Enduring Love

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF IAN MCEWAN

Ian McEwan is one of the most important British writers of the last fifty years. Born in Aldershot, Hampshire, in the south of England, McEwan studied at the University of Sussex and the University of East Anglia before publishing a pair of short story collections—*First Love, Last Rites* and *In Between the Sheets*—whose chilling content earned him the nickname "Ian Macabre." Over the next several years, McEwan's style evolved, an alteration that won the author far greater fame and critical success with the publication of such mainstream novels as *Black Dogs*, *Amsterdam* (for which McEwan won the Man Booker Prize), and, most famously, *Atonement*, which was lauded by *Time* magazine as the best novel of 2002. McEwan continued to produce at a rapid pace in the years following *Atonement*, releasing six novels from 2005 until 2016. Among these are *Saturday*, a response to the War on Terror and Britain's involvement in the invasion of Iraq; *Solar*, a satirical examination of the politics of climate change; and *Sweet Tooth*, a Cold War thriller that features significant autobiographical elements. McEwan is married to Annalena McAfee, a journalist and editor, and lives in London and the Cotswolds.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 2007, the British forensic psychologist Lorraine Sheridan told the BBC that the 1980s and 1990s saw an increase in stalking-related crimes in England. During those decades, stalkers "had more methods—such as mobile phones and computers—to research their victims." Whether or not *Enduring Love* was written as an answer to stalking's increasing prevalence, it certainly exists in that historical context.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Enduring Love shares a tone and style with other Ian McEwan novels of its period, particularly *Black Dogs* (1992), *Atonement* (2001), and *Saturday* (2005). As a work examining the ramifications of mental illness, it bears comparison to John Wray's *Lowboy* (2009), Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* (1987), and Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003). Finally, as a British novel of the late 1990s, it proceeds from the same literary tradition as Graham Swift's *Last Orders* (1996), Julian Barnes's *England, England* (1998), and Michael Frayn's *Headlong* (1999).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Enduring Love*
- **When Published:** 1997
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary British
- **Genre:** Literary Fiction
- **Setting:** London, England
- **Climax:** Jed Parry enters Joe Rose's apartment and threatens to kill his wife, Clarissa Mellon
- **Antagonist:** Jed Parry
- **Point of View:** The point of view is primarily Joe Rose's, with occasional sections narrated by Clarissa Mellon and Jed Parry

EXTRA CREDIT

Mind Over Matter. In a 2009 interview with *The New Yorker*, Ian McEwan revealed that he wrote *Enduring Love* in part to combat the "unexamined Romantic assumption that still lingers in the contemporary novel, which is that intuition is good and reason bad."

Fake Science. *Enduring Love* concludes with a scholarly report that claims to be "reprinted from *The British Review of Psychiatry*. In fact, McEwan wrote this report himself, and it is, like the novel, entirely fictional.

PLOT SUMMARY

Joe Rose and his wife, Clarissa Mellon, are picnicking in the English countryside when they hear the shouts of a child in distress. The child, Harry Gadd, is in the basket of a hot-air balloon, which the wind is threatening to carry away. His grandfather, James Gadd, is working feverishly to secure the basket to the ground. As Joe is racing toward the balloon in an attempt to help, he is joined by several other men, among them John Logan, a local doctor and former mountain-rescue worker, and Jed Parry, a young man who lives alone on the income from a large inheritance. Though the men do their best to provide assistance, taking hold of the ropes dangling from the balloon's basket, their intervention ends in disaster. John Logan holds on to his rope when a burst of wind carries the balloon high into the air and, to the horror of everyone present, he falls a great distance to his death.

In the moments after Logan's fall, Joe and Parry share a few minutes together as they wait for the police to arrive. Parry encourages Joe to pray, and when Joe responds that he holds no religious beliefs, Parry is increasingly insistent. Later that evening, after Joe and Clarissa have talked through the events of the day again and again, Joe is awakened by a phone call. On

the other end of the line is Parry, who insists that he understands what he believes Joe to be feeling and that he loves Joe, too. Confused and flustered, Joe hangs up the phone and tells Clarissa that the call was a wrong number.

In the days that follow, Parry's behavior grows increasingly perplexing. He suffers from de Clerambault's syndrome, which has given him the delusion that he and Joe are in love, and, as a consequence, he begins to write Joe long letters, follow him in the streets around Joe's apartment, and leave pleading telephone messages on Joe's answering machine. Though Joe attempts to explain to Clarissa what is happening, she is hesitant to believe that Joe is in any danger, preferring instead to think that Parry is harmless and ought to be gently and carefully reasoned with.

In part to escape from Parry for a few hours, Joe travels to Oxford to visit John Logan's widow, Jean Logan. Distraught and inconsolable, Jean reveals her belief that her husband was having an affair in the weeks before his death. She questions Joe about the afternoon of the accident and threatens to kill her husband's supposed lover if she ever meets her. Back in London, Joe finds his relationship with Clarissa to be increasingly troubled. Parry's obsession has caused a rift between the two of them, and an atmosphere of mutual distrust has arisen in their household.

Things continue in this manner until the afternoon of a birthday luncheon in Clarissa's honor. Joining her and Joe is Clarissa's godfather, an elderly scientist and professor. As their meal progresses, Joe notices a similarly composed group—a woman and two men—dining at a nearby table. Suddenly, a pair of gunmen enter the restaurant, move toward the nearby table, and shoot the younger of the two men sitting there. Before they can shoot him a second time, however, a man whom Joe recognizes as Jed Parry intervenes. Parry has sent the men into the restaurant to kill Joe, but they have mistakenly shot a man Joe's age.

Unsatisfied with the response of the police, who cannot be convinced that Joe is in danger despite what has happened, Joe purchases a gun from a former friend. On his way home, he receives a call from Jed Parry, who tells Joe that he is sitting in Joe's apartment with Clarissa and that Joe must join them right away. Racing back to London, Joe finds that Parry and Clarissa are indeed together. A distraught Parry confesses that his love for Joe has ruined his life, and when he pulls a knife from his pocket, Joe shoots him in the arm to prevent him from killing himself.

In the novel's closing pages, Joe and Clarissa travel to Oxford once more to visit Jean Logan. They picnic with Jean and her children beside a river and are joined by two of John Logan's friends: a university lecturer and the young woman with whom he is romantically involved. John Logan's supposed affair, the university lecturer reveals, did not occur. Rather, John was giving the lecturer and the young woman a ride in his car when he stopped to assist the balloonists, a fact that led to the circumstances and details that aroused Jean's suspicions.

Simultaneously relieved and guilty, Jean Logan wonders who can forgive her for doubting her husband's faithfulness. Her question makes Joe and Clarissa ponder their own relationship, and while Joe concedes that he might one day forgive Clarissa for discounting the threat posed by Parry, he isn't yet able to do so.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Joe Rose – Joe Rose is the protagonist of *Enduring Love* and the novel's chief narrator. He's married to Clarissa Mellon, and he is a science writer and a committed rationalist. After witnessing a man die in a ballooning accident, Joe reacts with his typical commitment to reason over emotion, focusing on the logistics of what went wrong rather than the meaning of witnessing a violent death. Nonetheless, he feels a formless malaise in reaction to the event. The ballooning accident has another profound effect: Jed Parry—another witness to the accident—begins stalking Joe, which upends Joe's life. He finds himself questioning both his career and his relationship with Clarissa. Dissatisfied with his professional life, he undertakes a fruitless quest to realize his old ambition of being a scientist, and he comes to resent Clarissa for not believing him that Jed Parry is stalking him, which fractures their marriage. The central tension between him and Clarissa is whether Joe's rationalism or Clarissa's intuition is the better lens with which to view the events of their lives, and, by the end of the novel, it's clear that both parties are correct on some counts. However, as Joe was right about Jed Parry, and his reliance on reason allows him to thwart his stalker and restore equilibrium to his life, McEwan seems to suggest that Joe's rationalism is—when used in moderation—preferable to Clarissa's intuition. The book concludes with Joe's consideration of whether a future with Clarissa might yet be possible.

Clarissa Mellon – Clarissa Mellon is a secondary protagonist of *Enduring Love* and the wife of Joe Rose. A literary historian, Clarissa is especially interested in the Romantic British poet John Keats, a piece of whose correspondence she is attempting to locate as the novel begins. In the early days of Clarissa's relationship with Joe, she writes him long, passionate letters, an act that helps to reveal her highly emotional and loving character. Though Clarissa adores children and has set aside a special room in the couple's apartment in which nieces and nephews may play, she is herself unable to have a child due to a medical error in her early adulthood, and she is haunted by "the absence of babies" in her life. In part because she is guided by intuition and emotion rather than Joe's rationalism, Clarissa spends much of the novel unconvinced that Jed Parry is a true

threat to Joe, believing instead that Joe has exaggerated the danger as a result of the emotional trauma of the ballooning accident. It is only when Parry breaks into her apartment and takes her hostage that Clarissa concedes that Joe was right about the man, and even then she insists that Joe unnecessarily isolated himself throughout his interaction with Parry rather than allowing Clarissa access to his most personal thoughts and feelings. As the novel ends, Clarissa, like Joe, seems interested in reconciliation but unsure of its likelihood.

Jed Parry – Jed Parry is the antagonist of *Enduring Love*. An isolated and lonely recipient of a significant inheritance, he's a deeply religious man who suffers from de Clerambault's syndrome, which gives a person delusions of love. Due to his condition, Parry spends the bulk of the novel stalking Joe Rose, whom he met during the ballooning accident. Parry believes that a glance he and Joe exchanged in the tragedy's aftermath indicated a spontaneous blooming of love between the two men and that he alone can bring Joe to religious faith by means of their relationship. Like Clarissa, Parry holds a view of the world that stands in marked contrast to Joe's rationalism. Yet, in Parry's case, that worldview is not, like Clarissa's intuitiveness, a legitimate alternative but, rather, a psychotic *anti*-rationalism that Joe must unequivocally resist. Because Parry's feelings for Joe are a product of both faith (which, by definition, stands apart from reason) and mental illness, they cannot be argued away. Indeed, as the novel progresses, Parry becomes increasingly unstable, attempting to murder Joe and ultimately taking Clarissa prisoner before threatening suicide. As the book ends, Parry has been arrested and taken into psychiatric care

John Logan – John Logan is a family doctor who lives with his wife, Jean, and their children, Rachael and Leo, in Oxford. A former mountain-rescue worker, Logan rushes unhesitatingly toward the scene of the ballooning accident and loses his life in part because his courage exceeds that of the rest of the group. When the other men attempting to hold down the runaway hot air balloon release their ropes, Logan, who is still holding on, is carried into the air and falls to his death, a turn of events that emphasizes Logan's commitment to the cause of aiding a child in danger. Though his wife briefly suspects that Logan was having an affair in the months before the accident, she later learns that this was not, in fact, the case. Instead, Logan was practicing his habitual kindness yet again: offering a ride to a friend whose car had broken down (and whose affair with a younger woman is the relationship Jean mistakenly attributes to her husband). Throughout the novel, John Logan is consistently spoken of as "brave" by the other characters, and, indeed, much of Clarissa's sorrow after the accident is due to the fact that a "good man" has perished.

Jean Logan – The wife and, later, widow of John Logan, Jean Logan lives in the couple's Oxford house with their children, Rachael and Leo. Jean is in mourning throughout the novel, an emotional experience that is heightened by her suspicion that her husband was unfaithful to her before his death. When Jean realizes that her fears about her husband's fidelity have been misplaced, she wonders aloud who can forgive her now that he is no longer alive to do so.

Rachael Logan – Rachael Logan is the ten-year-old daughter of John Logan and Jean Logan who lives with her widowed mother and her brother, Leo, in the family's Oxford home. A precocious child, Rachael argues with Joe about whether it is wrong to eat horses, among other things. By the novel's closing pages, she has developed a friendship of sorts with both Clarissa and Joe.

Leo Logan – Leo Logan is the eight-year-old brother of Rachael Logan and the son of John Logan and Jean Logan. Leo clings to his mother in the aftermath of his father's death but is still, like Rachael, able to laugh and play. Also like Rachael, he develops a relationship with Clarissa and Joe as the novel progresses.

James Gadd – James Gadd is a fifty-five-year-old executive in an advertising agency. The pilot of the balloon featured in the novel's opening chapter, Gadd attempts to save the life of his grandson, Harry Gadd, who is trapped in the balloon's basket. He is later found to have violated a number of safety procedures.

Harry Gadd – Harry Gadd is the ten-year-old grandson of James Gadd and the child whose imperilment begins the novel. Trapped in the basket of a wind-tossed hot-air balloon, Harry must be rescued before the balloon can be blown into nearby power lines. Once John Logan falls to his death and Harry realizes that he is on his own, he slowly lets air out of the balloon and returns to the ground safely.

Joseph Lacey – Joseph Lacey is a sixty-three-year-old farm laborer and the best friend of fellow-laborer Toby Greene. During the ballooning accident, Lacey attempts to hold down the balloon, and then he assists Toby when he falls from his rope and breaks his ankle. A former paratrooper, Lacey is unhurt by his own fall.

Toby Greene – Toby Greene is a fifty-eight-year-old farm laborer who is unmarried and lives with his mother. Like his friend Joseph Lacey, Greene tries to secure the runaway hot-air balloon. Unlike Lacey, however, Greene injures himself during the attempt, breaking his ankle in a fall from one of the balloon's dangling ropes.

MINOR CHARACTERS

James Reid – James Reid is a professor of logic who is having an affair with Bonnie Deedes, his student. As the novel opens, John Logan is giving the couple a ride, the evidence of which later leads Jean Logan to mistakenly believe that her late husband was unfaithful.

Bonnie Deedes – Bonnie Deedes is a university student whose

affair with James Reid, a professor, inspires Jean Logan's mistaken suspicion of her husband. At the conclusion of the novel, Bonnie and James Reid confess to Jean Logan their part in her grief.

Jocelyn Kale – Jocelyn Kale is Clarissa Mellon's godfather and an eminent scientist and professor. He accompanies Clarissa and Joe to the birthday lunch at which Jed Parry attempts to have Joe killed.

Luke Mellon – Luke Mellon is Clarissa Mellon's brother whose fifteen-year marriage is disintegrating as the novel opens. Clarissa goes to dinner with her brother on the evening after the ballooning accident.

Duty Inspector Linley – Duty Inspector Linley is the police officer who responds to Joe's complaints about Jed Parry and who interviews Joe at the police station. Because Parry has not yet attempted to harm Joe, Linley insists that there is nothing the police can do.

Detective Constable Wallace – Detective Constable Wallace is the police officer who interviews Joe after Jed Parry's attempt to have Joe killed. Wallace presses Joe about minor details surrounding the restaurant meal, and he cannot be convinced that Parry was responsible for the shooting.

Colin Tapp – Colin Tapp is an undersecretary at the Department of Trade and Industry and a man of about Joe's age. When Jed Parry sends assassins into a restaurant to kill Joe, the men mistakenly shoot Colin Tapp instead.

Johnny B. Well – Johnny B. Well is a drug dealer and a former friend of Joe Rose who helps Joe purchase a gun when Joe feels that his life is in danger.

Steve – Steve is an acquaintance of Johnny B. Well from whom Joe purchases a gun.

Xan – Xan is the muscular friend of Steve who is present when Joe buys a gun.

Daisy – Like Steve and Xan, Daisy is present when Joe purchases a gun with the assistance of Johnny B. Well.

THEMES

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

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOYALTY

The catastrophic balloon accident at the start of *Enduring Love* precipitates several crises of loyalty. One crisis involves a group of strangers, another strains the dynamic of a relationship, and a third involves a widow grappling with her doubts about her late husband. Each of these scenarios shows that catastrophe can dramatically reshape situations that once seemed clear and stable. Once characters come to doubt the reliability and benevolence of the world around them, they can easily fall into disloyalty, even to those they love. Through his characters' post-catastrophe struggles with their loyalty to others, McEwan demonstrates the value of loyalty—its comfort, goodwill, and stability—while warning that loyalty, once squandered, is difficult to rebuild.

The fatal ballooning accident with which the novel opens occurs because a group of men are unable to cooperate successfully—because they are, in effect, disloyal to one another and to their shared mission. When the balloonists' distress first becomes clear to the strangers in and around the "hundred-acre field," several men run to help, thinking little for his own safety. The men are working together to rescue Harry Gadd, who is stuck in the balloon's basket and could be carried away by the wind at any moment, yet, despite a "vague commonality of purpose," they are "never a team." Hampered by a "fatal lack of cooperation," they work against one another instead of working together, which reveals how easily circumstances can disrupt a group's loyalty to a widely held goal.

This failure to cooperate becomes deadly after a stunning act of disloyalty. Though the collective weight of the men holding the ropes could save the child, one by one the men let go until only John Logan—who is carried away and eventually falls to his death—remains. For McEwan, this collective betrayal of Logan is the result of the fact that "selfishness is . . . written on our hearts": people think of themselves before thinking of others. Though none of the survivors will admit to himself that he let go first, it is beyond dispute that the men have "broken ranks" with catastrophic results.

The disloyalty of the men during the ballooning accident echoes a more intimate disloyalty that wreaks havoc on the novel's central relationship. During the long period in which Joe Rose, the novel's protagonist, is harassed and stalked by Jed Parry, Joe believes that his wife, Clarissa, is disloyal to him, and Clarissa believes Joe is crazy. Clarissa thinks that Joe is "making too much of" Parry and comes close to suggesting that Parry is a figment of Joe's imagination, while Joe invades Clarissa's privacy by going through her letters and notes in search of an explanation for her failure to support him. McEwan seems to be illustrating here how difficult it is to be loyal. Despite their best intentions, Joe and Clarissa allow their own suspicions and agendas to corrupt the mutual loyalty they know they ought to have in a moment of crisis.

As a consequence of this mutual suspicion, Joe and Clarissa soon drift apart. As Joe puts it, "When our eyes met, it was as if our ghostly, meaner selves held up hands before our faces to block the possibility of understanding." Here, disloyalty seems not only to set the couple against each other but to obscure

their very identities. While a reconciliation seems possible by the end of the novel, Joe acknowledges that Clarissa's failure to support him wholeheartedly might ultimately prevent them from remaining together. Though they may eventually reach "mutual forgiveness, or at least tolerance," they have not yet done so as the book ends.

In a third instance of catastrophe producing distrust and disloyalty, John Logan's wife, Jean, begins to believe, after his death, that he was having an affair in the weeks leading up to the accident. When this belief turns out to be incorrect, Jean realizes that she has been disloyal by mistrusting him. Once the truth is revealed, in fact, Jean is arguably more distraught than she was before. "Who's going to forgive me?" she asks, angry at herself for doubting her husband's fidelity. "The only person who can is dead." Jean's distress in this moment illustrates a highly significant characteristic of loyalty as McEwan understands it. Though characters can express regret when they fail to be loyal to one another, they cannot undo that failure. Just as her husband's death is irrevocable, the fact of Jean's initial suspicion cannot be altered. Clearly, her grief is at least in part an awareness of her inability to reclaim the total loyalty that she briefly set aside.

Throughout the novel, true loyalty is revealed to be as valuable as it is rare. Loyalty's uncommonness is, in fact, a sign of its worth, as is the difficultly of forgiveness once loyalty is violated. Violating loyalty, in McEwan's worldview, is easy, but the consequences of disloyalty include deep suffering. The message McEwan intends to communicate is clear: loyalty to groups, to shared goals, and to loved ones is a prized and irreplaceable human value. Once it is lost, it is almost impossible to reclaim.

RATIONALISM VS. INTUITION

Enduring Love features a protagonist whose commitment to rationalism—the notion that actions should be based on knowledge and reason—collides with characters who live by intuition or emotion. McEwan clearly validates Joe's commitment to reason: despite Clarissa's resistance, Joe immediately diagnoses Parry as an insane and dangerous individual, which allows him to later save Clarissa's life. Yet McEwan also takes Clarissa's emphasis on intuition and emotion seriously, as she deftly points out the flaws in Joe's single-minded rationality. Thus, McEwan is sympathetic to both reason and emotion, and he seems to believe that a combination of the two—with reason taking the lead—is an effective worldview.

Joe's rationalism is a defining aspect of his character. In the sunken field where John Logan's body has fallen, Joe is surprised by his own emotional reaction to seeing the corpse, stating that "however scientifically informed we count ourselves to be, fear and awe still surprise us in the presence of the dead." When Parry joins him and asks him to pray, however, Joe immediately dismisses the possibility. Joe's eagerness to reclaim his rationalism—despite his acknowledgement that rationality might not be able to account for his extreme experience—is an illustration of the importance of reason to him as a source of comfort.

Clarissa seems to associate Joe wholly with rationality. In the evening after the ballooning accident, when Joe states, simply, "We tried to help and we failed," Clarissa's response is telling: "You're so rational sometimes you're like a child." From Clarissa's perspective, Joe's reaction lacks the emotional depth required to fully account for the tragedy, and her dialogue reveals that Joe tends to think in straightforward, black-and-white terms rather than in her more intuitive or emotional language.

Indeed, Clarissa finds the moments in which Joe's rationalism "cracks" to be highly compelling. Remarking on Joe's "euphoric calm" in the presence of John Logan's corpse, Clarissa claims that she loves Joe "more" now that she has seen him "go completely mad." Though Clarissa believes that reacting so calmly to a person's violent death is irrational by its very nature, she simultaneously understands that some situations are so extreme that they call for irrationality. Later still, Joe reveals that Clarissa believes evolutionary psychology and genetics to be "rationalism gone berserk." Human behavior, from Clarissa's perspective, can't be explained merely by science, which suggests that, from her perspective, Joe's purely scientific worldview is a limited one.

This tension between Joe's rationalism and Clarissa's intuitive and emotional thinking remains central to the conflict between the pair. In her letter to Joe near the end of the novel, for example, Clarissa states that although Joe was right to say that Parry was dangerous, Joe's "being right is not a simple matter." For Clarissa, the more important matter is Joe's "feelings after the accident" and the extent to which Joe has been "running from [his] anxieties with [his] hands over [his] ears." This statement brings together Clarissa's critique of Joe's worldview, which privileges reason over emotion: Clarissa believes that Joe uses reason not as a way to grapple with the full complexity of himself and the world but, rather, to run from truths that are too uncomfortable to confront.

Though Clarissa's point is well taken, her worldview does lead her to underestimate the danger posed by Jed Parry. She never ceases to argue that Joe "overreact[ed] all along the way" to Parry and that Parry might have changed his behavior had they "ask[ed] him in and talk[ed] to him," but the novel provides no evidence whatsoever that this is the case. Instead, McEwan may be making a final argument here in favor of Joe's rationalism. Because Clarissa's intuitive thinking will not allow her to blame Parry alone for all that has occurred, even when Parry has held her hostage and threatened her life, her way of looking at the world cannot ultimately be a correct one.

Though McEwan shows the flaws in Joe's rationalism and

Clarissa's intuition, Jed Parry is shown to have the most irrational worldview. He is beholden to a religious faith that proceeds from a psychiatric condition, a combination that reveals McEwan's association of religion with irrationality. McEwan's rendering of Parry's religious faith as a component of a psychotic breakdown prevents the reader from considering his worldview as a legitimate alternative. Where Clarissa's ideology is concerned, however, the reader has more room. Joe ultimately rejects Clarissa's reasoning, but the reader *can* see her point: Joe "did the research" and "made the logical inferences" about Parry, but perhaps he *did* forget "how to confide" and how to "take [Clarissa] along with [him]." The reader is left with the sense that the couple will be better off if they learn to listen to one another and combine the strengths of their individual worldviews, though whether this is possible remains unknown.

OBSESSION

Enduring Love is a novel of obsession: not only sexual or romantic obsession, but also religious obsession and obsession with the past. The book's characters continually fixate on one another, on their own feelings, on their pasts, and on the lives they might have had if they had made different choices. This tendency, the novel suggests, is both harmful and a natural consequence of being human.

The most obviously destructive example of obsession in the novel is, of course, Jed Parry's obsession with Joe, which reveals the dangers of giving in to one's fixations. In one of his many letters, Parry warns Joe that Joe's attempts to ignore him might "end in sorrow and more tears than we ever dreamed," a threat he attempts to fulfill by having Joe killed at a restaurant. That an innocent and uninvolved stranger is mistakenly shot in Joe's place merely heightens the tragedy that Parry's obsession has brought about.

Interestingly, Joe is not above behaving obsessively himself, despite his rationalism and his clear understanding of the danger of obsession. A former scientist (and now a science journalist), Joe frequently harbors the notion that he is "a parasite" because he writes about others' research rather than conducting his own. He refers to this feeling as "an older dissatisfaction"—it is a regular and recurring part of his emotional landscape—and he "broods" on it whenever he's "unhappy about something else." For her part, Clarissa "hate[s] to see [Joe] back with that old obsession about getting back into science," a way of describing Joe's feelings that makes clear that, at least to those closest to him, his emotions are not mere disappointment but something far less understandable.

