

A Brief History of Seven Killings Study Guide

A Brief History of Seven Killings by Marlon James

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Plot Summary

Crooked politicians, opposing gangs, and unintended victims all add their voices to the story of *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. The novel tells the story of the rise in power of Josey Wales, a gang leader with a desire to take over the world. His ambition is matched by his temper, which ultimately leads to his downfall. In the course of the story, Josey plans an assassination attempt against the Singer, a Jamaican reggae superstar hoping to unite his country in peace. Josey ultimately destroys the peace plans even though the assassination plan fails. Josey later becomes rich when he branches his drug business to America. It is in America, however, that Josey's temper gets away from him and he shoots up a crack house after a druggie shoots him with a water pistol filled with urine. Josey is jailed for these crimes and at the end of the novel is believed to have been found dead in his jail cell.

Although the story of Josey's rise to power and fall from power seems to be the main plot in the novel, there are many subplots interwoven into Josey's story. These subplots involve the lives of those affected by Josey's cruelty and selfishness. Nina Burgess, one of the many narrators in the novel, runs for her life after she comes face-to-face with Josey after the Singer is shot. Alex Pierce hopes to make his name known with the story behind the peace concert in Jamaica and the shooting of the Singer. Josey sends a hit man to kill Alex but Alex is able to kill the man and escape. Josey Wales is able to convince the people of Copenhagen City to change loyalties from Papa-Lo, even though he is still the official leader of the Copenhagen City gang, to him. Papa-Lo is ultimately killed at Josey's request.

Although it is a fictional story, the novel is based on real events in Jamaica's history. There was an attempt to kill the singer, Bob Marley, as he prepared to present a peace concert for the country in 1976. Although the concert was intended to unite the country, it wound up being viewed as political propaganda.

Many themes are addressed in the novel including racism and discrimination seen from both the Jamaican and American points of view. Another theme in the novel is that of speech. The different characters in the novel are characterized by their speech patterns, grammar and pronunciation. Proper speech is considered a sign of intelligence while those who speak badly admit they are judged by their speech patterns. Although there is no particular religious theme in the novel, there are multiple uses of religious imagery throughout the text. In the scenes both before and after the attempted shooting of the Singer, he is depicted as Jesus Christ while those who plan the murder as likened to Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed Jesus.

The novel takes its name from two sources. First, it covers the murders of seven of the eight men involved in the plot to kill the Singer. Second, near the end of the novel the writer Alex Pierce names his series of newspaper articles *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. He writes not about those associated with the shooting of the Singer but instead about seven of the eleven people killed by Josey Wales in a Bushwick crack house.

Sir Arthur George Jennings – Original Rockers, p. 51

Summary

The stories of narrators from differing walks of life interweave to present the story of Jamaica, a country embroiled in gang and political wars, on a series of five different significant dates. The first two sections tell the story of the attempted shooting of Jamaican reggae singer Bob Marley on the Dec. 2, 1976, the day leading up to the murder attempt, and Dec. 3, the day of the murder attempt.

In this beginning section the deceased Sir Arthur George Jennings insists that his death was not a suicide, but a murder. He waits for the man who killed him to die. This book, he says, will be about the killing of several people who meant nothing to the world, but are connected to the man who killed him.

The section of the novel entitled “Original Rockers” begins with the voice of Bam-Bam. Bam-Bam tells how he became a member of Papa-Lo’s gang after his father and mother were killed. He has spent the last days staking out with other members of his gang outside the Singer’s house. Bam-Bam watched as the Singer and a girl had sex on the balcony.

Bam-Bam has always lived in the poverty of the ghetto though he says his father was the last good man left there. When he was ten, Bam-Bam’s house was targeted by shooters. His father covered him with his body to keep the boy from being killed. Bam-Bam remembers his father beating his mother because she was a whore. The day after the beating his mother returned with several men who beat Bam-Bam’s father. On that day, Funnyboy shot both Bam-Bam’s mother and father. Bam-Bam was not hurt because his mother’s dead body fell on him, hiding him from the gang members. When the men left, Bam-Bam remembers running until he was stopped by a group of people who recognized his distress. Papa-Lo, who was part of the group, saw something he could use in the boy and took him under his wing.

Barry Diflorino watches the precarious sign at King Burger as he thinks about an upcoming peace concert in Jamaica. The concert has been organized by the Prime Minister and while Diflorino knows the country needs peace, he doesn’t believe it will come from the Prime Minister. The son of the former CIA director is said to be in the country to tape the concert. Diflorino believed at first he’d been brought to Jamaica to trail William Adler, a former CIA agent, until he realized that man was instead following him. Among other things, Adler claims he has evidence that the CIA was responsible for the arson of a tenement on Orange Street and had been giving money to the opposition party. Adler had also given the Jamaican government names of CIA officers causing some agents to have to be shipped home. This has made Diflorino’s job even more difficult as he had to start from scratch with new agents.



Papa-Lo tells how he tried to warn the Singer one of his friends might try to take him down but the Singer just laughed. Papa-Lo is the enforcer for Copenhagen City and the Jamaica Labor Party. He says that when anything bad happens in the ghetto, like the recent brief kidnapping of a jockey who lost all of the races in the Kings Sweepstakes that he was supposed to have won, it is the work of the men from the Jungle. Papa-Lo believes it is these people who have dirtied the reputation of the Singer and made others believe that he was responsible for the horse races being thrown. The men from the Jungle have also shown up with new machine guns never seen before in that area. While Papa-Lo says he loves the Singer enough he'd be willing to take a bullet for him, he can only take one bullet.

Nina Burgess waits outside the Singer's house on Hope Road. She'd expected tight security but describes the men acting as guards as thugs. Just the week before armed men had broken into Nina's parents' home. They'd stolen cash and jewelry, and hit her father. Nina couldn't get her mother to tell her for sure if she'd been raped or not. She is upset because her sister, Kimmy, hasn't checked in on her parents yet. Nina met the Singer during a date with her former boyfriend, Danny, then saw him again when she went to a party at his house with her sister. She watched him go out on the balcony naked that night. She admits few people know the song "Midnight Ravers" is about her. She waits across the road for the Singer to come out so she can ask for his help.

When the Singer visited Copenhagen City he was greeted ecstatically by Papa-Lo and all the people he had helped, Bam-Bam remembers. He also remembers Josey Wales hissing as he watched Papa-Lo and the Singer walk off together to Papa-Lo's house to discuss business. The Singer is supported by the PNP, the opposing party of the one Papa-Lo leads, so the people wonder what is becoming of Papa-Lo. Even Bam-Bam hates the Singer in a way because it was the PNP men who shot his parents. Bam-Bam also believes the Singer is out of touch with life in the ghetto even though he still sings about it. Near the end of this section Bam-Bam describes how Josey gives him a different gun and makes him shoot a boy to prove his worth.

Josey Wales prides himself on his ability to speak well. He is angry with the Singer for talking like a ghetto man even though he's made a name for himself. He believes the changes needed in the ghetto will come from drug sales, not peace. The politicians who depend on the gang members for their muscle, have already started to see changes in Papa-Lo and are turning to Josey. He's been approached in secret by Louis Johnson from the CIA asking if he can trust Josey. Josey plays dumb and tells Johnson what he wants to hear. Josey is already involved in a plan to put drug runners in Miami and New York. His goal is to take over the world.

Nina counts the vehicles that pass as she waits for the Singer to come out of his house. She looks at her Timex watch, remembering how a friend had once made a comment it was cheap. As she waits, a police car passes and she remembers a fake spot check where she and other blacks were treated badly. Nina hopes the Singer will recognize her and help her and her parents get visas to go to the United States. A white man gets out of a car saying he is Alex Pierce from The Rolling Stone magazine. He claims to have an appointment with the Singer but he is turned away as well.



Analysis

After just the first fifty pages, this book already deals with a number of themes and issues including racism, gangs and politics, and speech. The style in which the novel is written is one in which a variety of different characters give their own perspective of what is happening on one particular date, Dec. 2, 1976. Written in their own voices, these characters give background on what has brought them to the places in their lives where they are. For instance, Bam-Bam describes the day his mother and father were shot by members of a gang. When he ran from his home, he was found by the leader of the opposing gang and taken in by that group. Nina Burgess, who has had sex with the Singer, a reggae superstar, hopes the man will remember her enough to help her and her parents, who have just been robbed and her mother possibly raped, get visas to get out of Jamaica. For this reason, she waits outside the Singer's home even though the house is tightly guarded by people whom she describes as thugs.

The stories of the characters twist and wind together with one character filling out and giving credence to the story told by another character. For instance, Bam-Bam remembers seeing the Singer and Nina the night they were together. He, like Nina, knows it was from that experience that the Singer's song "Midnight Ravers" was written. Two quotes begin the novel, one from Bonnie Raitt's Tangled and Dark "Gonna tell the truth about it, Honey, that's the hardest part." The second, a Jamaican proverb, also alludes to telling the truth about an instance, or at least as close to the truth as one can tell. The proverb, "If it no go so, it go near so," is also repeated by characters later in the novel.

One of the major themes to follow in the book is the coming of Josey Wales to power. In this section, Papa-Lo, who is the don of Copenhagen City seems to already be losing power among his people. Josey has in his mind a plan to take over Papa-Lo's spot as leader and also get involved in drug trade not only in Jamaica but also in the United States. Louis Johnson meets with Josey to feel him out but Josey is smart and plays dumb. In reality, he has planned his rise to fame well. He's spent years hand picking a wife who would bear the type of children he wants to follow him in leading his dynasty. Although he goes to strip clubs, he doesn't sleep around and take the chance of having subpar children. He's studied speech patterns and realizes how people judge a man based on how he speaks. At one point Josey berates his son for speaking in the Jamaican slang. Josey additionally realizes that if he wants to be a leader in the drug trade, he can't allow himself to get addicted to the drugs, for this reason he turns down sellers asking if he wants to sample the merchandise.

