My Cousin Rachel

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DAPHNE DU MAURIER

Daphne du Maurier was born in London to Muriel Beaumont, an actress, and Sir Gerald du Maurier, a famous actor and manager. Du Maurier's family connections (her paternal grandfather was renowned cartoonist and author George du Maurier, and her paternal first cousins were the Llewelyn Davies boys, who inspired the children's classic *Peter Pan*) helped launch du Maurier's early success as a writer. Despite the popularity of her work, du Maurier chose to live away from the spotlight, spending most of her life in Cornwall in the west of England, where she rented, restored, and fell in love with the historic estate of Menabily, widely known as a template for Manderley, the setting of du Maurier's most famous novel, *Rebecca*. Du Maurier married Lieutenant General Frederick Browning in 1932, and the pair had three children, whom they raised at Menabily. Du Maurier wrestled with her sexuality and her gender throughout her life. Though she remained married to her husband until his death, she harbored an unrequited love for Ellen Doubleday (the wife of her American publisher and the model for the character of Rachel Ashley) and likely had an affair with actress Gertrude Lawrence. As a child, du Maurier created a male alter ego named Eric Avon, and into adulthood she felt she was a "disembodied spirit," made up of a female self and a male self, who was responsible for her creative energy. Du Maurier penned more than ten novels, several collections of stories, and many works of nonfiction, including a memoir of her father. She was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1969, and she died in 1989 at her home in Cornwall, at the age of eighty-one.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Du Maurier deliberately keeps the temporal and geographical settings of the novel ambiguous. The novel is insular in scope, with most of the action taking place at the Ashley estate, or in the mind of the narrator, Philip. Because of these factors, the novel does not reference specific historical events. However, the time in which *My Cousin Rachel* was written and published does impact some of the attitudes that appear in the novel, especially those about gender. *My Cousin Rachel* was published in 1951, placing it in the midst of a western world bending to stifling, traditional gender roles. Such conformist attitudes are particularly clear in Ambrose and Philip, who both have staunchly misogynistic views of women and feel perplexed (and even threatened) by Rachel's independence and sexuality, which goes against the societal grain. Du Maurier's novel was published a decade before the aptly titled "sexual revolution," which began in the United States in the 1960s but took an additional ten to twenty years before it was embraced in Britain.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Du Maurier's most famous novel, *Rebecca* (published in 1938), explores many similar themes to *My Cousin Rachel*, including sexuality, identity, and the social status of women. Like *My Cousin Rachel*, *Rebecca* features a mysterious female lead, the late Mrs. Rebecca de Winter. As modern Gothic fiction, Du Maurier's work has its roots in the Gothic tradition of the late eighteenth century, which is epitomized by the novels of Ann Radcliffe, author of *The Italian* and *The Romance of the Forest*, among others. Du Maurier's attention to her character's psychologies is particularly reminiscent of Charlotte Brontë's classic *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847. Other writers of modern Gothic fiction include Eleanor Hibbert (pen name Victoria Holt), author of *Mistress of Mellyn*, and Phyllis A. Whitney.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *My Cousin Rachel*
- **Where Written:** Cornwall, England
- **When Published:** 1951
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Modern Gothic
- **Setting:** The Ashley estate, somewhere along the Cornish coast in western England; the villa Sangalletti, in Florence, Italy
- **Climax:** When Philip and Rachel have sex, which occurs in the early morning hours of Philip's twenty-fifth birthday
- **Antagonist:** The novel does not have a clear antagonist. Philip, through whose eyes the reader sees the action of the novel, wavers between viewing Rachel as a good woman who has been manipulated by her advisor, Signor Rainaldi, and a scheming villainess. Du Maurier never reveals whether Rachel did, in fact, murder Ambrose Ashley and attempt to do the same to Philip, instead leaving it in the reader's hands to pronounce judgment on the mysterious Rachel.
- **Point of View:** First-person

EXTRA CREDIT

Du Maurier: A Director's Muse. Du Maurier's writing has long been admired for its "cinematic" quality. Alfred Hitchcock directed film versions of two of du Maurier's novels, *Rebecca* and *Jamaica Inn*. In addition, his 1963 classic, *The Birds*, is based on du Maurier's short story of the same name. Most recently, Roger Michell directed a 2017 adaptation of *My Cousin Rachel*,

a character he describes thus: "as exotic as a glass of iced prosecco, as sweet as panettone, as dangerous as a stiletto."

Walking in Rachel's Footsteps. The "My Cousin Rachel Walk" is a five-mile trail along the Cornish coastline that encompasses some of the setting of the novel, along several locations central to du Maurier's *Rebecca*.

PLOT SUMMARY

Twenty-five-year-old Philip Ashley narrates the novel, prompted to reflect on the events of the past year by his guilt over the death of his cousin Rachel Ashley. An orphan, Philip grew up on a large estate in Cornwall, raised by his beloved older cousin Ambrose. After Philip graduated from university, Ambrose began spending winters abroad as treatment for his rheumatism. On one such winter, when Philip is twenty-four, Ambrose travels to Florence, Italy. Philip soon receives a **letter** from Ambrose saying that he has met and married an Ashley family relative named Rachel, the former Contessa Sangalletti. Ambrose seems completely taken with Rachel, but within a few months the tone of his letters shifts: he has begun suffering from extreme headaches, and he refers to Rachel as "my torment." Alarmed, Philip consults with his godfather and guardian, Nick Kendall, who recommends Philip travel to Italy immediately.

In Florence, Philip learns that Ambrose has recently died, allegedly of a brain tumor, and that Rachel is nowhere to be found. Swearing vengeance on Rachel, whom he believes to have somehow contributed to Ambrose's death, Philip returns to Cornwall. Within a few weeks, Philip learns that Rachel has just arrived in Plymouth, England. Determined to question her about Ambrose's final days, he invites his cousin Rachel to stay with him. The servants at the Ashley estate, particularly the steward, Seecombe, are kind to Rachel; unlike them, Rachel has *not* been provided for in Ambrose's will, which bequeaths the estate to Philip on his twenty-fifth birthday.

Over the ensuing months, Philip and Rachel bond over their shared love of Ambrose, and Philip begins to enjoy Rachel's presence at the house, even though he set out to hate her. He even applies to Nick Kendall, his legal guardian until his birthday, with a request to provide Rachel a monthly allowance, since no other financial provision is made for her in Ambrose's will. When Rachel learns of this allowance, she is initially offended because she feels Philip is patronizing her. However, she eventually reconciles to the idea, and even kisses Philip (his first kiss), which stuns him.

The weeks pass, and Philip gradually becomes infatuated with Rachel. One day, while sorting through Ambrose's old books, Philip finds an unfinished letter in which Ambrose accuses Rachel of extravagant spending and kleptomania (the uncontrollable impulse to steal). Philip is disturbed by the letter, but he ultimately puts it out of his mind. By December, Philip is wholeheartedly in love with Rachel. He decides to throw a Christmas party at the estate, and withdraws a family heirloom, a **pearl collar**, from the bank to give to Rachel as a present. At the dinner, Nick Kendall confronts Philip. He is concerned by Philip's decision to give Rachel the necklace. Not only does Philip not have the legal right to remove the family jewels from the bank, since he is not yet twenty-five, but the necklace also holds traditional and superstitious value: Ashley women only wear it on the occasion of their wedding. Furthermore, Kendall tells Philip that he has learned Rachel has overdrawn her monthly allowance, and he is concerned that she may be sending money out of the country. Kendall and Philip argue, but when Rachel appears, she calmly cedes the necklace to Kendall.

As the New Year begins, Philip decides to make improvements to the house, both to compliment the additions Rachel has already made to the garden, and to annoy Nick Kendall with the extravagant bills. One day in early spring, he is summoned to the home of a tenant, to whom Philip had given one of Ambrose's old coats as a Christmas gift. The tenant has found a letter inside the coat. In it, Ambrose writes that, ever since a miscarriage she suffered, Rachel has become increasingly reckless about money. Her friend and advisor, Rainaldi (whom Ambrose suspects might also be her lover), has also begun asking some disturbing, prying questions about Ambrose's will. Ambrose has written a new version of the will that bequeaths the estate to Rachel, but he has left it unsigned because he is worried about her spending habits. Ambrose concludes the letter with his fears that Rachel and Rainaldi are conspiring to poison him. Torn between his loyalty to Ambrose and his newfound love of Rachel, Philip buries the letter in the woods. He does, however, question Rachel about the alternate will and learns she has a copy of it in her possession. Philip resolves to turn the estate over to Rachel on his twenty-fifth birthday (under the condition that she not remarry); this way, she will be compelled to stay with him rather than return to Florence.

Philip's birthday, April 1, draws near. The document passing the estate to Rachel has been drawn up, and Philip has also removed the entire family jewel collection from the bank. On the eve of his birthday, Philip visits Rachel's room and presents her with the lavish jewels. He comes close to confessing his love for her, but can't quite find the words. In the early morning hours of Philip's birthday, he and Rachel have sex. At his birthday dinner later, a drunken Philip announces to the Kendalls that he and Rachel are engaged to be married. Appalled, Rachel makes an excuse and diverts the conversation. Later that night, Philip and Rachel quarrel: he insists she promised to marry him by having sex with him, and Rachel maintains she gave no such promise. She claims that Philip misinterpreted her actions, as she only meant to thank him for

the jewels. Philip becomes so enraged that he strangles Rachel, and demands she agree to marry him. Rachel escapes without saying anything, and the next day invites Mary Pascoe, the vicar's daughter, to stay with her in the house for protection.

The next day, Philip discusses matters with his childhood friend, Louise Kendall, who is his godfather's daughter. She suggests that Rachel has been after Philip's money all along, and that he spared her the trouble of having to embezzle by transferring the entire property to her. Philip can't bring himself to believe this. After spending some time in the rain that afternoon, Philip becomes gravely ill. Rachel spends five weeks nursing him back to health, but plans to leave for Italy as soon as he is well. Desperate to keep Rachel in England, Philip rifles through Rachel's desk, searching for a letter he knows her to have received from Rainaldi, which he thinks might reveal something about Rachel's plans. Instead, Philip finds an envelope filled with poisonous laburnum seeds, and realizes Rachel might be poisoning him with the tea (tisane) she makes him each night.

The following morning, Philip receives warning from one of his construction workers that the new bridge they have built over the sunken garden will not yet bear weight. When Rachel says she will be taking a walk in the garden, Philip does not warn her about the bridge. Instead, he convinces Louise Kendall to help him search Rachel's room for proof that she has been poisoning him; they are unable to find anything. Suddenly, Philip asks Louise to ring for help, as "there may have been an accident, to Rachel." Louise looks at him in horror, and Philip runs outside. He finds Rachel lying on the stones, under the collapsed bridge. He holds her and she opens her **eyes** in what Philip believes is recognition. Rachel calls Philip "Ambrose," and then dies.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Philip Ashley – Philip Ashley is the novel's narrator and protagonist. Philip was orphaned at a young age: his father died fighting the French in an unspecified war, and his mother lived only five months longer than her husband. Since he was eighteen months old, Philip has grown up under the care of his beloved older cousin, Ambrose Ashley, whom he loves as a father. Philip has inherited many of Ambrose's views of the world, including his opinion that women are simple-minded and annoying. Philip has never known a woman aside from his childhood friend, Louise Kendall, and Mrs. Pascoe, the vicar's annoying wife. Consequently, he is at a loss when he meets Rachel Ashley, Ambrose's beautiful Italian widow. However, Philip is young and naïve, and he quickly finds himself beguiled by Rachel, though he had originally sworn to hate her forever. Over the course of the novel, Philip's infatuation with Rachel begins to reveal itself in a dominating, violent attitude. Philip becomes obsessed with "owning" Rachel, even if it means physically hurting her in order to do so. Du Maurier frequently uses dramatic irony—where the reader knows something the main character does not—to show how Philip's obsession with Rachel blinds him to reality. Du Maurier depicts Philip as a sympathetic yet deeply troubled character. Philip may be young and rather foolish, but du Maurier makes clear that this is not an excuse for his behavior throughout the novel.

Rachel Ashley – Rachel Ashley is the novel's mysterious anti-heroine. Though she grew up in Italy, Rachel is distantly related to the Ashley family, having been born of an English father and an Italian mother. Rachel's father, a heavy spender, died when she was sixteen, leaving his wife and daughter penniless. Rachel married the Count Sangalletti when she was twenty-one, and, after his death, took Ambrose Ashley as a second husband. After Ambrose's death, Rachel returns to England and takes up residence at the Ashley estate in Cornwall, where she befriends and ultimately seduces Philip Ashley. At thirty-five, Rachel is perceptive, self-assured, and fully comfortable with her open sexuality. Though small in stature, Rachel has a bold personality and is physically distinguished by her fine **eyes** and her delicate **hands**. Du Maurier never reveals whether Rachel is guilty of having murdered her husbands, and attempting to kill Philip via poison. However, the author also refuses to completely demonize Rachel, instead rendering her as a complex, complete, and captivating character. Because the novel is narrated from Philip's perspective, the reader is limited in how much they can know about Rachel, making her an even more elusive character.

Ambrose Ashley – Ambrose Ashley is Philip's maternal cousin and father figure. Twenty years Philip's senior, Ambrose has raised Philip as a son since the deaths of Philip's parents. Because he suffers from rheumatism, Ambrose spends his winters abroad. It is on one such excursion that Ambrose meets, falls for, and marries Rachel Ashley in Italy. Ambrose dies shortly after his marriage, in mysterious circumstances: he may have been suffering from a genetic brain tumor (as his own father did), or Rachel may have poisoned him. The reader only sees Ambrose once; all other details about Ambrose are revealed through Philip's memories, or Rachel's. Though du Maurier shows Ambrose as being a caring "parent" to Philip, she also emphasizes his hatred of women. This makes it difficult for the reader to fully sympathize with Ambrose, thus complicating the issue of whether the reader ultimately believes Ambrose's written claims that Rachel is evil.

Signor Rainaldi – Signor Rainaldi is Rachel's close friend and advisor, who is also Italian. Ambrose and Philip both suspect Rainaldi of being in love with Rachel. Rainaldi is depicted as self-absorbed and condescending, but it is difficult for the reader to gauge whether Philip is correct in thinking Rainaldi to also be cold and sinister, or if he is just jealous and paranoid.

Nick Kendall – Nick Kendall is Philip's godfather and legal guardian, an old friend of Ambrose's, and the father of Louise.

Kendall is practical and level-headed; he finds both Philip's original hatred of Rachel and his later rapturous love of her to be alarming. Throughout the novel, Kendall tries his best to counsel Philip and help him moderate his behavior. However, Philip soon becomes resentful of Kendall's advice, and the fact that Ambrose's will designates Kendall guardian of Philip and of the Ashley property until Philip's twenty-fifth birthday. Many of the impetuous actions Philip takes throughout the novel, including removing the **pearl collar** from the bank and gifting it to Rachel, are partially motivated by a desire to spite his godfather.

Miss Mary Pascoe – The daughter of Mr. Pascoe and Mrs. Pascoe. After Philip physically assaults Rachel in an attempt to convince her to marry him, Rachel invites Mary to stay at the Ashley estate as a protector. Though Mary herself is sympathetically portrayed, Philip finds her as annoying as her mother, and is insulted by her presence at his home.

Seecombe – Steward at the Ashley estate. Seecombe has long been a servant of the Ashley family, and he is initially as displeased as Philip to hear of Ambrose's marriage to Rachel, as there has traditionally not been a woman (servant or gentlewoman) living on the estate. However, Seecombe soon warms to Rachel when he learns that she, unlike the family servants, has not been provided for in Ambrose's will. Eventually, Philip follows Seecombe's lead in becoming enthusiastic about finally having a mistress in the Ashley home.

Tamlyn – Head gardener at the Ashley estate. Tamlyn works closely with Rachel on her plans for developing the gardens. He is also the person who draws Philip's attention to the presence of laburnum trees on the estate's grounds, as well as to the poisonous qualities of their seedpods—which, the story implies, Rachel may be using to poison Philip and may have used to poison Ambrose, since the same laburnum trees decorated her villa in Italy.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Louise Kendall – Nick Kendall's daughter, and Philip's childhood friend. Louise is kind, savvy, and incredibly loyal to Philip. Though she never expresses her feelings, Louise appears to in love with Philip, but he refuses to see her as anything but a childhood friend.

Mr. Hubert Pascoe – The vicar. Like Mrs. Pascoe, Mr. Pascoe is impressed by Rachel. Though Mr. Pascoe is old and married, Philip reaches a state of such infatuation with Rachel that he is annoyed when Rachel pays attention to the vicar at Sunday dinners, since he views him as competition.

Mrs. Pascoe – The wife of Mr. Pascoe, the vicar. Mrs. Pascoe likes to talk, and is immediately fond of Rachel. Philip's misogynistic views are most clearly visible in his opinion of Mrs. Pascoe, whom he finds annoying and overly talkative.

Giuseppe – Servant at the Villa Sangalletti. Giuseppe and his wife are very kind to Philip when he visits the Italian villa. In a **letter** from Ambrose, Philip later finds out that Ambrose also had a high opinion of Giuseppe's loyalty and compassion.

Count Sangalletti – Rachel's first husband. An Italian nobleman, Sangalletti was rumored to have been an extravagant spender. Following his death (allegedly in a duel with one of Rachel's lovers), Sangalletti left Rachel with substantial debt, which Ambrose (Rachel's second husband) eventually paid off.

Don – Philip's fourteen-year-old dog, given to him by Ambrose on Philip's tenth birthday. Don is paralyzed in a construction accident at the Ashley estate, while Philip is away from the house. Rachel cares for Don tenderly and even helps Philip bury him when the dog passes away.

Aunt Phoebe – The blue room in the Ashley estate, where Rachel stays, used to belong to Philip's Aunt Phoebe. According to Rachel, Phoebe went mad after pining for a curate who didn't love her. When she was fifty-four, she married another curate but died on her wedding night because of "shock."

Wellington – Coachman at the Ashley estate.

John – Servant boy at the Ashley estate.

Jimmy – The young groom at the Ashley estate.

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.

GUILT

At the core of *My Cousin Rachel* lies a pair of questions: Did Rachel kill her husband, Ambrose? And, did Philip kill Rachel? The murky concept of guilt drives the novel forward, as Philip struggles to reconcile his loyalty to his beloved cousin Ambrose with his growing infatuation with Rachel, Ambrose's widow. However, the question of guilt is more than just a plot mechanism propelling the story. Over the course of the novel, du Maurier subversively reveals how guilt is more a social construct than a moral absolute. Through the character of Rachel (and, to a lesser degree, Philip), du Maurier argues that guilt exists on a spectrum; people are neither wholly guilty nor wholly innocent. Du Maurier also shows that the very notion of guilt is powerfully inflected by social norms. Because society has much more rigid definitions of acceptable female behavior than it does of male behavior, women like Rachel who do not conform to societal expectations are judged much more harshly when they do morally (rather than socially) transgress.

While her characters tend to think in black-and-white terms, du Maurier shows that guilt actually exists on a spectrum, and the spectrum itself differs depending on a person's gender. Twenty-five-year-old Philip begins narrating the novel in the wake of Rachel's death: "every day," he says, "haunted still by doubt, I ask myself a question which I cannot answer. Was Rachel innocent or guilty? Maybe I shall learn that too, in purgatory." Ostensibly, Philip is referring to Ambrose's death; the novel never makes it clear whether Ambrose died of a hereditary brain tumor, or if Rachel poisoned him using laburnum seeds. On a deeper level, though, Philip is gesturing at the myriad ways that Rachel defies societal convention: she is "guilty" of having extramarital sex, of not wanting to remarry, and of being enterprising and self-sufficient. (Philip himself is practically stunned by Rachel's suggestion that she give Italian lessons to the estate workers as a means of financially supporting herself.) Furthermore, du Maurier hints that even if Rachel were to have murdered Ambrose, she may have had motive: Rachel confesses to Philip that Ambrose was physically violent toward her, a claim that seems to be confirmed by one of Ambrose's **letters** to Philip, in which he writes that his headaches created "great excitation of [his] brain, driving [him] near to violence." Du Maurier thus demonstrates that guilt is not a clear-cut concept. Not only are there shades of culpability, she suggests, but the way society pronounces judgment on a person's guilt is powerfully affected by whether that person conforms to society's expectations for them.

Du Maurier reinforces the notion that guilt is a spectrum by refusing to describe the aftermath of Rachel's death. The reader knows that Philip feels at least some responsibility for allowing Rachel to cross a bridge he knew to be unstable; this much is indicated by Philip's conviction that he will end up "in purgatory"—a place of suffering where people are cleansed of their sins before continuing on to heaven. However, du Maurier does not explain what happened after Rachel died. Philip was at her side, as the reader sees in the closing scene, but there is no mention of whether Philip was questioned in regard to Rachel's death or of how other characters in the novel feel about Rachel's "accident." In fact, Philip implies that he has faced absolutely *no* suspicion following his cousin's death: "I shall continue to be honoured and respected," he says, "like all my family before me [...] No one will ever guess the burden of blame I carry on my shoulders." This passage clearly shows how Philip's aristocratic status (and, perhaps, his gender) protects him from censure in the case of Rachel's death.

A final crucial component of du Maurier's argument about guilt is the fact that she refuses to definitively state whether Rachel poisoned Ambrose and attempted to do the same to Philip. Instead, she shows how Rachel's defiance of social norms makes Philip more readily disposed to find her guilty of murder. Because Philip knows that Rachel has flouted other social conventions (for example, she has had extramarital sex, and she is widely considered to be "extravagant" in the amount of money she spends) he easily makes the jump into believing that she is capable of murder as soon as he discovers poisonous laburnum seeds in her room. The fact that Rachel is guilty of defying societal expectations based on her gender acts as a kind of evidence that she might also be guilty of killing Ambrose. Du Maurier thus shows how women are subjected to a much harsher standard than men.

Thus, even as she builds a "whodunit" plot—a detective story that invites the reader to solve the crime alongside the protagonist—du Maurier makes it clear that there exist shades of guilt and innocence, and people are not purely one or the other. In addition, she also highlights that not everyone is subject to the same kind of scrutiny when it comes to assigning blame or blamelessness in a patriarchal society. Women, particularly those like Rachel who buck fundamental societal expectations based on their gender, are ultimately judged much more critically than men.

WOMEN, SEXUALITY, AND SOCIETY

My Cousin Rachel builds to a sexual crescendo: the climax of the novel occurs when Philip and Rachel have sex in the early morning hours of Philip's twenty-fifth birthday. On a plot level, this moment is critical. By this point, Philip is in love with Rachel, the widow of his cousin Ambrose (which means that Rachel is Philip's cousin-in-law). In this scene, he hints strongly that he wants to marry her, and the narration of this scene indicates that Rachel understands what Philip is asking her. Though Rachel does not give a direct answer, du Maurier implies that the pair have sex. Philip misinterprets the act of sexual intimacy as an acceptance of the tacit marriage proposal he has just made. The emotional fallout of this misunderstanding is so intense that it ultimately results in a disillusioned Philip standing complacently by as his former beloved walks to her death. However, the sex scene between Philip and Rachel is even more important on a thematic level because it illustrates the fact that Rachel's power is rooted in her expression of her sexuality. At the same time, du Maurier explicitly shows that because Rachel's exertion of sexual power runs counter to social norms (which code women as subordinate to men), Rachel's power ultimately becomes her undoing. In this way, du Maurier argues that society rigidly circumscribes women's lives: while reducing women to roles related explicitly to their fertility (wives, mothers), social norms also punish women for enacting their sexuality on their own terms.

Philip is completely bewildered by Rachel's comfortable, overt sexuality because he has not grown up around women; the only means he has for understanding them is the limited framework handed down to him by society. This social code rigidly constrains women's sexuality, limiting to expressing their sexuality only in the context of their roles as wives and

mothers. Before meeting Rachel, Philip follows his cousin Ambrose's lead, viewing women as either simpering flirts or insufferable nags. As he begins to know Rachel, Philip struggles to identify what he believes must be the fundamental rules of female behavior. Thinking of the difference between men and women, Philip muses: "We were surely different, with our blunter comprehension, moving more slowly to the compass points, while they, erratic and unstable, were blown about their course by winds of fancy." Philip views men as more rational in their thinking and their actions. In contrast, women are unpredictable, emotionally unstable creatures. Rachel's sexual attractiveness and open sensuality make her unique among the women Philip knows—yet Philip is incapable of understanding Rachel beyond the limited definitions of womanhood that society (and, more directly, his father-figure, Ambrose) has handed down to him. Philip thinks of Rachel as his own future wife, Ambrose's widow, and even a kind of pseudo-mother figure. Since Ambrose was a father figure to Philip, Rachel's marriage to Ambrose makes her, in effect, a stepmother to Philip, and Philip frequently remarks on the ways Rachel's mannerisms make him feel like a naughty child. Philip is also obsessed with seeing Rachel wear a family heirloom, a **pearl collar** last worn by his own mother—as if Rachel were a kind of stand-in for Philip's own deceased mother. Ultimately, while Philip is captivated by Rachel's sexuality, he also refuses to accept this sexuality on Rachel's terms.

Philip's ambivalence towards Rachel's sexuality is clearly seen in the pair's sex scene. Philip interprets this act of physical intimacy as proof of his engagement to Rachel; by agreeing to sex, Rachel is agreeing to marriage. Du Maurier makes this situation especially ironic because Philip is aware that, four months into her pregnancy, Rachel miscarried the child she had conceived with Ambrose and, as a result, is now unable to become pregnant. On a purely biological level, then, any sex that Rachel has is independent from reproduction and growing a family—and, by extension, from marriage. Sexual intercourse becomes solely an act of pleasure. Because of Rachel's sterility, sex exists definitively on her own terms, and she makes this clear when she tells Philip that her decision to sleep with him was "to thank [him], that's all," for gifting her the family jewels. Appalled, Philip reacts by choking Rachel, then repeating his marriage proposal. Philip's violent reaction emphasizes that he is intolerant of Rachel's sexual power, even as he is attracted to it; the only way he knows how to respond to Rachel's exertion of sexual autonomy is by trying to physically overpower her.

In fact, du Maurier shows that Philip is unable even consciously to admit that Rachel actually *has* power over him. Reflecting on their night together, Philip wistfully claims: "Wonder is mine forever, that a woman, accepting love, has no defence. Perhaps that is the secret that they hold to bind us to them. Making reserve of it, until the last." Even by the end of the novel, Philip remains woefully unenlightened. In reality it was *he* who accepted love from Rachel—she was the one who instigated their sexual encounter. Prior to his experience with Rachel, Philip was a virgin. Furthermore, Rachel explicitly announces that she had no intention of binding Philip to her by having sex with him. In contrast, Philip is desperate to bind Rachel to him by physically dominating her. And, of course, Philip's idea that Rachel is rendered defenseless by the act of lovemaking is ludicrous—du Maurier makes it clear that in the novel's sole sex scene, Rachel is at the very height of her power.

In *My Cousin Rachel*, Du Maurier clearly explicates the constraints that society puts on women. Rachel represents the ultimate threat to the societal norm of women being wholly dependent on their male partners. Rachel is determined not to remarry, she expresses her sexuality as she chooses, and she even becomes economically independent by the end of the novel. All these things make Rachel a character who defies the status quo. Philip is incapable of accepting this quality in Rachel, and thus he allows himself to be complicit in her death. Furthermore, du Maurier suggests that society itself is determined to root out and destroy people who pose such a clear threat to social norms: before Philip can enact or even fully form a plan to kill Rachel, the Ashley house itself brings about her end.

