

Going Places



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF A.R. BARTON

A. R. Barton is a writer living in Zurich, whose work is modern and often explores themes of adolescence.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This story explores Ireland in the 20th century, in a time where gender roles were starting to change due to economic shifts from an agrarian society to an industrialized one. The rise of factory work, as well as the often-times militant protests by Irish suffragettes in the early 1900s, contributed to these shifting expectations for women. Women gained increased autonomy and political power during this time, gaining the right to vote in 1928. However, they quickly faced a sharp backlash of legislation limiting their freedoms, such as the “marriage bar” implemented from 1932 to 1973, which prevented any married woman from employment in the public sector, and a ban on contraceptives from 1935 to 1974. Ireland (and the United Kingdom more broadly) also has an entrenched class hierarchy, making it nearly impossible for individuals of a working or middle-class background to achieve a better life for themselves or their families, which led to waves of emigration.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

“Going Places” explores hero-worship and rich inner fantasy life from the perspective of a teenage girl. Other works exploring similar themes are: Steven King’s *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*, another coming of age story in which a young girl uses her imagination and idealization of an athlete to survive a harrowing ordeal. Sandra Cisneros’ [The House on Mango Street](#) is another work which explores a young woman using imagination to cope with the difficulties of working class life. Kathrine Paterson’s [Bridge to Terabithia](#) also shows readers the importance of imagination and creating alternate worlds to make sense of the one characters actually reside in. Diana Wynne Jones’ *Howl’s Moving Castle* is a fanciful exploration of another young woman expected to lead a life of unhappiness and lack of success who sees something greater for herself.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Going Places
- **When Written:** Unknown
- **Where Written:** Zurich
- **When Published:** Unknown
- **Literary Period:** Modern

- **Genre:** Young Adult, Coming of Age
- **Setting:** Working class Ireland, 20th Century
- **Climax:** Sophie realizing her fantasy about Danny Casey will not come true
- **Antagonist:** Sophie’s father, the broader society which often destroys the optimistic
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Lofty Vocabulary. Sophie’s vocabulary shifts significantly between when she is talking about the reality of her life and when she is fantasizing. For example: in describing her father, she states plainly that “his face and arms were shiny and he smelled of soap,” but she describes the crowd’s reaction to Danny Casey scoring a goal as “sudden thunderous eruption of exultant approbation” Her vocabulary becomes heightened as she imagines this fantasy world, showing a distinct distance between what is true and what she wants to be true.



PLOT SUMMARY

“Going Places” follows teenaged Sophie as she uses her vivid imagination to try to escape her dreary home life. On the way home from school, Sophie tells her schoolmate Jansie of her future aspirations to own a **boutique** or be an actress, and Jansie responds that Sophie’s ambitions are unrealistic and that she needs to be practical. When Sophie arrives home, she announces that if she ever comes into money, she will buy a boutique, but her father, mother, and little brother Derek all ridicule and dismiss this dream, suggesting that Sophie is constantly impractical about money and the future.

Looking at her small house, in which her worn-down mother washes piles of dirty dishes and cooks for her “grimy” husband, Sophie feels a “tightening” in her throat and leaves the room to find her older brother Geoff. She believes that Geoff might free her from the drudgery of her life, as she imagines that he lives an exotic and mysterious life, traveling to unknown parts of the city and meeting interesting people. However, it doesn’t seem that Geoff actually lives the life that Sophie imagines—he appears to be a shy homebody whose passion is the footballer Danny Casey.

To impress Geoff, Sophie tells him that she met Danny Casey and he asked her on a date. While Geoff initially rejects the story, her tale gains some traction as she reiterates it to her father and Jansie. The more she tells this story, the more elaborate it becomes, but still nobody seems to truly believe her—except, perhaps, Sophie herself.

On the night she said they would meet, Sophie waits on a bench for Danny Casey, seemingly believing that he might appear. However, Sophie's sense of reality is not entirely lost and she briefly comes to terms with the reality of her situation, acknowledging that Danny Casey isn't coming and that this is upsetting not because she wanted to see him, but because she will have to confess to her family that he never arrived, and they will be able to dismiss her once again. They "doubt me, as they have always doubted me," she thinks, and there is little she can do to rectify that.

As she walks back home to her dismal life, Sophie sees her father's bicycle near the pub and she retreats back into fantasy, imagining Danny Casey scoring a goal in front of a roaring crowd. In this fantasy, Casey is much like Sophie—he is "no taller" and "no bolder" than she.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Sophie – Sophie is the story's teenaged protagonist who, despite her dismal working-class life, spends much of her time fantasizing about a glamorous and wealthy future. She dreams of being a shop-owner and actress, or maybe a fashion designer, despite how unlikely those careers are, since she has no money and is expected to one day work at the local biscuit factory to help make ends meet. While Sophie is vocal and exuberant about her dreams, her family members and her friend Jansie actively discourage her, seeming offended by Sophie's audacity and whimsy. Sophie appears adrift in her home, alienated from all her family members except, perhaps, her older brother Geoff, whom she sees as a potential ally, somebody who might have an interesting life into which he could invite her, thereby helping her escape their reality. To impress Geoff and the rest of her family, Sophie concocts an elaborate fantasy that she met Geoff's favorite football player, Danny Casey, who also wants to open a **boutique**. She claims that Danny Casey asked her on a date, and on the night she said they were to meet, she goes to wait for Danny Casey on a bench, seeming to believe he might actually appear. As she realizes that Danny Casey isn't coming, her heart is broken—not because she feels romantically jilted, or because she even wanted to meet Danny Casey, but because she knows she will have to confess to her family that he didn't come, and they will have one more reason to dismiss her. As she walks back to her dismal life, Sophie fantasizes about Danny Casey scoring a goal in front of a roaring crowd—but in the fantasy, Danny Casey seems like Sophie (he is "no taller" and "no bolder" than Sophie). All along, it seems, Sophie's fantasy of Danny Casey was really a fantasy of her own success.

Geoff – Geoff is Sophie's older brother, the oldest child in the family. He is a mechanic who has a motorcycle, and (to Sophie,

at least) this appears to give him freedom and a glamorous life. Sophie imagines that Geoff knows interesting people and travels to unknown parts of the city, and she hopes that he will bring her with him, helping her to escape her own life. However, the story presents details about Geoff that suggest that Sophie is projecting onto him: he is shy, for instance, so it's unlikely that he has lots of secret friends, and he spends a lot of time at home. He does not share Sophie's interest in aesthetics, fame, or fortune, and while Sophie imagines Geoff in stylish clothes, in real life his clothes are unfashionable. Geoff's main interest seems to be the football player Danny Casey, which leads Sophie to claim that she is going on a date with him. She hopes that this will make Geoff admire her, and while it does pique his interest, the scheme ultimately fails. Presumably, she and Geoff will not get closer and he will not rescue her from her life, since Geoff seems not to be the person Sophie hopes that he is.