Along with the Jamaican proverb that is repeated in the novel, another phrase that will come up again and again is the flip side of the common saying "wait and see." In Jennings' introductory section, he indicates that the dead don't "wait and see" they "see and wait." The use of the flip side of the phrase indicates that as he is dead, there really isn't anything that Jennings can do to change the way the world is going. This idea is very much like fatalism, the idea that one's life is laid out in advance with nothing one can do to change the path of life. Notice that even the living in this novel use the same



phrase. Bam-Bam, for instance, says that in the ghetto, people “see and wait.” Like Jennings, Bam-Bam and the others see what is going on around them, but don’t really have the power to do anything about it. It is almost as if they are already dead. All the power is held by warring gangs with the people stuck in the middle.

In the opening section of the novel, Jennings breaks right into the theme of speech with his comment that “When you’re dead speech is nothing but tangents and detours and there’s nothing to do but stray and wander awhile.” He also argues that the dead never stop talking, but the living rarely listening alluding to the inability of the human race to learn from the mistakes of the past. Speech seems more important to those who grew up poor and are expected to speak badly. For instance, Nina is very proud of her ability to speak proper English. She looks down on people, like the police officers who come to investigate the robbery at her parents’ home, because they lack the ability to speak properly. Even though he speaks badly, Bam-Bam also recognizes the power of proper speech. He knows he won’t be able to get a job, even one working on a plant, if he “chats bad” as he says.

One of the most interesting aspects of the novel thus far is the different voices given to each character. These voice range from Bam Bam’s bad English and childish thinking to Diflorino’s educated speech in which he uses police terminology. Notice also the difference in what characters notice about their surroundings. Diflorino notices the leaning fast food sign and realizes it could be a danger. He also admits he avoids crowds as they can easily turn into mobs. Meanwhile, Josey has the intelligence to play dumb and pretend he can’t read the piece of paper Louis Johnson is holding upside down in front of him. All the while he’s playing dumb, Josey is thinking about his own plan to take over the world.

Racism and discrimination particularly when it comes to police action is another important theme in this novel. The idea seems particularly important in the sections narrated by Nina Burgess. She tells of how the police refused to come to her parents’ home to investigate their robbery until 9:30 the following morning, a delay that she blames on the police officers’ dislike for black people. She also talks about a black man walking home from church who was arrested by the police. Her father got the man out of jail and told the police he was proper, but Nina argues the man was too dark skinned for people to believe he was proper. Bam-Bam’s idea that the police will give a black man only two choices gives credence to Nina’s belief that the police discriminate against the blacks. He says the police will give a black man two choices: he can run and be shot in secret, or stay and be beaten.

One final aspect to keep in mind in this section of the novel is the reference to 56 bullets. Jennings makes a reference to this number of bullets in his introductory section of the novel. This reference foreshadows more references to 56 bullets. Also foreshadowed in Jennings’ section of the novel is the way some of the characters will die. For instance, Bam-Bam later dies by being buried alive, just as Jennings has described it.



Also notice the many religious references in the novel. For instance Bam-Bam describes the Singer coming out one day to talk to the people who were gathered around his house. Bam-Bam describes the Singer as Jesus Christ, the man who was sent by God to save the world from its sins and bring peace, according to the Christian Bible. In this case, many people believe the Singer has come to save Jamaica from itself and bring peace. Bam-Bam notes that the Singer looks at him and the other men in his group as if they were Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed Jesus Christ, leading to his death. In a way, the gang members are like Judas as they do plan to kill the Singer, sending a clear message that peace is not what they want. In other references, when Papa-Lo comes to meet Bam-Bam for the first time, he is described as parting the crowd as if he were Moses parting the Red Sea.

Discussion Question 1

Compare and contrast Papa-Lo and Josey Wales' personalities and styles of leadership.

Discussion Question 2

Why is the Singer so important to Jamaica? Why has he angered so many people?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss religious imagery as presented thus far in the novel.

Vocabulary

keen, shoddy, ska, whelping, pickney, merino, recoil, scoffed, monotonous, premises, indispensable, mediocre, innovator, irredeemable, apocalypse, destabilizing, tenement, preposterous, rogue, scheme, pilgrimage, gabardine, ambush, intervene, meritorious, hypocrite, marooned



Original Rockers p. 52 - 119

Summary

Demus forecasts some day in the future, someone will write his story. He remembers how he was arrested because he was caught by police taking a bath outside just a short time after a white woman claimed she was raped. He was held in jail and abused for the crime, but got with no apology after the woman changed her story. The next time the police came to his neighborhood, Demus shot one of them. Demus remembers a visit to the Singer's house and being promised money if he helped kidnap a jockey. The men who promised the money vanished, however. Demus was so angry at the time he wanted to burn down the Singer's house.

Demus was still angry from being tricked when Josey found him. Josey asked if he could shoot and Weeper gave him cocaine to ease the pain Demus said he'd had in his leg since he was in jail. The only things that had helped Demus' pain in the past was weed or listening to the Singer. When he learned Josey wanted him to shoot the Singer, Demus went home and vomited. He'd never have gotten involved, he says, if he had known the Singer was the target. Josey, however, has made him believe the Singer was responsible for the bad in their country.

Alex Pierce, the American writer from the Rolling Stone magazine, believes the Singer is up to something bigger than just the peace concert. A taxi driver has told him he saw the Singer at the horse-racing track with Papa-Lo, a man whom Pierce has discovered has been accused of a variety of crimes. Papa-Lo also works with the political party opposing the one that the Singer supports. Alex thinks some people in New York have already sensed there is something happening in Jamaica as Mark Lansing has been sent to film the concert. Alex thinks that with a general election coming in two weeks and numerous CIA agents in town there's more going on than what the magazine is wanting him to report on.

As Josey sits in a bar, he thinks about Weeper. Weeper went to high school and is an educated man even though he is a homosexual. On his way to try to get a job as an architect's apprentice, Weeper was among those caught in a police ambush. Weeper was knocked down and kicked in the head, and later found guilty of robbery and wounding with intent even though he was involved with no crime. He was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary. The police beat him and abused him brutally in prison, even hooking him up to an electrical cord around his penis in a torture process called the Electric Boogie.

Josey is just thinking about the way he and Weeper can communicate through their eyes when Weeper disrupts his daydreaming. Weeper reminds Josey of the time he first met the Singer. He'd been with a work detail chopping wood and the Singer had said he was fighting for the prisoners' rights, but had laughed, making Weeper hate him. Josey adds in his thoughts Weeper had also realized the Singer was talking to the man next to



him. Josey sends Weeper to pick up Bam-Bam, who has been watching the Singer's house all day.

Bam-Bam recalls going to the harbor for a shipment of guns and ammunition in a container marked Peace Concert. There were seven other boys with Bam-Bam who were taught to shoot the new guns by an American who couldn't understand what they were saying, but told them they were fighting freedom from tyranny. On the way back from learning to shoot, Weeper gave Bam-Bam some cocaine. Bam-Bam wanted to have sex but wasn't able to perform; he also wanted to shoot people. He and Weeper opened fire on a house and a shop that was still open. No one was killed, but Papa-Lo was angry when they got back. Soon, Bam-Bam was shooting and killing because he knew he would be rewarded with drugs if he did so. Bam-Bam thinks about these things as he watches the Singer's house. A white man has told them about every room in the Singer's house and shown them pictures. Bam-Bam thinks that in one more night, he will be like a superhero.

Even as he tries to write about the Singer, Alex realizes the person who is the Singer now did not exist when he lived in Jamaica originally. He knows he's in over his head and believes he's found a story, but isn't sure what it is. He believes a Cold War is coming, as even the local people are fleeing Jamaica. He believes William Adler is somehow connected but can't link just how he's connected. Wondering how the country will get through the next two weeks until the election, Alex dreams of writing a story he can give to Time, Newsweek or The New Yorker.

Papa-Lo realizes he's falling out of power. He recounts two things that have happened to him that have changed him. First, he shot a boy who was able to grab him and hold onto him before he died. Additionally, the boy's mother called him wicked, a term never used to describe him before. The Singer once asked Papa-Lo how he got to be on top since he worries so much. Papa-Lo knows that everyone can take a shot at someone on top, like he is afraid some plan to do with the Singer. Even though he's voiced his fear to the Singer, Marley won't listen. Instead, he tries to work out peace between Papa-Lo and Shotta Sherrif. On that hot night in December, Papa-Lo knows the calm he sees won't last. Two men, along with Peter Nasser, have been to see Josey, but didn't include Papa-Lo in their meeting. He believes Josey had something to do with the disappearance of guns from the wharf. He also knows Josey was responsible for burning an Orange Street tenement and shooting the firemen trying to put the fire out. He remembers the day Josey was shot and knows he was a different man when he recovered. As he thinks about how this quiet night might be the first night the ghetto people have gotten a full night's sleep, he realizes some one will have to pay for it.

Barry Diflorino gets a call from William Adler. Adler asks Diflorino to call off the people he has following him even though Diflorino claims to not know where Adler is. Adler also tells Diflorino that the men that Louis Johnson is teaching to shoot aren't dumb enough, they wouldn't shoot him as well. Adler tells Diflorino the current Prime Minister is about to be re-elected while Richard Lansing's son is there to tape the peace concert being put on by the Singer. He points out the coincidences are too neat. Diflorino refuses to listen to Adler and accuses the former CIA agent of getting people killed when he



released his book. He doesn't believe any of the things that Adler is trying to tell him, and eventually hangs up on him. Meanwhile, Diflorino's wife pressures him into getting off the job and letting them all move back home.