Importantly, Joe's feelings arise despite the fact that he already has an established reputation as a writer. Nevertheless, Joe can't help thinking obsessively about what might have been had his choice been different, and he wonders, even in the midst of his ordeal with Parry, how he can "find [his] way back to original research and achieve something new." That this stated goal is unreasonable is illustrated by the negative response of Joe's old teacher to his proposals. (He advises Joe, gently, "to continue with the very successful career you already have.") What the reader sees here is that Joe is not merely considering an alternate career path but rehashing previous life choices in a way that is ultimately futile.

Yet the career in research that Joe gave up is not the only thing that he obsesses about. According to Clarissa, Joe obsesses about Parry, even as Parry obsesses about *him*. "You became more and more agitated and obsessed," Clarissa writes in a letter to Joe. "You didn't want to talk to me about anything else." Clearly, the intensity of Joe's reaction to Parry—and his inability to modify or cease thinking about that reaction—contributes to the diminishment of his relationship with Clarissa.

Finally, Clarissa herself grapples with an obsession—not with another character, but with her inability to have children due to a medical mistake in her early adulthood. Just as Joe occasionally feels the loss of his intended career, Clarissa is, from time to time, the victim of "the old sense of loss" about the child she can never have, further proof that obsession can strike even psychologically healthy characters. According to Joe, when a friend of Clarissa's lost her baby five years before the ballooning accident, Clarissa "experienced as her own" her friend's grief. "What was revealed," Joe tells the reader, "was Clarissa's own mourning for a phantom child, willed into half-being by frustrated love." Once more, the reader sees the irresistibility of obsession: its ability to thwart the emotional stability of characters who are otherwise healthy.

This obsession of Clarissa's colors her response to the ballooning accident and, by extension, her emotional life throughout the events of the novel. "In John Logan," Joe states, Clarissa sees "a man prepared to die to prevent the kind of loss she felt herself to have sustained." As a consequence of this thinking, McEwan seems to be revealing, Clarissa is unable from the start to approach the ballooning accident and subsequent events from an emotionally neutral perspective. This shows again the danger of obsessive thinking.

In each of these cases, from Parry's dangerous fixation to Clarissa's deeply human sense of longing, McEwan portrays obsession as a force that overwhelms reason and that must be tamed if happiness is to be achieved. Because the characters are subject to feelings beyond their control, they cannot be fully truthful with themselves or with each other. As human beings, they are inevitably susceptible to obsession, which can be dangerous and destructive.

THE NATURE OF LOVE

At the heart of *Enduring Love* is the question of whether love is something that endures or that must *be* endured, and the double meaning of the novel's title suggests that both answers are correct. This is consistent with McEwan's larger project: asking the reader to consider love in all its complexity. Love is not merely a force for good, McEwan seems to be arguing, but a biological and neurological fact that manifests in ways both good and evil. For Joe and Clarissa, love is a potentially healing force and a prize to be reclaimed if at all possible. For Joe and Parry, however, love is a destructive delusion. Yet, in both cases, love seems to exist beyond the realm of total human control. The novel's characters experience it but cannot quite harness it, which suggests that love's power—good and bad—is beyond the reach of reason.

The most important love in the novel is the love shared by Joe and Clarissa. Though their love is challenged over the course of the book and appears not to escape entirely unharmed, it is nevertheless a crucial example of marital harmony: an illustration of what love can be in a best-case scenario. Early in the book, Joe recalls that Clarissa's letters to him, in the first days of their relationship, were "passionately abstract in their exploration of the ways [their] love was different from and superior to any that had ever existed." Joe, meanwhile, finds it miraculous that a "beautiful woman loved and wanted to be loved by a large, clumsy, balding fellow who could hardly believe his luck." In these passages, love is portrayed as a life-altering stroke of luck. That Joe and Clarissa have stumbled upon it, and each other, is a thrilling accident that only they can fully appreciate.

Similarly, when Clarissa insists, after the ballooning accident, that she and Joe "have to help each other" by behaving in a loving way, Joe realizes that, in his rationalist insistence on talking through every moment of the tragedy, he has "been trying to deny [himself] even the touch of her hand." Clarissa, on the other hand, has "effected a shift to the essential" by leading Joe to bed: she is helping him remember what really matters. The reader sees here that McEwan has love in mind as a potential antidote for sorrow. This is love at its most beneficial: it makes tragedy bearable by providing an alternative emotional realm into which to escape. This, for McEwan, is the kind of love that might have a chance at enduring, and whose endurance would be a purely positive phenomenon.

The novel's other primary example of love, on the other hand, is far more sinister: the one-sided love that joins Joe and Parry. Like the love between Joe and Clarissa, however, the love that Parry feels for Joe has simply happened, without planning or resolve. Parry is as much a victim of it, arguably, as Joe is, and luck is at work in this negative love as much as in Joe and Clarissa's positive love.

When Joe recalls the scene, in the novel's first pages, in which he and Parry both run toward the hot-air balloon, he imagines them "rushing toward each other like lovers," a deeply ironic statement that illustrates the novel's ideas about love. Neither Joe nor Parry knows what he is "rushing toward"—neither can anticipate or control the force of what is about to bind them—and, as a consequence, both are subject to love as an uncontrollable force. Furthermore, after attempting to murder Joe and while holding a knife to Clarissa's throat, Parry tells Joe, "I love you" and "it's wrecked my life." Clearly, this is a kind of love that inflicts hardship. Both Parry (who is destructively beholden to his emotions) and Joe (who cannot dissuade Parry from his obsession) are forced to endure this terrible love.

McEwan also stresses on several occasions the idea that love is, in a sense, biologically programmed, not only in the case of Parry's disorder-driven affection, but in healthy human beings, as well. McEwan first establishes this idea in the novel's early pages. As Joe is witnessing various happy reunions at London's Heathrow Airport, he notices that "the same joy, the same uncontrollable smile" can be seen "in the faces of a Nigerian earth mama, a thin-lipped Scottish granny, and a pale, correct Japanese businessman." For Joe, this proves "Darwin's contention that the many expressions of emotion in humans are universal, genetically inscribed." In other words, love is biological, rather than rational. Ironically, Joe encounters the results of this same evolutionary programming when it is his turn to greet Clarissa, despite his ability to recognize and diagnose that programming in others. "Immediately my detachment vanished," Joe tells the reader, "and I called out her name, in tune with all the rest." In this moment, Joe's behavior is beyond his immediate control.

Finally, near the end of the novel, when Parry has been disarmed and led away, Joe confesses that he and Clarissa would have immediately embraced and reconciled with one another had they lived "in a world in which logic was the engine of feeling." Reconciliation makes sense given what they have suffered together and the fact that the central point of contention between them—Is Jed Parry dangerous?—has been definitively answered. Yet the two do not immediately reconcile; "such logic would have been inhuman," McEwan writes. Instead, their emotions and behavior are, as always, just beyond their ability to master. Even here, love cannot be commanded.

Taken together, these relationships and feelings reflect the novel's ultimate statement about love: it has the power both to heal and to destroy, and, in either case, it is often beyond human reason or control. No other force in the book has anything like love's impact on the characters' motives, attitudes, and behaviors. It is, simply put, the reason *Enduring Love* exists.

SYMBOLS

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

CURTAINS

Enduring Love uses curtains to represent that human knowledge is often corrupted or incomplete. When Joe looks out his apartment window at Jed Parry in the street below, he hides himself from Parry's vision by standing behind the curtains, yet Parry, in a subsequent telephone message, congratulates Joe on using those curtains to send him a message. Joe has done no such thing, of course, which shows that their communication has become corrupted. Likewise, when Joe visits Jean Logan, he sees in her closed curtains a sign of grief and sadness, yet he understands simultaneously that he is merely projecting his own knowledge of her recent bereavement onto the house's appearance. Here again, a character has attempted to draw meaning from curtains, yet the knowledge that proceeds from that attempt is tainted. Jean is indeed bereaved, Joe understands, but the placement of her curtains does not necessarily proceed from that fact. As the novel proceeds, Joe finds himself thinking more and more about the very word "curtains" and his memory, just beyond the edge of recall, of a famous house in which curtains were used as a signal. This famous house turns out to be Buckingham Palace, and Joe's memory is of a mentally ill Frenchwoman who fell in love with King George V in the years after World War I. Like Parry, she suffered from de Clerambault's syndrome, and she came to believe that the king was using the palace's curtains to communicate with her. In an ironic temporary reversal of his curtain symbolism, McEwan allows *this* curtain-related memory to confer upon Joe what the reader understands to be *correct* information: Parry is himself afflicted with de Clerambault's. At the end of the novel, however, McEwan reverts to his earlier use of curtains as an indicator, or source, of incomplete knowledge. When Joe approaches his apartment with a gun, determined to rescue Clarissa, it is now *he* who must see past the curtains with which Parry has obscured himself. Once again, curtains are used to represent the necessary incompleteness of human awareness.

DOORS

In *Enduring Love*, doors symbolize obsession. When Joe first describes John Logan's abandoned car, he states cryptically that its "door, or doors," were "wide open," a detail that makes Jean Logan believe that a second person—a woman—must have been in the car with her husband. For Jean Logan (and, to an extent, for Joe and Clarissa, who doggedly try, throughout the book, to remember just what they saw), the car's doors are an entry point into an entire alternative narrative: if two doors were open, Jean's husband must have been having an affair, and Jean's married life must have been based on a lie. Elsewhere, doors contribute to obsession for other characters. When Joe glimpses Jed Parry in the reading room of the London Library, he becomes momentarily enthralled by the "diminishing pendulum movement" of the swinging doors that lead into a stairwell. (He "could not stop looking" at it.) When Jed Parry envisions, in a letter, his future life with Joe, he imagines Joe coming "right up to the front door," where "hardly anyone" goes. In both of these cases, a door signifies the fulfilment of a certain kind of obsessive prophecy: Joe's belief, even early in the novel, that he is being stalked by Parry, and Parry's belief, against all reason, that Joe will one day come to live with him in his house.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Anchor Books edition of *Enduring Love* published in 1998.

Chapter 1 Quotes

To the buzzard, Parry and I were tiny forms, our white shirts brilliant against the green, rushing toward each other like lovers, innocent of the grief this entanglement would bring.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jed Parry

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2

Explanation and Analysis

Joe Rose offers this analysis to the reader in the novel's opening paragraphs. Because of Joe's rational mind, he is able to step outside of himself and his own emotions and describe what he and Parry must have looked like to an outside observer, even a non-human one. Yet emotion inevitably intrudes again. Joe insists that the "entanglement" between the two men will bring "grief" even though both are, at the moment, "innocent" of it. This lack of awareness on both men's part illustrates the fact that Jed Parry is as much a victim of his delusional "love" as Joe is. Love strikes when and whom it will.

If one ever wanted proof of Darwin's contention that the many expressions of emotion in humans are universal, genetically inscribed, then a few minutes by the arrivals gate in Heathrow's Terminal Four should suffice. I saw the same joy, the same uncontrollable smile, in the faces of a Nigerian earth mama, a thin-lipped Scottish granny, and a pale, correct Japanese businessman as they wheeled their trolleys in and recognized a figure in the expectant crowd.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

Standing in London's Heathrow Airport, waiting for Clarissa's plane to arrive, Joe applies his scientific training and knowledge to the scene around him. Joe's conclusion is an important one: that the gestures and responses provoked by love are "genetically inscribed," transcending both the culture and the individual characteristics of those who experience them. This idea becomes important later in the novel, as both Joe and Jed Parry become captives, of a sort, to the "love" that Parry can't help feeling. Parry is, in his way, very much like the characters whom Joe observes in the airport. Love has taken over his body and mind, and he is merely expressing what it requires.

I should make something clear. There may have been a vague communality of purpose, but we were never a team. There was no chance, no time. Coincidences of time and place, a predisposition to help, had brought us together under the balloon. No one was in charge—or everyone was, and we were in a shouting match.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Toby Greene, Joseph Lacey, James Gadd, John Logan, Jed Parry

Related Themes:

Page Number: 11

Explanation and Analysis

Joe makes this claim about the men who participate in the balloon rescue attempt with him. The contrast Joe draws between "communality of purpose" and "teamwork" is a crucial one. Joe realizes that, because of the hurried and chaotic circumstances of the attempted rescue, the men lack the time and inclination to truly work together. As a result, they display no real loyalty to each other, working at cross purposes. A real team with a proper decision-making structure would have inspired far more loyalty; here, loyalty is difficult if not impossible.

It's worth noting, too, that throughout the book, Joe suffers from guilt at having dropped the rope, which made the rescue attempt unsuccessful. He seems not to know (or be able to admit to himself) if he was the first of the men to drop the rope, but this cold assessment of the circumstance shifts the blame from him slightly. If everyone was failing to work together because there was "no chance, no time" to form a coherent team, then Joe's cowardice in dropping the rope seems more like a reasonable reaction to a difficult and confusing circumstance.

Every fraction of a second that passed increased the drop, and the point must come when to let go would be impossible or fatal. And compared with me, Harry was safe, curled up in the basket. The balloon might well come down safely at the bottom of the hill. And perhaps my impulse to hang on was nothing more than a continuation of what I had been attempting moments before, simply a failure to adjust quickly.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Toby Greene, Joseph Lacey, James Gadd, Harry Gadd, John Logan, Jed Parry

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

Joe describes in this passage his moment of decision as he hangs in the air, slowly losing his grip on one of the hot-air balloon's ropes. He understands that he has a duty to be loyal to the group's attempted rescue—a matter of simple human decency—but he knows, as well, that the men holding on to the balloon's other ropes may themselves let go at any moment. Thus, Joe is hopelessly torn between altruism and self-preservation: he wants to be loyal, but he understands that loyalty may have too steep a cost. As somebody who analyzes even the smiles of loved ones meeting at the airport in terms of evolutionary biology, it makes sense that Joe would choose self-preservation over loyalty, particularly loyalty to a group of strangers that never had any camaraderie or coherence to begin with. It's a wholly logical impulse to drop the rope in the face of almost certain death. Of additional significance here is the extent to which Joe is able to analyze his own thinking, even in a moment of crisis. This reveals the power of Joe's rational

mind.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ Like a self in a dream, I was both first and third persons. I acted, and saw myself act. I had my thoughts, and I saw them drift across a screen. As in a dream, my emotional responses were nonexistent or inappropriate. Clarissa's tears were no more than a fact, but I was pleased by the way my feet were anchored to the ground and set well apart, and the way my arms were folded across my chest.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Clarissa Mellon

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after John Logan falls to his death, Joe stands around with the other characters at the scene and begins to feel a strange exuberance, which he describes in this passage. Because of his rational way of thinking, Joe is able to describe his thoughts and behavior in detail—showing extreme self-awareness—yet he seems unable to act in an emotionally appropriate way. Furthermore, he is pleased with himself for being calm and steady in the face of Clarissa's (understandable) emotion, which is odd self-congratulation, considering that Joe seems to be in shock from the accident. Perhaps, then, his rationalism in this moment is false, since he's not diagnosing his odd behavior as stemming from shock, and perhaps Clarissa's empathy and intuition are not as acute as she believes if she cannot recognize this fact, either. Nonetheless, this is a preview of a relationship dynamic that haunts Joe and Clarissa throughout the novel. Though he can understand Clarissa's emotions as "a fact," Joe cannot always participate in them or share suitable emotions of his own.

❝ "Look, we don't know each other and there's no reason why you should trust me. Except that God has brought us together in this tragedy and we have to, you know, make whatever sense of it we can?"

Related Characters: Jed Parry (speaker), Joe Rose

Related Themes:

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

In this early scene, in which Jed Parry confronts Joe in the pasture in which John Logan's body has come to rest, Parry reveals both his religiosity and his unreason. Joe has read enough about speech patterns to hear both hesitance and uncertainty in Parry's habit of turning statements into questions, as this passage displays, but Joe doesn't yet understand that, where Parry's quasi-religious obsession with Joe is concerned, Parry will come to have an iron will. Parry's assertion here is that the presence of God's will, which only Parry can recognize, overrides any hesitation on Joe's part, especially if that hesitation is based on mere facts (like the fact that the two men don't know each other).

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ I said, "We tried to help and we failed."
She smiled and shook her head. I went and stood by her chair and put my arms around her and protectively kissed the top of her head. With a sigh she pressed her face against my shirt and looped her arms around my waist. Her voice was muffled. "You're such a dope. You're so rational sometimes you're like a child."

Related Characters: Clarissa Mellon, Joe Rose (speaker), Harry Gadd, James Gadd

Related Themes:

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

After leaving the scene of the ballooning accident and returning to their apartment, Joe and Clarissa discuss at length the events of the afternoon, attempting to comfort each other and to determine who is to blame for John Logan's death. As a more intuitive character than Joe, Clarissa has another goal, as well: she wants to wring some meaning from what has happened, and she is playfully frustrated by Joe's unwillingness to do so. For Clarissa, the truth of the accident cannot be as simple as Joe's conclusion that they "tried to help and . . . failed." To speak so reductively transcends being rational: it's actually so inappropriate and inadequate a response as to be *child-like*, in Clarissa view. It is to deny the full complexity of the human experience.

"I'll tell you one thing it means, dummkopf. We've seen something terrible together. It won't go away, and we have to help each other. And that means we'll have to love each other even harder."
Of course. Why didn't I think of this? Why didn't I think *like* this? We needed love.

Related Characters: Joe Rose, Clarissa Mellon (speaker), Jean Logan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

Back in their apartment in the hours after the ballooning accident and John Logan's death, Clarissa and Joe try to console one another and to determine whether or not what they have experienced "means" anything. Though the two cannot agree on the answer to that question in a philosophical or spiritual sense, Clarissa redefines the question in practical and intensely personal terms. The two of them can pull their own meaning from the tragedy, she declares, by redoubling their love. Ashamed that his more rational mind has failed to produce such an obvious emotional truth, Joe happily gives in to Clarissa's intuitive suggestion. As the novel moves forward, though, this suggestion proves difficult in practice, and Joe is much less amenable to love and forgiveness when it's time to apply them, which will imperil his relationship.

"I love you more now I've seen you go completely mad," she said. "The rationalist cracks at last!"

Related Characters: Clarissa Mellon (speaker), Joe Rose

Related Themes:

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

Clarissa speaks these words in the apartment she shares with Joe in the late evening after John Logan's death. Her reference to "cracking" is a response to Joe's strange behavior after Logan's fall: he was in shock and behaved in a manic, emotionally inappropriate manner. For Clarissa, Joe's descent from perfect rationalism into erratic behavior is a welcome development, even though this change in his character was wrought by a tragedy. A more intuitive and emotional character than Joe, Clarissa is pleased to find that Joe is subject to normal human neuroses. He is not a machine but a flawed human, and Clarissa loves him all the more because of it.

Chapter 4 Quotes

I was afraid of my fear, because I did not yet know the cause. I was scared of what it would do to me and what it would make me do. And I could not stop looking at the door.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jed Parry

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

The day after the ballooning accident, Joe is working in the London Library when he is distracted by the sensation that he is being watched. He believes that he has seen, in his peripheral vision, a pair of shoes similar to the ones worn by Jed Parry during the ballooning accident, and he believes that the wearer of those shoes has just left the room through a swiveling door. Joe becomes briefly obsessed with the door—he cannot look away from it—which is appropriate, since doors in this novel point to obsessions. Joe's fixation on the swinging doors, and his fear of his own inexplicable fear itself, point to the obsession that Jed Parry is about to infuse into Joe's life. Parry is, indeed, stalking Joe (as Joe intuits but cannot bring himself to explicitly state because of his lack of evidence), and Parry's obsession with Joe will make Joe somewhat obsessed with Parry in return. This initial moment of unease, in which Joe is afraid of what fear "would make me do," points to the ways in which Parry will unsettle Joe's life and put Joe's hyper-rational worldview in conflict with the emotion and irrationality of people and circumstances around him. Here, Joe cannot know what is to come and it is this fact, more than his unease at Parry's presence, that makes Joe afraid.

Chapter 7 Quotes

"Something's happened," he said.
He wasn't going to continue, so I said, "What's happened?"
He breathed in deeply through his nose. He still would not look at me. "You know what it is," he said sulkily.

Related Characters: Joe Rose, Jed Parry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

This dialogue is exchanged between Joe and Jed Parry on the street outside Joe's apartment, two days after the ballooning accident. In this passage, Parry's words and tone neatly illustrate his imperviousness to reason. He *feels* that "something" has taken place, but he cannot define what that thing is using rational language. Furthermore, he shifts the responsibility to Joe in order to cover his own inability. If Joe is asking Parry for specifics, Parry implies, it is only because Joe is being coy, or even cruel. Though infuriating, Parry's rhetorical style is oddly effective: because the terms of his argument are inherently unreasonable, he cannot be defeated with facts or logic.

"The fact that you love me," he continued, "and that I love you is not important. It's just the means . . . [t]o bring you to God, through love. You'll fight this like mad, because you're a long way from your own feelings? But I know that the Christ is within you. At some level you know it too. That's why you fight it so hard with your education and reason and logic and this detached way you have of talking, as if you're not part of anything at all?"

Related Characters: Jed Parry (speaker), Joe Rose

Related Themes:

Page Number: 70

Explanation and Analysis

During the first of Joe and Jed Parry's many encounters on the street outside of Joe's apartment, Parry insists that his love for Joe is inherently selfless, and even impersonal. Rather, Parry argues, his love is the vehicle by which Joe will leave the cold world of "education and reason and logic" and enter the higher realm of "feelings." For Parry, any approach to "God" must be accompanied by such a shift in values. Parry's religiosity is implicitly connected to his intuitive way of thinking, and both are explicitly a product of his mental disease. Conversely, Joe's particular rationalism is a product of his sanity. He is unable to communicate with Parry in any real way.

Chapter 8 Quotes

A few years ago, science book editors could think of nothing but chaos. Now they were banging their desks for every possible slant on neo-Darwinism, evolutionary psychology, and genetics. I wasn't complaining—business was good—but Clarissa had generally taken against the whole project. It was rationalism gone berserk. "It's the new fundamentalism," she had said one evening . . . . What a zoologist had to say about a baby's smile could be of no real interest. The truth of that smile was in the eye and heart of the parent, and in the unfolding love that only had meaning through time.

Related Characters: Clarissa Mellon, Joe Rose (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 74-75

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Joe recalls an argument between himself and Clarissa, years prior to the events of the novel, about the nature of a baby's smile. Both characters put forth an explanation that is in line with their values and personalities. For Joe, a baby's smile can be explained scientifically: evolution has engineered it in order to meet a particular need. For Clarissa, such thinking is merely an example of the intellectual poverty of Joe's "rationalism," which science has taken to extreme ends. A baby's smile is personal and emotional; its mechanics can be explained, but its meaning cannot. This argument speaks to the fundamental difference between Joe's logical thinking and Clarissa's commitment to intuition and emotion.

Being hounded by Parry was aggravating an older dissatisfaction. It comes back to me from time to time, usually when I'm unhappy about something else, that all the ideas I deal in are other people's.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jed Parry

Related Themes:

Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

Two days after the ballooning accident, Joe finds that his emotional state is already being affected by Parry's aggressive, obsessive behavior, which awakens the irrational obsession that Joe describes in this passage.

Though Joe's career is a good one—it is financially stable, creative, and it has earned him awards—Joe is nevertheless determined, against all reason, to chase a dream that he knows he can never achieve. Parry's illogical obsession has driven the normally rational Joe to an illogical obsession of his own. This passage is an interesting admission from hyper-rational Joe, as Joe admits that it's an emotion—unhappiness—that always drives him to obsess about this "older dissatisfaction" and contemplate radically upending his professional life. That the seed of such an important life decision could be simple unhappiness about "something else" is deeply irrational and suggests more complexity to Joe's psyche than he is willing to admit.

Chapter 9 Quotes

"The guy's ridiculous," Joe continues. "He's fixated." Clarissa begins to speak, but he waves her down. "I can't get you to take this seriously. Your only concern is I'm not massaging your damned feet after your hard day."