Jansie – Jansie is a friend of Sophie's. They are both working class, and their families appear to be friends with one another. Josie is considerably more realistic and pessimistic than Sophie. She knows that the two of them are "earmarked for the biscuit factory" a truth which makes her feel "melancholy". She is also noted as a gossip who is unable to keep secrets.

Sophie's Father – Sophie's father, who is not named, is the story's antagonist. He works in some kind of manual labor, returning home each night dirty and sweaty and shoveling food into his mouth. He treats Sophie with disdain, chastising her for telling "wild stories" and dismissing her ambitions and desires. Through the reactions of his children (who all seem scared of him), the reader learns that he is an imposing figure with a drinking problem and a temper. Barton describes him in a rather unfavorable way, using words such as "grimy" and pointing out the fat rolls on his neck.

Danny Casey – Danny Casey is a famous football star who is greatly admired, most importantly by Sophie's older brother Geoff. He is described as a young, bright, beloved "prodigy." Sophie tells her family a story that she has met Danny Casey and he asks her on a date, which is meant to impress them and make them admire her. However, she seems to believe her own fantasy, and is disappointed when Danny Casey doesn't appear on the night she said they would meet. The version of Danny Casey that Sophie creates is gentle, has soft eyes, and is kind towards her. She says that Casey plans to open a **boutique** (which is also Sophie's ambition), and she describes Casey as being her own height and "no bolder" than her. Clearly, then, the Danny Casey of Sophie's fantasy is meant as a stand-in for her, someone living Sophie's own dreams of success and acclaim who she imagines to be not meaningfully different from her (thereby making her own dreams seem more in reach).

Mother Sophie's mother. She appears to be a homemaker who is resigned to a dreary life, and is not particularly interested in or close to her children or husband. Very little information is provided about her aside from the "delicate" looking **bow** on

her apron, and the overwhelming amount of housework she appears to be in charge of.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Derek –Sophie’s younger brother. He plays a minor role in the story, re-iterating his parents’ belief that Sophie’s ambitions are silly and that one must be practical about money.



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.



FANTASY VS. REALITY

In “Going Places,” teenaged Sophie is full of unrealistic dreams for her future. She talks of wanting to open a **boutique** or become an actress, and—most importantly—she tells her brother Geoff that she has met famous footballer Danny Casey and that the two have planned a date. While her brother and father are skeptical that she has met Danny Casey, and her best friend Jansie is constantly pulling her back to earth about her dreams for the future, Sophie maintains a commitment to her fantasies, believing in them to the extent that she waits for Danny Casey one night and feels heartbroken when he never arrives. This heartbreak is a looming danger of Sophie’s refusal to live in reality: presumably, at some point, she will become adult enough to realize that her dreams won’t come true. However, Barton does not simply depict fantasy as a prelude to disappointment. For Sophie, a lonely and ambitious girl from a troubled working-class family, fantasy is perhaps the only way not to be broken by her circumstances.

From the beginning, Barton depicts Sophie as immersed in fantasy and impervious to the reality of her situation. For example, the story’s opening line is Sophie’s proclamation that she will someday own a boutique—a dream that she maintains, even as her pragmatic friend Jansie attempts to bring her back to earth. When Jansie says that owning a boutique requires money, Sophie responds that she’ll start as manager, but Jansie notes that nobody would make Sophie manager without experience and that shop work doesn’t pay enough anyway. In response, Sophie says that she’ll become an actress or a fashion designer on the side in order to support her boutique, brushing off all of Jansie’s practical concerns. Jansie, who knows that “they were both earmarked for the biscuit factory,” urges Sophie to “be sensible”—a sentiment that Sophie’s family shares, as her father, her little brother Derek, and her mother all seem exasperated by Sophie’s talk of wealth when she comes

home. From this opening, it’s clear that Sophie isn’t sheltered from practical concerns—in fact, almost everyone in her life seems committed to making her abandon her unrealistic dreams. Sophie’s fantasies, then, seem less like naïve pipe dreams here, and more like a deliberate commitment to resisting a life she doesn’t want.

Barton shows the danger of living in a fantasy world when Sophie falls prey to her own imagined tale of meeting her family’s football hero, Danny Casey. In what might be a ploy to impress her brother Geoff (who she imagines has an exciting life that he doesn’t share with her), Sophie tells him that she met Danny Casey at the store. In response to his skepticism, Sophie does not abandon her tale and instead adds more detail to the fantasy and raises the stakes by claiming that he asked her on a date. As she adds detail, she seems herself to believe the fantasy, feeling proud the following Saturday when Danny Casey scores a goal, as though she does actually know him. This belief in her own fantasy crests when Sophie finds herself on “a wooden bench beneath a solitary elm where lovers sometimes came” waiting for Danny. While waiting, she imagines her excitement at seeing him emerge from the canal, and Barton writes that “not until some time had elapsed did she begin balancing against this the idea of his not coming.” The level of Sophie’s delusion is startling. She not only finds herself physically waiting for a date she has invented (one which she seems genuinely to believe will happen), but also she is heartbroken when he doesn’t arrive, and still doesn’t acknowledge reality even then (she comforts herself by telling herself “we know how it was...Danny and me”). This is a moment in which her fantasy seems dangerous and pathological, either an emotional disturbance or an imaginative excess that has now crossed the line from harmless to negatively affecting her life.

However, as Sophie leaves the bench where she has been waiting, she notices the bleak reality around her and anticipates the bleak reality that awaits her at home, which propels her back into her fantasies. In this way, Barton suggests that the fantasies—while potentially harmful—also help Sophie to bear her life. For example, once she realizes that Danny isn’t coming, Sophie immediately thinks of how horrible it will be to tell her family, noting that they will “doubt me, as they have always doubted me, but I will have to hold up my head remembering how it was.” From this, readers see just how much it hurts Sophie that her family doesn’t take her seriously and how much effort it requires to maintain her dignity and spirit in the face of their cruelty. Furthermore, Barton describes Sophie climbing “crumbling steps” and noticing her father’s bike outside the pub. While this bleak detail indicates that her father is (as is often the case) out drinking, Sophie is actually relieved because it means she won’t have to face him at home. On this horrible night, her family is not a source of comfort, but rather of torment. In the moment of seeing her father’s bike, Sophie retreats into one last reverie, which ends the story: imagining

meeting Danny Casey again, and then remembering him playing football the Saturday before. In these fantasies, Sophie feels happy and triumphant: his eyes “shimmer” and she is “breathless” as he looks at her, and as he scores his goal, she imagines the crowd’s “thunderous eruption of exultant approbation.”

