

Chapter 3

The narrator reflects on their first visit to Woolcombe, a grand estate where they spent summer holidays during their youth. Initially, they feared being relegated to the servants' quarters, but Xan, their host, assured them of their comfortable accommodations. The room, unchanged over the years, becomes a vivid memory, filled with antique furniture, books, and battle prints. The narrator nostalgically recalls the view from the window—the terrace, lawn, and river—and imagines returning as an old man to die there, underscoring the room's enduring significance in their life.

Xan offers to take the narrator cycling, revealing his father's practical yet impersonal gesture of providing a bicycle. The narrator, touched by the offer, questions the necessity, but Xan dismisses it with a sardonic remark about Woolcombe's obligatory unhappiness. This cynicism contrasts with the narrator's initial enchantment, as they struggle to reconcile Xan's jaded perspective with the house's apparent charm. The exchange highlights Xan's complex relationship with his heritage and his tendency to mask deeper feelings with dry humor.

The narrator expresses a desire to tour the house, embarrassed by their eagerness. Xan jokes about a vicarage-led tour, but the narrator prefers his guidance, hinting at their growing bond. As they unpack, the narrator feels self-conscious about their new suitcase and inappropriate clothing, though Xan seems indifferent. Their conversation turns to the strangeness of living in such a historic house, with Xan downplaying its significance while subtly revealing pride in his family's legacy. His enigmatic smile suggests a deeper, unspoken connection to Woolcombe.

The chapter closes with the narrator's poignant vision of Woolcombe's eventual decay, mirroring humanity's extinction. While they imagine global landmarks abandoned, it is Woolcombe's decline that truly moves them—the rotting rooms, overgrown gardens, and their cherished bedroom fading into oblivion. This reflection ties personal memory

to broader existential themes, emphasizing the fragility of both individual and collective history. The narrator's attachment to Woolcombe becomes a metaphor for loss and the passage of time.

