

ABSTRACT

CONLAN'S NURSERY: CHAPTERS 1 TO 3

This thesis contains the first three chapters of *Conlan's Nursery*, a novel that follows the Sims family through three decades of grief—the 1970s, '80s, and '90s—and their attempts to replace their dead or estranged relatives. In chapter 1, it is 1970, and a young historian, Richard, leaves his first wife and daughter, Iris, behind in London in order to work at a university in Chicago. He remarries, has a son, Ollie, who, along with Richard's wife Gail, reveals the consequences of Richard's decisions. By chapter 2, at age ten, Ollie demonstrates violent tendencies behind his calm, science prodigy façade. Chapter 3 takes place in 1987, when Richard moves the family farther west to Colorado, along the migration route of the nineteenth century mining prospectors he studies. By following Richard, Gail abandons her birth family, who really needs her, especially during her brother's struggles with drug addiction.

The rest of the novel, not included in this thesis, continues until 1998. In 1988, when Ollie gets too close to his friend Ed's twelve-year-old sister, Marguerite, their fight leaves Ed badly scarred. In 1992, Iris finishes graduate school in Seattle, and knows that Richard could sponsor a visa for her to stay in the States. Instead, she marries into a get-rich-quick family. In 1997, Marguerite's and Ed's father dies. Ollie, who has become a successful chef, returns to Ed to ask his forgiveness by working as his cook. The next year, Ollie still does not know Iris exists, until she arrives unannounced with her daughter.

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