Throughout the story, these moments of fantasy are when Sophie feels happiest and most herself. While Sophie’s disappointment over Danny Casey failing to appear perhaps foreshadows more devastating disappointments to come, the ending paints Sophie’s reveries as a (likely temporary) way to survive a difficult life that is bent on constricting her. In this way, Barton shows fantasy and imagination to be powerful tools, even if they cannot change reality.



FAMILY VS. INDIVIDUALITY

In “Going Places,” Sophie’s ambition and personality are continually at odds with her family’s expectations of her. While Sophie dreams of

owning a **boutique** or becoming an actress, her family members mock and reject her goals, treating her without warmth, care, or understanding. Throughout the story, however, Sophie remains fixated on living the life she fantasizes about and does not cave to her family’s attempts to make her more like them. She nonetheless fails to bring them around to her way of thinking—she neither proves herself to them nor earns their respect. By showing Sophie trapped in an unresolvable conflict between who she feels she is and who her family wants her to be, Barton shows the crushing weight of situations in which being loved and accepted by family is at odds with individual expression and fulfillment.

Sophie feels distinctly isolated at home, as her attempts express herself provoke her family’s mockery and dismissal. This is shown quite clearly with her father, a primary source for her feelings of isolation. He speaks harshly to Sophie, accusing her of telling “wild stories” or “aggressively” saying that, “One of these days you’re going to talk yourself into a load of trouble.” Sophie takes his words seriously, as she cautions her older brother Geoff that their father would “murder” her if he found out about her alleged meeting with Danny Casey, and she later expresses fear of her father instigating a “right old row.” Sophie does not feel accepted and cared for by her father; on the contrary, she believes any further signs of her whimsical personality will result in him erupting into physical violence. Sophie’s interactions with her mother and Derek, her younger brother, appear to follow a similar pattern. When made aware of her ambitions, Derek chastises her about financial practicalities, while her mother lets out an exasperated sigh. Rather than validating Sophie’s individuality, her family ridicules or passively aggressively ignores her. It’s no wonder, then, that Sophie is uncomfortable in her home; at the sight of her father and her mother in the kitchen, Sophie experiences “a

tightening in her throat” and quickly leaves them to find Geoff. Later, she’s happy to notice her father’s bicycle propped outside a pub, indicating he won’t be at the house to mock her when she returns from her failed “date” with Danny Casey. Sophie has clearly resigned herself to her parents and little brother being unable or unwilling to foster her individuality.

Despite this invalidation, Sophie clearly still longs for a sense of connection with her family. She holds out hope that Geoff, the only family member who has not explicitly rejected her, will become her ally, and perhaps even radically change her life for the better. Initially, Sophie imagines that Geoff has an exciting life that he keeps secret from her, a world that he might one day invite her into, thereby rescuing her. However, Sophie’s vision of Geoff seems at odds with who he really is. In her fantasy, Geoff is wearing “shining black leathers,” but Sophie later admits that Geoff is not fashionable—she only “wish[es] he cared more about clothes.” Furthermore, while she imagines that he knows “exotic, interesting people” to whom he might introduce her, she concedes that he is “quiet and didn’t make new friends easily.” This dissonance between the Geoff of her vision and the real Geoff suggests that Sophie might be projecting her own desires onto her brother, rather than seeing him for who he is. This mirrors the way her family treats her and undermines her hopes for finding an ally in the family.

Sophie continues to project her needs onto Geoff by creating a fantasy about Danny Casey, the star whose photographs adorn her brother’s room. This fantasy is an attempt to get closer to her brother by emphasizing a shared interest—and by creating a story in which someone Geoff respects thinks that Sophie is worth spending time with and knowing. This, in turn, is something Sophie clearly wants *all* of her family members to feel. Indeed, Sophie’s story is never *really* about Danny Casey—rather, it’s her attempt to prove to her family that she as an individual has merit. Sophie initially approaches the meeting place with naïve optimism, thinking that it is “the perfect place” and “she knew he would approve.” Barton is notably ambiguous here, providing the reader with a pronoun rather than a name and leaving room for the possibility that it is not necessarily Casey’s approval she is seeking, but rather that of her brothers and father. It soon becomes clear that she is, in fact, more concerned with the opinions of her family than she is with Casey’s arrival, as she thinks back to “Geoff saying he would never come, and how none of them believed me.” Finally, after passing a point of “resignation” that Casey won’t be coming, she turns to “sadness,” acknowledging that “she can see the future” and her family will likely lord this over her for years to come: “they of course will doubt me, as they have always doubted me.” She sees that her plan to prove her worth has failed, and that her family will continue to consider the traits that make her an individual to be character flaws.

Ultimately, Sophie proves unable to create a world, even in her own head, in which she receives praise and acceptance from

her family. Instead, she is only able to project her needs onto Danny Casey himself. In her fantasy, she asks for Danny Casey's autograph, but neither of them "have a pen"—leading her to muse that "my brothers will be very sorry." Even the fantasy version of herself, it seems, is unable to live up to her family's expectations. Barton further shows that Sophie is projecting herself and her needs onto Casey by having her emphasize to her father that Casey is planning to "buy a shop"—that is, to pursue the same ambition Sophie set for herself at the beginning of the story. As she loses herself entirely in fantasy at the end of the story, Sophie imagines Danny "ghost past the lumbering defenders" as the crowd holds its breath and then erupts in "exultant approbation" over his athletic success. Clearly, this is Sophie's dream for herself, and Danny has been a way to imagine her own unimaginable future all along.



