On the Face of It

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SUSAN HILL

Susan Hill was born on the coast of North Yorkshire, England in the middle of World War II. She wrote her first novel, *The Enclosure*, before she graduated from King's College London. In 1975 she married Stanley Wells, a Shakespeare scholar, and they moved to Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon. The two separated in 2013, when Hill began a relationship with the television producer and writer Barbara Machin. Hill is best known for her gothic ghost stories and crime novels, but she has also written plays, non-fiction, and children's stories. Her most popular works are *The Woman in Black*, *The Mist in the Mirror*, and *I'm the King of the Castle*. She has won numerous literary honors including the Somerset Maugham Award, and in 2012 Hill was appointed by the Queen as Commander of the Order of the British Empire for her services to literature.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

On the Face of It is probably set in rural England sometime around the time of its writing (1975). The only specific historical event mentioned in the play is "the war"—World War II—during which Mr. Lamb had his leg blown off by a bomb.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Hill's best-known other works are quite different in style from *On the Face of It*. She is most famous for her ghost stories and crime novels, which are often compared to the works of Daphne du Maurier, author of *Rebecca* and *The Birds*. Within the play itself, Derry's sense of alienation and isolation because of his perceived ugliness are also reminiscent of the famous novel *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** On the Face of It
- **Where Written:** England
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary Drama
- **Genre:** Play
- **Setting:** Rural England
- **Climax:** Derry finds Mr. Lamb fallen in his garden
- **Antagonist:** Derry's mother, society
- **Point of View:** Drama

EXTRA CREDIT

Controversial Beginnings. Hill's first novel *The Enclosure*, which was published when she was only 19 years old, was criticized as being too sexual and inappropriate for a "schoolgirl."

Management Skills. Hill also runs her own small publishing company, which has published several of her works as well as those of other authors.

PLOT SUMMARY

Mr. Lamb, an old man, is sitting in his garden when he encounters Derry, a fourteen-year-old boy. Derry is startled to see Lamb, as he thought the house and garden were abandoned. Mr. Lamb is unperturbed, and he invites the boy to sit with him and enjoy nature. As they talk Derry is reserved and wary, and also somewhat combative. He assumes that the old man is afraid of him because of his appearance, and it's revealed that half of Derry's face has been burned by acid, so most people avoid or pity him. Lamb seems unconcerned by this, and he says that he has a tin leg—his real one was "blown off" in the war. The neighborhood children call him "Lamey-Lamb" because of this, but he doesn't mind.

The two converse, with Derry complaining about how other people treat him, and Mr. Lamb inviting the boy to help him pick crab apples later in the day. Derry explains that he avoids people because of how they react to him, and in response Lamb tells a story of a man who locked himself in his room to avoid any kind of accident or rejection, but ended up dying when a picture fell on his head in bed.

They discuss Mr. Lamb's house, and Derry likes the fact that there are no curtains on the windows. Lamb says he has many friends, and people come and go at will in his house and garden, but Derry isn't sure if he believes this. Derry also worries that he might scare away Lamb's other friends if he were to come back and meet them.

Derry considers Lamb's offer to help him pick crab apples, but says he would have to let his mother know where he is first, and he lives three miles away. Lamb says he could run home and then come back later in the day. Lamb goes to tend to his bees, assuming that Derry won't actually come back, as the boy runs away.

At Derry's house, his mother forbids him from going back to see Mr. Lamb again, as she has heard rumors about the old man. Derry declares that he hates living at his own house, and she can't stop him from going to see Mr. Lamb. He runs off.

Mr. Lamb is picking crab apples by himself when he falls from his ladder to the ground. Just then Derry appears. He kneels by

the old man and says, "I came back. Lamey-Lamb. I did…come back."

CHARACTERS

Mr. Lamb – One of the play's two central characters, Mr. Lamb is an old man and veteran of World War II. In the war, he lost one of his legs to a bomb, and now he has a "tin leg." Lamb owns a big house and garden, and though he lives alone he keeps himself busy growing crab apples, keeping bees, reading, and making toffee and jelly. He is a wise and contemplative soul who enjoys observing, listening to, and learning from other people and the natural world. In his conversation with Derry, he expresses a philosophy of openness and non-judgmental connection, and his kindness and sense of the dignity inherent in all people eventually help him break through the boy's wary and defiant exterior. In keeping with this mindset of openness, Lamb has no curtains on his open windows because he likes to see the light and dark for what it is, and to hear the weather outside. He also leaves his garden gate open, and states that "all are welcome" in his garden and home. Mr. Lamb says that he has "hundreds" of friends and that people like to come and go in his home, but it's unclear if this is true or not—Derry suspects that Mr. Lamb is in fact lonely and unhappy, and that no one actually comes to visit him. Lamb does admit that the neighborhood children call him "Lamey-Lamb" because of his leg, but he says that this doesn't bother him at all. At the end of the play Mr. Lamb falls from his ladder while picking apples, and though it's left unclear, it's suggested that the fall kills him.

Derry – The other protagonist of *On the Face of It*, Derry (whose full name is Derek) is a boy of fourteen with a badly burned face. Of the accident that left him scarred, all he says is "I got acid all down that side of my face and it burned it all away. It ate my face up." Because of this, people treat him differently—he complains that others fear and pity him, and usually actively avoid him. This has led Derry to isolate himself and create a tough, reserved exterior. He wants to avoid being hurt, and so he avoids everyone he can, and when he does interact with other people he is both wary and angrily defiant. He also has internalized the way others see him and seems to consider himself monstrous because of his disability. He assumes that the world is a harsh and alienating place, and acts accordingly—for example, climbing over Mr. Lamb's garden wall instead of checking the gate, which is always left open. At first Derry assumes that Mr. Lamb will treat him like other people do, but he is soon intrigued by the old man's "peculiar" questions and open nature, suggesting that Derry does in fact long for human connection even as he fears the potential pain of being rejected. This is confirmed when Derry runs away from his mother—who, it's suggested, treats him with a dehumanizing kind of pity—to go back to Mr. Lamb's garden, where he just wants to sit and talk with the old man.

Derry's Mother – Derry's mother is given little characterization in the play, but she seems simultaneously overprotective and not understanding of her son. She contributes to his isolation by keeping him home because of his facial injury, and treats him with a sense of pity that robs him of dignity and agency—essentially treating him like a perpetually helpless victim. In the play, Derry's mother forbids him from returning to Mr. Lamb's house, but Derry leaves anyway, finally asserting himself in a positive way.

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.

