The Go-Between

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF L. P. HARTLEY

Leslie Poles Hartley was the son of Bessie and Harry Hartley, a solicitor and judicial officer. Hartley enrolled at Oxford University to read Modern History in 1915, where he befriended the writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley. Hartley was conscripted into the army during WWI but for health reasons was never sent to battle. After the war, Hartley returned to Oxford, mixing in literary circles. He subsequently worked as a book reviewer—British author J.B. Priestly once described him as "the best reviewer of fiction in the country"—but was frustrated by a lack of success with his own writing. It wasn't until 1944 that Hartley published his first novel, *The Shrimp and the Anemone*. More novels followed, with Hartley winning the prestigious Heinemann Award for *The Go-Between* in 1953. Three years later he was given the symbolic honor of being named Commander of the British Empire. Throughout his life, Hartley was a busy socializer but rarely became very close to those around him; Virginia Woolf once described him as "a dull fat man." He was not open about his homosexuality until late in life (though it was not legalized in Britain until 1967). Hartley died in London in 1972, at the age of 76.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Most of *The Go-Between* is set in 1900, with the "present day" of the novel taking place in the 1950s. Leo tells the story retrospectively, recounting the events that took place in one fateful summer when he was 12. The contrast between the two time periods is an important aspect of the book. The year 1900 was one of peak optimism at the tail end of the Victorian Era; Britain generally claimed a strong sense of progression with the expansion of its Empire, rising living standards at home, and great technological advances. It was widely believed that war was mostly a thing of the past (though the British were fighting the Boer War)—or at least that it would not come again on any great scale. Of course, events proved otherwise, and old Leo looks back on the time of his youth in the full knowledge of the two world wars that were to come. While young Leo feels the promise of the 20th century with excitement, the older Leo knows the disappointment, heartache and tragedy that displaced any sense of a "Golden Age."

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

As an exploration of the social class and hierarchy in relation to love and sex, *The Go-Between* has elements in common with the works of D.H. Lawrence (such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*) and Thomas Hardy. Hartley's book resembles a bildungsroman—a novel that specifically chronicles someone's journey from youth to adulthood—but shows the way that trauma can interrupt growing up. To that end, it's worth considering it (and its differences) in the context of classics of the genre, including James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and even J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. In its explorations of English social mores and anxieties, Hartley's book also relates to those by Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters, though it is more psychological in its tone and approach. *The Go-Between* continues to influence writers today, with contemporary authors such as Ian McEwan (whose novel *Atonement* also hinges on letters between an upper-class British woman and her working-class lover), Ali Smith, and Colm Tóibīn acknowledging the novel's impact on them.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Go-Between*
- **When Written:** 1952
- **Where Written:** Venice, Italy
- **When Published:** 1953
- **Literary Period:** Postmodern
- **Genre:** Literary Fiction
- **Setting:** Brandham estate, Norfolk
- **Climax:** Mrs. Maudsley, dragging Leo with her, discovers the affair between Marian and Ted
- **Antagonist:** Marian Maudsley
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

The Silver Screen: The book was famously adapted for film in the 1970s. Harold Pinter wrote the screenplay and the film starred Julie Christie.

Deadly Arrows: The Deadly Nightshade plant—*atropa belladonna*—that so fascinates Leo is one of the most toxic plants found in the Eastern Hemisphere, and was once used to make poison-tipped arrows.

PLOT SUMMARY

When sixty-something Leo Colston rummages through his old school belongings, he finds his younger self's diary from fifty years earlier—when a twelve-year-old Leo spent a fateful summer at the Brandham Hall estate in Norfolk. Feeling the

advance of his age, Leo decides that now is the time to confront the memory of those events that he has repressed for so many years—events that have ruined any chance he once had at an "emotional" life.

Cast back to the year 1900, and young Leo is a naïve, curious schoolboy. He's obsessed by the Zodiac and, owing to a recent success in "vanquishing" bullies at his school with a magic spell, believes he has supernatural powers. One of his school-friends, Marcus, who has a newfound respect for Leo on account of his magical reputation, invites Leo to stay at his aristocratic estate in Norfolk for the summer. Leo accepts, though is apprehensive—he leads a humble home life and isn't accustomed to the refined world that the Maudsleys—Marcus' family—and Brandham Hall represent. His mother, who raises Leo single-handedly, feels she will miss Leo but insists that he must go.

Leo arrives in the opulent environment of Brandham Hall in July and is quickly intoxicated by its inhabitants and their refined way of life. He wanders freely around the grounds, and in one disused outhouse discovers an enormous **Deadly Nightshade**—a highly-poisonous plant once used in witches' brews. Marcus shows Leo a **thermometer** in another of the abandoned buildings, starting Leo's almost daily obsession with checking the temperature.

Leo takes a particular liking to Marcus' beautiful older sister, Marian, who offers to take him to nearby Norwich and buy him clothes better suited to the intensely hot weather. On their day-trip, Leo is quickly smitten with Marian, who buys him a **green** suit that makes him feel a bit like Robin Hood (with his Maid Marian!). While in Norwich, Marian asks Leo to entertain himself for a while by visiting the cathedral; just before they reunite to head home, Leo notices her saying goodbye a male stranger.

Though he isn't allowed to swim yet, Leo joins some of the inhabitants of the Hall who decide to go bathing in a nearby sluice. As the group arrives, they notice the imposing physical presence of Ted Burgess, a nearby tenant farmer on the estate, already in the water. Denys, Marcus' dim older brother, has a brief conversation with Ted, informing him that Lord Trimingham, the estate's landowner, will arrive later that evening. Leo is fascinated by Ted's impressive physicality, but Marian pays him no attention.

Leo meets Trimingham at breakfast on Sunday morning. Trimingham has recently returned from fighting in the Boer War in which he sustained an unsightly injury to half of his face. After breakfast, Leo goes back to his room to fetch his prayer-book for church. There, Marcus informs him that he has the symptoms of measles and won't be attending the service and may even miss the upcoming cricket match and ball (rare occasions when the people from the Hall mix with the lower-class villagers).

Leo heads to church with the other guests and afterward walks home with Trimingham. Leo realizes that Trimingham is a Viscount and has a newfound respect for him; Trimingham in turn asks him to let Marian know that she has left her prayer-book in church, setting up Leo's role as a messenger. On a later day, Trimingham christens Leo with the nickname "Mercury," who is the messenger of the gods. Leo loves the idea, mapping Ted, Trimingham and Marian on to the Zodiac as the Water-carrier, the Archer and the Virgin, respectively.

With Marcus now quarantined, Leo is given his own room. Feeling newly independent, he explores the estate and ends up on Ted Burgess' farm. He slides down a huge pile of straw, but injures his knee in doing so. Ted, upon learning that Leo is from the Hall takes him into the farmhouse to tend to his wound. As a gesture of thanks, Leo agrees to take a note from Ted to Marian, which Ted insists must be done secretively. Marian is excited to receive Ted's message and reiterates that if Leo tells anybody about it they would all get into a lot of trouble.

The weather continues to grow hotter, pleasing Leo. One day, Trimingham tasks Leo with finding Marian so she can join in a croquet game. When Leo finds her she's reluctant to play—but she does give Leo a letter pertaining to "business matters" for him to take to Ted. Over the next few days, Leo continues to carry notes and verbal messages between Marian and Ted, unwittingly facilitating their secret relationship. Marcus begins to recover, and Leo thinks he won't be able to take any more messages without arousing Marcus' suspicions. Marian gives Leo another letter but is hurried by Trimingham's entry into the room. As the envelope is unsealed, Leo looks inside on route to the farm—he's horrified that it's a love letter.

Leo delivers the letter to Ted but says he won't be able to take any more. Ted insists that Leo keep taking them; otherwise Marian will be distraught. Leo asks Ted about "spooning"—sex—and Ted promises to tell him more if Leo keeps acting as the lovers' go-between.

The day of the cricket match arrives and Leo, drafted into the Hall team on account of another player's injury, catches out Ted, who is the star batsman of the village team. In the village hall afterwards, both Ted and Leo sing songs accompanied by Marian on the piano. Leo's is a star turn, and he basks in the glory of his achievements in both the cricket match and the party afterwards. On the walk home, Marcus lets Leo in on the news that Marian is now engaged to Trimingham, which Leo thinks will surely bring an end to Ted and Marian's letters.

After the next Sunday church service, Leo asks Trimingham about the Viscounts that came before him. Leo learns that the fifth was killed in a duel over a woman, but Trimingham warns him that "nothing is ever a lady's fault."

The next day, Leo is shocked when Marian gives him another letter for Ted. Feeling loyalty toward Trimingham, he tells Marian that he can't take it for her, to which she reacts with

anger and accuses him of being spoilt. In tears, Leo grabs the letter and runs to the farm. When Leo arrives, Ted is staring down the barrel of his gun, cleaning its insides. Ted notices that Leo's been crying and assumes it is to do with Marian. Ted manages to cheer Leo up, but gets frustrated when Leo questions him relentlessly on love, marriage, and "spooning." Ted stands up intimidatingly, causing Leo to run away back to the Hall.

Leo writes to his mother asking to be called home, without going into too much detail why. He thinks that if he can remove himself from Brandham Hall it will bring an end to Ted and Marian's affair. Trimingham asks Leo to find Marian for him, but she is at the house of her grandmother, Nannie Robson—at least, that it is what Leo heard from Marcus. Trimingham accidentally lets slip that Mrs. Maudsley is ill.

Leo spends some time with Marcus, who tells Leo that his mother is under nervous strain because she feels that Marian may go back on her agreement to marry Trimingham. He also informs Leo that for Leo's upcoming birthday Marian has bought him a green bicycle. Through Marcus' teasing, Leo realizes that the color green implies that he is young and naïve. Annoyed, Leo boasts that he knows where Marian *actually* is. They head to one of the outhouses and hear two people in there, but Leo prevents their discovery by saying he's bored.

Marian goes to London, and Leo enjoys a couple of carefree days. Invited into the secretive world of the men's smoking room, Leo learns from Trimingham that Ted might join the army and go to fight in the Boer War. Thinking that he will soon be leaving, Leo goes to visit Ted to say goodbye. As a parting gesture, Leo offers to take one last message for Ted. On returning to the hall, Leo receives a letter from telling him to stick it out with his stay at Brandham Hall—it would be rude to leave early.

When Leo next sees Marian, he changes one crucial detail of Ted's message. He tells Marian that Ted wants to meet on Friday (the day of Leo's birthday party) at 6:00 p.m., when in fact Ted had said 6:30. He mentions that Ted will be going to war, which greatly distresses Marian. Leo asks why she can't just marry Ted—she say's it's impossible. Leo sneaks out late one night and pulls up the Deadly Nightshade, wanting to use some of it in a spell to break Ted and Marian apart.

The day of Leo's birthday arrives; for once, the weather is overcast. Marian takes Leo aside to give him a letter but is interrupted by a suspicious Mrs. Maudsley. Marian insists the letter is for Nannie Robson to inform her that she will visit her in the afternoon. In the late afternoon, the guests gather to celebrate the birthday, but Marian is nowhere to be seen. When a carriage for Marian returns from Nannie Robson's only with the message that she hasn't been there at all, Mrs. Maudsley drags Leo out to look for her. In the pouring rain, they arrive at the outhouse where the Deadly Nightshade had been. They discover the entwined bodies of Ted and Marian, making Mrs. Maudsley scream. Subsequently, Ted commits suicide with his gun.

The narrative returns to old Leo, who heads back to Norfolk to find out what happened to those involved. Leo meets Marian's grandson—the eleventh Viscount—who arranges for him to meet Marian. He learns from her that Marcus died in the first world war; Trimingham married Marian despite her affair and treated her love child with Ted as his own but died ten years later. Mrs. Maudsley, like Leo, never really recovered from the trauma. Marian tells Leo that her grandson believes he has cursed because of what happened at Brandham Hall and begs Leo to tell him that her and Ted's love was pure and beautiful. He reluctantly accepts this final mission as go-between and heads towards Brandham Hall, feeling himself to be "a foreigner in the world of emotions."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Leo Colston – The novel's prologue and epilogue, which bookend the main story, are set in the 1950s when Leo is "sixty-odd" years of age. The majority of the novel takes place in the summer of 1900, however, when Leo is a schoolboy on the cusp of turning thirteen. The older Leo finds the diary of his younger self and tells the reader that the events of that fateful summer changed his life forever; since then, he has lived a dull and disappointing life devoid of emotion. Younger Leo is a naïve but inquisitive boy who has a respect for the rules alongside a burgeoning desire to know how the world works. As his father has passed away, Leo is raised by his mother and has a close relationship with her. He is fascinated by magic and spells and sees the other adults in the book as characters in his own personal Zodiac. When he agrees to spend the summer at the mansion estate of his upper-class school friend, Marcus, he is thrown into a world very different from his humble upbringings. Here, Leo proves very impressionable and forms strong attachments to the novel's three main adults: Marian, Ted, and Trimingham. Leo's eagerness to please makes him a natural errand boy; his ability to go between the markedly different worlds of Marian and Ted—Brandham Hall and one of the nearby farms—facilitates their affair, making their secretive communication much easier. But young Leo's naiveté and innocence (hinted at by the **green** suit he wears) gets the better of him, drawing him deeper and deeper into a world of passion that he does not understand, and ultimately resulting in tragedy. Old Leo, a "foreigner" in the world of emotions, seeks closure on the events of Brandham Hall by returning there fifty years later. He wants to find out what happened to those he knew at the Hall by going to see Marian. Agreeing to do one last errand for her—to tell her grandson that he is not cursed—he returns to his role as go-between.

Marian Maudsley – The beautiful daughter of the Maudsleys, Marian is a charming, funny, and impatient young woman. She initially treats Leo affectionately, taking him to Norwich to buy him some more suitable clothes for the summer. She also sees how useful Leo is to her and Ted, however, and uses her charms to manipulate him into becoming a go-between for messages between the two of them. Highly aware of the restrictions of social class and hierarchy, Marian generally plays her aristocratic role to perfection, and for the benefit of her family has agreed to marry Lord Trimingham and thereby secure the Brandham Hall estate. But below the surface, she is a capricious and passionate woman, much more attracted to the unrefined tenderness of Ted than to the rather unexciting devotion of Trimingham. Leo finds Marian again at the end of the novel, fifty or so years after the events at Brandham Hall. Though she did indeed end up marrying Trimingham after Ted's suicide, the elderly Marian is as committed as ever to the "happiness and beauty" of her and Ted's love. She implores Leo to be her messenger once again and tell her grandson that he isn't cursed by what happened. It's up to the reader to decide whether she is deluded or, by living her life closer to her emotions, represents the antidote to the strictures of class society.

Ted Burgess – Ted is a working-class tenant farmer on the Brandham estate. He is physically imposing and has a reputation through the Hall and village as a ladies' man. He also displays a tender side, taking care of Leo's knee after he finds him injured on his farm, and appears deeply devoted to Marian despite knowing he can't be with her officially. Ted commands the respect of the lower classes, who love his heroic display in the cricket match and his rough singing in the village hall afterwards. Though Ted generally behaves respectably and defers to his social superiors, he also has an air of violent threat about him, more felt than witnessed. In one encounter, for example, Leo visits Ted just as he is cleaning his shotgun—literally looking down the barrel of the gun that he will later use to kill himself upon the discovery of his affair with Marian. Leo sees Ted as an authority on those things he doesn't understand, especially "spooning" (a euphemism for making love). Ted, ultimately, has ideas about love and marriage that are quite radical for the time—he thinks it perfectly plausible for two people to "spoon" before marriage, and doesn't think marrying before "spooning" would be very "lover-like." He represents, then, a kind of commitment to love that is less concerned with what's practical or legitimate than what makes people feel something—a view quite outside of the norm in 1900.

Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh — Trimingham is the ninth Viscount and landlord of the Brandham Hall estate. He has just returned from service for the British Empire in the Boer War, in which he sustained an unsightly facial injury. Trimingham is engaged to Marian, a marriage which suits both parties as the Maudsleys have more money than he does but he has the rights to the estate. He is a prime example of the late-Victorian gentleman, never giving much of himself away and always behaving in line with the social manners expected of his class. He betrays very little emotion, and always treats Leo with respect. In fact, it's Trimingham who comes up with Leo's nickname, Mercury—the messenger of the gods—that Leo so enjoys at first. Leo is in awe of Trimingham's status and also sees him as someone who can help him understand the world. That's why, when worried about whether there will be a fatal duel between Trimingham and Ted, Leo asks Trimingham about romantic relationships. In this moment, Trimingham offers Leo the advice that "nothing is ever a lady's fault"—which Leo can't make work in light of what he knows of Marian's actions. It transpires that Trimingham dies in 1910, but stood by Marian after the revelation of her affair. He even took care of her love child with Ted, treating the baby as his own. It's not clear, though, whether that response comes from humane concern for Marian and the child, or from a desire to save face and maintain his status in society—the likelihood, on the evidence of the book, is both.

Marcus Maudsley — Marcus is the school friend of Leo's who invites him to Brandham Hall to stay with his family. He is a typical schoolboy, often play-fighting with Leo and calling him names. He also had a tendency to gossip—it's Marcus who tells Leo of Marian and Trimingham's engagement, and, suspects Leo, Marcus is the probable source of the information that leads Mrs. Maudsley to the discovery of Marian and Ted's affair. Marcus also has a great distaste for the working-class villagers in the area (of which Ted is one); when he has to spend time with them in the village hall, he tells Leo afterwards that their smell very nearly made him throw up. Marcus is, in a way, more important for his absence than his presence in the novel: when he contracts measles at the start of the summer, Leo is set free from the constraints of playing with his friend and is able to roam around the estate alone, setting in motion the events that lead to the novel's traumatic climax. After the events at Brandham Hall, Marcus doesn't pay Leo much attention at school. The elderly Marian informs Leo that Marcus then died in service during the first World War.

Mrs. Maudsley Mrs. Maudsley is the hawkeyed matriarch of Brandham Hall. Most days, she dictates proceedings and is much more dominating than her husband, Mr. Maudsley. She prefers things to be ordered and structured, and is the architect behind the engagement of Marian to Trimingham. That said, she is also prone to bouts of "nervous exhaustion" usually brought on when things don't go her way. She is suspicious of Marian and comes to suspect Leo, too, of somehow facilitating her daughter's deception. Such is the shock of discovering Marian's rebellion that Mrs. Maudsley screams relentlessly and never recovers.

Mr. Maudsley Husband to Mrs. Maudsley and father to

Marcus, Denys, and Marian, Mr. Maudsley is a quiet man and plays only a small role in the novel. He exemplifies the quintessentially English attribute of keeping quiet about emotions, and is more inclined to talk about cricket and cigars. One interest he does share with Leo is that of the temperature—the two frequently bump into each other at the outhouse with the **thermometer**, though their exchanges usually only involve Mr. Maudsley asking if Leo is "having fun."

Edward / Lord Trimingham the Eleventh Viscount At the end of the novel, Leo encounters the grandson of Marian. His resemblance to Ted confirms that Marian's child—that is, Edward's parent—was not Hugh Trimingham, but rather Ted. This post-war Trimingham has fewer trappings of status and wealth than did his grandfather, and only lives in a small part of Brandham Hall (the rest have been let out to a girls' school). He is afraid to get married as, fully aware of the terrible events in the summer of 1900, he fears there is a curse on him that he would pass down to any children he might have. He apologizes to Leo for what took place at Brandham Hall—the only character to do so.

Leo's Mother A single mother raising Leo in the wake of her husband's death. Leo's mother is protective of her son but allows him to wants to return home, she encourages her son to be patient, as the Maudsleys could be valuable friends in the future; Leo's father, she writes, made a mistake in not caring enough about his social life.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Denys Maudsley Denys is Marcus' older brother. Though very class conscious and obedient to his mother, Mrs. Maudsley, he is an otherwise unremarkable young man who is swiftly put in his place whenever he tries to suggest anything of which his mother disapproves.

Nannie Robson — Marcus and Marian's grandmother. The reader never meets her, but Marian uses Nannie Robson's alleged forgetfulness as a cover for her secret meetings with Ted.

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.

SOCIAL CLASS AND HIERARCHY

The Go-Between is fundamentally a drama of social hierarchy. The story is set in late-Victorian/Edwardian Britain around the turn of the 20th century, a time when class dominated society, and primarily explores these ideas in two related story lines: through its primary character, Leo, who narrates the book retrospectively about his experiences when he, a middle class boy, was invited to spend the summer at the high class estate of has schoolmate Marcus's family; and through the love affair between the upper class Marian (Marcus's sister) and the local farmer Ted, in which Leo gets caught up as a go-between. Through these intertwined stories, the novel shows how social class functions as a system of power that both makes people (such as Leo) accept it as natural and right, as well as how—in the disastrous consequences of Marian and Ted's affair—these same social conventions, however refined, will brutally destroy those who go against its codes of acceptable behavior.

The overwhelming and rigid power of the social hierarchy impacts all aspects of Brandham Hall life, from meal times—breakfast is announced by a gong—to clothes. Before his visit, Leo hadn't paid much attention to how he dressed: "Hitherto I had always taken my appearance for granted; now I saw how inelegant it was compared with theirs; and at the same time, and for the first time, I was acutely aware of social inferiority." Though it's not spoken about in the open, *all* the characters (except, to a degree, Leo) are fully aware of and affected by social hierarchy. That's why, when Lord Trimingham arrives to Brandham Hall, the Maudsleys are all on edge—as a Lord and the hereditary owner of the estate, he outranks them.

While it is true that sometimes the upper class and the servant/working class might *appear* to mix, as when the two come together at the cricket match and following meal, these occasions always occur on the terms of the upper class, as if it is doing the lower class an honor by attending. After the cricket match and meal, for instance, Marcus comments: "Anyhow, we've said goodbye to the village for a year. Did you notice the stink … Three times I nearly had to cat [throw up]." All of this is why Marian and Ted enlist the class-ignorant Leo as their go-between—their love affair is the most intimate form of mixing, and they know that they have to keep it secret. Eventually, though, the affair is discovered by Marian's mother Mrs. Maudlsey, who had architected Marian's engagement to Lord Trimingham in order to secure her own family's ascent into an even higher class. Mrs. Maudsley's subsequent nervous breakdown along with Ted's suicide—which can be read as his passionate acknowledgement that society will never allow him to be with Marian—make clear just how profoundly society will punish this transgression against class.

There is a direct relationship, Hartley suggests, between the strictness of social codes and the extremity of the consequences when these codes are disobeyed. Love is only permitted to exist between those people whose social standings are in proportion. The fact, as explained in the novel's epilogue, that Marian and Ted's love child is falsely presented as the product of her marriage to Lord Trimingham is final proof

that Marian and Ted's love was forbidden and *remains* so. The social order must be maintained: even when Marian was caught, the need for the Maudsleys and Trimingham to avoid embarrassment was more important than being honest about the father of the child. When, at the end of the book, the elderly Marian asks Leo to carry one last message, this time to her grandson (the eleventh Lord Trimingham), this is the forbidden knowledge that she hopes to communicate: that her and Ted's love was real and nothing to be ashamed of. That she needs Leo to take the message to her estranged grandson implies that society *still* refuses to allow such thinking.

COMING OF AGE AND TRAUMA

The Go-Between is a coming of age story with a twist. The novel has the basic structure of a bildungsroman—a novel about a youth growing up. However, as the adult Leo narrates his story as about his childhood experiences at Brandham Hall, it's clear from his description of himself as a man who has spent his life surrounded by "facts"—as opposed to feelings—that Leo has missed out on sexual and emotional maturity altogether, and that the story he is about to tell is the trauma that has caused this stunted growth. Because Leo's narration reveals almost nothing about the years between leaving Brandham Hall as a youth and the book's present, there is the sense that these years have been somehow skipped over or neglected. Indeed, these are the years in which Leo would have grown up and lived the majority of his adult life. By leaving these years out of the narrative, the novel demonstrates the catastrophic effects of trauma on youth.

The novel is set in motion when, in the prologue, the elder Leo finds a diary written by his younger self about events that he had repressed. Later in the prologue, Leo imagines a conversation with his younger self in which the younger Leo, as preserved by the diary, asks the older: "Why have you grown up such a dull dog, when I gave you such a good start?" In other words, the older Leo knows that he is a disappointment to his own youthful ideals of what growing up would mean—instead of living a life of emotion and vitality, he has spent his "time in dusty libraries, cataloguing other people's books instead of writing [his] own."

Older Leo comments, though, that it is precisely because of the behavior of his younger self (as described through the main body of the story) that he has grown up to be such a "dull dog." He tells his younger self that "it was you who let me down … You flew too near to the sun, and you were scorched." Here the elder Leo refers to the myth of Icarus, who in his youthful exuberance flew too near to the sun on his wax and feather wings, and then fell to his death. This reference reinforces the idea of a coming-of-age interrupted by trauma.

Young Leo knows himself to be on the precipice of "growing up"—a mysterious idea that both excites and frightens him. His time at Brandham Hall represents his attempts to wrestle with that idea and find his place in the world. He is youthfully naive, especially when it comes to sex and love. It's this innocence in Leo that makes Marian choose **green** for his new outfit, which draws comparisons from the others to Robin Hood (Leo doesn't realize he's being mocked). Young Leo is attracted to Marian, but not in an explicitly physical way. He does, however, feel a growing desire for nudity: "my notions of decency were vague and ill-defined, as were all my ideas relating to sex; yet they were definite enough for me to long for the release of casting them off with my clothes, and being like a tree or a flower, with nothing between me and Nature." Though his ideas about sex are still new and hazy, he senses that it's an important part of adult life.

Though the older Leo tries to make peace with his younger self through the telling of his story, and by visiting Marian at the novel's close, so much time has passed that this can only be a partial, incomplete reconciliation. That's why, as he heads to Brandham Hall fifty years after his last visit there, Leo still feels himself "a foreigner in the world of the emotions, ignorant of their language but compelled to listen to it." Further, when at the end of the novel the elder Leo agrees to Marian's request that he go to tell her grandson that there is no curse and that Marian and Ted's love had been "so much happiness and beauty," this moment of healing is also a signal of trauma: even as Leo agrees to try to mend the rift between Marian and her grandson, he never escapes the role of being Marian's go-between. He remains stuck in the role he had as a youth when he first suffered the original trauma.

MASCULINITY

While the attention that Marian gives the young Leo begins what he calls his "spiritual transformation," Leo's interactions with the men in the story are equally important in his attempts to figure what coming of age might actually mean for him. His father is no longer alive, and his experiences as Brandham Hall present him with different ideals of masculinity through the rough, unrefined physicality of Ted and the restrained status and manners of Trimingham. Leo's loyalties change throughout the text as he tries to figure out what it means to *be a man*. Through this process, Hartley shows what happens when these contrasting ideals come into conflict, both in the way Leo switches allegiance between different men and in his ultimate rejection, in adulthood, of "emotions" altogether. It's also not just within Leo that these masculine ideals compete: Marian, too, struggles with a choice between Ted and Trimingham. Of course, she isn't supposed to have a choice at all—her parents have already chosen Trimingham for her. Yet Ted's masculinity exerts an irresistible hold on her, and she makes a decision that she wasn't meant to.

Because his father is dead, Leo does not have any male role

models in his home life. Young Leo also feels he has more in common with his mother's temperament than his father's. His father was quite blinkered, interested only in collecting rare books, whereas his mother likes "gossip" and "social occasions." Like young Leo, she likes "to mix with well-dressed people on some smooth lawn." Because Marcus falls ill with the measles, Leo has more freedom to move about in the adult world and encounter the contrasting examples of masculinity represented by Ted and Trimingham. Leo first encounters a new form of masculinity when he goes swimming with a group from Brandham Hall (he himself is not allowed to swim by orders of his mother). When the group sees the farmer Ted in the water, the farmer's "mere physical presence" casts "a spell" on Leo. "He was," Leo notes, "I felt, what a man ought to be, what I should like to be when I grew up." Ted's is a raw masculinity that contrasts with the refined mannerisms that surround Leo at Brandham Hall—and this makes him much more attractive to Marian than Lord Trimingham.