CLASS VS. AMBITION

Each of the characters in "Going Places" reacts differently to being poor: Sophie's father seems to drink and be cruel, her mother seems resigned and depressed, and her little brother, Derek, is already old enough to roll his eyes at Sophie and tell her that money doesn't grow on trees. Sophie, meanwhile, responds to her restrictive circumstances by imagining opening a **boutique** or becoming an actress. Though these ambitions help propel her through the world with some semblance of optimism, her family and friends dismiss her ambitions altogether. To some extent, this is out of simple unkindness, but the real reason that Sophie's dreams seem so wild to those around her is that she is working class. For even a middle-class family, becoming a shop owner or manager would presumably not be out of the question, but Sophie's dreams are categorically shut down by others because they're so alien to their class background. Through this, Barton illustrates the immense weight and reach of class hierarchy—which is so rigid and seemingly impassable that those of Sophie's class can't imagine, let alone hope for, a better life.

When Sophie attempts to share her fantasies of future jobs with others, she is quickly rejected. Upon declaring that she wants to open—or even just be a manager of—a boutique, her friend Jansie peppers her with pragmatic concerns (opening a shop "takes money" and "They wouldn't make you manager straight off"). Even her little brother makes fun of this fantasy: "She thinks money grows on trees, don't she, Dad?" Her father seems almost primed to cut down Sophie's "wild stories" and he threatens that she will "talk [her]self into a load of trouble." Ambitions for a life beyond that of a factory worker are apparently so unrealistic as to be laughable in Sophie's world, subtly underscoring the incredible difficulty of overcoming poverty.

Sophie's refusal to accept her poverty, meanwhile, appears not

just to perplex, but to *anger* those around her. While bitter resignation may help Sophie's family and friends get through the day, Sophie's vivid imagination is a reminder of the things they will never have, and spending any time dwelling on such things is perhaps too painful to handle. Jansie, for instance, wants Sophie to stop fantasizing because Jansie has already accepted the reality of the situation—that is, that they are both "earmarked for the biscuit factory." Trying to imagine anything else makes Jansie "melancholy," suggesting her awareness that, for people of their background, grander aspirations are impossible. When Sophie's father hears of the Danny Casey story, he looks at her in disdain and grimaces at her words. Exposure to his child's creativity results in him behaving as though he has been wounded, showing this has somehow hit a nerve. That he reacts "aggressively" towards her suggests that he views Sophie's dreams as an affront to his own life and choices.

The title of "Going Places" can be read ironically, as its characters are not going anywhere. Instead, Barton illustrates that they are so trapped by their socio-economic circumstances that they cannot even *imagine* a better future. In a class system with so few opportunities for upward mobility, Sophie's relatively harmless penchant for, essentially, going places in her head to escape her bleak reality is received with utter disdain by those around her. Being confronted with the thought of something better, no matter how unlikely, is simply a reminder of their limitations.



LIMITATIONS OF GENDER ROLES

In "Going Places," the men and women fit rigidly within gendered expectations. Sophie's father is the family's breadwinner, while her mother appears to be in charge of household duties. As for Sophie's generation, her brother Geoff (a mechanic who loves football) is associated with traditionally masculine objects and pursuits, while her friend Jansie (a known gossip who is destined for a life making biscuits) is more traditionally feminine. Sophie is unique in displaying both feminine and masculine characteristics, as she has interests in fashion and acting, but she is ambitious and independent. Unfortunately, her inability to identify a satisfying model of womanhood to which she can aspire leaves her adrift and disappointed, projecting her own ambitions onto a man, Danny Casey, in whom her dreams seem more at home. This shows how restrictive rigid gender roles are, even to the most imaginative and defiant of people.

Throughout her life, Sophie has been exposed only to traditional gender roles. Her father is "grimy" due to his work outside of the home, and he appears to fit well within the masculine archetypes of "distant father" and "angry drunk." While Sophie does not like her father, she still wants to impress him, which acknowledges his power and suggests a desire for male validation. Sophie also associates her brother Geoff—a

sports-obsessed mechanic—with traditionally masculine items, activities, and concepts. When she fantasizes of him helping her escape her dreary life, he is on a motorcycle wearing “shining black leathers.” It’s clear that she associates him with a freedom she assumes he is afforded due to his gender, as she imagines him being able to go “places beyond in the surrounding city” and meet “exotic, interesting people.”

By contrast, the women in Sophie’s life seem restricted and embittered. Barton depicts Sophie’s mother as “stooped over the sink” with her “crooked back,” keeping house for her “heavy-breathing” husband with the “dirty washing piled up in the corner.” She appears resigned, submissive, and docile, which are all traditionally feminine traits. As the only adult woman in the story, Sophie’s mother paints a bleak picture of femininity. And while Barton suggests that the next generation of women might have slightly more freedom (Sophie and Jansie are expected to work outside the home, unlike Sophie’s mother), Jansie is also gendered strictly female and seems resigned to her life and depressed. Sophie points out that Jansie is “nosey” and that providing her with information means “the whole neighbourhood would get to know it,” implying that Jansie is a gossip, which is a traditionally feminine archetype. Readers also learn that her future job will be making biscuits at the factory, which is slightly less traditional than cooking at home, but not much. However, that is not to say that Jansie is optimistic about her fate; in fact, she is “melancholy” about Sophie’s ambitious talk of **shop**-owning, because to her it’s only a reminder of a life she will never have.

Since Sophie has trouble seeing herself in either a feminine or masculine role, she struggles to imagine her own future. Sophie’s reaction to seeing her mother working in the kitchen is to feel a “tightening in her throat” and leave the room, which shows how viscerally repellent her mother’s life is to her. She also refuses to let Jansie bring her back to earth about her likely future at the biscuit factory, showing her unwillingness to resign herself to even a less-extreme female fate. However, as a woman, Sophie can’t imagine herself in the masculine roles she clearly admires. Her own fantasies of power and independence are exaggeratedly feminine: becoming an actress or fashion designer. Furthermore, when she pictures herself running away with Geoff, he is the one driving the motorcycle while she rides along in an extravagant, fashionable dress and cape, and she imagines Danny Casey rescuing her from drudgery by taking her on a date. In both of these scenarios, Sophie is putting herself in the role of the damsel in distress, which suggests a gendered limitation on her imagination. She wants to have the freedom of a man, but she cannot imagine seizing it for herself—instead, a man must give it to her. This is unsurprising, since she has no female role models besides her mother, whose femininity she actively rejects.