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jed Parry, Clarissa Mellon

Related Themes:

Page Number: 92-93

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Joe's run-in with Parry causes him to berate Clarissa, who has just returned home from a difficult workday. Joe's hypocrisy is evident here. He accuses Parry of being "fixated" and "ridiculous," since Parry imposes his own reality on Joe without concern for Joe's beliefs or experiences. However, Joe seems unaware that he is behaving the exact same way by disregarding Clarissa's perspective in the moment. Clarissa has had a "hard day" and she requires emotional care, not a list of facts. His petty dismissal of Clarissa's attempt to speak shows that he hasn't considered her reality at all, and instead he is wholly captive to his own present fixation. However, this passage is more complex in that Joe is recounting his own unflattering behavior through Clarissa's eyes, which shows, in retrospect, an empathy for her experience that he lacked in the moment. While this moment encapsulates the tension in Clarissa and Joe's relationship that persists throughout the remainder of the book, Joe's ability to retrospectively acknowledge some of his own failings (even just implicitly by showing his bad behavior through Clarissa's eyes) gives hope for the couple's love.

Chapter 12 Quotes

It wasn't that she believed Parry, I told myself, it was that his letter was so steamily self-convinced, such an unfaked narrative of emotion—for he obviously had experienced the feelings he described—that it was bound to elicit certain appropriate automatic responses. Even a trashy movie can make you cry. There were deep emotional reactions that ducked the censure of the higher reasoning processes and forced us to enact, however vestigially, our roles: I, the indignant secret lover revealed; Clarissa, the woman cruelly betrayed. But when I tried to say something like this, she looked at me and shook her head slightly from side to side in wonderment at my stupidity.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jed Parry, Clarissa Mellon

Related Themes:

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

Jed Parry has sent Joe a long and deeply personal letter, which Clarissa has just read, leaving her visibly shaken. In Joe's telling, Parry's letter contains deeply felt (though insane) emotional cues, and Joe believes that those cues are bound to provoke a response in *anyone*, especially a person of Clarissa's emotional sensitivity, since human beings are biologically programmed to react in certain ways to certain stimuli. This is a moment in which Joe is clearly reducing the complexity of Clarissa's response—he's failing to grapple with all the layers of emotion that she is experiencing, since he prefers to see emotion as a pre-programmed response. That Clarissa seems to reject Joe's diagnosis is telling: she is disgusted by his attempt to bring reason to bear on what has been an intuitive personal response. Furthermore, she sees Joe's reasoning as a way not to deal with her criticism of him. By seeing Clarissa's emotions so coldly, Joe is able to avoid confronting the fact that she is upset with the way he has treated her.

Our easy ways with each other, effortlessly maintained for years, suddenly seemed to me an elaborate construct, a finely balanced artifice, like an ancient carriage clock. We were losing the trick of keeping it going, or of keeping it going without concentrating hard.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Clarissa Mellon

Related Themes:

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

In the aftermath of Jed Parry's first letter to Joe, Joe and Clarissa have fought, and their relationship has settled into a cold standoff, as neither seems able to empathize with the other's point of view. Joe believes that Clarissa is disloyally suspicious of him and unwilling to acknowledge the threat posed by Jed Parry. Clarissa, meanwhile, thinks that Joe is obsessive and secretive—emotionally closed off. Though they are both right, they are unable to admit mutual fault, and the result, expressed by Joe in this passage, is a marriage in which love seems unlikely to endure. Their marriage's upkeep has been "effortless" over the years—it has lasted nearly outside the couple's attention or will, seemingly because their differences complemented one another in the absence of conflict. However, now that they have a specific conflict and trauma to resolve, they seem to have forgotten that love requires specific effort in the face of mutual distrust. Though Clarissa originally said after the ballooning accident that they would have to love one another even more now, Joe seems never to have internalized the importance of this, and Clarissa seems to have given up.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ This woman was convinced that all of London society was talking of her affair with the king and that he was deeply perturbed. On one visit, when she could not find a hotel room, she felt the king had used his influence to prevent her from staying in London. The one thing she knew for certain was that the king loved her . . . . He used the curtains in the windows of Buckingham Palace to communicate with her. She lived her life in the prison gloom of this delusion. Her forlorn and embittered love was identified as a syndrome by the French psychiatrist who treated her, and who gave his name to her morbid passion. De Clerambault.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jed Parry

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 133

Explanation and Analysis

During Joe's visit to Jean Logan's home, one of Jean Logan's children utters a chance remark that reminds Joe of a mentally unbalanced woman who was obsessed with the idea that the king loved her. This historical anecdote is significant because of the obvious parallels Joe sees to his own situation with Jed Parry, and because of the use of curtains, once again, as a symbol of incomplete human knowledge and imperfect communication. Just as Jed Parry saw messages in simple acts like Joe touching the hedges, the woman in the story believes, wrongly, that the king is communicating with her via the curtains in the palace. This passage is the first instance in which Joe is able to apply his scientific knowledge to the seemingly indefinable obsession that Jed Parry feels, which transforms Jed Parry's irrational obsession into an easily-explicable medical condition characterized by a predictable pattern of behavior. For Joe, this represents an attempt to take some rational control of the situation.

Chapter 15 Quotes

❝ "I'm pretty well off, you know. I can get people to do things for me. Anything I want. There's always someone who needs the money. What's surprising is how cheap it is, you know, for something you'd never do yourself."

Related Characters: Jed Parry (speaker), Joe Rose

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 139

Explanation and Analysis

Parry's remark in this passage is ostensibly about his ability to hire a researcher, who has gathered copies of Joe's articles for him. Yet Joe correctly hears a threat in Parry's language and believes that Parry is alluding to his ability to hire men to do Joe some physical harm. It's interesting that Parry, who sees subtle messages in Joe's behavior, speaks in subtext—clearly, he lives in a world in which important ideas are communicated without stating them outright. In a sense, Joe's ability to read Parry's subtext indicates the extent to which Parry has drawn Joe into his world. This passage is the first major instance in which Parry's obsessive behavior is specifically linked to the promise of violence. It speaks to the extremities to which obsession can take a person, and this promise of violence—alongside the knowledge that Parry's obsession is a medical condition—undermines the credibility of his faith.

Chapter 18 Quotes

❝ There were very few biblical references in Parry's correspondence. His religion was dreamily vague on the specifics of doctrine, and he gave no impression of being attached to any particular church. His belief was a self-made affair, generally aligned to the culture of personal growth and fulfillment. There was a lot of talk of destiny, of his "path" and how he would not be deterred from following it, and of fate—his and mine entwined. Often, God was a term interchangeable with self. God's love for mankind shaded into Parry's love for me. God was undeniably "within" rather than in his heaven, and believing in him was therefore a license to respond to the calls of feeling or intuition.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jed Parry

Related Themes:

Page Number: 163-164

Explanation and Analysis

Preparing to attempt once more to enlist the police on his behalf, Joe reads through all of Jed Parry's many letters, looking specifically for violent phrases. Though he finds a few sentences that nearly qualify, he is most struck by the character of Parry's religiosity. For Parry, religion is an intuitive, emotional matter that is divorced from religious doctrine, which might impose a logical structure on his beliefs. Parry's looser, more intuitive religious faith is of a piece with his general unreason. Just as he cannot be talked out of "loving" Joe as a result of logical argument, so too do his religious beliefs exist independently of reason or structure. It is for this reason that Parry is such a compelling foil to rational Joe. This is also a strong condemnation of intuition and religion on the part of McEwan. McEwan has made clear that Joe is the more reasonable person in this situation, and that he has knowledge about Parry's personality that Parry himself lacks. Therefore, Joe's dismissal of Parry's religion as a method of justifying living by his emotional whims carries weight with readers, even if it's a broad and searing assessment. With Clarissa, McEwan allows readers to entertain the possibility that emotion is a fine lens with which to see the world, but with Parry, McEwan shows that he ultimately comes down on the side of reason.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ The tall man, ready to cast his spell, pointed his wand at Colin Tapp.
And Tapp himself was suddenly ahead of us all by a second. His face showed us what we didn't understand about the spell. His puzzlement, congealed in terror, could not find a word to tell us, because there was no time. The silenced bullet struck through his white shirt at his shoulder and lifted him from his chair and smacked him against the wall. The high-velocity impact forced a fine spray, a blood mist, across our tablecloth, our desserts, our hands, our sight. My first impulse was simple and self-protective: I did not believe what I was seeing.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jocelyn Kale, Clarissa Mellon, Jed Parry, Colin Tapp

Related Themes:

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

At a restaurant lunch with Clarissa and Jocelyn Kale in celebration of Clarissa's birthday, Joe narrowly avoids being the victim of an assassination, as the assassin shoots the wrong man. That Joe is unable to understand what is happening in the moment illustrates the imperfection of rational inquiry. Joe cannot make sense of the specific details of the shooting, and, in fact, he dramatically misinterprets them. He does so, in part, because of his emotional need not to be traumatized: his "impulse [is] simple and self-protective." Emotion has intruded into Joe's rationalism, regardless of his inclinations. It's also interesting that Joe is able to recognize the self-protection inherent to this moment, in which he is not able to believe what he is seeing, but not the fact that Joe often uses rationality itself as a form of self-protection. For example, after the ballooning accident, Joe retreats into reason in order to not have to grapple with the more difficult emotional aspects of seeing somebody die. Joe recognizes his self-protective impulse only when it propels him towards reason (a way of thinking that comforts him), and not when it propels him towards emotion (which makes him feel uncertain and unsafe), which shows a fundamental illogic to Joe's worldview.

Chapter 20 Quotes

❝ I felt a familiar disappointment. No one could agree on anything. We lived in a mist of half-shared, unreliable perception, and our sense data came warped by a prism of desire and belief, which tilted our memories too. We saw and remembered in our own favor, and we persuaded ourselves along the way. Pitiless objectivity, especially about ourselves, was always a doomed social strategy. We're descended from the indignant, passionate tellers of half-truths, who, in order to convince others, simultaneously convinced themselves.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Jed Parry, Detective Constable Wallace

Related Themes:

Page Number: 196

Explanation and Analysis

In the police station after the botched restaurant shooting, Joe is forced by Detective Constable Wallace to address irrelevant inconsistencies in the eyewitness testimonies offered by Joe, Clarissa, Jocelyn Kale, and members of the restaurant staff. In this passage, Joe bemoans the impossibility of purely rational thought: everyone, including Joe himself, is susceptible to delusional thinking as a result of self-interest and faith, however secular. Joe longs for "pitiless objectivity"—it would suit both his character and his needs at the time of the police interview—but he understands that people are inherently emotional creatures. Perfect reason may be desirable, but it is not an option. In light of this, the reader should wonder why Joe stakes his whole worldview on a rationality that, he admits here, he can never truly attain.

Chapter 23 Quotes

❝ "But what I was also trying to say last night was this: your being right is not a simple matter."

Related Characters: Clarissa Mellon (speaker), Jed Parry, Joe Rose

Related Themes:

Page Number: 233

Explanation and Analysis

After Joe shoots Jed Parry to prevent him from killing himself, Clarissa writes Joe a long letter explaining her thoughts about all that has happened. Clarissa's remark in this passage is a crucial assertion of the need to temper reason with emotion. Though she is conceding that Joe was right about Jed Parry and she was wrong, she is not wholly conceding that Joe's behavior since the ballooning accident was appropriate or helpful. In Clarissa's thinking, a logical understanding of the threat posed by Parry must be tempered by an emotional grappling with all that has transpired. Though Joe was correct about Parry, he was nevertheless wrong in a deeper emotional sense: his inability to understand the meaning and impact of the ballooning accident has put their relationship on the path to disaster, and his lack of empathy for Clarissa's views has compounded the problem. He closed himself off from Clarissa, she argues, and allowed himself to become isolated and obsessed, which is a far less rational reaction than Joe assumes.

Chapter 24 Quotes

❝ This breathless scrambling for forgiveness seemed to me almost mad, Mad Hatterish, here on the riverbank where Lewis Carroll, the dean of Christ Church, had once entertained the darling objects of his own obsessions. I caught Clarissa's eye and we exchanged a half-smile, and it was as if we were pitching our own requests for mutual forgiveness, or at least tolerance, in there with Jean's and Reid's frantic counterpoint. I shrugged as though to say that, like her in her letter, I just did not know.

Related Characters: Joe Rose (speaker), Bonnie Deedes, James Reid, John Logan, Jean Logan, Clarissa Mellon

Related Themes:

Page Number: 247-248

Explanation and Analysis

In the novel's closing pages, Jean Logan has learned that her husband was not having an affair, after all. James Reid wants to be forgiven for causing Jean's emotional distress, and Jean wants forgiveness for doubting her husband's fidelity. For Joe, these desires for forgiveness exist entirely outside the realm of reason: they are obsessive in their fervor. As a consequence of such thinking, Joe is himself much more guarded. Though he admits, backhandedly, that he would like forgiveness and he wants to set his relationship right, he is unwilling to give into this emotion in the way that those around him are. He may one day be able to ask Clarissa for forgiveness and forgive Clarissa for her perceived disloyalty to him, but he will have to think things through. His decision cannot be a purely emotional matter.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

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

CHAPTER 1

Joe Rose and his wife, Clarissa Mellon, are having a picnic. They've journeyed to the Chilterns, a hilly region in southeast England, to celebrate Clarissa's return from a long trip abroad. Joe hears a shout and a child's cry from across the field, and he immediately begins to run toward the source of the noise. As Joe recounts this story for the reader, he imagines not only his own figure, but also those of the four other men who run with him toward the shouts and cries. Joe envisions the five of them converging on the center of the field as if viewing them from the perspective of a buzzard flying overhead.

McEwan's opening lines present the reader with crucial characterization of Joe, the novel's protagonist. With careful attention to detail, Joe attempts to establish precisely when (at what "pinprick on the time map") the novel's story began. Similarly, he sees the five men rushing toward the balloon in rational, scientific terms. Even while telling his story in retrospect, Joe explains its events in a scientific and rational way that is true to his character.

As Joe recalls this moment, he pauses to consider what Clarissa is doing at the same instant. Joe reveals that Clarissa walks (but does not run) toward the field's center and is thus "well placed as an observer" of what happens next.

The novel will frequently share Clarissa's perspective with the reader along with Joe's. Though readers sometimes receive Clarissa's own words, her experience here is explained by Joe.

After setting the scene in such a way, Joe finally reveals what the characters are running toward: a massive hot-air balloon in whose basket a boy, Harry Gadd, is trapped. Joe describes the balloon as a "furnace in whose heat identities and fates would buckle into new shapes." From its basket dangles a series of ropes, and clinging to one is Harry's grandfather, James Gadd, who is trying desperately to prevent the wind from carrying the balloon away.

Joe's technical and scientific description of the balloon not only reveals his rational thinking but provides powerful foreshadowing, as well. One of the fates Joe references is his own. Because the novel is narrated retrospectively, Joe always knows more than the reader does about the events that will follow.

Here, Joe pauses, explaining to the reader that he is intentionally holding back information for a time in order to first recount the circumstances that brought him and Clarissa to the Chilterns in the first place. Clarissa, the reader is told, has been in America for six weeks researching the poet John Keats. Joe recalls picking up food and wine for the picnic, taking delivery of Clarissa's belated birthday present, and journeying to the airport to get her. "Less than an hour later," the pair have made their way to the field where they intend to picnic. Having never been apart for so long before, the two of them are thrilled to be reunited.

Joe's decision to intentionally delay his narrative occurs in part because McEwan wants to increase the story's tension and further establish Joe's commitment to detailed, unemotional storytelling. Yet it is also true that Joe wants the audience of his tale to understand its characters as fully as possible. The reader sees in the particular details Joe offers the strength of his and Clarissa's relationship, as well as Clarissa's passionate personality.

As Joe describes unpacking the picnic lunch, he summons again the moment in which he first hears the cries for help. The balloon from which those cries issue is "the size of a house," and the man trying to secure it, James Gadd, is being "half dragged, half carried across the field." As Joe springs into action, running toward the balloon, the wind drops for a moment, and Joe slows his pace. Yet John Logan, another of the men rushing toward the balloon, continues running at full speed. John Logan knows something, Joe alerts the reader, that Joe doesn't yet realize. What Joe *does* understand, however, is that a "whole stage" of his life is closing as he makes the decision to run toward the balloon.

Joe's rationalism depends on his ability to make choices informed by reality, so his incomplete knowledge of what's happening in these paragraphs is crucially important because it forces him to act instinctively rather than on the basis of reason, pulling him out of his comfort zone in a moment that is already extreme. While he sees in retrospect that a "whole stage" of his life closed at this moment, he lacks awareness of that fact until much later.

Sure enough, the wind "renew[s] its rage" before Joe can take too many more steps. Joe begins to run again but is beat to the balloon by John Logan, who takes hold of another of the dangling ropes. When Joe finally arrives at the center of the field, he is met by the remaining men: Jed Parry and two farm laborers, Joseph Lacey and Toby Greene. The four men join John Logan and James Gadd among the ropes, and each takes hold of one of them as James Gadd shouts orders.

By emphasizing the unpredictability of the wind, McEwan stresses the power of nature over people, which ties into Joe's eventual refusal to acknowledge his emotional experience during the accident, preferring to describe rationally and scientifically what has happened. Joe also alerts the reader to the fact that James Gadd's shouted orders did nothing but increase the chaos at the scene, making successful cooperation from the men very difficult.

Though James Gadd attempts to direct the men to whatever strategy he has in mind, he is "exhausted and emotionally out of control," and the others ignore him. Instead, they begin to pull "hand over hand" on the ropes in an attempt to bring the basket to the ground. Beside them, however, is a dramatic slope, in which the field "drop[s] sharply away at a gradient of about twenty-five percent" before "level[ing] out into a gentle slope toward the bottom."

Joe continues to prepare the reader for the idea that the men were unable to work together because of their inherent selfishness. This problem is exacerbated by the appearance of a dramatic slope. Like the wind, this element of nature forces itself into the men's plans.

Throughout these pages of recollection, Joe is clear that the men are "never a team": the situation is too chaotic, the group has no clear leader, and each man attempts to tell the others what to do. Making matters worse, the endangered child, Harry Gadd, has ceased to respond to instructions and has instead entered "a state known as learned helplessness." Terrified and paralyzed, the boy is unable to participate in his own rescue.

By pausing his narrative to make this point, Joe makes it clear that he believes teamwork (or loyalty to one another) is the crucial *missing ingredient in the attempted rescue. Joe's diagnosis of Harry Gadd's condition further illustrates his intelligence and education, as well as his tendency to find a scientific or rational explanation for people's actions rather than an emotional one.*

As the men bicker and curse, a great gust of wind cuts through the air again. Once more, Joe pauses his narrative to set the scene more precisely. According to his telling, the men have come to the edge of the slope. Beside Joe is John Logan, whom Joe now reveals to be "a family doctor from Oxford" and a member of a mountaineering club. Further along is Joseph Lacey, an older farm laborer, and beside him is his friend Toby Greene. The next man in the makeshift semicircle is James Gadd, and immediately next to him—across from Joe—is Jed Parry.

The clarity of Joe's memory illustrates his commitment to rational thinking. In Joe's descriptions of the other men present at the scene, the reader sees the precision of Joe's thinking even in a moment of chaos. Yet, about Jed Parry, Joe tells the reader almost nothing. This may serve as one of Joe's first admissions that Parry's character and motives are a mystery to Joe.

Joe emphasizes the chaos with which the attempted rescue is proceeding. The men are "breathless, excited, [and] determined on [their] separate plans." Joe explains that while he, Joseph Lacey, and Toby Greene are trying to pull Harry Gadd from the basket, James Gadd is trying to climb over them, and Jed Parry and John Logan are shouting their own suggestions. As the great gust of wind arrives, James Gadd is knocked from the basket, and his "considerable weight" no longer contributes to the work of keeping the balloon anchored to the ground.

Joe's technical descriptions of what physically *happens to the balloon simultaneously show Joe's obsession with reason over emotion (he tells nothing about the emotional significance of the moment) and gives the reader a continuing sense of the rescue effort's disorganization. Clearly, Joe understands the rescue attempt in terms of science and the physical world.*

As a consequence of James Gadd's being knocked aside, the balloon begins to rise into the air, taking the five remaining men—Joe, Jed Parry, Joseph Lacey, Toby Greene, and John Logan—with it. Joe recounts the infinitesimally brief moment of thought that follows: either he must hang on to his rope and hope that his weight (and that of the others) brings it down, or he must let go immediately.

This represents Joe at his most rational. Even in the presence of disaster, Joe is able to understand—or at least look back clearly on—the "neuronal" processes that were at work in the men's decisions to hang on or let go.

Joe realizes that "every fraction of a second that passe[s] increase[s] the drop" and that the drop will eventually be fatal if he holds on too long. Though he doesn't believe that he is the first to do so, he lets go of his rope and falls to the ground, as, around him, do Jed Parry, Joseph Lacey, and Toby Greene. Only John Logan continues to hang on, and with only his small weight to hold the balloon down, the man and basket begin to rise farther into the air.

Joe reveals his own disloyalty to the rescue effort when he drops, and it is in this moment that Joe first reveals a hint of moral or emotional thinking. By justifying his actions through claiming he was not the first to drop, he suggests that, even though dropping was a rational choice that saved his own life, he has some guilt about it.

By the time Joe regains his footing, the balloon, and John Logan, are "fifty yards away" and very high in the air. Unable to believe what is happening, Joe states that he expects some "freak physical law" to intervene on John Logan's behalf, and he is surprised when "only ruthless gravity" asserts itself. Joe watches as John Logan slips down to the end of his rope, hangs on for a final moment, and then falls the terrible length to his death. The chapter ends with Joe confessing to the reader, "I've never seen such a terrible thing as that falling man."

Interestingly, Joe's momentary disbelief of what is happening is decidedly irrational*: that he expects a "freak physical law" to prevent John Logan's death clearly indicates that Joe's rationalism can at least be* challenged *by events. The chapter's closing words, similarly, provide a rare window into Joe's emotions. He has previously described the accident in physical and scientific terms; now, in his horror, he turns to the purely emotional word "terrible."*

CHAPTER 2

In the moments immediately after John Logan's fall, Joe again slows the pace of his narrative, indicating that he wishes to "give the half-minute after John Logan's fall careful consideration." To justify this move, Joe explains to the reader that "whole research departments" exist to study the first "half-minute" of the universe. Having done so, he describes for the reader the "déjà vu" that overcomes him "in the second or two it [takes] for Logan to hit the ground," recalling a recurring nightmare from his youth, in which he is forced to watch a disaster unfolding from a helpless distance.

Joe shows again that he is inclined to examine events from a scientific perspective, even while recollecting times of great stress. For instance, Joe's reference to "research departments" reveals not only his educatedness, but also his desire to narrate in a scientifically appropriate way. Yet the fact that Joe is a victim of a recurring nightmare (and that he experiences the unscientific phenomenon déjà vu) indicates that he is not entirely successful in controlling his thinking.

Shaken by this memory, Joe pauses to consider the respective positions of the other men in the field. Joseph Lacey is helping his friend, Toby Greene, who "cannot stand," while Jed Parry is next to Joe, and James Gadd is a few steps away, shouting about his grandson, Harry, who is still in the balloon's basket. Clarissa has stepped toward Joe and put her arms around him, but although she is crying, Joe is merely in shock: he states that "sorrow seem[s] a long way off" to him. Joe takes note of where John Logan's body has landed—in a second field at the base of the slope—but, as he does so, he notices that Jed Parry is watching him. Unaware of what is happening in Parry's mind—that Parry is even now beginning to become obsessed with Joe—Joe "honor[s] Parry with a friendly nod" and even speaks to him, telling him in a "deep and reassuring voice, 'It's all right.'"

Joe's attempt to bring his thinking under control—to behave rationally—can be seen in his attempt to reestablish a precise narrative. Thus, the details provided here represent not only Joe's determination to inform the reader, but also his desire to reclaim his own thought processes. What Joe isn't *able to control is his emotional response to the tragedy. Whereas Clarissa experiences traditional emotions—tears—Joe cannot yet feel "sorrow" and instead speaks to Parry in a way that seems artificially hearty. That Joe attempts to "reassure" Parry is an ironic result of Joe's lack of information about the man.*

Feeling strangely excited, even euphoric, Joe telephones the police then strides down the hill in the direction of John Logan's body. Perversely, Joe has convinced himself that Logan might still be alive, and though Clarissa, recognizing that Joe is in shock, urges him to "slow down," he ignores her. As he descends, however, his euphoria wears off, and he begins to feel "trapped and lonely in [his] decision."

Joe remains unable to comprehend all that has happened with his rational mind, and this failure informs the calm euphoria he feels during these passages. Similarly, it informs his bizarre inability to recognize that John Logan must be *dead, which any rational person would understand.*

He pauses to urinate against a tree trunk then approaches Logan's body from the rear. He notices sheep grazing in the field, and though he wants to turn and shout to Clarissa, he is ashamed of his behavior at the top of the hill. He worries that Logan might still be alive and that he will have to perform first-aid. His hands are trembling, and he approaches Logan's body as slowly as he can, taking care to keep Logan "at the periphery of vision" rather than looking at him directly.

