Rebecca

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DAPHNE DU MAURIER

Daphne du Maurier was born to a prominent show-business family: her father was a famous theater manager, and her mother was a well-known author. As a teenager, du Maurier wrote and read constantly, and her parents encouraged her to paint and act in addition to her literary endeavors. Throughout the 30s, 40s, and 50s, du Maurier wrote an astounding number of short stories, plays, and novels. Inspired in part by her father and mother, she wrote the bulk of these works in a suspenseful style, aiming to dazzle and thrill her readers. Her short stories were highly popular, and several of her novels, including *Rebecca* (1938) and *Jamaica Inn* (1936), were bestsellers. Du Maurier became enormously wealthy after a number of her writings were turned into Hollywood films. These works include *Rebecca*, adapted as an Academy Award-winning film by Sir Alfred Hitchcock, "The Birds," also adapted as a Hitchcock film, and "Not After Midnight," adapted as the celebrated 1973 horror film *Don't Look Now*. Du Maurier married Frederick Browning in 1932, and remained married to him for the rest of her life, despite many suggestions that she was unhappy in her marriage, or was a repressed homosexual. Du Maurier died in 1989, just as she was ceasing to be regarded as a mere "genre writer" and beginning to be celebrated as one of the 20th century's most talented authors.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Rebecca doesn't explicitly allude to many historical events, but it's worth keeping in mind the culture of the 1930s, when the novel was published. At the time, the English aristocracy still enjoyed a high degree of protection in the journalistic world: their infidelities and illicit affairs would be kept out of the newspapers out of a sense of respect and decorum. And yet this pact between the aristocracy and the journalist world was slowly disappearing. The rise of modern tabloids and gossip magazines in the 20s and 30s (paralleling the rise of motion pictures in the U.S.) gave journalists a desire to provide their readers with scandalous news about the social elite. In the second half of *Rebecca*, newspapers pose a real danger to Maxim de Winter: they threaten to reveal his scandalous relationship with Rebecca to the public, ruining his reputation forever.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The most important point of comparison between *Rebecca* and its related literary works is its strong Gothic atmosphere. The Gothic novel was a popular English genre in the 18th and 19th centuries. In a novel of this kind, a young protagonist, almost always female, is summoned to live at a mysterious, imposing manor house, where she has to contend with intimidating new circumstances and mysterious characters with shadowy pasts. The Gothic is an obvious influence on *Rebecca*: the narrator comes to live at Manderley (a mysterious, imposing manor), and contends with the intimidating, sinister Mrs. Danvers while piecing together her husband's complex past. One Gothic novel to which *Rebecca* explicitly alludes is Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Much like the narrator of *Rebecca*, Jane Eyre, the titular heroine, falls in love with Rochester, the shadowy master of Thornfield Hall, in spite of Rochester's conflicted relationship with his previous wife, Bertha (who, much like Mrs. Danvers in *Rebecca*, sets fire to the manor house at the end of the novel). Another, even earlier story that *Rebecca* draws from is the French folktale of Bluebeard, in which a rich, powerful nobleman marries a naïve young wife, who explores his mansion and eventually discovers that he has murdered all his wives before her.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Rebecca*
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** April 1938
- **Literary Period:** 1930s mystery
- **Genre:** Mystery, Gothic
- **Setting:** Manderley, England
- **Climax:** Dr. Baker reveals that Rebecca had uterine cancer
- **Antagonist:** Mrs. Danvers / Rebecca de Winter / Jack Favell (though there's also a convincing argument that Maxim de Winter is the novel's true antagonist)
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

Famous cousins: Daphne du Maurier was born into a famous show-business family, and her parents knew many of the greatest writers and actors of the time. One of Daphne's oddest family connections, however, is that she was the cousin of the famous "Davies boys," the four children for whom the writer J.M. Barrie wrote *Peter Pan*, one of the most famous children's books of all time!

Hollywood headaches: Daphne du Maurier is one of the most frequently "adapted" writers of the 20th century: much like Stephen King, her books inspire a never-ending list of movies. Unlike King, however, du Maurier despised almost all of the

films based on her books. Though the Internet Movie Database lists du Maurier as having a whopping 54 film credits, she claimed that her books had been made into only two decent films: *Rebecca* (1940), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and *Don't Look Now* (1973), directed by Nicolas Roeg.

PLOT SUMMARY

The novel is narrated by an unnamed woman recalling past events in her life. Throughout the course of the book, the narrator remembers the time she spent at **Manderley**, a large, handsome English estate, while married to Maxim de Winter.

As a young woman, the narrator worked for a rich, obnoxious old woman named Mrs. Van Hopper: she was Van Hopper's travel companion. One summer, the narrator and Van Hopper travel to Monte Carlo. There, Van Hopper makes a point of introducing herself to the charismatic Maxim de Winter, who, it is well-known, has just lost his beloved wife in a tragic boating accident. Although the narrator is shy, Maxim takes an immediate liking to her, and when Mrs. Van Hopper catches the flu, Maxim invites the narrator to drive through Monte Carlo with him. During the course of these drives, the narrator begins to develop feelings for Maxim. At the end of the summer, Maxim asks the narrator to marry him, and she accepts. The narrator senses that something isn't quite right with Maxim, however—he seems pensive, and refuses to discuss his first wife.

Two months later, the narrator and Maxim return from their honeymoon, and travel back to Manderley, the narrator's new home. The narrator is initially uncomfortable and nervous at Manderley, since she wasn't raised in a wealthy household. From the beginning, the narrator clashes with the head servant of Manderley, the elderly, severe Mrs. Danvers. Mrs. Danvers, like many of the other servants, is openly devoted to Maxim's deceased first wife, Rebecca. The narrator also develops an uneasy relationship with Maxim's sister, Beatrice, who tells the narrator, "You are so different from Rebecca." Beatrice tells the narrator that Rebecca drowned in the sea near Manderley. It took two months to find her body, by which point it was difficult for Maxim to identify the body. Finally, the narrator befriends Frank Crawley, the estate manager of Manderley.

During her first months at Manderley, the narrator awkwardly adjusts to her new life. Mrs. Danvers treats her with contempt, sensing that the narrator's not comfortable with an elite lifestyle, as Rebecca was. As the narrator explores the grounds of Manderley, she meets Ben, a mentally challenged gardener who's lived at Manderley for many years. Ben warns the narrator to stay out of the cottage on the Manderley grounds.

The narrator clashes with Mrs. Danvers in increasingly serious ways. She accidentally breaks a small china cupid, and because she doesn't want to displease Mrs. Danvers, she sweeps the pieces into an envelope. A misunderstanding leads to a servant nearly being fired for breaking the cupid—the narrator is forced to confess breaking the object, displeasing both Maxim and Danvers. One day, while Maxim is away from Manderley, the narrator discovers a mysterious visitor walking through the house with Mrs. Danvers. Although he tries to sneak out without being detected, he crosses paths with the narrator, and is forced to introduce himself as Jack Favell. Favell asks the narrator not to mention his visit to Maxim. The narrator agrees, but later asks Beatrice who Favell is—Beatrice explains that Favell is Rebecca's cousin.

In the summer, Maxim's friends propose that the narrator host an opulent costume party at Manderley. Although the narrator is at first reluctant to do so—she's never hosted anything so lavish in her life—Maxim, Beatrice, and Frank convince her. Mrs. Danvers suggests that the narrator base her costume on a portrait that hangs in the house. On the evening of the ball, the narrator puts on her costume—a beautiful **white dress**, based on the portrait Mrs. Danvers had suggested. When she joins Maxim downstairs, however, Maxim is horrified—tearfully, Beatrice explains that this was the costume Rebecca wore at the last party she organized at Manderley.

The next day, the narrator furiously confronts Mrs. Danvers about her manipulations, and is surprised to find Mrs. Danvers crying. Danvers explains that she's still utterly devoted to Rebecca, and can feel her presence everywhere in Manderley. As if in a trance state, Danvers tells the narrator to try on Rebecca's clothes, then opens the second-story window of the house and feverishly orders the narrator to jump out of it.

There is a sudden "boom," and the narrator sees Maxim running from the sea. The narrator rushes downstairs, where she learns from the servants that a large ship has run aground on the beaches near Manderley. Down at the beach, the narrator learns that the grounded ship's sailors have inadvertently discovered something in the water: Rebecca's **boat**, in which there's a body. The narrator can't understand what's going on: she'd been told that Maxim identified Rebecca's body months ago. She goes to ask Maxim what's going on. To her surprise, Maxim reveals the truth: Rebecca didn't die of drowning at all. When Maxim married Rebecca years ago, he explains, he was enamored with her. But he quickly discovered that she was a liar: although she pretended to be virtuous and perfect, in secret she despised the servants, had affairs with other men, and disobeyed Maxim at all times. Knowing that he could never divorce Rebecca without creating a scandal, Maxim reached a "bargain" with Rebecca: Rebecca would live her life on her own terms, but only during her time in London. As Manderley, she would have to be on good behavior.

Over time, Maxim continues, Rebecca began breaking her own rules. She tried and failed to seduce Frank, and then began an affair with her own cousin, Jack Favell, while staying at Manderley. Knowing about the affair, Maxim armed himself

with a gun and went to the cottage on the Manderley grounds, hoping to find Rebecca there with her lover. Instead, he found only Rebecca. After a long, tense conversation, Rebecca told Maxim that he'd be forced to raise any child she bore him, whether he was the father or not. Furious, Maxim shot Rebecca, and then disguised his crime by throwing his wife's body in a boat and sinking it off the beach.

As the narrator listens to Maxim's story, she feels herself filing with relief. All along, she's thought that Maxim was still in love with Rebecca, but now she realizes that he never loved Rebecca at all. She kisses him, as if for the first time.

An investigation begins to determine how Rebecca's body came to be in the boat the sailors discovered. Maxim goes to meet with the local coroner and the inspector, Colonel Julyan. Horridge discovers that the boat had three holes deliberately drilled in it. After much thought, he rules Rebecca's death a suicide, throwing Maxim's reputation as a loving husband into controversy.

After the coroner's report, Maxim and the narrator receive a visit from Jack Favell. He produces a note from Rebecca, which he received shortly before Rebecca's death. The note, which tells Jack to come see her immediately, seems to disprove suicide. Jack tries to use the note to blackmail Maxim. When Maxim refuses to play along, Jack calls Colonel Julyan to Manderley. During the long meeting that follows, Jack accuses Maxim of killing Rebecca, and Colonel Julyan begins to believe Jack. Jack calls Ben, who denies having seen any evidence of Maxim killing Rebecca, and then Mrs. Danvers, who is similarly unhelpful. However, Mrs. Danvers produces Rebecca's diary, which contains the phone number for a Dr. Baker in London.

The next day, Colonel Julyan travels with Maxim, the narrator, and Jack Favell to London to find Dr. Baker. Baker tells Julyan that shortly before Rebecca's death, a woman calling herself "Danvers" came to visit him, and learned that she had uterine cancer. Julyan deduces that this woman must have been Rebecca. The group leaves Dr. Baker. Jack Favell, still sure that Maxim killed Rebecca, vows to get revenge, but admits that he has no proof of the crime. Colonel Julyan bids Maxim and the narrator goodbye—after he leaves, the narrator and Maxim agree that Julyan suspected Maxim of the murder all along. Maxim points out that Rebecca was trying to send him to jail: knowing that she was dying of cancer, she succeeded in goading Maxim into shooting her, hoping that he'd be sentenced to death for his crime.

Maxim and the narrator drive back to Manderley from London. It's early morning when they return. As they approach the house, they're shocked to see that it is engulfed in flames.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Rebecca de Winter – The titular character of du Maurier's novel never appears in the book, yet she exerts a powerful influence over all the other characters. As a young woman, Rebecca marries the charismatic aristocrat Maxim de Winter by fooling him into believing that she is a kind, virtuous woman. After marriage, however, Rebecca shows her true colors, having affairs, mocking the servants, and bringing dishonor to the de Winter family name. Knowing that Maxim values appearances too highly to divorce her, Rebecca tries to manipulate Maxim into obeying her. When she learns that she has terminal cancer, she tricks Maxim into believing that she's pregnant with another man's child, ensuring—in a final act of vengeance—that he'll be arrested for murder. Rebecca's duplicity is enormous—even after she dies, her reputation as a lovely, perfect woman survives her, intimidating the young, naïve narrator. Yet it's also telling that we only learn the "truth" about Rebecca from Maxim—her murderer—and there are critics who have argued that Rebecca is actually a tragic, misunderstood character, a victim of the misogyny of early 20th century England.

The narrator – The narrator of *Rebecca* is a young woman who marries a wealthy, middle-aged aristocrat, Maxim de Winter, and goes to live with him at his estate, **Manderley**. It's significant that we're never told the narrator's real name: to the extent that she has any name at all, it's Madame de Winter, or, to Maxim, "pet" or "lamb." Throughout the novel, the narrator struggles to "make a name" for herself—that is, to assert her own personality and identity in the stuffy, claustrophobic environment at Manderley, which is still dominated by the memory of Maxim's first wife, the charismatic Rebecca de Winter. The narrator is under a great deal of pressure to fit in at Manderley—in essence, to become Rebecca. And yet as the novel comes to a close, the narrator discovers new information about Rebecca and Maxim, convincing her that the notion of becoming Rebecca is flawed from the start. In the process, she overcomes her anxieties about life at Manderley, and seems to "grow up overnight." By telling us the story of Rebecca, she purges herself of her own doubt and insecurity, completing her coming of age.

Maximilian de Winter – The wealthy, charismatic, middle-aged owner of **Manderley**. On the surface, Maxim, or Max, is a calm, dapper man—the very image of the English gentleman. He's perfectly well aware of his power and charisma, and at times doesn't hesitate to use these assets to compel those around him to obey his wishes—even pressuring the narrator to marry him. Like any good gentleman, Maxim is obsessed with his public appearance. As a result, he doesn't divulge the truth about Rebecca, his first wife, to the narrator until towards the end of the novel—as far as she's concerned, Maxim loved Rebecca, and continues to love her even after her death. But as the novel goes on, Maxim's calm façade breaks down. He reveals that Rebecca was manipulating and blackmailing him,

using the threat of a scandal to keep him in a loveless marriage. By the end of the novel, Maxim is a shadow of the confident gentleman we'd first met: no less than the narrator, he's weak and susceptible to manipulation. On the other hand, there are other critics who argue that Maxim, not Rebecca, is the real villain of the novel: he's a shallow, misogynistic man who treats women like children, and demonizes and murders them when they don't obey him.

Mrs. Danvers – Perhaps the most ambiguous character in the novel, Mrs. Danvers is the elderly caretaker and chief servant at **Manderley**. Danvers remains utterly devoted to Rebecca—it's never clear if this is because she doesn't understand that Rebecca is really a wicked woman, or because she knows and approves of Rebecca's wickedness (or Rebecca wasn't wicked at all, and it's only Maxim who says so). In either case, Danvers uses her influential position at Manderley to intimidate and manipulate the narrator, who, in spite of her superior rank, is terrified of Mrs. Danvers. Danvers is at her most diabolical during the summer costume party, during which she humiliates the narrator by convincing her to wear the same **white dress** that Rebecca wore years before. And yet Danvers is a sympathetic and even pathetic character, in addition to being a frightening one. She's utterly devoted to a woman who's dead, and who may never have cared about her in the first place.

Jack Favell – Jack Favell is Rebecca's cousin and, we later learn, her lover. Like his cousin, he seems friendly on the outside, but is secretly greedy, unethical, and manipulative—and yet he also reveals that he was truly in love with Rebecca, while she had no real feelings for him in return. Although he's not a major character in the novel until the final chapters, Favell shows his true colors when he attempts to blackmail Maxim de Winter for murdering Rebecca—an attempt that fails when it's revealed that Rebecca had been diagnosed with terminal cancer before her death. Because Rebecca herself isn't a speaking character, Jack Favell is an important addition to the novel—by studying his character, we get a better sense for what kind of woman Rebecca herself truly was.

Frank Crawley – Frank Crawley, the manager and businessman of the **Manderley** estate, is one of the most interesting characters in *Rebecca*. Although he's not directly involved in any of the main storylines of the novel, he's an important influence on the narrator, and even a potential lover. At more than one point, Crawley appears to be the narrator's only friend at Manderley—we could easily see the two of them having an affair right under the oblivious Maxim's nose. Eventually, however, we come to see that Frank is an honorable man, and fiercely loyal to Maxim. By the same logic, the narrator's refusal to pursue her interest in Frank any further is an important sign of her strength and independence.

Beatrice Lacy – Maxim de Winter's energetic, talkative sister, Beatrice Lacy is an important foil to the narrator. She's entirely comfortable among wealthy, aristocratic people, and she's never shy about expressing her opinion. Surprisingly, Beatrice is often a loyal friend to the narrator, ensuring that she's not completely humiliated at the summer costume party. In the end, Beatrice is perhaps the most enviable character in the novel. She has all the advantages of a wealthy lifestyle (money, power, luxury) without any of the emotional baggage and scandal that accompanies the other wealthy characters, like her brother.

Mrs. Van Hopper – The obnoxious woman who hires the narrator to work as her companion in Monte Carlo. Mrs. Van Hopper doesn't appear in *Rebecca* for very long, but if she hadn't introduced herself to Maxim de Winter, the narrator would never have met him. Furthermore, Van Hopper is the first character in the novel who sees Maxim's marriage to the narrator for the potential disaster it is.

Ben – A mentally challenged gardener who works at **Manderley**. Like Manderley itself, Ben is a mysterious force in the novel: although he's dim-witted, he has a good memory, and recalls serving Rebecca de Winter. The fact that Ben—who's far below the narrator on the social totem pole—has power over the narrator insofar as he knows about Rebecca, is a powerful reminder of Rebecca's massive influence on life at Manderley.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Colonel Julyan – The local detective for **Manderley**, who investigates Rebecca's death after her body is found in a **boat**.

Dr. Baker – The doctor who examines Rebecca de Winter and determines that she has a terminal case of uterine cancer.

Clarice – A maid at **Manderley**, whom the narrator likes because she doesn't judge or condescend to the narrator for her lack of aristocratic bearing.

Billy – Mrs. Van Hopper's nephew.

Frith – A loyal servant at **Manderley**.

Alice – A maid at **Manderley**.

Major Giles Lacy – The friendly but oblivious husband of Beatrice Lacy.

Robert – A young servant at **Manderley**.

Gran – The grandmother of Beatrice and Maxim, who remains devoted to Rebecca de Winter.

Roger – The son of Beatrice and Giles Lacey.

Lady Crowan – An elderly, rather grotesque guest at the **Manderley** summer ball.

Captain Searle – The captain of the ship that runs aground near **Manderley**, inadvertently exposing the **boat** in which Maxim de Winter placed Rebecca's body.

Horridge – The local coroner, who rules that Rebecca's death was a suicide.

James Tabb – The carpenter who builds the **boat** in which Rebecca is found dead.

Jasper – **Manderley**'s old, faithful dog.

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.

MEMORY

From the first sentence, it's apparent that *Rebecca* is constructed as a memory. The narrator (never named) remembers her time at **Manderley** after marrying her husband, the handsome, mysterious Maxim de Winter. As the novel goes on, however, we realize that life at Manderley is dominated by the memory of Maxim's first wife, Rebecca. In essence, the novel *Rebecca* is about the memory *of* a memory. In light of memory's obvious importance to the novel, it's worth examining this theme a little more closely.

Much of the eerie, uneasy tone of *Rebecca* derives from the clash between past and present—in other words, from the ambiguous dynamics of memory. By definition, a memory involves the past "replaying" in the present. At Manderley, Rebecca's past is constantly being replayed in its inhabitants' memories—the servants mention Rebecca whenever possible, for example. Even Manderley itself is the embodiment of Rebecca's past, since she designed the gardens, the bedrooms, etc. Simply to walk through Manderley is to relive Rebecca's life. As the book moves on, we realize that this is exactly what Rebecca intended: sadistically, she filled Manderley with personal mementos, ensuring that Maxim would be cursed to forever remember the wife he hated. As du Maurier sees it, a memory is like a zombie—a dead, vanished being that's been recalled to life, often with terrifying results.

There's no doubt that memories can be painful and intimidating. And yet there's something undeniably comforting about remembering, no matter what the individual memory consists of. Although the narrator spends the majority of the book frightened of Rebecca—a woman she's never met—she recognizes that the people around her, including her husband, find meaning and even pleasure from memory. The people who worshipped Rebecca, such as Mrs. Danvers, base their entire life around the act of remembering her—at times spending long hours reconstructing her wardrobe and her bedroom. Even Maxim, who, we learn, despised Rebecca, gets an undeniable sense of comfort from his wife's memory. Though Maxim hated Rebecca's cruelty and manipulation, Rebecca stands for Manderley itself in his mind, so to forget Rebecca would be to forget who he is altogether. Through Maxim's behavior, du Maurier makes one of her most provocative points about memory: it's better to have flawed, even horrifying memories of one's past than to have no memories at all.

But is there any way to escape memory without surrendering one's identity altogether? At the end of *Rebecca*, Mrs. Danvers, furious with Maxim for murdering Rebecca, has set Manderley on fire. Symbolically, this suggests that Rebecca's past no longer has a stranglehold on the characters' lives. Not coincidentally, this scene coincides closely with Maxim's decision to share the sordid details of Rebecca's past with the narrator. Perhaps the suggestion here is that the only way to move past a painful memory is to share it with someone else. Thus, Maxim escapes the haunting influence of his dead wife by sharing his memories with the narrator. By the same token, the narrator transcends her own haunting experiences at Manderley by passing them on to someone else entirely: the reader.

FEMINISM AND GENDER ROLES

Rebecca is a dated novel in many ways. When it was published, about 75 years ago, assumptions about how women, especially married women, should behave were markedly different than they are today. To "get into" the novel, readers would have to believe that the public would be shocked by the thought of a wealthy aristocrat divorcing his wife—something that seems fairly uncontroversial by modern standards. Additionally, Du Maurier blurs many of the sexual details of her novel: it's unclear, for example, if the narrator sleeps in the same bed as her husband, if she ever has sex with him, if she's attracted to other men, etc. (We should also keep in mind that many of these omissions reflect the publishing norms of the 1930s, rather than du Maurier's artistic decisions.) It's worth thinking a little more closely about the ways in which *Rebecca*'s portrayal of gender roles has aged badly, and the ways in which it was ahead of its time.

The biggest challenge to a pro-feminist interpretation of *Rebecca* is Rebecca herself. As we learn more about Rebecca, our impression of her becomes increasingly negative. We learn that Rebecca was a two-faced liar, that she was a skilled manipulator of everyone around her, that she had extramarital affairs, that she was "loose" in London, etc.—by the final chapters, Rebecca seems to be the book's primary antagonist, while Maxim de Winter, Rebecca's one-time husband, seems like her helpless victim. Any conclusion about Rebecca's merits as a work of feminism must stem from a conclusion about whether or not we agree with this interpretation of Rebecca's character. By modern standards, Rebecca doesn't seem so bad. As far as her duplicity and her reckless affairs are concerned, she could even be considered a victim of the sexism of her era (it's also telling that we only learn the "truth" about her from Maxim himself). If du Maurier agrees with Maxim that Rebecca

is a villain, then *Rebecca* is a more simplistic novel overall, as well as badly dated in its treatment of gender roles: it judges Rebecca (and sentences her to death!) according to a set of rules for female behavior that simply don't carry much currency anymore.

A more radical interpretation of *Rebecca* is that du Maurier herself disagrees with Maxim's take on his wife. Though du Maurier herself never weighed in on this possibility, critics have suggested that Maxim is the real villain of the novel: he's a controlling husband who expects his wife to behave like an obedient child, then lashes out at her when she refuses to play along. (Some critics have likened Rebecca de Winter to Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre*—another character who could be either the hero or the villain of her own story.) Judging from the way he treats his second wife, the narrator (he calls her "lamb" and "child" countless times), Maxim is sexism incarnate, a domineering man whose obsession with appearances is so great that he remarries mere months after his first wife's death.

Even if it will never be clear whether or not du Maurier agreed with feminist critics' interpretation of her novel, *Rebecca* is an important feminist work insofar as it studies the ways that men dominate women. The narrator feels that she's constantly being watched during her time at **Manderley**: her smallest action is measured against a social standard for how "proper ladies" should behave. Perhaps most tellingly, we never learn the narrator's real name: she's only ever known as Madame de Winter. The narrator's identity is subsumed into her husband's name and family history. Du Maurier suggests that (heterosexual) marriage is itself a sexist institution: the woman not only takes her husband's name, but she's also forced to structure her new life around the husband's existence.

In some ways, *Rebecca* reflects the social mores of the early 20th century England. Yet in other ways, it critiques society's assumptions about how women, especially married women, should behave. It's telling that du Maurier complained that no one understood *Rebecca* when it was first published: critics, she claimed, didn't understand that it was a novel, first and foremost, about a weak woman under the influence of a strong man. By applying an uncommon level of psychological depth to this theme, du Maurier makes what could be a conventional mystery novel an important—and at times prophetic—feminist work.

