

# **A Bell for Adano Study Guide**

## **A Bell for Adano by John Hersey**

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# Plot Summary

A Bell for Adano is about a man named Major Victor Joppolo, who is positioned in Adano, Italy as World War II is coming to a close. He positively impacts all of the people of Adano and improves their lives there, despite inherent limitations within the government, and is eventually forced to leave the town due to an overbearing, stubborn and ignorant General.

Major Joppolo arrives in Adano as part of the AMGOT team to restore peace and order to the town as World War II comes to a close. The town is starving and in desperate need of organization when Joppolo arrives. Despite the long list of orders that he is given, Joppolo looks around and determines what needs to be done. He encourages the bakers to begin baking bread again. He convinces the fishermen to fish again. He settles small matters with grace and humanity that the town has desperately needed since the Fascist regime. At first, the town hesitates and questions him, thinking that his democratic ways are a trick he is playing on them. Over time, however, they begin to see that he is serious and unlike the other military men that have traveled through their town. They tell him about a historic bell that was an important part of their town that the Fascists removed to melt down for bullets. The bell was over 700 years old and everyone in town dictated their life by the bell. Joppolo immediately promises to restore a good bell back to Adano.

Major Joppolo becomes friends with the townspeople, understanding their common sayings and how they operate in the town. He becomes a welcome and integral part of their community. He visits with Tomasino, the old fisherman, and becomes good friends with his family, in particular with his daughter Tina. He has a wife back home, but he still enjoys spending time with Tina. One afternoon, General Marvin travels through Adano and shoots a mule for being too slow in the road. Thereafter, he decrees, all carts and mules are banned from the roads of Adano. At first, Major Joppolo must comply with the decree, but he soon sees how ineffective this demand is for his town. For this reason, he overrides the General's dictate and allows carts to travel through town. Unfortunately, news of Joppolo's ignorance of the dictate makes its way back to General Marvin and he immediately dismisses Joppolo and reassigns him to another town without first analyzing whether Joppolo is good for the town or not. Joppolo finds out that he is dismissed on the same night that the town of Adano has thrown him a thank-you party. He quietly leaves the next day, hearing the sounds of the bell he finally put into place for them.



# Chapters 1, 2 & 3

## Chapters 1, 2 & 3 Summary

Major Victor Joppolo arrives in Adano with Sergeant Leonard Borth. Borth's job is to determine which Italians in Adano will be helpful and which ones are dangerous; he sees the war itself as a cynical joke and feels it is his job to make people take themselves less seriously. He teases Joppolo constantly, but finds Joppolo's seriousness hard to penetrate.

Borth and Joppolo walk through town and it is immediately clear that Joppolo sees the townspeople as friends and the war as a shame. They walk into the large Palazzo di Citta, which is the government headquarters and where Joppolo will have his office to conduct business. Joppolo writes his name and title on the door outside the building. Despite the complete poverty surrounding the building, inside the palace is a stiflingly rich scenario with opulent furniture, materials and paintings. They notice files of everyone in town, which is excellent information for them to start determining who will be helpful for them in their rebuilding efforts.

Zito Giovanni races in just moments after Joppolo and Borth arrive in the office. He has been the usher in the building for years, although he was publicly a non-Fascist. Joppolo doubts his story and tells him that if he is lying, he will be in a lot of trouble. Joppolo has no tolerance for lies, but truly appreciates complete honesty. Giovanni is the first person to tell Joppolo how important a bell was for the town of Adano and how replacing it would significantly help them. The Fascists took Adano's bell, which was over 700 years old, to melt for bullets and the town was devastated. They also need food and basic survival items, but the bell is the heart of the town.

Joppolo sits at his desk and pulls out his orders. He briefly glances at them, but soon realizes they would be impossible to fulfill. He tears them apart and begins to look at his situation as something he can solve by using his own brain. While he is mulling the situation over, another man comes to see him. He looks like an American gangster and is originally from Cleveland, Ohio; his name is Ribaldo Giuseppe. He will become Joppolo's main assistant for getting things done in the town.

Cacopardo and Craxi, two more Adano townspeople, come to see Adano. They also talk of the bell and how important it was for the town. It is the spirit of the town and although they need food, they argue that the bell is just as crucial for their lives. The crier travels throughout the town at Joppolo's request to read the notices that he has posted for them. Joppolo also promises Father Pensovecchio that he will attend his Mass and for this reason, the Father has a much larger crowd than usual, which makes him nervous and hopeful. Joppolo arrives very late, but notices a blonde woman there who captures his attention.



## Chapters 1, 2 & 3 Analysis

Joppolo's reaction to the town of Adano is distinctly different from the other military men who come here. He sees the Italians as friends, never referring to them in slang, and can speak Italian fluently. He learns their colloquialisms and deals with them as if he is their servant, helping them rather than as a man of power, forcing them to do as he wishes. When Joppolo tears up his list of instructions from the military, it is immediately clear that he is an independent thinker and will look at the town of Adano as a unique case and address its individual needs. He hears the story of the lost bell and recognizes that this bell is an important step towards making the town feel whole again. A typical military man who have ignored this plea, but Joppolo is a special man who will dedicate himself to the restoration of this town.



## Chapter 4, 5 & 6

### Chapter 4, 5 & 6 Summary

A crowd is gathering in front of the baker's door, waiting for food. The townspeople are discussing Joppolo, while simultaneously berating Zapulla the baker for taking so long with the bread. As the crowd starts to bicker with one another and with Zapulla, Gargano, the head of the police, comes up and takes his place at the top of the line. The townspeople immediately balk at the idea that this man can take his place at the head of the line, even though this was the typical custom in the past. Carmelina, the wife of lazy Fatta, questions his authority and Gargano carts her off to Major Joppolo's office, while the rest of the crowd is in an uproar. Joppolo sentences Carmelina one day in jail, but also tells Gargano that he needs to stand in line like everyone else in the town.