Trimingham, for his part, represents the counterpoint to Ted's masculinity. He is a man of status and shows Leo a form of manhood based on social standing, etiquette, and "gentlemanliness." Leo is in awe of Trimingham's powerful title: "It didn't matter what he looked like: he was a lord first, and a human being, with a face and limbs and body, long, long after." Where Ted's masculinity centers on the body, Trimingham's is structured around social power. He has also just returned from the Boer War, but rarely talks about it—further reflecting his refined take on manhood. Importantly, it's from him that Leo learns "nothing is ever a lady's fault"—it is the job of the man, Trimingham says, to take responsibility.

Of course, Leo finds this idea hard to reconcile with Marian's treatment of Trimingham and her illicit affair, contributing to the build of psychological pressure that results in Leo's trauma. Yet after the revelation of the affair and Ted's subsequent suicide, Trimingham appears to live by his own dictum when he marries Marian anyway and treats her and Ted's love-child as if it were his own. The novel doesn't make clear whether this is about saving face and preventing a scandal, however, or from a genuinely charitable compassion.

Leo, in his role as go-between, is literally caught in the middle between Ted and Trimingham: social authority versus physical power; refinement versus passion; status versus humility. Further, he is never able to work through or come to a choice about his own preferences between these attributes. Instead, his diary cuts off abruptly after the discovery of Ted and Marian's affair and Ted's suicide, with the suggestion that Leo's own development similarly stopped in that moment. In fact, the suggestion is that Leo gives up on both sides of masculinity that he admired as a youth. He once again "goes between"—he neither lives with "emotions" the way that Ted did, nor attains any of the social refinement and standing that define Trimingham. Instead, in becoming a quiet book-collector, like his own father, he lives only with facts and other people's books. Leo's sense as an adult, though, is that this is not any sort of triumph, but rather that it is a failure, and that he is more of a "dull dog" than a man.

FATE, MYTH, AND MAGIC

The Go-Between is full of semi-supernatural elements, from Leo's devotion to the zodiac, to the spells that he casts, to the more general constant sense that things are fated to go wrong. Hartley never takes an explicit stance on these elements: through the novel they simultaneously seem to be, on the one hand, real and powerful, and on the other just the delusions of a twelve-year-old boy. In treating these supernatural elements in this way, Hartley accomplishes a number of things: he portrays the way that a young boy understands (and fails to understand) the world; he captures the way in which Leo's unique status in the story itself function as a kind of supernatural force that turns society on its head; and he conveys the ways in which the events that occur at Brandham Hall actually are fated and epic, though not in the way that Leo believes.

Given his age and upbringing, Leo has very little sway over or understanding of the adult world. The zodiac and Leo's magic spells answer both of these needs: they give him a way to process the world around him (including his place in it), and to affect that world. For instance, before the main action of the book, when Leo casts spells on two bullies at school who then later fall off a roof, both Leo and his schoolmates come to see him as having magical abilities. Later in the book, Leo understands Marian's attraction to Ted as a spell cast by the latter, one which he needs to counter with his own magic.

Leo also sees the world in terms of the zodiac: Marian is the Virgin, Ted is the Water-Carrier, and he thinks about what it means to be a proper man in terms of the zodiac signs of the Ram, the Bull, and the Lion. In his role as a go-between, he sees himself as a part of his personal zodiac pattern, as a kind of "messenger to the Gods"—a notion that is only intensified when Trimingham starts calling him "Mercury." In seeing the adults as gods, it's clear that he isn't able to see them as actual human beings, with human desires, frailties, and complexities. Leo's conception of the world is heroic and romantic, but also unreal. And when Leo, at the end of the book, is faced with reality—the "virgin" and the "water-carrier" having sex—he can't handle it. Leo may briefly be able to move among the gods—at least his gods—but he is too young and naïve to survive unscathed. Just like the story of Icarus flying too close to the sun (another myth referenced in the novel), Leo's proximity to powers beyond his comprehension, and desires beyond his experience, means that he, like, Icarus, is sure to crash.

Even as Leo's belief in magic and zodiac-based understanding mark him as a naïve child, Hartley never explicitly marks either as being wrong. For instance, the possibility is left open

throughout the book that it *was* Leo's spell that caused the two bullies to fall off the roof. Throughout the novel, there hangs an implication that spells might exist and exert power in the actual adult world, and that Leo's sense of a world determined by fate may also not be so farfetched, even as it doesn't operate in the clean way that Leo imagines it does. The novel's depiction of Marian and Ted is of two people who, despite knowing the social consequences, can't stop their love. They aren't the virgin and the water-carrier, but the novel presents them as no less fated for they humanity. And while the fates of the two lovers Marian and Ted may not be written in the stars as Leo believes, they are, in many ways, written in their characters and the social rules that define the world in which they live.

The novel's use of fate—and the way that its lovers are doomed from the beginning—parallels countless other romantic tragedies, including *Romeo and Juliet*. These parallels link *The Go-Between* to a larger tradition and suggest that the same forces of conflicting love and social conventions that lead to the lovers' ends in all of these tragedies are, in fact, universal to the human experience. It suggests, in other words, that such conflicts will always exist so long as there are people, and, by extension, that such tragedies are always fated to occur—that they are a part of the irreconcilable complexities of being human.

LOVE, SEX, AND MARRIAGE

Through the various relationships that it portrays, *The Go-Between* explores the nature of romantic human relationships with the larger social world. Through the specific affair between Marian and Ted, the novel suggests that passionate romantic love is too strong to be constrained by social conventions. Through the devastating end to that relationship, however, the novel also makes clear that those same social conventions can't be held at bay for long, even by love. More broadly, as Leo is exposed to different ideas about love, sex, and marriage, and fails to reconcile them, *The Go-Between* is able to show how these different ideas—marriage as an institution versus love as passion and emotion—are in fact not reconcilable. The rising pressure that Leo feels about these ideas stands in for an actual pressure in society, which explodes with the revelation of the upper class Marian's affair with the lower class Ted.

Hartley presents marriage in late-Victorian/Edwardian society as a predominantly institutional arrangement, suggesting that it is an activity more governed by practicality, convenience, and social and economic status than love or emotion. Mr. and Mrs. Maudsley, the only married couple in the book, do not show one another any signs of affection. When Mr. and Mrs. Maudsley arrange for Marian to marry Lord Trimingham, they are not concerned with whether Marian loves him, but rather with the practical benefits of their potential marriage. Lord Trimingham is the owner of the Brandham Hall estate and, therefore, marrying Marian to him would secure the Maudsleys' living standards and social standing.

Even Marian knows that she *should* marry Lord Trimingham. Her engagement to him is a fact of life to which she has acquiesced—in part because she recognizes that it will help her family, and in part because she knows it will ensure her own comfort and security. But Leo's lack of understanding reveals the inherent weakness in this conception of marriage. For instance, after he learns of Marian and Lord Trimingham's engagement, Leo assumes that this means the end of his role as go-between for Marian and Ted. It never occurs to him that the affair might continue; he can't imagine that love and physical attraction might continue to exist after an engagement. What's interesting here is that while Leo immediately comes across as hopelessly naïve in this moment, the institution of marriage is built on the similarly naïve foundation that marriages of social convenience can withstand the buffets of love.

Even more mysterious to Leo than love is sex, which he euphemistically calls "spooning." Once again, Leo's naiveté about sex allows the novel to explore the subject, as Leo's innocent questions reveal deeper truths and complexities. Neither Leo nor Marcus know anything about sex, and don't understand why anyone would get involved with "spooning." At one point Leo comments, "I'm sure your sister doesn't spoon, she's got too much sense." On the one hand, Leo's comment here is just plain ridiculous: lots of "sensible" people have sex. However, at the same time, Leo's idea that sex isn't sensible—that it is irrational—is also something that, given the events of the rest of the story with its passionate and destructive affair, can't be dismissed. Leo's simplistic belief, then, may suggest a deeper truth. Leo may *not* actually be wrong in his idea that sex is irrational. Rather, he is wrong in his sense that Marian—or, really, almost anyone—is sensible when it comes to sex and physical attraction.

After Leo becomes a go-between for Marian and Ted and starts to understand that their "business" letters are in fact love letters, he becomes increasingly curious about sex. He repeatedly asks Ted to tell him about "spooning" because he senses that Ted knows about it. In one conversation, Leo questions Ted on whether you could marry someone without spooning them first. In response, Ted argues that sex before marriage is natural, and that love should, naturally, be paired with sex. In late-Victorian/Edwardian times, which prized female virginity and purity and promoted abstention from sex until marriage, these are radical ideas. At the same time, to a modern reader, it seems pretty normal to see things Ted's way: that romantic love and sex are perfectly natural, regardless of marital status.

Leo responds to Ted's ideas by thinking: "Natural! So spooning was natural! I had never thought of that. I had thought of it as a kind of game that grown-ups played." But he doesn't seem to truly accept Ted's argument about the naturalness of sex. When

he is confronted with the reality of Ted and Marian having sex, his interior world is brought crashing down in a way that suggests that Leo (like Mrs. Maudlsey, whom he is with) perceives what is happening as sinful and terrible. He then spends the rest of his life avoiding or repressing emotion entirely.

The Go-Between doesn't suggest that love and sex are always incompatible with the institution of marriage. It's perfectly possible to imagine a socially-arranged marriage that also involves love and sexual attraction. But the novel does make clear that institutional marriage on the one hand and love and sex on the other are also completely different social forces, motivated by and motivating different goals and behaviors—and that these differences can create conflicts that lead to destructive results. Even at the book's close, as old Leo visits the elderly Marian, she refuses to see the affair as purely tragic, and implores Leo to tell her grandson that her relationship with Ted was "nothing to be ashamed of … the most beautiful thing." Leo, still traumatized by what happened at Brandham Hall and after living a life in which he has closed himself off to all emption, can only see Marian's positive reflections on the past as "self-deception." And yet, "half-wishing" to see things as she does, he goes on the errand for her and returns to Brandham Hall as the go-between for one last message of love.

SYMBOLS

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

MAGNETS

Magnets crop up throughout *The Go-Between*, bringing up ideas of attraction and irresistible force. Like two lovers who can't help but be together, if the positive and negative sides of a magnet are placed close to one another the force of attraction brings them together. Ted and Marian, who know they are *forbidden* by society to be together because of their class differences, are pulled together by an unstoppable force of attraction that cannot be disrupted by any means other than violence.

In the novel's prologue, Leo finds two rusty magnets alongside his diary of 1900 (the fateful year in question). The fact that his magnets have rusted shows that, because of the trauma of that summer, he didn't reach sexual maturity and was never attractive to or attracted by the people in his life. The rustiness shows that, despite the elderly Marian's protestation that "it isn't too late" for Leo to find love, his emotional life has been dead for decades.

THE ZODIAC

The zodiac is nothing less than the organizing principle for young Leo's own personal cosmology. He is intoxicated by its pictograms and links its mystical atmosphere to the anticipation and excitement of the fledgling twentieth century. The figures of the zodiac offer Leo an opportunity to construct his own ideas about morality and the supernatural; frankly, he doesn't know that much about them, but the suggestive power of their individual identities—The Water-Carrier, The Lion, The Virgin, and so on—makes them the perfect material for an imaginative and sensitive young boy to construct his belief system.

The only problem is, the real world doesn't conform as neatly to the zodiac as he would like. He, for example, feels that as a Leo—both in name and star sign—should be expressly lion-like, leading a brave life and ruling over territory with his physical dominance. On the contrary, it's patently clear that Leo can't dominate anyone or anything physically (which explains the reliance on magic). Marian, on the other hand, who even has the "curls and tresses" of the Virgin on his 1900 diary, fails to live up to the virginal qualities of purity and holiness that Leo expects of her. So traumatic is the sight of his Virgin figure in the act of making love—with the farmer-like Water-Carrier, Ted—that Leo never gets over it, shutting down his imaginative and emotional life from that moment on. The zodiac thus ultimately represents Leo's attempt to understand the world as both orderly and magical, and the shattering disappointment he feels when he discovers that it is neither.

THE HEAT / THE THERMOMETER

Part of Leo's initial love for the summer of 1900 is his newfound appreciation for hot weather. Having spent the previous summer in bed with fevers, his ability to move about in the heat makes him intoxicated with freedom. In fact, he actively desires the weather to get hotter and hotter. That's why he's frequently found at the disused game-larder on the Brandham estate—there's a thermometer there that he can check on a daily basis. The summer of 1900 feels like a liberation for Leo, and the heat increases his attunement to his own sensuality.

The heat also represents the pressure and imminent release of Leo, Marian, and Ted's situation. As the affair "heats up" and the secrecy becomes more difficult to maintain, the temperature goes up and up. The psychological pressure on all of the characters increases and needs an outlet. That's why the heat's release—the storm of the last chapter—mirrors the tragic release of pressure in the final scene, when Marian and Ted are discovered in the pouring rain.

One other thing to note is that the thermometer functions using the element mercury—the same word with which

Trimingham has christened Leo (because Leo is the "messenger to the gods"). Like the mercury in the thermometer, directly respondent to the heat of its surroundings, Leo too is encapsulated in the heat of the affair. The pressure in the thermometer pushes the mercury higher and higher, just as the psychological intensity of Leo's role places him under greater and greater mental strain.

GREEN

When Marian buys Leo a new suit to save him the blushes of wearing the "wrong" sort of clothes, she picks a fetching shade of green. He loves it at first; he fancies himself as Robin Hood, with Maid Marian by his side. Of course, Robin Hood is a story more popular with children than adults, but Leo sees his new suit as representative of his entry into the world of Brandham Hall. As he spins for the crowd around the dinner table, he feels their adulation turning what were previously the "scorching gas-jets" of social anxiety into the "water fountains" of social acceptance.

But, of course, green can mean a lot more than Robin Hood. Later in the book, Marcus is jealous of Leo's successes in the cricket match and the singing afterwards. He looks for a way to wound Leo psychologically, and finds the best option—he informs Leo that the color green is an insult, not a compliment. Leo realizes that green means unripe, youthful and inexperienced—all traits he felt he was transforming beyond. Furious at Marian for being so derogatory, he changes back into his old clothes. But this doesn't last long—feeling again that he doesn't fit in, he puts his green suit back on, thinking that the implicit meaning of the suit is better than the explicit teasing that wearing his home clothes brings about.

Green, too, has undertones of jealousy. Undoubtedly, Leo is partly jealous of Ted, both for his status as Marian's lover and his physical prowess. But overall, Hartley's use of the color green is definitely more skewed towards the first meaning—naïve innocence—than this second.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the New York Review of Books edition of *The Go-Between* published in 1953.

Prologue Quotes

"And the expansion and ascension, of some divine gas, which I believed to be the ruling principle of my own life, I attributed to the coming century. The year 1900 had an almost mystical appeal for me; I could hardly wait for it: "Nineeteen hundred, nineteen hundred," I would chant to myself in rapture; and as the old century drew to its close, I began to wonder whether I should live to see its successor.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Leo not as a young boy but as a man in his sixties who feels his life is behind him. He's describing how he felt in 1900, fifty years earlier, when he looked forward excitedly to the coming century and felt it to be full of promise. As a young boy, he was looking to find his place in the world and sensed that the future was unwritten. He expected 1900 to herald a new Golden Age, unaware of the 20th-century horrors to come. Young Leo conceived of the world as having divine and mystical properties. He was trying to construct a personal cosmology—his own way of seeing, organizing, and affecting the world. "Divine gas" appealed to him because gas is a changeable form, mirroring the way he felt his personal universe to be at the beginning of its formation (along the lines of the Big Bang). The quote demonstrates both his anticipation of life to come and the fact that he instinctively considered himself to be the center of his world. His chanting of the year is like an incantation—a spell to raise the spirits.

"If my twelve-year-old self, of whom I had grown rather fond, thinking about him, were to reproach me: "Why have you grown up such a dull dog, when I gave you such a good start? Why have you spent your time in dusty libraries, cataloguing other people's books instead of writing your own? What has become of the Ram, the Bull, and the Lion, the example I gave you to emulate? Where above all is the Virgin, with her shining face and long curling tresses, whom I entrusted to you"—what should I say?

I should have an answer ready. "Well, it was you who let me down, and I will tell you how. You flew too near to the sun, and you were scorched. This cindery creature is what you made me.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Marian Maudsley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

This quote sums up Leo's life since Brandham Hall. It tells the reader that, in his own words, he has grown up to be "a dull dog." This frames the narrative to come, as the reader now knows from the beginning that Leo's life didn't follow through on its turn-of-the-century optimism. That lends the main part of the book—the events of summer in 1900—a sense of impending tragedy; the reader knows things aren't going to work out well.

Also demonstrated is the importance of the zodiac to young Leo. He expected his life to play out according to its scheme. The question of what has become of the Ram, the Bull, the Lion, and the Virgin plants the idea in present-day Leo's mind to both tell the story and to find out what happened since. With all of the above in mind, it's important to question what Leo's division of himself suggests: it shows the rupture in his psyche caused by the trauma of Brandham Hall. His imagined reply to his younger self likens the latter to Icarus, the Greek myth of the winged boy who flew too close to the sun and fell to his death.

Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ I was urged to put out more spells, one of which was that we should be given a whole holiday. Into this last I put all the psychic force I had, and I was rewarded. Soon after the beginning of June we had an outbreak of measles. By half-term more than half the school was down with it, and soon after came the dramatic announcement that we were to break up.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 22-23

Explanation and Analysis

The measles outbreak gives Marcus and Leo the looming expanse of summer, which prompts the latter's invitation to Brandham Hall. Whether or not Leo really has supernatural powers is not especially important—what's crucial is that both he and others *believe* that he has them. This is the second "successful" spell cast by Leo, and therefore he understandably believes that magic offers him more power over the world than is normal for a young boy. The measles will also come to play an important role in the book. Towards the start of Leo's stay, Marcus is quarantined because of the virus, meaning Leo gets his own room and greater independence.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ Marcus wasn't with me, I was alone, exploring some derelict outhouses which for me had obviously more attraction than the view of Brandham Hall from the S.W. In one, which was roofless as well as derelict, I suddenly came upon the plant [the deadly nightshade]. But it wasn't a plant, in my sense of the word, it was a shrub, almost a tree, and as tall as I was. It looked the picture of evil and also the picture of health, it was so glossy and strong and juicy-looking: I could almost see the sap rising to nourish it. It seemed to have found the place in all the world that suited it best.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 33

Explanation and Analysis

Discovering the deadly nightshade has a big effect on Leo. The shrub has a dark mystery to it and, as it's a plant associated with witchcraft, speaks to Leo's supernatural interests. But in its relentless growth and rude health, it also symbolizes virility and physical power—linking it with Ted, and sex more generally. The sexual overtones are clear: its glossy, juicy strength, and the subconscious sexual imagery of the rising sap. These fascinate Leo, but an important part of his attraction to the plant depends on the impression that the nightshade has found its best possible place in the world—exactly what Leo is trying to do. At this early stage in his visit, the discovery of the nightshade confirms to him that there are mysterious elements in the world awaiting his investigation. His roaming around the derelict outhouses suggests he is looking to test the limits of his world, and to explore its borderlands. The outhouses are a kind of no man's land where the imagination can run wild and, as is discovered later, people can meet in secret.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ I came to dread these pleasantries, they seemed to spring up all around me like rows of gas-jets scorching me, and I turned redder than I was already. The frightful feeling of being marked out for ridicule came back in all its strength. I don't think I was unduly sensitive; in my experience most people mind being laughed at more than anything else. What causes wars, what makes them drag on so interminably, than the fear of losing face?

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

This gives the reader a clear sense of the intensity of Leo's self-awareness. For him, being the center of attention—the wrong attention—is a kind of violence and even, in his mind, the root cause of all violence. What to others is just pleasantry to Leo is painful social anxiety (and note that he perceives this anxiety with imagery of flame and heat, through the use of "gas-jets"). Leo is conflicted, wanting both to be at the center of his world but also to avoid the kind social scrutiny that he doesn't understand or can't match equally. He doesn't really feel comfortable yet at Brandham Hall and doesn't have experience of the social nuances involved with the upper classes. His suggestion that war stems from a fear of "loss of face" is also ironic—Trimingham, yet to enter the text, has sustained facial injury while serving in the Boer War.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ My spiritual transformation took place in Norwich: it was there that, like an emerging butterfly, I was first conscious of my wings. I had to wait until tea for the public acknowledgement of my apotheosis. My appearance was greeted with cries of acclaim, as if the whole party had been living for this moment. Instead of gas-jets, fountains of water seemed to spring up around me. I was made to stand on a chair and revolve like a planet, while everything of my new outfit that was visible was subjected to admiring or facetious comment.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Marian Maudsley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis

This comes after Marian buys Leo a fetching green suit during their trip to Norwich. Leo's never felt like this before, lavished with praise on account of his physical appearance. The idea of transformation reiterates that he is desperate to find his place in the world, but the fragile imagery of the butterfly suggests that his newfound identity is far from safe. Furthermore, the "wings" remind the reader of what was said in the prologue—that young Leo was an Icarus who flew too close to the sun. For the moment, though, Leo relishes his adoration—the gas-jets (an image of heat and fire) of social anxiety become the cool fountains of social acceptance. The planetary image also reminds the reader of Leo's zodiac cosmology; furthermore, as a planet must travel on its orbital plane, this quote hints at the idea of fate and unchangeable destiny.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ But the idea of goodness did attract me, for I did not regard it as the opposite of sin. I saw it as something bright and positive and sustaining, like the sunshine, something to be adored, but from afar.

The idea of the assembled Viscounts contained it for me, and the Maudsleys, as their viceroys, enjoyed it too, not so incontestably, but enough to separate them from other human beings. They were a race apart, super-adults, not bound by the same laws of life as little boys.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh

Related Themes:

Page Number: 64

Explanation and Analysis

This quote shows the workings of Leo's mind as he constructs his new universe based on his experiences at Brandham Hall. This is a daydream he has while in church, showing that he is not concentrating on the service—its morality, like his mother's, seems old-fashioned and unappealing to him. Leo is becoming more intoxicated by social class and prestige, which makes him see the upper

classes as separate from the rest of the human race. This fits his cosmology of being a planet among the gods, confirmed elsewhere by Trimingham when he christens Leo as "Mercury." Leo's association of the new people in his life with an abstract goodness outside of the morality of the church will serve to confuse him and place him under psychological strain when those people start to behave in ways that don't make sense to him.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ I was in love with the heat, I felt for it what the convert feels for his new religion…And without my being aware of it, the climate of my emotions had undergone a change. I was no longer satisfied with the small change of experience which had hitherto contented me. I wanted to deal in larger sums. I wanted to enjoy continuously the afflatus of spirit that I had when I was walking to Lord Trimingham and he admitted to being a Viscount. To be in tune with all that Brandham Hall meant, I must increase my stature, I must act on a grander scale. Perhaps all these desires had been dormant in me for years, and the Zodiac had been their latest manifestation.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 69

Explanation and Analysis

Leo's "spiritual transformation" is accelerating. Last summer he was ill with fevers, so to enjoy the heat in the summer of 1900 has a liberating effect on him that makes him crave more. He feels like he's experiencing a new world, but the quote also displays an anxiousness to fit in. He wants to be "in tune" with the world of Brandham, which he feels means he must increase his stature—but what does that actually mean? He can't suddenly become rich, buy land, and join the upper classes. Instead, he can place himself more and more in their favor by running errands for them.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ The messenger of the gods! I thought of that, and even when the attention of the gods had been withdrawn from me, it seemed to enhance my status. I pictured myself threading my way through the Zodiac, calling on one star after another.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

This is Leo's reaction when Trimingham first calls him "Mercury." He's clearly in love with the idea of being a messenger of the gods, as it gives him status and fits with his cosmology of the zodiac. But it also dehumanizes the adults in his world, making them seem infallible and god-like. It also brings to mind the image of space, which emphasizes how little Leo understands his new world and its daunting power. It's important that the nickname comes from Trimingham—Leo is very much in awe of Trimingham's high social status and wants to be accepted by him. This quote emphasizes Leo's newfound acceptance, but also that it is predicated on him proving useful, making him dangerously susceptible to future manipulation.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ I gave him the envelope which at once he tore open; and then I knew he must have killed something before I came, for, to my horror, a long smear of blood appeared on the envelope and again on the letter as he held it in his hands.

I cried out: "Oh, don't do that!" but he did not answer me, he was so engrossed in reading.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Ted Burgess

Related Themes:

Page Number: 94

Explanation and Analysis

Knowing from the prologue that events are not going to turn out well, the reader can't help but see the sight of blood as a bad omen. Leo shows his boyishness by being squeamish, and Ted shows the urgency of his feelings towards Marian by not bothering to even clean up before reading the letter Leo has just delivered. The quote also contributes to Ted's air of physicality and violence, one of the most important characteristics marking him out as different from Trimingham. It also dramatically suggests that Marian and Ted's relationship is written in blood—that it is a matter of life and death, and doomed from the start.

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ My world of high intense emotions collapsing around me, released not only the mental strain but the very high physical pressure under which I had been living. My only defence was, I could not have expected it of Marian. Marian who had done so much for me, Marian who knew how a boy felt, Marian the Virgin of the Zodiac—how could she have sunk so low?

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Marian Maudsley, Ted Burgess

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 102

Explanation and Analysis

Leo looks at one of Marian's letters to Ted and is horrified to learn that the nature of their relationship is not "business," as they keep saying, but romance. Leo's entire new worldview—its confidence and optimism—is dependent on Marian's affections and support. Now, she doesn't seem so innocent, and Leo can no longer be sure of anything. It shows him that both Marian and Ted have been lying to him (or at least withholding the whole truth), and that he can no longer trust anyone. Marian is now tainted by lust, no longer the pure Virgin of Leo's zodiac—in a biblical sense, she has "fallen." Though Leo feels a temporary release of pressure, it will quickly come back to an even greater degree as he tries to maintain the structural integrity of his zodiacal world.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ I could not tell whether the next ball was on the wicket or not, but it was pitched much further up and suddenly I saw Ted's face and body swinging round, and the ball, travelling towards me on a rising straight line like a cable stretched between us. Ted started to run and then stopped and stood watching me, wonder in his eyes and a wild disbelief.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Ted Burgess

Related Themes:

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

This happens during the cricket match pitting the Brandham Hall team against the villagers. Ted, playing for the village team, has been batting extremely well, but miraculously is caught out by Leo, who is only playing because one of the Hall team members got injured. The "straight line" between Ted and Leo represents their entwined fates. The image of Ted standing stationary shows his helplessness to affect his fate, and Leo's catch represents a small victory over Ted, who he sometimes perceives as his rival. The trajectory of the ball also echoes Leo's imagery around planetary bodies, again reinforcing the sense that events are set on an inevitable and unchangeable course. By catching the ball, Leo spares the Hall team the shame of losing—but also impresses Ted, who is not angry at him but actually rather proud. Leo, then, impresses both his male role models—Trimingham and Ted—in one single, simple catch.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ "Phew! Three times I nearly had to cat…And you looked so *pi*, Leo, really dreadfully *pi*. So did everybody, while you were singing that church thing about the angels taking care of you. They all looked as if they were thinking about their dear dead ones, and Burgess looked as if he might be going to blub. Of course it's difficult to know how Trimingham feels because of his face, but he didn't half crack you up to Mama. He'll eat out of your hand now.