Although it is almost time for the curfew to go into affect, Nina is still at the Singer's house. She thinks about a recent family discussion in which her father read an article detailing what might happen if the current Prime Minister wasn't re-elected. Kimmy, who is dating the son of the country's Minister of Tourism, calls it right wing propaganda. Nina tells her family she doesn't think anything about politics. She prefers to think about her own lack of purpose. All she has in her life is the waiting. Waiting on the good stuff that never happens and waiting on the bad stuff that might or might not happen. As she watches, a Datsun drives up, picks up a man and leaves. Nina realizes she needs to go home. She is stopped by police at the Waterloo Road intersection. They tell her they will take her home if she gets in the car, but they make a left turn instead of a right saying they are taking a shortcut.

Demus describes the one-room house by the sea in which he and nine other men are gathered. The men include Josey, Bam-Bam, Weeper, Heckle, Renton, Matic, Funky Chicken and two men from the Jungle. The number is cut to eight men when Matic kills himself by mistaking rat poisoning for cocaine. Renton is shot by Josey when he refuses to play a part in the Singer's death because the Singer has given his family money in the past. Josey leaves the remaining seven men there. He warns them that anyone who leaves will be shot. The door is locked, keeping the men in.

Jennings remembers the night he died. He'd been having sex with a woman who complained she was thirsty and needed ice with her wine. A man pushed Jennings over the balcony when he went down the hall for the ice. In the present, Jennings watches as the man who killed him has sex. After they finish, they hear a glass break and the man who killed Jennings gets his gun. There is a man in the living room. He asks the man who killed Jennings for money. The man, who is Josey, tells Nasser that Papa-Lo and Shotta Sherrif are talking and that they've both stopped eating pork. Nasser refuses to give Josey any money. Meanwhile, Jennings senses the ghost of a dead fireman in the room. He was one of the firemen who responded to the tenement on Orange Street who was killed by Josey.

Analysis

Important to notice in this section are the stories of how the men who turn out to be involved with the assassination attempt on Marley become members of the gang. Most of them, like Bam-Bam, had some idea that they needed more than a gang membership to ensure them a good life, but circumstances have kept them from doing anything but turning against the police. Demus, for instance, was falsely imprisoned for the rape of a white woman. He was released from jail but because of the brutality he suffered at the hands of the police, he develops a desire to kill police officers. Then he's embroiled in a get rich quick scheme and blames the Singer when he doesn't get the money he was expecting when he agreed to help kidnap the jockey.



As Papa-Lo remembers it, Josey's story is even worse as Josey is a smart kid on his way to a job interview when he is caught in a police ambush during the fall of Balaclava. Josey was shot multiple times and left for dead. Papa-Lo explains that Josey was a different man when he recovered from his wounds and left the hospital. Weeper, also on his way to try to get a job, was jailed for a robbery just because he was black. In all of these cases, the police in Jamaica seem to think black men are guilty of any crime committed based just on the color of their skin. Even as a black woman from mid town, Nina has already learned this. She was part of a bus stop where police searched a bus on which she was riding. Although she was not jailed, Nina felt the police treated the black people badly. She fears the policemen who say they plan to take her home but then go a different route, telling her they're taking a shortcut.

On the flip side of racism, Alex Pierce, the white reporter notices the differences between blacks and whites in Jamaica and in America. He says that while there are blacks in America, they aren't as visible as those in Jamaica, mainly only on television for comic relief, not for reading the news. He also refers to the black people there using what he calls "the white" tone. Instead of talking in their usual fashion, these people talk as they have been trained to for the purpose of communicating with white people. Alex dislikes this unnatural speech. Continuing the theme of speech, the author uses grammar and pronunciation in his writing to characterize each of the different characters. Character from the ghetto, for instance, speak with subjects and verbs that don't agree, use improper verb tenses and refer to themselves as we. The author also makes a point to spell word as the characters pronounce them. Wah for what, for instance.

Notice the intertwining of the stories that continues in this section of the novel. As Nina waits for the Singer to make an appearance outside his house, she sees the white Datsun driven by Weeper, pull up. He picks up Bam-Bam, whom she hadn't even noticed in the shadows and drives him to the house by the sea. Meanwhile, Papa-Lo sits on his veranda feeling that evil is on the move even though he isn't sure what is happening. The Datsun drives by Papa-Lo's house and Josey scorns the older man sitting on his porch. Bam-Bam speaks of an American who gave them guns and taught them how to use them. Seven of these men are locked inside a house waiting the next day when they will go to kill the Singer. Louis Johnson, the American who taught the gang members how to use the guns is a CIA agent. Barry Diflorino, also a CIA agent, gets a warning from William Adler that Louis Johnson is arming the gang members and teaching them to use the guns but Diflorino doesn't believe him.

Even though the Singer has come to Jamaica with hopes of bringing peace to the people, it appears the Singer is angering some people in this process because he is meeting with the heads of warring gangs, each of which support different political parties. The Singer is putting on a peace concert, sponsored by the PNP, but at the same time has been seen being friendly with Papa-Lo, the head of the JLP. His actions have people confused and concerned. They do not trust the politicians will improve conditions in Jamaica as they have heard promises before and have been disappointed. For instance, after Balaclava was destroyed, the politicians from the PNP promised people life would get better but never carried through with the promise. Now that the



PNP is hoping to get back into power, the gangs are tasked with roughing up the people and threatening to be sure they vote correctly.

Josey continues his march toward power in this section of the novel. He's hand picked his assassination squad and had them armed and taught to shoot by Louis Johnson, just as Adler tried to warn Diflorino. He's gathered all of the men together and locked them in a house to assure that none of them get away before they do the deed they've promised to do. When Josey tells one of the men their target is the Singer, the man refuses because the Singer has given his family money. Josey reasons with the man trying to explain this habit of giving money doesn't really help, just keeps the people fed for awhile. The man won't listen so Josey shoots him.

Notice the way the author continues to play with language and voices between the different characters. As a journalist hungry for a big story, Alex writes and thinks like a journalist. He notices that Mark Lansing is in Jamaica but believes the boy is there because he also knows there is a story to be told in Jamaica. He doesn't recognize Lansing's connection to the former head of the CIA as Adler does. Alex believes the story he's looking for centers on the Singer but can't pin down what it is or who is at the center of it. He describes Marley as an allegory, insinuating that the Singer represents something to the people even though he has changed from the ghetto boy to the big name rock star.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss police brutality against black men as it is portrayed in this section of the novel. How are police actually making it attractive for people to join gangs?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the connection between politics and gangs in Jamaica.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Barry Diflorino not take William Adler's advice seriously? Does he make a mistake? What do you think he should have done?

Vocabulary

cordite, bombocloth, concierge, racketeering, extortion, acquitted, goons, magnitude, apprentice, palaver, paranoid, sodomite, unremitting, vortex, sensationalism, allegory, mediates, climax, denouement, eradicate, propaganda, patronizing, expose, intrepid, prosper, bauxite, deformation, exsanguination



Ambush in the Night p. 120-171

Summary

Nina fears the officers plan to rape her. The police officers discuss politics and the previous night's episode of Starsky and Hutch as they stop the car to give the engine a break. Nina asks them to rape her if that is what they have planned so they can take her home. The officers seem surprised at her frankness and take her home. As Nina thinks about the following day's peace concert she predicts the JLP will shoot somebody resulting in inner fighting between the gangs. She hopes the gangs will destroy each other and let the people, especially her mother, feel safe.

Papa-Lo talks about a white boy who shows up at the Singer's house the night before the peace concert. He doesn't threaten anyone or ask the Singer to stop the concert, but those in the house believe they've been visited by the devil. Papa-Lo warns that they shouldn't turn their back on the white boy. When he asks the Singer what the boy looked like, the Singer doesn't remember.

Josey Wales, who is riding in the Datsun when Weeper picks up Bam-Bam, sees Nina waiting in front of the Singer's house and considers confronting her. Later, he thinks about his encounter with Peter Nasser and Nasser's belief that he owns people instead of just representing them. Josey worries the boys who have been recruited to assassinate the Singer won't be able to do the job. Weeper believes if he makes the boys stay in the house until they are ready, and then gives them drugs, they'll do anything they are asked. Both agree the boys will only be used for one job.

Barry Diflorino and his wife drive their children to school. She continues to nag him about getting to move back to the United States. Diflorino drives past the Singer's house. He slows down looking at it remembering the shock in the community when that black man built a house there. His wife hints she might go to the concert but Diflorino quickly orders her not to go.

Alex can't sleep so he pays a taxi driver to take him to a club where there is real action. At the Turntable, a girl taps him on the shoulder. He wakes up in bed with her as she has turned out to be Aisha, a girl he dated once. He's supposed to have lunch with Mark Lansing that day. Lansing believes he can get Alex in to see the Singer.

Papa-Lo wakes after only one hour of sleep feeling uneasy in his spirit. He has noticed Peter Nasser beginning to talk to Josey Wales more. Papa-Lo remembers how things used to be in the ghetto when he was allowed to take care of problems when they arose. For instance, two men — Bunton-Banton and Dishrag — coleaders of Eight Lanes had begun to cause problems so Papa-Lo had them taken care of. A year later, Papa-Lo can see how much the landscape has changed. While people think he was disturbed because he killed a boy on his way to school, Papa-Lo admits to himself he was disturbed because he realized that he was no longer bothered by the violence.



Nina gets a call from her sister, Kimmy. Kimmy asks her sister what she knows about Garveyism. Nina humors her sister, who is a dedicated Rasta. In the phone conversation, Kimmy finally calls Nina a “dutty little hypocrite” and accuses her of sleeping with the Singer because someone saw Nina standing outside the Singer’s house the night before. Nina unloads her frustration on her sister. She wants to get off the phone so she can continue working on her plan to get the Singer to help her get visas for her parents so she can get them out of the country. Kimmy hangs up on her.