HOME AND BELONGING

Philip Ashley, the novel's twenty-four-year-old narrator and protagonist, is a self-proclaimed homebody: "I never had any desire," he confesses, "to be anywhere but at home." The physical structure of home plays a critical role in *My Cousin Rachel*. Growing up in his older cousin Ambrose's home, Philip had extremely limited interactions with women. Ambrose—a less-than-subtle misogynist—refused to employ female servants and tried his best to never have women visitors, with the exception of the vicar's wife and daughters at Sunday dinner. As such, Rachel's femininity makes her an outsider from the moment she arrives at the ancestral Ashley home. On top of this, despite the fact that she is of English descent, Rachel hails from Italy, which makes her even more exotic and out of place. As he falls in love with Rachel, Philip tries fervently to convince both himself and her that she belongs with him in the Ashley home, but he is never able to fully shake his impression of Rachel as a foreigner, with her facial features "like those stamped on a Roman coin." From the very beginning, the novel marks Rachel as someone who does not belong, and she is inevitably excised at the novel's close. In a twist befitting a horror film, it is the Ashley estate itself that "kills" Rachel, when she falls to her death from the unstable terrace bridge in the yard. In this way, du Maurier powerfully argues that the insular definition of home and belonging embodied by the aristocratic Ashleys—which, at the beginning of the novel, made Philip seem innocent and even sympathetic—is actually toxic and even deadly, especially to

women.

Philip has a deep attachment to his home and the surrounding Cornish countryside. When he returns from Italy after having learned of Ambrose's death, Philip finds that "sorrow was with me still, but not tragedy. I too was back where I belonged, and the smell of home was all about me." Philip even takes solace in the notion that when Ambrose died in Italy, "he was not part of that room, or of that house, or of [that] country, but that his spirit went back where it belonged, to be amongst his own hills and his own woods, in the garden that he loved, within the sound of the sea." Because he is so emotionally connected to his home, Philip is deeply bothered by the news that Rachel will be coming to Cornwall. Even after the novel's events have run their course, Philip finds himself wishing that Rachel had never stayed in Cornwall and instead "travelled back to the place where she belonged, back to that shuttered villa, musty with memories." Rachel fundamentally does not belong in Philip's world, and the appearance of Signor Rainaldi in Cornwall exposes the fact that Rachel was never truly welcome in England. When Philip sees Rachel speaking Italian with Rainaldi, he feels sure that Rachel's presence "sparkle[d] at the villa Sangalletti with greater brilliance than it had ever done at my dull table." Rachel's Italianness makes her a transplant at the Ashley home, much like the warm-weather plants brought home to England by Ambrose and cultivated in his gardens. (Indeed, Ambrose—albeit rather patronizingly—compared Rachel to "a green-house plant, fit only for expert cultivation, quite useless in the common soil.") Philip has no knowledge of how to care for these plants, and he finds himself similarly alienated by Rachel's non-English habits, mannerisms, and language.

Yet it is not just Rachel's continental roots that make the Ashley home fundamentally inhospitable to her: her gender is also against her. Though Philip and the household servants quickly warm to the presence of a mistress in the house, du Maurier suggests that there is a legacy of misogyny that is practically built into the house itself. This legacy means that Rachel's foreignness stems as much from her identity as a woman as it does from her identity as an Italian. Du Maurier shows this subtly, such as when Philip thinks of Rachel (after she has revealed she does not intend to marry him): "We were strangers, with no link between us. She came from another land, another race." The phrase "another land" has already indicated that Rachel is not truly English, making it seem as though the phrase "another race" refers not to Rachel's nationality, but to her gender, as if women belonged to a different branch of human beings than men. Imagining himself fused with Ambrose, Philip goes on to note: "Her **eyes**, so dark and different from our own, stared at us, uncomprehending." The first person plural seems to expand to encompass not just Philip and Ambrose, but all men, demonstrating that Rachel, by combination of her gender and her Italian roots, is far too "dark and different" for there to be room for her at the Ashley home.

Thus, over the course of the novel, du Maurier unfolds the argument that, far from being tender and heartwarming, the Ashley notions of home and belonging are actually viciously exclusive and deeply antipathetic to women.

IDENTITY AND DESTINY

Both Philip and Rachel have fractured and refracted identities. Before he meets her, Philip imagines Rachel as "a dozen personalities or more and each one more hateful than the last." Even after Rachel arrives in England and Philip begins to fall for her, he notes that she is a much different woman by day than by night: "a new softness came to her by candlelight," he says, "that was not with her in the day." Philip himself also embodies multiple selves; Rachel and others note how much Philip physically resembles his cousin Ambrose, and Philip often feels as if "Ambrose stood beside [him] in the shadows." In *My Cousin Rachel*, Du Maurier links the idea of multiple, repeated identities to the concept of destiny. In the opening chapter of the novel, Philip declares: "We would have both survived, had we been other men [...] It did not happen that way because I looked like Ambrose. It did not happen that way because I felt like Ambrose." Du Maurier thus imbues her characters with a certain helplessness: no matter what they do, their very identities doom them to their fates. At the same time, however, du Maurier delicately casts doubt on this premise, suggesting that the resignation her characters feel toward their fates means that they wind up at least partially contributing to their own misery.

From the opening chapter of the novel, Philip introduces the notion that he is a kind of reincarnation of Ambrose. "I have wondered," he says, "whether his spirit left his body and came home here to mine, taking possession, so that he lived again in me, repeating his own mistakes, caught the disease once more and perished twice." Rachel expresses a similar sentiment: "'A woman can't suffer twice. I have had all this before.' And lifting her fingers to her throat she added, 'Even the hands around my neck.'" It is as if these characters are stuck in a temporal loop, forced to relive their disastrous interpersonal relationships. While Philip believes himself to be replicating Ambrose's path, Rachel's suffering is depicted as even more compounded and all-encompassing. Rachel is often described as having an ancient quality about her; Ambrose claims she "reek[s] of old Rome," and her knowledge of herbal medicine links her to an ancient tradition of medicine women. (And, not incidentally, suggests a connotation of witchcraft.) Philip even imagines that Rachel's **eyes** hold the same "age-old look of suffering" as those of a beggar woman he observed during his visit to Italy.

It is details such as this one that refute the argument that the characters are condemned to their fates. Du Maurier seems to be deliberately exaggerating by suggesting that Rachel embodies a kind of ancient (and peculiarly feminized) suffering.

Du Maurier undercuts Philip's overt comparisons between Rachel and the Madonna, and even Rachel's own conviction that she has already endured all forms of suffering by deliberately highlighting the melodrama of these claims. Rachel, she suggests, is nothing more than herself. While this might seem to Philip as though Rachel were "two persons, torn in two, first one having sway and then the other," to imagine that a person contains an infinite number of selves is actually to obscure who the person really is. Philip becomes so wrapped up in all the possibilities of Rachel's identity that he blinds himself to the person actually before him. Similarly, Philip's conviction that he is living a parallel life to Ambrose becomes an impediment to Philip taking responsibility for his actions. For example, right before he chokes Rachel, Philip imagines himself into Ambrose's shoes: "I think I knew, upon that instant, all that Ambrose had known too. I knew what he had seen in her, and longed for, but had never had. I knew the torment, and the pain, and the great gulf between them, ever widening." Here, Philip is laying claim to all the resentment and anger that Ambrose felt toward Rachel. Of course, the nature of Ambrose's relationship to Rachel was quite different than Philip's. Ambrose was married to Rachel, and they conceived and lost a child together, while Philip is not even engaged to Rachel. Yet Philip, because of his resemblance to Ambrose, feels he has internalized Ambrose's antagonistic feelings toward Rachel—and he allows those feelings to fuel his physical attack on Rachel. In this way, imagining himself to be a reincarnated version of Ambrose means that Philip is able to cede responsibility for the actions he takes regarding Rachel.

In this way, du Maurier pulls off a delicate balancing act. By emphasizing the fractured identities of her two main characters, she imbues the novel with a haunting feeling of mysticism, turning the idea of destiny into another tool for suspense. Simultaneously, however, du Maurier suggests that the intertwined processes of indulging in the idea of multiple selves and resigning oneself to a preordained fate merely leads people to blindness. As a result, characters are unable to clearly perceive their own actions, and become incapable of seeing others for who they truly are.

JEALOUSY, POSSESSIVENESS, AND UNKNOWABILITY

At the heart of Philip and Ambrose's infatuation with Rachel is a desire to fully possess her. Both of the Ashley men are deeply jealous of Signor Rainaldi, Rachel's Italian friend and advisor, and suspect Rachel of having an affair with him. Eventually, Philip even begins to feel jealous of his late cousin Ambrose, the person he loves above all others, because Ambrose was married to Rachel prior to his death. Du Maurier portrays this possessive jealousy as particular to male characters: because social norms code women as subordinate to their fathers and husbands, women become objects that can be coveted by male characters. However, du Maurier also suggests that the root of jealousy and distrust in all relationships is a fundamentally unbridgeable gap between people: the inherent unknowability of another person.

The only non-male character in the novel to openly exhibit jealousy is Louise Kendall, Philip's childhood friend and would-be sweetheart. (Rachel does mention in passing to Philip that she felt jealous of Ambrose's affection for him in the early days of their marriage.) Yet, even though Louise seems envious of Rachel's captivating influence on Philip, she remains a true friend to Philip. This is perhaps most powerfully exemplified when Rachel and Philip have a public disagreement after Philip announces their "engagement" at his dinner party. The following day, Louise sends a note to the Ashley house offering to meet Philip in town in case he "want[s] someone to talk to." Contrastingly, the men of the novel—namely Philip and Ambrose—are virulently self-absorbed in their performances of jealousy. Philip finds himself resenting any and all men whom Rachel interacts with, including his godfather, Nick Kendall, and the vicar, Mr. Pascoe. Ambrose, too, immediately assumes that Rachel must be having an affair with her long-standing friend Rainaldi, ignoring the possibility that Rachel needs someone other than her husband in whom to confide about the loss of her child after her miscarriage. By limiting this kind of possessive jealousy to male characters, du Maurier powerfully illustrates men's frustration at not having a monopoly on the women to whom they consider they have a claim.

Yet, despite her clear emphasis on the way that society convinces men they have a right to women as a sort of commodity, du Maurier also has a broader argument to make: she is attempting to show that the root of jealousy is the fact that it is fundamentally impossible to really know another person. This is true across the gender divide in the novel. Ambrose is mystified by how Rachel's manner "alter[s]" after the loss of their child, unable to fathom the depth or extent of her grief (which du Maurier also hides from the reader, as Rachel never directly discusses her miscarriage in the novel). Philip, too, constantly references how mysterious and elusive he finds Rachel to be. Du Maurier intends to show how ill-equipped her male characters are at understanding her female characters, thanks to the way society has taught them to view women. However, she pushes this argument further, suggesting that no one, regardless of gender, can ever truly know someone else. This is clear in the following passage, which occurs near the end of the novel, when Rachel is planning her return to Italy: "She must believe me happy, to have peace of mind. I had left the land of fantasy, to her to enter into it. Two persons therefore could not share a dream. Except in darkness, as in make-believe. Each figure, then, a phantom." While this passage does, once again, highlight a divide between men and women—only "in darkness," presumably in the act of lovemaking, do men and women come close to "sharing a

dream"—it is noteworthy that du Maurier uses non-gendered nouns. This passage references persons and figures, a distinction that separates it from other passages in the novel that explicitly discuss the two sexes. Here, du Maurier is making a much broader philosophical point: on an existential level, people are no more than phantoms to each other.

Du Maurier underscores this point by paying careful attention to the **letters** Ambrose writes to Philip. Philip is flabbergasted at the news that his cousin has married, since, as Louise points out, Ambrose has never "admire[d] a woman yet." As the novel unfolds and he discovers more missives from Ambrose, Philip becomes less and less able to understand his cousin's thoughts and actions leading up to his death. Indeed, the novel ends without Philip ever building a clear picture of Ambrose's marriage to Rachel and his physical decline. As Philip falls in love with Rachel, he begins to realize why Ambrose was so taken with her—yet the rupture between Philip and his beloved cousin remains. Philip, it turns out, did not know Ambrose as well as he believed, and neither he nor the reader will ever know the truth of Ambrose's death.

Thus, du Maurier depicts male jealousy as yet another byproduct of a patriarchal society that relegates women to the status of property. Yet she also suggests that jealousy is rooted in people's fervent yet ultimately futile desire to bridge the gap that separates them from people they love. In this way, du Maurier gestures toward a powerful, invisible force at work in the lives of her character: it is not the question of guilt or of love, but rather the threatening, looming realization that one can never fully know another person—and thus that the condition of humans is to be always, on an existential level, lonely.

SYMBOLS

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

EYES

In the novel, eyes symbolize the impulse to make clear-cut judgements about people, which fails to account for rich, nuanced personalities. Both Rachel and Philip have distinct eyes. Philip's are remarkable because they are nearly identical to Ambrose's. Meanwhile, Rachel's eyes are one of her finest physical features: dark and fine, they are also incredibly expressive. Philip often judges whether or not Rachel is making fun of him based solely on the expression in her eyes. However, du Maurier complicates the platitude that "eyes are the windows to the soul," by filling the novel with shifting glances, averted gazes, and impossible-to-read expressions. While Rachel's eyes may be her finest feature, they are also her most sinister one; in his **letters**, Ambrose writes that Rachel's eyes are always "upon [him], watchful and strange." Philip, too, is unsettled by Rachel's eyes, even as he is captivated by them. He once thinks of Rachel: "Had I ground the face to powder with my heel, the eyes would have remained." Rachel's eyes thus have a timeless, almost mystical power to them. Philip often refers to Rachel's eyes as "the eyes," using the definite article ("*the* eyes") rather than the possessive pronoun ("*her* eyes") suggesting that there is something inhuman, perhaps even otherworldly about Rachel. The paradox of Rachel's eyes is their expressiveness coupled with their unreadability, and du Maurier uses this complexity to suggest that it is impossible to fully interpret another person's behavior, especially by a physical marker. Philip often attempts to do this, distrusting Rainaldi's "dark hooded eyes," and immediately warming to the servant Giuseppe, at the Villa Sangalletti, due to his "dog's eyes, honest and devoted."

LETTERS

The characters of the novel are constantly receiving, finding, and destroying written letters, which symbolize the power and limitations of the written word. Letters are Philip's primary mode of communication with Ambrose, and the only "proof" Philip has that Rachel might be a murderer, though he almost always destroys such letters by ripping, burning, or burying them. While letters are critical plot devices, revealing new information that the characters and reader otherwise would never learn, they often result in more confusion than clarity. Some of Ambrose's letters are unfinished or illegible; Ambrose also admits that he never sent some letters, and that he thinks still others may have been lost. Furthermore, Ambrose has left important information out of his letters to Philip, such as the news of Rachel's miscarriage. In this way, du Maurier also uses letters as a tangible manifestation of how difficult it is to ever truly know another person.

RACHEL'S HANDS

While other character's hands—including Philip's and Rainaldi's—are described in the novel, none are more painstakingly evoked than Rachel's, which symbolize her extraordinary power. Rachel's hands are incredibly small, and they remind Philip of "the hands of someone in a portrait painted by an old master and left unfinished." Philip often finds himself watching Rachel's hands, as he is less tongue-tied doing so than when he tries to meet Rachel's **eyes**. Philip's obsession with the smallness of Rachel's hands suggests that her size is a quality he finds attractive. Philip likes that Rachel is small, because it makes him feel more powerful. Philip's comparison of Rachel's hands to a portrait "painted by an old master" suggests that Rachel's hands are part of what make her seem so old and wise, an association that is supported by the fact that

Rachel uses her hands to prepare her renowned herbal remedies. Indeed, this is the contradiction symbolized by Rachel's hands: they may be small, but Philip is wrong in thinking this makes them a symbol of powerlessness. In fact, Rachel's hands—and by extension, the rest of her body—are where her power resides. After all, it is these hands that may have poisoned both of Rachel's husbands, Sangalletti and Ambrose, as well as Philip himself. Du Maurier thus uses Philip's fixation on Rachel's hands to show how badly Philip misunderstands his cousin. He wants to believe Rachel small and powerless, but du Maurier uses the symbol of Rachel's hands to show how underestimated Rachel's size and gender cause her to be.

PEARL COLLAR

The pearl collar, which is an Ashley family heirloom, symbolizes marriage. The collar is traditionally worn by Ashley women only on their wedding day and was last worn by Philip's mother. Philip gifts it to Rachel first on Christmas and again on his twenty-fifth birthday, when it is actually legally his to give. Rachel wears the necklace several times over the course of the novel, but the most important time is on the eve of Philip's birthday, just before Philip and Rachel have sex. Later, Philip interprets Rachel's acceptance of the gift (and the fact that she has sex with him) as proof that she has consented to marry him. While suffering from meningitis, Philip also has a fever dream about Rachel wearing nothing but the necklace, which suggests how intimately Phillip associates the necklace with Rachel's sexuality.

On a deeper and more disturbing level, however, the pearl collar is also a symbol of Philip's possessive obsession with Rachel. His desire to see Rachel wearing the collar represents how desperate he is to be sure of his "ownership" of her; Philip needs tangible proof that Rachel belongs to him. Though du Maurier never explicitly makes the comparison, it is significant that the piece of jewelry that holds such meaning is a "collar," rather than a bracelet or a pair of earrings, as "collar" frequently refers to an item worn by an animal demonstrating to whom the animal belongs. Furthermore, the pearl collar is worn around the neck, pointing to when Philip strangles Rachel in a desperate attempt to threaten her into marriage.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Sourcebooks edition of *My Cousin Rachel* published in 2009.

Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ How soft and gentle her name sounds when I whisper it. It lingers on the tongue, insidious and slow, almost like poison, which is apt indeed. It passes from the tongue to the parched lips, and from the lips back to the heart. And the heart controls the body, and the mind also. Shall I be free of it one day? In forty, in fifty years? […] Perhaps, when all is said and done, I shall have no wish to be free. As yet, I cannot tell.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, twenty-five-year-old Philip reflects on the events of the past year, particularly the death of his beloved Rachel. It is significant that Philip is still so close to the events of the novel, both temporally and emotionally. This means that he has little added perspective when narrating the novel, which limits the reader's perception of the events, since Philip the narrator is just as confused as ever when it comes to the question of Rachel's guilt. It also suggests that the passage of time doesn't necessarily lead to increased understanding of people or events.

This quotation is particularly striking because it shows how dominant Rachel's presence is even after her death; Philip can't imagine being free of Rachel's memory even fifty years down the line. What's more, he is not sure he wants to forget Rachel, suggesting that despite his at times despicable treatment of her, Philip did feel genuine fondness for her. A final noteworthy aspect of this quotation is Philip's comparison of the power of Rachel's name to poison. Though a reader might not notice this detail on a first read, it becomes obvious once the reader learns that Rachel may have been poisoning her successive husbands using laburnum seeds.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ Master Philip had gone forever. Mr. Ashley had come home. It was a strange feeling. In a sense it made me humble, and at the same time oddly proud. I was aware of a sort of confidence and of a strength that I had not known before, and a new elation. It seemed to me that I felt as a soldier might feel on being given command of a battalion; this sense of ownership, of pride, and of possession too, came to me […] But, unlike a soldier, I would never have to give up my command. It was mine for life.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 65

Explanation and Analysis

Philip has just returned home from Florence, where he learned of his cousin Ambrose's untimely death. Upon returning to Cornwall, Philip is struck by the fact that the family servants have begun calling him "sir." The sense of joy and purpose Philip takes in being master of the estate underscores how central his home is to his identity. As a member of the landed gentry, Philip is deeply connected to his ancestral land, and his new feeling of confidence and strength seems to align with a newfound awareness of his manhood. As the novel unfolds, however, Philip will come to feel that his masculinity is less rooted in his long-held value of home, and more in his sexual competence and relationship with Rachel. This goes to show how strong an influence Rachel has over Philip's sense of identity.

Chapter 7 Quotes

I don't know what I thought to see. Something bold, perhaps, with loops and flourishes; or its reverse, darkly scrawled and mean. This was just handwriting, much like any other, except that the ends of the words tailed off in little dashes, making the words themselves not altogether easy to decipher.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Nick Kendall, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 73

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Philip is looking at the letter Rachel has sent to his godfather, Nick Kendall, announcing her arrival in England. Du Maurier is doubling down here on her argument that it is ultimately impossible to know another person. To begin with, Philip seems to be trying to interpret something about Rachel from the characteristics of her handwriting. He will in fact find that Rachel is even more difficult to "decipher" than her handwriting is. Additionally, du Maurier uses Rachel's letter as a way of depicting how people project their own expectations onto others. Philip has imagined several possibilities for Rachel's handwriting, just as he has for Rachel herself. In Rachel's letter, Philip has clear proof of what Rachel's handwriting looks like, and he can judge whether it matches any of his expectations (unsurprisingly, it does not). Later in the novel Philip will find that Rachel herself does not physically match his expectations either, but unlike with Rachel's letter, he will never have concrete, tangible proof of who Rachel actually *is*. Du Maurier suggests that this project of trying to understand another person's essence is fundamentally impossible, and moreover, that one's preconceived notions about someone can make it even more difficult to ever see them clearly.

Chapter 8 Quotes

Somewhere there was a bitter creature, crabbed and old, hemmed about with lawyers; somewhere a larger Mrs. Pascoe, loud-voiced, arrogant; somewhere a petulant spoilt doll, with corkscrew curls; somewhere a viper, sinuous and silent. But none of them was with me in this room. Anger seemed futile now, and hatred too, and as for fear—how could I fear anyone who did not measure up to my shoulder, and had nothing remarkable about her save a sense of humour and small hands?

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Mrs. Pascoe, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 101

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation occurs on the night Rachel arrives at the Ashley estate, when she and Philip are spending the evening together in the blue room. This selection is important on several thematic levels. The fact that Philip has only been able to imagine Rachel according to various "types"—an old hag, a "spoilt doll," a evil "viper"—shows that he is not capable of viewing Rachel, or perhaps women in general, as having complex, multifaceted identities. Even as Philip gets to know Rachel and falls in love with her, he will continue to look at her in this limited (and limiting) way.

Another important aspect of this quotation is Philip's ready dismissal of Rachel's personhood, due to her small stature. In fact, as the novel unfolds, Philip will come to find Rachel's petite stature incredibly sexually attractive—and ironically her "small hands" will be the thing he fears the most, when

he begins to suspect that Rachel might be poisoning him. This quotation thus brilliantly evokes how male characters like Philip consistently underestimate the women around them, perhaps even to fatal consequences.

Once, not so long ago, I had seen other eyes with that same age-old look of suffering. Those eyes too had held reserve and pride, coupled with the same abasement, the same agony of supplication [...] it must be because the eyes are the same colour and they belong to the same race. Otherwise they could have nothing in common, the beggar woman beside the Arno and my cousin Rachel.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation occurs on Rachel's first night at the Ashley estate. Philip has just returned to his room after meeting and conversing with Rachel for the first time. This quotation establishes a symbolic link between Rachel and the beggar woman that Philip encountered in Florence. Du Maurier seems to be suggesting that this link exists only in Philip's mind. Philip is at such a loss for how to react to Rachel that he resorts to comparing her to the only other member of her "race" he has ever seen. This language is important, because Philip is ostensibly referring to the fact that Rachel is Italian, thereby harshly marking the distinction between his Englishness and her identity as a continental European. However, there is a second shade of meaning to Philip's word choice that suggests he views Rachel's gender as making her a completely different branch of human being than he. This quotation thus serves to emphasize how Philip considers Rachel as the "other." Though Philip will eventually overlook what he considers these innate differences between himself and Rachel, they will nevertheless drive an insurmountable wedge between Philip and his beloved.

Chapter 10 Quotes

I looked up, startled, and it seemed to me, as we stared at one another, that she knew now all my fantasies, my dreams, that she saw one by one the faces of the women I had conjured all those months. Denial was no use, protestation absurd. The barriers were down. It was a queer feeling, as though I sat naked in my chair.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 119

Explanation and Analysis

Philip has just revealed to Rachel that he visited the Villa Sangalletti in Florence. He has also shown her the final two letters he received from Ambrose, the second of which suggests that Rachel was somehow "tormenting" Ambrose in the final days of his life. Immediately before this passage, Rachel says to Philip: "How you must have hated me." This passage symbolically links Rachel's eyes not only to her extreme perceptiveness but also to her sexual power. After all, Rachel's eye contact makes Philip feel not only that his thoughts are exposed, but also that his physical body is naked. This quotation thus powerfully illustrates the power that Rachel has over Philip, and foreshadows the later "queer feeling" he will have that is likely a euphemism for sexual arousal.

Chapter 11 Quotes

"Not unremarkable," said Mr. Pascoe, flipping the head of a hortensia with his cane, "certainly not unremarkable. Nor would I say, as the girls do, beautiful. But feminine, that is the word, most decidedly feminine."

Related Characters: Mr. Hubert Pascoe (speaker), Philip Ashley, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 139

Explanation and Analysis

Philip is walking in the Ashley estate gardens with Mr. Pascoe and his daughters before a Sunday dinner, discussing Rachel's physical appearance. The Pascoe girls have pronounced Rachel beautiful, to which Philip has

retorted that he finds her "small and entirely unremarkable." Mr. Pascoe's assessment of Rachel is significant because it suggests that Rachel's power resides in her identity as a woman. More than that, Mr. Pascoe's distinction between beauty and "femininity" suggests that he is using the latter term as a kind of euphemism for sexuality. Rachel's defining feature seems to be the fact that she is more overtly sexual than any other female character in the novel.

In addition, it is significant that the first thing this group of characters focuses on now that Rachel has arrived on the estate is her physical appearance. Even though Rachel has a unique power in embracing her sexuality, her personhood is still reduced to her physicality because of the fact that she's a woman. This illustrates how rigidly society restricts women's worth and how narrowly it defines their ability to be "remarkable."

Chapter 12 Quotes

"Ambrose was wrong in what he said of women," I shouted. "At half-past eight in the morning they look very well indeed."

"Ambrose was not referring to half-past eight," she called back to me; "he was referring to half-past six, and he did not mean downstairs."

Related Characters: Rachel Ashley, Philip Ashley (speaker), Ambrose Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 154

Explanation and Analysis

Philip and Rachel have this exchange on the morning that Rachel's Italian plants have arrived at the Ashley estate. Philip opens the conversation with: "I understood [...] that Ambrose told you no woman was fit to look upon before eleven. What are you doing downstairs at half-past eight?" This exchange is important because it emphasizes both Philip's naïveté and Rachel's comfort with being flirtatious and even sexually suggestive. There is clearly a power differential here, and it favors Rachel. This dynamic will continue to be important to Philip and Rachel's relationship, especially in the climactic moment of the novel when the two have a sexual encounter. Additionally, this quotation reflects the bizarre way in which Ambrose is a constant presence in Philip and Rachel's relationship, touching upon Philip's increasingly urgent desire to "become" Ambrose by romantically winning over Rachel.

Chapter 13 Quotes

The voice, so near to tears again, did something to me. A kind of tightness came to my throat and to my belly.

"I would much rather that you hit me," I told her, "than that you cried."

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 169

Explanation and Analysis

After arguing with Philip about the quarterly allowance he wants to provide her with, Rachel apologizes. When she does so, she's in bed behind her curtains and thus hidden from Philip's sight. This passage foreshadows Philip's inability to handle complex emotions, and his tendency to resort to violence instead. Later in the novel, Philip will even suggests that physical violence is the only tool men have to "defeat" women, suggesting that women are fundamentally much more emotionally powerful than men. In this passage, Philip actually invites Rachel to physical violence—even though she shows no inclination for it—because he feels so unable to handle the idea of her being upset. Additionally, Philip's physical response to Rachel's tears is noteworthy, as it evokes a strong sense of Philip's sexual attraction to Rachel. Philip's language is important, because he does not seem to have to vocabulary to describe this attraction, instead using vague terms like "something" and "a kind of tightness."

The little girl look and the choir-boy surplice had misled me. She was a woman all the time.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

Rachel, still in bed in her nightgown, has just kissed Philip. In this passage, Philip is referencing the fact that Rachel's nightgown makes her look very young, and that the design of the actual garment resembles the robes worn by church choirboys. Philip's language makes it seem almost as though Rachel's gender is a sort of hidden weapon. In particular, Philip characterizes Rachel's sexuality as the source of her power—since Philip did not find Rachel intimidating when

he felt she looked like a "little girl." The notion of Rachel being "a woman all the time"—or "all along," as the phrase might be rendered in more modern language—is noteworthy because it will later affect the way Philip thinks about Rachel's possible guilt over Ambrose's death. Though Philip will, by the end of the novel, believe Rachel to be a murderer, he will never be able to shake himself of the fact that her primary identity is that of a woman. This will ultimately color how much agency Philip actually assigns Rachel in the murders he believes her to have committed.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ "There is a tisana for that too," she said, "made from the leaves of raspberries and of nettles. If a woman drinks that for six months before the birth, she has her baby without pain."