HUMAN CONNECTION AND OPENNESS

On the Face of It, a short play that mostly consists of a conversation between an old man, Mr. Lamb, and a fourteen-year-old boy, Derry, is largely concerned with the relationships between people and the things that divide them or bring them together. Derry has a burned face and Mr. Lamb has lost a leg, and so society treats them differently from other people. In response to this, Derry has learned to close himself off and avoid others, while Mr. Lamb maintains an attitude of openness. Ultimately, Lamb's friendliness and non-judgmental acceptance win Derry over, and the two find a strong (though brief) connection. In Mr. Lamb's character, playwright Susan Hill presents a worldview that embraces openness, the dignity and value of all people, and the importance of connection and kindness between them—and though Lamb's story ends in tragedy, his positive effects on Derry are what linger beyond the play's final scene.

Derry, whose face was badly burned by acid in a past accident, avoids others because of how they might react to his disability. In talking with Mr. Lamb, he describes several incidents of people being cruel or insensitive to him. Most notably, he describes two women at a bus stop whispering to each other that he has "a face only a mother could love." And yet even of his mother he says that she only kisses him because she has to, and then only on the unburned side of his face. He also says several times that other people are afraid of him, even if they pretend not to be. Derry lingers on these negative experiences and brings them up to Mr. Lamb as his reason to avoid others—he doesn't want to be pitied or feared, and so he closes himself off to human interaction altogether. Indeed, he only comes into Lamb's garden because he assumed it was empty, and he admits that he would never have entered if he knew Lamb was there. Tellingly, he also climbs over the garden wall and doesn't even

notice that the gate is left open—Derry *assumes* that people should be closed off from each other.

Derry does enter the garden and encounter Mr. Lamb, however, and this leads to their transformative conversation. From the start, Lamb treats Derry like any other boy, and challenges his extreme reservations. Mr. Lamb embodies the play's philosophy of openness, and he presents this to Derry as an alternative to his bitter isolation. Lamb lives a quiet, contemplative life and welcomes any interaction with people or nature. He leaves his gate open so that anyone might come in, and says that he has "friends everywhere." "People come in," he says, "everybody knows me. The gate's always open. They come and sit here. And in front of the fire in winter. Kids come for the apples and pears." Later there is doubt cast on whether or not all these people actually visit Mr. Lamb, but the important point is that this is what he *wants* to happen—he likes accepting everyone. "I'm interested in anybody," he says.

Notably, Mr. Lamb welcomes not only positive interactions but also negative ones—he accepts whatever comes with a spirit of openness. The neighborhood children mock his disability and call him "Lamey-Lamb," but he still lets them come into his garden to take apples, and they do so. "Doesn't trouble me," he tells Derry. While Derry closes himself off to avoid being hurt by other people, Lamb keeps himself open to all kinds of interaction. This is also symbolized by the state of his house—there are no curtains on the windows, and he likes to keep the windows open even in the rain and wind. He accepts the weather as it comes, just like he accepts people. "I'm not fond of curtains," he tells Derry. "Shutting things out, shutting things in." While this might sometimes be uncomfortable, Mr. Lamb seems to have found a great deal of peace in his lifestyle—certainly far more than Derry has.

The authenticity of the two characters' connection is put to the test when Mr. Lamb invites Derry to pick crabapples with him later in the day. When he first sees Mr. Lamb, Derry immediately tries to make an excuse to flee, but by the end of their conversation he is determined to run the three miles home, tell his mother where he's going, and then return to Lamb's garden to talk more and help with the apples. This shows just how much Derry has been changed by Mr. Lamb's worldview, and that he and the old man have found a real connection with each other. In trying to convince his mother to let him return, Derry even takes on Lamb's attitude, telling her that "I want to be there, and sit and…listen to things. Listen and look." He claims that Mr. Lamb says "things that matter. Things nobody else has ever said. Things I want to think about." Derry has found joy in his connection to the old man, and this inspires him to open himself to the potential of more.

At the play's end, Mr. Lamb falls and seems to have died, but it's clear he has touched Derry deeply. As the boy runs to Lamb's body, Derry starts weeping—a sure sign of a bond between the two, despite the briefness of their relationship. The play then ends, leaving it unclear whether Derry will withdraw once more in the face of this new pain, or if he will continue to follow the old man's example by seeking out connection with others and remaining open to the entire range of human experience.

DISABILITY AND PERCEPTION

The two main characters of *On the Face of It* both have a physical disability, but they react to their disabilities in very different ways. The fourteen-year-old Derry had half of his face badly burned by acid in an accident, while Mr. Lamb lost one of his legs in World War II. Because he has been treated poorly by society as a person with a visible physical disability, Derry avoids others and assumes that everyone either pities or fears him. Mr. Lamb, on the other hand, sees disabilities as something that don't matter when it comes to one's humanity, and his conversation with Derry offers the boy a different perspective. The play ultimately advocates a shift in perception about disability—both on a societal and an individual level—to more fully embrace the value and dignity of all people, whatever their experience or appearance might be. This also includes changing the perspectives of people with disabilities themselves so that they might stop seeing their own disabilities as something to be hated or ashamed of.

People treat Derry differently because of his burned face, and so he feels a bitterness towards both his injury and other people. He believes that everyone finds him hideous and either pities him or fears him, and many of his experiences seem to confirm this. Some people try to comfort him with platitudes or fairy tales (like "Beauty and the Beast"), while most simply avoid him. He is also clearly hurt by an instance of two women whispering to each other that he has "a face only a mother could love," and by hearing someone else say that he should have stayed at the hospital with others like himself. Derry rightly blames others for this, but it also makes him hostile to the idea of any kind of human interaction at all; he tries to flee the garden as soon as he realizes Mr. Lamb is there, assuming that the old man will treat him like other people do. Unfortunately, Derry has also internalized society's view of him, saying that he even fears himself when he looks in a mirror. He tells Mr. Lamb, "you think I'm ugly as a devil. I *am* a devil." Derry considers himself fundamentally different from other people because of his disability, and feels only shame and anger because of this.

