city, he realizes that the intensely natural world of his childhood, with its various sensorial stimuli—such as the freezing cold and overwhelmingly white snow in the winter, the smell of animals, and the pleasure of walking around naked in the summer heat—makes him feel like an immigrant in the city, as though he were abandoning his past entirely.

At the train station, Patrick notices a man with three suitcases screaming in a foreign language for two days in a row, seemingly lost and confused. In the large station, Patrick says his name out loud but no one notices him, and he concludes that they are all stuck in the belly of a whale.

In 1919, millionaire Ambrose Small disappeared. The Bertillon identification system, according to which people could be correctly identified according to the precise measurements of certain parts of the body, was used to search for him, although so many people were attracted by the monetary reward that thousands of people claimed to be or to have seen Ambrose Small. The press fueled people's frenzy and published even the most improbable signs of Small's existence or death.

*The results of Nicholas's courtship with the nun, Alice, remain mysterious, as there is a time gap between this period and Alice's reappearance in the story. Nicholas's fear of sleep, surprising since there is much more danger in working on the bridge than in sleeping, makes him partially irrational and, therefore, more complex and human as a character.*



*Nicholas's lack of participation in people's conversations reveals his desire to keep his private life separate from his public life. This episode also shows that seemingly magical events such as the nun's disappearance—and others throughout the novel—often have a more rational explanation, which might not be immediately visible.*



*Although Patrick is Canadian, his impressions of Toronto make him feel like a foreigner in his own country, since the rural lifestyle is so different from urban life. As Patrick will need to reinvent a new existence for himself, the intensely individual quality of his life in the country will be transformed into a new social and collective existence, as he belongs to a group of people in a similar situation as him: the foreign working class.*



*The mystery surrounding this man's actions creates an atmosphere of confusion typical of city life, as the high density of inhabitants means that people's motives often remain cryptic to outsiders. In this atmosphere, Patrick realizes that he can easily lead an anonymous life.*



*Small's death highlights the extent to which society is driven by profit and personal gain, as people prove desperate to receive the reward for finding him, even if the chances of actually doing so are slim. It also shows that the value of people's lives is based on their wealth, as Small's disappearance is widely publicized whereas that of other members of society would likely remain unknown.*



Between 1910 and 1919, Ambrose Small dominated Toronto's business life by buying theaters. Although his wife Theresa Kormann lived a life of moral righteousness and abstinence, Ambrose Small organized extravagant parties and had various lovers. One of them, actress Clara Dickens, was only twenty-one when Small was thirty-five.

Although Small was tyrannical and callous in business, either owning people or making them his enemies, he was generous with Clara. She encouraged him to stop taking part in wild parties and, instead, to go on excursions in the countryside. On such expeditions, Small would continue to buy property, explaining that he is a thief planning an "escape route." In December 1919, Small disappeared after one million dollars was withdrawn from his bank account, and was never found, whether alive or dead.

The Ambrose Small case so excited people's curiosity, as everyone followed the police's investigations, that companies paid people to become "searchers," in the hope that they might find Small and reap the \$80,000 reward that Small's family offered for information about Small's location. After one year in Toronto, Patrick Lewis decides to take up a job as a searcher. He becomes interested in the various letters the police have received about Small. When he meets with Small's two sisters, who appreciate his interest in these letters, they tell him that Clara knew Small best, because Theresa was too morally upright.

When Patrick first meets Clara, she tells him she does not want to talk about Small and asks him to leave. However, as Clara attaches an earring in front of a mirror, Patrick finds her beautiful and fascinating, in part because she is connected to a world of wealth. He becomes passionately curious about her. When he returns the next morning, he spends all day trying to seduce her with charm and humor. The two of them spend the evening debating and arguing, and Patrick tries to prolong their conversation to stay with her as long as possible.

The next evening, late at night, Clara too takes part in this process of seduction. She comes to pick Patrick up at the library, where he is looking through old files to find information about Small, and drives him back to the Arlington hotel.

*Small's life contrasts starkly with the workers' routine, which is centered exclusively around work, family, and brief moments of respite. Small, by contrast, is used to centering his life around the alternation of pleasures, romantic and otherwise.*



*Small's attitude toward work highlights some of the more negative aspects of business-making in a consumerist society. As Alice will later criticize harshly, Small needs to be heartless in order to succeed. This explains why people like Commissioner Harris can profit from exploiting vulnerable populations of workers, since the goal is not to create a cooperative society but to make as much money as possible.*



*The amount of money spent on the Small case demonstrates how desperate people across the country can become to make a lot of money in a short time. The fact that Clara would know more about Small than his wife also suggests that Small lived a life of contradictions, full of mysterious deals and activities, and might not be easily understandable, since he shrouds his life in secrecy. Strong moral principles—as symbolized by Theresa—are at odds with this kind of life, so focused on luxury and ephemeral pleasures.*



*Patrick's attraction to Clara is in part superficial, as he is captivated by her environment and her appearance more than her actual personality, which he does not yet know. These first impressions thus foreshadow the mix of frustration and fascination that Patrick will feel as his relationship with Clara evolves and he realizes that part of her life remains hidden to him, and that she still wants to be with her millionaire lover Ambrose Small.*



*Clara's seductive attitude does not necessarily translate into true romantic commitment, as it remains ambiguous whether she actually has feelings for Patrick or only wants a temporary romantic adventure.*



Another day, Clara helps Patrick carry boxes of files to his apartment. Exhausted, they fall asleep holding hands and, later, make love, although when Patrick wakes up Clara is no longer there. Clara then calls him some time later, telling him that she is taking him to her friend Alice's house in the countryside. Patrick and Clara reach the farmhouse, where Alice would arrive in a couple of days.

One day, as they lounge naked in the bed, Patrick tells Clara he loves her and asks her about her past lovers, which prompts Clara to tell him she once fell in love with a man called Stump Jones when she was sixteen. As Patrick watches Clara sleep, he wonders about her love life, trying to find answers for his questions in the shape of Clara's sleeping body.

Later, at three in the morning, behaving like a child, since love makes him feel free and unconstrained, Patrick wakes Clara up to show her a tree frog against the window—a rare sight at night. Patrick says that the frog is Ambrose and Clara gives the frog on the other side of the window a kiss, calling Ambrose her beloved. Patrick asks Clara to marry him but she says she will soon leave Patrick to join Ambrose, because she is convinced he is alive, which leads Patrick to conclude that he will probably never see her again. That night, Patrick dreams of Ambrose and Clara notices that he is twitching in his sleep.

Patrick and Clara spend the next day making love, driving around the country, and talking about their lives. Patrick asks her about Ambrose and learns some anecdotes from her. When Clara mentions that Ambrose gave her a piano, she comments that everyone needs a creative outlet to avoid going crazy: Ambrose, for example, enjoyed gambling, and she enjoyed playing the piano. She asks Patrick what he does but he doesn't know. Clara also mentions that she considered becoming Ambrose's friend Briffa's lover, because he was clear-headed and had a strong creative vision, which Clara finds unique.

Although Patrick learns about some of Clara's most intimate, erotic experiences, he does not feel comfortable talking about his own past, preferring to resort to vagueness. Clara finds that there is a wall in him that no one can move past. She asks him about his friends but Patrick says she is his only friend. When he expresses dismay at the thought of losing her, since Clara insists that she will leave him for Ambrose, Clara tries to reassure him by telling him that everyone is replaceable.

*Clara's unpredictable appearances and disappearances sets the tone of their relationship, foreshadowing her ultimate decision to leave Patrick for Ambrose. At the same time, her desire to spend time with Patrick suggests that she does enjoy his presence.*



*It remains ambiguous whether Patrick and Clara's relationship is purely one-sided, which Patrick's seemingly unanswered declaration of love would indicate. Patrick's silent, solitary interrogations serve as a prelude to his later loneliness, after Clara's departure.*



*Patrick's association of love with childhood suggests that love brings him fascination in the same way that observing insects in his father's house did. Patrick shrouds the presence of this frog in similar mystery as his early interrogations about insects' lives. At the same time, Patrick's joke about the frog being Ambrose suggests discomfort, a breach of intimacy, as the thought of Ambrose actually disturbs Patrick beyond his attitude of nonchalance and humor.*



*The presence of Ambrose in Patrick and Clara's conversation means that they are never truly alone, since Ambrose is always there as a haunting presence in the back of both Patrick and Clara's minds. Clara's comments about creativity suggest that she is not necessarily as easily satisfied with her life as it may seem, since she fears becoming too bored or going insane. Her appreciation for art and creativity gives her a sensitive, non-consumerist quality that Ambrose lacks.*



*Patrick's dependence on Clara is an expression of his love for her, which she does not reciprocate to the same extent, but also of his difficulty in forming close relationships with other people. This might in part be due to his appreciation of solitary life or by what Clara identifies as his fear of truly opening up to others. Clara, by contrast, is happy enough to compare people to consumer goods, as interchangeable additions to life.*



Reflecting on his feelings for Clara, Patrick wonders if he was attracted to her because she was so unreachable, living a life of wealth and extravagance as Ambrose Small's lover, understanding the subtle exchanges implied in rich people's gifts. As Patrick holds her after making love, he realizes that he does not know who she truly is.

*Patrick is lucid enough to realize that part of what he enjoys in Clara is the contrast of her life with his, as it is defined not only by greater wealth but by more complex social interactions. Patrick thus becomes incapable of determining what constitutes Clara's social façade and what might define her inner personality.*



When Alice finally arrives, Patrick watches Clara as the two women walk together. Clara recounts a childhood anecdote in which her father and she shaved their hunting dogs, using paint to number and mark the animals with their family name, Dickens. She recalls fond conversations with her father about a variety of topics, lamenting that her father died when she was fifteen. Patrick explains that his father also died, killed while setting charges in a feldspar mine, because the company made him go too deep. That is how Patrick learned that feldspar is used in a variety of everyday life materials, from tiles to artificial teeth.

*The difference between Patrick and Clara's social environments is visible from their earliest memories. While Clara shares an intimate relationship with her father, Patrick's relationship with his father was marked by silence and external observation. They also both grew up in contrasting social environments, as Clara's hunting dogs indicate that she was probably wealthy. These divergences help explain their individual attitudes toward people, money, and society.*



While Patrick and Clara share episodes from their childhood, Alice prefers to talk about the present, revealing little about herself. Over the course of the night, Patrick soon becomes overwhelmed by the two actresses' mode of talking, as they imitate people's behaviors and laugh, making Patrick feel like their audience. Exhausted, Patrick decides to go to bed, while the two women are still chatting. Then, they decide to go "get him."