Joppolo assembles the town's officials together to hold a meeting. He explains that from now on, the town will be run democratically and he will teach them these new rules. He also tells the officials that if they see themselves as servants of the people, they will have more peace in town and become the happiest they have ever been. He asks Guiseppe about the blonde that was in the church and learns she is the daughter of the best fisherman in town, Tomasino.

Meanwhile, General Marvin is passing through Adano and his entourage is slowed by a cart being pulled by a mule. The man driving the cart, Errante, is drunk, asleep in the back of the cart and in no hurry to get where he is going. He does not notice the General or any delay since he is dreaming about eating a fish. He is awoken when the General tips over his cart and shoots his beloved mule in front of him. The General thereafter forbids carts in Adano. He goes to meet Major Joppolo and catches Joppolo off-guard; he is out of uniform, which the General despises.

Joppolo agrees to forbid carts in the town of Adano, but the order is quickly reversed after some of the poorest members in Adano come to see Joppolo to convince him that the town survives because of the carts. Joppolo realizes this is the truth and overrides the General's order. It is a decision that will haunt him.

### Chapter 4, 5 & 6 Analysis

This interaction with the townspeople and Zapulla is a foreshadowing of how they will interact with other people in the town, including the painter and Joppolo himself. They enjoy doubting, criticizing and giving their opinion even if it was not asked for.

When Joppolo tells the Adano officials that they should consider themselves servants of the people, rather than persons of great power, and that this way of thinking will make them the happiest they have ever been, the reader sees a small insight into how Joppolo himself sees his role in the town and how he views his position of authority.



The General's decision to forbid carts would have had disastrous results if it had remained in Adano. The General could not have realized how important the carts were for the life of the town. However, Joppolo recognizes their importance and despite strict orders to keep carts off the roads, he allows them to continue. Again, Joppolo is ignoring orders that are given that do not directly benefit the residents of Adano, but it is a move that will impact his stay in the Italian town.



# Chapter 7, 8 & 9

## Chapter 7, 8 & 9 Summary

At the Command Post, a man named Captain Purvis tells his Technical Sergeant Frank Trapani that he thinks Joppolo is crazy for ignoring an order from General Marvin. He doesn't think that Joppolo is right, although Trapani tells him that the order was a silly one. Purvis has only been in the military for eight months and is very "military." He writes a report in order to protect himself and sends it to General Marvin.

Meanwhile, Major Joppolo asks Guiseppe about Tina and finds out that her father is Tomasino, the most respected fisherman in the area. Tomasino refuses to see Major Joppolo so the Major travels to see him instead. For the people of Adano, this is an unheard of event; no government figure has ever gone to visit a local person. In the past, if someone refused to see a government official, they were thrown in jail or dragged to the office by the police. For this reason, the entire town of Adano follows Major Joppolo to the shoreline to see Tomasino.

The crowd frustrates Joppolo and Tomasino thinks that the crowd is there to make a mockery of him. Major Joppolo simply wants Tomasino to start fishing again to help the people, who need to eat.. At first, Tomasino refuses stating that he doesn't want to pay fees or other bureaucratic tricks. Once he is certain that Joppolo simply wants him to fish, he enthusiastically agrees, but Joppolo has to have the Navy approve the action. Joppolo visits Lieutenant Livingston to have them approve the fishing. Despite the bureaucratic hold-ups, Joppolo convinces Livingston to let them fish and tell him where the underwater mines are so that the fishermen do not blow themselves up. Joppolo achieves his goal, but Livingston is not certain that he is a fan of the man.

After the fishing resumes again, Joppolo checks on the status of the original bell of Adano. He determines that the bell was finally melted and is unrecoverable.

## Chapter 7, 8 & 9 Analysis

Joppolo's brilliance with people is demonstrated in these chapters. First, he has to convince an embittered old fisherman that he just wants him to fish again, no bureaucratic catch involved. On the other side, he must negotiate with the other side of the social spectrum with Lieutenant Livingston, who is a well-bred Ivy man with top connections. These two men are vastly different from one another, but by the end of discussion, Joppolo has gotten both to see his point of view and gotten his goals accomplished.

Also, Joppolo's check of the final status of the bell of Adano shows that he has not forgotten about the bell and its importance to the town.





# Chapter 10, 11 & 12

## Chapter 10, 11 & 12 Summary

Mayor Nasta walks down the main road of Adano. Steadily, a crowd gathers behind him, jeering him. Captain Purvis and Major Joppolo are having lunch together when they see the spectacle. The crowd instantly calls for Mayor Nasta's head. Instead, Joppolo arrests the man and throws him in jail. Mayor Nasta screams for a new chance; Joppolo responds by telling him that he never gave the people of Adano a chance, so why should he extend the privilege to him?

Joppolo tells Nasta that every morning, he must report to Borth, and repent for a number of sins. Afterwards, he will work at the chores that Borth gives him. The people of Adano love to stand behind Nasta and hear him admit to being a coward for abandoning the town and its people, while simultaneously cheating them for years. For them, they get the revenge they so desperately want through this humiliation.

Tomasino goes to visit Joppolo to ask him to dinner. He says his wife has made him enter the Palazzo and he would have never gone on his own. Joppolo accepts the dinner invitation. When he shows at Tomasino's house, Captain Purvis is also there. They eat candy together while Joppolo talks to Tina and Purvis talks to her sister, Francesca. Guiseppe is also there as a translator.

