

The End of the Affair



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF GRAHAM GREENE

Henry Graham Greene was the fourth of six children born to Charles Henry Greene and Marion Raymond Greene. Greene discovered a love of reading when he was a young boy spending time at his uncle Sir Graham Greene's estate in Cambridgeshire. Greene started attending the school his father was headmaster of in 1910. From a young age, Greene experienced serious bouts of depression that led to him being sent away for psychoanalysis in 1920 when he was 16. Greene later attended Oxford University and graduated with a degree in history, but was plagued by his depression and largely kept to himself during his time at Oxford. After college, Greene worked as a journalist and reviewer and met his wife, Vivien Dayrell-Browning, when she wrote to the paper he was working for to correct something he had said about Catholicism. Over time, Greene got to know Vivien and learned more about Catholicism, ultimately choosing to be baptized in 1926. He married Vivien the following year, and the pair had two children together. Greene published his first novel, *The Man Within*, in 1929, and from there his career took off, though he continued to work at papers as a literary and movie critic. During World War II, Greene worked for England's MI6 in Sierra Leone and traveled all over the world for work. In 1947, Greene left his family but, due to his Catholic beliefs, never divorced his wife. Instead, Greene moved away to be closer to his mistress, Yvonne Cloetta, and the two stayed together for the rest of his life. Greene died in 1991 from leukemia while living in Vevey, Switzerland.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In *The End of the Affair*, Maurice Bendrix and Sarah Miles begin their relationship in London during the early days of World War II. From 1940 to 1941, London was the target of numerous attacks, known as the Blitz, from the Germans. German pilots would fly over London and other major cities in England and drop bombs, destroying numerous buildings and killing tens of thousands of civilians. The literal end to Bendrix and Sarah's affair comes during a surprising air raid in June 1944, less than a year before the end of the war in Europe. In real life, outside of the pages of the novel, the Germans made a last-ditch effort to take down London by sending pilotless rockets known as V-1s or "doodlebugs" into London on June 13, 1944, killing over 6,000 people and injuring nearly 18,000. The final round of surprise blitz-like attacks came later in 1944 when the Germans sent V-2 rockets, killing almost 3,000 and injuring more than 6,500.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The End of the Affair grapples with religious belief, as Sarah transforms from atheist to follower of God. Greene's early novel, *The Power and the Glory*—widely considered his best work—is an early example of Greene's growing interest in Catholicism and how others perceive of it. Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, like *The End of the Affair*, focuses on sexless and unhappy marriages, as well as the consequences of adultery. In a similar vein, Ernest Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* examines problematic romantic relationships, particularly in the context of adultery and the dangers of jealousy. William Shakespeare's *Othello* examines how those with bad intentions can exploit and manipulate jealous spouses for their own gain, and, like *The End of the Affair*, ends with the tragic death of a beloved wife. As for more contemporary fiction that bears resemblance to *The End of the Affair*, Ian McEwan's *Atonement* is set in England in the years just before, during, and after World War II (the same period *The End of the Affair* covers) and charts the progression of a relationship doomed to fail.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The End of the Affair*
- **When Written:** Sometime after Greene's 1946 affair with Catherine Walston
- **Where Written:** England
- **When Published:** 1951
- **Literary Period:** Late Modernism
- **Genre:** Novel, Psychological Fiction
- **Setting:** London, 1939-1946
- **Climax:** Bendrix receives and reads Sarah's diary, discovering why she left him.
- **Antagonist:** Jealousy
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Papal Permission. When Greene first published his most famous novel, *The Power and the Glory*, in 1940, it was met with a lot of criticism from Catholics who were offended by Greene's portrayal of Catholicism and Catholic priests in Mexico. However, Pope Paul VI had a personal talk with Greene and told him to ignore the criticism.

Related Writers. Graham Greene was not the only world-famous writer in his family. One of his mother's cousins was Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of the beloved children's book *Treasure Island*.



PLOT SUMMARY

Maurice Bendrix, who is both the protagonist and narrator of *The End of the Affair*, notes that this story is “a record of hate far more than of love.” One cold and rainy night, Bendrix walks out of his apartment with the intention of going to a nearby pub. He catches sight of Henry Miles standing alone in the rain, and even though he hates Henry, Bendrix greets him. Henry, on the other hand, appears enthusiastic about seeing Bendrix, noting that he hasn’t seen Bendrix in quite some time and implying that any hatred between the two is entirely one-sided. Bendrix asks Henry about his wife, Sarah, simply because it would seem unusual not to. Bendrix thinks to himself that he would be thrilled to hear that Sarah is unhappy and sick because learning that she is suffering would diminish his own suffering. Henry tells Bendrix that Sarah has gone out for the night. Bendrix invites Henry to accompany him to the pub for a drink, Henry agrees, and they walk to the nearest one.

At the pub, Bendrix and Henry each order a rum, and Bendrix thinks back through the years to remember how he originally got to know Henry and Sarah. In 1939, Bendrix had been writing a novel that featured a civil servant as the protagonist. He invited Sarah out to lunch to ask her questions about Henry, who was a secretary at the Ministry of Home Security. From there, they began a friendship. Eventually, Bendrix told Sarah about his book and that he was using Henry as source material for foolish character who was the book’s comic relief. Sarah, who was fiercely loyal of Henry immediately hated the book. From then on, Bendrix would purposely ask Sarah questions about Henry to tease her even though it made her cry.

Back in the present, Henry tells Bendrix that he is “worried” about Sarah. Bendrix asks Henry if Sarah is ill, but Henry tells him that he doesn’t think so. Henry invites Bendrix back to his house to talk somewhere quieter and more private. Once there, Henry shows a Bendrix a letter with a recommendation for a “discreet” private detective, implying that he has suspicions about Sarah’s faithfulness and has looked into hiring a private detective to follow her. When Bendrix offers to save Henry the embarrassment by going to the detective, Mr. Savage, himself, Henry insists that it can’t be done and burns the paper with Mr. Savage’s address. Just then, they hear Sarah come inside. Henry tells Sarah she’ll die of a cold because she’s soaked through from the rain. In a narrated aside, Bendrix wonders if anything in his and Henry’s feelings of “distrust, and hate” would have changed if they’d known just how true Henry’s statement was.

Several days later, Bendrix goes to see Mr. Savage. During their interview, Bendrix tells Mr. Savage that he and Sarah had an affair but haven’t been together since June 1944, about two years before the current time. When Mr. Savage expresses surprise, Bendrix asks, “Can’t one love or hate [...] as long as that?” Mr. Savage notes that jealousy is “the mark of true love”

and arranges to have a man follow Sarah and provide Bendrix with weekly reports of her whereabouts.

Back at home, Sarah calls Bendrix and asks him to meet her for lunch because she has something to talk to him about, and Bendrix agrees. At a restaurant called Rules, which they used to frequent together, Sarah tells Bendrix that she’s worried Henry is lonely and asks Bendrix to talk to him every once in a while. Bendrix expresses surprise that Henry is lonely with Sarah around, and she reminds Bendrix that Henry hasn’t “really noticed [her]” for years. Bendrix pays the bill and they leave the restaurant, stopping at the grating where they shared their first kiss years before. Bendrix moves towards Sarah as if he might kiss her again, but just then she has a coughing fit—the second one during their afternoon together. Bendrix coldly tells her to get her cough checked out, and they go their separate ways.

Back at home, Bendrix thinks about his past relationship with Sarah. Throughout much of their relationship, Bendrix had been able to maintain his usual writing schedule. Once he realized how much they were arguing and that their relationship was doomed, however, Bendrix struggled to write anything. Bendrix’s landlady interrupts his thoughts, informing him that a man named Mr. Parkis wants to talk to him. When he enters, Mr. Parkis introduces himself as “Mr. Savage’s man,” there to provide the Bendrix with first report. As he reads the report, Bendrix realizes that Mr. Parkis had been watching him and Sarah have lunch, although Mr. Parkis hadn’t recognized Bendrix. When Bendrix tells him about it, Mr. Parkis feels humiliated and worries about what he’ll say to his son, Lance, about it. Even though Bendrix tells Mr. Parkis to just tell a different story to explain the mistake, Mr. Parkis insists on admitting the mistake to Lance. As Mr. Parkis leaves, Bendrix realizes that he was—for once—briefly distracted from thoughts of himself and Sarah because he was so interested in Mr. Parkis’s dilemma.

Alone, Bendrix thinks about the first days of his affair with Sarah. Shortly after their first kiss, they had gone to see a movie that was based on one of Bendrix’s books together. After that, they got lunch at Rules before deciding to go to a hotel together. After awkwardly having sex for the first time, they went back to Sarah’s house and held each other in the parlor while Henry worked in another room. When Bendrix mentioned that Henry could walk in on them without warning, Sarah told him there was a squeaky stair that would alert Henry’s presence. Later, when Sarah walked Bendrix to the door, she told him that it would be better if she called him rather than vice versa. This forethought made Bendrix realize that Sarah had carried out other affairs in the past. A short time later, Bendrix went to Sarah’s house to see her while Henry was sick in bed, and they had sex on the floor of her parlor. When Sarah climaxed, she told Bendrix that Henry had never gotten her to do so in their 10-year relationship. This explained why Sarah had turned to extramarital affairs: sexual satisfaction and

fulfillment.

Back in the present, Mr. Parkis sends Bendrix a report that he had followed Sarah to a private residence on Cedar Road, where she appears to spend a lot of her time. Mr. Parkis also sends a scrap of a love letter, in which Sarah had written, “I want to abandon everything, everybody but you”—but it’s unclear who “you” is. After reading the letter, Bendrix enters a downward spiral of jealousy and remembers all the arguments he and Sarah had about his jealous nature during their relationship. A few days later, Bendrix receives another report about Sarah going to the same address on Cedar Road. For Bendrix, this seems like confirmation that Sarah is romantically involved with someone else, and he writes to Henry telling him that he has important information to share. When he and Henry meet for lunch a short time later, Bendrix reveals that he hired Mr. Savage and, as a result, has evidence that Sarah is having an affair. When Bendrix tries to give Henry the reports and evidence, Henry throws them into the fire instead of reading them and then storms out of the building. When Bendrix catches up with Henry, Henry asks him if he and Sarah had also had an affair. Bendrix confirms that they did and explains that Sarah has affairs because Henry is “a bore and a fool.”

Henry asks Bendrix why the affair between him and Sarah ended, and Bendrix says it’s because their love simply reached its conclusion. Bendrix thinks privately about how his affair with Sarah really ended: the final night of their relationship coincided with the first night of the V1 bombings in London in 1944, shortly before the end of World War II. Bendrix and Sarah were in bed together when they heard the air raid start, and Bendrix got out of bed to go see if they needed to head to the bomb shelter in the basement. Shortly after Bendrix left the room, a bomb destroyed part of his building. The blast shattered nearly all the windows except the **stained glass window** on his door, and it knocked Bendrix unconscious. Alarmed by the blast, Sarah went to find Bendrix and discovered his lifeless body trapped under a door. Frightened, Sarah ran back to Bendrix’s room where she uncharacteristically prayed to God, making a deal that if God would let Bendrix live, then she would end her affair and return to her husband. Just then, Bendrix walked back into his room with only minor injuries, and Sarah promptly went back to her house even though Bendrix begged her to stay. After Sarah left, Bendrix tried to call and write to her to no avail—Sarah had gone away with Henry to the country, and Bendrix didn’t see or hear from her again for two years.

Back in the present, Mr. Parkis has unearthed two important pieces of information: first, he’s discovered that the name of the man Sarah is visiting is Richard Smythe. More importantly, Mr. Parkis was able to steal Sarah’s diary, which he now gives to Bendrix. In the diary, Bendrix reads about Sarah’s promise to God and subsequent spiritual struggle; Sarah had always been

indifferent about whether God existed, but after the supposed “miracle” of Bendrix coming back to life, she began to believe. Bendrix also learns that Mr. Smythe is an atheist who Sarah hoped could talk her out of believing in God so she could break the vow and return to Bendrix. Throughout the diary, Sarah wavers between her belief in God and desire to be with Bendrix. After reading this, Bendrix calls Sarah and tells her that he’s coming for her, even though she asks him not to. When Bendrix arrives, Sarah, who is seriously ill, runs out into the rain to escape him. Bendrix catches up with Sarah when she stops at a church and tells her about reading her diary. He tells Sarah to go back home and rest—as soon as she’s well, they can run away together. A few days later, however, Sarah passes away.

After Sarah’s death, Bendrix finds a letter she wrote him days before she passed away. In it, she tells him that she can’t run away with him because of her marriage and belief in God. This enrages Bendrix, who begins lashing out at God for preventing him and Sarah from being together. Henry, who has since forgiven Sarah for her affairs, asks Bendrix to help him plan the funeral. Father Crompton, a Catholic priest, reveals that Sarah had been interested in Catholicism, but Bendrix talks Henry out of giving Sarah a Catholic funeral. After Sarah’s funeral, Mrs. Bertram, Sarah’s mother, reveals that Sarah was secretly baptized as a toddler, further complicating the idea that Sarah was truly atheistic. Bendrix, a self-proclaimed atheist, begins grappling with a budding belief in God. Even though it is painful, Bendrix fully accepts that God is real because God had been strong enough to lure Sarah away from him. In the end, Bendrix prays to God to simply leave him alone forever, since love is too painful.



CHARACTERS

Maurice Bendrix – Maurice Bendrix is the narrator and protagonist of *The End of the Affair* and Sarah Miles’s lover. Sarah calls him Maurice, but everyone else calls him Bendrix. An unmarried writer, Bendrix lives alone in the same square (or Common) as Sarah and Henry. Unbeknownst to Henry, Bendrix and Sarah partake in a passionate love affair from the beginning of World War II until 1944. During their affair, Bendrix’s jealousy drives him to “pick[] on [Sarah] with nervous irritation,” starting arguments and preventing them both from being happy together. Their affair ends when Bendrix is knocked unconscious during an air raid while he and Sarah are together. Bendrix had gone to the front of the house and the blast knocked a large door on top of him, trapping him under it. Sarah finds him and, thinking him dead, makes a deal with God that she’ll end their relationship if Bendrix is allowed to live. When Bendrix walks back into the room largely uninjured, Sarah immediately leaves him. Two years later, Bendrix runs into Henry, who shares his fear that Sarah is having an affair. Bendrix, still jealous of anyone who gets to be with Sarah, hires

a private detective to follow her around. The detective gets ahold of Sarah's journal, which reveals that she never stopped loving Bendrix. Elated, Bendrix calls Sarah and tells her he's coming to get her, but she runs out into the rain to get away from him, still dedicated to upholding the vow she made to God. Unfortunately, the rain makes the cold she was already sick with get worse, and Sarah dies soon after this incident. After Sarah's death, Bendrix, who has since told Henry about the affair, moves in with Henry at his invitation. Eventually, Bendrix and Henry grow closer. Once a staunch atheist, Bendrix begins believing in God, but his belief is colored by hatred as he lashes out at God for coming between him and Sarah. Eventually, Bendrix petitions to God to "leave [him] alone for ever," highlighting the novel's message about the pain associated with developing religious faith.

Sarah Miles – The other protagonist of the novel, Sarah is Henry's wife and Bendrix's lover. Because Henry is unable to sexually satisfy her, Sarah participates in a series of affairs throughout their marriage. Despite this, Sarah has "an enormous loyalty to Henry" and hates to hear him insulted or maligned, something which Bendrix often does out of jealousy to punish her. Despite Bendrix's jealous cruelty, Sarah loves him intensely and, when she finds him unconscious after part of his house is hit in an air raid during World War II, makes a deal with God that she will leave Bendrix if God lets him live. When Bendrix wakes up, Sarah stays true to her promise to God and leaves him. In her diary, she writes about her struggle to keep the promise and her tumultuous spiritual journey from indifference to reluctant belief and acceptance, especially after going to listen to Richard Smythe speak of the impossibility of God's existence. When Bendrix, who has hired a private detective to follow Sarah, gets his hands on this diary, he calls Sarah to tell her he is coming to her house. A panicked Sarah, remembering her vow to God, runs out into the rain even though she's already seriously ill with a cold. Despite Bendrix's attempts to persuade her, Sarah refuses to leave Henry for him. Sarah writes Bendrix a final letter just days before dying. In the letter, she reiterates that she won't run away with him but reassures him that she still loves him as much as ever. Sarah's death brings Henry (who has since learned of the affair from Bendrix himself) and Bendrix, the two people who loved her the most, together as they learn to cope and navigate life without her together.

Henry Miles – Henry is a simple, honest civil servant who is married to Sarah. Although Henry is always very kind to his wife, he is unable to sexually satisfy her, so she turns to extramarital affairs for fulfillment. Henry trusts Sarah implicitly, so he doesn't notice any of these affairs even though some of them, including her final affair with Bendrix, happen in their house while he's home. Two years after Bendrix and Sarah's affair ends, Henry runs into Bendrix and tells him that he's worried Sarah is having an affair because she's very distant. In

fact, Henry has looked into hiring a private detective and has learned of one named Mr. Savage, but he is ultimately too ashamed to go through with it and burns the paper with Mr. Savage's address. Unbeknownst to Henry, Bendrix promptly hires Mr. Savage himself and arranges to have Sarah followed. Eventually, Mr. Savage's employee Mr. Parkis uncovers evidence of Sarah meeting a man named Mr. Smythe at his home, and Bendrix brings the evidence to Henry. When Bendrix tells Henry of Sarah's behavior, he also tells Henry that he had had an affair with Sarah, as well. Henry doesn't get mad but returns home and begs Sarah to stay with him for just a few more years but doesn't tell her he knows about her affairs, which highlights one of the key differences between Henry and Bendrix: Henry does not become cruel and jealous when he learns that Sarah has been with other men, but simply asks her to give him another chance by staying with him. After Sarah's death a short time later, Henry is haunted by her memory and asks Bendrix to move in with him. Henry and Bendrix grow very close in the weeks and months after Sarah's death and Henry eventually admits that taking evening walks with Bendrix is one of the only two things he ever looks forward to anymore.

Richard Smythe – Richard Smythe is an atheist who regularly goes to a public park to speak to passersby about the nonexistence of God and passes out cards with his sister, Miss Smythe, inviting people to talk privately with him in his apartment. Sarah hears him talk one day and feels bad for him because everyone throws his cards away. She keeps a card and later decides to go talk to him, hoping that if he talks her out of believing in God, then she can break her promise to God not to be with Bendrix anymore. Sarah starts going to Smythe's house regularly, but instead of convincing her that God doesn't exist, he accidentally makes her believe in God even *more*. At their final meeting, Sarah tells Smythe that she comes to listen him just because she likes him and he proposes marriage, which she refuses. Smythe also has a peculiar set of spots on one of his cheeks, and he very self-consciously tries to hide that cheek when talking to people. After Sarah's death, the spots miraculously disappear and Smythe tries to tell Bendrix that it was a miracle, but Bendrix refuses to admit it's more than a coincidence. It would seem that Smythe, like Bendrix, begins believing in God after Sarah's death.

Mr. Parkis – Mr. Parkis is the man who follows Sarah to gain information about her whereabouts after Bendrix hires a private detective named Mr. Savage. Mr. Parkis is enthusiastic about his job and even brings his son, Lance, with him to teach him the family trade. Mr. Parkis develops a genuine liking for both Sarah and Bendrix and even shows up to Sarah's funeral after her death, insisting to Bendrix that he doesn't believe Sarah ever really did anything wrong. After Sarah's death, Lance gets very sick and the doctor wants to operate. Mr. Parkis, however, is afraid to let Lance go under the knife because his wife died in surgery years before. For unexplained

reasons, Lance requests a memento of Sarah's, and Henry sends one of her childhood books along, not knowing that Sarah had once scribbled an inscription inside about how people who are "sick in bed" can read the book. After receiving the book, Lance mysteriously starts feeling better and no longer needs surgery, prompting Mr. Parkis to send the book back with a letter saying that he had prayed to God and Sarah to heal Lance.

Lance – Lance is Mr. Parkis's son and apprentice in the art of following people for Mr. Savage, who runs a private detective agency. Lance often helps his father by keeping watch and deflecting suspicion. At one point, Bendrix uses Lance to help him see Richard Smythe himself after learning that Sarah was going to his house regularly. After becoming ill with something requiring surgery (possibly appendicitis), Lance requests a memento from Sarah, who has been dead for a while but who made an impression on Lance. Henry, who receives the request and thinks it's simply from a friend of Sarah's, sends one of her childhood books without noticing that she wrote an inscription in it about reading it while "sick in bed." Not long after receiving the book, Lance mysteriously heals overnight, and Mr. Parkis sends the book back to Henry and Bendrix with a letter about what happened.

Father Crompton – Father Crompton is a Catholic priest who shows up at Henry's house after Sarah's death to try to convince Henry to give her a proper Catholic burial instead of having her cremated in a largely secular ceremony. Father Crompton reveals that Sarah had come to him and shown an interest in becoming Catholic and, therefore, can have masses said for her and qualifies for the church to take care of her burial. Bendrix, who knows Sarah had developed some interest in becoming Catholic at one point but ultimately chose not to, successfully persuades Henry not to do it. After the funeral, however, Henry goes to Father Crompton's church to hear the mass said for Sarah and invites him over for dinner. Bendrix is suspicious that Henry is being converted, even though Henry argues that he's just trying to be friendly. While Father Crompton is at Henry's house (which Bendrix has moved into by now), Bendrix lashes out at Father Crompton, blaming the priest for what happened to Sarah and the fact that Bendrix and Sarah never got back together. Father Crompton notes that Bendrix is in pain and "a good hater," but Bendrix, who described himself as "a man of hate" earlier in the story, leaves the room and slams the door on Father Crompton and Henry. Bendrix's anger at Father Crompton's observation is evidence of Bendrix's growing realization that his hatred is actually a sign of the depths of his love—a realization which he struggles throughout the story.

Mrs. Bertram – Sarah's mother. Mrs. Bertram didn't regularly visit Sarah and Henry, as she's convinced that Henry doesn't like her. Mrs. Bertram regularly finds excuses to ask Henry for money and even asks Bendrix for a few pounds after meeting

him for the first time at Sarah's funeral. At lunch with Bendrix after the funeral, Mrs. Bertram reveals that she had had Sarah baptized as a Catholic when she was just a toddler out of spite for Sarah's father, who didn't like Catholicism and didn't want Sarah baptized. Mrs. Bertram says she always hoped that the baptism would "take," and Sarah would become a Catholic one day. She resents that Sarah was not given a Catholic burial but blames Henry for this, not knowing it was actually Bendrix who convinced Henry that Sarah would have wanted a more secular funeral. Mrs. Bertram asks Bendrix not to tell Henry or anyone else about Sarah's baptism, but she soon decides to tell Henry herself. Upon learning of Sarah's baptism into the Catholic Church, Henry considers the strange coincidence of Sarah showing interest in Catholicism as an adult without even knowing that she had been baptized.

Mr. Savage – The "discreet" private detective that Bendrix hires to have Sarah followed. Bendrix learns of Mr. Savage from Henry, who suspects that Sarah is having an affair but is uncomfortable with actually hiring a private detective to uncover the truth. In fact, Henry burns the paper with Mr. Savage's address in order to get rid of the temptation to contact him and as a sign of remorse for having suspected Sarah at all. Propelled by his jealousy of whoever Sarah might be having an affair with, Bendrix is determined to learn the truth and thus hires Mr. Savage and has Sarah followed. Mr. Savage and Bendrix only talk once, but he assigns Mr. Parkis to the case.

Miss Smythe – Richard Smythe's sister, who lives with him. Miss Smythe and Richard invite people to their apartment to discuss atheism, and it is Miss Smythe's job to help make those who come to visit feel comfortable. Having learned that Sarah spends a lot of time at the Smythes' apartment, Bendrix takes Lance there one day in an effort to learn more about the nature of Sarah's comings and goings. Bendrix pretends that Lance is sick, hoping that Miss Smythe will invite them inside to see Richard. Because Sarah had gone to the apartment so much to listen to Richard talk, Miss Smythe was familiar with Sarah. As Bendrix and Lance prepare to leave, Bendrix tells Richard that he should meet "a friend of [his], Mrs. Miles." Miss Smythe immediately exclaims, "Oh, my dear," implying that she knows Richard had proposed to Sarah and the pain that hearing the name "Mrs. Miles" would cause him.

Sylvia Black – Sylvia is the young and beautiful protégé of Peter Waterbury, a literary critic who meets with Bendrix the day of Sarah's funeral. Bendrix knows Sylvia is looking for a mentor to teach her about writing and publishing novels just by looking at her. Bendrix also knows that he could "get her from [Waterbury]" if he wanted to, meaning that he could seduce her and ruin her relationship with Waterbury. Initially, he does seem ready to "take" Sylvia: he accepts her offer to help him find the cemetery where Sarah's service is being held, and he even asks her to dinner that night. However, Bendrix realizes

that he can't pretend to really be interested in Sylvia because he's still in love with Sarah and begins praying to Sarah to help get him out of having to bring her to dinner. Coincidentally, after this prayer Mrs. Bertram comes up to Bendrix, and he jumps on the opportunity to tell Sylvia that he can't take her out to dinner after all because he must accompany Mrs. Bertram.