As Joe's euphoria wears off, he begins to feel isolated from Clarissa, a state of affairs that will increase as the novel progresses. Here, again, he feels something that is irrational (and almost supernatural)—a fear of the dead—but he knows enough to dismiss it as "prescientific" thinking to which he shouldn't allow himself to give in.

When Joe finally looks straight at Logan's body, the corpse seems to him like "some stumpy antenna of [Logan's] present or previous self." The body is sitting upright, but its shoulders are "narrower than they should have been," and Joe realizes that Logan's "skeletal structure [has] collapsed internally to produce a head on a thickened stick." He speaks to the corpse but quickly realizes that what he has previously mistaken for the body's "calmness" is, in fact, "absence." John Logan is unmistakably dead.

The gruesomeness of the portrayal of John Logan's body is one of the novel's most difficult passages. Joe has been experiencing Logan's death almost entirely in his own head; coming upon Logan's actual *shattered form helps remind him of the literal, physical events that have transpired and what he must do as a result.*

As Joe looks at Logan's body, he is joined by Jed Parry, who has come down the hill behind him. Parry urges Joe not to touch Logan's body, but, rather than responding, Joe looks at Parry "for the first time," taking in his height and leanness—the way "his bones fairly burst out of him." To Joe, Parry looks like "a pale Indian brave," and though Parry's appearance is "slightly threatening," Joe hears in Parry's "feebly hesitant" voice the "apologetic" habit "of making a statement on the rising inflection of a question." Parry tells Joe that Clarissa is worried about him, and Joe responds with a hostile silence, disliking Parry's use of Clarissa's first name, as if he can claim to know either her or her state of mind.

This first major encounter between Joe and Jed Parry sets a number of precedents. Here, the reader sees both Parry's religiosity and his refusal to take "no" for an answer. In Parry's Americanized speech patterns (and, in particular, his habit of making declarative statements sound like questions), Joe hears a man of weak will, not yet knowing that Parry's will of iron will be the primary test of Joe's own sanity, self-conception, and love.

When Parry asks Joe if he is all right, Joe responds by telling him, "There's nothing we can do but wait" for the ambulance and the police to arrive. Parry responds that, in fact, there is something the two of them can do: they can pray. To this suggestion, Joe, who holds no religious belief, responds that while he doesn't care to participate, Parry is welcome to pray alone.

Here the reader sees a perfect illustration of the contrast between Joe's rationalism and Parry's irrationalism. *Joe is speaking in purely reasonable terms when he declares that nothing can be done for John Logan. Yet Parry's desire to pray moves beyond reason.*

The two men have a mild (but, on Parry's part, increasingly fervent) argument about prayer. Parry has lowered himself to his knees and is inviting Joe to join him. Joe is horrified and "speechless" and wants "not to offend a true believer," even as he realizes that Parry is not concerned about offending him. When Joe responds that prayer isn't his "thing at all," Parry makes an important claim: that God has "brought [the two of them] together in this tragedy" and that they "have to make whatever sense of it [they] can."

The reader sees in these passages both Joe's opposition to religion and his fundamental decency. While he is, at this point, careful not to mock Parry or make him feel as if his desire to pray is foolish, he makes clear that he has no interest in even considering such an idea. In fact, he is so surprised by the request that he can't speak at first.

Though Joe shrugs and declines again, Parry is increasingly insistent, referring to himself as "just the messenger" and to prayer as "a gift." He closes his eyes, "not praying so much as gathering his strength," then approaches Joe from behind as Joe tries to walk away. He begs Joe to reconsider, even telling him that he doesn't "have to believe in anything at all," but Joe, stating that he has to return to Clarissa, finally begins to depart.

Parry's persistence is on full display in these paragraphs. Crucial is his idea that Joe does not himself need to have religious belief: he can merely go through the motions and be "saved" by the sincerity of Parry's *belief. This is an idea to which Parry will return later in the novel, when grappling with Joe's atheism.*

Parry attempts "a radical change in tone," asking Joe "sharply" what is preventing him from participating in the prayer. Pushed to the point of rudeness, Joe responds that he won't pray because "no one's listening. There's no one up there." Strangely, Parry responds not with anger but by smiling. As the chapter ends, two policemen are striding down the hill to Logan's body, and Parry is looking at Joe with a "radiating" expression of "love and pity."

The suddenness of Parry's change in tone prepares the reader for the erratic behavior that will mark his character later. So, too, does the reader see hints about the future in the fact that Parry smiles *at Joe's refusal. Part of what comes to be so infuriating about Parry is his tendency to hear "yes" when "no" has been said.*

CHAPTER 3

Joe and Clarissa have returned to their London home. The time is 6:00 PM, and Joe is surprised to find that everything looks the same as it did when he left. The couple sit down at the kitchen table and open a bottle of wine, ready to discuss at last the events of the afternoon after saying very little on the car ride home.

Here is another brief lapse in Joe's rationalism. There is no reason why the apartment shouldn't be exactly as he left it, but Joe can't help thinking that it somehow shouldn't be. This hints at the emotional weight of what he has just experienced, though Joe will not admit this outright.

Their words, Joe tells the reader, come out in a "torrent" of "repetition," and Joe finds comfort in the "reiteration" of them just as he does in the "familiar weight of the wineglasses and in the grain of the deal table." First Clarissa speaks, then Joe interrupts, and vice versa. Together, they "heap curses on" James Gadd "and his incompetence," but they are drawn inevitably back to what they could have done themselves to save John Logan.

This scene is both loving and deeply human. The reader sees Joe and Clarissa's connection, and it is this aspect of their relationship that will allow the reader to cheer for their reconciliation later on. Yet, even here, the reader gets the sense that Joe's desire to blame others may end up harming him.

Joe shows Clarissa the rope burns on his palm, which he received just before the balloon carried him briefly into the air, and Clarissa kisses his palms. Though the two of them are briefly distracted from the "ritual" retelling into which they are, for the moment, locked, they cannot escape it for long, returning instead to Logan's fall. Overwhelmed by the horror of the memory, the two of them retreat "into the peripheries" of the story, trading their recollections of the police, the ambulance, and the stretcher that carried the injured Toby Greene away. They briefly imagine the police contacting Mrs. Logan, but "this [is] unbearable too," and so they return to their own recollections.

Here, McEwan transforms Joe's desire to tell his story over and over into something slightly darker. By touching him gently, Clarissa has tried to insert an emotional element into the rational way they are relating to one another. Yet Joe is quickly drawn back into what has become an obsessive repetition of his story, and Clarissa follows shortly behind him with her own version of events.

When Joe comes to the story of Jed Parry and his insatiable desire for prayer, he tells it "as comedy and [makes] Clarissa laugh." Joe feels an urge to tell Clarissa that he loves her, but instead he is drawn to a description of John Logan's body, confessing that it is "far worse in recollection than it had been at the time." Clarissa watches Joe patiently as he "spiral[s] into a regress of emotion, memory, and commentary," and after a few minutes she moves toward him and embraces him.

That Joe resists the temptation to break off his tale and profess his love for Clarissa is perhaps a troubling sign. So, too, is it potentially problematic that Joe's first instinct is to render Parry comic rather than explaining the man in a sincere and truthful way. This failure (which will be repeated) will later come to haunt Joe.

Moments later, however, the two of them are back in their seats, going over the story once more. When Clarissa insists that Logan "was a good man," Joe is reminded of "the routine surgical procedure that left Clarissa unable to bear children." He recalls her grief, five years earlier, upon a friend's loss of a "four-week-old baby to a rare bacterial infection," and he speculates that, in John Logan, Clarissa sees "a man prepared to die to prevent the kind of loss she felt herself to have sustained."

In these paragraphs, McEwan introduces Clarissa's own obsession: the notion that she has been denied some essential part of herself because of her inability to bear children. The reader sees in these lines Joe's notion that Clarissa tends to view events—in this case, the ballooning accident—through this highly personal and emotional lens.

Putting aside that line of thinking, Joe reveals to the reader that the balloon eventually came down safely on its own and that the child, Harry Gadd, is unharmed. Neither Joe nor Clarissa wants to believe that John Logan "died for nothing," but Clarissa goes a step further, insisting that Logan's death "must mean something." Because he has "never liked this line of thinking," Joe hesitates before he responds, finally stating, simply, that they "tried to help and . . . failed." The truth is as obvious and unadorned as that.

Joe and Clarissa look at the world in fundamentally different ways—a distinction that undermines their relationship when Jed Parry intrudes into it. Joe doesn't like Clarissa's near-supernatural insistence that John Logan's death must be part of some larger "plan"; Clarissa is suspicious of Joe's failure to think so.

Clarissa responds that Joe is "so rational sometimes [he's] like a child," and she insists that one meaning that can be pulled from the tragedy is that the two of them will "have to love each other even harder." Moved, Joe wonders why he doesn't think in such terms, and he allows himself to be led into the bedroom by Clarissa.

Clarissa's description of Joe as childlike in his rationalism is a crucial passage: it establishes the idea that Joe's way of thinking may not be entirely correct and that Clarissa has, perhaps, the better understanding of love.

As the two of them undress and embrace, Clarissa confesses that she feels "scared" and that she's "shivering inside." To calm themselves, the two of them tell stories from childhood: of Clarissa's young cousin going briefly missing and of Joe's first public performance on the trumpet. After a time, the two of them make love then sleep briefly. When they awaken, "after an hour or so," they invite some friends to join them and they spend the next several hours retelling their story, once again interrupting each other and trading portions of the narrative.

The obsessive way that Joe and Clarissa tell their stories—both to each other and, later, to friends—indicates just how deeply the events of the day have affected them. The reader sees, too, in these moments the level of intimacy between Joe and Clarissa at this point in their relationship. The two of them clearly have no secrets from each other—a state of affairs that the novel will challenge.

After their friends leave, just after one in the morning, Joe and Clarissa prepare for the next day—a Monday, and Clarissa's first day back in the classroom after her research sabbatical—then finally go to bed. Joe is awakened, however, by a phone call in the middle of the night. The call is from Jed Parry, who, bizarrely, confesses to Joe that he "understands" what Joe is feeling, that he "feels it too," and that he "loves" Joe. When Clarissa asks sleepily who has called, Joe makes his "first serious mistake." He tells her that it has been a wrong number.

Joe lies to Clarissa about Jed Parry's telephone call either to protect her, or because he is too tired to have a long conversation about it. Yet in this moment, the reader sees the first instance of Joe's disloyalty to Clarissa. Meanwhile, in Parry's declaration that he also *feels what he wrongly believes Joe to be feeling, the reader sees the irrationality of Parry's blooming obsession.*

CHAPTER 4

Joe and Clarissa wake the next morning and go about their normal routines. Clarissa returns to work at her university, while Joe finishes an essay about the Hubble telescope, briefly recalling both the "glee" felt by ordinary people upon its initial failure and the wonder with which its ultimate success was met. Throughout the morning, Joe feels a sense of "unease" that he can't quite define. He doesn't think about Parry's late-night phone call; rather, he manages to merge the call "with all the trouble of the day before."

As an intelligent and educated person, Joe has the ability not only to recognize the nuances of science and culture, but to analyze them, as well. Yet his intricate thoughts about the Hubble telescope (and the public response its photographs provoked) can only distract him for so long from the irrational restlessness that he feels.

After finishing the piece, Joe telephones the police and learns that he must attend an inquest concerning John Logan's death in six weeks' time. He takes a taxi across town to meet with a radio producer who wants a story on supermarket vegetables, and he surprises himself by telling the producer "the full story" of the balloon disaster. Leaving the radio station, he feels again the "unnamed sensation" from earlier in the morning, and he proceeds to the London Library, where he intends to spend the afternoon researching Charles Darwin's contemporaries.

Joe's decision to share the story of the ballooning accident with the producer, almost without meaning to, reveals Joe's increasing obsession with his own behavior. He can only work through the events of the previous day by retelling them. Accompanying Joe, however—even in the midst of this intellectual work—is a highly emotional (and unidentified) sensation. Joe is not quite able to shake it off.

Joe has in mind a particular new essay: he wants to write about "the death of anecdote and narrative in science." He believes that "Darwin's generation was the last to permit itself the luxury of storytelling in published articles." He recalls a published anecdote in which a dog appeared to engage in strategic thinking, and he reflects on the fact that "the attractions of narrative" had, in that particular case, "clouded judgment."

Joe's ability to think abstractly is highly developed, as is his understanding of the history of scientific discovery. The particular historical anecdote he recalls here, moreover, seems specifically related to the tragedy he has just been through. Can a compelling narrative be shaped from what happened, or was it simply a series of random events?

As he works, Joe can hear outside the reading room the traffic in St. James's Square, and he is further disturbed by the sound of creaking floorboards behind the chair in which he's sitting. Giving in to the distractions, he glances up from his book in time to see "a flash of white shoe and something red," as well as the "closing of the sighing swing **doors** that led out of the reading room onto the stairs."

Though sharp, Joe's concentration is not perfect. As the outside world intrudes here, the reader sees the limits of Joe's ability to lose himself in the rational world of scholarship. The intruding element, the novel hints importantly, appears to be the irrational force that is Jed Parry.

Turning his attention back to his research, Joe fails for a moment to grasp "the prompting of footwear and color," not yet realizing that what he has seen matches the shoes worn by Jed Parry during the ballooning accident. Instead, he begins to "fret," and is struck by a sense of "apprehension" whose source he can't identify. He cannot "stop looking at the **door**" that closed a moment earlier, and, after a few seconds, he stands and moves into the stairwell then descends onto the street.

Joe's obsession with the swinging doors illustrates his inability to order his thoughts exactly as he would like. Joe wants to continue his research, but his emotions overpower his reason until he is forced to give in to them. This occurs despite the fact that Joe's knowledge of what he has seen is, as of this moment, incomplete.

Standing in St. James's Square, Joe looks around for anyone dressed in the footwear he believes he saw in the reading room: "a pair of white shoes, trainers with red laces." He sees nothing, but, before returning to the reading room, he replaces a bunch of flowers in the jar from which they have been knocked. In doing so, Joe is righting a makeshift memorial to a policewoman who was murdered on that spot. Though he thinks that this act might bring him "luck," he realizes simultaneously that he is engaging in a delusion on which "whole religions" have been founded.

Despite his natural inclinations and his scientific training, Joe can't help but think in supernatural terms, just as he can't help looking around frantically for something he only might *have seen. Yet Joe is also aware that his behavior—especially where the overturned jar is concerned—is delusional. It is in this tension that the reader best sees Joe's character and values.*

CHAPTER 5

Upon finishing his research at the reading room, Joe goes on to his second meeting of the day: he is helping to judge a science book prize. After the meeting, he realizes that he needs to talk to Clarissa and feels that "the effort of appearing sane and judicious" for so many hours has "rather unhinged [him]." He returns to his apartment and mixes a drink for himself, and while he considers interrupting Clarissa's dinner—she is in a restaurant consoling her brother Luke in the midst of his divorce—he decides to wait until her return to tell her about Parry's phone call and the fact that Parry may have followed him to the library.

Joe transitions from one physical and emotional state to another with surprising ease. Though he has been disconcerted by what he saw at the library, he is nevertheless able to continue going about the business of his day—business that is of significant professional importance. Similarly, he is able to wait on Clarissa with a reasonable degree of patience, a fact that reveals the steadiness of his intellectual life, even in the midst of near-constant change.

Joe watches the evening news and considers the state of his own affairs. He worries that Parry has been following him and that Parry knows his home address, but he understands, as well, that if he is mistaken about what he has seen, his own mental state must be "very frail." Picking up the phone, Joe dials "last number recall," determined to trace the message that he has just heard on his answering machine ("a breathless pause followed by the rattle of a receiver being replaced"). Though he expects to reach Parry's own answering machine upon doing so, he is nonetheless surprised to hear Parry's recorded voice in his ear. Determined not to spend the evening drinking and brooding, Joe retreats to his office, where he continues work on his essay on the use of narrative in science.

Joe's ability to diagnose his own mental state with some degree of precision is a compelling sign of his sanity. Yet Joe's anxiety in these paragraphs reveals that his hold on rationality is being tested. Joe has no reason to believe that Parry has his home address, but he can't help worrying about it anyway. Similarly, Joe acts with irrational haste and a surprising lack of foresight when he calls Jed Parry's telephone number. Also important, however, is Joe's ability, even now, to distract himself with intellectual work.


Working through his idea, Joe speculates that, because the 19th century was the novel's heyday, scientists of that era—many of them mere intelligent amateurs—inevitably thought in narrative terms. As history proceeded, however, and science grew more difficult, amateurs largely ceased to make important scientific discoveries, and "the meanderings of narrative [gave] way to an aesthetic of form." As proof of this hypothesis, Joe considers both Albert Einstein's General Theory, originally accepted on account of its "beauty," and Paul Dirac's work on quantum electrodynamics, which was rejected, Joe reflects, in part because of its "ugliness." Though Joe swiftly loses interest in his own "puny reasoning," he manages to distract himself with work for three hours.

Despite Joe's eventual doubts about the quality of his work, the reader can see in these paragraphs the extent of his ability to reason. Joe's capacity to craft a narrative from disparate historical examples is an impressive feat of deduction and one that helps the reader fully comprehend Joe's intelligence. Yet the reader can also see here that Joe's confidence in his work as a science writer is already being shaken. The emotional event that was the ballooning accident has disturbed the intellectual event that is Joe's attempt to compose an essay.


Setting his pages aside, Joe feels for the second time that day "someone at [his] back." He reflects on the evolutionary processes that have resulted in the shot of adrenaline he now feels, and he quickly turns to find Clarissa approaching him, home from her evening with her brother at last. Clarissa tells Joe that she loves him and has had a terrible evening with Luke. For his part, Joe reflects upon the fact that evolution has contributed yet again to his reunion with Clarissa: her presence "always brought, along with the familiarity, a jolt of surprise." Retreating to the bedroom, the couple discuss Luke's bad behavior, and Joe is so happy to see Clarissa that he declines again to mention Parry's phone call or behavior. As the two of them make love, Joe surrenders to his happiness and reflects upon the fact that the telephone will not disturb them. He unplugged the phone, he remembers, "many hours before."

Joe's impression that someone is sneaking up behind him is an example of the kind of anti-rational (or pre-rational) "thought" that Joe both appreciates (from an evolutionary perspective) and finds suspect. Yet Joe falls victim to anti-rational behavior once again when he allows himself to be led by Clarissa into their bedroom. By any reasonable standard, Joe should be explaining to Clarissa exactly what Jed Parry has said and done in the last twenty-four hours. That he surrenders instead to his emotions tells the reader a great deal about the impossibility of a total commitment to rationality.

CHAPTER 6

Joe reflects upon the architectural history of his apartment: the builder was inspired by the *Queen Mary* and other transatlantic ships of the 1920s, and, as a consequence, the building in which Joe lives features rounded corners, iron staircases, and skylights that are vaguely reminiscent of portholes. Joe recalls the "frenetic month" after moving in and confesses that Clarissa and he have yet to decorate their side of the apartment's roof, whereas their neighbors, to whom the other side belongs, have created a "fantasy garden."

Ever the intellectual, Joe cannot help but think eruditely, even about his apartment building. In his worldview, most decisions are likely to have a knowable, rational source. If the building in which he lives features "portholes," for example, then the builder must have been influenced by majestic ships. Even Joe and Clarissa's failure to decorate their side of the roof can be traced to a particular cause.

Sitting at the single, unadorned table on his side of the roof the next morning, Joe thinks again about John Logan and his responsibility for Logan's death. He examines the rope burns on his hands and asks once more if he was the first man to let go. Was letting go "panic," he further wonders, or was it "rational calculation"? Moreover, does he now have an obligation to visit Mrs. Logan, in order to "tell her what happened"?

Joe continues to be obsessed with his own guilt (or guiltlessness) where the ballooning accident is concerned. The fact that he is haunted by the possibility that he was the first man to let go of his rope speaks to how deeply Joe is convinced that such a failure would have represented a betrayal of the group.

Picturing that prospective scene, Joe imagines Jean Logan dressed in black with children clinging to her knees. Soon enough, however, this creation of a narrative of Joe's own reminds him of his unhappiness with the essay he worked on the previous evening. Flitting between thoughts of his writing and his culpability in John Logan's death, Joe fails to notice that Clarissa has joined him "until she sat down on the other side of the table."

By creating a story about Jean Logan that may or may not be true, Joe commits the same error that befell the narrative-obsessed scientists he has been criticizing in his essay. Perhaps because narrative feels so intuitively correct as a way of describing the world, it cannot be resisted by even the most rational mind.

Joe understands that now is the time to tell Clarissa the truth about Jed Parry's phone call, "before her kindness and our love got the better of me." Though Clarissa briefly wonders why Joe initially lied about the nature of the call, she quickly gives in to her amusement about Joe's "secret gay love affair with a Jesus freak." Determined to convince her that the situation is serious, Joe tells her that Parry followed him the previous day. Clarissa quickly points out, however, that Joe "didn't see [Parry's] face" and can't be sure at all of what happened.

Joe and Clarissa briefly reverse roles in these important paragraphs. Whereas Joe is convinced that Parry was following him despite the fact that he has no hard evidence to support that assertion, Clarissa cannot be made to believe Joe's claim in the absence of such evidence. To maintain a total commitment to either rationality or intuition seems not to be possible.

Though the couple do not yet quarrel, Joe can tell that Clarissa is moving through their conversation "with the caution of a bomb disposal expert," and he grows annoyed when Clarissa emphasizes that Joe, by his own admission, sensed that he was being followed before ever seeing the shoe. For Clarissa, the situation represents a mere nuisance: "some poor fellow has a crush on [Joe] and is trailing [him] about." Though Joe is happy to be reassured by Clarissa, she leaves to go to work before they can discuss the situation further. As Clarissa is walking out the **door**, Joe's closing words—a suggestion that Parry might very well be a "vengeful fanatic"—are interrupted by the telephone ringing. Clarissa goes on her way, and Joe picks up the phone to find Parry on the other end.

In these paragraphs, Jed Parry's obsession with Joe begins to alter Joe and Clarissa's relationship for the first time. The couple cannot agree on how reality is to be defined, and neither seems willing to accept the other's point of view as a matter of faith. So, too, do readers get a sense of the circumstances that will eventually lead to the further dissolution of Joe and Clarissa's marriage. Their busy lives prevent or cut short important conversations, as does the constant intrusion of Jed Parry himself.

Parry is calling, he reveals, because Joe called him the previous evening, using "last number recall." When Joe asks Parry what he wants, Parry promises to leave Joe alone if he hears him out a single time. Joe agrees, and Parry reveals that he is at a pay phone at the end of Joe's street, an admission that he makes "without shame." As Joe leaves the apartment to meet Parry, he is comforted by the fact that he can still smell Clarissa's perfume lingering on the stairs.

Irrationally, Joe has provided Parry with a legitimate reason to call him again, a highly ironic fact given the extent of Parry's delusions. That Parry is unashamed of having tracked Joe down is early evidence of his inability to think in reasonable social terms. He is not capable of that level of reason.

CHAPTER 7

On the street, Joe sees Parry lingering under a tree a hundred yards away. Parry looks "abject" and refuses to meet Joe's eye. Joe offers Parry a handshake and considers as he does so that Clarissa was right: though Parry is a "nuisance," he is "hardly the threat [Joe] made him out to be." Parry requests that the two of them go to a coffee shop around the corner, but Joe, feeling emboldened, declares that the two of them must talk right where they are.

This scene illustrates the impossibility, for Joe, of fully understanding Parry's capacity to cause harm until it is too late. Joe is a highly rational character, but even he cannot completely trust his own inclinations in the face of seemingly reasonable dissent from Clarissa.

"Something's happened," Parry tells Joe a few moments later, looking down at his fingernails rather than at Joe. When Joe asks *what*, Parry is offended, insisting that Joe "know[s] what it is" and is denying that knowledge merely to further his own "control" of the situation. Bored already by Parry's inability to make sense, Joe looks at his watch and considers that he is missing the most productive hours of his working day. When he presses Parry to say what he intends to communicate, Parry confesses at last that Joe "loves" him, that he has no choice but to "return" Joe's love, and that "there's a reason for it, a purpose." Joe responds by insisting that Parry is mistaken—that he doesn't know Parry or anything about him. When Parry answers by pleading with Joe not to "do this," Joe wonders if "talking [is] making matters worse."

