***Tuck Everlasting***

***Chapter 19***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Brief Summary***

When the stranger stepped into the house, he immediately told Winifred that she was safe now and he had come to take her home, but Tuck insisted that they would be the ones to take her home. Eventually, after several comments back and forth, Tuck asked the man to explain himself. Although neither man was angry, the tension between the Tucks and this man was very heavy. Even Winnie could feel it and she stayed by Tuck.

The stranger told his story explaining that when he was a young child living west of Treegap, his grandmother had told him of a friend that had come to stay with her for a short time. She had two children, a boy and a girl and the children had played with his mother. The friend had told his grandmother of the strange family she had married into; she believed them to be witches, because the whole family, including her husband, never seemed to age. Mae jumped up and confronted the stranger; Tuck followed her telling the man to get to the point.

The stranger continued his story. He explained how he had studied philosophy, metaphysics and medicine but found nothing to explain a family that never aged. When he returned to his grandmother after his studies were complete, he brought her a music box as a present. His grandmother suddenly remembered the mother of the strange family had a similar music box. His mother knew the song from playing with the children all those years before and taught him the melody.

Twenty years later, the stranger began to look for the family again. He explained how he had heard the melody his mother taught him several nights before in the wood behind the Foster's home. He then told them how he had seen Mae and the boys taking Winifred away with them, so he followed, heard everything he needed to hear, found out where they were and returned to the Fosters on the Tuck's horse. He finished by saying the Fosters had given him the woods in exchange for returning the daughter.

Tuck called the man a horse thief and asked the purpose of all of this. The stranger explained his scheme of bottling the water in the spring and selling it to worthy people for a very large sum. He insinuated that the Tucks were not worthy people several times during this conversation. He told them he wanted their help with advertising and, of course, he would pay them.

Jesse had heard enough. He could not believe this man wanted them to be "freaks" for him to make a profit. The family jumped up and all started telling him not to tell anyone about the spring. The stranger was now angry. He grabbed Winnie by the arm very hard and started dragging her from the house. Winnie fought the whole time, screaming that she would not go with him.

The stranger opened the door and started to leave with Winnie, when Mae told him to leave the child. She held Tuck's old shotgun like a bat. The man called them stupid and told them they could not stop him. He continued by saying that he would make Winifred drink from the spring and use her. Mae took the gun and hit him on the back of his head. He fell to the ground as the constable came through the trees and saw the end of the argument.

***Brief Analysis:***

The three wheels have come together. It is obvious that the happiness that had once followed each wheel has been disrupted. The Tucks truly care for Winnie, which becomes apparent when Mae strikes the stranger. Winnie and the Tucks know that no one can ever find out about the spring and they must do everything in their power to protect it.

The author has built the stranger up with an air of mystery, but the plan that he divulges to the Tucks is completely evil and is what would be expected of him. There is a surprise, though, when he threatens to use Winnie in his scheme. From this encounter with the Tucks, the reader sees the stranger as more evil and greedy then before.

***Summary in detail:***

The man in the yellow suit tells Winnie she's safe now, but she doesn't feel reassured. Tuck insists that the rest of them were going to take her home, but the man in the yellow suit ignores him.

Instead, the man in the yellow suit explains that his grandmother told him stories about a family that never aged. His grandmother's friend had married one of the sons in the family, but she'd left him when he still looked the same after years of marriage. The woman had a son and a daughter, and Miles exclaims that they were his. The man in the yellow suit says he was fascinated by these stories, and eventually attended university to try to find the secrets behind them. He could find no evidence of this mysterious family, and nearly gave up. However, one day he brought his grandmother a music box as a gift, and she remarked that the mother of the family that never aged also had a music box, and hummed part of the tune. The man in yellow remembered the tune, thinking it was a useful clue. He was searching the countryside looking for this mysterious family when he heard that tune - it was Mae's music box. He followed the tune and listened in on their story, then made the Fosters give him the woods in exchange for bringing back Winnie.

