

# **The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared Study Guide**

**The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared by Jonas Jonasson**

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# Plot Summary

The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared is the examination of the epic life of Allan Karlsson, a Swedish man who travels the globe many times over during his eventful lifetime. Allan is a demolitions expert by trade, and his skills at exploding things and people brings him into contact with some of the most famous leaders of his lifetime. From Spain and General Franco, to American presidents such as Truman, Johnson and Nixon, to Soviet leader Stalin, and many, many others -- all of whom seek Allan's knowledge and abilities for their own governments' purposes -- Allan works at the behest of political causes and ruling classes far beyond his own personal, apolitical interests. His sought after desirability only magnifies when at the ripe age of 100 Allan steals a suitcase filled with millions, which leads to the latest and perhaps last adventure in his storied life.

100-year-old retiree Allan Karlsson vanished from an old folks' home on the day of his century-old birthday party, intent on starting a life anywhere but in an assisted living facility. He encountered Bolt, a young hoodlum, at a bus station and stole Bolt's suitcase containing 50 million Swedish dollars. Fleeing with the money, Allan soon met Julius Jonsson, a former thief, who offered shelter. Julius also helped defend Allan against Bolt's attack when Bolt attempted to reclaim the missing money. Bolt was accidentally killed in the process, and Allan and Julius disposed of Bolt's body and then disappeared with the cash.

Chief Inspector Aronsson arrived at the bus station, attempting to fathom what happened to the missing Allan. Meantime, Allan and Julius met Benny Ljungberg, a perennial student who became part of their "share the stolen money" group when he agreed to chauffeur them in his Mercedes and quit his hot dog stand business. The trio hid out on a remote Swedish farm occupied by the Beauty, aka Gunilla Bjorklund, and her elephant Sonya. Livid over his stolen money, the Boss, aka Per-Gunnar Gerdin, ordered his henchman Bucket to track down the missing suitcase. Bucket found the missing money at the Beauty's farm, but Sonya sat on him and crushed him to death before Bucket could collect it. Allan and his new friends decided to remain a loose-knit family and split the stolen money, planning to leave the Beauty's farm with a bus towing Sonya the elephant with them. The Boss became suspicious after not hearing from Bucket and set out for the farm to investigate. After a car accident with Allan's bus hitting the Boss' car, the Boss was taken back to the Beauty's farm for a secret recovery.

Meanwhile, during these numerous escapades, the story shifts back and forward in time. Allan's life is recollected in a series of encounters with famous world leaders. Allan's talent for explosive detonation played a factor in his secretive adventures, starting with General Francisco Franco in Spain in the late 1920s, when he saved Franco's life. Next, Allan sailed to America in the late 1930s, where in the 1940s he accidentally spilled an idea which lead to the first atomic bomb to physicist Alan J. Oppenheimer at the classified Manhattan Project. President Truman thanked Allan and assigned him in 1945 to assist Soong Mei-ling, wife of Chinese leader Chiang Kai-Shek, in her struggles to stop Mao Tse-tung's communist forces in China. Allan wound up



rescuing Jiang Qing, Tse-tung's imprisoned wife, and crossed the Himalayas with her in a daring escape attempt. Allan crossed into Iran and was interrogated by a vice prime minister. Allan tricked the hostile interrogator by rigging an explosive which killed the vice prime minister and allowed Allan to flee to the Swedish embassy. Allan was thanked for his efforts by Winston Churchill, and then flown back home to Sweden. Next the Soviets recruited Allan, seeking out his bomb-making expertise in 1948. Allan upset Joseph Stalin in a dinner meeting and was assigned to a gulag for his offenses. He befriended Herbert Einstein, Albert's half-brother, in the gulag and the two escaped after 5 years in confinement. Allan and Herbert fled into North Korea in 1953 and met Kim Jong Il and his father Kim Il Sung, the head of state. Mao Tse-tung was visiting and immediately helped Allan and Herbert along their way as pay-back for Allan earlier rescuing his wife. Allan and Herbert fled to Bali, where Herbert wed Amanda, who later bribed her way into becoming the governor of Bali. In 1968, Amanda assigned Allan as an ambassador to France, where they both met French President De Gualle and visiting U.S. President Johnson. Johnson knew of Allan from Truman and assigned a secret agent status to Allan for him to recruit a top Russian nuclear scientist to act as double agent for the U.S.

Back in 2005, Allan and his band were joined by the Boss and Chief Inspector Aronsson, all of whom agreed to participate in an equal split of the money that united them all as co-conspirators. They lied to Prosecutor Ranelid to cover their tracks. Allan contacted Amanda in Bali and she approved the whole clan moving there to retire in comfort and style. Allan discovered Herman had passed years earlier. Allan and Amanda were married. Allan seemed set for actual retirement, once and for all, when an Indonesian official contacted him secretly and recruited him to help with building a nuclear bomb.

The 100-Year-Old-Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared is a robust, often satirical examination of the wide array of political beliefs permeating the 20th century. The book encompasses the same 100 years of time in both Allan's life and the same 100 years in time interweaving events of the previous century in order to compare and contrast the life of a singular human being. By doing so, the effects such a lone person can have on historical outcomes, versus the manner in which the world's pressures in and of themselves influence a person's own choices in reverse, are brought to comedic life.



# Chapters 1 - 3

## Summary

Allan Karlsson, a 100-year old man, escaped an old folks' home on his 100th birthday by climbing out the window and vanishing. After he stole a suitcase containing 50 million dollars, Allan became the object of a nation-wide manhunt. He fled with the money and befriended a handful of new acquaintances, all of whom agreed to split the windfall with him in exchange for keeping him from being returned to the retirement shelter. But even his modern day adventure with all its exciting twists and turns pales when compared to the lifelong series of top secret missions Allan previously had which involved famous world figures such as Truman, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, and countless others.

In Chapters 1 and 2, set in 2005, Allan escaped from the old folks' home and fled to the local bus station. He had no plans where to go except not back to the old folks' home. Bolt, a member of the Never Again crime syndicate, asked Allan to watch Bolt's suitcase while Bolt used the station restroom. Allan impulsively decided to steal the suitcase and hopped aboard the nearest bus. Bolt finished using the bathroom and returned to see Allan disappearing with the suitcase. Bolt swore under his breath Allan was a dead man from that point forward.

In Chapter 3, Bolt threatened a bus ticket taker until he gained information where Allan was headed. Meanwhile, word spread about the missing 100-year-old man. The Mayor was forced to involve the police when the media hounded him with questions about Allan's well being. Allan was deposited outside a derelict bus station inhabited by Julius Jonsson, a lonely thief who lived in the abandoned train station as a cheap shelter. Julius had earlier in his life defrauded his hometown government by providing electrical poles too short to work effectively. Rather than face the citizens' wrath, Julius lived as a recluse in the station. He was lonely for years when he finally met Allan, hence their instant bonding as friends.

Bolt arrived and demanded to know where his suitcase was from the two older men. He threatened their lives and waved a gun. Allan grabbed a plank and conked Bolt on the head with it, stunning the younger man. Julius and Allan dragged Bolt into the freezer and locked him inside. They returned to pry open the suitcase, having agreed to share whatever was inside it.

## Analysis

In the very brief Chapter 1, the author sets in motion the entire plot for *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared*. Readers are introduced to Allan Karlsson, the century-old retiree who escapes via the window from his old folks' home and sets out on a (what he presumes to be) final adventure in life. Notice the writer has crafted this opening chapter less than a page in length, which equally mirrors



the final Chapter 29, also less than a page in length. This is an example of literary mirroring, or echoing, in which the author utilizes similar tones and (in this example) narrative chapter construction to suggest a passage of time and act as a circular-styled round up indicating the story has gone from a beginning to end.

In Chapter 2, readers see the generational culture clash between Allan and practically everyone else he encounters in his aged life, as he has outlived almost everyone he has ever met or known! His meeting with Bolt is particularly illustrative of the vast gulf of time Allan experiences when he meets younger people. Bolt is described as being very contemporary and very debauched, a literal thug working for a criminal organization. In fact, before the name "Bolt" is used to describe this character, the author repeatedly refers to him as a "young man with long, greasy blond hair, a scraggly beard, and a jean jacket," rather than using a proper name for him. This emphasizes the manner in which Allan sees the world, too, with physical characteristics and an anonymous sense of being, befitting both Allan's age and his weary sense of being perceived as a perpetual outsider owing to his advanced age (where he is, ironically, also viewed as "just an old man" by younger people).

Bolt carries with him 50 million Swedish dollars in a suitcase. In an act of recklessness which the author describes as saying "yes" to life, Allan impulsively steals the suitcase, even though Allan doesn't have a clue what it contains when he does so. Allan is a man for whom all of life's meaning has been lost to time, and is the person least likely (or so it would seem) to commit such a crime. The fact that he does so is not mere coincidence, but critical to the entire story. For by stealing the suitcase and saying yes to life, Allan empowers himself to receive more life. As the pages that follow illustrate, Allan has been metaphorically doing this for more than 100 years. It is both the secret of his long life as well as the source of some of his greatest sorrows. Yet, as the author indicates, it is this very self-same ability that makes it possible for Allan to have lived, and in turn out-lived, so many of his friends, family and associates, most of whom lacked his audacity and courage to live life on whatever terms it handed them.

In Chapter 3, Allan is befriended by Julius, who lives in an abandoned railway station. In a pattern that will repeat throughout the novel, Allan's strange, beatific ability to inspire calm and believe in others works to his advantage, inspiring Julius to take a chance with an old man who is a total stranger. The fact that the two must work together to subdue and place Bolt in the freezer is a sign that Allan's inspirational nature extends beyond merely words and into life-risking action. For Julius risks his life combating Bolt when Bolt shows up at Julius' tiny home without knowledge of what the suitcase Allan carries contains. Certainly there is no way Julius would assume 50 million dollars was inside. Again, this pattern is important to understand, as the author will use it time and time again throughout the many encounters Allan has with famous, infamous and anonymous human beings throughout his life's story. Allan has an uncanny ability to enlist sympathy and trust from the oddest of characters he meets.



## Discussion Question 1

Why do you believe Bolt entrusts Allan with watching the suitcase? Why doesn't Bolt select another person at the station instead?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do you think the author characterizes Allan's taking of the suitcase filled with millions in cash as saying yes to life, despite the fact that doing so means Allan is surely risking death by such an act?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Allan split the contents of the suitcase with Julius even though Allan doesn't know what is inside it? Is Allan more interested in the money he then discovers is inside the suitcase, or the companionship splitting it up produces?

## Vocabulary

pondering, maneuver, medieval, centenarian, illiterate, conscientious, jovially, convivial, heifer, accelerated, interrogation



# Chapters 4 - 6

## Summary

In Chapter 4, time shifts back to Allan's childhood. Allan was born in 1905 in Sweden. His father, a firm socialist with a short temper, moved alone to Russia to fight in the Russian Revolution. When Allan's mother received word of Allan's father's death, she stoically said to her son that whatever would be, would be. Soon thereafter, Allan's mother died. Allan, who had mastered the art of explosives at a young age, used the small inheritance she left him to form a dynamite detonation company which was successful.

Gustavsson, a local merchant who once cheated Allan's family, accidentally drove his car onto a farm field in which Allan was testing an explosive. Gustavsson was killed in the resulting explosion, and Allan placed in an asylum for 4 years. As part of his confinement, Allan was sterilized by Professor Lundborg, a believer in eugenics. Allan was eventually released with a handful of money and left to exist on his own.

In Chapter 5 in 2005, Chief Inspector Aronsson investigated the case of Allan. Media pressure grew as the story of the missing 100-year-old came to dominate headlines. Meanwhile, Allan and Julius discovered the suitcase contained 50 million dollars in 500 dollar bills. Alas, Bolt had frozen to death overnight in the freezer because Allan and Julius drank too much and passed out, forgetting Bolt was there. Allan and Julius became partners, agreeing to get rid of Bolt's corpse and divide the money. Julius produced an old railway trolley and they used it to transport the money, the body and themselves.

In Chapter 6, the Boss, head of the Never Again crime syndicate, ordered Bucket, his henchman, to the area where Bolt vanished to look for clues. The Boss was livid the 50 million had been evidently stolen. Meanwhile, Julius found a shipping container to dump the body in and Allan helped him get rid of the incriminating evidence. Later, Allan and Julius encountered Benny, a hot dog stand salesman with a Mercedes. The two older men hired Benny to be their chauffeur for 100,000 dollars.

Chief Inspector Aronsson investigated the case and slowly began to piece together some of the puzzle. Allan accidentally mentioned the amount of money he and Julius were transporting to Benny. They agreed to cut Benny into the 50 million, too. The trio hid out on a farm they came across owned by a woman named Gunilla, but whom Benny endearingly nicknamed the Beauty.