Mr. Lamb's disability is not as immediately obvious as Derry's—as Derry points out, Lamb can cover up his leg, while Derry can't cover his face—but he also has a fundamentally different perspective about it than the boy does. Mr. Lamb's view is somewhat subtle. He doesn't deny the difficulty of being physically disabled, or pretend that things aren't sometimes different and harder for him and Derry than for most people, but he also doesn't define either of them by their disability, and

doesn't let himself feel ashamed or like he is less valuable because of it. Regarding his leg, Mr. Lamb says several times that "it doesn't signify"—meaning "it doesn't matter." Obviously his disability matters in some practical ways, like putting him in danger when he climbs a ladder, but it doesn't matter in terms of his humanity, and isn't somehow definitive of who he is simply because it's a visible part of his body. To illustrate this point, he makes various comparisons between physical disabilities and other fundamental aspects of life, like saying that hatred is worse than any acid or bomb (the respective causes of Derry's and his disabilities), and comparing the difference between his tin leg and Derry's burned face to the fact that Derry is standing and Lamb is sitting. There are certainly differences between people, but there's no reason to use some of these differences as an excuse to elevate some and oppress others. As Lamb says about the plants in his garden, which would be considered **weeds** by some and flowers by others, "It's all life…growing. Same as you and me."

The play doesn't offer much specific social critique regarding how society treats people with disabilities, other than inviting all people to be kinder to each other and not look down on people different from themselves—there is no mention of laws, organizations, or civil rights. Instead, its structure of an intimate conversation between two characters largely focuses on a change in perspective on the part of both individuals with disabilities and the ableist society in which they live. Instead of seeing disabilities as things to be hated, hidden away, or ashamed of, they can be treated as simple facts of certain people's experience, and addressed as such without degrading people's humanity or dignity. The play's title, which most clearly refers to Derry's burned face, also asks its audience to look beyond what is "on the face of it" when dealing with disability.

LONELINESS AND ALIENATION

The play largely consists of a single conversation between an old man, Mr. Lamb, and a boy, Derry, who had previously never met but who eventually find a sense of connection and companionship with each other. A large part of the poignancy of this brief connection (brief because Mr. Lamb presumably dies before their relationship can grow further) is the fact that both characters live in a society that makes them feel alienated and alone. Because of their respective physical disabilities, Derry and Mr. Lamb are treated differently from other people, and this leads them to lives of relative isolation, whether willingly or not. *On the Face of It* explores some of the ways people separate themselves from others and alienate certain people, and shows just how damaging loneliness and isolation can be.

Derry has secluded himself mostly willingly, as he hates how people treat him because of his badly burned face. When he enters the garden and first sees Mr. Lamb, he immediately makes an excuse and tries to leave, despite the old man's welcoming words. Soon after, Derry says, "I don't like being with people. Any people." He assumes that others find him hideous, and he doesn't like to "see them being afraid of [him]." It's also implied that Derry's mother contributes to his isolation, as she refuses to let him return to Mr. Lamb's house and seems to purposefully keep him at home because of his disability. These isolating measures are meant to protect Derry from pain—he doesn't want to be rejected by others, and so he avoids others altogether—but he is clearly lonely, and this leads him to bitterness and even anger.

Mr. Lamb is a more complicated figure. He lives alone in a big house, but leaves his garden gate open and welcomes visitors of all kinds. He claims that he has "hundreds" of friends, and that people come and go in his house and garden, but it's also unclear if this is true, and he does admit that the neighborhood children mock him and call him "Lamey-Lamb." At one point Derry says, "I don't think anybody ever comes. You're here all by yourself and miserable and no one would know if you were alive or dead and nobody cares." To this Mr. Lamb says only, "You think what you please," but he also seems to confirm Derry's harsh assessment in his later musings to his bees, saying that none of "them" (presumably other brief visitors like Derry) ever come back. Lamb is not bitter about this, but he does seem to feel a great sadness and longing for conversation and connection. He is lonely, alienated by others, and resigned to his fate.

The central point about isolation comes towards the end of the play. When Mr. Lamb invites Derry to help him pick crabapples later in the day, the idea of "coming back" (since Derry has to go home first and tell his mother where he is) comes to represent human connection and breaking the cycle of isolation. Both characters are lonely, but they have found a brief bond with each other, and the question then becomes whether or not they will pursue this connection further or return to their respective states of aloneness—whether Derry will "come back" or not. Mr. Lamb makes this clear when Derry tries to insult him, and Lamb says, "That's a good excuse. […] Good excuse not to come back. And you've got a burned-up face, and that's other people's excuse." The point he's making here is that people find reasons to separate themselves from others for fear of being hurt. Whether this is avoiding someone because of a physical disability they have or refusing to get closer to someone because of the way they challenge one's beliefs, people long for connection but also isolate themselves in an attempt to avoid pain. Of course, Derry does "come back," making the bold choice to go against his mother's wishes and his own reclusive tendencies, but he is too late to further his connection with Mr. Lamb, and is left alone again.

On the Face of It portrays characters who have many good reasons to avoid other people, but it also illustrates how human beings long for connection with others, and how isolation and alienation can lead to great suffering. Alienating others and

secluding one's self can be a means of self-preservation, but as the play shows, this isolation only leads to greater unhappiness in the end.

NATURE, OBSERVATION, AND CONTEMPLATION

While *On the Face of It* is primarily concerned with issues of human connection and alienation, it also touches on the value of simply sitting in nature, contemplating one's experience, and observing the world and other people. Again, this is mostly presented through the character of Mr. Lamb, and also in the way that Derry is converted to Lamb's contemplative worldview over the course of their conversation. In connection to its theme of remaining open to all kinds of experience, the play emphasizes the importance of appreciating nature and observing and learning from one's surroundings.

Throughout his conversation with Derry, Mr. Lamb often returns to the subject of simply sitting, listening, and learning. He says "I sit here. I like sitting," and "I'm interested in anybody. Anything. There's nothing God made that doesn't interest me." He speaks of listening to his bees, saying, "When you listen to bees for a long while, they humm....and hum means 'sing'. I hear them singing, my bees." This also extends to Mr. Lamb's openness towards other people, as he accepts all kinds of human interaction, either positive or negative, and tries to learn from it. In trying to convince Derry to return, Lamb discusses the boy's vague longings in terms of contemplation, saying that Derry could learn what he wants by "Waiting. Watching. Listening. Sitting here or going there." Mr. Lamb might be lonely for friends and family, but he also seems satisfied and at peace with his contemplative life, and finds company in his plants, bees, books, and the occasional visitor like Derry.

Though Derry is resistant to Mr. Lamb during their conversation, when the boy actually goes home to his mother, he summarizes Lamb's ideas to her and seems to have been convinced of their validity. Derry tells his mother that what he really wants to do is go back to the old man's garden and "be there, and sit and...listen to things. Listen and look." He declares that what's important is "what I think and feel and what I want to see and find out and hear." Before Mr. Lamb, no one had spoken of things like this to Derry before, and the boy clearly has a contemplative nature and wants to learn more about himself and the world around him.