Peter Waterbury – Peter Waterbury is a literary critic who is going to write an article about Bendrix and his works.

Waterbury meets with Bendrix on the day of Sarah's funeral to interview him and get his opinion on other writers, but Bendrix quickly loses interest. Sylvia suggests they leave the interview early together so she can show him to the cemetery where Sarah's funeral is being held.



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.



LOVE AND HATRED

Throughout *The End of the Affair*, the only thing that compares with the love Bendrix feels for Sarah is the hatred he also has for her. Constantly toeing the line between love and hatred, Bendrix is entirely consumed by his affair with Sarah even after it ends. Sarah, too, goes through periods in which she hates Bendrix and writes in her diary, "I've hated Maurice, but would I have hated him if I hadn't loved him too?" In the middle of all this is Sarah's husband, Henry, who doesn't learn about the affair until nearly two years after it ends and, even then, is incapable of hating either of them, but insists that he loves his wife and eventually comes to love Bendrix after Sarah's untimely death. And despite Bendrix's assurances to the reader that he is "a man of hate," it becomes clear that his feelings hatred are so intermingled with those of love that the one is indistinguishable from the other, and the question Sarah wrote in her diary becomes the ultimate question of Greene's novel. Through the story of Bendrix and Sarah's affair and its aftermath, Graham Greene illustrates that hatred can't exist without love.

From the very beginning of the book, Bendrix (who notes that he is the one writing the story) insists that the whole narrative is about his hatred for Sarah and Henry Miles. Bendrix asserts that "This is a record of hate far more than of love," which prepares the reader to encounter both feelings. This also illustrates Bendrix's initial motive in writing the story: he wants to explore his hatred for Sarah and her husband—hatred that has been simmering ever since Sarah broke things off with Bendrix in order to stay with Henry. Throughout the story, even

as Bendrix's attitude towards the couple begins to soften, he actively fights to maintain his hatred. This is shown when a Catholic priest tries to write of Bendrix's emotional outburst as "pain" over Sarah's death and Bendrix insists, "I'm not in pain, I'm in hate."

Despite Bendrix's desire to keep the focus of this story on his hatred for Sarah and Henry, it rapidly becomes clear that there is a strong undercurrent of love that threatens to surface. Bendrix observes that "Hatred seems to operate the same glands as love: it even produces the same actions." This immediately implies that love could be motivating Bendrix just as much as hate, but he's unwilling to admit this or perhaps doesn't recognize it himself. Even Sarah doubts Bendrix's ability to truly hate anyone, which is shown in her diary entry when she describes him as someone who "thinks he hates, but loves, loves all the time." In other words, Sarah believes that Bendrix feels things very deeply, but has convinced himself that all of these deep emotions are forms of hatred rather than making himself vulnerable by admitting that they stem from love. Eventually, even Bendrix admits that his general feelings of hatred imply an equal (or even greater) amount of love: "hating Sarah is only loving Sarah and hating myself is only loving myself." This shows an immense amount of personal growth in Bendrix, who begins to let go of his insistence that hatred has always reigned supreme over love.

Ultimately, Bendrix learns that not only are hatred and love not mutually exclusive, but that if he opens himself up to the positive experience of love, then he must necessarily open himself up to the negative experience of hatred. Bendrix writes, "I thought I was writing a record of hate, but somehow the hate has got mislaid." This is Bendrix's way of acknowledging that he overestimated the power of his hatred when he began the story, although he remains unwilling to admit that his hatred for Sarah and Henry has entirely come to an end or the extent to which he continues to like and even love them. Bendrix uses his hatred as a shield to protect himself against love, the idea of which is closely tied to the overwhelming pain and despair he felt after losing Sarah—if he doesn't experience love, then he won't experience the pain of losing it either. However, a question that Sarah poses in her diary reveals the futility of this: "would I have hated [Maurice] if I hadn't loved him too?" As Sarah discovered for herself, hatred and love are fluid, and one emotion can give way to the other almost imperceptibly. Therefore, it is useless for Bendrix to try and protect himself from love by hiding behind hate.

In exploring his hatred, Bendrix discovers how inextricably it was bound up in his love for Sarah. Sarah, too, notes that she would never have experienced moments of hatred for Bendrix if she hadn't loved him first. Both hatred and love, then, have roots in each other: love can be born of hatred (such as Bendrix's budding love for Henry) and hatred can be born out of love (such as what Sarah describes in her diary). In either

case, one can't exist without the other.



FAITH, ACCEPTANCE, AND THE DIVINE

The existence or nonexistence of God or some other supreme deity is something that Bendrix and Sarah are initially indifferent about when they begin their passionate love affair in *The End of the Affair*. To them, it doesn't matter whether or not God exists; they are entirely wrapped up in each other, even though Sarah is still married to a kind but passionless man named Henry. However, when Sarah discovers Bendrix's lifeless body stuck beneath a door after one of the air raids that plagued London during World War II, she suddenly turns to God, promising that if Bendrix is allowed to live, then she will stop cheating on her husband and start believing in God. Just at that moment, Bendrix walks into the room, and, true to her word, Sarah ends their relationship. Two years later, after hiring a private detective to follow Sarah, Bendrix gains possession of her diary and learns the truth about why she broke up with him and her new belief in God. Shortly thereafter Sarah dies, leaving Bendrix to grapple with his own budding belief in—but hatred for—God. The literal end to the affair between Bendrix and Sarah, then, is the beginning of a spiritual journey that transforms their lives entirely. In *The End of the Affair*, Green explores the acceptance of faith as an inevitability, albeit a sometimes painful and personally devastating one.

Bendrix writes that “[Sarah] believed in God as little as I did.” This mutual unbelief is significant as it implies that Bendrix and Sarah both believe that their adulterous relationship is not a sin, and which therefore makes it easier for them to continue without spiritual fear for themselves. After Sarah's death, Bendrix asks Henry if he's beginning to believe in God. Henry, mildly offended, says, “Of course I'm not.” This shows that Henry, too, was, at best, indifferent about the idea and found it somewhat ridiculous to think that he would ever become a believer.

However, a handful of Sarah and Bendrix's comments, as well as Mrs. Bertram's (Sarah's mother) revelation about Sarah's childhood baptism, reveal that the seeds of faith were always there, ready to grow into something more meaningful. For instance, Bendrix claims that he has a “personal devil” that provokes him into teasing other people. The belief in any kind of devil (a negative force) would imply a belief in a positive force such as God, casting doubt on Bendrix's claim that he is atheistic. And even though she writes in her diary that the vow she made with God for Bendrix's life was made to “somebody [she didn't] really believe in,” Sarah evidently nursed some small hope that God existed. That hope could only have existed alongside some latent belief that there was somebody she could pray to for help. After Sarah's death, Mrs. Bertram reveals that she had Sarah secretly baptized as a Catholic when she was just a toddler and claims she “always had a wish that it

would ‘take,’” although she never told anyone about it. Sarah, then, had always technically been part of the Christian faith, and the same spirit that prompted her mother to baptize her could have had a greater influence in Sarah's life than she recognized.

Ultimately, as the drama and pain associated with the ending of Sarah and Bendrix's relationship increases, each character accepts God as a reality. However, the story depicts this acceptance not as a heartwarming and welcome experience but as a painful one that life has forced upon each of the characters. In her diary, Sarah writes, “I've caught belief like a disease” as she describes how her newfound belief in God is preventing her from breaking her vow to him. In likening religious belief to catching a “disease,” Sarah implies that her new faith is something that threatens her happiness and health rather than something that positively impacts her life. After Sarah's death and having read of her spiritual journey in her diary, Bendrix tells God, “I hate You, God, I hate You as though You existed.” Even though Bendrix implies that he still doesn't believe God exists, the fact that he is talking to God in the first place—and harbors hatred toward him—shows that he actually *does* accept God's existence, whether consciously or not. Once again, though, religious belief is depicted in negative terms, as Bendrix's belief hinges on hatred, as it was God who caused him to lose Sarah. In the end, even though he accepts God, Bendrix wants to live a Godless existence. This is shown in the book's final lines when Bendrix prays to God to “leave [him] alone for ever.” So even as the novel presents belief in God as an inevitability, it doesn't necessarily mean that the book's characters go on to dedicate their lives to God and become upstanding religious people.

For Bendrix and Sarah, the acceptance of God as a reality is a painful experience, but one that was bound to happen. Sarah was baptized as a child, and, as her mother hoped, it eventually does “take” when Sarah faces her worst fear: the possibility of Bendrix's death. For Bendrix, whose life is entirely bound up in his relationship with Sarah, accepting God becomes inevitable after learning that God is the reason Sarah left him. For both of them, accepting God is linked with the idea of losing each other and any possibility of finding happiness together in the future. With this, the novel suggests that acknowledging God's existence can be a largely negative and painful experience, thus illustrating the darker side of faith.



JEALOUSY AND PASSION

In *The End of the Affair*, Maurice Bendrix and Sarah Miles engage in a passionate love affair that turns toxic due to Bendrix's intense jealousy. Sarah, on the other hand, is never jealous and struggles to understand Bendrix's feelings as his insinuations and insults make it harder and harder for them to be happy together. Sarah, who is married to a passionless man named Henry, has had affairs

before, and none of her assurances to Bendrix that she's never loved a man like him and never will again fall on deaf ears as Bendrix's obsession with her intensifies. Even when their relationship ends and Sarah passes away, Bendrix's jealousy prevents him from moving on and finding a healthier and happier relationship elsewhere. Through Bendrix, Greene explores the self-destructive nature of jealousy, highlighting how it can infect even the happiest relationships.

Bendrix realized early on that Sarah had carried out affairs before, which planted the seed of jealousy in his mind. Eventually, his jealousy became their relationship's defining characteristic, poisoning even their happiest moments. After the first time they sleep together, Sarah tells him about a stair in her house that always squeaks and mentions that it will be better if she calls Bendrix instead of him calling her house. This makes Bendrix think of "how well she knows how to conduct an affair" and marks the beginning of his jealousy and insistence that she doesn't really love him. Bendrix himself claims that he "measured love by the extent of [his] jealousy," meaning that the more reasons he found to be jealous, the more he was sure that he truly loved Sarah. Bendrix also describes his attempts to catch Sarah in lies, even little ones, saying, "every lie I would magnify into a betrayal," thus making arguments and inevitability and illustrating his own awareness that he was actively trying to poison their relationship and time together.

Even after the end of their relationship, Bendrix's jealousy and possessiveness prevent him from truly moving on and from allowing Sarah to do so as well. Two years after the end of their relationship, Bendrix runs into Henry and learns that he is concerned that Sarah is having an affair. Even though it's been two years since Bendrix and Sarah's relationship ended, Bendrix thinks to himself that there's "still [...] jealousy of my rival." Jealousy over the mere idea of Sarah seeing someone else prompts Bendrix to hire a private detective to follow her around and send reports back to him. Even when he no longer has any rational claim on her affection, Bendrix is unwilling to let her be happy with anyone else. Furthermore, Bendrix claims that his "passion for Sarah had killed simple lust forever" and he's been unable to enter a new relationship. Bendrix calls his feelings for Sarah "passion" instead of "love," implying that he knew his feelings for her were out of control and, therefore, were capable of preventing him from truly living his life or beginning a healthy relationship with anyone who didn't inspire the same emotions in him.

Not even Sarah's death puts an end to Bendrix's jealousy, but rather causes him to project his resentment toward Sarah's other partners onto God. Bendrix admits, "My jealousy had not finished [...] with her death. It was as if she were alive still, in the company of a lover she had preferred to me." His admission reveals an irrational belief that he had a right to Sarah and her body and sees her death as an act of infidelity on her part. Bendrix even targets priests, claiming the Catholic priest who

comes to visit is "the victor" because he represents God and encouraged Sarah to embrace her budding faith—a faith that convinced Sarah to cut things off with Bendrix and dedicate her life to God. Bendrix's contempt for the priest suggests that Bendrix viewed possessing Sarah as a kind of competition, framing her body and affection as a prize to be won and thus stripping her of much of her humanity. After learning of Sarah's spiritual journey, Bendrix says God "was as underhand as a lover," showing that, even as his own religious belief begins to take root, he still sees God as an enemy that has wronged him. This attitude, steeped in competition, prevents Bendrix from developing a healthy spirituality that may have brought him comfort and helped him move on.

Bendrix's uncontrollable jealousy destroys everything in its path, including his own chances for happiness. In the end, Bendrix discovers that he has become afraid of love, making himself the final victim of his own irrationality and illustrating how the damaging effects of jealousy can destroy a person's happiness from the inside out.



ADULTERY, DECEPTION, AND HONESTY

The End of the Affair follows Bendrix and Sarah as they begin an extramarital affair in the early days of World War II. Bendrix is a single writer, while Sarah is married to a simple, honest man named Henry, who loves and trusts his wife wholeheartedly—even though it's revealed that she has actually had multiple affairs throughout their marriage. The relationship between Bendrix and Sarah ends when Bendrix is knocked unconscious during an air raid in June 1944. Sarah finds him and, believing him dead, makes a deal with God that she will leave Bendrix if God will let him live, revealing her own hidden belief that their adulterous relationship—characterized by lies and deceit—is wrong. Sarah hopes God will reward her willingness to live more honestly and leave Bendrix by bringing Bendrix back to life. In fact, both Sarah and Bendrix reveal a desire for the truth about their affair to be known, revealing deep signs of remorse even though they are unwilling to be upfront and tell Henry about their relationship. Over the course of the book, Greene argues that the most powerful force in human nature is the desire to live honestly, a desire which can overcome even the most intense romantic affairs.

Initially, both Bendrix and Sarah seem untroubled by lying to Henry, who is blissfully ignorant of the reality of their friendship. Bendrix says that Sarah "had a wonderful way of eliminating remorse," meaning she simply does not feel bad or experience any regret that she's lying to her loving husband. Bendrix writes that within a day of beginning his affair with Sarah, Henry became "an enemy, to be mocked and resented." By mocking Henry, Bendrix is able to convince himself that Henry *deserves* to be lied to, which helps justify the fact that he and Sarah are deceiving him by having an affair right under his

nose.

However, the knowledge that they are in an adulterous relationship taints Bendrix and Sarah's potential for happiness, as they both long for a relationship marked by honesty and openness. Bendrix seeks out honesty by trying to make Sarah "say more than the truth" in the form of promises that their relationship will last forever, even though they both know she won't leave Henry. Bendrix admits to doing this just "to give [himself] the satisfaction of rejecting" these promises as lies. This is an example of Bendrix manipulating Sarah (tricking her into making false promises) to make her out to be a liar and himself to be honest, as he would reject Sarah's false promises and remind her of the truth that their relationship won't last forever.

After the end of their affair, Sarah's diary reveals her desire to tell Henry about the relationship. At one point, Sarah writes, she had to fight the impulse to tell Henry's coworker about finding Bendrix injured during an air raid—and that she was naked when she found him, because they "had been making love all evening." For Sarah, however, being honest about her relationship with Bendrix would mean hurting Henry (whom she has an "enormous loyalty" to), which outweighs the benefits of getting divorced and starting over with Bendrix. Furthermore, Bendrix claims that he "should have been overjoyed" if Henry found out about their affair while he and Sarah were together because "one gets so hopelessly tired of deception." Bendrix sees being honest with Henry as a means of making his relationship with Sarah morally legitimate because then they would no longer need to lie about it.

In the end, Sarah and Bendrix do come clean about their relationship—but after centering their relationship around lies and deceit for so long, they find that they can no longer have an honest relationship with each other. Sarah, although unhappy, is sustained by the thought that she is doing the right thing by keeping her promise to God to end her relationship with Bendrix forever, but Bendrix lashes out and tries to find ways to punish both of them. When Bendrix brings Henry what he believes is evidence that Sarah is having an affair with someone else, he also admits that he and Sarah had had an affair. Perturbed by Henry's lack of apparent anger at this revelation, Bendrix feels the "poison [...] beginning to work in [him] again" and hurls insults at Henry before finally asking, "Why don't you get angry, Henry?" Bendrix clearly wants Henry to get worked up; Henry's anger would, in Bendrix's mind, lead to some sort of punishment that would formally put an end to Bendrix's need to be dishonest with Henry and thus give him a clean slate. Later, Bendrix continues to say wild things to make people angry at him for his affair. After Sarah's death, Bendrix has an outburst at both Henry and Father Crompton, a Catholic priest who comes to visit, calling Sarah a "tart" and blaming Crompton and God for "[taking] her away from all of us." This is meant to start a fight and reveals a continued desire for someone to

blame and punish him for his role in Sarah's fate.

Sarah, on the other hand, makes it clear that her desire to live honestly and love openly trumps her desire to reignite her relationship with Bendrix. In her final letter to him, she tells him that he "taught [her] to want the truth," meaning he taught her to want an honest relationship, which is not something she can have with him because of her marriage vows and fierce desire not to hurt Henry by leaving him. For this reason, Sarah refuses to reignite her relationship with Bendrix even though she continues to love him.



SYMBOLS

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



THE DESERT

In her diary, Sarah makes numerous allusions to a desert that she and Bendrix are wandering through after she leaves him. This desert represents a life without love, particularly the love they shared together during their affair. In her diary, Sarah describes them wandering through a desert looking for watering holes, meaning that they are looking for some kind of love that resembles the love they once shared. Sarah's greatest fear is that they will spend the rest of their lives in this barren, loveless desert because of the vow she made to God—years ago, after finding Bendrix seemingly dead and trapped under a door after an air raid, Sarah had prayed to God that if he would save Bendrix's life, she would cut off their affair. Sarah also asks in her diary, "If one could believe in God, would he fill the desert?" This shows her growing belief that the only source of relief left to her is in God's love, which might be an acceptable replacement for Bendrix's. Sarah also notes that "In the desert there's no time," which means the negative experience of being alone in the desert transcends any concept of past, present, or future; there is only a seemingly endless feeling of loss, isolation, and despair as one wanders alone. Sarah also notes that "the desert is full of churches and public houses," both of which are places people typically go to try and drown their sorrow (through drinking in public houses) and find love (such as when Sarah begins spending time in church trying to find relief in God's love as a replacement for Bendrix's)—even if the relief and experience of love found there is momentary and fleeting. As she wavers between her newfound belief in God and her "corrupt human love" for Bendrix, Sarah considers an alternative route out of the desert: call Bendrix and start their affair over again. However, because of her commitment to keeping her vow to God, Sarah doesn't do this, condemning both herself and Bendrix to dwell alone in the desert forever.



VICTORIAN STAINED GLASS

The old Victorian-era stained glass window on Bendrix's door symbolizes Sarah and Henry's marriage—something that perhaps should have been destroyed but somehow remained intact. Likewise, the stained glass window on Bendrix's door has somehow survived all the turmoil and air raids that rocked the building during World War II, during which Bendrix and Sarah had their affair. It is notable that Greene specifically describes the stained glass as "Victorian," an era famous for being especially traditional and conservative and which placed a huge emphasis on the sanctity of marriage. The Victorian era is also notoriously considered a "sexless" era when sexual relationships outside of marriage were prohibited and even sex within marriage was a taboo subject. In keeping with this reference, Henry and Sarah's marriage is sexless; Henry cannot satisfy Sarah, so they no longer have sex. In 1944, on the night that Sarah and Bendrix's affair ends, a bomb destroys the front of Bendrix's building and knocks out just about all the glass from the windows, but the stained glass remains intact. Bendrix, in a way, is a bomb in Sarah and Henry's marriage, destroying everything but the marriage itself, which Henry is determined to keep alive and which Sarah agrees to stay in.

Furthermore, the stained glass makes an appearance at key moments having to do with Sarah and Henry's marriage in the book. The first time it appears is when Bendrix leaves his apartment and sees Henry for the first time since the affair ended. That same night, Henry tells Bendrix of his suspicion that Sarah is having an affair and that he's looking into hiring a private detective. Even though Bendrix encourages Henry to either contact the detective or to let him go to the detective in Henry's place, Henry decides to burn the detective's address in a symbolic gesture of renewed trust in his wife's faithfulness. The second time the window makes an appearance is when Bendrix's apartment is hit by a bomb and he notices that even though there is glass all over the floor, the stained glass window remains undamaged. Little did Bendrix know that at this moment, Sarah was inside praying to God and promising to end her sinful affair with Bendrix and do the right thing by returning to her husband. The stained glass window's last appearance is when Bendrix returns to his apartment after staying the night with Henry the day Sarah passed away. When he enters his room, Bendrix sees a letter from Sarah on his desk. In the letter, Sarah tells Bendrix (who had recently asked her to run away with him) that she can't see him ever again because of her marriage. The final mention of the stained glass window then, coincides with Sarah's final verdict: she will remain committed to her marriage. The stained glass window thus highlights Greene's belief in the strength of traditional marriage to withstand anything when both partners are committed to maintaining it.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin edition of *The End of the Affair* published in 1951.

Book 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

●● If hate is not too large a term to use in relation to any human being, I hated Henry—I hated his wife Sarah too. And he, I suppose, came soon after the events of that evening to hate me: as he surely at times must have hated his wife and that other, in whom in those days we were lucky enough not to believe. So this is a record of hate far more than of love, and if I come to say anything in favour of Henry and Sarah I can be trusted: I am writing against the bias because it is my professional pride to prefer the near-truth, even to the expression of my near-hate.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Henry Miles, Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

In the opening paragraphs of the story, Bendrix steps out of his apartment building and spots Henry standing alone in the rain. Bendrix decides to greet Henry in a friendly way, but Bendrix shares his true feelings for Henry in these lines. Bendrix reveals that he hates both Henry and Sarah while setting the tone for the rest of the story by calling it "a record of hate far more than of love." However, the mention of love indicates that love does indeed exist alongside hate in the story. Furthermore, Bendrix shares that he is not the only one who hates in the story: Henry will come to hate Bendrix and Sarah, implying that Bendrix and Sarah wrong Henry together.

Bendrix also displays anxiety to make sure his audience knows that this is a "record of hate." He assures the reader that anything nice he says about either Sarah or Henry is merely the product of his noble and professional attempt to write "against the bias." The latter half of the final sentence also implies that Bendrix realizes he won't always be shown in the best light either. He says that he's willing to share the "near-truth, *even to the expression of my near-hate*" (emphasis added). This shows that Bendrix recognizes that a lot of readers will perceive him as a negative force because he is full of hate in the same way one would expect a villain to be full of hate.

☛ The fool, I thought, the fool to see nothing strange in a year and a half's interval. Less than five hundred yards of flat grass separated our two 'sides'. Had it never occurred to him to say to Sarah, 'How's Bendrix doing? What about asking Bendrix in?' and hadn't her replies ever seemed to him... odd, evasive, suspicious? I had fallen out of their sight as completely as a stone in a pond. I suppose the ripples may have disturbed Sarah for a week, a month, but Henry's blinkers were firmly tied. I had hated his blinkers even when I had benefited from them, knowing that others could benefit too.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles, Henry Miles

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

After they greet one another, Henry asks Bendrix how long it's been since the last time they met and Bendrix reveals that it's been nearly two years. Henry expresses wonder at how long it has been, but he shows no suspicion and asks no questions. As these lines show, much of Bendrix's disdain (or even hatred) for Henry lies in the fact that Henry is trusting to the point that he appears stupid. Henry sees no reason for suspicion in a situation that Bendrix sees as being fraught with reasons to be jealous. In Bendrix's mind, his sudden and conspicuous absence from Henry and Sarah's lives is clear evidence that he and Sarah had been romantically involved and then ended it. However, because Henry is so trusting and naïve, he doesn't recognize Bendrix's absence as evidence of wrongdoing.

Bendrix also makes an important revelation about his jealousy. He realizes that he was not the only man to benefit from Henry's "blinkers" (which here means Henry's implicit trust in Sarah which prevents him from seeing clear evidence of her infidelity); other men, as Bendrix knows, have taken advantage of Henry's trust in Sarah to have affairs with her themselves. In a way, Bendrix holds Henry responsible for allowing Sarah to have other affairs which, in Bendrix's mind, is a slight against himself as well.

Book 1, Chapter 5 Quotes

☛ She had often disconcerted me with the truth. In the days when we were in love, I would try to get her to say more than the truth—that our affair would never end, that one day we should marry. I wouldn't have believed her, but I would have liked to hear the words on her tongue, perhaps only to give me the satisfaction of rejecting them myself. But she never played that game of make-believe [...].

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after seeing Bendrix in her house with Henry, Sarah invites Bendrix out to lunch. When Bendrix tells her she's a few minutes late and should have taken the tube because it's faster, she abruptly tells him that she didn't want to be fast. This abrupt and almost offensive honesty makes Bendrix think about how "disconcert[ing]" that habit had been during their affair. Bendrix recognizes a certain sort of irony in the fact that Sarah showed such a dedication to telling the truth in a fundamentally deceitful (because adulterous) relationship. While Sarah seemed comfortable living with this irony, Bendrix wanted to exploit it. He wanted to make Sarah lie to him for the sake of being able to shut her down and confront her with her own dishonesty. This attitude and habit, however, inevitably soured their relationship and Bendrix thus punished himself as well as Sarah.