## Analysis

Beginning with Chapter 4 and alternating throughout the book, the author switches back and forth throughout Allan's life. Allan's father and the demonstrating of his devotion to socialism is the first such time this occurs. Because he is so dedicated, Allan's father





moves to Russia to fight the revolution leaving behind Allan and his mother to fend for themselves. Allan's father is killed not long after arriving in Russia in a ridiculous stand on political principal that forever marks Allan and causes in him a lifelong aversion to not just socialism, but any and all political philosophies. This theme is carried forward throughout the book, as is the branding on young Allan by his mother in her reaction to the news Allan's father has been killed in Russia. She tells him that whatever will be, will be. This fatalistic but practical resignation to life's powerful forces makes a huge impression on Allan, and is a leading reason why he is able to survive not only the loss of his father, but the many other obstacles he encounters in later chapters.

In Chapter 5, Chief Inspector Aronsson confronts a nationwide obsession with the story of the missing 100-year-old man by the media. Notice that the press and t.v. reporters care little or nothing about Allan as a person. Rather, they care about the headline, which states a "100-year-old man is missing." Allan is reduced by the media coverage to being a person who is a century old example of his age rather than a caring, perhaps confused, human being with a name and a biography who has vanished and may need help. This is another theme that surfaces throughout Allan's life in the coming chapters. Often he is stereotyped by his background or nationality, his rather nonchalant attitude in life, and other factors that dehumanize him in the eyes of others. Notice that Allan's one passion in life -- drinking excessively whenever he can -- is matched by Julius and they instantly bond as a result. They drink until they pass out, which inadvertently leads to Bolt's death, left confined in the freezer overnight. This kind of black comic approach is key to understanding much of the richness of the book, as the author uses it frequently to resolve seemingly impossible and/or improbable situations.

In Chapter 6, many new characters are added to the plot in rapid succession. First, there's the Boss, whose 50 million dollars has gone missing. There's also Bucket, the Boss' henchman, who is sent by the Boss to retrieve the money from Allan. In Allan's side of the quest, he not only agrees to befriend Julius and split the money with him, but also encounters Benny and the Beauty. All of these characters will be more fully fleshed out in the coming chapters, but their introduction in rapid succession creates a zany, anything-can-happen spirit in the book that is important to understand as key to the book's sense of humor.

## Discussion Question 1

What event more than any other in his young life causes Allan to view all political philosophies with suspicion thereafter? Why do you believe this event so deeply marks Allan and forever alters his point of view?

## Discussion Question 2

Do you believe the news media are more interested in the missing Allan's well being, or are they simply more concerned with covering the story of a generic 100-year-old man who has vanished? What examples can you cite to support your answer?



## Discussion Question 3

Do you find the rapid succession of characters that Allan befriends owing in part to the suitcase filled with millions believable or farcical? Are there other forces at play in the fast friendships Allan and his companions form beyond the easy lure of money?

## Vocabulary

procession, suffrage, contractions, contraceptives, socialism, riffraff, mobilizing, nitroglycerin, consulate, philosophy, eugenic, interrogated, geriatric



## Chapters 7 - 9

### Summary

In Chapter 7 in 1929, Allan secured work at a cannon foundry and was befriended by Esteban, a native of Spain. Esteban convinced Allan to return to Spain with him. There, a war between the fascists and the socialists rocked the country, forcing citizens to take sides. Esteban was killed almost instantly fighting for socialism. Allan saved the life of General Francisco Franco, the fascist army leader, and was well-treated. Using a letter Franco gave him, Allan escaped war-torn Spain on a boat.

In Chapter 8 in 2005, the Beauty served Allan and guests dinner and explained how she came to own Sonya, an escaped circus elephant kept in her barn. This led Benny to detail how he had studied in many various fields of academia because of an intense competition with his brother Bosse over an inheritance. Benny explained that as long as he studied, the inheritance money arrived from an estate lawyer, but only if Benny never graduated in any one field of study. The Beauty was infatuated with Benny, especially when she learned he was a near-vet, as he called himself.

Benny and the Beauty broke into a clinic and stole medicines needed to heal Sonya's foot infection. But the next day, the Beauty learned from a newspaper the true identity of her house guests. She was outraged her new friends had deceived her. Allan deduced the only logical course of action was to include her in a four-way share of the 50 million. The Beauty agreed and went shopping for supplies for them. Meanwhile, Chief Inspector Aronsson drew ever closer to finding them, following clues supplied by the public.

In Chapter 9 in 1939, Allan arrived via ship in New York. Lacking official papers, Allan was kept in a holding cell for a few years. He was eventually flown to Los Alamos, New Mexico, because of his valuable knowledge in explosives. He served coffee to the prestigious scientists who were working on the first atomic bomb, including Alan Oppenheimer. During one such meal, Allan interrupted the gathered brains to supply the critical idea necessary to complete the bomb. Vice President Harry Truman, who happened to be visiting to check on the progress, was impressed by Allan's genius insight and invited Allan to a private dinner. The dinner sadly concluded with news served to Truman that President Roosevelt had just died.

### Analysis

In Chapter 7, Allan is introduced to the first in a long series of famous world leaders, General Franco. He does so in a manner that will remain consistent throughout *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* -- Allan's modest nature is revealed by his interactions with these famous men and women as amazingly beneficial to them. For example, Allan meets Franco by saving Franco's life from a



bridge shortly before it explodes. Allan has the wisdom not to tell Franco it was Allan who rigged the bridge in the first place, and for his keeping his tongue silent, Allan is rewarded by Franco with a letter of praise and Franco's eternal sense of gratitude. This pattern will be kept throughout the rest of the book, with Allan consistently offering advice and strategic intervention just when each successive world leader needs it most. The irony is further heightened by the fact Allan rarely, if ever, attempts to offer his services or knowledge with any forethought or planning. Rather, he is recruited by circumstances and later agents of various leaders (once his reputation and name becomes known in powerful inner circles).

In Chapter 8, the early bloom of friendship between the Beauty and her new farmhouse guests is put to the test when the Beauty reads newspaper headlines in which Allan's true history, along with Julius' and Benny's as well, is revealed as tainted with criminality. In actuality, the newspapers have exaggerated much of the background of the men, even if Julius has a notorious history for mostly petty theft (note the newspapers label him as a master thief). But when the 50 million dollars is mentioned to the Beauty and she is invited to participate in the stolen money as an equal partner, all hesitation and judgments of morality by her vanish. She quickly becomes a part of the daring money theft and spends some of it buying groceries and supplies for the traveling cadre. This is another theme that occurs throughout the book. Whenever someone encounters Allan and learns of the 50 million, they almost instantly convert to friend and co-conspirator in spending the money. The Beauty is no exception, offering almost no resistance to participating as soon as she is invited to do so. Part of the allure is the charm of the outlaw outfit itself, but by no means is that all that attracts each new participant. Rather, it is the simple fact of spending so much money without having to acquire it that convinces each new person to play along with the plan. For most of them, their share represents more money than they ever thought possible to acquire, and so having it at hand to spend freely and without worry is simply too big an opportunity in life for any one of them to decline. Following Allan's earlier example, they are each saying yes to life by joining with him in spending the money.

In Chapter 9, another familiar pattern is echoed. Allan arrives in New York City and because he does not have the correct entry papers, he is held for a couple of years by the American authorities. This pattern runs throughout Allan's life, as when he is earlier held in an asylum for accidentally blowing up a local merchant who wandered onto his property as a young man. Allan typically undergoes many years of exciting, if haphazard, adventures, followed by periods of isolation and confinement by various governments. It is a theme that illustrates the "whatever will be, will be" mantra Allan's mother earlier explained to him by way of helping him to understand his father's death. This pattern will be repeated throughout the rest of the book. Another familiar theme is also present in the meeting with Oppenheimer and Allan's happenstance solving of the mystery of the atomic bomb's construction to Oppenheimer's surprise. This same theme echoes with Truman's meeting with Allan, in which Allan is the innocent bystander to history even as the men and women of history who decide it turn to Allan at crucial times for his expert advice and mystifying ability to make troubled situations all right.



## Discussion Question 1

Does Allan believe in the cause that his friend Esteban dies for any more or less than he does the cause Franco represents? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

Is the powerful attraction the suitcase full of money has on so many characters because they are weak-willed, or because the amount represents a stimulant to each new character's imagination?

## Discussion Question 3

How much of what Allan does to assist Oppenheimer with the bomb is purposeful intellect versus the unintended blurring of ideas on his part? How does Allan's methodology in such moments align with this political philosophy?

## Vocabulary

delinquent, ignition, analytic, proletarian, competent, revolution, foundry, mortar, browbeaten, generalissimo, laughingstock, trolley, antibiotics, expertise



# Chapters 10 - 12

## Summary

In Chapter 10 in 2005, Bucket discovered the Beauty when she bought food supplies and followed her back to her farm. Carried away with the success of his mission (and sure it would please the Boss), Bucket carelessly ordered Allan, the Beauty and everyone else to do what he said as he waved a gun. He accidentally stepped into a pile of elephant dung and slipped onto his back, whereupon Allan commanded Sonya to sit. Sonya sat and crushed Bucket to death.

In Chapter 11 in 1945, Allan met with President Truman at the White House. Truman asked Allan to meet with Soong Mei-ling, the wife of head Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek. Truman wanted Allan to blow up bridges and slow the advancing communist armies in mainland China to defeat Mao Tse-tung. Allan reluctantly accompanied Soong Mei-ling. A few victorious skirmishes with the communists resulted in Mei-ling's forces capturing Jiang Qing, the third wife of Tse-tung. Allan experienced a change of heart and broke Jiang Qing free of confinement. He attempted to return Jiang to her husband via passage on foot through the Himalayas. During their journey they met three Iranian communists who befriended them. When they all set foot in Iran, the three Iranians were shot for being communists, and Allan was taken prisoner.

In Chapter 12 in 2005, the Boss drove to the Beauty's farm to locate the missing money himself. He saw a bus containing Sonya and realized it was Allan and company fleeing the farm. He pursued the fleeing bus, cutting it off. The bus rammed into his car, nearly killing him. Allan, the Beauty, and the rest spirited away the Boss' badly injured body just before Chief Inspector Aronsson arrived. Aronsson was left bewildered, always one step behind the motley crew he sought.

## Analysis

In Chapter 10, the absurd nature of much of the underlying black comedy is emphasized with the death of Bucket, the Boss' henchman. After staking out a supermarket where Beauty buys supplies and then trailing her back to her own farm, Bucket commits to action and drives his car onto the Beauty's property. He hops out waving a gun and immediately demands Allan and the rest give back the stolen money. But when he steps into a pile of Sonya's dung and slips to the ground, Allan gives the command and Sonya sits atop Bucket, crushing him to death. The black humor is important to the book's tone, as otherwise, Allan's command for Sonya the elephant to sit and crush Bucket seems murderous and unduly harsh. Because the moment is played for laughs and surrealism, however, Bucket's horrific death reads as darkly comedic, and Allan does not seem murderous as, after all, Bucket is waving a gun at his friends.



In Chapter 11, Allan first works at the behest of President Truman and democracy in assisting Soong Mei-ling's mission to thwart Communist forces behind enemy lines in China, and then turns coat and works for the communists by helping Jiang Qing break out of captivity and return to her husband Mao Tse-tung. This underscores the continual theme throughout *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* of non-allegiance to any one philosophy of rule by Allan. Allan refuses to take any one government at face value, having been disillusioned as a young man with his father's obsession with socialism, which cost him his life. The use of the Himalayas is also metaphorically appropriate by the author, as Allan is a larger-than-life character and hence needs equally grandiose settings against which to tell his story. By selecting not just key figures in 20th century history but majestic locales as well -- the Himalayas, the Manhattan Project in New Mexico, Bali, etc. -- the high stakes nature of Allan's life arch is made more readily apparent.

In Chapter 12, the Boss finally becomes a more active participant in the story rather than a passive observer who dispatches his henchmen to take care of his dirty work. It is therefore ironic that the Boss is almost immediately injured in a car wreck of his own careless design. He winds up completely at the mercy of the very people he sought to rough up for his well being. Irony, forever present in this book, shows up again when Allan, the Beauty, Julius and Benny decide not to abandon the Boss to his fate as he lies dying in his crashed vehicle, but actually rescue him and then take him back to the farm to nurture him so that he recovers. Given that Allan and clan have every reason to leave the Boss to die (as it affords them the perfect means to escape his pursuit and get away with the money), their rescuing of the Boss is a true act of generosity and will later influence the Boss as he recovers and understands they are not thieves, but opportunists, in life, the same as he is as well.

## Discussion Question 1

How does the author avoid creating the feeling that Allan is a cold-blooded murderer in the scene where Allan orders Sonya to sit on Bucket and crush him to death?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does the author utilize majestic backgrounds such as the Himalayas and other world famous locations to tell Allan's story?

## Discussion Question 3

Are Allan and his traveling companions solely interested in the money, or do they also have the welfare of others in mind when confronted with such issues? What incident in Chapter 12 offers proof one way or the other?