COMING OF AGE

In addition to being a taut mystery, a Gothic romance, and a prototypical feminist text, *Rebecca* is an insightful coming-of-age story. When we first meet the narrator, she's essentially a child: a young, innocent woman who has no idea what the future holds for her. By the end of the novel, she's become a mature adult—as her husband, Maxim de Winter, says, she seems to have grown from a girl to a woman overnight. In a novel that's so much about loneliness, paranoia, and uncertainty, what does it mean for a character to grow up?

To begin with, du Maurier portrays her protagonist's initial immaturity as a kind of solipsism—an inability to understand that other people have thoughts and feelings of their own. Surrounded by obnoxious older women like Mrs. Van Hopper, her employer, the narrator struggles to assert her personality in public, and for the most part, she's too shy to say anything. (It's worth mentioning that Daphne du Maurier herself was notoriously shy in real life.) Frightened of speaking, the narrator is alone in her own head. By the same token, the people around her remain enigmas to her. Because she refuses to disclose any of her own personality, she's powerless to wrap her mind around the personalities of others. Even her husband, Maxim de Winter, is impenetrable. At many points in the first half of the book, the narrator thinks that Maxim is angry, frustrated, or amused with her, only to learn much later that she was utterly wrong in her interpretation of her husband's feelings. For du Maurier, immaturity and isolation are practically synonyms.

Consistent with her psychological insight, du Maurier portrays coming-of-age as an act of exploration. The narrator begins to grow up as she navigates her way through **Manderley**, and—even more importantly—begins to explore the motivations and emotions of the people around her. At first, Mrs. Danvers, the cruel, intimidating head servant at Manderley, terrifies the narrator, and makes her feel like a small child. But as the narrator begins to learn more and more about Mrs. Danvers, she's surprised to find that Mrs. Danvers is a sad, sympathetic, and even pathetic character: though she's an elderly woman, she's still devoted, in an almost childish way, to her former mistress, Rebecca. After the narrator confronts Mrs. Danvers and witnesses her crying about Rebecca, the tables turn. The narrator learns an obvious yet valuable lesson—everyone has secret vulnerabilities—and when she realizes this, she begins to feel herself growing up. The most extreme example of such an insight comes when Maxim reveals to the narrator that, instead of still being in love with Rebecca, he's actually deeply *afraid* of Rebecca. Maxim, who is on the surface the calmest, most mature character in the novel, turns out to be the weakest.

Some critics have also interpreted the novel from a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, with the narrator's discovery of the truth about Rebecca as the final stage of resolving an "Electra Complex." The psychologist Sigmund Freud believed that most young boys are first naturally attracted to their mothers and thus want to overcome or kill their fathers—this is called an "Oedipal Complex," based on the Greek figure of Oedipus, and its corresponding name for girls (wanting to kill their mothers and marry their fathers) is an "Electra Complex," after the Greek figure of Electra. It's only when these complexes can be

resolved in some way that a child can mature in a healthy manner. Throughout *Rebecca*, Maxim is portrayed as a father figure, as well as a lover, for the narrator. Toward the end of the book, however, Maxim and the narrator work together to "destroy" Rebecca, the narrator's rival for Maxim's affections. In Freudian terms, this signals the narrator's coming of age: by symbolically defeating Rebecca (the wife of the narrator's father-figure, and thus a kind of mother-figure), the narrator becomes an adult. But even if one rejects a psychoanalytic interpretation, it's clear that the narrator's symbolic defeat of Rebecca signals the most important aspect of her coming of age. As the narrator spends more time with her husband, she begins to realize that Maxim and Rebecca's carefully maintained image of respectability and sophistication is just an illusion. By embracing this truth, the narrator stops feeling intimidated, and grows up.

PLACE, IMPRISONMENT, AND THE GOTHIC

In *Rebecca*, du Maurier addresses the theme of imprisonment in many ways. From a feminist standpoint, for example, it's easy to see that the narrator is imprisoned by the gender roles of her time. But du Maurier also confronts the theme of imprisonment in an even more literal sense: by studying the role of a physical place, **Manderley**, in the narrator's life. In order to study Manderley, the de Winter family estate, *Rebecca* imitates the conventions of a familiar genre of English literature: the Gothic. In a Gothic novel (Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is a good example), a young, naïve (usually female) protagonist comes to an old, mysterious place, usually a big English manor house, and tries to make a new life for herself there. Du Maurier both honors and subverts Gothic conventions in her novel, painting a unique picture of psychological—and literal—imprisonment.

As in the Gothic novel, Manderley represents both imprisonment and liberation. At the beginning of *Rebecca*, the narrator has no home to speak of—almost all of her family is deceased, and she's inherited no property. The narrator has no "base"—no place she can point to and call her own. She's cast adrift in the world, and as a result, she's forced to take on various dull and humiliating jobs, such as working for the obnoxious Mrs. Van Hopper. The narrator's fortunes then improve—and decline—when she marries the wealthy, landed aristocrat, Maxim de Winter. As Maxim's new wife, the narrator finally has a place of her own—indeed, an enormous house, surrounded by sprawling grounds. The tradeoff of this arrangement is that the narrator can only claim Manderley as her own property by sacrificing her own personality. Surveyed by Maxim, and by servants, the narrator feels a constant pressure to become something she's not—an elegant lady.

One of du Maurier's most important insights is that Manderley represents imprisonment and freedom, not only to the narrator, but to Maxim himself. Maxim is completely comfortable at Manderley—he's familiar with every inch of it, having lived there since childhood. Ownership of the estate gives him the freedom to build relationships with his wealthy and powerful neighbors, and allows him to earn an income without lifting a finger. And yet Maxim, even more so than the narrator, has no life outside of Manderley. We can see this especially clearly at the end of the novel, when he's accused of murdering Rebecca. While the local detective, Colonel Julyan, orders that Maxim should be put under house arrest until his innocence can be determined, we sense that these measures are redundant—Maxim doesn't haven't have anywhere to run off to.

At the end of a typical Gothic novel, the protagonist becomes the owner of the big house where she used to be a stranger. The implication is that an estate, even if it's a prison, is the source of too much power to give up. At the end of *Rebecca*, however, du Maurier subverts the usual Gothic tropes: in the final sentence of the book, we learn that Manderley is burning to the ground. Instead of adjusting to their prison, Maxim and the narrator must build new lives for themselves. It's a powerful reminder of the influence, both positive and negative, that a place can wield over its owner, and (especially in light of the novel's early 20th century setting) of the declining power of the English aristocracy.

POWER, CONTROL, AND INFORMATION

Like many of Daphne du Maurier's works, *Rebecca* studies how people maintain power over others. Surprisingly, the characters in the novel almost never rely on physical force (the simplest form of power, one would think) to assert themselves—in fact, on the one significant occasion when a character does use violence, his actions are presented as a total failure. Instead of violence, the powerful characters in *Rebecca* control their weaker peers using intimidation, manipulation, and various other psychological weapons.

Perhaps the most important such weapon in du Maurier's novel is information. As a mystery novel, *Rebecca* is full of hidden information that must be gradually discovered or revealed. Throughout the novel in general, then, power means knowing this information, weakness means not knowing information, and control consists of the powerful keeping information from the weak. Even in the early chapters of *Rebecca* it's clear that power and knowledge are closely related. The narrator's weakness, uncertainty, and immaturity are synonymous with her ignorance of Maxim de Winter's life and family. Although she's admired **Manderley** since childhood, she has almost no idea what it contains. This weakness allows Maxim to "buy" her into marriage—essentially by saying that he'll give her access to money, luxury, and, most importantly, some of the secrets of his life.

As Maxim's example suggests, information must be managed carefully in order to control other people. Many of the characters in the novel try and fail to control their enemies, because they don't quite understand what to do with their own knowledge. The most obvious example of this problem is Jack Favell, who tries and fails to blackmail Maxim into giving him money. Favell thinks that his knowledge of Rebecca's unfaithfulness can send Maxim to jail, but when Maxim calls his bluff, Favell doesn't know how to wield his own weapon—he tells Colonel Julyan, the local detective, everything he knows, but Julyan takes an immediate dislike to Favell's aggressiveness, and so from the beginning he doesn't take the information seriously. By the same token, Mrs. Danvers wields great power over the narrator, in spite of her inferior social rank, because she knows more about Rebecca and the de Winter family history. It's only when Danvers begins to surrender this information voluntarily that she loses all power over the narrator—with no more secrets to keep, all the leverage is gone from Danvers' relationship with the narrator.

In *Rebecca*, control always comes "from a distance." Only rarely do the characters pose literal, physical threats to one another. More often, they control their peers by dangling money, access, and above all, information, in front of them. The tense, claustrophobic mood of the novel stems from du Maurier's unorthodox understanding of power and control. The narrator isn't being physically coerced during her time at Manderley, and yet Maxim and Mrs. Danvers *are* controlling her, using her ignorance to frighten, intimidate, or manipulate her.

SYMBOLS

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

REBECCA'S BOAT

In the second half of the book, it's revealed that Maxim de Winter killed his first wife, Rebecca, by shooting her, then placing her body in a boat and scuttling it on the beach. It's then darkly appropriate that the narrator is reminded of Rebecca's boat after seeing a buoy with the message, "Je reviens," which means "I'll return" in French. Just as Rebecca intended all along, the boat returns to Maxim's life with a vengeance, triggering a renewed investigation of Rebecca's death, and casting suspicion upon Maxim and the narrator. Rebecca's boat is a potent symbol of the power of memory and the past: Maxim tries to forget his turbulent marriage with Rebecca, but he's unable to escape the past so easily.

MANDERLEY

The most obvious and evocative symbol in *Rebecca* is Manderley, the manor house in which Maxim, and later the narrator, live. Manderley is a centuries-old estate, ruled by the de Winter family for generations. At the most basic symbolic level, Manderley is an embodiment of the past: a huge, sprawling place where tradition and remembrance are all-important. We can see this very clearly through the character of Mrs. Danvers, who worships Manderley above everything else: not only does she follow the strict schedule of a large estate at all times, but she's also committed to worshipfully preserving the memory of her previous mistress, the charismatic Rebecca de Winter. However, for most of the other characters in the novel, such as Maxim, Manderley and its memories aren't so pleasurable. Maxim wants to forget about Rebecca, who was (supposedly) evil and manipulative, but because Rebecca is so intimately tied to Manderley—which is to say, to his past—he's unable to do so. The symbolism comes to its logical (and inevitable) conclusion at the end of the novel, when Manderley is engulfed in flames—presumably set on fire by the heartbroken or vengeful Mrs. Danvers. At the precise time when Maxim and the narrator are finally ready to forget Maxim's sordid past with Rebecca, they find that Manderley has been destroyed.

THE WHITE DRESS

At the de Winter costume party, the narrator wears a beautiful white dress at the suggestion of Mrs. Danvers. It's only when she appears before Maxim himself that the narrator learns, to her horror, that the white dress matches the one that the late Rebecca wore to the last costume party. On the surface of things, the white dress symbolizes Mrs. Danvers' cruel—and rather petty—manipulations. But it's also a more subtle symbol of the importance of social and gender roles in *Rebecca*. The narrator wants to fit in with her new life in Manderley, but as she spends more time there, it dawns on her that the only way to "fit in" is to imitate the actions and habits of her predecessor, Rebecca—in essence, to *become* Rebecca. Wearing Rebecca's white dress is, on a symbolic level, the culmination of the narrator's attempts to adjust to her new life—and proof of why these attempts are utterly misguided.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Harper edition of *Rebecca* published in 2006.

Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ On and on, now east now west, wound the poor thread that once had been our drive. Sometimes I thought it lost, but it appeared again, beneath a fallen tree perhaps, or struggling on the other side of a muddied ditch created by the winter rains. I had not thought the way so long.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 2

Explanation and Analysis

In the dreamy opening pages of the novel, the narrator (who's never named) describes Manderley, the vast manor house where she used to live with her husband. She describes the "path" to Manderley, a path that twists and turns unpredictably. While the narrator is speaking of a literal path--i.e., a road--we understand that she's also alluding to the more metaphorical "path" of memory. Throughout the novel, the narrator will look back on her time at Manderley, as clearly she's still haunted by her experiences there. Sometimes, her memories will seem exaggerated or uncertain, the product of her fear and anxiety. In short, the quotation is a kind of "thesis statement" for the entire book: the narrator will circle back, again and again, to her time at Manderley, lost on the meandering path of that oppressive, unforgettable place.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ But I never dared ask Mrs. Danvers what she did about it. She would have looked at me in scorn, smiling that freezing, superior smile of hers, and I can imagine her saying: "There were never any complaints when Mrs. de Winter was alive."

Mrs. Danvers. I wonder what she is doing now.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Rebecca de Winter, Mrs. Danvers

Related Themes:

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

Here the narrator recalls her former housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, for the first time. Right away she describes Mrs. Danvers as a severe, intimidating woman. Furthermore, Mrs. Danvers like to compare the narrator with her predecessor--Rebecca de Winter (the narrator's husband's former wife). Danver's constant, silent judgment of the narrator makes the narrator feel anxious and uncertain: everything the narrator does is being "weighed" against Rebecca's memory.

And yet the narrator doesn't seem the least bit anxious about Mrs. Danvers, *in the present*. On the contrary, she seems calm and collected, wondering offhandedly what ever happened to her former tormenter. The fact that Mrs. Danvers--a veritable institution at Manderley--is gone suggests that something has happened to Manderley itself. The narrator's former life as a resident of Manderley, alongside her husband, is over--but it'll take 300 pages before we understand what has happened to it.

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ "When we climbed the hills and looked down over the precipice. I was there some years ago, with my wife. You asked me if it was still the same, if it had changed at all. It was just the same, but—I was thankful to realize—oddly impersonal. There was no suggestion of the other time. She and I had left no record. It may have been because you were with me. You have blotted out the past for me, you know, far more effectively than all the bright lights of Monte Carlo."

Related Characters: Maximilian de Winter (speaker), Rebecca de Winter, The narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 40

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator--at this point a young, shy, unmarried woman--gets to know Maxim de Winter, the man who will one day become her husband. Maxim explains to the narrator that he was once married. He and his former wife traveled all over Monte Carlo, and once visited the very hill where he and the narrator are currently standing.

As Maxim goes on to explain, he likes the narrator because she helps him forget the pain of his former wife. Maxim doesn't go into any detail about what his marriage to Rebecca was like (we the readers don't understand the marriage until the end of the novel). And yet it's clear that Maxim is looking to forget his past: the narrator is a kind of "medicine," helping Maxim move on with his life. By 21st century standards, Maxim's speech is rather sexist: he

treats the narrator as a means to the end of his own happiness, and seems to have little interest in the narrator's personality. In this sense, the quotation is confusing: we're not sure if we're meant to pity Maxim for his loss, reject his narrow-minded sexism, or both.

❝ How many times she must have written to him thus, in how many varied moods. Little notes, scrawled on half-sheets of paper, and letters, when he was away, page after page, intimate, their news. Her voice, echoing through the house, and down the garden, careless and familiar like the writing in the book.

And I had to call him Maxim.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Rebecca de Winter, Maximilian de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator begins to enter into a strange competition with Rebecca, Maxim de Winter's dead wife. Rebecca and Maxim seem to have enjoyed a close marriage for many years--hence Rebecca's habit of calling Maxim "Max." The narrator, by contrast, has been instructed to refer to Mr. de Winter as "Maxim." As the narrator interprets things, she's more removed from Maxim's thoughts and feelings. Even after the narrator marries Maxim, she's not really close with him--she begins to sense that Maxim is still in love with Rebecca, hence the distance implied by "Maxim."

It's strange to think that the narrator is "competing" with Rebecca for Maxim's affections. Throughout the novel, though, Rebecca will exert a powerful influence over the characters, albeit from beyond the grave. Rebecca could also be considered a strong maternal presence, against whom the narrator must rebel in an Oedipal sense. (See Themes.)

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ "If you think I'm one of the people who try to be funny at breakfast you're wrong," he said. "I'm invariably ill-tempered in the early morning. I repeat to you, the choice is open to you. Either you go to America with Mrs. Van Hopper or you come home to Manderley with me."
"Do you mean you want a secretary or something?"
"No, I'm asking you to marry me, you little fool."

Related Characters: Maximilian de Winter, The narrator (speaker), Mrs. Van Hopper

Related Themes:

Page Number: 52

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Maxim de Winter dines with the narrator in Monte Carlo. Abruptly, Maxim asks the narrator to marry him. His tone is brisk and matter-of-fact--there's no real compassion or love in his voice (he even calls the narrator a "little fool"), and both characters are clearly aware of their different roles (Maxim as the powerful male benefactor, and the narrator as the lower-class, helpless female) in the relationship.

The absence of any real passion or affection in this quotation reflects the continued distance between the narrator and Maxim, who is to become her new husband. Even after she's married and moves to Manderley, the narrator will continue to regard her husband with a combination of fear and uncertainty. And we, the readers, can't tell exactly why Maxim is asking for the narrator's hand in marriage. Perhaps he's genuinely attracted to the narrator, but perhaps he thinks of her a means to an end--a way of purging himself of any lasting feelings for Rebecca. Even by the end of the book, it'll be impossible to tell how Maxim feels after Rebecca--an ambiguity that has led some feminist critics to dub Maxim the real villain of the novel.

❝ "Naturally one wants you to be happy, and I grant you he's a very attractive creature but—well, I'm sorry; and personally I think you are making a big mistake—one you will bitterly regret."

Related Characters: Mrs. Van Hopper (speaker), Maximilian de Winter, The narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, the narrator--who's just gotten engaged to Maxim--crosses paths with her rather cruel former employer, Mrs. Van Hooper, for whom she's acted as a valet and travel partner. Van Hooper, who, it's been suggested, is jealous of the narrator's friendship with Maxim, tells the narrator that she doesn't approve of the marriage.

It's strange that such a simple quote from such an

unimportant character should have such major ramifications for the narrator's relationship with Maxim. For the rest of the novel, the narrator continues to remember Van Hooper's words, eventually concluding that her former employer was right all along: she was wrong to marry such a mysterious, taciturn man. The fact that the narrator would be so disturbed by the opinion of a woman she despises suggests that the narrator herself is uncertain about her marriage to Maxim: she barely knows Maxim, and so she's afraid that Maxim thinks of her as a mere "cure" for his marriage to Rebecca.

Chapter 8 Quotes

"Who is it?" I said, "who do you want?"
There was a strange buzzing at the end of the line, and then a voice came, low and rather harsh, whether that of a woman or a man I could not tell, and "Mrs. de Winter?" it said, "Mrs. de Winter?"
"I'm afraid you have made a mistake," I said; "Mrs. de Winter has been dead for over a year." I sat there, waiting, staring stupidly into the mouthpiece, and it was not until the name was repeated again, the voice incredulous, slightly raised, that I became aware, with a rush of color to my face, that I had blundered irretrievably, and could not take back my words.
"It's Mrs. Danvers, Madam," said the voice. "I'm speaking to you on the house telephone."

Related Characters: Mrs. Danvers, The narrator (speaker), Rebecca de Winter

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

In this darkly amusing scene, the narrator answers the telephone in her new home, Manderley. Unfamiliar with the voice on the other end of the line, the narrator explains that "Mrs. de Winter"--i.e., Rebecca de Winter--is dead, only to realize that Mrs. Danvers is trying to get in touch with the narrator herself.

The narrator is so uncomfortable with her new role as the mistress of Manderley that she doesn't even answer to her own title. The narrator has *become* Mrs. de Winter, but she continues to think of Rebecca as the true owner of this elite title. The narrator's nervousness reflects her lack of familiarity with the lifestyle of the English aristocracy. A middle-class girl, she hasn't a clue how to go about running Manderley--the contrast between Rebecca's legendary competence and the narrator's incompetence is crystal-clear, and a crucial aspect of the power dynamic between Mrs. Danvers (who also clearly thinks of Rebecca as the *real* Mrs. de Winter) and the narrator.

Chapter 9 Quotes

"You see," she said, snapping the top, and walking down the stairs, "you are so very different from Rebecca."

Related Characters: Beatrice Lacy (speaker), Rebecca de Winter, The narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 107

Explanation and Analysis

Here the narrator meets Beatrice Lacy, the sister of Maxim de Winter. At the end of Beatrice's visit to Manderley, the narrator speaks with Beatrice one-on-one, and Beatrice lets slip that the narrator is very different from Rebecca, Maxim's former bride.

Up to this point, the name "Rebecca" has been spoken aloud barely at all. Beatrice says what everyone--Maxim, Mrs. Danvers, and even the narrator herself--has been thinking all along: Rebecca was a very different kind of woman from the narrator. Where the narrator struggles with her duties as the wife of an English aristocrat, Rebecca (reportedly) handled her social obligations with impressive skill, reflecting her comfort in the world of elites. While Beatrice's words might sound shocking and rude, they have a peculiar effect on the narrator. After *thinking* about the comparisons between herself and Rebecca for so long, it's oddly satisfying for the narrator to hear Beatrice speaking the obvious truth.

Chapter 11 Quotes

I heard myself saying boldly, brazenly, "Rebecca must have been a wonderful person."
I could not believe that I had said the name at last. I waited, wondering what would happen. I had said the name. I had said the word Rebecca aloud. It was a tremendous relief. It was as though I had taken a purge and rid myself of an intolerable pain. Rebecca. I had said it aloud.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Rebecca de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator takes a leap and speaks the name of Maxim de Winter's former wife, Rebecca. The narrator is in the middle of a visit to the wife of the local bishop--one of her many duties as the wife of an English aristocrat. Away from her husband--who refuses to hear the name Rebecca at any time--the narrator takes the opportunity to vent some of her pent-up frustrations, and speaks Rebecca's name in a kind of cathartic release.

The narrator has been frightened of Rebecca for a long time now, even though Rebecca has been dead for more than a year. She feels that she's an incompetent, childish young woman, whereas Rebecca must have been an impressive, beloved wife to Maxim. After repressing her guilt and fear for so long, it's enormously satisfying for the narrator to *name* the source of her frustrations. The quotation is important because it signals that the narrator is beginning to explore the mysteries of Manderley, starting with the mysteries' source, Rebecca herself.

❝ "I ought to have told you all this before," I said.
"I wish you had," he said. "I might have spared you some worry."
"I feel happier," I said, "much happier. And I've got you for my friend whatever happens, haven't I, Frank?"
"Yes, indeed," he said.
We were out of the dark.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Frank Crawley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

Here the narrator talks with Frank Crawley, an accountant and administrator of the Manderley estate. The narrator finds that she's comfortable opening up to Frank about her frustrations with her marriage. Frank assures that narrator that Maxim has done a good thing by marrying her: the narrator is actually superior to Rebecca in every way, since she's kind, sincere, and honest.Inspired by Frank's calm manner, the narrator feels comfortable talking about her feelings, and instantly gets the consolation she'd been hoping for. In other words, the narrator learns that she's partly to blame for her own anxiety: if she'd only open up about her feelings, then she wouldn't feel so anxious.

The passage is also important in that it hints at a possible romance between Crawley and the narrator. The narrator's "comfort" around Frank seems to suggest that she feels closer to him than to her own husband--although nothing ever explicitly comes of this connection.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ I dreaded his going. When I saw the car disappear round the sweep in the drive I felt exactly as though it were to be a final parting and I should never see him again. There would be an accident of course and later on in the afternoon, when I came back from my walk, I should find Frith white and frightened waiting for me with a message. The doctor would have rung up from some cottage hospital. "You must be very brave," he would say, "I'm afraid you must be prepared for a great shock."

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Frith, Maximilian de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

Here the narrator talks about the fear she feels whenever her husband leaves Manderley to drive into London. The narrator feels a powerful fear that Maxim is going to get in a car accident and die, leaving the narrator alone at Manderley forever.

The passage is notable in that it shows the narrator's fantasy life in full-swing: the narrator seems to hallucinate a complex scenario in which a doctor tells her about Maxim's tragic death. Alone in a big house, the narrator has no way to occupy her time other than with elaborate fantasies, even if they're gruesome and depressing. The passage also suggests the narrator's total, slavish devotion to her husband. Alone in a strange, austere world, the narrator has one and only one friend--Maxim himself--meaning that, in a way, she's imprisoned in her new life at Manderley. (As some critics have pointed out, Maxim may be totally aware of the narrator's dependence on him, and using it to his advantage.)

Chapter 15 Quotes

She had relaxed against the pillows, plucking at her shawl, and her mouth began to tremble. "You talk too much, all of you. I don't understand." Then she looked across at me, a frown on her face, and began shaking her head. "Who are you, my dear, I haven't seen you before? I don't know your face. I don't remember you at Manderley. Bee, who is this child? Why did not Maxim bring Rebecca? I'm so fond of Rebecca. Where is dear Rebecca?"

Related Characters: Gran, The narrator (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 188

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator goes with Beatrice to visit Maxim's aging, senile grandmother, "Gran." To the narrator's horror, Gran doesn't realize that Rebecca has died: as far as she's concerned, the narrator is a kind of impostor, "stealing" the role of wife away from Rebecca, the rightful owner.

Gran's behavior in this scene, senile though it might be, literalizes the narrator's own feelings of insecurity at Manderley. True enough, the narrator *does* feel like an impostor: thanks to the severity of Mrs. Danvers, the narrator thinks of herself as an inadequate replacement for Rebecca. The narrator lacks confidence in her own abilities, to the point where she begins to hate herself simply for not being Rebecca.