Joppolo and Tina get into an intimate discussion. He tells her about the Bronx, his wife and asks her about the color of her hair, which she reveals is dyed blonde, not natural. He leaves feeling very lonely and sharply missing his family for the first time since the invasion. Purvis, meanwhile, gets nowhere with the other daughter and leaves feeling frustrated. The next day, he wakes up with a hangover and tells his inferiors to send the report to Marvin, which they had tried to hide in the mountain of paperwork on his desk. Trapani titles the letter to the wrong person in the division in an attempt to stall the letter, which Purvis does not notice.

## Chapter 10, 11 & 12 Analysis

While Purvis is at Tomasino's house, he acts like a stereotypical military American male, talking crassly to the women who cannot understand him. Joppolo, conversely, can speak Italian and can easily converse with the family. He never talks inappropriately about or to the daughters. This contrast should be remembered when Joppolo's fate is revealed and the reader understands Purvis's role in it.

Purvis also blames Joppolo for not helping him to get farther with the sister. He sees Joppolo as a man without blemishes, a "wet blanket" and he doesn't like him, although he never shows it. For this reason, when he sees his report to General Marvin buried under a mountain of paperwork on his desk, he immediately tells Trapani to push it

through. He has a hangover and doesn't see Joppolo as a comrade and doesn't stick up for him, despite the fact they are supposed to be friends.



# Chapter 13, 14 & 15

## Chapter 13, 14 & 15 Summary

Cacopardo Matteo tells Major Joppolo that he knows where the Germans are hiding, waiting for another attack. Joppolo tells him that he needs to go to General Marvin with his information and writes him a letter of introduction. Cacopardo travels to the General's base and is put through a fruitless rigmarole to see the General. Finally, when he does enter the General's room, he sees that he and another officer are chipping their knives into the priceless furniture that his friend once owned. Cacopardo is so outraged that rather than tell the General his crucial information about the Germans, he tells them that they are barbarians. Needless to say, this proclamation does not go over well with the General and Cacopardo is shown to the door.

Captain Purvis is very critical of Major Joppolo behind his back, but to his face, he is very friendly. They often have lunch together and often spend time together mainly because they can both speak English. They decide to visit Tomasino's family again that evening and take the family by surprise. When they arrive, Major Joppolo talks with Tina again, but when she asks him a favor — to see if her lover has been killed in the war — and this request angers Joppolo who thinks that she is using him. He storms out of the house.

Later that evening, Chuck Schultz, who works with Purvis, goes drinking with two of his best friends. They become very intoxicated and start to lament over the inevitable fate of Major Joppolo. They know that since a report has been written to General Marvin about Joppolo's ignorance of his command, that Joppolo will no doubt be leaving Adano soon. They are sorry about this because they believe that Joppolo is a good man. They decide to get him a going away present, but in their drunken state, they destroy precious heirlooms and pieces in a fashionable house in Adano. They are too drunk to notice their wrongdoing.

## Chapter 13, 14 & 15 Analysis

The environment that Cacopardo encounters when he tries to help General Marvin with crucial war information is a sharp commentary on life in the military. Despite the fact that Cacopardo has important information for them, he is subjected to silly bureaucratic nonsense simply to relay a message. Compare this situation with that of the atmosphere with Major Joppolo! When Cacopardo sees the General, he is destroying priceless antiques, which is barbaric and another generalization of these American military men. They treat the Italians the same way they are treating this furniture — as if it is worthless — and ignoring the true value of the country, its heritage and the people.

The relationship between Purvis and Joppolo becomes more complicated. These two men are supposed to be friends, but in reality, Purvis dislikes Joppolo and would never



hang out with him in the States; they are only friends because they share the same language. The differences between these men are highlighted whenever they visit Tomasino's family. While Joppolo wants to talk with Tina, Purvis immediately says crass, dirty things to the girls because he knows they don't understand English. Purvis doesn't like the Joppolo won't get drunk with him and help him get farther with one of the sisters. However, in the end, both men want the same thing — an Italian girl to help keep them company during their loneliness during the war.



# Chapter 16, 17 & 18

## Chapter 16, 17 & 18 Summary

Lord Runcin comes to visit Joppolo to check on his progress. He is a respectable man who has snuff during the conversation and often uses expressions that Joppolo does not understand. Joppolo tells him about the progress in the town and "his Lordship" listens until he becomes too bored to concentrate. After that meeting, Quattrocchi barges in to complain about the destruction that Schultz and his two friends have done to his house. Joppolo calls the boys in to explain and rather than tell him about his inevitable departure, they make up a story about why they were there instead. As punishment, Joppolo tells the boys that the unhappiness of Quattrocchi is on their conscience and when they leave, all three remark how great a guy Joppolo is and how they feel like they broke their own mothers' possessions.

Joppolo continues to monitor the town and even determines how the presence of the Americans has negatively impacted the town. Due to their misunderstanding, Americans are unintentionally paying the townspeople far too much for goods and services, allowing them to retire early or ask the same price from everyone else in town — an impossibility. For this reason, the black market has grown out of control. Joppolo sees this and makes changes to diminish it.

The report to General Marvin continues its slow progress to him. As it reaches its next bureaucratic stage, the men involved remark how terrible it would be for Major Joppolo if the General saw the report and try to get it lost "accidentally on purpose."

## Chapter 16, 17 & 18 Analysis

The visit from "his Lordship" is another example of the different types of people that Joppolo must communicate with and impress during his stay in Adano. He impresses Lord Runcin since his Lordship does not have to take any action to help Joppolo and he can continue with his lazy behaviors. Joppolo, nevertheless, is impressed by the man's title, which demonstrates his own place in society back at home.

Joppolo continues to make excellent improvements and changes to the town of Adano. He is even smart enough to realize that the presence of the Americans has had an influence on the town's current economy and makes changes to ensure that the Americans don't do more harm than good. Also, the men who know Joppolo are using the typical bureaucratic stalls to see if the report Purvis wrote about him never reaches General Marvin. The delay allows Joppolo to continue to help the people of Adano, although he is not aware of the inevitable fallout coming his way.