## Vocabulary

colleague, fortuitous, dame, henchman, ventilation, instinctively, countermand, inherited, communist, contradictory, fascist, specimen





# Chapters 13 - 15

## Summary

In Chapter 13 in 1947, Allan was held prisoner by the Shah of Iran's secret police force. During captivity, Allan befriended Father Ferguson, a Christian missionary who believed he could convert Muslims by the millions. Allan was interrogated by an Iranian Chief of Police. The Chief wanted to assassinate Winston Churchill, who was set to visit soon. In exchange for his freedom, Allan agreed to terms, plotting to build an explosive that would kill Churchill in his car. Instead, Allan blew up the Chief of Police, and escaped to a nearby Swedish embassy. Father Ferguson assisted Allan's escape but stayed behind and was shot to death by Iranian soldiers. President Truman spoke glowingly of Allan to Swedish authorities, and Allan was released into the company of a grateful Winston Churchill. Back in Sweden, Allan was interviewed for but turned down from a job helping Sweden build an atomic bomb.

In Chapters 14 and 15, Prosecutor Ranelid admonished Chief Inspector Aronsson for the lack of progress in solving Allan's whereabouts, which had become a national media sensation. Meanwhile, Benny apologized to his long-estranged brother Bosse in exchange for including Bosse in the 50 million dollar suitcase pay-out and Bosse allowing Allan and the rest a safe place to stay on Bosse's farm. In a surprise revelation, it turned out that Bosse and the Boss were old friends from Bosse's previous adventures in crime as a younger man. They committed many small-time crimes, but when the Boss wanted to use formaldehyde injected into imported food to sell it longer before it spoiled, Bosse decided to part ways with the Boss. Allan wondered about the Boss, and how such criminal mastermind was going to feel when he woke up the next morning and realized he was in the care of the same people who had taken his 50 million.

## Analysis

In Chapter 13, religion in the form of the Christian priest Father Ferguson enters the picture when Allan shares political confinement in Iran with him. It is another opportunity for the author to demonstrate that for Allan, no one belief system is superior by default to any other one. Previously Allan has silently refused to participate in or personally believe that any one form of governmental philosophy is preferable or superior to any other he encounters. For Allan, if a human being devised it, then a human being also corrupted it. Allan sees no advantage in being truly committed to any one form of government or another, but rather taking opportunistic advantage of whatever governmental forces he happens to find himself within at any given moment. Father Ferguson reflects the same ideal Allan possesses, only in terms of a stated religious preference rather than governing philosophy. Allan dreads the Christian message he is forced to listen to Father Ferguson espouse as much as he dreads the Muslim message his Iranian captors espouse. Allan, however, is not judgmental about such matters, and



rescues Ferguson along with himself to flee into North Korea. Alas, Ferguson chooses to remain behind and convert Muslims into Christians. Shortly after Allan escapes, Father Ferguson is gunned down for his choice of Christianity over all other forms of religion in a moment that echoes the same stand for a puritanical cause that Allan's father undertook for socialism (note that both figures are "Father" to Allan and share the same fate).

In Chapters 14 and 15, reconciliation plays a role. Benny reconciles with his older brother Bosse in exchange for Bosse allowing Allan, Julius, the Beauty, Sonya, himself and the Boss to hide out on Bosse's remote farm. The narrative twist that occurs after the reconciliation (which is spurred on by Bosse's inclusion in the 50 million dollars) is that Bosse and the Boss were former criminal associates in their younger days. They parted over a disagreement over whether or not to use formaldehyde in imported foods as an illegal and potentially dangerous preservative, with Bosse wanting no part of it while the Boss had no reservations whatsoever. This contrast in morality is important, as it echoes the theme the author has utilized throughout *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* in terms of morally questionable tactics used by all of the protagonists. All of the characters from Allan to the Boss are portrayed as far from perfect citizens, even if their crimes are often seemingly mild compared to, for example, some of the world leaders whom Allan meets who cause the deaths of their fellow citizens by the tens of millions in some cases. But it is worth noting that Allan is a man who has assisted such figures of death, and that his co-horts are equally less than ideal in terms of their every personal moral choice. The author illustrates there is no perfect world for any of his characters to inhabit. At the same time, he shows they struggle to make moral choices at every turn despite this fact, which largely redeems them in the reader's eyes.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Father Fergusson choose to stay behind in Iran when he has an opportunity to flee with Allan? Do you think Allan would be surprised to discover the outcome of Fergusson's decision, even though the book implies Allan never learns it?

## Discussion Question 2

What earlier event between them lead to the Boss and Bosse parting ways as partners? Is there any irony in the fact that Bosse now injects poultry and produce with taste enhancers given this background conflict that earlier parted them?

## Discussion Question 3

Even though Allan eschews any personal belief in any one political system over another, he assists and inadvertently (at times) profits many unethical and immoral world leaders, some of whom lead to the deaths of their citizens by the millions. Is Allan complicit in such leaders' crimes, or is he morally without culpability?

## Vocabulary

porridge, clergyman, convert, prognosis, synagogue, provocateur, supplementary, fusion, circumstantial, proprietor, concussion, morphine



# Chapters 16 - 18

## Summary

In Chapter 16 in 1948, an unemployed Allan was hired by the Soviets to help them build an atomic bomb. Yury Borisovich, head of the Soviet bomb effort, took an immediate liking to Allan. At a depth of 700 feet below surface waters in a Soviet submarine, and tight from Russian vodka, Allan inadvertently blurted out a clue to Yury of how to build a fissionable bomb that proved to be a major breakthrough. Marshal Beria, a ruthless member of Stalin's inner circle, decided to kidnap Albert Einstein in order to extract bomb-making information from the renowned physicist. By mistake, KGB forces kidnapped not Albert, but Herbert Einstein, Albert's little known half-brother. Herbert was assigned to a gulag, deemed worthless for the atomic bomb making effort. And when Allan unintentionally insulted Joseph Stalin during a dinner meeting, Allan was also consigned to rot in the same gulag. Allan and Herbert befriended one another and spent over 5 years in a Siberian work camp.

In Chapter 17 in 2005, the Boss awakened to find himself injured from the car wreck but recovering owing to the efforts of Allan and company. The Boss reflected on the fact that he and Benny's brother, Bosse, were old friends who had drifted apart after one particular scheme devised by the Boss was deemed too risky by Bosse. Still, the Boss' ire was lessened by his meeting Bosse again, and so he agreed not to take further action against Allan and his friends for the time being.

In Chapter 18 in 1953, Allan decided to break out of the Gulag and escaped via South Korea. Allan and Herbert stole guard uniforms and started a diversionary fire. Unfortunately, the small explosion they started mushroomed into a raging inferno, burning down the entire Soviet port of Vladivostok. Marshal Meretskov, a high-ranking Soviet official, stopped his car to witness the chaos and was held up by Allan and Herbert, who demanded he and his driver remove their uniforms. Thus disguised in high-ranking Soviet uniforms, Allan and Herbert arrived in Pyongyang, North Korea. Allan pretended to be Marshal Meretskov to young Kim Jong Il, son of Kim Il Sung, North Korea's leader. Il Sung recognized Allan as a fake. Fortunately for Allan and Herbert, Mao Tse-tung was also present and thanked Allan for helping his wife escape the Chinese republic's confinement earlier. Tse-tung suggested Allan recover in Bali after his ordeal in the gulag.

## Analysis

In Chapter 16, a familiar motif is repeated by the author when he has Allan, drunk on Russian vodka, accidentally blurt out the secret to atomic bomb making while on a Soviet submarine deep undersea. This is an echo of a similar moment in which Allan blurted out the same secret to Oppenheimer in Chapter 9. Thus according to the book, the reason the Americans ever devised the atomic bomb first was because of Allan, and



then later, the reason the Soviets also created the bomb and started the Cold War was because of Allan. More importantly from Allan's point of view, the damage owing to his absentmindedness is severe, nothing less than potential nuclear annihilation for all mankind. These two incidents form a warning lesson in Allan's mind, and from this point forward in the story, he is very mindful of not blurting out secrets which could be catastrophic to his own species. Later, his meeting with Stalin ends disastrously in part because Allan mindlessly proclaims a poem to Stalin to which Allan does not know the foreign translation. The words are known to Stalin, however, and he is livid with indignation, sending Allan to the gulag for 5 years as punishment. This shows that even though Allan desires to not say the wrong thing at the wrong moment, under the influence of vodka which he drinks excessively, even his best kept promises are often tossed aside owing to careless drunkenness. He meets Herbert Einstein, Albert's half-brother, a fictitious character who lacks any of the defining intelligence of the real life Albert.

In Chapter 17, the warming of the Boss to becoming a part of the Allan consortium of friends is illustrated. Like all who come into Allan's magical hold over them, soon the Boss, while recovering from his injuries, finds himself irresistibly drawn into the confidence and warmth of Allan. There is the obvious thanks the Boss feels towards Allan and his co-horts in that they saved his life by rescuing him from his crashed vehicle, but this is counterbalanced by the fact they took his 50 million dollars in the suitcase. What really is transpiring is the charisma Allan unwittingly exudes, which is all the more remarkable given it emanates from a 100-year-old man. Soon, however, the Boss and Allan are friends, and as their bond tightens, so does the Boss' plan to take back the money and break up Allan's happy troops.

In Chapter 18, Allan and Herbert decide to break-free of the Soviet gulag. They steal two guard uniforms and cause a distraction, with Allan starting a small fire. However, because he starts the fire near a munitions hold, soon the entire naval bay where the gulag is situated is aflame. Allan and Herbert, posed as ranking officers, commandeer a car and escape to the North Korea border, where they are captured and taken to see Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, the father and son ruling class in Pyongyang, where their charade is uncovered. As throughout much of the book, fate intervenes when Mao Tse-tung just happens to be visiting Il Sung and rescues Allan and Herbert from certain death. The theme that no matter what side one chooses in life, the outcome is uncertain owing to fate is again echoed by the author, and Allan -- who is sure he is a dead man -- instead finds himself on the way to Bali at the help and behest of Mao Tse-tung.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Allan vow after the Russian submarine incident to not blurt out ideas while under the influence of alcohol? Is he able to keep this vow for the rest of the book?



## Discussion Question 2

The Boss decides not to kill Allan and his friends despite the fact they took the Boss' 50 million dollars and caused the death of two of the Boss' henchmen. Why does the Boss change his mind?

## Discussion Question 3

Throughout the book, Allan meets a variety of world-famous historical figures. How does Allan typically react to each new leader he meets? Is he impressed by their intellectual abilities, or is he disinterested beyond polite conversation? Why does he react the way he does, no matter the person?

## Vocabulary

chauffeur, archipelago, limousine, laureate, colleague, physicist, gulag, anesthetize, obstructive, interpreter, entourage, occupation, diversionary



# Chapters 19 - 21

## Summary

In Chapter 19 in 2005, the outlaws hid on Bosse's farm. Allan and the rest tended to the Boss' wounds, who slowly healed. The Boss became friendly with them all and renewed his friendship with Bosse. Benny and Bosse also renewed their brotherhood, each forgiving the other for past transgressions. Allan deepened his bond with Sonya the elephant, as well. As time progressed, the story of Allan's disappearance lost luster in the headlines, taken off the front pages.

In Chapter 20 in 1953, Allan and Herbert vacationed in Bali. There Herbert met and fell in love with Ni Wayan Laksmi, a none-too-bright local woman who nevertheless appreciated Herbert, flaws and all. Herbert and Allan first encountered Ni when she acted as their cocktail waitress on the resort beach. Though she was attracted to Herbert and vice versa, she could not help but irritate Allan because she perpetually mixed up their drink orders. With Herbert's help, Ni (who changed her name to Amanda at his insistence) won the governor's title of Bali, and using corruption and graft, bribed her way into a successful reelection. A volcano erupted, however, and Allan, Herbert and Amanda decided it best to move to Paris and start again.

In Chapter 21 in 2005, Chief Inspector Aronsson arrived at Bosse's farm and finally discovered the whereabouts of all involved in the ongoing story. Aronsson was a bit surprised no one seemed worried or alarmed by his arrival, but only a sleeping the Boss and Allan were home. Allan fixed Aronsson a cup of coffee and promised to tell the chief inspector everything about the case to date unknown by the authorities.

## Analysis

In Chapter 19, a lyrical time passes wherein the main characters have a respite from the constant action and duress under which they otherwise operate and live in much of the book. This pause in the story's action allows for the Boss to finally come to the realization that he does not want to recover his money as much as he does remain a part of Allan's extended family of friends, even if that means splitting the money evenly between them all. This dramatic conceit by the author -- that all who encounter Allan become magically spellbound by his gentle, non-threatening nature -- is echoed throughout the book whenever Allan meets world rulers. The Boss is a microcosm of such figures, a man of power and wealth who nonetheless desires to be in Allan's company despite himself. The sub-plot in which Bosse and Benny as brothers reconcile is another reflection of the powerful chemistry Allan's presence has on all who fall within his orbit. Old conflicts are resolved, and new hopes are born, and all because Allan perpetually remains the calm, enigmatic figure at the center of the chaos.