"That's witchcraft," I said. "They wouldn't think it right to do so."

"What nonsense! Why should women suffer?" said my cousin Rachel.

Related Characters: Rachel Ashley, Philip Ashley (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

Philip and Rachel have this conversation around the time that Rachel is becoming known throughout the neighborhood for her effective herbal remedies. Philip has just cautioned Rachel that sooner or later the tenants on the Ashley estate will expect her to serve as the local midwife, and Rachel gives this response. This quotation shows how forward-thinking Rachel is; she does not believe women should have to be in pain during childbirth just because that is the "natural" way of things. This quotation also indicates that such thinking is considered so shameful by society that it would be thought to be witchcraft—that is, practically non-human behavior. Thus, this quotation strikingly shows how out of place Rachel's confidence and conviction make her in English society, as well as how rigidly society defines a woman's right to shape her own experience of life. Additionally, the mention of witchcraft here is important because it suggests that there is something sinister about Rachel's herbal, medicinal knowledge. This is a moment of foreshadowing, because by the end of the novel, Philip will be convinced that Rachel is maliciously poisoning the herbal tea she prepares for him on a daily basis.

❝ I hoped she had not noticed—I had barely noticed it myself—that for the first time I had not called her cousin, but Rachel. I don't know how it happened. I think it must have been because standing there, with my arms about her, she had been so much smaller than myself.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 187

Explanation and Analysis

Rachel and Philip have been sorting through Ambrose's old clothes when Rachel bursts into tears. Philip comforts her, holding her like "a child" or "a wounded animal," and calls her by her first name. This moment represents an important turning point in the novel. Some scholars point to it as the moment in which Philip truly falls in love with Rachel. Even if this is the case, it is critical to note that the reason Philip feels suddenly emotionally intimate enough with Rachel to use just her first name is because he realizes, when holding her, how small she is. This powerfully suggests that part of Philip's infatuation with Rachel is rooted in the possibility of him dominating her. Philip's desire to exert himself over Rachel will become incredibly important in the context of their sex scene later in the novel.

Chapter 15 Quotes

❝ I felt strangely moved, as if all that I did and said was laid down for me and planned, while at the same time a small still voice whispered to me in some dark cell of matter, "You can never go back upon this moment. Never… Never…"

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 202-3

Explanation and Analysis

Philip and Rachel have just concluded a long discussion about her past in Italy, including Ambrose's decline and death. Immediately before this quotation, Philip has taken Rachel's hands and assured her that she "belongs" at the Ashley estate. This passage is noteworthy because it touches upon the theme of destiny, suggesting that Philip is not fully in control of how his relationship with Rachel will unfold. Rather, his path is "laid down for [him] and planned." Philip seems to draw a sense of confidence and strength from this conviction—yet, at the same time, he also clearly

has a sense of foreboding, which is indicated by the ominous tone of phrases such as "a small still voice" and "some dark cell of matter." The latter phrase is particularly important because it suggests that Philip is physically destined to have a disastrous future with Rachel, just as Ambrose did. In this way, then, even though this quotation does not directly mention Ambrose, it also reflects Philip's belief that he is a reincarnation of his older cousin and father figure.

Chapter 16 Quotes

She would take great care about her person, when she went calling. Her best mantle, and her new veil and bonnet. I would sit with my back to the horses, in the carriage, so that I could look at her; and, I think to tease me, she would not lift her veil.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 207

Explanation and Analysis

By the time this quotation appears, Philip and Rachel have settled into a daily routine together, which involves Rachel making weekly calls to families in town and on the estate. This quotation contains important imagery, because the fact that Philip intently looks at Rachel but is unable to actually see her, due to her veil, represents the idea that Philip will never actually know the woman he professes to love.

Furthermore, it is important to note Philip's conviction that Rachel keeps her veil over her face "to tease [him]." While it is possible that Rachel is enjoying wearing her veil as a means of flirting with Philip, the reader has no way of knowing whether Philip's interpretation of this action is correct. Perhaps Rachel does not like the fact that Philip sits in the carriage and stares at her, so she keeps her veil down as a means of retaining some privacy. Or perhaps she merely wants to wear the veil in order to conform to society's expectation of her mourning dress. This quotation is thus an important reminder that Philip's perspective is not always a reliable one.

Her shoulders were bare. She had dressed her hair higher than usual, the roll of it was looped up and drawn back, showing her ears. Around her neck was the collar of pearls. It was the only piece of jewellery [sic] upon her person. It glowed soft and white against her skin. I had never seen her look so radiant, or so happy. Louise and the Pascoes had been right after all. Rachel was beautiful.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Louise Kendall, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 219

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation occurs as Rachel descends the stairs on Christmas Eve; Philip is waiting for her, and the Christmas dinner guests are all assembled in the other room. This quotation is important for several reasons. This is the first time Philip admits that he finds Rachel beautiful, and it is also the first time he sees her wearing the pearl necklace he has given her as a Christmas gift. This necklace was last worn by Philip's mother, and is traditionally worn by Ashley women on their wedding day. It is extremely significant that the first time Philip sees Rachel as beautiful is also the first time he sees her "marked" as his; the pearl collar represents a symbol of ownership. This shows that an important part of Philip's attraction to Rachel is his desire to possess her—almost literally. Another noteworthy aspect of this passage is the sexualized description of Rachel's dress. Her hair is pinned up higher, and she is showing more skin than usual, including her shoulders, which are often a sexualized body part on a woman. This further links Philip's sexual attraction to Rachel with his desire to "own" her.

Then she kissed me. Not as she had done before. And as I stood there, holding her, I thought to myself, "It was not yearning for home, nor sickness of the blood, nor fever of the brain—but for this, that Ambrose died."

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Ambrose Ashley, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 219

Explanation and Analysis

Just before Philip and Rachel make their way into the dining room for Christmas dinner, Rachel gives Philip this kiss. The ambiguity of Philip's statement—"it was for this that Ambrose died"—is extremely important. Clearly, Rachel's kiss is much more sexual than the others she has given Philip to this point; this is made clear by Philip's dramatic, fragmented statement "Not as she had done before." But the reader has no way of knowing what the kiss means to Rachel on an emotional level—or, indeed, whether Philip's "this" refers to sexual intimacy with Rachel or emotional, romantic intimacy. Regardless, this is an extremely important moment because it suggests that Rachel herself—as a feeling woman with her own sexual desires—is a killing force. This subverts the traditional portrait of a woman as a life-giving force (given her ability to bear children), making Rachel a unique and perhaps indomitable character.

Chapter 19 Quotes

And I could see them sitting on the terrace of the villa, with this strange shadow between them, built out of nothing but their own doubts and fears, and it seemed to me that the seeds of this same shadow went back beyond all reckoning and could never more be traced.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Ambrose Ashley, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 253

Explanation and Analysis

Rachel has just told Philip why she thinks Ambrose never signed the will that would have bequeathed her the estate. She says: "I never knew [...] but I think when he realised that I could not, after all, have children, he lost belief in me. Some sort of faith went." Philip then imagines Rachel and Ambrose's life together at the Villa Sangalletti following the death of their child. This quotation could easily be interpreted as a moment of authorial insight, given that the tone is relatively sophisticated and thoughtful in comparison to Philip's usual way of speaking. Du Maurier seems to be deliberately pausing at this point in the novel to emphasize the great divide of understanding between people, even two people who love one another. It is also noteworthy that this quotation says nothing about gender. It is not because Rachel is a woman and Ambrose, a man, that their shared grief remains somehow incommunicable. Rather, it is an "untraceable," eternal quality of human existence that humans can never fully know one another.

Chapter 22 Quotes

She lifted her veil, and the eyes that looked into mine were not smiling as I had hoped, or tearful as I had feared, but steady and serene and quite unmoved, the eyes of someone who has been out upon a matter of business and settled it to satisfaction.

For no great reason I felt blank, and in some sense cheated. I wanted the eyes to be as I remember them at sunrise.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 303

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation occurs on Philip's birthday, the morning after Philip and Rachel have slept together for the first and only time. Philip and Rachel are in the carriage together; Rachel has just returned from Nick Kendall's home, where she went to discuss Philip's decision to bequeath her the entire Ashley estate. Philip's aching disappointment that Rachel's eyes are not as he remembered them at sunrise shows that even though Philip now "knows" Rachel in the biblical sense of the word (that is, he's had sex with her), he does not fully know her as a person. She can still surprise him, and she is capable of changing her behavior toward him. The fact that Philip wants Rachel to forever more be as she was "at sunrise," after she had sex with him, is an indication of Philip's desire not only to know Rachel intimately, but to control her entirely.

She did not answer. She went on looking at me, incredulous, baffled, like someone listening to words in a foreign language that cannot be translated or comprehended [...] She had not understood what it was I asked of her at midnight, nor I, in my blind wonder, what she had given, therefore what I had believed to be a pledge of love was something different, without meaning, on which she had put her own interpretation.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 313

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation appears in the midst of Philip and Rachel's huge argument after his birthday dinner. Philip insists that Rachel promised to marry him the previous night by agreeing to have sex with him, but Rachel claims she slept with him as a simple thank you for the jewels. Several elements of this description are important to note. First, Philip assumes that Rachel's incredulity is because she did not understand, the previous night, that he was trying to ask her to marry him. Given how perceptive Rachel has proved herself to be, it seems Rachel might have, in fact, known this, and that her confusion is over the fact that Philip has interpreted her decision to have sex with him as implicit acceptance of a marriage proposal he never actually made. This quotation thus shows that Philip is more willing to think Rachel ignorant or unnoticing, than he is to admit that he made a mistake.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that once Philip realizes the sex he had with Rachel was not her way of accepting his hand in marriage, he immediately defaults to the belief that the sex was "without meaning." Even as he admits that Rachel has "her own interpretation" of their intimacy, he dismisses it as meaningless, since it does not conform to the interpretation he desired. This suggests that even though Philip is attracted to Rachel's self-assuredness, he still wants their interactions to ultimately be on his terms.

> I tried to think what else I had to give. She had the property, the money, and the jewels. She had my mind, my body, and my heart. There was only my name, and that she bore already. Nothing remained. Unless it should be fear. I took the candle from her hand and placed it on the ledge, above the stairs. I put my hands about her throat, encircling it; and now she could not move, but watched me, her eyes wide. And it was as though I held a frightened bird in my two hands, which, with added pressure, would flutter awhile, and die, and with release would fly away to freedom.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 314

Explanation and Analysis

After Rachel and Philip argue about the meaning of their sexual encounter, Philip chokes Rachel and demands that she swear never to leave him. Philip's violence clearly shows that he is not willing to love Rachel and let her go; because she does not return his love in the way he wants, Philip is determined to force her to comply to his desires. It is significant that Philip never apologizes to Rachel for assaulting her, nor does he ever seem to feel guilty for it. This further emphasizes the fact that Philip feels completely entitled to treat Rachel as she chooses. A final noteworthy aspect of this quotation is the similarity it bears to a passage in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, in which Mr. Rochester tries to force Jane to stay with him after she has learned he already has a wife. The scene in Brontë's novel also compares Jane to a bird.

> I went to my room, and catching sight of my reflection in the mirror paused, and stared. Surely it was Ambrose who stood there, with the sweat upon his forehead, the face drained of all colour? Then I moved and was myself again; with stooping shoulders, limbs that were clumsy and too long, hesitant, untutored, the Philip who had indulged in school-boy folly.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Ambrose Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 315

Explanation and Analysis

After choking Rachel, Philip returns to his room and thinks of his cousin Ambrose. This passage emphasizes Philip's strong identification with Ambrose, which he has expressed throughout the novel. However, it is noteworthy that Philip invokes this similarity at this point, as it seems like a way of excusing his violence against Rachel by displacing it onto Ambrose. Additionally, this quotation is important because it highlights how self-absorbed Philip is in his obsession with Rachel. Philip does not acknowledge the "folly" of trying to endear himself to the woman he loves by throttling her. Instead, he reflects only on his "school-boy folly" of believing that Rachel was in love with him and would marry him. Because her wishes do not match his, Philip is incapable of believing Rachel has genuine feelings of any kind for him. Instead, he dismisses his relationship with her as "folly." This shows how incredibly self-centered Philip is as a character, and suggests that his love for Rachel might be more accurately characterized as obsession.

Chapter 23 Quotes

I could not believe it possible that a girl I knew and trusted could have so damnable a mind, and speak—that was the greatest hell—with so much logic and plain common sense, to tear apart another woman like herself.

"Is it your father's legal mind speaking in you, or you yourself?" I said to her.

"Not my father," she said; "you know his reserve. He has said little to me. I have a judgement [sic] of my own."

Related Characters: Louise Kendall, Philip Ashley (speaker), Nick Kendall, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 321

Explanation and Analysis

The day after Philip's birthday, when he drunkenly announced to Nick and Louise Kendall that he and Rachel were engaged, Philip and Louise meet to talk at the church. Louise tries to convince Philip that Rachel has been manipulating him from the start. Philip's reaction to Louise clearly highlights his misogyny. Not only is he offended that Louise could have a mind of her own, but he is doubly annoyed that Louise insists on speaking her thoughts aloud. Philip seems to try to brush his misogyny to the side, by suggesting that the real reason he is upset with Louise is because he doesn't like to see one woman "tearing apart" another. In fact, it seems clear enough that Philip is upset because he knows Louise is showing incredible "common sense," and because her version of Rachel does not match the one Philip has created in his mind. This quotation is incredibly important, because the reader most often sees Philip interacting with Rachel, whom he treats with much more dignity than he does other female characters. This interaction with Louise serves as a reminder of how deeply misogynistic Philip actually is, despite the fact that he is in "love" with Rachel.

Chapter 25 Quotes

So we had come to battle. Her words were a challenge that I could not meet. Her woman's brain worked differently from mine. All argument was fair, all blows were foul. Physical strength alone disarmed a woman.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 357

Explanation and Analysis

Rachel has just informed Philip that, should he threaten her again, she will ask Rainaldi, who is currently visiting, to stay at the estate indefinitely for her protection. When Philip says that Rachel "wouldn't dare," she replies: "Dare? Why not? The house is mine." This quotation shows clearly that Rachel has permanently bested Philip. He recognizes at last that he is not intelligent enough to argue with her; all that is left is for him to physically overtake her. The fact that Philip still considers physical assault an option suggests that he has not *truly* accepted the fact that Rachel has beat him. Furthermore, it indicates that Philip is not genuinely concerned for Rachel's well-being, implying that his love for her was never actually love, but rather a desire to dominate and possess.

Then, tears coming to her eyes, she looked at me and said, "A woman can't suffer twice. I have had all this before." And lifting her fingers to her throat she added, "Even the hands around my neck. That too. Now will you understand?"

I looked over her head, straight at the portrait above the mantelpiece, and the young face of Ambrose staring at me was my own. She had defeated both of us.

Related Characters: Rachel Ashley, Philip Ashley (speaker), Ambrose Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 358

Explanation and Analysis

Philip has made a move toward Rachel, and she has taken hold of the bell-rope in response, saying that she will call for Seecombe if Philip tries to hurt her. Philip tells Rachel to go ahead, saying: "Tell him all that has happened here, between us. If we must have violence and shame, let us have it in full measure." The importance of this quotation is what Philip means when he says Rachel has "defeated" both him and Ambrose. Rachel's defeat lies in the fact that she refuses to suffer. Philip is the one who wants to bring "violence and shame" upon her, but Rachel will not allow herself to be miserable, regardless of what happens. Her claim that "a

woman can't suffer twice" implies that women *won't* suffer twice. Instead, they will protect themselves. This quotation thus powerfully highlights Rachel's inner strength, and her refusal to let her spirit be dominated, even if her physical body is abused.

Chapter 26 Quotes

As I lay there in the darkness I was not aware of danger, or of fear. Only compassion. I saw her as someone not responsible for what she did, besmirched by evil. Compelled and driven by the man who had power over her, lacking, through fault of circumstance and birth, in some deep moral sense, she was capable by instinct and by impulse of this final act. I wanted to save her from herself, and knew not how.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Signor Rainaldi, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 370

Explanation and Analysis

Philip has recently found poisonous laburnum seeds in Rachel's desk drawer, and he has also examined both his and Rachel's tisana cups in search of evidence that she has been poisoning his nightly tea. This quotation is noteworthy because of the nature of Philip's "compassion." When examined closely, this compassion clearly resembles pity, as Philip seems to think that Rachel herself is not actually at fault for murdering Ambrose. Rather, Philip chooses to believe that Rainaldi is controlling Rachel, or that some "fault of circumstance or birth" has caused Rachel's morals to become skewed. Though he believes her guilty, Philip does not want to actually assign Rachel the burden of the guilt. The reason for this, it would seem, is because Philip cannot imagine a woman having the agency to kill a man. Indeed, Philip's patronizing tone is particularly clear in his desire to "save Rachel from herself," as this implies that, like a small child, Rachel is not actually aware that what she has been doing is wrong. This quotation thus strikingly shows how Rachel's gender shapes other characters' expectations of her in every possible way.

I had held it many times, in love, before. Felt the small size of it, turned the rings upon the fingers, seen the blue veins upon the back, touched the small close-filed nails. Now, as it rested in my hand, I saw it, for the first time, put to another purpose. I saw it take the laburnum pods, in deft fashion, and empty out the seeds [...] I remembered once I had told her that her hands were beautiful, and she had answered, with a laugh, that I was the first to tell her so. "They have their uses," she said. "Ambrose used to say, when I was gardening, that they were workmen's hands."

Related Characters: Rachel Ashley, Philip Ashley (speaker), Ambrose Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 371

Explanation and Analysis

Rachel and Philip are on their way to church the day after Philip has discovered the laburnum seeds. This passage is significant on a symbolic level because it represents a dramatic shift in the way Philip perceives Rachel's hands. Up until this point, he has viewed them as beautiful, largely due to their small size. Now, he realizes Rachel's hands might be responsible for murdering someone. This suggests that Philip previously associated the smallness—perhaps the "womanliness"—of Rachel's hands with powerlessness. Philip is finally realizing that a woman can be small, beautiful, *and* powerful. Rachel has been capable of work and of intelligence all along, but Philip only realizes it now that that power has been possibly turned against him.

Now, no part of her was strange. I knew the best, I knew the worst. Even the motives for all she did, baffling perhaps even to herself, I guessed them too. She hid nothing for me now, Rachel my torment...

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 375

Explanation and Analysis

The carriage has just returned Philip and Ashley from church to the Ashley estate. Philip is remembering the first Sunday dinner he ever had with Rachel, and comparing it to

how he feels about her now. This is a moment of irony, as Philip clearly does *not* know everything about Rachel, least of all her motives for murdering Ambrose (in fact, Philip, like the reader, cannot even know for sure whether Rachel really did kill Ambrose in the first place). In fact, it seems much more likely that Rachel is a "torment" to Philip because she hides things from him—in other words, he will never be able to fully know her. The fact that Philip persists in thinking he has "cracked the code" of Rachel's character shows just how blind he still is when it comes to her.

> Her head was turned to him as she listened, so that from the head of the table, where I sat, I looked on her in profile. She was always a stranger, thus. Those neat clipped features on a coin. Dark and withdrawn, a foreign woman standing in a doorway, a shawl about her head, her hand outstretched. But full-face, when she smiled, a stranger never. The Rachel that I knew, that I had loved.

Related Characters: Philip Ashley (speaker), Nick Kendall, Rachel Ashley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 378

Explanation and Analysis

At the final Sunday dinner of the novel (and of Rachel's life), Philip is watching Rachel talk to his godfather, Nick Kendall. This passage parallels the way Philip used to imagine Rachel with multiple identities, before he actually met her. Now, he thinks of her as having only two: the Rachel he knows, and the "foreign" Rachel. What Philip is unable to admit is that he may not know Rachel at all. He also seems unable to fully grasp the fact that Rachel might have a complex, multifaceted identity, rather than a clearly bifurcated one. Despite all the ways Rachel has shown herself to be different than Philip thinks, Philip still insists on clinging to the belief that he knows her intimately. Yet again, du Maurier is emphasizing how blind Philip is to the fact that, like Ambrose, he will never truly know Rachel, nor she him.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

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

CHAPTER 1

The novel opens with twenty-five-year-old Philip Ashley recounting a childhood memory. When Philip was a boy, criminals were hung at a place called Four Turnings. Philip recalls being seven years old and seeing a dead man named Tom Jenkyn at Four Turnings; Philip's cousin Ambrose (who was twenty-seven at the time) explained to him that Jenkyn had been hung for murdering his wife. Young Philip was overwhelmed at the sight. Ambrose, sensing this, turned away so that Philip could vomit in privacy. As his cousin walked away, Philip threw a rock Tom's body, but quickly felt ashamed and ran off after Ambrose.

The novel's opening chapter is mysterious, even disorienting. Philip doesn't provide many details about himself, or his relationship to Rachel and Ambrose, the novel's other two main characters. This gives the opening chapter an intriguing, yet slightly uneasy, tone. In addition, the opening chapter immediately introduces the central theme of guilt. Even as a child, Philip seems aware of how ambiguous the question of guilt is. His feeling of shame at having thrown a rock at Tom suggests that he doesn't feel entirely certain that Tom is guilty, or that he deserves to be punished. Philip's confusion over what it means to be guilty or innocent will intensify as the novel unfolds, and the reader will be drawn into this ambiguity through Philip's first-person narration.

Philip explains that he hasn't thought of Tom Jenkyn since that day. Now, however, he finds himself wondering about Tom's life story. Philip is also troubled by something having to do with a woman named Rachel; he says the question of whether Rachel was "innocent or guilty" haunts him every day. Philip muses about Ambrose's death in "that damned villa," and about how similar to Ambrose he has become, almost as if he were Ambrose's "phantom." Philip thinks that he and Ambrose "would have both survived, had we been other men." Philip wishes remorsefully that Rachel had not stayed with him. He thinks: "Some instinct should have warned her that to stay with me would bring destruction, not only to the phantom she encountered, but finally to her also."

Philip does not yet explain to the reader who Rachel is, and what she means to him. Even though Rachel is at the heart of the novel's plot, she will in many ways continue to be as shadowy a character as she appears to be in these opening pages. This passage also introduces the theme of identity. Philip closely aligns himself with his cousin Ambrose throughout the novel, and his fatalistic tone here suggests that he is desperately searching for any means possible to explain the events he has witnessed, even if that means rejecting the idea of free will and placing belief in the idea of destiny. The comparison of other people to "phantoms" will recur throughout the novel, suggesting that it is impossible to ever actually know another human being. Rather, the understanding we have of others is as insubstantial as a ghost.

This leads Philip to think about two warnings he did receive about Rachel, who is revealed to be his cousin. One warning came from a man called Rainaldi and the other from Nick Kendall, Philip's godfather. Philip also recalls the night he first met Rachel, as well as the time he stood underneath her window on the eve of his birthday. That man "has gone," he thinks, "just as the child has gone who threw a stone at a dead man on a gibbet to give himself false courage." The chapter ends with Philip addressing that man, Tom Jenkyn, saying: "Had I looked back at you, over my shoulder, I should not have seen you swinging in your chains, but my own shadow."

This passage flags two key conversations (one between Rainaldi and Philip, and one between Philip and Nick Kendall) that the reader will later see in full. The closing image of this first chapter is powerful, because it suggests that Philip feels incredibly guilty about Rachel's death. By picturing his "own shadow" in place of Tom's hanging body, Philip seems to be subconsciously admitting that he deserves the blame for Rachel's death.

CHAPTER 2

The chapter opens with Philip remembering his last night with Ambrose, before Ambrose "set out on his final journey." Philip says that, in the moment, he had "no premonition that [he and Ambrose] would never be together again." Ambrose was preparing to go abroad for the third successive winter on his doctor's recommendation. Philip would be staying behind at the Ashley estate, which he says he enjoyed, since he has always been a homebody.

Philip's strong connection to his physical home—both the natural landscape of Cornwall, and the Ashley estate itself—is a central theme of the novel, and he associates his home with a powerful feeling of belonging. It's significant that Philip admits he did not feel a sense of foreboding before Ambrose's departure, even though in retrospect, he thinks he should have. This suggests that the concept of fate in which Philip seems so strongly to believe is somewhat of a false construct—in other words, fate is a sense of order or logic that can only be imposed on one's past, but cannot actually be perceived in the moment.

Philip describes his childhood in Ambrose's home. Since he was orphaned at eighteen months of age, Philip grew up with Ambrose. Ambrose dismissed Philip's nurse when Philip was three, because it angered him to see Philip spanked. From that point on Ambrose never employed a woman, as he was "mistrustful" of them. Philip recalls Ambrose as affectionate and well respected by his tenants and fellow aristocrats—"despite his idiosyncratic opinions on women." Philip always preferred being at home with Ambrose to being at either of the schools he attended, Harrow and then Oxford.

Philip excuses Ambrose's misogynistic beliefs as "idiosyncratic," rather than seeing them for what they are: evidence of a deep-rooted prejudice against women. Over the course of the novel, it will become clear that Philip shares much of his cousin's misogyny; for both Ambrose and Philip, the only acceptable woman is Rachel. This suggests that, in some strange way, Ambrose and Philip do not consider Rachel a "real" woman. While it is difficult to say why this is, it seems that Rachel's confidence in her sexuality—a trait that society finds permissible almost exclusively in men—might mean that Ambrose and Philip view her as existing in her own category, which is at once unfeminine and hyperfeminine.

Ambrose began wintering abroad after Philip finished his schooling. While away, Ambrose enjoyed collecting foreign plants to bring back to England and cultivate in his garden. For his third winter, Ambrose decided to go to Italy. On the night before he left, Ambrose and Philip sat together in the library. Ambrose expressed the wish that Philip were coming to Italy with him, and gave him instructions for how to further develop the garden. When Philip asked, "Why not you?" Ambrose gave the cryptic reply: "Same thing. It makes no odds. Remember though."

This moment is the only point in the novel at which the reader is able to see Ambrose in "real" time. Otherwise, Ambrose's character is revealed predominantly through his written letters. Ambrose's ambiguous instructions to Philip to prioritize the Ashley gardens highlights how important home is to him and, by extension, to Philip. Ambrose's comment also suggests that he sees something of himself in Philip, just as Philip will later feel that he is a reincarnation of Ambrose. The fact that Ambrose seems to share this belief shows that the overlap in Philip and Ambrose's identities is not (entirely) a product of Philip's imagination.

Ambrose leaves for Italy, and Philip spends time at home visiting with his godfather, Nick Kendall, and his daughter, Louise, a childhood friend of Philip's. In November, Philip receives Ambrose's first **letter**, announcing his arrival in Italy; his second letter arrives from Florence, and mentions, for the first time, a woman he refers to as "cousin Rachel. Rachel is distantly related to the Ashleys, and is a widow of an Italian nobleman named Sangalletti. Ambrose writes that Rachel has offered to show him the gardens of Florence, and Philip feels glad to know that Ambrose "had found a friend."

Ambrose's second letter formally introduces Rachel, depicting her as "sensible" and "intelligent." These qualities will take on increased, even distorted significance as Philip begins to fear that Rachel might be a cold, calculating gold-digger—perhaps even a murderer. Philip's positive reaction to Ambrose's news is also worth noting because it marks the beginning of Philip's mercurial feelings about Rachel, whom he loathes and loves by turns.

In another **letter**, Ambrose continues to praise Rachel, saying: "She is extremely intelligent but, thank the Lord, knows when to hold her tongue. None of that endless yattering, so common in women." Philip is surprised by his cousin's interest in Rachel, and chats about Rachel with Nick and Louise Kendall. Louise comments, "She must be very charming for Mr. Ashley to take notice of her [...] I have never heard him admire a woman yet."

