

Chapter-wise Summary of Disgrace/ CC-12

Chapters 1-4

David Lurie, a fifty two year old divorcee, was once a Professor of Modern Languages at Cape Town University but with the change of the times and administration, he is now Adjunct Professor of Communication. He is also limited in the courses he offers. Other than the mandatory Communication 101 and 201, he is allowed to offer only one elective or special-field course. This year he offers a course on Romantic poets. Lurie is apathetic toward the material he teaches and rarely engages his students. He no longer teaches out of passion or conviction but only to make a living. Over the past twenty-five years the professor has published three scholarly books on opera, the erotic nature of Richard of St. Victor's revelations, and Wordsworth's influence on history. Yet, his true desire is to write a chamber opera about love entitled *Byron in Italy*.

Every Thursday Lurie travels to a prominent gated community, enters a well-furnished apartment, and sleeps with **Soraya**, a prostitute that he chose from a catalogue at Discrete Escorts under the category of exotic. After Lurie unexpectedly sees Soraya in public with her children, Lurie becomes distracted during their lovemaking. Perhaps because she senses the awkwardness, Soraya announces that her mother is ill and so she can no longer see him. Lurie tries another prostitute also named "Soraya" but she is young and inexperienced. Having grown bored, he sleeps with a married secretary, Dawn; her enthusiasm in bed repels him and he makes sure to avoid her at work. Frustrated and even briefly but not seriously considering castration, Lurie calls Soraya at her home. She is horrified and demands that he never call her house. His response to her reaction is a cool observation, "What should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen's nest, into the home of her cubs?(10)."

Without his Thursdays with Soraya, Lurie is terribly bored until he spots a young student in his Romantics course. **Melanie Isaacs** is thin with dark eyes and hair and broad cheekbones. He first sees her by the college gardens and invites her to his house for a drink. Melanie is not an exceptional student and does not share his passion for Wordsworth or literature; she is a theater major and hopes to have a career in stagecraft and design. After dinner and a movie, Melanie inquires whether or not he is married. He replies he has been married twice and then proceeds to invite her to sleep with him. When she asks why, Lurie responds, "Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it (16)." She seems to be momentarily intrigued until he quotes Shakespeare. Melanie is turned off and makes an excuse to leave.

Instead of withdrawing his advances, Lurie pursues her more intensely. He looks into her records at the university to obtain her home address and telephone number, which he uses to invite her to lunch. Taken aback, she agrees but is clearly uncomfortable throughout the lunch date, not eating or talking much. They return to his house and have sex. She is passive throughout the act but he finds the act pleasurable and passes out on top of her. As soon as he awakes, she makes an excuse to leave. When Melanie comes to class the next day Wednesday, Lurie lectures on Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Melanie looks up from her book for the first time just as he is re-envisioning their sexual encounter; she at once understands and looks down.

Lurie continues his predatory behavior. He secretly watches her at a play rehearsal where Melanie is playing a hairdresser. The next afternoon, he goes to her apartment unannounced. He carries her to the bedroom even though she says that she doesn't want to have sex. Lurie says, "She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eye(25)." When it is over she asks him to leave because her cousin Pauline will be back soon. He watches her from his car and sees her immediately take a bath.

Melanie does not come to class for an entire week. She misses her mid-term and Lurie falsifies her record, giving her a C until she retakes the test. Sunday night, the next week, Melanie arrives at his door tired and disturbed, wanting a place to stay. He prepares his daughter's old room for her. Initially he is not prepared for the idea but after a little consideration likes the idea of having her available to him on a consistent basis. Yet, he is disturbed when she seems to be using the situation as leverage for her missing so many classes. The narrator says, "But if she has got away with much, he has got away with more; if she is behaving badly, he has behaved worse. To the extent that they are together, he is the one who leads, she the one that follows. Let him not forget that(28)."