In Chapter 20, Allan and Herbert arrive in Bali, and through Herbert's courtship of Amanda which leads to their marriage, Allan enjoys a respite for many years resting on the beaches and drinking. Amanda, despite her limited intelligence, rises in power and through a system of corruption and graft, she buys her way into becoming the governor of Bali. It is interesting to note that Allan has no objection to this whatsoever, having dealt with so many world figures of power at this point that nothing any of them do surprises or disillusion them. In essence, because Allan has refused to impart special powers of moral clarity upon any of the world leaders he has met, he has not been often disappointed in their choices.

In Chapter 21, Chief Inspector Aronsson finally corners Allan at the farm house. Interestingly, Aronsson finds himself immediately drawn to the seemingly frail 100-year-old man and immediately offers an empathetic ear. Allan offers the inspector coffee and soon Aronsson is listening with rapt attention, yet another in a long line of folks who have preceded him who cannot resist listening to Allan's stories. This despite the fact that Allan has been anything but an attention seeker throughout his storied life. In fact, Allan is the opposite of someone who attempts to place himself at the center of any situation, but rather the first to shy away from undo flattery or compliments by his reclusive nature.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does the Boss decide to join with Allan and his circle of friends rather than go back to a life of crime? What qualities in Allan's assembled-on-the-run family does the Boss find attractive that he's missing in his own life?

## Discussion Question 2

Amanda chooses Herbert and vice versa when they meet in Bali. Why do you believe Amanda chooses Herbert over Allan when the trio first meet, when later after Herbert's death, Amanda and Allan fall in love and also marry?

## Discussion Question 3

What are some of the essential qualities that Allan embodies which lead him to be a natural bonding agent between total strangers with diverse backgrounds? What is it about Allan's persona that attracts others to trust him?

## Vocabulary

benefactor, nirvana, germinate, pretentious, passports, reciprocate, authoritative, democratic, defame, anti-corruption, lucrative, prosperity, embassy





# Chapters 22 - 24

## Summary

In Chapter 22 in 2005, an Egyptian sailor who found the remains of Bolt's body in a shipping container in the port of Djibouti (along with Bolt's wallet) kept the dead man's wallet. Alas, a suicide bomber detonated his bomb, killing several people, including the Egyptian sailor with Bolt's wallet. The authorities in Djibouti recovered the wallet of Bolt and alerted the Swedish consulate that they believed (mistakenly) Bolt had been killed in the suicide bombing (when it was actually the sailor). In Latvia, Bucket's car was crushed in a scrapyard, revealing the dead Bucket's arm. Prosecutor Ranelid received word from the Latvian authorities of Bucket's death on Latvian, not Swedish, soil. Ranelid frantically contacted Chief Inspector Aronsson, informing Aronsson that the theory Ranelid had carefully presented to the Swedish media involving the deaths of Bolt and Bucket as having taken place in Sweden was clearly incorrect (as they apparently died in foreign countries). This exonerated Allan and his friends from their supposed involvement in the deaths of Bolt and Bucket. Aronsson informed Ranelid that he had found Allan as well as the Boss, which further blew a hole in Ranelid's theory. Ranelid was in a panic because he knew the press wouldn't react favorably to an altered narrative of events.

In Chapter 23 in 1968, Allan was introduced to French President de Gaulle and visiting American President Johnson during the height of the May Riots in Paris. Impressed with Allan, Johnson asked him to dinner. There Allan revealed that it was he who gave the secrets of the bomb to the Russians (as well as assisting in other operations that were essentially anti-American), and Johnson reluctantly severed all ties to Allan, convinced he was a traitor to the USA. But Agent Hutton from the CIA convinced Johnson that Karlsson would make an excellent Moscow spy, and after carefully considering it, Johnson agreed.

In Chapter 24 in 2005, Ranelid managed to convince the press that Allan and his colleagues were innocent of all charges, thus ending the media manhunt for them. But a skeptical press doubtful of the sudden turn of events in the official story suddenly threatened to end Ranelid's career with their continuous questioning. Meanwhile, Aronsson, a lonely man without a family, was drawn into the inner circle of Allan and his loose-knit family and decided to side with them when his boss Ranelid later called. Ranelid pleaded with Aronsson to have Allan and his friends accept both a brief interrogation and his personally-delivered apology the next day, after emphasizing how Ranelid had cleared their names with the media. Aronsson drank toasts of champagne with his new companions after they accepted Ranelid's offer.



## Analysis

In Chapter 22, various threads of the narrative involving the reasons that Allan and his traveling companions are sought after by the Swedish police all magically resolve themselves in the course of a few hours. The bodies of the Boss' henchmen who went seeking Allan to recover the 50 million dollars in the suitcase are both found too far away from Allan's whereabouts to make a legal case Allan or his friends were responsible for their deaths. This exoneration by fate follows the pattern throughout the novel for Allan in such situations. Ordinarily, such outrageous twists and turns would be considered over the top and too unbelievable to have much in the way of literary merit. However, because this is a consistent pattern that both benefits and occasionally hinders Allan, it plays as black comedy for dark laughs. In essence, Allan's century-long adventures would have never happened if his uncanny luck in this regard had not held sway, and so when the Boss' two henchmen are found, lifeless and too far away from Allan for Allan to be blamed for their deaths, the author is merely repeating the same patterning he has used throughout the book to move Allan along from one adventure to the next.

In Chapter 23, Allan's earlier work for President Truman echoes in his encounter with President Johnson. Allan's reputation as an eccentric genius precedes him, and Johnson invites Allan to a private dinner to pick Allan's mind for ideas. Alas, Allan is honest and forthwith as he always is in such situations, and much like his encounter with Stalin, the words Allan chooses place him in an uncomfortable situation with the American president. Because Allan candidly admits to having helped foreign leaders whose values are diametrically opposed to the United States, Johnson is reluctantly forced to consider Allan as a traitor to America. Only the interdiction by Agent Hutton from the CIA convinces Johnson to reconsider after Johnson rudely bids Allan goodnight. Hutton reiterates that while it is true Allan worked for the behest of communist countries, he never did so with any direct result in harm to the U.S., only tangentially by way of his very presence. Hutton is able to convince Johnson that Allan would make a great double agent for the U.S. if so recruited, in that he already has demonstrated a background to willingly work for any country or government that employs him. Johnson sees the value and agrees, thus furthering Allan's indefatigable luck yet again.

In Chapter 24, most of the outstanding plot threads concerning the wanted nature of Allan and his friends by the Swedish authorities are rapidly driven to a conclusion. Instead of being sought after by Prosecutor Ranelid for potential criminal charges, Allan and company are sought after so that Ranelid may offer them a hurried explanation and sincere apology for their earlier wanted status. This is yet another ironic turn which *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* is filled with as novel. Ranelid has gone full circle from being a prosecutor hell-bent on finding Allan to a meek authority figure desperately trying to hold onto to his job. Such ironies define the essence of Allan's life, and per normal, Allan has done very little in the way of intervention to have such a resolution other than merely exist in time and space.



Throughout the book, Allan has monumental events transpire around and to him, but rarely initiates them.

## Discussion Question 1

Some would call the utterly unbelievable series of circumstances that continuously benefit Allan contrived, and yet, the author uses such moments without abatement. How do these larger-than-life twists work as literature, and what type of comedy are they utilizing to draw in the reader?

## Discussion Question 2

Allan inadvertently portrays himself as a traitor to the U.S. when meeting with President Johnson, offending the American president in much the same way Allan offends other world leaders he encounters. Why do you think the author chooses to have Allan so witless throughout the book when speaking to power? Is Allan merely naive, or does the author wish to make a larger point?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Ranelid go from hell-bent on catching and prosecuting Allan into submissive and wanting to work with Allan to clear Ranelid's own professional well-being? What essential quality about Allan works to effect this change in Ranelid?

## Vocabulary

fez, mincemeat, consul, legionnaire, ministry, reinforcements, arduous, accreditation, epithet, chaos, blockhead, ideology, monologue, catastrophic



# Chapters 25 - 27

## Summary

In Chapter 25 in 2005, Prosecutor Ranelid drove to Bosse's farm to question Allan and company before Ranelid faced a press corps both eager and angry to know the full story about Allan's disappearance. Allan fabricated a story involving he and his constituents at the farm being members of a religious group of which the Boss and his cohorts were also members, and how they were all attempting to transport Bibles for sale to enlighten the masses. Though Allan and his friends' stories were full of holes, Chief Inspector Aronsson went along with the deception, remaining quiet. Exasperated, Ranelid drove to the press conference and used Allan's accounting to explain the whole affair, even though Ranelid had his doubts about the story's veracity. Aronsson was surprised by the group's revelation to him that the suitcase contained 50 million dollars, and that they furthermore wanted him to accompany them on an excursion abroad to enjoy it. Aronsson, lonely and without a family, agreed.

In Chapter 26 in 1968, CIA agent Ryan Hutton accompanied Allan to Russia and installed him as an agent in Sarov, the top secret base where the Soviets maintained their nuclear program. Though it took a year of effort, Allan finally devised a method of contacting his old contact Yury Borisovich Popov, head of the Soviet nuclear missile development program. Allan convinced Yury and his wife Larissa that the U.S. would support them both as double agents in exchange for a few years of vital information provided while still in the U.S.S.R. Further, Allan promised the older Russian couple could migrate to America and retire in New York City, where they could visit the various operas they adored with frequency and via a pension provided by the CIA. They agreed. Impressed with Allan's success, a meeting between he and President Nixon was arranged. Nixon thanked Allan for his dedication and fine work in providing the information that led to various missile reduction talks and treaties between the two superpowers. When Reagan was in office, Allan and Yury provided concocted information that led to the Star Wars Defense Initiative.

In Chapter 27 in 2005, Allan contacted Amanda, and she was so delighted to hear from him, she invited him and his friends to Bali. Meanwhile, Inspector Ranelid had his press conference and managed to quell the journalists. Allan and company flew to Bali by provisioning an Indonesian airline that agreed to carry Sonya for an extra charge. Allan and Amanda ignited their simmering love affair (as Herbert, her former husband, had died years previously), agreeing to get married.

## Analysis

In Chapter 25, Allan and his companions offer the most outrageous - though believable - story they can to account for their disappearances. They spill a convoluted tale to Ranelid when he visits them on Bosse's farm involving phony religious convictions and



their desire to spread the word of God via Bibles to the disbelieving. Prosecutor Ranelid is desperate to not only believe their tale, but hopefully convince the media less than one hour later in a press conference that the story is valid in a last-ditch effort to save his job. Aronsson is told the truth and offered a chance to participate in their group foray in spending the 50 million. Despite his oath to uphold the law, Aronsson sees no reason not to join Allan's cadre, as Aronsson's personal life is without companionship or personal meaning. Again, there is irony present that the figure who represents law and order, and who has spent the majority of the novel tracking Allan down, turns and accepts what amounts to a huge bribe to join Allan's circle of friends. But such is the loneliness of Aronsson that he sees no conflict in doing so, and in fact, an enormous upside as he will now have friends as well as fortune, neither of which his occupation has provided for him.

In Chapter 26, Allan again meets with Yury Borisovich. Time has passed and now Yury is one of the most respected nuclear scientists in all of the U.S.S.R. Yury is grateful to meet with Allan because Yury knows (as does Allan) that the only reason Yury was able to help the Soviets with their experimental nuclear missile program was because of Allan's drunken assistance aboard the Russian submarine earlier in the novel. In a twist of fate, this time it is Allan who is secretly recruiting Yury to become a double agent for the U.S., and keep the U.S. (via Allan) informed on the progress of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. Allan uses Yury's love of opera to recruit him in part, promising Yury and his wife they will be able to retire soon on the funds the U.S. provides to them as spies and watch as much opera as they desire. In fact, they often meet at opera houses to conduct their spy information exchanges. So successful is Allan's venture that he is eventually invited to visit with President Nixon, wherein Allan tells the American leader about how governments are run in Bali (with break-ins, grafts, etc.). It is suggested by the author that Nixon is so impressed with the concept, it is what he uses in his own office while commander-in-chief. Ironically, where such tactics worked for Amanda in Bali, they lead to Nixon's downfall in the U.S.

In Chapter 27, Allan and friends visit Amanda in Bali. Herbert has passed away, but this only opens the door for Allan and Amanda to begin a courtship that both seem pre-ordained to experiencing. That fact that Allan at 100 years of age marries seems incredible to the reader, but then again, given what Allan has been through up until this advanced point in his life, it seems equally likely to have happened, too. Their unlikely union plays upon the theme so prevalent throughout the book that Allan's mother first uttered after Allan's father died: whatever will be, will be.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Chief Inspector Aronsson go along with Allan and his friends despite his professional misgivings? What is missing in Aronsson's life that he would make such a drastic decision?



