

# Chapter 25

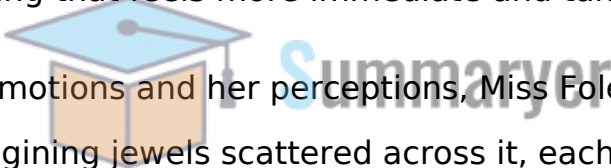
Chapter 25 delves into Miss Foley's introspective journey as she begins to sense the presence of reflections in her home, reminiscent of the way one can feel the snow falling outside without needing to look. Over the years, she has come to recognize these reflections as shadows of her former self, filling the spaces within her house and reminding her of the passage of time. With each shadow, she treads carefully, avoiding the cold December ice that seems to symbolize the weight of these memories.

Acknowledging these remnants from the past could pull her into a deeper spiral of reflection, where she might become trapped by the very memories that seem to linger in her home. There is an underlying fear that embracing this connection to her past might overwhelm her and prevent her from moving forward, forever bound by the oppressive nature of time and its associated regrets.

On this particular night, after the boys have left, Miss Foley's connection to these reflections becomes even more intense. She can almost feel them pulling her in, as if she could reach through the mirrors and rediscover forgotten pieces of herself. But there's a deep hesitation within her; the thought of unlocking these reflections terrifies her. What if each mirror she touched revealed not just memories, but an overwhelming cascade of versions of herself—versions that could suffocate her or leave her lost in a web of confusion? Her fear of becoming overwhelmed by these multiple selves, unable to make sense of it all, keeps her rooted in the present. Despite this, her yearning to connect with these lost parts of her intensifies, as she wonders whether confronting the past could offer her a form of healing or simply deepen the mystery surrounding her existence.

In the midst of these reflective thoughts, Miss Foley turns her attention to her nephew, whose recent arrival in her life has stirred emotions she cannot fully comprehend. His presence seems to create an inexplicable detachment within her, even as he

encourages her to embrace the excitement of the carnival. Despite his insistence on enjoying the carnival's offerings, particularly the music and excitement, Miss Foley cannot shake the sense that his presence carries a deeper, more unsettling meaning. He advises her to avoid the maze where winter rests, yet she feels drawn to him, especially when he entices her toward the carousel, which represents a symbol of summertime joy and enchantment. The pull of the carousel is strong—its promise of magic and escape drawing her away from the reflection-filled confines of her home and toward something that feels more immediate and tangible.



Torn between her emotions and her perceptions, Miss Foley glances outside at her untended lawn, imagining jewels scattered across it, each one a symbol of potential and untapped opportunity. She becomes more certain that her nephew has a plan, and she suspects that he seeks to isolate the two boys—Jim and Will—who might hinder her from fully seizing the opportunity represented by the carousel ticket she has found. She resolves to act independently, sensing that now is the time to protect herself from any external interference, particularly from the boys who have become an unwanted reminder of her past. She decides that her connection with her nephew is more important, and she will follow the pull toward the carousel, which promises something far more enticing than the life she has lived so far.

In this moment of resolve, Miss Foley recalls the unspoken encouragement her nephew has conveyed through touch, along with the faint scent of baked apples that lingers in her memory. Feeling more determined than ever, she takes the phone in hand and dials Mr. Halloway, Will's father. She arranges to meet him at the police station in ten minutes, a decision that marks a significant turning point in her actions. This moment signals her readiness to confront the complexities surrounding her nephew and her own desire to embrace the carousel's magic, despite the consequences. It is clear that Miss Foley is stepping into a new phase of her life, one that is filled with both anticipation and danger, as she chooses to follow her instincts rather than the well-meaning advice of others. The chapter reflects her internal conflict, as she moves further into a world of uncertainty and deeper personal revelations.