Josey Wales has an appointment with Doctor Love, a man with whom he’s had a connection since they first met in 1975. After just a few minutes talking with Josey, Doctor Love realized he was a thinking man and that he had Louis Johnson snowed. Doctor Love had asked Josey to meet him at Kingston Harbor the following day. While there, Doctor Love ran along a line of cars stooping at each one as if to check the tires. When he got back to Josey, he told him to duck as the cars exploded. It was Doctor Love who told Josey if he wanted to impress people even further up the power chain than Peter Nasser that he should blow up the Orange Street tenement. During his current meeting, Doctor Love tells Josey he has C-4 for him if he wants it, telling he needs to impress the men.

Analysis

The feeling of coming doom develops in these chapters. Even Nina, who is unaware there is a threat against the Singer, predicts that someone from one of the gangs will shoot someone from the opposing gang during the concert. She believes that is all that it will take for hell to break loose in the ghettos. Papa-Lo continues to struggle with his feelings of uneasiness although he has no grounds on which to place his worry. Josey Wales worries that the boys he and Weeper have recruited to do the job won’t be able to follow through. It is from his discussion with Weeper that the reader is able to glean that the two do not plan to let the boys live after they have completed this job whether it is done well or not. Wales indicates he plans to use the boys once, and then destroy them.

The theme of speech continues to be developed but with a twist. In this section both Papa-Lo and Josey point out the significance of silence. Papa-Lo begins this discussion by noting that he and the Singer like to be with one another because they both like to talk. On the other hand, Wales seems to prefer people who keep quiet and can keep a secret. Later, when Wales meets Doctor Love for the first time, note how he takes cues from the man’s face without either of them saying anything. He notices that Doctor Love doesn’t talk unless he has to, a stark contrast with Nasser, who talks all of the time.

Josey’s personality is developed more in this section of the novel as the reader learns it was he who set fire to the Orange Street tenement. The arson was an attempt on Josey’s part to earn the respect of people higher up the power ladder than Nasser. While it is significant that Josey is willing to burn down an apartment building, perhaps putting hundreds of lives at risk, and then shooting the firemen who came to put out the blaze, it is more important to realize that Josey committed this crime with the intent of



gaining power. He didn't care if he hurt innocent people. Contrast this with Papa-Lo's reaction to having killed the schoolboy. While some people, like Josey, believe that Papa-Lo was disturbed because he killed the schoolboy, Papa-Lo admits to himself that the incident disturbed him most because he realized he didn't feel badly about having killed the boy. For Papa-Lo killing has always been a way to get revenge or to put an end to a problem, he didn't kill just for the power it might bring, as Josey does.

Also in this section it is learned why the fireman who was shot to death at the Orange Street fire is hanging around Peter Nasser. In the section narrated by Jennings, the fireman walks through Nasser and attempts to swat at him with no success. It is learned during a section narrated by Josey that Peter Nasser is the man who introduced him to Doctor Love. Doctor Love, in turn, instructed Josey to set fire to the tenement in order to get the attention not only of Nasser but also people higher than him. Therefore, the fireman's death, like Jennings', was initiated by Nasser.

Just as Josey burned down the tenement hoping to catch the attention of people higher up the power chain, he also plans the shooting of Marley to catch the attention of people higher up the chain. Notice that although Doctor Love suggests to Josey that he not be involved personally with the shooting, Josey chooses not to take his advice.

Notice also Diflorino's order to his wife not to go near the peace concert. Diflorino seems to be out of the loop when it comes to the things that Louis Johnson and Doctor Love, both of who have CIA connections, are doing to aid Josey and his cause. His quick response to his wife that she should stay away from the concert makes the reader wonder if he might have some hunch of what is about to happen. It seems unlikely, however, since William Adler gave him a hint that it was Louis Johnson who helped the gangs locate and steal the guns from the wharf, and Diflorino didn't even seem interested in giving the idea a second thought.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Josey Wales worry that the boys Weeper has recruited won't be able to carry out the assassination?

Discussion Question 2

How is the CIA involved in the plan to kill Bob Marley?

Discussion Question 3

What does the incident with the poison tainted flour seem to indicate? How is it significant that Peter Nasser knew in advance to have Papa-Lo warn the people in his area?

Vocabulary

naïve, ostentatious, cultivate, bogus, consort, constituency, blaspheme, mediating, perplexing, asserting, bigot, unflappable, par, infiltrate, antagonize, varmint, berate, impotent



Ambush in the Night p. 172-214

Summary

Diflorino seems surprised to learn that Doctor Love is in Jamaica. He also indicates that on that day, Dec. 3, the CIA is set to revoke Marley's visa for smuggling drugs. As he waits for the action to happen, Diflorino looks over the files on Doctor Love. He remembers his wife having asked him in an earlier conversation what they were really doing in Jamaica, a question Diflorino answered vaguely. His wife let him know she didn't believe him and intended to find out what was going on.

Papa-Lo realizes Josey, Louis Johnson and Doctor Love must be planning something bigger even than the tenement fire. As he walks to Josey's house, he remembers all the things that have been done in his area against his commands that these three have turned out to be responsible for. He realizes also that Josey now has the support of the people.

A source has told Alex about the horse racing scam believed to have been initiated by Marley. He also learns about Marley's trip to Fort Clarence Beach and how angry the man was when he returned. His thoughts are interrupted by a phone call from Mark Lansing telling him about a press conference at the Singer's house at which another reporter from the Rolling Stone was present. Alex believes he's been fired from the Rolling Stone after a morning conversation with his boss and is curious what Lansing wants to tell him. Lansing tells Alex how he has been with Marley nearly every day and has even brought him a pair of cowboy boots. He tells Alex he can get him in to see Marley if Alex will agree to take an extra bag with him back to the states. Lansing suggests Alex go on back to the states as the film is on a rush order.

As Nina is leaving to go to the Singer's house, she gets a call from her mother asking her to come to their house. Kimmy opens the door. At first, Nina's mother won't talk to her, but then finally tells her to talk to her father, telling Nina she is a whore. Kimmy has told that Nina had an affair with the Singer. Nina argues Kimmy is worse than she but her mother calls for the girls' father who comes with a belt, beating Nina. She finally gets the belt away from her father and hits him, knocking him down. She flails with the buckle until her mother screams at her to stop. She holds the belt and looks at Kimmy.

Louis Johnson's secretary won't tell Diflorino's secretary where Johnson has gone. Diflorino walks to the secretary's desk and threatens her. She tells him Johnson is at the Liguanea Club. Diflorino goes to the club where he finds Johnson and Doctor Love together. He follows the two when they leave and attempts to tail them in their vehicle but loses them in the Garbagelands. He's passed by a white Datsun then suddenly the car Johnson and Doctor Love are driving comes from nowhere and rams him. They seem surprised to see Diflorino and make him go to the hospital. After he's released, Johnson drives him home. During the ride he asks Diflorino if he knows a third political party is trying to set up power in Jamaica. Johnson tells Diflorino he is simply a



bookkeeper while it is agents like Johnson who get the work done. Johnson hints around that something will be happening on that day but won't name names and tells Diflorino it is too late to stop it. He suggests Diflorino go home and watch the news.

Analysis

Uterior motives abound in this portion of the novel. Nina angered her sister, Kimmy, when she finally got fed up with Kimmy's abuse. Kimmy gets her revenge by telling her parents that Nina has slept with the Singer. The bomb is dropped just as Nina is planning to go back to the Singer's house to try to get his help in getting herself and her parents out of the country. Notice that Nina has already tried to get a visa the legal way but was turned down because she had no ties in America. Outside the embassy, however, a man approaches her telling her he can get her a visa for \$5,000. This offer will be important later in the novel.

Another character who seems to have an ulterior motive is Mark Lansing. He bribes Alex with the promise of getting him close to the Singer but in exchange for time with the Singer, Mark wants Alex to take a bag back to America in his name. Mark's urgency to get the bag, as well as Alex, out of the country makes the reader wonder what might be in the bag. One also has to wonder if Mark is wanting Alex out of the way so he can write a story about the Singer or if he is working from orders higher up because it has been learned that Alex is snooping around.

Meanwhile, Diflorino learns that much more has been going on under his nose than he ever thought possible. He finds Johnson and Doctor Love together and decides to follow them. The pair leads Diflorino to the ghetto where they ram him. Johnson takes the opportunity to find out exactly how out of touch Diflorino is with what is going on in Jamaica. It is already known that Diflorino doesn't like Johnson and hates Doctor Love, who is a CIA consultant, even more. Johnson is one of those agents that had to come to Jamaica on short notice when others were named in Adler's book. Although it is doubtful that Johnson and Adler are working together, one has to wonder if there was not some strategy that went into the path that Johnson followed so he could get into Jamaica, supply gang members with guns and teach them how to shoot. Notice also that even Diflorino's wife doesn't believe that he doesn't know for sure why he's in Jamaica. Even she seems to be aware that much more is going on there than meets the eye.

Notice in the beginning of the novel, as Alex researches information about the Singer and the state of affairs in Jamaica, he comes across the proverb that is quoted at the beginning of the novel. This reference reminds the reader that the stories they are reading are from each character's point of view. Although no one character can be expected to know the whole story, it is this interweaving of the story from several different viewpoints that allows the reader to get a full picture of what is happening.

Note also in this section that just before Diflorino's car is rammed by the one driven by Johnson, he sees this white Datsun, with a man, presumably Weeper, scowling at him.



It is most likely that Johnson and Doctor Love have sent Weeper out to report back to them on Diflorino's progress so they can know when to drive into his car.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think the author refers to Bob Marley as "The Singer" instead of by his given name?

Discussion Question 2

What do you think will be in the bag that Mark Lansing wants Alex Pierce to take back to the United States with him? Why is he pushing Alex to leave early?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Kimmy tell her parents about Nina's affair with the Singer? What does she hope to gain?