Chapter 16 Quotes

He considered me a moment, his eyebrows raised, whistling softly. "Listen, my sweet. When you were a little girl, were you ever forbidden to read certain books, and did your father put those books under lock and key?"
"Yes," I said.
"Well, then. A husband is not so very different from a father after all. There is a certain type of knowledge I prefer you not to have. It's better kept under lock and key. So that's that. And now eat up your peaches, and don't ask me any more questions, or I shall put you in the corner."
"I wish you would not treat me as if I was six," I said.

Related Characters: Maximilian de Winter, The narrator (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 205

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator has brought up the issue of Rebecca to Maxim de Winter himself. But instead of opening up about the issue to his wife, Maxim clams up, condescendingly claiming that the narrator is too young and childish to understand Maxim's feelings. As Maxim explains it, the narrator is like a young child, who needs to be kept out of a library for her own good.

As the narrator readily points out, Maxim is treating her like a tiny child. Moreover, Maxim is obtusely implying that the narrator is the problem--i.e., that she's curious about things that should be left alone--when in fact it's Maxim himself who's to blame for being too cowardly to discuss the truth with another person. The narrator has felt that she's being treated condescendingly for some time now, but it's not until this scene that she *tells* Maxim how she's feeling--a sure sign that the narrator is becoming stronger and more assertive.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" he asked. His eyes blazed in anger. His face was still ashen white.
I could not move, I went on standing there, my hand on the banister.
"It's the picture," I said, terrified at his eyes, at his voice. "It's the picture, the one in the gallery."
There was a long silence. We went on staring at each other. Nobody moved in the hall. I swallowed, my hand moved to my throat. "What is it?" I said. "What have I done?"

Related Characters: Maximilian de Winter, The narrator (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 217

Explanation and Analysis

In this uncomfortable scene, the narrator prepares to enter the Manderley summer ball, a fixture of social life in the community. With Mrs. Danvers's help, the narrator has chosen for her costume a beautiful white dress. To her horror, though, the narrator discovers--as she enters the party itself--that the dress is identical to one worn by Rebecca years before. Mrs. Danvers has tricked the narrator into humiliating herself in front of her guests and

her husband.

The scene is designed to show the narrator in a state of total cluelessness: at this point, the narrator has no idea what she's done, or why her behavior has enraged Maxim. And yet we, the readers, can already guess what's going on. The narrator has dared to wear Rebecca's clothes--symbolically, she's attempted to step into Rebecca's role as wife and socialite, and she's utterly failed. In short, the passage confirms the narrator's worst fear: that she's an embarrassing, inadequate substitute for Rebecca de Winter.

Chapter 17 Quotes

I remember Robert dropping a tray of ices, and the expression of Frith's face when he saw Robert was the culprit and not one of the minions hired for the occasion. I wanted to go to Robert and stand beside him and say "I know how you feel. I understand. I've done worse than you tonight."

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Robert, Frith

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 228

Explanation and Analysis

In the immediate aftermath of her humiliation at the party, the narrator falls into a state of trancelike calm. She's been so utterly embarrassed by Mrs. Danvers that she feels she can't sink any lower. And yet in the depths of her humiliation, the narrator seems to mature. Before the party, she was shy and mousy, avoiding conversation as much as possible; now, she's become more sympathetic and comfortable with her servants--she reaches out to Robert when he makes a mistake, offering sympathy and support.

In short, the passage shows the narrator regrouping after her embarrassment, and growing from a shy young woman into a mature adult. The passage is also important because it illuminates a crucial difference between the narrator and Rebecca. Rebecca was a glamorous socialite, but she was also cold and bullying. The narrator, by contrast, is a reluctant hostess, but she's also compassionate in a way that Rebecca could never match.

Chapter 18 Quotes

That was why I had come down last night in my blue dress and had not stayed hidden in my room. There was nothing brave or fine about it, it was a wretched tribute to convention. I had not come down for Maxim's sake, or Beatrice's, for the sake of Manderley. I had come down because I did not want the people at the ball to think I had quarreled with Maxim. I didn't want them to go home and say, "Of course you know they don't get on. I hear he's not at all happy." I had come for my own sake, my own poor personal pride.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Maximilian de Winter, Beatrice Lacy

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 235

Explanation and Analysis

In the aftermath of her humiliation, the narrator makes the difficult choice to continue with her party. Mrs. Danvers has embarrassed her horribly, but instead of fleeing to her room, she decides to continue on with the party, playing the part of a gracious host.

It's important to note that it's the narrator's pride, nothing else, that compels her to continue on with her hosting duties. In a slightly different sense, the narrator chooses to continue on because she doesn't want her hundreds of guests talking about her behind her back: she's concerned with her reputation in the community. Ironically, in spite of Mrs. Danvers best efforts, the narrator's humiliation at her party has caused her to become a more competent hostess and a more confident partner to Maxim de Winter--she's finally playing the part of Maxim's wife. The narrator presents this as a character flaw, but in reality it's a sign of growth--she's doing things for her own sense of dignity and self-respect, rather than just because she thinks Maxim (or Rebecca) would approve.

"I thought I hated you but I don't now," she said; "it seems to have spent itself, all the feeling I had."
"Why should you hate me?" I asked; "what have I ever done to you that you should hate me?"
"You tried to take Mrs. de Winter's place," she said.

Related Characters: Mrs. Danvers, The narrator (speaker), Rebecca de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 245

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator comes face-to-face with Mrs. Danvers, the woman who has conspired to humiliate her in front of hundreds of guests (besides belittling her more privately many other times). The narrator, humiliated to the point where she has nothing to lose, asks Mrs. Danvers why she hates her so much. Danvers replies that she *hated* the narrator for usurping Rebecca's place as Maxim's wife.

In a way, Mrs. Danvers's explanation doesn't tell us anything we didn't already know: it was clear that Mrs. Danvers resented the narrator right away, and that her resentment stemmed from her immense loyalty to Rebecca. Yet Mrs. Danvers comes across as strangely pathetic in this scene. She's so loyal to a dead woman that she's practically a slave--she has no life independent of her relationship to Rebecca de Winter, who is gone. Prior to now, Mrs. Danvers had always seemed like a calm, rational adult, while the narrator had seemed clueless and childish. Now, the roles are reversed: Mrs. Danver is the child and the narrator is the mature presence.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ I was free now to be with Maxim, to touch him, and hold him, and love him. I would never be a child again.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Maximilian de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 296

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, the narrator has a bizarre and horrifying conflict with Mrs. Danvers, at the end of which the narrator asserts her right to live in Manderley and be married to Maxim. To her own surprise, the narrator realizes that she's cleansed herself of any feelings of fear or insecurity: where before she was afraid of Mrs. Danvers and afraid of not measuring up to Rebecca, the narrator is now calm and collected, confident that she's a better bride to Maxim than Rebecca ever was.

It's important to note that the quotation stresses that the narrator has grown up, as well as conquered her fears of Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers. In addition to being a mystery, *Rebecca* is also a coming-of-age story. Here, we learn how the narrator grows from a child to an adult: she gets over her feelings of insecurity and learns to be confident in herself.

Chapter 20 Quotes

❝ "Our marriage was a farce from the very first. She was vicious, damnable, rotten through and through. We never loved each other, never had one moment of happiness together. Rebecca was incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency. She was not even normal."

Related Characters: Maximilian de Winter (speaker), The narrator, Rebecca de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 275

Explanation and Analysis

Maxim de Winter finally tells the narrator the truth about Rebecca. Contrary to what the narrator has always assumed, Rebecca was not a lovely, glamorous woman; on the contrary, she was a cruel, two-faced villain whom Maxim despised.

After this quotation, Maxim will go into great detail about why, exactly, Rebecca was so bad. But for now, it's crucial to notice that Maxim sums up Rebecca's faults by saying, "She was not even normal." For Maxim, the word "normal" means a few things: being a loving wife, being obedient to one's husband, doing one's duty as a hostess, etc. Many critics of the novel have pointed out that it's *Maxim*, not Rebecca, who comes across as a villain here. Maxim resents Rebecca, it could be argued, not because she's a particularly awful person, but because she refuses to go along with the sexist norms of society and be subservient to her husband.

❝ "Yes," I said, "my sweet, my love." But I looked away from him so he should not see my face. What did it matter whether I understood him or not? My heart was light like a feather floating in the air. He had never loved Rebecca.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Maximilian de Winter, Rebecca de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 278

Explanation and Analysis

As Maxim explains to the narrator that Rebecca was a vile, hateful woman, the narrator is filled with happiness. In this quotation, we learn why: the narrator is thrilled to learn that Maxim never loved Rebecca.

It's important to notice that the narrator doesn't really understand Maxim any better than she did before: she doesn't really know anything about his personality or his character--the only thing that matters is that she, the narrator, isn't competing with Rebecca for Maxim's love. Strangely, even after the narrator learns that Rebecca wasn't the wonderful, glamorous woman she's been led to imagine, she can't help but compare herself to Rebecca: in a way, she's more interested in "beating" Rebecca than she is in understanding her own husband (or later accepting the fact that he murdered his former wife). Rebecca, it's been argued, is a Freudian mother-figure, competing with the narrator for Maxim's paternal love. The narrator's competition with Rebecca shows that she's still locked in an Electra Complex--a sure sign that she's not yet a fully mature adult.

Chapter 21 Quotes

"I will give the orders about the lunch," she said. She waited a moment. I did not say anything. Then she went out of the room. She can't frighten me any more, I thought. She has lost her power with Rebecca.

Related Characters: Mrs. Danvers, The narrator (speaker), Rebecca de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 296

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage the narrator savors her victory over Mrs. Danvers. Previously, the narrator had been terrified of Danvers. Danvers was the living, breathing symbol of Rebecca's power over Manderley--her continued presence in the house implied the continued presence of Rebecca herself. But now that the narrator knows the truth about Rebecca (i.e, she was a wicked woman who hated the servants and never loved Maxim), Mrs. Danvers seems like a sad, pathetic woman--fiercely loyal to a woman who never particularly liked Danvers in return.

The passage signals that the narrator has again grown towards maturity. Obsessed with Rebecca's strong maternal presence, the narrator had no way to mature into her own woman--everything she did was measured against Rebecca's legacy. Now, the narrator has finally escaped Rebecca's influence, staking out her own place at Manderley in the process.

"This business has been a shock to me, you know," he said. "A bloody awful shock. Rebecca was my cousin. I was damn fond of her."
"Yes," I said. "I'm very sorry for you."
"We were brought up together," he went on. "Always tremendous pals. Liked the same things, the same people. Laughed at the same jokes. I suppose I was fonder of Rebecca than anyone else in the world. And she was fond of me. All this has been a bloody shock."

Related Characters: Jack Favell, The narrator (speaker), Rebecca de Winter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 329

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator talks to Jack Favell, the cousin of Rebecca. Jack, we've already noticed, is a somewhat sleazy, unpredictable character--not to be trusted in the slightest. After Rebecca's dead body is found in a washed-up boat, there's a renewed inquiry into the manner of her death. (We, and the narrator, know that it was Maxim who killed Rebeca.) The coroner concludes that Rebecca killed herself--a conclusion which satisfies many, but not Jack.

Much like Mrs. Danvers, Jack comes across as a sad, even pathetic character here. Jack continues to love a dead woman--a woman who, furthermore, probably never loved him in return. As the narrator becomes increasingly free of her obsession with Rebecca, the people around her seem to become increasingly obsessed with Rebecca--Jack is the perfect example. The passage also hints at a sexual relationship between Rebecca and Jack (a fact confirmed elsewhere), further reinforcing Rebecca's licentious, transgressive character—or else her confident, liberated personality.

Chapter 24 Quotes

Thank God for Favell's laugh. Thank God for his pointing finger, his flushed face, his staring bloodshot eyes. Thank God for the way he stood there swaying on his two feet. Because it made Colonel Julyan antagonistic, it put him on our side. I saw the disgust on his face, the quick movement of his lips. Colonel Julyan did not believe him. Colonel Julyan was on our side.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Colonel Julyan, Jack Favell

Related Themes:

Page Number: 337

Explanation and Analysis

Jack Favell comes to Manderley to speak with Colonel Julyan, the local constable who's been put in charge of investigating the death of Rebecca de Winter. Although the coroner has ruled that Rebecca died by suicide, Jack insists that Rebecca was murdered by Maxim (a theory that we know to be the truth). Jack further maintains that he and Rebecca were lovers, and that Rebecca would never have killed herself.

As the narrator points out, Colonel Julyan seems not to believe anything Jack says--Jack is so angry, flushed, and drunk that he can't be taken seriously. The narrator's savvy awareness of Jack's body language and tone suggests how far the narrator has come during the novel. At first, the narrator was clueless, frequently making the wrong impression on other people because of her lack of self-awareness. Now, the narrator seems like the "perfect host," always conscious of the nuances of behavior. As the novel approaches its climax, the narrator seems like an intelligent, confident woman, not a child—even as she mostly disappears from the real "action" of the book.

I would learn more about the estate, too. I should ask Frank to explain things to me. I was sure Frank liked me. I liked him, too. I would go into things, and learn how they were managed. What they did at the farm. How the work in the grounds was planned. I might take to gardening myself, and in time have one or two things altered. That little square lawn outside the morning-room with the statue of the satyr. I did not like it. We would give the satyr away. There were heaps of things that I could do, little by little. People would come and stay and I should not mind. There would be the interest of seeing to their rooms, having flowers and books put, arranging the food. We would have children. Surely we would have children.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Maximilian de Winter, Frank Crawley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 382

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator and Maxim de Winter are driving back to Manderley, having resolved the mystery of Rebecca's "illness." With law enforcement satisfied that Rebecca died by suicide, Maxim is free of all suspicion--in short, he and the narrator can finally begin their life as a married couple, finally free of Rebecca's influence. In the car, the narrator plans her new life as Maxim's wife. Although she's been living at Manderley for months now, it's as if she's going there for the first time: she envisions doing all the things she *should have* been doing all along. The narrator has been too intimidated by Rebecca's memory to play the part of the aristocrat's wife--now, however, she's looking forward to doing so.

And yet there's a subtle hint that all is not well. The mention of Frank "liking" her suggests that the narrator is still a little dissatisfied with her marriage. (Notice that the narrator insists, "We would have children," even though the only man named in the passage is Frank, not Maxim) In short, the narrator seems be settling into her role as Maxim's wife, planning to host parties and give birth to children--as a good wife ought to, she believes--and yet there's also a suggestion that she's not entirely comfortable with such a role.

There was no moon. The sky above our heads was inky black. But the sky on the horizon was not dark at all. It was shot with crimson, like a splash of blood. And the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea.

Related Characters: The narrator (speaker), Maximilian de Winter

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 386

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the novel, the narrator and Maxim return to Manderley, ready to start a new life with one another. And yet when they approach their manor home, they're shocked to see that it's in flames: someone (Mrs. Danvers, it's implied) has set the building on fire.

What does the destruction of Manderley mean for the narrator? Just as the narrator was getting ready to settle into the role of mistress of Manderley, her home is destroyed. By the same token, the narrator's chances of a

stable adult life have disappeared: although she's still married to Maxim, she'll never be entirely respectable--because of the destruction of Manderley, her name will always be tied to some mysterious scandal.

And yet the destruction of Manderley is a beginning as well as an ending. Throughout the novel, the narrator has struggled to liberate herself from Rebecca's memory. In no small part, the narrator's struggle was so great because Rebecca and Manderley were practically synonymous. Now that Rebecca's legacy has finally been buried, it's only fair that Manderley should be "buried," too.

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.

CHAPTER 1

The novel begins, "Last night I dreamt I went to **Manderley** again." The narrator remembers a dream about approaching a large metal gate that's been locked. Behind the gate, she sees an old house with lattice windows and a chimney. Walking along the drive to her house, she notices plants and flowers that clearly haven't been cut or trimmed in years.

Right away du Maurier sets the tone for the book. Rebecca *is structured as a series of flashbacks. Individual memories blur together, and it's not always easy for us to tell if the narrator is experiencing the present or only recalling the past. For the time being, the narrator's past dominates her life—she can't escape it.*

The narrator passes "like a spirit" through the gate and proceeds to the house. The moon is shining—it's night, apparently—and the moonlight illuminates long, tangled ivy vines. As the narrator stares up at the house, she has the sense that the house is alive. She remembers the dog, Jasper, the newspapers she used to read, and other intimate details of the house. As the narrator wakes up, she decides not to tell anyone about her dream, because "**Manderley** was ours no longer. Manderley was no more."

The idea of Manderley (the name of the estate) being alive will come back to haunt the narrator time and time again. The house and grounds have a clear identity of their own, but in contrast, the narrator remains anonymous. Although we'll learn more about the narrator in due time, we'll never learn her name—a potent reminder of her uncertainty and lack of a strong identity.

CHAPTER 2

The narrator concludes that she can never return to **Manderley**, because the past is "too close." She thinks about looking at her husband, with whom she once lived at Manderley. Currently, they're living in a hotel. The narrator's husband once had a premonition that Manderley would go through a disaster—a premonition that's turned out to be quite true.

In addition to being a work of literature, Rebecca *is also a mystery novel, and du Maurier is upfront about the nature of the mystery: something bad happens to Manderley, and it'll take us the remainder of the novel (right up to the last sentence!) to find out what this is. It's interesting that, in a sense,* Rebecca *is a murder mystery where the "victim" is a place, not a person. This is a strong reminder of the thematic importance of place in the novel.*

Despite her assuredness that she can't return to **Manderley**, the narrator can't help thinking of it at all times. The smallest details remind her of Manderley life: trees, plants, even newspaper articles. The narrator notes that the caretakers at their hotel, which is located far from England, must dislike them for being so aggressively English, and consuming quintessential English foods like crumpets.

It's hard to gauge the narrator's attitude toward Manderley. On one level she seems repelled by it: it's big, ugly, intimidating, eerie, etc. And yet the narrator is clearly drawn to Manderley, as if by hypnosis (the style of these opening chapter is regularly described as "hypnotic"). This combination of attraction and repulsion characterizes many of the characters' relationships with one another. It's also important to note that the characters' English affect follows them wherever they go. Manderley—the quintessential English manor house—has made a strong impression on the narrator.

The narrator remembers some of the people who lived at **Manderley**. There was the servant, Mrs. Danvers, who, if the narrator complained about anything, would say that the narrator's predecessor, Rebecca de Winter, never complained about anything of that kind. Mrs. Danvers disliked the narrator for her "lack of poise." Rebecca, by contrast, was always perfectly poised. The narrator would dine while being served by Mrs. Danvers.

So far, we've gotten the impression that the narrator exemplifies the English, upper-class values of Manderley. Here, we see that this wasn't always the case. When the narrator arrives at Manderley, she lacks aristocratic poise. This naturally makes us wonder who she was before she came to Manderley—leading to another flashback.

The narrator also remembers Mrs. Van Hopper, a woman she worked for long ago. One evening, the narrator was dining with Van Hopper at a restaurant, when they both noticed a handsome man, Maxim de Winter. Van Hopper explained to the narrator that de Winter owned **Manderley**, and that his wife had died recently.

This chapter has unfolded like a hazy memory—we're not clear exactly where we are, or what the relationship between the characters is, but there's a powerful, eerie atmosphere of something sinister and mysterious. Du Maurier follows many conventions of the "Gothic" novel in her book—including the young heroine falling in love with a wealthy, handsome man with a mysterious and tragic past.

CHAPTER 3

The narrator considers the fact that Mrs. Van Hopper's observation about Maxim de Winter changed the course of the narrator's life. Years before, Van Hopper used to go to the Hotel Cote d'Azur in Monte Carlo, Monaco. Van Hopper was known for being a busybody, and for the obnoxious habit of claiming people she'd met only once as her "friends."

At the most basic level, Mrs. Van Hopper is a rather grotesque "mother figure" to the narrator. The narrator isn't the least bit fond of her, but without her, the narrator wouldn't be the woman she is.

The narrator remembers the afternoon, years ago, when Mrs. Van Hopper was sitting on a sofa in the Hotel d'Azur. On the afternoon in question, Van Hopper calls for the narrator, who is working as her servant and "companion" at the time, and tells her to fetch a letter Van Hopper's nephew has sent. The narrator knows what's going on: Van Hopper is going to use the letter as an excuse for introducing herself to Maxim de Winter. The narrator goes to fetch the letter, but when she comes back down to the hotel lounge, she finds that Maxim and Mrs. Van Hopper are already speaking. Van Hopper casually tells the narrator that she and Maxim are having coffee later. The narrator senses that Van Hopper is signaling to Maxim that the narrator is only a servant, and therefore not worthy of being talked to. To the narrator's surprise, however, Maxim invites her to join them for coffee.

In the beginning of this flashback, the narrator has no knowledge of Manderley whatsoever. She's familiar with a different kind of lifestyle, one in which she is a servant paid to deliver mail on behalf of her spoiled employee. There's a complicated power dynamic in the scenes between the narrator, Maxim, and Mrs. Van Hopper—instead of directly threatening or excluding the narrator, Van Hopper uses allusion and veiled references to assert her social superiority. Although Maxim, we can sense, is attracted to the narrator, he's playing by the same rules of polite manipulation as Mrs. Van Hopper: instead of openly expressing his admiration for the narrator, he tamely invites her for coffee.

The narrator, Maxim, and Mrs. Van Hopper proceed to have coffee together. Van Hopper says that Maxim must know her nephew, Billy. She shows Maxim Billy's letter and shows him photographs of the vacations Billy has taken with his new wife. The narrator thinks that Maxim looks somehow archaic, as if he's from the 15th century. Van Hopper praises **Manderley**, Maxim's home. The narrator notices that Maxim isn't saying anything to Mrs. Van Hopper, yet Van Hopper keeps talking. The narrator feels embarrassed on Van Hopper's behalf.

Du Maurier presents Van Hopper as an ironic foil to Maxim de Winter. Where Maxim is quiet and mysterious about his family and family history, Van Hopper is loud and over-shares about everything. This is the first sign that the narrator and Maxim have something in common—a reluctance to speak, especially about oneself, that sets them apart from other characters like Mrs. Van Hopper.

To the narrator's surprise, Maxim gently asks her if she would like more coffee. He asks her if she's enjoying Monte Carlo, and the narrator is too surprised to respond. Mrs. Van Hopper interjects that the narrator is "spoiled," a suggestion that Maxim doesn't agree or disagree with. Mrs. Van Hopper continues to "babble" on about gossip, and Maxim continues to smoke his cigarette silently. After a time, a servant comes to summon Mrs. Van Hopper to the dressmaker. Van Hopper thanks Maxim for his company, and invites him for a drink tomorrow. Maxim declines, saying he'll be driving out of Monte Carlo tomorrow. He quotes an old de Winter family motto, "He travels the fastest who travels alone."

Although the narrator doesn't respond to Maxim—she's too tongue-tied and shy—her lack of response ends up being the perfect response. Like Maxim, the narrator is quiet and modest, even if she lacks Maxim's suaveness. Maxim seems cool and collected at all times, because he's been raised with strong traditions, a rigid code of manners, and the confidence of great wealth.

Later in the afternoon, the narrator prepares to play bridge with Mrs. Van Hopper. Bridge is dull for the narrator, since she plays with Van Hopper's friends, who don't like or trust her. The bridge game proceeds. Halfway through, an errand boy brings a letter for the narrator. The letter—which has the narrator's name, spelled correctly (a rarity, according to the narrator)—says, "Forgive me. I was very rude this afternoon."

For Van Hopper, the narrator is a mere tool—just a "hand" with which to play bridge. Although it's not yet clear what Maxim thinks of the narrator, we know that he's interested in her. It's presented as a mark of his interest that he spells her (apparently foreign) name correctly—but this is also du Maurier being ironic, as we don't know the narrator's name at all, and never will.

CHAPTER 4

The day after meeting Maxim de Winter, Mrs. Van Hopper wakes up with a fever of 102. While the doctors care for Van Hopper, the narrator goes to eat lunch, alone. In the lunch hall, the narrator sees Maxim, also dining alone. While she's reaching for her water glass, the narrator spills water all over the tablecloth. Maxim invites the narrator to eat with him, since her own table is soaked. The narrator assumes Maxim is only being polite, but Maxim insists.

In a novel where even the smallest details are carefully planned, Mrs. Van Hopper's illness is an anomaly: an unpredictable event that has enormous consequences for the narrator and Maxim, bringing them together in situations without distractions or obstacles.

At lunch, Maxim tells the narrator once again that he apologizes for his rudeness. The narrator says that Maxim wasn't rude—at least not a form of rudeness that Mrs. Van Hopper would understand. As they eat, the narrator thinks about **Manderley**, the source of Maxim's fame and prosperity. As a child, the narrator saw a picture of Manderley on a postcard, and was chastised for not having heard of the famous estate.

This is an important scene, because it shows Maxim being more honest and intimate with the narrator. And yet, at the same time, Maxim doesn't have *to talk about himself—he can count on the fact that the narrator already knows about Manderley. Even here, Maxim and the narrator's relationship is mediated by the existence of Manderley, the source of Maxim's power and wealth.*

The narrator explains to Maxim that she works for Mrs. Van Hopper for a sum of 90 pounds a year. Maxim is confused about why the narrator needs to work for money—she has a lovely and unusual name, he points out. The narrator explains that her family is dead. Maxim wants to hear about the narrator's father, so she tells him her "family history" (but does not repeat it to the reader). After the narrator has finished explaining her family history, Maxim tells her that they have a lot in common: they're both lonely people. Maxim has a sister, he explains, but he never sees her—and apart from his sister, he has no living relatives.