Bendrix also reveals his own belief in the idea that their affair was doomed. He recognizes that any of Sarah's promises of forever or a happily ever after would be false, which means Bendrix recognized that their relationship would end somewhere. This is because the affair was adulterous: if Sarah ever *was* going to leave her husband out of love for Bendrix, it certainly would have happened by that point. However, not even in trying to manipulate Sarah into lying that Bendrix broach the topic of Sarah leaving Henry because even Bendrix is aware of what the answer would be.

Book 1, Chapter 6 Quotes

☛ When I began to realize how often we quarrelled, how often I picked on her with nervous irritation, I became aware that our love was doomed: love had turned into a love-affair with a beginning and an end. [...] As long as I could make-believe that love lasted, I was happy—I think I was even good to live with, and so love did last. But if love had to die, I wanted it to die quickly. It was as though our love were a small creature caught in a trap and bleeding to death: I had to shut my eyes and wring its neck.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 25

Explanation and Analysis

After reminiscing on various elements of his relationship with Sarah (including her disconcerting habit of being honest and his growing hatred of Henry for being so blind and trusting), Bendrix recalls his role in the relationship's demise. According to Bendrix, he not only recognized that their relationship would not last forever, but actively hurried it towards its conclusion. Rather than savoring the time they had together, Bendrix would "pick[] on [Sarah] with nervous irritation" to start arguments. While it is debatable that any adulterous affair could ever really be healthy, Bendrix's revelation of his cruelty confirms that their relationship had some complex toxic elements to it that went beyond Sarah's marriage. This passage also reveals that Bendrix recognizes a difference between "love" and a "love-affair": love is something that can be had forever and doesn't necessarily die out with absence, but an affair is something that *does* end. Bendrix's realization that his relationship with Sarah will end increased any feelings of insecurity that he did have, driving him to continue being cruel to her as punishment for his own negative feelings.

Bendrix's description of trying to play "make-believe that love lasted" harkens back to a previous comment he made about trying to get Sarah to say that their relationship would last forever. This reveals that not only did Bendrix want the satisfaction of being able to call Sarah a liar for making these statements, but he wanted her to make these promises to feed into his own fantasies about their future. While Bendrix might not have had the power to make their relationship last forever, he did have the power to drive it to its end, as shown in his final comment about "wringing [love's] neck."

Book 1, Chapter 7 Quotes

☹️ Jealousy, or so I have always believed, exists only with desire. [...] But I suppose there are different kinds of desire. My desire now was nearer hatred than love, and Henry I had reason to believe, from what Sarah once told me, had long ceased to feel any physical desire for her. And yet, I think, in those days he was as jealous as I was. His desire was simply for companionship: he felt for the first time excluded from Sarah's confidence: he was worried and despairing—he didn't know what was going on or what was going to happen. He was living in a terrible insecurity. To that extent his plight was worse than mine. I had the security of possessing nothing. I could have no more than I had lost, while he still owned her presence at the table, the sound of her feet on the stairs, the opening and closing of doors, the kiss on the cheek—I doubt if there was much else now, but what a lot to a starving man is just that much.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles, Henry Miles

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 31-32

Explanation and Analysis

Bendrix often thinks about the nature of jealousy, and this particular passage is an exploration for what shape his jealousy was taking in the days after Henry shared his fears that Sarah was having an affair. Bendrix has hired a private detective to follow Sarah to learn the truth for himself because even though they're no longer in a relationship, Bendrix still feels possessive over Sarah. This is the first time that Bendrix truly recognizes that he and Henry are united in a common cause even though Henry had chosen not to hire a detective himself. This also reveals their different attitudes toward Sarah: Bendrix's jealousy is rooted in passion and Henry's is rooted in a "desire [...]" for companionship." In this instance, Bendrix and Henry's roles are also reversed. Henry, who used to be very insecure during his relationship with Sarah, now feels secure and confident. On the other hand, Henry is riddled with insecurity and doubt.

Bendrix views Sarah as something that can be possessed or owned. He writes that Henry "owned" Sarah's kisses and (perhaps most importantly) her "presence" in their house. Unlike Bendrix, Henry gets to live next to and surrounded by Sarah. Bendrix, a "starving man," recognizes how valuable this is only because it's something he had lost. Because of this, Bendrix is able to sympathize with Henry, who is now faced with losing it.

Book 2, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞☞ ‘Do you mind?’ I asked her, and she shook her head. I didn’t really know what I meant—I think I had an idea that the sight of Henry might have roused remorse, but she had a wonderful way of eliminating remorse. Unlike the rest of us she was unhaunted by guilt. In her view when a thing was done, it was done: remorse died with the act. She would have thought it unreasonable of Henry, if he had caught us, to be angry for more than a moment.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Henry Miles, Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after the first time they have sex, Henry goes over to Sarah’s house and they have sex again while Henry is in the room above them. Once they’re done, Henry suddenly appears in the doorway to say hello; evidently, Henry doesn’t suspect a thing. Once Henry leaves, Bendrix asks Sarah if she “mind[s]” it. Bendrix might actually have been comforted by Sarah’s remorse—that sense of remorse of having betrayed Henry might also prevent her from betraying Bendrix in a similar way. However, as Bendrix notes, Sarah does not feel remorse for having betrayed Henry because, in her mind, it is not a real betrayal. As Bendrix has noted in the past, Sarah has an “enormous loyalty” to Henry which she shows by refusing to say anything bad about him. Sarah cares for Henry in her own way, but that tenderness for him doesn’t prevent her from finding personal and sexual fulfillment outside of their marriage.

This description of Sarah’s lack of remorse also reveals her lack of jealousy. In Sarah’s view, once a thing is “done,” there is no rational reason to be mad about it. This means that even if Henry or Bendrix went out and slept with another woman, Sarah would see no point in hanging onto remorse or even anger. She accepts this as a part of human nature—of course Henry and/or Bendrix would look for fulfillment somewhere else if they can’t get it with her. For Sarah, this wouldn’t necessarily mean they loved her any less and so there would be no reason to hold onto anger.

Book 2, Chapter 2 Quotes

☞☞ I am a jealous man—it seems stupid to write these words in what is, I suppose, a long record of jealousy, jealousy of Henry, jealousy of Sarah and jealousy of that other whom Mr. Parkis was so maladroitly pursuing. Now that all this belongs to the past, I feel my jealousy of Henry only when memories become particularly vivid (because I swear that if we had been married, with her loyalty and my desire, we could have been happy for a lifetime), but there still remains jealousy of my rival—a melodramatic word painfully inadequate to express the unbearable complacency, confidence, and success he always enjoys. Sometimes I think he wouldn’t even recognize me as part of the picture, and I feel an enormous desire to draw attention to myself, to shout in his ear, ‘You can’t ignore me. Here I am. Whatever happened later, Sarah loved me then.’

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Mr. Parkis, Henry Miles, Sarah Miles

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

After receiving a scrap of what appears to be a love letter written by Sarah to an unnamed man attached to a report from Mr. Parkis, Bendrix feels himself overwhelmed with jealousy and hatred. Bendrix’s observation that this story seems like “a long record of jealousy” hearkens back to his initial description of it as a “record of hate.” This highlights just how closely hatred and jealousy are linked. Furthermore, Bendrix’s jealousy, particularly of his “rival,” transcends all else, including his jealousy of Henry. Although Sarah was loyal to Henry (in her way), she was not in love with him. Bendrix fears that Sarah is in love with his “rival,” whoever that may be. What Bendrix wants even more than sex with Sarah is her love, and he can’t stand the idea that anyone else might have it.

Bendrix does not consider his rival a single, solitary individual, but rather the idea of an individual. He is haunted by the idea of another man winning Sarah’s love, but not a specific person. Bendrix sees himself as one element in the larger “picture” of Sarah’s life. More than just about anything else, Bendrix yearns to be acknowledged as a huge and important part of that picture, hence his desire to remind anyone with whom Sarah might be in a relationship that *he* had been the one she loved once. Bendrix wants to haunt Sarah’s future partners just as they (or the idea of them) had haunted him when Bendrix and Sarah were together.

“I was jealous even of the past, of which she spoke to me frankly as it came up—the affairs meant nothing at all (except possibly the unconscious desire to find that final spasm Henry had so woefully failed to evoke). [...] There was a time when she would laugh at my anger, simply refusing to believe that it was genuine, just as she refused to believe in her own beauty, and I would be just as angry because she refused to be jealous of my past or my possible future. I refused to believe that love could take any other form than mine: I measured love by the extent of my jealousy, and by that standard of course she could not love me at all.”

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 42-43

Explanation and Analysis

After considering his own jealous nature, Bendrix turns his attention to Sarah’s disconcerting lack of jealousy. For Bendrix, not even the assurance that Sarah’s past affairs had only been a way of finding sexual fulfillment (which Henry was never able to give her) is enough to dispel his jealousy. Sarah, however, is willing to talk “frankly” about her past affairs, which shows that she sees no reason for Bendrix to be jealous or else she would presumably never dream of bringing them up. Jealousy is not something Sarah experiences naturally, which makes it difficult for her to understand it when she sees it in Bendrix. In fact, not even a concerted effort on Bendrix’s part to say things that might make Sarah jealous elicits an angry or jealous response. Instead, Sarah’s indifference fuels Bendrix’s jealousy and anger.

The extent of Bendrix’s unhealthy beliefs about love are revealed in the final sentence in this passage. For Bendrix, love only really exists when there is jealousy, and the extent of that jealousy measures the extent of love. Sarah’s lack of jealousy added to Bendrix’s insecurities about their relationship because it seemed to him like proof that she didn’t really love him—at least not the way he loved her. This also implies that Bendrix is incapable of being in a truly healthy relationship. Jealousy only exists where there is insecurity, and if Bendrix measures love by jealousy then he must always be insecure in his relationships. Similarly, his partner must experience the same level of insecurity as a mark of their love for him.

“You’d make my bed for me?”

‘Perhaps.’

Insecurity is the worst sense that lovers feel: sometimes the most humdrum desireless marriage seems better. Insecurity twists meanings and poisons trust. In a closely beleaguered city every sentry is a potential traitor. Even before the days of Mr. Parkis I was trying to check on her: I would catch her out in small lies, evasions that meant nothing except her fear of me. For every lie I would magnify into a betrayal, and even in the most open statement I would read hidden meanings. Because I couldn’t bear the thought of her so much as touching another man, I feared it all the time, and I saw intimacy in the most casual movement of the hand.

‘Wouldn’t you want me to be happy, rather than miserable?’ she asked with unbearable logic.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Mr. Parkis, Sarah Miles

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 43

Explanation and Analysis

During one of their arguments about Bendrix’s jealousy (and Sarah’s lack thereof), Bendrix challenges Sarah by asking her if she would “make [his] bed for [him]” if he were to sleep with another woman and Sarah responds that she might. This adds to Bendrix’s already rather extreme feelings of insecurity within their relationship. However, Bendrix seems to understand that his insecurity clouds his judgment and ability to recognize what Sarah actually means with her answer. To Bendrix, Sarah’s “Perhaps” implies that she would be okay with him sleeping with other people because by doing so he would be giving her permission to do the same. For Sarah, however, her answer of “Perhaps” means that would be alright with him having sex with another woman simply because she wants him to be happy—a sentiment she assumes he shares.

Bendrix’s description of trying to catch Sarah in lies and then blowing them up into major betrayals reflects his earlier description of picking on her with “nervous irritation.” Because there was so much about their relationship that made Bendrix uncomfortable, he sought out ways to make Sarah uncomfortable, too. Bendrix obsessively sought out evidence of Sarah’s infidelity or disloyalty even though he was terrified of what would happen when he found it. Bendrix’s constant fear illustrates how damaging and painful jealousy and passion can cause once they’ve taken root.

☛ I have never understood why people who can swallow the enormous improbability of a personal God boggle at a personal Devil. I have known so intimately the way that demon works in my imagination. No statement that Sarah ever made was proof against his cunning doubts, though he would usually wait till she had gone to utter them. He would prompt our quarrels long before they occurred: he was not Sarah's enemy so much as the enemy of love, and isn't that what the devil is supposed to be? [...] If there is a God who uses us and makes us his saints out of such material as we are, the devil too may have his ambitions; he may dream of training even such a person as myself, even poor Parkis, into being his saints, ready with borrowed fanaticism to destroy love wherever we find it.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles, Mr. Parkis

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

After describing a failed attempt to have sex with a prostitute to spite Sarah and make her jealous, Bendrix contemplates the forces that drove him to do things that would imperil his relationship with her. The “personal Devil” Bendrix refers to is his jealousy, which came to be the defining feature of his and Sarah's affair. Interestingly, Bendrix says this devil wasn't necessarily “Sarah's enemy,” but was actually “the enemy of love” in general. This means that whenever Bendrix is truly in love, he risks falling victim to this “personal Devil” and his crippling jealousy. This also reaffirms Bendrix's earlier statement about his belief that jealousy is the true measure of love and makes a powerful statement about how love, when we truly open ourselves up to it, requires vulnerability; unfortunately, in Bendrix's case, his vulnerability took the form of insecurity and jealousy, which drove him to do things that would hurt Sarah.

One of the key themes in this story is Bendrix's spiritual journey. He repeatedly makes comments not believing in God, but he seems to embrace the idea of a devil as it helps him explain the self-destructive nature of his jealousy. According to Bendrix, he has learned from experience that personal devils exist, but he still insists that the existence of God is an “enormous improbability.” Bendrix also equates the idea of God with, meaning God is a positive force. If the only reason Bendrix accepts the existence of a devil is because he has experienced that devil's influence, then it follows that Bendrix only has difficulty believing in God (a positive force) because he has not experienced God's influence—or at least he hasn't experienced what he believes God's influence would be. Part of Bendrix's

spiritual journey will involve learning to accept that God's influence doesn't always take an apparently positive shape; in fact, sometimes God's influence is painful and difficult to understand.

Book 3, Chapter 2 Quotes

☛ He is jealous of the past and the present and the future. His love is like a medieval chastity belt: only when he is there with me, in me, does he feel safe. If only I could make him feel secure, then we could love peacefully, happily, not savagely, inordinately, and the desert would recede out of sight. For a lifetime perhaps.

Related Characters: Sarah Miles (speaker), Maurice Bendrix

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

Thanks to Mr. Parkis, Bendrix is able to get his hands on Sarah's diary and this passage is in the first entry (12 June 1944). Written just days before the end of their relationship, this passage reveals the emotional toll Bendrix's jealousy was taking on Sarah. She describes his jealousy as a “medieval chastity belt,” meaning that it is restraining and even uncomfortable. Sarah's observation that Bendrix only feels “safe” when he is physically with her echoes Bendrix's own description of how his imagination (thanks in part to his “personal Devil”) starts to run away with him almost as soon as Sarah leaves. This highlights how jealousy ruins happiness (both long-term and short-term) in relationships.

Sarah writes about a symbolic desert, which comes to represent a life without the love that exists between them. Sarah can see this desert, meaning she can see what life will be like if they don't learn how to love together “peacefully.” As it is, because of Bendrix's jealousy and insecurity, they love “savagely,” and it hurts both of them. At this point, there is a way for both Sarah and Bendrix to avoid having to live in the desert: Bendrix must learn how to let go of his jealousy and possessiveness. If he is able to do that, then his desire to enjoy lifelong love with Sarah will become a possibility because, as Sarah notes, “the desert would recede out of sight.”

☛ A vow's not all that important—a vow to somebody I've never known, to somebody I don't really believe in. Nobody will know that I've broken a vow, except me and Him—and He doesn't exist, does he? He can't exist. You can't have a merciful God and this despair.

Related Characters: Sarah Miles (speaker), Maurice Bendrix

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

In her diary, Sarah records the events leading up to her decision to leave Bendrix. She also grapples with her growing belief in God, especially after making a vow to end her affair if God allows Bendrix to live after she finds him seemingly dead during an air raid. After making the vow and seeing that Bendrix does indeed live, Sarah considers breaking it and going back to Bendrix. There is a level of irony in the fact that Sarah feels compelled to honor a vow to someone she still professes to believe “can’t exist,” but at the same time, she chooses not to honor her wedding vows to her very real husband. This implies that Sarah considers her wedding vows as temporal, but even though she is fighting against her faith in God, she considers vows to him to be far more meaningful. A relationship with God, then, would transcend any earthly relationship in Sarah’s mind.

This passage also perfectly captures Sarah’s struggle *against* developing faith and belief in God. Even though she vows that God “can’t exist” now that his existence would prevent her from gratifying her desire to go to Bendrix, she clearly had enough latent belief in God to turn to him in a time of trouble. This also highlights how developing faith sometimes means making sacrifices—difficult, painful sacrifices, with no guarantee of immediate reward. It is the pain and difficulty of self-sacrifice associated with belief in God that characterize the spiritual journeys of both Sarah (shown in her diary) and Bendrix (shown after Sarah’s death).

Book 3, Chapter 7 Quotes

☛ But was it me he loved, or You? For he hated in me the things You hate. He was on Your side all the time without knowing it. You willed our separation, but he willed it too. He worked for it with his anger and his jealousy, and he worked for it with his love. For he gave me so much love, and I gave him so much love that soon there wasn’t anything left, when we’d finished, but You. For either of us. I might have taken a lifetime spending a little love at a time, eking it out here and there, on this man and that. But even the first time, in the hotel near Paddington, we spent all we had. You were there, teaching us to squander, like You taught the rich man, so that one day we might have nothing left except this love of You. But You are too good to me. When I ask You for pain, You give me peace. Give it him too. Give him my peace—he needs it more.

Related Characters: Sarah Miles (speaker), Maurice Bendrix

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

In the second to last entry in her diary, Sarah addresses God and reveals just how much her belief in him has evolved since her separation from Bendrix (or Maurice, as Sarah calls him). It is worth noting that Bendrix once said that Sarah always called him “you” during their relationship, and now that is what she calls God. This highlights how Sarah was actively trying to transfer her love of Bendrix to God, which is something she promised to do in the vow she made in exchange for Bendrix’s life. Sarah takes this a step further by claiming that Bendrix and God ultimately had the same plan: to teach Sarah to stop “eking [love] out here and there, on this man and that” and instead find fulfillment in the love of God. Sarah believes that through Bendrix, God was emptying her of her will to sin in order to fill her up with belief and acceptance of God’s reality.

Despite her early struggles against accepting God, in this passage Sarah shows that she has fully embraced God and finds peace in her newfound belief. Sarah’s relationship with Bendrix was characterized by his jealousy and lack of trust in her, but her relationship with God is characterized by the absolute trust she puts in him. In learning to let go of trying to keep control over her own life, Sarah has found peace and wishes this same peace on Bendrix. However, for Bendrix to experience the same thing, he too would need to learn to let go of his need for control and possession and instead allow himself to be possessed by a greater force.

Book 4, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ [...] turning as I left the church and seeing her huddled there at the edge of the candlelight, like a beggar come in for warmth, I could imagine a God blessing her: or a God loving her. When I began to write our story down, I thought I was writing a record of hate, but somehow the hate has got mislaid and all I know is that in spite of her mistakes and her unreliability, she was better than most. It's just as well that one of us should believe in her: she never did in herself.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 107

Explanation and Analysis

After Bendrix calls Sarah to tell her that he wants to run away with her, Sarah runs out into a storm to seek sanctuary from Bendrix in a church. Bendrix, however, follows her to tell her of his plans to take her away. It is here that Bendrix sees Sarah for the last time. After reading about Sarah's continued love for him in her diary, Bendrix is elated and in the ecstasy of the moment his hatred is "mislaid." In his own love for Sarah, Bendrix shows a greater openness to the possibility of God's existence; because Bendrix loves Sarah so much (and because she has such a great need for love), it is easier for him to accept that God exists and loves her, as well.

Bendrix notes that this story is supposed to be a "record of hate," but that it's not quite turning out that way. Telling this story serves the double purpose of helping Bendrix mourn the past and forcing him to take a closer look at his hatred. Admitting that he has "mislaid" his hatred indicates that Bendrix is beginning to understand that love played a much more prominent role in his history with Sarah than he previously gave it credit for.

Book 5, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ I wanted her burnt up, I wanted to be able to say, Resurrect that body if you can. My jealousy had not finished, like Henry's, with her death. It was as if she were alive still, in the company of a lover she had preferred to me. How I wished I could send Parkis after her to interrupt their eternity.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Mr. Parkis, Henry Miles, Sarah Miles

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 112

Explanation and Analysis

Just hours after Sarah passed away, Henry called Bendrix over to his house because he needed company. There, Henry told Bendrix that he planned to have Sarah's remains cremated but was worried because in her final hours Sarah had asked for a priest (they did not, however, summon one for her). In this passage, Bendrix is enraged with Sarah and sees her death as a betrayal. Bendrix wants Sarah "burnt up" because in his mind it's the only way to keep God from being able to possess her body through resurrection. Bendrix's desire to challenge God is both a tacit admission that God exists (something which Bendrix has been fighting through most of the narrative) and an indication that Bendrix believes God is a force that he is in competition with and must fight against.

Bendrix also reveals his belief in the human soul. He wants to "interrupt" Sarah's eternity with her new lover (God) by sending Parkis after them in the same way he sent Parkis after her alleged earthly lover. This desire indicates that Bendrix doesn't necessarily see Sarah herself—her soul, personality, and character—as dead: she is just gone away out of Bendrix's reach. For Bendrix, belief in the existence of souls and an afterlife is convenient because it leaves open the possibility that he could get revenge and punish Sarah and God for causing him so much pain.

☞ I thought, I've got to be careful. I mustn't be like Richard Smythe, I mustn't hate, for if I were really to hate I would believe, and if I were to believe, what a triumph for You and her. This is to play act, talking about revenge and jealousy: it's just something to fill the brain with, so that I can forget the absoluteness of her death. [...] She had lost all our memories for ever, and it was as though by dying she had robbed me of part of myself. I was losing my individuality. It was the first stage of my own death, the memories dropping off like gangrened limbs.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Richard Smythe, Sarah Miles

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 112-113

Explanation and Analysis

After Sarah's death, Bendrix becomes more aware of the fact that he is turning more and more of his thoughts to God. In keeping with his belief that he is in some sort of competition, Bendrix thinks that if he accepts God, then he loses while Sarah and God "triumph." For once, Bendrix fights against hate because he believes that one cannot hate what is not there—and God most certainly is not there (or at least this is what Bendrix *wants* to believe). Bendrix even tries to convince himself that he only thinks he hates Sarah and is jealous of God because it helps him cope with the "absoluteness of her death." Without a belief in God, Sarah is simply gone, out of Bendrix's reach for eternity. If he were to accept and believe in God, however, then Bendrix would have to confront the idea that some part of Sarah does exist and is with someone she ultimately loved more than Bendrix: God.

Sarah's death kickstarts an identity crisis in Bendrix. He writes that when Sarah died, she took "a part of [him]" with her. The part of Bendrix that Sarah took was his comfortable unbelief. As Bendrix begins, against his will, to accept God, he also begins to question his past and what it meant, which is why he feels like his memories are falling away like rotten limbs. The Bendrix of the past is dying off, but a new Bendrix—one who believes in God even though it provides him no comfort—is beginning to emerge.

☞ 'Oh, she doesn't belong to anybody now,' he said, and suddenly I saw her for what she was—a piece of refuse waiting to be cleared away: if you needed a bit of hair you could take it, or trim her nails if nail trimmings had value to you. Like a saint's her bones could be divided up—if anybody required them. She was going to be burnt soon, so why shouldn't everybody have what he wanted first? What a fool I had been during three years to imagine that in any way I had possessed her. We are possessed by nobody, not even by ourselves.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix, Richard Smythe (speaker), Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

Richard Smythe came to Henry's house to see Sarah's body the day after she passed away and snipped a piece of her hair off as a memento. When Bendrix saw Richard holding the lock of Sarah's hair, Richard explained that he had the freedom to take it because Sarah no longer "belong[ed] to

anybody" anymore. Bendrix's realization shows a sudden shift in his belief about the human body. During his affair with Sarah, Bendrix had always believed that if he held her body in that moment, then he possessed her entirely. That's why he would begin to feel jealous as soon as she left to go home or run errands—he no longer had direct possession of her body, and thus anyone else could take her away. Richard's words, however, force Bendrix to understand that Sarah's body was never actually Sarah; it was and still is a material object that, upon her death, can be divided up between all who want her. Sarah—the laughing, beautiful, intelligent, loyal, and loving Sarah—is an immaterial thing that transcends the physical limitations of her earthly body and as such cannot be owned.

This thought also makes Bendrix question his past jealousy. What had seemed so logical to him during Sarah's life (that what she did with her body had the most meaning, rather than what she did with her heart and mind) no longer seems to make sense. Bendrix feels like a "fool" because he had placed so much importance on the possession of Sarah's body that he had abused her heart and soul with his jealousy and endless suspicion. And all that, he discovers now, was for nothing—he never actually stood a chance at possessing Sarah.

