***Tuck Everlasting***

***Chapter 21***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Brief Summary***

Winnie sat in her rocking chair by her bedroom window. Her family had doted on her from the moment the constable brought her home. She told them about the Tucks and said that they are her friends. She asked her parents if they had really given the stranger the woods. Her father admitted he had and she told them what Mae had done to the stranger. Her father immediately said something about getting the woods back, but stopped short of finishing the sentence. Winnie finished it for him, acknowledging that the woods would be theirs again if the stranger died. She said the sentence without emotion. They knew she had changed.

She had changed. There were things that were hers alone, that she only shared with the Tucks. She watched the night sky hoping for rain, hoping the stranger would live and Mae would be saved. The constable arrived at the house and Winnie crept out to the stairs to hear what was being said. The constable told Mr. Foster that the stranger had died and since he had witnessed the incident, Mae would hang.

Winnie overheard the entire conversation. She crawled into bed understanding that Mae had killed the man because she had to. She did it to protect her family and Winnie. Winnie realized then that she had to do something to keep Mae from the gallows. She just did not know what she needed to do.

Brief Analysis:

The author changes things around now. The stranger is out of the way, but the Tucks are now in need of protection. As they protected Winnie, she will now protect them. There is also a resolution involving Winnie. The author lets this resolution come through, when Winnie finishes her father's sentence about death. Although the reader is not sure about how she is dealing with things, they know that she has a better understanding of life than most people.

Analysis in Depth chapter 16-21

Winnie sits in the rocking chair in her room. Her family had been so happy to see her, but they dismissed her when she said that the Tucks had not kidnapped her. She asks them about the man in the yellow suit and if they had given him the woods in exchange for finding her, and they said they had. She bluntly explains that Mae hit him in the head with a shotgun and that he might die, which shocks her family and makes them treat her differently. A storm starts to brew as Winnie thinks about how to help the Tucks. She also thinks about the man in the yellow suit - if he dies, that means Mae will be sent to the gallows, but if he lives, he knows about the spring and will plan to sell the water. Not long after, a man comes to the door to announce that the man in the yellow suit has died. Since there was no kidnapping, the rest of the Tucks will not face charges, but [Mae Tuck](https://www.gradesaver.com/tuck-everlasting/study-guide/character-list#mae-tuck) will be executed. Winnie thinks about the time she killed a wasp and then immediately wishes she hadn't. She wonders if Mae is weeping for the man in the yellow suit. Despite the fact that Mae is a murderer, Winnie is determined to help her.

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:***

[Winnie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/winnie-foster) pulls a child-size [rocking chair](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/symbols/winnie-s-rocking-chair) up to her window. She sits in it even though it's too small because it makes her feel comfortable and soothed. She remembers how, when the [constable](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-constable) brought her home, her [mother](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters), [father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters), and [Granny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters) met her at the [fence](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/symbols/the-fence). They refused to believe that Winnie left of her own accord and that the Tucks were good and kind people. They were horrified when Winnie told them that [Mae](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/mae-tuck) hit the [man in the yellow suit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-man-in-the-yellow-suit), and Winnie's father reasons that they'll get the wood back if he doesn't make it. He cannot finish the sentence, however, and when Winnie finishes it for him, the adults are shocked. They tuck her into bed and treat her as though she's a different child than the one that left.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The way that Winnie's parents treat her makes it very clear that what Winnie experienced at the Tucks catapulted her into maturity in a number of ways. She now understands that death is necessary and is willing to speak these hard truths, as well as ask the adults to listen to what she has to say. However, even as she's taken these steps in the direction of maturity, Winnie is still a child. She still seeks comfort from things like the rocking chair, which is a reminder of how safe and comfortable her childhood was before she learned these difficult things.

***Summary Part 2:***

Sitting in her [rocking chair](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/symbols/winnie-s-rocking-chair), [Winnie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/winnie-foster) thinks that she is different and experienced things that are “hers alone.” She finds this lonely and somewhat satisfying. The rocking makes her feel connected to her family, but she also now feels connected to the Tucks. Winnie watches heat lightning in the distance, puts her head on her arms, and sees an image of the [man in the yellow suit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-man-in-the-yellow-suit), motionless in the dust. She thinks that the man can't die, but she also thinks that if the Tucks' story about the spring is true, the man has to die. Winnie knows that this is why [Mae](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/mae-tuck) hit him.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Feeling connected to both the Tucks and to Winnie's family shows that as Winnie has gone through this journey to start to come of age, an essential part of that was making new friends that are hers and hers alone. The fact that she finds this independence both satisfying and lonesome speaks to her liminal space in her development, where she's not totally a child but not entirely an independent adult yet.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Winnie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/winnie-foster) hears hoof beats and a knock at the door. She creeps out of her room and listens to the [constable](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-constable) tell her [father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters) that they can't press kidnapping charges, since Winnie says she chose to leave. However, the [man in the yellow suit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/the-man-in-the-yellow-suit) is dead and now [Mae](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tuck-everlasting/characters/mae-tuck) is a convicted murderer. Winnie creeps back to her room, climbs into bed, and thinks that Mae killed the man and meant to do it. She remembers killing a wasp once so it wouldn't sting her, but when she saw the wasp's body, she cried and wished it were alive again. Winnie wonders if Mae wishes the man in the yellow suit were alive, even if Mae does want to save the world. Winnie decides that she has to do something to save Mae from the gallows.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Winnie's thought process shows a great deal of maturity and nuance. She recognizes that there are multiple ways to look at what happened and importantly, that she doesn't have to choose to look at things from only one direction: she can mourn and feel bad for the loss of the man in the yellow suit, while also believing that Mae did the right thing in killing him. Because Mae is Winnie's friend, that connection gives her the space to come to this mature conclusion and illustrates how friendship can help foster this nuance.