Related Characters: Marcus Maudsley (speaker), Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh , Ted Burgess, Leo Colston

Related Themes:

Page Number: 140-141

Explanation and Analysis

This is clear example of Marcus's class snobbery—he can't stand the villagers and sees himself as above them. He's referring to the post-match event in the village hall, a rare example of those from Brandham Hall mixing with the working-class villagers. He exaggeratingly claims that the smell of the villagers was so bad that it made him want to throw up. As he's such a young boy, it's fair to assume that he has inherited or learned his snobbish attitude from the adults in his life, showing the strength of the social hierarchy.

Marcus also doesn't like Leo receiving so much praise for his singing, and is attempting to bring him back down to earth. He knows that Leo has been soaring to new emotional heights, but equally that Leo would be too embarrassed to admit it—so Marcus undermines the idea of emotion itself. Furthermore, he's undermining Leo's imaginative zodiac-based cosmology by belittling angels. Marcus shows himself

to be a callous child, searching for Leo's psychological weaknesses and probing at them. Meanwhile, Ted, of course, is probably close to "blubbing" because of Marian.

Chapter 14 Quotes

I liked Ted burgess in a reluctant, half-admiring, half-hating way. When I was away from him I could think of him objectively as a working farmer whom no one at the Hall thought much of. But when I was with him his mere physical presence cast a spell on me, it established an ascendancy which I could not break. He was, I felt, what a man ought to be, what I should like to be when I grow up.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Ted Burgess

Related Themes:

Page Number: 142

Explanation and Analysis

This comes just after Leo learns that Marian is engaged to Trimingham. He's weighing up Ted against Trimingham, showing that they offer him competing ideas of masculinity as potential role models. Leo is happy that Marian is marrying Trimingham—the Viscount seems to offer stability, honor, and refinement. Leo thinks, therefore, that he's no longer embroiled in the affair between Marian and Ted. But if Leo were more of how sexuality works, he'd know that the "spell" Ted's physical form casts on him also has a strong effect on Marian; there's no guarantee that the engagement will end the illicit relationship. Leo wants to be like Marcus and look down on Ted, but there's something mysterious about Ted that Leo can't escape. It's partly his impressive physicality, but also has to do with his relationship to land, his instinctive feel for emotional life, and the threat of his wild aggression. Leo "half-hates" Ted because, Ted being the true object of Marian's affection rather than Trimingham (or Leo himself), Leo sees him as a rival. But that's also why he wants to grow up and be like him—to become his sexual equal.

Nothing is ever a lady's fault; you'll learn that.

Related Characters: Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh (speaker), Marian Maudsley, Leo Colston

Related Themes:

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

This is a vital moment in which Trimingham gives Leo advice about women. Specifically, Leo has asked him about a duel fought by Trimingham's ancestor over his wife. Trimingham doesn't now about Ted and Marian, and so naturally doesn't see any parallels; Leo does, though. Leo's immense respect for Trimingham means that he takes this advice to heart. While on the surface this simple sentence might seem harmless enough—a fairly hollow but benign platitude—it sets Leo up for psychological trauma by making Marian "officially" blameless. Like pressure looking for a release, Leo needs to be able to make sense of his situation, and if he can't hold Marian accountable for the way she treats him, something else will have to give. Furthermore, this quote demonstrates Trimingham's role as a male role model (and specifically a model of upper-class ideas of chivalry) for Ted.

Chapter 15 Quotes

She was a fairy princess who had taken a fancy to a little boy, clothed him, petted him, turned him from a laughing stock into an accepted member of her society, from an ugly duckling into a swan. With one wave of her wand she hasd transformed him, at the cricket concert, from the youngest and most insignificant person present to a spell-bounder who had held them all in thrall. The transfigured Leo of the last twenty-four hours was her creation; and she had created him, I felt, because she loved him. And now, again like an enchantress, she had taken it all away and I was back where I had started from—no, much lower.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Marian Maudsley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 155

Explanation and Analysis

This is catastrophic for Leo. He knew Marian was instrumental in his transformation, but he didn't realize that his new confident identity could be so easily demolished. He has just found out that she intends to continue her affair with Ted despite her engagement to Trimingham. And even worse, she still wants Leo to act as their go-between. Suddenly he sees that her affection for him is based on his usefulness for her. Heartbreakingly for Leo, he realizes that he is still just a little boy, and that his new identity is nothing but a fairytale—or more accurately, it was a rival act of

magic. Ultimately, though, Leo holds on to Trimingham's advice (see the previous quote) and fails to truly acknowledge Marian's responsibility in what happens.

Chapter 17 Quotes

"Green, green mon pauvre imbécile, bright green...et savez-vous pourquoi? Parce que vous êtes vert vous-même—you are green yourself, as the poor old English say...it is your true colour, Marian said so." And he began to dance around me, chanting "Green, green, green."

Related Characters: Leo Colston, Marcus Maudsley (speaker), Marian Maudsley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 175

Explanation and Analysis

Marcus shows that he truly is no friend of Leo's. He knows that Leo's new sense of identity is tied to acceptance in the adult world and Leo's misplaced sense of maturity. The color green implies something unripe, small, and vulnerable. Two things make this doubly hurtful for Leo. Firstly, he is pained that he didn't recognize the implications of green when Marian bought him his new suit. Secondly, Marcus times the insult to make it wound as deeply as possible—he has just told Leo that Marian intends to buy Leo a bright green bicycle for his birthday. In normal circumstances, the promise of a bicycle would be joyous news to any young boy. By insulting Leo using news that Leo would normally love to hear, he makes Leo feel more naive, self-conscious, and deceived than ever before. Leo no longer sees himself as the green clad Robin Hood with his beloved Maid Marian; now he is just a bright green fool. There is also a suggestion that green indicates Leo's jealousy of Ted as Marian's sexual interest, but this is definitely the secondary meaning.

Chapter 18 Quotes

Lady-killer: what did that mean? I didn't like to ask too many questions. I did not think, however, Ted would kill Marian: Man-killer, that was what I had been afraid of. Now the fear had passed away, lost its reality with the rest of my life at Brandham Hall. I could scarcely believe that I had once felt I ought to warn Lord Trimingham of his peril. The ninth Viscount would never know that I had saved him from the fate of the fifth. By removing myself I had removed the danger: it was my master-stroke.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh , Marian Maudsley, Ted Burgess

Related Themes:

Page Number: 188

Explanation and Analysis

This is an almost virtuosic display of naiveté from Leo, reminding the reader just how young and innocent he really is. He finds it difficult to follow the subtext of adult speech, in this case taking lady-killer far too literally. He doesn't realize that the word is a euphemism for Ted's reputation as a man of sexual prowess and promiscuity. The quote demonstrates Leo's biggest mistake of all—that he thinks he still has agency over the threat of impending tragedy. He has a misplaced sense of security because he thinks he will soon be back home again, safe in the care of his mother—and furthermore, he assumes that Ted and Marian's affair cannot continue without his presence as their go-between. As the reader knows from the prologue, however, something traumatic is going to happen, lending Leo's thoughts here an air of tragic desperation.

Chapter 20 Quotes

"Marian, why don't you marry Ted?"

It was only for a moment, but in that moment her face reflected all the misery she had been going through; it was a heart's history in a look. 'I couldn't, I couldn't!" She wailed. "Can't you see why?"

I thought I did and since so many barriers between us were being overturned I added—it seemed only logical:

"But why are you going to marry Hugh if you don't want to?"

"Because I must marry him," she said. "You wouldn't understand. I must. I've got to!" Her lips trembled and she burst into tears.

Related Characters: Leo Colston, Marian Maudsley (speaker), Ted Burgess, Lord Trimingham the Ninth Viscount / Hugh

Related Themes:

Page Number: 211-212

Explanation and Analysis

Here the reader sees the intense pressure that Marian is under. The "heart's history" reflects not just back in time but forward too—Marian despairs at the thought of a future spent without Ted in her life. She knows that her arranged marriage with Trimingham is the "proper" thing to do, but it goes against every fiber of her being. The constraints of social class and hierarchy are in direct competition with the intensity of her love for Ted. Leo, knowing little of the world of romance, asks the logical but naive question: if she loves Ted, why doesn't she just marry him? The answer is first and foremost that society will not allow such a mixed class union. Just as importantly, Marian's parents want to marry her to Trimingham to secure their own social status by making the estate part of their family possessions (they currently rent from Trimingham). But this is not the true release of the situation's tension. Because the affair is still secret, the pressure on all involved is merely increased.

Chapter 21 Quotes

❝ But what spell could I employ to break the spell that Ted had cast on Marian?

I had no knowledge of Black Magic and relied on the inspiration of the moment. If while concocting the spell I could excite myself and frighten myself, I felt it had a better chance of success. If also I had the sense of something giving way, inside me and outside, that was still better...but those were spells whose operation was confined to the world of my experience, the schoolboy world. I had never launched a spell against a grown-up person. My present victims were not only grown-ups, they belonged to the world from which my spells derived their power; I should be trying to turn their own weapons against them.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Ted Burgess, Marian Maudsley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

Leo is desperate to find a way to retake control of the situation now that his plan to go home early has failed. Despite his realizations about his own naivety, he evidently still believes that the solution to his problems—and everyone's problems—depends upon supernatural intervention. He is still governed by his faith in the realm of magic, whether or not the reader chooses to believe in it too. Frankly, it is an understandable attitude, because Leo has little else at his disposal. The quote also shows that Leo's dimly felt understanding of love and sexual attraction is itself framed as a supernatural force. Leo's acknowledgement that he must match the strength of the spell of love leads him to the most powerful magical object that he is aware of: the deadly nightshade.

Chapter 23 Quotes

❝ To demonstrate my knowledge I began to tell her about the Deadly Nightshade, and then stopped. I found I did not want to speak about it. But she was only half listening.

Related Characters: Leo Colston (speaker), Mrs. Maudsley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 237

Explanation and Analysis

This is a small but significant quote. Leo is in the gardens with Mrs. Maudsley, who is suspicious of him. She senses that something is going on with Marian, and has a hunch that Leo is somehow helping her keep it secret. Leo, trying to make polite conversation with Mrs. Maudsley and allay her suspicions, accidentally tells her about the deadly nightshade he has found. Leo knows that the outhouse with this witchy plant is the likely location of Marian and Ted's passionate rendezvous. He thinks wrongly that Mrs. Maudsley isn't paying attention to what he says, but it later becomes clear that she puts two and two together—probably having heard from Marcus that the boys heard voices when they went to see the nightshade—and realizes that the outhouse is the likely location of Marian's secret meetings. The deadly nightshade is a clear omen of death, and by speaking its name Leo has unwittingly put the mark of death upon Ted.

"No, you shall come," she said, and seized my hand, and it was then we saw them, together on the ground, the Virgin and the Water-Carrier, two bodies moving like one. I think I was more mystified than horrified; it was Mrs. Maudsley's repeated screams that frightened me, and a shadow on the wall that opened and closed like an umbrella.

Related Characters: Mrs. Maudsley , Leo Colston (speaker), Ted Burgess, Marian Maudsley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 244

Explanation and Analysis

This is the moment of psychological rupture that so traumatizes both Leo and Mrs. Maudsley. She makes him witness the discovery of the lovers in order to punish him and tie Leo's fate to theirs. It shows the complete collapse of Leo's cosmology, with the Virgin completely losing her sense of innocence and perfection. He's "more mystified than horrified" because he doesn't really know what he's witnessing—the sight of two people having sex is completely new to him. Perhaps that's why his closing image is so surreal: the umbrella obviously has little to do with sex, but it's the only similar image that his frantic brain can find. The quote also emphasizes the union of Marian and Ted—for this brief moment they are together as one. Of course, it's short-lived, as Ted almost immediately upon their discovery returns home and shoots himself.

Epilogue Quotes

Tell him this, Leo, make him see it and feel it, it will be the best day's work you ever did. Remember how you loved taking our messages, bringing us together and making us happy—well, this is another errand of love, and the last time I shall ever ask you to be our postman...Tell him there's no spell or curse except an unloving heart.

Related Characters: Marian Maudsley (speaker), Edward / Lord Trimingham the Eleventh Viscount, Leo Colston

Related Themes:

Page Number: 260

Explanation and Analysis

Back in the novel's present day, Leo goes to visit the elderly Marian. She wants him to act as go-between one last time, so that her grandson—the eleventh Viscount (and son of Marian and Ted's love child)—will stop thinking there is a curse on his family and find love for himself. It shows that, despite the passage of time, Marian still thinks of Leo as her "postman." The quote also shows her blinkered view of the events of that summer—she sees no tragedy, even though Ted is dead and Leo lost his ability to feel. She is preserved in the summer of 1900, still hopelessly in love. The fact that her grandson refuses to marry until the curse is lifted shows that the supernatural—or more accurately, the perception of the supernatural—still holds immense power over people.

Leo, who hasn't really grown up, can't help but agree to be Marian's go-between once again. Even after the trauma he has suffered, he still wants to please her. The idea that there is no curse "except an unloving heart" has grave implications for Leo—he might feel he has left his boyish taste for magic behind, but Marian is essentially saying that he has spent his entire life under a spell.

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.

PROLOGUE

Leo Colston, a British man in his sixties, comes across a battered old collar-box full of belongings dating back to his childhood. Amongst its contents are "two dry, empty sea urchins; **two rusty magnets**; some negatives rolled up in a tight coil," and, most significantly to him, his old diary. He feels the "almost mystical thrill of early ownership," which is a feeling of which, at his age, he is somewhat "ashamed."

In a way, The Go-Between*'s story starts at the end. The reader's first encounter with Leo is of him as old man, not as the young boy at Brandham Hall. This sets up the sense that the events in the novel have already happened, and are fated beyond the agency of any of the characters involved. The magnets are an early hint that irresistible attraction is going to play a significant role in the story.*

The golden-edged diary looks like the only object of his that might have been expensive. Leo is hesitant to touch it, because he feels it will "challenge his memory." He stares at it for a while, trying to remember the code to its combination lock. When he was young, Leo tells the reader, he would show off by pretending that he needed to be in a trance to open the diary's lock.

Leo's diary brings him into direct contact with who he used to be as a boy. The fact that it's locked symbolizes that Leo has repressed the memory of the traumatic events at Brandham Hall since he last touched the diary all those years ago.

Leo remembers the combination and unlocks the diary, but is still hesitant to touch it. He is fearful of its "message of disappointment and defeat", events that he had been unable to "overcome." He feels that "had it not been for the diary, or what the diary stood for, everything would be different." He would be in a "rainbow-hued room" instead of the "drab, flowerless" one he is in now, "looking not into the past but into the future." Furthermore, he wouldn't be "sitting alone".

One of the main conflicts in the novel is between old Leo and young Leo. Now in his later years, he feels that what the diary represents—the summer of 1900—has prevented him from making the most of his life. He thinks he could have led a more emotionally active life, and perhaps have had a family of his own—but since that summer, his life has been defined not by the possibilities of the future but by the constraints of the past.

Leo opens the diary—it's for the year 1900. The year is ornately decorated by the signs of the **Zodiac**, a cosmology that held considerable power over him as a young boy. Leo remembers the "glorious" signs well, but also remembers that they no longer hold the same potency for him as they once did.

Young Leo was looking for a way to understand the world; the Zodiac, with its enticing supernatural figures, gave him that. But it also presages the feeling that the tragedy—or tragedies—within the novel are unpreventable.

Leo describes the different **zodiac** signs on the diary. He sees the Ram, Bull, and Lion as representing "imperious manhood," and lingers on the only expressly female sign of the galaxy, "the Virgin." To Leo, she is "the key to the whole pattern, the climax, the coping-stone, the goddess."

At the time, the Zodiac signs were suffused with power and meaning for Leo. As a young boy wondering what it means to be a man, the Ram, Bull, and Lion offered him some clues. But the Virgin sign, representing both the mysteriousness of sexual attraction and the innocence of young Leo, held the most sway over him.

Leo recalls how significant the year 1900 seemed to him as a young boy. Back then, he would chant "nineteen hundred" to himself, seeing the end of the old century and beginning of the new as representative of "the expansion and ascension" of "some divine gas." At the time, he believed it to be "the dawn of a Golden Age" and "infinitely precious." He believed that the coming century was destined to be the "realization" of his "hopes."

Leo's attachment as a young boy to the idea of an approaching Golden Age makes him psychologically vulnerable to any trauma that might prove his anticipation is misplaced. It also contrasts significantly with how he feels now, as a man of sixty-odd years, emphasizing that his life (like the twentieth century) has not turned out as he hoped.

One aspect of the **zodiac** was jarring for young Leo: he couldn't identify with the symbol that was supposed to be his own, the Lion (his birthday is in July). The two other candidates for Leo's favorite sign were the Archer and the Water-carrier. He preferred the Archer, as it seemed more warrior-like and "romantic," whereas the Water-carrier was too much like a "farm-laborer or at best a gardener." The two signs "attracted and repelled Leo" in equal measure.

This is significant information, as it hints at the rivalry that is to come between Ted and Trimingham. Because he has just returned from the Boer War and has the facial scar to prove it, Trimingham will be identified as the Archer; Ted, who works the land and is generally less refined than Trimingham, maps onto the Water-Carrier. The trope of attraction and repulsion also connects to the early mention of magnets.

The young Leo had felt a pressure that the diary must "record something worthwhile." The present-day Leo flicks through the pages, most of which record banalities, such as: "Muffins, scones, cakes and strawberry jam." One entry records the victory in a football match between Leo's school and a rival: "Lambton House VANQUISHED 2-1!!!! McClintock scored both goals!!!!"

The diary makes clear that Leo was really just a typical schoolboy. There wasn't much more important going on in his life than snacks and football, but the desire he felt to write down something worthwhile hints to the reader that what follows will be momentous.

Young Leo enjoyed having the diary, wanting to both keep it secret and for people to see its contents. He felt it would enhance his "prestige" for people to know of his secretive activity, but he didn't especially want to share its contents. The diary's frontispiece would frequently send him into daydreams about the **zodiac** and the twentieth century to come.

Leo had a vague desire for some kind of grand narrative to his life, but this was also based on him wanting the respect and admiration of his peers. The turn of the century added weight to the idea of an approaching future.

Perhaps because he was too public about having a diary, bullies at Leo's school stole it from him. They picked up especially on his use of the word "vanquished," and would beat Leo up, taunting him with the question, "are you vanquished, Colston, are you vanquished?" This happened to Leo on a daily basis, but because of the code amongst his peers against "sneaking"—telling adults about misbehavior—he kept quiet.

Even as a youngster, Leo already lived in a world of structured moral codes. The way the bullies used his own word, "vanquished," against him made him want to take matters into his own hands to get revenge. To be vanquished is to be defeated thoroughly, and this is what the reader senses old Leo to be; it just remains to be seen why.

Young Leo decided to take action against his bullies. He got the diary back, covered in insults written by his enemies. But these were written in pencil, and he duly rubbed them out. Knowing that he couldn't match their physical strength, Leo decided to write three curses in his diary to get revenge on his bullies (whose names were Jenkins and Strode). He wrote them in blood, not completing the third curse because—Leo believed—it would mean the death of Jenkins and Strode.

This is the first instance of Leo's attempts at magic. He was looking for a way to affect the world beyond the means at his disposal as a young boy—in essence, he wanted power. He didn't really understand the supernatural, but he sensed that it gave him a better chance of attaining agency than any other means, like fighting back physically.

Older Leo feels that the written curses "breathe malevolence" and "pluck a superstitious nerve" even now. He is envious of his former self for taking action and gaining respect for doing so. He recalls that he left the diary, now containing the curses, somewhere he knew his bullies would see it.

Even now, fifty years later, Leo still feels that the curses hold some kind of power. He admires his younger self's hazardous attempts to take control, which contrast with the way he has lived his life since. That his young self left the curses out for the bullies to see shows that on a surface level there was a strong element of performance involved in Leo's actions.

The bullies mocked Leo even more for the curses. They poked him in the eyes and that night Leo shed tears over their treatment of him for the first time. His roommates at school showed him the cursory kindness of not acknowledging his crying after lights out (rather than teasing him or telling anyone about it).

Here the reader is given another example of the strange moral code of the schoolboys: Leo's peers leave him to cry without getting involved. Old Leo sees that as a form of kindness, but it also shows that young Leo was intensely isolated by his experiences. That's why he was trying to take action, and appealing to the supernatural world to help him.

But the next day it appeared that the curse had worked: Jenkins and Strode fell off the school roof and were hospitalized. Leo's fellow students had a new respect for him and offered their congratulations. It turned out they generally didn't like Jenkins and Strode either. Furthermore, because word had gotten around about the curses, the rest of the school feared Leo's powers.

Hartley doesn't take a clear stand on whether this was just coincidence, or the curse actually worked—either way, the bullies were "vanquished." This gave Leo an authority among his peers, and, most importantly, inspired confidence in his ability to affect events around him. But it's also worth noting that even his newfound popularity was still a kind of isolation—it was based on him possessing supernatural abilities that no one else did.

Young Leo then became an authority on black magic and code-making, even charging his schoolmates for his expertise. He began to dream about being a great writer, "perhaps the greatest writer of the greatest century, the twentieth." He was often asked the meaning of the curses' text, but he himself didn't really know and maintained the air of secrecy.

Leo didn't really know anything specific about magic or curses, but liked the idea that others thought he did. This also represents his first taste for social climbing—suddenly he wasn't at the bottom of the pecking order anymore. The attention thrust upon him, alongside the turn of the new century, made him feel grandiose and important.

Present-day Leo turns the pages of the diary. February, March, April, May and June all account for those happy days in the aftermath of the successful curses (and the Easter holidays). He comes to July, and under Monday the 9th is written "Brandham Hall." For that day and those that follow there is a **temperature** recording, e.g. "Thursday 26th. 80.7 degrees."

This sets up Leo's obsession with temperature throughout his time at Brandham Hall. It's an important symbol because the rising heat has both sexual overtones and the sense of increasing pressure in need of release. In the diary, the months leading up to Brandham Hall show that Leo continued to enjoy the glories of his supernatural success.

The 26th is the last entry in the diary—Leo knew the rest of the pages were blank. Though it is later than his usual bedtime, Leo feels the past, specifically the events of that July, stirring within him. He has suppressed their memory for years, but always knew they remained intact within him, "carefully embalmed."

Since the events of Brandham, Leo has kept his memories under both literal and metaphorical lock and key. Stored in a box somewhere, he hasn't had to confront what happened—yet those memories never went entirely away either. This signals how deep the events of Brandham Hall run in Leo's psychology—with Hartley's use of the word "embalmed" foreshadowing death and preservation.

Leo reflects on his life since those fateful July days. He had made a "working arrangement" with life, on the condition that there should be no "exhumation" of the memories of Brandham Hall. Leo reflects that part of the reason that he couldn't deal with what happened at Brandham Hall is that he did not understand its world (as opposed to the world of his school). The people at Brandham intimidated him then and still do now: "they had **zodiacal** properties and proportions. They were, in fact, the substance of my dreams, the realization of my hopes; they were the incarnated glory of the twentieth century."

Leo's survival mechanism post-Brandham was to live a functional life and to completely sever himself from the young boy who visited Brandham Hall. When he visited the Hall, its social codes and rules were different from those he'd gotten used to at school, making its inhabitants seem super-human. That fit well with his zodiac-based worldview, but ultimately set him up for disappointment and trauma.

Leo imagines a conversation between him in the present day and his younger self. The young Leo chastises him for being "such a dull dog" and not emulating the zodiac signs—the Ram, the Bull, and the Lion, and "above all" the Virgin.

This shows the severity of the psychological rupture that Leo has been through: he actively conceptualizes himself as two people: pre- and post-Brandham Hall. The Virgin zodiac sign here is the one female sign, Virgo; the others mentioned are masculine. And, of course, Leo shares his name (ironically) with the fifth sign of the zodiac, "the Lion," associated with dominance, braver,y and sexuality. Hartley uses the zodiac signs as a set of characteristics to measure the characters against; Leo's inability to identify with the Lion makes his younger self demote him to a "dull dog."

Leo answers his younger self, saying that the latter had been burned after flying "too near to the sun." He believes that the man he is today is what his younger self made him. His younger self argues that he has had "half a century" to take control of his life, in the "glorious epoch" of the twentieth century no less. Present-day Leo argues that the twentieth century has not delivered on the promise of being a new dawn in the way that his younger self so excitedly anticipated. He tells his younger self that he was, in fact, "vanquished."

Leo sees his life in relation to the Greek myth of Icarus. Icarus, a young man, defies his father's warning against flying too close to the sun and then drowns when his wax wings melt. Leo therefore feels that his life was effectively ended when he flew "too near the sun"—in this case the world of Brandham Hall and, specifically, Marian. Interestingly, it also shows that even now Leo still has the capacity to see his life in mythic terms. And just like he never delivered on the promise of his younger self, neither did the twentieth century—which ended up being full of horror and war.

Leo's younger self argues that he could at least have *tried* to deal with the challenges of life, as he had with Jenkins and Strode all those years ago. Leo argues that his younger self was wrong to think of the people at Brandham Hall "as angels, even if they were fallen angels. They belonged to your Zodiac." What his younger self should have done, thinks Leo, is called down curses on "Mrs. Maudsley or her daughter or Ted Burgess or Trimingham." Present-day Leo hasn't thought of those people since his youth because he felt that was what his younger self wanted.

Leo confronts his younger self's cosmology, trying to disown it. But even old Leo, who claims to have let go of any attachment to the supernatural, feels that things could have gone better if he'd used curses at Brandham Hall. This shows that, on a deeper level, he still has common ground with the boy he used to be—it's just that it's too late to change anything about the past. The only action he's taken about events at Brandham has been to try not to think about them.

The voice of his younger self, as it dies away, implores Leo to write down the events at Brandham Hall before it is too late. Leo knows now that he has to face those memories. Surrounded by his piles of papers, he picks up the diary again. He reveals that the combination of letters to open the lock is his own name: "LEO."

Now that he's discovered his old diary, Leo doesn't feel that he can turn away from those memories any longer. Though it's too late to change anything, perhaps he can bring some kind of closure to what happened by revisiting it in his old age. The fact that he has to use his own name to get into the diary symbolizes that this will be an investigation into the depths of his own identity.

CHAPTER 1

It is 1900, fifty-odd years before the prologue. Young Leo is invited to spend the summer at Brandham Hall in Norfolk, where his schoolmate Marcus Maudsley lives. The thought of going there gives Leo "bouts of stomach-turning trepidation," but he's also excited by the prospect. Brandham Hall is a great deal more opulent and upper class than he is used to. Leo knows Marcus by his surname, as that's more common amongst schoolchildren.

The main narrative begins, casting the reader back fifty years or so. Leo is now twelve but soon to turn thirteen. He's both nervous and excited at the prospect of seeing Brandham Hall in all its grandeur—and not just seeing the estate, but being welcomed there as a guest. That said, he doesn't know Marcus all that well yet and doesn't know what to expect from the trip.

Leo thinks that part of the reason for his invite might be that, when the boys had discussed their respective home addresses, Marcus had taken Leo's "Court Place" to be a wealthier environment than it is (in fact it's just a fancy name for an ordinary house).

This shows that social class is often about appearances and details. The name of Leo's home is meant to make it sound more refined than it is—most people will only encounter it as a postal address. This then raises the question of whether Marcus invites Leo because he likes him, or he because he mistakenly believes him to be his social equal.

Leo reflects on his parents. His father, who is no longer alive, was a reserved man preoccupied with his principal hobbies of book-collecting and gardening. He worked as a bank manager and would have liked Leo to be home schooled, though Leo's mother had refused. Leo's father's collection of books sold for a surprisingly high sum many years later, granting Leo "immunity from the more pressing cares of life."