The gendered limitations on Sophie’s imagination are clearest in her Danny Casey fantasy. While at first glance, Sophie’s

fantasy of dating a celebrity may seem stereotypically feminine, it soon becomes clear that she is not imagining herself as his date, but rather as him. In describing Danny Casey, she feminizes him to make him seem more like her, commenting on his “gentle eyes” and noting that he is “not as tall as you’d think” and has a “soft melodious voice.” She later makes the parallel between herself and Danny Casey more explicit, saying to herself that he is “No taller than you. No bolder than you. A prodigy,” which suggests that she is seeing Danny as being just like her in order to imagine the possibility of herself being successful and admired like Danny. Significantly, this fantasy is not meant for her own satisfaction—she is also using it to try to gain power and respect from the men in her life. This fantasy, surrounding a footballer her brother adores, is meant to impress him and to increase her own value in his eyes. She also projects her own ambition onto Danny Casey, telling her brother and father that Danny wants to open a boutique, which suggests that she believes her family might respect her own ambition more if it is shared by a man they admire.

At the end of the story, when the possibility of winning her family’s admiration through Danny Casey has dissipated, Sophie retreats into one last fantasy: she visualizes Danny sinking the ball “crisply into the goal” to “exultant approbation” from the crowd. Despite her impressive creativity and vocabulary, she is living in a society so restrictive she cannot even imagine success for herself in her own mind. Clearly, Sophie herself wants to be powerful, successful, and celebrated like Danny Casey, but the world she lives in is so restrictive to women that, at the story’s end, she cannot even imagine her own desires for herself—she imagines them for a man instead.



SYMBOLS

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



THE BOW

When Sophie comes home, she notices the “delicate bow” on her mother’s apron as her mother is stooped uncomfortably over the sink. The bow represents the incongruity between the beauty expected of women and the grim reality of their actual lives. A bow is stereotypically feminine, and despite how non-threatening a bow is, in this context it evokes the oppression that also sadly comes along with being a woman or a girl. In this time period especially, many women were unable to have lives outside of the home, so in some ways the bow might as well be a chain, trapping women to domestic servitude. It is important to note Sophie’s reaction to the bow: she feels a “tightening in her throat” and proceeds to leave the room. She sees the bow and her mother’s life and is distressed and wants to get away from the situation. The

tightening in her throat lines up with feeling restricted and unable to voice one's wants or needs, which appears to be the exact predicament her mother is in. To underscore this reading, Sophie's mother does not even have dialogue—the bow is the only distinguishing character attribute she is given, as if her entire being is wrapped around completing the dull, monotonous tasks she has been given.




THE BOUTIQUE

Sophie describes a number of potential futures for herself, and one that she dreams of the most is owning a boutique. The boutique symbolizes everything that Sophie wants for herself in the future: wealth, beauty, independence, respect, and admiration from others. Notably, this is a dream that Sophie likely cannot achieve because she is working class, and it's a dream that her family and her friend Jansie discourage and even mock, making Sophie feel that her very identity is under threat. The reasons that nobody believes in Sophie's dream have to do with both class and gender: it's unlikely that a working class girl who is expected to work in a factory could ever come up with enough money to own a boutique, and, besides, her male family members seem to find this dream frivolous, likely because of the association between fashion and femininity. Therefore, Sophie's class and gender both contribute to the widespread dismissal of her ambitions. When Sophie tells her family that the football star Danny Casey also dreams of owning a boutique, she seems to be trying to give her own dream legitimacy by associating it with a man that her family respects and admires. However, her family never comes around to giving Sophie the respect and admiration she desires, mocking her imaginative nature and her ambition until the story's end. Nonetheless, the boutique perfectly pairs Sophie's desire to be feminine with her boundless ambition, melding these two aspects of herself while everything around her seems intent on destroying them. In this way, Sophie's dream of the boutique—no matter how unlikely she is to achieve it—sustains her identity and inoculates her from her harsh reality.

Related Characters: Sophie (speaker), Jansie

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 77

Explanation and Analysis


During a conversation with her friend Jansie, Sophie reveals her ambition to own a boutique one day. When Jansie protests with practical objections, Sophie insists that she will succeed despite all obstacles, stating that she'll be a "natural" and so she will inevitably be wildly successful. This quote shows how invested Sophie is in her fantasy life and how willing she is to push the bounds of reality. She states that her rise to fame within the fashion world will be similar to Mary Quant, bypassing the facts that Mary Quant came from well-educated (and well-off) family, obtained a degree in the arts, and was an apprentice at a high-end milliner before becoming a fashion icon. In her fantasy, other people will simply see that Sophie is naturally talented and she will be bestowed success without much initial exertion on her part, and she ignores and neglects to mention anything that may be contrary to her desires. This shows the reader how entrenched this form of thinking is for her, that all evidence against her fantasies simply do not exist in her mind

☞ Their mother sighed.

Sophie watched her back stooped over the sink and wondered at the incongruity of the delicate bow which fastened her apron strings. The delicate-seeming bow and the crooked back. The evening had already blacked in the windows and the small room was steamy from the stove and cluttered with the heavy-breathing man in his vest at the table and the dirty washing piled up in the corner. Sophie felt a tightening in her throat.

Related Characters: Mother, Sophie's Father, Sophie

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 78

Explanation and Analysis

As Sophie returns home, she briefly interacts with her family members, and takes notice of her mother in the kitchen. This is one of the only glimpses the reader has of



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the National Council of Education Research and Training edition of *Flamingo* published in 2014.



Going Places Quotes

☞ "I'll be like Mary Quant," Sophie said. "I'll be a natural. They'll see it from the start. I'll have the most amazing shop this city's ever seen."

Sophie's mother, and it is a grim picture: Sophie's mother is a sort of inhuman laborer, toiling in a hot and disorderly kitchen to serve her family while never speaking a word (her only form of expression at all is a sigh). This labor is gendered female, since it is housework (specifically in the kitchen) and her mother is wearing an apron with a bow. However, Sophie also notes that this bow—which signifies a certain kind of femininity—seems at odds with the kind of femininity embodied by her mother's back-breaking, silent work in the kitchen. In other words, Sophie identifies with the glamorous aspects of femininity (as evidenced by her fascination with high fashion and symbolized by the bow), while she rejects the parts that seem oppressive. Indeed, seeing her mother in this position makes Sophie unable to breathe (a "tightening in her throat") which is a physical manifestation of her extreme emotional discomfort. Probably, she is this uncomfortable because imagining herself in her mother's position is so horrible to her that she physically has to remove herself from the situation.

☝ She was conscious of a vast world out there waiting for her and she knew instinctively that she would feel as at home there as in the city which had always been her home. It expectantly awaited her arrival. She saw herself riding there behind Geoff. He wore new, shining black leathers and she a yellow dress with a kind of cape that flew out behind.