# Chapters 19, 20 & 21

## Chapters 19, 20 & 21 Summary

To undermine the Americans, Mayor Nasta goes around town, spreading bad gossip about the Americans. The town initially does not believe him, but the rumor picks up speed and the Mayor used to have power in the town, the semblance of which can still occasionally be felt.

After Nasta's consistently ugly behavior, the Americans send him to a prisoner camp. However, after just a little time there, he manages to convince some Germans to help him escape. Borth chases him down and ties him up, gagging him and pulling him through Adano. Everyone is outraged by his actions, even Joppolo, and they threaten to send him to Africa.

The spirit of the town is best reflected in the works of Lojacono, the town painter. If the atmosphere is depressed, he does not work very often. However, Major Joppolo has not been in town long before Lojacono is back to work again, painting optimistic scenes on the sides of fishing boats. He paints a picture of Joppolo riding the side of a dolphin and the townspeople all question his depiction. They do not criticize because they disagree with him necessarily, but instead like to understand his rationale of why he is painting the way that he is.

Errante Gaetano is back with a new mule and cart. He is watching the Swimming War, which is what he calls the military vehicle that can drive on land and enter the water like a boat as well. He watches the children screaming for caramels from the Americans. He does not notice that he is yet again blocking a military process behind him. The head of the police, Gargano, stops to address Errante, yelling at him, which makes his mule scream. Something inside Errante's brain clicks and he immediately lunges for Gargano, attacking him. Gargano eventually subdues Errante, but jails him.

## Chapters 19, 20 & 21 Analysis

Since the spirit of the town is highlighted in Lojacono's brush, it can be assumed that the town of Adano is in a better state than they were before Joppolo's arrival. Considering Mayor Nasta's behavior even when he is nothing more than a humbled, embittered man who has lost his power, it is no wonder that the town was suffering before Joppolo's arrival. He represents the corrupt state of Adano and the government that was supposed to be helping the people before Joppolo arrived. Again, the contrast between what the town has always known and what Joppolo is trying to create is demonstrated. There is no reason why you could not assume that General Marvin would not act the same way as Mayor Nasta in his situation. The only difference is that the General is still in power and Nasta has been removed from office.



# Chapter 22, 23 & 24

## Chapter 22, 23 & 24 Summary

Major Joppolo receives a letter from Cacopardo about his ship with sulphur that he wants to sell to profit with Adano. In order to get the ship through, Joppolo calls Livingston again. Livingston is not terribly keen on Joppolo since he doesn't come from the same background as him, but after Joppolo butters him up, he mentions the ship with sulphur and Livingston even offers for him to come over to share a Scotch sometime.

Meanwhile, Lord Runcin has asked some of his colleagues to look into getting a bell for Adano. The request is immediately shot down.

Joppolo is also acting as a judge to the town of Adano. Typically, the offenses are small, but everyone in town comes because they think that Joppolo is able to make the truth seem beautiful. After the usual small discretions, Gargano brings forth Errante on the case of his cart holding up traffic on the road and his recent physical attack on Gargano. Joppolo allows Errante to retell his story and realizes that this is the man who unintentionally crossed General Marvin and the reason behind the no-carts command. At the end of Errante's story, Joppolo tells Gargano that he is sorry, but they must dismiss this case. Despite the fact that he held up traffic and attacked Errante, the cartman had been severely wronged in the past and it was only natural for him to act this way. Errante is greatly relieved and appreciative.

## Chapter 22, 23 & 24 Analysis

Joppolo continues to foster his relationship with Livingston because he understands how important he will be for the success of their campaign. Ultimately, Livingston will become one of Joppolo's greatest supporters. The fact that Lord Runcin is asking for a bell for Adano also shows that Joppolo has made an impression on him as well.

Finally, Joppolo's act of forgiveness to Errante demonstrates how personal he takes the activities in Adano. He sees every situation for what it is and does not try to apply black-and-white, clear cut rules to a situation that would not be able to withstand them. Errante reacted against Gargano simply because of the injustices that had been done to him in the past and fortunately, Joppolo is able to see that. He, as an American, is able to erase the wrongdoing that Errante received from another hardnosed, less understanding American soldier. Joppolo is able to apologize to Errante for the horrible mistake that altered his life and Errante is able to forgive him and all Americans in turn.



## Chapters 25, 26 & 27

### Chapters 25, 26 & 27 Summary

Joppolo returns to Tomasino's house to give Tina an update on the political prisoners. He is not certain if her lover is still alive, but he knows that they are being released soon and Tina will have her answer. He also hints at the end of their conversation that he is beginning to like her.

Ultimately, Joppolo wants to be a popular figure in the town and wants to be liked by the people. He is not a stereotypical politician, but he does try to make moves that will get him liked in town. So when Zito arrives one morning to announce that the leaders of Adano would like to see him, it makes him nervous. However, when they arrive, they simply command him to get his picture taken by a man named Spataforo. Joppolo is warned that the man has bad manners, but to ignore him because it will be the best picture ever taken of him.

Joppolo goes to visit Spataforo and is not treated well by him. Spataforo accuses him of wanting to look at himself in a frame and being conceited. While Joppolo is not particularly immodest, he doesn't appreciate the remarks from Spataforo either. He finally gets his picture taken and leaves.

Joppolo has not mentioned the sulphur ship to Livingston, but in a few days, Livingston has pushed the ship through by his Navy connections. Meanwhile, a stranger travels around town, spreading rumors that the Germans are about to attack Adano again. At eleven that morning, the same mail plane that flies over Adano flies again and the town goes into a state of frenzy. They believe they are dying from the gas and race around town, including lazy Fatta who has not run in years. Joppolo must calm them down and literally walk from place to place in Adano to smell the air and assure them that no poison has dropped from the plane. Joppolo must walk from place to place to assure them that there is no poison gas.