Vocabulary

consorted, disavow, facilitating, terminate, meticulous, scurrilous, perverse, dissident, automaton, inept, mystic, ostentatious, loquacious, impound, tribulation, invincible, embodiment, cunt, cockney, jive, conspiracy, debasing, impertinent, devious, opportunist, spoof, demoralized, defused, menace, condone, collateral

Ambush in the Night p. 215-275

Summary

Papa-Lo blames himself for the divide that's come between him and Josey. He heads to the man's house with the hope of leaving there with both of them of the same mind. Ten yards from Josey's house, he is stopped by gunfire coming from three Jeeps. Although Papa-Lo's men were supposed to have stopped the Jeeps carrying police and Army men, there is no one in sight. The men beat Papa-Lo then carry him off to a jail cell.

Alex rides to the Singer's house with Mark. The man at the gate at the Singer's house won't let Mark park his car there so they have to park and walk back to the gate. The guard lets Mark in but won't allow Alex. Mark tells Alex he'll come back for him but never returns. As Alex waits, he wonders what questions he should ask the Singer. He thinks about how he gets the feeling the story he's chasing is about the Singer, but it isn't the Singer's story. Alex watches as truck leaves with seven armed men from the complex, then a car leaves, carrying more men holding guns. The gate doesn't close and Alex assumes everyone is gone. He walks the grounds for a short while, and then hails a taxi but stops when he sees a blue car turning into the driveway.

Nina takes off running for the Singer's house. She watches as two white cars swerve into the driveway. She's surprised to hear what she believes are firecrackers as it isn't even Christmas yet.

In the house by the sea, Demus pretends to be asleep though he is aware of what is going on around him as the others mumble in their sleep, fondle themselves and try to get free. The house gets hot as the sun rises and still the men are locked inside, going crazy. As the sun begins to set, Josey and Weeper return. Josey gives the boys guns while Weeper gets them doped up with white powder. Demus feels the overwhelming urge to kill the Singer. They've gone over what they are supposed to do three times but Demus forgot the instructions from the first and third times. The men get into a pair of white Datsuns and head for Hope Road.

Bam-Bam's thoughts are muddled and he's preoccupied with the effects of the drugs as he rides to the Singer's house. He knows the Singer stands between him and another hit. Bam-Bam wanted to shoot the Singer but Josey runs in first. The manager blocks Bam-Bam's shot. Josey thinks he's killed the Singer. On the way out, Bam-Bam and Josey see a girl walking into the house. Josey looks her straight in the face, but doesn't shoot her. They drive away as the police arrive.

Demus takes over the narrative as Weeper stops and forces Heckle out of the car. He begins to realize what trouble they are in as Weeper drives through the Garbagelands. Finally, Weeper stops the car, gets out and runs off leaving Bam-Bam and Demus alone with Josey. Bam-Bam runs off leaving Demus with Josey who blames the drugs for messing up the hit. Josey runs off as well leaving Demus alone in the car. Demus'



thoughts are muddled and he thinks the police are coming after him. He tries to make his way back to the house by the sea, but winds up in someone's yard. Josey, along with Tony Pavarotti find Demus and begin shooting at him.

Like Demus, Bam-Bam also tries to hide in the Garbagelands. When he thinks everyone is asleep, Bam-Bam leaves the Garbagelands. As he walks, he hears on a radio that the Singer had been treated and sent home and he knew that Josey had missed. Because of the drugs, he's lost track of his days and suddenly finds himself among the people gathered for the concert. Bam-Bam believes the Singer is looking at him and singing about him. He knows either Josey or Papa-Lo will find and kill him. Bam-Bam runs, believing he is being chased by babies with bat wings, until he runs right into Tony Pavarotti.

Demus also runs. He hears hoofbeats. He wakes in Garbageland believing a woman is holding his testicles. She runs when he threatens to throw a rock at her. He is angry with Weeper and Josey for using him. He runs until he reaches the sea and a seemingly abandoned area. Suddenly, he is surrounded by eight Rastamen.

Bam-Bam tries to scream but he is gagged. His hands and feet are tied together. He feels Weeper and Tony lift him up and drop him into a grave. They shovel dirt on top of him until he is buried alive.

Jennings watches as Bam-Bam is killed. He watches as Demus is located by the Rasta. He knows Demus can see him, which is a bad sign. Jennings watches as the Rasta pull Demus through the woods. He also witnesses as the Rasta hang Demus.

Analysis

Thus far, there have been two of the seven killings. Bam-Bam is buried alive by Weeper and Tony, just as Jennings forecasted he would be. Demus is hung. There are six men involved in the attempted killing of the Singer that await their fate.

The author shows his literary genius as he records the events of the night the Singer was shot through the eyes of gang members Bam-Bam and Demus. In the section narrated by Bam-Bam, covering pages 236-244, the narration is written in what almost appears to be blank verse. Bam-Bam is high on cocaine and his thoughts are jerky and sometimes repeated. Little punctuation is used, showing the way that his mind is running on high with his thoughts separated but really having no clear division. In the following section, narrated by Demus, Demus' thoughts go on with no periods, or paragraph or line breaks for nearly five pages. The running away of Demus' thoughts as put on paper also illustrates the disturbed thought processes of a person high on drugs.

Notice also in this section that there is foreshadowing and signs given that Bam-Bam and Demus are about to die. Both have described waking and feeling as if someone had smeared a thick liquid over their faces, just as Jennings has said is a harbinger of death. Along with the liquid on his face, Bam-Bam has also had hallucinations that he was being chased by flying babies with bat wings. Jennings has already described the



way that Bam-Bam will be killed by being buried alive. He later describes the way that Demus dies by hanging. Interesting is that Demus can see Jennings following him and the Rasta as they are dragging him to the place they plan to hang them. It seems that Demus is just as disturbed by Jennings, since he cannot tell if the man is alive or dead, as he is by the Rasta who plan to hang him.

Important in this section are the religious references, particularly in regard to the singer. Marley is twice compared to Jesus Christ. On page 242, Bam-Bam records that the Singer looks at him as if the Singer were Jesus telling Bam-Bam, who serves as the deceiver Judas, to get it over with. Later, when Bam-Bam stumbles upon the Singer's concert, he compares the female emcee to John the Baptist, the man sent to precede and tell others about Jesus, while the Singer was Jesus, the savior. Other significant Biblical references are also made. In one of these, prior to the attack on the Singer, Josey is compared to the horseman of the book of Revelations or the Bible. This character is believed to be the harbinger of death and evil. As Papa-Lo walks toward Josey's house in an attempt to make peace with the man, he says the he feels like the seven seals are breaking. This reference also points to the Biblical book of Revelation where an angel of the Lord breaks seven seals on a scroll just before the end of the world begins.

Something to notice in this section that will be important later on in the novel is Nina's encounter with Josey and Bam-Bam. The girl isn't named as Nina but by the description that Bam-Bam gives of the girl in sexy jeans and pretty blouse, it is Nina with whom Josey comes face-to-face with as he leaves the Singer's house. Consider also that it appears that all of Papa-Lo's men have turned their backs on him as they allow the police and Army men into Copenhagen City to beat and arrest the man. Although Papa-Lo believes he has finally discovered what is going wrong with the area and has blamed the fissure on himself, it appears he hasn't even guessed how deep the break has really become.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Weeper and Josey feel the need to lock the boys up in a house, and then get them high before they went to the Singer's house?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Josey chooses not to shoot Nina?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the literary techniques used by the author in this section of the novel to capture the mindset of the characters.

Vocabulary

rendezvous, crevice, eradicate, tamarind, metaphor, obscene



Shadow Dancin' p. 276-313

Summary

Kim Clarke is afraid to ride the bus, fearing it will explode. She doesn't like to hear the news. She wonders what people think when she, a black woman, goes into the house where she lives with her boyfriend. She describes how she met the American named Chuck but it seems she has to keep forcing herself to find reasons why she finds him attractive. She believes she will be moving to America with Chuck soon. She's been taking small amounts of money from Chuck's wallet and wonders if he has noticed. As she thinks, she rubs her hands over something with a stamp on it and realizes she needs to wash. In order to get her passport, Kim had to have sex with the man who was selling it to her. She believes it was worth it because she will finally get to leave Jamaica. When Chuck comes in, he hears Kim talking to herself. He tries to tell her about an interesting article in the Star magazine but Kim tries to avoid the conversation.

Chuck tells Kim the company will be closing sooner than expected. When Kim suggests she will be going back to America with him, Chuck tries to break the news softly that she won't be going but has to tell her straight forward when she won't take the hint. It turns out Chuck has a wife in America. In her anger, Kim asks for a cigarette and the paper and goes into the bedroom. Reading the paper, she focuses on the name of Kim-Marie Burgess, a contestant in the Miss Jamaica pageant. In a picture she sees the image of a man from whom she has been running from for two years. She remembers going to the Singer's house the night of the shooting. She remembers the man undressing her with his eyes. Kim starts to call herself Nina as she tells herself the man is coming after her. She sets the paper on fire. She sets the bed on fire as well as Chuck tries to get into the bedroom.

Analysis

In the last section of the novel, it was assumed that the woman that Josey and Bam-Bam ran into on their way out of the Singer's house was Nina, this section secures that person's identity. Nina has been so scared by the events of the night of the Singer's shooting that she has been living under an assumed identity. She has developed a bad case of paranoia. She's scared to ride the bus, afraid it will blow up; she won't watch the news on television or listen to it on the radio; and she's afraid the sea gulls are listening in on her thoughts. She doesn't sleep at night. Kim Clark, aka Nina, is one of the unintended victims of the attack on the Singer.

One of the early indications in this section that Kim is Nina is her assumptions that people are wondering what she, a black woman, is doing going into the rich American house. This attitude is one that has predominated the sections of the novel narrated by Nina. The author has given each character such a strong voice that individual



characters can be recognized easily by that voice even when they carry a different name.