## Discussion Question 2

Is there any dichotomy between Yury Borisovich's love of opera by night and his creation of a nuclear arsenal designed to destroy the world by day? How do some of Allan's own internal inconsistencies mirror Yury's seemingly split personality?

## Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the author has Allan wed at the age of 100? What qualities does Allan possess at such an age that Amanda finds attractive enough to marry?

## Vocabulary

conscience, delinquents, adultery, monopoly, fiasco, meteorological, decrepit, exegesis, sarcasm, inkling, bugged, paralysis, compressed, parasol, indiscreet, specialist, intercontinental



# Chapters 28 - Epilogue

## Summary

In Chapter 28 and 29 in 1982, Allan retired from spying and returned to Sweden. He received a pension from the Swedish government with which he used to buy a small retirement cottage. He befriended a stray cat named Molotov and lived a peaceful, if quiet, existence. When a wild fox ate Molotov, Allan flew into a rage and plotted the fox's demise. Allan dynamited the hen house nearby where the fox was raiding food, but inadvertently exploded his own cottage, too. A Swedish social worker saw to it that Allan was housed in an old folk's home. However, the rules and rigidity of the old folks' home didn't suit Allan, who was used to living life on his own terms, and so he plotted to escape from it on his 100-year-old birthday.

In the Epilogue in 2005, Amanda and Allan were very happy together. Allan gave Amanda a laptop computer on her own birthday, and Amanda created a blog. In the blog, she described the many adventures Allan had undertaken for so many world leaders throughout his clandestine career. Not long thereafter, a man representing the Indonesian government showed up to talk with Allan. The man wanted to know if Allan would help the Indonesian president with developing a nuclear bomb. Convinced the president he would be working for was mentally stable, Allan agreed to terms and was off on his latest top secret adventure.

## Analysis

In Chapter 28 and 29, the setting in *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* returns full circle to Sweden. Allan buys a cottage and retires, but owing to his love for a cat named Molotov, he winds up dynamiting the cottage by mistake while killing the fox who killed Molotov. This echoes the earlier chapters in the book when Allan blew up his first family home by accident. In that earlier time, Allan winds up in an asylum as a result of his explosives obsession. This time Allan again winds up placed in a facility as a result of his blowing up his home, only it is the old folks' home. Thus the circle is completed, and Allan impatiently waits until his 100-year-old birthday so that he may escape and flee from the old folks' home, which he detests living within.

In the Epilogue, Allan's life is yet again echoed ad infinitum when he gives Amanda a laptop computer and she creates a blog detailing some of his earlier adventures. The blog is read by an Indonesian secret agent who then promptly arranges a surreptitious visit with Allan one day. The agent propositions Allan to help him and the Indonesian government with their quest to build a nuclear bomb, and the entire cycle of Allan's lifetime's work of having assisted one government after another in such a mission is set in motion yet again. For Allan, time is a cyclic notion and he is forever being recruited to do the bidding of others in tasks too large for them to accomplish for themselves.



Despite his advanced age and weariness at having done so much for so many in prior times, Allan agrees after only one question: will the leader he'll be working remain mentally stable while he is employed to help make a bomb? This humorously suggests that while Allan has not had his fill of risking his life to accomplish tasks beyond the ordinary, he has had his fill of working with crazy world leaders, who seem to task Allan beyond his ability to work with them.

## Discussion Question 1

What circumstances force Allan into the old folks' home despite the fact he owns a retirement cottage? Is there irony at play with the events that lead to Allan moving into the old folks' home, and if so, which ones?

## Discussion Question 2

How might events in the story have been irrevocably altered had Allan not dynamited the fox who ate his cat Molotov? Would they have even taken place as the author delineated them, or changed completely?

## Discussion Question 3

What is the eventual outcome of Amanda starting a blog about Allan's many world adventures? What conclusion do you draw from the conclusion itself in terms of Allan's so-called retirement and whether or not he'll stay in it for long?

## Vocabulary

pension, subscribe, hermit, provisional, distillery, veranda, domain, geriatric, longed, pondering, allergic, surgical, hitherto, veranda





# Characters

## Allan Karlsson

Allan Karlsson is the 100-year-old protagonist who flees from his old folks' home and sets out to have one last life adventure when the story begins. Allan grows up an only child in rural Sweden to a loving mother and indifferent father. His father is killed in Russia fighting for the socialist revolution, leaving Allan alone with his mother in virtual poverty. Allan works hard to help support his mother, but she, too, dies not long thereafter, leaving him alone and penniless in the world.

Allan becomes an explosives expert at a young age, fascinated with the science behind blowing things up. After unintentionally leading to the death of a local merchant in an errant detonation, Allan is housed in an asylum, where he is sterilized by a quack doctor who believes in eugenics. Soon after his release, Allan wanders the world always awaiting the next opportunity in his life, which always seem to seek him out rather than the other way around. His uncanny luck at solving and surviving each new encounter with fate and fortune gives Allan a protective aura of survival instinct that is unmatched by others in his sphere of influence. Ironically, however, Allan does not boast nor attempt to capitalize upon his innate abilities, but rather allows others he meets to see his potential and exploit these qualities for themselves instead.

In conception and execution, Allan is a kind of blessed innocent, though some of his adventures do beg the wisdom of a protagonist willing to undertake life-threatening jobs without much forethought. Allan has the trusting, naive faith of a child who never learned the world is a far more cruel and dangerous place than his parents perhaps warned him. By all rights, the reader naturally expects him to pay the ultimate price of death for his continued innocence, but ironically, it is the cynical, world-weary characters around Allan who most typically suffer and die, while he miraculously survives and thrives despite their dire warnings to him. Allan possesses a kind of magical ability to turn every bad situation he encounters into a blessing, even when the odds are incredibly against him. In this way, Allan is a very optimistic, hopeful figure who inspires confidence and trust in those he meets who have lost their own child-like ability to believe in life's positives rather than the bleaker negatives. As a protagonist, he actually acts more like an agent of change in others rather than as a character who is changed himself, although he does experience changes owing to his many personal adventures, too.

## Julius Jonsson

Julius Jonsson is a small-time thief who lives in an abandoned railway station he purchased with money he stole from a safe. He is the first person Allan meets when Allan steals the suitcase full of money and attempts to elude the pursuing henchman Bolt who wants the 50 million dollars back.



Julius' background as a petty criminal is most notably marked by a scheme he uses on his rural home town as a younger man. Julius contracts with the village to provide a large number of wooden electrical poles to support the town's wiring needs. However, in order to save time and make his money faster, Julius harvests the trees needed before they are fully grown, making the poles a foot shorter each than required. As a result, as soon as the poles are installed and wired, various machines like tractors and trucks are too tall for the lowered height of the wires and the poles all spectacularly fail, crashing to the ground. Julius absconds with the money and goes into hiding, engaging in various low-level crimes since his caper with the utility poles to support himself.

Julius takes Allan in to his modest station home and helps start the story by locking Bolt into the freezer, which inadvertently leads to Bolt's death. Julius is also the first person that Allan agrees to share the stolen 50 millions dollars with, giving Julius a privileged status in terms of the succeeding characters who will join with Allan to split the money.

## Herbert Einstein

Herbert Einstein is the world famous Albert Einstein's half-brother. Herbert is a fictitious character and not truly Albert's actual half-brother, which gives the author leeway to heighten the absurdities and conflicts Herbert has without having to remain true to any real-life facts. For example, Herbert is abducted by Russian agents who mistakenly believe Herbert is Albert. Only after they interrogate Herbert do the agents realize he has no knowledge about physics whatsoever, and the promptly toss him into a gulag, where he meets Allan for the first time.

Allan does not mind that Herbert is not very bright and soon the two are friends. After 5 years in the gulag, Allan decides it is time to break out and enlists Herbert to help him. Herbert, who is bored with life and has an active death wish, agrees, figuring there is a good chance both he and Allan will be killed in the process of attempting escape. Ironically and because he is with Allan, Herbert survives the escape and many adventures to follow, protected in a second-hand manner by Allan's uncanny good luck, which casts a positive shadow on Herbert's fate, as well.

## Benny Ljungberg

Benny Ljungberg is a perpetual student who has never graduated with any degrees despite spending decades studying various fields of inquiry. Because an inheritance dispute he is engaged in with his brother Bosse stipulates that the money they receive ends when either of the two brothers actually completes a degree of study, Benny has craftily dodged the cessation of said monies by re-enrolling in a different field every time he comes close to graduation date. This leads to a conflict with Bosse and the two brothers are estranged when the story begins.

Benny operates a hot dog stand while driving a Mercedes when he first meets Allan and Julius on the run with the 50 million dollars. In exchange for a share of the money, Benny agrees to become their personal chauffeur and general helper, abandoning his



hot dog stand as entrepreneur. Benny is characteristically thoughtful and not prone to boasting, which makes his presence very welcome to Allan and Julius.

## **Gunilla Bjorklund aka the Beauty**

Gunilla Bjorklund aka the Beauty is so nicknamed by Benny when he first meets her on her farm, seeking a place to hide with Allan and Julius with the stolen money. She is a woman in her 40s who has given up on men after divorcing her husband when the novel begins, but who warms to Benny because he instantly nicknames her "the Beauty" and showers her with non-stop affection.

The Beauty owns a rural farm that provides perfect shelter for Allan, Julius and Benny when they arrive in Benny's car, seeking to avoid capture by the Swedish police as well as the Boss' henchmen. At first she does not know they are wanted men and agrees to allow them to stay on her farm. Later she reads a newspaper headline and discovers the men's true identities, which makes her livid. However, when Allan cuts her in for a share of the loot and invites her to travel with them, the Beauty is all aboard, bored with her life as is on the lonely farm she owns.

## **Bosse Ljungberg**

Bosse Ljungberg is Benny's brother. He lives on a farm where he illegally injects flavoring juices into processed chicken bodies to improve their commercial taste as products. He is estranged from Benny over an inheritance dispute. It also turns out that Bosse once was a partner in crime with the Boss. The two parted over the Boss' attempt to make money by adding formaldehyde as a preservative to shipped food, which Bosse thought went too far in terms of safety to the people eating it.

After Benny apologizes over the conflict the two brothers have, and after Benny also includes a percentage of the stolen money for Bosse to spend as he pleases, Bosse forgives his brother and the two make up. They become traveling companions along with Allan, Julius, the Beauty and the rest, eventually winding up in Bali.

## **Per Gunner-Gerdin aka the Boss**

Per Gunner-Gerdin aka the Boss is a lifelong criminal who works his way up the underworld ladder from lowliest to ruling status. He is obese and calculating, a formidable nemesis when his anger is aroused. It is the Boss' 50 million dollars that is stolen by Allan in the book's opening and that leads to the major plot line throughout the novel in which the Boss first sends his henchmen, and then himself, after Allen and his friends in order to retrieve the stolen cash and punish them for their insolence.

The Boss is surprised when he encounters Bosse at Bosse's farm, as the Boss and Bosse were once gangland co-conspirators. This shared history lessens the Boss' ire at



Allan and the rest, and leads to the Boss eventually agreeing to join their entourage as they contemplate leaving Sweden and spending the 50 million as a group.

## Chief Inspector Aronsson

Chief Inspector Aronsson is a lonely career bureaucrat who is assigned by his superior Prosecutor Ranelid to the case of the missing Allan. Aronsson is a very competent officer, but Allan's disappearance draws media headlines and newscasts throughout Sweden, owing to the unusual nature of a 100-year-old man vanishing. Aronsson actually tracks Allan and his friends down to Bosse's farm, in essence solving the case. But he finds himself drawn to the companions who form Allan's circle of friends and eventually decides to keep the truth of the missing 50 million dollars to himself, as Allan and company invite Aronsson to become a part of their family. Bored with his career and lacking any friends, Aronsson decides to accept their offer.

## Prosecutor Ranelid

Prosecutor Ranelid is the man who must put a face on Allan's whereabouts to the press. He is very dependent on Chief Inspector Ranelid to provide clues and leads that will quickly end the case (before the inquisitive, hostile media ends Ranelid's career). Ranelid dreams of glories beyond his job, mentally composing a book he has never written that will be his vainglorious memoirs. He eventually meets with Allan and company, but less to solve the mystery of Allan's whereabouts and more to attempt to salvage his prosecutorial career, which has been severely damaged by Ranelid's falsely telling the media one set of facts about the case that later evidence reveals as wrong.

## Amanda Einstein aka Ni Wayan Laksmi

Amanda Einstein aka Ni Wayan Laksmi is the Balinese young lady who, with Allan's and Herbert's assistance, rises from a server of drinks in a hotel to the governor of Bali. Herbert Einstein marries her shortly after they meet, but because he cannot remember her name as Ni Wayan Laksmi, he has her change it to Amanda. Because of her rise to power and wealth, neither Herbert or Allan have to earn a living while they are under her care. Eventually Herbert dies and when Allan returns to Bali, he and Amanda marry.