At this point in the novel, Parry's irrationality is as much a source of boredom for Joe as it is a source of danger. This is true in part because Parry is unable to communicate with Joe on a rational level. Joe attempts to reason with Parry, assuring him that he is misinterpreting Joe's words and behavior, but Parry is fundamentally unable to modify his thinking based on reason and fact. Revealed here is the extent to which rationality is unable to stand up to intuitive, emotional thinking at its most extreme. *Nothing Joe says can make any difference to a man unable to be convinced.*

Continuing to speak against his better judgment, Joe asks whether Parry was following him the previous day. Parry looks away rather than answering, and Joe takes that response "as [a] confirmation." To Joe's surprise, Parry begins to cry, begging Joe to tell him why he's "keeping this up" and insisting that he "can't control [his] feelings the way [Joe] can." Joe, "feeling suffocated," begins to walk away, and Parry runs along behind him, tugging at his sleeves and continuing to plead his case.

Joe's discomfort in these paragraphs is due as much to Parry's extreme emotional vulnerability as it is to his unreason, though the two are clearly linked. When Parry suggests that Joe has the ability to control his feelings, he is correctly diagnosing an important element of Joe's character—one that his behavior will challenge.

For the first time since the beginning of their encounter, Joe finds himself "calculating the physical danger" posed by Parry, who is "twenty years younger" and who possesses "a desperate cause," which might lead him to fight with greater passion were a physical altercation to ensure. Joe reflects on the exhausting "variety of [Parry's] emotional states and the speed of their transitions," yet he is unable to resist asking what Parry means when the young man declares that a "purpose" has brought them together. Parry confesses, surprisingly, that the *fact* of his and Joe's "love" is unimportant; it is merely the means through which Joe will be brought "to God." Joe listens to this speech but is so startled by Parry's delusions that he finds it difficult "not to gape."

Joe is completely unprepared, in these paragraphs, for the irrationality of Parry's worldview. Yet his own behavior here is imperfectly thought out, as well. Joe knows that he ought not to engage with Parry, yet he can't resist probing the depth of Parry's unreason when Parry mentions that the two men have been brought together according to some supernatural plan. Joe, in other words, is unable to behave in perfect accord with his own beliefs and values. His prized rationality is incomplete.

Trying a different strategy, Joe asks Parry "exactly" what he wants, suggesting that perhaps Parry wants to have sex with him. When Parry responds that his own feelings are "not important," Joe loses interest once again and begins to daydream about the absurdity of the entire situation—the fact that he is "talking to a stranger in terms more appropriate to an affair" and seems to have "fallen through a crack in [his] own existence." Aware that he might soon need assistance in dealing with Parry, Joe asks for Parry's address then waves down a taxi. As Joe climbs into the cab, Parry suggests that he, Joe, and Clarissa should all meet and talk. Joe directs the cabdriver to speed away before Parry can completely express this sentiment, however. As Joe departs, Parry stands on the sidewalk looking like "a man blessed in love."

That Joe tries multiple "strategies" during this conversation suggests that he still believes that Parry can be defeated with reason. This both emphasizes Joe's commitment to rationalism and underlines its limited effectiveness in extreme circumstances. Meanwhile, the fact that Parry's expression, in the chapter's closing moments, is a happy one reveals an important characteristic of love: it has the power, even in the corrupted form in which Parry experiences it, to transform the way a person defines reality.

CHAPTER 8

As he rides in the back of the cab, Joe reflects on how quickly his feelings toward Parry have changed. The previous day, Parry represented "the unknown" and was a source of potential "terror." Now, Joe sees in Parry a pathetic figure whose "inadequacies and emotional cravings rendered him harmless." Moving on to other thoughts, Joe recalls the scene at Heathrow airport when he picked up Clarissa on the day of the ballooning accident. Joe believes that he might be able to compose an essay about the human smile—many versions of which he saw while waiting on Clarissa's flight to arrive.

Joe's attempt to come to terms with Parry's behavior using observation and analysis is reminiscent of the Scientific Method. Yet, in Joe's case, such a methodology merely serves to fling Joe swiftly from one way of thinking to another; it provides no ultimate answer. Joe cannot reason his way to a solution to his Parry problem, and so he chooses to abandon the matter altogether, thinking instead about the work that he will do that day.

Joe's thesis, which he reflects upon as he rides, is that the smile is an evolutionary feature with which infants learn to secure a greater share of parental love. Such an argument will be well received, Joe thinks, because science book editors have largely moved beyond their previous craze, Chaos Theory, and now want nothing but evolutionary psychology, into which Joe's smile theory neatly fits. As he considers the matter, Joe remembers that Clarissa has "generally taken against the whole project" of evolutionary psychology and finds it to be "rationalism gone berserk." An infant's smile matters, in Clarissa's opinion, because of "the unfolding love" between parent and child.

These paragraphs neatly illustrate the tension between Joe's rationalism and Clarissa's more emotional and intuitive way of looking at the world. Both characters were likely correct—a smile is *an evolutionary feature, but it* does *have an important non-scientific meaning—yet neither was willing to give in to the other's perspective completely. This tension highlights the novel's determination to show the benefits and limits of both worldviews.*

Fully immersed in the memory of their conversation about the human smile, Joe recalls his counter-argument: that by increasing the world's *understanding* of a phenomenon, science can increase its *appreciation* of that phenomenon, as well. He remembers, too, however, how Clarissa claimed that he was misunderstanding her—that she was talking about "love" rather than any particular evolutionary reality. Joe's ultimate conclusion about the remembered conversation is that the entire argument was actually a veiled examination of "the absence of babies from [their] lives." Though Clarissa was sincere in her objection to evolutionary psychology's view of the world, that objection masked in part a deeper sense of loss.

Joe's belief is that Clarissa's attitude about the human smile, during their long-ago conversation, was due largely to her obsession with her own childlessness, as was the tenacity with which she insisted that she was being misunderstood. On display in these paragraphs is the potential of obsession to warp one's responses to the world, as well as the notion that love, an emotional phenomenon, stands apart from the colder realm of science. For Clarissa, an intuitive character, the two have nothing to do with each other.

Arriving at his destination, Joe purchases a book, browses briefly, then returns home. Parry is waiting for him, and Joe chides himself for believing that Parry would "vanish" simply because Joe was "thinking about something else." Parry insists, falsely, that Joe asked him to wait there, and Joe pushes past him and retreats into his apartment. Once inside, Joe hears the phone ring. He answers, thinking that Clarissa might be calling, only to find Parry on the other end once again. Hiding behind his **curtains** for a moment, Joe watches Parry before hanging up, turning the ringer off, and "set[ting] the answering machine." As Parry begins to leave a series of messages, Joe retreats to the phone connected to his fax machine and calls the police.

Joe's occasional susceptibility to irrational thinking is on full display when he allows himself to forget, however briefly, that Parry exists merely because he wants that to be the case. Once again, Joe the rationalist is unable to maintain such a commitment without an occasional lapse. The curtains featured in these paragraphs, meanwhile, are an important symbol in the novel. Joe uses them in an attempt to veil himself from Parry—to render incomplete the other man's knowledge.

Reporting to the police a case of "systematic harassment," Joe is made to answer a series of bureaucratic questions about the specifics of Parry's behavior. Though Joe tries to take comfort in "having [his] story assimilated into" a crime with which Parry can be charged, he quickly learns that Parry's behavior is "not a police matter." That Parry is trying to "convert" Joe, as Joe eventually tells the police officer with whom he speaks, is insufficient to merit an investigation.

Joe cannot rid himself of Parry using the inherently rational mechanism of the State. Indeed, Joe's attempt to do so is met with irrational *bureaucratic inefficiency. Joe is attempting to solve his problem using a reasonable method, but the novel suggests that such a strategy will not be sufficient to thwart Parry's unreasonable behavior.*

Joe returns to his living room and looks out the window again. Though Parry is no longer speaking into a telephone, he is still lingering outside Joe's building, and Joe realizes that Parry has ruined his concentration for the day. Rather than thinking about his essay, Joe finds himself drawn back to "an older dissatisfaction." Though Joe has a talent for explaining scientific ideas in laymen's language, he misses the excitement and sense of discovery that accompanies real scientific work in a laboratory.

Once again, Joe finds that Parry's irrational behavior has drawn him away from the rational world of work, and particularly of science. More importantly, it has drawn Joe into an irrationality of his own. Joe ought to be satisfied with the work for which he has a clear talent, yet he cannot help yearning for the work of his early adulthood.

Reflecting on his early adulthood, Joe recalls the events that left him "too old" for the "very competitive game" of serious science. Leaving college, Joe had felt restless "after seven years' disciplined study." He had nearly become wealthy after inventing a technological device with a friend, but the time spent working on that project had left a "hole" in his résumé. Unsure how to proceed, he had written a book about dinosaurs at a time when "no dinosaur book could fail," and he had, as a consequence, stumbled into a career as a science writer. Yet beneath this ostensible success lay dissatisfaction, as Joe slowly realized that "no scientist" would ever "take [him] seriously again."

Joe chases these memories with a doggedness and a specificity that make clear that he has an obsession of his own. The obsession is irrational—losing the professional regard of scientists has been no impediment to Joe's success—but he cannot help but feel it, nonetheless. Obsession, here, has the potential to strike both those whose actions are based on reason and those whose actions are the result of unreason. *It is, for that reason, one of the novel's most powerful forces.*

Taking a cup of coffee and a plate of sandwiches into his study, Joe tries to work while simultaneously getting up at regular intervals to check on Parry. By five o'clock in the afternoon, Parry is gone, and Joe checks the answering machine to find that Parry has left him twenty-nine messages. Among them is a claim by Parry that Joe has succeeded in leaving Parry a message "with the **curtains**," an assertion that is clearly a product of Parry's imagination. Returning to his study, Joe sits and broods until Clarissa returns home, promising himself that he will find a way back to "original research."

Joe's inability to concentrate is another example of the limitedness of his rationality: he can do nothing about Parry, yet he cannot help but check on the man constantly. Parry's messages, meanwhile, speak to the strength of his own obsession, as does his delusional misinterpretation of Joe's curtains. Joe has left Parry no message with them, but Parry's obsession cannot be defeated with mere fact or reason.

CHAPTER 9

Joe indicates that he will narrate Clarissa's return home from her perspective. She has had a bad day at work dealing with unprepared students and difficult university colleagues, and, as she carries a heavy bag of books up the stairs to her apartment, she worries that the unexpected effort required to do so indicates that she is "getting old." She looks forward to seeing Joe, but realizes upon entering the apartment that he appears to have a "wild look about him." This suspicion is confirmed when Joe begins to tell her "a tale of harassment and idiocy" without so much as a "hello."

Joe's decision to turn the narrative over to Clarissa is, in a sense, an indicator of his commitment to reason. Joe understands that he cannot fully do justice to Clarissa's feelings without attempting to inhabit her mind, and he also seems to grasp that his own behavior can be viewed in many different ways. These concessions to reality reveal the fact that Joe continues to be sane despite all that has happened.

With no transition or pause, Joe finishes his rant about Jed Parry and begins to tell Clarissa about a conversation he has had with a particle physicist friend about a potential job interview. Because Clarissa sees that Joe is "conversationally deaf and blind," she interrupts him, declares that she is going to take a bath, and moves away from Joe toward the bedroom. Joe follows her, "insisting that he has to get back into science," yet he is soon talking once again about Parry, whom Clarissa once more dismisses—if only in her own mind—as harmless.

Joe's rational mind prevents him in this moment from understanding Clarissa's emotional needs or recognizing the franticness of his own speech. Interestingly, his dual obsessions—with Parry and with returning to a career in science—give way to one another as he continues to speak. It is this manic behavior, as much as anything else, that Clarissa rejects.

As Joe continues talking uninterruptedly, Clarissa resigns herself to the fact that Joe "is not going to take care of her." Her bad mood is tempting her to draw "significant conclusions" about the state of her relationship with Joe and his manic behavior, but she reminds herself that they "love each other" and are merely "in very different mental universes now." Nevertheless, Clarissa can't help noting that Joe could easily "get back into science" with nothing but a "good idea" and a "sheet of paper" if he so desired. Joe needs the fantasy of a university appointment, Clarissa reflects, to protect himself "against failure, because they will never let him in."

Clarissa's suspicion that Joe is shielding himself against failure by demanding a university appointment rather than taking up science again on his own is an important perspective on Joe's character and on the imperfectness of his ability to reason. Because Joe is locked into his own perceptions and experiences, he can't recognize in himself the subconscious motives that Clarissa easily diagnoses. Joe's information about himself is incomplete.

Preparing her bath, Clarissa reflects further on Joe's emotional state, noting that his "precise and careful mind . . . takes no account of its own emotional field." She wants to be left alone but feels unable to ask because of Joe's "intensity." Instead, she finally begins to concentrate on what Joe is saying and realizes that he is claiming to have received dozens of phone messages from Parry. Alarmed, Clarissa insists that the machine's indicator "said zero," and Joe responds that he erased the messages, a claim that puts Clarissa briefly in mind of her father, who died of Alzheimer's.

Clarissa's thoughts in these paragraphs about the precision of Joe's mind (and the emotional cost of that precision) are one of the novel's fullest expressions of the difference between the two characters. Here, McEwan allows the reader to understand that Joe's rationalism is not entirely "correct," and neither is Clarissa's more intuitive thinking entirely "wrong."

Clarissa uses this moment of contradiction to finally interrupt Joe, explaining that he has been talking non-stop since she arrived. When he confesses that he feels "agitated," she asks him again if he's "making too much" of Parry and suggests asking Parry in for "a cup of tea." Arguing that Parry is merely a "symptom" of Joe's "old frustration about not doing original research," Clarissa prompts Joe to reveal that Parry stood outside their apartment all day and that "the police say it's not their business."

Clarissa connects Joe's frustrations about Jed Parry to his frustrations about his career, and she is not entirely wrong to do so. Yet this connection reveals the intuitive thinking that dominates Clarissa's intellectual life. Though likely true, such a diagnosis of Joe's mindset is formed by psychological implication, not pure fact.

Clarissa is unmoved by Joe's claims, however, and asks him why he erased the messages on the answering machine. When Joe responds that he did so because the police weren't interested in the tape, Clarissa raises the stakes of the argument by suggesting that the tape would have been "evidence for [her]." Horrified that Clarissa clearly doesn't believe him, Joe follows her into the bedroom as she finishes her bath. He is angry now and complains bitterly that he "can't get [Clarissa] to take this seriously." Clarissa responds that Joe's own obsession with Parry suggests that Joe has, in a sense, "invented him." "You ought to be asking yourself which way this fixation runs," she tells Joe. Furious and hurt, Joe insists that he only wants Clarissa's support, while Clarissa accuses Joe of "lying" about Parry's initial telephone call. Joe storms out of the apartment and sees Parry waiting for him on the street once again.

Loyalty and obsession are at the forefront in these important paragraphs. Joe's understanding of loyalty requires that Clarissa believe and support him irrespective of his lack of evidence, whereas Clarissa's understanding of loyalty requires that Joe abandon his obsessive ranting and attend to her emotional needs. At the same time, Clarissa's implication that it is Joe who is obsessed with Parry (rather than vice versa) is spoken in anger, yet it nevertheless reveals what Clarissa actually believes. *For her, Joe's emotionally insensitive behavior is evidence that his factual claims must not be correct. Such is the extent to which Clarissa values emotion.*

CHAPTER 10

Narrating from his own perspective once again, Joe states that the rainy weather that greets him upon his leaving the apartment seems to intensify as he walks past Jed Parry. As he walks, leaving Parry far behind in his hurry, he remembers a "quarter-memory"—a faint and decontextualized recollection of the word "**curtain**" that might somehow help him in his current situation. Joe attempts to tease out this fragment of memory and pictures "a grand house" with "some kind of military presence." Yet he can get no further in his recollection and soon sets the memory aside.

Once again, the use of curtains in these paragraphs is highly symbolic. Here, they represent the incompleteness of Joe's memory and his inability to summon facts at the exact moment in which they are needed. To the extent that Joe's commitment to reason is factual, *then, that commitment will always be limited by the imperfect working of Joe's very human brain.*

As Joe continues walking swiftly, he feels a pleasurable disdain for the wealthy homes he's passing, recalling only after several minutes the fact of his own "half-million-pound apartment." Joe briefly considers the word "**curtain**" again before sensing Jed Parry coming up behind him.

Joe's ability to condemn the rich without condemning himself reveals the power of selective thinking. No matter his inclinations, Joe cannot escape the biases and blind spots that mar all human thought.

Parry is sobbing, and he accuses Joe of "playing games" and "pretending" not to return his love. Joe moves quickly away, "almost running," and Parry is briefly trapped "in the center of [a] road," a circumstance that causes Joe to daydream about "the redeeming possibility of a bus crushing him." Parry continues to shout accusations at Joe through the rain and traffic, and his "rage" is so "compelling" that Joe can't stop looking at him. As Joe listens, Parry grows increasingly hysterical, shouting obscenities at Joe and accusing Joe of "want[ing] to destroy" him. Parry frantically asserts that Joe will one day "crawl on [his] stomach" and beg Parry for forgiveness.

Once again, Jed Parry reveals himself in these paragraphs to be impervious to reason. If Joe were to return his love, such a gesture would be "true" in Parry's thinking, yet any gesture in which Joe denies *that love must, by definition, be false. Joe is compelled by Parry's delusions in part because Parry's way of thinking is so different from his own. Meanwhile, Parry's prediction about Joe's future groveling is another early hint about his violent character.*

Losing Parry's words in the blare of a passing siren, Joe realizes that he feels toward Parry a kind of pity, even as he is simultaneously revolted. Once again, he comes to the conclusion that Parry is too deranged to "harm" anyone. Parry "needed help," Joe reflects, "but not from me."

Joe attempts to bring reason to bear in his thoughts about Parry. If Parry is insane, Joe hypothesizes, he cannot simultaneously be dangerous. This attempt at a rational diagnosis will not ultimately hold up.

Allowing his thoughts to continue wandering, Joe considers the word "signals," which Parry has twice accused him of "sending" during their confrontation. The word "signals" again brings to Joe's mind the idea of a "**curtain**," and Joe puts the two together to realize that his "quarter-memory" is of "a curtain used as a signal," while the "grand house" in his recollection is "a famous residence in London."

Joe's further thinking about the curtains reveals his desire to overcome the lack of knowledge that is a fundamental feature of human existence. Interesting, too, is the fact that Joe is unable to concentrate on Parry alone, even at the peak of Parry's insanity.

Following this line of thinking, Joe reflects upon his own **curtains** in his apartment and the massive collection of files in his study. Somewhere in that collection, Joe knows, is the specific information that he is partially remembering. To access it, and because he senses that he needs to set right his relationship with Clarissa, Joe loses Parry in the traffic and begins to jog home.

Joe's changeable mind is on further display in these paragraphs—another illustration of his incompletely rational thinking, whatever his inclinations. Though Clarissa is not present in this moment, merely recalling his apartment sends Joe whirling in her direction.

CHAPTER 11

In a letter to Joe, Jed Parry states that "happiness" is running through him "like an electric current" due to the "unspoken love" that connects the two men. Parry thanks God, he writes, that he and Joe exist in the same world, and he states that while there is "difficulty and pain" ahead of them, God will eventually bring them to "even greater joy."

Parry's obsession with Joe and his delusional thinking are explicitly related to his religious belief, a connection that reveals McEwan's distrust of religion. Meanwhile, the fact that Parry thanks God despite his lack of success with Joe is further evidence of his insanity.

Continuing on in these delusions, Parry apologizes to Joe for not initially feeling the love that Joe clearly felt "from the very beginning," when the two men first met one another during the ballooning accident. He chastises himself for being "insensitive" and asks Joe again, "in the name of God," to forgive him. Parry speculates that Joe must have been "weeping too" from the joy of Parry's many telephone calls, and he guesses that part of Joe's apparent disinterest in him is due to Joe's concern about Clarissa's feelings.

An interesting role-reversal is present in these paragraphs. While Joe has been insensitive to Clarissa in the recent past, it is now Parry who is "insensitive" and Joe who must grant "forgiveness." That one scenario is real and the other false merely serves to emphasize the extent of Parry's delusions. He is attempting to enact a domesticity with Joe that doesn't actually exist.

Parry tells Joe that he already knows quite a bit about Joe's life, and he begins to relate the story of his own. He describes the "beautiful house" that he has inherited, along with his "lawns" and "courtyard." He looks forward to the day when Joe will approach the "front **door**" of the house, where "hardly anyone" goes, "apart from the postman." Parry explains the chain of events that led to his inheriting the mansion (his aunt married a lucky "crook"), and he assures Joe that his origins are humble and that God has given him his "castle" for "a purpose of His own."

Jed Parry's delusional belief that Joe will one day approach his front door is an illustration of his obsession, and the door itself is a symbol of it. For Parry, another person's use of his front door represents a kind of intimacy: a human connectedness that he, at present, shares with few others, if any. Joe's use of Parry's front door will, in Parry's thinking, represent the fulfillment of all his hopes.

Parry explains that loving Joe has made him alert to the natural world as never before: he wants to "touch and stroke" everything he sees. He recalls the fact that Joe "brushed the top of [a] hedge with [his] hand" the previous evening, during the men's argument in the rain, and he thanks Joe for sending him another "message" by doing so.

Jed Parry's musings about the natural world are nearly poetic in these paragraphs, a sign that McEwan may intend to draw a comparison between Parry's delusions and Clarissa's artful, intuitive thinking. Both stand apart from Joe's rationalism.

Relating his career history, Parry tells Joe that he used to teach English as a foreign language but now does little but wait at his grand house for God's "purpose" to "unfold." He tells Joe that the house, with its "library," "huge old sofas," and "miniature cinema," is waiting for Joe to come, and while Joe's "denial of God" is a "barrier," Parry will soon "mend [that] rift."

Once again, Parry's insanity is at one with his religiosity, as the fulfilment of "God's" ostensible "purpose" would require Parry's delusional predictions to come true. Chief among those predictions is that Parry will bring Joe, a committed rationalist, to a supernatural religious faith.

Continuing on, Parry offers to speak to Clarissa on Joe's behalf. He confesses that he feels Joe's "presence" beside him as he writes, and he apologizes once again for his "refusal" to "recognize" their love in the moments after the ballooning accident. "Joe," he concludes, "will you ever forgive me?"

Parry's hold on reality is not completely gone: he recognizes that Clarissa may be one of the things keeping Joe from him. This partial *grip on what is real only underlines Parry's* overall *insanity.*

CHAPTER 12

Two days after the arrival of Parry's letter, Joe drives to Oxford to visit John Logan's widow, Jean Logan. In his thoughts is his "sense of failure at science," an "old restlessness" whose resurgence Joe connects to "Logan's fall" or "the Parry situation."

Even as he fulfills an unpleasant obligation, Joe is unable to shake his new obsession, an indication of obsession's power over even a rational mind.

As Joe drives, he glances occasionally in the rear-view mirror, watching for Parry, who he assumes may be following him. He thinks, too, about the "large Victorian house" to which he's driving, and he reflects upon the fact that he was able to find nothing related to the words "**curtain**" and "signal" in his files.

Joe's thoughts continue to swirl in an unpredictable way: he is unable to commit to any one particular line of thinking, despite his rational mind. The workings of such a mind, it seems, can be interrupted by complicated realities.

His relationship with Clarissa, Joe narrates, has continued to be difficult. Though the two have been "affable" and have even "made love, briefly," they remain emotionally distant from one another. Joe has read Parry's letter to Clarissa, and while she has acknowledged that Joe is "right to feel harassed," she has also remarked that Parry's writing is "rather like" Joe's. Similarly, Clarissa seems convinced that Joe must have said something to Parry to provoke Parry's latest delusions. "Parry's artful technique of suggesting a past, a pact, a collusion," Joe reflects, is causing Clarissa to wonder if Joe is telling her the entire truth. While Clarissa doesn't *actually* believe that Joe is secretly having an affair with Parry, she is nevertheless provoked by Parry's "steamily self-convinced" letter into certain "automatic responses." She can't help behaving, Joe thinks to himself, like "a woman cruelly betrayed."

Joe's belief that Clarissa has experienced certain involuntary emotional responses to Parry's letter says much about Joe's understanding of Clarissa's character. Joe's thinking is that Clarissa is unable *to make the reality-based determinations that he himself would make as a rationalist and a former scientist. If Parry has the emotions and desires of a person with whom Joe is having an affair, Joe suspects that Clarissa cannot help but feel, emotionally, that Joe has been unfaithful to her. Joe's thoughts here are driven in part by Clarissa's irrational implication that Joe is secretly the author of Parry's letter.*

Continuing to remember the morning in question, Joe recalls that an "unarticulated dispute" had lingered between Clarissa and him despite the cheerfulness with which she had kissed him goodbye. Joe thinks that the two of them are "losing the trick" of their marriage and that, even "in bed," he and Clarissa have become "unconvincing somehow." Clarissa, Joe speculates, has somehow persuaded herself that the Parry situation is Joe's fault, and she simultaneously "hate[s] to see [Joe] back with that old obsession about getting back into science." Joe recalls Clarissa's statement that she is "trying to help [him]" but that he is too "feverish in [his] attention to Parry" to allow her to do so. There is "something," Clarissa insists, that Joe is "not telling [her]."