While Ambrose praises Rachel's intelligence, he also adds that she is different than other women. This shows that Ambrose is still a misogynist, despite his high regard for Rachel; he admires her even though *she is female. Furthermore, Ambrose claims to appreciate Rachel's intelligence, but he seems more enthusiastic about the fact that she keeps her mouth shut, which suggests that he doesn't genuinely respect Rachel or value her as an equal. Louise's description of Rachel as probably "very charming" sheds further light on this, because it implies that Ambrose might be assigning "intelligence" to Rachel as a kind of euphemism for sex appeal. As the reader will come to see, Rachel is intelligent, charming,* and *sexy, which makes her a formidable character indeed.*

After not hearing from Ambrose for several months, Philip receives an Easter **letter** from him. In it, Ambrose announces that he and Rachel were married two weeks earlier and are now in Naples on their honeymoon. Ambrose writes: "Why she has chosen me of all men, a crusty cynical woman-hater if ever there was one, I cannot say. She teases me about it, and I admit defeat. To be defeated by someone like herself is, in a sense, a victory." Philip, who has just turned twenty-three, feels "numb with misery" at the news of his cousin's marriage, as if the only thing he has to look forward to was "a new world of strange experience that [he] did not want."

Ambrose's letter acts as a kind of "breadcrumb"—a clue about Rachel's true nature, which the reader might notice more clearly in retrospect. Ambrose notes that he has no idea why Rachel has chosen to be with a "crusty cynical" misogynist like himself. The reader will later find out that Rachel may be out to profit from the Ashley fortune—a possibility that gives this letter, and Ambrose's comment, more significance. It is also worth noting how profound a threat Rachel represents to Philip's way of life. Her entrance into his life will ultimately introduce him to a "new world" he cannot even imagine yet.

CHAPTER 3

Philip feels guilty about how unhappy Ambrose's marriage has rendered him and tries to hide his disappointment. Meanwhile, his neighbors, including the vicar's wife, Mrs. Pascoe, whom Philip detests, rejoice in the news. Only Seecombe, the steward at the Ashley house, feels as gloomy as Philip. He laments: "A mistress in the house will have everything upside down, and we shan't know where we are."

Seecombe's uneasiness about having a mistress in the house shows how women have been coded as an inherent threat to the Ashley way of life. Du Maurier will ultimately use this fact to show how society at large is also feels threatened by a woman in power, especially in romantic and sexual contexts. Furthermore, in claiming that a woman will have "everything upside down," Seecombe belies a deeper belief that women are irrational or backward in their thinking. Philip will express similar modes of thought later in the novel, via his interactions both with Rachel and with Louise Kendall.

In a conversation with his childhood friend Louise Kendall, Philip reacts particularly snappishly to the topic of Rachel. This prompts Louise to ask Philip, "You aren't jealous, are you, by any chance?" Philip vehemently denies being jealous of Rachel, but when his godfather, Nick Kendall, mentions that an heir produced by Ambrose and Rachel would significantly alter Philip's life, Philip admits that he is, in fact, experiencing "the jealousy of a child who must suddenly share the one person in his life with a stranger."

It is important to note that Philip characterizes his jealousy as that of a "child," as his journey over the course of the novel will be a coming-of-age story, with sexual awakening at its center. The nature of Philip's jealousy is also significant. He is jealous of Rachel because he feels she has displaced him as the primary object of Ambrose's attention and affection. As the novel unfolds, Philip will become "jealous of" Rachel in a different sense of the word: that is, being overly protective of one's possessions.

Philip finds himself miserably imagining what Rachel will be like. He hates all the versions of her he invents, from "middle-aged and forceful" to "simpering and younger than Louise." Soon, Philip receives a **letter** from Ambrose, which states that he and Rachel will spend the remainder of the summer in Italy in order to sort out the massive debt left to Rachel by her first husband, Sangalletti. Philip feels relieved until Mrs. Pascoe suggests that "perhaps [...] Mrs. Ashley's state of health forbids her travelling," implying that Rachel is pregnant. Annoyed, Philip willfully misinterprets Mrs. Pascoe's comment, replying: "Ambrose mentioned in his letter that [he and Rachel] had spent a week in Venice, and both of them came back with rheumatism." Crestfallen, Mrs. Pascoe responds that Rachel "must be older than [she] thought."

Philip's project of imagining different versions of Rachel will continue even after he has met and fallen in love with her. Rachel's multiple, shifting identities are a large part of what make her such a mysterious, threatening, and unknowable character. The fact that Philip will continue to find Rachel elusive even after he has gotten to know her well suggests that it is impossible to ever truly know someone. Du Maurier implies that people are always engaged in a project of imagining different versions of each other, even when they are face to face.

Mrs. Pascoe's comment causes Philip to imagine yet another version of Rachel: "The nursery receded, and I saw the drawing-room become a lady's boudoir […] and someone calling to Seecombe in a testy voice to bring more coal, the draught was killing her." This image of Rachel makes Philip feel immensely comforted, as though "[his] home was still [his] home."

Philip feels extremely relieved to picture Rachel as a post-menopausal woman, which alludes to the power that women of childbearing age possess. On a practical level, Rachel represents less of a threat to Philip if she is past the age of childbearing, because she will not produce an heir who would "steal" the Ashley fortune away from Philip. On a psychological level, Philip's fear of Rachel being of childbearing age suggests that women's sexuality (and their ability to have children) gives them significant power over men. As the reader will learn, though Rachel is only thirty-five, she is unable to have children due to a medical condition. Yet she will still exert enormous influence over Philip both emotionally and financially.

Time jumps forward to the winter, and Philip begins to receive anxious, nostalgic **letters** from Ambrose, filled with "a kind of loneliness that struck me as strange in a man but ten months married." Philip notices that Ambrose's tone when he writes about Rachel has become suddenly "formal […] and cold." Ambrose also mentions that he has been experiencing frequent headaches.

The change in Ambrose's letters foreshadows Ambrose's decline and death. Furthermore, Ambrose's headaches are an important plot detail. Philip will experience headaches of his own, and will spend much of the novel trying to determine whether Ambrose's illness was the result of a hereditary brain tumor or of foul play. The fact that Philip is unable to parse and understand Ambrose's cold tone suggests the limitations of the written word as a means of communication. Philip's difficulty in accounting for Ambrose's "strange loneliness" further implies that truly understanding the emotions of another person is, in some ways, an impossible task.

Philip does not hear from Ambrose throughout the spring, and he begins to grow worried. In July, Philip finally receives a **letter** from Ambrose; it is incoherent and paranoid. Ambrose writes that he trusts none of his Italian doctors, all recommended by someone named Rainaldi; he also says that Rachel "watches [him] all the time," and it is "better [to] keep silent." Alarmed, Philip shows the letter to his godfather, Nick Kendall, who reveals that Ambrose's father died of a brain tumor. Kendall worries Ambrose might be suffering the same fate, and he suggests that Philip make a trip to Italy.

Rachel's eyes will become a recurring symbol throughout the novel. Here, Ambrose depicts Rachel as a sinister, stifling force, and her watchful eyes represent that power. As Philip gets to know Rachel over the course of the novel, he will rely heavily on her eyes to gauge her true feelings, reading in them by turns laughter, love, and cold impenetrability. By amassing these many different depictions of Rachel's eyes—and by never entering Rachel's point of view in the narration—du Maurier pushes back against the platitude that "eyes are the window to the soul," suggesting instead that people often superimpose their own feelings or desires onto others.

On a July morning, Philip sets out on his journey to Italy; as he is driving away from the estate, a servant rides up with a **letter**. It is from Ambrose, and it reads: "For God's sake come to me quickly. She has done for me at last, Rachel my torment. If you delay, it may be too late." Philip is devastated by the letter, as he knows there is no way he can make it to Ambrose until mid-August.

The phrase "Rachel my torment" will become an important refrain in the novel. Ambrose's final letter to Philip is also important because of its ambiguity, which leaves Philip to construct his own interpretation of what has happened between Rachel and Ambrose. This is the first instance in the novel where Rachel is depicted as a villainess, and Philip will struggle with this image of her through much of the novel.

CHAPTER 4

Philip arrives in Florence, Italy, on August 15. He is anxious to reach Ambrose, and finds himself disgusted by the scenery, as though his "anxiety turned to loathing of all things alien, even of the very soil itself." On alighting from his carriage, Philip goes to stand by the river Arno. There he is approached by a young beggar woman; her appearance strikes Philip as haunting, as though "centuries in time looked out from those two **eyes**, [as if] she had contemplated life so long it had become indifferent to her."

Philip's strong attachment to home, when combined with his worry for Ambrose, results in a strong antipathy to things he considers "alien." Philip will go on to express a similar aversion to Rachel, due to what he sees as her "foreignness"—even after he has fallen in love with her. This passage powerfully illustrates the insularity, even the viciousness of Philip's understanding of home. The appearance of the beggar girl is significant because she will return to Philip in visions. He will ultimately conflate Rachel with the beggar woman, which suggests that Philip is deeply unsettled by the power of women, which he interprets as strangely eternal and untouchable.

Philip bathes at a hostel and then hails a carriage to take him to the Villa Sangaletti. When he arrives, he finds the villa eerily deserted; finally, a peasant woman responds to Philip ringing the bell at the front gate. When Philip asks for Signor Ashley, the woman fetches her husband (Giuseppe), who speaks English. Giuseppe tells Philip that Ambrose died suddenly three weeks ago. Upon Ambrose's death, Rachel "shut up the villa [...and] went away." Rachel has been gone for two weeks, and Giuseppe does not know if she plans to return.

This scene is important because it is the first Philip has heard of Ambrose's death. Philip's emotional reaction to the Villa Sangaletti is also noteworthy: like the city of Florence itself, Philip finds the physical setting of the villa off-putting. This contrasts with the profound sense of comfort and joy that Philip derives from his home in Cornwall, and emphasizes—before Philip or the reader meet her—that Rachel might as well be from another planet than Philip.

The news of Ambrose's death makes Philip feel numb. Giuseppe takes Philip through the villa, followed by Giuseppe's wife and their child. He shows Philip a courtyard with a fountain where Ambrose used to sit with Rachel in the evenings to "take their tisana" (a type of herbal tea). Philip, still in shock, looks on as Giuseppe's wife begins to sweep the courtyard of laburnum pods, which have fallen from a tree overlooking the fountain.

This passage introduces two important "clues" about Rachel's role in Ambrose's death. Both the laburnum seeds and the tisane (tea) that Rachel prepares will be central to Philip's investigation of Rachel's guilt later in the novel. Du Maurier shows the reader these two plot elements early on, and then deftly weaves them back into the story in later chapters.

Giuseppe asks if Philip would like to see the room where Ambrose died; Philip agrees. The room is "plain and bare like a monk's cell," with a statue of the Madonna in one corner. Giuseppe explains that Ambrose became ill very suddenly, and experienced a fever accompanied by violent fits. Giuseppe says that "it was pitiful [...] to see so large a man helpless."

Like the beggar woman by the river, the Madonna statue holds an important symbolic link to Rachel. When he finally comes to know her, Philip attributes a kind of suffering to Rachel that both the beggar woman and the Virgin Mary seem to share. Philip's image of Rachel as helpless and suffering ultimately makes it hard for him to believe that she could have had the agency to kill Ambrose. By emphasizing the fact that Philip tries to understand Rachel using rigid "types" of women, du Maurier once again shows how blind people can be to the specific nuances of people they know.

Giuseppe takes Philip out onto a terrace and describes how beautiful the villa and its gardens are "on a still evening." He mentions that "Signor Rainaldi told us that the villa is to be let, possibly sold." Philip asks who Rainaldi is, and Giuseppe replies that "he arrange[s] all things for the contessa [...] matters of business, matters of money, many things." Philip insists that he wants to meet Rainaldi, and Giuseppe agrees to provide Rainaldi's address.

Signor Rainaldi will become an important character because he will challenge both Ambrose and Philip's trust of Rachel. Though Rachel consistently claims that her relationship to Rainaldi is platonic, Ambrose and Philip both ultimately come to suspect Rachel and Rainaldi of having an affair. This further emphasizes how distrustful the male characters are of Rachel's confident sexuality, even as they find it alluring.

As they walk back through the villa, Philip gives Giuseppe some money and thanks him. When Philip asks what has been done with Ambrose's belongings, Giuseppe's wife (with her husband as translator) explains that Rachel took all of Ambrose's things with her when she left. Giuseppe adds that all that is known of Rachel's location is that she has left Florence. He also kindly offers the knowledge that Ambrose was buried in a Protestant cemetery in Florence. "Many English buried there," he says. "Signor Ashley, he is not alone."

Though a minor character, Giuseppe plays an important thematic role because he underscores the vital importance of belonging. Philip feels kindly toward him because he demonstrates an understanding of how deeply English Ambrose and Philip both feel. When Giuseppe says Ambrose is "not alone," he means that Ambrose is buried with his own people. Giuseppe's character thus serves to emphasize how important Englishness is to the Ashley men—a value that will ultimately prove incompatible with Rachel's distinct Italian identity.

As Philip leaves the villa, Giuseppe's wife runs into their home and returns with Ambrose's hat, the one thing Rachel left behind. Philip silently turns it over in his hands, reflecting that it is too big for any man besides Ambrose to wear.

Philip comments on the fact that Ambrose's hat is too large for any other man, including him, to wear. This suggests that, even though Philip has always wanted to be like his older cousin, he is self-conscious about his shortcomings. This will affect Philip's relationship with Rachel, as he attempts to metaphorically fill Ambrose's shoes (or hat) with regard to his widow.

CHAPTER 5

Philip returns to Florence from the Villa Sangalletti. Still in a daze, he finds himself wandering into a cathedral. As he stands in the church with Ambrose's hat in his hands, Philip "realise[s] suddenly and sharply the full measure of [his] loss." Philip leaves the church, eats a meal near the cathedral, and then goes to find Rainaldi's house.

Though Philip never fully expresses his grief over Ambrose's loss, it is worth noting how alone Ambrose's death has left Philip. This loneliness provides important context for Philip's later relationship with Rachel. Because Rachel's ancestors were Ashleys, she occupies a unique role in Philip's life, as she is both his love interest and his only living relative. This further complicates the romantic relationship between Philip and Rachel, as she functions as both Philip's romantic counterpart and a pseudo-mother figure.

Rainaldi is surprised to see Philip, and Philip himself is immediately wary of Rainaldi's "dark and deep-set" **eyes** and "disdainful" demeanor. The two men discuss Rachel's departure, and Philip makes the "bold move" of showing Rainaldi Ambrose's last two **letters**, in which he expressed clear distress. Rainaldi insists that Ambrose's doctors believed "there might be something pressing on his brain [...] that would account for his condition." Philip finds himself distrustful of this claim, wondering: "Why did this Italian watch my eyes?"

Philip takes an immediate disliking to Rainaldi. Though he will be just as aware of Rachel's eyes as he is here of Rainaldi's, Philip will not have the same negative gut reaction to Rachel that he did to her closest friend. This seems to suggest that part of the reason Philip finds Rachel (initially) non-threatening has to do with her gender. Up until the very end of the novel, Philip persists in thinking Rainaldi guilty of controlling Rachel's decisions. This likely has to do with the attraction Philip feels to Rachel, even as he comes to believe her guilty of conspiring to kill Ambrose, but it also seems plausible that Philip will never be able to fully consider Rachel accountable for her own actions because he sees her as a passive person based solely on her gender.

Rainaldi offers to contact Ambrose's doctors on Philip's behalf, but Philip declines. Rainaldi then produces Ambrose's death certificate, saying that he has sent a copy to the Ashley estate in Cornwall and one to Nick Kendall, whom he says is the trustee of Ambrose's will. Philip is slightly taken aback to hear this new information; he is even more surprised to learn that Rainaldi has actually read Ambrose's will. From reading the will, Rainaldi is aware that Nick Kendall is also Philip's new legal guardian, now that Ambrose is dead. Philip is confused by this, since he is twenty-four years old, but he decides to focus for the moment on learning more about Ambrose's death.

The fact that Philip does not take possession of the Ashley property until his twenty-fifth birthday will cause innumerable conflicts throughout the course of the novel, and will precipitate the disintegration of Philip's relationship with his godfather. This plot point also has significant thematic ramifications, as it underscores the importance of possession. As he falls in love with Rachel, Philip becomes increasingly desperate to solidify his "possession" of her by gifting her with physical possessions—namely, the Ashley jewels—even though these items do not yet legally belong to him.

Philip continues to press Rainaldi for details about Ambrose's **letters**, which he claims are proof that Ambrose was "surrounded by people he [could not] trust." Rainaldi insists that Ambrose was suffering from a brain tumor, which caused him to be "troubled by delusions." Philip finds Rainaldi's approach "cold" and "confident." He is unsure what to believe about Ambrose's illness—"all [he] know[s] [is] that [he] hate[s] Rainaldi."

Though Philip hates him instantaneously, Rainaldi remains as mysterious a character as Rachel. Since Rainaldi appears much less frequently in the novel than Rachel, it is even more difficult for the reader to determine whether Philip's prejudice against him is justified. By showing how immediately Philip becomes convinced that Rainaldi is a sinister figure, du Maurier once again show the impossibility of really knowing another person. After all, it is more likely that Rachel is an actual murderer than Rainaldi, and Philip does not have an immediate negative reaction to her—in fact, he even falls in love with her.

Philip demands more answers from Rainaldi: why didn't Rachel contact him, Philip asks, when Ambrose fell ill? Rainaldi replies that "a woman of feeling does not easily give way." "[Women's] emotions are more primitive than [men's]," Rainaldi explains. "They hold to the thing they want, and never surrender." Philip realizes he has "no more to say" to Rainaldi and rises to leave.

Rainaldi's characterization of Rachel as a woman of "feeling" makes Rachel seem unpredictable and inscrutable. This quality will ultimately both captivate and infuriate Philip, but du Maurier seems also to be suggesting that her male characters attribute this impulsivity to Rachel in a dismissive way, because they do not care to fully understand her motives. This dismissiveness appears in Rainaldi's claim that women have more "primitive" emotions than men, suggesting that women are less advanced than their male counterparts. Simultaneously, however, Rainaldi seems to be unconsciously acknowledging that women are emotionally more powerful than men, because their feelings are deeper and more intense. Philip will wrestle with whether such fundamental differences exist between men and women throughout the remainder of the novel.

Rainaldi offers to make arrangements for Philip to visit Ambrose's grave, but after a brief conversation, Philip realizes he does not want to see the place; Ambrose "would be with [him]," he believes, no matter where his body is buried. Philip tells Rainaldi to inform Rachel of his visit, but Rainaldi replies that Rachel is "a woman of impulse," and that he is unsure she will ever return to Florence. Philip leaves the house, feeling Rainaldi's **eyes** "follow[ing] [him] from behind his shuttered windows."

Philip's conviction that Ambrose will continue to be with him after death ultimately becomes distorted. This results in Philip feeling as though he is Ambrose reincarnate, which will cause Philip distress in many forms as the novel continues. Additionally, Philip's decision not to visit Ambrose's grave means that the granite slab at the Ashley estate, which features heavily in the second half of the novel, takes on even more emotional significance, as it is the only "grave" of Ambrose's that Philip has ever seen.

Philip finds himself again at the riverside, and he stands there reflecting. He decides he believes "in the truth of those two **letters**" from Ambrose, rather than in Rainaldi's version of events. He then makes a vow to seek revenge on Rachel. He thinks: "Whatever it had cost Ambrose in pain and suffering before he died, I would return it, in full measure, upon the woman who had caused it."

This moment provides an important emotional baseline for Philip. Before meeting Rachel, Philip is thoroughly convinced of her guilt and considers her an enemy both of his and of Ambrose's. Philip will journey through several key turning points in his relationship to Rachel as the plot of the novel unfolds.

CHAPTER 6

It is September by the time Philip returns home to his estate in Cornwall. The servants and tenants are all in mourning, as Nick Kendall has informed them of Ambrose's death. Philip feels relieved to be home; on his return journey, he felt haunted by images of the "monstrous" Rachel, but now the images have "vanished as nightmares do at break of day." Philip is greatly comforted by the familiar sights of his estate. He goes out walking the grounds and is thrilled by the realization that everyone and everything he sees "[is] all part of [his] inheritance; they all belonged." His first night home, he falls asleep feeling deeply at ease, "as though something long sleeping had stirred inside [him] and now come to life."

The sustaining sense of pleasure that Philip takes in being home shows how central the Ashley estate is to his identity. In fact, it would seem that Philip is happier at the estate than ever before; Ambrose's death means that the estate will soon pass to Philip, which gives him a new sense of purpose and confidence. Over the course of the novel, the sense of manhood and identity that Philip derives from being a (future) landowner will come to be replaced by his sexual awakening (which Rachel ignites). Philip will transition from viewing his masculinity as stemming from owning land and managing tenants, to exerting dominance over Rachel.

The following day, Nick Kendall pays a visit to Philip in order to read him Ambrose's will. Rainaldi was correct in stating that Kendall has been appointed Philip's new legal guardian. Per Ambrose's wishes, the Ashley estate does not officially become Philip's until his twenty-fifth birthday (in April), so now that Ambrose is gone, Kendall will serve as Philip's legal guardian until that time. This means that Philip will have to request any money for estate accounts or personal use from Kendall for seven more months.

Kendall's status as Philip's legal guardian will cause extreme friction between these two characters later on in the novel. Part of Philip's frustration with this clause of Ambrose's will is that it will ultimately limit his ability to "peacock" in front of Rachel, by gifting her with items such as the Ashley jewels. Upon Ambrose's death, Philip has very quickly come to identify as a member of the landed gentry, and the limits place on him by Kendall's guardianship will ultimately cause him to rebel and act recklessly.

Nick Kendall and Philip spend some time reminiscing about Philip's boyhood days. Kendall laments that Philip has grown up "ignorant of women," and adds that he and Louise both worry about what life will be like for Philip's future wife. Philip replies, "My wife can take care of all the difficulties when the time comes. If it ever does come, which is unlikely."

Though Kendall uses the word "ignorant" to mean that Philip lacks knowledge of women, many of Philip's later actions and opinions will suggest that he also embodies a more modern definition of the word "ignorance," meaning narrow-mindedness. Though less explicit than Ambrose's, Philip's feelings toward women also show signs of deep-seated misogyny.

Philip then recounts for Nick Kendall his visit to Rainaldi. He bitterly informs his godfather of Rachel's departure from the villa, saying she "[went] off, like a thief, taking all Ambrose's possessions with her." Kendall chides Philip for being ungenerous, reminding him that Ambrose's will does not include provisions for a wife. This leads Philip and Kendall to squabble, with Philip insisting that Rachel "drove [Ambrose] to his death," and Kendall maintaining that Philip must "reconcile [himself] to the fact that the man we knew and admired and loved was not his true self before he died." Philip refuses to believe this, and Kendall harshly orders him "not to spread [his] views to others." If Rachel ever heard these views, he says, "she would be well within her rights to bring a case against [Philip] for slander."

This conversation establishes the fact that Kendall believes Ambrose died of a hereditary brain tumor, making Philip's theory about foul play seem ludicrous. The reader will be caught between these two poles for the remainder of the novel. Additionally, this passage underscores how disempowered women are in the society of the novel. Rachel is completely destitute because Ambrose did not include her in his will, and her future will likely be bleak unless she remarries, since there are evidently not many career paths she could pursue. This passage thus emphasizes how even fulfilling society's expectations by getting married does not ensure that a woman will have a stable future.

Surprised by Nick Kendall's forcefulness, Philip awkwardly asks him (and Louise, who has been out walking in the Ashley gardens) for dinner. After dinner, Philip and Louise talk privately. Louise is disappointed that Philip has not gleaned any information about Rachel's appearance. Philip teases Louise, saying: "I ought to have taken you to Florence with me. You would have learnt much more than I did." Louise blushes at this, and again later when Philip bids her and her father good night. Philip feels amused by the idea of a girl "whose hair [he] used to pull only a few years back, now looking upon [him] with respect."

Philip and Louise's interaction provides a moment of dramatic irony, when the reader knows something that the character does not. It is clear that Louise is in love with Philip, but Philip remains oblivious to this throughout the novel and often treats Louise poorly, despite the constant friendship she shows him. It is also interesting to consider Philip's comment that Louise would have learned more than he did in Florence, because Louise will prove herself a perceptive character later in the novel, while Philip will constantly be making blunders and misreading other characters' actions.

Philip settles down to work on the estate; there is much to do given his long absence and the start of the harvest. He is surprised to receive a note from Nick Kendall within only a week's time, bidding Philip to come visit him. When Philip rides over to his godfather's the next day, he learns that his godfather has received a **letter** from Rachel, who has arrived by boat in Plymouth, England.

The "cliff-hanger" nature of this chapter's ending demonstrates how skillful du Maurier is at manipulating tension in her writing. This passage is also noteworthy because it contains the only formal letter Rachel writes in the entire novel (at least that Philip is privy to). While the reader gets a glimpse of Ambrose's interior life from his letters, Rachel's inner thoughts and feelings are never revealed in this way, even in this singular letter.

CHAPTER 7

Nick Kendall shows Philip the **letter** from Rachel. In it, she provides an account of Ambrose's death and also inquires as to what she should do with her late husband's possessions; she has saved them in case Philip would like them. Philip is left speechless, but Kendall insists that Rachel be invited to Cornwall. Knowing Philip's hostility toward Rachel, Kendall suggests that she stay in the guest room at his house, Pelyn, so Philip will not have to see her. "Why should you imagine I don't wish to see her?" Philip replies. He claims that if Rachel can act on impulse, he can too, and he asks Kendall to write and inform Rachel that she has been invited to the Ashley estate. When Kendall expresses his dismay at seeing Philip "grow[n] so hard" and asks "what has happened to [him]," Philip retorts: "Nothing has happened to me […] save that, like a young war-horse, I smell blood."

Philip uses violent imagery when he claims he wants Rachel to stay with him at the Ashley estate because "like a young war-horse, [he] smell[s] blood." Clearly, Philip believes Rachel is in some way responsible for Ambrose's illness and death, and he intends to make her suffer, just as he swore to do on the banks of the Arno. However, even after Philip meets and falls in love with Rachel, he will continue to exhibit a violent, domineering attitude toward her.

Philip goes out to Nick Kendall's summer-house to speak with Louise. Louise expresses her opinion that Rachel will find the Ashley home "untidy, dusty, [and] smelling like a kennel." Offended, Philip insists that if the house suited Ambrose, it should suit his widow just fine. When Louise asks if Philip really intends to interrogate Rachel, Philip replies that he does not know yet, but that he intends to enjoy watching her squirm. Privately, however, Philip is already beginning to regret his decision to issue the invitation "like a challenge." He wonders: "What in the world was I to do with that woman in my house? What indeed should I say to her, what action should I take?"

Philip's hesitation about having rashly invited Rachel to the estate is significant. Though, at this point, Philip believes that Rachel is somehow involved in Ambrose's death, this is not what makes him nervous to have her staying in his home. Rather, his anxiety appears to stem more directly from the fact that Rachel is a woman. Philip is much more concerned about how to interact with Rachel than he is with the fact that she might do him harm, as she possibly did Ambrose. This passage thus emphasizes how Rachel does retain some social power, despite the many ways in which society disadvantages women.

Philip informs Seecombe, the steward, that Rachel will be coming to stay. Seecombe is glad of the news, as he and the servants have learned that no provision was made for Rachel in Ambrose's will. "It's not usual, you see," Seecombe says, adding, "We, the servants, were not forgotten." When Seecombe suggests that Rachel stay in Ambrose's room, Philip impulsively replies that he intends to move into Ambrose's room. Seecombe agrees that "in that case the blue room and the dressing-room will be more suitable for Mrs. Ashley."

Seecombe's concern for Rachel's welfare once again highlights how society considers women to be fully dependent on men. Even the Ashley servants are in a more secure financial position than Rachel is following Ambrose's death. This passage is also significant because it shows that Philip is protective of his of his home, and spaces he considers rightfully his. Ironically, Philip will ultimately find himself much more interested in gaining access to the blue room, where Rachel resides, as the novel continues.