## Sonya

Sonya is the Beauty's pet elephant. Sonya escapes from a traveling circus and winds up on the Beauty's property. The Beauty takes Sonya in and grooms and feeds her, as well as offering her shelter in the barn. They become so attached as companions that the Beauty refuses to travel with Allan and friends unless they figure a way to build a transport for Sonya to accompany them. Sonya also is an accidental murderer, sitting atop Bucket, one of the Boss' henchmen, when Allan gives the elephant the command to do so. Sonya acts as an absurd touch, in that the idea of a gang of friends moving



about the countryside while trying to avoid the attention of the police couldn't have a harder task than to disguise a pachyderm while doing so.

## General Francisco Franco

General Francisco Franco is one of the first world leaders Allan meets and assists in his many travels around the world. Like all such political figures in the book, Franco is partly historical and partly fictionalized. Allan meets him as a fascist Franco battles the socialists in Spain, saving Franco's life from a bridge Allan ironically himself has wired to detonate whilst working on behalf of the socialists.

## Soong Mei-Ling

Soong Mei-Ling is the wife of Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek. She meets Allan in the U.S. at the behest of President Harry Truman when Truman asks Allan to covertly assist her in overthrowing the advance of communist leader Mao Tse-tung. Soong considers herself the real brains behind her marriage, and berates her husband Kai-shek for not having the audacity and cleverness to stop Tse-tung.

## Joseph Stalin

Joseph Stalin is the leader of the Soviet Union when Allan meets him at a dinner party in Russia. Stalin is portrayed as mercurial, one moment quite friendly and then the next moment mad with outrage. Allan accidentally offends Stalin, causing Stalin to have an apoplectic fit and sentencing Allan to life in a gulag for his offense.

## Director Alice

Director Alice is the woman who runs the old folks' home where Allan lives when the book begins. She is distant and cold, and runs the facility as if it were a prison rather than a residency for the retired people who reside there. She is the main reason Allan decides he cannot stand living at the home and why he decides to leave on his 100-year-old birthday, because he cannot stand the thought of seeing her smugly control his birthday celebration which she has planned without his participation.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Allan Climbing Out the Window

Allan climbing out of the window at the old folks' home is symbolic of Allan's unwillingness to ever compromise in life with difficult scenarios. From his childhood to his 100-year-old birthday, Allan refuses to allow bad situations and controlling people to determine who he will be and where he will reside. Instead, he bides his time when confronted with such forces of oppression and eventually figures a way around them. Sometimes, as in the symbol of the window (in which Allan is opening up to a new possibility in life, which is literally represented by the window itself), Allan cannot devise a plan beyond merely taking a blind shot at action, unable to guess what the outcome of such a drastic maneuver will be. Many times throughout his life, Allan must make such decisions and trust fate will deliver him to a better outcome. Almost magically, life does precisely that, but only when Allan takes the initiative towards action. The window is the symbol for this lifelong philosophy which forever propels Allan into each new adventure. That is, he can see out the window and use it to escape, but he cannot see very far beyond the panes of glass to determine where such an action will deliver him.

## The Suitcase Allan Steals

As the author writes, the suitcase Allan steals at the bus station is Allan's saying yes to life itself. In other words, Allan has no rational reason to take Bolt's suitcase beyond an impulsive desire to alter the boring, predictable outcome of events as they are currently unfolding when he escapes the old folks' home. Rather, taking the suitcase symbolically represents the daring ability Allan possesses to take life-affirming actions even when it might seem pointless to do so to any bystanders. That a 100-year-old man would flee his assisted living facility on his birthday is bold enough, but that he would in the same day also steal a suitcase belonging to what is clearly a young thug is daring beyond most people's idea of prudent actions, young or old. So while the suitcase also represents a certain monetary freedom as it contains 50 million dollars, the action of stealing the suitcase itself is a symbol of Allan's irrepressible nature, which is a large secret to his long-lived life. Where others might play it safe, Allan takes chances, as symbolically represented by the act of stealing the suitcase.

## The Closed Train Station Julius Occupies

Julius lives in a small, abandoned train station he purchased with stolen money. While it is an unusual place to call home, it fits the nature of Julius, who is a man who has largely lived as a recluse outside of normal society. Hence, a closed, forgotten train station symbolically represents Julius himself. Julius once was a man on the go when he was younger and committing small-time crimes and fraud, but now he is a man who rarely has contact with other human beings. The train station mirrors this background,



as it was once a small but bustling stop along the now closed railway where busy passengers came and went in large numbers. The station also has a symbolic double meaning in that the story of Allan and Julius teaming up and having the adventure begins at the train station. Thus the station acts not just as a symbol for Julius' withdrawal from the world around him prior to meeting Allan, but also as a symbolic launching point for Julius' and Allan's friendship and all that follows from it throughout the rest of the story. This is fitting symbolically for a structure that has historically functioned to bring people together and transport them to another location.

## Allan's Mother's Saying

Allan's mother's saying whenever something goes awry is, "Things are what they are, and whatever will be, will be." She first says this when she and Allan learn that Allan's father died a pointless death in the Soviet Union fighting for socialism. However it is not an epithet to mark his father's passing, but symbolically an entire philosophy of life. Allan adopts it as his own and applies it whenever he encounters unexpected troubles beyond his ability to solve or even sometimes comprehend. While it reads as perhaps defeatist in nature, Allan symbolically applies it to quite the opposite effect in his own life. He uses the phrase to steady himself when faced with the latest defeat or inexplicable death of a friend or loved one. For Allan, who has lived a century of hardship and watched too many he cared for pointlessly die, the phrase has an almost magical power to calm and soothe him, getting him through the latest tragedy. Rather than giving up on life when he utters the symbolic phrase, Allan is actually making peace with life and refusing to surrender to its call to give up because of its apparent pointlessness. Ironically, even though the phrase his mother taught him seems weary with resignation, it actually is a symbolic form of encouraging determinism, in that the phrase absolves the person who utters it from having to understand the overwhelming chaos and meaningless that life can hurl at a person struggling to find meaning within it.

## Bolt's Death in the Freezer

Bolt, the henchman who totes the suitcase with 50 million inside, and his death in Julius' freezer is symbolic of much of the black humor that permeates the novel. Prior to Bolt's death, the events in the story are far-fetched but within the realm of legally acceptable, such as an old man running away from an old folks' home. But with Bolt's accidental death in the freezer, which is caused by Allan and Julius getting drunk and forgetting they've locked him inside it, the story takes a symbolic turn for the worse, as now Allan and Julius must face the genuine possibility they will be arrested for Bolt's murder. It doesn't really matter that either Allan or Julius had no intention to leave Bolt in the freezer overnight. What matters is that through their actions, from the outside authorities' eyes, Allan and Julius are suddenly considered murder suspects as a result. The reader understands that Allan and Julius are innocent, in that they had no intent to harm Bolt (quite the opposite, as Bolt arrives intending to kill them and retrieve his money), but Bolt's death forces the two older men to go on the run with the stolen money and dispose of Bolt's body. Numerous deaths in this accidental vein will be



repeated from this point forward in the book in a kind of morbidly humorous echoing pattern, and usually when someone is threatening Allan. So in this sense, it is also a symbol of Allan's naive ability to withstand antagonists who mean to do him harm and ironically turn the tables on them, emerging the unexpected victor who profits from the process.

## The Bridges Allan Explodes

Throughout the book, Allan is called upon to detonate various bridges for various world powers. Bridges become a symbolic representation of the general inability Allan has for choosing one side in a conflict over another side. For example, when Allan is young and traveling with Esteban in Spain, Esteban convinces Allan to work on behalf of the rebel socialist forces and blow up bridges that General Franco the fascist is using to transport troops and supplies. Because he is never committed to one side of a fight or another, Allan agrees. After Esteban is killed before his eyes, Allan decides to warn off the troops he sees on the latest bridge he has wired to explode in an act of mercy. Ironically, the bridge is being used at that very moment by General Franco himself. Franco is grateful (as Allan does not tell him it was Allan who wired the bridge to blow) and rewards Allan with safe passage. Another time, Allan must wire bridges to explode in China to defeat the communist forces, and winds up liberating the communist leader's imprisoned wife instead. Bridges in Allan's life symbolically represent the change that Allan himself often undergoes as he crosses from one side (as in, side of a conflict) to another side. Because Allan never chooses sides no matter who employs him, his neutrality is unwavering. He may be employed by one faction or another, but Allan never chooses to become beholden to one political philosophy or another. Allan perversely enjoys exploding bridges for that reason: it places the former bridge where Allan himself likes to be, in the middle with no common ground and no connective tissue. Detonating bridges symbolically represents Allan's sense of not wanting to be on either side of a conflict.

## Allan's U.S. Confinement on Arrival

After Allan arrives in the U.S. for the first time shortly before World War II, he is locked away by the immigration authorities because he lacks any proper citizenship I.D. or traveling papers. The U.S. agents cannot find any reason for Allan's being in the country, and so they lock him up. Years pass and Allan's explosives expertise suddenly makes him valuable to the top secret Manhattan Project. Allan is shipped there because he has value suddenly to the American war effort. Throughout the book, Allan is of little use as an individual person, but enormous value as a person who knows how to explode things. The symbolism of Allan's expertise being of value versus his inherent rights as an individual being worthless are illustrated in this episode, and repeated throughout the book. When no country or leader has need of Allan's knowledge, he is often locked away, as if his existence as a human being serves no purpose to anyone. This happens to Allan repeatedly in the book, and so this episode distills the manner in which leaders perceive Allan not as a full-bodied, complex individual, but a symbol of power and control for their own nefarious purposes.





## Building an Atomic Bomb

Allan is an explosives expert throughout the book who is much sought after by numerous countries who wish to exploit his knowledge and capabilities. The ultimate symbol of this desire by world leaders to have Allan working on their side is the atomic bomb. Whereas Allan is content exploding nitroglycerin, dynamite and other forms of smaller explosives, the atomic bomb represents the ultimate form of lethal power in terms of raw energy. While Allan has no interest in supporting one government or another in terms of helping them build such a device, he is attracted to what detonating such a weapon symbolically means to him: the ultimate form of explosive power ever to be unleashed by a human mind. In essence, the symbol of the bomb itself as the single most destructive force ever conceived and executed by a human being finds favor with Allan because of his passion for explosions, pure and simple, and not geopolitics. So while Truman, Stalin, and the rest of the world's leaders see the bomb as the literal manner in which they can control the world, Allan sees the building of an atomic bomb purely in symbolic form as the most awe-inspiring explosion ever detonated on the planet. Allan never voices any concern about the amorality of building such a device. Rather, he is absorbed by the mental calculations necessary to detonate it.

## Vodka

Allan enjoys drinking as much as he does exploding things. His favorite drink of all time is vodka, which he prefers to all others. Vodka is symbolic of Allan's detached nature as a supreme individualist, in that he does not work on behest of others for money, power or fame, but typically because they can supply him a good vodka to drink while he is in their employ. In this sense, vodka symbolically represents Allan's preference for interior, rather than exterior, experiences. He would rather get drunk on vodka, say, rather than attend a state function with visiting dignitaries (unless the state function served vodka, that is). Vodka motivates Allan to take action, such as when he decides to break free of the Russian gulag not because he has been unjustly imprisoned, but because it has been over 5 years since he has had any vodka to drink. Another time Allan blurts out the secret to atomic fusion to a Russian physicist in a submarine because Allan is drunk on vodka and forgets himself. Again, this is a good example of how the symbolic value of vodka is internal for Allan in much the same way the secret to making an atomic bomb is: he holds the nuclear knowledge internally until the vodka lowers his inhibitions and then suddenly his inner workings are blurted into the public sphere. Vodka is a symbol of unintended disclosure and inner sedation in the book. Even more than money, Allan seeks the calming effects vodka has on him, though he learns to be careful with whom he drinks after making unwise disclosures while under its influence.

## Sonya the Elephant

Sonya the elephant is symbolic of the absurd nature of much of the book. The idea that the Beauty insists on transporting Sonya with Allan and his friends wherever they go is an echo of this symbolism. Allan and his companions are all on the run from the law and



could not choose a worse time to draw attention to themselves than by attempting to move an elephant about the Swedish countryside. Sonya also acts as a symbolic representation of Allan and the group's sudden cohesion as a family. In reality, Allan or one of the other friends would likely object to the notion that the Beauty has the right to set conditions for travel that include a large pachyderm as her condition for going along. But in the magical circle Allan and his new family create by their unconditional support for one another, no one objects to including Sonya or offers any reasonable alternative to bringing her along. Rather, they work together to insure Sonya is included. So in this manner, Sonya symbolically echoes the suitcase full of money, in that she offers an unquestioned reason why the humans stay tightly aligned in their mutual quest. The difference is that she is a living symbol of unity, while the suitcase is an inanimate one.