Leo lacks a male role model now that his father is no longer there. This creates a kind of vacuum of masculinity that Leo wants to fill as he makes his transition from boyhood to manhood. From what the reader knows of Leo's life after Brandham Hall, it appears that he turned into a man quite similar to his father: bookish, reserved, and unemotional.

Leo's mother is "attracted by the things of the world" and is a much more social creature than her husband was. Leo says she likes "to mix with well-dressed people on some smooth lawn…to greet and be greeted by them…all this gave her a tremulous pleasure."

Leo inherits his self-conscious eagerness to be liked from his mother. She is more attuned to social life than Leo's father was, and more aware of the importance of appearances.

Leo talks about his impressions of Marcus, thinking he possess a "savoire-faire that enabled him to be, without appearing to seek it, on the winning side." Though Marcus had remained neutral during the diary episode (that is, during the curses on Jenkins and Strode), he had secretly rooted for Leo and happily told his family of Leo's magical victory.

Evidently some of Marcus' attraction towards Leo is based on the latter's perceived supernatural abilities. Like Leo, he is a committed respecter of social codes—but his greater familiarity with manners and etiquette gives him the air of generally being in the right. That's an attractive quality to Leo, who is trying to figure out how the world works and has little experience of places like Brandham Hall.

Leo enjoys the weeks at school after his "vanquishing" of Jenkins and Strode. His mother doesn't understand his improved status, as it's based on Leo being a "magician." She's not sure that Leo should be so prideful when the two boys who bullied him are hurt.

Leo's mother offers him moral guidance and an alternative perspective on what he sees as his supernatural successes. These weeks at school before the summer are in a way the pinnacle of Leo's life, when he has the respect of his peers and felt sure in his convictions about how the world works.

When Leo goes back to school after Easter, his friends and clients—who pay him to learn black magic—ask him to use his powers to make the school term end early. Leo uses all his "psychic force," and, coincidentally or not, a measles outbreak means the school closes for summer weeks earlier than planned.

Leo has the luck of a second coincidence, firmly cementing his status as the authority on everything supernatural. The measles is highly contagious and causes the school term to be cut short, creating the lengthy summer holiday that gives Leo the chance to visit Brandham Hall. At this point, then, Leo feels like the architect of his own destiny.

Those at the school without measles are delighted at the prospect of such a long holiday. The children pack their belongings and are later picked up from the school gates, bidding goodbye to the schoolmaster and his family. The departing children make a loud uproar as they leave, not thinking about how the sound would affect the patients in the nearby sanatorium.

The nearby sanatorium—a medical facility for long term illness—gently introduces the possibility of trauma into the story. While the schoolboys hardly have a care in the world, they are not far from those suffering with chronic illnesses both mental and physical. This hints that the border between joy and suffering is not as difficult to transgress as the schoolboys might currently believe.

On the train leaving the school, the children are extremely joyous, intoxicated by "the very breath of freedom." Leo takes out his dairy, and the others wonder whether a new spell is being cast. Leo himself wonders whether he really was supernaturally responsible for the measles outbreak. Leo feels his dreams for the "year 1900, and for the twentieth century, and for myself" coming true.

Leo gives the other children a deliberate glimpse of his diaries, again performing his professed supernatural talents. Deep down, he's not sure whether he was actually responsible for what happened to Jenkins and Stroke or the measles, but either way, he enjoys feeling like he was, and his newfound status promotes a general feeling of optimism towards growing up in the new century.

The previous year had been a disastrous year: Leo's father had died and Leo himself had been seriously ill with diphtheria, spending the entire summer in bed. Leo senses this year will be better.

Leo's optimism is based on the questionable notion that he has a mystical power over what happens to him. He's also excited to enjoy the coming summer as opposed to his severe fevers of the previous year.

Back at home, Leo and his mother discuss the invitation to Brandham Hall. His mother is hesitant for him to be away for so long, and especially that he will not be at home for his birthday in late July. She makes him promise to let her know if he isn't happy. There's also a chance, she thinks, that he or Marcus will get measles.

Leo's mother is protective of him, but also knows that it's important for him to develop a sense of independence and adventure. She also seems to partly hope he gets measles, since that would be a legitimate, objective reason for him to have to stay at home.

Leo prepares for his trip. Because June was not a hot month, he doesn't think the summer is going to be hot either. His mother agrees, and packs only thick clothes for him. She warns him that "getting hot is always a risk" and against doing "anything *violent*." She implores him to go to church if he can. Leo feels glad that she's not coming with him, concerned that she would seem "socially unacceptable."

Leo's mother doesn't pack him suitable clothes for the summer, instantly setting him up for ridicule amongst the inhabitants of Brandham Hall. She's also a religious woman, with a simplistic moral worldview that she tries to impart on Leo. He's starting to outgrow her influence, however, as he searches for other ways of seeing and understanding the world.

As the day of departure grows near, Leo becomes nervous about the trip. He asks his mother to write to Mrs. Maudsley and tell her that Leo has contracted measles and can't make it. His mother refuses to lie for him. He tries to make a spell to bring about spots on his chest, but to no avail. On the eve of departure, Leo and his mother sit in their "one formal room" in silence; Leo senses she has something "special to say," but is close to crying and it remains unsaid.

One interpretation of Leo's sudden nervousness about the trip is that he is somehow experiencing a premonition of the traumatic events that are to come. Ironically, his mother's steadfast morality confirms his departure—she does want him to stay, but she won't tell a lie to make it so. It's an emotional farewell, as it's the first trip of its kind for Leo.

CHAPTER 2

Old Leo talks of the difficulties of remembering his time at Brandham Hall. "Certain things" are established in his mind as "facts," but he can't visualize them. Other memories come back to him strongly but are unverified by any facts, "like the landscape of a dream." At the time of his visit, he kept his diary religiously, aiding his ability to recall the story.

Leo's memories have been repressed for so long that some of them have become less clear. It's a psychological distance as much as a temporal one: he has deliberately pushed the memories as far away as possible so that he can live a semblance of a normal life.

In Leo's diary is transcribed a description of Brandham Hall in the directory of Norfolk county: "Brandham Hall, the seat of the Winlove family, is an imposing early Georgian mansion pleasantly situated on a plot of rising ground and standing in a park of some five hundred acres." The entry also lists some of the significant paintings found in the Hall, by Gainsborough, Reynolds, Cuyp, Ruysdael, Hobbema, and Teniers the Younger.

The very fact that Brandham Hall is in the county directory shows that it is a significant building occupied by powerful people. The list of paintings shows that those who have lived in the Hall over the years have been rich enough to collect art.

Old Leo remembers admiring the double staircase, which to him looked like a "tilted horseshoe" or a "magnet." But he is surprised that he doesn't have a good memory of the front façade of the grand building. He does remember that Brandham Hall is cavernous, with lots of confusing passageways.

The magnet symbol appears again, reinforcing the idea that this is a story about attraction. Leo doesn't really remember the front of the building because most of his time is spent inside it or exploring the surrounding estate. Arriving at the front is more associated with formality and adult socializing.

Young Leo and his friend Marcus share a room at the top of the Hall, with a single window set high in the wall from which they can only see the sky. Lots of guests come and go, with dinners of up to eighteen people. Old Leo remembers Mr. Maudsley and Mrs. Maudsley sitting at either end of the long dining table, the former taking up less space than was necessary for him, and the latter taking up more.

Leo and Marcus are removed from the adults because of their age. This will give them certain privileges (like being able to move about fairly undetected) but will have its downfalls too. The reader also learns here that Mrs. Maudsley is the Hall's matriarch, a stern woman who seeks to control what happens in her home.

Young Leo sometimes encounters Mr. Maudsley around the grounds, but only ever exchanges a few words with him. He is often asked if he is "enjoying himself," to which he replies "Yes, sir." He finds it difficult to think of Mr. Maudsley as the "master" of the house.

Mr. Maudsley is relatively similar to Leo's own father in that he is reserved and generally doesn't like to socialize much. This doesn't seem like behavior befitting the "master" of such a grand environment, and accordingly Mr. Maudsley does not serve as a male role model for Leo.

Old Leo cannot remember Mrs. Maudsley's face particularly well—but he sees her often in his dreams. In these, he sees her "with the look of a portrait by Ingres or Goya, a face with dark, lustrous eyes." In his dreams, Mrs. Maudsley is as "cordial" to Leo as she was at the start of his visit. He wonders if her spirit wants to "make it right" with him.

Here is further evidence that part of Leo still thinks in supernatural terms. This also shows that, despite his attempts to repress his memories, the psychological impact of what happened means they have haunted him his whole life. The idea that something needs to be "made right" indicates that part of Leo's objective in revisiting the summer of 1900 is reconciliation and closure.

At young Leo's first dinner at Brandham Hall, Mrs. Maudsley asks him if he is a magician. He says, "not really"—only at school. Leo makes a mental note to chastise Marcus for his breach of trust (children aren't meant to tell much to their parents) and wonders how adults occupy themselves.

It's against the school code to give away too much about others, but Marcus has broken that code here. Leo is self-consciously embarrassed to talk about magic with the refined upper-class adults of Brandham.

Leo meets Marcus's brother, Denys, whom he finds quite unremarkable. He is much more intrigued by Marcus' sister, Marian, who has "hair bright with sunshine." He thinks of her as his first real encounter with beauty.

Marian makes a big impression on Leo (while Marcus's brother doesn't). Hartley here sets up Marian as a force of light in Leo's world, but also as the sun that, in line with the prologue, he will fly too close to.

Old Leo finds an entry in the diary of something he had forgotten, which comes back with the "utmost vividness": "Wednesday 11th of July. Saw the Deadly Nightshade — Atropa Belladonna."

The deadly nightshade is a notoriously poisonous plant once used in witchcraft and for the poison tips of arrows. It's early appearance in the story sets up a feeling of foreboding and supernatural threat.

Young Leo finds the *Atropa belladonna* plant when he's wondering aimlessly around the estate grounds. He is especially attracted to the derelict outhouses, and it's in one of these that he finds the plant—which to him seems more like "a tree" as it's so tall. He knows that the nightshade is poisonous, but also finds it beautiful. He is afraid to go close to it and tiptoes away. But he resolves not to tell Mrs. Maudsley about the plant, fearing that she will order the gardeners to destroy it.

Leo explores the newfound sense of freedom that comes with staying on such a large estate. The fact that there are derelict buildings on the estate suggests that the Maudsleys are not completely on top of everything that is going on. Leo is afraid but also enchanted by the nightshade—he knows that he ought to tell Mrs. Maudsley about it, but his fascination with the supernatural prevents him from doing so.

CHAPTER 3

The weather starts to get hotter, and Leo and Marcus go to check the reading on a **thermometer** near a disused building in the grounds. Marcus shows Leo how the instrument works, but tells him not to touch it because Mr. Maudsley likes to do the readings. The reading is eighty-three degrees Fahrenheit. Leo notices that Marcus is wearing much lighter and cooler clothes than he is.

This shows the beginnings of Leo's interest in the temperature at Brandham Hall. Perhaps this curiosity is in part due to his illness the previous summer, which made him feverish. Now in good health, Leo can investigate what was previously ill-advised (being hot). The thermometer also suggests a rise in pressure and a potential climax, which is a fair description of the entire Brandham Hall story.

Old Leo can recall the details of his and Marcus's clothes because he is looking at a picture of the two of them together at the time. In the picture, Leo is wearing restrictive clothes, with everything pulled up high and tight; he has on a "Norfolk jacket." Old Leo looks at his young face and detects self-consciousness and "the strain of adaptability."

Old Leo can see the self-consciousness on his younger self's face. Brandham Hall is Leo's first trip away without a parent and he is becoming aware of his presence in the world—and concerned about what people think of him. The "Norfolk jacket" is ironic: though Brandham Hall is in Norfolk, the jacket is not suited to the hot weather.

Young Leo is not too bothered by the hot weather, though is conscious he doesn't have any cool clothes. He prepares a spell to lower temperature, but it doesn't work. The next day the thermometer has climbed to eighty-five. Leo wonders if he should wear his school cricket clothes because they are cooler than anything else he has. Marcus admonishes him for the thought, saying only "cads" would wear school clothes in the holidays. He also criticizes Leo for not leaving his dirty clothes on the floor in their bedroom: "You must leave them lying wherever they happen to fall—the servants will pick them up."

After the successes of his spells at school, here is the first one that doesn't work. Leo isn't too concerned, as he doesn't care that much about the heat, but it's an early sign that he might not have the power that he believes. Leo starts to worry about his lack of cool clothes, and Marcus's teasing makes Leo even more self-conscious about his appearance (and lack of knowledge when it comes to clothes). Marcus's ridiculous suggestion that Leo mustn't pick his own clothes up demonstrates the class dynamic of Brandham Hall—the Maudsleys are used to having things done for them.

Later at tea-time, someone asks Leo if he isn't hot in his clothes. Leo mops his face with a handkerchief and says that he isn't, and that he and Marcus have been running. Leo feels embarrassed at the attention to his appearance, and people asking him whether he is hot or would like to take his jacket off becomes a running joke at Brandham Hall. That night Leo tries another spell to cool the weather down.

Leo's self-consciousness intensifies, increasing the psychological pressure on him as he now attempts to lie about why he is hot. Leo once again tries to affect the world through his supernatural abilities, showing that in private, his faith in them lingers.

The next day, the temperature has indeed dropped slightly. By that tea-time, though, it has gotten hot again, and Leo is teased further about his flustered appearance. He is also teased for wearing a Norfolk jacket, which seems doubly unfair to him considering that Brandham Hall is, after all, in Norfolk. He feels "utterly out of place" among the rich, and socially inferior. He tells the group that he might look hot, but underneath is "a chilly mortal," which the others find hilarious.

Leo learns that there are numerous social rules, codes, and in-jokes that he is not yet aware of. After all, shouldn't a Norfolk jacket be worn in Norfolk? He starts to sense his own class position and feels embarrassed by it. He looks on the Brandham Hall inhabitants as socially superior. This creates the sense that he is an outsider, which will prove vital to his role as the go-between.

Mrs. Maudsley asks if Leo has forgotten his summer clothes. Not willing to admit he doesn't really have any, he says that his mother must have accidentally left them out of his trunk. Mrs. Maudsley suggests he write to his mother and get her to send some clothes, but Marian interjects that that would take too long. She asks if she can take Leo to the nearby city of Norwich and get him a new outfit. Leo says that he hasn't got any money, but Marian tells him "that doesn't matter," as the Maudsleys do.

This is Marian's first real interaction with Leo, and on the surface of it seems to be a charitable and sympathetic gesture. Mrs. Maudsley's reluctance to accept Marian's suggestion implies that she doubts its sincerity and is suspicious of an ulterior motive.

Marian suggests that the new clothes can be a birthday present for Leo, whose birthday happens to be on the twenty-seventh of that month. Leo tells Marian he was born under **the sign of Leo**, and that his name is actually Lionel. She jokingly suggests that she could buy him a "mane … or a lion-skin?" Trying to be part of the joke, he argues that those "might be rather hot." Marian says they will go to Norwich tomorrow.

This is a kind of calibration of the novel's zodiac—Leo is being ironically positioned as the lion. But the suggestion that Marian could buy the essential physical traits of a lion implies that Leo actually lacks the lion-like qualities of bravery and physical dominance. Really, she's having a joke about how young and boyish he is.

Mrs. Maudsley asks whether Marian would rather wait till Monday, when Lord Trimingham will have arrived, so they can all go to Norwich together. Mr. Maudsley and Denys did not realize Hugh (Lord Trimingham) was coming, thinking that he would be at the horse races. Leo doesn't know who Hugh is, but he doesn't want him to come—he'd rather be alone with Marian. Marian says Norwich would be boring to Hugh anyway, and that it's important that Leo gets new clothes as soon as possible. Mrs. Maudsley reluctantly agrees to the trip.

Leo dimly senses Trimingham to be some kind of love interest of Marian's—a rival for her attentions. She sneakily tries to make reasons for Trimingham not to come to Norwich with them, sidestepping Mrs. Maudsley's reluctance. Evidently, Trimingham's imminent arrival is important news for the Maudsley household.

Marian goes to Leo and Marcus's room to look through Leo's clothes. She admires how well mended they are (by Leo's mother) and asks whether Leo's summer clothes are "a myth": "you didn't really have them?" Leo doesn't mind admitting to Marian that she's right, "delighting in the shared secret."

This is the beginning of Marian and Leo's secretive communication. The thought of having a private world with Marian is exciting to Leo, and makes him willing to do things to make her happy. At this point, he genuinely believes that she is just a caring young woman looking out for him.

CHAPTER 4

Marian takes Leo to Norwich to buy clothes, and he sees the experience as a "turning-point" that changes everything. Before the trip, he hadn't really thought much about his appearance, and it is a somewhat disturbing revelation to him that he is "bound up" with how he looks. Marian chooses the clothes, judging what suits Leo and what doesn't.

Marian is Leo's ticket to social acceptance—she has the taste and refined aesthetic sense to make him look good, which he has just realized is going to be important. That Leo feels this trip is a turning point shows that he at a very delicate in his adolescence, highly impressionable, and looking for allies.

Leo and Marian have lunch at a hotel, which is a new extravagance for Leo. One they're finished and with the shopping done, Marian asks Leo to go and spend some time looking around the cathedral, as she has some other business to attend to. Leo greatly enjoys the cathedral; Marian's attention to him has put him in an ecstatic mood.

The Norwich trip is almost like a date, except Leo is too young to really think of Marian romantically (and obviously her true affections are elsewhere). The cathedral lends an epic quality to Leo's feelings, intensifying them. This is all so new to him that he is in a state of rapture, spellbound by the new sights and Marian's attentions. Marian is deliberately vague about the "business" she has.

Not long after, Leo meets Marian by the statue of Sir Thomas Browne, someone he's not heard of before. He gets there early and sees Marian on the other side of the street. She seems to be saying good bye to someone, before then walking back to the coach and taking Leo home.

Leo catches a brief glimpse of Marian's real motive for being in Norwich—the man—but he's too wrapped up in his good feelings and sensory overload to pay it any mind.

Leo considers the trip to Norwich his "spiritual transformation." At mealtime back at Brandham Hall, everyone greets his new appearance with "cries of acclaim." He is made to stand on a chair and spin round so that everyone can get a good look at his new outfit. The guests remark on the **green** color of his clothes and, when one likens him to Robin Hood, he is "delighted" to think of himself as that character and Marian as Maid Marian, Robin Hood's love interest.

Suddenly Leo feels like he is at the center of the universe. His spinning is suggestive of planets, contributing to his zodiacal way of seeing the world. Leo loves the attention and the feeling of fitting in, and likes thinking of himself as Robin Hood because it suggests a mythic heroism and importance (not to mention Marian as his maid). It doesn't cross his mind that green can also mean unripe or unready, demonstrating his youthful naiveté.

One of the guests asks Leo if he feels different now he has new clothes. He replies, "'I feel quite another person!" Mrs. Maudsley asks him to come closer so she can admire the outfit, which she likes very much. She then asks Marian whether she saw anyone in Norwich; Marian says no, and gets Leo to confirm that they were busy shopping the entire time.

Leo is shedding his old identity and gaining a new one—or at least that's what he thinks is happening. Mrs. Maudsley's questioning shows that she remains suspicious of Marian's motives for going to Norwich, and Leo's covering up for Marian shows that he is becoming bound to her and has a willingness to protect her, even if it means lying.

Now with clothes better suited to the weather, Leo enjoys the heat, which he feels gives everything the "sense of suspended movement." He wants the heat to "somehow be cumulative," to get "hotter and hotter" so he can find its "heart."

Leo's new identity isn't afraid of the heat (like last summer). In fact, the heat is now a sensual fascination for him, and he wants to test its limits. There are definite sexual undertones here too.

Leo's clothes feel good to wear. He feels that their thinness represents his first "steps towards" his "corporeal union with the summer." He imagines discarding them one by one, until eventually he'll be released "into nakedness." He's not too sure about sex, but he knows he has "yearnings for nudist fulfillment," for there to be nothing between "me and nature." At the same time, he doesn't think of these feelings as being really "capable of realization."

Leo yearns to turn from boy to man, but he's getting ahead of himself. His sudden interest in nudity represents his dimly felt sexual awakening—his desires are growing but he's not really sure about what they are. This increases the appeal of the adults—they have some kind of secret knowledge that he doesn't.

Leo feels very grateful for the purchases made on his behalf and can't believe he is the recipient of the Maudsleys' "godlike" expenditure. He sees the inhabitants of Brandham Hall, especially Marian, as "resplendent beings," and "citizens of the world who made the world their playground." He finds them easily equal and comparable to the "august and legendary figures of the Zodiac."

Leo's zodiacal perspective is crystallizing as he gets to know the people at Brandham. Towering above him both physically and in terms of their perceived wisdom, they are becoming the gravitational forces in his world—and the bodies to which he is most attracted.

On Saturday the 14th, a group from Brandham Hall decides to go swimming. Leo wants to try out his bathing-suit, but he doesn't know how to swim. Marian says she'll teach him, but Mrs. Maudsley won't allow that. Leo's mother has told her that he is prone to catching a cold, and accordingly Mrs. Maudsley insists Leo gets written permission from his mother before he does any swimming.

This scene is a reminder that Leo is still an innocent young boy. Not only can he not swim, but he's not allowed to even try yet on orders of his mother. She sees him as fragile and vulnerable, which is not an unreasonable point of view.

Leo and Marcus go along with the swimmers, taking their bathing suits even though neither of them can swim. Leo is disappointed by how much their suits are going to cover up their bodies. Even though Leo knows he isn't going to swim, the fearful idea of it still gives him "a tingling on my skin and a faint loosening of my bowels."

Leo wants to be part of the group even if he isn't allowed to swim. In fact, it's the nudity—the mystery of other bodies—that seems more interesting to him than actually swimming. It's worth remembering that swimming with the opposite sex was a considerably more risqué thing to do in 1900 than it is now, or even in old Leo's 1950s.

The party of six, including Leo, Marcus, Marian and Denys, walk down some tree-lined paths towards the water. Marcus tells Leo that Trimingham will be arriving that evening and warns of his "dreadfully ugly" face, which sustained wounds during the Boer War. He then says that Mrs. Maudsley wants Marian to marry Trimingham, making Leo feel jealous and that he already dislikes the man. He doesn't understand why she'd want to marry someone "horribly ugly" who is "not even a Mr."

Leo is intimidated by Trimingham before he's even met him—Marcus' warnings about Trimingham's face make him seem a threat (not to mention that he is returning from fighting in the war). This is also where the reader first learns that the Maudsleys intend for Marian to marry Trimingham. Leo's comment about Trimingham not being a "Mr." shows that he is not yet fully aware of who Trimingham actually is—the ninth Viscount and the landlord of the entire estate.

The group goes over marshy terrain and water creeps over Leo's shoes. He notices a structure of "bars and spars and uprights, like a gallows," which he finds intimidating. Suddenly they spot the head and shoulders of a man among the rushes. The man walks up to the structure and dives into the water below. Ted's "manly" physicality is also hinted at in his actions here, while his work on near this structure resembling a gallows hints at his fate.

The structure is faintly suggestive of gallows, implying a quiet threat of death in the background. The manner of Ted's appearance is important to the story—he is mysterious from the beginning.

The grown-ups are shocked to see another man—seemingly a trespasser—swimming on their lands. Denys suggests that he order the man away. The girls of the group go off to change. As the others near the man, Denys realizes that it's Ted Burgess, the tenant of one the nearby farms on the estate. Denys seems relieved not to have to make a scene and admires Ted's swimming ability ("for a farmer").

This shows both the entitlement of Denys and the willingness of Ted to break rules. He isn't really supposed to swim there, but does so because he feels no one will find out. That said, Denys can't help but admire Ted's swimming, though must add the caveat that it's only good "for a farmer." Class divisions run deep.

After Ted emerges from a dive into the water, Denys shakes his hand. Ted apologetically says he didn't know anyone was going to be there, and that he needed to cool down after getting **hot** from farm work. Denys tells him not to hurry and that Trimingham will arrive that evening.

Ted shows deference to Denys, but avoids being told off for swimming. This also ties Ted together with the idea of being hot, which Leo is now interested in and carries a definite suggestion of sex.

The other men in the group go off to change, and Marcus and Leo withdraw to the rushes to put on their bathing suits. Leo feels that being able to see others and not be seen is "tinglingly secret." Marcus tells him there is no point in Leo putting on his bathing suit if he's not going to swim at all.

There is a point for Leo putting his bathing suit on, despite what Marcus says. In fact, there are two: to be closer to a state of nudity, and to fit in with the group. Even if he isn't going to swim, Leo has already learned that appearances are important. There is also a note of voyeurism here, as Leo gets excited by the idea of watching others and being unseen himself.

Everyone emerges by the water in bathing suits, and Leo is disappointed by the way these suits seem to cover up even more of their bodies than their evening wear. Leo watches the others swim. He also observes Ted getting out of the water, "his muscles bunched." Leo retreats "almost in fear before that powerful body," which speaks to him of "something I did not know."

Leo was expecting a more intimate view of people's bodies—but bathing costumes in those days were very chaste. The one body he does catch a glimpse of is Ted's. Ted's physical prowess makes a strong impression on Leo, and he subconsciously associates it with sex. Ted is in good shape because he works the land, and this strongly links him to the idea of physicality. His attractive masculinity intimidates and intoxicates Leo in equal measure.

Leo watches Ted get dressed, in awe of his bodily maturity and "those limbs which have passed beyond the need of gym and playing field, and exist for their own strength and beauty." Throwing his clothes on with "furious energy," Ted walks off back toward the farm. Meanwhile, the girls in the water laugh at their attempts to keep their hair dry.

Everything Ted does demonstrates not just physical strength but also grace. He isn't simply a boorish male—he has tenderness too. Overall, Ted seems to know how to use his body and doesn't have an ounce of self-consciousness about it. This, of course, is the complete opposite of Leo.

Marian gets out of the water and comes up to Leo. Her hair is coiled up like the Virgin of the **Zodiac** in Leo's diary. She asks Leo whether "that man"—Ted—has gone. Leo asks if she knows Ted;, she says only that she may have met him and can't really remember.

Marian is clearly interested in Ted, but doesn't want to let on, and her answers are deliberately evasive. Leo's association of Marian with the Virgin sign grows stronger as she now resembles the picture on his diary.

The group gets changed, and Marian complains to Leo that her hair is so wet it's going to make her dress damp. He offers her his dry bathing-suit, which she gratefully pins round her neck. She asks Leo to spread her hair out over his bathing suit so it can dry quicker, which he considers "a labour of love … the first I had ever done." As the group walks back to the Hall, Leo feels a "tremendous sense of achievement."

Leo is enamored with Marian and wants to make her happy. Her attentions towards him give his life a new sense of purpose. The gift of his dry bathing suit is an act of chivalry rewarded with closer physical proximity.

CHAPTER 5

Breakfast at Brandham Hall is an orderly affair, announced by the ringing of a gong and beginning with prayers read by Mr. Maudsley. Marcus and Leo always attend breakfast, but Marian is frequently absent or arrives halfway through.

There is a rigid structure to proceedings in the upper classes, and a stiff morality suggested by the daily prayers. Even at this early stage, the reader can tell that Marian is rebellious—something else is calling her.

This particular Sunday morning, Marcus isn't feeling well and stays in bed. He asks Leo to give Trimingham his regards. Leo feels Trimingham to be a "weight" on his thoughts, and considers whether to cast a spell on him.

Leo continues to conceptualize his world in supernatural terms. He hasn't met Trimingham yet, but he seems like some kind of threat to Leo's position.

Trimingham sits next to Leo at breakfast. Leo can't help noticing the bad scarring on one side of his face—its damaged eye doesn't look able to close and is watering.