The narrator has a family history, but we don't know what it is. The implication is that whatever social prestige the narrator has is tiny and particular—easy to summarize over a lunch date. In other words, there is an immediate power asymmetry between the narrator and Maxim. Both characters have been trained to value the notion of tradition and family history, and yet one of them has much more of these things to boast of than the other.

Maxim asks the narrator what she'll be doing with her free afternoon. The narrator says she's planning to walk around Monaco, sketching. Maxim offers to drive her about in his car, in spite of the narrator's polite protests. For the rest of the meal, Maxim tells the narrator that she's made a mistake in working for Mrs. Van Hopper. The narrator is too young, Maxim claims, for such work—she should be thinking of her future. While working for Mrs. Van Hopper may seem like good work at the time, it'll be difficult to use the job experience to find another job later on. With these words, Maxim tells the narrator that it's time to walk to his car.

Maxim isn't shy about criticizing the narrator's choice to work for Mrs. Van Hopper. There's something almost flirtatious about his pronouncement—it establishes trust between Maxim and the narrator, and suggests that the narrator "can do better." Maxim makes it clear to the narrator that he's an older, more experienced man, who knows much more about the world than she does. Curiously, this makes Maxim seem almost fatherly in the narrator's eyes—but that also seems to be attractive to her.

The narrator spends the afternoon with Maxim in Monaco, attempting to sketch. Because it's too cold and windy to sketch for a long time, Maxim offers to drive the narrator to the summit of a nearby hill, where at least they'll be able to see the beauty of the sea. At the top of this hill, the narrator realizes that Maxim is lost in thought, to the point where he barely remembers that the narrator is present. Suddenly, the narrator turns to Maxim and suggests that they should be getting back to the hotel. Without answering, Maxim says that he's been to this hill before, many years ago, and it hasn't changed at all.

Maxim is simultaneously pulling the narrator closer to him and pushing her away. He's flirtatiously asked her to spend the day with him, and even given her a ride in his car, yet he also clearly has some dark secrets that he's unwilling to divulge to her so soon. This scene is intended to add to the sense of mystery and past tragedy surrounding Maxim, and it also brings up the theme of memory again. Just as the narrator can't escape her memories of Manderley (in her present narration), so Maxim seems unable to move past his own troubled memories.

On the car ride back to the Hotel, Maxim tells the narrator about the flowers at **Manderley**: beautiful violets, tulips, and lilacs. As he speaks, dusk falls on Monte Carlo. They pull up to the Hotel. Maxim thanks the narrator for a wonderful day. He also gives her a volume of poems and tells her that she should read it. He won't see her that night, he explains, since he's dining out. With this, the narrator gets out of the car and Maxim drives off.

Manderley is an integral part of Maxim's identity, so for Maxim to tell the narrator about the physical characteristics of Manderley feels like an intimate act, particularly following the scene on the hill. Even if Maxim doesn't tell the narrator what's been troubling him, he at least gives her more information about himself in an effort to build trust with her.

The narrator goes to dinner in the Hotel, where she looks through the volume of poems Maxim gave her. The most frequently thumbed page, she notices, is about a woman who "flees" from "Him" without success. She also notices that on the front page of the book there's a message: "Max—from Rebecca. 17 May." She remembers something Mrs. Van Hopper told her the previous day: Maxim's wife died years ago, drowning in a bay near **Manderley**. Supposedly Maxim never utters her name.

This is a very important scene, because it's the first moment in which the narrator tries to understand Maxim's relationship with his dead wife, Rebecca—who is named here for the first time. Based on his behavior on the hill and this book of poetry, it would appear that Maxim is still haunted by Rebecca's death and cannot escape his memories of her. He is courting someone new (the narrator) but even a romantic gesture towards her (giving her the book of poetry) only serves as another reminder of Rebecca. The poem's subject of the woman "fleeing" from "Him" also adds to the mood of control and domination, particularly between men and women.

CHAPTER 5

The narrator notes that she's felt the "fever of first love" not once but twice. She remembers the days after meeting Maxim de Winter. Mrs. Van Hopper, still bedridden but not really sick, demands to know where the narrator has been lately. The narrator lies and says that she's been playing tennis. In reality, the narrator has been spending her days driving with Maxim. The days fly by for the narrator—she's in awe of Maxim for his kindness and politeness, while also recognizing a secret sadness in him.

The closer that the narrator gets to Maxim, the more it sinks in that she doesn't understand him at all—yet this only makes him more intriguing to her. Keeping their courtship a secret from the nosy Mrs. Van Hopper also adds to the romance of the new relationship.

One day, during her drive with Maxim, the narrator asks him, point-blank, why he's spending so much time with her. Maxim replies that he's "chosen her" because she's not a wealthy, pompous woman, and because she's young. The narrator points out that Maxim knows nothing about her, and Maxim replies that the narrator knows nothing about him. The narrator explains what she does know about Maxim: he's from **Manderley**, and he's lost his wife. Maxim falls silent, and the narrator is afraid she's ruined their friendship for good. Maxim explains, very gravely, that he's been trying to forget about the past altogether. Angrily, he tells the narrator that he enjoys her company, and if she insists on asking him questions, she can leave him.

Maxim's explanation is both flattering and condescending. He speaks of "choosing" the narrator, as if it doesn't matter whether or not she's attracted to him in return. Maxim's statements about the past are equally contradictory: based on everything we've seen, it would seem that he's trying to recapture the past (he revisits the hill, keeps Rebecca's old book of poetry, etc.), but he also wants to keep secrets from the narrator and claims that he's trying to forget *the past. There's also an unpleasantly sexist undercurrent to Maxim's outburst, as he calls the narrator impertinent for daring to ask him personal questions. He is touchy about maintaining his power, and as is the norm in this novel, power means* information*—control over what is withheld and what is revealed.*

The narrator, upset by Maxim's aggressive tone, says that she wants to go home. Maxim nods, and drives the narrator back to the Hotel. In the car, the narrator thinks about going back to her old life, dining with Mrs. Van Hopper and trying to forget about Maxim. Suddenly, Maxim puts his arm around the narrator. He apologizes for losing his temper, and tells the narrator to call him "Maxim," his Christian name, instead of "Mr. de Winter," from now on. As suddenly as the narrator had been feeling upset, she now begins to feel happy.

Maxim's behavior seems erratic, but there's actually a method to his madness. He's been courting the narrator and trying to build a relationship with her, while also making it clear that he has some deep secrets to keep from her. In order to balance out his evasiveness, Maxim tries to establish trust with the narrator in other ways—here, for example, he tells her to call him by his first name. This is also an early example of the narrator's seemingly complete dependence on Maxim and his views of her—her happiness depends on how much he likes her, not vice versa.

The narrator returns to the Hotel, and before Maxim parts ways with her for the day, he kisses her, which the narrator finds satisfying and comforting. For the rest of the day, the narrator plays cards with Mrs. Van Hopper. At one point, Van Hopper asks the narrator if Mr. de Winter is still in the hotel, and the narrator replies that she thinks he is.

As a result of her affair with Maxim, the narrator finds herself lying and keeping secrets of her own: it's as if Maxim's secrets and deceptions are contagious.

The narrator finds that she can't stop thinking about Rebecca, Maxim's former wife. No doubt, Rebecca called Maxim "Max." Perhaps Rebecca read poetry over his shoulder, after giving him the volume of verse for his birthday. The narrator feels a strange sting of irritation that to Rebecca, Mr. de Winter was "Max," while to the narrator herself, he's only "Maxim."

This is an important moment in the novel because it establishes a rivalry between the narrator, Maxim's current love interest, and Rebecca, Maxim's dead wife. While it seems absurd to be jealous of a dead person, the narrator thinks that Maxim is still very much in love with Rebecca—and in a way, the fact that she's dead makes her more powerful of a rival. In death, Rebecca is (seemingly) immune from making any mistakes or being criticized at all. She can be like an idealized "angel" for Maxim, while the narrator must remain all too human.

CHAPTER 6

The narrator remembers having to leave **Manderley** recently. She and her husband (unnamed for the moment) are staying in various hotels. Strangely, being away from Manderley has reminded the narrator that she and her husband have aged visibly.

Du Maurier reinforces the connection between Manderley and the past. It was like a timeless place of tradition and agelessness, and when the characters are forced to leave it, they seem to age quickly.

The narrator remembers the rest of her time in Monte Carlo with Mrs. Van Hopper. Van Hopper asks her if she'll accompany her to New York at the end of the summer. The narrator is reluctant to take Van Hopper up on this offer, but Mrs. Van Hopper tells her that she'll be able to find men "in your class."

Mrs. Van Hopper plays the part of an overpowering mother to the narrator in trying to find her a suitor—but Van Hopper's helpfulness is, of course, condescending and belittling, as she thinks that the narrator is fit for lower-class men only.

Mrs. Van Hopper comes to the end of her time at Monte Carlo, and the narrator is seriously considering accompanying her to New York. On Van Hopper's last night in Monte Carlo, the narrator cries herself to sleep.

The narrator's relationship with Maxim has seemed like happy, mysterious dream to her, but now she senses that it must end. She could never be with someone like Maxim—as Van Hopper suggests, she must stick to her class.

The next morning, the narrator wakes up early and dines with Mrs. Van Hopper, who's oblivious to her companion's sadness. Suddenly, the narrator gets up and goes to Maxim's room. She tells Maxim that she's come to say goodbye. She explains that she's going to New York with Mrs. Van Hopper, although she'll be miserable there. Maxim nods and asks the narrator a question: would she prefer New York or **Manderley**? Surprised, the narrator says she'd prefer Manderley, of course. Maxim tells the narrator that he's proposing marriage to her. She's shocked—even though she feels strong feelings for Maxim, she never imagined that he'd want to marry her. Tearfully, she tells Maxim that she's been crying all night, because she'd thought that she would never see him again. Maxim nods, and tells the narrator that she'll be his companion, just as she is to Mrs. Van Hopper: she'll dine with him, spend the day with him, etc.

This rather disturbing scene is one of the first suggestions that Maxim might be the real villain of this book (see Themes). In essence Maxim is telling the narrator that he'll treat her the same way Mrs. Van Hopper treats her: he'll take care of her financially, and in return she'll have to be a good "companion" to him. It's also crucial to note that the narrator never actually says "Yes" to Maxim in this scene: she's so immature and unsure of herself that she can't commit to a decision (or at least say it out loud). It's equally telling that Maxim interprets the narrator's response as a "Yes." He assumes he is doing her a favor, and she should be honored.

The narrator imagines being Maxim's wife, and has an almost hallucinatory vision of walking around **Manderley** with Maxim. She realizes that she'll become Lady de Winter—she imagines writing this name on her letters, her checks, etc. Every day, she'll go to parties, dine with her husband, etc.

Du Maurier has already foreshadowed this theme, which will only grow more important as the novel progresses—the narrator believes that she'll have to become *Rebecca (Lady de Winter) to be Maxim's wife. This signifies the narrator's uncertainty and immaturity: rather than living as her own person, she thinks she needs to become someone else in order to make Maxim happy.*

The narrator ends her vision, and finds herself sitting before Maxim in the hotel. Maxim tells her that he's going to break the news of the engagement to Mrs. Van Hopper. Together, they walk to Mrs. Van Hopper's hotel room. Instead of walking inside, the narrator goes to her room next door, and listens through the walls as Maxim explains that he's going to marry the narrator. Van Hopper obsequiously tells Maxim that this is a wonderful idea. In her own room, the narrator scans the volume of poetry that Maxim gave her. On the title page, she sees the "R" of Rebecca's name—an "R" that gets bigger and bigger the longer she stares at it. She overhears Maxim telling Mrs. Van Hopper that he and the narrator are in love. This surprises the narrator, because Maxim didn't tell her he was in love with her when he proposed. Frustrated, the narrator tears out the dedication page of the book and throws it in the fire.

Notably, this is the only scene in the novel in which Maxim interacts with people from the narrator's life before Manderley. The narrator has no family for Maxim to meet, which reinforces the idea that Van Hopper is a mother-figure to the narrator. Furthermore, the narrator seems distant and cut off from Maxim, even though they're about to be married. In the scene, she's even listening to his voice through a wall as she first hears him say that he loves her. The narrator also continues to grapple with Rebecca's legacy, as she still thinks of Rebecca as a rival for Maxim's affections.

After Maxim leaves Mrs. Van Hopper's room, the narrator goes in, reluctantly and fearfully. Van Hopper is cold, and says that the narrator is lucky that Van Hopper had influenza. She faults the narrator for lying to her about her whereabouts, and reminds her that Maxim is years older than she is: he's 42. Van Hopper asks the narrator if she's been "doing anything you shouldn't." The narrator doesn't know what this means, and Van Hopper laughs cruelly. She tells the narrator that she'll be hopelessly lost at **Manderley**—unable to survive at the balls and elaborate parties. In conclusion, Van Hopper says that the narrator is making "a big mistake, one you will bitterly regret."

This scene confirms every misgiving the narrator had about Van Hopper, who's revealed to be a bitter, nasty old woman. Although Van Hopper had seemed enthusiastic about helping the narrator find a husband, it's clear that she mostly just wanted the narrator to "know her place"—in other words, to marry someone low-class. Van Hopper treats the narrator's behavior as impertinent—she might even be jealous of the narrator's success and happiness. And yet Mrs. Van Hopper, for all of her cruelty, makes a good point: like it or not, the narrator will be hopelessly out of place in a manor house.

The narrator leaves Monte Carlo with Maxim. But she can't stop thinking about what Mrs. Van Hopper told her: Maxim is only marrying her because he's slowly going insane after his wife's death.

The narrator has been trying to forget about Rebecca, but now, she realizes this is harder than she'd thought. Even after burning Rebecca's name, the narrator can't shake the suspicion that Maxim doesn't really love her—that he's measuring her against his memory of his previous wife.

CHAPTER 7

Max—or Maxim, as the narrator still calls him—and the narrator arrive at **Manderley** in early May. Manderley, which is in England, is rainy and wet. The narrator realizes that she's been dreading her arrival to her husband's home following their honeymoon. Maxim happily points out the landmarks on his property, but the narrator can only think of how the servants and guests at Manderley will treat her. Maxim warns the narrator that his principle servant, Mrs. Danvers, is a very severe woman, but also highly capable.

There's significant emotional distance between the narrator and Maxim, even though they're married now. Maxim is completely comfortable at Manderley, while the narrator, on the other hand, will need plenty of time to adjust to her new circumstances. Maxim seems almost totally oblivious to this fact.

Maxim and the narrator drive to **Manderley**. When they're only a short distance from the house itself, the narrator notices that all the servants are standing outside, ready to welcome her. She sees an old, kind-looking man—the butler—whom Maxim addresses as Frith. Frith greets Maxim and tells him that Mrs. Danvers was the one who ordered all the servants to assemble outside. Maxim isn't surprised at all.

This assembly—an entire manor house-worth of servants gathering outside—seems both friendly and aggressive. Even if Mrs. Danvers—mentioned here for only the second time in the book—meant the servants to put the narrator at ease, it would seem that they've had the opposite effect. They're like a formidable army, reminding the narrator that she's outnumbered at Manderley.

As the narrator emerges from the car, she sees an older woman walking toward her. Maxim introduces her as Mrs. Danvers. The narrator finds that she can't remember exactly what Danvers says to her at the time—it was a cold, lifeless speech welcoming her to **Manderley**.

The narrator's outsider status at Manderley allows her to see through the servants' polite manners: she can see that Mrs. Danvers' speech is fake. It now seems likely that Danvers did intend the assembly of servants as a "show of force" more than a welcoming committee.

Inside **Manderley**, Maxim and the narrator greet Maxim's prized cocker spaniels, Jasper and his old, blind mother. The narrator, comforted by the sight of the dogs, looks around the library. There is an old, lilac smell in the air, and the room is full of dust.

The introduction of Jasper is one of the only moments of warmth and comfort in the first part of the novel—everything feels foreign and sinister to the narrator except for the dog.

The narrator thinks of everything that has happened to her lately. Several months have passed since her time in Monte Carlo—in that time, she's been married to Maxim, and honeymooned through France and Italy. Maxim has been in joyous spirits lately, and proven himself to be more youthful and energetic than the narrator had thought.

The narrator confirms that a short amount of time has passed since the events of the previous chapter, and she and Maxim have finally been married. Their relationship as a whole has been very fast-paced—they've only known one another for 3 months—but it's also this fact that allows Maxim to remain so mysterious to the narrator even as her husband.

The narrator looks around **Manderley**, her new home. Surveying her library, she can't believe that she's standing inside the building that she'd glimpsed on cards as a child. Suddenly, Frith opens the door and tells her that Mrs. Danvers has asked her to come to her new room. The narrator goes to join Mrs. Danvers. Maxim tells her to "make friends."

The narrator feels small and child-like in her new home, and this impression is confirmed by her memories of looking at Manderley on cards. Furthermore, Maxim's suggestion that the narrator "make friends" is belittling; it's the kind of thing a father would say to a young daughter.

Frith leads the narrator to her new bedroom. The narrator finds herself feeling nervous—she says that the house is "very big," then realizes she's sounding childish. They arrive in the bedroom, where Frith leaves the narrator with Mrs. Danvers. Danvers is very quiet and severe-looking. The narrator smiles, and Danvers doesn't smile in return. Mrs. Danvers tells the narrator she's there to carry out her orders at all times. She explains that this bedroom is intended for the narrator, though previously no one used it at all.

The narrator's mistake is that she's trying to interact with Mrs. Danvers as she'd interact with a friend or a casual acquaintance. Mrs. Danvers lives in a world of rules and formalities, and seems to scorn the narrator's weakness in failing to assert her superior social rank. Danvers becomes more and more of an antagonistic figure—but usually without saying or doing anything that seems outright antagonistic.

The narrator asks Mrs. Danvers if she's been at **Manderley** for long. Danvers explains that she's been at Manderley ever since the first Mrs. de Winter was married. As Danvers speaks of Mrs. de Winter, the narrator notes that she seems exhilarated and excited for the first time. Danvers stares at the narrator with pity and scorn. Feeling uncomfortable, the narrator tells Danvers that she hopes they'll become friends. She adds that her new, wealthy life is foreign to her, and Danvers's expression grows even more scornful. Danvers tells the narrator that she'll soon begin planning parties for the narrator, and adds that she's decorated the house according to the first Mrs. de Winter's wishes. Danvers tells the narrator that the first Mrs. de Winter's bedroom is located on the other side of the house.

Everything that the narrator thinks *she sees in Maxim, she sees clearly in Mrs. Danvers. Mrs. Danvers is still openly devoted to Rebecca, and she also obviously looks down on the narrator because of the narrator's inferior social status. This is strange, since Mrs. Danvers herself is only as servant (albeit a very important one). It's as if Danvers (like Van Hopper) despises the narrator for pretending to be someone she's not: a noblewoman. Ironically, Danvers's greater experience and knowledge of Manderley (and of Rebecca) makes her more powerful than the narrator. In the closed world of Manderley, Danvers "outranks" the narrator.*

Suddenly, Maxim enters the narrator's bedroom. Cheerfully, he praises the décor of the room, and notes that it was wasted in years past, when it was only a guest room. Mrs. Danvers leaves, bowing to Maxim. Maxim asks the narrator how she's gotten along with Danvers, and she admits that Danvers seemed "a little bit stiff." Maxim tells the narrator that she must try to get along with Danvers, since she's an excellent servant. Maxim adds that Mrs. Danvers never bullies him, since he, of course, has the power to fire her.

The narrator is seemingly terrified of Mrs. Danvers, but she lies to Maxim and just says that she finds her "stiff." The narrator is clearly still uncomfortable around Maxim, and wants to seem braver and less "stiff" herself than she actually is. Maxim's statement again seems condescending and even menacing—as if he knows that Danvers will probably bully the narrator, but he doesn't mind as long as he himself remains immune and powerful.

In the evening, Alice, a maid, dresses the narrator for dinner. The narrator wears an old dress that Mrs. Van Hopper gave her months ago. At dinner, the narrator laughs with Maxim, happy that the other servants don't stare her down, as Mrs. Danvers did. Yet after dinner, as the narrator sits by the fire with Maxim, she becomes conscious that she's sitting in Rebecca's chair, drinking from the cups that Rebecca used to use, etc.

The narrator has been trying to forget about Maxim's last wife, but now that she's at Manderley she finds that this is nearly impossible. Manderley itself is a physical reminder of Rebecca's presence: although Rebecca herself is dead, she lives on in the objects and details constantly surrounding the narrator in her new environment.

CHAPTER 8

The narrator notices right away that life at **Manderley** is carefully planned and scheduled. Maxim gets up from his bed (the couple sleeps in separate beds, in either the same or adjoining bedrooms, it would appear) early every day—when the narrator comes downstairs, she finds Maxim already finishing breakfast. On her first morning at Manderley, Maxim tells the narrator that his grandmother and his sister, Beatrice, will want to visit them immediately.

Du Maurier conveys the narrator's awkwardness and lack of comfort at Manderley: she sleeps in too late, and seems unaware of the schedule for the coming weeks. It's also worth noting that du Maurier glosses over any sexual details in her novel: it appears that Maxim and Rebecca sleep in different beds in the same room, but even this only hinted at. This was a common convention for novels of the period—it would be a long time before censorship codes allowed people to write about sex, or even the vague implication of sex.

The narrator eats breakfast by herself, until it's past 10 o'clock. She apologizes to Frith for eating so slowly, and notices that he seems surprised by her. The narrator realizes that she lacks poise and sophistication, since she wasn't raised in a wealthy household. She goes to the library, which she finds extremely cold. When she asks Frith to light the hearth in the library, he explains that the first Mrs. de Winter usually didn't light the fire in the morning, but says that from now on it will be lit early. The narrator, reluctant to change the routine, tells Frith that there's no need to warm the library after all.

At every turn, the narrator finds herself being compared to her predecessor. There's no particular reason why Frith has to mention that Rebecca used to light the fire later in the day—the only purpose of such an explanation, it would seem, is to remind the narrator that she's out of place. Plainly, the servants of Manderley are still devoted to the "first Mrs. De Winter," and the narrator is so uncomfortable that she doesn't want to challenge the authority of Rebecca—or even the memory of Rebecca.

In the "morning-room" of the house, the narrator sits with her two dogs. She realizes that even these animals knew what time the library was heated—she's clueless in her new home. She notices a writing table in the morning-room, and is surprised to see a notebook on which someone has written a list of planning subjects, such as "addresses," "menus," etc. She notices that the handwriting is Rebecca's.

Du Maurier uses some rhetorical tricks to convey a sense of claustrophobic "closeness." The narrator keeps finding small symbols of Rebecca's presence; her handwriting, her dogs, her fireplace, etc. It's as Rebecca is standing right next to the narrator at all times.

The telephone rings, and the narrator answers it. A low voice asks for "Mrs. de Winter," and the narrator replies that Mrs. de Winter has been dead for more than a year. Then, the narrator realizes that the voice belongs to Mrs. Danvers—she's speaking to Mrs. Danvers on a houseline. Danvers explains that she wants to know if the narrator approves of the menus for the day. The narrator replies that she has no preference about the food for the day.

Here, du Maurier makes the narrator's unease with her new circumstances hilariously plain: the narrator actually admits *that she's not the "true" Lady de Winter. It's still unclear if Danvers is torturing the narrator deliberately, or if the narrator's discomfort is all in her head.*

The narrator hangs up the phone and stares at Rebecca's notebook. Rebecca kept herself busy for years by attending to the affairs of **Manderley**: the food, the scheduling, etc. Slowly, the narrator takes a pen and writes a letter to Mrs. Van Hopper, explaining that everything is well with her. As she writes, she thinks that she is an "indifferent pupil taught in a second-rate school."

It's poignant that the narrator has no one to communicate with from the outside world except for Van Hopper—a woman who, toward the end of their time together, despised and mocked the narrator.

CHAPTER 9

At noon, the narrator hears the sound of a car pulling up to **Manderley**. She feels a sudden rush of nervousness—she's not prepared to talk to guests today. The narrator rushes back to her bedroom, trying to find her way back through the enormous house. She walks to an unfamiliar wing of the house and tries to open a door. Suddenly, she sees Mrs. Danvers, who seems vaguely angry. The narrator explains that she was trying to find her way back to her bedroom—Danvers explains that she's on the wrong side of the house, the west wing. Danvers tells the narrator that she'd be happy to show her the rooms of the west wing, but the narrator shyly says that there's no need for her to see these rooms.

Although Mrs. Danvers is only a servant, she conducts herself as if she's the master of the house—she seems to be ready to punish the narrator for trespassing into a new wing of the house. It's important to understand that Mrs. Danvers never actually threatens the narrator in any way—she maintains power over the narrator using implications and an affect of veiled menace. One consequence of this is that we can't yet be 100% sure if Danvers is actually hostile to the narrator or not: because of the novel's point of view, it often seems that the narrator is only imagining things.