Related Characters: Sophie, Geoff

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 79



Explanation and Analysis

This glimpse into Sophie's fantasy life indicates what her ideal life might be. Some aspects of her fantasy are easily identifiable from what readers have already learned about her: she is drawn to fashion and freedom. Notably, though, she is not in the driver's seat (so to speak) of her own fantasy: Geoff is the one rescuing her from her dreary life by whisking her away on his motorcycle. It's totally understandable that Sophie would want to leave her home and find a new home out in the world (since her family life seems stifling and unpleasant), but it's notable that this fantasy does not involve her leaving her family altogether. Not only does she envision Geoff remaining, but she also envisions him being her savior, which shows how wedded she is to her family even as she resents them and how powerless she herself feels as a woman (she imagines a man

rescuing her instead of her rescuing herself). It is also telling that Sophie wants the world to recognize her. Not only does she feel like she is waiting to experience the world, but she assumes that the world is waiting to experience her. While that may initially seem narcissistic, it's important to remember that Sophie appears to have not received recognition of any kind in her life. She is so desperate to be seen that imagining herself as being awaited by the world is comforting to her.

☝ Her father grimaced. "Where'd you hear that?"...He muttered something inaudible and dragged himself round in his chair. "This another of your wild stories?"... "One of these days you're going to talk yourself into a load of trouble," her father said aggressively.

Related Characters: Sophie's Father (speaker), Sophie

Related Themes:  



Page Number: 80

Explanation and Analysis

This quote provides the reader with a great deal of information about the characters and their typical patterns of interacting with one another. It is clear that Sophie's father doubts his daughter when he learns about her alleged encounter with Danny Casey, believing her to be a habitual liar. This likely has been going on for some time as evidenced by his level of frustration and usage of the word "another"—he's also right, in a sense, since she has made up the story about Danny Casey to impress Geoff. This moment also clearly sets up her father as an antagonist. Muttering something under his breath and turning around to insult Sophie to her face is a sign of aggression and malice, something most people would be afraid of, especially coming from an authority figure. He goes on further to express what difficulties may lie ahead of Sophie due to her behaviors. This is ambiguously worded, allowing for the possibility that this line is a direct threat. Sophie views her father as a threat, and his hostile behavior here shows the reader why.

☝ There was a wooden bench beneath a solitary elm where lovers sometimes came. She sat down to wait. It was the perfect place, she had always thought so, for a meeting of this kind. For those who wished not to be observed. She knew he would approve.

Related Characters: Sophie's Father, Geoff, Danny Casey, Sophie

Related Themes:  



Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Sophie has gone to wait for her (imagined) date with Danny Casey in a picturesque spot. There are a number of important elements in this quote. The bench is sometimes frequented by lovers, yet there is a solitary elm—a tree that has been alone for quite some time. This foreshadows how Sophie's intention may be romantic or communal, but her reality is lonely. She also notes that this is a place for people who do not want to be seen, which is interesting because the entire point of the Danny Casey story was for other people (her family) to bear witness to what happened in some way. It seems as though the only reason one would not want to be seen with a famous person would be if they never showed up, so maybe Sophie still knows on some level that he won't be there. There is also interesting language in the part about knowing "he would approve"—it's not clear here if she means Danny Casey, Geoff, or her father, and it's plausible that she could be talking about all three.

●● I remember Geoff saying he would never come, and how none of them believed me when I told them. I wonder what will I do, what can I tell them now if he doesn't come? But we know how it was, Danny and me — that's the main thing. How can you help what people choose to believe? But all the same, it makes me despondent, this knowing I'll never be able to show them they're wrong to doubt me.

Related Characters: Sophie (speaker), Geoff, Danny Casey

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 84

Explanation and Analysis

When Sophie realizes that Danny Casey is not coming for their date, she becomes distressed. This quote makes it very clear that Sophie is not upset about Danny Casey, but rather about her brother and her family learning that she made the story about Danny Casey up. It's clear, then, that this fantasy was not primarily romantic: it was an attempt to impress her family and thereby earn their respect and

admiration. As she does when she's upset, Sophie moves into fantasizing about her and Danny knowing "how it was" as an attempt to comfort herself, but her main concern appears to be her extreme sadness at the thought that her family will continue to doubt her. For Sophie, not being believed is devastating, and it likely contributes to her feelings of not being understood or respected. Unfortunately, Sophie's attempt to make her family believe in her probably backfired, since now they will know that Danny Casey was only a fantasy. Nonetheless, creating and discussing her fantasies appears to be Sophie's primary coping strategy, so expecting her to change this behavior while under stress (and not receiving any sort of encouragement) is unlikely. Sophie is left with sadness knowing that she will continue to be perceived in a way that she is unhappy with and that she has no idea what she needs to do to remedy this.

●● "Excuse me, but aren't you Danny Casey?"

Coming through the arcade she pictured him again outside Royce's.

He turns, reddening slightly. "Yes, that's right."

"I watch you every week, with my dad and my brothers. We think you're great."

Related Characters: Danny Casey, Sophie (speaker), Geoff

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 84



Explanation and Analysis

As Sophie retreats back into her Danny Casey fantasy, readers learn more about the importance of this interaction for her. Her fantasy of Danny Casey is not excited about his fame; rather, when she approaches him he is embarrassed, not emboldened. It is again made clear that this fantasy is not just about Sophie, but about her family. She makes it apparent to Danny Casey that watching him play is a family affair, and that it is not just she who finds him great. Instead, she uses the word *we*, signifying that she is united with her family (which is perhaps her dearest fantasy of all). Danny Casey's greatness appears to be the only thing that unites her with her family, which then would provide more evidence for her using the Danny Casey fantasy to build a connection with her family.

●● No taller than you. No bolder than you. The prodigy. The innocent genius. The great Danny Casey.

And she saw it all again, last Saturday — saw him ghost past the lumbering defenders, heard the fifty thousand catch their breath as he hovered momentarily over the ball, and then the explosion of sound as he struck it crisply into the goal, the sudden thunderous eruption of exultant approbation.

Related Characters: Sophie (speaker), Danny Casey

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 85

Explanation and Analysis

Sophie does not describe a football star in a manner one might expect, as people often remark on an athlete's greater-than-average size or boldness or skill. However,

Sophie tells readers that Danny Casey is ordinary in some ways—notably, ways that Sophie herself is likely to be ordinary. The language she uses to describe Danny Casey may very well be how she would describe herself, as a young, innocent genius. By making the two of them more alike, it then becomes easier to project herself onto his success and notoriety. She describes Danny Casey's success in vivid detail, harkening back to her fantasy of being on a motorcycle with Geoff. It has the same basic ideas (fame and recognition and the approval of her family), but she has moved herself out of the fantasy completely here. As her plan for telling the Danny Casey story backfired, she is even further away from her family's approval than when she started and it becomes harder for her to imagine connection with them, despite having such a rich fantasy life.