They have sex one more time on his daughter's bed. A young man - Melanie's boyfriend - visits Lurie unexpectedly in his office that afternoon. He threatens Lurie with disclosure of the relationship. That night Lurie's car is vandalized and Melanie does not come to his house. Monday, Melanie reappears in class with her boyfriend. Ironically, Lurie's scheduled lecture for that day happens to be Byron's "Lara," referencing [Lucy](#). The class is unusually hushed. The boy answers a question about Lucifer with a knowing smirk saying, "He does what he feels like. He doesn't care if it's good or bad. He just does it(33)." After class Lurie speaks to Melanie in his office asking the boy to wait outside. He demands that she come to class more regularly and retake the test, all the while understanding her unspoken protest. When Melanie finally speaks, she does not commit to taking the test she missed and says that she has not read the material.

Chapters 5-6

Instead of making up the test, Melanie withdraws from Lurie's class. That same morning, Lurie receives a telephone call from Melanie's father. Unaware of the true nature of Lurie's and Melanie's relationship, Mr. Isaacs asks Lurie to encourage Melanie to stay in school. Reluctantly, Lurie agrees to talk to Melanie and attempts to phone her at her cousin Pauline's apartment. Pauline does not allow Lurie to talk to her. Attendance in his class that week is poor, and Lurie figures the story must have spread. Melanie's father, a small, thin man from the rural province of George, comes to Lurie's office and says in front of the staff and students,

We put our children in the hands of you people because we think we can trust you. If we can't trust the university. Who can we trust? We never thought we were sending our daughter into a nest of vipers. No, Professor Lurie, you may be high and mighty and have all kinds of degrees, but if I was you I'd be very ashamed of myself (38).

Lurie is visibly embarrassed and rushes out of the office.

The next morning the Student Affairs office (Vice-Rector's) contacts Lurie informing him a sexual harassment complaint has been filed against him and includes a copy of the corresponding section of the Code of Conduct he has been accused of violating, Article 3.1: the victimization or harassment of students by teachers. Lurie is shocked by the notification and refuses to believe that Melanie filed the complaint out of her own will. He imagines a scene in which Pauline forces Melanie to file the complaint. Lurie, after going to the office and signing the complaint, notes, "The deed is done. Two names on the page, his and hers, side by side. Two in a bed, lovers no longer but foes (40)."

When Lurie arrives for his appointment at [Aram Hakim](#)'s office (the Vice-Rector), his department chair, [Elaine Winter](#), and the university chair, [Farodia Rassool](#), are present. They inform Lurie of the harassment charge and further accuse him of falsifying Melanie's attendance records. Hakim, who unlike Elaine is somewhat sympathetic, advises Lurie to seek legal counsel.

Lurie quickly becomes a pariah. Only two students enroll in Lurie's Baudelaire class the next term. Lurie seeks advice from a lawyer who recommends that Lurie temporarily leave school and enter counseling in exchange for dropped charges. However, Lurie rejects counseling, refusing to exhibit shame for his desires. During a dinner with his ex-wife of eight years, [Rosalind](#), Lurie reveals that he plans to visit his daughter, [Lucy](#), on the Eastern Cape once the term is over. Rosalind brings up the scandal at the university and openly expresses her disapproval. The next day Rosalind informs Lurie of an article that has been written in the local paper, *Argus* regarding the affair.

The date of the hearing arrives. Melanie, who has submitted her statement to the committee the day before, is not present. Manas Mathabane, Professor of Religious Studies, chairs the hearing. Hakim is the secretary. The remainder of the committee is composed of Farodia Rassool, Desmond Swarts (Dean of Engineering), and a professor from the Business School whom Lurie does not know. Lurie is defiant throughout. When informed of the charges, Lurie says:

I am sure the members of this committee have better things to do with their time than rehash a story over which there will be no dispute. I plead guilty to both charges. Pass sentence, and let us get on with our lives (48).