*Alice's reluctance to talk about the past will remain constant in the novel, even after she becomes romantically involved with Patrick. It makes her appear mysterious, suggesting that she might have a hidden life—which her past as a nun would indeed show—but also that she is centered on the present and the future, as her interest in politics and justice indicates.*



At night, in the dark, Clara and Alice approach the bed where Patrick is sleeping. They place candles on a chair and, placing paper on the floor, begin to sketch Patrick feverishly, curious to see what he might reveal while sleeping. They are used to taking part in spirit paintings, which seek to extract hidden emotions from a person's face, using everything they know about him in the process. Alice asks if they are witches and both of them laugh, before running outside and making wild animal-like noises under the rain and the moonlight.

*The two women's nighttime activity reveals their belief in spiritual forces beyond ordinary human existence, suggesting that everyone might have a hidden life. This gives the potential to every character to prove more complex and interesting than appearances might indicate. In fact, Alice herself later proves more interesting than her role as Clara's friend initially suggests, since she will become a fascinating protagonist in her own right.*



Early the next day, Patrick walks around the house, looking out at the field and inside at the sleeping women, whom he discovered at dawn throwing rhubarb at each other across the kitchen, Alice laughing wholeheartedly and Clara a little shy at seeing him enter the room. He touches Alice's elbow and tells her he needs to leave to catch a train. Alice tells him that they left him a present from the night before and that Clara will explain later.

*The friendship between the two women excludes Patrick and shows that, unlike him, they benefit from pleasant, fulfilling relationships outside of the narrow circle of their romantic life. The women's childlike attitude mirrors Patrick's own behavior with Clara, suggesting that friendship can be just as strong and intense as romantic relationships.*



Alice accompanies Patrick to the kitchen, where he eats a grapefruit and Alice watches him move efficiently in the kitchen, as though he were trying to make himself as invisible as possible. Patrick then leaves, telling Alice to tell Clara that he will see her at the hotel. While Alice goes back to sleep by Clara's side, Patrick thinks about Alice, feeling as though the woman's proximity to Clara has made her suddenly noticeable to him.

That night, at the Arlington hotel, Patrick looks at the sketched portraits that Clara shows him but does not believe her when she says his soul is flexible, because he feels as though his character is made of irreconcilable elements. However, he appreciates their gift and feels that he can learn from it. In general, Patrick admires Clara and Alice's close friendship and, when Clara asks him about Alice, he says he liked her. Clara says that Alice, who is a stage actress (whereas Clara only acts on the radio), is much better than her. Patrick then recalls the moments before falling sleep when he saw the women enter his room with candles, and feels a deep sense of community.

Sometimes, Patrick takes part in a private activity: he blindfolds himself and moves around his room faster and faster, avoiding objects carefully. That night, after Patrick and Clara talk extensively about Clara's intention to leave the next day to follow Small, Clara asks Patrick not to follow her. Patrick feels lost and alienated from Clara's life.

After trying to convince Clara not to leave, Patrick blindfolds himself, telling her not to move, and begins to leap around the room, avoiding objects perfectly and impressing Clara with his agility. However, when Patrick begins to whirl around her and scream his love for her, Clara becomes overwhelmed and moves off the bed to a rug with her hands over her ears. Suddenly, Patrick hits Clara violently, knocking her over. Patrick's nose is bleeding and, disappointed in the breaching of his trust, he tells her that she moved when he had warned her not to.

Reflecting on the novels he has read throughout his life, Patrick realizes that the stories in books always have clear endings—two lovers always have clear motives and are both capable of accepting the end of a relationship. Patrick, by contrast, recalls only feeling resentful and bitter when Clara left him at the train station. She gave him her blind iguana, whom she did not want to have to carry, and told him how to feed it, before climbing onto the train. Patrick realizes that he believes in romantic tales in which fate is predestined. He imagines himself as a hero, destroying Small and rescuing Clara with her own iguana.

*Even though Alice does not yet know Patrick, she can recognize central aspects of his personality, such as his appreciation of anonymity. By contrast, Patrick can only see Alice through the lens of Clara's life. It is only later in his life, once Clara has left, that he will be able to discover the complexity of Alice's life, as separated from Clara's personality.*



*Patrick's confusion at his own personality contrasts with the women's vision of him, as they seem to understand him more clearly than he understands himself. This sense of detachment from his own self expands into a feeling of detachment from human community, as he remains fascinated by the women's friendship precisely because he sees it as an outsider. It is only once he integrates into the Macedonian immigrant community that he will finally gain trust in his own capacity to connect with other people.*



*Despite Patrick's privacy about his inner life, he, too—like Clara with her piano and Clara and Alice with their spirit drawings—takes part in fanciful activities meant to distract him from the routine of ordinary life. These moments allow him to assert his creativity and his capacity for self-expression.*



*Patrick's decision to show Clara his private activity reveals how much he wants her to take part in every aspect of his life, even the most extravagant. However, it is precisely the intensity of his love that alienates Clara. Her decision to move demonstrates that their communication and trust might be superficial. It is also a prelude to the deep disappointment and grief that Clara will provoke in Patrick when she leaves him for Ambrose, "moving" away from him once and for all.*



*Patrick highlights the contrast between literary worlds and the more insecure nature of real life, where stories might not have a clear, happy ending. This idea lies behind In the Skin of a Lion's structure: an alternation of stories that follow the chaotic path of memory instead of a clear narrative structure. This suggests that the novel is trying to represent the unfinished, uncertain nature of reality as accurately as possible instead of depicting ideal models of behavior.*



Obsessed with Clara's absence, Patrick imagines writing letters to her, sharing his reflections about her relationship with Ambrose, his dreams, and his notes about hearing lovers fight at night in the street. He recalls memories, such as the moment when he refused to let her go at the train station but she angrily got away from him. One night, he has a dream in which he approaches Clara at a dance but the man she is with and his friends beat Patrick.

*Patrick's grief makes him lead a double life, focused on imaginary conversations as much as on his ordinary life. The vivid nature of his dreams reveals that he is trying, in his conscious and unconscious life, to make sense of what has happened to him and to find the way to return to Clara. These descriptions highlight the way in which love can blend the real with the imaginary: Patrick's dreams merge his memories and his hopes with the reality of Clara's absence.*



One day, Patrick opens the door and is shocked to see Alice standing in the doorway. As she enters the apartment, she sees that Patrick is trying to repair the objects he broke in anger after Clara left. Alice asks him about these objects and Patrick explains that he is trying to put order in his life. Alice then asks him how long Clara has been gone, but Patrick gives no clear answer to Alice's hypothesis that it has been about two years.

*The fact that Patrick has been overwhelmed by Clara's absence for two years reveals how lonely he is. The broken objects in his apartment are a symbolic representation of the fact that his entire life is broken: in the same way that he had to reinvent himself when he first arrived in Toronto, he must now reinvent his life without Clara—which he has not yet figured out how to do.*



Alice asks Patrick for some coffee and he notes that she looks strong and confident. She says that he, on the other hand, looks tired and Patrick explains that he is mentally exhausted but that his body is fine. He realizes that he has not spoken this much in months, and also that he is avoiding looking at Alice. Patrick then looks at her and suddenly hugs her, seeking comfort in this human contact, which he has not enjoyed in so long. He feels as though Alice must have come to bring him back to reality, and reflects that she must know where Clara is.

*Patrick's initial wariness toward Alice highlights how lonely he has become, and how difficult it is for him to connect with other people. His emotional outburst reveals this fragility, suggesting that his apparent self-sufficiency is nothing but a façade, hiding his more vulnerable, sensitive side. However, he still finds himself unable to see Alice for who she truly is, since he only focuses on her possible connection to Clara.*



Patrick ran into Alice the day before, as she was exiting a theater. He told her he was currently working at a lumber yard and would see her play that evening, but all he wanted was to walk away, feeling as though Alice has taken part in Clara's departure.

*Patrick's anger about the situation Clara has left him in extends toward innocent individuals such as Alice. This attitude, though, keeps him from sharing his feelings with anyone, which only augments his unhappiness.*



In Patrick's apartment, after Alice and Patrick make love, Alice mentions that Clara's mother probably knows where she is. She encourages him to look for her so that he might get rid of Clara's dark influence on him. Despite Patrick's seemingly noncommittal reply, he goes to see Clara's mother in Paris, Ontario. They have dinner and chat about Clara's brief marriage with Stump Jones—a piece of information that shocks Patrick, who did not know Clara had gotten married.

*Patrick's sexual relations with Alice suggest that he appreciates the comfort she gives him, but has not forgotten his obsession with Clara, which Alice is aware of. Patrick's ignorance that Clara had been married to Stump Jones highlights, once again, that Patrick actually knows very little about Clara's private life beyond the anecdotes she chose to tell him.*





Clara's mother mentions that Clara said she had seduced Patrick. She enjoins Patrick to forget her, since it has been over two years since she left, but Patrick only laughs. He looks at old pictures of Clara with Stump and, when Clara's mother says that Clara is somewhere Small knows Patrick will never go back to, Patrick becomes convinced that they must be at a place that is so familiar to him that he has forgotten about it: the place where he lived his childhood. At the Paris hotel and then their old room in the Arlington hotel, Patrick relives memories of the time he spent there with Clara and searches for traces of their frantic love-making.

When Patrick finds Ambrose Small in the early hours of the morning, both men seem excited by each other's presence as though they were reflecting each other like a mirror. As Small prepares to talk about his own life, Patrick says he is only interested in Clara because she has cast a spell on him. After Small realizes that Patrick has told no one about Small's whereabouts, he goes inside, supposedly to wake Clara.

In the meantime, Patrick sits outside, enjoying the various sounds and sensations of this countryside, in which he grew up. However, when he feels some water dripping on him even though there is no rain, he realizes that Small has poured kerosene on him from the roof and is about to throw a match at him. Patrick immediately begins to run toward the river, slicing his coat off of him with his knife, and finally reaches the water, where he turns on his back to drown the fire.

Although Patrick does not feel any pain from being on fire, he has cut his hands with his knife. When he looks up, he sees Ambrose throw a burning bottle at him and, when it explodes against the water, Patrick feels as though his left eye might be blind. Patrick then steps out of the water and attacks Ambrose on the shoulder with his knife before running toward his hotel, a mile away. He runs past his old house and other places he remembers from childhood before finally reaching the hotel.