# Settings

## The Old Folks' Home

The Old Folks' Home where the book opens with Allan escaping the window and running away to avoid his 100th birthday is represented as a confining, prison-like institutional setting. Allan can't stand the officious director, Alice, and the way she insists on keeping everyone who is a resident in the Old Folks' Home in line and part of a very dehumanizing atmosphere. This is why Allan is willing to risk what is left of his life to escape from the facility, as he feels it is better to be on one's own in the world than restricted in a home that makes one feel less-than-human for being there.

## Lake Farm

Lake Farm is the Swedish farm owned by the Beauty. It is remote and near a lake front. In fact, the lake is where the Beauty finds Sonya the Elephant when Sonya escapes from her owners and wades across the lake to the Beauty's farm. Lake Farm is important to the story because it is where the core group of friends -- Allan, Benny, Julius and the Beauty -- all intersect for the first time, get to know one another and vow to travel as far as the 50 million dollars will take them as a group collective.

## Bellringer Farm

Bellringer Farm is the farm owned by Bosse, Benny's brother. It is a remote farm where Bosse injects flavoring into the processed chickens he buys wholesale and then resales them with the special flavoring to an unsuspecting public who love the taste. The farm is also where Benny brings Allan, the Beauty and Julius to hide out from Chief Inspector Aronsson as he closes in on the missing group, at large and wanted by the Swedish police. Though quite successful financially, Bellringer Farm is also quite dull for Bosse, who lives there alone prior to the arrival of his brother and his brother's friends. So while he has made a success of himself there, Bosse is bored and eager to leave behind Bellringer Farm for a life of adventure with his newly found friends.

## The Himalayan Mountains

The Himalayan Mountains are a mountainous range that Allan uses to travel from China to Iran after helping rescue Jiang Qing and returning her to safety. The mountains are difficult to pass on foot owing to extreme altitude and snow, but Allan can see no other way to escape China lacking air transport and so sets out on foot. The passage is tiring, and Allan has to start over after two months on one side of the mountains when he realizes the opposite side of the mountains offers better hiking. The mountains also perfectly represent the symbolic nature of Allan and his many quests throughout the book, in that they are seemingly immovable forces of nature that must be overcome.



through sheer, dogged determinism. Where many would fear to tread, Allan does not, and the mountains represent literally the highest of challenges that Allan must master acting largely on blind faith and sheer instinct.

## Bali

Bali is portrayed as a lush, tropical paradise. However, as easy as life is portrayed as being for the residents there, there is another side shown that portrays Bali as easily corruptible, as demonstrated by Amanda's rise to power as governor using bribery and other illegal means. Allan spends many years on the Balinese beaches, doing little more than reading newspapers and drinking alcohol. This represents the classical tourist image, which is why Allan resides in the country. But the graft and rigged elections Amanda puts into motion represent another side of Bali, one suggestive of corruption and manipulation of public policies. Both sides of the equation, good and bad, co-exist in Bali, making it a much more deceptively complex country than the initially naive presentation suggests is how the country is run.

## Spain

Spain is where Allan first arrives with his friend Esteban when they seek out the war-embroiled country in hopes of aiding the socialists at war with the fascists there. The countryside is deceptive, as proven by Esteban's sudden death and by Allan's rescuing of General Franco on a bridge (the same bridge, ironically, Allan has rigged to explode). The switching of allegiances which is a constant refrain in the book from one side of a political reality to another side is first introduced in Spain, when Allan goes from working for the socialists to working for the fascists in the blink of an eye.

## Russia

Russia is used a panoramic background throughout much of the book. Allan and Herbert are imprisoned in a gulag by Stalin after Allan accidentally offends Stalin at a private dinner party. Allan and Herbert eventually escape the gulag after 5 years and flee to North Korea, but decades later, Allan will return to Russia at the behest of the U.S. government and engage in spying for the Americans as they try to recruit a top nuclear physicist whom Allan has previously encountered. Throughout the book, the portrait the author makes of Russia is one of cold precision, where culture and science abound, but always under the oppressive regime of a leader who rules over free expression and prohibits too much in the way of personal liberties.



# Themes and Motifs

## The Happenstance Nature of Life

One of the major themes in the book is the happenstance nature of life. Events often unfold and without warning, to sudden, often profound outcomes throughout the novel. Allan experiences many sudden twists of fate in his 100 years of life.

For example, when he is a boy, Allan's father goes to Russia to fight for the socialist revolution. His father stakes off a tiny plot of land and claims it is the New Russia, provoking his own death by soldiers when they try to move him. From a young age, Allan sees that had his father not followed the socialist cause so completely, he would never have been in Russia to be killed in the first place. This event changes the way Allan views the world and politics, and as a result, he vows as an adult never to get caught up in geopolitical matters (a vow which he keeps to 100 years of age, despite the fact he ironically assists many world powers).

Another example happens when Esteban and Allan travel to Spain as young men. Esteban is killed by a mortar making a ridiculous stand for socialism in an echo of the manner in which Allan's father earlier died in Russia. Allan has a change of heart when he sees the Spanish dictator Franco on a bridge wired to explode. Allan rushes onto the bridge, saving Franco (while conveniently forgetting to tell Franco it was Allan who wired the bridge). Allan's decision has nothing to do with politics, just the opposite. Allan is merely tired of watching soldiers die in combat, and wants to prevent further loss of life, no matter their political beliefs. As a result, Franco -- the man Allan had moments earlier targeted for death on an exploding bridge -- is alive and grateful, giving Allan assistance in safe travels through Spain.

A final example of chance influencing events is Allan running into Bolt at the bus station, just after Allan has first escaped the Old Folks' Home. Bolt just happens to have a suitcase with \$50 million inside and selects Allan out of all the people present to watch the suitcase while Bolt uses the restroom. This is a chance occurrence, and as if in response, Allan suddenly decides to steal the suitcase while Bolt is gone. In effect, this is a double twist of chance, with first Bolt's arbitrarily selecting Allan to guard the suitcase, and then Allan's stealing the suitcase on a whim!

All of these acts of fate illustrate the happenstance nature of much of the plot in the novel. Throughout the book, there is at play a very satirical, yet wistful, sense of random probability and its being a bigger influence on life than most of us like to admit. Much of what happens happens to the characters, often interrupting whatever plans they have afoot for themselves, and requiring them to reorient to a new reality. This perfectly mirrors the happenstance nature aspect the author sets as a central motif throughout the story.



## The Consequences of Choice

Allan's life is a history reflecting the consequences of choice he has had made as a protagonist. From his earliest childhood when he chose to explore his fascination with explosives, to his 100th year when he's still making choices such as choosing to steal Bolt's suitcase filled with money, Allan refuses to lead a life wherein fate alone works on him, no matter how much it may assert itself. So while it is true he often makes spontaneous decisions (such as when he decided after 5 years imprisonment in a gulag it was time for him to escape for a much-needed drink of vodka), Allan nevertheless makes decisions, and in doing so, he often alters his fate in the process.

For example, Allan chooses to detonate some explosives as a young man on his parent's farm. Alas, a local merchant is driving his car near the area when an unwitting Allan explodes the charges, killing the merchant. Allan is confined to an asylum as a result of the accidental death because he is not yet a legal adult. Even though the outcome is tragic, it was tragically chosen by Allan, who detonated the blast itself. Again, Allan's choices affect the outcome of his character's destiny in a seemingly magnified, usually humorous manner.

The ultimate example of this theme of choice and outcome is Allan's opening scenes gambit of grabbing the suitcase filled with cash. While it is true Allan does not know the suitcase has money in it when he first grabs it, it is the act of brazenly stealing the suitcase that designates this moment as a vision of clarity in terms of choice and its outcome. Because Allan chooses to grab the suitcase, an entirely new world of adventure, friends and even eventually a wife opens up to him. And because Allan is still alive to that kind of power of perception at 100, he is still very much alive, period.

## Stoicism as Philosophy

Throughout the book, the author imbues his protagonist Allan with a calming stoicism that is unexpectedly at peace for an old man character. While Allan grows tired at times owing to his age, he never tires of living life to the fullest he can at any given moment, and this includes drinking prodigious amounts of alcohol.

The philosophy of stoicism on his part is suggestive by the author of being the key to Allan's longevity. In other words, Allan has been the lucky recipient of incredibly good fortune in many of the fantastic breaks and well as the misfortune he's had in his life, but just as truly, Allan has opened the door for each new moment life has presented to him. Driving all of this good and bad fortune is Allan's stoic belief that the world and what happens in it is largely not controllable, and yet, conversely, one must take action if one is to have any fun at all while one is here.

Allan learns this philosophy from his mother. When word reaches them his father has died in Russia, his mother's only wearied response is that "whatever will be, will be." In a sense, it is a very fatalistic viewpoint, and yet, it does not preclude the possibility of happiness anymore than it predicts unhappiness. There is a guarded air of feint hope



surrounding this phrase in the book, even though the characters saying it are often witnessing bad events or outcomes before they utter it. It is the recognition that humans have severe limits, and sooner or later, we all face them.

## Miscommunication

There are many examples of miscommunication in the novel. For example, brothers Bosse and Benny have a long history of sporadic miscommunication between them. Due to an inheritance dispute that runs for decades, the two brothers cease all communication whatsoever between themselves, refusing all contact. It is only by sheer coincidence that Benny winds up on Bosse's farm to hide out and that their brotherhood is reignited. Reunited on the farm, the two resolve their differences and promise to keep misunderstandings between them at a minimum.

There is also a lot of miscommunication between the police forces who are tracking Allan when he goes missing from the Old Folks' Home. Chief Inspector Aronsson and his superior Prosecutor Ranelid both miscommunicate with the press when stories of Allan's disappearance first circulate in the small town when Allan resides. Later there is more miscommunication when Aronsson decides to join with Allan's moving party of friends. Aronsson advises Allan and company to come up with a believable story to explain why they've been missing while Ranelid and the rest of the Swedish police have been searching for them. While the latter story is technically a lie, Allan and his circle of friends devise the tale so carefully, it is also a miscommunication designed to mislead Ranelid with its thoroughness of detail.

Throughout the book, miscommunication often plays a key role in how events unfold. It often takes a larger act of fate to undo or make correct the problems the characters encounter that miscommunication in and of itself first set in motion.

## The Motivational Aspects of Money

The motivational aspects of money run as a constant theme throughout the book. For most characters, larger and large sums of money set their courses for how they will make choices in their lives, and incredibly large sums of money such as the \$50 million Allan steals in the briefcase, become life-changing events.

Ironically, Allan himself is almost immune to such large sum motivations. While he does not give up the money or refuse to take his share in such situations, Allan is nonetheless not motivated by money as the end all and be all for all of his choices and actions in life. Rather he tends to work for people and on jobs which he can seriously appreciate for whatever reasons of passion such employment provides. Most of his clandestine jobs involve Allan working in the field of explosives, which he loves, and not for any particularly extravagant sums of money for a job well done. The proof of this is that Allan rarely asks for any salary upfront, but rather takes what is offered to him financially by each new employer.



The stolen suitcase filled with money does little to change this aspect of Allan's nature. Rather than attempt to keep it all for himself, Allan generously shares the overall sum of money with each new person who joins his circle of friends, and evenly between them all, as well. Each new person who joins the circle gets the same proportionate amount of cash as everyone else, which is a unique arrangement. It is telling that each new person who joins in with Allan is bowled over by the large sum of cash, and literally alters their respective life plans in order to participate in the suitcase's holdings. So while huge sums of money don't completely alter the persons who join Allan's circle of fortune, it does act as a motivational force, making each person consider their life's situation before abandoning what they have for a life of riches courtesy of Allan.





# Styles

## Point of View

The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared by Jonas Jonasson is written in a third-person point of view. As a result, much of the book reads like an objective, journalistic account of a series of incidents that happen to the main characters as told to the reader in a third-person perspective. The main characters are given plenty of descriptive phrases to delineate them to the reader, but because of the third-person perspective, the reader does not have much in the way of inner privilege to the various characters' heads in which to understand their thoughts and feelings. Rather, objective motions and spoken sentences suffice to give the reader insight into the protagonists and antagonists and help delineate why a certain character feels or thinks the way he or she does.

Given that author Jonas Jonasson once was a newspaper reporter, this third-person style -- so common to many journalistic endeavors -- is not unexpected. Jonasson is adept at using it to create intrigue and interest in his characters, and given the cast of characters is so large in the book, it is not unexpected that Jonasson chose this literary style to tell his far-ranging story. Writing the book in this manner forces the reader to supply much of his or her own imaginings in terms of the famous characters presented, such as Harry Truman, Joseph Stalin, Richard Nixon and many, many other historical names. Owing to the largely cameo nature of most of these real-life persons, the reader cannot readily ascertain much in the way of defining characteristics when each character briefly takes center stage. Rather, the author uses the third-person point of view to concentrate on each leader's brief estimation of Allan himself, rather than Allan's point of view of each new leader he meets.

