

Love medicine summary



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Love Medicine Summary, essay,? 1419816?, Kashpaw In 1981, June Kashpaw is traveling home when she is called into a bar by a man she thinks she knows. She needs money so agrees to leave with him, out into the winter countryside; they have sex in his car. Moved by a feeling she cannot explain, June gets out of the car and starts walking through the snow. She is never again seen alive. June™s niece, Albertine Johnson, hears about her aunt™s death much later, after the funeral, when her mother writes to let her know. Albertine is angry, as she had been fond of her aunt, but sees the late notice as typical for the Kashpaw family. The family™s complex structure generates incomprehensible drama, and the family™s history goes back to the time of Rushes Bear and the division of American Indian land.

June had married her cousin, Gordie Kashpaw, to general disapproval, leading this latest generation into even more drama. After June™s disappearance, Albertine™s mother, Zelda, and her Aunt Aurelia had organized a family gathering. Joining Albertine at the gathering are June™s son, King Kashpaw; his wife, Lynette; and their son, King, Jr. Brothers Nector and Eli Kashpaw still hold the family™s land.

Nector, married to Marie, had been educated in the white school, while Eli had remained at home” hidden” and received a more traditional education. Nector and Eli represent two strands of family history, and Albertine feels at a loss to retrieve much of that history now that Nector™s memory is fading. The family gathering is contentious. King, Jr., is drunk, abusive, and violent. He has used his mother™s insurance money to buy a large new car and feels guilty about doing so.

Unable to articulate his grief over his mother™s death, he and Lynette fight, damaging the pies being baked for the gathering. Albertine, meanwhile, has fled with another of June™s sons, Lipsha Morrissey, who had been adopted by the Morrisseys. Lipsha and Albertine sit in the darkness, talking. Allegedly, Lipsha does not know his father™s name. Fifty years earlier, Marie Lazarre is determined to become a nun at the Sacred Heart Convent, having been a pupil at the school. However, she is bullied and abused by one of the nuns and runs away. She encounters Nector as he heads to the market, and in a bizarre encounter, they have sex. They later marry, even though Nector had been determined to marry Lulu Nanapush.

Fifteen years later, Marie, who has rejected the Lazarre family, reluctantly takes in June, her sister™s daughter. Later, she becomes reluctant to raise her own son, Lipsha. June™s cousins attempt to hang June, at her own urging.

Eventually, she rejects Marie™s family and moves into the woods with her Uncle Eli. It is now 1957, and Lulu Lamartine, formerly Nanapush, has led a wild life. She has eight sons, although it is not clear who their fathers are.

Beverley Lamartine, brother of Lulu™s late husband Henry Lamartine, thinks Lulu™s youngest child, Henry, Jr., is his and wants to claim him. He has dreamed of raising Henry, Jr., but cannot get up the courage to ask Lulu. In the end, he leaves without Henry. Nector reflects on life with his wife, Marie, who has adopted many children to compensate for the loss of her own. He begins an affair with Lulu and determines to leave Marie for her.

When he changes his mind, he burns his letter to Lulu, and in doing so accidentally burns down Lulu™s house, a mystery that remains unsolved for many years. When she discovers Nector™s letter to Lulu, Marie determines to ignore it and hold on to Nector. It is now 1973, and Albertine is thinking about her dreams of leaving for the city and meeting Henry, now home from his time in Vietnam. She goes to his hotel room, reluctantly, and they go to bed together. While in the grip of post-trauma nightmares, Henry rapes her. Henry™s brother Lyman recalls the car that he and Henry jointly bought and refurbished. After Henry had returned from the war, traumatized, Lyman had vandalized the car to prompt a response from Henry.

Henry restores the car a second time, and he and Lyman take a drive. Lyman tells everyone later how he had witnessed Henry™s death. He claims that Henry killed himself by driving the car into a river. It is now 1980, and Albertine is remembering the story of Gerry Nanapush” a career criminal, alleged murderer, and serial escaper” and his wife, Dot. Dot is pregnant, and Gerry is desperate to get out of prison to be with her for the birth of their child. He escapes, briefly, and is caught and taken back to jail. Lipsha, who had been raised by Marie and Nector, has stayed with them but is conscious that he is only tolerated by Marie.

He thinks about his relationship with them, and of Nector™s declining memory. Lipsha has healing skills but, despite Marie™s urging, finds he cannot do anything for Nector; indeed, he is not sure he should try to help him. He is aware of Nector™s affair with Lulu and is present when Nector confesses to having caused the fire that destroyed Lulu™s house.

Lulu, however, does not understand the concern, and the issue is dropped. Lipsha eventually makes a love medicine for Marie and Nector, at Marie™s request, because she believes that he is still chasing Lulu. Nector chokes on the medicine and dies, but Marie is content, believing that he returns to her from beyond the grave. Lulu and Marie finally make their peace and become friends.

Together they work on local issues. After hearing the truth from Lulu, Lipsha finally reveals that he knows the identity of his mother and his father, Gerry Nanapush. Lipsha, who is running from the military police, has a vision that his father is about to escape from prison, so he heads for Minneapolis to meet him. Here, he runs into his childhood tormentor, King, who also knows that June was Lipsha™s mother; because of this, King hates Lipsha. The two find Lipsha™s father, who reveals that in the past, King had turned informer against him. They play cards for ownership of June™s car, and Lipsha wins” he had cheated.