Through Nick Kendall, Philip makes arrangements to send a carriage for Rachel on Friday. In the meantime, the servants are busy readying the house for her arrival, decorating with flowers and preparing the blue room, which once belonged to an Ashley relative named Aunt Phoebe. On Friday morning, Louise Kendall pays a visit, bringing flowers of her own and asking if Philip would like her to stay in the house until Rachel comes. Philip feels irritated at this assumption of his incompetence, but he is privately nervous and intends to be away from the house when Rachel arrives. Philip promises Louise that he will ride over to Pelyn the following day to tell her all about Rachel.

This passage highlights the care that Louise has for Philip, which likely has roots in both platonic and romantic feelings. It also emphasizes how inept Philip feels in the face of Rachel's arrival; Louise and the servants all seem at their ease, but Philip has resolved to physically remove himself from the house—which is usually his one true place of sanctuary—when Rachel arrives. This detail seems to hint that there is room either for Philip or for Rachel at the Ashley estate, a kind of foreshadowing of the novel's tragic ending.

Philip spends the afternoon out riding and walking, feeling anxious about Rachel's arrival, as if he can already sense "an unknown hostile presence, stamping her personality upon [his] rooms, [his] house." Around seven in the evening, Philip returns home and is informed by Seecombe that Rachel has arrived. Rachel has brought few possessions of her own, and all of Ambrose's old things have been placed in Philip's room. Rachel has decided to dine alone in her room, requesting that Philip excuse her. Just as Philip is finishing own dinner, he receives a note from Rachel saying she would be happy to receive him in her room after he has eaten. Philip takes a shot of brandy, heads upstairs, and knocks on the door of Rachel's room.

With a chapter ending such as this one—with the "curtain" dropping just as Philip knocks on the infamous Rachel's door—it is easy to see why so many scholars consider du Maurier's writing to have a particular cinematic quality. On a thematic level, this passage is important because of how worried Philip is about Rachel's arrival physically changing his home. The fact that he imagines Rachel's very being as capable of "stamping" itself on the house shows how powerful he considers Rachel to be—though he will seem to forget this as the novel continues.

CHAPTER 8

Rachel calls Philip into her room, where she has been joined by his old retriever, Don, and several of the other family dogs. Philip's first impression of Rachel is "one of shock, almost of stupefaction, that she should be so small." "The only things large about her [are] her **eyes**," and Philip thinks Rachel looks as shocked to see him as he is to see her. Though she seems nervous at first, Rachel quickly begins chatting to Philip about how "strange" it is to be in the Ashley home; she says she and Ambrose often discussed "the journey home." Philip soon finds himself thinking: "If anyone was at fault it was myself, for I felt oddly large and clumsy in so small a room."

Over the course of the novel, Philip will consistently associate Rachel's small stature with helplessness. However, Philip and Rachel's first meeting shows quite clearly that it is Rachel who holds the cards. Even though the house belongs to Philip, he immediately feels out of place; the room is small, just like Rachel, as if she has somehow adapted her surroundings to fit her, just as Philip feared she would. This scene also formally introduces the symbol of Rachel's eyes. Du Maurier clearly marks the power of Rachel's eyes by pointing out that they are physically the only things large about her.

Rachel insists that Ambrose "always intended [Philip] to have his room," and that he would be very glad of the current arrangements. When Philip offers that he hopes Rachel will be comfortable in Aunt Phoebe's old room, Rachel recounts the story of Aunt Phoebe, which Philip has never heard before. Rachel says Phoebe took a twenty-year chill after being struck by unrequited love for a curate. At the age of fifty-four, Rachel says, Phoebe married another curate and "died on her wedding night—of shock." As Rachel finishes the story, her **eyes** remain "solemn," but Philip notices "her mouth twitching." Unable to help himself, "[he] smile[s] at cousin Rachel, and something happen[s] to her eyes and [she] smile[s] back at [him]."

This conversation shows how adept Rachel is at manipulating social interactions. By reassuring Philip he was right to take Ambrose's room for herself, Rachel is able to make him feel powerful and in charge, and to establish a connection between the two of them by mentioning Ambrose. However, Rachel's story about Aunt Phoebe suggests that Ambrose has shared more with Rachel than he has with Philip, which subtly returns the power to Rachel's corner. Additionally, the story clearly demonstrates how open Rachel is about her sexuality—the story's punchline being that Aunt Phoebe died because she was so surprised to find out what sex was. By telling the story, Rachel also seems to be implicitly flirting with Philip, which is another way for her to take charge of their first interaction. Philip's inability to withhold a smile suggests that he is susceptible to Rachel's charm.

Rachel and Philip continuing talking, but Philip decides: "I had smiled at her once, I was damned if I would smile at her again." The pair discuss the Ashley grounds, and Rachel expresses a wish to learn to ride. Though Philip tries to repress it, he feels "a rising tide of something near hysteria" when speaking to Rachel. Seecombe brings in a tea tray for Rachel, and takes the dogs out with him. Rachel invites Philip to smoke his pipe, surprising him. He says, "I thought women minded about such things," and Rachel replies, "They do, when they have nothing else to worry them."

Rachel's ability to produce "something near hysteria" in Philip upon their first meeting seems a sign that their relationship will be a turbulent one. Furthermore, it suggests that, despite his professed hatred of her, Philip was somehow predisposed to like Rachel, perhaps because he subconsciously wants to be like Ambrose. Meanwhile, Rachel's comment that women worry about such things as gentlemen smoking in their bedroom only "when they have nothing else" to fret over hints that Rachel has much bigger problems on her mind, which makes her intriguing both to Philip and to the reader.

Sitting by the fire with Rachel, Philip finds himself unable to muster hatred for her. In fact, he is half asleep. He thinks: "I must remember […] not to drink brandy another time after a ten-mile walk in the rain […] I had come to fight this woman and I had not even started." Rachel orders Philip to bed, reminding him that she would like to ride tomorrow. Philip says he can take her, but Rachel reminds him that tomorrow is Saturday, and he will be paying his tenants' wages. Philip is surprised and wonders aloud how Rachel knows this. Tears spring to Rachel's **eyes**, and she says coldly, "If you don't know […] you have less understanding than I thought."

Rachel's thorough knowledge of the workings of the Ashley estate not only catches Philip off guard, but also evinces how at home she has positioned herself to be even before arriving in England. Rachel's comment about Philip having "less understanding than [she] thought" is difficult to parse but seems to suggest that Rachel and Ambrose had always intended to return together to the Ashley estate. This would appear to serve as evidence that Ambrose's death truly was sudden and unexpected, and thoroughly disrupted the plans Rachel had to return with her husband to his native land.

Before Philip leaves, Rachel gives him Ambrose's old walking stick. She then pushes him from her room. Befuddled, Philip stands outside her door holding the stick. The look in her **eyes** when she gave it to him reminds him of the "age-old look of suffering" that he noticed in the beggar woman he encountered on the banks of the river Arno.

Philip's mental comparison of Rachel to the beggar woman is one he will continue to make, and which suggests that he has a rather monolithic understanding of women. Though he was charmed by his first meeting with her, Philip is still operating under the assumption that Rachel bears some guilt in Ambrose's death, which makes it impossible for him to believe that the look of suffering he saw in her is related to the death of her husband. Because of this, he instead links Rachel's emotion to a sort of "age-old" suffering that he somehow seems to associate with women in general. This strange association suggests just how inept Philip is when it comes to trying to understand Rachel.

CHAPTER 9

Philip rises early the next morning, and visits the stables, where he discusses Rachel's wish to ride with Wellington, the coachman. Philip is rankled when Wellington asks what time "the mistress" would like to begin her ride; "how swiftly men, especially men-servants," Philip thinks, "bec[o]me fools when in the presence of a woman." Philip spends the afternoon working on the accounts, but when the servants arrive to receive their wages, he notices that the gardener, Tamlyn, is not there. He learns that Tamlyn is working in the garden with Rachel, and he goes out to find them.

This passage contains another brief moment of irony, since it is clear that Philip is in as much danger of behaving like a fool in Rachel's presence as his servants are. Philip's annoyance at hearing Rachel referred to as mistress is important to note because it will eventually be paralleled by his annoyance that Rachel's last name is Ashley because of her marriage to Ambrose, and not because of anything to do with Philip. This parallel suggests how aggravated Philip is at the idea of Rachel being in possession of the Ashley estate. Philip only bequeaths the estate to Rachel later in the novel, because he *wants to prove and solidify his possession of* her.

In the garden, Rachel cheerfully informs Philip that she brought to Plymouth "all the plants and shrubs that we had collected, Ambrose and I, during the past two years," and that she and Tamlyn have been discussing where to plant them. Rachel bids Tamlyn goodbye, and recommends eucalyptus oil for his wife's sore throat. As they walk toward the house, Philip informs Rachel: "You may be able to teach Tamlyn about camellias, but you won't be able to do the same with me and farming." Rachel replies, "I know oats from barley [...] Doesn't that impress you?"

This scene provides further evidence of how charming and personable Rachel is—clearly she has gotten to know Tamlyn and inquired about his family while working with him in the garden. Rachel's suggestion of eucalyptus oil for Tamlyn's wife is the first indication of Rachel's facility with herbal remedies, which will become an important plot detail later on. It is also worth noting how breezily Rachel deals with Philip's curmudgeonly comment about farming, suggesting that one of Rachel's great social skills is diffusing tension. This will become incredibly apparent later in the novel, at Philip's birthday dinner.

At the house, Rachel and Philip eat lunch together. Philip is impressed that Rachel "has a certain independence of spirit that would seem, thank the Lord, unfeminine." However, he is annoyed that Rachel has been interpreting his "sarcasm [...] as joviality." After lunch, Wellington brings around a horse for Rachel to ride. Philip is struck by how much "more distant, more remote, and more—Italian" Rachel seems, when viewed in profile upon the horse. Philip leads Rachel and the horse about the Ashley grounds, and is surprised that she knows the names of all the Bartons (tenants' farms associated with the estate). Rachel says, "[Ambrose's] home was his passion, therefore I made it mine."

It is clear in this passage that Philip has already begun warming to Rachel, even though she has just arrived. Philip's admiration for Rachel's "unfeminine" independence indicates that independence and autonomy are traits that society does not ascribe to women; possessing them makes a woman not quite a woman. Furthermore, the fact that Philip mentally goes out of his way to describe Rachel as unfeminine suggests that perhaps he finds her just the opposite, and doesn't know how to deal with feelings of attraction. Finally, the idea of Rachel looking "foreign" when in profile is one that will recur throughout the novel, and serves as an indication of how unknowable people really are to one another.

As they continue to walk, Rachel begins describing the Villa Sangalletti to Philip, and he realizes that Rachel does not know he visited the villa (even though Philip had asked Nick Kendall to mention it in the **letter** he wrote to Rachel). He realizes guiltily that he must tell her, but is unable to bring himself to do so and instead falls silent. The two finish their walk and have dinner at home. They then sit together in the library, where Rachel asks what is troubling Philip. Philip admits: "My godfather [...] and the servants learnt of Ambrose's death through Signor Rainaldi. But [...] I learnt of it in Florence, at the villa, from your servants." Philip sees "no tears in [Rachel's] **eyes**, no hint of laughter either"; instead, she looks at him with an expression of "both compassion and reproach."

The fact that Philip feels compelled to tell Rachel of his visit to Florence shows that he already feels a degree of loyalty to her that is surprising given his recent vow to hate her. It is difficult for the reader to interpret Rachel's look of "compassion and reproach" that follows. Perhaps Rachel feels that Philip violated her privacy by visiting the villa, or that his visit was inconsiderate of her recent loss. Alternatively, Rachel may be worried that Philip has seen the villa because she has something to hide that she fears he may have learned by visiting her home. Du Maurier forces the reader to play many of the same interpretative games Philip does, thus driving home the point of how difficult it is to truly understand another person.

CHAPTER 10

Rachel is shocked to learn that Philip was at the villa on August 15, the day after she left Florence. She insists that Philip tell her the whole story, so he explains that his worry began when he received the two disturbing **letters** from Ambrose. He offers to show them to Rachel, but she says she will look at them later. Philip finishes his account of his visit to Florence, and Rachel then asks to see the letters. After reading them she says, "How you must have hated me." Philip feels "as though [he] sat naked in [his] chair," and Philip admits that she is right.

Rachel's gaze makes Philip feel naked, metaphorically and literally. Not only does this highlight Rachel's perceptiveness—and what power this quality gives her—but it also reveals an underlying sexual tension between Rachel and Philip that will be unearthed over the course of the novel. Philip admits his jealousy to Rachel's face, something he could not even articulate to his lifelong friend Louise—a fact that further emphasizes how compelling a personality Rachel has.

Rachel then asks why Philip invited her to his home, and he admits that it was "to watch [her] suffer […] then […] to let her go." Rachel replies: "That was generous. More generous than I should deserve. Still, you have been successful. You have got what you wanted. Go on watching me, until you've had your fill." Unable to do so, Philip opens the door of the library and bids Rachel leave, saying that he has "never seen a woman cry." Rachel does not leave, so Philip instead returns to the hearth and throws both of Ambrose's **letters** in the fire.

This passage relies heavily on the symbol of eyes, and once again emphasizes Rachel's intense eye contact as an exertion of power. Philip's concern that Rachel will begin crying shows his immaturity, and further suggests that Rachel is the one in control of any social interactions between these two characters. Finally, the fact that Philip burns Ambrose's two letters represents an important turning point, since Philip previously claimed passionate belief in the truth of these letters, and in the idea that Ambrose's death was not of natural causes.

Rachel says she wishes Philip would go on condemning her, as "it would make it easier in the long run for both of us." Philip says he neither condemns nor hates her, because he "can't go on hating a woman who doesn't exist." "But I do exist," Rachel replies. "You are not the woman I hated," Philip says. "There's no more to it than that."

This exchange between Philip and Rachel emphasizes how powerful the imagination is when it comes to trying to understand another person. More significantly, it also underscores that Philip knows very little about Rachel. He might know she is not the woman he hated, but he does not know the woman she actually is. This exchange also highlights Rachel's radical assertion of her own autonomy and value in the face of a male-dominated, patriarchal society.

Rachel and Philip go on talking, and Philip explains how jealous he was of Rachel when he first heard Ambrose had married her. Rachel claims that Philip and Ambrose suffer from the same problem: the only person they have loved is each other. Rachel says that, at forty-three, marriage came too late for Ambrose; he "became obsessed with her," in much the same way "some men wake to religion." The trouble is, Rachel says, that women are not like religious icons made of plaster: "We are human," she says, "that is our failing."

Rachel points out that society does not allow women to be fully human. By expecting women to be virtuous, practically holy examples of purity and of motherhood, society strips women of their humanity. Not only does this have disastrous consequences for men such as Ambrose, but—as Rachel reveals—it makes women believe that by being full human beings, who experience anger, sexual urges, and all the "unfeminine" things a man experiences, they have somehow "failed."

Philip is confused. He asks whether Rachel means that Ambrose "put [her] on a sort of pedestal." "No," Rachel says. "I would have welcomed a pedestal after my rough life. A halo can be a lovely thing, providing you can take it off, now and again, and become human." Philip continues to ask questions, until Rachel explains that meeting her caused Ambrose to fundamentally change. "Something in me brought out those qualities," she says. "Finding me was ecstasy to him for one brief moment, and then catastrophe." Philip finally realizes that Rachel blames herself not only for the changes to Ambrose's personality when he became ill, but also for his death. "If he had not come to Italy," she says, "he would not have died."

This is a rare moment in which Rachel appears insecure. If this emotion is interpreted at face value, it would seem that Rachel recognizes that a woman as self-assured as she does not fully belong in society. Of course, this moment can also be read cynically; Rachel might only be pretending to blame herself for Ambrose's death in order to secure Philip's sympathy. As always, du Maurier places the reader in a tricky position. Unable to view Rachel through any set of eyes other than Philip's, the reader is limited to his perception and is often swept up in the strength of his feeling as well.

Philip assures Rachel that Ambrose could have just as easily fallen ill at home in Cornwall. The two then bond over Rachel's admission that she was as jealous of Philip in the early days of her marriage to Ambrose, as Philip was of her. Finally, Rachel decides that she has "talked enough" for the night, and assures Philip they can talk more tomorrow; on Monday, she plans to go to Nick Kendall's home at Pelyn. Philip insists that this is absurd, and she should stay at the Ashley home to take care of Ambrose's things and help Tamlyn with the new plants. Rachel says nothing, but looks at Philip "with such a strange expression in her **eyes**, almost as though she saw right through [him] into someone else."

Clearly, Philip has already fallen under Rachel's spell, as he does not want her to leave the Ashley estate. This shows how impressionable Philip is as a character. Another noteworthy element of this passage is the look Rachel gives Philip, which suggests one of two things. The first is that Rachel sees Philip's resemblance to Ambrose. Certainly she is aware of their physical similarities, but perhaps she, like Philip, has the sense that Ambrose's spirit has somehow possessed Philip's body. The second possibility is that Rachel is aware of Philip's painfully transparent motives, and that she has seen "through him" into the true version of himself. That is, Philip is not aware he has begun to fall for Rachel, but it seems likely that Rachel is. This would further highlight Rachel's existing perceptiveness as a character.

Rachel and Philip say goodnight on the stairwell, after assuring one another that their feelings of jealousy and hatred are gone. Before she retreats to her room, Rachel kisses Philip's cheek and says: "The first you have ever had […] and if you don't like it you can pretend I did not give it to you, but that it came from the other woman."

This passage shows Rachel's playful, flirty side. It could also be interpreted as evidence that Rachel is aware Philip is attracted to her, and that she is selfishly manipulating that attraction. Regardless, this interaction also displays Rachel's wit and her resourcefulness. In referring to the "other" version of herself that Philip imagined before meeting her, Rachel seems to show that she is aware of—and in precise control of—the multiple different "Rachels" she contains.

CHAPTER 11

It is Sunday morning, and Philip and Rachel are going to church. Rachel is wearing a veiled hat that covers her face, and when Philip insists that "the people will want to see [her] face," she replies, "Then they must want." On the carriage ride to town, Philip and Rachel tease each other and reminisce about Philip's childhood. Suddenly, Philip remembers that he forgot to call upon Louise the day before, as he had promised. Rachel scolds Philip for treating a woman so poorly, and he responds, "Louise isn't' a woman […] She's younger than myself and I have know her since she ran around in petticoats." Rachel replies, "That's no answer. She has feelings just the same."

Rachel and Philip's conversation in the carriage once again suggests sexual tension between the two characters. It would seem that Philip wants as badly as the townspeople to see Rachel's face under her veil, and Rachel seems to enjoy suspending Philip in a state of anticipation. There is a sexual undertone to this sense of anticipation that makes this a very charged interaction. Another important aspect of this passage is Rachel's treatment of Louise. Not only does she try to encourage Philip to focus his attention on Louise—who is a much more appropriate match for him—but she also stands up for Louise as a woman. Rachel will continue to express a sense of female solidarity that makes her sympathetic, despite her flaws.

Philip and Rachel arrive at church. Contrary to his expectations, Philip finds himself feeling "confident and proud, and oddly pleased" rather than out of character. Sitting beside Rachel in the Ashley pew, Philip finds himself wondering about his parents, and wishing in particular that he could remember his mother, who died when he was very young, five months after the death of Philip's father. Soon, the sermon ends, and Philip realizes that he did not hear a word of it: "I had sat there dreaming, and watching my cousin Rachel."

The fact that Rachel makes Philip think of his own mother underscores the element of "forbidden romance" inherent in Philip's attraction to his cousin. Not only is Philip related to Rachel by blood and by (Ambrose's) marriage, she also seems to satisfy his desire for the mother he has never known—making his sexual attraction to her even more taboo. Additionally, the fact that Philip spends the service "dreaming" and watching Rachel suggests that she serves as a kind of screen on which Philip is projecting all kinds of identities and desires.

Outside the church, Rachel coyly suggests that she ride with Nick Kendall, while Philip rides with Louise. (It was always Ambrose's custom to dine after church with the Kendalls, and the family of Mr. Pascoe, the vicar.) Philip apologizes to Louise for not visiting her, but quickly becomes irritated by all of Louise's questions about Rachel. When Louise opines that Rachel is "very beautiful," Philip replies that she "must be mad." "Perhaps," he says, "[Rachel] has fine **eyes**, but otherwise she is quite ordinary. The most ordinary person I have ever met." Louise then comments that Rachel must be "quite thirty-five" and Philip snaps, "I am not interested in people's ages. She could be ninety-nine for all I know." "Women don't have eyes like that at ninety-nine," says Louise.

The fact that Philip admits Rachel has "fine eyes" even as he insists on how ordinary he finds her suggests that Philip is attracted to Rachel's confidence. Louise's comment further suggests that it is Rachel's sexual *confidence that makes her appealing—by saying that women "at ninety-nine" don't have such eyes, Louise is implicitly pointing out that Rachel is still young enough to be considered sexually attractive. Finally, it is important to note Louise's use of the word "beautiful," as Philip will only begin using the word for Rachel after he consciously realizes he is in love with her.*

Back at the Ashley estate, Philip tours Mr. Pascoe and his daughters around the garden, while Mrs. Pascoe visits the blue room upstairs with Rachel. Philip enjoys professing that he finds Rachel "small and entirely unremarkable," an opinion that is met by "little squeals of protestation" from the Pascoe girls. At dinner, where Rachel sits opposite Philip at the head of the table, "only Louise seem[s] silent, and withdrawn"; otherwise, Philip finds himself enjoying "the most fantastic Sunday dinner" of his life." Not even Mrs. Pascoe, whom he loathes, can annoy him. When he meets Rachel's **eyes**, he feels a "queer, strange" feeling that goes "right through [him]."

Philip's attraction to Rachel makes him more charitable to the other women in his life. He is not as harsh in his judgment of Mrs. Pascoe, and he even has the decency to notice that Louise seems downcast and to try to draw her out. However, this does not mean that Rachel has miraculously cured Philip of his misogynistic views. In fact, Philip seems to enjoy Rachel precisely because she is not "like other women," suggesting that his fundamental prejudice against women is still very much intact. Meanwhile, the "strange" feeling Philip experiences when Rachel looks at him seems to be a euphemism for sexual desire and arousal.

As dinner draws to a close, Nick Kendall asks whether Philip reminds Rachel of Ambrose, and she replies, "So much so […] that I have wondered […] if there is any difference." Even after Rachel and the other women leave for the drawing room, Philip finds that "the feeling [is] with [him] still."

Yet again, it is difficult to take the measure of Rachel's words. It might be that she is implicitly challenging Philip to be different—that is, better—than Ambrose was to her. On the other hand, perhaps Rachel is acknowledging that sense of inevitability that Philip seems to feel, as if she is doomed to repeat with Philip the life she had with Ambrose. This chapter closes on Philip being utterly captivated by Rachel, even if he does not yet fully know it.

CHAPTER 12

As the dinner guests are leaving the Ashley house, Philip hears Kendall mention that Rachel will be coming to Pelyn. Philip "squash[es] the idea," saying that Rachel will be staying with him and paying visits to "every one of the tenants in strict precedence." Happy to be alone together, Philip and Rachel discuss the evening. When Philip expresses how pleasant he found it, Rachel says: "Then you had better hurry up and marry your Louise, and have a real hostess, not just a bird of passage."

Philip's eagerness to have Rachel remain at the Ashley estate not only emphasizes the about-face he has done with regard to his cousin, but also suggests that Philip feels slightly possessive of Rachel. This feeling will increase as Philip becomes increasingly infatuated with Rachel. Also worth noting is Rachel's continued attempt to direct Philip's attention toward Louise, which could be interpreted as genuine concern for Philip or as an attempt to flirtatiously provoke him.

Philip insists he does not want to marry anyone, least of all Louise. Rachel insists that Louise would make an excellent wife, and Philip bids her "be quiet." He also tells her to forget about staying at Pelyn or at the vicarage with the Pascoes, who have also issued her an invitation. "I am the master here," he says. "Then I must do as I am bid," Rachel replies. "That is part of a woman's training too." Philip suspects Rachel might be laughing at him, but she is looking down, and he "[cannot] see her **eyes**."

This exchange reveals a glimpse of Philip's cockiness. Rachel does seem to be teasing Philip by agreeing to do as he bids, and the fact that Philip cannot tell this for certain shows that, despite his displays of confidence, he is still at a loss when it comes to interpreting Rachel's words and actions.

Rachel teases Philip by suggesting that he "make up a little list of rules" for her to study "while [she] is waiting [at the Ashley house] to be called upon," since Philip has forbidden her from visiting. Philip begins inventing a schedule for Rachel, but she soon protests, saying that he is "drawing up for [her] a programme of leisure for which [she is] entirely unsuited." Instead, she suggests, she could give Italian lessons to the estate's tenants. Horrified, Philip insists that "only spinsters give lessons, when they have no one to support them." When Rachel asks what a widow should do in "similar circumstances," Philip replies: "Oh, widows marry again as fast as possible, or sell their rings." Rachel says she would prefer giving Italian lessons, pats Philip's shoulder, and leaves the room.

The flirtatious exchange between Rachel and Philip continues, showing that Philip is more at ease than when he first met Rachel. Their banter sours when Philip oversteps his bounds. He has been treating the entire conversation as a joke, but Rachel's suggestion of giving Italian lessons highlights how truly bereft she is in the wake of Ambrose's death. Not only does she have to deal with the emotional burden of losing her husband, Rachel must also find some way to support herself. Her departure from the room shows that she is serious about securing a stable future for herself, even if Philip treats the subject with flippancy.

Philip is immediately humiliated by his thoughtless comment to Rachel. He knows he will not be able to sleep because he will be kept awake by shame at how "blundering" and "unfeeling" he was. Instead he takes Don out for a walk about the grounds. He begins to worry about the fact that Ambrose's will makes no financial provision for Rachel, and he decides to visit Nick Kendall to see what can be done. "Thank heaven I had thought of [this]," he reflects. "Italian lessons… How shaming, how appalling."

Philip is ashamed of what he's said because he realizes it is disrespectful to Rachel given that her husband is only recently dead. However, the fact that Philip persists in thinking it shameful that Rachel should want to employ herself as an Italian teacher shows that he does not treat seriously the notion that Rachel might want to be financially independent rather than rely on a man to financially provide for her. Philip is quicker to make financial provision for a woman he had sworn to destroy than he is to imagine that a woman might desire financial independence. This shows how deeply engrained the societal norm of women's dependence on men truly is.

As he continues to walk, Philip hears Rachel's voice calling to him from her open bedroom window. Though he would like to apologize, Philip finds himself "tongue-tied and ashamed." As Philip stands below Rachel's window, Rachel reaches behind her and drops down a flower to him, from one of the displays that was put in her room. Philip feels instantly "light of heart."

The appearance of Rachel's window is important, because Philip will stand outside it again on the eve of his birthday, just before the most climactic point of the novel. It is also important that Philip is tongue-tied in this scene, because it suggests that Rachel has an advantage over him, since she always finds something to say, even in awkward situations. The idea that Rachel has the upper hand in her relationship to Philip is symbolically mirrored by the fact that she is elevated, sitting at her window, while Philip is below her on the ground.

On Thursday morning, Rachel's Italian plants arrive from Plymouth, and Philip uses the opportunity to visit Nick Kendall at Pelyn. The two discuss Rachel's situation, and Kendall resolves that "the best plan will be to pay a quarterly cheque, from the estate, into an account" that he will open for Rachel. Philip decides on an extravagant sum to be paid Rachel, and watches with satisfaction as Kendall writes a **letter** to her informing her that "it was the wish of the estate that provision should be made for her." Philip takes a copy of the letter with him so he can drop it off at the bank.

This scene represents the first step Philip takes toward transferring all of his financial inheritance to Rachel. The fact that he suggests a much higher sum than his godfather is comfortable with shows how eager Philip is to lavish Rachel with material things as a way to buy her emotional devotion. Philip's desire to force Rachel to be permanently at home at the Ashley estate will only grow more desperate as the novel continues.