These ideas of observation and contemplation are also inextricably bound to nature, especially as they are first presented in the setting of Mr. Lamb's garden. Derry enters the garden because he wanted to be in this beautiful place, and Mr. Lamb enjoys sitting in the garden. The initial meeting of the two characters is thus caused by their mutual desire to be outside and in nature. "A day like this," Lamb says, soon after the two first encounter each other. "Beautiful day. Not a day to be indoors." He also often turns to nature for comfort and peace, or to make a point to the defiant Derry. This is especially noticeable in Lamb's discussion of the supposed "**weeds**" in his garden, which are only seen as weeds because of society's perception of them, and in the fact that he bases their potential future relationship around Derry coming back to help him pick crab apples. When Derry complains about people always staring at his burned face, Lamb again diverts to nature, saying that "There's plenty of other things to stare at. [...] Like crab apples or the weeds or a spider climbing up a silken ladder, or my tall sun-flowers." Instead of focusing inward on his own problems, Lamb prefers to look outward at the world, and he finds a sense of peace in contemplating nature rather than the negative aspects of humanity or his own disability.

Overall, Mr. Lamb's character emphasizes the value of being present and observant, and Derry comes to appreciate these values through his conversation with the old man. In the end, Derry decides that he too wants to "[go] back there" to the garden, "to look at things and listen." A large part of the play's exploration of openness thus involves remaining aware of all kinds of experience: listening, looking, and appreciating nature.

SYMBOLS

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

WEEDS

The majority of the play takes place in Mr. Lamb's garden, and at one point the old man directs Derry's attention to a certain part of the garden near the far wall. "What can you see?" he asks, and the boy first responds, "Rubbish," and then, "Just...grass and stuff. Weeds." Mr. Lamb then points out that there is only an arbitrary distinction between what is considered a flower and what is considered a weed. Lamb says, "It's all life...growing. Same as you and me." Weeds therefore act as a symbol of perspective and perception, particularly regarding the disabilities faced by both Derry and Mr. Lamb (Derry's burned face and Mr. Lamb's amputated leg). A plant can be seen as a flower—something positive and desirable—or as a weed—something negative and undesirable—just like a disability can. The plant (or person with a disability) itself does not change, but when society's perspective of it changes, it can go from being something rejected and avoided to something cultivated and admired. And while the plant obviously cannot change its perception of itself, humans can—and in this brief exchange about weeds, Mr. Lamb suggests that Derry could do so. He cannot change society's perspective (whether others treat him like a flower or a weed), but he can change the way he thinks about himself. Instead of

feeling ashamed and angry, he can recognize that he, like all other people, is just "life...growing" and valuable in his own way.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the National Council of Education Research and Training edition of *Vistas* published in 2015.

Scene One Quotes

DERRY: I thought it was empty….an empty house.

MR LAMB: So it is. Since I'm out here in the garden. It is empty. Until I go back inside. In the meantime, I'm out here and likely to stop. A day like this. Beautiful day. Not a day to be indoors.

DERRY: [*Panic*] I've got to go.

MR LAMB: Not on my account. I don't mind who comes into the garden. The gate's always open. Only *you* climbed the garden wall.

DERRY: [*Angry*] You were watching me.

MR LAMB: I saw you. But the gate's open. All welcome. You're welcome. I sit here. I like sitting.

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

Derry has just entered the garden, and is surprised to encounter Mr. Lamb there. Derry then immediately tries to make an excuse to leave, as he had anticipated being alone and he generally avoids being around other people because of his burned face.

It is important to note that Derry actively sought out the garden, even climbing over the wall in pursuit of a place to be alone in nature. He is a naturally contemplative character, though he hasn't yet figured out what he wants in life and is generally withdrawn and bitter. Their mutual love of nature will help Derry and Mr. Lamb to find a connection, however, as Lamb too wants to be outside in his garden on a beautiful day.

The way Derry enters the garden also encapsulates his and Mr. Lamb's separate worldviews. Derry assumes that people are isolated from each other and build up walls around themselves, so he jumps the garden wall to get inside without even checking the gate. Mr. Lamb, on the other hand, advocates for openness between people, and leaves his garden gate open all the time so that anyone might come or go. Mr. Lamb then remains calm in the face of Derry's anger, only reiterating that "all [are] welcome." This initial clash of opposing viewpoints—openness and acceptance versus pessimism and reserve—is thus representative of the two characters as they first encounter each other.

MR LAMB: You want me to ask….say so, then.

DERRY: I don't like being with people. Any people.

MR LAMB: I should say….to look at it…. I should say, you got burned in a fire.

DERRY: Not in a fire. I got acid all down that side of my face and it burned it all away. It ate my face up. It ate me up. And now it's like this and it won't ever be any different.

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

Here Derry states explicitly that he avoids other people, and he challenges Mr. Lamb to ask about what is wrong with him. It will presumably be already clear in performances of the play that Derry has a burned face, but to readers this is the first explicit reveal of Derry's physical disability.

Derry is immediately defiant about his burned face, and clearly has experienced antagonism from others to the point that he has developed his current attitude. Though Mr. Lamb is not judgmental and doesn't even make a big deal about it, Derry immediately becomes pessimistic in his description of himself, saying "now it's like this and it won't ever be any different." Because others define him by his disability, Derry does too, and assumes that he can only ever be lonely and bitter. But while his face might not heal, his perspective on himself and others *can* change, as Derry learns over the course of his conversation with Mr. Lamb.

MR LAMB: Some call them weeds. If you like, then….a weed garden, that. There's fruit and there are flowers, and trees and herbs. All sorts. But over there….weeds. I grow weeds there. Why is one green, growing plant called a weed and another 'flower'? Where's the difference. It's all life….growing. Same as you and me.

DERRY: We're not the same.

MR LAMB: I'm old. You're young. You've got a burned face, I've got a tin leg. Not important. You're standing there…. I'm sitting here. Where's the difference?

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

After Derry describes his burned face for the first time, Mr. Lamb soon diverts to a discussion of nature, asking Derry to look at a certain section of the garden and tell him what he sees. Derry describes the plants there as "rubbish" and then "weeds," and Mr. Lamb points out that words like these are only a matter of perspective, and they don't reflect the inherent nature or value of the plants themselves. This is his way of telling Derry that he can change his perception of himself and his disability, even if he can't change other people's reactions and perspectives.

Lamb then makes a series of comparisons that emphasize the common humanity between the two. Derry thinks of himself as fundamentally different from others because of his burned face, but Lamb places their respective disabilities in the same category. This isn't meant to minimize the scale of their disabilities, but rather to put them in a new context. People are different and these differences shouldn't be ignored, but that doesn't make them any less valuable as people or less deserving of connection with others.