### Chapters 25, 26 & 27 Analysis

The rumor of the poison gas demonstrates that despite all of the progress Joppolo has made, the fear of war and its recent reality is still very much in the minds of the people of Adano. It also demonstrates that they are all easily swayed by the mass thought. Not one of them considered thinking on their own about the poison gas, but instead let themselves be swept up in the panic of the situation.





# Chapter 28, 29 & 30

## Chapter 28, 29 & 30 Summary

Private First Class Everett B. Banto is reading someone else's mail when he sees that a letter has been addressed improperly. He doesn't think that Americans will ever win the war with their constant mistakes and re-addresses the report to go to the right person. It is the report from Purvis about Joppolo's ignorance of Marvin's command about the carts in Adano.

Joppolo goes to the Navy Club to meet Livingston for a drink with his friends at exactly six o'clock. There are twelve of them and by the end; all of the officers are supporters of Joppolo. Joppolo tells the story about Adano's bell and how it has been lost for its people. Thanks to the drink, which helps his mind to relax, he tells the story beautifully and he has the perfect audience: the Navy is filled with tradition and these men appreciate heritage and history. They can understand how a single bell would mean so much to a specific group of people. At the end, Livingston and his friends vow to help Joppolo and tell him about a bell on the Corelli ship that might be the perfect replacement for the town. Joppolo wisely defers taking any credit and props up Livingston and his friends more in order to encourage them. They tell Joppolo the bell will be to Adano in roughly a week's time.

The town of Adano comes up with the idea of a party for Joppolo as a way to show the town's affection and also partly for Purvis to spend some alone time with Francesca. He asks Guiseppe to help him plan the party. They put out an invitation, which calls Joppolo "His Excellency the Mister Major Joppolo." Joppolo is pleased with this and reads the title over and over again.

## Chapter 28, 29 & 30 Analysis

Perhaps if Joppolo had stayed in the town of Adano for too long, his ego would have gotten the best of him. Perhaps the story of Joppolo is the story of a politician being born and his removal from the town was the best thing that could have happened to him. Most revolutionary leaders and political leaders that made a difference in the beginning will decline as their years of reign increase. Joppolo's pleasure over his title as "His Excellency" demonstrates that Joppolo is beginning to slip away from his idea that he is the servant of his people and instead is becoming more interested in looking powerful with his people.



# Chapters 31, 32 & 33

## Chapters 31, 32 & 33 Summary

The political prisoners are released and Adano looks beautiful. The streets have recently been cleaned and the weather is perfect. The men walk down the street, but they do not run when they see the group of women who have come to see them. The streets of Adano have become electrified, but while the men know that there is certainly a woman waiting for them, the women are not certain who is still left alive. For this reason, they run to the men, searching for their loved ones. Tina is among the women, but her search is fruitless. Joppolo watches as one of the men looks at her and shakes his head and she finds out that her lover is dead. Joppolo walks over and takes her hand, despite the fact that they are in public.

Joppolo, Purvis, Tina and a man recently returned from prison named Niccolo go out to dinner. Niccolo tells the story of Giorgio, Tina's lover, and how he was killed. In the end, it turns out that Giorgio was killed by his own men after he berated them for not being more patriotic and faithful to the country during the war. The men were scared and half-crazy and took out their fear on Giorgio because they felt so utterly lost.

Lojacono is painting his portrait of Joppolo, while the rest of the community criticizes different aspects of it as usual. Lojacono defends her work, assuring them in the end they will like the painting.

Each Wednesday, General Marvin listens to various reports around the area to "stay in touch" with what's going on with the rest of the Army. It is during this time that he finally hears the report about Joppolo. He recalls the incident in Adano with the carts and the fact that when he met Joppolo, he was not in full uniform, and immediately removes Joppolo from Adano.

## Chapters 31, 32 & 33 Analysis

When Joppolo walks over and takes Tina's hand in public, the rest of the town notices. Just like that, Joppolo has broken yet another one of his rules and warnings to himself that he wrote down before entering Adano. He warned himself to be wary of invitations and not play favorites, yet that is exactly what he is doing. It makes the reader wonder and question what would have become of Joppolo had he not been preemptively removed for disobeying the General's warning.

Throughout Niccolo's story, Purvis shouts out crass and inappropriate things. If he knew the Italian language, he would never have done such a thing, but instead, he is on the outside and does not care about what the others are talking about. All he wants to discuss is his chances with Francesca or getting into bed with other girls. Juxtaposing his behavior next to Niccolo's horrible story demonstrates clearly how different Purvis and Joppolo are.



When Joppolo is removed from office, General Marvin never asks how Joppolo is doing in the town, how his progress is going, what accomplishments (or failures) must be occurring. Instead, he removes him without once questioning the benefit of the rule that he made. For this reason, Marvin is no better than the Fascists that the Americans were supposed to be fighting against and protecting the Italians from.



## Chapter 34 & 35

### Chapter 34 & 35 Summary

The fishermen are fishing a bit away from their usual fishing grounds. They have an extraordinarily heavy net, but as Sconzo lifts it up, he sees the mine. Three men are dead before Sconzo has a chance to get away from the underwater mine. Tomasino races over to where the boat was, but no one remains. Tomasino docks his boat and walks to the Palazzo to be the first one to tell Joppolo the news. They both want to claim responsibility for the deaths, but Tomasino tells him that he will not be attending Joppolo's party because it is inappropriate to be there.