The authorities soon arrive to recapture Gerry, but he escapes. Later, Lipsha takes his father to the Canadian border. Love Medicine Summary

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LinkLove Medicine is both the title and the main thematic thread that ties fourteen diverse short stories into a novel. Although it refers specifically to traditional Indian magic in one story, in a broader sense love medicine refers to the different kinds of spiritual power that enable Erdrich™s Chippewa and mixed-blood characters to transcend” however momentarily” the grim circumstances of their lives. Trapped on their shrinking reservation by racism and poverty, plagued by alcoholism, disintegrating families, and violence,

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some of Erdrich™s characters nevertheless discover forms of love medicine that can help to sustain them. The opening story, *The World™s Greatest Fishermen*, begins with an episode of love medicine corrupted and thwarted. In 1981, June Kashpaw, once a woman of striking beauty and feisty spirit, has sunk to the level of picking up men in an oil boomtown.

At first she hopes a man she meets will be different from others who have used and discarded her, then tries to walk to the reservation through a snowstorm. June fails in those last attempts to attain love and home, two goals she and other characters will seek throughout the novel. Although she appears only briefly in this and in one other story, June Kashpaw is central to the novel because she embodies the potential power of spirit and love in ways that impress and haunt the other characters. Part 2 of *The World™s Greatest Fishermen* introduces many other major characters of *Love Medicine*, when June™s relatives gather together several months after her death. Several characters seem sympathetic because of their closeness to June and their kind treatment of one another. Albertine Johnson, who narrates the story and remembers her Aunt June lovingly, has gone through a wild phase of her own and is now a nursing student.

Eli Kashpaw, Albertine™s great-uncle who was largely responsible for raising June, is a tough and sharp-minded old man who has maintained a traditional Chippewa existence as a hunter and fisherman. Lipsha Morrissey, who, though he seems not to know it, is June™s illegitimate son, a sensitive, self-educated young man who acts warmly toward Albertine. In contrast to these characters, others appear flawed or unsympathetic according to Albertine, who would like to feel her family pulling together after June™s death. Zelda

and Aurelia, Albertine™s gossipy mother and aunt, host the family gathering but do little to make Albertine feel at home.

Albertine admires Grandpa, Zelda™s father Nector Kashpaw, for having once been an effective tribal chairman, but Nector has become so senile that Albertine cannot communicate with him. Gordie Kashpaw, the husband whom June left, is a pleasant fellow but a hapless drunk. In marked opposition to Lipsha, June™s legitimate son King is a volatile bully. Although King gains some sympathy when he voices his grief over his mother™s death, his horrifying acts of violence” abusing his wife, Lynette, battering his new car, smashing the pies prepared for the family dinner” leave Albertine and readers with a dismayed sense of a family in shambles. Love Medicine then moves back in time from 1981, and its stories proceed in chronological order from 1934 to 1984, presenting ten earlier episodes in the lives of the Kashpaws and related families and three later episodes that follow the events in The World™s Greatest Fishermen. Saint Marie concerns a poor white girl, Marie Lazarre, who in 1934 enters Sacred Heart Convent and a violent love-hate relationship with Sister Leopolda.

In Wild Geese, also set in 1934, Nector Kashpaw , infatuated with Lulu Nanapush, finds his affections swerving unexpectedly when he encounters Marie Lazarre on the road outside her convent. By 1948, the time of The Beads, Marie has married Nector, had three children, and agreed to raise her niece June. Marie™s difficulties multiply: Nector is drinking and philandering, and June, after almost committing suicide in a children™s hanging game, leaves, to be brought up by Eli in the woods.

Lulu™s Boys, set in 1957, reveals that the amorous Lulu Lamartine (nee Nanapush) had married Henry Lamartine but bore eight sons by different fathers; years later, she still has a mysterious sexual hold over Henry™s brother Beverly. Meanwhile, in The Plunge of the Brave, also set in 1957, Nector recalls the development of his five-year affair with Lulu and tries to leave his wife Marie for her. All ends badly when he accidentally burns Lulu™s house to the ground. The offspring of these Kashpaws and Lamartines also have their problems. In The Bridge, set in 1973, Albertine Johnson runs away from home and becomes lovers with Henry Lamartine, Jr., one of Lulu™s sons, who is a troubled Vietnam veteran. The Red Convertible, set in 1974, also involves Henry, Jr., as Lyman Lamartine tries unsuccessfully to bring his brother out of the dark personality changes that service in the Vietnam War has wrought in him. On a lighter note, Scales, set in 1980, is a hilarious account of the romance between Dot Adare, an obese white clerk at a truck-weighing station, and Gerry Nanapush, one of Lulu™s sons who is a most unusual convict; enormously fat, amazingly expert at escaping from jail, but totally inept at avoiding capture. A Crown of Thorns, which overlaps the time of The World™s Greatest Fishermen in 1981, traces Gordie Kashpaw™s harrowing and bizarre decline into alcoholism after June™s death.

Although in Love Medicine™s early stories the positive powers of love and spirit are more often frustrated than fulfilled, in the last three stories several characters achieve breakthroughs that bring members of the different families together in moving and hopeful ways. In Love Medicine, set in 1982, Lipsha Morrissey reaches out lovingly to his grandmother Marie and to the

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ghosts of Nector and June. In *The Good Tears*, set in 1983, Lulu undergoes a serious eye operation and is cared for by Marie, who forgives her for being Nector™'s longtime extramarital lover. Finally, in *Crossing the Water*, set in 1984, Lipsha Morrissey mentions that Lulu and Marie have joined forces in campaigning for Indian rights, and he helps his father, Gerry Nanapush, escape to Canada.

As Lipsha heads home to the reservation, he comes to appreciate the rich heritage of love, spirit, and williness that he has inherited from his diverse patchwork of Chippewa relatives” especially from his grandmother Lulu, his aunt Marie, and his parents, June Kashpaw and Gerry Nanapush.;;?