DERRY: […] Do you know, one day, a woman went by me in the street — I was at a bus-stop — and she was with another woman, and she looked at me, and she said….whispered….only I heard her…. she said, "Look at that, that's a terrible thing. That's a face only a mother could love."

MR LAMB: So you believe everything you hear, then?

DERRY: It was *cruel*.

[…]

MR LAMB: And is that the only thing you ever heard anyone say, in your life?

DERRY: Oh no! I've heard a *lot* of things.

MR LAMB: So now you keep your ears shut.

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

Here Derry describes an example of the way people treat him because of his burned face, giving it as a reason for avoiding people altogether. He was clearly hurt by the woman's words at the bus stop, and he doesn't want to be hurt like this again. Mr. Lamb, however, tries to put the situation in a different context. This was a cruel and painful thing to hear, but it was also only a single moment, and Derry has surely overheard many conversations that weren't cruel and painful. Lamb believes there's no reason to elevate the importance of certain words over others, and he hopes to convince Derry of this as well so that the boy might stop lingering over those experiences that seem to confirm his pessimistic worldview. Mr. Lamb also emphasizes the importance of remaining open and observant, lamenting that Derry has "shut" his ears to the world because of hearing painful words like these.

DERRY: I don't like being near people. When they stare….when I see them being afraid of me.

MR LAMB: You could lock yourself up in a room and never leave it. There was a man who did that. He was afraid, you see. Of everything. Everything in this world. A bus might run him over, or a man might breathe deadly germs onto him, or a donkey might kick him to death, or lightning might strike him down, or he might love a girl and the girl would leave him, and he might slip on a banana skin and fall and people who saw him would laugh their heads off. So he went into this room, and locked the door, and got into his bed, and stayed there.

DERRY: For ever?

MR LAMB: For a while.

DERRY: Then what?

MR LAMB: A picture fell off the wall on to his head and killed him.

[*Derry laughs a lot*]

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 61-62

Explanation and Analysis

After Derry makes it clear that he avoids people to avoid being hurt by them, Mr. Lamb tells this story about a man who locked himself in his room in an attempt to protect himself. The story is essentially a parable, meant to show Derry that one can never escape suffering altogether. This is a good example of the play's overall point about isolation versus connection: people often put up barriers or isolate themselves from others in an attempt to avoid pain, but this also leads to its own kind of unhappiness, and to missing out on the potential joys of companionship and connection. The fact that Derry "laughs a lot" at the end of this story is then a good sign that he's opening up and starting to get this point.

MR LAMB: I'm not fond of curtains. Shutting things out, shutting things in. I like the light and the darkness, and the windows open, to hear the wind.

DERRY: Yes. I like that. When it's raining, I like to hear it on the roof.

MR LAMB: So you're not lost, are you? Not altogether? You do hear things. You listen.

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

Derry has pointed out that there aren't any curtains on the windows of Mr. Lamb's house, and here the old man explains his reasoning. This is essentially an encapsulation of Mr. Lamb's philosophy of openness—he likes to remain receptive to all kinds of experience, whether positive or negative, and to accept things as they come. He doesn't believe in putting up barriers between himself and the world. Derry is also attracted by this attitude, though he has certainly "shut" himself away from other people in his own life. He is starting to be swayed by Lamb's worldview, and he is opening up to the old man a bit more. Lamb also emphasizes listening and observing once more, and is pleased that Derry is also listening and hasn't "shut his ears" altogether, as Lamb previously feared.

DERRY: Do you have any friends?

MR LAMB: Hundreds.

DERRY: But you live by yourself in that house. It's a big house, too.

MR LAMB: Friends everywhere. People come in…. everybody knows me. The gate's always open. They come and sit here. And in front of the fire in winter. Kids come for the apples and pears. And for toffee. I make toffee with honey. Anybody comes. So have you.

DERRY: But I'm not a friend.

MR LAMB: Certainly you are. As far as I'm concerned. What have you done to make me think you're not?

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Lamb extends his attitude of acceptance and openness to all people, stating that he has "hundreds" of friends, and that people come and go in his house and garden. Derry is skeptical and says that *he* isn't one of Mr. Lamb's friends. Lamb contradicts this, showing his parameters for what makes a "friend"—essentially anyone he has even the briefest connection with, and who doesn't then prove

themselves antagonistic to him. Mr. Lamb likes to think of everyone as a potential friend.

This loose definition of friendship, along with later scenes in the play, cast into doubt Lamb's assertion that he actually has hundreds of friends who frequent his home and garden. He does seem to live an isolated existence, despite his gate being "always open." Whether it's true or not, though, it's important that this is what Mr. Lamb would *like*—to have many friends and experience their company, remaining open to everyone.

DERRY: Those other people who come here....do they talk to you? Ask you things?

MR LAMB: Some do, some don't. I ask them. I like to learn.

DERRY: I don't believe in them. I don't think anybody ever comes. You're here all by yourself and miserable and no one would know if you were alive or dead and nobody cares.

MR LAMB: You think what you please.

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

Derry, feeling confused about the "peculiar" questions Mr. Lamb asks, briefly withdraws again with this cruel statement. Derry projects his own insecurities onto Mr. Lamb here, but he also might be right. Lamb claimed to have "hundreds" of friends, but there is no evidence of this, and the old man certainly experiences some bullying because of his missing leg. He also later muses to himself that visitors like Derry "never do come back," implying that these "friends" might just be one-time acquaintances. Yet Derry is also essentially describing himself, or how he sees himself: alone, unhappy, and uncared for. This is surely a hurtful statement to Mr. Lamb, but the old man remains outwardly calm and accepting as ever.

DERRY: I think you're daft....crazy....

MR LAMB: That's a good excuse.

DERRY: What for? You don't talk sense.

MR LAMB: Good excuse not to come back. And you've got a burned-up face, and that's other people's excuse.

DERRY: You're like the others, you like to say things like that. If you don't feel sorry for my face, you're frightened of it, and if you're not frightened, you think I'm ugly as a devil. I *am* a devil. Don't you? [*Shouts*]

[Mr *Lamb does not reply. He has gone to his bees.*]

DERRY: [*Quietly*] No. You don't. I like it here.