Mrs. Danvers leads the narrator back to her room, and tells her that Major Giles and Beatrice Lacy—Maxim's sister and brother-in-law—are waiting for her downstairs, along with Frank Crawley, the **Manderley** "agent" and estate manager. The narrator dresses quickly, then comes downstairs to find Maxim waiting with Beatrice and her husband. Beatrice greets the narrator and tells Maxim that she isn't at all what she expected. This provokes laughter, which makes the narrator uncomfortable.

From the beginning of her meeting with the guests, the narrator feels alien to them. Beatrice—on paper, someone with whom the narrator could be good friends—treats the narrator like an object, to be observed and critiqued disrespectfully.

Giles and Beatrice tease Maxim about his health—they suggest that he's lost weight lately, probably because of marrying the narrator. The narrator notices that Maxim is trying not to seem angry. Giles and Beatrice tell the narrator that she'll need to come to stay with them and go hunting. The narrator confesses that she's never been hunting. Out of the blue, Beatrice asks the narrator if she loves Maxim. Before the narrator can answer, Beatrice laughs and says that she and her brother loved each other dearly, even if they appear to bicker constantly. Beatrice tells the narrator that she'd expected Maxim's new wife to be a social butterfly. The narrator isn't sure if Beatrice means this as a compliment or an insult. But she thinks that she likes Beatrice—she's calm and open, unlike Mrs. Danvers.

It's clear that Beatrice has insulted her brother, but du Maurier doesn't explain exactly why he's offended. In part, Maxim seems annoyed with Beatrice for implying that Maxim married again to regain his youth. In another sense, Beatrice's joke suggests that the narrator is a "medicine" for Maxim—a way for him to stave off the ills of middle age. Both of these seem like distinct possibilities—for all we know, Maxim did *marry the narrator for exactly these reasons. This helps explain why the narrator starts to like Beatrice: even if she's rude and sometimes condescending, she at least says exactly what she's thinking. After Mrs. Danvers's veiled threats, this is a massive relief.*

Beatrice and the narrator take a walk around **Manderley**. Beatrice asks the narrator how she's been getting along with Mrs. Danvers. The narrator admits that she's a little frightened of her servant, and Beatrice nods—Danvers is extremely jealous, she says, and she adored Rebecca. Beatrice also asks the narrator about her interests, and the narrator only says that she enjoys sketching.

The narrator is more open with Beatrice than with Maxim, as evidence by the way she talks about Mrs. Danvers. While the narrator isn't 100% honest with either of them, at least she admits to Beatrice that she's afraid of Danvers. As usual, we learn almost nothing about the narrator's life and identity outside of the events of the book—she still seems like a child or a blank, anonymous figure, entirely defined by her relationship to her husband and her current surroundings.

The narrator and Beatrice meet up with Giles and Maxim outside on a lawn. Maxim invites Giles, Beatrice, and the narrator to come with him to see the east wing of the house. It occurs to the narrator that Beatrice has lived at **Manderley** for the majority of her life—she played here as a small child. Giles says that the renovations to the east wing of the house are splendid, and he reminisces about staying in the east wing with Beatrice years ago.

Beatrice, like Maxim, is completely at home at Manderley. Thus, the narrator is reminded once again that she's a fish out of water in her new home: everyone around her takes Manderley for granted, while she's still feeling overwhelmed by it and trying to get a handle on her new home.

Giles and Beatrice say goodbye, inviting the narrator to visit them anytime. As Beatrice goes, she apologizes to the narrator for asking her unusual questions, and adds, "You are so different from Rebecca."

One could interpret Beatrice's parting words in many different ways. But perhaps their most important implication is that the narrator isn't just a replacement for Maxim's last wife: she's her own woman, and shouldn't be afraid to assert herself as such.

CHAPTER 10

The narrator notices that Maxim seems tired after hosting his sister. To relax, he, the narrator, and Jasper the dog go for a walk in the woods, to an area of **Manderley** called the Happy Valley. As they walk, the narrator can't help but think about Beatrice. Beatrice and Maxim seem barely to know one another—the narrator can't wrap her head around why Maxim was so irritated with Beatrice that afternoon.

The narrator gets a surprising hint that Maxim isn't any more comfortable around his guests than the narrator is. This is an important moment, because it shows that the narrator's peers aren't always as confident and self-assured as she'd believed.

As Maxim and the narrator walk around the grounds, Jasper bounds away from them, and the narrator goes chasing after him. She then comes upon a middle-aged man, who's clearly mentally challenged. The man is digging a ditch. The narrator greets him and asks him for a piece of string—something to use as a leash for the dog. The man doesn't respond. The narrator walks ahead to a small cottage, but doesn't find any string inside. She notices that the cottage is filthy—clearly nobody has been inside in years. When she emerges, the man says, "She don't go in there now," and adds that "she" is "gone in the sea."

We're meant to automatically assume that the "she" the mentally challenged man refers to is Rebecca. It's telling that we can make this leap so easily: Rebecca's presence dominates life at Manderley to the point where even a single reference to a vague "she" must *mean Rebecca.*

The narrator and Jasper walk back to Maxim. Maxim tells the narrator that the man is named Ben. Maxim also noticed that the narrator entered the cottage. Feeling uncomfortable, the narrator bursts out that she'll "never go near the bloody place" again. Maxim is surprised by the narrator's sudden outburst. He says that they should never have come back to **Manderley**. Together, they walk back to the house. The narrator begins to weep.

Here again, we see the narrator and Maxim interacting with each other through allusions and implications instead of saying exactly what's on their minds. Evidently, the narrator believes that Maxim wants her to keep away from Rebecca's old rooms—although Maxim himself hasn't said this, Mrs. Danvers at least has implied as much. The tragedy of this scene (which will get more obvious as the book goes on) is that much of the narrator's anxiety about displeasing her husband is in her own head.

The next day, the narrator begins to fall into the rhythm of life at **Manderley**. She has tea with Maxim in the afternoon. The weather is cold and grey. The narrator notices that Manderley is very close to the sea, though it's hard to see or hear the sea from the house itself.

After the intense outburst of emotion of the previous section, the narrator feels a bit of relief and begins to make more progress in fitting in at Manderley. The sea, like Rebecca's presence at Manderley, is something ubiquitous and all-encompassing, but also hidden and just out of reach.

CHAPTER 11

The narrator learns more about Rebecca in the coming weeks. The servants ask the narrator if she'll be hosting many guests, and when the narrator replies that she's unsure, they often note that Rebecca was "so very popular." The narrator also becomes conscious that there's now tension between herself and Maxim due to her outburst about the cottage. He's always polite with her, but there's a distance between them now.

The "wall" between Maxim and the narrator is getting wider due to their argument about Rebecca. Paradoxically, the narrator is becoming more comfortable with her life at Manderley at the same time, even if she still resents the servants for being loyal to Rebecca.

One day, the narrator pays a visit to the wife of the local bishop. She says that she's here to pay her respects and greet her new neighbors. Together, she and the bishop's wife talk about hosting parties in the near future. The bishop's wife remembers the wonderful parties organized by Rebecca, and the narrator blurts out, "Rebecca must have been a wonderful person." When the narrator says this, she feels instantly relieved. She's been thinking about Rebecca for so long that saying her name out-loud is a massive relief.

In this section, we learn about Rebecca's power over her community: due to the parties she hosted every year, Rebecca was popular and well liked by everyone—not just those at Manderley. In other words, Rebecca's influence is even greater than we'd thought. The fact that it's a relief simply to talk about Rebecca suggests that the narrator's anxiety stems from her attempts to ignore or forget Rebecca, rather than discuss her with Maxim head-on.

The narrator gets up to leave. The bishop's wife tells the narrator to pass on her respects to Maxim, and to ask him to reorganize a ball that Rebecca used to host at **Manderley**. For the rest of the day, the narrator finds herself obligated to pay visits to the houses in the area. She quickly becomes exasperated with these visits, however—she finds them cloying and insincere, since most of the people only want to know when the next party at Manderley will be. Sometimes, the guests bring up Rebecca, and sometimes they imply her presence, as if she's still alive and living in Manderley.

As the narrator gets more comfortable with Manderley, she finds that there's a "script" she must follow at all times. As part of this script, she has to visit houses in the area and pretend to be polite and gracious to her neighbors. Life at Manderley consists almost entirely of rules for politeness and good manners—rules which, as we've seen with Mrs. Danvers, usually just serve to conceal people's true feelings of contempt or dislike.

At the end of the day, the narrator drives back to **Manderley** and finds Frank Crawley waiting there. He greets the narrator, and the narrator thinks that she finds him very formal. The narrator asks Frank about the Manderley ball, and he explains that this ball was an annual affair, attended by hundreds of people from London and the country. The narrator confesses that she wouldn't be good at planning a ball.

Although Frank Crawley is formal and stiff around the narrator, he at least gives her some information about the past. Since the narrator has been uninformed about Rebecca for so long, any straightforward information comes as a big relief.

The narrator asks Frank about Ben, the mentally challenged man who was working on the **Manderley** grounds. The narrator mentions the cottage that she entered. She explains that inside, it's dirty and dusty—clearly no one enters it anymore. Frank seems uncomfortable discussing the cottage—eventually, the narrator asks, point-blank, if the cottage is full of Rebecca's things. Frank says that it is.

Everyone at Manderley knows about Rebecca, and yet no one seems particularly willing to talk about her. This is the source of Rebecca's power over the narrator: the narrator feels Rebecca's influence everywhere, and this influence is all the more intimidating because it's almost never discussed explicitly.

The narrator, sensing that Frank is going to be honest with her, asks Frank how Rebecca died. He explains that she was sailing on the ocean when her **boat** capsized and sank—Rebecca must have drowned while trying to swim back. It took two months for a body to be found. She asks Frank how the police were able to identify the body, then immediately feels ashamed for asking such a gruesome question. She apologizes for her line of questioning.

So far, the narrator has been forced to accept that Rebecca was a hugely important person to her husband, while also accepting that she can never ask Maxim about her. The line of questioning that the narrator pursues with Frank proves how desperate she's been for information about Rebecca ever since meeting Maxim.

The narrator tries to explain herself to Frank. She tells him that everyone in her new life compares her to Rebecca. She admits that she's beginning to feel that she should never have married Maxim. Frank assures her that she's done Maxim a "great good" by marrying him. He adds that while the narrator doesn't come from a noble background, she's kind and sincere—far more valuable qualities. The narrator is surprised with Frank—at first, she'd thought him a quiet, trivial man. She tells Frank that she's glad they're friends now.

Frank phrases his response to the narrator oddly—instead of telling her that she didn't make a mistake, he says that the narrator has been good for Maxim. This is reminiscent of Beatrice's remarks about the narrator being good for Maxim's health: even the narrator's friends seem to think of her as an object, a remedy for Maxim's depression. However, Frank also proves himself to be a kind, genuine man—a rarity in this novel.

The narrator and Frank walk back to the front of **Manderley**. The narrator asks Frank if Rebecca was beautiful, and he admits that she was extremely beautiful.

The narrator's questions prove that she still isn't over her insecurity: she's still competing with Rebecca for Maxim's affections.

CHAPTER 12

The narrator sees very little of Mrs. Danvers in the coming days, and she senses that Danvers is making herself scarce. The narrator remembers what Beatrice said—that Danvers adored Rebecca—and finds herself feeling sorry for Mrs. Danvers: she's devoted to a woman who's no longer alive. The narrator finds that the only person in the house who doesn't look down on her is a maid named Clarice, who's too young to remember Rebecca.

As time goes on, the narrator begins to be a little less afraid of Mrs. Danvers. There's something pathetic, she realizes, about being devoted to a dead woman. And yet, ironically, the narrator obsesses over Rebecca almost as often as Danvers does. The only person at Manderley completely free of Rebecca's influence seems to be Clarice.

The narrator receives a wedding present from Beatrice—a large multi-volume text called *A History of Painting*. There's a note with the book, "I hope this is the sort of thing you like." The narrator finds it touching and slightly pathetic that Beatrice went to so much trouble to find her a gift that she'd like. While she's looking over the books, the narrator accidentally breaks a small china cupid on a nearby table. Embarrassed, she takes an envelope and sweeps the pieces into it, then hides the envelope in a bookshelf.

The narrator's behavior is at its most childish in this scene—instead of taking responsibility for her actions, she tries to conceal them altogether. This suggests that the narrator continues to think of herself as a guest in Manderley, when, in reality, everything in Manderley now belongs to her, meaning that she can do whatever she wants with it.

The next day, Frith asks to speak to Maxim. Frith reveals that there's been a problem with Robert, a servant in the house. Mr. Danvers has accused Robert of stealing a valuable ornament from the morning-room, and Robert has denied this. As the narrator listens to Frith and Maxim speak, she realizes that *she* was responsible for breaking the ornament in question—a small china cupid. After Frith leaves, the narrator admits to Maxim that she broke the cupid. She's very embarrassed, but Maxim insists that she go tell Mrs. Danvers what became of the ornament. The narrator refuses, and Maxim points out that she seems afraid of Mrs. Danvers. Impatiently, he goes to speak with Mrs. Danvers himself.

The narrator's behavior is utterly immature in this scene—she's like a sheepish schoolgirl, admitting she's done wrong. By the same token, Maxim's behavior seems particularly paternalistic here, as he scolds his wife as if she were his daughter. While we can fault Maxim for belittling his wife, the broader point is that he doesn't understand the narrator's relationship to Mrs. Danvers: he's so used to Mrs. Danvers that he doesn't understand why she'd be intimidating for a new resident of the manor.

A short while later, Maxim and Mrs. Danvers come back to where the narrator is sitting. Mrs. Danvers, who is blank-faced as ever, tells the narrator that she should tell her directly when she's broken something, so as to avoid any misunderstandings. Maxim, amused by the incident, asks the narrator what became of the pieces—she admits that she scooped them into an envelope. Maxim tells her to send the pieces to a shop in London where the cupid might be repaired. When Danvers leaves the room, Maxim asks the narrator, almost angrily, why she's so afraid of Danvers.

In this scene, it's almost amusing how clearly Mrs. Danvers is suppressing her real emotions. Danvers calmly tells the narrator to be upfront with her in the future, but in reality, she's seething with anger and contempt for the current Lady de Winter—a poor substitute, she believes, for Rebecca.

The narrator tells Maxim that her closest friend at **Manderley** is the servant girl, Clarice. Maxim, who's known Clarice as his servant for years, remembers Clarice's mother, an old, sloppy woman who had 9 young children. The narrator realizes why Clarice didn't sneer at her underclothes—Clarice herself was brought up in a poorer environment.

The narrator and Clarice are kindred spirits because they're both perpetually out of place at Manderley. In no small part, this is because they remember a time when they didn't *live at Manderley—when their lives were harder but also less mysterious.*

The narrator goes on to tell Maxim that she's been frustrated in her new lifestyle. Maxim, she explains, is used to a life of visits, parties, and elaborate lunches—but she is not. She suggests that Maxim married her for exactly this reason—she's quiet and calm, meaning that there wouldn't be any idle gossip about her reputation. Maxim looks angry, and demands to know who the narrator has been talking to. The narrator, feeling afraid, says that she hasn't been talking to anybody, and apologizes to her husband. Maxim seems to forgive the narrator.—he kisses her forehead and calls her "lamb."

The narrator shows a bit more maturity here, telling Maxim exactly—or almost exactly—what's been on her mind. Frustratingly, Maxim seems not to understand the source of the narrator's dissatisfaction: while he grasps that she's out of her element at Manderley, he seems to think that it's only a matter of time before she adjusts to her new life. He also assumes that this is a problem she must deal with on her own, while he just has to "forgive" her for being unhappy. He also continues to belittle and infantilize her, even calling her "lamb."

The narrator apologizes to Maxim once again for breaking the china cupid. She asks him if it was valuable, and where it came from. Maxim claims not to remember, but guesses that it was a wedding present, since "Rebecca knew a lot about china." The narrator is shocked to hear Maxim pronounce his dead wife's name.

Maxim speaking Rebecca's name in the narrator's presence seems to show the couple's growing closeness. On the other hand, this might also be another sign that much of the narrator's anxiety is in her own head. She has built up a fear and awe of Rebecca, partly out of the rumors she heard about Maxim before their marriage (such as that he never utters his wife's name), but it's unclear how much the narrator's ideas correspond to reality, especially because Maxim now seems so casual about mentioning Rebecca.

CHAPTER 13

In June, Maxim travels to London to attend a public dinner. For two days, the narrator is on her own. As she watches Maxim drive away in his car, she senses that she'll never see him again—perhaps he'll have some horrible accident. Later in the day, she receives a telephone message from the dinner club in London: Maxim has arrived safely. This calms the narrator.

Although the narrator is sometimes angry with Maxim for being oblivious to her emotions, she's still extremely attached to him. Not coincidentally, her behavior in this scene resembles that of a young child saying goodbye to her parents for a weekend.

The narrator proceeds with her day. Slowly, she realizes that she's feeling excited for the first time since she arrived at **Manderley**: she has a childish desire to go exploring. With Jasper, she goes running through an area of the grounds called the Happy Valley, where there are beautiful flowers everywhere. As the narrator joyfully inspects the flowers and foliage, she realizes that, if Maxim were there, she'd be somber and meek.

This is an important step in the narrator's coming-of-age—she's beginning to guide her own way through the manor house, instead of allowing herself to be pushed and scheduled by Maxim or Mrs. Danvers. It's also telling that the narrator is happier without *Maxim around, even though she seems to base her entire happiness around him—when he's actually present, she feels that she must perform in front of him, and live up to an impossible ideal.*

The narrator walks through the Happy Valley until she approaches the sea. There is a harbor with a buoy floating nearby. She notices that "Je Reviens" (which means "I come back" in French) is written on the buoy. This reminds the narrator of Rebecca's **boat**—a boat which did *not* come back on the day she drowned.

The name of the boat in the harbor is ironic: although Rebecca's boat doesn't come back, Rebecca herself "returns" to Manderley after her death, since her influence can be felt everywhere. The name also has a more menacing undertone to it—as if Rebecca herself is promising the narrator that she will "come back."

Jasper begins to bark, and he runs toward the cottage nearby. As the narrator approaches the cottage, she notices Ben, who's hiding behind a wall. Ben sheepishly emerges, and the narrator notices that Ben is holding a fishing line in his hand. The narrator sternly tells Ben not to take other people's things, assuming that he's keeping the line for himself. She cautions him that Maxim doesn't like people going inside the cottage. Ben begins to cry, and insists that he doesn't want to be sent to an asylum. The narrator, feeling guilty for being so harsh, assures Ben that he won't be punished.

As the narrator becomes a little more comfortable with her life at Manderley, she begins to assume more of a role of authority, and to exercise her control over the people she has technically "outranked" this whole time. For now, however, she is still a very reluctant leader, and immediately expresses regret for bossing around Ben.

Ben tells the narrator, "you're not like the other one." He explains that "the other one" threatened to throw him in the asylum if he explored the cottage. The narrator slowly tells Ben that no one will throw him in an institution. The narrator walks away from the cottage, pitying Ben—surely he's been living in fear for years, frightened that Rebecca would send him away.

Once again, Ben talks about Rebecca without ever mentioning her name. It's suggested that Rebecca was cruel to Ben, threatening to send him away if he was disobedient. This is one of the first hints that Rebecca wasn't as lovely a person as the other characters have made her out to be—a hint that the narrator doesn't seem to catch.

As the narrator walks back to the house, she notices an unfamiliar car parked off the road. Suddenly, she notices that one of the windows of the west wing has been opened—there's a man staring down at her. When the man notices the narrator staring back, a hand shuts the window immediately. The narrator recognizes this as Mrs. Danvers's hand (the black sleeve is a dead giveaway).

In this rather eerie scene du Maurier builds the tone of suspense and menace. On another level, however, we also see the narrator acting like the owner of Manderley, rather than a guest. When she sees a strange man at the window, her first thought isn't, "Someone I haven't met yet," but rather, "An intruder."

When the narrator enters the house, she notices that a few things have been moved or rearranged: her knitting has been placed on a table, and someone has been sitting in her usual divan. She hears Mrs. Danvers's voice saying, "If she has gone to the library you will be able to go through the hall without her seeing you." Feeling a little mischievous, the narrator goes to the drawing room and stands near the door, in the hopes of catching the "intruder." Sure enough, a man, noticing Jasper barking, walks into the drawing room, and is startled to see the narrator standing there.

The narrator proves that she has a good eye for details, and that she's been at Manderley for long enough to know where small objects are kept. For the first time, she acquires evidence that Mrs. Danvers isn't just a severe but obedient servant. She's clearly scheming with the intruder to make sure that the intruder isn't seen—clearly working against the narrator, but also possibly against Maxim himself.

The mysterious man apologizes to the narrator, and explains that he's come to see "old Danny." He pets Jasper, and explains that he's known the dog for years and years. Without introducing himself, he asks the narrator about "old Max"—but nobody calls Maxim "Max," the narrator thinks.

Eerily, the intruder turns out to be perfectly familiar with Manderley—more at home, seemingly, than the narrator is. The intruder (still anonymous) is also immediately associated with Rebecca, as both call Maxim by the same nickname.

Mrs. Danvers enters the room, and the narrator senses that Danvers despises her. The man asks Danvers to introduce him to the narrator—Danvers explains that the man is Mr. Favell, but she doesn't explain who this is. Favell says that he should be going. He adds that he's parked his car in a remote part of **Manderley**, so as not to "disturb" the narrator. The narrator sees through this lie immediately: Favell didn't want to be seen while he was at Manderley. Before he leaves, he asks the narrator not to mention his visit to Maxim—he explains that Maxim isn't "fond of me." The narrator doesn't say that she'll keep his secret, but she also doesn't say that she won't.

Although Mr. Favell is the intruder in this situation, he doesn't betray any signs of discomfort or sheepishness. This suggests that the narrator isn't being as harsh with him as she could be—she's just been too hard on Ben, and probably doesn't want to make the same mistake again. Even if the narrator doesn't assert her status as the mistress of Manderley, she does at least finally have some power and agency of her own—in the form of information that Favell and Danvers want to be kept secret.

After Favell is gone, the narrator wonders who he could be: he's addressed Maxim as Max, something only Rebecca did, as far as the narrator can tell. It's possible that Favell is some kind of thief or con-man, and Mrs. Danvers is his accomplice. As the narrator considers these possibilities, her heart begins to beat in a "queer excited way."

Ironically, the frightening possibility that Mrs. Danvers is a traitor is exciting to the narrator. In part, this is because the narrator has been unsure about her relationship with Danvers for a long time now—it would be almost reassuring to know to a certainty that she's a villain.

CHAPTER 14

Shortly after Favell's departure, the narrator walks to the west wing, to find the window from which she first laid eyes on Favell. When she finds the proper room, she's surprised to find that it's fully furnished, and nothing is covered up—unlike the layout of the room when she first saw it. She slowly realizes that she is trembling, and can barely stand.

This scene is terrifying in a more psychologically disturbing way—the room looks fresh, as if Rebecca herself is still there living in it. The power of her memory only seems to be growing stronger, and even to be physically affecting the house.

The narrator surveys the room more closely. There are dressing gowns in the wardrobe, which emit a stale, sickly sweet smell. Suddenly, Mrs. Danvers walks in. The narrator notices that she's smiling in a cloying, fake way. Danvers tells the narrator that the room belonged to Rebecca. She points out Rebecca's old dressing gown, which is too big for the narrator, since Rebecca was far taller than she.

It seems clear that Mrs. Danvers is the one who has been keeping Rebecca's room clean and furnished. This is frightening on a different level—Danvers not only feels that the narrator is an inferior usurper to Rebecca's place, but she also tries to keep Rebecca "alive" in a way that seems both pitiable and disturbing.

Mrs. Danvers, still smiling, shows the narrator more of Rebecca's clothes, reminiscing about serving her in the old days. Then, unexpectedly, Danvers tells the narrator that Rebecca was "battered to bits" by the waves and rocks: she lost both of her arms. Danvers has always blamed herself for the accident, she explains: because Danvers showed up late at **Manderley** that evening (she was coming from Kerrith), Rebecca went out to entertain herself. Had Danvers been on time, Rebecca would never have left.

Mrs. Danvers thinks about Rebecca so often that she seems strangely desensitized to the gruesomeness of Rebecca's death. But as intimidating and cruel as Mrs. Danvers can be, there's also something pathetic about her. It's unclear just what Rebecca herself may have thought of Danvers, but Danvers has based her whole life around Rebecca, and now that devotion has led to a constant (and unnecessary) sense of guilt for Danvers.

Mrs. Danvers continues talking about Rebecca as the narrator grows more and more uncomfortable. She explains that Maxim doesn't use the west rooms of the house because it's easy to hear the sound of the sea from these locations—and the sound reminds him of his wife's death. Mrs. Danvers rises and asks the narrator, "Do you think the dead watch the living?" The narrator replies that she isn't sure, and Mrs. Danvers suggests that sometimes, Rebecca is watching the narrator and Maxim. With these words, Mrs. Danvers leaves the room.