The committee insists upon a confession of wrongdoing, but the closest Lurie allows himself to come is when he says, "I was not myself. I was no longer a fifty-year-old divorcee at a loose end. I became a servant of Eros (52)." This half-hearted confession does not appease the committee. Lurie leaves to meet a hostile press corps, to whom he is also condescending, saying that he was enriched by the experience. In return, they publish a scathing article. Mathabane contacts Lurie to discuss the terms of the settlement. In exchange for his statement, they offer Lurie a leave of absence and a return to teaching conditioned upon the consent of the Dean and the head of the Department. Lurie refuses.

Chapters 7-10

After his resignation, Lurie locks himself up his house before traveling to [Lucy's](#) farm in Salem, a town on the Eastern Cape. Lucy, who has gained weight since he last saw her, greets him warmly. She is a true rustic now, barefoot in a flowered dress. She makes her money from her kennel and from selling produce and flowers. Lurie stays in Lucy's girlfriend Helen's room—Helen has recently moved back to Johannesburg and Lucy now lives on the farm alone.

In the back of Lucy's farm is a converted stable where [Petrus](#), Lucy's assistant, and his family live. That day, Lurie has an opportunity to meet Petrus, a tall man in overalls and rubber boots. At dinner that night, Lucy carefully brings up the topic of her father's dismissal. He reveals that he protested the university's insistence upon "reformation of character." Lucy appears relatively accepting of her father's action—affairs with students were not uncommon during her school years—and offers him "refuge."

Lucy introduces Lurie to life on the farm; he helps to sell her produce and to run her animal refuge. At the refuge he meets [Bev Shaw](#), a robust woman. Bev initially repulses Lurie because she makes little effort to be attractive and her house smells of cat urine. Lurie also meets her husband, Bill. Lurie later remarks to Lucy, "It's admirable, what you do, what [Bev] does, but to me animal-welfare people are a bit like Christians of a certain kind. Everyone is so cheerful and well-intentioned that after a while you itch to go off and do some raping and pillaging. Or to kick a cat (73)."

Lurie finds life on the farm generally boring. Lucy encourages her father to stay and suggests that he find activities to occupy his time, like cutting up the dog-meat, helping Petrus establish his own land, or possibly volunteering at the animal shelter with Bev. Upon the last suggestion Lurie objects jokingly, saying, "I'm dubious, Lucy. It sounds suspiciously like community

service. It sounds like someone trying to make reparations for past misdeeds (77)." Lucy replies that the dogs don't care about your motives. Lurie agrees but only on the condition that he does not become a better person.

Lurie's first job as an animal volunteer is to help restrain a dog as Bev lances an impacted tooth. Next, a goat needs to be put down after being attacked. Lurie begins to understand Bev Shaw's purpose, thinking to himself, "This bleak building is a place not of healing-her doctoring is too amateurish for that-but of last resort... Bev Shaw is not a veterinarian but a priestess, full of New Age mumbo jumbo, trying, absurdly, to lighten the load of Africa's suffering beasts (84)." Back with Lucy, Lurie decides to try and adjust to quiet country life.

Chapters 11-13

Lurie and his daughter wake up early on Wednesday morning and walk the dogs together. [Lucy](#) encourages her father to take a position at a local university, above his insistence that he is no longer marketable. They discuss Lurie's position-having been punished for desire-and Lucy remarks that men should not be able to act upon desires simply because they have them. She is generally unwilling to abet Lurie's attempts to draw self-pity.

As they walk together, they encounter three men whom they've never seen before. When they return from their walk with the dogs, the men are waiting for them at the house and ask to use the phone. Lucy lets a young boy in to use the phone, but the other two men push past. Lurie, seeing the attack, calls out to his daughter but there is silence. He sets one dog on the attackers before being knocked unconscious in the kitchen. The men shoot the dogs with Lucy's rifle and light Lurie on fire. In the end, Lurie is badly burned. Only one dog survives. Lurie tries to comfort his daughter but she wriggles away and locks herself in the bathroom. She finally comes out and agrees to seek help from a neighbor. She tells Lurie that she has been raped.