Trimingham's injury was sustained in the Boer War, a war fought in present-day South Africa between two sets of colonists: the British and a Dutch group called the Boer. The war was known for its brutality. Trimingham's damaged eye symbolizes his inability to see emotional truths like Marian and Ted can. Trimingham's injury also implies a certain amount of war heroism, typically idealized masculine traits. At the same time, the injury makes him notably unattractive.

Leo wonders why the Maudsleys are making such a fuss about Trimingham's arrival. To Leo, he seems to be of a social position "below that of a gentleman but above that of, well, such a person as Ted Burgess." Marian sits next to Trimingham, giving him her full attention.

Leo tries to figure out Trimingham's position in the social hierarchy. He doesn't seem especially refined, though he does appear to be above working class. Leo has yet to learn the importance of Trimingham to the Maudsleys.

After eating his porridge, Leo returns to his room. Marcus has the symptoms of measles and jokingly complains that if Leo gets it too they'll miss the cricket match and the ball. These are both annual occasions when the Brandham Hall inhabitants mix with the rest of the villagers, which, Marcus says, "helps to keep them quiet."

Marcus shows a class-based disdain for the villagers. As he's so young, it's safe to assume he's learnt it from the adults in his life. The working classes are seen as a nuisance that must be appeased—that's why the Hall organizes the cricket match and ball each year.

Leo retrieves his prayer book and heads to the front of the house, where some of the others are assembling to go to church. Mrs. Maudsley gives Leo some money so that he can make a donation to the church collection.

Christianity offers Leo an alternative worldview to his zodiac, but there's no evidence so far that it particularly interests him. But as it's Sunday and it's 1900 Britain, going to church is almost compulsory.

After waiting for Trimingham, the group starts walking to church. Leo walks with Marian, who asks him if he has any sisters. He reminds her that he already told her about his family when they went to Norwich.

Marian's forgetfulness shows that her mind wasn't entirely on Leo during their trip to Norwich—there was something else going on. Leo doesn't suspect Marian of being dishonest yet.

Leo notices Trimingham catching up with them and tells Marian. She responds disinterestedly. When Trimingham does catch up, to Leo's relief he carries on past them.

Marian no longer gives Trimingham her full attention like she did at breakfast—on the walk to church, she's not under the watchful eye of Mrs. Maudsley.

CHAPTER 6

Now in the church, Leo looks at the memorial stones embedded in the walls and notices that each one is dedicated to the different Viscount Triminghams through the years. He counts seven of them, but wonders why he can't see the fifth or the ninth Viscount.

The church environment allows Leo's mind to wander. The Viscounts are clearly important to the church and the wider community, but Leo doesn't yet conceive of them as real people.

Leo suddenly realizes that, as the eighth Viscount died in 1894, the ninth is probably still alive. For him, this brings the whole family "to life"—they no longer seem like "things to be learnt about and forgotten."

The idea that the ninth Viscount is still alive is enticing to Leo. He's never met anyone with such a high social standing (and title).

As sunlight fills the church, Leo thinks about the **Zodiac.** He then turns his thoughts to "being good," which his mother often tells him to be. He doesn't associate goodness with moral behavior but "abstraction"—"the perfection of the heavenly bodies."

Leo inherits a rigid moral perspective on the world from his mother, but is starting to outgrow that, and beginning to question just what being "good" actually means. The zodiac is more appealing than morality or religion to him.

The clergyman begins to talk about "miserable sinners." Leo makes a mental objection to this idea. Even his bullies at school weren't sinners, he thinks, but just following their nature. Leo doesn't see how the concept of sin can help anything. His spells would probably make him a sinner, he ponders.

Leo is starting to form an essentialist way of looking at the world: people and things just behave in the way that their nature makes them. This outlines the fundamental conflict of the novel: do the characters have control over what happens, or are they fated by their nature?

But "goodness" as an idea does attract Leo: "I saw it as something bright and positive and sustaining, like the sunshine, something to be adored, but from afar." He feels the Viscounts and, to a degree, the Maudsleys represent this goodness—"super-adults" who "are a race apart, not governed by the same laws of life as little boys."

Leo's idea of goodness is different from his mother's—his is more aesthetic and less moral. He's swept up in his new world because he's never encountered people like the Brandham Hall inhabitants. That's why they seem "super-human" and displace his old way of seeing the world.

The church service ends and Leo notices Trimingham receiving a lot of attention. On the walk home, Marian heads straight to the front of the group.

Trimingham is evidently of important social standing, though Leo stil doesn't know why.

Trimingham walks beside Leo and introduces himself. Leo calls him Mr. Trimingham, which Trimingham says is wrong—he tells Leo to call him Hugh. Leo asks him whether all men are misters, but Trimingham says that some people have titles like "Doctor or Professor."

Leo tries to figure out who Trimingham is, and why everyone is treating him with such respect. Trimingham is honorable towards Leo and does not look down on him, even though Leo doesn't realize who he is.

Leo realizes that Trimingham is the ninth Viscount. He asks if he should call him "my Lord," but Trimingham says there's no need. Leo is amazed at Trimingham's willingness to be on such familiar terms.

Leo has only just arrived in the world of the upper classes, so is surprised to be treated so equally by Trimingham. Leo is still learning the behaviors required of him by the class system.

Trimingham ask Leo if he is on good terms with Marian. Hearing that he is, he asks if Leo would take a message to her now: she has left her prayer book in church and Trimingham has picked it up.

Trimingham senses an opportunity to get closer to Marian through Leo. The errand he sends Leo on is fairly innocuous, but it sets up the dynamic of Leo doing favors for the adults.

Leo catches up with Marian and gives her the message. She thanks him and asks Leo to thank Trimingham for her. Trimingham seems a little disappointed at her response.

Trimingham was hoping for a more flirtatious response from Marian, or at least something slightly more affectionate. Marian maintains formality, though, suggesting she is not really interested in Trimingham romantically.

After lunch back at the Hall, Mrs. Maudsley informs Leo that he is to be moved to a new room due to Marcus's measles. Leo heads to his new room in which all his stuff is already waiting, and changes into his new outfit—"**Robin Hood in Lincoln green**"—and leaves the house with a "tingling sense of imminent adventure."

This is an important moment for Leo that confirms his newfound independence. His spirit of adventure makes him want to explore, but also makes him vulnerable to influence.

CHAPTER 7

Today's reading of the thermometer stands at eighty-four degrees. Leo feels it "could do better"; he's now "in love with the heat" and "I felt for it what the convert feels for his new religion." Leo feels, too, that the "climate of his emotions has undergone a change." He now feels that he belongs to "The **Zodiac**, not to Southdown School," which he credits to the company he is keeping. In order to fit in with this new "reality," he believes his "emotions and behavior … must illustrate this change."

Leo believes he is growing beyond the boy that he was at school, as he is now understanding the world according to his zodiac. The change in the weather reflects his change in character. Because he actively wants his identity to change, he also wants it grow hotter and hotter. The heat has a sensuous allure that fits in with his awakening perception of his own appearance and, more generally, human physicality.

Marcus isn't around, and neither are any of the adults ("the companions of the **Zodiac**"). Left to his own devices, Leo decides to take the path that heads towards the bathing-place. He arrives at the water-meadow where the previous swimming expedition had been. It now seems a lot drier than before, and there's nobody around. He takes another path through the rushes and finds himself in a cornfield. The swathes of corn have been recently reaped; those still lying on the ground look different to the ones near his home, confirming in him the "sense of being abroad."

Leo's new confidence makes him want to explore the estate. The corn on the ground indicates that Ted has recently worked the field, but there's also a certain violence to the beheaded stalks lying on the ground. There is a strong metaphorical connection between reaping and death, e.g. the grim reaper, subtly hinting that there may be a death to come. Leo's feeling of being abroad ties into the idea of him being a foreigner—an outsider exploring a new world.

Eventually finding Ted's farm, Leo sees a huge stack of straw with a ladder running up it. He half wants to climb it and slide down, because that's what schoolboys would do and he "could not help acting as if the eyes of the whole school were on" him.

Leo's developing self-awareness means he is divided in his desire to climb the straw stack. He's a young boy, so it sounds like a fun idea—but the new identity he is fashioning for himself, he feels, is more grown-up, and this isn't the kind of thing he associates grown-ups with.

Leo slides down the stack, feeling the "wild rush through the air, so near to flying." But on the way down his knee hits something hard: a chopping-block. The blood flows from the gash, and Leo is in considerable pain.

Leo likes the physical sensation of going down the stack, but is naïve to think there won't be any dangers. The early appearance of blood in the story again hints at impending tragedy.

Ted suddenly emerges from across the farmyard. He is furious at the sight of an intruder on his farm. Leo frantically tells Ted that they have met before, at the bathing-place. With that knowledge, Ted's attitude changes instantly from anger to respect: "Then you are from the hall?" he asks.

Ted's natural instinct is to protect his territory. However, he quickly changes his attitude when he realizes that Leo is technically a guest of his employers. Ted didn't notice Leo at the bathing-place, but Ted's physical appearance made sure that Leo saw him.

Ted tells Leo that he had better take care of his wound for him and helps Leo toward the farmhouse. Ted tells Leo that it was lucky his accident happened on Sunday, otherwise he wouldn't have been near enough to hear Leo's pained shout when he fell. Leo is upset to know that he shouted, but Ted compliments him, noting that "some lads would have cried."

Ted's tender instinct kicks in and he takes Leo in to look after him. He compliments Leo in order to make him feel better, and Leo likes the idea of being thought of as brave. This sets up the initial relationship between Ted and Leo as similar to a father and son.

Ted asks Leo not to mind if he spoke to him a "bit hasty." Leo thinks it seems "right, natural and proper" that Ted should change his tone when realizing that Leo is from the Hall. Entering the house, Ted excuses its plainness, saying he's too busy to make it anything fancy: "I'm not what you call a gentleman farmer, I'm a working one."

Ted is class-conscious too, apologizing to Leo for his actions. Leo's new identity is fundamentally dependent on being a guest at Brandham Hall, and accordingly he displays the influence of its class snobbery. Ted, too, implies that his type of farming—the working type—is the proper one.

Ted cleans up Leo's knee, telling him he's lucky the blood didn't go on his **nice green suit**. Leo is hugely relieved and tells Ted that Marian gave him the suit. Ted ties a handkerchief to Leo's knee and tells him he can keep it.

If the blood had gone on Leo's suit, this could have foretold a potential loss of innocence. As it is, Leo is glad that Marian will not be angry with him for spoiling the suit and will remain in her favor. But telling Ted that means that Ted is suddenly aware that Leo has access to Marian.

Feeling that he owes something to Ted for his assistance, Leo asks whether there is anything he can do for him. Leo expects him to say no, but Ted asks Leo whether he could take a message for him, and whether he could wait a minute or two. Leo says he doesn't need to leave for fifteen minutes or so to get back for tea.

Leo feels indebted to Ted, but is also intrigued by him. So far, Ted has taken good care of him. Ted realizes the opportunity for communication with Marian that Leo represents, and so begins Leo's role as their "go-between."

Ted takes Leo to see the horses, introducing each one to him. He stops to give Boxer, the grey horse, a kiss on the nose. The horse shows "its appreciation by dilating its nostrils and breathing hard through them." Leo asks the name of another horse, which Ted replies is "Wild Oats." They grin at one another because of the name, though Leo is not sure why it is amusing.

Ted has an instinctive relationship with nature that is sensitive and physical. The name "Wild Oats" is Hartley's nod to the phrase "to sow wild oats," which is an old euphemistic way of saying someone is sexually promiscuous. Of course, Leo doesn't know anything about that yet, but his self-conscious awareness of how he comes across makes him grin anyway.

Back in the house, Ted asks Leo how old he is. Leo informs Ted that his thirteenth birthday is at the end of the month. Ted wonders whether he can trust Leo, to which Leo insists that he can. He cites his school-report, which calls him a "trustworthy boy." Ted asks if Leo can keep a secret, which Leo thinks is a silly question, as secrecy is a big part of a schoolboy's life.

Ted is fully aware of the dangers of his and Marian's secret being discovered; that's why he quizzes Leo on his trustworthiness. Leo doesn't really expect to have to keep any dangerous secrets, which is why he naively presents his school life as evidence of his ability to keep quiet.

Ted asks Leo whether he is friendly with Marian, and if he is often alone with her. He then asks Leo whether he is ever close enough to Marian to give her something. As Leo says yes, Ted tells him to wait a moment while he writes a letter for Leo to give to Marian. Ted describes his relationship with Marian as "business."

Ted echoes Marian's code word for their affair: "business." They both think, correctly, that business is uninteresting to children and therefore a safe description. Even though he is vital to Ted and Marian, Leo is misled by both of them from their first meetings.

Ted writes the letter but tells Leo not to give it to Marian unless he is alone with her. Holding the letter like "a lion guarding something with its paw," he makes Leo once more promise he will guard it carefully. Leo says he will "defend it with my life."

Ted is genuinely leonine, unlike Leo who is only like a lion in name. By saying he'll defend the letter with this life, Leo places himself under increasing psychological pressure. As the reader knows from the prologue, Leo did, in a way, pay for the events of Brandham Hall with his life.

Leo realizes that it's time for him to return to the hall. He puts the letter in one of his pockets and Ted shakes his hand, calling him a "good boy." Leo asks if he can return to the farm to slide down the straw-stack again, and Ted says he will take special care of it for that purpose. Leo leaves the farm, waving to Ted as he goes.

Leo's first meeting with Ted ends on a high, with the promises of unlimited access to the straw stack. Ted both treats Leo like an adult by shaking his hand, and as a kid by calling him a "good boy." This is a fair reflection of Leo's state of mind, caught between boyhood and the adult world.

When Leo returns to Brandham Hall, he informs the others of his accident and of Ted's kindness in bandaging his knee. Mr. Maudsley remarks that he has heard that Ted is a "good-looking chap," and Trimingham states that he needs to have word with Ted. Marian sits "hawk-like," ignoring the discussion of Ted. Suddenly she gets up and tells Leo she will dress the knee for him.

Marian is careful not to show any clues that she is interested in Ted. Mr. Maudsley's remark is ironic, given that he can't possibly be aware of any attraction between Ted and his daughter.

The two of them go to the bathroom. As Marian washes his knee, she asks Leo whether the handkerchief on it is Ted's. Leo says yes, and offers to throw it on the rubbish-heap, but she insists on washing it out. Leo gives Marian the letter, which she quickly grabs out of his hand. She tells Leo not to talk to anyone about the letter, not even Marcus. If he were to, she says tearfully, it would "get us all into the most frightful trouble."

Marian ramps up the psychological pressure on Leo to keep the lovers' secret. The fact she keeps the bloodied handkerchief shows the strength of her feelings towards Ted. Once again, because of the reader's foreknowledge based on the prologue, the tension in the story isn't generated by whether or not there will be "frightful trouble"—but by when the trouble will come, what form it's going to take, and what its consequences will be.

CHAPTER 8

Old Leo recalls the change that came over Brandham Hall when Trimingham arrived. Before his arrival there was a more jovial, carefree atmosphere; afterwards everyone is more concerned with formalities and, feels Leo, more on edge about how they come across.

It's not just young Leo who is self-conscious, but the Maudsleys and their other guests too. Much depends on how things go with Trimingham—ultimately, the Maudsleys are beholden to him as their landlord. That's why Mrs. Maudsley hopes to marry off Marian to Trimingham: so that she can secure their status.

Back in the main narrative, a group from Brandham Hall goes for a picnic. Marian sits close to Trimingham, and Leo tries to get near them. Trimingham notices Leo and calls out to him, saying, "Hullo there's Mercury!" Marian asks why he calls Leo that, and Trimingham replies that it's because "he runs errands." Leo assumes that Trimingham is referring to the smallest of the planets and commenting on his own diminutive size. Trimingham replies: "You're quite right, but before that he was the messenger of the gods. He went to and fro between them."

Trimingham gives Leo his nickname, Mercury. Mercury was the messenger of the gods in Roman mythology, but also served as the guide of souls to the underworld. He is a bridge between worlds, just like Leo. This is music to Leo's ears, adding more detail to his personal zodiac. It's worth noting that Marian only sits with Trimingham on occasions when there's a big group present—when she's on display and has to be seen to like Trimingham. Marian already knows that Leo runs errands—he's brought her a letter from Ted—but she can't possibly mention this.

Leo is excited by this description of himself: "I pictured myself threading my way through **the zodiac**, calling on one star after another: a delicious waking dream." He then falls asleep. Waking up, he hears Marian and Mrs. Maudsley discussing him. Mrs. Maudsley says that Leo is like Marian's devoted "little lamb," and Marian calls him "a darling." Marian asks whether they should postpone the ball because of Marcus's illness, but Mrs. Maudsley says that would disappoint too many people.

Leo, daydreaming blissfully about his role amongst the planets, catches a glimpse of what Marian actually thinks of him. She sees him as more of a lamb than a lion; he is young, innocent, and devoted. Marian probably suspects that the ball will be the occasion when her engagement to Trimingham is to be announced, which explains why she's quite keen for it to be postponed.

As the group heads back to the Hall, Leo has a conversation with one of the coachmen. He enjoys the simple, factual exchange, comparing it to the "conversation of the gods" of Marian, Trimingham, and the others. He believes that, with "the gods," it is not always his place to understand: "that was in order … they were something in a foreign language — star-talk." He asks whether the coachman knows Ted Burgess. The coachman calls him "a bit of a lad," but Leo doesn't think Ted seems laddish at all.

Leo doesn't really know what the coachman means by calling Ted a lad. He thinks it means being boyish, but the coachman is actually hinting at Ted's attractiveness to women. Leo's conception of "star-talk" increases the idea that he sees himself as moving in a zodiacal universe that he doesn't entirely understand.

Arriving back at the Hall, Leo learns that there is a letter from his mother waiting for him. He takes it to the lavatory, preferring to read it in private, but for the first time is not "really interested" in "the small concerns of home." They seem distant to him. Leo feels he doesn't belong there anymore, but at Brandham Hall: "here I was a planet … and carried messages for the other planets."

Leo doesn't want his new world and identity to be interrupted by thoughts of home. Furthermore, his mother's way of seeing the world seems old-fashioned and embarrassing in comparison to his new environment. He is firmly settled into his role as the interplanetary go-between.

Leo writes a reply to his mother but feels he can only give a "feeble" account of his time so far. He mentions Trimingham calling him "Mercury," how nice Marian is to him, Marcus being unwell (but not specifically the measles), and the upcoming cricket match and ball.

Leo doesn't mention the measles because he knows it might mean getting ordered to go back home. He keeps his exchange functional, but this doesn't come easily to him as he's not used to deceiving his mother.

After writing the letter, Leo goes back to the outhouse with the **thermometer**. He is impressed that it now reads a "sensational" ninety-four degrees Fahrenheit. He longs for it to reach one hundred. He has a brief exchange with Mr. Maudsley, also looking at the temperature gauge, who asks if Leo is enjoying himself.

Leo keeps checking the temperature because he wants his experiences to grow in intensity—though he doesn't really know how that would manifest. This is one of his rare interactions with Mr. Maudsley, who generally keeps out of the way.

Leo wanders aimlessly near the lawn, trying to avoid being seen, but Trimingham notices him and calls out. He tells Leo that he and the others can't find Marian and asks Leo to find and inform her that they want to play croquet. He instructs Leo that he "must bring her in alive or dead."

Marian is avoiding spending time with Trimingham, and it's highly likely that she's currently with Ted. Trimingham's quip about bringing her in "alive or dead" subtly increases the idea that there is a life or death drama at play, but not yet fully revealed.

Leo takes the cinder track towards the outhouses, where he spots Marian. She asks him what he's doing there. He lets her know about the croquet match and she reluctantly agrees to go. The conversation turns to the plans for the next day: most of the adults will be out, and Marian wonders what Leo will get up to. He says he might go and slide down Ted's straw-stack.

There's no obvious reason for Marian to be coming back from the outhouses, unless she is doing something secretive. Marian sounds Leo out, investigating whether she can use him to get a message to Ted.

Marian asks Leo if he will take a letter to Ted for her, which he's delighted to do. She asks him whether he likes Ted, to which he replies that he does, but likes Trimingham better because where Ted is only a farmer, the latter is a Viscount. Marian tells Leo that the letter is only a "business matter."

Leo is totally besotted by Marian and at this stage will do anything to help her. Leo's comparison of Ted to Trimingham is based on his new awareness of social hierarchy; as Marian is of the upper class, he feels he'd better say he likes Trimingham best. Marian continues with the "business" euphemism to describe her relationship with Ted.

Leo tells Marian that part of the reason he is willing to take the letter is because he likes her. She thinks that is "very sweet." The two then head towards the croquet lawn, but Marian suddenly decides she has a headache and doesn't want to play. Leo tells her Trimingham will be disappointed. Marian changes her mind and says that she will go. As she walks off, Leo asks her to tell the group that he sent her.

Marian really doesn't want to spend time with Trimingham and starts to pretend to be ill—but then she remembers the importance of her duty and changes her mind. Leo is proud of having found Marian and wants Trimingham to know of his success.

CHAPTER 9

Over the next few days, Leo continues carrying messages between Marian and Ted: "three notes from her, one note and two verbal messages from him." Ted's verbal messages were "tell her it's alright" the first time, and "tell her it's no go" the second. It's easy for Leo to find Ted: he's usually working on the harvest fields.

Leo remains oblivious to the nature of Marian and Ted's communications. The pattern of behavior starts to become normalized, and Leo is now instrumental in the organization of the lovers' meetings.

On one of the message deliveries, Leo sees Ted aiming his gun to kill any rabbits that come out of the rushes as they're cut. When Leo gives him the envelope, Ted's bloody hands smear the letter as he reads it. He's too engrossed in the letter to notice he's making it bloodied. Each time Leo visits Ted, he enjoys sliding down the straw-stack.

This is another hint that there may be violence to come. Ted is too excited by Marian's letter to keep decorum and clean off the blood before reading it. Leo enjoys going to Ted's because it gives him a break from his new identity in which he can briefly enjoy behaving like a boy again.

Leo takes his duties as Mercury—the go-between—"very seriously." Marian always seems to be more urgent with the letters than when dealing with anyone else. Leo feels that "to be of service to her was infinitely sweet to me, nor did I look beyond it."

Leo's commitment to taking the messages means he is a highly effective go-between. At this moment, it's still based on his devotion to Marian.

Leo wonders what the meaning of Ted and Marian's secret communication might be. He has a few theories, none of which completely satisfy him. Perhaps, he reasons, the envelopes contain money gifted from Marian to Ted to help him with his "business." Maybe they're comparing notes about the "temperature," he wonders. Leo's favorite theory—the most "sensational"—is that Ted is in trouble with the police and Marian is trying to help him, but even that theory doesn't quite ring true.

Leo suspects that "business" might be code for something else. But living in his pre-sexual (and strictly hierarchical) world, he doesn't yet suspect there might anything romantic between Marian and Ted. He naively thinks they might be communicating about temperature—though it's true that their relationship is becoming more heated. Leo also wonders if Ted might be a dangerous man, but this doesn't sit right with Ted's treatment of him so far.

Leo is "half ashamed" of his urge to know the nature of Ted and Marian's relationship, but is committed to his "privilege in being associated with the movement of the heavenly bodies."

Leo is torn between his growing desire to know what's going on and his duty as "Mercury." The idea of shame suggests an impending loss of innocence.

On Friday, Marcus comes downstairs for the first time since his sickness. It appears he will be well enough for the cricket match. Leo is glad his friend is starting to feel better, but realizes that if Marcus is around it will be impossible for Leo to take any secret messages between Ted and Marian. Leo feels he could tell his friend "many things but not my fantasy of myself as Robin Hood and his sister as Maid Marian."

This puts Leo in a double-bind; he knows Marcus is too savvy to be deceived about Leo's constant trips between Ted and Marian. This distances Leo from Marcus, increasing the psychological pressure on Leo to maintain secrecy.

Leo doesn't like the idea of lying to Marcus about the letters, feeling it goes against the schoolboys' "no-sneaking tradition". Besides, even if he lied, Marcus's shrewdness would quickly discover the truth. On the other hand, Leo is "still in love with the adventure" of taking the letters and fears that without his role as messenger he will have to reckon with an "emotional impoverishment."

Leo is starting to feel the psychological strain: he's both constrained by a code of secrecy and a code against lying. He can't stick to them both, and fears what will happen to his new identity if he can no longer be "messenger of the gods."

After breakfast, Leo starts to head off with Marcus, both hopeful and fearful that Marian will not stop him to give him a letter. But she calls out for him, and Leo tells Marcus to wait for him while he goes off with Marian for a moment.

Marian clearly expects Leo to keep the secret from Marcus as well. Her desire for Ted increases the risks she is willing to take. Leo, still not aware of the affair, remains obedient.

Leo is about to tell Marian about the newfound difficulty he foresees in taking the letters when Trimingham appears in the room. "Like lightning" Marian thrusts the letter in Leo's pocket before Trimingham can see.

It's not certain whether Trimingham is suspicious here or if it's just coincidence, but it certainly demonstrates the increasing dangers involved in the secret communication. The lightning metaphor suggests that what's contained in the letter is going to have a big impact.

Leo goes back to Marcus and tells him he wants to go and slide on the straw-stack. Marcus is bored by this idea and declines to go with Leo. Instead, he says, he will kill time by sitting at "yonder window and watch [the adults] spooning." They both laugh at the thought of spooning, before Leo says seriously that he's sure Marian doesn't spoon: "she's got too much sense." Marcus is unconvinced, and says that rumor has it that she even spoons with Leo—at this, the two boys wrestle before Marcus cries, "Pax!"

Spooning is a euphemism for sex, but neither Marcus nor Leo really knows what it is. Marcus obviously doesn't mean he's going to watch the adults having sex, but likewise Leo's vague sense of the word "spooning" as sexual activity means he doesn't like the idea of Marian—the Virgin of his Zodiac—engaging in it. "Pax" is the Latin word for peace.

Leo heads towards the farm. Fingering the envelope in his pocket, he realizes that it is unsealed. At Leo's school, the rules (between schoolboys) about reading other people's letters are that it's okay to do so if they've been left lying about. Often notes get passed around at school, and Leo frequently reads the ones that aren't sealed.

Leo tries to reconcile his desire to know about the letters with his various moral codes. He's trying to make it ethically okay for him to look at the letter as, unlike the previous letters, this one is unsealed.

Leo thinks it's fair that he can read Marian's letter, but he hesitates. He knows she probably meant to seal it, but the fact is that she hadn't. "If Marian had made a slip, well, then, she must pay for it," he thinks to himself. "That was only logical." Leo, though, is very divided about whether to read the letter.

Leo weighs what he thinks Marian wants with the school code that reading something unsealed is perfectly reasonable. Out of loyalty to her—and perhaps fear of the contents—he's psychologically divided over what to do.

Leo decides that, as this might be the last letter he can take because of Marcus's return, it's okay for him to read it. Furthermore, if the letter reveals a matter of "life and death," he resolves that he will find a way to continue taking their letters. He doesn't take the letter out of the envelope but reads the words that he can see by looking inside it. They read "Darling, Darling, darling, same place, same time, this evening. But take care not to—." The rest of the message is hidden by the envelope.

Leo justifies reading the letter on two grounds: one, that it's probably the last and so not too big a deal; two, that if the matter truly is "life and death," it's his duty as the go-between to find a way to keep the communication channels open. He only reads a part of the letter, but those few words show the intensity and urgency of Marian and Ted's relationship.

CHAPTER 10

Leo is bitterly disappointed at the message he's read. It had never crossed his mind that Marian and Ted were in love. He would never have expected "Marian **the Virgin of the Zodiac**" to "sink so low" as to be "soft" and "soppy." Leo thrusts the letter deep into the envelope and seals it, "to cover [Marian's] shame." With the above in mind, he resolves that it is still his duty to deliver the letter.