Shortly thereafter, a woman comes in with a child in her arms and she is screaming. Joppolo can quickly see that the child is dead. Joppolo hears from the child's brother what happened: the children who normally scream at the Americans for caramels got too aggressive and this child accidentally was thrown in the way of an Army truck. He was struck and immediately killed. Joppolo apologizes to the woman and tells her that in this case, the Americans' generosity has done a horrible thing and destroyed her child. Joppolo orders that Gargano remove all of the children from the road where they beg for caramels. He doesn't want to do it because it will mean that he'll miss part of the party, but Joppolo demands it.

### Chapter 34 & 35 Analysis

Again, the impact of the Americans in Adano has to be analyzed by Joppolo. Unlike most of his soldier comrades, he sees that the influence of the Americans has been both good and bad. Unfortunately, the war has killed multiple people in the town of Adano — the fishermen due to the leftover underwater mines and the children clamoring after the Americans. Joppolo must remind the town that the Americans are trying to help the town so as to prevent a deep-seated hatred building towards the soldiers. It's doubtful that any other leader would have the clarity to do this.



## Chapter 36 & 37

### Chapter 36 & 37 Summary

The day of Joppolo's party arrives and a number of things happen simultaneously. That morning, Joppolo receives a shipment and it is the bell from the Corelli that Livingston had promised. Joppolo is immediately excited and asks the townsmen to help him raise the bell. The town's official bell-ringer comes to analyze the bell and determines that it will have a good sound. The town is elated. In his mind, Joppolo rehearses the speech he will make when the bell is raised in the town.

Borth is going through the local reports that have come in the mail and sees that Joppolo has been removed from the area at General Marvin's command. He knows that Purvis has something to do with it, but the news depresses him. He decides to not tell Joppolo until after the party so he can have one more final good night in the town.

The officials of Adano meet with Joppolo to give him the portrait that was taken. In it, they describe him, giving him all of the characteristics that he wants. It makes him emotional and he is extremely flattered. Gargano travels to the road where the children typically fight for the caramels. He tricks them into climbing into the back of the police wagon and taking them to the jail by promising the largest load of caramels possible.

Joppolo arrives at the party and meets Tina there. Tina asks him if he is happy; he asks if she is over Giorgio yet. She admits to him that she loves him as the rest of the town loves him. He leaves her and runs into Borth, who is quite drunk. Borth ends up telling him that he has been removed from Adano. Joppolo spends the rest of the evening paralyzed, but plays it up like he is just fine. He finds Tina and tells her good bye.

Joppolo rearranges his papers and gives last minute instructions to Borth. Purvis does not have the guts to show himself throughout the entire morning. Joppolo calls for a motor car to pick him up and take him to a nearby town. He tells Borth he cannot handle saying goodbye to anyone. As he is driving away, he hears the bell — his bell for Adano — ringing in the distance. It is eleven o'clock.

### Chapter 36 & 37 Analysis

In the end, Joppolo achieves his very first goal in Adano. He gives them a bell and just as the bell was the physical symbol of the town's spirit, Joppolo has also succeeded in restoring the town's spirit psychologically as well. They all love him and see him as a wonderful, if unusual, leader.

Joppolo might not realize that Purvis is the man who condemned him, but he sees Borth as the true friend who stays by him until the end. Joppolo leaves Adano unannounced, but he hears the chime of his bell in the distance to let him know that he has accomplished what he needed to and has succeeded in the town.



# Characters

## Major Victor Joppolo

Major Joppolo is the main character in this novel. He arrives in the town of Adano as a member of the AMGOT team, which is set to restore the town after the war. He wants to help it to recover from the destruction caused by the Fascists. Joppolo is originally from the Bronx in New York and his family is Italian. He can speak the language fluently. His time in Adano will most likely be some of the best moments of his life, as he will gain the respect and popularity he craves from this tiny Italian town.

Joppolo is an unusual leader in that he truly feels himself a servant to the people of Adano and can also get along with a wide range of people. Despite the fact that he comes from a humble background, he ultimately has Lord Runcin, Sergeant Livingston of the Navy (notoriously critical of Army men), his comrade soldiers and the townspeople to all admire him. He can talk with each of them and knows how to get everyone to work together. From the poor Tomasino to the honorable Lord Runcin, Joppolo has the social skills and wit to know how to speak to each of them and values their honesty above all else.

Joppolo will ultimately be removed from Adano not for doing a bad job, but instead ignoring a command given by General Marvin. The command would have endangered the progress and growth that the town of Adano was enjoying, so Joppolo had to choose between listening to his superior and losing his career — or helping the townspeople. In the end, he chooses to help the town of Adano and suffered personally for it. It can be argued, however, that his time in Adano was some of the most personally rewarding for him as well.

## General Marvin

The main general of the Italian region where Major Joppolo is staying, the General is a hard-nosed military man who does not care about his region, the people or anything other than "doing his job." Although we see him only briefly in the novel, he plays a key role throughout the plot. He shoots a man's mule simply for "delaying the invasion" of the Americans into Italy, although there was no emergency to warrant the violence. He despises any military man not always in full uniform and dislikes Joppolo right away. Shortly after shooting the mule on the way into Adano, he tells Joppolo that carts are hereafter forbidden in the town. He does not care about the financial and social impact of the carts on the town before making such a rash decision. When Joppolo sees the error of this decision, he overrides the rule. Other military men will eventually write a report about Joppolo's ignorance of the command, which will get Joppolo sent home for disobedience. The contrast between the General and Joppolo is striking, but the situation is unfair that Joppolo listens and cares for the people of Adano — yet is sent home — and General Marvin simply barks orders and is allowed to stay in control.



## **Sergeant Leonard Borth**

The man who arrives in Adano with Major Joppolo, he is very apathetic and thinks the entire war is a cynical joke and he feels it is his job to make people take themselves less seriously.