The reader understands Clarissa's suspicions to be baseless, yet her thinking is not entirely wrong in these paragraphs. Joe has *returned to his old obsession, and, partly as a consequence, he has contributed to the strain in what was previously an uncomplicated, loving relationship. Importantly, Joe dislikes that strain in part because it is "unarticulated": he can't define what is happening to Clarissa and himself. This disturbs Joe's rational mind, which wants to understand, connect, and diagnose.*

After Clarissa leaves the house, Joe allows himself to entertain other "bad thoughts," wondering whether Clarissa is using Parry "as a front" to mask some infidelity of her own. Even as he reflects on the fact that the kind of "self-persuasion" in which he is engaging is a mere evolutionary reaction, he can't help allowing himself to walk into Clarissa's study, where he slowly begins to search through her correspondence for some evidence of an affair.

Once again, Joe allows his commitment to reason to lapse when he is confronted with a reality that reason cannot fully explain. Joe's thoughts about Clarissa's unfaithfulness are not connected to any facts, yet Joe cannot help but give into them by spying on Clarissa.

Though Joe tells himself that he is merely attempting to "bring light and understanding" to Clarissa's failure to support him, he nevertheless understands that, by invading Clarissa's privacy, he is sacrificing his own "honesty and innocence and self-respect." He knows he is "behaving badly," but he "care[s] less by the second," telling himself that it is up to him to resolve the situation in which he and Clarissa find themselves.

Despite his ostensible rationalism, Joe is easily able to deceive himself, about both his motives and what he is likely to achieve by going through Clarissa's things. Joe's ability to hold two competing beliefs at once—what he is doing is both wrong and necessary—is illustrative of his capacity for unreason.

Browsing Clarissa's letters, Joe finds a note from Jocelyn Kale, Clarissa's godfather and an eminent professor, inviting the two of them to lunch in celebration of Clarissa's birthday. He finds a letter from Clarissa's brother Luke, as well, but no evidence of adultery. Angry with himself, he manages to leave Clarissa's office with her stapler in his pocket. Retrieving that stapler, Joe has pretended to convince himself, was his reason for entering her study in the first place.

Joe's behavior is bad, but of far greater significance is his ability to deceive himself when necessary. Joe's decision to take the stapler with him, despite the fact that he has no need for it and has entered Clarissa's office for other reasons entirely, reveals that Joe, like Jed Parry, is incompletely dedicated to reality at times.

As Joe continues to drive, his thoughts turn to the evening after his invasion of Clarissa's privacy. Clarissa was "friendly, even vivacious," and Joe felt guilty about the fact that he now "really did have something to conceal from her." The next morning, he opens a letter from a former professor assuring him that a return to laboratory work is out of the question. Joe, the professor states, should "continue with the very successful career" he already has.

Reality intrudes into Joe's delusions in these important paragraphs, both in the form of Joe's recognition of his own guilt and in the letter he receives from his mentor. That Joe is able to receive and process factual information, even when it contradicts his hopes, is what separates him from Jed Parry.

Fifteen minutes away from Jean Logan's house now, Joe considers why he has come. He has spoken to Jean on the telephone, and while she seemed "calm" and "glad [he] was coming," Joe is no longer sure of his own motives: he "no longer trust[s]" himself, he realizes. Arriving at the house, Joe sees Jean Logan's "neglected garden" and "closed **curtains**," yet he realizes that "the sadness" he sees "coming off the house" is "mere projection." This leads to yet another reflection on Joe's part about his own "dishonesty": he has come not to tell Jean Logan of her husband's courage but to establish his own innocence in the man's death.

Like all human beings, Joe is a man of complicated motives, and he possesses the ability to deceive himself. In a sign of mental health, however, Joe is able to parse these moments of self-deception and he has the further ability to recognize the biases and flaws in his own thinking. Joe's response to Jean Logan's house is illustrative of this fact. Whereas Parry would see in the house's appearance a message intended specifically for him, Joe is able to resist that delusion.

CHAPTER 13

A grief-stricken Jean Logan meets Joe at the **door**. Following her inside, Joe reflects upon the house's décor, which he suspects has not changed since the "fifties or sixties." In the house's "austerity," Joe sees not only "the soul of English pragmatism" but "a perfect setting for sorrow." He follows Jean to a back room, and when she retreats to the kitchen to make tea, he looks around at the books and furnishings, speculating that "Jean or John Logan had surely inherited the house unchanged from parents" and that "the sense of sorrow in the place" perhaps "pre-dated John Logan's death."

Once again, Joe finds himself drawing conclusions on the basis of incomplete information. Interestingly, his nebulous thoughts about the house's "sorrow" feel like the sorts of conclusions that Clarissa, a far more intuitive character, might draw. This suggests that Joe's rationalism and Clarissa's intuition are shifting categories: the border between them is not hard, and characters move back and forth among the two realms.

Returning to the room, Jean confesses that she doesn't know why Joe has come and that she would prefer not to hear condolences from a stranger. Joe sees in Jean's appearance "the terms of her bereavement"—her clothes are dirty and her hair "greasy"—and he is unsure of how he should behave in her presence. Jean, Joe reflects, "gives the impression of a stringy kind of independence, and of a temper easily lost." Deciding on his conversational strategy at last, Joe asks Jean if she wishes to hear any particular details of the ballooning accident in advance of the "coroner's court," which remains several weeks away.

Jean Logan's bereavement—evident in her appearance and manner—illustrates the strength of her love for her husband and the devastating effect that his sudden death has had on her. That Joe struggles to enter the emotional realm in which Jean currently resides is evidence of his uneasy relationship with emotions, as well as of the private, intensely personal nature of love as rendered by McEwan.

Responding with surprising hostility, Jean answers that she does indeed wish to have certain questions answered, but that she doesn't think she will be told the truth. She confesses that others to whom she has asked these questions have found her to be "mad"—insane—and she begins to cry. Embarrassed, Joe looks away and sees out the window a "brown, igloo-style tent." He speculates that perhaps Jean's children have felt the need to flee to it in order to escape their mother's grief. Turning his attention to Jean Logan again, Joe realizes that what he is seeing on her face is "love" and that he needs immediately to return to London in order to "save" his relationship with Clarissa.

Joe is surprised to realize that Jean's hostility is a result of the love she had for her now-deceased husband. Yet Joe is able, in a moment of surprising emotional clarity, to apply that knowledge to his own relationship, as the reader sees when Joe feels a sudden desire to return to Clarissa. Meanwhile, these paragraphs reveal the extent of Jean's obsession with her husband's fidelity. Obsession is altering her emotional state to the extent that even a stranger can recognize the change.

Before he can depart, however, Jean gathers herself and begins to ask the questions she has in mind, telling Joe that there was someone "with [her] husband" on the day of the accident. She asks Joe if "one **door** or two" were open on the car from which John Logan ran into the field, and she speculates that whoever was with him must have stood and watched what happened from beside that car. Summoning the details of John's plans for that day (he was supposed to be at a medical conference in London), she insists that John would have had no reason to be in the Chilterns in the first place. Though Joe insists that there has to be "a perfectly innocent explanation," he isn't able to offer one, nor is he able to respond to Jean Logan's anger at the fact that the police will not fingerprint John's car because no "crime" has been committed.

McEwan's use of doors as an element of, and a symbol for, obsession is at work here. As a purely physical matter, the question of how many doors were open on John Logan's car is a small one. Yet, for Jean Logan, the answer informs an entire hypothetical narrative that has the potential to restructure her conception of her married life. She simply must *know the answer, regardless of the social or emotional consequences of doing so—a state of affairs that speaks to obsession's power over even mentally healthy individuals. Important, too, is the fact that Joe is unable to modify Jean's obsession with kind remarks.*

Producing a shopping bag from the corner of the room, Jean reveals to Joe the remains of a picnic, found in John's car among his other possessions. With the bag is a woman's scarf that Jean is unable to identify, and her natural assumption is that the scarf belongs to (and the picnic was for) whomever her husband was seeing in the months before his death. Jean insists that she has to "talk to" the woman in question, yet Joe knows that even the woman's fingerprints would only be useful if she has a criminal record. When Joe speculates that the woman may very well try to make contact with Jean, Jean states that she will "kill her" if she "comes near this house." As Jean finishes this remark, her two children, Rachael and Leo, come into the room.

Jean's threat is another illustration of the power of obsession to alter an otherwise reasonable and healthy personality, as is the way Jean clings to the remains of her husband's supposed picnic and the scarf that must belong to his mistress. To make such a threat is irrational, just as the fulfillment of Jean's wish to "talk to" her husband's ostensible mistress would almost certainly not satisfy her. Yet obsession has twisted both her values and her perception of the world. She cannot help herself.

CHAPTER 14

As he stares at Jean Logan's children, Joe reflects on his and Clarissa's history with kids. Though Joe has "never looked after a child for any length of time," he has been assured by Clarissa that he "would have made a wonderful father," and the two of them have spent many weekends with Clarissa's nieces, nephews, and godchildren. Nevertheless, Joe feels an "uneasiness" whenever he is in the presence of a child. Such a proximity makes him recall his own childhood, during which he often pitied adults and felt the need to "conceal the fun" he would have as soon as he was away from them.

Joe and Clarissa's childlessness haunts their relationship throughout the novel. In these paragraphs, the reader sees its manifestation in Joe's temporary awkwardness around Jean Logan's children. Evident here, as well, is Joe's occasional irrationality. The reason for his "unease" at the moment is clearly not reasonable, yet his emotions operate at a remove from his rational mind.

With these thoughts in mind, Joe appraises the Logan children and tries to see himself through their eyes: he is "yet one more dull stranger in the procession lately filing through their home." Rachael, Joe decides from looking at her, is "about ten" years old, while her brother, Leo, is "two years younger." With the children is a nanny, and Joe reflects that the children have "an appealing scruffiness about them" and don't, unlike their mother, "look crushed" by their father's recent death.

Rachael and Leo are an important counterpoint to Jean Logan. Because their minds are free of any suspicion about their father's behavior, they are able to experience grief as children, uncomplicatedly. This speaks to both the complexity of adult relationships and the high cost of obsession.

Staring back at Joe, Leo declares, apparently in response to his mother's assertion about the missing woman, that "it's completely wrong to kill people." When Joe replies that Jean has merely been using a common expression, the conversation shifts to whether it is wrong to kill and eat horses. Rachael joins the discussion, and the three of them enter a brief and child-like debate about cultural norms ("in China it's polite to burp after a meal") and whether any absolute moral rules exist. As Leo climbs onto her lap, Jean Logan asserts again that she "ha[s] to find" the woman who was with her husband, and she enlists Joe in the business of questioning the others who were present at the scene.

Rachael and Leo Logan represent a level of sanity and moral clarity that is beyond the reach of Jean Logan at this moment. Even as her children make indisputable moral points (amidst outbursts of childlike silliness and unreason), Jean is involving Joe in an obsessive plan that can only lead to further emotional damage. Because of the strength of her obsession, Jean is unable to modify her own thinking or to understand the pain for which she is setting herself up.

Joe tentatively agrees to help, realizing that he will be "in a position to censor the information and perhaps save the family some misery." He reflects on Rachael and Leo's precocious moral reasoning and decides that they would agree with his determination to lie were they to understand the situation fully. For the children's benefit as well as Jean's, Joe states loudly that John Logan was "a very determined and courageous man" and that, by refusing to let go of his rope, Logan "put the rest of us to shame."

Here, the reader sees Joe's lack of emotional intelligence. Unwilling to engage Jean's actual *feelings and thoughts, Joe steers the conversation to the safer (but, for the moment, less relevant) ground of John Logan's courage. Joe's* own *obsession—with his own comparative cowardliness—may be at work here, as well.*

As Joe finishes these remarks, Jean Logan begins to respond. She agrees that her husband was brave, but she insists simultaneously that he was "very, very cautious," as well, and that he "never took stupid chances." In Jean's mind, John must have held onto the rope longer than everyone else because he knew that the woman accompanying him was "watching." He was forty-two, Jean insists, and he "couldn't accept it." Thus, he was killed not by bravery but by foolhardiness and a determination to show off for a younger lover.

Jean Logan's hypothetical narrative is entirely false, as the reader learns at the end of the novel. Yet her obsessive need to understand her husband's death in the context of his supposed infidelity has rendered her unable to separate truth and untruth. Though such an inability leads to nothing but pain for Jean Logan; she simply cannot help thinking as she does.

Joe reflects to himself that only grief could "devise" such a "narrative," and he tells Jean not to believe such an elaborate "hypothesis." As he speaks, he notices the children dancing around the room, and he hears Leo remark that, in the game he and his sister are playing, "she's the queen and I only come out when she gives the signal." This seemingly random remark immediately jogs Joe's memory. The business about a "**curtain**" and a "signal" that he has been trying to remember has to do with Buckingham Palace, he now recalls. King George V was stalked by a Frenchwoman in the years after World War I, and the Frenchwoman became convinced, in her madness, that the king was sending her "signals that she alone could read," using the "curtains" of Buckingham Palace as a means of communication. The illness from which the Frenchwoman suffered was called de Clerambault's syndrome.

Joe's rational diagnosis of Jean Logan's thinking is the correct one in these paragraphs: because obsession and grief have taken the place of reason in Jean's thoughts, she is unable to recognize that her narrative is merely a theory. Joe, an outsider who cares nothing about John Logan's marital fidelity, meanwhile, is able to see things more clearly. That Joe's own obsession (with his half-formed "curtain" and "signal" memory) is resolved by pure chance is a similar point of interest here. Thinking feverishly about his half-memory has not helped Joe; rather, he has recalled the information only because of the antics of children.

As Joe prepares to leave, Jean Logan gives him the names and telephone numbers of the other accident witnesses, whom she means for him to contact. Joe thinks again of the story of King George and his insane devotee, and he realizes that Jed Parry must be suffering from the same condition, which causes the sufferer to feel delusions of love. Determined to research the condition further, Joe shakes the children's hands, steps out of the house, and returns to his car for the drive back to London.

Jed Parry's love for Joe is explicitly connected to a named psychological disorder in these important paragraphs. Here, McEwan is pursuing the idea that love is not merely a positive force, but a potentially destructive one, as well. Because it exists outside of Parry's control, he is as much a victim of it as Joe is.

CHAPTER 15

On his way back to London, Joe drives through the Chilterns and revisits the scene of the ballooning accident. He parks where John Logan's car was parked and imagines what the woman with Logan might have been able to see from that spot. He imagines the woman's "terror" and feels that he understands why she hasn't come forward. Wandering the field, Joe recalls the happiness that he and Clarissa shared before the intrusion of Jed Parry into their lives. He wants to "imagine a route back into that innocence," but he is unable to do so.

Joe's thinking in these paragraphs is more emotional than is usually the case. He empathizes with John Logan's presumed mistress and recalls his own past happiness with Clarissa, in the earlier days of their marriage. Yet Joe's rationalism eventually reasserts itself in his failure of imagination regarding the potential of that relationship to mend.

Continuing to walk the field, Joe visits each of the important places from the day of the accident, including the spots where John Logan fell and where Jed Parry asked Joe to pray. Joe feels, strangely, as if he has never really left the field, and he imagines all of the characters from the accident rushing toward him now, just as he once rushed toward the balloon. In his imagination, all of these characters have come to accuse him, yet he isn't sure what he is assumed to have done wrong.

Joe's desire to sort the anger of the novel's other characters into knowable categories is yet another example of his desire to treat emotion as a rational good: a strictly-defined entity that can be understood according to the dictates of logic and reason. Joe seems blind to the fact that other characters are motivated not by logic but by shifting, hard-to-define intuition.

Joe returns to his car and thinks ahead to the research he will do about de Clerambault's syndrome now that he has assigned Parry that diagnosis. He begins to think of de Clerambault's as a "dark, distorting mirror" that parodies real love, and he wonders what he "could learn about Parry that would restore [him] to Clarissa."

The novel's idea that real and delusional love are not entirely different is on display here. Parry and Clarissa are dissimilar characters, yet Joe is open to the possibility that the "love" of one may teach him something about the real *love of the other.*

Two hours later, Joe has completed his return trip to London and immediately finds Parry waiting for him outside his apartment building. Parry is staring at Joe and is holding an envelope, and when Joe tries to push past him, he thrusts the envelope into Joe's hand. Before Joe can go inside, Parry tells him that he has "paid a researcher" to gather all of Joe's articles and books. He states, cryptically, that Joe would never be able to "destroy" what Parry possesses even if Joe "wrote a million" such books. In a threatening voice, Parry tells Joe that he is able to hire people to do "anything" he wants. When Joe says that he will call the police unless Parry steps out of his way, Parry laughs and tells Joe that "everything is going to go [Parry's] way" in the end.

That Parry's obsession with Joe is not merely a nuisance but rather a real, physical danger is perhaps the most important message of these paragraphs. Parry's talk of destruction raises the stakes of his confrontation with Joe—it introduces an element of menace—as does Parry's grim prediction about the men's future. Joe's promise that he will call the police, meanwhile, underscores the fact that he realizes that a change has been wrought in Parry's behavior. Parry is no longer content to wait for Joe to give in to him.

Joe finally enters the apartment building and realizes that Parry has "frightened" him. He reflects on Parry's threat that Parry can "hire" people to do his will and wonders if Parry intends to hire "goons to thrash [him] within an inch of [his] life." Stepping into his apartment, Joe senses that Clarissa is home and that something is wrong, yet he is unable to find her when he searches the place. Finally, moving into the kitchen to fill a tea kettle, Joe sees Clarissa stepping out of his office. When Joe asks why Clarissa didn't answer when he called her name, she responds that Joe should have looked for her among his private things. After all, Clarissa says, "Isn't that how it is with us these days?"

These paragraphs reveal a Joe who is trying, with mixed results, to understand and navigate his own emotions. Joe is able to put a name to what he feels—he is "frightened"—but he is reduced to considering *that feeling. He can't simply experience it. Similarly, Joe's entrance into the apartment finds him unable, at first, to verify what he intuitively senses to be true about Clarissa's presence. This realm of emotion and intuition is unfamiliar to Joe, and he is somewhat lost in it.*

Though her voice is "calm," Clarissa is clearly "very angry" as she tells Joe that she hasn't been able to muster the curiosity to go through his own things as revenge for his earlier intrusion into hers, which she has clearly discovered. She tells Joe that she doesn't care about his "secrets" and that she would have shown him her letters had he simply asked her. As things stand, however, she considers that Joe has left her "a message." What she doesn't know is what his message is supposed to mean.

Joe has not *sent Clarissa a "message" by going through her things, yet she intuitively believes that Joe's actions must be coded and that it is her obligation to decipher them. This reveals once more a difference between the two characters: Joe went through Clarissa's things for a clear, knowable reason; Clarissa insists that he must have had some hidden motive.*

CHAPTER 16

The letter that Parry has pressed into Joe's hands begins with Parry recalling the student who brought him all of Joe's published work. Parry writes that reading Joe's articles was "torture" and that he pities the "innocent readers who had their day polluted by them." Parry reveals that he felt as though he could hear Joe's voice speaking as he read the articles. He wonders if Joe wrote them to "test" Parry, and he confesses that he only kept reading because he understood that Joe "needs [Parry] to set [him] free from his little cage of reason."

The specifically emotive *character of Parry's delusions is on display in his exaggerated language here, which speaks of "torture" and "pollution" rather than mere disagreement. So, too, is Parry's psychotic belief structure revealed by his need to fit Joe's older work (which, of course, predates Parry's intrusion into his life) into a narrative in which Parry is being "tested."*

As an example of what he finds so offensive in Joe's work, Parry mentions a specific article about "the latest technological aids to biblical scholarship," complaining that no one could lose his or her faith just because any one religious artifact or claim was proven by science to be a fraud. Yet the article that most angers Parry is one in which Joe writes "about God Himself." Joe has written speculatively about who "invented Yahweh," and Parry believes that "the best minds would rather die than presume to know" such a thing. Parry wonders how it is possible to love both God and Joe simultaneously, but he declares that he will be able to do so "by faith."

Parry's belief in God shares important characteristics with his belief that Joe loves him. Neither supposition can be refuted with evidence to the contrary, and neither can be contradicted without provoking Parry's wrath. Parry himself, meanwhile, is able to hold entirely contradictory views at once. Because of his delusions, he can simultaneously love both God and Joe, despite the fact that the two are, in Parry's view, at odds with each other.

Continuing on, Parry reveals that, after finishing Joe's work, he took a taxi to Joe's apartment, where Joe was presumably still asleep, "unaware of [his] own vulnerability." He wonders if Joe is properly grateful to God for all of God's blessings, and he expresses fear about what Joe's "arrogance" could "bring down on [him]."

Parry's language is explicitly threatening once again in these paragraphs. Yet even Parry's vengefulness is filtered through his religiosity here, as Joe's "vulnerability," for Parry, is related to Joe's ignorance of "God's blessings."

Concerned that Joe will think him uneducated, Parry insists that he doesn't "hate" science at all. Rather, he believes that the study of the universe should be undertaken in order that God's children may understand "the intricacies of His creation" more clearly, the better to give God praise. Parry asserts that Joe's writing about evolution is "a puny rant against an infinite power" and that Joe's articles are merely "a long cry of loneliness."

Parry's attitude toward Joe's publications says much about his approach to rational thinking, which has clearly been corrupted by his delusions. In Parry's view, Joe's work cannot *be based on pure reason; it must have an emotional underpinning—"loneliness"—that only Parry can truly understand.*

Parry tells Joe that his love for Joe is "hard and fierce" and that he "won't take no for an answer." He mocks Joe's earlier threats to call the police and speculates that if Joe is now feeling "uncomfortable," it's because "the changes in [him] are already beginning to happen." He implores Joe not to destroy his letters, regardless of what Joe happens to feel in this particular moment. Presumably, the two of them will want to look back on the letters together at some later date, Parry seems to believe.

Parry's delusions are arguably at their peak when he asks Joe to save his letters as a memento. So, too, is his threatening language reaching an apex in these paragraphs. More disturbing even than Parry's refusal to accept Joe's disinterest is his avowal that Joe is already changing on the inside. Parry's intuition resists all factual evidence.

Parry confesses that he wanted to "hurt" Joe upon going to his apartment building in the early morning, "or perhaps even more than that." He warns Joe that pride can "destroy" and asks if he can really be blamed for the "hatred" that Joe's articles inspired in him. Assuring Joe that he is merely anxious for their life together to begin, he recalls a school trip on which a long hike led eventually to a splendid meadow. Joe's inevitable embrace of his love, Parry declares, will be like reaching that beautiful destination.

Jed Parry's view of the world rejects the factual and scientific in favor of the lyric and poetic. The "meadow" metaphor created by Parry in these paragraphs is an example of this phenomenon. Parry's talk of blame, meanwhile, further reveals his commitment to language that is emotional and vague rather than intellectual and precise.

Closing his letter, Parry warns Joe that his life is about to be "upended" and that Joe may soon wish that he had never met Parry. He encourages Joe to show him all of his "fury and bitterness" if he needs to, but he cautions Joe never to "pretend to yourself that I do not exist."

Parry's closing warning is highly ironic: he is himself entirely locked within a "pretend" world, while Joe could not ignore Parry's existence even if he were inclined to do so.

CHAPTER 17

Several weeks later, Joe and Clarissa are lying in bed "long past midnight," and Joe is reflecting on the state of their relationship. The two of them are "hardly at war," but "everything between [them]" is "stalled." Clarissa considers Joe to be "manic, perversely obsessed, and . . . the thieving invader of her private space," while Joe considers Clarissa to be "disloyal, unsupportive . . . and irrationally suspicious." Nevertheless, the couple have not been quarreling, perhaps because, Joe reasons, a "confrontation might blow [them] apart." Rather, they have been going about their working lives and living together politely, despite the fact that they have "lost the trick of love."

Many of the novel's themes are operative in these important paragraphs. Clarissa explicitly accuses Joe of bearing an obsession of his own (and, in so doing, damaging their relationship), while Joe accuses Clarissa of disloyalty and irrationality. On display here is the tenuousness of love: it is something that must be held onto tightly lest it be "lost." It can be harmed, perhaps fatally, by disloyalties and obsessions that turn one's attention to matters that are ultimately less significant.