Lucy returns with her neighbor, Ettinger, who drives Lurie to the hospital to take care of his burns. Lucy stays behind to talk to the police. After Lurie is treated he finds [Bill Shaw](#) waiting for him and is surprised to see that Bill considers him such a friend. Bill takes him back to his house, where Lurie takes a bath and falls asleep on the couch. A dream about Lucy awakens him. He goes to see her but is abruptly turned away. Lucy treats him very distantly. She decides to return to life on the farm, though Lurie discourages her from doing so.

Lurie and Lucy remain at the Shaw's, receiving treatment. He probes Bev for further details regarding Lucy's rape, worried about the risk of sexually transmitted diseases in addition to pregnancy. Bev however refuses to reveal more than what Lucy has. Cut off from his daughter, Lurie grows increasingly depressed.

Two police officers arrive to file an official report. Lucy emerges from her room haggard and Bev drives them back to the farm. **Petrus** is nowhere to be found. Everything is as they left it: the dead dogs' bodies are in the kennel. The only survivor is the abandoned bulldog, [Katy](#). Lucy reports the robbery and her father's assault but leaves out her rape, even when the police notice that the bed has been stripped bare (which occurred during the rape). Lurie cannot get his daughter to tell him why she refuses to report the rape. He buries the dead dogs and offers to let Lucy sleep in his room, as she no longer feels comfortable in hers. Lucy finally explains why she doesn't report the rape, saying, "The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not (112)."

Chapters 14-15

The next day, Ettinger arrives with suggestions for security measures that should be taken, but Lurie is unsure his daughter will ever consent to them. Things have changed irrevocably: the only constant seems to be the abandoned bulldog, [Katy](#).

[Petrus](#) returns with his wife in a cab, dressed in a suit and bringing with him all kinds of building materials. Lurie is suspicious of the timing of Petrus' absence and questions him; [Lucy](#), however, refuses to consider his possible role in the crime. When Petrus comes to the house, he has heard about the robbery and asks if Lurie is okay. Petrus does not ask about Lucy. Petrus encourages them to go to the market so that they will not lose their stall; however, Lucy is not ready to appear in public. Lurie thus appears at the market in his bandages for Lucy's sake, with Petrus accompanying him. Petrus does all the work at the market and Lurie considers how times have changed since apartheid; he decides "[h]e would not mind hearing Petrus' story one day (117)."

Lurie continues to distrust Petrus, believing that Petrus "has a vision of the future in which people like Lucy have no place (118)." While helping Petrus clean out the algae from the storage dam, Lurie confronts him about the crime. Petrus does not admit any further knowledge of the event. When Lurie becomes worked up about wanting to find justice for his daughter, Petrus coolly responds that he is not wrong for that desire. Lurie meanwhile picks up the slack around the farm, caring for his depressed daughter. This care-giving role frustrates him, as he prefers to work on his Byron opera.

Petrus throws a party to celebrate his land transfer. In preparation for the party, Petrus purchases two sheep for the feast. Lurie feels sympathy for the sheep, saying, "I'm not sure I like the way he does things - bringing the slaughter-beasts home to acquaint them with the people who are going to eat them (124)." Lucy finds his view ludicrous.

Lucy wears a knee-length floral dress, high heels, and jewelry to Petrus' party. She encourages her father to wear a tie. Petrus' home is very humble. The old stable has no ceiling or proper floor; pictures soften the walls. Lucy and Lurie are the only whites present. When Petrus greets them he introduces Lucy as his "benefactor" and says, "No more dogs. I am not any more the dog-man (129)." As her gift, Lucy has brought the family an Ashanti bedspread. Petrus' wife is expecting a child and Petrus desires a boy.