Kim has put her future in the hands of an American named Chuck who she believes will take her back to America with him. She's been selling off her possessions, including her Timex watch, to pay for a fake visa. Kim is so desperate to get out of Jamaica that she even agrees to have sex with the officer who sells her the visa. Remember that Kim has tried in the past to get a visa legally but wasn't allowed to do so because she had no ties in America. It seems she has decided to take up the offer from the man who promised her he could get her a visa in exchange for cash. When Chuck tells Kim she won't be coming to America with him, Kim is distraught. The author leaves Kim in a questionable position as she has just set fire to the bedroom of Chuck's house.

Discussion Question 1

At what point do you realize that Kim Clark is Nina? Use examples from the book to support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Kim is justified in her fear of Josey? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think that Kim really loves Chuck or is she just using him as her ticket to America? Give reasons to support your answer.

Vocabulary

discrete, verbatim, feisty, sieve, concentric, ackee



Shadow Dancin' p. 314-362

Summary

Diflorino and his family are leaving Jamaica for Argentina in one week. He seems surprised to learn the CIA has been busted for breaking the law by keeping information about all major operations secret from all the ambassadors worldwide. He gives credit to Louis and even William Adler for alerting to how things were really going. Diflorino is now saying to himself that even he knew Adler was responsible for the death of Richard Welch back in 1976. Now he blames Nixon for all of the problems within the CIA. He thinks about how he got a phone call from both Louis and Adler just a few days ago. Adler was angry he'd finally been kicked out of the United Kingdom. He's also trying to give Diflorino information about a file Schlsinger compiled in 1974 for Kissinger. Diflorino tells Adler he isn't interested because he wrote the information in the file.

Papa-Lo rides in the car with Tony Pavarotti. He has hired the man for the day. They are headed to an old fort where they stop and pull three boys out of the car trunk. Papa-Lo has planned this ghetto trial to get Marley back for another concert. He really isn't angry at the boys anymore. He and Shotta Sherrif agreed to a peace treaty while they were in jail together but Papa-Lo is hoping to mend fences between himself and the Singer. The day before the treaty is to be announced, the PNP shoot a bunch of unarmed members of the Wang Gang at Green Bay. One other man involved in the shooting of the Singer has already been killed. Josey Wales tipped Papa-Lo off that the Leggo Beast was hiding in his mother's cupboard. Now these three are hung after a ghetto trial in McGregor Gully. At the end of the incident, Papa-Lo realizes it was Josey Wales who shot the Singer.

After the boys are killed, the details of what happens next seem to get mixed up in Papa-Lo's mind. He sees a white man in the car with him and wonders how he got there. He remembers the car stopping because of police blocking the road. The officers find a gun in the car. The head one tells the others they are returning fire on Papa-Lo even though Papa-Lo never shoots. They kill Papa-Lo with his own gun.

Analysis

Significant in this section is Papa-Lo's discovery during his ghetto trial that it was Josey Wales who was responsible for setting up the assassination attempt on the Singer and was the one who fired the gun at Marley. Papa-Lo had realized the shooting had driven a wedge between him and the Singer but didn't know the real cause until that moment. He'd hoped by letting Marley dole out justice on three of the men Papa-Lo believed were involved in the shooting that Marley would forgive him.

Notice again in this section of the novel that signs that Papa-Lo, as well as the three men who were involved in the plot to kill the Singer are about to die. The three men



complain of thick saliva on their faces, a sign of coming death as foretold by Jennings. Before Papa-Lo is killed, he sees Jennings sitting in the car with him and his two friends. He wonders why there is a white man in the car. Notice also the way Papa-Lo's thoughts become muddled and distorted between the end of the ghetto trial and his own death. He doesn't really seem to be sure how he got in the car or how he left the scene of the McGregor Gully hangings. Details of the shooting of Leggo Beast also get mixed up in the hanging of the other men.

Significant in this section is the fact that Papa-Lo was shot using his own gun. While the road block was obviously staged and the police were waiting for Papa-Lo, it was a big insult to him to shoot him with his own gun. Notice that the older police officer has no trouble in commanding his subordinate officers to make it appear as if they were firing at Papa-Lo in order to protect themselves. The less seasoned officer, however, doesn't understand at first what his superior is telling him to do. He sees only they are shooting an unarmed man who has done nothing.

In this section of the novel four more people who were involved in the shooting of the Singer have died. The only two people alive involved in the incident now are Heckle, who has run off and will not be seen again, and Josey, who is now the don of Copenhagen City since Papa-Lo is dead.

Barry Diflorino appears for the final time in this section of the novel. He and his family have been moved to Argentina. Just a few days prior to his last day at the office, he gets another call from William Adler telling him about some sort of file written in 1974. Diflorino claims to be the one who has written the file but it is difficult to get a grasp on what Diflorino knows and what he doesn't know. Through the course of the novel he has really only gotten stirred up and attempted to do something when he learned the Cuban, Doctor Love, was in Jamaica.

Discussion Question 1

How much do you think Diflorino knows about the operations within the CIA? Is he really clueless or is he just playing dumb?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the way the narrative gets jumbled and confused near the time of Papa-Lo's death. What does this change in narration suggest?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Papa-Lo hold his ghetto trial? What does he hope to accomplish?

Vocabulary

precede, locale, rescinded, apartheid, compadre, vanquish, aghast, gullible, entity, epaulette, retaliation



Shadow Dancin' p. 363-437

Summary

Alex Pierce wakes up to discover a man sitting on the edge of his hotel bed at the Skyline Hotel. At first, he doesn't move and pretends to be asleep. Then he plans an escape to the bathroom to lock himself in. He remembers Priest, who has been encouraging him to get a gun, helping him to get information about all of the ghetto areas in Kingston with the exception of Eight Lanes. He'd planned that day to go the office of the Gleaner and ask Bill Bilson how come Josey Wales knew the Singer was about to hand his manager part of a grapefruit just before he got shot since the Singer, the manager and Alex were the only ones who knew that detail. He's also talked to Junior Soul about the shooting at Green Bay that sparked the peace treaty in the beginning. The more information he gets about the shooting, the more questions he has, Alex thinks to himself. He remembers talking to Papa-Lo, then leaving Papa-Lo's house where he was escorted by two goons to Josey's house. Josey asked him what sort of story he was trying to write. It was during this conversation that Josey mentions the intent of the shooter was to hit the Singer's heart.

Back in the present, the man pulls a gun and begins waving it, Alex is at first worried the man will kill himself. Suddenly the phone rings and both Alex and the man with the gun jump. He drops the gun. When he bends to pick it up, Alex kicks him in the back. The man grabs Alex by the neck pinning him down so he can look for the gun. Meanwhile, Alex grabs the complimentary letter opener and jabs it into the man's throat, killing him.

Josey is still angry for the treatment he got after the failed attempt to kill the Singer. He's gotten calls from Medellin as well as Peter Nassar. He tried to explain he didn't kill the Singer because it would have turned him into a martyr. He and Tony Pavarotti had actually gone by the Singer's house again the night after the shooting to try to get a second shot but the house was dark and deserted. They even attempted to shoot Marley as he was going to his plane after the concert but Josey stopped Tony from shooting. When Josey got another pair of phone calls, he told the callers if they wanted the Singer dead so badly, they should shoot him themselves.

Now, Josey is waiting for three phone calls. As he waits, he thinks about how he told Peter Nasser he'd heard that there was hopes of setting up a Rasta government in Jamaica, which he knew would upset Nasser. A new CIA man has replaced Louis Johnson. Josey has played dumb with him as well. The new man, named Clark, showed Johnson the democracy coloring book. Josey told Clark he was on board with his plans as Clark was expecting him to do. Just before he left, Clark told Josey he knew about his trips to Miami and Costa Rico but wouldn't look into them if he did as he was asked. As he thinks about Papa-Lo approaching him about joining the peace movement, Josey realizes Papa-Lo wanted to be known as the man who united the ghettos. He continues to think, recalling how he saw a picture of Heckle, one of the shooters, with the Singer.



Even Papa-Lo was angry that the Singer added Heckle as a member of his band and got the man a visa.

As he continues to wait for his phone call, Josey's young daughter comes into the living room, crawls into his lap and goes to sleep. He first gets a phone call, which his wife answers; the only word spoken is "Copper." The second call informs Josey that a shooting has taken place on the causeway. Josey asks how many bullets were used. The third phone call informs Josey that the target for which he was looking, the Rasta follower Tristain Phillips, has fled. The final phone call he's waiting on is twenty minutes late. When the phone finally rings, it is Weeper. Weeper is angry because he has learned Josey has been talking about dealing in the white wife instead of bush. At the conclusion of the phone call, Josey tells Weeper he'll be going to New York.

There is change in the air, Sir Arthur Jennings repeats in his section of narration. He describes Marley's brutus toe and how he got cancer that ultimately killed him. Mark Lansing was among three white men who visited Marley. Lansing brought a gift of boots but when Marley put on one of the boots, his toe is sliced open by a pointed wire in the boot. Meanwhile, Copper is shot. Heckle plays with the band. Papa-Lo's car is stopped on the way home from the horse races and he is shot.

Analysis

In this section of the novel, Alex is still struggling with his book about Jamaica and the Singer. He has returned to the country to complete his research and wakes to discover a man sitting on the side of his bed. Notice the way his thoughts are recorded as he panics, wondering what he should do and what the man means to do to him. The style is almost stream of consciousness as his thoughts race and jump around. Unlike in the sections where Bam-Bam and Demus are panicked and under the influence of drugs, Alex the writer continues to think in full sentences with proper punctuation.