When Patrick wakes up, he cannot see well out of one eye. He looks out the window at the river and then hears Clara call him outside the door. Patrick pushes back the bolt but cannot turn the handle because of his wounded hands. When the door opens, Clara is shocked to see that it is actually Patrick, and Patrick feels his wounded eye crying uncontrollably. While Patrick does not know what to do with his hands, Clara touches his face, offering to clean him up and call a doctor for him.

*Clara's comment about seducing Patrick is ironic, since Patrick was initially so desperate to seduce her. However, it emphasizes that Clara has always maintained more power and emotional distance in the relationship, whereas Patrick was too immersed in his love to realize that he would probably end up abandoned and miserable. Now, Patrick is not only trying to find Clara again, but to regain control over his own memories, which might give him a sense of comfort, convincing him that what they experienced was real.*



*The ease with which Patrick finds Ambrose makes this scene surrealistic, given the number of people who have spent years searching for this man across the entire country. Patrick's disinterest in using this piece of information to receive a financial reward suggests that he has concluded that love is more important than money in life.*



*Ambrose's actions highlight his violent nature. In his private life, as well as in his business activities, he proves capable of wanting to eliminate his enemies cruelly, without consideration for the ethical or human consequences of his acts. This represents an extreme illustration of the cutthroat world Ambrose is used to taking part in.*



*This episode can be seen as an imitation of typical literary scenes of duels between two rival men, fighting for the love of a woman. However, the disjunction and seeming irrationality of Ambrose's actions, which conclude in Patrick running away instead of a clear resolution between the two men, makes this scene stray away from ideals of nobility and courage.*



*Although Clara has left Patrick for Ambrose, she still shows concern and affection for him. Patrick's wounds serve as a physical representation of everything he has suffered for her, and the extreme situations he has put himself in—physically and mentally—to try to find her again. Although Clara offers to help him, it remains clear that she will probably not be able to give Patrick what he truly wants: a return to their past relationship.*



As Clara washes Patrick's cuts, she asks him how he is and Patrick laughs nervously. Clara finds that Patrick looks older and realizes that he is more fragile than she thought. When she shaves him, she writes "Dickens 5" on Patrick's forehead and says that she doesn't want him "lost," even though she cannot stay with him. She then stands up to look at the landscape outside, while Patrick keeps on staring at the space in the wallpaper where Clara had leaned back.

After the doctor comes, Clara tells Patrick that Small is not actually interested in him, but only wants to protect himself and remain anonymous. Under the effect of the medication, Patrick falls asleep. Clara and he make love during the night, careful to avoid his wounds.

As she had said she would, Clara leaves at dawn without waking Patrick and goes to the beach by Ambrose's house, watching the river and thinking. In the meantime, Patrick has woken up and discovered blood all over the sheets, from how they moved during the night, as well as the shape of Clara's bloody hand on the wallpaper. Ambrose then exits the house with bandages around his shoulder and sees Clara looking out at Patrick's river.

*Clara's attitude toward Patrick is one of possession. She knows that she has power over him, as she underlines by writing her last name on Patrick's skin in the same way that her father had painted their hunting dogs. Patrick's obsession with the past reveals itself when he proves more interested in signs of her absence, such as the wallpaper, than in her current life and motives.*



*Small's lack of interest in Patrick—in stark contrast with Patrick's earlier fascination with Small's presence in Clara's life—reveals Small's apparent indifference to emotions, as he is more interested in self-protection than in the intricacies of his lover's life.*



*Although the reader never gains access to Clara's thoughts, her meditative attitude shows that she is not unaffected by seeing Patrick again. The blood in the hotel room represents their passion and also suggests that all Patrick will have to remember Clara are the visual memories she leaves behind, and not her actual presence.*



## PART 2: CHAPTER 1: PALACE OF PURIFICATION

In 1930, under Lake Ontario, men work in a dark, mud-filled tunnel in silence while the city photographer Arthur Goss captures the scene. The men struggle with wet rocks and mud to build Toronto's new waterworks. Like the Italian and Greek immigrants Patrick works with, he remains silent during his eight-hour shift, as they work, eat, and relieve themselves in the dark tunnel while knowing that, if they dig too far, the tunnel could flood and kill them all.

Whenever the workers discover large walls of rock, Patrick works alone to **dynamite** it. He is paid extra for laying charges, in addition to his ordinary digging work. Although dynamiting makes him feel comfortable, since it reminds him of his childhood and his father's skills, he is now condemned to work in darkness, below the earth, instead of in sunlight by the water.

*The danger and solitary nature of the working class's manual labor comes to light in this scene. The fact that they work in an underground tunnel is all the more symbolic, as it indicates that the workers' work and life remains invisible to the rest of society. The lack of hygiene that the men are forced to accept not only puts their health at risk, but also suggests that they are not even given the time and space to satisfy basic human needs.*



*Patrick's inheritance of his father's profession suggests that he does have a strong family identity, even if it is defined exclusively by work. The contrast between his childhood and his current work conditions adds unpleasantness to danger, suggesting that being part of the working class in the city is even more arduous than in the countryside.*



After work, Patrick walks home from work, recognizing other workers by the holes they have in their shirts—the result of removing their shirt during the day’s heat and pinning it to a wall—and feeling the clay dry on his clothing and arms. When he reaches his room, he removes his clothes, feeds the iguana, and goes to bed. At six in the morning, he wakes up to go to work, stopping by the Thompson Grill to eat a quick breakfast. At the waterworks, Patrick then enters the tunnel convinced that the mules who live there are just as knowledgeable as any man digging into a clay wall.

Above ground, Commissioner Harris organizes the excavations and the variety of elements that make up the waterworks, provided by many different specialized companies. Harris has dreamed of this water palace’s elegance, and the architect Pomphrey has designed it to look like an ideal city. Criticized during the Great Depression for this extravagant project, Harris insists that he is creating jobs when he knows that this construction project remains a self-centered dream.

Although Harris has sent the photographer Arthur Goss in the tunnels, he has never been there himself, as he is more interested in managing the technical aspects that building the waterworks involves. In Goss’s photographs, except for one man’s shirt, the tunnel looks dark and filled with strenuous labor.

Patrick eats most of his meals at the Thompson Grill, where he watches the waitress’s efficient movements, honed over the years. She seems indifferent to those around her, but Patrick finds her fascinating, thanks to her seeming aloofness, combined with her strong muscles and her precise movements.

One day, Patrick, who has spent the past couple of years completely alone, pins a note on his wall about a meeting at the waterworks at 8 p.m. He lives in a neighborhood of Macedonian immigrants, many of whom work in the tunnel with him, and his inability to communicate with them makes him feel pleasantly anonymous. However, over time, he regularly asks a Macedonian woman at the market for clover and vetch, having succeeded at making himself understood and repeating the word in their language.

*The visual signs that workers can recognize as symbols of their trade create a sense of solidarity and communion among workers, even if they do not actually talk to each other. In fact, Patrick’s routine is extremely solitary, and he does not seem interested in communicating with his colleagues beyond what is necessary. His comparison of a man’s brain to a mule’s emphasizes that, even if it involves skill and danger, the work that the men perform is not intellectually complex, and reduces them to the state of animals.*



*The participation of many different companies in the waterworks project shows that Harris is far from the only one responsible for the workers’ exploitation. Instead, the workers must be seen as part of an entire system of capitalist competition that allows private firms to benefit from the low cost of the men’s labor and the business that large construction projects bring.*



*Harris’s lack of interest in visiting the actual sites where men work once again reveals his indifference toward the workers’ plight. Goss’s photographs highlight the insalubrity of the men’s working conditions, as well as the artistic difficulty—which In the Skin of a Lion attempts to overcome—of making each worker look like a full human being.*



*In her apparent solitary attitude and physical efficiency, the waitress is reminiscent of Patrick himself, who is leading a life of routine manual labor and has become an anonymous member of the urban fabric.*



*Because of the composition of his neighborhood, Patrick experiences a culture shock in his own country, the estrangement that foreign immigrants usually feel. Although Patrick claims to appreciate his solitary life, he also derives pleasure from learning the immigrants’ language and having small interactions with them, which reveals that he might be more interested in cultural exchange than he admits to himself.*



When Patrick finally explains to the puzzled Macedonian shopkeepers that he needs vetch to feed his iguana, they all surround him, asking him many questions about his pet. The group then calls for Emil, a young boy who speaks the best English. When Emil sees Patrick, he calls him “Peaches on Friday.” Patrick realizes that all the Macedonians know about him is where he lives, that he lives alone, and that he always asks for canned peaches on Fridays.

Patrick is embarrassed to realize that he lives such a monotonous life. He is so overwhelmed by the Macedonians’ friendliness and generosity, as they hand him a Macedonian cake, that he feels tears fall from his eyes. Elena, the shopkeeper he has bought vetch from for over a year, hands him her white scarf to use as a handkerchief. Looking up at these people he has always considered so foreign, he realizes that he is their alien.

Everyone introduces themselves and, as Patrick tries to remember their names, he introduces himself as well. The Macedonians then invite him to have lunch with them, treating him as a guest of honor. During the lunch, Kosta asks Patrick a question through Emil, who first inquires if others believe this question is appropriate and then asks Patrick what he can do, adding that it does not matter if Patrick cannot do anything.

While everyone waits for his reply in silence, Patrick answers that he used to work as a searcher and that he knows how to use **dynamite**—a reply that causes an even greater silence. Kosta then suddenly begins yelling passionately at Patrick, saying “Me too, me too.” Later, as Patrick is showing his iguana around the neighborhood, Kosta discreetly invites him to a meeting at the waterworks at eight on Sunday night.

On Sunday, one hour after sunset, people walk up the hill toward the waterworks. The illegal gathering, made up of people from different nationalities, takes place inside the waterworks because the machines drown out the noise. Patrick follows the crowd to a temporary stage, waving to Kosta when he sees him greeting people. Patrick then realizes that this is a night of entertainment and of politics.