After the party has been going on for a while, one of the three robbers arrives. Lucy wishes to leave immediately. However, Lurie confronts him and asks Lucy to confirm his identity but Lucy will not do so in front of so many people. They leave the party. Lurie intends to call the police but Lucy will not let him. When Lurie confronts his daughter about why she refuses to confront the boy or charge him, she insists again upon her privacy. Lurie is sad that they no longer are like father and daughter but rather quarrel like husband and wife. After Lucy has gone to bed, Lurie returns to the party as an outsider and witnesses a chieftain's speech.

Chapters 16-20

Lurie gets an opportunity to approach [Petrus](#) about the robber at his party when they lay pipes together. Petrus does not answer the question, instead recoiling at the suggestion that he is a thief. Lurie presses Petrus, who resists, denying that the boy is guilty of any crime.

Later while working in the animal clinic, Lurie confides in [Bev Shaw](#), relating his concern for [Lucy](#). Bev Shaw tries to reassure him that Petrus is trustworthy but Lurie vehemently disagrees. Lurie discovers from Bev that Lucy does not think her father understands her suffering because he was not there during the rape. Meanwhile Lurie tries to give Lucy as much space as possible. He becomes more involved at the animal clinic and putting the animals to sleep begins to affect him more. He reflects deeply on his role in their deaths.

One Sunday after Lurie finishes his work at the clinic, Bev Shaw asks him about what happened in Cape Town. He tells her and she inquires whether he regrets his actions; he replies that he did not regret them in the heat of the act. The next day the clinic is closed, but Bev asks Lurie to meet her there in the afternoon anyways. On the floor of the clinic, they have sex. Bev has planned the entire event. She is ready with blankets and contraceptives. Afterwards, Lurie and Bev go on with their lives as usual.

Lurie approaches Petrus again as Petrus plows his newly acquired land with a borrowed tractor. Lurie proposes that Petrus act as a temporary farm manager while he and Lucy holiday in Cape Town for a while. Petrus declines, stating that it will be too much responsibility. Later, the police call claiming to have discovered Lurie's stolen Corolla. The police would like him to come to the station to identify the car. Lucy drives with him, but when they arrive Lurie discovers it is not his car. The news upsets Lucy, who reveals that she is anxious for the two men to be caught and fears that otherwise they'll return.

As they drive back to the farm, Lucy shares with her father the details of the rape. There were three men. The two older men were experienced whereas the youngest boy was there to learn. The act was violent and filled with hate. After their conversation, Lurie writes his daughter a note pleading with her to escape from the danger. Lucy responds, claiming that even if the path is wrong she will not be defeated because then she "will taste that defeat for the rest of my life" (161).

Lurie returns to Cape Town, stopping by the Isaacs' home in George on the way. Although he is intending to speak with Mr. Isaacs, [Desiree](#), the younger daughter, answers the door. Lurie is immediately attracted to the young girl, who resembles Melanie. Lurie decides to meet Mr. Isaacs at his office instead (Mr. Isaacs is principal of a middle school). Lurie tries to explain himself but Mr. Isaacs interrupts him. As Lurie leaves, Mr. Isaacs appears to have a change of heart and invites him to have dinner with his family. The dinner is awkward. Mr. Isaacs' wife and daughter are uncomfortable with him in the house. Before he leaves, Lurie finally apologizes, saying to Mr. Isaacs, "I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs. Isaacs. I ask for your pardon (171)." These are the words Mr. Isaacs has been waiting for. Mr. Isaacs questions Lurie about his future and, in a later telephone call, promises to intervene on his behalf with the university.

When Lurie arrives in Cape Town, he finds that his house has been raided. Appliances, shoes, clothes, suitcases, and more have all been stolen. The next morning, Lurie picks up his mail at the university. He realizes that he misses Salem and calls Lucy from a public phone to see how she is doing. He does not tell her about the raid and offers to come back if she needs him, but she declines. Lurie returns to his work on the Byron opera without getting anywhere. He decides a piano is not adequate accompaniment because it is "too rounded, too physical, too rich," opting for a banjo instead.