☞ Sarah had really believed that the end began when she saw my body. She would never have admitted that the end had started long before: the fewer telephone calls for this or that inadequate reason, the quarrels I began with her because I had realized the danger of love ending. We had begun to look beyond love, but it was only I who was aware of the way we were being driven. If the bomb had fallen a year earlier, she wouldn't have made that promise. She would have torn her nails trying to release me. When we get to the end of human beings we have to delude ourselves into a belief in God, like a gourmet who demands more complex sauces with his food. [...] I thought, she wanted me to have a second chance and here it is: the empty life, odourless, antiseptic, the life of a prison, and I accused her as though her prayers had really worked the change: what did I do to you that you had to condemn me to life?

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 119

Explanation and Analysis

Returning to his apartment building the day after Sarah's death, Bendrix contemplates the vow she made to God in exchange for his life and how things between them had changed even before she made that vow. Bendrix maintains his earlier belief that their love was doomed and would have burnt itself out soon enough, which is why he finds it hard to believe that Sarah thought the beginning of the end was when she found Bendrix trapped under a door. Bendrix believes that Sarah's decision to turn to prayer instead of "[tearing] her nails" to save him indicates just how little she still loved him. To Bendrix, Sarah was only willing to turn to prayer because she had given up on their relationship, and her promise to God offered her a graceful way out of a doomed romance. This, however, ignores the fact that Sarah had expressed a growing interest in God in her diary days before Bendrix was injured. Sarah's prayers, then, had nothing to do with giving up on Bendrix and everything to do with her growing belief that God was real and could help her.

Bendrix writes that he accused Sarah "as though her prayers had really worked." This illustrates his continuing struggle with his belief that God was a real force that had played a role in the end of Bendrix's relationship with Sarah and his determination to fight off this belief. More than anything, Bendrix wants an explanation for why things have turned out the way they have, but he is unwilling to admit that God may have had a part in it. This stems from Bendrix's continued belief that he is in some kind of competition and in order to win, he must maintain his atheism.

☝ I've caught belief like a disease. I've fallen into belief like I fell in love. I've never loved before as I love you, and I've never believed in anything before as I believe now. I'm sure. I've never been sure before about anything. When you came in at the door with the blood on your face, I became sure. Once and for all. Even though I didn't know it at time. I fought belief for longer than I fought love, but I haven't any fight left.

Related Characters: Sarah Miles (speaker), Maurice Bendrix

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

When Bendrix enters his apartment, he finds a letter from

Sarah that had gotten lost in the mail and so was delivered late. In the letter, Sarah writes that she can't run away with Bendrix and describes her newfound acceptance of God. Sarah describes the development of her belief as a "disease," meaning that it was entirely out of her control. Once it took root, belief had consumed Sarah entirely, especially in her final days. While her belief in God did not negate her love for Bendrix, it did prevent her from committing the sin of divorce and from breaking her vow to God to gratify her desire to be with Bendrix. Because of that, belief was a painful experience for Sarah, much like a disease can be painful.

Sarah writes that she "fought belief for longer than [she] fought love." Both love and belief in God require similar forms of self-surrender and a willingness to be open and vulnerable to pain. Sarah fought love in her lifetime because she knew that it would be doomed by her unwillingness to divorce Henry; love, then, would inevitably end in pain. Similarly, Sarah fought faith because belief in God made her vow to stay away from Bendrix more meaningful—her fear of future punishment prevented her from going back to Bendrix, even though she desperately wanted to.

Book 5, Chapter 3 Quotes

☝ There had been a time when I hated Henry. My hatred now seemed petty. Henry was a victim as much as I was a victim, and the victor was this grim man in the silly collar.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Father Crompton, Henry Miles, Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

Henry called Bendrix to come over when a Catholic priest showed up to discuss Sarah's funeral. The priest, Father Crompton, explained that Sarah had expressed a desire to join the church and therefore qualified for a Catholic burial. Seeing the priest, Bendrix becomes enraged. To Bendrix, Father Crompton represents God himself and is therefore responsible for luring Sarah away and ruining Bendrix's relationship with her. Father Crompton also embodies Bendrix's ideas about Catholicism: it is both "grim" and "silly." It's grim because it is a very serious belief system that requires a lot of self-sacrifice. At the same time, it is "silly" because it means believing in God, and Bendrix is still fighting to believe that God is nothing but a ridiculous idea.

Bendrix notes that his hatred of Henry feels “petty” in comparison to his hatred for Father Crompton. This harkens back to Bendrix’s realization about the futility of trying to possess Sarah’s body. Bendrix had been jealous of and hated Henry because he had possession of Sarah’s physical presence. Father Crompton, however, found a way to possess Sarah’s soul through God. That makes him a much more serious and insidious threat. Furthermore, because Sarah chose her love of and belief in God over her love of Bendrix, Bendrix sees Father Crompton as the “victor.” In fact, Henry and Bendrix are now united as victims and Bendrix is able to place blame on Father Crompton for their mutual victimhood.

Book 5, Chapter 4 Quotes

☹️ Hate lay like boredom over the evening ahead. I had committed myself: without love I would have to go through the gestures of love. I felt the guilt before I had committed the crime, the crime of drawing the innocent into my own maze. The act of sex may be nothing, but when you reach my age you learn that at any time it may prove to be everything. I was safe, but who could tell to what neurosis in this child I might appeal? [...] I implored Sarah, Get me out of this, get me out of it, for her sake, not mine.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles, Sylvia Black

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 131-132

Explanation and Analysis

Bendrix invited a young woman named Sylvia (the protégé of a literary critic who was writing an article on Bendrix) to Sarah’s funeral, where Bendrix asked her to have dinner with him. Sylvia agrees to have dinner, but Bendrix immediately regrets asking her. Bendrix asked Sylvia on a date knowing that because of her interest in the world of writing and publishing, she would attach herself to him and possibly fall in love with him—genuine love that might “prove to be everything,” not just the love of a moment. Bendrix, however, feels himself incapable of reciprocating those feelings and recognizes that he would inevitably hurt Sylvia the way Sarah had hurt him. Love has become a dangerous threat in Bendrix’s mind, and so the kindest thing he can do is find a way to shake Sylvia off and save her the heartache.

Interestingly, Bendrix in his distress turns to prayer, albeit a

prayer to Sarah rather than to God. Still, this shows a firm belief in the idea that there is a power or divine force that can hear his prayers and help him. This is reminiscent of Sarah’s instinct to pray and ask God for help after finding Bendrix trapped under a door.

☹️ It’s just a coincidence, I thought, a horrible coincidence that nearly brought her back at the end to You. You can’t mark a two-year-old child for life with a bit of water and the blood. If I began to believe that, I could believe in the body and the blood. You didn’t own her all those years: I owned her. You won in the end, You don’t need to remind me of that, but she wasn’t deceiving me with You when she lay here with me, on this bed, with this pillow under her back. When she slept I was with her, not You. It was I who penetrated her, not You.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Mrs. Bertram, Sarah Miles

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 137

Explanation and Analysis

After Sarah’s funeral, Bendrix took Sarah’s mother, Mrs. Bertram, out to dinner. Over dinner, Mrs. Bertram told Bendrix a secret: unbeknownst to anyone, including Sarah, she had Sarah baptized as a Catholic when Sarah was two years old. This is disconcerting to Bendrix, who seeks to convince himself that Sarah’s later interest in Catholicism was a “horrible coincidence.” The reason Bendrix is so anxious to convince himself that Sarah’s acceptance of God was all a coincidence is revealed when he says that if he could believe that the power of baptism had driven Sarah towards God in the end, then he could believe in other religious sacraments. That, in turn, would lead to belief in and acceptance of God. In his fight against belief, Bendrix can’t give up any ground—once he accepts that this is more than a coincidence, it won’t be long before he is forced to accept God’s reality.

Even though Bendrix is fighting against his belief in God, he still addresses his arguments to God (“You”). To Bendrix, the God he is addressing is just like an earthly rival for Sarah’s love. Bendrix is willing to admit that, ultimately, he has lost the competition to possess Sarah. However, he demands that he be recognized as someone who *once* possessed her, hearkening back to his previous desire to make any man who might have an affair with Sarah understand that he, Bendrix, was part of the greater picture of Sarah’s history. For Bendrix, it is important that he be

acknowledged—either by earthly rivals or by God—as an important part of Sarah’s life and someone who made a difference to her.

Book 5, Chapter 7 Quotes

💬 ‘[...] I know when a man’s in pain.’

I couldn’t get through the tough skin of his complacency. I pushed my chair back and said, ‘You’re wrong, father. This isn’t anything subtle like pain. I’m not in pain, I’m in hate. I hate Sarah because she was a little tart, I hate Henry because she stuck to him, and I hate you and your imaginary God because you took her away from all of us.’

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix, Father Crompton (speaker), Henry Miles, Sarah Miles

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

Bendrix loses his temper at Father Crompton, who had been talking about what a good woman Sarah had been. Henry was appalled by Bendrix’s words, but Father Crompton assured Henry that he recognized that Bendrix was hurting. In response, Bendrix expresses a desire to “get through the tough skin of [Father Crompton’s] complacency.” This explains why Bendrix openly calls Sarah a “tart” (slang for a prostitute) and blames God for taking her away—he hopes that by using extreme language and making serious accusations, he will get Father Crompton to get angry with him. This is similar to when Bendrix first told Henry about his affair with Sarah: at that time, too, Bendrix turned to strong language to elicit a strong reaction.

Interestingly, Bendrix seems to be in denial about Sarah’s role in her separation from Bendrix. Sarah’s diary and her final letter to Bendrix clearly show that she willingly kept herself away from him and that she ultimately did accept and love God. God, then, did not take Sarah away so much as she chose to walk away of her own will, even though it caused her and Bendrix a great deal of pain.

💬 And I thought, hating Sarah is only loving Sarah and hating myself is only loving myself. [...] Nothing—not even Sarah—is worth our hatred if You exist, except You. And, I thought, sometimes I’ve hated Maurice, but would I have hated him if I hadn’t loved him too? O God, if I could really hate you...

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

After leaving Father Crompton and Henry, Bendrix went to his room and read an entry from Sarah’s diary in which she wondered what it means to really hate God. Bendrix has reached the point in his emotional and spiritual crisis where he is questioning himself more and more. He has always considered himself a “man of hate,” but it becomes less clear what that means after he realizes that “hating [...] is only loving.” This means that he is losing a key part of his identity and, without it, he is unsure how he will be certain of anything anymore.

Bendrix also uses Sarah’s own words from her diary to explain his own changing perceptions of himself, Sarah, and God. He begins to understand what Sarah meant when she questioned whether she could ever have hated Maurice if she hadn’t loved him first. It would then follow that if Bendrix (or Sarah) hates God now, it is because there was a time when he loved him. And if he loved God once, then it would further confirm God’s reality—an acceptance that Bendrix is still fighting against.

Book 5, Chapter 8 Quotes

💬 I thought, you’ve failed there, Sarah. One of your prayers at least has not been answered. I have no peace and I have no love, except for you, you. I said to her, I’m a man of hate. But I didn’t feel much hatred; I had called other people hysterical, but my own words were overcharged. I could detect their insincerity. What I chiefly felt was less hate than fear. For if this God exists, I thought, and if even you—with your lusts and your adulteries and the timid lies you used to tell—can change like this, we could all be saints by leaping as you leapt, but shutting the eyes and leaping once and for all: if *you* are a saint, it’s not so difficult to be a saint. [...] I sat on my bed and said to God: You’ve taken her, but You haven’t got me yet. [...] I don’t want Your peace and I don’t want Your love. [...] With Your great schemes You ruin our happiness like a harvester ruins a mouse’s nest: I hate You, God, I hate You as though You existed.

Related Characters: Maurice Bendrix (speaker), Sarah Miles

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

After Henry learns about Sarah's baptism from Mrs. Bertram, Bendrix decides he must tear up Sarah's diary to prevent Henry from ever reading it, or else it might convince Henry to believe in God. As he rips it up, however, the diary falls open and Bendrix sees the entry where Sarah asked God to give Bendrix peace. Bendrix's thoughts after reading it illustrate his last attempt to fight off belief. Bendrix notes that he can "detect [...] insincerity" in his words because he's struggling to mean any of them anymore. "Hate," for example, no longer means to Bendrix what it used to, as seen in his former realization that "hating [...] is only loving." Bendrix finds no comfort in the idea that

Sarah—who committed plenty of sins—could attain some kind of sainthood simply by believing in God. For Bendrix, there is no comfort in the idea of equality because, as he revealed in the beginning of the book, he embraced a feeling of superiority in relationships and struggled when he couldn't experience that sense of superiority.

Ironically, Bendrix talks directly to God to try and assure him that he hasn't won Bendrix over yet. The very act of talking to God, however, means Bendrix *has* accepted his existence. Bendrix tells God that he doesn't want his "peace" or his "love" because, as Sarah wrote in her diary, sometimes God's love seems like a punishment—more than anything, Bendrix doesn't want to feel as if he's being punished anymore.



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.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

The narrator states that “A story has no beginning or end,” but that we “arbitrarily” choose a moment “from which to look back or from which to look ahead.” Despite this, the narrator wonders if he really has chosen the moment from which to begin this story, or if that moment chose him. The narrator also notes that if he had “believed then in a God,” then he might’ve believed that it was God who prompted him to go talk to Henry Miles. The narrator did this even though he hated Henry, and even though Henry would soon start hating the narrator, as well. In fact, the narrator notes that “this is a record of hate far more than of love” and assures the audience that if he writes one good thing about Henry or his wife Sarah then it is proof of his trustworthiness.

The narrator, whose name is revealed to be Bendrix, says that it was strange to see Henry out that night because it was so rainy, and Henry loved to be comfortable. The narrator, on the other hand, prefers discomfort and so had chosen to walk out into the rain to go to a nearby bar for a drink. On his way out of the building he lives in, Bendrix spots Henry standing alone in the rain. Instead of avoiding him and walking by unnoticed, Bendrix calls out to Henry, who affectionately returns the greeting. Bendrix asks about Sarah simply because “it might have seemed odd if [he] hadn’t,” although he also notes that nothing would have pleased him more than to learn that “she was sick, unhappy, dying” because it would “lighten [his] mind.”

Henry tells Bendrix that Sarah is out somewhere, which reminds Bendrix of a time when other people might have asked Henry where Sarah was and only he, Bendrix, would have truly known where she was. Bendrix invites Henry out for a drink and is somewhat surprised when Henry agrees, because they’ve never had a drink together outside of Henry’s home.

The narrator reveals two very important ideas here: first, he believes that he was not entirely in control of his decisions, shown by his description of an outside force, perhaps God, that prompted him to talk to Henry. Second, the narrator is anxious for the audience to believe that he is full of hatred and resentment, which is clearly seen in his insistence that “this is a record of hate far more than of love.” The latter half of that statement (“more than of love”), however, also prepares the reader to encounter love, albeit a love that has soured into hate for reasons yet to be explained.



In his alleged hatred for Sarah, Bendrix wants to hear that something is wrong with her because that would mean that he’s not the only one suffering. When Bendrix notes that it would have “seemed odd” of him not to ask about Sarah, he also begins laying the groundwork for their relationship; it sends the message that all three of them had openly been friends at one point, making it perfectly natural and expected for him to ask about her. This means that, whatever Bendrix’s relationship with Sarah was in private, in public they were friends.



Bendrix confirms that he and Sarah had an affair by mentioning that there was a time when someone would have asked Henry where Sarah was and only he would have known the real answer—they were together, and Henry didn’t know.



Henry notes that it's been a long time since he or Sarah has seen Bendrix, to which Bendrix replies that the last time they saw each other was in June of 1944, over a year ago. While they're talking, Bendrix thinks to himself what a fool Henry is for not seeing anything odd in the fact that they haven't seen each other in over a year even though they live in the same square. Bendrix calls this failure to see anything suspicious "Henry's blinkers" and he notes that he, Bendrix, "hated his blinkers even when I had benefited from them, knowing that others could benefit too." Bendrix asks Henry if Sarah is at the movies and Henry says that she isn't and actually doesn't go very much anymore. Bendrix says that she used to.

At the bar, Henry and Bendrix each order a rum. While they sit at the table together, Bendrix thinks to himself that he would never even have tried to get to know Henry or Sarah if, in 1939, he hadn't started writing a book about a civil servant. Bendrix remembers that he first started seeing Sarah to ask her questions about Henry's lifestyle, and these questions are what led to their "friendship." Henry was an assistant secretary in the Ministry of Pensions, and eventually Bendrix told Sarah that he was only interested in Henry as a "copy" for a "ridiculous, comic" character in his book. Bendrix notes that this is when Sarah, who was always loyal to Henry, began to hate his book and would cry whenever Bendrix would ask her questions about Henry.

After Bendrix and Henry exchange pleasantries about the past Christmas and Sarah's health, Henry offers to go get them each another rum and Bendrix runs to the restroom. In the restroom, Bendrix sees some crude graffiti about the landlord's wife and, when he returns to his seat, tells Henry about it. Henry notes that, "Jealousy's an awful thing." Bendrix is confused and asks Henry what he means, so Henry tells him: "When you are miserable, you envy other people's happiness." Bendrix is privately taken aback at Henry's words and states that, by expressing this private surprise, he is writing in a bitter way. Bendrix asserts that, if he could, he would "write with love," but also that if he could do that then he wouldn't be himself anymore.

Bendrix asks Henry if he is miserable and Henry responds that he is "worried." Bendrix encourages Henry to explain what he means and privately wonders if it's the rum that's prompting Henry to open up or if he has some idea of how much Bendrix knows about him due to his relationship with Sarah. Henry tells him that he's worried about Sarah, but just then a "little hilarious man" runs in and makes a lot of noise. Henry tells Bendrix they should go back to his house to talk some more.

Bendrix's internal musings about Henry's foolishness reveal that he looks down on Henry as an intellectual inferior, too stupid and naïve to pick up on how strange it is that Bendrix (who had been so close with Sarah) had simply vanished from their lives, seemingly without a word. Henry's "blinkers," then, represent the jealousy he would have had if he had been smart enough to suspect the truth of Sarah and Bendrix's relationship. Bendrix also displays a petty desire to prove his superior knowledge of Sarah by pointing out that she used to love the movies.



Bendrix reveals his capacity for cruelty when he describes asking Sarah questions about Henry and his job even though it made Sarah cry. By bringing Henry up, Bendrix was reminding Sarah of her marriage and her betrayal of that marriage as way of punishing her. For Bendrix, this was also a test to determine how strong his hold on Sarah was: will she stay with him even when he is needlessly cruel about her husband, or will her loyalty to Henry win the day and send her running back to him?



Bendrix's surprise at Henry's statement about jealousy is rooted in Bendrix's belief that Henry is too stupid to know such things about the human heart. On the other hand, Henry's statement could indicate that he has, since the days of his friendship with Bendrix, learned firsthand what jealousy is like and can now speak intelligently about it. This is also the first indication that Henry suspects something about Sarah's behavior.



Both Bendrix's belief that Henry needed rum to open up and Henry's desire to leave the bar to talk indicate that Henry is a very private and self-conscious person, especially where his marriage is concerned. In this, he's not only looking out for his own reputation, but that of Sarah: he is worried about her but also worries about what people might think if they overhear what he's concerned about, indicating that it is something negative on her part and not something innocent, such as illness.



Once home, Henry calls out to see if Sarah is back yet. There is no answer, so Henry invites Bendrix into his study to talk. Bendrix realizes that this is the first time he'll have been in Henry's study. Bendrix looks around the house as they walk, noting how unusual it is that there is an absence of any "token of past taste or past sentiment" and that everything looks unused. In his office, Henry offers Bendrix a whisky and Bendrix, noting how red Henry's eyes are, wonders if Henry is drinking too much and asks him what's wrong. When Henry answers "Sarah," Bendrix wonders to himself if this would have scared him just two years ago. He decides that, actually, he would have "welcomed the open fight" because he might have won.

Bendrix asks Henry what exactly it is that he's worried about and Henry shows him a letter. Bendrix, worried it might be one he wrote to Sarah, takes it and reads it. The letter contains a response to a request for information about a "discreet" private detective. Bendrix tells Henry that he doesn't understand, so Henry tells him that he had made the request but hasn't done anything. Henry also implies that he can trust Sarah not to read the letter, which he keeps out in the open, but that there's something he can't trust her not to do or be doing. Henry asks if Bendrix thinks he's a fool and Bendrix tells him that he's not a fool. He adds that it is possible because "Sarah's human," but also assures Henry that he's not saying anything "against Sarah"; just that there is "nothing foolish in the idea."

Henry asks Bendrix what he should do and Bendrix tells him to either burn the letter or see the private detective, Mr. Savage. Henry, however, swears he can't do either thing: burning the letter is impossible and he can't go to Mr. Savage because it will make him look ridiculous. At this, Bendrix gives in to his "desire to tease" Henry and offers to go see Mr. Savage himself. Henry is surprised but grateful for Bendrix's offer, but ultimately tells him the idea is too far-fetched and can't be done. Bendrix tells him that this, like "adultery or theft or running away from the enemy's fire" can be and is done every day in "modern life." Henry tells Bendrix that he only needed "a proper talk" and burns the letter, telling Bendrix to forget it.

The impersonal nature of Henry and Sarah's home reflects the lack of passion within their marriage. Like their house, their marriage is beautiful on the surface, but upon closer inspection it is clear that they do no more than live next to each other. Furthermore, the fact that Bendrix has never been in Henry's study sends the message that they were never personally close, although they had certainly been friendly in the past. Bendrix's realization that he would have "welcomed" a confrontation with Henry earlier reveals his desire for the truth to be known, but it's also clear that he is (and was) unwilling to just come out and tell the truth himself.



Henry has made these inquiries and received a recommendation for a private detective, but hasn't acted on it; he has the letter, which is incriminating evidence of his lack of trust in Sarah, but keeps it in the open, allowing her ample freedom to read it. These things combine to reveal Henry's unwillingness to harbor any jealousy towards his wife, his guilt about the fact that he is suspicious, and his latent desire to be found out so he can come clean with Sarah. This is reminiscent of what Bendrix revealed earlier, about his own desire for Henry to know the truth so that the two could fight about it.



Bendrix's "desire to tease" Henry serves another purpose, which is to insert himself, once again, into their lives. Henry's suspicions have awoken Bendrix's dormant jealousy of Sarah and any potential relationships she might be having with someone else. If he goes to see Mr. Savage, he will have access to the truth, which he can then use to punish Sarah by being the one to expose her current infidelity (if there is one) to Henry. This would hurt Henry, which, as shown by Sarah's tears whenever Bendrix talked about how he'd characterize Henry in his book, is the most effective way of hurting Sarah.



Just then Bendrix and Henry hear someone come in. Henry says it must be the maid, but Bendrix insists that it's Sarah they hear. Henry goes to the door and "automatically his face [falls] into absurd lines of gentleness and affection" as he calls to Sarah. Sarah walks over to them and Bendrix, noting that this is "one of the moments of hate," asks her if she's been out walking. Sarah says she has been walking and Bendrix observes how bad the weather is, while Henry notes that Sarah is soaking wet and will "catch [her] death of cold." Bendrix wonders if, "even if [they] had known he spoke truth," they would have "felt any genuine anxiety for her" strong enough to overpower their "nerves, distrust, and hate."

Bendrix's insistence that the person they hear coming in is Sarah subtly conveys, once again, that he knows Sarah better than even her own husband does. Henry's innocent observation that Sarah will "catch [her] death of cold" effectively foreshadows Sarah's oncoming illness (which resembles pneumonia) and ultimate death. This is confirmed by Bendrix's thoughts about whether he and Henry might (or might not) have felt differently in that moment if they'd known Henry's words would prove true.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2

Over the next few days, Bendrix keeps vigil outside of Henry and Sarah's house, hoping to see Sarah come out. Bendrix notices that Henry never walks across the Common anymore and wonders if he's embarrassed about having openly admitted his suspicions of Sarah's behavior. When he's not keeping vigil, Bendrix tries to write his next novel, but he has trouble getting the characters to come alive. Furthermore, Bendrix says there was a "hate and suspicion" and a "passion to destroy that went deeper than the book." To that end, Bendrix decides to get in contact with Mr. Savage.

Even though it had been nearly two years since Bendrix had seen either Henry or Sarah, his conversation with Henry and seeing Sarah again immediately sends Bendrix on a downward spiral of jealousy and obsession that reflects the jealousy he felt during his relationship with Sarah. Furthermore, Bendrix is so consumed by his hatred for Sarah and Henry that his work is suffering, highlighting the self-destructiveness associated with jealousy and hatred.