Suddenly Leo's zodiac scheme is disrupted—Marian is not the virginal figure that she seemed. Hartley definitely implies a biblical "fall" from grace, hence Leo's desire to cover Marian's shame by putting the letter in his pocket. Yet Leo still feels duty bound as the go-between to deliver the letter.

As Leo heads towards the farm, he notices how the sun has dried out the land and made the water shallower. The strength of the sun softens his attitude towards Marian. "Spooning" no longer seems the "most damaging activity that a human being could engage in" and he realizes it must have something to do with "the helplessness of Nature."

Leo tries to fit his new knowledge of Marian's "shameful" activity into his worldview, piecing it together with his earlier thoughts about the essentialist nature of life. Marian can't help spooning—it's just her acting in her nature. That's only a mild consolation to Leo, though.

Leo arrives at the farm, where Ted greets him with a "half mocking, half playful" salute. Leo hands Ted the letter before informing him that he will no longer be able to bring letters because of Marcus's recovery. Leo hasn't told Marian yet, and Ted says, "she won't know what to do, you see, no more shall I." Leo asks what they did before they had him to take the letters; Ted laughs and just says, "it wasn't so easy then."

Ted is confronted with the possibility of having his easy access to Marian taken away. The reader learns that their relationship is not new and predates Leo's arrival at Brandham Hall. Leo, still loyal to Marian, is under psychological pressure not to upset her—his new place in the world depends on her approval.

Ted asks Leo whether he would want Marian to stop liking him (Leo). When Leo says no, Ted asks him where Leo would "feel it" if she did. Leo, "half hypnotized," puts his hand on his heart, to which Ted responds, "So you have a heart." He warns Leo that Marian won't be the same if Leo doesn't take the letters. Ted says she'll cry; it's not that hard to make her cry, and that she had cried previously when she couldn't see him. "Do you want her to cry?" asks Ted. He thinks Leo considers him just a "rough chap."

Ted guilt trips Leo about Marian, casting a kind of spell over him. The hand on heart gesture shows that not only is the relationship a "matter of the heart," but also an issue of life and death. Leo, still loyal to Marian, won't want to be the cause of her sadness. Ted's claim to be a rough chap is in part an attempt to excuse his behavior, but is also a quiet threat of masculine power.

The thought of Marian crying brings tears to Leo's eyes and he is trembling, troubled by Ted's "vehemence." Ted invites him into the house out of the sun. Leo tries to change the subject, telling Ted that he had expected to find him in the field earlier. Ted informs Leo that he came back to look after Smiler the horse, who is going to have a foal.

Ted tries to soften Leo by inviting him in; he's aware that Leo's loyalties are delicately poised. The foal returns the conversation to nature. The name "Smiler" chimes ironically with the fact that Leo is crying.

Leo asks why Smiler is having a foal, and Ted says, "it's Nature." He tells Leo "between you and me … she did a bit of spooning." The word strikes Leo "like a blow." Leo didn't realize animals could "spoon"—he didn't think they were "silly" enough for that. Ted tells him that he won't think spooning is so "silly" when he's older.

This is further evidence that Leo is truly confused about what spooning is. Ted acts as a role model for Leo, dispensing cryptic wisdom about what Leo will think when he's older. This antagonizes Leo's feeling of having a new identity, though.

Leo asks Ted questions about marriage and "spooning." If you spoon someone, he asks, does that generally mean you will get married? "Generally," replies Ted. "Could you spoon with someone without marrying them?" asks Leo. "Yes, I suppose so," says Ted. Leo asks about marriage coming before "spooning," which Ted thinks wouldn't be "a very lover-like thing to do."

Ted's answers to Leo's questioning show an attitude towards sex and marriage quite radical for the time—that it is okay, preferable even, for sex to come before marriage. It's advice that directly contradicts the logic of Marian's arrangement to marry Trimingham, which is obviously not based on physical attraction.

Ted tells Leo it wouldn't be "natural" to "spoon" someone without loving them. Thinking of Smiler and her foal to come, Leo asks if "spooning" between people means they will have a baby. Ted says it isn't the same for people and for horses: "Nature doesn't use 'em as she does us."

Leo clearly wants to know about the mysteries of spooning and is trying to apply logical rigor to Ted's answers. The question about pregnancy suggests another danger of Marian and Ted's affair—that it might result in a "bastard" child.

Ted suggests that that is enough questions for one day. He doesn't want to "go putting ideas" into Leo's head. Leo says he's ready to know more—he's nearly thirteen. Ted agrees to tell Leo "all about spooning" but only if Leo will continue to deliver the letters. Leo has started to realize the force of attraction between Ted and Marian, comparing it to that of a **magnet**, but he finds it mystifying.

Ted strikes a deal with Leo—information about spooning in exchange for Leo's services as go-between. Ted plays on Leo's desire for knowledge to his and Marian's advantage. Again, the magnet comparison implies that attraction is an irresistible force, fated to pull objects—or people—together.

Ted reminds Leo that he has forgotten to slide down the straw-stack. He tells Leo to go and do so while he writes a letter for Marian.

Ted tries to calm Leo's mind by appealing to his boyish sensibilities. It also buys him time to write the letter, and returns Ted and Leo's relationship to its previous mode.

CHAPTER 11

It's now Saturday, the first cloudy day of Leo's time at Brandham Hall and a "disappointing" seventy-eight degrees Fahrenheit. At breakfast, Denys and Trimingham discuss how best to get Ted out during the upcoming cricket match. Mrs. Maudsley makes the point that Ted was got out for a "duck" last year.

The disappointing weather mirrors Leo's disappointment at discovering Marian and Ted's relationship. Ted's physical prowess makes him a threat in the upcoming cricket match. A "duck" in cricket means a score of zero.

Denys reminds Trimingham that they are short by one man of having the full eleven required for their cricket team. Trimingham believes there are two candidates to be the eleventh player, and asks Mr. Maudsley what he thinks. Mr. Maudsley suggests the men go and discuss it in the smoking room.

The Brandham Hall team is captained by Trimingham, reflecting his social status. Clearly the match is important to him and the Maudsleys—they can't be seen to lose to the "inferior" villagers.

Leo lingers by the door of the smoking room, and Trimingham calls out to him after the mens' deliberation: "Mercury!" He informs Leo that they have picked Jim the pantry boy to be the eleventh man in the team, but that they want Leo to be twelfth (the substitute). Leo is very pleased, as he hadn't thought he'd be involved in the match. Trimingham asks Leo to find Marian and ask her if she's going to sing "Home, Sweet Home" at the post-match concert.

Leo is very happy to be on the Hall team, even if he isn't going to play. His selection makes him feel that he is one of them. Leo continues in his role as Mercury, once more summoned to try and find Marian for Trimingham. Trimingham's choice of song for Marian is ironic, given that she is secretly rebelling against her home, Brandham Hall, by being with Ted.

Leo finds Marian, and excitedly tells her his role in the team. He asks Marian if she would like to hear the message from Trimingham; she answers, "not specially," surprising Leo. Marian is looking at roses in a bowl, lamenting the poor condition of the flowers at the end of July. Leo points out that it is the twenty-first of the month, so not quite the end.

Marian's lamentations about the flowers reflect that she is secretly worried about the death of her affair with Ted. She once again demonstrates that she isn't interested in Trimingham.

Marian asks Leo when he is meant to go home. She wants him to stay longer and says she will arrange it with Mrs. Maudsley. Leo says that his own mother would miss him, but that he'll write home and ask. Leo then tells Marian Trimingham's message; she says she will sing the requested song if Trimingham will sing "She Wore a Wreath of Roses."

Leo doesn't realize that the reason Marian wants him to stay longer is so that he can keep helping her and Ted. Marian's response to Trimingham's song request is deliberately mischievous: it's a song about a broken-hearted widow.

Leo returns to Trimingham and delivers Marian's reply. He seems hurt by the answer, telling Leo, "I don't sing." Sensing Trimingham's disappointment, Leo tells him that Marian's proposed deal must simply have been a joke, which brightens Trimingham's mood. Later that morning, Leo tells Marian that Trimingham's response to her message had been to laugh and think it "a very good joke." Leo is beginning to think of himself "as an editor as well as a messenger."

Leo wants to please all of the adults in his world; not only is he taking messages, he's actively aiding in their interpretation. Leo likes Trimingham and doesn't like the thought of him being upset. As he gets drawn deeper and deeper into the tangle of love interests, he mistakenly thinks he has a found a way to have greater agency over what happens.

As the day goes on, Leo notices the men at the Hall preparing for the cricket match, "as if a battle were in prospect." Leo, now dressed in his cricket whites, heads to the cricket ground with his teammates. He has the conviction that "nothing in the world mattered except that we would win." He notices the way the team is comprised of men of different status—the leading men of the Hall and their servants.

Leo senses the importance of the cricket match. Even though it's just a game, it's also a proxy battle about class, even if the class lines are not completely neat by virtue of the working servants of the Hall joining the team. That said, they're only following orders by being on the team, so the class dynamic is maintained. Naturally, the cricket match is only played by men—just as is usually the case in war.

The village team awaits the Hall's team at the pitch. The villagers don't have the proper white flannel cricket outfits, and consists mostly of men dressed in their working clothes. Looking at them, Leo doesn't think "they have any chance" against the Hall team: "It was like trained soldiers fighting natives." Mrs. Maudsley and the other women from the Hall arrive to watch the match.

Leo, organizing what he sees based on his newfound attention to appearances, thinks that the village team can't possibly win if they can't even wear the right clothes. He's inherited some of the Hall's prejudice towards the village, likening them to "natives."

The members of the two teams shake hands with each other, with Trimingham making the introductions. He introduces Leo to Ted (who is on the other team), but Ted tells Trimingham that they have already met, as Leo frequently visits his straw-stack. Trimingham had heard about that, and apologizes for the error. He tells Ted that he should make Leo "run errands" for him, because he's a "nailer" at that." Ted says that he's sure Leo is a "useful young gentleman."

This brings Leo, Trimingham, and Ted in dangerous proximity to the secret. Ted has to pretend that it's new information that Leo is a good errand boy, and Leo has to keep quiet about the errands he's already been doing. Ted is keen to present his relationship with Leo as entirely innocent—Leo's just a boy who likes sliding down his straw-stack. The cricket match also creates a space for Trimingham and Ted to be in direct competition with one another.

The cricket match gets under way, with the Hall team first to bat. Leo feels that "the honour of the Hall" is at stake. He senses that most of the spectators, being members of the village, will be supporting the village team. He wants Trimingham especially to do well in the match, "partly because I liked him … and partly because the glory of Brandham Hall—its highest potentialities for a rhapsody of greatness—centered in him."

Leo's loyalties initially lie with Trimingham; Leo feels that Trimingham represents the Hall and, accordingly, Leo's beloved new world. This direct competition between the village and the Hall—between Ted and Trimingham—heightens the novel's sense of drama and increases the feeling that everything will have to come to a head one way or another.

Trimingham hits a couple of good shots, but only manages to score eleven runs before he is out. The rest of the team doesn't fare much better, and the Hall team finds themselves five wickets down for fifty-six runs. Mr. Maudsley comes on to bat and, though he plays with "no style," scores well. The Hall team ends their innings on a respectable one hundred and forty-two runs.

Trimingham proves ineffective at cricket, but Mr. Maudsley saves his blushes. The score they reach looks likely to bring them victory and ensure that they don't suffer the embarrassment of defeat at the hands of the villagers.

CHAPTER 12

The village team comes out to bat, but their first five batsmen are all out for single figure scores. Leo loses concentration on the match and daydreams about a cloud in the sky. But a "rattle and clatter" draws his attention back to the match—the villagers are making excited noises as Ted is coming to bat.

The match isn't really dramatic enough for Leo—it doesn't have the Olympian epic quality that he desires. But the appearance of Ted, who is clearly popular with the villagers, gets his attention. The village team is doing badly, but clearly a lot is expected of Ted's batting.

Ted proves very good at batting, and quickly racks up over fifty runs. Leo confusedly wants him to do well, while still wanting his own team to win. Ted's way of playing is more exciting, and Leo contrasts it with Mr. Maudsley's more staid and sensible style. Leo feels they represent a conflict between different attitudes to life: order and lawlessness, tradition and rebellion, stability and revolution.

Leo feels his loyalties torn. His closeness to Ted makes him want Ted to succeed, but he also wants his own team to win so that they will be happy (and so that class hierarchies are maintained). He clearly sees two opposites at play, representing all kinds of division in society and human nature more generally. This reflects Leo's dual identities—he's a boy, but he also wants to live in the grown-up world as their precious messenger. Ted represents a wilder way of life than Brandham Hall, which Leo is undeniably attracted to (as, of course, is Marian).

Leo sits beside Marian, who appears to be very emotional, with trembling lips and flushed cheeks. Leo feels conflicted about the growing feeling in him that he wants the village team to win. They now need just twenty-one runs to surpass the Hall team's total. Ted hits a long ball that deflects off a fielder's hand and then nearly hits Mrs. Maudsley in the stand; it scares her but then she laughs about it.

Clearly Marian is conflicted too—not because she can't decide who she wants to win, but because she can't let on that she wants Ted to do well and secure victory for the village. She is isolated by her secret. The ball that almost hits and scares Mrs. Maudsley once again suggests the physical threat of Ted—or more accurately, it suggests that he is seen *as a physical threat, as a "wild" man of the working classes.*

The Hall team's fielder whose hand was struck by the ball is now injured. He is unable to continue. Trimingham calls up their twelfth-man to come on as a replacement: Leo. As Leo walks onto the field, Trimingham insists to him that they need to get Ted out. Trimingham places Leo far outfield. Ted continues to score, bringing his team within ten runs of the Hall's score. Leo senses that the drama of the match is not just "tenant and landlord, commoner and peer, village and Hall," but also "something to do with Marian."

Leo perceives the cricket match as a proxy battle for many issues, but especially now the rivalry between Ted and Trimingham for Marian's affections. Placing Leo so far outfield suggests that he isn't really expected to do much. Leo is now playing for a team he's not sure he actually wants to win. Psychologically he is divided between the refined world of the Hall and the wilder nature of Ted; in this way he has something fundamental in common with Marian.

Trimingham bowls a ball at Ted, who strikes a "glorious drive." Leo now feels strongly that he wants Ted's team to win. The next ball hit from Ted heads straight towards Leo "on a rising straight line like a cable stretched between us." Ted stares at Leo with "wonder in his eyes and a wild disbelief."

Leo feels that the trajectory of the ball between him and Ted is like a thread that ties their fates together. In a small way, it represents a victory for Leo over Ted—but the conflict is far from over.

Leo catches the ball, the impact knocking him over. The spectators applaud him, and Trimingham comes over to congratulate Leo on catching Ted out and winning the match for the Hall. The team heads back to the pavilion, with Leo feeling "it was as a man, and not by any means the least of men, that I joined the group who were making their way back."

This one-in-a-million catch from Leo feels like it was fated, written in the stars. Leo instantly wins the respect of everyone at the Hall and, because he's just a boy, the villagers too. His success gives him a real sense of belonging and, importantly, of becoming a man. Being a man, he feels, has everything to do with how other men perceive you.

Leo is elated, but also feels a "pang of regret" at making the catch. He wonders how Ted will react to Leo catching him out. He goes up to Ted and apologizes, but Ted tells him how impressed he was by the catch: "I never thought I'd be caught out by our postman." As they walk back to the pavilion, the villagers rapturously clap Ted for his heroic efforts. Leo notices that Marian doesn't look up as they pass.

Leo is worried that he's upset Ted, but Ted isn't really bothered about the cricket match. In fact, he's proud of Leo for his incredible catch. Leo has started to observe Marian's behavior more closely, and it's clear she is doing everything she can to avoid any suspicion.

CHAPTER 13

The post-match supper takes place in the village hall, which is opulently decorated with Union Jacks and paper streamers. Leo feels intoxicated by the occasion, especially given his success in the cricket match. He feels like a "companion of the stars", but equally that he rightfully belongs where he is. The seating arrangement mixes up the groups, alternating between members of the Brandham Hall party and villagers.

The decorations in the village hall are clearly designed to create a sense of common identity between the villagers and those from the Hall. Leo feels he is in the ascendancy now, not just a go-between for the stars, but temporarily one of them.

Mr. Maudsley gives a speech, praising players from both teams. He makes special mention of Leo: "last, but not least, except in stature, our young David, Leo Colston, who slew the Goliath of Black Farm if I may so describe him, not with a sling, with a catch." At this, Ted gives Leo a wink.

Ted clearly shows pride in Leo's achievements, making it more difficult for Leo to ally with the Hall. Though Mr. Maudsley isn't being serious in his David and Goliath comparison, it adds to the sense that the drama has biblical proportions—and Goliath dies in that story.

After the speeches, it's time for songs. However, the accompanist who was due to play the piano for the singers has not arrived. Trimingham asks for a volunteer accompanist. Nobody seems willing, but eventually Marian gets up and walks over to the piano.

The accompanist's absence means that Marian will be in close proximity to whoever comes up to sing: there is an intimacy between accompanist and singer. Trimingham, as the landlord of the estate, dictates proceedings.

Marian proves to be a "skilled accompanist." The first singers are taken from the cricket teams, and soon Ted is called upon to sing. He is reluctant to go up, but the villagers heckle him relentlessly. Trimingham adds his voice to theirs, saying, "Now don't disappoint us, Ted."

The villagers love Ted and want to hear him sing. Ted is reluctant to get so agonizingly close to Marian, but has to give in to the peer pressure. He, too, has a social standing to live up to.

Ted gets up to sing, and nervously hands his sheet music over to Marian. After a shaky start, Ted gives a "creditable performance" of "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes." The audience insists on an encore. After putting his head close to Marian to confer on what to play, Ted sings a "sentimental" song that features the lyrics, "When other lips and other hearts their tales of love shall tell, in language whose excess imparts the power they feel so well."

Ted's nerves might be because he is afraid of singing, but it's more likely that it's being so close to Marian without being able to touch her that upsets him. This mirrors their relationship more generally: they live near to each other but aren't allowed to interact out in the open. The songs he chooses allow him to sing about his love for Marian in full view of Trimingham and Mrs. Maudsley, without them realizing the sincerity of his performance.

Leo is entranced by the meaning of these songs, sensing them to be about the grown-up world. And he's intoxicated by the sound of the words. But he doesn't see how they have anything to do with "spooning." Leo sits in ecstasy as he listens to the rest of the song, "the music of the spheres."

Leo still hasn't made the connection between romantic love and sex, but its language is appealing to him. He's happy to be in the world of romance without understanding it fully, sensing its grandeur and drama.

With the song finished, Marian and Ted bow to the audience. Ted's movements are awkward and jerky, leading Trimingham to say to the person next to him, "not very gallant, is he?" Another guest says they'd make a "handsome pair," if it wasn't for "the difference."

The guest's comment is highly ironic, given that Marian and Ted already do make a "handsome pair"—just in secret. Trimingham mistakenly puts Ted's awkwardness down to his lack of refinement, when in fact Ted is overwhelmed by his proximity to Marian in full view of the crowd.

After other guests sing their songs, Trimingham asks Leo to perform. He apprehensively climbs the stage, feeling his "mouth going dry." Marian asks Leo what songs he knows. They decide to play "The Minstrel Boy," which Marian knows well.

Leo is self-conscious about having to perform. The Minstrel Boy is a song about a young boy going off to war with tragic consequences, reminding the reader about old Leo's feeling that Brandham Hall cost him his life.

Leo's song goes down extremely well with the audience. While singing it, he half daydreams about Marian and the sacrifices he would make for her. At the end of the song, there is "a storm of clapping."

Leo is almost living in a dream. Everyone's attentions are on him and he's close to his "sun," Marian. He feels once again that he would do anything for her.

The crowd wants an encore from Leo. He suggests Handel's "Angels ever bright and fair," which Marian doesn't know. However, someone in the audience has the sheet music. They begin the song, Leo singing the lines: "Oh worse than death, indeed! Lead me, ye guards, lead me on to the rack, or to the flames; I'll thank your gracious mercy." Leo likes to sing this song, not just because he can match its technical difficulty, but because he senses in it "the idea of something worse than death." The crowd adores Leo's moving rendition.

The song choice here reflects Leo's belief in the supernatural world. In it, angels take care of the living, comforting them as they pass into the afterlife. This prompts Leo's ever-increasing fascination with things he doesn't understand—he wonders what could be worse than death. Perhaps the answer is a kind of living death, a life not lived to its fullest—like old Leo's.

Later on, Marian sings the song Lord Trimingham requested. It sings of "the joys of home"—the peace of a "thatched cottage"—which Leo thinks contrasts strangely with her aristocratic home environment. She sings it "with so much feeling." Marian refuses to give an encore, which only makes Leo adore her more: "she was not of our clay, she was a goddess, and we must not think that by worshipping her we could lower her to our level."

The song Trimingham has requested unwittingly reflects Marian's true desires to be free from the aristocratic restrictions of Brandham Hall and to live a more humble life with Ted. Her exquisite performance serves to make her seem even more god-like in Leo's eyes—an attitude that can only end in disappointment.

After the party, Leo walks home with Marcus. Marcus teases Leo, but says "you didn't do so badly after all." Marcus then talks about Mrs. Maudsley's difficulty mixing with the villagers, saying she feels like he does about "the plebs" (including the "brute" Ted Burgess) and asking Leo if he noticed "the stink in the hall." Leo says that he didn't, but Marcus says he nearly had to vomit three times.

Marcus displays extreme prejudice towards the villagers and has none of the conflicting loyalties that Leo does. Marcus is being dramatic, of course, but his insults demonstrate that he and Leo are growing apart. He knows nothing of the new world that Leo has come to inhabit.

Marcus continues to tease Leo, saying he was too busy to notice the stink because he was singing his songs and being so pious. He adds that, during Leo's song about angels, the people in the hall looked "as if they were thinking about their dear dead ones" and Ted "looked as if he might be going to blub." Marcus tells Leo a secret: Marian is engaged to marry Trimingham. He asks Leo if he is glad, to which Leo replies, "Yes, I am. I'm sure I am."

What Marcus is saying shows how good Leo's performance was, but to Marcus that's a cause for embarrassment rather than pride. Leo is engulfed in the world of emotions, even if he doesn't fully understand it; Marcus is just a typical schoolboy. Ted's tearful face is more likely to do with Marian than any dead relative. Leo is taken back by the confirmation that Marian is to marry Trimingham; he needs to figure out how that fact fits in with her relationship with Ted.

CHAPTER 14

The following Sunday morning is utterly blissful for Leo. His triumphant role in both the cricket match and the singing afterwards make him feel that belongs to the celestial world, at one with his "dream life." Furthermore, he is happy that Marian will marry Trimingham, whom he considers "his idol."

This is Leo's happiest moment in the book, basking in the glories of his catch and his singing. Further, he assumes that because Marian is now engaged, the affair will stop, and he won't be tangled in the situation any longer.

Leo assumes that he will no longer be required to take messages between Marian and Ted, due to her engagement to Trimingham. Although he likes Ted in a "half-admiring, half-hating way," the "spell" of Ted's physical presence intimidates him. Leo admires Ted's manliness but feels he has defeated Ted twice (through the cricket match and the singing). Because he overshadowed Ted, he no longer finds him a "discordant" thought that he has to resolve.

Leo naively believes that everything has been brought to its logical conclusion. Weighing up Trimingham and Ted, Leo prefers Trimingham, as he represents a world he feels he has come to understand: the upper class. Ted is still mysterious, and his ability to cast a physical "spell" is a rival to Leo's supernatural powers.

Leo writes a letter to his mother, outlining his current happiness and asking to stay at Brandham Hall for longer. Leo remembers that Ted had said he would tell Leo about "spooning", and Leo thinks that out of politeness he will visit Ted at some point in the next couple of weeks. Leo notices that, though it's cloudy, the **temperature** is continuing to rise.

Leo wants to remain in paradise for as long as possible. The threat from Ted seems nullified, and the issue of "spooning" no longer as pressing. That's because Marian's engagement to Trimingham makes her virginal again—not necessarily in terms of sex, but because she is following the proper code of conduct of the upper class by marrying someone as prestigious as Trimingham.

Later in the day, Leo attends church again. He is glad that the service doesn't last too long, as he feels "impatient with Christianity" and that there isn't a "flaw in the universe." He notices that the Viscount memorials on the wall include their wives too, and imagines Marian's name up there.

Leo's zodiacal idea of the universe is made complete now that he feels he has made sense of romance and marriage. He likes the grandiosity of the names on the wall, and is happy that Marian will occupy such an important place in the world.

After the service, Leo walks home with Trimingham. They talk about how well Marian plays the piano, and Leo asks Trimingham why there is no fifth Viscount on the wall. Trimingham tells him that the fifth Viscount died in a duel over his wife. Evidently, she had been "too friendly with another man"; after challenging this other man, the fifth Viscount was killed in the ensuing duel and buried in France. Leo asks whether the fifth Viscount would have minded so much if he had and his wife had not been married, to which Trimingham says he assumes so. Leo momentarily considers that there is a parallel between the fifth Viscount's situation and Trimingham's.

This is confusing to Leo, as he thought marriage came with a guarantee that two people will remain together. There are obvious parallels between the fifth Viscount's situation and the current Lord Trimingham, planting a seed of worry in Leo's psyche that a similar tragedy could take place. The story shows Leo that marriage is not a perfect, final act between two people, and that life can have more in store for them.

Leo asks Trimingham whether the untimely death of the fifth Viscount was his wife's fault. Trimingham insists "nothing is ever a lady's fault." Leo asks if men still shoot each other over ladies, to which Trimingham replies "sometimes." They discuss the Boer war, which is where Trimingham sustained his facial injury. He says the Boers aren't innately bad, and it's a shame that so many of them had to be shot.

Trimingham's advice to Leo makes it difficult for Leo to blame Marian hereon in for anything that goes wrong. Trimingham's talk about the war conceives of the matter in a similarly essentialist way to Leo's earlier thoughts—the Boers aren't necessarily bad, it's just in their nature to want to fight.

CHAPTER 15

Later at lunch, Leo keeps thinking about two fragments of his conversation with Trimingham: that nothing is a lady's fault and that it might be necessary to kill someone even if "you didn't really dislike them."

These statements are on Leo's mind because they have worrying implications for Ted and Trimingham. If Trimingham finds out about the affair, thinks Leo, he might have to kill Ted even if he doesn't want to.

Marcus tells Leo that he can't hang around with him that afternoon as he has to visit his grandmother with Marian. He reminds Leo that Marian and Trimingham's engagement is a secret. Marcus asks if Leo will spend his afternoon sliding down the straw-stack. Leo says he's done with all that and might visit the rubbish heap instead.

Leo feels that he is now too mature to go sliding on the straw-stack. Marcus's request to keep the engagement secret means Leo is privy to even more hidden information, putting him in a dangerous situation with potentially grave consequences.

Leo visits the **thermometer** in the game-larder. The temperature is hotter than yesterday, but he thinks it can still do better. Marian suddenly appears, and to Leo's surprise asks him to take a letter to the farm.

Marian has clearly sought Leo out, deliberately avoiding detection. Leo is genuinely shocked that there's another letter, showing that he hasn't figured everything out in the way he thought.

Leo is "dumbfounded," as "the scaffolding of [his] life seemed to collapse." Leo thinks it's wrong that if she is engaged to Trimingham she should be "friendly" with another man, and that it might lead to murder.

Leo can't see any resolution other than tragedy, given the story he's heard about the fifth Viscount. Marian's willingness to continue the communication has made Leo's way of seeing the world uncertain.