*The Macedonians’ curiosity reveals that they must have wondered about Patrick for a long time but never found the way or the right moment to ask him about his strange requests. Emil’s nickname suggests that the community’s attitude toward Patrick is warm and playful, fueled by months of regular, polite interactions.*



*Patrick’s emotional reaction to the Macedonians’ warmth suggests that his solitary life was perhaps not as fulfilling as he thought it was, and that he too yearns for the love and comfort that a community can bring. This proves a revolutionary moment for Patrick, who has never benefited from the joy that a community can bring—not even in his own family.*



*The Macedonians’ friendliness toward Patrick is an expression of human warmth and empathy. In this sense, Kosta’s question can be seen as a simple effort to get to know Patrick better, in line with everyone’s concern to be as polite and welcoming as possible. At the same time, Kosta’s inquiry also aims to understand what role Patrick might play in the community, whether economic or political.*



*The silence after Patrick’s answer is ominous, suggesting that he might have made a faux pas. However, Kosta’s outburst of enthusiasm highlights the similarity between Patrick and him, suggesting that cultural differences matter less than one’s skills and experience. Patrick’s dynamiting skills also make him a potentially useful political activist.*



*The nature of this meeting suggests that Kosta was indeed trying to evaluate Patrick politically at lunch, and that Patrick is now allowed to take part in all aspects of the community’s life, even if he is not actually a foreign immigrant. The mix of entertainment and politics at the meeting shows that, in their life as marginalized citizens, immigrants need both to distract themselves and to make their voice heard.*



When the electric lights turn off, the only light comes from the oil lamps illuminating the stage. Puppets then arrive on stage, accompanied by a human figure disguised as a large puppet. In the absence of music, the puppets dance, twirling around. The large human puppet wears clothing that represents a mix of different nationalities. As a plot emerges, the human puppet becomes the hero. It plays the part of a naïve foreigner whom authorities insult and then begin to beat physically, while the puppet only makes pleading gestures. Patrick finds the scene unbearable and cannot look away from the puppet's face, which has thick eyebrows, a big nose, and a curled moustache. Finally, the human puppet kneels and begins to hit the wooden floor as a plea for help, which brings sudden, frightening sound to the show.

As the audience begins to clap at the same rhythm as the figure's hand, Patrick finds himself hypnotized by the scene. Desperate to make this terrifying action stop, he stands up and walks on stage, noticing that the performer looks much smaller from up close and is a woman. He then leans over and gently takes the woman's hand to make her stop banging it on the stage. When he looks up at the audience, he notices that there are hundreds of people there, more than he thought.

Although all Patrick notices is that the actress looks exhausted, she expresses more emotion, showing shock at seeing him. However, she then begins to clap slowly, raising her swollen hand and calling out the next performer, whom the crowd cheers on. Patrick moves back to leave the stage, embarrassed, and when he looks up again she is gone.

Backstage, Patrick searches for the woman everywhere, past actors who are putting on or taking off costumes. When he asks a performer where the puppet dancer might be, the performer gives him a flashlight and Patrick keeps on moving through the darkness, past a variety of puppets representing various roles. When Patrick hears the sound of something falling into water, he turns around, thinking that his gestures must also make him look like a puppet. Extending his hand, he touches an arm while someone calls him by his name.

Patrick turns on the flashlight again, feeling as though the woman was waiting for his light to reveal herself. The woman explains that no one comes there while she washes, and that she therefore knew it must be him. She asks him to wash the paint off her neck and, as he wipes off her eyes as well, he feels that he is interacting with something even more intimate than the person of Alice Gull, since he has to remove a minuscule spot of paint around her eye.

*From the aspect of entertainment, the human puppet's role, is to make the audience feel strong emotions of fear, pity, and compassion. From a political perspective, the puppet is denouncing the discrimination and brutality that immigrants often experience. In this sense, it aims to transform spectators' compassion into political indignation and a desire to act. This scene reveals the power of art to illuminate reality and, perhaps, to participate in societal change. In its aim to make history tangible and human, In the Skin of a Lion follows a similar goal.*



*Patrick's spontaneous interruption of the play suggests that it has achieved its effect: to spur the audience into action. The play encourages solidarity and compassion, the protection of the weakest members of society. Patrick's surprise at seeing so many people present indicates that urban life is not necessarily as impersonal and anonymous as he initially believed, but that it can foster networks of cooperation.*



*Patrick will later discover that the actress is none other than Alice, who is shocked to recognize Patrick as her savior. However, her subsequent clapping reveals that she is not as disturbed by his interruption as one might have thought, but that Patrick's presence on stage is part of the show.*



*The mysterious, backstage atmosphere that Patrick is immersed in makes him feel as though he is moving through a magical world, in which he too has become a puppet—a tool in a work of art that he does not yet understand. This scene creates mystery and suspense, amplified by the fact that Patrick is completely confused, whereas the person whose arm he touches apparently knows who he is.*



*The late revelation that the actress is Alice Gull explains why she would ask Patrick to wash her, but puts the reader in a state of confusion that mirrors Patrick's and thus makes the world seem magical and unintelligible. Patrick's removal of the paint on Alice's face allows her to step out of her role as an actress, and also re-establishes physical and emotional contact between them.*



Later, in Alice's room, where Patrick has just seen Alice's sleeping daughter, Alice explains that she wasn't married and that the girl's father is dead. He was a guerilla fighter and political activist who was persecuted in his own country and was deeply committed to justice, which made him difficult to live with.

Patrick and Alice then begin to talk about politics and injustice, and while Patrick argues that compassion—what Alice's play achieves—can be a powerful vehicle for political learning, Alice argues that they should take power from the powerful instead of trying to teach them to be better. She concludes that Patrick is solitary and self-sufficient, and therefore can allow himself to be what she calls “romantic.” Against Patrick's optimistic attitude toward social mobility, she argues that the only way to succeed economically is to become as predatory as Ambrose Small, who considered even Clara a possession he could detach himself from.

As Patrick listens to Alice's angry tirade, he wonders if this might be an acting role, an imitation of her daughter's father. Describing the plight of the many people who were at the gathering, Alice explains that working at a tannery is brutalizing, because the smell marks the men's very skin and causes them to suffer from arthritis and rheumatism. Alice argues that the only way to stop this is to destroy the rich's possessions.

Alice then explains that someone always walks on stage to stop her, as Patrick did tonight, but Patrick replies that she will not convert him to her cause. He then asks her if she would ever ask him to kill someone for political reasons and if her daughter's father would have done that, but she simply replies that she does not consider herself important enough to make someone hurt another person.

The two of them walk out onto the fire escape, holding Alice's daughter Hana in the fresh air, and passersby wave at them from below, which makes Patrick feel as though Alice and he are playing a role. As a bottle of whiskey attached by a rope moves down toward them, Alice drinks some, giving a toast to impatience, before offering some to Patrick and sending the bottle down for other people to enjoy. Looking out at their Macedonian neighborhood and the entire city, knowing that this is the “New World,” Patrick feels at rest.

*Although both Alice and Patrick are now alone, their partners gone, Alice's family situation contrasts starkly with Patrick's solitary life. Alice comes across as mature and responsible, potentially immersed in local politics and community life.*



*Even though Alice is an actress, she does not believe that art is capable of influencing reality—and, in particular, political dynamics—in any meaningful way. Unlike Patrick, her vision of life is less based on individual will and talent than on an understanding of capitalist society as a system that corrupts everyone involved, oppressing the poor and turning the rich or ambitious into greedy, uncaring opportunists. This means that the entire system—not just the particular individuals who represent it—needs to be overhauled.*



*The fact that Alice might have inherited some of her political opinions from her former lover suggests that love is capable of radically redefining people's beliefs and sense of self. Alice identifies with the plight of the working class and advocates revolutionary methods, according to which only destruction would allow for the creation of a more equal society, in which everyone understands what it means to be poor.*



*Alice's comment about the play aims to show Patrick that there are many people who care about justice in the city, and that this is a noble cause. However, her admission that injustice or politics does not justify killing others is a sign of humility, because she proves averse to the idea of imposing her beliefs onto others through brute force.*



*Patrick realizes that being part of a community involves both benefits and responsibilities, as being recognized makes him more accountable for his actions than the anonymous city as a whole does. The moving bottle of whiskey symbolizes the trust and solidarity that exists in the working-class community, as everyone shares a valuable good, whiskey with everyone else.*



After Patrick lies down, Alice tells him to sit up again to see something beautiful, and Patrick sees rectangles of light appear as night workers prepare in their apartments for their shifts. Patrick says that these people do not want Alice's revolution and she agrees, saying that only he will be involved.

*Alice's agreement that most members of the working class will never actually want a revolution means that she is working on behalf of others, not necessarily with their stated support. This makes her project subversive even within the working class itself.*



At five in the morning, Patrick leaves Alice and Hana sleeping on the fire escape to leave for work, stopping by his room to put on his clothes. He knows that he will be exhausted later and that his body will not be able to perform its strenuous tasks, but for the moment he feels awake and energetic. Patrick remembers a comment Clara had made about Alice after Cato, Hana's father, died. She said that Alice experienced something akin to madness and extreme loneliness.

*The contrast between the family that Patrick is leaving and his solitary work highlights the fact that he is now embarking on a new journey, in which his lonely routine might be complemented by more social activities. Clara's comment about Alice highlights the deep emotional impact that love has on people, capable—like a political revolution—of completely overturning their lives.*



In the Thompson Grill, Patrick recalls being eighteen, at a formal ball, and experiencing the beauty and wonder of a woman's embrace for the first time while drunk. As he also recalls his old conversation with Clara about Alice, he feels as though all these women might be a succession of painted faces.

*Patrick's life has been marked by his interaction with women. This indicates that love plays an important role in defining an individual's memory and identity, even if memory sometimes makes people seem impossibly distant.*



Over time, as Patrick begins to feel happy and fulfilled in his relationship with Alice, he finds a job at the tannery after the waterworks tunnel is completed. Since jobs are still difficult to find, he benefits from Alice's connections. At the tannery, he slices animal skins, walking on slippery mud that requires strong balance, and loses awareness of the terrible smell from the dying section. However, the men are only allowed ten seconds of water to wash off and Alice can still smell the leather on him. The dyers, by contrast, can wash longer but the horrible smell never leaves them.

*The natural progression of Patrick's relationship with Alice implies that Patrick probably needed love and comfort more than he ever realized. Like most of the jobs that the working class takes part in, his new job is both deeply unpleasant, unsanitary, and dangerous. The difficulty of finding even such a job suggests that the country is undergoing a difficult economic situation, impacting even the lowest paid members of society.*



The dyers, who wash in different-colored pools, wish they could gather to smoke a cigarette during their five-minute break. Reflecting on the fact that the men's colors look as though they represented their different nationalities, Patrick knows that these men have a terrible job, which is bound to make them smell terribly for years to come and die of consumption. Despite the men's desperate desire for a cigarette, they cannot smoke because the acid of the solutions they are immersed in would make them burst into flame if they brought a flame to it.