The man in yellow says he plans to sell the water for a high price, and only to people he approves of. However, he would welcome the Tucks if they helped him advertise - they can shoot themselves in the chest to prove that the spring water really does make a person immortal. The Tucks are enraged by this suggestion. The man in yellow grabs Winnie, who screams in protest. He tells the Tucks that they were selfish and stupid to keep the knowledge of the spring to themselves. He'll force Winnie to drink some of the water, and she can help him advertise for his product instead. Mae is enraged by this idea and grabs Tuck's shotgun. She hits the man in yellow in the head with the gun, and he falls to the ground. It is at this moment that the constable walks in.

***Analysis (Chapter 16 to 21):***

In Chapter Twenty-One, Winnie bluntly remarks that the man in the yellow suit might die as the result of his injuries, which shocks her parents and grandmother. This radical honesty and insight is evidence of her character growth - she accepts that death is a thing that happens to all living creatures and is not afraid to speak about it. The narrative implies that her family does not entirely accept this truth (they are shocked when she says this and they treat her with some anxiety). However, though she accepts death, she does not glorify it or seek to push living things to death before their time. The incident with the fish on the lake in Chapter Seventeen makes this clear - Winnie does not want to be the reason that this beautiful living creature dies, even if that means that she goes hungry.

There are elements of class differences between the Tucks and the man in yellow. The speaking style of the man in the yellow suit (which is very formal and stilted) as well as his brag of receiving a university education suggests that he is wealthy and educated, while the Tucks have received no formal education and live in simplicity. Yet he is evil and they are good, which suggests that goodness is not necessarily related to wealth or education.

One of the central questions that pushed [Natalie Babbitt](https://www.gradesaver.com/author/natalie-babbitt) to write [Tuck Everlasting](https://www.gradesaver.com/tuck-everlasting) is this: why might it not be good to be immortal? The narrative suggests four distinct reasons: it removes one from the cycle of life, it is lonely, it would make the world too crowded, and it would allow evil or unpleasant creatures to remain in the world forever. Previously, Tuck said that it is unnatural, that it removes a person from the cycles of growth and decay that characterize the lives of every living creature. The Tucks explained to Winnie how their former community had driven them out because they did not age, and they did not dare to make new friends who would eventually learn their secret. While on the pond, Miles points out that the world would get very crowded if no one ever died. Winnie wonders about a world in which creatures like mosquitoes could never be killed, and the arrival of the wicked man in the yellow suit, who wants to exploit the spring for profit, raises difficult questions about the difficulties resulting from an evil person drinking from the spring of immortality.

It is perhaps a narrative gap that the Foster family do not suspect the man in yellow of kidnapping Winnie (especially given that he was seen speaking to her when she was in the yard a few nights before) and turn him over to the constable. However, this may point to how desperate they are to find their daughter again.

Despite the fact that Mae is a murderer, Winnie is determined to help her. Though Mae is indeed guilty of killing a man, she did this only to protect Winnie and did not actually intend to kill the man, just drive him away. Moreover, if Mae is executed, she will not die. Not only would this potentially reveal the secret of the Tucks to the rest of the world, it could also result in great suffering for Mae - though she cannot die, she can probably still feel pain, so execution could be an agonizing experience.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

The [man in the yellow suit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-man-in-the-yellow-suit) looks around for a minute before addressing [Winnie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/winnie-foster) and telling her she's safe. Winnie thinks that there's something suspicious and unpleasant behind the man's expressionless face. [Angus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/angus-tuck) explains that they were going to bring Winnie home themselves. The man tells Angus to sit down and listen to what he has to say. He stands by the hearth and says that he was born in the west, where his grandmother told him stories about one of her friends who married a man who never got any older. Her husband's family didn't get older either and finally, the friend left her husband. Miles whispers, "[Anna](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters)."