Leo tells Marian he can't take her letter because Trimingham might be upset. She reacts angrily, insisting that the letters are only "a business matter." She lambasts Leo for being ungrateful and uncooperative, and assumes that Leo wants money. Leo, distraught at Marian's anger, snatches the letter from her and runs as fast he can.

Marian, of course, doesn't know that Leo knows about the affair. He's never seen her angry before, and so her reaction causes him great psychological distress—she is in the process of losing her virginal innocence in his mind, again threatening Leo's entire perspective.

Leo is gravely hurt by Marian's outburst. He credits her as being the "fairy princess" who has turned him from "an ugly duckling into a swan." He feels that his successes of the recent days are due to her "spell," but that now she has taken it all away. He now suspects that everything that she has done for him was with an "ulterior motive." At this realization he begins to cry, but holds onto Trimingham's advice that "nothing is ever a lady's fault."

This shows just how fragile Leo's happiness has been, and how contingent it was on Marian's affectionate treatment of him. To him, she possesses a supernatural ability to make or break him. Losing faith in her means losing faith in his entire cosmology. To combat this, he tries to make sense of what's happening using Trimingham's key piece of advice as his guide.

After some debate with himself as to whether he should deliver the letter, Leo heads to the farm and finds Ted inside the kitchen. Ted is bare-chested, peering into the muzzle of his gun.

The image of Ted with his gun builds the sense of a growing threat coming to the surface in the novel. His semi-nakedness emphasizes his physicality.

Ted notices that Leo has been crying and asks him why. He puts forward ways to cheer Leo up, suggesting that they take the gun outside and let it off.

Ted offers Leo a new experience, again positioning himself as a kind of role model.

In the stackyard, Ted fires the gun at a rook, frightening Leo. Leo asks Ted if he ever misses, to which Ted replies that he's a "pretty good shot." They take the gun back inside so that Ted can show Leo how to clean it. Leo admires the muscles in Ted's arms as he cleans the gun.

Leo is fascinated by Ted's physical appearance, partially from attraction and partially from jealousy—neither of which he understands much. The presence of the gun reaffirms the possibility of a duel to come.

With the gun now clean, Ted gets Leo to hold it, which Leo finds to be a "strange thrill." Leo points it at things in the room, and then at Ted. Ted tells him that he should never do that, even if it isn't loaded.

Leo feels empowered by the gun. Even though he doesn't mean to shoot Ted, the fact he points the unloaded gun shows that on a subconscious level Leo is tempted to annihilate Ted. The gun is also a phallic symbol, momentarily giving Leo the kind of masculine prowess that Ted displays throughout the book.

Leo's mood improves, and he offers to oil Ted's cricket bat. As he does so, Ted asks if Leo has a letter for him. Leo suddenly feels that it is time for him to leave, and asks if Ted has a message for Marian.

Leo's sympathies for Ted kick in because he admires him. He wants to please Ted—just as he does Marian and Trimingham—so he offers to deliver another message.

Ted asks whether Leo actually wants to take a message, and Leo says that if he doesn't then Marian will be angry. Ted realizes that Marian is the cause of Leo's upset. Ted asks if there's a favor he can do for Leo in exchange for the delivery of his message.

This is typical of Ted and Leo's relationship: give and take. It also shows how quickly Leo's feelings can be affected by the presence of the people he is with—he's an impressionable boy, despite his "new identity." Deep down, Leo doesn't want to give up his status as messenger for the gods.

Leo reminds Ted that he had promised to tell him about "spooning." Ted's not sure if he should, saying that it's a job for Leo's dad (not realizing he is dead). Ted tells Leo that it means "putting your arm around a girl and kissing her." Leo thinks it's something more—that it makes you "*feel*."

Leo only thinks about "spooning" when he is with Ted. This is partly because of Ted's impressive form, but also because Leo intuits that Ted "spoons" with Marian. Ted emphasizes the link between sex and emotions.

Ted asks Leo what he likes doing best. Leo can't think of much, but suggests dreams about flying, or "waking up and knowing that somebody you dreamed had died was really alive." Ted says to think of that, and then "add some," and that is what "spooning" is like. Leo implores Ted to tell him more, and says he won't take any messages for Ted if not. Ted stands up, "armoured by his nakedness," and tells Leo to get out of there quick—"or you'll be sorry."

Leo has no real comparison to make with sex as it's so unfamiliar to him, but he really wants to know more. Ted is uncomfortable with going into any more detail, but Leo feels like Ted is his only real opportunity to get some answers. Leo tries to blackmail Ted—but Ted's sudden change of mood scares him. Ted's nakedness is both a source of fascination and intimidation.

CHAPTER 16

Leo writes his mother another letter, asking to come back home early. He tells her that his reasons for wanting to return involve the messages, but he doesn't give her much detail of the situation, just saying that what he is being made to do is "Rather Wrong and perhaps Very Wrong." He also tells her of the hot weather—he knows she is often concerned about Leo overheating. Privately, Leo fears that Ted will shoot Trimingham because of Marian.

Leo reverts to being more like a young boy, calling on his mother to rescue him. But he's also bound by his vow of secrecy, and afraid of what will happen if he tells her too much of the truth. He tries to use the heat, which until now has intoxicated him, as a means of escape.

Leo fears that Marian will have told everyone at Brandham that he is a "swollen-headed brat" and a "stupid little boy," but when he gets back to the Hall everyone is very receptive to his arrival. Marian is pouring out tea for the guests, playing the role of animated host. Mrs. Maudsley, for once, hasn't joined for tea. Marian pours tea for Leo, and quietly tells him to wait behind for her afterwards. Instead, Leo locks himself away in his room.

Marian won't have told anyone about her fallout with Leo because that would arouse suspicion. Leo naively thinks that if he can avoid being in her presence he can avoid getting further involved. As Mrs. Maudsley is away, Marian is quite happy to perform the role of host, free from her mother's watchful eye.

Later on, Trimingham stops Leo in the hallway. Leo thinks that if he returns home, Ted and Marian's relationship will cease. Trimingham asks Leo to find Marian for him. He tells Leo that Marian is going to London tomorrow, and that he needs to speak with her before she goes. Leo remembers that Marian said she was going to her grandmother's, meaning Leo will be unable to find her. Trimingham lets slip that Mrs. Maudsley is not well.

Leo's belief that his departure from the Hall will put a stop to the relationship is naïve and misguided. This also represents the first misstep in the generally guarded behavior of Trimingham. Preoccupied with thoughts about Marian's whereabouts, he accidentally lets slip that Mrs. Maudsley is unwell.

CHAPTER 17

Leo spends time with Marcus, who speaks to Leo in affected French. This annoys Leo, because Marcus's language skills are superior. Leo suspects Marcus of trying to show off because he is jealous of Leo's cricket match and singing successes. Leo suggests they visit the outhouses and look at the deadly nightshade.

Marcus doesn't like Leo's newfound status and tries to belittle him by speaking in French. Leo wants to take him to the deadly nightshade because he hopes it will serve as a reminder to Marcus of Leo's supposed supernatural powers.

On their way, the boys spot a footprint in the path. Marcus tells Leo ironically that he will tell Mrs. Maudsley that they have discovered the footprint of Man Friday (from the book *Robinson Crusoe*). Marcus tells Leo, still in French, that is mother is a very nervous character, even a little bit hysterical. He informs Leo that she is worried that Marian will not stick to her engagement to Trimingham.

Here the reader learns that Mrs. Maudsley's suspicions of Marian are causing her considerable mental strain. She wants Marian to follow the plan and marry the man she's supposed to, but she knows Marian has other ideas. This would be potentially catastrophic, as Trimingham has power over the whole estate.

Leo asks why Marian has to go to London. Marcus tells him that she needs to buy new clothes for the ball, and then lets Leo in on a secret: Marian is going to buy Leo a special present for his birthday. After some horsing around, Marcus tells him that the present is a bicycle. To Leo, a bicycle is the thing he wants "most in the world," which will open "the gates of heaven."

Learning of the gift to come, Leo slips back into his favored way of seeing the world—as a kind of sublime heaven. Leo is a very sensitive figure, but a bicycle is the kind of gift that his mother couldn't afford. That's why it excites him so much.

Marcus tells Leo that the bicycle is a Humber—a much sought-after brand. He also says that the bike is bright **green**. Marcus asks Leo if he knows why the bike is going to be green. Marcus says, "you are green yourself … It is your true colour, Marian said so." He dances around Leo, chanting "green, green, green."

It dawns on Leo that green doesn't necessarily symbolize the heroic Robin Hood—it can also imply youthful naiveté and lack of experience. Marcus scents the weakness in Leo and teases him relentlessly, happy to bring him down to earth.

Leo is suddenly mortified to be thought of as "**green**"—he sees it as "a subtle insult, meant to make me look a fool." He feels taken advantage of and seeks some kind of revenge. He asks Marcus if he knows where Marian is at that moment (she is supposed to be at her grandmother's). He doesn't, but Leo says he does (in fact he isn't sure, but guesses that she is with Ted).

Leo's embarrassment is intensified by his high degree of self-awareness. This is the first time that he acts spitefully, using his knowledge of Marian's deceit to demonstrate his superiority over Marcus.

Leo takes Marcus to the outhouse with the nightshade. The bush has grown so much that it now reaches beyond the confines of the building. They hear the sound of voices, one of which Leo silently acknowledges to be Ted's. The voice has "an hypnotic quality" that, to Leo, seems to both want something and have the assurance that it will get it.

Leo and Marcus have stumbled on one of Marian and Ted's meetings. The voice they hear is the sound of intimacy, likely to be Ted's as he seduces Marian. It is a voyeuristic moment in which Marcus and Leo are privy to something truly private—but Marcus, of course, doesn't know (or really care) what.

Marcus thinks the voice is that of "a loony talking to himself." Then they hear a second voice and suspect that inside the outhouse there is a couple "spooning." Marcus wants to go and see, but Leo is terrified at being discovered, and cleverly tells Marcus, in French, that it would be too boring. He heads back on the path, and Marcus follows.

Marcus is slightly interested in discovering who the voices belong to, but Leo is suddenly remorseful and scared of the consequences. His claim that he's bored is clever, because it plays on Marcus' boyish sensibilities.

On the way home, Leo asks Marcus how long engagements go on, and whether they ever break off. Marcus says they do sometimes, and that that is what's worrying Mrs. Maudsley—but Marian would never be "so folle" (foolish) to leave Trimingham.

Leo is subtly trying to figure out what course events will take. Though he admits that engagements do break off, Marcus is convinced that the risk of losing social status will prevent Marian from not marrying Trimingham.

The boys return to the house. Leo notices that his letter asking to be sent home has not yet been taken for the post. He debates with himself whether to remove the letter—that way he would still get the bicycle. He decides to leave it for the post and returns to his room upstairs.

The bicycle acts a temptation to Leo, putting him in two minds as to whether to leave or not. On balance, he still thinks it's best if he leaves and that the affair comes to an end.

CHAPTER 18

Leo goes down to breakfast the next morning and notices his letter has now gone. Neither Mrs. Maudsley nor Marian is there. During the morning prayer, Leo considers how he feels about Marian but can't "answer it." He feels that her vision of him as "**the Green Huntsman**" has been "intoxicating" and "like a rebirth."

Because his letter is gone, Leo can now assume that he'll be leaving Brandham Hall before too long. With Marian away, he has a bit of space to try and figure out how he feels. He still wants to maintain his new identity, though exactly what that means is becoming unclear.

Leo now resents Marian thinking of him as **green**, and he can't bear to look at his green suit. He is relieved that she's not there that morning, leaving him free from the threat of "emotional show-down."

Leo flip-flops between different opinions of Marian, showing that his psyche is truly torn.

Leo feels that the next two days are two of the best at Brandham Hall, as he recovers from the events with Ted and Marian. Leo fondly imagines the bicycle, and thinks that, if he hadn't learnt of the reason for its **green** color, he would have loved to receive it.

Leo enjoys these two days because he is liberated from his role as go-between. Returning to his child-like state, Leo spends more time daydreaming about the bicycle.

On Tuesday, Leo receives a letter. He doesn't recognize the handwriting—it's from Ted. In the letter, Ted apologizes for treating Leo so harshly at their last meeting, especially given that he had just learned that Leo's father was dead. He invites Leo to come the following Sunday so that Ted can tell him what he failed to before.

Ted clearly feels guilty about his harsh treatment of Leo, but it's hard to tell how sincere he is being. His mention of Leo's dad subtly hints at Ted's position as a role model for Leo. The promise of more information about "spooning" is of course meant to entice Leo into returning to the farm.

Leo is partially charmed by the letter, but still suspects it is a "ruse" to make him take more messages. Leo thinks it doesn't matter much either way, as soon he will be returning home. It doesn't occur to Leo that he ought to reply to the letter.

Leo is so sure that he is going to be returning home soon that he is quite carefree about Ted's letter. He feels like the drama is over and that it's only a matter of time before the whole Brandham Hall experience is just a memory.

Later on, Leo seeks out Trimingham and finds him in the smoking room. He asks Trimingham if he knows anything about Ted Burgess. Trimingham says he is "quite a decent fellow," but a bit "wild." He calls Ted a "lady-killer," which Leo doesn't really understand.

Leo doesn't understand when adults use understatements or euphemisms. He doesn't know why anyone could so casually be described as a killer of ladies, because he isn't aware that this means sexually promiscuous.

Mr. Maudsley enters the room and tells Trimingham that he should show Leo the pictures on the wall. The pictures, by the painter Teniers, are bawdy and lusty, which make Leo feel uncomfortable. Mr. Maudsley says that Leo doesn't like the pictures.

Though interested in "spooning," Leo can't stomach the visually suggestive images on display. His curiosity about sex is just that—curiosity—rather than a clear awakening of sexual desire.

Trimingham tells Mr. Maudsley that he and Leo had just been talking about Ted. Trimingham says he has been talking to Ted about the latter joining the army to go and fight in the Boer War. Trimingham thinks he would make a good soldier, as he's single and a good shot. According to Trimingham, Ted was quite tempted.

Earlier in the novel, Trimingham had said that he needed to talk to Ted about something. Now the reader knows that it was about Ted joining the army. It's not clear whether this is Trimingham's attempt to remove the sexual threat of Ted, or if it's a genuinely patriotic attempt to help his country.

Mr. Maudsley says that Ted wouldn't "be altogether a loss to the district" because of his womanizing. Leo leaves the room; as he does so, he hears Mr. Maudsley say to Trimingham that he has heard that Ted has "a woman up this way."

Mr. Maudsley wouldn't mind if Ted gets sent to war. It's a tense moment when he says that he's heard Ted has a woman up this way—Leo is (presumably) the only one in the room who knows that it's Marian.

CHAPTER 19

Leo awaits a telegram from his mother to summon him home, but it doesn't arrive. He spends the day playing with Marcus, who tells him about the extravagant ball that will happen soon. Marcus again teases Leo for being **green**. Marcus tells Leo that the Hall is making preparations for Leo's birthday as part of the ball.

Marcus knows now that being "green" is Leo's weakness, so he won't stop mentioning it. With regards to the ball, Marcus doesn't know about Leo's plan to escape Brandham Hall early. If Leo gets summoned home as he wishes, he'll miss the ball and any birthday preparations for Leo will be in vain.

Marcus tells Leo that the highlight of the ball is to be Marian's arrival on his **green** bike. If Mrs. Maudsley will let her, Marian will make a grand entrance wearing tights.

It's as if the universe is planning a cruel cosmic joke on Leo: Marian, the object of his affections and sorrows, is going to create this enticing scene in which the main visual element—apart from her tights—will starkly remind him that he is thought of as naïve, young, and inexperienced.

Marcus and Leo see the boy who delivers telegraphs to the Hall cycling up towards them. They stop the boy excitedly, but the telegram is not for Leo; it's from Marian to Mr. Maudsley, and says she'll be arriving later than planned tomorrow. Leo realizes that a telegram is too expensive for his mother and that most likely a letter will arrive from her very soon.

Leo is sure that there is going to be a telegram for him, and doesn't consider whether his mother might opt not to summon him back. His current psychological stability is based on his certainty that soon enough he will be home.

Wednesday morning comes, and there is still no letter from Leo's mother. Leo thinks it's probably a record-breaking high temperature, but resists going to the **thermometer** "and nibbling at the unripe fruit of knowledge." Leo thinks about his departure, and whom he ought to thank before he leaves; his mother always asks if there is anyone he should thank.

Leo explicitly links heat to sin—that's what he's referring to by "fruit of knowledge." He wants to return to a state of innocence, before the Fall (in this case his involvement in Marian and Ted's illicit affair). He's so sure he's going home that he has turned his mind to the formalities of leaving.

Leo thinks that he ought to thank Ted and bid him goodbye. He needs a way to evade Marcus and comes up with the idea that Ted is going to give Leo a swimming lesson. Marcus says he wouldn't mind if Leo drowns Ted—Marcus has a "habit of speaking badly of people, especially those of a lower social status." Leo departs for the farm.

Interestingly, Hartley did write a swimming scene for Leo and Ted, but decided not to include it in the book because it made Leo's physical attraction to Ted too simple and obvious (it is anything but). Marcus continues to demonstrate his snobbery—but it's largely a performance put on in order to show off to his friend.

Leo finds Ted in the field. Ted says he didn't expect him to come back and wishes Leo good luck for the future. Leo asks if it's true that Ted might enlist in the army and go to fight in the Boer War. Ted asks who told Leo; Leo says Trimingham. Ted is aware of Marian and Trimingham's engagement and says that he might go to war; it depends on what Marian wants.

Ted is almost completely resigned to losing Marian, which is why he's considering going to war—essentially a form of self-sacrifice. He leaves it up to Marian, because the consequences of them going public would be much graver for her than for him—in theory. Trimingham's authority is gently present in this scene, as it's Trimingham who has offered Ted the army opportunity.

Ted asks whether Leo has told anyone about his and Marian's "business matter." Leo says that he hasn't. Ted now addresses Leo as "Master Colston," making Leo think Ted has "become acutely conscious of the social gap" between the two of them. Leo asks Ted to call him "postman" instead of the formalities.

Ted attempts to make amends with Leo by showing him deference in his terms of address. But Leo, as is always the case when he is actually with Ted, wants Ted to like him. He still sees Ted as a role model and wants to please him. The reader should note that though Leo has not talked openly to anyone about the "business matter" (the affair), he has let slip to Marcus that he often knows Marian's whereabouts.

Ted apologizes again for shouting at Leo earlier and says that Leo's questions about "spooning" were only natural. Leo says that it's fine—he knows someone else he can ask about it. Ted shakes Leo's hand, saying, "so long then, postman." As Leo turns to leave, he feels "grieved to be parting" from Ted and offers to take one last message to Marian. Ted gratefully tells Leo to inform Marian that "tomorrow's no good, I'm going to Norwich, but Friday at half-past six, same as usual."

If Leo were to leave it here, perhaps there would be no tragedy to follow. But he loves his identity as go-between: it makes him feel purposeful and powerful. That's why he offers to take one last message for Ted, as a gesture of goodwill. Leo, of course, thinks he'll be home by Friday anyway—out of sight and out of mind of Brandham Hall.

CHAPTER 20

Back at the hall, a letter from Leo's mother awaits him. But much to Leo's surprise, the letter doesn't summon him home. She says that, as she'd received to letters from him in the same post, one saying he's having a great time and wants to stay longer and the other saying he wishes to leave, she thought perhaps he was exaggerating "something a little."

Due to a quirk in the postal delivery system, Leo's mother has read both his happy and his sad letters at the same time, with their contradictory requests to stay longer and be called home. Understandably, she thinks Leo's mind is somewhat muddled.

Leo's mother thinks that it seems fair that Leo "run errands and take messages," as Mrs. Maudsley has hosted him so kindly. She suggests he doesn't run so fast on his errands so that he doesn't get "unnecessarily **hot**." She acknowledges that Leo said what he was doing seemed "Very Wrong" to him, but she doesn't understand what could be so wrong in such a church-going, well-to-do family as the Maudsleys. She suggests that he ask Mrs. Maudsley "very nicely" if someone else can take the messages.

Because Leo's mother doesn't know the nature of his errands—that they facilitate a secret affair—she assumes that he's just doing little jobs for Mrs. Maudsley. Leo can't ask Mrs. Maudsley for someone else to take the messages because that would reveal the affair and create catastrophe. The imagery of heat continues, but Leo's "heat" is more of a figurative problem than a literal one—he likes the physical heat, but he's too close to the "sun" of Marian and at great risk of being burned.

Leo's mother implores him to be patient and makes the point that the Maudsleys sound like good friends for him to have for the future. She says his "father didn't care about social life but I think he made a mistake." She adds that "we can't be happy *all* the time" and that perhaps that's a good thing.

This ramps up the psychological pressure on Leo, as for his mother, him staying now actively represents doing things in a better way than his father. He's under strain from multiple sources, putting him in a dangerous position.

The letter from his mother disorientates Leo; he has no idea what to do next. He feels he is the keeper of a "dead secret"—"not dead in that sense, but very much alive and death-dealing and fatal." He wanders aimlessly around the outhouses.

Leo senses the devastating power of his knowledge, since he knows that the affair is a matter of life and death. His physical wandering about the grounds reflects his disorientated mental state.

Leo considers it important that, when Marian returns, he avoid being along with her. He feels that against Marian he has no "defences"—whereas Ted is "like a schoolboy": " I did not feel…that he had any greater regard for me than one thrusting male has for another." But Marian is like a "fairy-godmother"—he hadn't imagined she could turn against him, "but she had." That said, he knows he will have to see her at some point to give her Ted's message.

Here, Leo associates Ted with nature and Marian with the supernatural. But this isn't always the case—earlier he described Ted as casting a spell with his physique. There is a general feeling that Leo's delicately balanced interior world is being dismantled by the way Marian has treated him.

Marian and Mrs. Maudsley return. After breakfast on Thursday, Marian takes Leo aside. She asks if Leo missed her, to which he self-consciously replies that he did. She says that he probably thinks she is "a ghastly old governess" but that really, she's "a good-natured girl." Leo senses that she is unhappy.

Marian wants to get Leo back on her side and uses her charm to do so. As has been seen a few times in the book, Leo is very keen to prevent unhappiness in Marian.

Leo asks if Marian had a good time in London; she says that did not. He says he is sorry to hear that, but she replies that he's "not sorry in the least." She tells Leo he's a "hard-hearted little boy," like all boys are. Leo isn't sure if she's serious, but asks if men are hard-hearted too—he can't imagine Trimingham being so, anyway.

Leo can't help but seek advice and wisdom from adults, but he still doesn't understand their subtext when they speak. Marian isn't being serious about Leo; this is just part of her winning Leo back by gently teasing him. Leo still venerates Trimingham.

To Marian, all men are hard, like "blocks of granite … or the beds at Brandham." Leo tells her that he once slept on the ground and that it made his hip sore, and asks whether soldiers have to sleep on the floor. She says she has no doubt Trimingham had to. Leo asks if Ted will have to sleep on the floor, "when he goes to the war." Marian is shocked to learn that Ted might enlist and is especially angry that it was Trimingham who suggested that he do so.

The image of men on the ground "like blocks of granite" conjures the prospect of death. Trimingham, perhaps quite innocently, hasn't mentioned anything to Marian about asking Ted to enlist.

Marian asks whether Trimingham "made" Ted say he would join the forces. Leo says that Ted is "strong" and that he can't imagine anyone making Ted do anything. Marian counters that "Ted is as weak as water. Hugh's [Trimingham] far stronger."

Marian has a unique perspective, as she is the object of affection for both men. Though Ted has demonstrated physical strength throughout, Trimingham's strength comes from his military past and his quiet obedience to social norms. Perhaps this is what lends him the authority over Ted that Marian perceives.

Marian asks whether Trimingham said why he wanted Ted to enlist. Leo says that it's because Ted is a "good shot," and that as a "single man with no ties" he would make a first-rate officer. She insists she'll not let Trimingham make Ted join up: "I'll soon put a stop to it! I'll make Ted put a stop to it! I tell you, Ted's a dangerous man when his blood's up." She says she'll tell Trimingham she won't marry him if Ted goes to the war.

Marian's response raises the impending sense of violence in the book. Of course, Ted is only pretending to be a "single man"; actually he is deeply in love with Marian, but there's no way he could have told this to Trimingham. Marian wants to take matters into her own hands, making her potentially volatile.

Leo appeals to Marian not to create conflict between Trimingham and Ted. He tells her that Trimingham doesn't know about her messages with Ted, and that Trimingham is sincere in his reasons for wanting Ted to go. Marian says doubtfully that Leo may be right, but that it's "silly" of Ted to agree.

Leo is afraid that there will be a duel between Ted and Trimingham and he will lose one of his new role models. Even Marian doesn't know how much Trimingham knows of the affair, making it hard for the reader to decide on the motives for Trimingham's actions.

Leo asks why Marian doesn't just marry Ted. Marian tearfully exclaims that marrying Ted would be impossible, and that she must marry Trimingham. When Marian cries, she no longer seems like a deceiver who has abused Leo's trust and manipulated him, but once again like "**Marian of the Zodiac**, Marian whom I loved."

Marian's sorrow restores her innocence, making her Leo's Virgin sign again despite what he knows. Marian feels she must marry Trimingham out of duty, not love. Duty is a strong force in her upper-class family, and in a very real way the continued social "success" of the Maudsleys depends on her marrying Trimingham.

Through her sobs, Marian asks if Leo went down to the farm while she was away. Leo says that he did speak with Ted, and that Ted had said that Marian should meet him at six o'clock on Friday. Marian asks if Leo is sure it's six and not half past; he says he is. Marian thanks Leo, calling him a "friend in a thousand." Leo has forgotten that he will still be at Brandham Hall on Friday, and that six o' clock will be the time of his party.

Leo, once again playing the role of editor rather than mere messenger, changes the proposed meeting time of Ted's message. That's why Marian is confused that he says six o'clock—not the time she usually meets Ted. Leo thinks that somehow this will be for everyone's good, but it's not yet clear exactly what his reasoning is.

CHAPTER 21

Leo feels reconciled with Marian, if still concerned about what she plans to do. Leo worries about what will happen between Ted and Trimingham. Leo wonders whose fault the situation is. Though he feels sympathy for Ted, he thinks it must ultimately be his fault—he has "bewitched" Marian and cast a spell on her.

Leo seeks to apportion blame for the dire situation, with Trimingham's advice sounding loud in his mind: "nothing is ever a lady's fault." His worldview is still fundamentally supernatural—he believes that Ted's physical form has cast a spell on Marian. Physical attraction is a mysterious, spell-like force.

Leo intends to break the spell of Ted over Marian. That's why he falsified the time that Ted had said he would meet Marian. Leo thinks Marian will turn up at six, get impatient waiting for Ted (due at six thirty) and decide, in the ensuing argument, never to see him again.

The reader learns Leo's logic in changing the meeting time. He knows that Marian is impatient, and is counting on that to help drive her apart from Ted—but he hasn't really bargained for the sheer strength of her devotion.

Leo feels everything has been diminished by the Marian-Ted relationship, and that it's the cause all of their troubles—including his own. It seems to him to be a "parasite of the emotions. Nothing else could live with it or have an independent existence while it was there." Leo knows there are no lengths the lovers will not go to maintain their passion. Leo compares himself to the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

The lovers' passion is becoming all-consuming. Leo senses that the logical conclusion of their love is the destruction of everything around it (himself included). Leo frames the affair as a loss of innocence—and he is the tempter that has made it possible.

Leo decides to make a spell to break Ted's hold over Marian. He imagines using magic to make Ted and Marian forget each other, or perhaps become "invisible to each other." Leo believes that his spell must involve him doing something that he dreads, to give it the required strength and "symbolic appropriateness."