This is where the third person point of view serves the author to best effect, as he uses the third person to one supreme effect: it keeps Allan a mystery, as Allan's thoughts and feelings are largely masked from examination by the reader. The reader must instead rely upon the various world leaders and other supporting characters to gain insight into Allan's deeper nature. Ironically, Allan's deeper nature is largely hidden from the reader and the other characters Allan encounters. For most who meet him, Allan remains an enigma, knowable but only in the most surface of manners. The use by the author of the third person to hide Allan's truest nature is a keen use of style, in that first person perspective would have divulged much of Allan's thoughts and emotions to the reader. As it is written, Allan remains behind a cloaked veil of mystery, a man given to impulsive actions but very little in the way of forethought and planning.

## Language and Meaning

Most of the language and style of the book is written as if taken from a supplementary digest magazine included in a Sunday newspaper. The tone and word choice is very



common in vernacular, giving the prose an easy-to-read feeling akin not unlike a print media magazine aimed at a wide, common audience of readers.

The vocabulary throughout is very much everyday in terms of choice and meaning, and given that the story involves Allan encountering many different world cultures and working on such highly technical science projects as an atomic bomb, surprisingly common in word choices. Whenever Allan discusses such matters with other characters, technical issues are almost entirely avoided and word choice never goes beyond the most simple, brief of descriptions. As a result, descriptions of scientific matters -- which could have made the read much more challenging in terms of accessibility -- rarely enters the discussion, with the author instead concentrating on the characters over technical matters.

The writer uses a very deadpan style of language to create a sense of spirit and adventure in the book. For example, he often writes about the most outrageous incidents (such as Sonya the elephant sitting on a bad guy and crushing him to death) with a completely deadpan, non-emphatic manner. This creates a literary contrast between the audacity of the event being described and the stark, plain language used by the author to record the event. This low-key use of style in language is repeatedly utilized throughout the book, and it sets a blackly comedic tone for the reader early on. Because there are dozens of such wild events and yet each is described in an underwhelming choice of words, the effect on the reader is to create a repeated sense of bemusement. The reader fully expects the author to attempt to "top" the reader with each new outrageously, and yet understated, narrative event.

## Structure

The structure used is a classic three-act narrative structure, but with an interweaving time shift built into the three acts that alters the chronological time back and forth in the 20th century. A majority of the action takes place in 2005 during the time that Allan absconds with the suitcase filled with cash and his discovery while trying to hide from the Swedish police who are looking for him. But a significant part of the novel also takes place in flashbacks from 1905 to the present, involving Allan's childhood, young adulthood and later mature adulthood, and the many adventures he has as a younger man in such countries as Spain, Iran, North Korea, China, Russia, the United States, and many others.

Jonasson interweaves the two timelines to narrative force, both singularly and in combination. In terms of standalone impact, the flashbacks offer a vast, literally world-spanning series of adventures that Allan experiences which detail his amazing will to live (despite difficult circumstances). Whereas the modern story of Allan stealing the suitcase and meeting new friends portrays Allan as a man still very much a survivor-type in terms of abilities and willpower despite his advanced 100 years of age. When the two narrative lines are combined -- modern with flashbacks -- a truer, deeper portrait of Allan's character emerges for the reader, and one can see how Allan is a true "blessed innocent" in terms of his nature. Throughout his journey in life, whether young



or old, Allan has remained willfully naive to much that is dangerous and treacherous in the world. Rather than give in to one philosophy, religion or other such belief system, Allan has deliberately chosen to remain non-committal, detached and apolitical to each new group of believers that he encounters. This makes him both enigmatic to those in power that he meets (who are used to bending new people they meet into followers) as well as a potentially very valuable tool, in that Allan can be trusted where most can't to not take sides in an issue.

Near the very end of the book, the flashbacks meet up with the modern present time of the story in a circular structure that posits Allan back on the day he first escaped from the Old Folks' Home. At this point, the story continues forward into the near future to resolve the narrative. This has the effect of ending the main plot line that the book has been following and shifting the narrative onto new ground in order to end the story.



## Quotes

And where is it you want to go?

-- The Little Man (chapter 2 paragraph 14)

**Importance:** This is the first line of dialogue in the book, and reminds the reader that Allan's quest to escape the Old Folks' Home is largely spontaneous. The Little Man (aka the seller of tickets at the bus station) asks Allan this question as he asks most passengers -- as a routine inquiry about destination. For Allan, however, the question is unanswered by where he's going, as much as how far can he ride on a limited amount of money. For Allan, it is literally an existential question, as Allan hasn't planned his escape route as much as he has dreamed simply of escaping the retirement facility.

Couldn't you have chosen to die in a less idiotic manner?

-- Allan's Mother (chapter 4 paragraph 27)

**Importance:** Allan's Mother says this after learning that Allan's Father died in Russia fighting for a useless cause. The line captures the distance between his parents as a couple, which was never very loving when Allan was growing up in their home. It also captures the weary resignation Allan's Mother has with politics, especially the radical form of politics Allan's Father practiced in the name of socialism. The line is ironic in that Allan's Father died for a political cause in a foreign land while leaving his wife and only child behind, alone and in poverty, to defend for themselves. For Allan's Mother, Allan's Father's death is indicative of the meaningless in life, particularly when one tries to apply overt meaning to it at the risk of one's own life.

What business did you have in my gravel pit?

-- Allan Karlsson (chapter 4 paragraph 50)

**Importance:** Allan says this after detonating an explosion on his farm that kills a local merchant. Allan is truly innocent of any crime as the merchant drives onto Allan's property without warning, blowing himself to smithereens. But the local authorities treat Allan as if he is guilty of a crime, and he is sent to a medical clinic where he is sterilized during his four year stay. Allan does not like the merchant, as the merchant previously took advantage of the his family.

You stole a bag of candy, when we've got fifty million in the suitcase?

-- Allan (chapter 6 paragraph 154)

**Importance:** Up until this point, Allan and Julius have kept the true amount of the suitcase's cash (50 million) a secret to themselves, even though they have tangentially invited Benny along for their open-ended journey. But after Julius steals a bag of candy during one of their road stops, Allan is flabbergasted by Julius' idiocy. Why not just pay for the candy when they have 50 million dollars at their disposal? Their small tiff over the money herein tips Benny to the fact Allan and Julius have much more in cash than he



knew, and it also forces Allan to agree to share the money evenly among all future participants once they've been included in the circle of the suitcase.

Revenge is not a good thing. Revenge is like politics: one thing always leads to another until bad has become worse, and worse has become worst.

-- Allan (chapter 7 paragraph 35)

**Importance:** This line summarizes Allan's philosophy in life. From the time his father dies fighting for socialism in Russia, to his earliest adventures in Spain, China, North Korea, Iran and other politically difficult situations, Allan maintains a neutral attitude towards such matters. He is as willing to work for U.S. presidents as he is notorious dictators like Stalin, and all ranges of belief between, so long as his most recent employer does not require him to swear allegiance to any one doctrine or another.

I'm almost a vet. Do you want to hear the long or the short story?

-- Benny (chapter 8 paragraph 44)

**Importance:** When Benny first meets the Beauty and her elephant Sonya, Benny is able to correctly diagnose an ailment that plagues Sonya. Benny curiously tells Sonya that he is "almost" a veterinarian. When she and the others are intrigued, Benny explains that he has spent most of his adult life studying in one field or another, but never graduating. He further tells them that this is not because he's lazy, but because he is involved in a strange inheritance in which he will lose his share of the monies should he actually complete and graduate in any one field of endeavor. His explanation also sets up the estrangement he feels from his older brother Bosse, who will enter the story later on.

As long as you can find a ship for me, I'll be happy to go.

-- Allan (chapter 9 paragraph 7)

**Importance:** Allan delivers this line to the men in New York City who hold him after he arrives via oceanic passage and is being held at Ellis Island under supervision until the officials can figure out what to do with him. He arrives with a letter from General Franco testifying to his value, but because the U.S. regards Franco with suspicion owing to his fascist regime, Allan is equally viewed as not trustworthy and therefore held in lock-up against his will. The line reiterates that Allan never chooses sides in a conflict as much as he does profits whomever he happens to be in the employment of at any given time. In a way, Allan is the ultimate free agent, working for whomever pays him, and hence his line. He will gladly take a ship to work for another government (or simply return to his home country of Sweden), but as always throughout the book, much of Allan's destiny is determined for him by others who wield power over him, as in this case.

How do you know that the Japanese are going to surrender?

-- Allan (chapter 11 paragraph 17)

**Importance:** After Allan helps solve the riddle of creating an atomic bomb during the Manhattan Project, he is later summoned to have a meeting with President Truman.



Truman confidently states that Japan will give up the war soon, which puzzles Allan. How can the President be so certain? Truman's answer is to obliquely remind Allan just how much Allan has contributed to the war effort by solving what even Alan J. Oppenheimer couldn't, namely how to utilize fusion to ignite an atomic explosion. Truman is confident because he knows no foreign country can oppose the United States at this point in history, or they risk facing certain nuclear annihilation. The line shows that even as Allan is oblivious and/or denies his enormous contributions in altering the history of mankind, others -- particularly those in positions of power -- are keenly aware what his unique mind is capable of producing, hopefully on their behalf. Truman is no different, and wants to take advantage of Allan's abilities just like every other world leader.

In his case, I think we will be able to manage a life sentence in the true meaning of the word."

-- Prosecutor Ranelid (chapter 14 paragraph 8)

**Importance:** Ranelid utters this line partly as truth, but more so as black humor. Ranelid is telling Chief Inspector Aronsson that by focusing on Allan, and not his co-horts who are traveling with him, the state will be able to secure a long sentence against Allan once the police arrest him. But Ranelid also means that because Allan is 100-year-old, any sentence handed out to him by the courts will inevitably be a life sentence because Allan is more than likely going to die behind bars of natural old age before his sentence expires. This line indicates the relative banality and futility of the police case against Allan, in the sense that no matter what they do to Allan, he's not only had far worse already done to him in his trouble-saturated life, but will not suffer for long even if he is given a lengthy sentence.

Is my life, by any chance, about to take a new turn?

-- Allan (chapter 16 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** Allan is sitting on a dock enjoying the view when he's suddenly approached by a well-dressed stranger in a conspicuously inconspicuous manner. He says this line to no one in particular as he realizes that he is yet again being recruited by another foreign government to work on their behest. Sure enough, the well-dressed man bears an offer to meet with a higher-ranking official for an undisclosed government (which turns out to be the Soviets). The line indicates Allan's growing self-awareness of how often his life is the subject of other persons' interests, and how frequently they seek Allan out to recruit his services. Moreover, Allan is fully cognizant of how incredibly rich with such twists and turns his entire life has been, and how such propositions seem to be intertwined with his existence beyond his ability to control or truly influence.

Over my dead body! She is absolutely charming!

-- Herbert Einstein (chapter 20 paragraph 4)

**Importance:** Herbert utters this line when Allan casually suggests having Amanda, their drink waitress in Bali, fired because she mixes up their orders. It shows the amount of attraction Herbert feels for Amanda even before they are better acquainted. It is also



ironic in the word choice, for Herbert has bemoaned having to remain alive through his scenes with Allan prior to Allan and Herbert arriving in Bali. Suddenly, after falling in love with Amanda, Herbert is declaring only over his dead body will anything bad befall Amanda. This turnaround is unexpected and Allan is surprised. Much, much later, the line will have an even grimmer irony, in that Herbert finally dies and leaves Amanda a widow. Even though decades have elapsed since he and Amanda have known each other, Allan (at the age of 100) proposes marriage to her and she accepts. So the line has several layers of meaning, even as it works on the most obvious first level as a simple declaration of infatuation by Herbert for Amanda.

What do you think about becoming a spy? I myself am one, and it is actually rather exciting.

-- Allan (chapter 26 paragraph 38)

**Importance:** Allan winds up ironically recruiting Yury, a top Soviet scientist who is involved with nuclear missile production, into working for the U.S. as a spy. This is a twist because decades previously, Yury had recruited Allan to work for the Soviet Union while aboard a Russian submarine. Allan accidentally gave the Soviets the knowledge to build an atomic bomb in the same way he had given similar knowledge to the Americans. Now, all these years later, the two men meet again and both are amazed the other is doing well. Allan senses Yury is bored with the restrictive Communist lifestyle and therefore tries to sell Yury on the excitement of the job. But in actuality, the job of being a spy is mostly a tedious waiting game (for example, it takes Allan a year of constant surveillance just to find Yury at an opera house and finally make contact with him). Allan, who typically craves anything but excitement, is being unwittingly droll when he says this line, for he desires neither excitement nor spying, per se. For Allan, an exciting time is actually spending time on the bench ordering new rounds of drinks to consume.