At Mr. Savage's office, Bendrix is shown into one of the two waiting rooms. When Mr. Savage comes in, Bendrix notices that he has a receding hairline and a shaved face; a peculiar movement of his fingers when he shakes Bendrix's hand makes Bendrix think he must be a freemason. Mr. Savage's head, Bendrix notes, glistens like "a beacon-light of understanding, sympathy, anxiety to be of service."

Bendrix is driven to Mr. Savage by his jealousy of whomever Sarah is seeing—if Henry is correct in his suspicions, that is. Mr. Savage's entire appearance is geared toward comforting the jealous men and women who come to see him; he seeks to convey, through his appearance, the impression that he can put an end to their jealousy by uncovering the truth.



When Bendrix is invited to sit in a comfortable chair and tell Mr. Savage to explain everything, Bendrix begins to feel "embarrassed and bitter." Bendrix asks Mr. Savage what the "charges are for watching." Mr. Savage tells Bendrix not to worry about that and that, if he wants, Bendrix can leave the office right then without being charged three guineas for a preliminary consultation. Before he begins sharing details, Bendrix notes that he is aware that Mr. Savage probably already knows what he's going to say, since this case is no different than the dozens of others Mr. Savage has been hired to take care of already that year.

Bendrix's bitterness here is actually a form of self-hatred born out of the shame he feels at his own actions. Even though Bendrix hasn't officially hired Mr. Savage yet, he has taken the irrevocable step of coming to his office, thus admitting to his own jealousy.



Even though Bendrix says there's not much evidence, Mr. Savage tells him that all he needs is "the mood, the atmosphere" and guesses that Bendrix is talking about his wife. Bendrix tells him that he's there about a friend's wife. Mr. Savage asks him if he and "the lady" are "intimate" and is surprised when Bendrix reveals that he's "only seen her once since 1944." When Mr. Savage expresses confusion, Bendrix asks, "Can't one love or hate [...] as long as that?" Bendrix also assures Mr. Savage that he is just a jealous person like Mr. Savage's other clients. Mr. Savage assures him that jealousy is actually "the mark of a true love."

Bendrix tells Mr. Savage that there's reason to believe that Mrs. Miles (that is, Sarah) is deceiving her husband because she's lying about her whereabouts and keeping "secrets." Bendrix provides details about the house, whether they have a maid, and Sarah's age. Bendrix also agrees to receiving weekly reports either in person or on the phone, with Mr. Savage's promise the investigation will be discreet. Bendrix reflects that Mr. Savage's job (the "detection of the innocent") is not a "respectable trade" and that lovers are usually innocent, because they don't believe they're doing anything wrong. Bendrix also thinks about the fact that he used to think loved excused everything, too. By the time Bendrix leaves, he notes that he is nearly convinced that all men go through this kind of conversation sometime in their lives.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3

Bendrix reflects on the similarities between his profession as a novelist and Mr. Savage's, including the fact that they both gather potentially meaningless details as part of the process of creating a finished product. This makes Bendrix wonder if, as he thinks back to the night when he met Sarah, he can "detect [...] her future lover." Bendrix says he "noticed Sarah [...] because she was happy," unlike so many people in the summer of 1939. Furthermore, she was beautiful, engaging, and had told him that she'd read his books without making a fuss over his career. However, Bendrix says he didn't think he'd fall in love with her *because* she was beautiful, and beautiful women make him feel inferior. According to Bendrix, he has a hard time feeling sexual desire for a woman without feeling either mentally or physically superior to her.

Both Mr. Savage and Bendrix reveal very unhealthy attitudes about love. Mr. Savage makes his attitude about love very clear in his assertion that jealousy is evidence of "a true love." This means that, in Mr. Savage's opinion, love is only real when one or both partners feel possessive over the other. This possessiveness can drive jealous partners to great lengths to prove the wrongdoing of the other. This is evidenced by Bendrix's decision to have Sarah followed even two years after his personal relationship with her ended.



Bendrix recognizes that Mr. Savage's career is a disreputable one but, ironically, continues to justify his own unhealthy jealousy and obsession with Sarah. The phrase "detection of the innocent" implies that Mr. Savage and his men are looking for wrongdoing and are somewhat determined to find it even if it doesn't exist—they have been hired to find it, and so find it they will. Furthermore, Mr. Savage helps normalize Bendrix's jealousy by making him feel that he's doing no more than every other man has done. For Bendrix, this serves to further justify his behavior even though his thoughts about Mr. Savage reveal that on some level he is aware that his actions, like Mr. Savage's career, lack respectability.



Bendrix reveals something very important about himself and the nature of his jealousy in this passage: even before beginning his relationship with Sarah, he felt insecure about himself when he was with her. This means that in their relationship, whether she recognized it or not, Sarah had the upper hand. Without his usual sense of superiority, Bendrix became insecure and felt that he needed Sarah more than she needed him. This made him jealous and his jealousy helped propel their relationship toward its tragic end.



Bendrix reminisces about walking out of the party where he met Sarah and onto the Common with Henry, whom Bendrix had met at another party the week before. Bendrix says he had liked Henry a lot as they talked on the Common. Bendrix told him that Sarah was “charming,” and Henry noted that she was “a great help” to him. In the present, Bendrix thinks to himself, “Poor Henry,” but then wonders why he’d consider Henry “poor” when, in the end, Henry proved to have the “winning cards” of “gentleness, humility, and trust.”

Once again thinking of the party, Bendrix remembers walking back into the house with Henry and thinking he saw Sarah and another man “separating as though from a kiss,” but he noticed that Henry hadn’t seen it. However, as Henry learns later, the man was not a lover, but a colleague of Henry’s.

In the present, Bendrix writes that he would have preferred not to think about these past events, because writing about them seems to bring all of his hatred back. Bendrix observes that “Hatred seems to operate the same glands as love,” and both result in many of the same actions.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4

Bendrix returns home from Mr. Savage’s and his landlady tells him that Mrs. Miles called while he was out. For a moment, Bendrix is excited and hopes that seeing him the other day had “woken not love, of course, but a sentiment, a memory which [he] might work on.” Bendrix believes that if could “have [Sarah] once more” then he might be able to get her “out of [his] system” and move on. Bendrix dials Sarah’s phone number (which he must look up because he no longer has it memorized) only to find that the number he has is no longer her phone number. Before he can dial Inquiries to get the number, Sarah calls Bendrix again and he answers the phone.

Sarah asks Bendrix if he got the message she left with his landlady and Bendrix tells her he was going to call her once he finished writing an article. Sarah tells Bendrix she wants to have lunch with him the next day, but Bendrix tells her that he can’t because he must finish writing his article. Sarah suggests they meet Wednesday, but Bendrix tells her Thursday is better. Sarah agrees and Bendrix notes that he can “almost imagine disappointment” in her voice, but also that “our pride deceives us.”

Bendrix says that Henry has the “winning cards.” The word “winning” implies that there was some sort of competition going on between them, apparently for Sarah. Bendrix also reveals that he realizes that trust played a big part in why Henry “won” in the end. Because he was jealous, Bendrix was unable to trust. Bendrix’s inability to trust Sarah made them both miserable and drove him to do cruel things to both Sarah and Henry, even after the affair was over.



When Bendrix saw what seemed like a kiss, it opened up to him the possibility that Sarah was willing to cheat on her husband. Later, this adds fuel to his jealousy and makes him bitter about all the affairs Sarah had over the course of her marriage.



Bendrix’s observation about the close relationship between hatred and love explains more about his jealousy. If jealousy is, as Mr. Savage told Bendrix earlier, the mark of true love, then jealousy would also be the mark of true hatred.



Bendrix expresses a desire to “work on” some awakening emotion in Sarah. By this he means that he wants to manipulate her emotions for his own gain, evidently to get her “out of [his] system.” This is something he apparently cannot do without “hav[ing]” her again, meaning he wants to have sex with her one last time. This is something Bendrix feels he has to do to move on, revealing that time has not lessened Sarah’s hold on him enough for him to engage in a healthier, more legitimate relationship.



Bendrix lies to Sarah in order to convey to her that she is no longer an important part of his life—he makes it clear that he would rather finish writing an article than call her back right away, even though the reader knows that he was actually very eager to talk to her. By doing this, Bendrix hopes to make Sarah believe that he’s moved on and she no longer has a hold on him. This is something that Bendrix believes will hurt Sarah and make her regret their breakup.



Sarah and Bendrix agree to meet at a nearby café and hang up. Immediately, Bendrix looks at hate as if it were “an ugly and foolish man whom one did not want to know” and calls Sarah, who hasn’t had time to walk away from the phone yet, back to tell her that he actually can meet her tomorrow. After hanging up again, Bendrix realizes that “This is what hope feels like.”

Despite Bendrix’s attempt to seem nonchalant and indifferent, his decision to immediately call Sarah back reveals just how excited he is to hear from her and to get to spend time with her again. As Bendrix describes it, the situation gives him “hope,” which he hasn’t had since the end of their relationship.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 5

Bendrix sits at the café table rereading the same page of the newspaper and refuses to look up at the door, which would “betray a foolish expectation.” Bendrix says it is his “bad luck” that Sarah comes in and sees him just as he is looking at his watch. Sarah apologizes and explains that the bus she took got caught in traffic. When Bendrix tells her that it’s faster to take the subway, she abruptly tells him that she didn’t care about getting there fast.

Bendrix once again turns to subterfuge to hide his anxiety and excitement to see Sarah again. If he keeps looking at the door, then it will betray how anxious he is to see her walk in. When Sarah catches him looking at his watch, Bendrix feels as if he showed his excitement to see her, which prevents him from punishing her with his indifference.



Bendrix thinks about how Sarah has “often disconcerted [him] by the truth.” He thinks about times in their relationship when he had tried “to get her to say more than the truth” and promise their “affair would never end,” even though he just wanted to reject her promises himself. Sarah had never engaged in “that game of make-believe” and would instead assure him that she had never loved a man as much as him and never would again. Bendrix thinks to himself that even though Sarah didn’t realize she was doing it, she also played make-believe.

Not only does Bendrix try to manipulate the situation with Sarah in the present, but he reveals that he has a history of trying to manipulate her by tricking her into making false promises. This would give Bendrix the benefit of being able to tell the truth: their relationship will end, and it’s not forever. The one type of “make-believe” Sarah does play, according to Bendrix, is when she’d tell him that she would never love anyone as much as she loved him. Bendrix sees this as a delusion on Sarah’s part, since he suspects that she’s having another affair.



Sarah sits down and tells Bendrix that she made a reservation at Rules, where they used to go to lunch together. Bendrix believes they must look tense, because he notices that they’ve caught the attention of a man sitting with a young boy in the café. Bendrix tells Sarah that they can go there for lunch. Sarah says she’s never been back to Rule’s, but Bendrix says he goes there several times a week. When Sarah stands up and suggests they go, she has a coughing fit that concerns Bendrix, but she assures him that nothing is wrong.

Bendrix once again tries to downplay his feelings and Sarah’s importance by saying that he goes to the restaurant they used to frequent together all the time. By saying this, he hopes to convey to Sarah that he hasn’t changed one aspect of his life since she left, which would mean that she was never a very important part of it.



When they arrive at Rules, the waiter greets Sarah and Bendrix and observes that he hasn’t seen either of them in “a very long time,” which makes Bendrix regret telling Sarah that he still spends a lot of time there. After eating their lunch, Sarah tells Bendrix that she is worried about Henry and asks Bendrix to check on him from time to time because he’s lonely. Bendrix asks Sarah how Henry is lonely with her and she reminds him that Henry’s “never really noticed [her]. Not for years.”

By saying Henry “hasn’t really noticed [her]” in a long time, Sarah means that she and Henry do not have a very active sex life together. Henry, unlike Bendrix and Sarah herself, is passionless; he doesn’t feel sexual desire for Sarah, or if he does, he doesn’t show it.



Sarah asks Bendrix if he's working on another book and tells him that she didn't like his last one very much. Bendrix notes that it has been difficult to write anything since the end of the war. Sarah tells him she had been afraid he would publish the book she "hated," and he assures her that writing a whole book is "too hard work for a revenge."

The book Sarah hated is the one Bendrix was writing during the beginning of their affair. Sarah was worried Bendrix would publish it because she knew that Bendrix had been using Henry as a model for a ridiculous character. Sarah believes this would have been particularly cruel and that Bendrix might have done it for revenge to hurt her after their relationship ended.



Bendrix pays the bill and they walk out of the restaurant. Bendrix stops by a grating where he and Sarah shared their first kiss years before, so they can say their goodbyes. Bendrix moves toward Sarah and says her name, but just then she has another serious coughing fit. Bendrix, "with bitterness," tells her that she needs to do something about her cough, but she tells him it's only a cough and says goodbye.

Bendrix is clearly hoping to recreate their first kiss, which harkens back to his previous thought that he might have woken up some dormant feelings in Sarah after seeing her for the first time in nearly two years. When Sarah starts coughing, Bendrix suspects that she did it on purpose to avoid kissing him, hence his "bitterness" towards her about it.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 6

Bendrix details his writing schedule, one he's closely followed for years and which has allowed him to finish one novel per year, writing at least 500 words a day for five days of the week. Bendrix says he never broke this schedule for any love affair until he met Sarah and, instead of devoting his mornings to writing, Bendrix began spending mornings and any other free time Sarah had with her. Even still, Bendrix had found ways to meet his daily quota while they were happy. Bendrix writes that it was only after he realized that their "love was doomed" that his schedule fell apart. He says that as long as he could "make-believe that love lasted" he could be happy, but that "if love had to die, [he] wanted it to die quickly," and so he would start fights with Sarah on purpose.

The ease with which Bendrix was able to write and the quality of his writing eventually started to reflect the tone of his relationship with Sarah; his writing went well when they were happy, and badly when they were not. This detail thus highlights how jealousy within a relationship can have a profoundly negative impact on every other aspect of a person's life. Furthermore, Bendrix's decision to hasten his relationship with Sarah to its end reveals his own fear of getting hurt: he wants to take control and be the one to drive Sarah away, not the other way around.



Bendrix stands alone in his apartment in the dark, looking at the opposite building across the Common. Bendrix's landlady knocks at his door and tells him that a man named Mr. Parkis is there to see him. When Mr. Parkis comes in, Bendrix notes that he looks familiar, but can't remember why. Mr. Parkis introduces himself to Bendrix as "Mr. Savage's man" and hands Bendrix the first report and expenses sheet (which his son has helped complete). As Bendrix goes over the expense sheet, he realizes that he recognizes Mr. Parkis as the man who was watching him and Sarah at the café.

There is irony in the fact that Bendrix hired Mr. Parkis through Mr. Savage to find out who Sarah was illicitly seeing behind her husband's back and that, sure enough, Mr. Parkis had been there to see Bendrix meet Sarah behind Henry's back. As soon as Bendrix recognizes Mr. Parkis as the man from the café, he knows that he's mysterious guilty party in the report even though, for once, they were not having an affair.



Bendrix reads the report Mr. Parkis and his son wrote up, which includes an account of Sarah meeting a man at a café and then going to Rules for lunch with him. Mr. Parkis noticed that, when they parted outside the restaurant, they appeared to be “labouring under great emotion” and Mr. Parkis theorized that they were “parting for good.” Mr. Parkis, according to the report, then followed Sarah, who walked around until entering a Catholic church and sitting alone in a pew for a few minutes. Bendrix is surprised by this because Sarah is not generally religious.

Bendrix, who had been sitting in the dark so far, leans into the light to tell Mr. Parkis that he was wrong about Sarah and the mysterious man at the café holding hands, which he knows because he was the man. Mr. Parkis is embarrassed and worried about what to tell his son, who admires his profession. Bendrix tries to reassure Mr. Parkis, but Mr. Parkis insists that he must come clean to his son and tell him about the mistake. When Mr. Parkis leaves, Bendrix realizes with surprise that he hasn't thought at all about Sarah or being jealous, and, in fact, “had become nearly human enough to think of another person's trouble.”

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 7

Bendrix writes that he thinks that jealousy “exists only with desire.” His desire at this point in the story's events, according to him, was “nearer hatred than love.” Henry, on the other hand, had stopped being attracted to Sarah long before he suspected her of adultery. Still, Bendrix theorizes, back then Henry was as jealous as Bendrix because Henry's desire was for companionship and he felt excluded by the idea that Sarah was having an affair. Bendrix compares his sense of security with Henry's insecurity, arguing that his security was due to the fact that he had already lost everything. Henry, on the other hand, still felt that Sarah should be at home with him.

Bendrix again thinks back to the beginning of his relationship with Sarah. One week after their first kiss outside of Rules, Bendrix called Sarah to invite her to see a movie that had been based on one of his books. Although the movie wasn't very good, Bendrix liked the scene where a woman's lover becomes angry with her for not eating onions because her husband didn't like the smell. Back at Rules after the movie, the waiter brought out a dish of onions and Bendrix had asked Sarah if Henry liked them. Sarah told him that Henry hated onions but that she loved them, and then she ate some. In the present, Bendrix wonders if it's possible to “fall in love over a dish of onions” and claims that he'd done just that.

Bendrix tried to appear indifferent, nonchalant, and entirely at ease while he was with Sarah, but Mr. Parkis's report makes it clear that the heavy emotions Bendrix was feeling were easily seen—presumably by Sarah as well. The account of Sarah entering a church, which Bendrix considers highly uncharacteristic, is the first indication of her growing faith in God—she went there for comfort and to set her mind at ease after the high emotions she must have felt at spending time with Bendrix again.



Bendrix's jealousy and hatred for Sarah stays alive only as long as he thinks about it, as this scene shows. By taking an interest in other people—in this instance, the distress Mr. Parkis feels about having to reveal that he made an embarrassing blunder to his adoring son—Bendrix might be able to lose sight of his negative feelings and find peace. It is telling that he chooses not to do that, but instead to devote his time and money to finding evidence of what he sees as Sarah's treachery.



Bendrix's desire, according to him, stems from his hatred, which makes him jealous of anyone who gets to be happy with Sarah—and, more importantly, of Sarah's own happiness, which Bendrix doesn't think she deserves. Bendrix seeks to gratify his hatred by finding justification for it, such as discovering that Sarah is having an affair with someone else. This would also enable Bendrix to punish Sarah because he could show Henry evidence of the affair and thus hurt him.



Bendrix fell in love with Sarah “over a dish of onions” because she showed him that she was willing to defy her husband to get her own gratification—whether that gratification came in the form of eating onions, having sex with someone else, or falling in love. It flattered Bendrix to think that this woman would take what seemed like a huge risk—if Henry smelled the onions on her breath later, then he might ask where she'd been and make her tell him about Bendrix.



Bendrix writes, “There was no pursuit and no seduction,” but that he and Sarah had left Rules to go kiss in the same spot. Once there, Bendrix told Sarah he’d fallen in love and she told him that she had, too. They were unable to return to either of their homes to have sex, so they took a taxi to a hotel where they “made love badly” before going to Sarah’s house. At Sarah’s, they continued touching each other. When Bendrix noted that Henry would be arriving soon, Sarah told him that they’d hear him because there’s “one stair that always squeaks.” Later, as they said their goodbyes, Sarah mentioned that it’d be better if she called Bendrix instead of vice versa. This made Bendrix realize “how well she kn[ew] how to conduct an affair like this.”

This description of the official start to Bendrix and Sarah’s affair highlights how quickly jealousy began to take root in Bendrix’s mind. Not only does Sarah’s obvious know-how when it comes to pulling off an extramarital affair indicate that she has had affairs before, but it means that she could even know how to have an affair with more than one man at a time; this further implies that Bendrix could be replaced at any time and he might not even be aware of what was happening.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 1

Bendrix asserts that it is easier to convey unhappiness than happiness. According to Bendrix, in happiness we lose our identity and are destroyed. Unhappiness, however, is individual and personal. Bendrix also writes about how the “act of love” is sometimes called a “little death” that sometimes brings with it “the little peace.” However, Bendrix says it is strange to write about these things because it makes it seem like he “love[s] what in fact [he] hate[s].” This discrepancy makes it difficult for him to understand what, exactly, he’s thinking.

For Bendrix, unhappiness is so much more personal than happiness because unhappiness is something he is able to both internalize and externalize—he can make other people as unhappy as he feels, as seen in his treatment of Sarah. Happiness, however, is more difficult to share with others, especially because Bendrix’s jealousy frequently drives him to destroy his own happiness rather than let it exist long enough for someone else to destroy it. Similarly, it is easier for Bendrix to talk about and share his hate than it is for him to talk about and share love.



The “peace” Bendrix describes is something he experienced in the early days of the war. Even still, it was a period “punctuated by misunderstanding and suspicion.” At times, Bendrix describes feeling certain that there were lots of other men in Sarah’s life, and that while he was “arrogant” in the “act of love,” once alone, he was full of uncertainty.

Bendrix find his confidence during the “act of love” (sex) because those are the moments when he is in complete possession of Sarah’s body. Once her body is no longer under his control, he falls prey to his jealousy and insecurity, believing that she is giving her body to other men, too.



One morning Sarah called Bendrix and told him that Henry was sick at home, thus preventing her from leaving. However, Sarah invited Bendrix over to her house, saying they could tell Henry that they’re discussing a movie and having sandwiches. This made Bendrix think to himself, “how many times before has she planned in just this way?”

Bendrix fears that Sarah has “planned in just this way” numerous times, which would reinforce his fear that he is only one of her lovers. It would mean that, ultimately, he is not that important. That would mean that Sarah lies when she tells him that she loves him, which he accuses her of many times.



Bendrix went over to Sarah's house and they had sex on the floor of the room below Henry's. After Sarah reached orgasm, Bendrix worried that Henry heard her. However, Sarah told him that Henry wouldn't recognize the noise because he's never brought her to climax before. Shortly after that, Henry peeked in the door to say hello before going back to his bed. Bendrix asked Sarah, "Do you mind?" In reply, Sarah silently shook her head. Bendrix reflects on how characteristic this was of Sarah, who had "a wonderful way of eliminating remorse." Because of this, Bendrix says one "could have called her a born Catholic," even though she, like Bendrix, did not believe in God.

Addressing the reader, Bendrix writes that if his story seem meandering, it's because he's "lost in a strange region." Bendrix notes that on the afternoon he just described, he trusted Sarah completely. Sarah told him that she'd "never loved anybody or anything" the way she loved him and, according to Bendrix, it was an act of self-surrender on her part as undeniable as when they made love.

Reflecting on this, Bendrix says that Sarah didn't lie about her love for him because she lived from moment to moment. Bendrix, however, is unable to live the same way, and thus found himself haunted by all the men Sarah had said those same words to in the past. In fact, Bendrix says that even "in the moment of love," he found himself "gathering evidence of a crime that hadn't yet been committed." Bendrix says that all the evidence he had gathered during their relationship came rushing back into his mind when he received a letter from Mr. Parkis.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 2

The letter from Mr. Parkis states that, with the help of a maid, he had been able to get inside Sarah's house, which is how he happened upon a scrap of paper that appeared to be part of a love letter in Sarah's handwriting. In the letter, Sarah wrote that she is "only beginning to love," but already wants to "abandon everything, everybody but you." She does not, however, write the name of whoever "you" is. Bendrix compares this scrap of a letter to his memories of the letters Sarah used to write him; in those letters, Sarah had always been careful to avoid open declarations of love and instead wrote the word "onions" for love and sex. Bendrix thinks of this "with hatred."

Sarah's willingness to take such huge risks (having sex on the floor immediately below the room her husband is in) is further proof of how secure she has become in her adulteries—she is not only certain that Henry won't see or hear them, but she doesn't care because she feels no remorse for what she's doing. Sarah uses the fact that Henry can't bring her to climax to justify her adulteries—it seems logical to her that what she can't get from her husband (and what he seems entirely indifferent to himself), she should be allowed to get elsewhere.



Bendrix is able to trust Sarah this time because she gave him this assurance without any hope of getting something in return. It wasn't like having sex, during which she expected to be brought to climax; and it wasn't like giving a little in order to get expensive presents or attention. She told Bendrix she loved him simply because she did, and Bendrix (who had not yet become bitter and angry) was able to believe it.



Bendrix's statement that he was always "collecting evidence" that would prove Sarah's infidelity is reflected in his earlier statements about how he came to realize that Sarah was really good at conducting an affair: knowing that he shouldn't call her, knowing about the squeaky step, etc. This proves that from the earliest days of their relationship, when they should have been happiest, Bendrix was looking for reasons to be unhappy.



For Bendrix, the scrap of a letter confirms his suspicions that not only has Sarah moved on, but that she uses the same effusive words of love in all of her affairs. However, Sarah had only ever openly professed her love for Bendrix in person; doing this in writing is much riskier and more permanent, and implies that the love she's speaking of now is more important to her than the love she once professed for Bendrix.



Bendrix wonders to himself, “Why doesn’t hatred kill desire?” He writes that there was a time when he “tried to find a substitute [for Sarah], and it hadn’t worked.” Bendrix admits that he is “a jealous man” and is jealous of whoever his “rival” is. He remembers the fights he and Sarah used to have about his jealousy, which was what he used to measure love. Unlike Bendrix, Sarah had never been prone to jealousy and she had once told him that she wouldn’t mind if he chose to sleep with another woman. Bendrix, on the other hand, claims that he lived in constant fear that Sarah was seeing other men. Bendrix remembers telling Sarah he’d rather see her dead than “with another man” (which Bendrix considers characteristic of “ordinary human love”).