Chapters 21-24

Lurie meets his ex-wife, [Rosalind](#), for coffee, during which they first discuss [Lucy's](#) safety on the farm. Then Rosalind turns the topic back to the Melanie case. Despite the supposed confidentiality of the hearing, Lurie's poor performance is common knowledge. Lurie asserts that he stood up for his "freedom to remain silent." Rosalind expresses her anger that Lurie has thrown his career away for an affair. Meanwhile she mentions that [Melanie Isaacs](#) is in a play at Dock Theatre. Lurie decides to attend her performance of *Sunset at Globe Salon*; however, Melanie's boyfriend, [Ryan](#), spots him there and throws spitballs at him. After the performance he asks the professor if he had learned his lesson to "stay with your own kind (194)." Later that night, Lurie picks up a young prostitute.

Lurie keeps up with Lucy over the phone. He feels that she is withholding something from him so he calls [Bev Shaw](#). After an ambiguous response, he visits Lucy in Salem. She is pregnant, having never taken emergency contraception after the rape. Lurie must take a walk in order to not explode in front of Lucy. Over dinner, Lucy informs Lurie that the young rapist has returned. His name is [Pollux](#), and he is [Petrus](#)' brother-in-law. Lurie confronts Petrus, who says that he would suggest that Pollux marry Lucy if he weren't so young. As a compromise, Petrus agrees to marry Lucy. The absurdity of the offer enrages Lurie. When he tells Lucy about it, however, she has already been considering the proposal. Because she is a woman alone, she needs protection. Realistically, she has no father or brothers who can protect her. She tells Lurie to propose to Petrus that he provide her with protection in exchange for her land, adding that he can publicly call her his third wife.

The next morning Lurie takes a walk with [Katy](#). They catch Pollux spying on Lucy as she takes a shower. Lurie has the dog attack Pollux and then kicks him on the ground. Lucy comes out and stops the attack. Both Lucy and Lurie admit that the boy is mentally disturbed, but for some reason Lucy protects him.

Lurie returns to the shelter to help Bev. With her help he finds a room in Grahamstown. He buys a truck to transport the dogs' bodies to the incinerator. In his spare time, he plays his banjo amongst the dogs trying to compose the music to his opera. Lurie has a dream about [Teresa Guiccoli](#) in his sleep. She is a ghost pleading for Byron to come with her. On Saturdays, Lurie helps Lucy at the market. Soon, they are on visiting terms once again. The novel ends on a Sunday when Lurie is putting dogs to sleep at the shelter. He kills a dog that he has grown fond of without resistance.

Character List of Disgrace

David Lurie : twice-divorced professor of Communications at Cape Technical University in Cape Town South Africa, fifty-two years old.

Soraya: prostitute that Lurie has visited weekly for over a year.

Melanie Isaacs : student in Lurie's Romantics course who charges a sexual harassment complaint against him after having sex with Lurie.

Lucy :Lurie's daughter who owns a farm and takes care of dogs. Lurie lives with her after he is dismissed from his position at the University.

Bev Shaw : woman who runs the animal shelter and with whom Lurie has an affair.

Bill Shaw :Bev's husband, who sees Davis Lurie as his friend.

Petrus : African who works for Lucy.

Mr. Isaac : Melanie's father whom Lurie apologizes to after the incident.

Pollux : one of the three South Africans who raped Lucy; Petrus' brother-in-law.

Katy : the surviving dog.

Elaine Winter: chair of Communications department.

Farodia Rassool: Social Studies professor, chair of the committee on discrimination.

Aram Hakim : sympathetic member of Melanie's sexual harassment investigation.

Rosalind : Lurie's second ex-wife.

Evelina : Lucy's biological mother.

Teresa Guiccoli : Byron's last mistress before he dies; Byron and Teresa's relationship is the topic of Lurie's opera.

Ryan : Melanie's boyfriend.

Desiree : Melanie's younger sister.

Courtesy : Dr. Md. Ejaz Alam