Considering the specifics of this cold existence, Joe recalls how he and Clarissa sleep "in the same bed" but never "embrace"—how they use "the same bathroom" but never see "each other naked." Though Joe understands Clarissa's beauty as "some schoolbook fact got by heart," he feels himself to be "a giant polyp of uninspired logic with which [Clarissa is] mistakenly associated."

Joe's dissatisfaction with his own rationalism is highly significant. Without the emotional balance provided by Clarissa, Joe is reduced to experiencing their relationship as a series of unremarkable facts. Reason alone, in other words, cannot satisfy him.

Jed Parry, Joe reveals, has been sending "three or four letters a week," all of which are "long and ardent" and all of which contain references to God's love, Parry's determination not to give up on Joe, and some "element of accusation" hurled in Joe's direction. Parry continues to believe Joe to be "a tease" who is "leading him on," and though Parry no longer insists that Joe is sending him "messages" with **curtains** or hedges, he now believes that Joe is speaking to him "in dreams."

Jed Parry's assertion that Joe is invading his dreams may be evidence that Parry's condition is evolving past even its prior level of insanity. Though Joe never sent Parry any messages with his curtains, the curtains at least existed. *Parry's claim about his dreams, meanwhile, is totally disconnected from any factual reality.*

Joe narrates that he has learned how to "scan" Parry's letters looking for some overt threat that he can take to the police. Parry, however, is too "cunning" to make his threats explicit, warning instead merely that Joe's decision to ignore him might "end in sorrow and more tears than [they] ever dreamed." Joe's research into de Clerambault's, meanwhile, has revealed that "well over half" of all male sufferers of the condition have "attempted violence on the subjects of their obsessions."

The idea that obsession often leads to violence is a theme of these paragraphs, both because of Parry's reference to "sorrow" and because of Joe's findings about the proclivities of de Clerambault's sufferers. Joe's skimming of Parry's letters, meanwhile, reveals his rational mind's disinclination to enter Parry's fantasies at greater length than necessary.

In addition to writing, Parry has continued to lurk outside of Joe's apartment building, yet he has ceased to talk to Joe when Joe passes him. This change in strategy, Joe reveals, has frustrated him because Joe has begun carrying a recording device with him in the hope of capturing on tape some threatening remark from Parry. Though Joe attempts to manipulate Parry into making such a threat, going so far as to run his fingers along a hedge in order to send Parry a fake "message," he realizes that Parry's "love [is] not shaped by external influences," proceeding instead from a "private necessity" beyond Joe's reach. Even if Joe were to write Parry a passionate love letter, he speculates, "it would have made no difference."

Joe's claim about the potential effects of a love letter is a startling one, yet the reader is inclined to agree with Joe's judgment. Important here is the fact that Jed Parry's belief system is entirely intuitive—unlike Joe's rationalism, which attempts to place value solely on external, verifiable facts, Parry's worldview proceeds from within. It is fitting, then, that Joe is unable to manipulate Parry using reason and careful planning. Parry's world does not operate according to those rules.

Joe confesses to the reader that Parry has made him increasingly paranoid. He takes extra care "locking up the flat at night," and he constantly worries that he is being followed. Joe has finally managed to secure an appointment with a police inspector, but he simultaneously wonders if he should purchase "mace" or "a knife" with which he might protect himself. Despite these daydreams, Joe realizes, however, that Parry is unlikely to "come at [him] head on."

Despite his rationalism, Joe is not immune to the temptation to fantasize, and it is significant that the intrusion of Jed Parry into his life increases this susceptibility. By forcing Joe to give into paranoia and worry, Parry is subtly altering Joe's mental and emotional identity, temporarily making it more like his own.

Setting aside these recollections, Joe watches Clarissa on the bed beside him. He wonders if the many years they have spent together "harmoniously" are enough to sustain them in this time of crisis. Rather than attempting another discussion, Joe has decided that "too much [is] made in pop psychology . . . of talking things through." Instead, he will let the conflict between himself and Clarissa "die." With this thought, he reaches out for her in an attempt to initiate an embrace.

Joe explicitly rejects the emotional and intuitive premises of "pop psychology." In the place of those premises, he employs a sort of crude mathematical formula, whereby the years he has spent with Clarissa are set against the depth of their current problems. This attempt to apply logic to an emotional problem will not end well.

To Joe's surprise, Clarissa responds to this gesture by declaring that things between them are "over." Joe realizes, upon hearing her say so, that he is in a "state of denial," yet he simultaneously realizes that he feels "nothing at all." Instead, his thoughts jump, "froglike," to Jean Logan, with whom Joe now understands Clarissa to have something in common. Both are women who believe themselves "to be wronged" and who "expect something" from Joe as a result.

These paragraphs reveal the convolutedness of Joe's emotions. He overanalyzes them, yet he does so in dry, clinical terms. So, too, is he unable to prevent his thoughts from jumping inappropriately to less important subjects. The connection he makes between Clarissa and Jean Logan is accurate but completely unimportant.

Thinking about Jean Logan immediately puts Joe in mind of the errand she has set him on, despite the fact that he hasn't yet responded to Clarissa's declaration. He has attempted to call Toby Greene but has found it difficult to get past Greene's unfriendly mother. Upon finally speaking to Greene, Joe has learned that the man has no idea whether Jean's husband was alone in the moments before the accident. Similarly unhelpful has been James Gadd, who has declared that he will only talk about the accident "in the coroner's court." Upon Joe's reaching Joseph Lacey, however, his luck has changed. Though Lacey has insisted on meeting in person, he has implied that he indeed saw John Logan with a woman.

That Joe is himself susceptible to obsessive thinking is made clear in his reaction to Jean Logan's *obsession. Though his relationship with Clarissa has reached a crisis of previously unknown proportions, Joe has briefly taken on Jean Logan's quest as his own and doesn't yet respond to Clarissa. The unreasonableness of Jean Logan's request may be illustrated, meanwhile, in the fact that none of the other witnesses has been of any assistance.*

Clarissa herself, Joe recalls, is unsure about the number of **doors** she saw open on John Logan's car, but she is certain that she didn't see a woman. Joe remembers briefly considering asking Parry to recall the scene, thinking that perhaps he can use the conversation to goad Parry into making a threat, but he soon realizes that "the idea of obtaining linear information from [Parry] seemed fantastic."

Once again, Joe reveals himself to be susceptible to foolish thinking—the idea that Parry might be a reliable witness to anything. *What sets Joe apart from Parry is his rational ability to recognize when he has slipped into unreason before acting on it.*

As Joe pursues these thoughts, he is interrupted by Clarissa, whose declaration about their relationship he has yet to answer. Clarissa accuses Joe, accurately, of thinking about Parry even in this moment, and when Joe insists once more that Parry is a "real threat," Clarissa begins to cry. Joe reveals to her what his research on de Clerambault's has taught him, but Clarissa recoils from the idea that Joe can "read [his] way out of this." Yet Clarissa goes further, too, suggesting that Parry, whom she rarely sees outside their apartment, isn't there as often as Joe claims and that Parry's supposed handwriting is suspiciously similar to Joe's. When Clarissa leaves the bedroom to sleep in the room set aside for children, Joe realizes that, although the two of them may continue to live "side by side," he is finally "on [his] own."

Clarissa's intuitive thinking has left her susceptible to a fantastic narrative—that Joe is secretly the author of Jed Parry's letters. Yet her intuition has also led her, much more accurately, to diagnose Joe's thought processes as he finally replies to her declaration. Clarissa's reliance on emotion and intuition is imperfect, clearly, but it is not entirely mistaken, just as Joe's rationalism is not entirely without flaws of its own. That the two ideologies are starkly opposed to each other, however, is made clear by Clarissa's disdain for Joe's research.

CHAPTER 18

It is Clarissa's birthday, and, to Joe's surprise, she kisses him when he gives her a card. Joe suspects that Clarissa is being "kind" because she knows that their relationship is over. He continues to feel, too, that Clarissa has "done neither the research nor the thinking" about Parry's condition and is thus underestimating it. Parry's love, Joe believes, "could not stand still"; it must soon turn "to either indifference or hatred."

Joe's attempt to analyze Clarissa's behavior with logic says much about his character, as does his belief that the "research" and "thinking" he has done about Jed Parry trump Clarissa's intuitions. Joe's desire to make predictions about the future using knowable data is a hallmark of his rationalism.

As Clarissa leaves for work, Joe goes to his study to wrap her present: an early edition of John Keats's poems. While there, he gathers all of Parry's letters and reads them again, looking for "significant passages." Joe is "attempting to compile a dossier of threats," and he has come to understand that Parry's threats lie not in his "pathetic" expressions of love but in his recollections, for example, of how much he loved hunting as a child: enjoying the "power of life and death" that was in his hands when he was armed with a gun. So, too, do Parry's threats lie in his assurance that he can hire others to do his bidding, which Joe reflects on once again as he works.

Joe's commitment to reason can be seen once more in his approach to Parry's letters. By annotating and organizing Parry's correspondence, Joe is attempting to bring reason to bear on a problem that is, by its very nature, resistant to logic. Joe's fear, too, is a result of his logical thinking: he instinctively believes that the clues to what Parry will do next can be found in Parry's words, despite the fact that those words bear little relationship to reality.

Joe notices, reading further, that Parry's letters contain very few religious references; instead, "his religion [is] dreamily vague on the specifics of doctrine." God, for Parry, is "undeniably 'within' rather than in his heaven"; thus, Parry has a license, Joe realizes, to "respond to the calls of feeling or intuition."

Joe explicitly connects Parry's delusional love with an intuitive, self-focused way of thinking. Thus, Parry rejects religious doctrine, in Joe's analysis, because doctrine would represent objective claims that exist outside of Parry's head.

Joe leaves his apartment carrying his notes about Parry's letters. Parry is not outside waiting for him, and the change in Parry's routine makes Joe "uneasy." Arriving at a police station—his destination this morning—Joe has to wait for "over an hour" to be seen, and he speculates that the "exhausted air" that seems to fill the station is a result of "the human need for order meet[ing] the human tendency to mayhem." At last, Duty Inspector Linley appears and leads Joe into an interview room. There, the two men sit beneath fluorescent lights to talk.

The stress that the Parry situation has caused in Joe may be responsible for Joe's emotional, non-rational thinking in these paragraphs. Joe feels "unease" despite the fact that Parry isn't present. Similarly, he gives into a metaphoric, non-literal idea about the police station's air. The Parry situation is corrupting Joe's reason, and not for the first time.

Joe reflects inwardly about the strategy that has finally brought him into a face-to-face conversation with a policeman: he has lodged a formal complaint about the way his case has "been handled so far," and now that complaint must be dealt with. Sitting with Duty Inspector Linley, to whom he has already told his story by telephone, Joe tries to determine whether the man is "slightly clever or very stupid." Duty Inspector Linley asks Joe a series of questions about Parry's behavior, and, once again, Joe finds it difficult to describe Parry's obsession in a way that clearly indicates its criminality. As Duty Inspector Linley asks Joe about Clarissa's response to Parry, it quickly becomes clear that Linley suspects that *Joe's* mental state may not be entirely healthy.

Duty Inspector Linley is not the first character to question Joe's sanity, an irony given the fact that Joe is ostensibly the sanest character in the novel. Like Joe, Duty Inspector Linley is able to comprehend Jed Parry's mindset and character only imperfectly. Because he is a member of an institution—the police—dedicated to an ordered reality, he finds it difficult to make sense of Parry or to fit Parry's behavior into a preexisting, bureaucratically approved narrative. Parry literally has no place in his world of fact and reason.

Frustrated, and "beginning to detest Linley," Joe states that he has "good reasons to believe [Parry] will turn nasty" and that he has come "to the police for help." Duty Inspector Linley suggests that he would have done "the same [him]self," but, even after examining the threats that Joe has copied out from Parry's letters, he declares that Parry is a "pussycat" as far as stalkers are concerned. When Joe insists that Parry is likely to hire someone to assault him, Linley responds that Joe's case is "too weak" to pursue. Joe asks Linley to "send a couple of officers round to [Parry's] place" and let him know he's being monitored, but Linley answers that such an action is not possible "in the kind of society we have, or want to have."

Joe is dedicated, both professionally and by inclination, to the pursuit of evidence-based fact. Yet here, two men look at the same facts and come to drastically different conclusions. This may suggest a weakness in Joe's evidence-dependent way of looking at the world. Unless evidence means the same thing to everyone, no shared conclusion can be reached. And because observing evidence is an inherently personal act—one brings to it one's own biases and, indeed, one's own intuition*—to arrive at common ideas is quite difficult.*

Late for Clarissa's birthday lunch, Joe leaves the station in frustration and rushes to the restaurant where he is to meet Clarissa and her godfather, Jocelyn Kale. As he walks, he thinks about Clarissa's last birthday, "when [they] had celebrated without a trace of complication in [their] lives." Even now, Joe reflects, he can't bring himself to believe that their relationship is really over, despite what Clarissa has declared. Instead, he tells himself that their love is "just the kind to endure."

Though Joe has been explicitly told by Clarissa that their relationship is over, he rejects that problematic fact in favor of the more emotionally palatable notion that their love will ultimately "endure." This reveals that Joe's commitment to reason is, like most other people's, incomplete. He retains his emotional defense mechanisms.

Reflecting further on Clarissa's last birthday, Joe recalls the specifics of that day. He had worked on an essay about "the genetic basis to religious belief" and had speculated that religion gave believers "the brute strength of singlemindedness." In bed that morning, Clarissa had attempted to make love to Joe, and he had made a playful show of resisting her, reading the newspaper while she "sat sleepily astride [him]." Even now, Joe recalls being simultaneously aroused by Clarissa and interested in a newspaper article that caught his eye. He ponders the marvels of the human brain, which is able to sustain such dual attention, even as he considers how much he misses his daily life with Clarissa. The task of reclaiming that life, he understands once again, will have to be his alone.

Because of his rational character, Joe uses scientific language and ideas even when remembering highly emotional and personal events and moments. Joe's memory of a happy time with Clarissa cannot be merely *a good memory; rather, it is an illustration of a particular scientific phenomenon. Related to this is Joe's memory of his essay from the previous year. Joe is clearly remembering that paper in the context of his relationship with Jed Parry, and he is tempted to apply scientific reasoning even there.*

CHAPTER 19

Arriving twenty minutes late for lunch, Joe sees Clarissa and Jocelyn Kale across the restaurant and notices that Clarissa remains in her "elated" mood. Jocelyn, who has just been "appointed to an honorary position on the Human Genome Project," greets Joe, as does Clarissa, who kisses Joe once again with passion. As the three take their seats and Clarissa begins to open her presents, Joe notices, at a nearby table, a man "whose name [he] learned afterwards was Colin Tapp," sitting with his daughter and father. Joe recalls, cryptically, that if he "registered at the time the solitary diner who sat twenty feet away," it "left no trace in [his] memory."

Joe is perplexed by Clarissa's elation and the passion with which she greets him, as her behavior is illogical given the fact that the two of them are quarreling. Yet Clarissa does not experience emotions according to the dictates of reason; rather, she simply feels what she feels in any given moment. Joe, meanwhile, continues the scientific business of analyzing the way his mind works, noting here the relationship between awareness and memory.

Jocelyn gives Clarissa a brooch representing the "double helix" of human DNA, which once belonged to Jocelyn's deceased wife. In the meantime, Joe speculates that he *may* have first noticed Colin Tapp and his family at the nearby table only *then*, as Jocelyn began telling a story about the discovery of DNA. As Jocelyn talks, Joe begins to feel restless, and he wants to tell Clarissa the story of his police interview. Jocelyn continues to tell his story about DNA, however, and Joe finds his attention wandering once again to the people at the nearby table.

Jocelyn Kale seems to straddle the line between Joe's rationalism and Clarissa's emotionalism. His gift to Clarissa is a token of his work as a scientist, yet it also has a deeply personal significance. Joe's awkwardness and disengagement from what is passing between Jocelyn and Clarissa is a result of his inability to control his own emotional experience.

When Jocelyn speculates that the model eventually built to illustrate DNA was "too beautiful not to be true," Joe seizes on the word "beauty" and offers Clarissa his own gift, recalling John Keats's famous line, "beauty is truth, truth beauty." The gift is a "first edition of [Keats's] first collection," published in 1817, and Clarissa "squeal[s]" in delight upon receiving it.

Joe's gift is his attempt to enter Clarissa's emotional realm. Though he arranged to purchase it before the intrusion of Parry into his life, the book of Keats's poems nevertheless comes to represent a peace offering: a signal that Joe wishes to understand and relate to his wife.

Even as Joe narrates these moments, he finds himself returning once again to the Colin Tapp party seated at a nearby table, about which he now wonders if he has, in memory, "invent[ed] or elaborate[d] details." Joe knows that he had an approximate sense of his neighbors' respective ages even at the time, but, still, he cannot be sure how much he knew then, rather than "discovered later."

Joe continues, with his scientist's mind, to attempt to decipher exactly how his thinking worked at any given moment. Less obvious to him is the fact that the Colin Tapp party becomes something of an obsession for him, removing him from the present moment of Clarissa's birthday lunch.

At Joe's own table, Clarissa has taken up Jocelyn's story about the discovery of DNA, in which "young men [were] oppressed, put down, or otherwise blocked by older men." Clarissa has turned the conversation to John Keats, who, in Clarissa's telling, was once rumored to have had a dispiriting encounter with the older poet William Wordsworth. As Clarissa explains why that encounter most likely never happened, Joe listens carefully. Yet had he stood up at that moment, he tells the reader, he would have seen two men entering the restaurant and could, perhaps, have persuaded Clarissa, Jocelyn, and "the strangers at the next table" to flee.

Even in recollection, Joe remains disengaged from the events at his own table. Rather, his mind is on the various logical sequences that might have unfolded had his behavior been different at any given moment. Given the events of the next few minutes, however, Joe is right to direct his attention elsewhere. Clarissa and Jocelyn are discussing historical *oppression; Joe is experiencing the repercussions of violence in the* present *moment.*

Instead, Joe recalls, he allowed his mind to wander as the two men made their way through the restaurant. He pondered the nature of human mortality and the fact that everything Keats ever "sens[ed] and thought" is now "gone," and he considered whether to tell a related story about the rejection, by an older publisher, of the first draft of a famous novel.

Because Joe's powerful intellect is flawed, he was unable to control his thought processes even in what he now sees was a crucial moment. Rather, he gave in to the emotional matter of Keats's (and his own) mortality.

At that moment, however, Joe sees the two men who have been making their way through the restaurant pause in front of the neighboring table, at which Colin Tapp and his family sit. The men are wearing latex masks, which Joe initially believes to be facial burns, and one of them pulls out a gun and fires at Colin Tapp. Though Joe initially misunderstands the situation—he sees the gun as a "wand" and wonders if the men are "crazy members of [Tapp's] family come to embarrass [him]"—he soon understands what is happening. Before anyone can act, and before the man with the gun can shoot Colin Tapp again, fatally, the solitary diner whose presence Joe saw or sensed earlier leaps forward to intervene. How, Joe wonders, had he failed, until that moment, "to recognize Parry?"

Emphasized in these paragraphs is the necessary incompleteness of human knowledge, which casts doubt on Joe's (or anyone's) ability to act in a purely rational manner. Even as events are occurring, Joe must attempt to aggregate data into a coherent narrative. Yet the speed of the action and the insanity of the events in question combine to prevent Joe's doing so. Joe cannot act on his knowledge because his knowledge is wrong*: he sees burns and a wand rather than masks and a gun. This suggests that perfectly logical behavior is ultimately untenable.*

As Joe realizes that the two men are hired assassins, he simultaneously understands that he, Clarissa, and Jocelyn have been the intended targets. Because the neighboring table also contained two men and one woman, the assassins have attacked them by mistake. Yet Joe doesn't feel even a "flicker of vindication" now that Parry has indeed revealed himself to be violent. Rather, he sits in shock like everyone else as two waiters rush forward to assist the wounded man.

That Joe feels no vindication at having been right about Jed Parry indicates the extremeness of the terror that Parry has caused. Any logical conclusions Joe might have drawn about what has happened are interrupted by shock—an involuntary physical and emotional response on Joe's part.

CHAPTER 20

"For the second time that afternoon," Joe finds himself sitting in a police station, waiting to be interviewed, a coincidence he attributes to the statistical phenomenon "random clustering." He reflects on the fact that the incident in the restaurant is already providing "headlines in the evening paper," and he and the other witnesses to the shooting gather around a copy that a waiter has procured. From the newspaper, Joe learns that Colin Tapp is "an undersecretary at the Department of Trade and Industry" and that Parry, who has not yet been identified, is being credited with saving Tapp's life.

Joe makes much of the fact that what is only his second trip ever to a police station has occurred in such close proximity to his first trip, going so far as to assign scientific language to that coincidence. Because of the way his mind works, Joe is unable to stop himself from applying scientific ideology to what is an inherently emotional event: someone has tried to murder him but has shot another man by mistake.

Clarissa is the first in Joe's party to speak to the police. As she returns, she warns Joe to "just tell them what [he] saw" rather than "go[ing] on about [his] usual stuff," his concerns about Parry. Because Joe knows that Clarissa didn't recognize Parry in the restaurant, he determines not to argue with her.

Because Clarissa's own knowledge of what has happened is incomplete, she is forced to rely on her intuition: that Joe will compromise his testimony and make a nuisance of himself to the police.

When Joe is finally shown into another interview room, the police officer with him this time is Detective Constable Wallace, whom Joe describes as a "polite young man." Joe begins talking even before Wallace has taken his seat, confessing that the bullet was "meant for [him]" and that Jed Parry is responsible for the shooting. Looking at Joe without "any great surprise," Detective Constable Wallace asks him to "go from the beginning." He listens and takes notes as Joe delivers his story.

Once again, Joe must undertake the challenging business of fitting seemingly unrelated events into a coherent narrative—work that tests his ability to speak reasonably and calmly. That Joe is both correct about the events at the restaurant and treated warily by authorities is an irony that underscores the difficulty of Joe's task.

As was the case during Joe's previous police encounter, Detective Constable Wallace occasionally steers the conversation "toward irrelevancies," asking Joe to clarify seemingly unimportant details. The two men quibble over when Joe first recognized Jed Parry, and Wallace eventually asks Joe to remain at the police station for a while so that he can be questioned again. Because Joe believes that the events themselves will "do the work" of verifying his concerns about Parry, he determines not to "press the police too hard." Despite this confidence, however, he feels his "isolation and vulnerability" as he sits at the station by himself. Nursing this sensation, Joe recalls the sense of loneliness that a friend, "wrongly diagnosed with a terminal illness," once described to him. Joe feels similarly now, believing himself to be totally alone in his fight against Parry.

Joe's inability to convince Detective Constable Wallace of objective facts sends him into an emotional tailspin. Joe's desire is to communicate rationally—to lay out information in a convincing, logical manner. Yet Detective Constable Wallace's interest in "irrelevancies" and the repetition of minor details reveals that he is rejecting Joe's logical construction of a narrative. As a consequence, Joe experiences the emotion *of "isolation." His inability to work properly in the realm of logic and reason condemns him to inhabit the darker realm of feelings, at least for a few moments.*

Detective Constable Wallace returns bearing Duty Inspector Linley's notes. The two men have spoken to one another on the telephone, and Wallace asks Joe to repeat his story from the beginning. Joe refuses, and Wallace begins to ask him a series of questions instead. Rather than answering, Joe continues to insist that the police investigate Jed Parry, who, Joe maintains, is "not going to stop at one attempt" on Joe's life. Irrelevantly, Detective Constable Wallace insists on talking about the Keats-Wordsworth story that Clarissa told in the restaurant. After a while, however, he comes to his point: the scholarly debate over the story's accuracy leads him to the matter of *in*accuracies in the eyewitness testimonies of Joe, Clarissa, and Jocelyn Kale. As he finishes, Wallace shares with Joe that "there was an attempt on [Colin Tapp's] life eighteen months ago" that was most likely related to his official work.

In these paragraphs, McEwan briefly calls into question the accuracy of the conclusions that Joe has drawn. Though Joe is correct to assert that Colin Tapp's luncheon party was composed similarly to Joe's own, such a similarity does not, on its own, prove that Joe was himself the intended target. The failure of Joe's tablemates to agree on eyewitness details, meanwhile, contributes to this work, as well. If Joe's attempt to construct a rational narrative is based on his mastery of objective facts and his ability to add them together, then it is highly relevant that Joe's understanding of those facts may not be correct, after all.