While his goings on may seem like just lots of rambling, Alex remembers how Josey talked to him about the fact the Singer was shot in the heart. Notice Wales refers to the act of the Singer having his heart as the focal point of a shooting as a literary device, which Alex interprets as a symbol. Not killing the Singer has been a topic of much frustration for Wales in this section of the novel. As he's been berated by his higher ups for not killing the Singer, one has to wonder if he really intended to kill the Singer at all. He seems pleased with the idea that he's brought the man down a notch and let him know he isn't as welcome in his home country as he'd once thought. It would appear that Wales really did intend to kill the Singer originally as he and Tony tail the man trying to get a shot the remaining two days he's in Jamaica. Failing to kill the Singer finally seems to be Wales' way of making a statement to his higher ups that he is no longer willing to ask how high when they say jump.

As Alex waits for the man on his bed to move he worries at one point the man is going to "pull a Hemmingway." This reference indicates Alex was afraid the man was going to commit suicide by shooting himself. Also in the theme of speech and language Wales



gets angry with himself when he catches himself cussing. He says that only ignorant men cuss. Josey is also frustrated with Nasser because even though the man went to an expensive school he still - as Josey says - is an “ignorant, bad-chatting, Syrian shithouse.” Notice also when Josey meets Mr. Clark, the new CIA agent who has replace Louis Johnson, he pretends to be ignorant. Part of this façade is his act of talking badly on purpose, which he believes makes a person appear unintelligent.

By gang standards, the Jamaican Defense Department has hit a new low in this section of the novel. A group of unaffiliated gang members were promised free guns, loaded up in ambulances and taken to a place called Green Bay. There soldiers opened fire on them. The message sent to all gang members is that it doesn't matter what gang they are affiliated with or what political party they support, they are always open to abuse by the government. Political leaders try to play down the incident as the say there were no saints killed there.

Notice the religious reference when the man calls Josey to tell him that Papa-Lo is dead. “It is finished,” the man says, the last recorded words of Jesus before he died. Notice also in the sections that talk about Papa-Lo going to kill Leggo Beast he appeared as Jesus did when he was going to clean the temple of thieves. Josey makes fun of Papa-Lo for what he describes as the man's fake righteous anger.

Notice the especially dark tone of Jennings's narration at the end of this section of the novel. He indicates that things are changing, repeating the phrase ten times as a talks of a malaria, or disease, blowing in the wind. He gives Marley's cancer a personality, defining it as a rogue turncoat. Jennings speaks of three white men, like the three wise men of the Bible, with the second bringing the gift of the boots. In this section Jennings makes the reader question if perhaps the boots had somehow been laced with cancer in the hopes that Marley would become infected through his bad toe.

Discussion Question 1

Do you recognize the man sitting on Alex's bed from prior descriptions? Why do you think this man has been sent to kill Alex?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the changes listed in Jennings' section of the novel. Also discuss the differences in the writing tone and style used by Jennings.

Discussion Question 3

What is Mark Lansing's role in the novel? Do you believe Marley's cancer was somehow given to him through the boots he was given as a gift by Lansing? Why or why not?



Vocabulary

precede, locale, rescinded, apartheid, compadre, vanquish, aghast, gullible, entity, epaulette, retaliation



White Lines / Kids in America p. 438-483

Summary

Dorcas Palmer is given a job with the upclass Colthirst family through her new employer, the God Bless Employment Agency. The man who answers the door looks like Lyle Waggoner. He tells Dorcas she must be the new sitter they hired to wipe his ass.

Weeper wakes up in bed with another man. He wonders if he should stay, leave or wake the man up for another round. He has to go to the airport and pick up Josey who should be arriving in about 12 hours. Josey is coming to check a crack house in Brooklyn. He's learned that Josey and his men shot up Rema after those living threatened to change their loyalty to the PNP. Twelve people were killed. Police invaded Copenhagen City but were able to find only two guns.

Tristan, who's now in jail, has agreed to be interviewed by Alex. He starts out by telling him about the slummy conditions of Balaclava. Tristan was awake but still laying in bed when he heard the rumblings of the bulldozers. After the destruction of Balaclava, Tristan was put in jail for five years. When he got out people had to go through the two PNP dons in Jamaica to get anything they wanted. When those two were shot, Tristan says he went from having a paying job to being a drug dealer. Tristan interrupts the interview and tells Alex the story of a box of sound equipment left at the wharf at the Singer's second concert. Weeper had been sent to take care of it and had pretended not to know anything about a new shipment of guns suspected to have come in that box.

Griselda Blanco sends John-John K on a hit. Although the man, Eustace, is supposed to be home alone, his wife is there. She makes it to the door and runs out, screaming. John-John K winds up shooting her in the street. Although the job was messy, it was successful. After hiding in New York for six months he gets a call to handle a dealer believed to have gone to the Feds. In this house, he first encounters a boy who tells him his parents are upstairs in the attic. This hit makes the news with reports of the couple shot in the head as they slept by a serial killer.

John-John K makes a major mistake in Miami where he meets Baxter in a club. John-John K learns from Baxter that some people are about to get shot. John-John K leaves right away. Paco, who John-John has told of the shooting, shares the news with the group about to get killed. Realizing what has happened, John-John K tries to go back to New York but Griselda's men meet him at the airport and take him back to her house.

Josey thinks about how Weeper's one job was to maintain communications between New York and Griselda in Miami. She's lost her patience with Weeper and would kill him herself if Josey didn't get involved. Josey has already let Eubie take over the Miami operations from Weeper, and moved Weeper north. Josey credits Eubie's intelligence



with helping them to sell more drugs than expected. He also knows Eubie can't get the drugs to sell except through Josey because the higher ups won't trust anyone as smart as Eubie. Josey fears, however, that Weeper will allow new gang members who have moved in from Jamaica to move in on his territory so he's going to New York himself to check things out. He already doesn't trust Weeper because he ordered Weeper to kill Tristan Phillips. Josey got a phone call from another man saying the job was done, but learned recently that the man is still alive, in Rikers.

Tristan tells Alex how he used to work with the peace council at the Singer's house. He remembers Josey Wales coming to the house to drop off some money from the peace concert. When the Singer got a look at Josey he looked angry, then asked Tristan who Josey was. The Singer got furious when he learned Josey was Papa-Lo's second in command. The Singer tells Tristan that Josey was in his house the night he got shot. Tristan admits it was at that point he knew the peace treaty wasn't going to work. Tristan also learns people in Canada are seeing the concert as it has been recorded by Copenhagen City Productions, a company Papa-Lo says he knows nothing about. It is when Tristan goes to visit a friend in Miami that he learns he's supposed to be dead. Tristan confronts Weeper about his supposed death. He shakes Weeper and the man he was with up, but didn't kill either of them. Soon, Tristan realizes he's one of only two people involved with the peace treaty that has been left alive. He returns to Jamaica to bury Copper, but then doesn't return.

Dorcas waits in the Colthirst house for the woman who hired her to come talk to her. When the woman does come, she acts as if Dorcas has been hired as a maid. When she leaves, the older man, Ken, begins telling her jokes until they are both laughing so hard they are crying. He begs her not to leave.

Analysis

Nina re-emerges. This time she's living under the name Dorcas Palmer and working for an employment agency run by Jamaicans. Although she knows she needs to work for this Jamaican agency to avoid having to admit she isn't legal, she hates being considered a Jamaican. She does, however, credit her ability to speak good English and her polite manners to landing her the job. Even the lady who owns the agency is impressed with her proper speech. Nina comments to herself, almost sarcastically, that her high school teacher would be impressed with the doors she'd opened for herself just by knowing how to speak properly.

Meanwhile, Josey continues to build his empire. He's become a supplier in the drug business for sites in both Miami and New York. However, he's having a problem with Weeper. Weeper has lied about killing a man that Josey ordered him to kill and also appears to be losing his handle on the business in New York. Josey has found another man, Eubie, who is smarter than Weeper and would probably be able to run the business more smoothly. Eubie suggests to Josey that he come and check out Weeper's set up and Weeper agrees. Josey feels he can trust Eubie because Eubie is smart. It is Eubie's intelligence that Josey feels will keep the man from taking over



Josey's position as leader as the people with whom Josey works wouldn't trust a man as smart as Eubie.

Meanwhile, Biblical references continue to be important in the novel. Dorcas seems to believe it is because her first name is taken from the Bible that people trust her. She explains it is ironic how people seem to think a person named after a Biblical character is above lying and stealing. Note also for all Josey's Biblical knowledge and his threats of killing people if they don't show respect for Jesus, he admits that he does not read the Bible.

Notice as Tristan talks to Alex he uses the phrase "see and wait" and echo of the hopelessness that seems to reverberate throughout the novel. In jail, just as in death, Tristan indicates the men have no control over their lives. In fact, Tristan is not really sure why he would up in jail. He tells Alex he had only five dollars and a bottle of alcohol when he was arrested. Another aspect of interest to note in Tristan's interview with Alex is the mention of the book *Middle Passage*. The author often makes reference to works of literature, literary devices and other authors in his novel. In this one, Tristan tells Alex the author has incorrectly portrayed West Kingston even by writing a beautiful sentence about how ugly the area is.

Notice in this section of the novel that Josey mentions several times that bad men don't write things down. Remember during his interview with Alex that he'd poked fun at the writer for writing things down in his notebook. He warns Alex that he should stop this practice and rely on his memory.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think it is that Josey has such a bad attitude about writing information down? Why do you think he'd rather rely on his own memory?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the author's choice to include information about Weeper and his homosexual relationships. Why are these relationships important to the novel?

Discussion Question 3

Although it is never formally indicated that Dorcas is Nina, it is assumed that she is. What clues are given in the book that help the reader to recognize her?

Vocabulary

empathetic, deportment, deportees, intrigue, collateral, discernment, duppy, reprisal, vendetta, orgy, privy, ingenious



White Lines / Kids in America p. 484-531

Summary

In Griselda's kitchen, John-John K is given a plate of food as Griselda asks if he was the man who messed up her hit. She tells him he's cost her a lot of money and asks what he plans to do about it. When John-John K jumps up after she slaps him, he hears the sound of 15 guns begin cocked around him. He's shown a picture of alligators eating what is left of Baxter. She gives him a job.