Bendrix remembers that this argument between himself and Sarah took place about a year into their relationship, while they were in his room. He writes that he “hated her because [he] wished to think she didn’t love [him].” Even though Sarah tried to apologize and end the argument, Bendrix challenged her by claiming she’d be jealous if Henry “threatened [their] marriage” by sleeping with someone else, but Sarah asserted that their marriage “never would be” threatened. Bendrix took this as an insult and left the apartment. Out of spite, Bendrix went to find a prostitute that he might be able to bring to his apartment. Once Bendrix found one, however, he realized that “passion for Sarah had killed simple lust forever.” Because of this, Bendrix left the prostitute behind and returned home to find that Sarah had left.

In the present, Bendrix wonders why people who believe in God don’t also believe in a “personal Devil.” Bendrix thinks about the power his own devil has (and always has had) over him. He writes that nothing Sarah ever said was enough to calm his personal devil down. Bendrix believes that if God is all about love then devils, including his own, would be devoted to teaching people like Bendrix and Mr. Parkis to “destroy love wherever we find it.”

Because Sarah is not a naturally jealous person, she is not worried about Bendrix having sex with someone else. This also illustrates that Sarah viewed sex and love as two different things—sex does not necessarily equal love, and just because Bendrix might sleep with someone else doesn’t mean he would love them. Bendrix, however, is unable to separate sex from love, which is why he is terrified at the mere thought of Sarah intimately touching another person.



Bendrix’s decision to seek out a prostitute as a means of challenging Sarah’s claims that she wouldn’t care if he had sex with someone else reveals just how far he was willing to go to prove himself right. He would risk losing Sarah if it only meant he’d have the satisfaction of being able to say, “I told you so.” However, the love Bendrix has for Sarah has changed the way he views sex; he now feels that without love, sex is meaningless, mundane, and useless.



Bendrix groups himself and Mr. Parkis together because they are both in the business of finding evidence to destroy relationships. Mr. Parkis follows people to catch them having affairs, and Bendrix keeps tabs on everything his partners say and do so that he can find discrepancies and evidence that they are lying to him, thus justifying any cruelty he shows them.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 3

Bendrix writes that he believed he could “detect in Parkis’s [...] report a genuine enthusiasm for the devil’s game.” Parkis reports that he has discovered that Sarah spends much of her time—sometimes secretly—at a private residence on Cedar Road. Parkis promises to discover which flat she is spending time shortly but notes that there’s not any proof that Sarah is doing anything wrong on Cedar Road. Bendrix thinks about how discovering that Sarah is making surreptitious visits somewhere feels like the “orgasm of [his] hatred.” In its wake is a “period[] of calm” in which Bendrix finds he feels bad for Sarah—she has, after all, “committed nothing but love.” Bendrix claims that he would have dropped the case right then, but then he sees Henry’s face in the paper and is overcome by hatred again—he writes Henry a letter saying he has something important to share.

Henry and Bendrix meet up for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Henry is clearly ill at ease while he eats and becomes evasive when Bendrix asks him, “How’s Sarah?” Bendrix asks Henry if he ever consulted a detective after the night Henry told him that he was worried about Sarah. Henry tries to change the subject, but Bendrix abruptly tells him that he has seen a detective. Henry becomes mad, says Bendrix had “no right,” and tries to leave, but Bendrix prevents him. He tells Henry that the detective has found a love letter, but when Bendrix hands him the report Henry throws it in the fire. Bendrix tells Henry that he hasn’t “got rid of the facts” as Henry storms out of the building.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 4

Henry drops his hat on his way out of the restaurant after Bendrix gives him Parkis’s reports, so Bendrix walks out after him. In a narrated aside, Bendrix says that, if he could, he might have turned back the clock and decided to walk right past Henry that night he saw him on the Common. However, Bendrix doesn’t think this would have ultimately mattered, saying, “I am beginning to doubt whether anything I can do will ever alter the course of events.”

Bendrix’s observation that Parkis has a “genuine enthusiasm for the devil’s game” harkens back to his earlier comment that the devil was at work in both himself and in Mr. Parkis. As exciting as it is for Mr. Parkis to have found seemingly hard evidence of Sarah’s lies, it is even more exciting for Bendrix to hear about it because it seemingly justifies all of his jealousy, fears, and anger. This, however, isn’t enough for Bendrix—he wants to share his hatred and make sure Henry knows that he has been misled, too.



Bendrix’s enthusiasm to have found that his suspicions were correct stands in stark contrast to Henry’s complete lack of concern or desire to know the truth. This shows that, at some point, Henry decided that he could accept the possibility that Sarah was having an affair because she was, after all, still married to him and he still enjoyed her company.



Bendrix expresses his belief that nothing he did would have stopped or altered any of the events in the story he’s writing. This would imply a belief in a higher power, such as God, who has preordained that certain events will take place. At this point, Bendrix does not consider himself religious, but this moment hints at how his spirituality will evolve going forward.



Bendrix wanders into the Victoria Gardens and spots Henry sitting on a bench. It is clear that Henry is crying and Bendrix, overcome with an uncharacteristic feeling of sympathy, apologizes to him. Henry invites Bendrix to sit down and asks if he and Sarah also had an affair. At first, Bendrix is evasive, but Henry tells him it's the only possible reason for Bendrix's decision to hire a detective. Bendrix starts to feel overcome by jealousy again, so he tells Henry that there were also others. When Henry asks him why, Bendrix says it was because Henry is "a bore and a fool."

Bendrix has been in pain over the loss of his relationship with Sarah for a long time, and Henry's questions offer Bendrix the opportunity to make Henry suffer as well. By sharing with Henry the extent of Sarah's infidelities and telling him that they were all his fault for being boring, Bendrix hopes that he'll rouse anger in Henry, who might uncharacteristically fight back. This also shows a different kind of jealousy in Bendrix: he is jealous that Henry has gone so long without being eaten up by the same jealousy that Bendrix has been torturing himself with for years.



Henry asks Bendrix why his affair with Sarah ended, and Bendrix explains that he also became "a bore, boring her with complaints and jealousy." Henry and Bendrix look around at the empty park in silence for a while before Bendrix goes on to say that he and Sarah had simply used up all their love—Sarah could do all kinds of domestic duties in her home with Henry, but all she and Bendrix could do was have sex. Henry says that Sarah is "very fond of [Bendrix]," to which Bendrix replies that "One isn't satisfied with fondness." Henry, however, retorts that he is. Henry says it isn't "human nature" for love to go "on and on" as Bendrix wanted. Bendrix remembers that Sarah said something very different when she ended their affair.

Bendrix's revelation that he had turned to "complaints and jealousy" as a way to cope with the fact that he and Sarah could only have sex together—while Sarah and Henry got to share an entire life together—reveals just how desperate Bendrix was for a meaningful and honest relationship; he wanted to have a wife whom he could share his whole life with, not just a mistress to have sex with on the sly. Furthermore, Bendrix is not "satisfied with fondness" because he wants to possess all of Sarah—all of her love, her loyalty, and her body.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 5

Bendrix remembers that when his affair with Sarah ended, she told him: "Love doesn't end." Bendrix didn't realize it at the time, but Sarah had made up her mind to leave him already. Sarah told him that a lot of people went their whole lives loving God without seeing him, which Bendrix now considers his first clue that Sarah was "under a stranger's influence." Sarah told Bendrix not to be scared and, even then, he knew that she wasn't just talking about the danger all over London. Bendrix writes that this was the first night of the V1 air raids in London in June 1944. Even though Bendrix and Sarah could hear explosions, they didn't worry about the bombs until after they were finished having sex.

To Bendrix, it's far more believable that Sarah would have started to believe in God because she was in love with a man who believed in God than that she might have developed her own belief in God. Bendrix's assumption also indicates that he had an earthly rival, someone he could target and physically or emotionally punish for seducing Sarah away from him.



Bendrix told Sarah he was going to see if anyone was in the bomb shelter in his building. As Bendrix walked down the stairs, he heard a V1 approach and then, suddenly, his mind was totally clear for a moment. When he came to, Bendrix found that he was lying under a door and missing two of his teeth but was otherwise uninjured. Bendrix walked back to his room and saw Sarah crouched on the floor. As soon as Sarah saw Bendrix come in, she jumped up and told him that she had to go, but first she stopped to help him clean his face. She told him that she had been praying after seeing him under the door—she was sure he was dead. Once Bendrix was cleaned up, Sarah left, and he didn't see or hear from her again for two years.

Bendrix earlier criticized Henry for having "blinkers" and not seeing the evidence of Sarah's affairs even when they happened right under his nose, but this instance shows that Bendrix had blinkers, too: he made no connection between his miraculous brush with death and Sarah's prayers. For Bendrix, God is so definitely unreal that no amount of praying on Sarah's part could have helped him, and his survival was just a coincidence.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 6

In the days after the air raid that nearly killed him, Bendrix held out hope that Sarah's absence was temporary; once he heard that Sarah was in the country, he assumed her letters to him had been lost and she couldn't make a phone call. Eventually, Bendrix remembered Sarah's observation about people loving God their whole lives without seeing him and assumed that she had left him for another man. From that point on, Bendrix hated Sarah, although he also claims that he might have moved on if he hadn't seen Henry in the Common.

Returning to the events of the story, Bendrix says that Mr. Parkis's next report revealed that Sarah was seeing a Richard Smythe and his sister, Miss Smythe. Bendrix decides he has to see Richard Smythe for himself. Mr. Parkis and Bendrix meet at a tea shop to discuss what Bendrix's next step should be. Mr. Parkis warns that if Bendrix confronts Smythe directly then it could complicate the case, if it goes to court. Bendrix assures Parkis that he only wants to see Smythe, and he devises a plan to use Parkis's son (Lance) to get into the apartment: he would knock on the door and pretend he was looking for someone else, then pretend Lance was sick so Miss Smythe would invite them in.

Once again Bendrix is unable to find the connection between the things Sarah says about God and her actions. Instead of arriving at the conclusion that Sarah had accepted God and wanted to end a sinful relationship, Bendrix believes that Sarah has abandoned him for someone else. Rather than dealing with his pain, however, Bendrix funnels all of his emotions into hatred.



It is notable that as soon as Bendrix hears that Sarah is visiting Richard and Miss Smythe, his immediate thought is that Sarah must be having an affair with Richard, rather than considering that Sarah might be visiting Miss Smythe. This highlights the fact that Bendrix has already decided that Sarah is sleeping with another man and will only consider evidence that points to that conclusion.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 7

The next day Bendrix takes Lance to Cedar Road to try to see Richard Smythe. Bendrix instructs Lance to pretend to be sick, and they walk up to Smythe's apartment. As predicted, Miss Smythe answers the door and invites them in when she sees that Lance looks sick. Bendrix sits in the living room and talks to Miss Smythe for a few minutes. As they make small talk, she reveals that her brother works on Sundays, but is not a clergyman. Bendrix wonders what that might mean for a moment before Richard himself walks in. Bendrix is surprised to see that one of his cheeks is covered in "gross livid spots." Even still, Bendrix wonders if Miss Smythe sits in a different room while Sarah and Richard have sex, or if they send Miss Smythe out for groceries.

Even though Richard fails to live up to the image Bendrix had in his mind of Sarah's handsome new lover, Bendrix still immediately assumes that Sarah is sleeping with Richard. Furthermore, Bendrix makes Miss Smythe a conspirator in Sarah and Richard's affair, assuming that she keeps out of the way so they can sleep together.



Richard looks closely at Bendrix and Lance before proclaiming that he's seen Lance around somewhere. Bendrix tries to take Lance and leave, but Richard tries to convince them to stay. Every time Bendrix looks at Richard's cheek, he feels his anger growing more and more. It seems "horribly bizarre" to Bendrix that Sarah would sleep with a man like Richard, and it seems to "diminish her importance" in Bendrix's mind. Richard reveals that he is an atheist and that people sometimes visit him to talk about philosophy, but before he can go into more detail, Bendrix abruptly announces his departure but mentions that his friend Mrs. Miles might be interested. Richard's face turns deep red and Miss Smythe exclaims, "Oh, my dear" as Bendrix shuts the door.

After the surprise of realizing that Richard does not have the perfect appearance that Bendrix believed he would, Bendrix becomes angry and bitter; he feels like it is a personal insult that Sarah would be with someone Bendrix considers uglier than himself. The reactions of Miss Smythe and Richard after Bendrix drops Sarah's name seem to confirm Bendrix's suspicion that Sarah is not only known there, but that she is important to them.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 8

Mr. Parkis describes a party at Sarah's house that he managed to sneak into by making Sarah believe he was one of Henry's friends and vice versa. Mr. Parkis puts a package on Bendrix's desk and tells him it is Sarah's diary, which he found in her room during the party. Bendrix opens the diary and sees that it is a couple of years old, but the entries are not daily and they cover the time up until the present. Bendrix thanks Mr. Parkis and promises to tell Mr. Savage about how well he's done his job. Mr. Parkis shakes Bendrix's hand before leaving. Once Mr. Parkis is gone, Bendrix opens the journal. What Bendrix reads in the journal is "like a declaration of love," and he notes that "It's a strange thing to discover and to believe that you are loved."

Bendrix considers it a "strange thing" to discover that he is loved. This highlights that Bendrix has become so accustomed to the idea of hatred—and has for so long been consumed by his own hatred of Sarah and the world around him—that encountering anything other than hatred feels strange and disconcerting.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 1

Bendrix opens Sarah's diary to the last page and reads the final two paragraphs. The first paragraph is directed to "You" and included an appeal to "You" to give "him" peace; no names are mentioned, however. In the second entry—dated February 12, 1946—Sarah writes that although she had experienced a period of peace, she dreamed of Maurice and no longer felt that peace. She writes that she wants "ordinary corrupt human love" and asks God to take the pain away for a while. In an aside, Bendrix writes that he started reading the diary from the beginning but did not read every entry because some of them "had still the power to hurt."

The two paragraphs Bendrix reads give a hint of the struggle between Sarah's belief in God and her desire to be with Bendrix (whom she refers to by his first name, Maurice, throughout the diary). It also illustrates that although belief is painful for Sarah, it also brings her moments of peace.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 2

On June 12, 1944 Sarah writes that she “get[s] so tired” of trying to make Maurice understand that she truly loves him. She writes that she “knows [Maurice] is afraid of that **desert**” they’ll find themselves in if their relationship ends but expresses frustration that she can’t make him understand that she feels the same way. Sarah describes Maurice’s jealousy as “a medieval chastity belt” and claims that without it they could be happy together forever.

In the same journal entry, Sarah wonders if God could fill the **desert** if she believed in him. She describes herself as someone who wants “everything” and then considers that many people believe that “God is everything.” Sarah then describes the love she has for Maurice and says she believes in his love for her because she feels love for him. This leads Sarah to believe that if she could love God, then she would be able to believe God loves her, too.

On June 17, 1944 Sarah says she wants to keep writing because “As long as [she] goes on writing, yesterday is today and [they] are still together.” Writing about the day before, Sarah describes going to the park and hearing an atheist “attack[] Christianity” even though nobody seemed to be listening. At the time Sarah is writing, she’s on a train to go to Henry and she wonders what would happen if she were back in London. Sarah asserts that she “might be killed quickly,” but that at least she’d be able to call Maurice. As it is, Sarah finds that even though she generally loves Henry, she hates him at the moment because he is happy while Maurice and she are not.

Of the evening before, Sarah says that “the sirens went.” Sarah notices that she mistakenly wrote “This evening” instead of “last evening,” but writes that it doesn’t matter because “In the **desert** there’s no time.” Sarah writes that she can come out of the desert by changing trains and going back to Maurice and that Henry would be none the wiser. Furthermore, Sarah says she can return to Maurice without anyone except herself and God (who, Sarah writes, “can’t exist”) knowing that she has broken a mysterious “vow.”

Sarah makes her first mention of the “desert,” which symbolizes a loveless life. Sarah recognizes that both she and Bendrix are afraid of the desert, but Bendrix doesn’t recognize that Sarah is as afraid of it as he is. Sarah herself feels trapped by Bendrix’s jealousy, describing it as a “chastity belt,” which implies that it limits her movements and freedom—even though she already loves Bendrix in the way he wants her to.



Although Sarah is afraid of the desert, it seems like she is preparing to go into it. She’s already wondering if she could fill the void Bendrix would leave behind by embracing the love of God, which indicates that she is already starting to not only accept God but love him as well.

Sarah says she is going to Henry but describes it as a negative thing. She also says she’s writing to hang onto the past (yesterday) because she’s not ready to let go. This indicates that she already regrets breaking off her affair with Bendrix. However, it is clear that Sarah is committed to going to Henry because even though she describes how easy it would be to go back to London and Bendrix, she is still on the train heading toward Henry.



Sarah’s note about the “sirens” refers to the air raid sirens that would alert London citizens about raids like the one that almost killed Bendrix. Sarah’s observation about the nature of time and statement that “there’s no time” in the desert implies that she is in the desert now; that would further imply that she’s officially entered a loveless existence without Bendrix—she is on the train to Henry because she has broken up with Bendrix.



Sarah writes that she and Maurice “paid no attention to the sirens” when they heard them. At first, they weren’t worried, but when the air raid continued, Maurice went to see if anyone was in the basement. Sarah writes that after he left, there was an explosion in the house; she went downstairs and found Maurice under a door, seemingly dead. Sarah describes, in a moment of “hysteria,” kneeling on the floor to pray even though she’d never been taught how. During her prayer, Sarah asked God to “make [her] believe” and promised that she *would* believe if God let Maurice live. Continuing her prayer, Sarah told God that she would “give [Maurice] up forever” if he were allowed to live. Just then, Sarah writes, Maurice walked in and she thought to herself: “now the agony of being without him starts.”

In her moment of “hysteria,” Sarah followed her instincts, which prompted her to pray to God. This indicates that Sarah had a belief in God already—at least enough of it to trust and believe that he could bring Bendrix back to life if she made a good enough promise. To Sarah’s credit, the moment she saw that Bendrix was alive, she prepared to make good on her promise—she takes her vow to God very seriously, which reveals that she is typically inclined to honesty despite her deceitful extramarital affairs.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 3

On July 10, 1944 Sarah writes that she went out for a walk several times during the day hoping to run into Maurice because accidentally running into him won’t break her vow to God. In the park, Sarah saw that “the man with the spots was still attacking Christianity” and wondered if he would be able to talk her into believing that she doesn’t have to keep a promise if she doesn’t believe in the person she made it to. A woman with the man passed out cards to people in the park and Sarah took one.

Sarah sees that her one escape from her promise to God is to be talked out of believing in him—by the “man with the spots” who will later turn out to be Richard. At the same time, she refuses to acknowledge just how much she does believe in God. In other words, Sarah wants to be talked out of believing in God even though she claims that she doesn’t believe in God, and therefore wouldn’t have any belief to be talked out of. This perfectly captures how complex Sarah’s relationship with God is, particularly after separating from Bendrix.



On the same night, Sarah writes that some of Henry’s coworkers came over for dinner. Henry and one of his coworkers talked about the V1s and Sarah writes that she wanted to tell them about finding Maurice trapped under the door and that she was naked at the time because she and Maurice were having an affair. Sarah wonders if Henry would have heard her if she did say these things. Sarah writes that she turned her attention to another of the men from Henry’s job, Dunstan. Sarah thought to herself that Dunstan would simply accept an affair for what it was and wouldn’t “be cross or indifferent.” Sarah asked herself, “Why shouldn’t I escape from this **desert** if only for half an hour?” Sarah also remembered that her vow was “only about Maurice.”

Sarah reveals one important detail about the symbolic desert: one can seek temporary relief from it in other people. Although the desert itself is a barren and loveless land, one can pretend for a moment that they are experiencing love with another person. That escape, however, is not a permanent solution; for Sarah, the only possible solutions involve breaking her vow to God and returning to Bendrix, or totally accepting God’s love as a substitute for Bendrix’s.



In the rest of her diary entries from July 1944, Sarah writes of meeting “D.” for dinner and kissing him once while they were out with Henry. However, Sarah writes that “nothing worked” and that one night she looked up Maurice’s phone number to call him. Sarah writes, “I said to God, [...] I can’t believe in you, I can’t love you, but I’ve kept my promise. If I don’t come alive again, I’m going to be a slut.” Sarah threatened to “destroy [her]self quite deliberately” as she waited for Maurice to answer the phone. When someone picked the phone up, however, it was a woman who said she was borrowing the flat while the owner was away.

After hanging up the phone, Sarah was unhappy because she didn’t know where Maurice was. She writes that they were “In the same **desert**, seeking the same water-holes perhaps, but out of sight, always alone.” Sarah also writes that the desert would cease to be a desert if she were with Maurice. Sarah turned to God and asked him what she’s supposed to do with her life. Sarah remembers learning about a king who decided to kill what God loved about him the most in order to get back at God, and Sarah thinks to herself that she wants to do the same thing. However, Sarah writes that she doesn’t think there’s anything loveable about herself and, therefore, God couldn’t love her. Sarah asks God to show her what he loves about her so she can “set about robbing [him] of it.”

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 4

On September 12, 1944 Sarah writes that she went out by herself and had a few drinks, but that this was a mistake. When Henry came home, he was excited to announce that he was going to receive an O.B.E. Sarah said she didn’t understand and Henry told her that, if he kept moving up through the ranks at work, then one day she could be “Lady Miles.” To herself, Sarah thought that she only wanted “to be Mrs. Bendrix,” which she could never do. That night Sarah remembered the time she asked Henry if he’d ever had an affair. Incredulous, Henry told her that he hadn’t and that he’d “never loved any other woman.” Sarah thinks to herself, “While I loved Maurice, I loved Henry, and now I’m what they call good, I don’t love anyone at all. And You least of all.”

When Sarah left Bendrix, she lost a part of herself, as well. Just as Bendrix found that he couldn’t have sex with a prostitute because he didn’t love her—and thus wouldn’t have been able to find emotional fulfillment as well as sexual satisfaction—Sarah is unable to re-create the emotional and sexual fulfillment she found with Bendrix with anyone else. However, she threatens to become a “slut” because, as she mentioned earlier, there is a chance that she can find temporary relief from the pain of a loveless life.



Just as Bendrix weaponized hatred in his quest to hurt Sarah and Henry, Sarah tries to weaponize love; more specifically, Sarah wants to take what God loves about her and use it to hurt him by destroying it. At the same time, Sarah reveals her one great insecurity: she believes that she is unlovable. This also helps explain why she feels so compelled to have affairs—it’s not just for sexual fulfillment, but to feel loved and to make herself believe that something about herself is loveable.



As time passes, Sarah moves beyond actively pleading to be let out of her promise and settles into despair—she no longer begs God to release her from her promise, but rather accepts that she will never become “Mrs. Bendrix” and explores her own apparent lack of love, shown when she says she doesn’t “love anyone at all” now that she’s left Bendrix. Furthermore, for the moment, Sarah has given up denying God’s existence, instead merely stating that she doesn’t love God—rather than that God doesn’t exist.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 5

On September 10, 1945 Sarah writes that while she was cleaning out an old purse, she found a business card for Richard Smythe with an address for those who wanted to visit him. Sarah writes that she wanted to “take a different medicine” and that if Richard could convince her that her promise to God was meaningless, then she would write Maurice and go back to him. At Smythe’s house, Sarah explained her vow and said though she didn’t want to believe in God, she wasn’t sure whether she did or not. Sarah asked Richard if he could “explain away love too,” so he told her that love stemmed from a number of desires—including a “biological” one—and warned her not to “confuse the thing with phantoms.” According to Richard, in Sarah’s case it was “just a question of [her] lover and [her] husband.”

Sarah asked Richard how she should decide what to do if love didn’t really exist. Although Richard claimed not to know for certain, he advised Sarah to choose whatever would make her happiest. To herself, Sarah thought that Richard only got happiness from feeling like he be comforting and useful to other people. As Sarah prepared to leave, Richard invited her to come back to listen to him talk for an hour each week. Sarah could see that it would make Richard happy if she agreed, so she told him that she would come back. Sarah writes that she was also “praying to the God [Richard] was supposed to cure [her] of” to let her “be of use” to Richard.

On October 2, 1945 Sarah writes that she went into a church to get away from human bodies and their many needs. However, the church she walked into was a Catholic church full of statues of human bodies, which made Sarah think that she could believe in a God if it didn’t look anything like a human but was instead more like a “vapour.” Sarah found comfort in this thought because then she could become a vapour and “escape [her]self forever.” However, Sarah realized that she didn’t want Maurice’s body to become a vapour because she loved it so much. Furthermore, as Sarah looked at a “material body on a material cross,” she questioned how “the world [could] have nailed a vapour” onto the cross.