As he is leaving Pelyn, Philip runs into Louise. He asks whether she has gotten over her "vile humour" from Sunday, saying it was "a wonder the Pascoe girls did not remark upon it." Louise retorts that the Pascoes were far more likely to have been remarking upon "how simple it must be for a woman of the world, like Mrs. Ashley, to twist a young man like [Philip] around her finger." Philip leaves in a huff, feeling as though "he could have struck [Louise]."

Louise's commentary provides important outside context for the reader, confirming that Philip's infatuation with Rachel is strong enough for other characters notice it. In addition, Philip's impulse to hit Louise because she has said something he does not like foreshadows the scene where Philip strangles Rachel when she says she will not marry him. These two scenes demonstrate that Philip has violent tendencies, and that he feels entitled to hear what he wants to hear from women.

CHAPTER 13

Philip returns home from Pelyn by way of town, where he has deposited Kendall's **letter** at the bank. He finds a bowl of flowers in his room, which he assumes are from Rachel, and which "[add] to [his] mood of high good humour." After bathing, Philip knocks on Rachel's door; she has just finished her own bath and is putting up her hair. She invites Philip in. Philip is shocked by how different Rachel looks when not in mourning clothes. He thinks: "I had never seen anything less like Aunt Phoebe, or aunt anyone."

This passage provides a strong example of Rachel using her sexuality to empower her in a social situation. By inviting Philip into the intimate space of her bedroom after her bath, Rachel fosters the mental link between her still-wet hair and the place her hair became wet—while she was bathing naked. Rachel is almost certainly aware that inviting Philip into her room like this is not entirely proper, so it's fair to interpret her decision as a means of flaunting her sexuality and manipulating Philip's arousal. And he certainly seems aroused—the fact that he thinks of Rachel not looking like "aunt anyone" suggests that he finds the ten year age gap between him and Rachel to be an addition to Rachel's attractiveness.

After she finishes with her hair, Rachel drops a hairpin in Philip's lap and tells him, "Put it under your pillow, and watch Seecombe's face at breakfast in the morning." She then goes into another chamber of her room to dress for dinner. From across the rooms, the two talk about the garden until Seecombe arrives with a **letter** from Nick Kendall. Philip is annoyed because he will now be "caught for the business of [Rachel] reading it."

Rachel continues to be suggestive in her comments to Philip. She tries to embarrass him by joking about the pin—a joke that is based on the ludicrous idea that Rachel and Philip might be sleeping together. This is clearly an exercise in power: by raising the possibility of an affair and then immediately denoting it as laughable, Rachel seems to be planting sexual desire even more firmly in Philip's mind.

After Rachel reads the **letter**, she and Philip have an argument. She maintains that he has humiliated her by bestowing the money on her. Philip accuses Rachel of being proud; he thinks, "I was damned if any creature, small and frail, should stand there and accuse me of humiliating her; and I was damned furthermore if she should refuse the money that belonged to her by right." Rachel looks as though she might hit Philip, but then her **eyes** fill with tears and she retreats into the bedroom and slams the door.

Depending on whether Rachel is actually after Philip's money, it is possible to read her claim of humiliation as genuine or facetious (she might be feigning shame only so Philip will insist more earnestly that she accept the money). More importantly, this scene yet again highlights how Philip responds to female "defiance" with violence, either emotional or physical. Philip is determined to force the money upon Rachel if need be; in fact, he seems to take as much pleasure in the idea of forcing her to accept it as he did in the idea of gifting her the money in the first place. Clearly Philip prefers being in a position of dominance over women, even the woman for whom he has begun to fall.


Philip dines alone, still furious at Rachel and surer than ever that he will never marry. After dining, he dozes awhile in the library and then goes upstairs to bed, where he finds a note from Rachel asking him to forgive her, and saying that she has written to Nick Kendall to accept the allowance. Philip finds himself resenting Ambrose for not providing for Rachel; he "hate[s] the fact" that she has had to experience such a "swing from pride to humility."

Philip's resentment of Ambrose represents a departure from Philip's line of thinking up to this point. Furthermore, this moment also suggests that Philip is beginning to see himself as Ambrose's successor—because Ambrose failed at providing for Rachel, Philip will now take over the role.

Philip goes to Rachel's room and apologizes to her, saying that he "had no idea of patronising her." From behind the drawn curtains of her bed, Rachel also apologizes, and her voice sounds to Philip as if she were near tears. It makes him feel "[weak] in the belly."

As when she refused to raise her veil, Rachel is plausibly keeping her curtains drawn as a deliberate means of arousing Philip's curiosity and sexual desire. Of course, it is also possible that Rachel genuinely does not want to be see in her nightgown by her dead husband's adoptive son. Regardless, Rachel's vulnerability both excites and intimidates Philip.

Rachel says that she intends to leave for London on Monday, as she has already stayed longer at the Ashley estate than she had planned. Philip insists that "if Ambrose had not been such a lunatic this would have been [Rachel's] home," which further upsets Rachel. Feeling "tactless" and "helpless," Philip draws open Rachel's bed curtains and finds that Rachel looks incredibly young in her nightgown. He says: "I don't know anything about you, or about any woman. All I now is that I like it now you are here. And I don't want you to go. Is that complicated?" "Yes," Rachel says. "Very."

The fact that Philip throws open the bed curtains without asking Rachel's permission further underscores the sense of entitlement he feels when conversing with Rachel—he wants to see her, and he wants for her to agree to stay in Cornwall, so he invades her privacy without a second thought. This moment also highlights how simplistic and simple-minded Philip is in his thinking. Rachel recognizes the complexities and delicacies of her staying on the estate, while Philip merely wants Rachel to stay because "he likes it."

Philip convinces Rachel to stay by asking her to tend the gardens, as Ambrose would have wanted. Rachel bids Philip come closer, and she kisses him, then pushes him away and closes her bed curtains. Philip is stunned. He thinks: "The advantage I had thought to have over her, as I stood above her and she lay on her pillows, was now completely lost. The last word, and the last gesture too, had been with her."

Based on Philip's reaction—he feels "lightheaded and somehow dazed"—it is evident that Rachel's kiss was nothing like the earlier moment when she kissed him on the cheek. For the first time, Philip seems to realize that, despite appearances, Rachel is in control when it comes to interactions between the two of them. He will lose sight of this truth as he becomes desperately obsessed with Rachel.

Instead of going directly to bed, Philip stays up to write a **letter** to Nick Kendall to "reassure him that all had gone off well." When Philip goes to deposit his letter in the post-bag in the hall, he finds two letters written by Rachel inside. The first is the letter Rachel claimed to have written to Kendall, accepting the allowance. The second is addressed to Rainaldi. As Philip ascends the stairs to his room, he reminds himself that "the man was her friend, why should she not write a letter to him?" However, he cannot shake the feeling that it is "exactly as if [Rachel] had hit [him] after all."

Philip's negative reaction to finding Rachel's letter to Rainaldi shows how possessive he already feels of her. While Ambrose may have been justified in feeling jealous of the time his wife spent with Rainaldi, Philip certainly has no legitimate claim to Rachel's time, or reason to feel jealous that she should be writing to a friend. Philip is conscious that he has no right to feel jealous, yet he can't seem to suppress the feeling.

CHAPTER 14

The next morning, Philip joins Rachel while she works in the garden. The two again discuss whether Philip will marry. Philip insists: "If it's warmth and comfort that a man wants, and something beautiful to look upon, he can get all that from his own house, if he loves it well." This makes Rachel laugh so hard that "Tamlyn and the gardeners, working at the far end of the plantation, [raise] their heads to look." Rachel tells him: "You must be a heartbreak to the neighbourhood. That poor Louise…"

Philip's comment is important on a plot level because he refers to it in the climactic scene between him and Rachel on the eve of his twenty-fifth birthday. On a thematic level, this scene shows how naïve Philip is. His home is so important to him that he has come to genuinely believe that it can provide a reasonable stand-in for a romantic partner. Rachel's laughter shows that she finds Philip's earnestness both ridiculous and touching.

October arrives, and Rachel spends three weeks working in the garden. She and Philip also visit the tenants on the estate, and Rachel endears herself to them with her knowledge of herbal remedies. She also receives some formal calls at the house, and is "as successful with 'the gentry,' as Seecombe call[s] them, as […] with the humbler folk." The servants at the Ashley estate rejoice in Rachel's presence, and Philip, too, enjoys hearing "county gossip" from Rachel in the evenings.

Rachel's popularity with the tenants at the Ashley estate, as well as other members of the landed gentry, shows her charisma. Rachel's talent at prescribing herbal remedies makes her particularly special and valuable to the community—however it also ultimately makes her a threat. Philip mentions to Rachel that some of the tenants believe in witchcraft, but it will be he who interprets Rachel's medicinal abilities as sinister; by the end of the novel, Philip will suspect that Rachel is poisoning his tisana with laburnum seeds. It is worth noting that it is Rachel's intelligence that makes her threatening. This suggests that society at large is not comfortable with educated women.

One night, when Rachel and Philip are talking in the library, Rachel mentions that the people of the neighborhood have provided her "a list of eligible widowers." Rachel quips that if she ever remarries, she will marry Nick Kendall. Philip knows Rachel is teasing him, but, nevertheless, during the next Sunday dinner he finds himself jealously observing Rachel's conversation with Kendall. "Another trick of women," Philip thinks, "to throw a jest in the air that left a sting behind it."

This moment shows how vulnerable Philip is to jealousy. He easily becomes obsessed with the possibility that Rachel might marry his godfather, Nick Kendall, and the idea makes him incredibly sulky, and resentful of a man he has known and loved all his life. This is merely a hint of the destructive power of Philip's jealous, obsessive tendencies, which are rooted in his desire to have sole "possession" of Rachel.

Rachel and Philip continue a pattern of teasing and jealousy, respectively, always concluding their days with conversation in the library. Philip loves these tender evening moments and wonders, "Why first the pin-prick, the barb of irritation to disturb the atmosphere, giving herself the trouble to make it calm again?"

As it is for Philip, it is impossible for the reader to know why Rachel enjoys "disturb[ing] the atmosphere." The dynamic between Philip and Rachel is similar to the one between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's classic, to which My Cousin Rachel *has long drawn comparison. While Rachel, like Jane, surely has her motives for her teasing behavior, it also seems likely that Philip is oversensitive to Rachel's "barbs" because he is so self-conscious about the intense attraction he feels toward her.*

By the end of October, the fair weather breaks, and—at Seecombe's suggestion—Philip decides to spend one rainy morning going through Ambrose's old things. Rachel joins him, and they begin by sorting through Ambrose's clothes, which Rachel decides should be given to the tenants on the estate. Suddenly, Rachel bursts into tears; Philip holds her. He offers to finish the task himself, addressing Rachel directly by her name for the first time, rather than as "cousin Rachel."

This is a key moment in the novel. Up to this point, Philip has always referred to Rachel as "my cousin Rachel." Here, for the first time, he directly addresses her as just "Rachel." This moment is often interpreted as the moment in which Philip falls fully in love with Rachel. Philip's use of Rachel's name also represents a break from Ambrose's habit of using the phrase "cousin Rachel." For the first time Philip seems to be asserting himself as a man, addressing Rachel the woman. Philip surprises even himself when he does this.

Philip and Rachel move on to sorting through Ambrose's books, chatting as they do so. Rachel is particularly pleased to find a book about gardens. Philip is startled when he opens a book "at random" and sees a **letter** from Ambrose fall out. The letter is merely a scrap, "torn from its context and forgotten," but it appears to have been addressed to Philip. In it, Ambrose accuses Rachel of kleptomania, which he believes she has inherited from her father. He writes: "This much I do know, dear boy, that I cannot any longer, nay I dare not, let her have command over my purse, or I shall be ruined, and the estate will suffer."

Ambrose's letter startles Philip out of his sense of comfort with Rachel, reminding him and the reader that the question of Rachel's guilt and innocence is still very much at stake. It is important to note that Ambrose accuses Rachel of having kleptomania, rather than of being a thief, as if Rachel is not fully in charge of her actions, even when she is committing a crime. Philip will similarly seek to minimize Rachel's agency later in the novel, when he theorizes that Rachel is acting at the behest of her advisor, Signor Rainaldi. This could be because Ambrose and Philip both have trouble fully believing Rachel might be a bad person. It also seems likely that part of the reason the Ashley men tend to dismiss Rachel's agency is because they don't believe her to be a fully autonomous person, by virtue of the fact that she is a woman.

Rachel notices Philip has found something, but Philip insists it's "nothing" and throws the **letter** in the fire. However, Rachel has seen Ambrose's handwriting, and asks what the paper was. Philip tells her it was "just some note [Ambrose] had made [...] on an old scrap of paper," and returns to sorting the other books. Rachel continues working alongside Philip, but now they are both silent.

The question of Rachel's past—and her potential past sins—reappears on center stage. It is noteworthy that this reminder of Rachel's guilt comes in the form of a rediscovered letter because it suggests the extreme power of the written word and of the past itself, which reasserts itself despite attempts to suppress it.

CHAPTER 15

Philip and Rachel finish sorting through the books by late morning; Rachel declines Philip's request for help arranging them downstairs in the library. Philip eats lunch alone, ruminating on the letter he found. By the even, easily legible handwriting, Philip concludes that Ambrose must have written the **letter** before he became ill. Later, in the library, Philip is looking up "kleptomania" in the dictionary when Rachel enters the room. The two have an awkward exchange before Philip goes upstairs to dress for dinner.

It is significant that the first time Philip hears about Rachel's monetary habits is in a letter, rather than directly from Ambrose or another character. Philip has to resort to piecing together clues about when the letter was writing, and consulting a dictionary to make sure he understands the accusations being leveled at Rachel. If Philip were having a conversation with someone face-to-face, he would be able more easily to ask questions. By using the plot device of the letter, du Maurier is highlighting how difficult it is to actually glean reliable information about another person.

During dinner, Seecombe asks whether Rachel has shown Philip the blue coverings she ordered for her bedroom. Philip looks at the coverings after dinner; he finds them beautiful but is mortified by how much they must have cost. Rachel asks Philip to accept the coverings as a gift, and Philip reluctantly accepts. Having read Ambrose's **letter**, Philip now feels "haunted by some doubt that what [Rachel] wanted to do for [him] might turn in some way to her disadvantage; and that in giving way to her [he] was giving way to something that [he] did not fully understand."

Philip's uneasiness about the curtains demonstrates his uncertainty about Rachel's motives—not only in making and gifting him such a purchase, but also for being in England in the first place. Additionally, Philip's concern that he is "giving way to something" he does not understand suggests that, while he is sexually aroused by some of the power Rachel holds over him, he does not want her to dominate him in any practical terms.

Distractedly, Philip asks Rachel whether she has lived her whole life in Italy, and Rachel gives an account of her history. Her mother was Italian and her father was English. Rachel's father died when she was sixteen, leaving Rachel and her mother penniless and moving from town to town for five years. At twenty-one, Rachel met and married Sangalletti, who "took nearly a year before he made up his mind" about marrying Rachel or her mother. Philip wonders whether Rachel is "beset with memories" of her past, but as he listens to her talk, he realizes he wants "to shut the door on [the past]. And lock it too."

Rachel's difficult past highlights yet again how society institutionally places women at the mercy of men—be it their father or their husband. It's also critical to note Philip's unwillingness to fully learn about and accept Rachel's past. This suggests that Philip is not truly interesting in getting to know Rachel for who she is; he would rather get to know her as he wants her to be. Again, du Maurier is carefully pointing out the difficulties of knowing another person, and showing that sometimes this difficulty is self-imposed.

Again, Rachel asks what was in the **letter** that Philip found, and he admits that Ambrose expressed in it his anxiety "about expenditure." Rachel seems relieved, and explains that her "extravagance" was "a constant source of worry to [Ambrose]." She tells Philip that Ambrose was extremely generous in paying off all of her first husband's debts, but that when Ambrose fell ill, he became suspicious and stopped giving Rachel money. Rachel admits that she had to secretly ask Signor Rainaldi for money in order to pay her servants' wages.

This passage doubles down on the way society forces women to rely on men. Even Rachel's closest friend and helper, Rainaldi, is male, and this is the only reason he has means to financially assist her after Ambrose has cut off her allowance. Additionally, Rachel's account of Ambrose's and her financial situation raises the question of how much Philip—and the reader—should trust Rachel, versus Ambrose. Philip will struggle with this question throughout the novel, as heavier accusations about Rachel's past actions emerge.

Rachel abruptly stops talking, and says that she wants Philip "to remember [Ambrose] as [he] knew him." "The last months were mine," she says, "and I want no one to share them with me. You least of all." She adds that it was wrong of her and Philip to go through Ambrose's old things. "We have let something loose she says, "that was not with us before. Some sort of bitter feeling."

Like Philip, Rachel seems to want to leave her past behind her—though it is difficult to know if this is because she finds Ambrose's death too painful, or because she feels some level of guilt about it. Regardless, Rachel does seem genuinely to want to spare Philip from having his revered image of Ambrose altered. This is evidenced by the fact that Rachel waits almost until the end of the novel to reveal to Philip that Ambrose was violent toward her.

Philip assures Rachel that there is no need to speak of the past, and that she is home now at the Ashley house. He feels suddenly "very old, and very wise, and full of a new strength [he does] not understand." He holds Rachel's **hands** and says, "You belong here now, just as he did, just as I do. We are all three of us part of the place together."

Philip's sense of confidence here seems to spring from a sense of ownership—just as it did when he returned home from Florence and was thrilled by the reality of inheriting the Ashley estate. In this moment, however, it seems that Philip prides himself on including Rachel as one of his possessions—she belongs to the estate now and thus, Philip hopes, to him.

Philip wishes that Rachel would rest her head on his chest, as she did that morning when she was crying. She does not, and soon bids Philip goodnight, saying, "One day you may come to know some of the happiness that I knew once." Left alone, Philip realizes: "The old sin of jealousy I thought buried and forgotten was with me once again. But this time I was jealous, not of Rachel, but of Ambrose."

This represents a key turning point in the novel, as Philip formally aligns himself with Rachel, over Ambrose. The fact that Philip envies Ambrose also reinforces the idea that Philip wants to "possess" Rachel in the same way that Ambrose did. This means sexually, but also, arguably, legally, since marriage made women the property of their husbands.

CHAPTER 16

November and December pass, and for the first time, Philip finds that "autumn [passes] without monotony." Philip and Rachel fall into a comfortable pattern. In the mornings, she works in the garden while he tends to estate business. The pair then have lunch together, and in the afternoon, Rachel makes calls in the carriage while Philip holds meetings and deals with estate matters. The two reunite for dinner. Philip's favorite moment of the day is waiting for Rachel to meet him in the library before dinner; the sound of her dress in the hall always gives him "a shock of anticipation." He begins to wonder "how [he] could ever have thought [Rachel] unremarkable."

This passage highlights the increased mental space Rachel is beginning to occupy in Philip's thoughts. Philip's language is important—the sound of Rachel's approach each night gives him a "shock," which suggests that the pleasure he feels is laced with sexual desire. It is also worth noting that Philip's favorite part of each day is not when he actually sees Rachel in the evenings, but when he hears her approaching. This suggests a deeper thematic significance, as Philip is falling in love not with the real Rachel, but with the version of her he has formed in his mind.

Rachel and Philip spend the evenings either in the library, with Philip as host, or in the blue room, with Rachel as hostess. They "lose formality" with one another, and Philip feels lonely when Rachel leaves him each night and goes to bed. He also begins to suffer from insomnia, staying awake until the early morning, "brooding in [his] chair, thinking of nothing, wasting the silent hours."

Philip is clearly developing serious feelings for Rachel, but it is important to note the agitated, almost violent undertone to these feelings. Philip's brooding suggests that he somehow feels he has been wronged, or denied something that is owed to him. All of this foreshadows the violent turn Philip will ultimately take in his behavior toward Rachel.

In December, Philip's lonely nights take on a magical quality. He sits in front of an open window and listens to the "eerie, unmistakable" sounds of a vixen outside. He begins to feel as if he inhabits a world of "enchantment" and he realizes he "[does] not want it for [him]self alone." Philip begins to vacillate between moods of "exultation and excitement" to "dullness and depression," because he knows Rachel might decide to leave the estate at any moment.

In this passage, du Maurier highlights the volatility Philip's character. She also reveals that Philip has entered a kind of fantasy world; the word "enchantment" suggests that Philip's hopes and expectations about Rachel are not fully based in reality. Another noteworthy aspect of this passage is the mention of the vixen, which will reappear on Philip's birthday eve.

Philip decides to revive Ambrose's tradition of giving a Christmas Eve dinner for the tenants on the estate. Philip arranges the decoration of a large Christmas tree, and Rachel plans the dinner menu; each keep their task secret from the other, giving the house an air of "excitement, and mystery too." Philip feels anxious about what he might give Rachel as a present, until he remembers there might be something amongst the Ashley family jewels he could give her. He decides to go to the bank to look at the jewels.

By deciding to throw the Christmas dinner, Philip is casting himself in Ambrose's role, which reinforces the fact that he desires to usurp Ambrose's role vis-à-vis Rachel. Additionally, the fact that Philip enjoys the childhood tradition of keeping secrets from Rachel not only emphasizes his immaturity, but also hints yet again at the taboo nature of Philip and Rachel's romance by blurring the line between a lover-lover relationship and a mother-child relationship.

At the bank, Philip looks at the jewels but quickly remembers that Rachel will not wear colored stones because she is still in mourning for Ambrose. All seems solved when Philip sees a **pearl collar** he remembers from his childhood. The banker explains that Philip's mother was the last person to wear the necklace, and that many other Ashley women have worn it on their wedding days. The banker is reluctant to allow Philip to withdraw the necklace from the bank, saying he would prefer if Philip's legal guardian, Nick Kendall, were present. Philip insists on taking the necklace, and leaves the bank feeling "much elated."

Withdrawing the pearl collar is the first of many reckless decisions Philip will make in this second half of the novel. It is important to note that Philip is technically stealing the necklace, since he does not yet legally own any of the Ashley property. This emphasizes the wrongness of Philip's obsession with Rachel, since he is willing to break the law to prove his love to her. Additionally, the fact that Philip acts in defiance of his godfather, Nick Kendall, shows that Philip is trying to assert his manhood, which is of course powerfully linked to his desire to make himself seem sexually attractive to Rachel.

Preparations for the dinner continue. The guests will all be tenants of the estate, with the addition of the Kendalls and the Pascoes. On the night of the dinner, Philip leaves the **pearl collar** in Rachel's room with a note asking her to "wear it tonight, and always." When he is dressed, Philip waits downstairs for Rachel, feeling nervous because he has never before given a woman a present.

In part, the pearl collar symbolizes a kind of ownership, and the fact that Philip specifies he wants Rachel to wear the necklace "always" is evidence of Philip's desperate desire to permanently mark Rachel as his. Du Maurier is underscoring the jealous aspect of Philip's love—that is, the protectiveness he has begun to feel over something, or in this case, someone, he believes to be his.

Rachel comes downstairs dressed for the dinner, wearing the **pearl collar**. Philip is struck by the realization that he finds her beautiful. Rachel puts her arms around Philip, and kisses him; Philip returns the kiss. Without exchanging any words, Philip and Rachel walk together to the room where the dinner will take place, holding hands as they approach "the laughing surge of voices and the bright expectant faces."

This scene is important for several reasons. First, it acts as a reminder of how little the reader knows about Rachel's motives. It is clear Philip kisses Rachel because he is in love with her, but it is impossible to know why Rachel herself initiates the kiss. Secondly, the very fact that Rachel kisses Philip is important because it shows that she is fully in charge of any and all romantic interactions, inverting the societal norm. Finally, the fact that Rachel and Philip enter the Christmas dinner together is important because it suggests that Philip has symbolically taken over Ambrose's formal role as head of the estate.

CHAPTER 17

Philip and Rachel take their seats, and the dinner begins. Philip is charmed to find that Rachel has placed personalized presents at the table for each of the dinner guests, including for him. His present is a gold keychain engraved with his and Rachel's initials. Before handing out presents from under the tree, Philip announces that the guests may take a five-minute break outside.

This scene highlights Rachel's infallible social graces, and affirms her popularity with the tenants of the estate. Rachel's ability to genuinely connect with others is an important character trait, because her charisma can be interpreted either as sinister and manipulative, or as evidence of her goodness.

While the tenants are outside, Philip greets the Pascoes and the Kendalls. Philip finds Nick Kendall's manner "abrupt"; he soon notices that his godfather's eyes are glued to the **pearl collar** Rachel is wearing. Philip bristles at the implied criticism from his godfather, but says nothing. Philip and Rachel distribute the larger presents from under the tree, and the guests then proceed to the drawing room for dessert.

Philip is clearly struggling to assert his manhood and independence, despite the fact that he will not be legally independent for several more months. Philip is so determined to win Rachel's attention that he is willing to sacrifice the lifelong relationship he has had with Nick Kendall. This passage thus emphasizes how much Philip is wiling to risk in order to "win" Rachel.

In the drawing room, Mrs. Pascoe compliments Rachel on the **pearl collar**. In response, Nick Kendall makes a cold comment about how much the necklace is worth. Rachel gives Philip a confused look, and he immediately announces that "the carriages have come." As the guests begin to leave, Kendall takes the opportunity to privately inform Philip that he has received a "decidedly disturbing message from the bank."

It is noteworthy that Nick Kendall has gotten his information firsthand from the bank. This is atypical in a novel that focuses so heavily on information being transmitted secondhand via written letters. At last, there is concrete proof that Rachel has done something wrong. The fact that Philip will find a way to dismiss this proof shows just how far he is willing to go to believe in Rachel's goodness.

Nick Kendall explains that Rachel has already overdrawn her account by several hundred pounds, and that he is worried she is sending the money out of the country. Kendall dismisses Philip's suggestion that Rachel has used the extra money to purchase the tenants' presents. Unfazed, Philip insists that Kendall increase Rachel's quarterly allowance and cover the overdraft on the account.

This exchange shows Philip clearly defying the advice of his godfather and legal guardian. However, it is important to notice that Nick Kendall blames Rachel not only for overdrafting her account, but also for (possibly) sending the money out of England. Du Maurier seems to be subtly pointing out how men inexorably try to control women; even though the money in Rachel's account is legally hers, she is not allowed to do with it what she wishes without scrutiny from male characters like Kendall.


Nick Kendall goes on to say that Philip was not within his rights in removing the **pearl collar** from the bank. He adds that he has learned more about Rachel's past on a recent trip he made. He says that Rachel and her first husband, Sangalletti, were both "notorious" for their "unbridled extravagance" and "loose living." Kendall even suggests that the only reason Rachel did not "run through [Ambrose's] entire fortune" was because Ambrose died so soon after the pair were married.

This passage is important on a plot level because it adds another accusation against Rachel: that of sexual impropriety, or "loose living." Philip does not seem to credit the idea now, but as the novel progresses he will become obsessed with the fear that Rachel is having an affair with Signor Rainaldi. Du Maurier thus emphasizes that society prohibits women from doing as they please with their own money and with their very own bodies.


Nick Kendall insists that Philip retrieve the **pearl collar** from Rachel and return it to the bank. When Philip refuses, Kendall says he will ask Rachel directly for the necklace. Philip is furious; he wishes his godfather were dead. Kendall and Philip continue to argue. Kendall is particularly worried that Rachel's appearance in the necklace at dinner will cause gossip, as Ashley "family superstition" holds that the necklace is worn by a bride as her "sole adornment" on her wedding day.

Kendall's concern about gossip is significant because it brings to the reader's attention the fact that Philip and Rachel's joint living arrangement is not necessarily considered proper by society at large. This adds another layer to the forbidden nature of Philip's feelings for Rachel, and, given how immature and impetuous he is, makes him even more likely to rebel against expectations of him.