Related Characters: Mr. Lamb, Derry (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

The potential of a continuing relationship between Derry and Mr. Lamb comes to hinge on whether or not Derry will "come back" to help Lamb pick crab apples after running home to tell his mother where he is. Derry wants to continue the companionship and connection he has found with the old man, but he only knows how to act bitter and defiant with other people, so he lashes out once more as Mr. Lamb goes off to tend to his bees. It is only when Lamb can no longer hear him that Derry fully lets his guard down, admitting that the old man *is* different from other people, and that Derry really does like being here with him.

Lamb's words about "excuses" also make one of the play's crucial points about loneliness—that people find excuses to separate themselves from each other in an attempt to avoid being hurt, but this only leads to unhappiness and a lack of human connection. For some, this "excuse" is a physical disability like Derry's burned face, which others use to alienate him and he uses to isolate himself. With this, Lamb again puts Derry's disability in a different perspective, even as Derry himself lashes out with his own internalized shame, stating that he really is the "devil" that people think he is.

Scene Two Quotes

DERRY: I hate it here.

MOTHER: You can't help the things you say. I forgive you. It's bound to make you feel bad things….and say them. I don't blame you.

DERRY: It's got nothing to *do* with my face and what I look like. I don't care about that and it isn't important. It's what I think and feel and what I want to see and find out and hear. And I'm going back there. Only to help him with the crab apples. Only to look at things and listen. But I'm going.

MOTHER: You'll stop here.

DERRY: Oh no, oh no. Because if I don't go back there, I'll never go anywhere in this world again.

[*The door slams. Derry runs, panting.*]

And I want the world….I want it….I want it….

Related Characters: Derry's Mother, Derry (speaker), Mr. Lamb

Related Themes:

Page Number: 68

Explanation and Analysis

Derry has been convinced by Mr. Lamb's arguments about openness (though he wouldn't admit this to Lamb himself) and wants to go back and spend more time with the old man. He has run home to tell his mother where he's going, and then hopes to return to Lamb's garden and help him pick his crab apples. Derry's mother, however, forbids him from leaving, but Derry leaves anyway. In contrast to his earlier statement in Lamb's garden—"I like it here"—Derry says "I hate it here" about his own home, where he is kept away from other people and treated like a perpetually helpless victim.

In rejecting his mother's restrictions and running away, Derry claims some agency and independence that he didn't have before. His mother wants to keep him isolated because of his burned face, but Derry doesn't want to be defined by his disability anymore. He is ready to open himself up to more experiences, and wants more of the contemplation and connection that he found in Mr. Lamb's company. As he runs away, Derry finally lets himself feel ambitious and excited about the world at large, instead of shutting himself away in an attempt to protect himself.

Scene Three Quotes

DERRY: […] Mr Lamb, It's all right….You fell….I'm here, Mr Lamb, It's all right.

[*Silence*]

I came back. Lamey-Lamb. I did…..come back.

[*Derry begins to weep.*]

Related Characters: Derry (speaker), Mr. Lamb

Related Themes:

Page Number: 68-69

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Lamb, convinced that Derry wouldn't come back to see him again, has fallen off his ladder picking the crab apples that Derry was supposed to help him with. It's not specifically stated in the play, but it's implied that Mr. Lamb is killed by his fall, or at least seriously injured, as Derry finds only his motionless body when he returns to the garden. These are then the tragic final lines of the play, as Derry kneels beside Mr. Lamb and starts to cry.

Whether or not Derry would "come back" to Lamb's garden became the crux of the connection between the two, and the fact that he really did come back shows that they did experience a bond, and that Derry was willing to open himself up to further companionship. Unfortunately, this is no longer possible, but the play suggests that Derry has been changed enough by his time with Lamb that he will hopefully be open to more interactions in the future.

Notably, Derry also calls Lamb "Lamey-Lamb," which is the name that the neighborhood children used to mock him because of his disability. Derry turns the insult into a term of endearment, reclaiming the old man's dignity and showing another way that Lamb has influenced him: his perception of disability.

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.

SCENE ONE

Mr. Lamb, an old man, is sitting in his garden on a beautiful September day. There he sees a boy, Derry, walking through the long grass. Mr. Lamb calls to him to be careful not to step on the fallen apples, and Derry is startled—he didn't know anyone else was there. Derry is shy and wary, and says that he thought the garden and house were empty. Mr. Lamb says it's his house and garden, but everyone is welcome inside, and he always leaves the gate open—even though Derry climbed over the garden wall to get in.

The play's two main characters encounter each other in the idyllic, natural setting of the sunny September garden. Mr. Lamb immediately shows his trusting nature and tendency toward openness, as he always leaves his gate open, while the young Derry is more cynical—he doesn't even check the gate and assumes that he must jump over the wall to get into the garden. Derry never considers that he might be willingly welcomed in. He also assumed that he would be alone in an abandoned garden, and so wasn't anticipating meeting another person. He may have come there to avoid people altogether.

Derry gets defensive that Mr. Lamb was watching him, and declares that he doesn't want to steal anything. Lamb is unconcerned, and tells Derry that he's "welcome." Derry, who reveals himself to be fourteen years old, says he needs to go, but Lamb says there's nothing to be afraid of. Derry says he's not afraid—other people are afraid of *him*.

The dialogue here introduces clues about Derry's disability—that there is something about his appearance that makes people avoid him. Mr. Lamb, however, seems to not notice or care, and reiterates that everyone is welcome on his property. This is clearly an idea Derry isn't accustomed to.

Mr. Lamb asks why other people might be afraid of Derry, and Derry says he knows they always are, even if they pretend otherwise—he says they think things about him like, "That's a terrible thing. That's the ugliest thing I ever saw," and "Poor boy." Derry says he's even afraid of himself when he looks in a mirror. Lamb starts talking about how he's going to pick his crab apples later to make jelly, and he offers that Derry could help him. Derry gets angry at him for changing the subject, and challenges Lamb to ask what happened to him.

Derry is almost aggressive in his bitterness towards others and in the way he assumes that Mr. Lamb fears him, even though the old man has given no sign that this is the case. Lamb finds solace in nature and in working in his garden, and his invitation for Derry to help him is both a generous offer of companionship and a sign of Lamb's own potential loneliness.

Mr. Lamb, unruffled, says he would guess that Derry was burned in a fire. Derry says no—he was burned by acid all down the side of his face. Lamb seems unconcerned by this. He tells Derry to look at a certain part of the garden and describe what he sees. Derry says "rubbish," and then "**weeds**." Lamb asks why some plants are considered weeds and some are considered flowers. He says "It's all life…growing. Same as you and me."