Leo wants to fight fire with fire—to cast his supernatural powers against those he believes Ted to possess. But this will take something much stronger than his earlier "vanquishing" of Jenkins and Strode, since the "spell" of love between Ted and Marian is extremely powerful. To make his own spell powerful, Leo feels he has to go to the depths of his psyche.

That night, after secretly listening to Marian and others sing, Leo sneaks out of the house. The night scares Leo; it's a place for "bad grown-ups" like "thieves, murderers and such." He plans to conduct a moonlit "chemistry experiment" and needs poisonous ingredients. Leo mentally rehearses the method for his potion, which he has written down in his diary. Old Leo interjects that he had intended at the time to tear that page out of the diary, but that events the next day had made him forget to do so.

The way Leo feels about the night reminds the reader that he is still just a boy—he's afraid of the dark. But he's determined to cast his spell, which he thinks is for everyone's good. The interjection by old Leo demonstrates the schism created in his life by the events that are about to occur.

Leo arrives at the outhouse with the overgrown deadly nightshade. He goes inside, "into the unhallowed darkness where it lurked, that springing mass of vegetable force." The plant has filled every available space of the building, and Leo momentarily panics that he will get poisoned himself. He wrestles with the plant and tugs at the roots, shouting "delenda est belladonna!" Finally, it gives way and comes out of the ground, sending Leo toppling backwards.

The growth of the nightshade mimics the growth of Marian, Ted, and Leo's dark secret. It has become a force unto itself and is infecting everything around it. Leo sees the nightshade as a kind of "pure evil," representative of the immorality of the affair. His shouting translates to mean, "the nightshade must be destroyed"—but "belladonna" also has suggestions of "beautiful woman."

CHAPTER 22

Leo sleeps deeply that night. The next morning, one of the servants wakes him and wishes him a happy birthday. Unusually, it looks like it's going to rain outside. The servant says they're living in the "Dog Days." Leo asks him if he knows of any dogs that have gone mad, but the servant says that human beings go mad too.

The Dog Days are a period of extreme summer heat believed by ancient cultures to be caused by the rising of the dog-star, Sirius, and causing people to go mad or act in strange ways. Leo's question about madness foreshadows the psychological trauma to come (which the reader knows about from the prologue). The change in the weather implies that a change in the situation is approaching.

The servant looks at the strange assortment of objects on the desk that Leo used the previous night to make his spell (candles, Bunsen burners, sponges etc.). Leo feels embarrassed, and, when the servant leaves, tidies up. Looking at the grey clouds outside, Leo senses the end of summer.

Leo suspects that his attempts at magic are childish and misguided, but he feels this most when adults are involved. On his own, he reverts to his beliefs in the supernatural world.

Leo feels stupid about his magic, which suddenly seems like "mumbo-jumbo." "Goodbye to make-believe!" he tells himself. Now he is thirteen, he thinks, and it's time to grow up. He despises all of his actions at Brandham Hall, thinking them the actions of "another person."

Leo is clearly in a delicate mental state. One moment he is tearing up plants to help with his spells, and the next he is rejecting magic completely. This shows that his identity is under threat—he's not really sure who he is anymore. He feels outside of himself, seeing all of his actions at Brandham as those of "another person."

Leo thinks about boyhood, and the way in which some adults treat boys like children and others treat them like "little men." He believes that Marian, more than anyone, has "puffed" him up and made him feel important. Perhaps the strange turn of events at Brandham Hall has been because of the **heat**, he wonders. After all, it incapacitated both Mrs. Maudsley and Marcus.

Marian has breathed life into Leo; but as she is under threat, so is he. The idea that he has been puffed up implies that his newfound confidence has been a performance and is not permanent. As events have coincided with the heat, Leo thinks it could be to do with weather. The heat suggests the situation's increase in pressure and need for release.

Old Leo interjects, saying, "this is what I think now, but it is also what I felt then." He balks at the idea that someone might have seen him "savaging" the nightshade—"It was bad enough to have been seen by myself."

Old Leo is not as different from young Leo as he might think: he's still self-conscious and prone to embarrassment. Under the glare of his readers' watchful eyes, old Leo makes excuses for his behavior. Above all, this demonstrates the traumatic division in his psyche: he is both the one pulling out the nightshade and the one watching from afar.

Though it's his birthday, young Leo decides he will put on his original clothes rather than his more luxurious **green** suit. After prayers, Leo is lightly teased for his clothes, but Trimingham defends him—he says Leo is "quite right" to wear a Norfolk jacket in Norfolk. Furthermore, if it rains, Leo will be in the most suitable dress. Everybody wishes Leo a happy birthday.

Putting on his old clothes shows that Leo wants to return to his pre-Brandham innocence. Trimingham's defense of Leo's Norfolk jacket shows his sensitivity to Leo's embarrassment. The fact that it's Leo's birthday means that the attentions are even more on him than usual, increasing the psychological pressure.

A parcel has arrived from Leo's mother. The accompanying note asks Leo to make sure to tell her if he really is unhappy and tells him that if the errands are too tiring that he ought to ask Mrs. Maudsley if someone else can do them. The present is a tie to go with his **green** suit.

After giving it some thought, Leo's mother realizes that he might be in more difficulty than he is letting on, but she's still clueless as to the reality of the matter. Besides, it's now too late. The present lends the occasion a sense of tragic comedy and emphasizes Leo's mother's distance from him—she has no idea that he doesn't want to wear his green suit anymore.

Another present, this one from Leo's aunt, also contains a tie to go with his **green** suit (which she has heard about from Leo's mother). The group much prefers the tie Leo's mother bought, but Trimingham gets Leo to let him try on his aunt's tie, which he thinks is quite "charming." Trimingham appeals to Marian and Mr. Maudsley for their opinion. Old Leo interjects that he kept his aunt's tie for years after.

Trimingham again is sensitive to Leo's feelings and self-consciousness. He doesn't want Leo to feel bad in front of the group and so lends the tie authority by trying it on himself. Leo clearly appreciates the gesture, which is why he still has the tie fifty years later.

After breakfast, Mrs. Maudsley announces that "today is Leo's day," and asks him how he would like to spend it. She suggests a picnic but is apprehensive about the rain; perhaps they could visit nearby Beeston Castle after lunch. They agree on the latter idea. Mrs. Maudsley says that at five o'clock they will have the birthday cake.

Mrs. Maudsley is trying to give Leo the kind of birthday boys usually have. But today being "his day" is probably the last thing Leo wants—he'd rather hide away or go home. Mrs. Maudsley, back after her mental illness, once again seeks to control proceedings, even if she gives Leo the illusion of choice.

Leo, believing that he has a "new true personality" that is dull and flat, feels distant from everyone at Brandham Hall. He doesn't feel any birthday cheer and is uneasy around Marcus. Above all, he has the sensation of being a "spectator." Just before lunch, Leo goes up to his room and changes back into the **green suit**, which makes him feel more "normal."

Leo can't relate to Marcus anymore—he's changed too much to just act like a kid again—but neither does he belong to the adult world. He's become a "go-between" caught between two worlds, going nowhere. Leo reasons that, if he can't go back to being the kid he was before Brandham, he can at least put his suit back on and restore his more recent identity.

CHAPTER 23

That afternoon, Mrs. Maudsley is unsure what the group should do because of the ominous weather. Marian takes Leo outside under the pretense of looking at the weather, but to his surprise hands him another letter.

Hartley employs the pathetic fallacy to indicate a change in mood: the weather reflects the action of the story. Marian continues to be duplicitous in order to continue her secret communications.

Marian playfights with Leo, telling him to take the letter and making him laugh. The noise brings Mrs. Maudsley outside to ask what the two of them are fighting about. Leo drops the letter, which Marian quickly says is the reason they were messing around. She says it is addressed to Nannie Robson, her grandmother, and announces that Marian will visit that afternoon; she says that she had asked Leo to take it.

Marian has to come up with a lie quickly, hoping that the mention of her grandmother will convince Mrs. Maudsley and make Marian seem like a caring, family-orientated woman. Mrs. Maudsley's sudden appearance outside implies that she is still suspicious of Marian.

Mrs. Maudsley tells Marian not to worry about informing Nannie Robson, and insists on taking Leo for a walk around the gardens. He asks if Marcus can come too, which she refuses. As they walk, Mrs. Maudsley talks to Leo about flowers; Leo volunteers his knowledge of the deadly nightshade, instantly feeling that he shouldn't have.

Mrs. Maudsley now suspects Leo of being involved in whatever Marian is hiding. He's trying to act innocent and make conversation, but lets slip about the deadly nightshade. This symbolizes the imminent discovery of the secret and the unleashing of great power—powers of life and death.

They stop by a magnolia with a pink blush, which Mrs. Maudsley says reminds her of Marian. She asks if Marian often sends him on errands to Nannie Robson, and says she feels bad that she stopped him just now. Leo lies and says he's been there once or twice. She says that perhaps he would like to go now: "You know the way, of course?" Leo says that he can ask, which makes Mrs. Maudsley suspicious—Leo has just said that he's been there before.

The pink magnolia symbolizes youthful innocence, which seems an incongruous symbol for Marian given what the reader knows of her. Leo's lying abilities are not as refined as Marian's, and he accidentally makes it clear that he's never been to Nannie Robson's, contrary to what Marian says. This increases Mrs. Maudsley's suspicion, making it obvious to her that there is a deception to be uncovered.

Mrs. Maudsley suggests that she can have one of the gardeners take the note. The nearest gardener comes over and agrees to take the note. Leo panics and pretends to have lost it. She tells the gardener to go to Nannie Robson regardless and tell her to expect Marian in the afternoon.

Leo knows that the note will be a message for Ted, and that if Mrs. Maudsley reads it all will be discovered. He also knows that the affair's discovery will have grave consequences, and tries to cover up for Marian. Mrs. Maudsley cleverly manipulates the situation by getting the gardener to go to Nannie Robson and ask her to expect Marian.

Mrs. Maudsley instructs Leo to take his hands out of his pockets. She warns him that she could make him turn his pockets out if she wanted. She asks Leo who he has taken notes to before, if it's not Nannie Robson. Leo cannot answer and runs up to his room as the thunder and rain strike up.

Mrs. Maudsley's sharp intelligence is too much for Leo. She tells him off, restoring the adult-child relationship and making Leo feel small. The rain starts, indicating a literal release of pressure to go with the imminent climax.

Later on, everyone assembles at the tea-table except for Marian and Mrs. Maudsley. Leo's birthday cake is on the table. Mrs. Maudsley comes in and informs Leo that he will be moving back into Marcus's room, as there are more guests who've come for the ball.

Perhaps Mrs. Maudsley is already looking for Marian, which would explain her absence. Leo's independence is taken from him as easily as it was granted, showing that he has no real power over his situation at Brandham Hall.

Mrs. Maudsley has put twelve candles on the cake and kept one aside so that it's not an unlucky thirteen. Leo can blow the thirteenth out when Marian arrives, she says, which should be around six o'clock. Leo notices that Mrs. Maudsley's hands are shaking.

Though Mrs. Maudsley keeps the thirteenth candle aside, the portent is still present—it's Leo's thirteenth birthday no matter what candles are on his cake. Mrs. Maudsley is clearly in a tense and nervous state, implying that she knows catastrophe is approaching.

As it's raining outside, Mr. Maudsley orders a carriage to Nannie Robson's to pick up Marian. Leo blows out the twelve candles, and the guests pull crackers, producing a "terrific salvo" and "thunder." Just then, a butler enters the room to inform Mrs. Maudsley that the carriage has returned empty from Nannie Robson's—Marian hasn't been there all day. The guests wonder where she could be.

Marian's deception is dangerously close to becoming public. The sound of the crackers suggests the explosiveness of what's to come. What should be a happy occasion is extremely tense, caught up in the pressure of the unresolved question of Marian's whereabouts.

Mr. Maudsley says they will just have to wait for Marian to arrive, but Mrs. Maudsley says that she is going to look for her. She accuses Leo of knowing where she is and grabs him to go with her. As they exit the room, Mr. Maudsley calls after Mrs. Maudsley.

Mrs. Maudsley cannot take any more of Marian's behavior. The incident with the dropped letter has confirmed for her that Leo has information about Marian's whereabouts, which is why she grabs and takes him with her. Mr. Maudsley's shout at the end implies that he is completely oblivious to the situation, but is aware of his wife's nervous state and would prefer to keep decorum (and prevent embarrassment).

Leo and Mrs. Maudsley pass through the hall, where Leo catches a glimpse of the **green** bicycle. It reminds him of a little "mountain sheep with curly horns, its head lowered in apology or defence." They run through the rain, Leo hardly able to keep up with Mrs. Maudsley.

As he is led to the story's tragic conclusion by the hand of an adult, Leo's sight of the green bicycle reminds him that he is not the bold, confident young man he felt himself to be—he's still a young, inexperienced boy.

Leo realizes that Mrs. Maudsley is taking them to the outhouse with the deadly nightshade and desperately tries to get her to go another way, but she persists. Suddenly they come across Marian and Ted making love: "together on the ground, **the Virgin and the Water-Carrier**, two bodies like one." Mrs. Maudsley screams repeatedly as the lovers' shadow opens and close on the wall "like an umbrella."

It was Leo who accidentally let slip Marian and Ted's probable whereabouts, making him responsible for their discovery and increasing the psychological burden on him. That the lovers are discovered in the abandoned outhouse confirms that their affair takes place outside of the confines of normal society—and the presence of the nightshade symbolizes the deadly power of such an affair. Marian and Ted are as one, but can only be so as "shadows"; they are not allowed to be together in the full light of day. Mrs. Maudsley's screams show how traumatic the discovery is to her, and Leo's comparison of the shadow to an umbrella illustrates how mysterious, disconcerting, and surreal the entire situation is to him.

Here, the main narrative ends abruptly—old Leo says that he remembers little more about Brandham Hall, but that somehow he had learned that Ted Burgess went home and shot himself.

Such is the deep trauma of this discovery that Leo short circuits and is psychologically removed from the situation (and his responsibility). The abruptness of the text here reflects the suddenness of the psychological rupture. Ted clearly knows this is the end of his relationship with Marian and, as Trimingham owns the land that he works on, the end of his livelihood too. Seeing no way out, he fires one last shot from his gun.

EPILOGUE

Back with old Leo, he tells the reader that he had meant to put away his memories at the end of the story, but that they failed to settle. That's how he has come to write this epilogue.

The narrative's sudden return to the "sixty-odd" Leo shows the trauma's severity—it literally severed his life in two. In the retelling of the story, though, he has brought his memories back to life and now seeks their resolution.

Old Leo likens his breakdown to being "a train going through a series of tunnels … sometimes in the daylight … sometimes in the dark, sometimes knowing who and where I was, sometimes not knowing." By September in 1900 he was deemed fit to return to school. He has never remembered what exactly happened after the discovery of Marian and Ted, or his return home.

The discovery of Ted and Marian affects Leo so deeply that he loses entire weeks to a mental blackout. His mind presents his recovery as a literal journey back to sanity as he seeks to recover some semblance of identity. The train journey is also a metaphor for the relationship between Leo's self-awareness and his subconscious: he has to travel through both to get back to any kind of normality.

Young Leo felt that he had betrayed everyone at Brandham Hall. Furthermore, he was haunted by visions of Ted, "his blood and brains stuck to the kitchen wall," and by an image of him cleaning his gun. Ultimately, feels old Leo, his spell worked: it broke off Ted and Marian's relationship, but with unintended terrible consequences. He sees his fate as linked with Ted's—"I could not injure him without injuring myself."

Because Leo accidentally led Mrs. Maudsley to the lovers, he feels a deep sense of guilt about what happened. The vision of Ted's suicide is understandably haunting. Leo shows that he hasn't completely rid himself of his magical thinking—part of him blames the spell he cast using the deadly nightshade. But he also characterized Ted as having supernatural powers—meaning both were bound to suffer.

Young Leo believed that supernatural powers punished him for believing he could harness their control. At Brandham Hall, he had "invoked these powers against each other, had tried to set the **Zodiac** against itself. In my eyes the actors in my drama had been immortals, inheritors of the summer and of the coming glory of the twentieth century." Whether he looked towards "the world of experience or the world of the imagination," he could make no contact with either and "shrank" into himself.

Too late, Leo comes to see the powers of the zodiac as beyond his control. The world that he had created for himself—or thought he had—showed itself to be an illusion. The twentieth century itself mirrors this disappointment, heralding not a new "Golden Age" as once predicted but instead the horrors of two world wars. Leo's only option was to retreat from emotional risk and to shut down his active imagination.

When Leo returned to school, he and Marcus barely acknowledged one another. Leo's fear of hearing anything about Brandham eventually turned into a lack of curiosity about people more generally. Instead, he spent the rest of his life accumulating "facts." His skill with facts meant that when the First World War came around, he was more useful in an administrative role. Just as he never learnt about war, he never learnt about "spooning" either.

Both Leo and Marcus are traumatized by what happened. The easiest thing for both of them is to ignore one another and avoid having to engage with the events of the summer. Leo misses out on another supposed kind of glory—war—because his skill with facts makes him more useful in an office than on the battlefield. It also seems he remained a virgin throughout his life—he was the Virgo in the zodiac after all, not Marian. Ted was his only authority on "spooning"—but "spooning" led Ted to his death; for Leo, it's easier to just avoid the subject altogether.

Old Leo realizes now that Marian took him to Norwich so she could meet Ted there. He also sees that Marcus must have told Mrs. Maudsley that Leo knew something about Marian's whereabouts at the time.

Old Leo is not as naïve as his youthful self and has the benefit of hindsight. He realizes that Marcus betrayed him, although Marcus can't be said to have realized the consequences of doing so.

Old Leo cannot take his younger self's interest in spells or magic seriously anymore. In writing about the facts of Brandham, it has "lost its terrors." Amongst his possessions, Leo finds the final letter that Marian gave him to take to Ted on that fateful day. If he wants true closure, he feels, he will have to reach beyond what he remembers and find out what happened to the people involved. For that reason, he decides to open Marian's last letter.

Interestingly, though Leo professes to have grown out of his magic and spells, both the prologue and the epilogue are littered with examples of him slipping back into the same supernatural way of seeing the world as his younger self, e.g., his opinion that he set the powers of the zodiac against himself. This shows that the supernatural still appeals to him, even if he can't admit it outwardly.

The letter reveals Marian's disquiet at meeting at six o'clock—she intended to tell Ted that she thought Leo had made a mistake, and instead they should meet at six thirty. She also tells Ted that Leo's new bicycle will mean he doesn't have to do so much walking on their behalf. She says if the letter doesn't make it to Ted she will wait from six till "seven or eight or nine or Doomsday — darling, darling."

Marian knew something was wrong with Leo's final message at Brandham Hall. Here the reader learns that even the gift of the bicycle had an ulterior motive—to speed up Leo's journeys between the Hall and the farm. Marian's use of "doomsday" in the final letter is sadly prophetic, as the day of the meeting is hers and Ted's day of judgment.

Old Leo heads back to Norfolk to try and find out what happened to everyone. He goes to the church and learns from the mural tablets that Trimingham had died in 1910. It also tells of a tenth Viscount, born in 1901, who was killed in action during the Second World War. Leo wonders how Trimingham could have married and had a child in the less than seven months since he left Brandham. It occurs to Leo that there might now be an eleventh Viscount who is still alive.

The dates don't quite add up, opening up the possibility that there is some kind of secret regarding the tenth Viscount (Trimingham's alleged son). Just like his first visit to this church, Leo ponders life and death through the vehicle of the Viscounts. Of course, the mural tablets don't give much away—he'll have to dig deeper to find out anything more about what happened.

Though he is not religious, old Leo says a prayer for everyone involved in the events at Brandham. He leaves the church and passes by the cricket ground. As he heads towards the village, he sees a young man whose face seems "less unfamiliar" to him than anyone else that's around.

Leo's prayer is really just a gesture—he doesn't believe it's going to work. His journey back to Brandham is a kind of pilgrimage into his memory: the cricket ground was where he caught out Ted Burgess before his popular singing at the ball afterwards.

Leo stops the young man and asks if there is still a Lord Trimingham—an eleventh Viscount—living at Brandham Hall. In fact, the young man replies that he *is* Lord Trimingham. He lives in just a corner of the house; the rest is a girls' school.

Much has changed over the years, and being the Viscount is evidently no longer as prestigious as it used to be. Most likely, the rest of the Hall is rented out in order to pay for the eleventh Viscount's living costs. This also emphasizes the passage of time—a brand new generation occupies the Hall now.

Leo informs the eleventh Viscount that he had stayed at Brandham in his youth and knew his grandfather, the ninth Lord Trimingham. The eleventh Lord Trimingham disconcertedly asks if Leo had known his grandmother, Marian, too. He informs Leo that she is still alive and living in the village, where Nannie Robson used to live.

The eleventh Viscount is edgy about talk of his grandfather because he knows about what happened. Given that the dates don't add up, there is some uncertainty about who his grandfather actually is—Ted or Trimingham. Ironically, Marian is now in the house where she had pretended to be at the time of her discovery.

The eleventh viscount says that his grandmother is quite lonely, and asks whether Leo would mind going to see her. Leo asks Trimingham if he will first go and tell Marian that Leo Colston is here to see her, to which he agrees. While Leo waits for Trimingham to return, he walks by the village hall in which he sung, but can't connect with the memory of his former "public triumph."

Leo isn't sure if Marian will want to see him, given what happened. The past now seems like a different place altogether to Leo, a "foreign country" that he doesn't understand. Much like his last visit to Brandham, he feels himself to be an outsider. This shows that, really, he's never grown up or gotten over what happened.

The eleventh viscount returns and informs Leo that Marian would be very happy to see him; she has also asked Trimingham to provide lunch for Leo at the Hall after he has been to see her. Trimingham says that Marian wasn't sure if Leo would want to see her, "because of something that had happened long ago." Trimingham apologizes to Leo if they didn't treat him well at the time, but Leo tells him not to give it another thought.

Clearly the story of that summer has been passed down through the generations, which shows how strong its impact on everyone's lives has been. Both the young Trimingham's apology and Leo's refusal of it are examples of politeness and understatement, showing that neither man really wants to go into any detail.

Leo and the eleventh viscount part ways, planning to meet for lunch at the Hall around one. Trimingham begins walking away, but then turns around. He asks: "Were you the little boy who—?" Leo interrupts and says "yes."

Both men are deeply curious about one another, but Leo doesn't want to talk about what happened. Perhaps this suggests that Leo is only comfortable with revisiting the memories when he is alone with them, in control of them with his pen and paper.

Leo arrives at Marian's house. She looks very elderly, but her eyes retain some of "their frosty fire." Leo asks her questions about the different people from Brandham Hall. She thinks that Marcus and Denys were both killed in the first world war. Mrs. Maudsley, she informs Leo, had a nervous breakdown.

This is the first time Leo has seen Marian since that summer. Hartley's mention of the "fire" in her eyes is intended to remind the reader of her position as Leo's "sun"—the fire that he flies too close to. Like many young men, Marcus and Denys died in the "glory" of defending their country. Leo wasn't able to do that, and was thus again denied the right to "become a man." Mrs. Maudsley and Leo suffered in a similar way, both unable to cope with the traumatic discovery of Ted and Marian's affair.

Marian tells Leo that they weren't sure how he found out about Ted's suicide. They knew he knew because one of the "few things" Leo said in the aftermath was "why did Ted kill himself—wasn't he a good shot?" She says Ted had a weak streak in him, like her grandson Edward (the eleventh Viscount).

Leo didn't understand Ted's suicide at the time. All he knew of Ted and guns was that Ted was extremely good at handling them. This once again places Leo outside of the world of emotions, a misfit who cannot truly understand the way that people feel. It's not possible to say for sure why Ted did shoot himself—was it the reality of losing Marian, shame, or fear of reprisal?

Marian tells Leo that Trimingham (the ninth) married her regardless of her affair and behaved very honorably towards her. Mr. Maudsley, she says, lived to be very old, and often came to see them.

This is quite surprising news for the reader: Trimingham (the ninth) stayed with Marian despite the discovery of her affair. The fact that he didn't disown her shows either that he truly did care about her or that he was concerned about losing his social status from the embarrassment—or a mixture of both.

Marian complains that her grandson, Edward, doesn't visit her often. She asks if Edward reminds Leo of anyone. She says that Edward wants to get married, but feels that he is "under some sort of spell or curse, and that he'd hand it on."

Despite none of the characters expressly believing in the supernatural anymore, it continues to hold power over them. Even if they don't believe in magic, this confirms that there are forces in life beyond their understanding.

Marian asks Leo to tell Edward "what *really* happened." She says that only he knows that she and Ted weren't "ordinary lovers," but that their love was a "beautiful thing." She and Ted were made for each other, she says. She asks Leo if he realized how beautiful their love was at the time, and wouldn't he be proud to be descended from their union, "the child of so much happiness and beauty?" Leo feels that the only answer he can give is yes.

The nature of Marian and Leo's relationship hasn't really changed despite their advancing age and the many years they've been without seeing one another. She's still giving him questions that he can only answer self-consciously in the way that she wants him to. The truth is Leo doesn't know anything about love or having children precisely because of what happened at Brandham Hall. Marian's actions have denied Leo the life experience necessary to answer her question truthfully.

Marian says that she is glad Leo agrees, as he was their "instrument"—he made them happy. They entrusted him with their "greatest treasure." She implores Leo to go and tell Edward that her and Ted's love was nothing to be ashamed of. She says that they never meant to hurt anyone, and though there were great sorrows in the lives of the Maudsleys, they were the fault of "this hideous century we live in, which has denatured humanity and planted death and hate where love and living were." Deliver this message, she says, and it will the "best day's work" Leo will ever do.

Being an "instrument" is not the most flattering of descriptions—it shows that Marian on one level saw Leo as a tool to make her affair happen more easily. Marian sees her love with Ted as somehow being in opposition to the terrors of the twentieth century, but Leo knows little of either, having never loved and not gone to war. She offers Leo one last job as her go-between, but this time it's to openly testify to the purity of the love she shared with Ted—not to carry its secret communication. She sees this final message as an important testament to the role of love in the world.

Marian wants her grandson to get married, and also thinks it's not too late for Leo to do so either. She says she can tell Leo is "all dried up inside." She asks him if he doesn't feel "any need of love," and says if only Ted "had more brains he wouldn't have blown them out." Leo owes it to Ted, and to her, to tell Edward that there's no curse or spell except "an unloving heart."

Marian doesn't see the reason why Leo is "all dried up inside"—because of the psychological pressure she put him under. She reverses Leo's view that love is a kind of spell, instead claiming that resisting love is the real curse. This means that, in her opinion, Leo is still under the control of supernatural powers. Marian's view of what happened is clearly blinkered—she doesn't pay much mind to either Leo's trauma or, a bit more understandably, that of her controlling mother.

Leo agrees to deliver the message, and Marian kisses him, calling him "a friend in a thousand." Her face is wet with tears. Leo leaves her house, "a foreigner in the world of emotions, ignorant of their language but compelled to listen to it." He marvels at Marian's self-deception. But why, then, he wonders, was he so moved by what she had said? And why ought he to go on this "preposterous errand"? He feels he should just head home, but instead turns towards Brandham Hall and walks towards it.

It's unclear if Leo delivers the message because he feels it's important or because, despite all these years, he still wants to please Marian and win her affections—he himself isn't sure. On the one hand, he thinks that she's absurd and deluded. But on the other, there's something about her appeal to the purity and sanctity of love that resonates with him, even if he doesn't have direct experience of it. Once again, his self is divided. In this final act as go-between, then, he is not only taking a message to the Hall, but he's also going between two different, contradictory versions of himself, one that believes in the world of emotion despite its "foreignness," and the other that wants to return to the cold, solid ground of facts.

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