Suddenly, Philip notices Rachel and Louise in the doorway. Rachel calmly gives the **pearl collar** to Nick Kendall, saying that she "perfectly understand[s]" the situation. The Kendalls depart; Philip is still so furious with his godfather that he is on the verge of tears. He asks Rachel, "Don't you know why I wanted you to wear [the pearls]?" Rachel kisses Philip and replies, "You wanted me to wear them because you knew that had I been married here, and not in Florence, Ambrose would have given them to me on our wedding day." She then goes upstairs to bed, leaving Philip thinking, "She had told me, some weeks back, that I lacked perception. To-night, I might have said the same of her."

This passage represents another moment of dramatic irony. Clearly the ever-perceptive Rachel knows that Philip gifted her the pearls because he is in love with her—and because the necklace carries with it the connotation of marriage. The fact that Philip thinks Rachel has genuinely misunderstood his motives shows that he does not realize how discerning Rachel really is—nor does he consider the fact that she might be deliberately trying to sidestep his romantic feelings for her. As the novel continues to unfold, Philip's frustration with Rachel's "lack of perception"—as well as her preference for the real Ambrose, rather than his successor—will boil over into outright violence.

CHAPTER 18

Philip and Rachel spend a pleasant Christmas Day together—but Philip is still angry with Nick Kendall over the matter of the **pearl collar**. As a way to spite his godfather, Philip decides to spend the New Year making home improvements. The thought of Kendall receiving the bills for the house work—which includes building a terraced walk over the fields—gives Philip "the greatest satisfaction."

Philip's motives for conducting home improvements is noteworthy. He is not building on the strong connection he has always felt to his home; rather, he seems to be flaunting, in an effort to spite his godfather and, most likely, to impress Rachel. This represents an important shift, as Philip has become as desperate to keep Rachel on the estate as he initially was to keep her away from it.

Philip uses the home improvements as an excuse to suspend the regular Sunday dinner that Ambrose traditionally held for the Pascoes and Kendalls. Philip and Rachel take to spending their evenings together in Rachel's bedroom, and Philip is at once pleased and tortured by the "new gentleness" he has observed in Rachel since the **pearl collar** incident. "Those **hands**," he thinks, "resting for a moment on my shoulder, or touching my head in a caress, as she passed by the chair where I was sitting [...] would set my heart beating so that it would not be stilled."

Philip and Rachel's relocation in the evenings is incredibly meaningful. While the library, where they used to retire after dinner, is nominally a male space (since Philip and Ambrose used to sit there together), Rachel's bedroom is explicitly her domain. Philip is now spending time on Rachel's turf. This suggests that the power dynamic is shifting even more obviously in Rachel's favor. Philip's fascination with Rachel's hands also demonstrates how infatuated he is with her at this point.

Early spring arrives. One morning, Philip is summoned to the home of a tenant, who is sick in bed. This tenant is one of those to whom Philip donated Ambrose's old clothes at Christmastime. The tenant, having just donned the coat for the first time, has found a **letter** addressed to Philip in Ambrose's hand wedged between the coat and its lining. Philip takes the letter, and asks his tenant not to mention the matter to anyone.

Again, a rediscovered letter has brought the past—and the question of Rachel's guilt—surging back to the forefront. Philip's reaction to his tenant's discovery is significant: he seems to be trying to suppress any negative information that might come to light about Rachel, even though he doesn't yet know the contents of Ambrose's letter. Philip's desire to protect Rachel suggests at once that he genuinely cares for her, and that he is in denial about who she actually is.

Philip wanders through the grounds, up to a path that overlooks the estate. There, a granite stone that Ambrose often jokingly referred to as his tombstone stands. Ambrose inscribed the stone with a record of his travels and "a line of doggerel at the end to make us laugh." Philip often visited the stone while Ambrose was abroad in his last winter, and he sits there now, debating whether or not to read the **letter**.

The fact that Philip has not visited the granite stone since Rachel arrived at the Ashley estate highlights how dramatically Philip's priorities have shifted since Ambrose's death. Philip now takes the kind of comfort he found in Ambrose's presence in Rachel's instead.

Philip thinks: "Back in the house, my loyalty was with her." Here near the granite stone, however, Philip feels Ambrose's "power [is] strongest." He decides to open the **letter**, and finds it is dated three months before Ambrose died. In the letter, Ambrose writes that he is suffering from increasingly bad headaches. He reveals that, at four months, Rachel miscarried the child she had conceived with him, and that ever since she has shown increased "recklessness with money" and "a tendency to evasion, [and] to lies." Ambrose even suspects that Rachel is having an affair with Signor Rainaldi.

Ambrose's letter provides important context for Rachel's character. Nowhere else in the novel is Rachel's miscarriage mentioned, although Rachel will later reference the fact that she cannot have children. The fact that Rachel's loss is only briefly canvassed in Ambrose's letter stresses the impossibility of knowing and understanding the suffering of others. Even Ambrose doesn't elaborate on his grief at the loss, indicating another way in which written letters are only a partial glimpse into the inner life of their author.

Ambrose is particularly disturbed by recent inquiries Rainaldi has been making about Ambrose's will. Ambrose reveals in the **letter** that he has drawn up an alternate will that bequeaths the Ashley house and estate to Rachel during her lifetime, with the caveat that Philip be in control of running the state, and that possession pass to him upon Rachel's death. Ambrose has left this will unsigned because he is worried about Rachel's spending habits. However, he cannot shake the feeling that Rainaldi and Rachel have been discussing the will behind his back.

This passage introduces Ambrose's unsigned, alternate will, which will feature heavily in the coming chapters of the novel. Additionally, it is noteworthy that Ambrose can't bring himself to solely accuse Rachel of plotting against him. Clearly, he does not have a problem with imagining Rachel being a devious person, but it seems he is incapable of assigning her the agency of plotting something on her own. This points to the way in which society underestimates women even as it harshly critiques and judges them.


Ambrose concludes the **letter** by describing the symptoms of his headaches, which are many, and which he does not recall his father (who died of a brain tumor) experiencing. Ambrose is obsessed by a single thought: "Are they [Rachel and Rainaldi] trying to poison me?"

This becomes the central question of the novel from this point onward. Though he is able to put it out of his mind while he still believes Rachel to be in love with him, Philip will ultimately become completely unraveled by the possibility that Rachel is a murderer.

Philip refolds Ambrose's **letter**, places it in his pocketbook, and buries the book in a hole under the granite slab. Philip returns to the house, where he is immediately confronted by terrible news from Seecombe. Don, the retriever, has been injured; a large slab fell on him from the construction on the roof, and he is now paralyzed.

Philip's decision to bury the letter rather than destroy it implies that he has not entirely dismissed Ambrose's claims. However, Philip would rather not think about Rachel's guilt—which makes sense given his shortsightedness as a character.

Rachel is in the library tending to Don. She is distraught, and Philip finds he is not thinking of "the **letter** buried deep beneath the granite slab, nor of poor Don so soon to die." All he can think is that this is the first time Rachel has shown sorrow "not for Ambrose," but for him.

Don's impending death is important because of how closely it occurs to Philip's burial of the letter. The death of Philip's beloved dog seems an ominous sign regarding Philip's decision to ignore the past. Additionally, the fact that Philip is more touched by Rachel's sympathy for him than by the death of a dog he has had since he was a child shows how completely fixated Philip has become on Rachel.

CHAPTER 19

Don dies around midnight. In Rachel's bedroom, Rachel and Philip reminisce about Philip's tenth birthday, when Ambrose gifted him with Don. Philip talks of his twenty-fifth birthday, which is coming in three weeks, and on which the Ashley property will become legally his. He insists that he will gift Rachel with all the family jewels, including the **pearl collar**. Rachel refuses, saying the jewels should belong to Philip's wife. Philip "[knows] well what [he] long[s] to say to her," but he remains silent.

The fact that Philip is unable to articulate his feelings for Rachel will become even more important as the stakes of their relationship become higher. Philip's decision to gift Rachel with material things as a sign of his affection not only demonstrates his immaturity, but also suggests that he feels intimidated by the woman he loves. This is clearly an unequal pairing, yet this lopsidedness might also be part of the attraction Philip feels to Rachel.

Rachel announces that she intends to leave the Ashley home after Philip's birthday. Philip is unfazed by this news because of the "plan" he has in mind. Without mentioning Ambrose's **letter**, Philip asks Rachel what she would do had Ambrose left a will of the exact kind he described in his unsent letter. Rachel says she would have still chosen to stay at the Ashley home, but it would have been different than the current situation. "I should be Mrs. Ashley," she says, "you my heir. But now, as it has turned out, you are Philip Ashley, and I, a woman relative, living on your bounty."

Rachel's description of how her situation would be different if she had inherited the estate is noteworthy. Though she describes herself as currently "living on Philip's bounty," she would still be at Philip's mercy even if she had inherited the estate, because he would still have the running of it according to Ambrose's will. No matter what, it seems Rachel will not be able to actually achieve financial independence, highlighting yet again how constricted women's lives are in the society of the novel.

Rachel asks to drop the subject, but Philip forces the issue by asking her what happened to the will. He then suggests that Rachel even has it with her. Rachel admits that she has the will, and when Philip asks, she agrees to let him read it. Philip sits down to write out a copy of the will, and while he does so, he questions Rachel about it. When he asks why Ambrose never signed this version of the will, Rachel replies: "I think when he realised that I could not [...] have children, he lost belief in me. Some sort of faith went, though he never knew it." Philip wonders "how it could be that two people who had loved could yet have such a misconception of each other."

This exchange is difficult to interpret. While it seems that Philip is bullying Rachel into answering questions about the will, it is also possible that Rachel is strategically meting out the information in order to manipulate Philip. Regardless, Rachel's feeling of failure—as if she has let Ambrose down by not being able to have children—is worth noting, as is the fact that she does not directly mention her miscarriage. Rachel's grief and her silence respectively reflect how damagingly society associates fertility with "true" womanhood, and the impossibility of ever adequately communicating one's suffering.

Philip asks a few more questions, and then tells Rachel that she will know his reason for asking them "in three weeks' time." Rachel replies, "I don't ask the reason […] all I ask is that you go." In the morning, Philip and Rachel bury Don together, and Philip then rides to an attorney in town. He asks that a document be drawn up that "enable[s] [him] to dispose of [his] property to [his] cousin, Mrs. Rachel Ashley, upon the first day of April, when it [becomes] [his] by law."

This is an important action on Philip's part, as it shows that he will voluntarily part with his beloved home in order to secure Rachel. This decision not only shows the level of Philip's infatuation, but also clearly indicates his naïveté, since just because Rachel will now be in charge of the Ashley estate, she will not necessarily decide to permanently reside there.

When the lawyer points out that Philip has come up with no provision should Rachel remarry, Philip decides that in the case of remarriage, the property should revert to him. The lawyer agrees to send a copy of the document to Philip by March 31. Philip rides home with "a reckless feeling in [his] heart," thinking how perfectly he has "turned the tables" on Nick Kendall. Now, Philip thinks, Rachel will have no reason to leave the Ashley estate, since it will legally be her property. Philip considers this "a day for folly and high fever."

Du Maurier emphasizes the frantic undertone of Philip's happiness in this passage, showing that he is on his way to being out of control. Du Maurier seems to be suggesting that Philip's love of Rachel is turning him into a rather unpleasant man—someone who enjoys spiting Nick Kendall, long a friend and mentor. Perhaps du Maurier is implying that Philip's "love" is more lustful and "reckless," than heartfelt and genuine.

When Philip returns home, he notices a carriage in the driveway. He goes inside and hears Rachel call him into the drawing room to see her visitor: Signor Rainaldi.

In this passage, it is not a forgotten letter that revives the question of Rachel's guilt, but rather her real-life, potential co-conspirator, Rainaldi.

CHAPTER 20

Philip and Rainaldi exchange a few tense words, and then Philip goes upstairs to dress for dinner. From his room, he can hear Rachel and Rainaldi talking in Italian. Philip's earlier excitement has passed, and he is now filled with "misgiving" about why Rainaldi is in Cornwall. The three gather in the drawing room before dinner, and Rainaldi states that part of the reason he has come to see Rachel is so they can decide on whether or not to let the Villa Sangalletti. At dinner, Rachel and Rainaldi occasionally converse in Italian, and Philip finds that this makes Rachel "more animated and more vivid, yet harder in a sense."

In this passage, Philip gets to see Rachel speaking what is presumably her native language for the first time. The fact that Rachel strikes Philip as so different when she is speaking Italian than when she is speaking English shows another way that people are "unknowable." Unless he learns Italian, Philip can never actually "meet" the Italian version—perhaps the true version—of Rachel. In this way, Philip's earlier project of imagining multiple different versions of Rachel was not entirely ridiculous; different versions of her do exist. Philip seems to find this unsettling, as he disapproves of this "harder" version of Rachel.

After dinner, Rachel and Rainaldi go up to her room to discuss their business; Philip declines Rachel's invitation to join them later. Instead, he wanders the grounds and broods: "Would she brew tisana for him, as she did for me, and move about the room so that he could watch her?" Around eleven at night, Philip returns to his room, where Rachel knocks on the door to wish him good night. She asks Philip's blessing for Rainaldi to stay three days at the estate, and laughingly teases Philip for his childish jealousy at dinner.

Rachel's carefree response to Philip's behavior obscures his pettiness and selfishness. Philip has no well-founded reason to resent time Rachel might spend with her longtime friend. However, he feels justified in behaving rudely solely because he wants Rachel's attention for himself. Though Philip gets annoyed when he feels Rachel is treating him like a child, passages like this make it easy to understand why she does so.

Rainaldi stays an entire week, and Philip continues to find him unpleasant and condescending. One evening, when Rainaldi and Philip are alone together before dinner, Rainaldi says: "This change of air has done wonders for [Rachel], but I think before long she will feel the need of society, such as she has been used to in Florence." Philip resents that Rainaldi has power over Rachel because he manages her affairs; however, he is comforted that "in three weeks' time [Rachel] [will] be independent of Rainaldi for the rest of her life."

Philip conceives of himself as a "good guy," trying to rescue Rachel from Rainaldi's pernicious, controlling influence. What Philip does not admit is the fact that he wants Rachel to be "independent of Rainaldi for the rest of her life," not for her own sake, but rather so that she can be dependent on Philip instead. After all, even after Philip bequeaths the estate to Rachel, he will be the one to manage it, meaning he will be even more fully in control of Rachel's finances than Rainaldi is now.

Before he goes upstairs to dress for dinner, Rainaldi tells Philip that the "strong medicine" of Rachel's presence, "taken in so large a dose, […] could do damage." When Philip asks if this is "a word of warning, or of advice," Rainaldi replies: "Of both […] if you will take it the right way."

Rainaldi's warning could be interpreted as genuine concern, or as mean-spirited teasing. Rainaldi uses medicinal language that parallels descriptions of poison, which might be taken as evidence that Rainaldi is in on a plot to harm Philip. Du Maurier does a masterful job at sustaining this ambiguity, as she allows the reader to decide how to interpret exchanges like this one.

On the last day of Rainaldi's stay, the Kendalls dine at the Ashley estate. Philip is annoyed by Rainaldi's suggestion that Rachel come to him in London, where he will be conducting some business before returning to Italy. He is even more irritated by Nick Kendall's enthusiasm about the idea. That night, Philip lurks on the stairwell and eavesdrops on Rainaldi and Rachel's conversation, catching his name and Kendall's mixed into their Italian. He is filled with hatred and jealousy of Rainaldi.

Philip is annoyed by the prospect of Rachel being "taken away" from him by Rainaldi (with Nick Kendall's help). The fact that Philip directs his anger at Rainaldi suggests that Philip is fundamentally objectifying Rachel, considering her as a piece of his rightful property that might be taken from him by another man. Such thought processes clearly show the way Philip has internalized the same misogyny that Ambrose espoused during Philip's childhood.

The next day, Rainaldi prepares to leave. He once again asks Rachel to come to him in London, but she insists that she will make no plans before Philip's birthday on April 1. Rainaldi snidely replies, "It must be odd to have a birthday on so singular a date. All Fools' Day, is it not?" Rainaldi finally leaves, and Rachel asks Philip, "Are you glad we are alone again?" She hurries off to the garden before he can answer.

Rainaldi's comment about Philip's birthday can be read as foreshadowing of the disastrous events that are about to unfold. His comment also contains fatalistic tones, hinting that Philip's birth on April Fool's Day means he is destined to act foolishly. This mirrors the sentiment Philip expressed in the opening chapter of the novel, that his very identity (as well as Ambrose's) doomed him to a disastrous relationship with Rachel.

CHAPTER 21

March passes quickly, and Philip becomes increasingly excited about his birthday. He even reminds Rachel, "You have to remember what you said to me the other day. The celebrator of a birthday must be granted every wish." "Only up to the age of ten years old," Rachel replies flippantly.

Philip and Rachel's conversation, while playful and flirtatious, occupies a strange grey area, since Philip is ostensibly asking Rachel to treat him like a child on his birthday. The age difference between Rachel and Philip, and the fact that her marriage to Ambrose makes her effectively Philip's stepmother, seems only to heighten the erotic tension between them.

On March 31, Philip visits the bank to withdraw all of the family jewels. The banker is reluctant to comply, but Philip insists and soon leaves with the entire collection packed into a basket. Outside the bank, Philip encounters Mrs. Pascoe and her daughters, and amuses himself by telling her that his home improvements have "ruined [him]" and he has been reduced to selling cabbages in town.

Philip takes pleasure in fibbing to Mrs. Pascoe, suggesting not only that he is slightly mean-spirited, but also that his fixation on Rachel has caused him to throw caution to the wind. Earlier in the novel, Philip fretted about Rachel giving Italian lessons because he feared it would reflect poorly on the prestigious Ashley name. Now, he relishes pretending to be a cabbage seller, flouting propriety just as recklessly as he did the law in withdrawing the jewels from the bank before they are legally his.

Philip stashes the jewels at home, and then rides to Pelyn to see Nick Kendall, carrying the document he has received from his attorney and the will drafted by Ambrose. Philip announces to Kendall that he wants him to witness his signature on the new document. Kendall tries to dissuade him, cautioning him that the new document lacks adequate safeguards and might cause the Ashley fortune to be "dispersed" by Rachel. Philip remains steadfast, though he takes offense when Kendall asks, "You are completely infatuated with your cousin, are you not?"

Philip is offended by Nick Kendall's use of the word "infatuated," calling it "a futile and most ugly word." Perhaps what Philip means to say is that this word suggests a childish level of emotion—and affection that is one-sided. Part of the reason Philip has grown to resent his godfather so much seems to be that Kendall consistently points out Philip's immaturity, while Rachel humors it, even as a mother might.

Kendall watches as Philip signs the document, though not before offering him this warning: "There are some women […] good women very possibly, who through no fault of their own impel disaster. Whatever they touch, somehow turns to tragedy." Unfazed, Philip leaves. He is thrilled by the sight of home: "All this was old to me, long-known and loved, possessed from babyhood; yet now it held new magic."

Kendall's comment, like some of Rainaldi's earlier statements, suggests a sense of fate that seems ultimately detrimental, as it excuses Philip (and Rachel) of making better decisions than they do. Another important aspect of this passage is that Philip now takes pleasure not in his home belonging to him, as he did before, but in the fact that it will soon belong to Rachel. This detail powerfully highlights how much Philip's love of Rachel has changed him and his values.

At home, Philip receives a case of pipes from the servants as a birthday gift. Philip and Rachel dine, and then Philip goes out to walk the grounds and swim in the ocean. Returning to the house, he smells a "rank vixen smell," but does not see the fox. It is now almost midnight, and Philip stands below Rachel's window and calls up to her, asking her to wait there for a little while.

As before, when Philip heard but only briefly saw the fox, Philip is aware of the animal due to her smell, rather than the sight of her. The fox's presence is sensual and powerful, yet the animal herself is elusive, much like Rachel herself.

Philip goes inside and fetches the basket full of jewels. He returns outside, under Rachel's window, and throws up a rope to her, which he has knotted to the basket. After Rachel pulls up the basket, Philip climbs up to her window using a vine. Rachel tells Philip she thinks he has gone mad, but he replies: "It's only that, at this minute, I have become twenty-five." He places the document he signed in front of Kendall on a table and tells Rachel she can read it later. He then opens the jewels on Rachel's bed.

Instead of simply entering the house and presenting Rachel with the jewels, Philip compels Rachel to hoist them up to her room through the window. This makes the entrance of the jewels and subsequently of Philip into Rachel's intimate bedroom space more laborious and thus more significant. Additionally, the fact that Philip opens the jewels on Rachel's bed represents an unusually confident move on his part, as he is laying claim to Rachel's personal space.

Rachel is overwhelmed by the jewels, and she and Philip embrace. "It was as though," Philip thinks, "she caught my madness, shared my folly, and all the wild delight of lunacy belonged to us both." Rachel tells Philip to name anything he wants, and she will give it to him. Philip suddenly "remembers what the **[pearl] collar**"—which Rachel now wears around her neck—"mean[s]." He says there is one thing, but "it isn't any use my asking it."

Du Maurier highlights how out of control Philip and Rachel both are in this scene—though of course, it is possible Rachel is more in control than ever. It is also important to note that Philip remains unable to vocalize his desire to marry Rachel, which means he is relying on Rachel to interpret his intentions. This also shows how difficult it is for people to understand one another, even in the most intimate of situations.

Rachel presses Philip for an answer, and he recalls the conversation they once had about how he did not want to marry because he had all the comfort he needed within the four walls of his home. Unsure how to ask Rachel to marry him, Philip instead asks if she remembers this conversation. She says she does, and Philip says that he "know[s] now what [he] lack[s]." Rachel laughs, and snuffs the candle.

This is the climactic scene of the novel. Though du Maurier does not actually depict the action in real time, it seems that Rachel and Philip have sex, at Rachel's initiation. What is not clear is whether Rachel actually knows that Philip wants to marry her, or if she interprets his reference to their earlier conversation as an indication that he now desires the "comfort" of a woman in addition to the comfort of his home. Regardless, Rachel initiates the sexual encounter, which shows more clearly than ever how much power she holds of the inexperienced, naïve Philip.

Philip wakes the next morning before the servants. He goes outside and stands on the grass, wondering "if any man before [him] had been accepted in marriage in quite so straight a fashion." Philip's narrative voice cuts into the action, and explains that Rachel was his "first, and last" lover.

Philip clearly interprets Rachel's decision to have sex with him as her acceptance of the marriage proposal he never actually made. Du Maurier shows here that even when two people engage in the act of sexual intimacy, they can never truly know the other person's heart and deepest desires.

CHAPTER 22

Philip goes back inside, feeling "calm and still." He falls asleep, and when he wakes, he goes outside and picks camellias to bring to Rachel. He finds her sitting up in her bed, eating breakfast, the opened document on her tray. Rachel sends Philip away before Seecombe can see him. Her "cool voice" mutes Philip's spirits slightly, but he realizes she is right not to want the servants knowing about their engagement before they officially announce it.

Philip is confused when his joyful mood is not matched by Rachel's cool poise. He knows she has read the document bequeathing her the estate, but he does not infer that his "gift" of the estate may have something to do with Rachel's mood. This passage is only the beginning of a sustained gap in understanding between Philip and Rachel that they do not take time to talk about until it is too late.

Downstairs, Seecombe presents Philip with a portrait of himself, and the two hang it in the hall together. Philip refrains from telling Seecombe of his engagement to Rachel because he thinks he and Rachel should share the news together. Philip then goes to his office to work, feeling "all the fever of last night" once again. Impatient to see Rachel, he asks the servants to pack them a picnic lunch, and soon learns that Rachel left in the carriage at ten in the morning. By two o'clock Rachel still has not returned, so Philip dejectedly goes for a walk in the woods.

Philip is aware enough of social graces that he realizes he and Rachel should make a joint announcement of their "engagement." However, he does not pause to consider the fact that the servants would likely be horrified to know that Philip intends to marry Rachel less than a year after Ambrose' death. The fervency of Philip's feelings for Rachel have caused him to lose perspective on how taboo their romantic relationship actually is.

While walking, Philip spots the carriage; he bids it stop and climbs in beside Rachel, who reveals that she has been to Pelyn to consult with Nick Kendall. Rachel says Kendall has clarified the document for her, but Philip finds her voice "cool and unattached." With her veil over her face, he thinks, she is "a world away from the Rachel who had held me against her heart."

Philip seems to think that because Rachel had sex with him, she is in love with him and has agreed to marriage. Though the reader knows this is not necessarily the case, it is still moving to see how badly Philip wants to feel close to Rachel. However, Philip does not acknowledge the fact that, even though Rachel held him against her heart last night, he still does not actually know her that well.

Rachel's cool demeanor perplexes Philip. "Since yesterday," he thinks, "everything was changed. Yet she gave no sign of it." Rachel even mentions that she still intends to go to London. Philip is dismayed, and his dejection increases when he realizes for the first time that with "Ambrose but nine months dead […] the world would think it wrong for us to marry before midsummer." Philip asks Rachel to walk with him in the woods instead of going directly home, and she agrees.

Philip's statement is key: "Since yesterday, everything was changed. Yet she gave no sign of it." Philip assumes that sex has inherent meaning. This may or may not be true for Rachel—the reader has no way of knowing. Clearly, Philip thinks Rachel owes him a certain kind of behavior since they have been intimate with each other. While du Maurier does not offer answers about whether Rachel or Philip is in the right, she exposes the complex expectations and emotions that sex entails, and which Phillip did not at all anticipate.

Philip kisses Rachel passionately in the woods, telling her, "This […] was my plan, which you have spoilt by lunching with the Kendalls." Rachel replies: "I rather thought it might be […] which is one of the reasons why I went." She adds that it will take time for her to "grasp the full measure of [Philip's] generosity" in bequeathing her the estate. She gives Philip his birthday gift, a cravat pin, and then asks to return home.

It seems that Rachel is regretting having slept with Philip, since she now realizes that it has caused him to expect more affection from her than she is willing to give. Even though Rachel was in the position of power during the sexual encounter itself, du Maurier highlights the fact that the sex didn't ultimately happen on Rachel's terms, since Philip now has expectations of her to which she does not want to conform.

While walking home, Philip and Rachel pass the granite stone—Ambrose's "tombstone." Rachel insists on stopping to see it, and Philip is suddenly overcome by the feeling that he has "betrayed" both Rachel and Ambrose. Philip and Rachel return home, and Rachel goes straight to her room. Philip, in his own room, is unable to shake the words of Ambrose's **letter**, buried under the granite slab: that money is the "one way" to Rachel's heart.

The fact that Philip feels so torn about his loyalty to these two characters, who respectively represent a father and a mother figure in his life, implies that Philip is still much more of a child than he imagines himself to be.

Philip and Rachel dine. Rachel wears the **pearl collar**, but Philip finds this makes her "not closer to [him], but more distant." Philip feels a sense of desperation, and drinks wine in an effort to "forget the granite slab and what it stood for in our inner selves."

It seems that Philip no longer takes pleasure in seeing Rachel wear the pearl necklace because it now legally belongs to her. This means it no longer symbolizes Philip's "ownership" of Rachel.

Soon after dinner, the Kendalls stop by to celebrate Philip's birthday. Heavily inebriated by this point, Philip has resolved to announce his engagement to Rachel. He drunkenly breaks the news, and Rachel quickly explains to Nick Kendall and Louise that "the birthday and the wine have gone to Philip's head." She then ushers them into the drawing room, leaving Philip feeling as though there is "a kind of vacuum where [his] heart had been."

Du Maurier relays Philip's confusion and heartbreak empathetically. Philip and Rachel have fundamentally misunderstood one another, and though Philip's assumptions about what Rachel owes him may be unfair, du Maurier suggests that Philip still deserves to be pitied for the way in which he has so publicly had his heart broken.

Philip stays in the dining room, and listens as the Kendalls leave. His head a bit clearer, he stands and meets Rachel at the stairs. Rachel tells him: "You make me feel like a backstairs servant, creeping to some attic with a groom. I have known shame before, but this is the worst." Philip retorts that Rachel was "not ashamed last night at midnight," when she gave him her promise to marry him. Rachel claims she made no such promise, and insists that she will never marry Philip. "Do you dare to reproach me for what happened?" she asks. "I wanted to thank you, that was all. You had given me the jewels."