Maxim doesn't want to remember his dead wife—as symbolized by his attempts to drown out the noise of the sea. And yet his attempts have been in vain: as Danvers notes here, Rebecca seems to still be alive. Even if Rebecca herself isn't alive, her memory lives on in Manderley itself, and in the delusions of servants like Mrs. Danvers (who clearly wants *Rebecca to come back to life).*

CHAPTER 15

The next day, Maxim is scheduled to return in the late evening. In the morning, the narrator receives a call from Beatrice. Over the phone, Beatrice asks the narrator if she'd like to meet Maxim's grandmother that afternoon. When the narrator agrees, Beatrice says she'll pick up the narrator from **Manderley** around 3:30 pm.

As the mistress of a large manor house, the narrator is expected to pay visits to her neighbors and family. And yet it's a mark of the rapidness of her marriage to Maxim that the narrator still hasn't met Maxim's own grandmother.

At 3:30, Beatrice arrives at **Manderley**. She drives the narrator to see "Gran," noting in the car that the narrator looks thin and unhealthy, but that she'll probably bear Maxim a child soon enough. Beatrice expresses her hope that the narrator isn't doing anything to "prevent" Maxim from producing an heir. A little shocked, the narrator insists that she isn't.

Whenever the other characters talk about the narrator in relation to Maxim, there's an implication that the narrator is a tool or an object for Maxim—here, for example, she's treated as a way for Maxim to produce a male heir, presumably a important task for an old, aristocratic family.

In the car, the narrator asks Beatrice if she's ever heard of Jack Favell, and explains that he came to **Manderley** yesterday. Beatrice thinks she's heard the name before, and guesses that Jack was Rebecca's cousin. The narrator notices that Beatrice seems reserved and clipped while talking about Favell.

Even Beatrice, who had seemed to be so outspoken and straightforward, is now clearly hiding something about Favell, and keeping more secrets from the narrator—just like her brother.

Beatrice and the narrator arrive at the house of Beatrice and Maxim's mother. Inside, the narrator finds a house full of dried plants and old-fashioned furniture. Beatrice explains that her "Gran" is in poor health—she's 86 years old. In a bedroom, Beatrice introduces the narrator to Gran. Gran is quiet and soft-voiced, and she seems more interested in talking to Beatrice about Beatrice's child, Roger, who's about to go off to Oxford.

Gran is the embodiment of tradition and convention at Manderley: for her entire life, she's been the head of a big manor house. But here, du Maurier describes Gran in macabre, almost grotesque terms, as if to suggest the decline and decay of the English aristocracy (a theme that du Maurier will reinforce at the very end of the book).

Beatrice tells Gran that the narrator is a talented artist, and the narrator modestly denies this. As the narrator talks with Gran, she notices the family resemblance between Gran and Maxim. Gran asks repeatedly where Maxim is, and Beatrice gently reminds her that Maxim has gone to London. Gran asks the narrator if she lives at **Manderley**. Beatrice impatiently reminds Gran that the narrator is Maxim's wife. Gran seems not to understand this—she asks where Rebecca is. Beatrice, sensing that their visit is going downhill quickly, tells the narrator that it's time for them to leave.

In addition to representing the long lineage of the English aristocracy, Gran symbolizes the stranglehold that Rebecca maintains over the narrator's life. Although Gran has forgotten almost everything else, she remembers who Rebecca was, and knows nothing at all about the narrator herself.

Outside Gran's house, Beatrice apologizes profusely to the narrator for Gran's behavior, but the narrator insists that there's no problem. Gran is very old, the narrator admits, meaning that she's surely forgotten Rebecca's death. Beatrice remembers that Gran was very fond of Rebecca, and lost her mind after Rebecca's death. Beatrice adds that Rebecca was attractive to everyone: men, women, children, and dogs.

In a way, Gran is a far more accurate reflection of the way the characters think than Beatrice or the narrator gives her credit for. Like Maxim and Danvers, Gran seems to have forgotten that Rebecca died—as far as she's concerned, Rebecca is still the real *mistress of Manderley.*

As Beatrice and the narrator drive back to **Manderley**, the narrator imagines Gran as a younger woman, raising Maxim when he was a small boy. As the car approaches Manderley, the narrator is pleased to see that Maxim has returned: his car is parked in its usual place.

The narrator has an almost involuntary habit of fantasizing about the distant past—here, for example, one gets the sense that her subconscious mind is making up daydreams, even though she'd prefer not to think about Gran any further.

The narrator thanks Beatrice and says goodbye. As she walks into **Manderley**, she hears Maxim arguing with Mrs. Danvers, saying, "his car was seen here yesterday afternoon." When the narrator finds Maxim, he's alone (Mrs. Danvers has walked out), but clearly very angry. The narrator greets Maxim warmly, expecting him to mention the incident with Jack Favell. But Maxim doesn't bring up Favell at all—he only says that he's had a long drive back from London.

The narrator thinks that talking about Jack Favell with Maxim will establish trust and intimacy between them, yet Maxim doesn't bring up Favell at all, suggesting that he's still reluctant to talk about his past with the narrator, and doesn't trust her with his secrets—yet another way of belittling her, in a way. It's also unclear just how Maxim finds out about Favell's visit, since the narrator doesn't tell him. It could be one of the servants, or perhaps Beatrice passing on the narrator's information.

CHAPTER 16

The narrator remembers the Sunday when the idea of a "fancy dress ball" was first proposed. Maxim and the narrator are entertaining a number of unexpected guests for lunch, including Frank Crawley and several of Maxim's friends. One of the guests is Lady Crowan, a boring old woman who lives nearby. Crowan proposes to Maxim that he host a summer ball. Maxim seems indifferent to this idea—he suggests that Crowan ask Frank Crawley about the idea. Crawley says that he doesn't mind organizing the ball at all, if the narrator approves. The narrator says, "I don't mind," though privately she has no desire whatsoever for a large ball.

The narrator has no experience organizing parties, but as the mistress of a big manor house in England, she's expected to host a ball from time to time. Thus it's only a matter of time before someone proposes the idea of a dress ball (i.e. costume party). Although Maxim is the master of the house, it's ultimately the narrator's decision whether or not to approve of the event—and yet once again she feels to insecure about her position to assert her real desires.

After the guests leave, the narrator, Frank, and Maxim discuss the idea of a ball. The narrator complains that Lady Crowan is a tiresome woman—her desire for a party shouldn't be the reason for hosting a ball. Frank points out that the narrator is a new bride, however, and should have some sort of celebration for herself. He assures the narrator that she'll enjoy herself, and the narrator bursts out laughing—Frank is good at calming her down. She wonders what costume she should wear. Frank and Maxim suggest an "Alice in Wonderland" theme. Not knowing what she'll wear, the narrator tells Frank and Maxim that she'll keep her costume a secret until the last minute.

The narrator decides to organize the dress ball after all. In part, she does so because she wants to prove herself to Maxim and the rest of his "circle," but also because Frank and Maxim convince her that it could be fun. In general, Frank seems to have much more rapport with the narrator than Maxim, her husband, does. And yet both Frank and Maxim regard the narrator as a child in many ways, even suggesting that she come dressed as Alice, the young girl who was lost in Wonderland, much as the narrator is "lost at Manderley."

The narrator goes to the west wing of the house with Jasper. She thinks about Maxim's orders to close up these rooms, and wonders if he ever comes into Rebecca's old bedroom and touches her clothes, as Mrs. Danvers does.

From the narrator's perspective, Maxim is still devoted to Rebecca, and therefore wants the narrator to imitate Rebecca by hosting a costume party.

Word gets out that there's to be a costume ball at **Manderley**. Clarice, the narrator's favorite maid, tells the narrator that she's excited for the big night. Frank and the servants spend weeks preparing for the ball. The narrator tries to think of an appropriate costume. She goes through the books on the history of painting that Beatrice bought her, hoping to find inspiration. Dissatisfied, she makes sketches of gowns from paintings by Old Masters, but then throws them in the trash.

The narrator thinks that she can use the dress ball as a way to ingratiate herself with her new friends and neighbors, proving that she really does belong among the landed gentry instead of the middle class (into which she was born). For this reason, the success of her costume becomes something more symbolic and meaningful than just a dress in itself.

The next day, Mrs. Danvers approaches the narrator about the sketches she's thrown away—she claims to want to make sure that the narrator meant to throw these away. The narrator insists that she did. Mrs. Danvers inquires whether the narrator has determined what to wear to the ball, and the narrator, sensing that Mrs. Danvers is secretly disdainful of her, admits that she hasn't. Mrs. Danvers suggests copying any one of the pictures hanging in **Manderley**, especially a picture of a young lady in white. She also gives the narrator the name of a good dress shop in London. Finally, Mrs. Danvers notes that it would be better to make the ball a "period event"—that is, telling everyone to come dressed as figures from a specific historical era.

In this scene, Mrs. Danvers gives the narrator something she's never offered before: assistance. Right away, this makes us suspicious. But the narrator, in her haste to be successful, doesn't question Mrs. Danvers' motives—she thinks that Danvers is the perfect person to consult for advice in this matter, since she's helped organize dozens of similar balls over the years. It's fitting that Mrs. Danvers thinks the ball should be a strictly period event—Danvers is so trapped in her own past that it's only natural for her to want to extend her nostalgic worldview onto everyone else.

After Mrs. Danvers leaves, the narrator wonders why Maxim doesn't like Rebecca's cousin, Jack Favell. She suspects that Jack is the "black sheep" of Rebecca's side of the family—a troublesome fool. As she dines with Maxim, she can't stop thinking about Rebecca and Jack Favell's relationship—they way they might have spoken furtively over the phone so as not to upset Maxim. Suddenly, Maxim asks the narrator what on earth she's thinking about. Surprised, the narrator ends her daydream. Maxim says that the narrator has a "flash of knowledge" on her face. He insists that there's a "certain type of knowledge" he doesn't wish her to have. Upset, the narrator asks Maxim why she's being treated like a young child. Without answering, Maxim gets up and leaves the dinner table.

As the narrator spends more time at Manderley, her confusion about Maxim's relationship to Rebecca is to only growing. As a result, she has long, complicated daydreams in which she imagines how things might *have played out between Rebecca and her peers. These daydreams, since they take place entirely within the narrator's mind, symbolize the narrator's almost solipsistic shyness—her inability to escape her own head and ask other people the questions she wants to. It's very refreshing then to hear the narrator ask Maxim, point-blank, what we'd already been wondering—why he infantilizes her. Maxim refuses to answer, proving that he's really no more mature than his younger wife.*

As the ball approaches, the narrator decides to go with Mrs. Danvers' suggestion for a costume, and copies the portrait of the woman in white. She sends her sketch off to a dress shop whose name Mrs. Danvers mentioned: the shop translates the sketch into a proper dress. Workers prepare the house for the ball, and move much for the furniture away to make room for dancing. Only one day before the ball, the shop in London sends the narrator the **white dress**, which has turned out beautifully. She decides to keep her costume a secret from Maxim and Frank until the last minute.

We can sense that Mrs. Danvers is going to sabotage the narrator—everything she's done so far suggests as much. Furthermore, the fact that the narrator is keeping her dress a secret from Frank and Maxim until the last minute seems like a textbook example of Murphy's Law: anything that can go wrong will go wrong, and du Maurier sets it up to all go wrong at once in a single disastrous reveal.

It is the afternoon of the ball. The narrator is very nervous—so nervous that she can't eat anything. Beatrice and Giles show up early, before the narrator has put on her costume. They embrace the narrator and tell her it's "just like old times" at **Manderley**. Beatrice is carrying her costume—an "Eastern" lady, and Giles will dress as an Arabian sheik. Beatrice tells the narrator she's excited to see the narrator's costume.

The narrator's costume party seems like a triumph, at least initially: the purpose of the party was for the narrator to prove to the community, to Maxim, and to herself that life is back to normal at Manderley. By hosting a lavish party, the narrator is stepping into Rebecca's shoes and, it would seem, becoming the confident young mistress of the manor.

The narrator goes upstairs to put on her dress. As Clarice helps her with it, the narrator thinks excitedly about the evening ahead of her. Perhaps Mrs. Danvers was right, she admits to herself—it would have been better to make the ball a period event, rather than allowing everyone to dress up as figures from different eras. As she looks at herself in the mirror, the narrator recognizes that she's dressing as Caroline de Winter—a Lady of **Manderley** from hundreds of years ago.

It's fitting that the narrator ultimately chooses to dress up as a Manderley mistress from centuries ago, as Mrs. Danvers suggested. She's so desperate to fit in at Manderley that she wants to steep herself in tradition and respectability. The only foolproof way to do so is to impersonate another de Winter—in this case, one of Maxim's distant ancestors!

The narrator, now dressed in her white gown, walks downstairs, to find a group of guests arriving. To her surprise, no one laughs or applauds for her dress—indeed, Maxim looks at her stonily. "What the hell do you think you're doing?" he shouts. Terrified, the narrator explains that she's copied the portrait of Caroline de Winter from one of **Manderley**'s hallways. Without explaining himself, Maxim orders the narrator to change immediately. As the narrator walks back to her room, she passes Mrs. Danvers, who looks triumphant.

We can tell that Mrs. Danvers has sabotaged the narrator. The question, then, is why wasn't the narrator more suspicious of Danvers in the first place? In short, the answer is that the narrator was too eager to acclimate herself to life in Manderley—she placed her trust in Mrs. Danvers simply because Danvers was experienced with parties, and the narrator wanted to believe that Danvers was finally beginning to accept her and help her. The tragic result is that the narrator has alienated herself further from both her guests and from Maxim, when the goal of the ball was precisely the opposite.

CHAPTER 17

When the narrator returns to her room, she finds Clarice, teary-eyed. With Clarice's help, the narrator gets out of her dress, still extremely confused. She tells Clarice that she'd like to be alone for a moment. Reluctantly, Clarice leaves.

Judging from Clarice's tears, she didn't know about Mrs. Danvers' sabotage any more than the narrator knew about it. Based on what we know about Clarice—she's the only member of the Manderley staff too young to remember Rebecca—it's easy to deduce that Danvers' scheme has something to do with Rebecca.

Suddenly, Beatrice walks into the narrator's bedroom, wearing an "Eastern" gown. Beatrice explains the truth to the narrator: the **white dress** she wore was the same white dress that Rebecca wore to the last costume party. While Beatrice understands that the narrator couldn't have known this, she points out that Maxim might think that the narrator was trying to shock him. Beatrice has "covered" for the narrator, enlisting Frank and Giles to make up a story about the dress not fitting. Quietly, the narrator explains that she's not coming back to the ball. Even if the other guests won't think it odd that she's not wearing a costume, the narrator will feel uncomfortable. "I was badly bred," she thinks. Reluctantly, Beatrice leaves the narrator.

Although the narrator has been humiliated by Mrs. Danvers' manipulations, it's refreshing to see the other organizers of the party jump to help the narrator through her night. Thus, Beatrice and Giles go out of their way to cover the narrator's tracks. Regrettably, it seems that the narrator's humiliation has caused her to only draw back into a further state of immaturity and insecurity—like a hurt child, she refuses to come out of her room. She condemns herself for her poor manners and bad training—which seems to have been Mrs. Danvers' goal all along.

The narrator imagines the conversations about her going on downstairs. The guests are undoubtedly talking about how the narrator isn't at all like Rebecca—how, instead, she's a "little chit." Perhaps the guests are talking about how Maxim's new marriage is a failure, since the narrator can't be comfortable in her new environment.

Over the past few chapters, we've seen the narrator daydreaming about how events are playing out, or might be playing out. Here her anxious imaginings seem even more unlikely, thus suggesting that her others might be fictions as well. In all likelihood, the guests aren't talking about the narrator at all, but the narrator's self-consciousness and guilt leads her to imagine otherwise.

Slowly, the narrator takes out a blue dress from her wardrobe. She irons the dress, puts it on, and walks out of her room. As she walks downstairs, she passes the portrait of Caroline de Winter. Downstairs, she finds guests dressed in gaudy, grotesque costumes—Lady Crowan is dressed in an erotic purple outfit, for instance. The narrator sees a household servant, Robert, drop a tray of ice cubes. Though she says nothing, she wants to tell him, "I've done worse than you tonight."

After a crisis there comes a moment of catharsis, following by healing. Mrs. Danvers has humiliated the narrator, and yet in the aftermath of this, the narrator seems eerily calm—much calmer than she'd been even before she put on her white dress. She has an easier time seeing through the phoniness of her guests, and commands her staff with great poise and humility.

The narrator joins Maxim. Together, they smile graciously at guests. The narrator senses that they're performing like actors in a play. Yet Maxim never touches the narrator, a clear sign of his discontent. Guests ask the narrator about her **white dress**, which, thanks to Giles and Frank, everyone thinks was too small for her to wear. The narrator makes jokes about the dress, but secretly she feels terrible.

The narrator's behavior in this chapter reiterates an important point: life at Manderley is dominated by play and performance. The narrator isn't really enjoying herself (she's only pretending to), but there's no evidence that the other guests are any more sincere than she is—and all this acting is also grotesquely highlighted by the fact that everyone is wearing costumes. One gets the sense that "poise" and "maturity" are just roles that people play with varying degrees of confidence.

As the night goes on, the narrator dances joylessly with Maxim. Slowly, the guests begin to leave. The narrator says goodbye to them with the same meaningless words, "I'm so glad you could come." Beatrice, one of the last guests remaining at the end of the night, tells the narrator that she looked lovely in her blue dress. She kisses the narrator kindly, and bids her goodnight.

Although Beatrice has been coarse and inconsiderate with the narrator before, the narrator always sensed that Beatrice was trying to be kind, and is a good person overall. Beatrice's words of encouragement, whether sincere or not, provide some much-needed uplift at the end of this long, complicated chapter.

The narrator goes to her bed, and waits for Maxim to enter the room and climb into the bed next to hers. Although she waits hours before finally going to sleep, Maxim never comes.

Although the narrator has grown more confident in this chapter, it remains to be seen how Maxim is taking the incident (or why the white dress offended him at all). Once again he seems to be reacting to things in an immature way, and simply avoiding the narrator instead of explaining why he's angry or upset.

CHAPTER 18

In the late morning after the ball, the narrator wakes up to find a tray of cold tea waiting for her—Clarice must have left it for her hours ago. The narrator remembers her decision to enter the ball wearing her blue dress. She didn't do it for Maxim or for Beatrice—she did it because of her own pride.

The costume party is a major turning point in the novel, and here, du Maurier explains why. Returning to the ball in her blue dress is one of the first moments in the book in which the narrator chooses to do something out of her own sense of pride, rather than to please the people around her.

As the narrator gets out of bed, she realizes that she's simply not suited for life with Maxim—Mrs. Van Hopper was right all along. Maxim wants to have a new wife, but deep down he still belongs to Rebecca and no one else. Indeed, most of Maxim's family and servants are still deeply loyal to Rebecca, despite her death. The narrator can feel Rebecca's presence everywhere at **Manderley**.

The narrator tries to understand why Maxim shouted at her the previous night. Her conclusion is that her appearance reminded Maxim of Rebecca in some way, and as a result Maxim became angry with her for trying to imitate Rebecca. Since the narrator has long assumed that Maxim married her in order to be a replacement for Rebecca, it's heartbreaking for her to think that her replacement has been a failure.

The narrator imagines guests talking about the ball they've attended the previous night. Perhaps they'll agree that the ball was a success, even if the narrator seemed "rather dull," and Maxim seemed visibly aged. As the narrator walks to her door, she sees a note scribbled in pencil. The note, from Beatrice, thanks the narrator for a lovely evening, and tells her not to think any further about her dress.

Although the narrator continues to daydream about possibilities, her daydreams now seem more realistic and less anxious than before. Beatrice once again proves herself an ally to the narrator, even if an inconsistent one.

Downstairs, the narrator greets Robert and asks where Maxim might be—Robert reports that he left the house after breakfast. The narrator spends the afternoon playing with Jasper. When she can't distract herself any more, she calls Frank at the estate office. Frank reports that Maxim isn't with him. The narrator tells Frank that Maxim thinks she was playing a joke on him, dressing as his dead wife. Frank, who sounds uncomfortable even over the phone, assures her that Maxim doesn't think this. The narrator, feeling more and more emotional, insists that Maxim is still in love with Rebecca. Frank says that he's coming to see the narrator right away.

As was the case before, Frank is a useful sounding board for the narrator, in the sense that she can tell him how she's feeling about Maxim. Here, for example, she admits for the first time that she's afraid he's still in love with Rebecca—a fear that she's been feeling for months now, but which she's been unable to put into words. In many ways, Frank is a better friend to the narrator than Maxim: he's attentive to her emotional needs, where Maxim is mostly ignorant.

The narrator waits for Frank to arrive. She senses that she'll never see Maxim again—that he's left her forever. She walks across the grounds of **Manderley**, thinking angrily of Mrs. Danvers. It was Danvers who planned her humiliation, and it's possible that Danvers was listening to her conversation with Frank just now.

The narrator is sure that Maxim will leave her, but she only believes this because of the way she's interpreted their marriage so far. The narrator believes that Maxim wants her to replace Rebecca in every way—she thinks Maxim is done with her because she has failed to live up to Rebecca's ideal.

Furious, the narrator goes to confront Mrs. Danvers about last night's fiasco. She finds Danvers in the west wing of the house, and is surprised to see that Danvers has been crying. Danvers no longer looks like an evil old woman—now, she's strangely childish and pathetic. Nevertheless, the narrator tells her that they need to speak immediately. Danvers whispers, "Why did you ever come here?" In response, the narrator asks, "Why do you hate me?" Danvers replies, "You tried to take Mrs. de Winter's place."

Ironically, Mrs. Danvers's plan in the previous chapter has made the narrator less afraid of her, not more afraid. Previously, Mrs. Danvers was intimidating and unpredictable—but now that she's shown her hand as a desperate old woman trying to manipulate someone young and naive, she seems less powerful and more pitiable. It's telling that du Maurier compares Danvers to a small child (the same comparison du Maurier has made in referring to the narrator)—the narrator is seemingly switching roles with Danvers.

The narrator stares into Mrs. Danvers's old, wizened face. Danvers explains that ever since the narrator has come to **Manderley**, Maxim has been miserable—if the narrator had truly loved Maxim, Danvers insists, she'd never have married him. Rebecca, Danvers recalls, had the spirit "of a boy," and "ought to have been a boy." Danvers took care of Rebecca when Rebecca was only a child. As Danvers continues talking, her voice grows stronger and louder, and a twisted smile crosses her mouth. Danvers cries, "The sea got her in the end," and then weeps silently.

This is one of the most psychologically acute moments in the book. It gives us a rare insight into why Mrs. Danvers loved Rebecca so passionately—in her view, Rebecca was powerful and charismatic in a way that's usually reserved for men. In a way, Rebecca did the things that Mrs. Danvers could never do herself: she controlled a household; she influenced her husband instead of being influenced by him, etc. In a novel about the importance of gender roles (particularly for women), Rebecca exists outside these roles altogether: she's freed herself from societal expectations about how women should behave. This scene will be important again later on, as evidence for the theory that Maxim is the real villain of the book.

The narrator isn't sure what to do with Mrs. Danvers. She tells her to go to her room, but Mrs. Danvers shouts that the narrator has no power over her. She accuses the narrator of ratting her out to Maxim after Jack Favell visited **Manderley**—an accusation that the narrator denies. Mrs. Danvers tells the narrator, "you're never going to get the better of her," and adds, "She's the real Mrs. de Winter."

It's disturbing how Danvers refers to Rebecca as if she is still alive and in a struggle with the narrator. It's also telling that this struggle is to be the "real Mrs. de Winter"—both women are defined by their relation to Maxim, not on their own merits or actions.

Mrs. Danvers opens a nearby window, from which the narrator can see the fog and the ocean in the distance. Danvers tells the narrator she should jump out. There's no point in the narrator staying at **Manderley**, Danvers explains—no one loves her. As Danvers speaks, the narrator walks closer and closer to the window. Eventually, she's standing right next to the window, with Mrs. Danvers whispering, "Jump … jump."

In this chilling moment, it's as if Rebecca herself is controlling both the narrator and Mrs. Danvers. Both women feel desperate and hopeless, and they seem to be acting almost in a trance.

Suddenly, there's a loud "boom." Mrs. Danvers explains that a ship on the water is firing off a rocket. The narrator hears shouts and footsteps coming from the grounds of **Manderley** outside.

In a "deus ex machina" ("god from the machine," or some outside force suddenly arriving and saving the day) moment, the narrator is freed from her trance state just in time.

CHAPTER 19

The narrator stands by the window with Mrs. Danvers, looking down at Maxim, who's rushing from the direction of the water. Maxim yells that a ship has run aground—it fired a rocket as a distress call.

Ironically, the ship's distress call (fired because people's lives are in danger) ends up saving the life of the narrator, who was seemingly about to kill herself.

Mrs. Danvers steps away from the window, and tells the narrator that she should go downstairs to provide help. Then Danvers asks the narrator to tell Maxim that there will be a hot meal waiting for the men on the ship, if they should come to **Manderley**. The narrator nods and says she'll pass along this message to her husband.

It's chilling how easily Mrs. Danvers alternates between urging the narrator to kill herself and serving out in her capacity as an efficient servant at Manderley. But these two roles aren't really that different for Mrs. Danvers: she is slavishly devoted to the rules and formalities of life at Manderley, and urging the narrator to end her own life is seemingly just a part of her loyalty to Rebecca.