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.

GOING PLACES

On their way home from school, Sophie informs her friend Jansie that one day she will own a **boutique**. Skeptical, Jansie tells Sophie that she would need money, but Sophie is undeterred. She says she'll be a manager first, which Jansie finds implausible, but Sophie is confident that her natural talent will land her "the most amazing shop this city's ever seen."

The first thing readers learn about Sophie is her desire for a better future through a glamorous (though unrealistic) career. And although readers understand that it's unlikely that her dreams will become reality, it's also clear that she has a determined spirit and an unwillingness to back away from her dreams. Sophie's dreams are not ignorant of reality—they seem to exist in defiance of a reality that Jansie is trying to assert.



Jansie, who knows that both she and Sophie are destined to work at the biscuit factory, feels sad when Sophie talks like this, and she asks Sophie to "be sensible," since shop work isn't lucrative and Sophie's father would never allow it. Sophie replies that maybe she will be an actress, since there's "real money in that." She muses that she could have a **boutique** or be a fashion designer on the side, since actresses don't work full time.

The two girls clearly come from a working-class background, and it's important to Sophie's family that she make an income and contribute to their bills. This is a practical reason for Sophie not to pursue her dreams, which are financially riskier than working at the biscuit factory. While Jansie appears to have accepted this depressing reality, Sophie continues to push back. Deciding to become a famous actress for money makes Sophie seem delusional.



Walking into her home, Sophie announces that if she ever comes into money, she will buy a **boutique**. Her father replies that, if she had money, she would "buy us a blessed decent house to live in, thank you very much." Sophie's little brother Derek quips that Sophie "thinks money grows on trees," and their mother sighs. Sophie watches her mother "stooped over the sink," noticing the "incongruity" between the "delicate **bow**" on her apron strings and her "crooked back." The "small room" is "cluttered" with her "heavy-breathing" father and the "dirty washing piled up in the corner." Feeling a "tightening in her throat," Sophie goes to find her older brother, Geoff.

Like Jansie, Sophie's family shuts down her dreams, underscoring that Sophie's ambitions are not a result of her not being exposed to the practical realities of her situation—she is actively in defiance of those who want to rein her in. Sophie appears most miserable when considering her mother's life, which begins to show that Sophie has no positive female role models. She cannot imagine a life as an adult woman that she would want to live, so she falls into clichés of adult femininity: being an actress or a fashion designer, for instance.



Geoff, an "apprentice mechanic," is in the next room working on a part of his motorcycle. Every day he travels to the "far side of town" for work, and—since he is "almost grown up"—Sophie suspects that there are parts of his life he doesn't tell her about. In fact, he rarely speaks at all, and Sophie is "jealous of his silence." When he isn't speaking, it seems as though he is "away somewhere...she had never been," places that fascinate Sophie because they are "out of reach" to her.

Geoff seems to have the freedom that Sophie desires. While Sophie is clearly envious, Geoff does not seem aware of his sister's admiration, further showing her isolation from her family. Geoff is also notably masculine in both his interests and lack of communication, seeming to be a strong but silent type. The fact that Sophie admires Geoff but chafes at the restricted lives that Jansie and Sophie's mother accept suggests that freedom is a quality Sophie associates with men, not women.



Sophie also imagines that Geoff is secretly friends with “exotic, interesting people,” although she concedes that he is “quiet” and doesn’t “make new friends easily.” Still, she longs for Geoff to like her enough to “take her with him.” She is conscious of a “vast world out there waiting for her,” and she knows that she will feel at home there. In her mind, she sees herself riding behind Geoff on his motorcycle with him wearing “shining black leathers” and her “a yellow dress with a kind of cape.” She imagines applause as “the world [rises] to greet them.”

Sophie uses her vivid imagination to concoct a fantasy of her brother as a charismatic well-dressed savior. She is projecting a number of her desires (freedom, fame, aesthetics) onto him, and her acknowledgement that he doesn't make new friends easily hints that she might be misunderstanding Geoff in the same way her family misunderstands her. It's notable that Sophie imagines Geoff saving her rather than her saving herself: she is so conditioned to understand women as helpless and less free than men that, even in her fantasies, a man has to help her.



As Geoff works on the motorcycle, Sophie says “I met Danny Casey.” Geoff does not believe her, and then he asks if she has told their father. This upsets Sophie, because she wants Geoff to understand that he is “the first” to hear her secrets. She claims that she met Danny Casey while out shopping, and when Geoff asks what he looked like, Sophie notes that he has “gentle eyes” and is “not as tall as you’d think.”

In an attempt to bond with Geoff, Sophie invents a secret to share with him: that she met his favorite football player. She believes this will connect them in two ways, first by fostering a closeness based on sharing secrets, and second by suggesting that Danny Casey finds Sophie worthwhile, thereby encouraging Geoff himself to find Sophie worthwhile. It is notable that she attributes traditionally feminine characteristics to Danny, making him more like herself.



In the living room, Geoff tells their father about Sophie meeting Danny Casey. Their father turns his “thick neck” to look at Sophie with “disdain.” He and Geoff argue about how good at football Danny Casey is (with her father suggesting that Casey is too young to play professionally) when Sophie interjects that Danny Casey is going to “buy a **shop**.” Grimacing, Sophie’s father asks if this is another of her “wild stories,” and Geoff defends her. Their father tells Sophie that someday she is going to “talk [herself] into a load of trouble,” and he says that Geoff doesn’t believe her, “though he’d like to.”

Once their father is made aware of the Danny Casey story he reacts with cruelty towards both children, showing how difficult it must be to grow up in that household. Sophie brings up Danny Casey wanting to buy a shop, which ties back into her boutique idea. If her family saw Danny Casey as a successful shop owner, then Sophie's dreams may seem less outrageous and foolish and more worthy of respect.