Just as Philip was within his rights to feel embarrassed and confused in the preceding scene, du Maurier makes it clear that Rachel has a right to her humiliation as well. Rachel is upset because Philip has made it seem as though Rachel has no respect for Ambrose. Even more than being publicly embarrassed, Rachel seems to feel genuinely guilty about having slept with Philip so soon after losing Ambrose. Philip's accusation that Rachel was "not ashamed at midnight" is all the more cruel for this reason, since it throws Rachel's own sexual desire back in her face, as if to humiliate her even further. Rachel, too, is cruel in suggesting that the only reason she slept with Philip was to thank him for the jewels. This fraught conversation captures the complexity of sex and the vital need for communication if two people hope to ever understand the slightest thing about one another.

Philip is stunned. He thinks the only way he can now influence Rachel is with fear, so he wraps his hands around her throat and begins to strangle her as he entreats her to promise never to leave him. When Philip finally releases Rachel, he says, "Will you marry me now?" Rachel backs away slowly, "her **eyes** still upon [Philip's] face, her fingers still to her throat." Philip hears Rachel lock herself in her room, as he looks at "[his] own shadow on the wall, a monstrous thing, without shape or substance."

In this passage, Philip is rendered completely unsympathetically. His violence toward Rachel is hateful—even he seems to recognize this, since his own shadow strikes him as looking "monstrous." Still, Philip doesn't take responsibility for his horrible actions, either by apologizing to Rachel or by admitting that he acted reprehensibly.

CHAPTER 23

The next morning, Philip breakfasts alone, where he receives a note from Louise. She says she can meet him in town if he would like someone to talk to; "please remember," she writes, "I am your friend, and always will be." Philip accepts: "a sleepless night" and "an agony of loneliness" make him crave Louise's company. He rides through the rain to town, where he and Louise take shelter in the church.

Louise's note reaffirms that she is a loyal, caring friend to Philip. Though she has never been a fan of Rachel's, Louise genuinely feels badly that Philip has been hurt by Rachel. Besides giving a deeper glimpse into Louise's character, this passage suggests that Philip is not self-sufficient enough to work through the events of the preceding day; rather, he relies on Louise for comfort almost as heavily as he has relied on Rachel.

Louise does her best to comfort Philip. "There has been deception from the first," she says, "and you were prepared for it, in the beginning, before [Rachel] came." Philip replies that the only deception happened in "the last few hours," and that he is to blame for the misunderstanding. Louise insists that Rachel has been taking advantage of Philip. She points out that Rachel has been steadily sending money out of the country, and suggests that Rachel has merely been biding her time until Philip's twenty-fifth birthday when, "with [Nick Kendall] no longer guardian, she could bleed [Philip] as she chose."

Louise's comments are important because they closely resemble Philip's early concerns about Rachel. The fact that Louise's accusations of Rachel seem so outlandish to Philip is evidence of how much his perspective—and perhaps the reader's along with it—has changed over the course of the novel. Another significant aspect of this passage is that Philip does admit his fault in the "misunderstanding" that occurred when he and Rachel slept together without clarifying what the act meant. This is a rare moment in which Philip takes responsibility for his actions.

Philip takes Louise's comments as "slander, almost blasphemy." He responds that Louise has been prejudiced against Rachel from the moment she met her, and thinks that "no one could ever understand, save Ambrose, who was dead." Louise asks what Philip's future holds, and he says he will continue asking Rachel to marry him. When Louise asks what Rachel's answer was the first time Philip asked, on the morning of his birthday, Philip replies: "We spoke at cross purposes […] I thought that she meant yes, when she meant no."

Philip's conviction that Ambrose is the only one who can understand him once again touches on the theme of destiny, as Philip seems to be suggesting that he and Ambrose are the only ones who truly know what it means to love Rachel. (Though, arguably, neither of the Ashley men either loved—or even knew—Rachel all that well.) Additionally, it is ironic that Philip claims he and Rachel "spoke at cross purposes," as the entire problem is that they did not speak to each other at all, and instead relied solely on action to convey their complex and divergent intentions.


Philip and Louise exit the church; Louise's carriage is waiting to take her home. Louise tells Philip what happened when Rachel visited Pelyn on Philip's birthday to discuss the transfer of the estate with Nick Kendall. Kendall pointed out the remarriage clause, emphasizing to Rachel that she must remain a widow in order to retain the Ashley estate and fortune. According to Louise, "Mrs. Ashley smiled at him and answered, 'That suits me very well.'" Philip insists that if Rachel were to get remarried to *him*, this clause would not apply. "That is where you are wrong," says Louise. "If she married you, the whole would revert to you again."

Louise's comments convincingly suggest Rachel's malice. It seems possible that Rachel would refrain from marrying Philip in order to retain the estate and a degree of financial independence. However, what none of the characters (including Louise) consider is that all Rachel may actually be guilty of is not loving Philip. After all, Rachel has never asked Philip to give her more, and aside from overdrafting her account once, it does not seem that she has stolen anything. Yet again, du Maurier plays the delicate balancing game of hinting at Rachel's guilt, only to also provide evidence of her innocence.

Philip is offended. "[Rachel] would not refuse to marry me because of that one clause," he says. "Is that what you are trying to suggest?" Louise replies: "A wife […] cannot send her husband's money from the country, nor return to the place where she belongs. I suggest nothing." Louise apologizes for hurting Philip, and leaves. Philip is dejected, having "come for comfort and found […] only cold hard facts, twisted to distortion."

Louise's comment suggests that Rachel has never actually belonged at the Ashley estate. This seems harsh, since England is her ancestral home, and she likely would have lived on the estate with Ambrose, had he survived. However, it is difficult to deny the accuracy of Louise's statement in the sense that Rachel's fierce independence and her overt sexuality make her out of place in a rigid English society.

Philip spends some time at the inn in town, the Rose and Crown, and then rides home through the rain. At home, he learns from the servant John that Miss Mary Pascoe has come to stay at the estate. Confused, Philip goes upstairs to his room, where he finds a note from Rachel. She writes: "I have asked Mary Pascoe to stay here with me in the house as a companion. After last night, I cannot be alone with you again."

Though Philip seems to have already moved on from the fact that he tried to strangle Rachel, Rachel's decision to bring Mary Pascoe to the estate underscores how much of a danger Philip poses to Rachel. This effectively highlights Rachel's precarious position, as she has nowhere else to stay except in the home of a man who has just physically assaulted her.

Philip is enraged. Without changing out of his wet clothes, he storms to Rachel's room, where he finds her with Mary. Philip insists on speaking to Rachel alone. Philip demands to know how long Mary will be staying; "as long as I choose," says Rachel. Rachel says Mary's presence not only gives her "some measure of security," but will also help lessen the gossip that Philip's "boast of marriage will have done little to improve." "You threatened me last night," says Rachel. "Once was enough." She then bids Philip leave.

It is interesting to note that Rachel has turned to another woman for a "measure of security," instead of, for example, asking Nick Kendall to help protect her. In fact, Mary's gender specifically seems to anger Philip, as if he is annoyed that Rachel is exhibiting a kind of female solidarity. Additionally, Rachel's choice of words is powerful—she says Philip "threatened" her. This understatement actually makes the violence Philip committed against her even more horrifying.


Philip now regrets strangling Rachel. He begins to worry that he has taken a chill, and orders dinner in his room. Later in the evening, he knocks on Rachel's door, but it is locked and she does not answer. In the morning, Philip has a terrible headache. Seecombe summons Rachel to Philip's side, and Rachel decides to send for the doctor. Philip is only half-lucid by the time the doctor arrives, but he hears an agitated Rachel telling the doctor that she has seen this illness before, and that it "attacks the spine, and then the brain." Philip begs Rachel to stay with him, and she promises to "be with [him] all the time."

Philip's illness begins with a headache—the same symptom that Ambrose's fatal illness produced. It is also noteworthy that Rachel, rather than the doctor, makes the diagnosis of meningitis. On the one hand, this demonstrates that Rachel is incredibly knowledgeable, despite the fact that she does not have formal medical training. On the other hand, Rachel's assertiveness in making the diagnosis could be a means of covering up for any role she might have had in precipitating the illness.


Philip drifts off into a fevered dream, where he imagines himself on the banks of the Arno. "Rachel the beggar girl" approaches him "with empty **hands**," naked except for the **pearl collar** around her neck. She points to the river, and Philip looks down to see Ambrose's dead body floating past.

Philip's fever dream suggests that he still very much sexually desires Rachel. Rachel's silence in the dream is also important, as it emphasizes how Philip relies on her looks and gestures to try to understand her.

CHAPTER 24

Philip awakens, and is puzzled to find that the tree outside is window is already in leaf. He also realizes he has grown a beard. Rachel is in the room with Philip, and when he asks where Mary Pascoe is Rachel responds that she has long since gone. It is the second week of May; Philip has been ill for five weeks, having nearly died of meningitis. Philip asks "what pulled [him] through" and Rachel replies that she gave instructions to the doctors. "We are very old," she says, "and very wise, who come from Florence."

Rachel's claim about being "old and wise" is significant because it is one of the few times that Rachel claims to have any sort of mystical (rather than purely practical) wisdom. Though Rachel links her wisdom to her identity as an Italian, it also seems to be implied that her gender somehow impacted her ability to heal Philip, even when the male doctors were at loss for how to treat him.

Philip begins to convalesce. Though he cannot remember much of his illness, he is sure that he and Rachel were married the day before his birthday. Philip finds Rachel gentle and tender, and loves her more every day. Eventually, he is well enough to go outside and he finds that many of his home improvements are complete. The house now boasts a terrace walk, and a sunken garden that is waiting to be paved. Tamlyn also shows Philip through the grounds, where Philip admires the blossoming laburnum trees. Tamlyn mentions that the trees will need to be moved the following year; otherwise, they will drop their poisonous pods into the cow fields and potentially kill the animals.

The fact that Philip is so content to have Rachel tend to him suggests that much of what he values about her is based on her maternal qualities. While this does lend a strange quality to the nature of Philip and Rachel's romantic relationship, it is also rather melancholy, as it serves as reminder that Philip grew up without ever knowing his mother. This passage also introduces the presence of poisonous laburnum seeds on the Ashley estate, a dramatic reveal that du Maurier has timed perfectly to add drama to the final chapters of the novel.

When Philip remarks that there were laburnum trees in the Villa Sangalletti, Tamlyn replies that he and the servants have heard Rachel will soon be returning there. "She was only waiting to see you restored to health before she went," Tamlyn says. That night, when Philip is drinking his customary cup of tisana before bed, he asks about Rachel's plans. She intends to be back in Florence by the spring, and suggests Philip might like to visit her there. Philip is confused and asks when Rachel plans to tell the servants that she and Philip are married. When Rachel tells him this is not true, Philip bursts into tears, realizing that he has been living a fantasy the past several weeks. "It would have been better [...] had you let me die," he says.

This passage parallels the "fantasy" Philip previously had about being engaged to Rachel. This time, Philip's delusion is caused by the lingering amnesia from his illness, yet du Maurier suggests that Philip's earlier conviction that he and Rachel would get married was just as much a delusion. Again, du Maurier emphasizes how powerfully one's desires shape one's understanding of others, and she also seems to suggest that that understanding is always, at least on some level, a kind of fantasy.

Rachel attempts to soothe Philip, encouraging him to continue making improvements to the estate after she has left. "In a little while everything will seem to you just the same as it was before I came," she says. When Philip asks if Rachel truly believes this, she says that she must, or she will have "no peace of mind." Philip implores Rachel to stay at least a few more weeks before leaving. He thinks: "I sought to evade the future and escape. But when I held her it was not the same."

For the first time, it would seem, Rachel is practicing the same willful denial that Philip has exhibited throughout the novel. It is difficult to guess whether Rachel truly regrets having to leave Philip, or if she is merely trying to make the best of the situation by doing everything in her power to avoid "provoking" further violence from him. In this way, the confusion the reader may feel at trying to parse Rachel's motives mirrors Philip's own.

CHAPTER 25

Over the ensuing weeks as May turns to June, Philip and Rachel attempt to remain "light-hearted," not speaking of Rachel's impending departure. Philip suffers lingering head pain, but does not mention it to Rachel. He begins to feel that those around him are repulsed by his weakened state, and he wishes he could "erect a fence about the property, as in the old enchanted tales of childhood, to keep away all callers, and disaster too."

Though Philip is a year older than he was at the beginning of the novel, he does not appear to be much more mature, as evidenced by the desire he expresses to shut out the outside world rather than confront the reality of losing Rachel. The foreboding tone in this passage makes it seems as though the Philip senses that fate will not be writing him a happy ending.

Philip looks for signs that Rachel will soon be leaving. He does not see any trunks, but he notices that Rachel has been tidying her possessions and sorting through papers. She has also begun to go out driving in the mornings, and evades Philip's questions about what business she is attending to on her trips. One morning, Rachel goes out in the carriage with Wellington the coachman, leaving the groom, a boy named Jimmy, at home with an earache. Jimmy tells Philip that he caught cold waiting on the quay, while Rachel was inside at the Rose and Crown, as she is every day.

Despite the fact that he is still recovering from his illness, Philip is still trying to exert control over Rachel by tracking her movements. This suggests that Philip has been unable to shake his possessiveness of Rachel, even though he knows she will not be staying at the Ashley estate. This obsessiveness on Philip's part is rather ominous, especially given that Rachel has made it clear by this point that she is quite resolved to leave.

Philip is perplexed; why has Rachel been going to the town inn every day? He ventures to the quay and questions a local boy, whom he recognizes as a servant at the Rose and Crown. The boy explains he is catching fish for the Italian gentleman who has been sitting at the parlor in the Rose and Crown. Alarmed, Philip takes a small boat of Ambrose's out into the harbor and spies on the entrance to the inn. Before long, he spots Rainaldi.

Philip is more than just curious about why Rachel has been visiting the inn—he seems to feel that he is entitled to know her reasons. Philip is neither Rachel's father nor her husband—even the rigid societal code of the novel does not give Philip the "right" to control Rachel's movements. Yet, because he still "loves" her, Philip feels he deserves an explanation of Rachel's actions. This passage thus suggests how powerfully society engrains in male characters the notion that they have a right to answers from their "inferiors," including women.

At home, Philip finds Rachel in the library. He accuses her of having a secret, but before he can say more, Seecombe summons the pair to dinner. After dinner, Rachel flees upstairs but Philip enters her bedroom before she can lock the door against him. Philip badgers Rachel until she reveals that Rainaldi has been staying at the inn for two weeks, and that she has been meeting with him for "advice." Philip claims that Rainaldi is in love with Rachel, but she insists that he is just a friend—her "only friend."

It is interesting to note that Philip claims Rainaldi is in love with Rachel, rather than the other way around. Perhaps it is too painful for Philip to think that Rachel could possibly be in love with anyone if not himself. But it also seems plausible that Philip is determined to absolve Rachel of guilt, even as he simultaneously refuses to accept her explanation that Rainaldi is only a friend.

Philip orders Rachel to send Rainaldi away, but she stands her ground, saying that she will even ask Rainaldi to the estate as her "protector" if Philip threatens her again. "You would not dare," Philip says, and Rachel replies: "Dare? Why not? The house is mine." Philip takes a step toward Rachel, and she moves away toward the bell-rope, saying she will call Seecombe if Philip tries to touch her. Defeated, Philip asks that Rachel meet Rainaldi at the house in future, rather than meeting him at the inn. He then leaves the room.

Rachel is incredibly brave to threaten to expose Philip's violence, and it is difficult not to admire this courage, whether Rachel is guilty of past crimes or not. Meanwhile, Philip still so desperately wants to feel that he is "in control" of Rachel that he asks her to meet with Rainaldi at the house, where he can observe her, rather than at the inn.

The next night, Rainaldi comes to dinner at the Ashley house. Seecombe accidentally shows Rainaldi into the library, where Philip is alone. The two have a tense conversation. Philip is disgusted by Rainaldi, and particularly irritated Rainaldi's use of the word "we" when referring to him and Rachel. Rachel soon arrives, and the three have dinner. Philip feels nauseated; even the tisana "ha[s] a bitter unaccustomed tang." After eating, Philip leaves and goes upstairs to his room.

Philip continues to exhibit a brand of rabid jealousy. It is as though he is determined that no man will have Rachel, if he cannot. Taken on its own, the detail of Philip's herbal tea tasting bitter might seem to indicate Philip's foul mood, and his bitter feelings toward the world in general. However, in retrospect, this detail could be interpreted as evidence that Rachel is trying to poison Philip.

After Rainaldi leaves, Rachel knocks on Philip's door, where she finds him sitting by the window. She bids him put on a blanket, and then says goodnight. That night, Philip's fever returns. In the morning, the doctor visits and leaves some medicine. Philip notices a "weariness" in Rachel, and imagines her to be thinking, "Is it going to start again? Am I doomed to sit here as a nurse to all eternity?"

This passage is a rare moment in which Philip exhibits both awareness of and empathy toward how confined Rachel's life is. Philip seems to feel badly that Rachel has to care for him, even though she wants to return to Italy. This passage shows that, despite his selfishness and other flaws, Philip is not wholly an unlikeable character.

Philip tells Rachel she should spend time with Rainaldi if she prefers. Rachel replies that Rainaldi left England the previous day. Philip is relieved, but asks when Rachel will follow Rainaldi. She says it depends on Philip, adding, "If [...] you would only be less bitter and less cruel, these last days could be happy."

Rachel might be prolonging her stay in England to make sure Philip is back in good health before she leaves. Alternatively, she might be staying long enough to poison him for good. Either way, it seems profoundly unlikely that Rachel and Philip will ever again experience shared happiness.

That night, Philip has a dream about returning to the granite stone in the woods and re-reading the buried **letter**. The next day, when Rachel is in her room resting, Philip sneaks out to the woods and digs up the letter. He re-reads it in full, and then tears it to pieces and smashes the shreds into the ground with his foot. When he returns home, he finds Seecombe with the post-bag and sees a letter to Rachel from Rainaldi. Philip regrets that Seecombe is present; otherwise he would have stolen the letter.

Philip's behavior in this passage is more erratic than ever before. Instead of focusing on whether or not Rachel is guilty of past crimes or indiscretions, Philip seems now to be fixated on determining whether or not Rainaldi is in love with Rachel. This suggests that Philip is as infatuated with Rachel as ever, and that he wants to assure himself that she will not be with anyone else, if she will not be with him.

In the evening, Philip sits in Rachel's bedroom as she brews his tisana. He cannot take his eyes off Rainaldi's **letter**, which sits on Rachel's bureau. He wonders: "Would an Italian, writing to the woman he loved, keep to formality?" When Rachel asks what the matter is, Philip lies and tries to distract her by "pretending an urgency of longing and of love, so that her questions might be stilled, and that she would forget the letter lying on the desk and leave it there."

Philip's behavior in this passage is peculiar. He claims that he feigns "longing and love" in order to distract Rachel, which suggests that he no longer genuinely harbors these feelings for her and must fake them now. However, he is nevertheless obsessed with determining whether or not Rainaldi is his romantic rival. It would seem that du Maurier is illustrating that even though Philip no longer loves Rachel, he still feels he has a kind of claim to her, thus demonstrating the power and toxicity of male jealousy.

In the early hours of the morning, Philip sneaks into Rachel's room and looks for the **letter**. He cannot find it, though he searches all of Rachel's drawers. One drawer alone is locked, so Philip fetches the keys and returns to Rachel's room to open it. He pulls out an envelope but it is not Rainaldi's letter—it is an envelope filled with laburnum pods and seeds, "poisonous to cattle, and to men."

The dramatic ending of this chapter suggests that Rachel has been poisoning Philip's herbal tea with laburnum, and that she did the same thing to Ambrose at the Villa Sangalletti, where laburnum seeds also grew. For the first time, it appears that proof of Rachel's guilt actually exists.

CHAPTER 26

Philip calmly returns the envelope and seeds to the drawer. He then goes downstairs to the kitchen, and finds the cups out of which he and Rachel drank their tisana. He tastes and examines the dregs of both cups; he thinks his might be thicker, but he is not sure. Philip returns to his room, and lies in bed, filled with a deep compassion for Rachel. He wishes "to save her from herself, and [knows] not how." He finds himself wondering whether Rachel poisoned her first husband, Sangalletti, as well as Ambrose. With Ambrose's **letter** now destroyed, Philip is "the only one to know he spoke the truth." Philip realizes he is come full circle, back to the "bridge beside the Arno," where he swore to seek revenge on Rachel.

Philip's feeling of "compassion" for Rachel seems to resemble something more like pity. Though Philip now believes that Rachel is a murderer, he also seems to believe that she is not really responsible for her actions—that she needs to be saved from herself. This is strangely infantilizing, and suggests that Philip does not fully think Rachel capable of the crimes he believes she has committed, perhaps because she is a woman.


Morning dawns; it is Sunday, and Philip and Rachel take the carriage to church. Philip wishes that he could hate Rachel, "as [he] hated her for many months, unseen." Instead, he still feels only a "strange, terrible compassion." After the service, Rachel suggests that the Kendalls and Pascoes be invited to dinner, as of old. Philip agrees because he thinks their presence will keep Rachel from "look[ing] at him, and wonder[ing]."

Though Philip does not actually formulate a plan to take action against Rachel, the tone of this passage suggests that he might intend to do so anyway. This is supported by the fact that he wants to avoid Rachel noticing that he is acting any differently toward her. It is also interesting that Philip seems to want to return to the phase of his life where he was able to imagine many different versions of Rachel. Instead—at long last—there is only one, and she is a murderer.

As Rachel, the Kendalls, and the Pascoes are making plans for the evening, Philip notices one of his construction workers standing nearby. The man approaches Philip and cautions him, "if [he] should go on the terrace walk, not to stand on the bridgeway we are building across the sunken garden" because it is unfinished and won't bear weight. Anyone crossing it, the worker says, "could fall and break their neck." Philip thanks him for the warning, and turns back to the others.

The fact that Philip does not warn any of his friends about the unstable bridge suggests either that he is too distracted by thoughts of Rachel's guilt to remember, or that he plans to somehow use the unstable bridge to exact revenge on Rachel.

Philip rides home in a carriage with Louise. He asks if she is aware that laburnum seeds are poisonous; she replies that she is. Philip asks to speak privately with Louise later in the day. At the Ashley estate, Rachel is in high spirits. She pours wine for everyone except for Philip, who has resolved to "take nothing from her **hands** again." Rachel chats to her guests about Florence, and as Philip listens he reflects on how he used to think Rachel was "magic." "Now," however, "[he] know[s] all the tricks."

In this passage, it is clear that Philip has become completely disillusioned. Because he now believes Rachel guilty of murder, Philip has started to see all her finely honed social skills in a cynical light. Rather than viewing Rachel's charisma as magical and alluring, Philip now sees it as dark and manipulative. He seems unable to account for a more complex version of Rachel that encompasses both.

After the meal, the Pascoes and Nick Kendall depart. Rachel invites Louise and Philip to her bedroom to drink tisana. Philip refuses to drink his cup, telling Rachel she should drink it herself. "Mine is already poured," she says. "I like it to stand longer. This must be wasted. What a pity."

Du Maurier seems to include this detail as a teaser; it is hard not to interpret Rachel's refusal to drink Philip's tisana as proof that she has poisoned it. Still, du Maurier never lets the reader feel entirely certain.

After a while, Rachel suggests a walk in the garden. Philip claims he has something to show Louise, so Rachel says she will walk alone. Philip tells Louise to stay where she is, and goes downstairs, where he finds Rachel just setting out for her walk. She intends to walk up to the terrace, "to see if a little statue would look well in the sunken garden." "Have a care," Philip says. When Rachel asks why, Philip replies: "Have a care […] of walking beneath the sun." Rachel laughs, and leaves.

This passage is important because it has to do with Philip's guilt and innocence rather than Rachel's. Philip's choice to not warn Rachel about the unstable bridge suggests that he is guilty of murdering his cousin. It is also important that Philip relies on a physical part of the estate to harm Rachel, as it is as if du Maurier is further emphasizing how inhospitable the Ashley house, steeped in misogyny as it is, has been to Rachel from the very first moment she entered it.

Back upstairs, Philip tells Louise he thinks Rachel has been poisoning him. He says the proof lies in Rainaldi's **letter**, which he needs Louise's help in translating from Italian. As he begins searching Rachel's desk for the letter, Philip notices the envelope full of laburnum seeds is now missing. Philip finds a list of names, which Louise identifies as plants. Laburnum is listed, but nothing of poison is mentioned. Philip also finds a note from the bank stating that Rachel has returned the Ashley jewels, and listed Philip as her heir. Philip feels "sudden anguish," thinking: "Whatever Rainaldi's influence, some impulse of her own directed this action."

Again, Philip exhibits a strangely patronizing attitude toward Rachel. He seems to think that Rainaldi must have compelled Rachel to commit murder, but that she alone is responsible for ensuring Philip's well-being by making him her heir. It is difficult to say whether Philip does this because he truly believes Rachel to be a good person, or because he does not think a woman is capable of murder. Likely, both of these factors are at play.

Philip cannot find Rainaldi's **letter**. Louise suggests he check the blotter; the letter is there. It is written in English, and says only that Rainaldi will wait for Rachel in Florence and that if Rachel "cannot bring [her]self to leave that boy behind," then she should bring Philip with her to the villa. Philip is perplexed; something must be missing, he thinks. He continues searching and finds a drawing of Ambrose, done, he thinks, by "some Italian friend, or artist." Ambrose has written a dedication to Rachel under the drawing.

Rainaldi's letter is far more innocuous than Philip ever could have believed. In fact, Rainaldi's invitation for Rachel to bring Philip to Italy seems to undermine Philip's entire perception of the man. Though the text does not dwell on Rainaldi's letter, it nevertheless serves of an example of how misguided Philip can be in his perception of other people.

Louise translates the Italian dedication, "non ramentare che le ore felici," as "remember only the happy hours." Louise wonders whether she and Philip have "misjudged" Rachel, as they cannot find proof she is trying to poison Philip. "There will never be any proof," says Philip. Louise suggests they leave Rachel's room, saying, "I wish now we had not meddled with her things."

Louise points out the fundamentally frustrating part of Rachel's character: there is no way for the other characters to know whether or not she is guilty. Has the reader, as Louise suggests, misjudged Rachel as well?

Philip crosses to the window, and looks out on the terrace walk. Louise asks him what the matter is, and he responds by telling her to pull the bell-rope on the staircase landing that summons the servants. When Louise asks why, Philip says: "Everyone is out, or sleeping, or scattered somewhere; and I may need help." Louise is perplexed, and Philip explains, "There may have been an accident, to Rachel." Louise stares at Philip and finally says, "What have you done?"

Louise's reaction to Philip suggests that Philip may as well have killed Rachel with his own hands. Because du Maurier carefully constrains the scope of the novel, the reader never learns if Louise speaks of this conversation or Philip's role in Rachel's "accident" to anyone else. Du Maurier does make clear, however, that Philip himself struggles with the question of his guilt as much as he struggles with that of Rachel's.

Philip runs outside to the terrace walk, but sees no sign of Rachel. He notices two of the family dogs standing near a pile of mortar, and sees Rachel's footsteps and her sunshade. Then he notices part of the collapsed bridge hanging, "grotesque and horrible, like a swinging ladder." Finally, Philip finds Rachel lying amongst the stones. She opens her **eyes** when he takes her **hands**, and calls him Ambrose. Philip holds Rachel's hands as she dies. The novel ends with the same line with which it opened: "They used to hang men at Four Turnings in the old days. Not any more, though."

Rachel's death is moving; the fact that she calls Philip "Ambrose" serves as a reminder not only of the fact that Philip could never have been beloved by Rachel, but also as a reminder of all that Rachel has lost. Perhaps she calls Philip "Ambrose" because she killed Ambrose and feels guilty. Or perhaps it is because she loved Ambrose, and misses him, and wishes he were the one to comfort her as she dies. The power of Rachel's death scene, as of the novel as a whole, lies in its ambiguity.

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