Sarah went to Richard to be talked out of her belief in God so that she would finally feel free to break her vow. However, Richard makes the mistake of trying to convince Sarah that love also doesn’t exist. This is something Sarah really can’t understand, because she has felt and experienced love; if Richard is wrong about love not existing, then perhaps he is wrong about God not existing, as well.



When Sarah starts praying to God immediately after her first meeting with Richard, it shows that she had already given up on the idea that Richard could talk her out of belief. Her decision to go back to him, then, is more to give Richard happiness than out of any hope that he could help her. In this, Sarah illustrates her willingness to endure discomfort to give someone else happiness. This mirrors Sarah’s unwillingness to divorce Henry—she would rather be in a passionless marriage that costs her the love of her life (Bendrix) than hurt Henry by leaving him.



This marks a new development in Sarah’s spiritual journey. She has moved beyond considering God as just an idea to wondering what shape he might take—does he have a material body or is he just a “vapour”? When Sarah wonders how “the world [could] have nailed a vapour” onto the cross, she is also asking how anything could have been nailed onto the cross if it wasn’t real; in other words, the fact that there is a figure on the cross can be considered evidence of God’s existence.



As Sarah contemplated whether God had a material body or was just a vapour, she thought about Richard and the fact that he “hated a fable.” She thought about how Richard hated the idea of heaven (the fable equivalent of the sugar house in the story of Hansel and Gretel); Sarah hated the evil queen in Snow White, but Richard didn’t hate “his fairy-tale Devil.” Sarah wondered why Richard saved all his hatred for the good in fairy tales rather than the bad. To herself, Sarah says, “I’ve hated Maurice, but would I have hated him if I hadn’t loved him too? Oh God, if I could really hate you, what would that mean?”

Sarah arrives at an important realization—arguably one of the most important messages of the book—that hate, more often than not, is rooted in love. For example, Sarah admits that there were times that she hated Bendrix. But that hatred would never have existed if she hadn’t learned to love him first; the hatred itself was a result of frustration with the fact that his jealousy limited her freedom and prevented them from being happy together, as shown in the beginning of Sarah’s diary when she likened his jealousy to a “medieval chastity belt.” It seems, then, that Sarah may be considering hatred as a path toward love; if she could hate God, then maybe she could love him too.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 6

On January 10, 1946 Sarah writes that she walked out into the rain because she couldn’t tolerate being inside. As she walked, Sarah talked to God and remembered that when she asked him to save Maurice, it didn’t matter that she didn’t believe in God; God had still accepted her prayer. While Sarah thought about this, she noted that she could almost feel herself loving God for the first time, and that she “wasn’t afraid of the **desert**.” When Sarah returned home, she saw Maurice with Henry and realized that it was the second time God had given Maurice back to her.

When Sarah sees Bendrix with Henry, it seems like a reward for how far she’s come on her spiritual journey—she is learning to love God and, in return, God is rewarding her by bring Bendrix back into her life. However, as long as Sarah feels God’s love, she doesn’t feel the same need to return to Bendrix, as shown by her statement that she “wasn’t afraid of the desert” when she thought of her love for God.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 7

On January 18, 1946 Sarah writes about going out to lunch with Maurice for the first time since they separated. Sarah says that she wanted to ask Maurice about Henry because Henry’s behavior is leading her to believe that he’s worried about her—something that would be odd because there’s genuinely nothing for him to worry about anymore. She says that Maurice tried to hurt her during their lunch and “succeeded because he was really hurting himself.” Sarah wonders if she “broke[] that old promise” by going out for lunch with Maurice, but writes that she doesn’t think she did.

Sarah and Henry’s lack of real communication—and by implication their lack of emotional intimacy—is illustrated by the fact that Sarah believes Bendrix would know whether or not Henry is worried about her. Interestingly, Sarah does not take the reappearance of Bendrix to be a sign from God that she can begin a new affair with him. Instead, it seems to her like a sign from God that he trusts her not to break her vow; Bendrix can be part of her life, just not in an adulterous way.



On February 3, 1946 Sarah says that she saw Maurice walking to the Pontefract Arms but that he didn't see her. Sarah writes that she had been at Richard's, trying to understand his arguments but instead gaining an increased sense of belief in God. Sarah wonders if anyone could really be "so serious, so argumentative" if what they were talking about wasn't real. She says that she first went to see Richard to see if he could make her believe that God didn't exist, but he had only made her believe in God more. Returning to describing seeing Maurice, Sarah says she followed him to the bar and told God that if Maurice saw her then she would go in. However, Sarah writes, Maurice didn't see her and so she kept walking.

In the same entry, Sarah writes that her thoughts turned to how happy she could make Maurice, which led to the decision to return to her house, pack her bags, write a goodbye letter to Henry, and then call Maurice to tell him that she was coming "for tonight and all the other nights." Sarah writes that she can do this without fear of long-term bitterness from Henry because he is so polite and will understand. Sarah writes about returning to her house and writing the letter to Henry but notes that she struggled with how to end it because "God bless you [...] sounded smug." Having done this, Sarah went down the stairs to put the letter somewhere Henry would be able to find it. Just then, however, Henry walked in the door.

In the same entry, Sarah says Henry told her that he had been to lunch with Bendrix and then abruptly said, "I love you [...]. Do you know that?" Sarah writes that she "could have hated him" for saying that; it would have been better, according to Sarah, if Henry had gotten angry because his "anger would set [her] free." Sarah records that she asked Henry what was wrong, and Henry tells her that he doesn't think he's been a very good husband, before going on to say that they don't "do anything together." Sarah told him that it was bound to happen most marriages, which was supposed to be her "escape line." However, Henry deviated from the script and asked her to stay "a few more years." Because she'd seen what it looked like when Henry was miserable, Sarah promised not to leave him, again giving up the hope of being with Maurice.

Back in her room, Sarah writes, she grabbed a "cheap ugly" crucifix she had bought and tried to think of a prayer "that wasn't me, me, me." Instead, Sarah tried to think about the "awful spots on Richard's cheek" and Henry's tear-stained face. In her prayer, Sarah begged God to "Teach [her] to love" him and to alleviate Richard and Henry's pain.

Although Sarah has evidently not given up her love for Maurice and her hope that they can be together again (shown by the fact that she followed him and expressed a willingness to go to him if she received a sign), she is unwilling to do it without sanction from God. Sarah has put her full trust in God's judgment and truly believes that he will give her a sign indicating whether she can go to Bendrix or not, and she accepts this judgment without complaint even though it makes her unhappy. It's also telling that Richard's arguments against God only make Sarah believe in God more; it seems that her belief isn't really a rational one, despite how much thought she's put into it.



Despite her earlier acceptance of God's judgment, Sarah nearly succumbs to her desire to reignite her affair with Bendrix, but this time she is willing to leave her marriage to Henry to do it. As if in response to Sarah's sinful desires, Henry and everything he represents—honesty, trust, loyalty, and her vows to him as well as to God—appears. This, it seems, is also a sign from God designed to remind her of her vow to give up her relationship with Bendrix.



As the reader knows from Bendrix's narrative, when Henry went to lunch with Bendrix it was because Bendrix wanted to show him evidence of Sarah's infidelity—and at the same lunch, Bendrix admitted that he had been in an affair with Sarah, too. Henry's lack of jealousy is notable; rather than being mad and jealous, Henry turns his blame inwards and accepts that he hasn't been an especially good husband either romantically or sexually. Just as Sarah is preparing to break her vows to Henry and God, Henry tries to recommit to the vow he made to Sarah when they got married. Sarah interprets this, too, as a message from God that she must honor her vows.



In an earlier entry, Sarah wrote that she felt peace and contentment at the same time that she felt love for God. Here, when she asks God to teach her to love, it is the same as asking him to show her how to have peace again. Sarah is able to remember why she sacrificed Bendrix and why she must stick to her promises when she remembers the pain of others and how she can alleviate that pain with her presence.



On February 6, 1946 Sarah records a “terrible scene” she had with Richard. Richard noticed that Sarah was distracted and asked her, “What do you come here for?” Sarah told him it was to see him. At this, Richard got up from his chair and sat next to Sarah. According to Sarah, she knew that he was going to make a romantic advance on her. Richard asked Sarah to marry him, but she refused. Instead, Sarah told Richard about her belief in God and that Richard had talked her into that belief rather than out of it. Richard told Sarah that he could understand her love of God because of her beauty but questioned why he should love a God who had given him the spots on his cheek. In response, Sarah kissed Richard’s spotted cheek and then left.

On February 10, 1946 Sarah writes to God: “Did I ever love Maurice as much before I loved You? Or was it really You I loved all the time?” Sarah writes that Maurice was on God’s side “without knowing it” and that Maurice, like God, had caused their separation. Sarah claims that from the beginning of her affair with Maurice, God “[was] there, teaching us to squander [...] so that one day we might have nothing left except this love of You.” Sarah asks God to give Maurice her peace because “he needs it more.”

In Sarah’s final journal entry on February 12, 1946, she writes that although her last entry was full of “peace and quiet and love,” she has had a dream about Maurice and is no longer at peace. Instead, Sarah says she just wants Maurice like she did before. She writes that she wants “ordinary corrupt human love” and asks God to take away her pain for a while.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 1

After reading Sarah’s diary, Bendrix is elated and consumed with feelings of love and a desire to go to Sarah. Bendrix immediately calls her, but the maid who answers the phone tells him that Sarah is out. Suspicious that the maid is lying, Bendrix calls back and asks for Sarah again, but disguises his voice to sound like one of Henry’s coworkers. This time, Sarah answers the phone and is surprised to hear Bendrix on the other end. Bendrix tells her that he is coming over despite her protestations that she is too sick to see him. Bendrix tells Sarah that he still loves and wants her to run away with him. Sarah tells him that she will leave the house if Bendrix comes, but he ignores her and runs out the door to get to her.

Richard reveals that the root of his refusal to believe in God is actually a refusal to believe that any benevolent or merciful being would give him the spots on his cheek. Earlier, Sarah wondered why Richard condemned what most people consider positive forces such as heaven and God instead of negative ones. The answer to that is also shown here: it was God (a positive force) that would have given Richard the spots, and so it is this positive force that Richard hates.



From her current perspective, Sarah sees God’s hand in her relationship with Bendrix. It was Bendrix’s jealousy that drove a wedge between them, but it was also God’s will. Sarah’s relationship with Bendrix taught her to value love as a necessity to enjoy sex and this ruined her ability to find fulfilment in extramarital affairs; this, too, was God’s will. What Sarah and Bendrix really “squander[ed]” together was the will to engage in sinful behavior that was hurting their souls even though they didn’t realize it. With this realization, Sarah has peace, which she selflessly asks God to give to Bendrix instead.



This abrupt departure from the previous peace-filled message highlights the painful road from nonbelief to belief. Even though there are moments of peace, it is still extremely difficult and painful for Sarah to believe in God because it means she must continue to deny herself the earthly happiness of being with Bendrix.



After reading Sarah’s diary, Bendrix’s primary focus is on the fact that she still loves him. Bendrix’s own lack of belief in God prevents him from understanding Sarah’s, which means he also doesn’t take it seriously. For Bendrix, Sarah’s belief in God is acceptable as long as it doesn’t continue to prevent him from gratifying his own desire to possess Sarah. However, this also reveals how selfish Bendrix is capable of being: even after reading about how hard Sarah fought to keep her promise to God, Bendrix decides to try and talk her out of it instead of respecting her well-documented desire to keep her vow.



Outside, Bendrix realizes that the weather is much worse than when he saw Henry outside the other night—there is sleet instead of rain, making it so that he can't run. As he nears Sarah's house, Bendrix sees her step outside and take off down the road. Without trying to get her attention, Bendrix follows her. He briefly loses sight of Sarah once, but recalls the address of the church Mr. Parkis followed her into once and goes there; sure enough, Sarah is in the church. Bendrix sits next to her after seeing her struggle with a painful coughing fit. Sarah asks Bendrix to leave her alone, but he refuses. When Sarah asks why his behavior is so different from the other day at lunch, Bendrix reveals that he read her diary and tells her how he got it.

Sarah, exhausted by her coughing fit, leans against Bendrix while he tells her of his plan to take her away so they can start over. Bendrix acknowledges that he was a “bad lover” due to his insecurity, but assures her that he is “secure now.” Sarah doesn't respond to Bendrix's assurances, but she doesn't stop leaning on him, either. Bendrix takes this as permission to go on and tells her that she should go home and stay in bed until she's well enough for him to help her pack and take her away. As Bendrix talks, he notices that Sarah has fallen asleep. While Sarah sleeps on his shoulder, Bendrix whispers to her of his love, tells her that she shouldn't worry about Henry, and says that nobody can stop them from being together.

When Sarah wakes up, Bendrix tells her to go home and rest. Sarah, however, refuses and tells him that she wants to stay in the church a while longer. Sarah urges Bendrix to leave so she can have some time to herself. Bendrix agrees, but only after making Sarah promise not to stay long. When he tries to get her to promise to call him, however, she crosses her fingers and then, crying, begs him to “have a bit of mercy” and go away.

Bendrix remembers that when he gave Sarah a goodbye kiss, she told him, “God bless you.” This, Bendrix remembers, was the same thing Sarah crossed out in her goodbye letter to Henry the night she tried to leave him. As he gives Sarah a final departing glance, Bendrix can imagine “a God blessing her: or a God loving her.” In the present, Bendrix notes that although this story was supposed to be “a record of hate,” all of his hatred seems to have gotten misplaced. In fact, Bendrix asserts, Sarah “was better than most.”

Once again Bendrix illustrates that he is incapable of respecting Sarah's boundaries by chasing her into a church, even though he knows she wants to be alone and get away from him. In his determination to get what he wants, Bendrix also doesn't give due attention to Sarah's cough; what to many would be a clear indication that she is seriously sick (especially considering that she had several coughing fits when she went to lunch with Bendrix), to Bendrix is insignificant compared to his overwhelming desire to get Sarah back.



Bendrix's apology for being a “bad lover” and promise to be better are reminiscent of Henry's earlier apology for being a bad husband and his promise to try to be better. Bendrix evidently does not realize how ironic and similar his assurances are, even after reading Henry's words in Sarah's diary. Furthermore, Bendrix still refuses to acknowledge that Sarah's belief in God is what has kept her from returning to him. He still looks for earthly reasons for why they aren't together (namely Henry), unwilling to admit that the forces keeping them apart are more powerful than that.



It is telling that Sarah feels she has to cross her fingers to deceive Bendrix. It shows that she has no faith that he will respect her wishes, because she recognizes that he is determined to get his way. This moment also shows how deep Sarah's religious belief has become, since she used to deceive Henry routinely without ever crossing her fingers or seeming otherwise bothered by it.



On some level, Bendrix recognizes that when Sarah said “God bless you,” she was telling him goodbye forever the same way she had planned to tell Henry goodbye forever. Upon reflection, Bendrix is able to recognize how hard Sarah was trying to do the right thing, which is why he says she “was better than most” despite her evident faults.



BOOK 4, CHAPTER 2

Bendrix writes that in the days after his talk with Sarah in the church, he rededicated himself to finishing his novel and another project—a biography of a man named General Gordon—so that he could finish them and get paid enough to keep himself and Sarah financially afloat. Even though Bendrix makes sure he is home at the time of day when Sarah can safely call, his phone never rings.

During this time, Bendrix frequently wonders why he, a known atheist, has been asked to write a biography on General Gordon, who was a staunch Christian. Bendrix decides that he is expected to write something scandalous about Christianity, but he decides he will “throw no stones at any phantom [Sarah] believed she loved.” Bendrix feels no hatred for God because he had proven himself to be stronger than God.

Bendrix never receives the expected phone call from Sarah. Once, Bendrix calls Sarah’s house, but hangs up quickly because he is afraid Henry will answer. Eight days pass before Bendrix’s phone finally rings. When Bendrix answers it, however, Henry is the one on the line—Sarah has passed away and Henry, distraught, wants Bendrix to come over for a drink.

Where once Bendrix was motivated by hatred—hatred for Sarah, Henry, himself, and God—Bendrix is now driven by love. He begins to think about the future as something that he can enjoy because his view of it is not darkened by his hatred for Sarah.



As long as Bendrix thinks he has a future with Sarah, he does not hate God. In fact, he accepts God because Sarah loves God. This also shows that, when he is secure in love, Bendrix is able to let go of jealousy; there was, after all, a time when Bendrix was jealous of anyone or anything that took up space in Sarah’s heart, because he was so afraid of losing her.



Bendrix once ridiculed Henry for not paying enough attention to Sarah. This time, however, Bendrix is the one who hasn’t paid enough attention. If he had, he might have recognized how ill Sarah was and convinced either her or Henry to get her help, possibly saving her life.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 1

Bendrix sleeps on the sofa in Henry’s house the night after Sarah’s death. Over a bottle of whisky, Bendrix asks Henry to tell him what happened to Sarah. Henry explains that the night after he and Bendrix ran into each other on the Common (about four weeks prior) Sarah developed a cold but refused to see a doctor. Then, about a week prior, Sarah went out into the rain and came back completely soaked through and running a high fever. Henry called a doctor, but the doctor told Henry that he should have called a week ago—the cold had infected Sarah’s lungs and it was too late to save her. In his thoughts, Bendrix tells God, “I hate You if you exist.”

Henry’s revelation that Sarah’s illness took a turn for the worse after she ran out into the rain a week before—which was when Bendrix chased Sarah to the church—adds a new layer to Bendrix’s despair after her death. As the reason that Sarah left her house that day, Bendrix was the indirect cause of Sarah’s death, which presumably might not have happened if Bendrix had respected her wish not to go to her house.



Henry tells Bendrix that he doesn't know how to handle the practical matters of a death; what to do with Sarah's clothes, her makeup, and other items. When Bendrix reaches for another glass of whisky, Henry tells him there is plenty because Sarah had found a new source. This makes them both fall silent and Bendrix again addresses God in his thoughts: "why did You have to do this to us?" Bendrix asks Henry about Sarah's funeral and Henry tells him that he is confused about what to do because Sarah "kept on asking for a priest" in her final hours. Henry said he is "worried," but plans on having Sarah cremated.

Coincidentally, Bendrix is talking to God right now in much the same way Sarah talked to God in the first weeks and months after she left Bendrix. Like Sarah, Bendrix expresses hatred and blames God even though, at this time, he is not willing to admit to himself that he believes in God. Henry uses the same term to describe his fear that Sarah had become religious ("worried") as he did earlier to describe his fear that she was having an affair. This could mean that what Henry really feared, in both cases, was the implication that there were things about Sarah he neither knew nor understood even after over a decade of marriage; for Henry, this would further highlight that he had failed Sarah as a husband.



Bendrix assures Henry that Sarah only mentioned a priest because she was delirious with fever, but Henry tells him that Sarah had been so strange before her death that she "may have become a Catholic" unbeknownst to either of them. Bendrix tells Henry that Sarah didn't believe in God any more than they do. In his thoughts, however, Bendrix says that he "wanted her burnt up" so he'd be able to challenge God to resurrect her. He notes that his jealousy hasn't diminished with Sarah's death, but that he views it as her running away with another lover. Henry interrupts Bendrix's thoughts to ask if he's sure Sarah wasn't a Catholic. Bendrix answers in the affirmative, but in his mind Bendrix warns himself not to hate like Richard Smythe, because if he "were really to hate [he] would believe."

Bendrix views Sarah's death as just another separation. Just as with their first separation, Bendrix looks for someone to blame—someone who must have taken Sarah from him because it is inconceivable that she may have left him of her own volition—and this time the only one he can blame is God. Just as Bendrix felt he was in a competition with Sarah's possible lover, now he feels that he is in a competition for possession of Sarah with God. To that end, Henry wants Sarah's body burned because then God won't be able to possess that through resurrection as well. However, while Bendrix was willing to hate Sarah's possible human lover, he must be careful now, because hatred implies belief and Bendrix is not ready to admit belief in God.



Henry asks Bendrix to stay the night as a favor to Henry and Bendrix agrees. When Henry leaves the room to get Bendrix some blankets and pajamas, Bendrix looks around the room. He notices a rock that he and Sarah found on an excursion once and a wooden rabbit that he purchased for her. When Henry comes back, he tells Bendrix to go ahead and take anything he wants because Sarah didn't leave a will. Bendrix tells Henry that that is kind of him, and Henry replies that he is "grateful [...] to anybody who loved her."

When Bendrix went to Sarah and Henry's house on the night Henry told Bendrix that he was worried about Sarah, Bendrix noted that their home held no indications of sentiment or personal taste. However, this passage makes it clear that Sarah did keep sentimental items that reminded her of Bendrix, highlighting the fact that he was an important part of her life.



The next morning Bendrix wakes up before Henry. A maid brings Bendrix some breakfast and while he eats, he thinks about how he needs to "begin again" and fall in love, but he is ultimately unable to convince himself that he is capable of falling in love with anyone else. While Bendrix eats, Richard Smythe is shown into the room. When Richard says that he's come to offer help to Henry, Bendrix coldly replies that most people would write a card. Richard asks Bendrix about the funeral and then reveals that Sarah would have wanted a Catholic ceremony—she wrote to him several days before saying she was beginning the process of conversion. In despair, Bendrix wonders how much more there is to learn about Sarah.

As Bendrix is prevented with more and more evidence of Sarah's faith, he is confronted with the fact that he did not know her as well as he thought. Bendrix fears learning more about Sarah because he does not want to face the fact that he didn't truly understand her, and that there were other people who understood her better—especially if those other people are men.



Richard asks to see Sarah's body, so Bendrix points him in the direction of the spare bedroom, where Sarah's body remains. After spending some time in Sarah's room, Richard asks Bendrix to "Let her have her Catholic funeral" because she wanted it. Richard explains that he knows Henry has a lot of respect for Bendrix and would give Sarah a Catholic funeral if he suggested it, which sends Bendrix into a hysterical laughing fit. Richard angrily prepares to leave, but Bendrix gets up and explains that he was just rattled. Bendrix sees that Richard has a lock of Sarah's hair in his hand and asks about it. Richard explains that Sarah "doesn't belong to anybody now," which makes Bendrix realize that Sarah has become "a piece of refuse" and that he had been a "fool" to believe he could own her.

Richard asks Bendrix if he knows that Sarah wrote to him. This makes Bendrix remember, with sadness, that she never so much as called him. Richard tells Bendrix that in her letter, Sarah asked him to pray for her, so he did. Bendrix tells Richard that it doesn't "seem right" that he prayed to someone he didn't believe in. Bendrix walks out of the house with Richard and goes back to his own apartment.

In his apartment building, Bendrix observes that the only thing that remains unchanged from 1944 is the **stained glass window**. In a narrated aside, Bendrix writes that Sarah really believed that "the end" began when she found Bendrix trapped under the door. He, however, believes the end began much earlier because there were fewer phone calls and far more arguments between them. Furthermore, Bendrix believes that if the bomb had hit his apartment a year earlier, then Sarah would have done everything she could to get the door off him instead of praying to God. Bendrix claims that we "delude ourselves into a belief in God" when we "get to the end of human beings."

Back in his narrative, Bendrix wonders what he did to Sarah that she would pray for him to have a second chance at life, which is now "odourless, antiseptic" and "empty." Bendrix blames Sarah for this "as though her prayers had really worked." Back in his apartment, Bendrix sees that a letter from Sarah has been placed on his desk in his absence

When Sarah was alive, Bendrix believed that possession of her body was the most important thing—if he possessed her body, he also possessed Sarah as a person (meaning her personality, heart, and mind). However, in death Bendrix realizes how little ownership of her body ultimately meant because all the things that made Sarah herself could not be owned. They were not material things that could be touched, but intangible qualities. This harkens back to Sarah's journal, where she wondered whether she'd rather believe in material God or a God that was a "vapour."



Bendrix outwardly claims that prayers to a force one doesn't believe in are wrong, but inwardly he has already shown himself guilty of this because he has addressed God more than once since Sarah's death. This illustrates how hypocritical Bendrix is in the denial of his belief in God.



To Bendrix, Sarah's decision not to do everything in her physical power to lift the door off of him was a tacit admission on her part that she was ready to be done with him—and what could have made that easier than if he were dead? Bendrix sees prayer as futile, so in his opinion, by praying Sarah was actually giving up on him.



Even though Bendrix claims not to believe in the power of prayer, it is convenient to be able to blame Sarah for his current unhappiness by believing that her prayers caused it. In this way, Bendrix avoids having to take responsibility for his role in his own unhappiness.



In the letter, Sarah writes that she was not going to run away with Bendrix and that she “can’t” see him again. She writes about going to see a priest to ask if she could divorce Henry, become a Catholic, and marry Bendrix. The priest, however, told her that she had to stay married, so Sarah walked out. Sarah says that God has more mercy than priests, but that his mercy “sometimes looks like punishment.” Sarah asserts that she believes in God and “the whole bag of tricks” and that she has no strength left to fight either her belief or her love anymore. In the letter’s closing lines, Sarah writes that Bendrix paved the way for her belief by removing her “lies and self-deceptions.” Sarah ends the letter by saying she hopes God won’t keep her alive any longer.