The narrator walks downstairs, where she finds Frith, who tells her that Maxim was here only a minute ago—he's run back to the ocean. The narrator walks outside toward the Happy Valley. As she walks, she realizes how silly she was to think that Maxim was leaving her—he's been himself all along, and now he's tending to the sailors in the grounded ship. She tries not to think about her frightening encounter with Mrs. Danvers—none of it matters as long as Maxim is all right.

As with the costume party, crisis is followed by catharsis and then healing. After being on the verge of suicide, the narrator now begins to climb back from this "rock-bottom" of her life. She sees how absurd it was to think that Maxim would leave her. In essence, she's appreciating how childish and immature she was, even just a few hours ago. Yet her moment of "growing up" also centers around Maxim, as usual.

The narrator stares out at the ocean, and sees Frank. Frank greets the narrator cheerily and tells her to "join in the fun." A team of boats is trying to pull the ship back to the water. In the meantime, Frank assures the narrator, the sailors are fine—Maxim will probably invite them all back to **Manderley** later. A coastguard, who's standing nearby, adds that Maxim is a wonderful leader, and extremely generous to those in need. The narrator notices crowds gathering from nearby towns to watch the ship from the safety of the nearby cliffs. Families sit, laughing and eating, and the narrator wishes that she could join them.

It's telling that Maxim spends this entire chapter trying to help other people. So far, the narrator hasn't told us very much about what, exactly, Maxim does all day long. Now, it seems to be dawning on the narrator that Maxim has a life outside of his duties as the master of Manderley—and therefore, he has a proud, successful life outside of his marriage to Rebecca.

The narrator sees Ben approaching her. The narrator tells Ben that there must be a hole in the bottom of the ship. Ben tells her that "she" will break up slowly, and the fish will eat her until nothing is left. The narrator tells Ben that fish don't eat steamers, but Ben seems not to understand this.

The narrator thinks that Ben is talking about the ship itself, a steamer, which has run aground on the beach (ships are usually referred to as "she," after all). But as with the last time Ben mentioned a nameless "her," du Maurier hints that he is once again talking about Rebecca—and this has very sinister ramifications if it's true.

The narrator returns to the house, and asks Robert if Maxim has been home. Robert says that Maxim has just left, without saying when he'll be back. The narrator eats lunch alone in the library, wondering when her husband will return. A while later, Robert enters the library and tells the narrator that a Captain Searle is there, looking for Maxim. Still not knowing where Maxim could be, the narrator goes to speak to Searle, who explains that the sailors have discovered something unpleasant beneath their own ship: the hull of the **boat** that belonged to Rebecca. Furthermore, Searle tells her, the sailors discovered a body inside the boat. This surprises the narrator, since she knows that Maxim identified a different body as Rebecca's, months after the accident. The result, Searle concludes apologetically, is that there will have to be a public announcement about the body.

It's worth noting that the narrator steps up and assumes a leadership position in this chapter—instead of letting Maxim take care of things, she speaks with Captain Searle directly. This is important, because it suggests that the narrator is maturing quickly—the crisis at Manderley is forcing her to assume responsibility to an extent she wouldn't have dreamed of only the night before. The narrator is then immediately rewarded (or punished) for her direct action by learning some surprising news about both Maxim and Rebecca. The "mystery genre" aspect of the book now takes center stage.

Suddenly, Maxim enters the house and sees Captain Searle and the narrator talking. He asks Searle if anything is the matter. Before Searle can repeat himself, the narrator leaves the room. She finds Jasper, kisses his head, and takes him to the library. A short time later, Maxim enters the library, visibly shaken from his conversation with Searle. The narrator tells Maxim that she's very sorry for what's happened. She assures Maxim that she's matured, even in the last 24 hours, and will "never be a child again."

Based on everything we've seen, it seems that the narrator is right about her own "growing up." In the last 24 hours, she's confronted not one but two distinct crises, and survived. She's stopped being so afraid of Mrs. Danvers—now, she sees Danvers as a sad old woman—and she's begun to realize that Maxim isn't as focused on Rebecca as she'd believed.

The narrator goes on to discuss the previous night with Maxim. She asks Maxim if he'd thought she'd worn Rebecca's dress on purpose, but Maxim says he can't remember anything from that night. He asks the narrator, "How much do you love me?" Before the narrator can answer, however, Maxim says that they've lost their chance at happiness: Rebecca has won.

Paradoxically, Maxim's pronouncement that "Rebecca has won" is the beginning of a new relationship between Maxim and the narrator. Maxim now suddenly seems willing to be open and honest, meaning that he and the narrator are finally on the same side—a husband-and-wife unit, rather than two strangers living together.

Maxim tells the narrator what Captain Searle has just told him, but the narrator cuts him off before he can finish—she assumes that Maxim will want to find out who the second person in Rebecca's **boat** was. Maxim, his entire body shaking, tells the narrator the truth. Rebecca didn't die in a boating accident: Maxim shot her in the cottage. He then carried her body to the boat and sunk it. The body he pretended to identify belonged to an unknown woman, "belonging nowhere." He concludes, "Can you love me now?"

Here, we come to the major turning point of the novel. We've spent the first half of the novel imagining that Maxim was still in love with a dead woman. Now we see that the opposite is true: Maxim killed this woman, and may not have ever loved her in the first place. Moreover, Maxim didn't tell the narrator this information, we can surmise, because he thought the narrator wouldn't be able to love him if she did. Rebecca has always been the barrier between the narrator and Maxim, but not in the sense the narrator has assumed.

CHAPTER 20

The narrator stands in the library with Maxim, having just learned that he murdered Rebecca. There is no horror in the narrator's heart—she finds that she can't feel her body, so great is her shock. Maxim approaches the narrator and begins to kiss her, insisting that he loves her enormously. Suddenly he stops, noticing that the narrator isn't kissing him back. "You don't love me," he says.

Maxim seems to love the narrator sincerely—he's been reluctant to express his feelings because he thought the narrator would hate him when she found out he was a murderer. Of course, Maxim hasn't taken into account the fact that the narrator will have to reevaluate her feelings for him in light of this huge new revelation—he initially assumes that the narrator will automatically still love him.

The narrator tries to express what she's feeling to Maxim, but instead of listening, Maxim explains what will happen next. The police will identify Rebecca's body in the **boat**—her rings, her clothes, etc. As Maxim speaks, the narrator can only think back to what he's already told her: he murdered his own wife. "What are we going to do?" she asks. Without responding, Maxim tells the narrator that he'd wanted to tell her about his murder earlier, but couldn't find a way of opening up to her: she'd seemed aloof, and more interested in talking to Frank than to him.

It's telling that the narrator uses the word "we" when asking what the future holds. She doesn't question whether or not she bears responsibility for Maxim's actions from here on out—she treats it as a given that she'll have to assist her husband in any way she can. Previously, we'd thought of Maxim as a confident, collected character, but now we see that he was going through the same internal crisis as the narrator: he was trying to find a way to talk about Rebecca, but couldn't.

Maxim explains more about Rebecca. Rebecca, he claims, was "damnably clever," and extremely talented at saying the right things to the right people. Although Maxim was thrilled to marry Rebecca at first, he quickly realized that she was incapable of love. When he was in Monte Carlo with Rebecca years ago, he took her to the top of a hill—the same hill where he took the narrator. There, Rebecca told Maxim "things I shall never repeat to a living soul." As Maxim explains this, he begins to laugh, which terrifies the narrator.

This chapter (which consists almost entirely of the "truth" about Rebecca) begins with a bang: Rebecca wasn't the saint everyone thought her to be, and on the contrary, she was manipulative and treacherous. This twist seemingly confirms that Rebecca is actually the villain *of the novel, but some feminist critics have also suggested that Rebecca isn't really that bad, especially because we only see her from Maxim's perspective. Some have pointed to the fact that Rebecca embodies both masculine and feminine qualities as evidence that she could have bee lesbian or bisexual (it's worth noting that du Maurier may have been so as well). In this sense, it's possible that Maxim despises Rebecca because she's "incapable of love" for* him, *not because she's wicked.*

Maxim goes on to explain that he could never divorce Rebecca—there would be too much suspicion, too many rumors. Instead, he and Rebecca agreed to live in peace with one another, with Rebecca running **Manderley** and Maxim staying out of her way. Rebecca secretly despised the servants at Manderley, but never let them know it—as far as the servants were concerned, she was an angel. As the narrator listens, her heart is full of love for Maxim: she realizes Maxim never loved Rebecca at all.

Maxim is obsessed with maintaining an appearance of properness, so he can't divorce Rebecca (this seems unrealistic to a modern reader, but we must simply accept that a divorce would be very scandalous). This is an important revelation, because it shows that manners, wealth, and fame can be weaknesses as well as strengths, as Rebecca used Maxim's desperation for the appearance of a happy marriage to manipulate him. The narrator's sudden rush of love for Maxim is more disturbing than comforting, however—her pleasure at realizing that Maxim doesn't really love Rebecca, and she doesn't have to compete for his affections, entirely overpowers what he's just revealed. The narrator seemingly cares more that her husband really likes her best than the fact that he's a murderer.

Over the years, Maxim explains, he was loyal to Rebecca because she helped reshape **Manderley** into a grand estate. But slowly, she began to grow idle. She would flirt with Frank, trying to meet him alone in the cottage. Eventually, Frank, who was loyal to Maxim, told Maxim about Rebecca's attempts to seduce him. After Rebecca realized she could never control Frank, she started on Giles, Beatrice's husband. Giles was practically in love with Rebecca, though Beatrice, Maxim noticed, disliked Rebecca.

We learn more about the people in Manderley: Beatrice always disliked Rebecca, which explains why she liked the narrator. Rebecca seems like a classic "femme fatale," using her beauty and sexuality to manipulate the men around her. Because she's (supposedly) incapable of love, it seems that Rebecca manipulates men out of a sense of boredom more than anything else.

Maxim explains that Rebecca had a cousin, Jack Favell, who lived in London. The narrator nods and explains that she's met him at **Manderley**. This surprises Maxim, who had no idea that his wife knew Favell—the narrator explains that she didn't want to upset Maxim with the news. Maxim continues: Rebecca began an affair with her cousin, and would meet up with him in the cottage near the Happy Valley. Maxim, who knew that they were spending nights there, threatened to shoot Jack if he ever found him on Manderley property.

All this revelation of the truth is complex for us to interpret, even if the narrator automatically believes Maxim and assumes that Rebecca was a villain. Rebecca was certainly a bad wife, but part of her perceived "wickedness" was daring to assert her own agency and power in a male-dominated world. Maxim could not tolerate this, just as he could not tolerate that she was cheating on him (seemingly not because he loved her and was jealous, but because he was concerned with his image). We also learn that the cabin was off-limits for a different reason than the narrator had supposed.

One night, Maxim went down to the cottage with a gun, thinking that he'd surprise Rebecca and Favell. Instead, he found Rebecca waiting there alone, looking pale and oddly sickly. Maxim, unsure what Rebecca is doing, tells her, "What you do in London does not concern me. You can live with Favell there, or with anyone you like. But not here. Not in **Manderley**." Rebecca laughs and says that Maxim has no way of controlling her. He could never divorce her for infidelity, since everyone in her life thinks she's the perfect wife. She could convince Mrs. Danvers, her most loyal follower, to swear anything Rebecca asked her to swear. Rebecca goes on, taunting Maxim by saying that any child she gave birth to would have to be raised at Manderley, whether Maxim was the father or not. Furious, Maxim shoots Rebecca. She falls to the floor, still smiling.

In this flashback scene (the only time in the entire book that dialogue is attributed to Rebecca), we see Rebecca at her most manipulative and cunning. She knows that Maxim wants to keep up appearances at all costs, and she also knows that he can't stop her from cheating on him, heavily implying that she's already pregnant with a child from another man (probably Favell). Although it's Maxim who strikes first, it's also clear that Rebecca has come out ahead in their confrontation—she dies, but she continues to cast a pall over Maxim and the narrator even after death. In this way, the smile on her face foreshadows the sinister way she'll control others' lives from beyond the grave. All this information also adds to the speculation about who the real "villain" is—we only see this confrontation from Maxim's perspective, and even then it seems like murder is an excessive "punishment" for Rebecca's cruelty. Maxim essentially justifies his violence by declaring Rebecca wicked, and the narrator immediately buys into this. The more complicated question, then, is just what du Maurier intends—if she agrees that Maxim was justified, or if she thinks he is the real villain, or if the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

Maxim carries Rebecca's dead body to the sea, where he throws her in a **boat** and then sinks the boat. Since then, he's always known that eventually her boat will be found and the body identified. In other words, Rebecca will win in the end. The narrator protests that she and Maxim have to think of a way to explain the body in the boat. If the police find Rebecca's body, then Maxim will have to say that he made a mistake with identifying the previous body. Maxim acknowledges that this excuse, while not very believable, would keep him out of jail—there's no proof against him. Suddenly, the phone begins ringing.

The stakes of the upcoming police investigation (symbolized by the phone ringing) are clear enough. Even if Maxim won't be sent to jail or executed for murder, he'll be disgraced in his community, first because people will find it strange that he couldn't identify his wife's body, and second because people will wonder why Rebecca was with another person when she died. These are significant stakes, particularly to a landed aristocrat like Maxim—he wants to keep his reputation spotless, and the investigation would be a huge scandal.

CHAPTER 21

Maxim goes to answer the phone, leaving the narrator alone. She has the strong sense that *she*, along with Maxim, has murdered Rebecca. And yet she's no longer afraid of Rebecca, nor does she hate her—indeed, as long as she knows that Maxim never loved Rebecca, Rebecca seems to have lost her power over her.

The narrator's sense of guilt for Maxim's crime suggests both her own insecurity and her boundless love for Maxim: she essentially merges her identity into his. She's been defining herself via her relationship to Maxim for so long that she's surrendered her own agency. In case the earlier scene was just a fluke, du Maurier now makes it perfectly clear—the narrator is much more relieved to learn that Maxim didn't love Rebecca than she is shocked or disturbed to learn that Maxim killed *Rebecca. The chilling force of Rebecca's memory and presence now starts to disappear from the novel, as the more conventional "mystery" aspect takes over for a while.*

Maxim returns from answering the phone, and explains that he's just spoken to Colonel Julyan, the police magistrate of the local area. Julyan has asked Maxim if he has any idea whose body it could be in the **boat**. Maxim has answered that he has no idea whatsoever. He's also told the Colonel that it's possible that he made a mistake while identifying "Rebecca's" body last year. As Maxim explains this, the phone rings again, and Maxim goes to answer it. When he returns, he says that the caller was a journalist, asking about the identity of the woman in the boat. This, Maxim concludes, signals the beginning of the gossip about the incident. Tomorrow morning, the police, led by Colonel Julyan, will retrieve the boat from the water and proceed with identifying the corpse.

For Maxim, the danger that the journalists in the community will find out about the "second" person in the boat and make a scandal out of the situation seems just as dangerous and important as the possibility that he might be arrested for murder.

The next morning, the narrator wakes up to find that Maxim has already left the house, presumably to meet with Colonel Julyan and Captain Searle. The narrator orders Robert to send a message to Mrs. Danvers about the menu for the week. Mrs. Danvers comes to meet with the narrator, complaining that Rebecca never used Robert to deliver messages. The narrator coolly replies that she doesn't care what Rebecca used to do—this information is of no concern to anyone anymore. While the narrator says all this, Robert announces that a reporter from the local paper, the County Chronicle, wants to speak to her. The narrator tells Robert to tell the reporter she's not at home.

The fact that Maxim has left the house without notifying the narrator—previously a cause for alarm and anxiety—doesn't disturb the narrator at all anymore, and is a sign of her increased self-reliance and maturity (a maturity that is rather questionable, however, since it seems almost entirely based upon the revelation that Maxim really loves her). The narrator's refusal to speak to the paper isn't unusual—at the time, it was highly improper for aristocrats to speak to journalists (there was a saying that aristocrats' names should appear in the paper only three times—for their birth, their marriage, and their funeral).

Mrs. Danvers stares silently at the narrator, then asks why the reporter wanted to speak to her—the narrator replies that she doesn't know. Danvers also asks if the rumors about Rebecca's **boat** are true—again, the narrator denies knowing anything. Mrs. Danvers leaves, and the narrator thinks that she's no longer afraid of the old woman—now that she knows about Rebecca, she has nothing to fear.

Mrs. Danvers' power over the narrator stemmed from her access to secret information about Rebecca. Now that the narrator has the same access to this information—and actually knows more about Rebecca than Danvers—Danvers has no more power, and just seems like a pitiful figure now.

In the afternoon, Colonel Julyan comes to **Manderley** with Maxim and Frank Crawley. The narrator remembers seeing the Colonel at the ball, dressed as Oliver Cromwell (a ruler from English history). Julyan is very respectful to the narrator. They chat casually about golf and the weather in France and Monte Carlo. Then, unexpectedly, Julyan turns the conversation to Rebecca's body. The problem, he explains, is that Maxim has already identified one body as Rebecca's, when it turns out that a different body is hers. Frank points out that it's quite natural to mistake one body for another, especially considering the emotional circumstances, and the fact that the body was highly decayed. Julyan agrees, but stresses that the case of Rebecca's discovery will attract a great deal of unwanted publicity for Maxim and the narrator. As the narrator listens, she makes eye contact with Frank for a second, and realizes that Frank knows what really happened to Rebecca.

From the beginning, Colonel Julyan's relationship with Maxim as a detective is tied up in his relationship with Maxim as a guest. Surely it's a conflict of interest for Maxim to be investigated by the same person who attended one of his parties just a few months ago. This suggests that most of the bias in this case is in Maxim's favor: although the newspapers will assume the absolute worst for the sake of a story, the detectives will always assume the best about Maxim's intentions, even in the face of evidence that he killed his own wife. At this point in history the landed gentry are less immune to attack and disgrace than before, but they still have clear privileges over everyone else, and part of this means that they get the "benefit of the doubt" in the eyes of the law.

Colonel Julyan thanks the narrator and Maxim for their patience, and bids them good day. Maxim and the narrator go to speak in private, and Maxim tells the narrator that the doctors have been unable to find any evidence of the bullet in Rebecca's body—as far as anyone can tell, Rebecca drowned. Maxim points out that the narrator looks years older—it's as if by telling her about Rebecca, Maxim has killed off the look of youthful innocence that made him fall in love with the narrator to begin with.

It's telling that Maxim feels guilty about telling the narrator about Rebecca. On one hand, it suggests that he sincerely cares about his wife, and wants to keep her happy. On the other hand, it suggests that Maxim liked his wife best when she was naïve and childish. As far as we're concerned, the transformation the narrator has made in the last 30 pages has been one for the better, but for Maxim this may not be the case. He wanted someone innocent and naïve (and also submissive)—the exact opposite of Rebecca.

CHAPTER 22

By evening, there are headlines in every local paper about the discovery of Rebecca's **boat**. Frith asks the narrator about the inevitable inquest—he wants to know if the servants will be asked to give evidence. The narrator tells Frith that this is unlikely. Frith adds that the news of Rebecca's boat has been very shocking to Mrs. Danvers—she's been ill lately.

At the same time that Frith reminds the narrator that Danvers has been shocked by Rebecca's boat, Frith is also reminding us that Mrs. Danvers is still heavily invested in the results of the inquest—she is far more loyal to Rebecca than to Maxim. This foreshadows some of the climactic events of the novel.

The narrator reads the newspaper stories about Maxim. They describe Rebecca as beautiful, brilliant, and talented, and suggest that Maxim was a vile, unlikable man who married a "young girl" as soon as he could after Rebecca's death. Frank visits the house and instructs Maxim and the narrator about the inquest to come. The coroner, Horridge, will want to talk to Maxim, but Frank warns Maxim not to let Horridge "rattle" him.

We can see the importance of appearances in the newspaper articles about Rebecca and Maxim. Rebecca was always careful to seem saintly in public, and here, we see that her efforts at public relations have paid off beautifully. Maxim has been fighting a battle with Rebecca for public perception, and he's lost.

On the day of the inquest, Maxim and the narrator have lunch at one. The narrator is extremely nervous, and eats nothing. Maxim, by contrast, seems quite calm. Maxim tells the narrator that she mustn't come to the inquest, but the narrator insists that she wants to come along. They drive to the local police station with Frank. When they arrive at the station, the narrator says that she's changed her mind—she'd prefer to sit in the car.

Maxim continues to treat the narrator like an innocent child. While the narrator seems to be growing up, and to at least be as mature as Maxim, she "regresses" in this section, eventually deciding that the inquest really is too painful for her to listen to.

After pacing outside the car for some time, the narrator changes her mind for a third time and heads into the station. When she enters, she finds James Tabb, a boat builder, standing with Jack Favell. Tabb is testifying that the boat he built for Rebecca had never been known to capsize in rough weather—it was very sturdy. Tabb then goes on to give some important evidence: this morning, he says, he examined Rebecca's boat, curious if there was any evidence of damage to his handiwork. To his surprise, he found that there was no problem with the boat at all—there were no scrapes or gashes in the wood. There were, however, holes that someone had made deliberately with a spike or other device. Tabb concludes that the boat never capsized, as it had first seemed—it was deliberately sunk.

In this section, we get some important expository information about the boat, compelling the conclusion that Rebecca's death wasn't accidental at all. Second, we're reintroduced to Jack Favell, who, we recall, knew all about Rebecca's true nature and the nature of her relationship with Maxim. It seems highly likely that he now suspects Maxim of the murder, and will try to sabotage his defense.

After Tabb stands down, it's time for Maxim to speak about the **boat**. Horridge, the coroner, asks him if he knew about the holes drilled in the boat. Maxim replies that he has no idea who could have made them. Horridge points out that the boat was kept on **Manderley** property, meaning that no outsider could have tampered with it. As Maxim listens, he becomes angry and uncomfortable. Horridge asks Maxim if his relationship with Rebecca was happy. Before Maxim can answer, the narrator, who's been listening to the conversation with great anxiety, falls to the ground—she's about to faint.

The narrator is intimately tied to Maxim's fate throughout this inquest—it's as if she's externalizing the emotions that Maxim is adept as suppressing. Thus, when Maxim is on trial, it is the narrator who feels nervous and loses consciousness. The narrator never seems to stop to consider whether or not she still trusts Maxim—if anything, the revelation that he's a liar and killer makes her love him more, since it means he loves her and not Rebecca. All this is disturbing on several levels.

CHAPTER 23

When the narrator regains consciousness, she finds Frank standing with her outside the station. Frank suggests that they go back to **Manderley**, but the narrator insists that she wants to stay and listen to Maxim talk to Horridge. The narrator says that she's worried for Maxim, since it's come out that Rebecca's **boat** was deliberately scuttled (sunk). She remembers seeing Jack Favell at the inquest, but Frank explains that Jack has the right to attend it, since he's Rebecca's cousin.

The narrator seems more nervous about the inquest than Maxim. This isn't the case, of course—Maxim is simply better than the narrator at disguising his emotions. As the chapter begins, du Maurier suggests that Jack Favell will be an important character for the rest of the novel, and will arguably become the primary antagonist—a less glamorous, complex stand-in for Rebecca herself.

Over the narrator's protestations, Frank drives the narrator back to **Manderley**, and then drives back to the station to assist Maxim. The narrator walks to her room and lies down in bed, trying to make sense of what has happened. She imagines Maxim being arrested by the police for murdering his wife, being sentenced to death, and being hanged.

The narrator continues with her habit of fantasizing about possible turns of events. Previously, her fantasies were fairly trivial (a few chapters ago, she imagined her guests laughing behind her back), but now her fantasies have become more gruesome, reflecting the huge changes in her life in the last two days.

Hours later, Maxim enters the narrator's bedroom. He explains, "it's all over." The Coroner has concluded that Rebecca died by suicide, though he doesn't know the motive: as far as the police are concerned, suicide is the most likely explanation for a bizarre death. Maxim believes that he kept a "stiff upper lip" throughout the proceeding, fooling Horridge into thinking he had no idea how Rebecca died.

Here, Maxim's calmness and stoicism was a major asset, fooling the investigators into believing that Rebecca's death was a suicide. Although this seems a strange conclusion (particularly because Rebecca was so well liked in her community), it's the simplest explanation in what, to the investigators, seems like a bizarre case. It's also likely that the investigators naturally favor Maxim because of his status and family history, and so they too want to avoid a scandal for him.

Maxim says he's going to the crypt on **Manderley** property, where Rebecca will be buried that evening. The narrator waits in her bedroom, imagining Maxim standing with Frank and Colonel Julyan, listening to the priest read Rebecca a prayer. While Maxim is out, Frith announces that a gentleman has come to visit: it's Jack Favell.

It is now made clear that Jack Favell will be an important character for the rest of the book. He knows the truth about Rebecca's life, and suspects Maxim of foul play. The interesting thing is that he's right, *but we're meant (presumably) to take the side of the murderer, and hope that Maxim escapes justice.*

The narrator goes downstairs to greet Jack Favell, who's smiling oddly. Favell asks the narrator if Maxim is "running off." He notes that the narrator has grown up since they last spoke—she seems more mature and confident. He asks her, point-blank, "You think I'm a big, bad wolf, don't you?" When the narrator doesn't reply, he explains that he misses his cousin terribly. He and Rebecca were brought up together, and he loved her dearly. He tells the narrator he knows Rebecca didn't kill herself.