*The colors at the tannery symbolize the fact that most of the working class is comprised of foreign immigrants. It also highlights the near-impossible difficulty of achieving social mobility, since these men's skin is marked for life by the chemicals they have worked so long in. This serves as a metaphor, on a physical level, for the way in which these men's social identity, at the bottom of the economic ladder, will probably never change.*



At the tannery, when the workers arrive at dawn, working until six in the evening, the labor agent gives them English names, which they repeat to themselves like a number. Mentioning the smell that will forever mark the dyers' skin, Alice criticizes the attitude of the rich, who always laugh, never work, and keep the poor in menial jobs. She forces Patrick to remember that the rich will never want to give up on their material superiority.

In Kosta's house, Alice is relaxed with her friends, with whom she speaks, English, Finnish, or Macedonian. Patrick does not understand everything, but knows that they mention the police chief who made public meetings by foreigners and speaking a foreign language in the street illegal. Patrick reflects on his father's comment about the loggers they would see when he was a child. Hazen Lewis said that they did not know where they were. Patrick now realizes that the situation has been reversed: he is the one who does not know where he is.

One day, Alice reads Patrick some of Joseph Conrad's letters. The writer defends the right of the oppressed to fight for political ideals, even as he finds political crimes repellent. As Alice tries to convince Patrick of the validity of her views, he says that the problem with ideology is that it is not compatible with the private, intimate lives of people.

On Saturdays, workers from the tannery gather at the steam baths, while saluting each other using people's countries as their names, for example calling Patrick "Canada." Patrick does not know anything about his fellow workers' private lives, and keeps his own Canadian identity secret to his bosses. In the steam baths, though, everyone relaxes and Patrick listens to the music, giving in to ease and comfort.

Later, Patrick joins Alice and Hana and they eat on the fire escape or at the Balkan Café where Hana teaches Patrick the foreign words for the food they are eating. Since Alice works in the evening, he would spend time with Hana waiting to pick Alice up at ten, and they would walk around the neighborhood, while Hana translated words to him. Patrick enjoys learning about the Macedonians' customs, and admires the way in which Hana has made certain spots of the city her own.

*The foreign men's efforts to remember their names underlines their estrangement from English-speaking Canadian society, even as they sacrifice their own lives to take part in it. Manual labor turns them into mere numbers, anonymous individuals contributing to a greater economic system whose benefits they are unlikely to reap.*



*The state's endorsement of a law that directly targets foreigners supports Alice's view that the rich aim to keep the working class poor and disenfranchised. By making public meetings illegal and keeping people from speaking foreign languages, the police aims to limit the possibility for workers to organize for their rights—an anti-democratic goal meant to keep workers from fighting for better pay and working conditions.*



*Patrick does not believe in fighting in a potentially violent way for abstract ideals, because he argues that it destroys the emotional realm of human life, such as compassion and empathy. He seems to believe in the popular vote, the basis of democracy.*



*Patrick realizes that he is neither fully from Canada (since he lives and works with so many foreign immigrants), nor from somewhere else, since he cannot communicate with his foreign colleagues. However, all the workers are linked by a single, unifying characteristic: their strenuous manual labor.*



*Patrick, Alice, and Hana form a small family. Although Patrick takes care of Hana, he actively learns from her, through her linguistic skills. This relationship of interdependence shows that love can allow everyone to grow and learn in a cooperative way. It also underlines his sincere interest in actually becoming part of the immigrant community around him.*





Patrick and Hana sometimes go to Hana's favorite place, Geranium Bakery, where her friend Nicholas Temelcoff shows them around the bakery. One night, Hana shows Patrick some old photographs and tells him about Cato, her father, whom she never knew. Noticing a picture of people on the bridge, Patrick asks Hana about it and Hana says that Alice must have known them.

One day, Alice shares with Patrick parts of her love story with Cato. She explains that Cato was his war name and that, because of his need to hide his identity, she learned she could never trust him. Although they often spoke of breaking up, since it was complicated to maintain such a relationship while Cato took part in political work, they would always see each other on Thursdays and explore the surrounding countryside on their bicycles, making love out in the open.

Although Patrick initially wonders if these stories make him feel jealous, he concludes that they do not. He then asks Alice about the men on the bridge but Alice, who is not inclined to give much importance to the past, tells him to leave the past alone.

With the photograph of the men on the bridge in his pocket, Patrick reflects that he has always believed that characters have a life on the page, expanding beyond the plot that the author has chosen for them. He walks to the Riverdale Library, where he searches for information about the bridge's construction. There, he reads about the nun who fell off the bridge and discovers a picture of Nicholas Temelcoff. Although Patrick wants to find the picture of the nun, he realizes that no one would have printed her picture. As Patrick reflects on the various stories around him, he realizes that he is now part of a web of stories—Alice's love story with Cato, Hana's friendship with the baker—and wonders if Alice was a nun.

The next day, at work, Patrick reflects on what he knows about Alice's past. After work, he goes home and plays a game with Alice and Hana on the bed. Patrick marvels at Alice's frail, yet agile body. Once, Alice tells Patrick that she misses Clara, who made her sane for years and has made Alice the person she is now.

*Patrick's curiosity about the photographs reveal his interest in Alice's past, which he does not know much about. It is only much later that Patrick will realize that this photograph is a symbol of Alice's break with the past: she once decided to abandon her life as a nun to join ordinary society, after being rescued by Nicholas on the bridge.*



*Alice's lack of knowledge about Cato's true identity reflects Patrick's ignorance of Alice's former life. It suggests that perfect knowledge or understanding is not necessary for love to flourish, but that people can learn to accept elements of mystery in the other's character. In this case, Alice accepts that Cato's political involvement is more important than complete transparency on his part.*



*Patrick's lack of jealousy shows that he accepts that love can involve multiple people at once, in the past and the present: Patrick can love Alice even if she once loved Cato as strongly as he currently loves her.*



*Patrick's attitude toward fictional characters' lives outside the page mirrors his desire to understand the meaning of this photograph in Alice's life: he believes there is more to people's lives than what most people usually see. In this case, he discovers that Nicholas is not only a baker, but a former fearless bridge builder, and that Alice might be a former nun—which would explain why she is currently friends with Nicholas. Patrick discovers that the stories he has heard do not exclude him from other people's lives. Rather, they allow him to become part of a collective narrative, a series of personal stories that he is now involved in through the simple act of becoming Alice's partner.*



*This series of seemingly disjointed events does not bring any resolution to Patrick's interrogations about Alice, but reinforces the idea that there will always be an element of mystery to people's past. In the present, though, love is powerful enough to make everyone fulfilled.*



Patrick realizes that he is obsessively looking through Alice's past because he wants to keep her from being dead, and he hopes to achieve a return to the past which only literature can achieve. When Patrick goes to see Nicholas Temelcoff at the bakery, he realizes that Alice must be the nun, taking on the parrot's name Alicia as her own, perhaps in a mocking reply to Nicholas's injunction that she speak.

After Patrick leaves the bakery, Nicholas keeps on thinking. Although Nicholas never talks about the past, as he focused only on his work at the bakery and his feeling of being a citizen there, Patrick's questions have made him experience the pleasure of being part of history. Now, Nicholas will give up on some of his shyness and begin to tell stories, sharing with his wife the story of the nun.

Patrick remembers lying on Alice's stomach and listening to stories about her relationship with Cato. She explains that he was born in the north, the son of a Finnish family. When she mentions that he used to skate on a frozen lake holding burning plants as torches, Patrick realizes that the loggers he knew as a child must have been Finns, and that he now has a name for that anonymous group. Then, as Alice and he make love, he wonders where *she* is from. Lying with her in bed, he also feels amazed that the actor he once saw on stage is now lying in his arms, fully human. He wonders how she succeeds in separating her acting roles from her true self.

One day, Hana hands Patrick a letter Cato wrote to Alice while working as a logger in the winter and living what would become his final days. Engaged in political activism, Cato was planning a strike and, when the camp bosses learned about this, they chased him, caught him, and executed him. As Patrick reads the letter, he wonders if he is an impostor for enjoying Alice and Hana's presence, the members of Cato's family. He feels as though he has become a searcher in his own family.

Thinking about his own life, Patrick realizes that he has always been detached from other humans and that, despite being Canadian, he feels foreign to this place. He knows that he cannot be a hero in the stories he has heard, and that the Finns who played on the river at night were perhaps more closely linked to the land than he was. He concludes that everyone's stories can exist without him, and that all he does is collect their stories, feeling a gap between him and the love of a community. When he realizes that he never knew about the union battles taking place in 1921 in his very own childhood region, he feels ignorant and blind.

*The sudden announcement of Alice's death remains unexplained until much later in the novel. For the moment, it remains as elusive as her life as a nun, which she discarded suddenly and irrevocably. In the same way, her death—however mysterious—is immutable, and cannot be modified once it has happened.*



*Patrick's discovery that Nicholas took part in building the bridge makes Nicholas feel pride in his own past. This proves that Patrick's effort to understand Alice's connection to the bridge workers was well intentioned. All he wanted to do was to understand his community better, and Alice's position in it.*



*When Patrick discovers through Alice that the loggers he used to know were members of Cato's community, it becomes apparent that people's lives are deeply connected. This episode also suggests that uncovering history serves a humanizing role, as it keeps a group of workers from remaining anonymous. Instead, it gives them an identity and a purpose. Like Patrick, through historical investigation, In the Skin of a Lion seeks to give life to potentially anonymous groups of workers.*



*The extremely violent punishment that Cato suffered at the hands of his bosses reveals how dangerous it is to be involved in political work, since the powerful people in society have strong economic interests to keep workers from defending their rights. Patrick's consciousness of becoming part of people's various stories does not always make him feel comfortable, even if it is historically useful.*



*It is difficult to separate Patrick's feelings of estrangement from his previous announcement of Alice's death. If love made him feel connected to other people, he now realizes that his lack of connection to others makes him feel ignorant. In this way, love, connection, and the joy of knowledge all go hand in hand. However, Patrick's comments about his ignorance sound unfairly harsh, since the environment he grew up in kept him isolated from a community and from the region's political life.*



Patrick remembers one Sunday when Alice and he were walking back from the regular gathering at the waterworks. Patrick offered to become more formally responsible for Hana, but Alice replied that he already was looking after her, since Hana knew he loved her. Overwhelmed by grief, Patrick now longs for Alice's presence and recalls various moments of their time together. Talking to Alice in his mind, he tells her that the moment she told him she would not ask someone to hurt someone else was the moment he fell in love with her, since it made him realize he could trust her—even though, paradoxically, Alice saw her own confession as self-criticism.