Sarah says she “can’t” see Bendrix again. In this instance, “can’t” implies two things: first, that Sarah is morally bound by her vow not to see him; second, that she doesn’t have the strength to fight her feelings for Bendrix anymore. Sarah’s description of how God’s blessings or mercy can look like punishments highlights one of the most important lessons she learned on her spiritual journey: that there is no way for mere human beings to understand God’s actions, but just because something feels like a punishment doesn’t mean that it actually is; one might actually find that the punishments are blessings in disguise.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 2

Bendrix writes that he was late for Sarah’s funeral because he went to meet a literary critic named Peter Waterbury who was going to write an article about his novels. In an aside, Bendrix says he doesn’t understand why he went because he had lost interest in his work—none of it seemed to matter. Returning to the story, Bendrix writes that Waterbury was with a woman named Sylvia. Due to his long years in the publishing business, Bendrix recognizes that Sylvia is Waterbury’s protégé. To himself, Bendrix thinks he’d be able to seduce Sylvia away from Waterbury if he wanted to. Waterbury starts to ask questions about Bendrix’s opinion on the novelist E.M. Forster, but Bendrix and Sylvia exclusively talk to each other about the funeral Bendrix has to go to. Sylvia offers to show Bendrix the way to the cemetery and he accepts, leaving Waterbury to angrily call after them.

In Sylvia, Bendrix sees an opportunity to seduce a woman away from another man the same way he always feared someone would seduce Sarah away from him. Furthermore, the fact that Bendrix goes to this meeting even though he knows it will make him late to Sarah’s funeral implies that, on some level, he wants to miss the funeral—by missing the funeral, Bendrix might avoid having to deal with further undeniable evidence of the reality of Sarah’s death.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 3

Bendrix writes that Henry was uncertain about Sarah’s funeral the afternoon before she was to be cremated. Henry calls Bendrix and asks him to come over. When Bendrix gets there, Henry introduces him to a priest named Father Crompton. Bendrix has the distinct impression that Crompton knows who he is and disapproves. Father Crompton assures Henry that he would have taken over Sarah’s funeral preparations immediately if he’d known about her death. In a narrated aside, Bendrix notes that he hated Father Crompton because he was the “victor” while he and Henry were victims. Father Crompton explains that Sarah had shown an interest in becoming Catholic and, through “the baptism of desire,” she qualified for a Catholic burial.

Although nobody else (except maybe Richard Smythe) knows, Bendrix is aware that Sarah had become a believer in God by the time she died. Father Crompton is a real-life reminder of what Sarah had chosen over Bendrix: faith in God and a desire to rectify her ways by becoming faithful to Henry. This is why Bendrix considers Father Crompton the “victor.”



After listening to Father Crompton and Henry discuss Sarah, Bendrix speaks up and tells Henry that they have no reason to believe what Crompton is saying. Father Crompton claims that he saw Sarah less than a week before she died and implies that Bendrix simply hadn't been in Sarah's confidence. Bendrix angrily tells the priest that Sarah might have expressed curiosity about religion, but that doesn't indicate a wish to join. Bendrix turns to Henry and tells him that it is too late to change the funeral plans, especially since they have no evidence that Sarah would have wanted a Catholic funeral. After going back and forth, Bendrix convinces Henry that it is impractical to change the arrangements. Father Crompton promises to remember Sarah at Mass and gets up to leave. Crompton turns his back on Bendrix, which makes Bendrix believe that Crompton can sense his hatred.

When Father Crompton states that Bendrix might not have been in Sarah's confidence, he touches the point on which Bendrix has become most insecure: that he really didn't know or understand Sarah anymore and, for that reason, no longer has the ability to speak about her wants and desires with any authority. The other implication of this statement is that Father Crompton was in Sarah's confidence, which offends Bendrix's jealous nature even further.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 4

Back on the day of Sarah's funeral, Sylvia offers to accompany Bendrix the rest of the way to Golders Green for Sarah's funeral. Even though Bendrix notes that he has "nothing to give Sylvia," he asks her to go to the funeral with him because he "need[s] her beauty to support [him]" there. Sylvia agrees and they walk together to the crematorium. Once they get to the building, however, everyone comes out and Bendrix, with "an odd conventional stab of grief," realizes that they missed the service.

Bendrix wants Sylvia's "beauty" with him because it provides reassurance that he might move on from Sarah. Furthermore, Sylvia's presence with Bendrix would send the clear message to everyone that he was capable of moving on. At the same time, his "conventional" feeling of sadness indicates that despite all the complications in Sarah and Bendrix's relationship, there's something very common and human at its core: straightforward love and desire.



Suddenly, a familiar voice tells Bendrix it is a "sad pleasure" to see him again. Bendrix turns around to see Parkis, who explains that he took the afternoon off to see the funeral because Sarah was "a very fine lady." Bendrix asks where Lance is and Parkis explains that Lance is ill with "violent stomachaches" and hadn't been able to come. Bendrix asks Parkis to name the people who are there and Parkis points out Dunstan. At the sight of him, Bendrix feels his "old hatred" return, even though he also thinks that he would be "willing to share [Sarah] with a world of men if only she could be alive again."

Parkis's presence at Sarah's funeral is a reminder of Bendrix's jealousy and the lengths he went to just to prove that Sarah was doing something that would justify his hatred toward her. Sure enough, Parkis is able to point out people that inspire Bendrix's jealousy, even though Sarah is dead and beyond the reach of any earthly lovers.



Bendrix abruptly asks Sylvia to have dinner with him. In his mind, Bendrix asks Sarah if she can see how well he's able to "get on without [her]." When Sylvia agrees, however, Bendrix realizes he has just "committed [...] to go through the gestures of love" and is overcome with remorse. In his thoughts, Bendrix begs Sarah to get him out of the commitment "for [Sylvia's] sake." Just then, a grey-haired woman walks up and asks if he is Mr. Bendrix. When Bendrix confirms that he is, the woman introduces herself as Mrs. Bertram, Sarah's mother. Mrs. Bertram asks if Bendrix can lend her a little money to get lunch and go home. Bendrix recognizes an opportunity to get out of dinner with Sylvia: he offers to buy Mrs. Bertram dinner and tells Sylvia he'll have to take her another time.

Bendrix wants to avoid memories of Sarah, so he brings Mrs. Bertram to a restaurant he never went to with Sarah. However, he is reminded of her anyway *because* they had never been there. Over dinner, Mrs. Bertram tells Bendrix that she didn't like the service, that Henry is "a very mean man," and that she's had to borrow money from Henry in the past. Mrs. Bertram repeats that she didn't like Sarah's service and then reveals that Sarah was a Catholic. When Bendrix tells her that that can't be, she reveals that she had Sarah baptized as a toddler. Mrs. Bertram makes Bendrix promise not to tell anyone because the baptism was conducted in secret—not even Sarah knew. Mrs. Bertram says she always hoped the baptism would "take" the way "vaccination" did. Bendrix assures her that it didn't.

After dinner, Bendrix gives Mrs. Bertram some money and then heads home. On the way, Bendrix thinks to himself that God and baptism didn't "take" in Sarah (writing from the present, Bendrix notes that he "told" this to "the God I didn't believe in"). Bendrix notes that God has "ruined even in his non-existence the only deep happiness [Bendrix] had ever experienced." Bendrix says to himself that it is just "a horrible coincidence" that Sarah was unknowingly baptized as a Catholic as a child and then sought Catholicism out as an adult. Once again Bendrix addresses God and says he might have won in the end, but Bendrix was the one who "was with [Sarah]," not God. Even when Bendrix wakes the next morning, his first thought is that Sarah had been his, not God's.

Just as he did when he sought out a prostitute to make Sarah jealous, Bendrix tries to make Sarah jealous here by asking a woman on a date at Sarah's funeral. This shows how unreasonable and irrational jealousy can be; Sarah can't possibly see what Bendrix is up to, at least according to Bendrix's belief system. This act just ends up hurting Bendrix, because he is now faced with having to pretend to be interested in a woman that he has no interest in. Bendrix turns to prayer to help him escape, but when the prayer seems to work, he doesn't recognize the appearance of Mrs. Bertram just at that moment as anything more than a coincidence.



Mrs. Bertram's revelation that Sarah was baptized as a child might make her ultimate desire to be Catholic as an adult seem like fate, but Bendrix is still fighting against the idea that greater forces are at work in the world. To that end, he is anxious to convince everyone he can that Sarah was not religious and to hide the details of her belief in God. This would enable Bendrix to take control of the narrative of Sarah's life; it is the last part of her that he feels he has any possession of or control over.



Bendrix admits to himself that he is praying to a God that he still claims not to believe in, which echoes what Sarah wrote in her diary about her prayer and vow to God on the night Bendrix was injured in the air raid. Furthermore, Bendrix becomes preoccupied with making God understand that he, Bendrix, had once been the one in possession of Sarah and was thus an important part of her life—a part that God had no place in. But at the same time, Bendrix's fixation on talking to God shows that God does still have a place in Bendrix's relationship with Sarah, even after her death.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 5

Even though Bendrix once joked to himself that Henry would ask him to move in, he is surprised when the invitation comes. Henry tells Bendrix that he has plenty of space in his apartment for Bendrix to move his books and other things in—Henry also says that Bendrix would be doing him a favor by agreeing to do this. Henry goes on to say that he regrets not giving Sarah a Catholic funeral. Bendrix tells him that it would have been ridiculous to do that because Sarah “was no more a Catholic” than either of them. After a short back and forth about man’s inability to prove or disprove the existence of God, Henry repeats his wish for Bendrix to move in with him.

Suddenly, Henry asks Bendrix if there is any tension remaining between them, especially since Henry got mad at Bendrix about hiring a detective. Bendrix tells Henry to forget about it. Henry goes on to say that Sarah was a good woman and it wasn’t her fault that he had been unable to “love her properly.” Henry begins talking about his house and how it doesn’t feel empty with Sarah gone: “Because she’s always away, she’s never away.” Henry apologizes for talking about Sarah so much but explains that he has nobody else to talk to about her. However, he mentions that he met a man named Parkis who claimed to know Sarah and wanted to have something of hers to give his son. Bendrix explains, to Henry’s surprise, who Parkis is, and then he agrees to move into Henry’s house.

Henry shares his regret at not giving Sarah a Catholic funeral, which shows that the doubts that Bendrix tried to prevent from taking root in Henry’s mind have, in fact, begun to grow there. Still, Bendrix doubles down on his claim that Sarah was not Catholic and would not have wanted a Catholic funeral, because Bendrix is still holding onto his hatred of God and his unwillingness to admit that Sarah left him for something (God) that neither of them were supposed to believe in.



Henry displays a lot of healthy development and growth in his admission of the role he played in Sarah’s fate. Now that Sarah is dead, Henry is able to recognize that he failed to see Sarah’s unhappiness and was therefore unable to help her find happiness and fulfillment. Henry also describes Sarah as a good woman, which means he recognizes that beneath her surface faults and mistakes, she never intended to hurt anyone or to do wrong—she quite innocently sought out the love she couldn’t get from her husband.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 6

After moving into Henry’s house, Bendrix makes a more active effort to move on. Once while Henry is away for a few days, Bendrix brings a prostitute back to the house to see if he can enjoy sex again. However, Bendrix finds that he can’t enjoy sex with the prostitute and remarks sadly that he now has to give up something he’s always enjoyed. Bendrix pulls out some of Sarah’s childhood books to look at and states that sometimes lovers “long[] to be also a father and a brother” because lovers are “jealous of the years” before their loved one knew them. Bendrix comforts himself with looking at all the scribbles in Sarah’s books before putting them away.

When Bendrix seeks out a prostitute this time, it is not for revenge but to measure his own capacity for frivolous, meaningless sex, which he discovers he can no longer enjoy. Although the effort is a failure, it also shows Bendrix’s desire to find joy and pleasure outside of Sarah, which means that—at least emotionally—he wants to lead a happy life again one day.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 7

One morning Henry comes into the house late and explains that he went gone to Father Crompton's church to hear him say Mass for Sarah—and that he invited Father Crompton over for dinner. Bendrix says that he will leave for the night, but Henry asks him to stay because Crompton had been “a friend of Sarah's.” Bendrix asks Henry if he is “turning a believer too,” but Henry incredulously tells Bendrix that he is not. Father Crompton comes to dinner and Bendrix keeps thinking that the priest “was the man who had kept Sarah from [Bendrix].”

Henry tries to make conversation with Father Crompton, but the priest only gives short answers to most of his comments. Finally, Henry says that he hasn't prayed in a long time—not since he was a child—and the priest tells him that any kind of prayer is good because it is “a recognition of God's power.” Bendrix scornfully compares prayer to “touching wood or avoiding lines on the pavement,” but Father Crompton tells him that even superstition can be good because it's “the beginning of wisdom.”

The doorbell rings and Bendrix runs to get it. A woman hands Bendrix a package from Mr. Parkis which contains a book and a letter. In the letter, Mr. Parkis explains that he asked for the book because Lance, who was sick and needed surgery, begged for a memento from Sarah. On the night he received the book, Mr. Parkis prayed to God, his wife, and Sarah to help Lance get better. In the morning, Lance was well again. Mr. Parkis says that there is an inscription in the book. When Bendrix flips the book open, he sees that Sarah had scribbled something about reading the book when one is “sick in bed.”

Bendrix asks Henry if he looked in the book that he gave to Mr. Parkis. Henry says that he didn't and asks why. Bendrix explains that it must be a coincidence before handing Mr. Parkis's letter to Henry and Father Crompton to read. After reading the letter and the inscription in Sarah's book, Father Crompton notes that Sarah was a good woman and that “There's no harm in praying to the dead as well as for them.” Suddenly, Bendrix loses his temper and says that Sarah “was nothing of the sort” and that she deceived everyone. Henry tries to get Bendrix to stop, but Father Crompton tells him to let Bendrix go on. Bendrix states that Sarah had been with a lot of men and tells Father Crompton to go back to his church.

Even though Henry claims that his presence at Father Crompton's church is not indicative of a growing belief in God, some of his past words (such as when he expressed regret at not giving Sarah a Catholic funeral) reveal that he is at least curious. On the other hand, the appeal of Father Crompton (to Henry) is mainly his connection to Sarah. By going to Mass at Crompton's church, Henry is finally trying to get closer to and understand Sarah in the way that he failed to do when she was alive.



Bendrix tries to downplay the importance of prayer because of his complicated relationship with faith: Bendrix has prayed and his prayers were a tacit and begrudging acknowledgment of God's existence, but Bendrix is still outwardly fighting off belief in that existence. Bendrix doesn't want to hear that prayer is a “recognition of God's power” because he doesn't want to be guilty of having recognized that power himself. What's more, believing in God's power would make Bendrix feel inferior to God and make it all the more painful that Sarah essentially left him for God.



Coincidentally, just as Father Crompton is describing prayer as a “recognition of God's power,” Bendrix is handed evidence of the power of prayer—it seems as if Mr. Parkis's prayers for his son's health were answered by God himself. This incident would be construed as a miracle by anyone who believed in God, but Bendrix still refuses to believe.



Bendrix focuses on Sarah's sins rather than her good deeds. Now that Sarah is dead, it seems as if her acceptance of God miraculously made her a “good woman” in the eyes of others—after all, would Father Crompton have called Sarah a good woman if he had only known her as an adulteress and a liar? Bendrix doesn't want Sarah to be seen as a good woman by others because he himself is still hurt and she was the one who hurt him; he's still harboring hatred and anger at her for choosing to leave him, despite (or because of) all his love for her.



Henry apologizes for Bendrix's outburst, but Father Crompton says that there is no need to apologize because he "know[s] when a man's in pain." Furious, Bendrix proclaims that he isn't "in pain," but "in hate." Bendrix tells them that he hates Sarah and Henry and Father Crompton, which prompts the priest to tell Bendrix that he is "a good hater." With tears in his eyes, Bendrix angrily walks out of the room. Bendrix tells himself to "be reasonable." Bendrix wonders to himself if one can "really hate and love" at the same time and then thinks of all the things about himself that he hates, including the fact that he pursued Sarah in the first place and his "untrusting mind."

Bendrix grabs Sarah's diary out of his nightstand and opens it to the entry where she wonders what it would mean if she hated God. To himself, Bendrix thinks that hating Sarah or himself is only *loving* Sarah or himself. To God, Bendrix says that the only one worth hating is God if he exists. Bendrix then "[speaks] to the Sarah [he doesn't] believe in" and asks her what kind of life he is supposed to live without her. He tells her that when she was alive and he loved her, he had lost his appetite for food and other women—and that if he were to love God then he would "cease to be Bendrix," which makes him afraid.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 8

The work Bendrix is doing on his book isn't going well, so he goes for a walk in the park. At the park, Bendrix notices Richard Smythe in a crowd in front of a street performer. Bendrix approaches Richard and asks if he still speaks in the park. Richard tells Bendrix that he has given up speaking about atheism and is no longer sure what to believe. Bendrix notices that Richard is holding a handkerchief against the cheek that is covered in spots, so Bendrix asks him what is wrong. Without a word, Richard takes the handkerchief off and reveals a perfectly smooth cheek. Bendrix asks how it happened and Richard evasively answers that it was "Modern methods. Electricity."

Bendrix goes back home to struggle over writing a character in his book. As he works, Bendrix imagines that God must experience a similar feeling about a lot of people, who only "help to furnish the scene in which a living character moves and speaks." After working for a while, Bendrix hears Henry come home. Bendrix goes to Henry so they can leave for their usual evening drink at the bar. While Henry gets ready, he tells Bendrix that he ran into Mrs. Bertram, who needed to borrow some money and grew angry when Henry lectured her about borrowing so much. Henry adds that Mrs. Bertram then told him a "strange story." Before he can explain, Bendrix tells him that Mrs. Bertram shared the same story with him already and assures Henry that it's just "an odd coincidence."

Bendrix refuses to admit that his anger is rooted in pain, because pain could be construed as weakness and Bendrix does not want to appear weak. Furthermore, Bendrix is trying to punish those around him for forgiving Sarah for her past sins (such as when Crompton called her a "good woman" despite knowing her history). He wants to make them angry and feel the same pain he does, and so he turns to strong language the same way he did in Victoria Gardens when he told Henry about Sarah's affairs.



Like Sarah did in the church earlier, Bendrix begins to consider the relationship of hatred and love and arrives at a similar conclusion: the two are so intertwined that one can hardly feel hatred without love, and vice versa. This is why he says that hating himself or Sarah is the same as loving. However, Bendrix says he hates God without realizing that, by his previous logic, he is also saying that he loves God. Either way, this is further evidence that Bendrix really has accepted God's existence even though he still doesn't admit it.



Bendrix's friendliness towards Richard shows that Bendrix has let go of his hatred and jealousy of him. Richard's seemingly sudden decision to stop preaching atheism in the park, combined with his statement that he no longer knows what to believe and evasiveness about answering Bendrix's question, indicates that Richard may have had a spiritual epiphany that is linked to his cheek. However, Bendrix either genuinely does not or purposely will not pick up on these clues.



The story Mrs. Bertram told Henry was, of course, the story of Sarah's childhood baptism. Bendrix knows that if he doesn't quickly talk Henry out of thinking too much about the story of Sarah's baptism and how she wanted to become Catholic before her death, then Henry will likely slip into the same belief of God that Bendrix is fighting against. However, Bendrix himself has found a new way to connect with God because he has realized that, as a novelist who creates worlds and people with his books, he has something in common with God.



While Henry is getting his shoes on, the phone rings. Bendrix runs to get it himself—Richard Smythe is on the other end and anxiously reveals that he lied about how his cheek healed. Bendrix states that he really doesn't care, but Richard goes on to say that his cheek cleared up overnight and that "It was a..." But Bendrix hangs up on him before Richard can finish the sentence. Bendrix convinces himself that it is a gimmick and that soon Richard will be speaking about it in the park the same way he spoke about atheism. Henry walks in and asks who was on the phone, but Bendrix, worried that Henry might run to Father Crompton with the story, tells him Richard called to share that he has been to a doctor who cleared up the spots on his face.

To himself, Bendrix wonders "how many coincidences are there going to be?" He thinks back over how Mrs. Bertram saved him from having dinner with Sylvia, the story about Lance and Sarah's book, Richard's cheek, and Sarah's childhood baptism. Despite all of this, Bendrix thinks that he has a "duty" to "hold Henry up till the last moment" even as he himself drowns. Suddenly, Bendrix decides to go back to his room so he can destroy Sarah's journal and keep Henry from ever finding it.

Bendrix rips the cover off Sarah's diary and it falls open to the entry where she asks God to give Bendrix peace. Addressing Sarah, Bendrix thinks, "you've failed there, Sarah." He tells Sarah that he has neither peace nor love, except love for Sarah. Bendrix thinks about how he had called himself a "man of hate," but notes that now he doesn't "feel much hatred." He thinks about how Sarah, despite all her sins, took the leap into acceptance and belief in God, and he considers the implication that anyone could do the same and attain sainthood. Turning to God, Bendrix tells him that he "[hasn't] got [Bendrix] yet" and rejects God's peace and love. Bendrix accuses God of ruining his and Sarah's happiness and says: "I hate You, God, I hate You as though You existed."

Bendrix looks down at Sarah's diary and realizes that it is all he has left of Sarah, so he picks it up and puts it away. Then Bendrix says to Sarah that he will believe in God, but that "it will take more than your prayers to turn this hatred of Him into love." Bendrix described his hatred for God as something that is in his brain, and therefore can't be removed like some physical ailment.

Bendrix is unwilling to even hear the word "miracle" because once that seed is planted so openly in his mind, soon he will be accepting miracles (and therefore God) as a reality, as well. In a similar way, Bendrix wants to keep Henry from believing in miracles because he doesn't want Henry to believe in God, either. If Henry begins to believe, then Bendrix will be surrounded by believers and will be unable to fight belief any longer—and he will also be vulnerable to all the pain that comes with it, as shown in Sarah's diary.



Bendrix's question to himself suggests that he is losing the struggle to believe that all these things are coincidences rather than miracles. Furthermore, his concern for Henry and how to keep Henry safe from the pain of learning to believe in God is similar to Sarah's devotion to Henry and desire to save him pain. For Bendrix, belief is painful because it means accepting defeat and because, thus far, belief in God always comes at a terrible personal price—after all, it cost him his relationship with Sarah.



By continuing to deny God's existence, Bendrix is able to deny that God ultimately won Sarah. Bendrix, still suffering from his horrible insecurity and jealousy, doesn't want to think that his hold over Sarah had been so weak that an unseen force such as God was able to pluck her away. Admitting that God exists would also mean that Bendrix would be admitting his own powerlessness—accepting that he couldn't save Sarah, or possess her, or force her to accept him as the most important part of her life. For Bendrix, this is still a competition and he doesn't want to admit defeat, even as his belief grows stronger.



Bendrix says he will accept God on the condition that he can keep his hatred for God, too. In doing this, however, he doesn't account for his earlier realization that hatred and love are nearly one and the same, and that hatred often has its roots in love. In this case, Bendrix's hatred for God has roots in his love for Sarah. Like Henry, Bendrix is looking for a way to be closer to Sarah, and making this concession is his way of getting closer to her.

Henry calls to Bendrix to see if he is ready to go out for a drink. The two men walk out together toward the bar. Henry tells Bendrix that he always “look[s] forward to these evening walks of ours.” Bendrix agrees and puts a hand on Henry’s arm, while thinking to himself that he will have to be strong for both of them. Then Henry says that their walks “are the only things” he looks forward to. This prompts Bendrix to pray to God: “O God, You’ve done enough, You’ve robbed me of enough, I’m too tired and old to learn to love, leave me alone for ever.”

Bendrix’s final prayer—and clearest admission of his belief in God—comes about as a result of Henry’s words. Bendrix feels Henry’s growing love for him and recognizes the danger—if Henry loves Bendrix, then Bendrix may come to love Henry. Love itself does not scare Bendrix, but the pain of losing love does. Ultimately, what Bendrix wants is apathy. He doesn’t want the pain of love or hatred; he doesn’t have any more energy to spend on either one, because he’s spent it all on Sarah and his pursuit of revenge. In her diary, Sarah wrote that she and Bendrix had “squander[ed]” all of their love on each other so there’d be nothing left, leaving room for God. Bendrix goes through a similar situation here: he realizes he has “squander[ed]” all of his meaningful emotions, and the best he can now hope for is for God to allow him apathy and indifference, both of which will keep him safe from pain. Of course, it’s unclear whether Bendrix will get what he wants; the ending leaves open the question of how Bendrix and Henry’s relationship might develop from here.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Greenwood, Alissa. "The End of the Affair." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 27 Nov 2019. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Greenwood, Alissa. "The End of the Affair." LitCharts LLC, November 27, 2019. Retrieved April 21, 2020.
<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-end-of-the-affair>.

To cite any of the quotes from *The End of the Affair* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Greene, Graham. *The End of the Affair*. Penguin. 1951.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Greene, Graham. *The End of the Affair*. London: Penguin. 1951.