In Geoff’s bedroom, which is full of posters of Danny Casey, Sophie swears Geoff to secrecy about something, saying that their dad would “murder” her. Geoff protests that he would only murder Sophie if he believed her, and Danny Casey “must have strings of girls.” Sophie protests that Danny Casey “isn’t like that”—he’s “quiet,” and Sophie was the one who approached him. She tells Geoff that she asked if he was Danny Casey and he looked surprised, and then when she asked for an autograph, they couldn’t find a pen, so they talked about clothes for a while. She said he seemed “lonely” being so far from Ireland, and he asked if she would meet him next week to get the autograph.

Sophie clearly wants to impress and be liked by her older brother, as she tries to win his favor by sharing her “secrets” and convincing him that a hero of his found her interesting enough to interact with. She again is making Danny seem like herself by bringing up feelings of loneliness (which she likely struggles with herself) and by making their conversation about fashion: the Danny Casey story is just a way for her to communicate her wants and needs to her family.



“You do believe me now, don’t you?” Sophie asks Geoff. She watches him put on a “shiny and shapeless” jacket and wishes to herself that he paid attention to his looks and cared about clothes. He tells her that the story is the “unlikeliest thing he ever heard.”

Sophie appears to be desperate for her brother’s approval, and unfortunately does not receive it. Rather, like the rest of her family, Geoff disbelieves her. It’s notable here that Geoff’s clothes aren’t fashionable: in Sophie’s previous fantasy of Geoff whisking her away on his motorcycle, his clothes are described as being chic, but that is not Geoff’s reality. This indicates that Sophie is not seeing Geoff for who he is.



On Saturday, Sophie’s whole family attends a football match, and their team wins with Danny Casey scoring the final goal. Sophie “glow[s] with pride” and Geoff is “ecstatic.” Their father goes to the pub to celebrate.

It seems as though the only time everyone in the family is happy or even content is when Danny Casey is playing well and their team wins. This makes it more understandable why Sophie would grasp onto Danny Casey as a way to win her family’s approval: they do not appear happy or content with anyone or anything else.



The following week, Jansie asks Sophie about meeting Danny Casey, and Sophie is “startled” and dismayed. This is a “Geoff thing, not a Jansie thing,” she thinks, cursing Geoff for sharing what was meant to be “something special just between them” with Jansie, who gossips to the whole neighborhood. Sophie says that it’s a secret, since she wants to keep it from her dad. When Jansie says she would think Sophie’s father would be pleased, Sophie realizes that Geoff didn’t tell Jansie about the date, and she is relieved, thinking that Geoff “believe[s] in her after all” and that “some things might be sacred.” Jansie says she wishes she had been there to meet Danny Casey, but Sophie dismisses it as a “little thing, really.”

To her disappointment, Sophie learns that her tale of Danny Casey has spread to her friend Jansie. She clearly thinks of her story as meant for Geoff, and not her friend. This could be related to gender, as Jansie is presented in a quite feminine manner as compared to Geoff. Sophie’s discomfort may also be due to the Danny Casey story being meant to bring her closer to her brother and her family. This makes Jansie’s opinion irrelevant and explains why Sophie minimizes the story instead of adding more details like she did with her brother.



After dark, Sophie walks by the canal to “a wooden bench beneath a solitary elm where lovers sometimes came.” She thinks that it’s the “perfect place” for a date, and she knows that Danny Casey would approve. While she waits, she imagines him appearing, and “some time elapse[s]” before she begins to entertain the possibility of him not coming.

Sophie, clouded with thoughts of gaining approval from a surrogate authority figure, waits for Danny Casey for some time before acknowledging he may not arrive. The fact that she seems to expect him to show up (even though she invented their date in the first place) paints her as delusional to a troubling extent. This is no longer mere escapism: she’s out in the world expecting her fantasy to come true.



Sophie wishes fervently that Danny Casey would come, but she feels “pangs of doubt.” She remembers Geoff telling her that Danny Casey “would never come” and “how none of them believed me when I told them.” Sophie wonders what she’ll tell them if Danny Casey doesn’t come. Even though “we know how it was, Danny and me,” Sophie still becomes “despondent” at knowing that she’ll “never be able to show them they’re wrong to doubt me.”

In this crucial passage, Sophie reacts to realizing that Danny Casey won’t come. Instead of being distressed that she won’t have a romance with a famous man, Sophie’s distress centers on her family: she’s distraught that she won’t be able to tell them about her date and thereby earn their respect. Clearly, this fantasy was not about romantic fulfillment for her—it was about showing her family that she is worthy of respect and admiration.



Sophie is sad, which is a “hard burden to carry.” She sits waiting and “knowing he won’t come,” and she “can see the future”: her family will doubt her, as “they always have,” so she will have to “hold up [her] head remembering how it was.” She imagines the “slow walk home” and Geoff’s “disappointed face” when she tells him Danny Casey didn’t come. He’ll slam the door, but Sophie will tell herself that she and Danny “know how it was.”

As Sophie imagines the scorn from her family she will likely endure when she gets home, she attempts to comfort herself by retreating back into fantasy, imagining Danny’s approval as a way to brace herself for her family’s rejection. Sophie’s family’s “doubt” of her seems to be what bothers her the most: she wants them to trust her and think of her as capable and powerful, but she cannot figure out how to convince them of this.



Walking home, Sophie climbs “crumbling steps” and notices her dad’s bike propped against a wall by the pub. She’s glad that he won’t be there when she arrives home.

The one piece of reality Sophie can use to comfort herself is that her father will not be home for her to face. For Sophie, it is easier to deal with a father drunk at a pub than one who actually interacts with her, which shows how bleak her real life is. It’s no wonder that Sophie retreats into fantasy so often.



Sophie pictures herself meeting Danny Casey at the **shops** again. She asks him for an autograph, and she notices that his eyes are “on the same level” as her own, he smiles “shyly,” and his eyes are “gentle, almost afraid.” Danny Casey runs his eyes over Sophie and she looks at him, “breathless.” After he’s gone, she stands in the store remembering him: he’s “No taller than you. No bolder than you. The prodigy. The innocent genius.” She remembers the previous Saturday as he maneuvered the ball into the goal to an “eruption of exultant approbation.”

Sophie retreats one last time into the Danny Casey fantasy. Unable to cope with the sadness and disappointment in her life, she projects herself onto the footballer, imagining qualities (shy, gentle, “innocent genius” who is no greater than herself) that could apply to her, too. She thinks back to his goal in the game that made her family so happy, as it seems to be the only thing that would garner their approval and celebration. Even in her vivid imagination, there is no room for her to be accepted for who she is, and no path to gain her family’s admiration—she imagines herself as Danny Casey because it seems like the only way to envision pleasing them.





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