This important scene reminds us that the narrator has become bolder and braver in the last few days, and it also further reveals that Jack is an unlikable man. And yet Jack is also a sympathetic character—we don't have any major reasons to doubt him when he says he loved Rebecca, and wants to see her killer punished for his crime. This has added to the argument of some critics that Maxim really is the villain of the novel—Jack, while not exactly a hero, is at least on the side of justice and wants to avenge his beloved cousin's death. Jack's words to the narrator also imply that he knows Maxim has painted himself and Rebecca as villains—but whether Maxim's portrayals are true or false is almost impossible to say. (It's also worth remembering again that the only explanation of Rebecca's wickedness comes from Maxim himself, suggesting the unreliability of this interpretation of Rebecca's character.)

Maxim returns to **Manderley** and finds the narrator talking to Jack Favell. Jack greets Maxim cheerily and congratulates him sarcastically on the inquest results. Maxim coolly tells Favell to leave immediately. Favell tells Maxim he knows that Maxim, the narrator, and Frank know the truth about Rebecca—i.e., they know that Rebecca and Favell were lovers. Favell says he also knows to a certainty that Rebecca would never have killed herself—surely, Maxim must have something to do with her death. Favell casually suggests that he could be kept quiet for a few thousand pounds a year. He insists that he has enough evidence to make Maxim hang: just before she died, Rebecca sent Favell a note, saying that she needed to see him immediately. This is proof that Rebecca didn't intend to kill herself, and thus would suggest that she was murdered.

Favell is hardly an admirable character—he cares more about getting rich than about restoring justice to his cousin's memory—and yet there's nothing definitive in the text to suggest that he's any worse than Maxim. Jack's a blackmailer, but Maxim is a murderer. At the time of its publication, critics treated Rebecca *as a fairly typical mystery thriller, where the differences between the good and evil characters were obvious. Increasingly, however, critics read du Maurier's novel as a blurring of the differences between good and evil characters—one could conceivably see Maxim as a hero or a villain, and the same could go for Jack.*

Maxim calmly says that Favell should leave, or he'll call Colonel Julyan and tell him about Favell's affair with Rebecca. Favell laughs and says he'd be happy to talk to Julyan that evening. Maxim decides to call Favell's bluff: he calls Colonel Julyan on the spot and tells him to come to **Manderley** right away.

Du Maurier sets up the scene that will dominate the rest of the chapter. After hundreds of pages of build-up, the characters are finally divulging their secrets, and now they must face the law and their ultimate fates.

It takes a long time for Colonel Julyan to come to **Manderley**. Favell sits in Manderley, reading the newspaper. The narrator fantasizes about shooting him and hiding the body. After more than an hour, Colonel Julyan arrives. Maxim greets Julyan and introduces him to Favell. Favell tells Julyan he has important information to share: a note that Rebecca sent him. He shows Julyan the note, which seems to suggest that Rebecca didn't intend to kill herself: she'd told Favell to come down to Manderley immediately to talk to her.

There's no way to verify whether or not Jack's note is real or a forgery (indeed, it seems odd that Julyan wouldn't inquire about this possibility). There are a few ways to interpret this. One is that du Maurier isn't writing a strictly realistic novel, so since the letter isn't particularly important to the rest of the book, there's no need for a distracting subplot involving Rebecca's handwriting. Another possibility, however, is that Colonel Julyan just isn't taking Jack seriously—mostly because Jack seems aggressive and unlikeable, and Maxim is considered an "upright man" with great prestige in the community. The narrator's fantasies now grow more disturbing, as she seems to have further subsumed herself into Maxim's identity—she now daydreams about murder as a way to solve the couple's problems.

As Colonel Julyan listens to Favell, the narrator senses that he's taken an intense disliking to Favell. When Favell has finished explaining why the note disproves the suicide hypothesis, Julyan tells Favell that all the other evidence of the case points to suicide. He asks Favell what he thinks happened to Rebecca. Favell replies, without any hesitation, that Maxim murdered Rebecca.

It's almost refreshing to see Jack Favell lay all his cards on the table. There's been so much implication and insinuation in this novel that for a character to simply say what he's thinking is a genuine anomaly.

CHAPTER 24

Jack Favell has just suggested that Maxim killed Rebecca. Favell laughs hysterically, and the narrator notices that Colonel Julyan, who's been listening to Favell's hypothesis, is taken aback. Julyan insists that Favell is drunk and delusional—nothing he says should be taken too seriously. Frank interjects that Favell is trying to blackmail Maxim. Julyan nods and asks Favell if he has any actually proof that Maxim killed Rebecca. Favell is forced to admit that he doesn't. But he admits that he and Rebecca were lovers—therefore, Maxim killed Rebecca because he was jealous of Rebecca's affair.

Favell controls a lot of information, but he doesn't know how to use it to his advantage. Unlike Mrs. Danvers, Favell can't use his knowledge of Rebecca as a form of leverage: he discloses too much to Colonel Julyan, too quickly, and not in a convincing or appealing manner.

As the narrator listens to Favell and Colonel Julyan argue, she realizes that there *is* a witness to Rebecca's murder: Ben. She remembers what Ben told her: "The fishes have eaten her, haven't they?" Clearly, he was talking about Rebecca, not the ship. As the narrator realizes this, she's dismayed to hear Favell arrive at the same conclusion: he tells Julyan that they should speak to Ben, who may well have seen Maxim with Rebecca on the night of her murder. Julyan nods and tells Robert to go find Ben.

For most of this scene (and in fact, for the rest of the novel!), the narrator doesn't really participate in the action, except in the simplest of ways. Her function in this chapter is mostly to explain to us, the readers, what her thought process is, and to help reveal the series of secrets that lead to the novel's conclusion.

While Frank, Favell, Julyan, Maxim, and the narrator wait for Robert to find Ben, Favell insults Frank. He says that Frank didn't have much success with Rebecca, but that when Maxim is executed, Frank will be able to provide a "fraternal arm" for the narrator. Maxim, furious, attacks Favell, punching him in the face. Julyan tells the narrator that she needs to go upstairs, but the narrator refuses. The narrator thinks that Colonel Julyan is beginning to take Favell more seriously.

Jack Favell is caddish, but he vocalizes things that none of the other characters are brave enough to say. In the earlier chapters, du Maurier had seemed to be leaning towards a romantic relationship between the narrator and Frank, and there is now a real possibility that Maxim will be accused of murder. Because Maxim loses control and exhibits violence right in front of him, Julyan now begins to side with Jack Favell.

Robert returns to **Manderley** with Ben. Inside, Favell greets Ben and asks Ben if he remembers who he is. Before Ben can answer, Colonel Julyan interjects—he tells Ben he's going to ask him some questions, and then send him home. Julyan asks Ben if he knows Favell, and Ben denies this. Favell, furious, says Ben *does* know him, and calls Ben a "half-witted liar." Julyan next asks Ben if he remembers Rebecca de Winter. Ben seems hesitant. Favell asks Ben if he saw Rebecca on the night she died, but Ben replies, "I seen nothing." Favell insists that someone is bribing Ben to keep quiet. Julyan, unconvinced, tells Ben to go home.

Du Maurier never reveals why Ben is suddenly silent at this crucial time. Maxim may have bribed Ben to keep quiet about what he saw on the night of Rebecca death (or threatened to send him to the asylum), or Ben may have just sensed what was happening and is now trying to help Maxim. The most important sign that Ben is lying to Julyan comes when Julyan asks him about Rebecca—though we've already witnessed Ben talking about Rebecca, Ben is now reluctant to say anything. In any case, Ben's lack of information is a crushing blow for Jack's case.

Colonel Julyan tells Favell the facts: Favell has no way whatsoever of proving his story. Favell smirks and says he has one "way" left. He rings a bell, and Frith enters the room. Favell tells Frith to ask Mrs. Danvers to come downstairs at once. In a few moments, Mrs. Danvers is downstairs, face to face with Colonel Julyan.

So far, we're not sure how much Mrs. Danvers knows: she'd said that she admired Rebecca for being unrestrained and independent "like a boy," but this doesn't necessarily mean she knows about Favell, or about Rebecca's other affairs in London.

Favell asks Mrs. Danvers to tell Colonel Julyan the truth about Rebecca: she'd been "living" with Favell for years during her marriage to Maxim, and was in love with him. Mrs. Danvers denies this without so much as a moment's hesitation. But then she clarifies: Rebecca was not in love with Favell *or* Maxim—she didn't really love anyone. Rebecca told her many times that love-making was only a "game" to her—she did it for a laugh. Mrs. Danvers begins to cry.

Mrs. Danvers only says that Rebecca didn't love Favell—she doesn't confirm or deny that they were living together. Rebecca seemingly manipulated everyone in her life, even her own cousin. This makes Jack seem like a more pathetic character than we'd imagined: he's deluded himself into believing that he had a special relationship with Rebecca, when he was actually just another pawn for her.

Colonel Julyan asks Mrs. Danvers if she can think of any reason why Rebecca would kill herself. Danvers pauses for a long time, then says, "No." Julyan shows Danvers the note Rebecca supposedly sent Favell before her death. Danvers insists that this note is a fabrication: if Rebecca had something important to tell Favell, she would have told Mrs. Danvers first. However, Mrs. Danvers also mentions that Rebecca kept a diary, in which she kept note of her upcoming appointments. Mrs. Danvers goes to fetch the diary. When she returns with the diary, she shows Colonel Julyan that Rebecca had written down her appointments for the day that she supposedly killed herself. Julyan notices a name written in the diary: "Baker," with the telephone number "M 0488" written beside it. Julyan asks Danvers who this person could be, but Danvers says she has no idea.

It's impossible to tell if Mrs. Danvers is purposefully lying to Julyan, or if she's just lying to herself. Danvers presumes to be Rebecca's closest confidante, even though the only suggestions that this was ever true come from Danvers herself. Although she faults Favell for deluding himself into believing that he was special to Rebecca, Mrs. Danvers is doing exactly the same thing. This is Mrs. Danvers' last scene in the novel, and as it draws to a close we realize that she summarizes the "agonies and ecstasies" of knowing Rebecca: both the thrill of having her trust and the pain of knowing that she's a manipulative liar.

Favell says that Frank should call all the phone numbers listed in the M-0488 format. Frank does so—the first number, he says, is for a woman who's never heard of Baker. The second M-number links to a man named Baker, Frank discovers. He was a doctor in Bloomsbury, though he left about six months ago. Colonel Julyan decides that he'll need to get in touch with Baker as soon as possible.

Du Maurier doesn't linger long on the details of how Frank gets this information from his correspondent (it seems pretty implausible that he could learn so much about Baker over a simple phone call). Du Maurier's purpose isn't to be overly realistic—for now, it's just to move the plot forward.

CHAPTER 25

The narrator stands in her home, looking at Colonel Julyan, Frank, Favell, Mrs. Danvers, and Maxim. She sees a look of utter despair on Maxim's face—now he knows he's going to be hanged for his crime.

Maxim can't hide behind his façade of complacency any longer—he can sense that Baker has some kind of crucial information about Rebecca, information which could send him to die.

Frank reports to Colonel Julyan that Dr. Baker is a well known "woman's specialist," according to the man he spoke with on the phone. Colonel Julyan concludes that Rebecca must have gone to see Dr. Baker, gotten a medical diagnosis of some kind, and then sent the note to Favell to share the information with him. Julyan wonders what this "diagnosis" could possibly be.

Based on Rebecca's conversation with Maxim immediately before he murdered her, we sense that Dr. Baker had determined that Rebecca was pregnant. Strangely, the fact that not one of the characters guesses this possibility (again, the censorship standards of the time avoiding any direct reference to sex or "women's issues") makes it seem more likely as a "twist."

As Julyan, Maxim, and Favell argue, the narrator notices that Mrs. Danvers is looking at Maxim with utter hatred. The narrator realizes that Danvers didn't realize until just now that Favell was accusing Maxim of murdering Rebecca.

The narrator isn't actively involved in this scene, but she remains perceptive and sharp-witted throughout. Here, she correctly deduces that Mrs. Danvers realizes the truth about Maxim and Rebecca. This is dangerous, because Danvers has enormous power over Manderley, and therefore over Maxim, and she also loves Rebecca with a fanatical fervency.

Colonel Julyan says that he'll need to speak to Dr. Baker as soon as possible—probably tomorrow evening at the earliest. Favell objects that Julyan will need to keep watch on Maxim in the meantime to make sure he doesn't flee the country. Julyan hesitates, then tells Mrs. Danvers that she's to lock all the doors in **Manderley** that night, after Maxim goes to sleep. Danvers says that she'll do so. Julyan says he'll come to Manderley tomorrow morning at nine to go to London with Favell and Maxim. Favell should wait for Julyan's car at the border of Manderley. Favell, satisfied with this arrangement, jeers that Maxim is going to be executed—Baker will probably provide evidence that will be used to put him away.

This is one of the more unrealistic scenes in the book (what kind of detective would leave a likely suspect on his own?), but there are two interpretations that make the scene more plausible. First, it's possible that Julyan doesn't really believe Favell at all—he's only humoring Favell with his investigation (or he's too loyal to Maxim to send him in prison). Second, and more importantly, it's likely that Maxim would never try to run off in the middle of the night. He's so intimately tied to his life at Manderley that he has nowhere to run to.

Favell, Colonel Julyan, and Mrs. Danvers leave the room, leaving Maxim with Frank and the narrator. Frank goes to make sure that Favell and Julyan leave the house—when he's made sure they're gone, he comes back to the room and tells Maxim that he needs to get in touch with Baker immediately. Maxim replies that there's nothing at all to be done: tonight, he just wants to be alone with his wife. Frank nods and leaves Maxim with the narrator.

Maxim's calmness borders on despair in these scenes—he refuses to discuss Dr. Baker, or rehearse an alibi for himself. He's resigned to his fate, certain that Dr. Baker will uncover damaging information and Rebecca will finally have "won."

It's now almost 10 pm. The phone rings, and the narrator answers—it's Beatrice. Beatrice asks about the suicide verdict, which has just been publicly announced. The narrator doesn't mention Favell at all, but says that Maxim is in a state of shock after the verdict. Beatrice insists that Maxim must try to alter the official verdict—suicide will only arouse suspicion and outrage in the community. Furthermore, Beatrice says, Rebecca could never have killed herself.

Beatrice doesn't have any idea that her brother is a murderer—as far as she's concerned, the danger of Rebecca's boat is that Maxim will be disgraced in his community, not that he'll be sent to die. Nevertheless, Beatrice is right on the main point: it's unlikely that the fierce, confident, and manipulative Rebecca would have suddenly killed herself (especially via such a carefully premeditated method).

The narrator abruptly hangs up the phone and turns to Maxim. Beatrice calls again, but neither she nor Maxim answer. The narrator and Maxim kiss, feverishly, as if they've never kissed before.

A few weeks ago, the narrator was consumed with the sense that Maxim was ignoring her or didn't love her anymore. Now, it's Beatrice whom Maxim ignores. Maxim and the narrator's love scene is more feverish and disturbing than romantic—Maxim is kissing the narrator because it's probably the last time he'll be able to do so before he's sent off to die. The narrator, for her part, still seems completely attracted to Maxim, and never stops to question her loyalty to this volatile man. Both of them are also in a feverish state with so much happening at once, and they cling to each other more tightly in the turmoil.

CHAPTER 26

The next morning, the narrator wakes up early. She goes downstairs and walks around the grounds of **Manderley**. She notices birds flying through the trees, and sees the beautiful flowers that Rebecca planted years before. As she walks, she realizes that the future of her husband hinges on a man named Baker.

Du Maurier begins the penultimate chapter of her novel with a reminder of the stakes of this visit. If the visit to Baker goes well, Maxim lives—but if it goes poorly, Maxim dies.

The narrator goes to wake Maxim, and they eat breakfast in silence. At nine, Maxim and the narrator get in their car and drive away from **Manderley**. They find Colonel Julyan waiting for them outside the estate, and they pick him up. When they drive farther away from Manderley, they find Favell waiting for them on schedule. Maxim drives Julyan and the narrator into London, followed closely by Favell's car. They arrive around three. In London, Colonel Julyan finds a map and uses it to determine Dr. Baker's location. Julyan determines that he's looking for a building called Roselands, where Baker used to work. After several hours of asking pedestrians if they know where Roselands is located, Julyan drives his passengers to this location. Favell drives close behind.

In an interesting turn of events, it is the narrator who wakes up Maxim, not the other way around (as in the earlier chapters). This symbolizes the narrator's growing maturity and self-assuredness, inspired by the revelations about Rebecca. It's worth noting how much faster the pace of this chapter is, compared with its predecessors. Du Maurier doesn't linger on descriptions of the car ride or the search for Baker's house: her priority is getting to the climactic scene of the novel, in which the group meets Dr. Baker in his offices.

The group arrives at Roselands, where Dr. Baker now lives. At the front door, Colonel Julyan asks for Dr. Baker, and a maid shows everyone, including Favell, inside. After about five minutes Dr. Baker comes downstairs. Colonel Julyan greets him and asks him if he'd be willing to answer some questions.

In this novel, control and power have always been about who has what information, and now the information that will decide the characters' fates resides with a totally free agent—Dr. Baker, a character we know nothing about.

Dr. Baker sits down with the group. Before Colonel Julyan can begin his questions, Favell interjects that there was a supposed suicide, and Dr. Baker can help Julyan conclude that the suicide was actually a murder. Maxim explains that they've found Baker's phone number in Rebecca de Winter's diary, suggesting that Rebecca had come to visit Dr. Baker. Baker says he hasn't consulted with any female patients with the surname de Winter. Julyan points out that Rebecca could easily have given a false name.

It's interesting to see whose side Colonel Julyan takes during the investigation. Jack Favell alleges that Maxim is responsible for Rebecca's death, making it very clear to Dr. Baker that the stakes of his testimony are very high (in a real case, someone like Favell would never be allowed in the room—Julyan would be interviewing Baker one-on-one).

Colonel Julyan asks Dr. Baker if he saw any patients on the 12th of the month last year, at noon—the day before Rebecca's death. Baker goes to consult his old appointment book, and finds that he saw a "Mrs. Danvers" at this time—a young, attractive woman. Baker—recognizing that he needs to reveal this patient's medical records in the interest of solving a crime—says that he took X-rays of "Danvers." He determined that the woman was suffering from a terminal case of uterine cancer that prevented her from having children. There was nothing Baker could do for "Danvers" except prescribe her painkillers—she was inevitably going to die of the cancer. The group is visibly stunned by the information they've just been given. Colonel Julyan thanks Dr. Baker for his help. He and the rest of the group leave Roselands in silence.

Even if this scene is a little hard to take seriously by 21st century standards (Dr. Baker gives up his patients' medical records pretty quickly, without so much as a second thought) it's still surprising and devastating. Rebecca knew she was going to die, and she knew that the manner of her death prevented her from having children. This makes us reevaluate everything Maxim has told us about Rebecca. Since Rebecca was goading Maxim about having children only seconds before he shot her, it seems that she wanted *to be killed. Knowing full-well that she was going to die anyway, Rebecca manipulated Maxim into shooting her, effectively sentencing her husband to death by hanging. And yet from Colonel Julyan's perspective, this information absolves Maxim of all guilt: Rebecca killed herself, he assumes, because she didn't want to die of cancer. Either way, we get new perspective on the complex character of Rebecca here—she took her fate into her own hands and died on her own terms (essentially committing suicide, but not in the way Julyan thinks), and in a way that would hurt Maxim, her enemy, the most. The question remains, though, which "enemy" (Maxim or Rebecca) was more justified in their actions, and which was the real "villain." The most fascinating aspect of the novel is that it allows for such divergent interpretations.*

CHAPTER 27

Outside Roselands, the group stands by their cars, shaken. Favell in particular is stunned by the news that Rebecca had cancer. Colonel Julyan sternly tells Favell to go home and to never see him again—Favell has tried to blackmail Maxim, and he's failed. Favell smirks and admits that Maxim has "dodged a bullet," but still insists that Maxim is guilty of killing Rebecca, and will hang for his crime. With these words, Favell gets in his car and drives away.

As usual, Jack Favell puts everything into plain language: Maxim has just caught a lucky break. Even though Rebecca intended to frame her husband for murder by sacrificing her own life, the detectives will conclude that she killed herself (and in a way, of course, she did).

Colonel Julyan watches Favell drive away. He asks Maxim if he had any idea that Rebecca had cancer—Maxim says he didn't. Julyan suggests that Rebecca killed herself to avoid the prolonged pain of death by cancer. Maxim nods and says this must have been what happened.

Maxim accepts the Colonel's conclusion, even though it will undoubtedly cause a flood of gossip at Manderley (to say the least, it makes Maxim look like a wicked husband who drove his wife to suicide). This isn't ideal, but it's preferable to being accused of murder.

Colonel Julyan advises Maxim and the narrator to get out of England for a while to avoid the gossip and controversy about Rebecca's death. He suggests Switzerland. Maxim drives Julyan to his sister's home, and bids him goodbye

Julyan's parting words to Maxim and the narrator suggest that, like Maxim, he was really most concerned with the public perception of Manderley all along, rather than ensuring that justice was served. He always acted as a rather biased detective, and seems as relieved as Maxim is to be able to justify his "verdict" of suicide. Maxim's privilege is shown in plain view as Julyan leaves the scene—instead of Rebecca's murder being thoroughly pursued and ending with a (correct) conviction for Maxim, instead Julyan performs a rather halfhearted investigation and ends by advising Maxim to visit Switzerland.

The narrator and Maxim stop along the way back to **Manderley** to eat dinner at a London restaurant. Inside, Maxim wonders aloud if Julyan suspected the truth about Rebecca's death. Maxim then answers his own question: "Of course he knew." He adds that Rebecca, knowing she was going to die anyway, was trying to frame Maxim for murder: provoking him into shooting her in the hope that Maxim would be unable to hide the body, and eventually would be hanged for murder.

Maxim confirms this to be the case—Julyan figured out the truth, but just didn't want to start a scandal. This motive may seem foreign by modern standards, but a century ago it wasn't uncommon for the police to take aristocrats' sides in a criminal case, even in the face of all the evidence. Despite everything, Maxim still displays no regret for his actions, and even feels more justified now that he has learned that Rebecca probably wanted *him to kill her. All this makes us wonder if he's as admirable a husband as the narrator still seems to believe.*

At the restaurant, Maxim places a call to Frank. Frank reports that Mrs. Danvers has disappeared from **Manderley**: no one can find her. The narrator shrugs and says, "So much the better." She assumes that Favell has called Mrs. Danvers and told her about Dr. Baker's information. The narrator imagines herself running the house unopposed, now that Danvers is gone. With Frank's help, she'll learn the economics of Manderley. She'll also bear Maxim children.

The mention of Mrs. Danvers in this scene is particularly menacing, because now Mrs. Danvers has all the information, and she knows Rebecca well enough to deduce that Rebecca manipulated Maxim into killing her. There's no telling that Danvers will do, now that she blames Maxim for the death of the woman she admired above all others. One other uncomfortable element of this section is that the narrator seems perfectly comfortable in her role as "child bearer" for her husband: she's finally embraced the role of the perfect, subdued English wife, where previously she'd struggled with it. One could easily interpret this to mean that the narrator is surrendering her freedom to fit with misogynistic gender roles—the exact opposite of Rebecca, who pushed for her freedom and independence up to the end, even in the very manner of her death.

On the long drive back to **Manderley**, the narrator dreams about returning to her home and seeing Mrs. Danvers there. She suggests to Maxim that they travel to Switzerland, as Colonel Julyan suggested.

Du Maurier leaves it up to the reader to decide what kind of relationship the narrator can have with Maxim, now that she knows the truth about Rebecca. For the time being, she seems content to travel with her husband, and to have accepted the fact that her husband is a murderer. Some critics see the narrator's acceptance as a mark of her maturity and intelligence, while others see it as foolish or even misogynistic—the narrator accepts her husband's hatred of Rebecca without question, never thinking that perhaps Rebecca wasn't such a one-dimensional villain, and that Maxim's anger might be turned on her *someday.*

The narrator takes another nap. When she wakes up, it's very late at night, and she and Maxim are almost back home. Over a hill in the distance, Maxim glimpses a flash of light, as if it's already dawn. And yet it's much too early for dawn. As the car draws closer to **Manderley**, the light gets brighter. The narrator sees that Manderley is burning, throwing bright, blood-colored light into the night sky.

In this shocking finale, we discover that Manderley—the symbol of the past, of trauma, and of Rebecca, is destroyed. (Though it's not explained, we can assume that Danvers has destroyed the manor in revenge for Maxim's murder of her beloved mistress.) Perhaps the destruction of Manderley is meant to symbolize the end of Rebecca's stranglehold on Maxim and the narrator's lives: now that the case is closed, Maxim and the narrator can move on and be free of Rebecca's oppressive presence. By a slightly different reasoning, we should note that the end of Manderley also exactly coincides with the end of the book. Rebecca*—the novel we've just finished—was a confession, written by the narrator for the reader. Over the course of the last 300 pages, the narrator has "worked through" her conflicted feelings about Rebecca, Manderley, and Maxim. Now that she's shared her guilty, her pain, and her anxiety with us, she's ready to move on. Perhaps she'll now stop "dreaming about Manderley again."*

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