Annoyed at this "meaningless coincidence," Joe argues further with Detective Constable Wallace about the particular details of the restaurant meal. He feels "a familiar disappointment" that "no one [can] agree on anything" and wonders if the "prism of desire and belief" inevitably warps all recollections of the past. He thinks again of the evolutionary necessity of "convinc[ing] [our]selves" from time to time of "half-truths," and he thinks, too, what "startling inventions" metaphysics and science are to rescue humans from such illogic.

For Joe, the failure of his tablemates to agree on details is an illustration of the tension between reason and emotion. Joe trusts his own recollection of the past, yet he believes that others' recollections have been warped by the inherently emotional phenomena of "desire" and "belief." Joe's inability to see that his own *desires may be affecting his memories represents a weakness in his thinking.*

As their interview draws to a close, Joe and Detective Constable Wallace argue further over the flavor of the ice cream served at the restaurant, the respective weight and height of the two gunmen, and whether either wore a ring. Though Wallace assures Joe that "Parry isn't behind this," he suggests that Joe might nevertheless need "help" and offers him forty milligrams of Prozac. Joe hurries away, experiencing once again the "shrinking, isolated feeling" that tells him that he is on his own.

The absurdity of Detective Constable Wallace's behavior underscores once again the impossibility of perfectly logical communication, as does the fact that he attempts to medicate *Joe—to regulate Joe's emotional life through the use of drugs. This sends Joe into a troubled emotional realm once more.*

Joe arrives home in darkness, the day having passed at the police station, and finds that Jed Parry is nowhere to be seen. Clarissa has left a note saying that she has gone to bed, and Joe pours himself a drink and goes into his study. Looking through his address books, Joe finds the names of acquaintances who have fallen out of his life and reflects on how financially successful they have all been. Though he does not yet tell the reader what he's looking for, he makes it clear that he doesn't expect to find it among his reasonable, responsible friends. Finally, however, Joe finds in the "W" section the name of Johnny B. Well, a harmless drug dealer whom Joe once knew and who is "as extensively connected as a neuron." From him, Joe can presumably get what he is looking for.

By going to bed before Joe returns home from the police station, Clarissa denies Joe the opportunity to construct once more a Parry-related narrative from the events of the day. Instead, Joe must find relief among his acquaintances, and even this work is undertaken in Joe's methodical, logical way. Joe knows which of his friends might be counted on to break the law and which are likely to be too successful, these days, to do so. Joe's metaphor about Johnny B. Well, meanwhile, is yet another example of the scientific terms in which he thinks.

Joe reflects on his long-ago acquaintance with Johnny B. Well and on the economic forces that gradually altered the man's drug-selling career. Johnny has been "obliged to extend the range of his contacts" over the years, and Joe now believes that someone in Johnny's circle will be able to help him. Staring at Johnny's name in his address book, Joe wonders why he didn't think of him "instantly." "The answer," Joe reflects, "was that I had not seen him in eleven years." Additionally, Joe has long since given up illicit drugs for the "infinite, ingenious" and "*tasty*" pleasure of alcohol.

Joe is unable to think about even the career of a London drug-dealer *without defining that career in rational terms—in this case economic ones. As always, Joe remains curious about his own thought processes, as well, criticizing himself for not having asked Johnny B. Well for help much earlier in his struggle with Jed Parry. Before Joe can move on, he must find a rational excuse for this lapse: he hasn't seen Johnny in years.*

Sitting with his telephone in his lap, Joe realizes that he is at a "turning point" and that "one action, one event, would entail another, until the train was beyond [his] control." Nevertheless, he picks up the phone and calls Johnny B. Well. What he needs, he tells his former friend, is a gun.

Joe continues to think in logical terms, understanding the fact that actions are inter-related and that it is not always possible to anticipate the chain of events that one's initial gesture might begin.

CHAPTER 21

The next morning, Joe drives Johnny B. Well to the house where Joe will be sold the gun he has requested. In Joe's pocket is £750 in wadded-up bills, and he listens disdainfully as Johnny B. Well advises him on how to speak "cool[ly]" to the men who will be providing the weapon. Johnny tells Joe that the men whom he'll be meeting are "intellectuals" rather than mere criminals, and Joe feels as if he "already" hate[s] them. As he drives, he looks at Johnny next to him and sees the toll that the man's lifestyle has taken on his appearance.

Joe's powers of observation (and his inability to stop observing) are on display as he watches the face of Johnny B. Well. These paragraphs reveal, furthermore, the tension between the characters of Joe and Johnny. Joe merely wants to achieve a particular, defined goal—securing a gun. Johnny's hope that the sale might proceed according to certain aesthetic preferences is far less rational.

After a long drive into the countryside, Joe and Johnny B. Well come eventually to an "ugly mock Tudor house," which looks to Joe "like a place where crimes could be safely committed." Johnny advises Joe not to "make fun of these people" when he sees them, and the two of them walk to the **door** and ring the bell. The man who opens the door, Steve, is an acquaintance of Johnny, and the two begin to argue about what day it is. Eventually, Steve moves further into the house, followed by Joe and Johnny.

Throughout Joe's encounter with Johnny's friends, his entirely reasonable plan to purchase a gun is met with absurd and irrational behavior, as when Steve and Johnny argue over the day of the week. Joe must emerge from the gauntlet of this irrationality in order to complete his logical quest.

In the kitchen is a woman named Daisy, whom Joe guesses to be "about fifty." To Joe, Daisy's appearance tells a "tale of regret," and Joe watches her until the group is joined by Xan, a friend of Steve who possesses large, muscular forearms. As the group sits down at the kitchen table, Joe finds it difficult not to laugh at Steve's "fierce burnt orange" mustache. Joe's stomach feels uneasy, and his body seems "weightless and shivery." To cover the combination of "anxiety and hilarity" that he feels, he takes a bite of the oatmeal that he has been served. The effort is unsuccessful, however, and, after a few moments, Joe falls to the floor in a fit of hysterical laughter. Passing this off as an ammonia allergy (the room smells of bleach), Joe apologizes. Nevertheless, he is soon drawn into a minor disagreement with Steve about the nature and origin of allergies.

Before Joe can complete his entirely reasonable business at the house, he must clear the hurdles of the other characters' absurdities (such as Xan's bulky figure and Steve's mustache) and his own emotional instability. Such an instability on Joe's part seems to be a consequence of the fact that his rationalism in under attack: by Jed Parry, broadly speaking, and by Steve, Xan, Daisy, and Johnny B. Well in this specific moment. Though Joe retains reason enough to know that he ought not to laugh at the men who will be selling him the gun, he doesn't *retain self-control enough to refrain from doing so.*

As the conversation turns to the gun Joe wishes to purchase, the others assure him that they don't "approve" of weapons. Steve and Xan argue briefly about why they're selling the gun and whether the deal is really about "the money," but, in the end, all agree that Joe will have to explain why he wants a gun in the first place. Joe assures the sellers that he wants the gun for self-defense, and, to seal the bargain, he puts his entire wad of money on the table at once.

The argument between Steve and Xan is inherently emotional (and ridiculous). To counteract it, and to impose his own will upon the conversation, Joe must fit his desire for a gun into an approved narrative—he merely wants the gun for self-defense—and support that desire using an approved symbol: a pile of money.

Steve briefly indicates that he will keep Joe's money and give him nothing, but Xan insists that Steve produce the gun. The two seem not to agree about which of them will get the money, and Xan soon throws his empty porridge bowl at Steve, whose neck he misses "by an inch." At this provocation, Steve and Xan begin to fight, violently, on and around the kitchen table. When Xan places Steve in a "headlock," Joe warns Xan that he is "going to kill him" if he continues. As the two men fight on, Daisy leaves the room and returns with a shoebox. Inside is the gun, and she gives it to Joe and tells him to leave.

Joe's rational quest—the purchase of a gun for self-defense—is interrupted by Steve and Xan's highly emotional sideshow. The confrontation between the two competing ideologies ends only because Joe follows Daisy's advice: he abandons any hope of preventing the irrational violence that is unfolding in front of him and instead focuses on his single-minded (and far more logical) plan.

Joe and Johnny B. Well flee the scene, not wanting, in Johnny's words, "to be a witness." As they begin to drive back to London, Joe's phone rings, and Jed Parry is, once again, on the other line. Parry is in Joe's apartment, he reveals, and, disturbingly, he's "sitting [t]here with Clarissa."

Joe is brought back to the matter at hand with great suddenness. His trip to Steve's house has been an absurd diversion, but now Joe must re-enter the rational plan that he has devised.

CHAPTER 22

Jed Parry puts Clarissa on the phone, and she tells Joe that he must "come straight back" and can't "talk to the police." Before she gives the phone back to Parry, she warns Joe that Parry will be watching him "out the window" as he arrives. Joe assures Parry that he will do "whatever [Parry] want[s]."

Joe's vague plan of self-defense must now give way to the specific plan of rescuing Clarissa. Because of his loyalty to her, he pledges to do whatever is necessary to prevent her from coming to harm.

Opening the cardboard box, Joe takes a look at the gun he has purchased. It is "lighter" than he expected, and he wonders how difficult it will be to figure out how to use it. After a few moments, he and Johnny B. Well pull over onto the side of the road and walk into the woods. There, Johnny explains to Joe how a gun works, revealing that he was "into" them for a while when he lived in America.

The irony of these paragraphs lies in the fact that dreamy, broken-down Johnny B. Well carries the knowledge that Joe needs to enact his plan. Joe's own knowledge is incomplete, however logical his ideas, and he requires outside assistance if he is to carry on.

Joe continues to feel uneasy, even ill, especially when Johnny warns him that to point a gun at someone is "basically" to give him "permission to kill you." Sick to his stomach, Joe relieves himself in the woods before returning to the car and getting back on the road. To calm himself, he considers the dirt in which he dug "a shallow trench" for his waste. In that dirt was evidence that humans are, despite their troubles, merely a part of a "grand cycle" of nature.

Once again, Joe attempts to reassure himself by applying his scientific knowledge to a situation that doesn't necessarily call for it. He does this because the fact he has been given—about what pointing a gun at someone means*—is too difficult for him to accept without an intellectual digression.*

Joe races back to London in his car. On the way, Johnny B. Well warns him that he mustn't connect Johnny to the illegal gun should the police catch him with it. Joe tries calling the apartment but receives no answer. He considers alerting the police despite Clarissa's warning but realizes that he is likely to be met once more with a "weary bureaucrat" who will be unable to help him. Arriving in London, he drops Johnny off at his street and receives Johnny's warning to dispose of the gun properly after finishing with it.

Surprisingly, Johnny B. Well is attempting to impose a further degree of rationality on what is essentially a criminal plan. Joe listens to Johnny's advice, having turned to criminality as the only logical response to the failure of a legal *apparatus (the police) to protect him. The police have come, for Joe, to represent* irrationality. *They can be of no assistance to him.*

Returning to his apartment at last, Joe goes around to the back of the building and climbs the fire escape to the roof. Looking into the kitchen through a skylight, he sees Clarissa's bag but nothing else. Yet a second skylight gives him a view of Clarissa sitting on a couch, with Jed Parry sitting "directly in front of her on a wooden kitchen chair." Parry's back is to Joe, but he doesn't dare shoot, as he isn't sure how the glass he would be firing through would affect the trajectory of the bullet. Instead, he goes back to his car, drives to the front of the building, and honks so that Parry will know that he has arrived.

These paragraphs underscore once again the incompleteness of Joe's knowledge and the difficulty of any human being to understand the world completely. Joe struggles to see clearly where each character is and what each is doing, and he is forced to follow Jed Parry's instructions only because he doesn't understand how firing through glass would affect a bullet. Joe wishes to rely on science and reason, but he cannot fully do so.

Parry has come to the window and is partly concealed by the **curtains**, and Joe realizes that their usual positions have been "invert[ed]." Joe climbs the stairs, rings the doorbell, then lets himself in, releasing the safety on the gun as he does so. Stepping into the apartment, Joe calls Clarissa's name then finds her and Parry in the sitting room, where he observed them moments earlier.

The reversal of the window-curtain tableaux created in an earlier chapter indicates that the incompleteness of human knowledge, which the curtains symbolize, is a factor not only for an irrational character like Jed Parry, but also for a rational one like Joe. No one is immune to it.

Parry, who is clearly nervous and distraught, warns Joe not to come any closer. Joe sees no obvious "bulge" in Parry's clothes that might be a gun of Parry's own, but he *does* see "an edge of something black" protruding from Parry's pocket. When Joe urges Parry to release Clarissa now that Joe has arrived, Parry responds that he "needs" both of them and that loving Joe has "wrecked [his] life." He reiterates his claim that Joe has led him on and has fought God's "will" by rejecting him. Determining not to "contradict" Parry, Joe continues his attempt to discover whether Clarissa is being held in place by some kind of weapon.

Joe understands that to insist on reason—to argue, for example, that he has not *led Parry on—would be to put Clarissa's life in danger. Parry may be irrational, but the physical circumstances of this encounter have conferred more power upon Parry's irrationality than upon Joe's reason. Joe's ability to counteract those physical circumstances, meanwhile, is a result, in part, of his incomplete knowledge regarding whether Parry is armed.*

When Clarissa assures Parry that Joe never meant to do him any harm, Parry grows increasingly nervous and states that neither Joe nor Clarissa knows what he has been through. Surprisingly, he then asks Joe to "forgive" him for attempting to have Joe killed the previous day, calling that action "insanity." Before Joe can respond, Parry produces from his pocket a "short-bladed knife" and brings it to his own ear rather than Clarissa's throat. He pleads again for forgiveness, telling Joe that he's going to commit suicide regardless. Seeing that Parry is sincere, Joe tells him to "drop the knife" so that the two of them can "talk." When Parry refuses, Joe shoots him in the elbow so that Parry is forced to release his weapon.

These paragraphs arguably mark the high point of Jed Parry's insanity. According to the terms of his delusions, it is in his interest to extort some promise from Joe while Joe and Clarissa are in his power. Yet rather than pursuing that rational end, Parry turns his knife on himself. An irony of this scene, meanwhile, is that Joe himself *acts irrationally, at least where pure self-interest is concerned. Were Joe to act here with undiluted logic rather than human emotion, he would simply let Parry die.*

Joe reflects on the fact that he and Clarissa *should*, in a perfect world, have reunited at that very moment, even as the police and ambulances came to take Parry away. Yet such behavior, Joe concludes, would have been "inhuman." He and Clarissa had witnessed "a bungled murder and an attempted suicide" in the last "twenty-four hours," Joe reminds the reader, and so the two of them were unable to move immediately into the kind of "happy ending" that might, Joe speculates, have occurred in the "movies."

Even Joe is aware that perfect rationality must sometimes give way to the vaguer realm of human emotion—hence his lack of surprise that he and Clarissa do not fall immediately into one another's arms. Real life, Joe recognizes, is messier than the artificial reality of cinema; humans are not so easily able to master their feelings.

So, too, is any immediate reconciliation prevented by the fact that the police lead Joe away for "possession of an illicit firearm and malicious wounding with intent." Though the police's arrest of Joe seems apologetic, he must nevertheless accompany them to the police station. He is made to spend the night in jail, but he is released the next morning. In part because of a letter of support from Duty Inspector Linley, Joe is never charged with any crime.

In these paragraphs, Joe is made to re-enter the realm of the State, with all its logical imperfections. Joe has behaved in a way that is both morally correct and reasonable, yet official authority is too absurd to recognize this fact immediately. Reason will eventually defeat unreason, but Joe will first have to wait.

Reflecting on the moments before the police took him away, Joe recalls the look of "repulsion and surprise" with which Clarissa responded to the sight of him with a gun. Thinking about her reaction, he finally comes to suspect that the two of them are "finished."

Clarissa is bound here by her emotions. This is true despite the fact that, by any reasonable definition, Joe's gun is at least partly responsible for Clarissa's present safety.

CHAPTER 23

The narrative shifts to a letter that Clarissa has written to Joe sometime after Joe's shooting of Jed Parry. Clarissa opens by apologizing for the "row" that she and Joe had the previous evening, and she also apologizes, again, for disbelieving Joe about the danger posed by Parry.

Clarissa recognizes that she has not been completely loyal to Joe and that she has erred by disbelieving him. She will have more to say, but first she must make these important concessions.

However, Clarissa states, Joe's "being right is not a simple matter." Clarissa continues to believe that the entire episode "might have had a different outcome" had Joe "behaved differently." She criticizes Joe for being so "intense and strange" and for lying to her about Parry's initial phone call. She brings up Joe's betrayal—his "ransacking" of her desk—and suggests that Joe's researching of Parry's condition was meant to "substitute for the science [Joe] wanted to be doing."

Clarissa's remark that Joe's "being right is not a simple matter" is perhaps her most important assertion of the supremacy of emotion over reason. For Clarissa, a factual understanding of the threat posed by Parry is merely one item on an entire emotional continuum. Though Joe was correct about that detail, *he was wrong about many other things.*

Continuing on, Clarissa suggests that much of Joe's emotional turmoil over the last many weeks has been due to his fear that he was the first rescuer to let go of his rope. "Parry," she argues, presented Joe "an escape from [his] guilt." Furthermore, Clarissa states, she understands why Parry might have thought Joe was "leading him on": Joe's obsessiveness suggested that Parry was bringing something "out" in him.

These claims represent yet another point at which Joe's and Clarissa's understandings of recent events cannot align. Clarissa explains Joe's behavior using the language and ideology of psychoanalysis. Joe would almost certainly reject such a characterization as illogical.

Clarissa's most important point, which she soon comes to, is that Parry's ultimate violence was never "inevitable"; rather, it was spurred on by Joe's reactions. Clarissa thanks Joe for "saving [her] life," but she simultaneously argues that Joe might have put it in jeopardy in the first place by overreacting to Parry's attentions. As the letter concludes, Clarissa suggests that the two need "some time apart" (she will stay with her brother, Luke) and that she doesn't know whether their love will survive.

Because Clarissa's assertions cannot be proven with facts (but must rather be intuited using a kind of emotional sense), Clarissa is unable to share in Joe's perspective. As a consequence, she and Joe cannot resume their relationship. Their love, no matter how long-lived, seems unable to transcend their fundamentally incompatible worldviews.

CHAPTER 24

"Two weeks after the shooting," Joe travels to Joseph Lacey's home to keep their appointment. The next day, he arranges a picnic much like the one he arranged in the novel's opening chapter, and the day after that he picks Clarissa up in his car and drives the two of them to Oxford. Joe experiences "a sudden ache" when he sees Clarissa, and he is pleased that their "week apart" has granted them a slew of "neutral topics" to discuss as they travel. The pair discuss their work—Joe has been researching a new article, and Clarissa is closer to tracking down John Keats's missing letter—and soon they arrive in the Oxford countryside.

This second picnic serves as a shadow of the first and a kind of bookend: it represents an opportunity for Joe to resume the life he set aside upon first encountering Parry. Yet Joe's conversation with Clarissa reveals that such a resumption will not be easy. Despite the fact that Joe still loves her, the two of them have been forced into the kind of empty politeness that might inform strangers' conversations. Their former intimacy cannot yet be reclaimed.

Joe reflects on the intense fight to which Clarissa alluded in their letter. He refers to the argument as "an orgy of mutual accusation" and considers the fact that Clarissa's letter has driven the two of them "further apart." Joe dislikes the letter's "clammy emotional tone" and assures himself that "sharing" his feelings, which Clarissa seems to want, is nothing "compared to" the fact that "a madman paid to have [him] slaughtered in a restaurant." Joe's conclusion is that, if he was isolated, as Clarissa has claimed, he was forced into that isolation by Clarissa and the police.

Joe's way of looking at the world is fundamentally different than Clarissa's. For Joe, the simple facts about Parry's actions are the end of the story: Parry stalked and tried to kill Joe, and no other reality exists. For Clarissa, however, Joe's behavior must be judged using an emotional scale. Joe acted correctly in a technical sense, but his behavior was nevertheless wrong in an emotional sense.

Arriving at Jean Logan's house, Joe and Clarissa are greeted by Leo, who is "naked but for face paint done in clumsy tiger stripes." When Jean Logan appears, Joe sees that time has not yet begun to heal her. Jean asks Joe and Clarissa to wait in the back garden, and there they find Rachael, lying in the grass and "working at a tan." Immediately engaging with the girl, Clarissa tickles her with a "stalk," while Joe goes back indoors to find Jean Logan.

Jean Logan's appearance, by revealing the strength of grief, simultaneously reveals the strength of love. This message serves as both a rebuke to Joe and Clarissa and provides an example to which they might aspire. Clarissa's interaction with Rachael, meanwhile, reveals that her character is fundamentally unchanged.

Joe asks Jean Logan to hear the "story" he wishes to communicate "at first hand." He makes a telephone call to the college and asks to speak to a particular professor. Then the group makes its way to a meadow as Jean remarks how "good" both Joe and Clarissa are with the children.

By remaining "good" with Jean Logan's children, Joe and Clarissa reveal that one important ingredient of their relationship—taking care of children together—remains what it has always been. This is, perhaps, a hopeful sign.

As they arrive in the meadow, the group sets their picnic up beside a river, and Leo and Rachael begin to wade in the water, accompanied by Joe. Joe and Rachael share an engaging conversation about water droplets, but, after a while, they rejoin the others by the picnic. There, the children share a memory of their father, John Logan, and a family vacation on which they accompanied him. Joe feels as if the "energetic presence of John Logan" has joined them as they talk.

Joe's scientific mind is juxtaposed here with the emotional story of John Logan and his family's vacation. Perhaps because she is a child, Rachael easily straddles the two worlds, discussing both the properties of water with Joe and her memories of her father with the entire assembled group.

After a while, a man and a younger woman approach the group and join them. Jean Logan expresses concern about whether she can "meet" this woman, and Clarissa assures her that "it's all right." The man, the reader soon learns, is James Reid, a professor of logic at the university. The younger woman with him is his student, Bonnie Deedes. Reid begins to speak nearly at once, revealing to Jean Logan that, on the day of the ballooning accident, he and Bonnie had planned a picnic of their own. They had had car trouble, however, and had been given a ride by John Logan, who was passing in his own vehicle. Reid and Bonnie saw the accident—they were responsible for the second car **door** being open—but they fled the scene once they realized that there was nothing they could do to help.

The culmination of the subplot regarding John Logan's affair neatly reveals Logan's guiltlessness. As a consequence, his happy relationship with his wife, Jean, can (posthumously) begin to heal. This narrative arc may be intended to mirror Joe and Clarissa's own story. Just as John and Jean Logan go from happiness to suspicion to (posthumous) reconciliation, so Joe and Clarissa may make a similar journey. That Jed Parry is a character in both arcs merely underlines the thematic similarities in the Logan and Rose/Mellon relationships.

James Reid reveals that he and Bonnie are "in love" and that he didn't step forward as a witness because he didn't want to jeopardize his position at the college. Instead, they made their way to a nearby pub, where they encountered Joseph Lacey, who was in the process of telling a "group of regulars" about the botched rescue. Accompanying Lacey to his home, Reid and Bonnie received from Lacey the advice to say nothing for the time being: "there were enough witnesses to the accident," Lacey assured them. Now, however, Reid sees that he has caused Jean Logan "distress," and he apologizes to her with great sincerity.

The love shared by James Reid and Bonnie has been an inconvenient one for several of the novel's other characters, yet that love (like Parry's love for Joe) seems to exist outside of their control. James Reid is likely to lose his job as a result of loving Bonnie, and Bonnie, too, will be touched by scandal. Yet their love continues, nonetheless, underscoring McEwan's idea that love strikes when and whom it will, irrespective of human preference or logic.

Rather than taking comfort from James Reid's story, Jean Logan is further distraught. "Who," she asks, "is going to forgive [her]" for doubting her husband's faithfulness, now that "the only person who can is dead?" As Reid attempts to comfort Jean, Joe concludes that such a "breathless scrambling for forgiveness" is "almost mad." He catches Clarissa's eye and exchanges a "half-smile" with her, and though he seems to believe that the two of them are "pitching [their] own requests for mutual forgiveness," he "just [does] not know" whether such a thing will be possible.

Though the act of forgiveness is emotionally satisfying and perhaps even morally right, Joe cannot completely fit it into his rationalist worldview. Stopping him is the same series of facts that has thwarted his reconciliation with Clarissa up to this point: he is unable to overlook her perceived disloyalty, just as Clarissa is unable to accept that she has been completely in the wrong. Forgiveness may be right, but it isn't entirely reasonable.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Hilliard, Graham. "*Enduring Love.*" *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 15 Dec 2017. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Hilliard, Graham. "*Enduring Love.*" LitCharts LLC, December 15, 2017. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/enduring-love.

To cite any of the quotes from *Enduring Love* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

McEwan, Ian. Enduring Love. Anchor Books. 1998.

CHICAGO MANUAL

McEwan, Ian. Enduring Love. New York: Anchor Books. 1998.