The Cone Gatherers - CHAPTER TWO

**Summary**: In chapter Two we meet Dr. Matheson as Duror is walking home from the woods. He offers Duror a lift home, which for Duror is an inconvenience as he will have to make small talk with the doctor. The doctor seems to be more interested in the lack of food due to the war and is not at all happy about it as he is used to fine food such as venison and whisky. Duror returns home to a desperately unhappy home life. His wife, Peggy, is morbidly overweight and is bedridden. We also meet the dour, hostile motherin-law Mrs Lochie. She blames Duror for her daughter’s misfortune and wants him to spend more time with her. We are of course, aware that Duror is repelled by anything that is deformed.

1. **DUROR**

• Duror meets Dr. Matheson. We can tell he is not happy about having to talk to the doctor •

Duror’s wife Peggy is morbidly obese. Why is this so significant?

• When asked about Peggy he is compared to a tree**. “Duror’s voice was as stripped of emotion as a winter tree” p16**

The doctor is suspicious that despite Duror’s stalwart and stoic appearance, something dark lurks in his mind :

“**For all its composure he suspected a sort of fanaticism lurking in it. God knows how many…………snakes of damnation” p16**

• The doctor admires Duror’s stoic nature

• Duror is desperately unhappy at home yet he hides his suffering :

“…**poor Duror for all his pretence of self possession……there could not be victory.” P17**

**“The envy that he felt……determination off for a rest” p18**

• Duror thinks of the cone-gatherers and how he is becoming obsessed:

“**This overwhelming aversion…….dependence upon them.” p18**

• Has Duror known that his sanity would, at one time, escape him?

“**For a long time he had dreaded……..now it was happening.” P18**

1. **DUROR’S UNHAPPY HOME LIFE**

• Duror wishes that he could be in the ‘miserable hut’ rather than be at home . He envies the “tranquillity and peace of mind” p25

• Mrs Lochie - she, like Duror will never show her suffering

• Mrs Lochie is aware of, and not afraid to comment on, Duror’s dissatisfaction with his married life p20

• Peggy and Duror were, at one time, happy **“When she had been well….to the clouds” p20**

1. **DUROR’S MADNESS**

Duror, in thinking about envying the cone gatherers, fears this equates to madness.

“ **that he should envy……….the ultimate horror, madness itself.” p25**

• Duror has a strong bond with his dogs. His dogs then sense the inner turmoil in their master’s mind as he fantasises about thrashing them – but he manages to regain control • We first hear of the deer drive and the hatching of the **evil** plan to create suffering for the brothers, which will lead to their dismissal. Duror believes that this is the solution to his torment:

**“the cone gatherers would have to obey….that dismissal might be his own liberation.” P27**

This, for Duror, is a “**conscious surrender to evil**.”. The word **“conscious**” is crucial. He knows what he is doing.

1. **PEGGY**

Physical description: **“The sweetness of her youth still haunting amidst the great wobbling masses of pallid fat……..unexpected tears**” p20

Her voice: “ Squeaky with an inveterate petulance..” “wheedling” “whimpered”

1. **TREE IMAGERY**

Duror’s inner turmoil is portrayed by the imagery of a tree- a tree of madness- growing within him.. This motif is used throughout the novel.

“**Do you really….and its fruit madness” p26**

**Homework for Monday 21st August**

Write a detailed description and evaluation of the character of Duror as presented to us inn Chapters One and Two. Use, and analyse quotations from the novel as evidence for points made. Include a personal response to the character evaluating how deserving Duror is of the reader’s sympathy- again, give evidence,