This passage reveals the nature of Derry's disability: he has a badly scarred face, and is treated differently by most people because of it. Again Mr. Lamb seems to change the subject by turning back to his garden, but he is actually making an important point here. Whether a plant is considered a weed or a flower is just a matter of perspective, and perspectives can change—just like Derry can change the way he views the world and himself.

Derry argues, saying that he and Mr. Lamb aren't the same. Lamb says "You've got a burned face, I've got a tin leg. Not important." Derry is interested in this, and Lamb says his leg was "blown off" years ago. Now the neighborhood children call him "Lamey-Lamb," but he doesn't mind. Derry says at least Lamb can cover up his leg, but Derry can't cover up his burned face. Mr. Lamb says there's plenty of other things for people to stare at instead, "like crab apples or the **weeds** or a spider climbing up a silken ladder, or my tall sun-flowers."

Mr. Lamb reveals that he has his own disability, but in the same breath declares that his missing leg and Derry's burned face are "not important"—that is, not important compared to the fact that they are human beings with their own value and dignity. Mr. Lamb also knows what it's like to be mocked, but he clearly has a calmer and more positive attitude about this than Derry. Again, Lamb turns to nature and for comfort and peace.

Mr. Lamb says, "It's all relative. Beauty and the beast." This angers Derry, who says he's been told that "fairy story" before, but he knows that in real life the beast wouldn't transform to become a handsome prince—he would just stay ugly, like Derry himself. Derry says no one will ever kiss him, anyway, except his mother, and she only kisses the unburned half of his face, and only "because she has to."

Derry gives more reasons for his angry and withdrawn nature. He has indeed been treated unfairly by the world and feels lonely and isolated because of it, and he has been offered only unrealistic fairy tales as comfort. Derry's mother is introduced as someone who loves her son but also pities him.

Derry asks Mr. Lamb if his leg ever hurts him, and he says, "it doesn't signify" (it doesn't matter). Derry gets angry at this, too, ranting about other things that people say, like how brave people who are disabled or in pain are, and how he should just think of all the people who are worse off than he is.

Derry is also angered by the useless platitudes that people offer him as comfort or inspiration. He doesn't want to have to be brave, or to find happiness only in comparing himself to others even worse off—he wants to just be treated like a normal boy.

Derry says that once he heard two women whispering about him, and one said, "That's a face only a mother could love." Mr. Lamb challenges him, saying that this was only one thing one person said, and he doesn't have to believe it. He says that Derry probably keeps his ears "shut" now to keep from hearing more cruel things.

This small incident encapsulates the way society treats Derry in general. He is pitied, avoided, and whispered about. He is made lonely almost by default, as people avoid him but also assume that no one will want a close relationship with him. Mr. Lamb, who values listening and observing very much, worries that Derry has totally closed himself—shut his ears—because of the cruel things he's heard.

Derry is confused but intrigued, and he tells Mr. Lamb that he says "peculiar things." Lamb says he likes to talk and have company, but that Derry is welcome to leave whenever he wants. Lamb says he has a hive of bees in his garden, and he likes to listen to them humming, or "singing." Derry says that he likes it here, but admits he wouldn't have come in if he'd known Mr. Lamb was there. He doesn't like being near people, because they stare and he can tell they're afraid of him.

Derry starts to feel more comfortable as Mr. Lamb continues to treat him with dignity and understanding. Mr. Lamb elaborates on his philosophy of listening to and contemplating nature, something that clearly gives him great pleasure and that he worries Derry has shut himself off from. Derry is now actually considering coming back to visit Lamb.

Mr. Lamb tells a story about a man who locked himself in his room because he was afraid of everything—of dying in an accident, of being rejected, of being laughed at. He stayed in bed all day to avoid all these possibilities, but he died when one day a picture fell off his wall and hit him on the head. Derry laughs at this story.

Lamb's story is more like a parable, meant to teach a lesson—that Derry can never entirely avoid the possibility of pain, no matter how much he isolates himself. Lamb is worried that Derry will totally withdraw from other people in fear of getting hurt.

Derry asks Mr. Lamb what he does all day. Lamb says he likes to "sit in the sun" and "read books." He says his house isn't empty because it's full of books. Derry comments that there aren't any curtains on the windows of Mr. Lamb's house, and Lamb says he doesn't like "shutting things out" or in. He likes to see the light and the dark, and open the windows to hear the weather. Derry says he likes this too, and Lamb comments that Derry does "listen" to some things after all.

Mr. Lamb elaborates on his life philosophy of openness—he doesn't like shutting anything out, whether pleasant or unpleasant. He also finds a sense of connection and companionship in reading books, as shown by the fact that he considers a house full of books to not actually be uninhabited. Derry is attracted to Mr. Lamb's worldview, as he comes further out of his shell.

Derry says he hears his family talk about him, wondering "what's going to happen to him" when they're gone, "with that on his face." Mr. Lamb reminds him that he still has his brain and all his body parts, and he can "get on" however he wants, if he sets his mind to it—just like Lamb himself does.

Derry withdraws a bit once more, returning to things he has heard people saying about him, but at least trying to show Mr. Lamb that he really does *keep his ears open. Lamb doesn't pity Derry, and pushes him to not pity himself.*

Derry asks Mr. Lamb if he has any friends, and Lamb says he has "hundreds." He claims that people come into his house to sit by the fire or to have fruit or toffee, and "everybody knows" him. He says Derry too is now a friend. Derry protests, but Lamb says that they are friends as far as he's concerned. Derry says not everyone can be a friend, especially if you only meet them once—and there are some people he even hates. Mr. Lamb says that hating people is worse "than any bottle of acid," or the bomb that blew up his leg.

There's no reason to disbelieve Lamb's claim about his friends at this point in the play, but later on it's made unclear if he's being totally honest here—he might actually be lonely and isolated, "visited" only by people who steal his apples or taunt him. Yet he clearly values human connection greatly, as he already considers Derry a friend. Lamb also compares a negative emotion like hatred to a physical wound, making Derry see his disability in a new light.

Derry explains that one person said that he'd have been better off staying at the hospital with other people like himself. He says if all the people with various disabilities were kept together, "at least there'd be nobody to stare at you because you weren't like them."

Though Mr. Lamb's openness and understanding have broken through some of Derry's reservations, the boy still keeps bringing up things that make him bitter, perhaps hoping that Lamb will help explain them or change his view of them.

Derry says that he'd like to have a place like Mr. Lamb's: "A garden…a house with no curtains." Lamb says that Derry can come whenever he wants to, though other people might be there as well. Derry thinks that if others were there, they'd probably run away once they saw him, and then Mr. Lamb would lose all his other friends. Lamb says he might as well risk it. Even though the neighborhood kids call him "Lamey-Lamb," he says, they still come into his garden—because he's not afraid of them.