Recalling other memories, Patrick concludes that he does not want a love story structured by plot and logical consequences, but that he simply wants to be alone in a field with Alice, when they used to walk around the city and the countryside together.

*Alice's comment about the love that exists between Patrick and Hana aims to show him that love is powerful enough to bring comfort and protection without the need for formal recognition. In the same way, Alice recognized the need for people to look after each other, regardless of their political beliefs. Her inability to tell someone to harm someone else reveals not lack of confidence, as she believed, but trust in humanity and the dignity of every human being, even her own enemies.*



*Patrick wishes he could escape ordinary life to enter the world of literature, where the reader can choose to stop reading at any point and settle on a single memory, instead of having to endure the pain and grief that real life can bring.*



## PART 2: CHAPTER 2: REMORSE

In Alice's room, Patrick recalls his old desire to know Alice when she was old. Lying in bed, where her smell still lies, he finds that he cannot sleep and fears losing his precise memory of her face. He recalls a conversation in which he asked her why she liked him, and she said he gave her energy and confidence. Patrick leaves Alice's room with a suitcase and takes the night train to Hunstville, where there is a regatta. Thinking about the equality and justice that Alice believed in, Patrick boards a steamer and finds a deck chair by the dock to sleep in, while clutching his suitcase.

On Page Island, Patrick visits the Garden of the Blind, where he sits reading a newspaper while hearing the birds' calls. The night before, Patrick poured paraffin in the Muskoska hotel, where many regatta-goers were staying, and **dynamited** the dock before rowing away. Now, a woman in the Garden of the Blind begins to talk to him, after hearing that he is reading a newspaper and must not be blind. She tells him that her name is Elizabeth and she walks around the garden with him, sharing personal stories about her life.

Patrick tells Elizabeth that he is wanted by the police for destroying property. He plans to stay at the garden until nightfall and then swim out to a boat. When Patrick sees the woman's eye, one of which is gone entirely, it reminds him of the intense greenness of moths. They sit down together, and Patrick remembers Alice's grand cause as well as her death in his arms. When the woman falls asleep against him, Patrick finally moves away and leaves.

*Patrick and Alice's relationship was based on the act of sharing, as each character derived strength from receiving and giving each other support, in the present and the future. Because of this, Patrick inherits Alice's beliefs once she is gone, and wants to help her achieve her goals even now that she is dead. He is no longer listening to her political speeches: he has now internalized her mode of thinking, and knows what he is supposed to do to honor it.*



*Patrick's decision to destroy the Muskoska hotel remains unexplained. Although it clearly meant to deprive the rich of some of their possessions—one of Alice's revolutionary goals—it remains ambiguous whether Patrick now agrees with Alice's political views, whether he is angry at the rich for Alice's death, or whether he meant his action to honor Alice's goals.*



*The color of the moths reminds Patrick of his childhood and his fascination with beautiful things. Although it appears that this type of beauty has now been replaced by his love for Alice and his embrace of her political cause, his recollection of childhood still gives him an innocent outlook, proving that he has not become a cold, calculating political activist.*



At night, Patrick jumps off the dock and swims toward a night cruise under the moonlight. When a sunken log touches him, he feels suddenly scared and alive. Hearing music on the boat, he succeeds in breaking a window and climbing through it, landing on a table in the kitchen. Startled at the noise, the cook turns around but Patrick makes a sign for him to keep quiet and, after cleaning the kitchen, the cook leaves. Hearing the music above him, Patrick takes off his wet clothes, heats them in the oven, and looks for food, ultimately deciding to eat some raw meat while waiting for his clothes to dry.

*The contrast between the luxury and entertainment on the boat and Patrick's current plight highlights the gap between the rich and him. It also suggests that he has made a commitment to fight for justice, not to make money, and that he is not interested in living the kind of life that the people on the cruise are taking part in. Rather, as the episode with the sunken log suggests, it is the knowledge of the fight, with all its dangers, that makes him feel as though his life is worthwhile.*



## PART 3: CHAPTER 1: CARAVAGGIO

At the Kingston Penitentiary, the prisoners Patrick Lewis and Buck are painting the roof of the prison blue, careful not to confuse that color with the sky and step off the side of the roof. Patrick and Buck paint Caravaggio blue against the roof so that he will not be visible and can escape. At night, after prison staff search for him in vain, Caravaggio unfastens the belt attaching him to the roof and jumps off, running through the small town of Bath in the darkness. Finally, he jumps onto a train, attaching himself as he had on the roof, and falls asleep.

*The story now shifts from Patrick to Caravaggio. Caravaggio, a thief, represents another aspect of working-class life: the section of society that takes part in illegal actions for a living. However, Caravaggio's political beliefs are aligned with Alice's, as he despises the lifestyle of the rich. He represents an alternative way of life—a different way of engaging in economic and political subversion.*



When Caravaggio arrives in Trenton, he jumps off the train, still completely covered in blue. He sleeps in the grass for a while, and walks through the woods near an industrial area. When he steps out of the woods, he sees a child observe him while he is trying to look normal. As Caravaggio begins to talk to the boy, he learns that his name is Alfred, and the boy asks him if he is part of the movie company, to which Caravaggio nods. Caravaggio asks Alfred to help him remove the paint from his body and Alfred agrees to wipe the paint of Caravaggio's face. Caravaggio finally admits that he is not part of a movie crew, but comes from the prison. Laughing, he says that he is the painter Caravaggio. The boy promises to keep this a secret and helps him cut off his hair.

*The improvisational nature of Caravaggio's movements and decisions, as well as the ease with which he lies, reveal that he used to living a life of dissimulation and uncertainty. However, his good humor gives him the air of an adventurer instead of depicting him as a potentially dangerous criminal, which thieves are usually considered to be. Caravaggio's joke about being the famous painter highlights the difference in status between Caravaggio, who steals paintings for a living, and the original Italian artist, who made them.*



Caravaggio then walks briefly into the nearby factory when the owner is busy, and goes into the bathroom to remove the paint oil from his face. In the mirror, he sees his neck for the first time since his prison attack, three months earlier, which left him with a scar. Caravaggio says goodbye to Alfred, who gives him a piece of paper with his name, telling him to remember it.

*Despite Caravaggio's illegal activities, the prison attack—which is only described later in the novel—highlights the difference between him and ordinary criminals, who use violence to assert their power. Caravaggio, by contrast, prefers to remain discreet and make money without risking a confrontation.*



Caravaggio runs north through the bush, hoping to find a cottage he could stay in for a few days. After three days of sleeping outdoors, he finally finds a cottage that looks empty and from which it would be easy for him to escape if the owners came back. In ten seconds, he enters the cottage and, having only eaten some chocolate that Al gave him, he walks excitedly around the house, finding a can of beans. Upstairs, he removes blankets from one of the beds and sleeps on them in the hallway. His life as a thief has made him hate sleeping. Even when his wife is asleep in his arms, he remains watchful, paying attentive to all the noises around him, which makes him sleep uneasily.

While sleeping, Caravaggio experiences a familiar nightmare, the memory of three men attacking him in prison. Patrick, who could see what was going on from his cell opposite Caravaggio's, began singing to alert Caravaggio, but the men succeeded in wrapping Caravaggio in his sheets and beating him. Patrick kept on singing, waking up people in the other cells. As the men were beating Caravaggio, they insulted him with derogatory terms referring to his Italian nationality. Blindfolded, Caravaggio felt a razor cut his neck and he fell against the wall. After the men left, Patrick yelled to Caravaggio that they had cut his neck and that he needed to stop the bleeding while waiting for someone to come. Caravaggio felt blood in his mouth and, when he touched his neck, he realized it was not there anymore.

The next morning, Caravaggio uses a canoe to paddle on the lake. He comes across a neighbor in another canoe, who recognizes Caravaggio's canoe as the Neals' and asks about them. Caravaggio tries to answer her question vaguely and, when she presents herself as Anne, Caravaggio says his name is David. He explains that he is here to get his bearings, and Anne says that this is the perfect place to do so, noting that it can be healing for people who are alone. Seeing the aquamarine paint on his neck, she asks him if he is an artist, and Caravaggio smiles at the thought that he has always called it blue. However, Anne senses that Caravaggio wants to leave and, feeling guilty, wonders if she has talked too loudly after having spent so many weeks alone.

Caravaggio recalls training to be a thief and moving all the furniture and objects in his room at night to practice. During his first robbery, he broke his ankle after jumping out a second-floor window with an expensive drawing in his hand. He then succeeded in finding a hiding place in a mushroom factory, where he noticed that all of the workers' punch cards showed Portuguese and Italian names.

*Caravaggio's activities as a thief influence his entire life. It causes him to examine every situation from the perspective of potential escape, and allows him none of the well-earned rest that official workers such as Patrick enjoy. In this way, living outside the law might bring certain rewards, but it also involves self-sacrifice. The mention of his private life and his seemingly loving relationship with his wife makes Caravaggio likable, as his decision to steal does not necessarily make him a bad person who wants to harm others.*



*Despite being a lawbreaker himself, Caravaggio has a friendly, peaceful attitude that sets him apart from truly malicious individuals. This episode in prison highlights Caravaggio's vulnerability, as he becomes the object of a hate crime in which his origins are used to justify violence against him. This isolated episode points to the racism that exists in Canadian society, where foreign immigrants are treated as second-class individuals. At the same time, citizens like Patrick serve as a reminder that not everyone is intolerant, and that it is possible for members of any nationality to protect each other.*



*This social situation is just as dangerous for Caravaggio as being caught stealing in someone's house, since he is using other people's property and possessions. Anne's comment about the paint suggests that she probably has artistic sensibilities herself, and Caravaggio realizes that he is usually too focused on the practical details of his life to focus on the actual details around him, such as the color of paint he used to escape from prison. The woman's guilt proves ironically misguided, since Caravaggio simply does not want his identity as a thief to be revealed.*



*Even though Caravaggio is a thief and the people in the factory take part in an entirely different kind of work, he knows that they are part of the same community as him: Southern European immigrants who came to Canada in the hope of leading a better life. On a purely cultural level, this makes him part of the foreign working class.*



Caravaggio then remembers the early days when he felt interested in becoming a thief. He was impressed by other thieves' politeness and discovered that they often spent their afternoons in cafés with their friends. In the mushroom factory, he remembers an important piece of advice he was given, never to steal where he sleeps, so he did not steal anything from the factory office. Hungry and longing for a book, he finds a nook by the mushrooms where he falls asleep, with the stolen drawing by his side.