## **Zito Giovanni**

Moments after Joppolo and Borth enter the office, Giovanni arrives to ask for the position as their usher. He has always been a non-Fascist, he claims, and tells them that the town needs their bell back as much as they need food because they are starving.

## **Ribaudo Giuseppe**

A former criminal from Cleveland, Ohio, Giuseppe becomes an assistant to Joppolo, becoming a general liaison between Joppolo and the town to help get things accomplished. He will help Joppolo learn who the important people are in town and how things operate within the community.

## **Matteo Cacopardo**

The old, rich man in Adano who owns a sulphur factory. He represents part of the established, well-off community in Adano.

## **Errante Gaetano**

A man with a stubborn but wonderful mule, he blocks General Marvin's progress down the road and the General shoots his mule and forbids carts in Adano. Later, he will get in trouble when he has another mule and slows down army progress yet again.

## **Captain Purvis**

Stationed at the Command Post for the M.P.'s, Captain Purvis thinks that Major Joppolo is a fool for ignoring an order given by General Marvin. He writes a report to protect himself against the General's rage that eventually gets to the General himself, who immediately removes Joppolo from Adano despite all the good works that the Major has accomplished in the town.



## **Lojacono**

The elderly painter in town, Lojacono paints scenes on the sides of carts, boats and other places around town. His paintings reflect the true state of Adano and how the people feel. However, just like with every other talented person in town, the rest of Adano must criticize and ask questions of Lojacono. They don't ask questions because they disagree with his work necessarily, but they like to hear the painter explain his rationale and how he sees the painting so that later they can explain these sentiments to others. It irritates Lojacono, however, to be questioned about his work.

## **Sconzo**

The fisherman that hauls up the nets and notices the underwater mine caught in the netting. He cannot tell his fellow fishermen in enough time to save himself and the others.





## Objects/Places

### The bell of Adano

An important architectural adornment for the people of Adano, they lived their lives to its chime before it was taken by the Fascists and melted for bullets. The bell was over 700 years old and is called the "spirit" of the town. It was designed by an important sculptor, Lucio De Anj of Modica and hung on the tower by Pietro of Aragona. Joppolo is told of its significance within moments of his arrival in Adano and it will be his final act for the townspeople before he is removed.

### The fishing grounds

Joppolo asks Tomasino to resume fishing in the area to help the town of Adano enjoy good fish again. He asks the Navy to allow them to fish in a specific area. When three fishermen go outside the restricted zone, they are blown up.

### Bronx

The town in New York where Joppolo is originally from.

### Tomasino's house

Tomasino invites Joppolo to dinner and here he meets Tina, Tomasino's blonde-haired daughter.

### Palazzo di Citta

The main government building in Adano where the Fascists used to govern and where Joppolo now resumes his leadership.

### Purvis's report

When Purvis discovers that Joppolo has ignored General Marvin's command, he writes a report to the General which ultimately gets Joppolo removed from Adano.

### Caramels

The American soldiers give the Italian children caramels tossed from their vehicles as they drive past. This activity ultimately gets one of the Adano children killed.

## **The Tina**

The name of Tomasino's boat that he takes out to fish for the town of Adano.

## **Torrone**

A type of caramel candy that Tomasino's family cooks for Joppolo and Purvis the first time they come over to visit.

## **U.S.S. Corelli**

The ship from where the new bell for Adano comes.



# Themes

## Compliance

To be a soldier in the Army, you cannot question your commanding officer's authority. This idea is paramount in the Army and a major foundation from which all soldiers operate. To question a commanding officer's directive is impermissible. However, when General Marvin makes a direct command that no carts are allowed on the pathways in Adano, Joppolo realizes that this command is not logical. Initially, he accepts the rule and does not question it. However, when he is approached by the poor cartmen of Adano, he sees the error of the ruling. What separates Joppolo from the rest of his comrades is his ability to think for himself and he uses his intelligence to see that keeping General Marvin's command will kill the town. The town depends upon its carts for products, services and general essentials within the town. Joppolo listens to the complaints of the town and reverses the ruling, saying that he will take the blame for it. In the end, he will suffer the ultimate consequences for this action.

However, in this case, complying with the command of General Marvin would have destroyed the town. Joppolo is forced to choose between his career and doing what he has always been told and choosing between the lives of the people in Adano. His choice to allow carts in the town permits the town to prosper and recover from the destruction that the Fascists had done to the town.

## Camarderie

One of Joppolo's top skills is his ability to encourage camaraderie with everyone he encounters. No matter the history or background of the person with whom he is talking, Joppolo manages to communicate with the individual on a common ground. From the poor fishermen and cartmen of Adano to Lord Runcin and the prestigious Livingston of the Navy, Joppolo navigates the social waters to get his point across and make the person a friend.

By learning the Italian language, Joppolo is able to connect with the townspeople of Adano. Unlike the other soldier who cannot speak Italian, Joppolo speaks in the native language and is considered an insider. When Niccolo tells the story of how Giorgio died, Purvis, who cannot speak Italian, speaks rudely to the other people there; meanwhile, Joppolo is able to understand the severity of the situation and be there for the Italians.

Without Joppolo's unique ability to encourage camaraderie with everyone he meets, it is unlikely that he could have accomplished as much as he did in the short period of time that he was in Adano. His relationship with Livingston helped him to find a new bell, while his relationship with the local people helped to install the bell in time for him to hear its chime on the way out of Adano for the last time. Joppolo's ability to enjoy

camaraderie with everyone he meets makes him the ideal leader for the town of Adano, when they were in desperate need of one.