***Analysis Part 1:***

Here, the man in the yellow suit begins to symbolize the age-old interest in immortality and evading death. While this is something that humans are naturally curious about, since it's something that humans can't actually know, Angus's talks with Winnie suggest to the reader that this man's curiosity and desire to figure out the secret are actually misplaced.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Mae](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/mae-tuck) tells the [man in the yellow suit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-man-in-the-yellow-suit) that he has no right to talk to them about this, while [Angus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/angus-tuck) tells the man to get to his point. The man in the yellow suit says that he was fascinated by these stories and went to school to figure out how it could be true. After school, the man gave his grandmother a music box, which made the grandmother remember that her friend's mother-in-law had a music box. The friend's children knew the melody by heart and the man's grandmother taught it to him. He says that he started looking a few months ago and finally heard the melody coming from the Fosters' wood, saw the Tucks take [Winnie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/winnie-foster), and heard their story.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Because the man in the yellow suit has dedicated his life to figuring out how to evade death, he represents a third option for how a person can spend their days (the first option being Winnie, who's alive and seems as though she'll continue to grow, and the second being the Tucks, who don't change and in some cases long for death). However, the man's classism and distaste for the Tucks suggests that he's a foe, not a friend, and his intentions aren't actually good.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Mae](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/mae-tuck) goes suddenly pale and asks the [man in the yellow suit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-man-in-the-yellow-suit) what he's going to do. With a smile, the man says that Winnie's [father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters) gave him the wood in exchange for bringing [Winnie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/winnie-foster) home. Flushing, the man says that now, he can bottle and sell the water to "certain people, people who deserve it." It will be very expensive. He says that "ignorant people" like the Tucks shouldn't have the opportunity to purchase it, but since the Tucks are already immortal, he'll pay them to perform deadly tasks to demonstrate the water's efficacy. In a dull voice, [Jesse](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/jesse-tuck) says that the man wants them to be freaks.

***Analysis Part 3:***

With this, the man in the yellow suit suggests that only a certain type of person (one who's able to pay and who comes from an affluent background) should have access to immortality. This suggests that one type of life is more valuable than others, something that the novel overwhelmingly indicates isn't actually the case. Just as the novel suggests that people should take the lives of non-human beings seriously, it also suggests that all people, no matter who they are, play crucial roles in the cycle of life.

***Summary Part 4:***

This makes the [man in the yellow suit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-man-in-the-yellow-suit) raise his eyebrows. He says that he thought it'd be nice to offer and points out that with the money, the Tucks could live "like people again, instead of pigs." At this, [Angus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/angus-tuck), [Jesse](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/jesse-tuck), and [Miles](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/miles-tuck) shout at the man, who grabs [Winnie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/winnie-foster) and roughly shoves her out the door. Winnie screams that she won't go with him. She turns to see [Mae](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/mae-tuck) behind her, holding the rifle like a club, and Mae tells the man to leave Winnie alone. The man says that it's selfish to not share the water and says that when Winnie drinks the water, she'll be even more effective in demonstrating its power. Mae's face is bright red as she swings the shotgun and hits him in the back of his head. The man drops instantly as the [constable](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-constable) emerges from the trees.

***Analysis Part 4:***

The way that the man in the yellow suit speaks about the Tucks also suggests that he assigns moral value to economic standing--that is, poor people like the Tucks are, in his eyes, less "good" and not as moral as wealthy people like himself. Mae's choice to hit the man with the gun shows that even if she's resigned to her fate as an immortal, she doesn't believe that anyone should be forced to make the same decision and is willing to remove a dangerous person from the world in order to protect Winnie from this fate.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

"But I'm not going to sell it to just anybody," he protested. "Only to certain people, people who deserve it. And it will be very, very expensive. But who wouldn't give a fortune to live forever?"

"I wouldn't," said Tuck grimly. (19.23-4)

***Explanation:***

This seems pretty obviously wrong, wouldn't you say? But why? How is controlling who gets the water any different than keeping it a secret (like the Tucks are doing)? What's the difference?

***Quotation 2:***

But Mae's face was dark red. "Not Winnie!" she said between clenched teeth. "You ain't going to do a thing like that to Winnie. And you ain't going to give out the secret." (19.37)

***Explanation:***

As much as Mae is concerned about protecting Winnie, she's also concerned about keeping the spring thing under wraps. We could look at that two ways: (1) She wants to continue the lie she and her family have perpetuated for so long, or (2) she's protecting more than just Winnie—she's protecting the world at large.