Hours later, Caravaggio sees a factory worker, a woman, dress beside him and he tries to attract her attention without scaring her. When the woman finally turns around and sees him, she kicks him in the face, which causes Caravaggio to scream out in pain but also to start laughing. They speak in Italian and he asks the woman to bring him chicken, telling her that he is a thief who has broken his ankle. The woman touches his ankle and believes him, deciding to trust him because of the way he laughed.

Although Caravaggio cannot see the woman's face, the two of them laugh together and share their names. The woman, whose name is Giannetta, promises him to bring him food and a bible. Caravaggio asks to see her face but she refuses. After the woman is gone, he recalls seeing her dress, putting on her blouse and carrying her helmet, replaying that memory over and over in his mind. The next morning, Giannetta tells Caravaggio to turn around while she dresses, and she gives him the food she promised. Later, she returns to strap his ankle again and tells him that her friends and she have a plan to help him exit the factory.

The next day, Giannetta tells Caravaggio that they have to shave his moustache because only women work at this factory. When he touches her hair, Giannetta leans forward to kiss him. Then, she hands him a dress and he tells her not to look while he undresses, although she keeps on looking. As she teaches him how to put on a dress, she wonders dreamily if they will tell their children how they met.

At the lake, Caravaggio walks toward the cottages that are connected to telephone wires. Hoisting himself onto the roof of the boathouse with a pulley-chain, he sees Anne sitting at a table, concentrated, writing and looking out at the lake. He feels that he has discovered something very intimate as he watches the woman write.

*Paradoxically, many of the thieves lead a life that mirrors what Alice and Caravaggio criticize as rich people's laziness and love of luxury. Although Caravaggio's life is more precarious than the upper-class life of the rich, he sets himself apart from the rest of the working class because of the lifestyle he has chosen, whose adventurous quality is strikingly different from the routine nature of much low-level work.*



*Caravaggio's friendliness and capacity to speak Italian with the woman makes him seem inoffensive, even though he has seen her in the intimate act of dressing for work. Caravaggio's lighthearted attitude plays an important part in his success—and his survival—as people often prove disposed to help him instead of judging him for what he does.*



*Caravaggio's attitude toward the woman is playful and erotic. Although Giannetta does not give in to Caravaggio's demands, her willingness to help him reveals that she is kind and generous and, perhaps, finds Caravaggio interesting. She seems just as lighthearted as Caravaggio, as she does not appear worried about getting into trouble for helping a thief or for failing to tell her boss that there is an unauthorized person in the factory.*



*Giannetta's kiss reveals that the romantic interest that Caravaggio feels for her is mutual. In fact, Giannetta proves similar to Caravaggio in other ways, as she makes him undress before her in the same way he has watched her dress in the past. Giannetta's dreams of the future make their relationship seem like an adventure, spontaneous and optimistic.*



*Anne's artistic creation apparently allows her both to escape the present moment, as she could be writing about anything, but also to immerse herself fully in it, as she looks out at the lake in front of her. This recalls Clara's description of art-making as a necessary aspect of life.*



Caravaggio then jumps down and enters the main building where he finds a phone to call Giannetta. His wife tells him that she already knows he has escaped because the police came to her house to tell her that he had disappeared. After hanging up, Caravaggio is startled to see Anne facing him. In Italian, he begins to explain that he couldn't find her to ask about borrowing the phone, but she tells him to speak English and argues that he was perfectly capable of finding her.

Anne asks Caravaggio whom he was calling, if he is a thief, and what he is looking for. When she offers him food and he follows her into the kitchen, she wonders out loud why she is not scared of him, and Caravaggio says that it is because she has been somewhere else and might still be there. He then admits that he saw her writing earlier. As the two of them talk, Caravaggio tells Anne about his escape and they chat throughout the night.

Caravaggio recalls the beginning of his career as a thief, when he was scared and self-conscious every time he stole from people. After Giannetta told him to get a dog, Caravaggio stole one and named him August. August would bark once to warn Caravaggio if anyone was coming.

Now at his brother-in-law's house, Caravaggio drinks a glass of milk and embraces Giannetta, who kisses the scar on his neck. Elated at seeing each other, they laugh while they make love and immerse themselves in each other's smells.

*Caravaggio's love and commitment toward his wife indicates that they share a strong bond, and that his wife does not hesitate to protect him against the law. Anne's sudden appearance reveals her composure, as she does not seem scared to see Caravaggio in her house but instead reproaches him for failing to ask her permission to use her phone.*



*Anne's attitude mirrors Giannetta's, since both women do not fear Caravaggio and prove willing to help him when they discover him in a potentially difficult—and dangerous—situation. This demonstrates Caravaggio's charisma and friendliness, which is capable of making people feel that he is not harmful.*



*Caravaggio's fears about being a thief show that he is not necessarily as brazen as he may appear. His reliance on his wife for help and support highlights their interdependence.*



*The joy that Caravaggio and Giannetta demonstrate at seeing each other makes their life seem ordinary, even though they are involved in illegal activities. Their intimate relationship makes them seem loving and caring.*



## PART 3: CHAPTER 2: MARITIME THEATRE

Patrick is released from prison in 1938, when police units focused on industrial political activity aim to crush any political activity, and thousands of immigrants are being deported out of Canada. Patrick takes the train from Kingston to Toronto's Union Station, where crucial events in his life have taken place: his arrival at the age of twenty-one and Clara's departure. Patrick then walks out into the city, noticing the changes in fashion that have taken place during his absence.

*The state's oppression of workers continues, demonstrating its willingness to crush democratic activities such as organizing unions in order to preserve the pre-existing socio-economic order. These events confirm Alice's opinion that the rich seek to keep the poor helpless and marginalized. They also reveal the country's distrust of the immigrant communities it hosts.*



When Patrick reaches Geranium Bakery, Nicholas Temelcoff hugs him vigorously. Patrick then asks about Hana and Nicholas tells him that she is packing. Walking up to Nicholas's apartment, Patrick finds Hana sitting on the bed and notices that she looks a lot like Alice. This makes him suffer, and Hana sees his deep love for Alice in his eyes. Five years earlier, before Patrick left for the Muskoka Hotel, Nicholas offered to take Hana into his family and Patrick had to tell eleven-year-old Hana that they would have to be on their own for a while.

Suddenly, Hana stands up, showing Patrick how tall she is, and hugs him softly. The two of them walk down to have lunch and feel comfortable joking together. In prison, Patrick believed that freedom meant being on his own in silence and keeping himself from thinking about Alice, but his refusal to communicate changed on the night that Caravaggio was attacked.

When Clara left to join Ambrose Small, she realized that Ambrose keeps every aspect of his life—whether economic or romantic—perfectly separate, and only shows the parts of him he wants people to see, even to Clara. When Ambrose was dying, he finally shared with Clara all of his memories, revealing the depth of his knowledge of many woman, financial affairs, and emotions she was not aware of. While Clara tried to figure out what might have become of these women or financial deals, Ambrose proved uninterested. Ultimately, despite Ambrose's outflow of words and memories, Clara concluded that she would never know him fully.

In their shared apartment, Hana wakes Patrick up to tell him that he needs to answer an urgent phone call from Clara Dickens she forgot to tell him about. When Patrick picks up the phone, feeling that he has not heard from her in a hundred years, Clara asks who the girl was and Patrick says she is a sixteen-year-old friend he is looking after. Clara then asks him to come pick her up in Marmora, Ontario, now that Ambrose has died.

*After years, Patrick's love for Alice remains as alive as ever, capable of making him suffer. The sequence of events Patrick remembers shows that he behaved in a rational fashion, premeditating his actions instead of simply abandoning Hana to take part in a rash act of revenge. Like Cato, it appears, he decided that his political act was more important than preserving the unity of his family.*



*After a long time spent in silence and mourning, Patrick realizes that it is necessary for people to unite as groups, in order to protect each other and bring each other support. His conversation with Hana once again highlights that he enjoys social contact more than he thinks, as it brings pleasure and meaning to his life.*



*This description of Clara's relationship with Ambrose serves as a prelude to her return into Patrick's life, and also proves to be a mirror of Patrick's experience with Clara. In the same way that Patrick was disappointed to realize that parts of Clara would always remain unreachable to him, Clara was forced to accept that she would never know Ambrose as well as she thought she did. This contrasts with Patrick's relationship with Alice, which might have also had its elements of mystery but was defined by consistent trust and honesty.*



*Patrick's description of Hana as a friend might signal his difficulty of accepting his fatherly role toward the adolescent or his lack of trust toward Clara. Clara's attitude toward Patrick seems moved by necessity, since she believes he is the only person who could help her, but is also an expression of affection and trust on her part.*





Clara tells Patrick that Marmora is four hours away from Toronto and that she needs his help. Patrick makes ironic comments about the time that has passed, Clara's sudden reappearance, and Ambrose's death, but Patrick agrees to come pick her up, even though he has a broken arm. He tells her that Hana will keep him awake and that she has saved his life. When Clara asks if Patrick is her father, he does not initially answer, asking her for precise directions instead, but finally says that he is indeed her father. When they hang up and Patrick tells Hana that they need to go to Marmora, Hana begins asking him many questions. Patrick agrees to tell her about Clara during the trip, which makes Hana feel excited, but asks to take a nap first.

Six months earlier, when Patrick left prison, as the Spanish Civil War was evolving in Spain, the upper class became fearful and began to crack down on workers' unions. At the waterworks, the police and the army began to guard buildings to protect from attacks. Harris established a security parameter and was the only person inside the building at night. Comfortable around the sound of machines, Harris would dream of his constructions and what he has achieved.

One evening, on another section of the river, the Yacht Club holds a costume ball, in which the wealthy can dance, drink champagne, and try to hit chained monkeys with champagne corks to win a free bottle. That night, Patrick, Caravaggio, and Giannetta step off a motor launch toward the Yacht Club where, thanks to Caravaggio's confident attitude, they are able to join the party even though they were never invited. The rich accept Caravaggio's pirate costume and presentation as Randolph Frog, while Giannetta and Patrick stay on the sidelines, pretending to be shy.

Inserting himself perfectly in this social circle, Caravaggio dances with women and jokes with men, before finally finding the couple he is looking for: a flirtatious wife and a domineering husband. He tells the wife that he learned Italian during a vacation in Tuscany and, after flirting with the wife, she invites him to their yacht. When Caravaggio points to Giannetta, explaining that she is his sister, the wife invites her too. Earlier in the evening, before they arrived at the Yacht Club, Caravaggio had made a comment about the rich's laugh and their obsession with their possessions that reminded Patrick of Alice.