## Separation from Home

Many of the soldiers suffer from homesickness. Initially, when Joppolo meets Tina, he says that he is not homesick, that he is exactly where he wants to be. However, by the end of that evening, he is consumed with missing his wife back home and his home in New York. For this reason, Joppolo looks to Tina to help him solve his loneliness. It is this way of thinking that he is upset and hurt when Tina asks him to find out information about her lover, Giorgio. What he doesn't realize is that Tina is also lonely and her need to find out more information about Giorgio is her way of recovering from and handling her loneliness during the war as well.

Together, Tina and Joppolo form a relationship to help alleviate their pains of loneliness. Had Joppolo stayed in the town of Adano longer, they might have taken their relationship farther than a strong friendship, which would have made Joppolo compromise his relationship with his wife. Compromising his relationship with his wife would have simultaneously compromised his commitment to honesty and would have diminished him, so in this way, it is fortunate that Joppolo is removed from the town.

The rest of the American soldiers also react to loneliness by frequently getting drunk and trying to pick up Italian girls. Their behavior is ultimately extremely destructive and gives all Americans a bad reputation. However, it is simply the soldiers' reaction to their loneliness and not a true depiction of their personalities.



# Style

## Point of View

The story is written from the point of view of Major Joppolo the entire time. The narrator is an omniscient narrator that can give detailed insight when the story moves away from Joppolo; however every event that happens in the book relates in some way to Joppolo and his fate. From this point of view, the reader gains a better understanding of Joppolo as the main character and learns his motivations through his dialogue with other characters. However, the narrator will also tell the reader important facts, such as the fact that Joppolo really wanted to be popular in town and would often make decisions to encourage this popularity. The reader never gets an in-depth look at the other characters, such as Tina or Purvis, including his feelings and reactions to hearing that Joppolo is forced to leave Adano because of the report that he wrote.

By keeping the point of view with Joppolo throughout the novel, the story focuses on the man more than the fate and growth of the town of Adano. Even though the novel is called "A Bell for Adano" it is really about the leadership and accomplishments of a single man named Major Victor Joppolo and the narration of the story supports that emphasis.

## Setting

The setting of the novel takes place in the town of Adano. Within the town, the plot continues at important locations in Adano, such as the fishermen's docks, Tomasino's house, the Palazzo di Citta and the local restaurant.

The setting is described fully as Joppolo and Borth arrive in the town and walk down the streets. After they come to through the streets, they end up in the Palazzo di Citta, which lets the reader know that Joppolo will be an important figure to the town. His trip to the fishermen's docks shows that Joppolo is willing to travel anywhere in town to talk with the people and get them better fed.

When the poison gas scare occurs in the town, Joppolo walks everywhere in Adano to assure the people that the gas was just a farce — not a reality. By walking through town with the people, he is showing that that he is one of them and will suffer and struggle as they do.

## Language and Meaning

The language in the novel is formal, which shows the formality and structure of Joppolo. He does not appreciate outrageous or drunken behavior and his dialogue with his soldiers demonstrates this. He does not use "small talk," but speaks directly to people in order to get the truth out of them and proceed accordingly. The narrator describes the

situation and gives the emotional background to the characters. A good example of this is when the narrator describes the loneliness that surrounds both Joppolo and Tina and how it influences their actions. Without this language, the reader would have never known that loneliness was a direct part of their motivations.

## **Structure**

The structure of the novel is linear. There is little foreshadowing, but because the story regularly returns to the status of a report that Purvis writes about Joppolo, the reader knows that the report will play a role in Joppolo's fate.

There are 37 chapters in the novel, which jumps the reader from one location to another in order to show what is happening at simultaneous times during the novel. There are no flash-forwards or flashbacks in the story line and the reader follows the plot as it is occurring in the town. It helps the reader feel as though they are a member of the town and encourages a greater camaraderie with the characters in the novel.



## Quotes

"That was the one he wanted. When plans fall down, improvise." p.15

"He took time only to tell Giuseppe that he had a little interpreting for him to do that afternoon and to look into the face of the blonde." p. 38

"Democracy is this: democracy is that the men of the government are no longer the masters of the people. They are the servants of the people." p. 45

"Boss, you're a kid Guiseppe" p. 68

"I would be a man of authority. I would be the thing I have hated all my life. The other fishermen would laugh at me for becoming the thing I had always hated most." p. 78

"You think I'm too previous?" Captain Purvis said. "Hell, why beat around the bush, Major?" p.97

"No," said Tina. "You don't have to explain. I know what it is to be restless. That's why my hair is blonde, I guess." p. 101

"Cacopardo is sulphur and sulphur is Cacopardo." p. 108

"Behind Major Joppolo's back, Captain Purvis was very critical of him. To his face, the Captain was cordial, even friendly." p.115

Finally Chuck said: "Hell of a war, when you can't even find a present in ol' Four Eyes' house." p.128

"I'm not Italian, boys. I'm American, and sometimes I'm not as proud of it as I'd like to be." p.138

It was a fine sound in the summer air. The tone was good and it must have been loud to hear it as far as this." p. 269



## Topics for Discussion

How does Joppolo achieve getting a new bell for the town? Does he succeed?

Why do the townspeople hate Mayor Nasta? What does he represent for them?

Discuss why the Germans would help Mayor Nasta escape from jail, while not helping themselves to escape as well?

Imagine what would have happened if Joppolo had remained in Adano. What relationships would have continued? How would he have handled his popularity in the long-term?

How does Joppolo get Sergeant Livingston from the Navy on his side? What social tricks does he use to get him on his side? Is this relationship important for the town of Adano and if so, why or why not?

Analyze the impact of General Marvin in the town of Adano and on the lives of the soldiers under him. Compare his actions to those of the Fascists that ruled before the Americans.

Note some of the stereotypical actions in the novel, such as the drunken behavior of the soldiers or how they treat the local townspeople. How does the language barrier affect the way they interact with people in the town?