Derry has grown more comfortable with Mr. Lamb now, but he is still immediately wary of other people, and still assumes that they would be afraid of him. Mr. Lamb admits that he too is mocked for his disability, but he has developed a healthier attitude about it (presumably with decades of practice that Derry doesn't have), and he doesn't let other people's cruelty bother him much. He finds comfort in remaining open to everything.

Derry asks Mr. Lamb if he lost his leg in "the war," and Lamb says, "Certainly." Derry then asks how Mr. Lamb can climb the ladder to get crab apples. Lamb says he takes his time, and has learned how to do many things. Derry muses that if he were on his own, Mr. Lamb could fall off his ladder and no one would find him. Derry then considers Lamb's earlier offer of helping him pick the apples.

Derry's comment about Mr. Lamb potentially falling off his ladder and having no one to find him is in fact foreshadowing of the play's dramatic climax. The tragic situation of having no one around in a time of desperate need also emphasizes the importance of human connection. Derry now seriously thinks about coming back to talk more with Mr. Lamb, as he has found a real sense of companionship with the old man.

Derry says that if he's going to help Mr. Lamb with the apples, he'll need to let his mother know where he is, and he lives three miles away. Mr. Lamb says he could run home and then come back later, but Derry insists that his mother would never let him come back. Mr. Lamb thinks that this just an excuse—*Derry* is the one who wouldn't want to come back.

Mr. Lamb now shows his own sense of wariness, as he assumes that Derry won't really come back to see him again and is just using his mother as an excuse. The two characters now start to switch roles to a certain degree, as Derry becomes more excited about spending time with Lamb, while Lamb pulls away slightly in anticipation of Derry rejecting his offer of friendship.

Derry asks about the other people who Mr. Lamb said come to visit him. Derry then declares that he doesn't believe Mr. Lamb has any friends at all—he thinks "you're here all by yourself and miserable and no one would know if you were alive or dead and nobody cares." Lamb says only, "you think what you please." Then he gets up and says he needs to go tend to his bees.

As their conversation comes to an end, the two withdraw back into themselves slightly, both of them insecure about the sense of connection they have found with each other. Derry's statement about Lamb's loneliness, while cruel, is also potentially true—there's no evidence that Lamb actually has lots of friends, or that anyone comes to visit him. Lamb again turns to nature and his methodical, contemplative work after a potentially upsetting exchange.

Derry says he thinks Mr. Lamb is "daft" and "crazy," but Lamb rebukes him, saying that this is only an "excuse," like Derry's burned face is "other people's excuse." Derry tries to accuse Mr. Lamb of thinking he's "ugly as a devil," and declares that he *is* a devil, but as Mr. Lamb walks off to his bees Derry admits to himself that Lamb doesn't really believe this. Derry says, "I like it here," and promises to himself that he'll run home and then come back. He runs off.

Mr. Lamb supports a worldview that people are meant to be kind and connected to each other, but instead they find "excuses" to be cruel and isolate themselves. Derry recognizes that Lamb is different from other people he has interacted with, but he isn't yet ready to say this to Lamb himself. Derry has grown over the course of this brief encounter, and is now potentially willing to open himself up to a new friendship.

Mr. Lamb, tending to his bees, talks to himself. He says, "I'll come back. They never do, though. Not them. Never do come back."

Here Mr. Lamb shows his own insecurities—he is not as unflappable as he initially seemed, and has apparently had other experiences like this, in which he opened himself up to someone else who left and never returned. This is a brief glimpse of Lamb's own loneliness, as it may be the case that he doesn't have any lasting friendships at all.

SCENE TWO

Now back at his house, Derry speaks with his mother. Derry's mother says she has heard rumors about Mr. Lamb—has been "*warned*" about him—and she refuses to let Derry go back to his house. Derry describes Lamb as just "an old man with a tin leg and he lives in a huge house without curtains and has a garden." Derry declares that he wants to go back and sit and listen and think, because Mr. Lamb talks about things that no one else does.

This scene adds an extra layer to the conversation that just took place—Derry's mother has been "warned" about something regarding Mr. Lamb, but it's never made clear just what this is. It now seems more likely that Lamb doesn't actually have "hundreds" of friends, and is considered by most to be an eccentric old man who lives totally alone. Derry, however, is now fully convinced of the connection he felt with Lamb, and wants to go back and spend more time with someone who remains open to the world and treats him like a full human being.

Derry's mother again forbids him from going, and Derry declares that he "hates" it at home. His mother says she forgives him for saying that, since "it" is bound to make him feel and say bad things. Derry exclaims that this has nothing to do with his face, and that he wants to go help Mr. Lamb pick apples, and to "look at things and listen." He declares that he's going to go no matter what his mother says, because "if I don't go back there, I'll never go anywhere in this world again." He runs out of the house, saying to himself, "I want the world."

Derry's mother sees her son as a perpetual victim, and connects his entire being to his burned face, which is the opposite of what Derry himself wants. Derry has apparently also been swayed by Mr. Lamb's love of nature and his embrace of a quiet existence of listening and contemplation. Derry has all the ambitions of any young person, but he has been denied so much that he can only find an outlet for his desires in brief moments of connection like that which he found with Lamb.

SCENE THREE

Back at the garden, Mr. Lamb is on his ladder, shaking a branch of the crab apple tree so that the fruit falls to the ground. Suddenly his ladder falls back and Lamb crashes to the ground, where he lies motionless.

This is the hypothetical situation that Derry described earlier—Mr. Lamb could fall off his ladder, and if he were "on [his] own" no one would find him and help him. The question now is whether or not Lamb really is *on his own—if Derry will come back.*

Just then Derry rushes up, stating that he *has* come back, despite Mr. Lamb's doubts. Then he sees Mr. Lamb's body and stops short. Derry kneels beside him, saying, "I came back. Lamey-Lamb. I did…come back." Derry starts to cry.

It's not stated whether or not Mr. Lamb has survived his fall, but either way this is a tragic finale to the play. Both characters found a brief moment of connection with each other, but now they are separated again by an accident (Lamb's fall) and society's restrictions (Derry's mother). It's also important that Derry calls Lamb "Lamey-Lamb" in this poignant moment, using the name that others used to taunt the old man as a term of endearment. This signals a shift in Derry's perspective on disability, and hopefully in his own self-esteem. He starts to recognize that he can both have a burned face and be a valuable and worthwhile human being, and can even embrace his disability as part of himself.

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