*Patrick's ironic comments suggest that he has perhaps never fully forgiven Clara for leaving him and choosing Ambrose over him. However, his unwillingness to let his resentment overwhelm him reveals his kindness and generosity, as well as the affection he still feels for Clara. Patrick's admission that he is Hana's father is a radical statement, proving that he has finally accepted his role in Alice's family and that, as Alice believed, true love—more than official labels—leads to sincere commitment.*



*Even though the rich might have always feared the working class, the example of Spanish workers rising up against the government has made Canadian authorities willing to act decisively. The fact that Patrick's life cannot be separated from international political dynamics shows that everyone—even the seemingly marginalized members of the working class—is part of history at all times.*



*The apparent disjointedness of these various events—from the Spanish civil war to a costume ball—demonstrates that history is made up of a variety of anecdotes and actors, whose lives intersect in ways that sometimes seem accidental or extraordinary. Although Patrick, Caravaggio, and Giannetta's motives still appear obscure, their later actions will bring their purpose to light, proving that they, too, are part of world political dynamics.*



*The fact that Caravaggio can appear so comfortable among the rich is ironic, given his hatred of their behaviors and their lifestyle. However, he shows that he understands them, since he is capable of manipulating them so easily. The fact that Caravaggio cannot openly say that he is Italian is also ironic. Paradoxically, while Italy is considered an exotic, upper-class destination, Italian immigrants are looked down upon in Canada.*



When the group steps onto the couple's yacht, Caravaggio, already drunk, searches for more bottles of alcohol. After they begin sailing, the wife asks Caravaggio if he is hungry and leads him downstairs, both of them sexually aroused. Beneath the deck, the woman half takes off her dress. The music then stops abruptly and Caravaggio, recognizing the signal, puts a handkerchief with chloroform on the lady's mouth, at the same time as Patrick chloroforms the husband upstairs. Caravaggio holds the wife and wonders what she is dreaming of before he puts a blanket over her and heads upstairs. While the husband lies unconscious in the ropes, Patrick, Giannetta, and Caravaggio laugh and head toward the waterworks. Enjoying the atmosphere, not yet thinking of what is to come, Patrick feels relaxed.

After meticulously studying the plans of the waterworks that Caravaggio stole, Patrick knows the specific size of each part of the waterworks. Taking off his shirt, he rubs grease all over his body and Caravaggio helps him attach the **dynamite**. They have calculated that one tank should be sufficient for Patrick to succeed, although they are not completely certain about this. In addition, Patrick carries a blasting-box small enough for him to pass through the iron bars at the entrance of the intake pipe. He also carries wire-cutters to get through a metal screen, after a second series of iron bars. Finally, Caravaggio wishes Patrick good luck and Patrick dives, holding the mouthpiece in his mouth.

On this night of July 7, 1938, Patrick crawls through the iron bars, but the difficulty of swimming with a heavy tank makes him discard his lamp, to carry less weight. He thus swims in darkness, meanwhile fearing that his tank will run out of air. When Patrick reaches the second row of metal bars, his tank is empty. After crawling through, he finally reaches the metal screen and begins to panic because he does not know what to do without any air in his tank. However, he then realizes that he is actually breathing pure air, as there is space between the water and the screen.

Having lost his wire cutters, hanging onto the screen with one arm, Patrick decides to use a small explosion to break through it, although he is not sure how small it will actually be. After placing the explosive and diving as far as he can, he does not hear the sound of the explosion but feels its effect, as it peels the skin on his chest and back, and he tastes blood in his mouth. Patrick then exits the well and finds himself surrounded by machines. He takes off his **dynamite** and strips naked, lying down to rest.

*As he does in most aspects of his life, Caravaggio uses his charm to get himself through difficult situations. The wife's willingness to cheat on her husband while he is on the same boat as she reveals how little her marriage means to her, in stark contrast to the partnership that exists between Caravaggio and his wife. In this particular situation at least, it seems that lower-class life can be characterized by stronger relationships. The boat's direction toward the waterworks suggests that the three protagonists are taking part in a political expedition, reminiscent of Patrick's trip to the Muskoka Hotel.*



*Patrick's intention to dynamite the waterworks becomes clearer, even as a variety of obstacles emerge. The aspects of Patrick and Caravaggio's plan that remain uncertain suggest that Patrick is putting his life at risk for this project. As with the episode at the Muskoka Hotel, it remains ambiguous what Patrick's exact motives might be. He is clearly moved by strong passions and anger, likely bred by his own experience of working at the waterworks, where he saw how badly the workers were treated.*



*The danger that Patrick exposes himself to is reminiscent of the dangerous actions workers have taken part in, on construction projects such as the bridge and the waterworks. Patrick proves that, like economic necessity, political resolve can be sufficient to make one forget about one's own well-being and put one's life at risk for a greater cause, as a matter of personal and collective necessity.*



*Patrick's decision to put his life at risk suggests that he might not believe he has much to lose, since Alice's death has left him forlorn, and also that he believes he is taking part in a project greater than him. The fact that he inherited his skills from his father makes it seem as though he were destined to use his talents for a greater purpose—in this case, as a form of political protest.*



When Harris hears a sound that he does not recognize as the machine's ordinary noise, he walks around the building but does not see anything suspicious. In the meantime, Patrick prepares himself to walk through the puppet-filled hallway where he saw Alice years ago. He knows that he has broken something because his face is in deep pain. After a while, he stands up, dresses, and attaches the blasting caps onto the **dynamite**, imagining the effect of the explosion as it will make the water burst in the air and will destroy the building entirely. He begins to sing softly to himself as he places charges on the machine, his singing drowned by the sound of the machines.

When Patrick enters Harris's office some time later, the Commissioner sees him walk in, though Patrick is unrecognizable, covered in black grease as well as in scratches and blood, with a limp arm hanging down his side, while carrying the blasting-box. Patrick then explains that he worked for Harris and, when he runs his finger over Harris's desk, recognizes the material as feldspar.

After thinking for a while, Harris begins to speak, explaining that he has worked hard to arrive at his current position, Patrick says that Harris has forgotten them. He tells the Commissioner that the tiles he has chosen for the waterworks cost more than half of the men's salaries and asks if Harris feels ashamed, but Harris replies that he has been building a grandiose work of architecture that will be admired in the years to come. However, Patrick asks him if he knows how many workers have died to achieve this, and Harris replies that "There was no record kept."

Patrick then asks Harris to turn the light off, because the darkness makes him feel more awake. Harris tells Patrick that he does not understand power and is simply looking for a villain. In order to distract Patrick until morning, when Harris will be able to use the light to grab his gun, he tells Patrick about his dreams for Toronto. He explains that workers are part of these beautiful constructions, but that their marginal role makes them reject power, leaving other people to take responsibility for telling a historical narrative.

Patrick interrupts Harris's speech to tell him about Alice Gull's death. When Harris mentions that she was killed by an anarchist, Patrick explains that she was killed because she grabbed the wrong bag: a bag that contained a clock bomb. In a low voice, Patrick says that he does not want to talk about this anymore. However, he explains that people at the tannery told him about the bag and that he ran out to search for Alice, accompanied by Nicholas Temelcoff. When he heard the explosion nearby, he ran to Alice and took her in his arms, where she died from a wound in her side.

*Patrick's association of the waterworks with Alice's memory makes his project clearer, as he might be simultaneously protesting against the condition of the working class and against the injustice of Alice's death. His composed attitude shows how habitual it is for him to use dynamite. This suggests that political protest might be just as natural to him as manual labor—an extension of his identity as an oppressed member of the working class, who believes in his own dignity.*



*Patrick's identification of the desk's material as feldspar gives greater meaning to his actions, since his father was killed when asked to go too deep in a feldspar mine. Patrick is thus protesting against the death of innocent workers such as his father, defending their dignity by destroying the works that exploited them.*



*Harris immediately understands that Patrick's motives are probably economic and political, and he tries to convince Patrick that they are not necessarily enemies. However, Harris's indifference to the workers' plights—even, for their very life and death—makes him seem callous, focused only on his selfish dreams and ambitions. Harris does not seem bothered by the deep class inequality that exists in society.*



*Paradoxically, Harris places responsibility for the workers' lack of power onto the workers themselves, thus refusing to accept that he plays any role in their political and economic marginalization. However, he correctly identifies historical narratives as artificial stories that leave out key actors—an aspect of history that In the Skin of a Lion aims to counter by focusing specifically on individuals' lives.*



*Alice's death, as Patrick narrates it, appears to be no one's fault, since it was a simple mistake. However, Alice's death made the faults of the system—a system in which workers are forced to protest by using violent means, since they are denied any space in the political arena—evident. His decision to use violence to protest against it, though, remains paradoxical, since he is opposed to the idea of sacrificing human lives for political ideals.*



When Patrick goes quiet, Harris calls out to him. In the darkness, Harris realizes that Patrick swam all the way here, and wonders what dream kept Patrick going. For an hour, Harris waits for dawn. When some light finally arrives, he sees Patrick, all bloody, sitting silently, in a strange position, and thinks he is dead before realizing he is only sleeping. After reflecting on why Patrick chose him, Harris concluded that it is because Harris has concrete monuments that prove his power, whereas richer, more powerful people are more discrete, because their wealth is more invisible. When an officer walks into Harris's office at six in the morning, Harris tells him to take the blasting-box away and to find a nurse for Patrick, who is hurt.

After making some coffee, Hana wakes Patrick up from his nap, telling him they have to go to Marmora. While they walk to the car, Hana asks Patrick to tell her about Clara, and he explains that she was Alice's best friend. He promises to tell her the full story and asks her if she wants to drive, while he handles the gears for a while. While Hana adjusts the rear-view mirror, he makes himself comfortable in the passenger seat, exaggerating the luxury of it, and tells her to turn on the lights.

*Harris's incredulity at Patrick's physical achievement reflects his inability to understand political passion, and workers' desire to make their voices heard. However, the fact that Patrick fell asleep suggests that he was perhaps more interested in sharing his story with Harris, and trying to make Harris show compassion for workers, than actually following his desire for violence and revenge. Harris's protective attitude toward Patrick proves that he is not vengeful either, and understands that Patrick might have simply wanted for someone to hear his complaints.*



*Patrick's decision to tell Hana about Clara reveals that he is finally ready to consider himself involved in the stories of the people around him—instead of considering himself lonely and detached from other humans, as he has in the past. Storytelling thus reveals his embrace of his position in human society, an interconnected network of relationships.*





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