John-John K wakes up in New York barely remembering how he got there. He's in bed with a man who tries to steal his wallet but John-John catches him in time. That day, he's supposed to take out a Jamaican who lives in New York. Griselda had said the order didn't come from her, but someone higher up. She seemed uneasy.

When Eubie calls Josey to finalize plans for his New York trip, Josey gets the feeling that Eubie thinks he's ignorant. Eubie warns Josey he hasn't been able to get in touch with Weeper but he's heard drug prices in Bushwick, the part of New York that Weeper runs, have doubled. Eubie's also heard some of Weeper's dealers are using. He strongly suggests that Josey visit the Bushwick site while he's in New York. After they hang up, Josey tries to call Weeper but doesn't get an answer.

The phone rings and Weeper doesn't answer it. The ringing bothers the man with whom Weeper is trying to have relations. When the phone rings again, the man asks Weeper why he's so uptight. The phone rings again while Weeper is in the bathroom and the other man answers it. Eubie is angry that another man had answered the phone. He tells Weeper he will be picking Josey up instead of Weeper doing it. Eubie also warns Weeper that Josey wants to see the operations in bushwick. He should meet them there, Eubie says.

Ken convinces Dorcas to go out of the house with him. They take a cab, then the subway to the Bronx. Dorcas tries to tell the man the subway isn't safe at that time of day but he won't listen.

In their interview, Tristan continues to question Alex why he can't go back to Jamaica. Tristan mentions that the Singer might have been purposefully infected with cancer. Tristan begins to talk about Josey Wales and the fact he noticed Josey more after the Singer made mention of him. He tells Tristan he felt that if Josey didn't kill the man, he was trying to make some other point. He feels Josey is the person behind the peace effort falling apart as he is the only one who has really seen any benefit from it. He makes the point that the political warfare of Jamaica is still going on in the United States with the Storm Posse being the equivalent of Jamaica's Copenhagen City while the Ranking Dons represent the Eight Lanes. He tells a story of the Dons raiding a man's house who had a stash of drugs for Copenhagen City but no back up. At the end of his



story, Tristan says he knew why Josey wanted him dead, but wants to know how Alex learned there was a hit out on him.

As Weeper tries to find out how business is running in the Bushwick area, a neighbor woman complains to him about a man trying to molest her son. Weeper is more concerned because he hasn't seen a spotter or runner anywhere near his business. The young boy two blocks away seems afraid to tell Weeper what's happening. He finally admits they're losing business because there are no runners in the street and no dealers either. The boy tells Weeper he's been seeing Ranking Dons checking out the place. Weeper sends the man he's with, Omar, to check the house. Omar is able to push open the door easily and then nods that the boy is right. When Weeper goes in the house, the dealer is high, tries to offer him a hit for free and doesn't recognize him. When the man refuses to follow Weeper's orders, Weeper shoots him.

Analysis

Notice in this section how Eubie rubs Josey the wrong way. Josey admits the man is intelligent, but he also prides himself in being intelligent. He does not like the way that Eubie makes him feel ignorant. Additionally, Eubie seems almost pleased that he's able to tell Josey how badly Weeper is handling business in Bushwick. It is almost as if he is trying to earn the spot as teacher's pet, or in this case dealer's pet, by telling on another person.

Meanwhile, Weeper has let his business get out of his control. Rumor on the street is that buyers are going to other areas because they can find anyone to sell them drugs in Weeper's territory. The opposing gang, the Ranking Dons are eyeing this area because it is such a good drug area filled with abandoned buildings and empty lots.

Tristan's character is interesting as he seems to have a better grasp on what is going on in Jamaica than anyone else. He's one of the few people who has put together that Josey Wales was behind the shooting of the Singer and why he might want to hurt that man. Tristan echoes Josey's own words in an earlier section as he says he believes the man might have been sending a message to the Singer by trying to shoot him in the heart. Tristan additionally suspects Josey is at the bottom of the peace effort falling apart.

Meanwhile in this section characters continue to make references to religion and the Bible. For instance, Tristan says he started to see signs indicating that Josey is behind the troubles in Jamaica. He apparently associates signs with church and religion as he says he saw these signs "even though you never did like church." (p. 511) Also in this section Dorcas' employer mentions that her clients like employees with Bible names. It seems there is some false belief that a person with a Biblical name will not steal from an employer.

Reverse racism is seen in this section in Dorcas' experience with Ken. He begs her to take him out of the house. When she agrees, he asks to go to the Bronx even though



she tells him it isn't safe. As he rides the subway after 5 p.m., which Dorcas believes is a way of asking for trouble, then walks through the Bronx, which Dorcas believes is taking his life in his own hands, she can only figure that he feels safe because he is a white man. While she waits for someone to attack or arrest her at any minute, she has the opinion that white people believe they are invincible. Notice also the way the Ken treats Dorcas on the subway. Remember that Dorcas is living under an assumed name and has been trying desperately for years to keep a low profile and not be noticed. Now, people are staring at her because she's riding the subway with a white man. Fearing they assume she is a prostitute, Ken makes a public announcement that the two are married. He believes the reactions from the people on the train are amusing but Dorcas is mortified by the attention her draws to her.

Also in this section Griselda tells John-John K there is a man with even more power than she who wants the person she is sending him to kill dead. The person who is to be killed is a Jamaican who lives in New York who could possibly be Weeper, but no names have yet been mentioned. Thus far in the novel, Griselda has seemed the highest person on the drug dealer food chain so the reader must wonder whom it is who is calling the shots with her.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Griselda is so disturbed about the hit that she's ordered John-John K to carry out?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Eubie has an ulterior motive in trying to get Josey to visit the Bushwick area in person? What do you think that might be?

Discussion Question 3

What has caused Weeper to lose control of his business in Bushwick? What does this mean for him?

Vocabulary

dossier, default, inhibited, pilfer, cutlass, aesthetics



White Lines / Kids in America p. 532-569

Summary

Ken winds up in Dorcas' apartment. He fixes them drinks out of what little she has in her fridge. Before long, they're singing and dancing to a Prince album. Ken uses her bathroom and comes back holding a copy of the book *How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found*.

Tristan tells Alex that Josey is coming to New York that day and notices that Josey gets quiet. Alex finally admits to Tristan he can't go back to Jamaica because he killed a man. When Alex describes the man he killed, Tristan recognizes him as Tony Pavarotti. He asks Alex what he did to anger Josey Wales, the only one who would have ordered a killing like that. As he thinks Tristan realizes that Josey Wales accidentally told Alex that the bullet that hit the Singer was meant for his heart, something only the shooter, the Singer and Alex knew at that time. Tristan comments on the things the two have in common as they are the only two people who Josey has ever tried to kill who are still living and he is planning to visit New York that day.

Josey is immediately irritated by Eubie's attempts to make constant jokes with him. He's also angered when Eubie takes him to a Jamaican restaurant even though Josey requested no Jamaican food. He furthered angered when Eubie tells him he has a man spying on Weeper who has told him Weeper is using crack cocaine. Eubie continues to talk but Josey tells him he's heard enough. He requests they go to Bushwick before the food has even come.

John-John K thinks about past lovers as he waits for the light in the bedroom to go off and stay that way. He goes upstairs, unlocks the door and shoots seven shots into the bed, then turns to see a man standing behind him. The man throws a cup of mouthwash at his face and runs. John-John K gets a shot at him and stops the man. He grabs him by the ankle and drags him back down the alleyway.

Meanwhile, Ken questions Dorcas about the book he found in her bathroom. She tells him she stole her name from a gravestone, and it isn't the first one she'd stolen. He asks her what she did and from whom she is running. Dorcas tells him she isn't a criminal, but won't give her real name. He goes to the bathroom again. Dorcas picks up his coat, which has fallen in the floor and notices a phone number written inside. She calls and the family gets her address to come pick Ken up. When Dorcas knocks on the bathroom door, she's surprised when the man asks who she is and demands she get away from the door.

Tristan tries to convince Alex that Josey is no longer after him. He tells him how Josey and Eubie both have ambition and plans, and that they wouldn't kill a white man in America because of fear the Feds would investigate. Alex then tells him he's trying to write a book about all that's happened, which Tristan insinuates might not be a bad



idea. He thinks someone needs to write about how close to peace the country was at one point. He asks Alex to do him a favor and wait until everybody associated with the happenings in the book are dead before he publishes it.

Analysis

Tristan's sections of narration are different from the other sections. This difference becomes very apparent in this section of the novel. While the other characters have narrated their sections mostly through their thoughts, Tristan's sections are his parts of an interview with Alex. The only part of the interview recorded in the novel is Tristan's side of the conversation leaving the reader to guess at what Alex is asking him or saying to him.

It is in one of his sections of narration that Tristan brings up to Alex the idea of fatalism and describes the way it determines the path of life for those in the ghetto. The topic comes up when Alex apparently asks Tristan what he plans to do when he is released from prison. Tristan, like other characters who become involved in gangs, feel that have no choice in their lives. If they try to leave the gang, they'll be killed, which is why Tristan laughs when Alex mentions that he leave the Ranking Dons.

As Ken learns Dorcas' procedure for disappearing and taking on a new identity. She took her name off a tombstone and has been thorough in collecting information. She's gotten a copy of the woman's birth certificate and is even drawing social security in her name. Dorcas, like others who fear Josey, won't talk to Ken about who she's running from or why even though it is very unlikely that Ken would know Josey or anything about him.

As the chapters move on toward the end of this section of the novel there is building of suspense. All of the central characters are moving toward New York. Eubie and Weeper are waiting for a visit from Josey. Weeper tries to get his business together while Eubie seems to be hoping Weeper doesn't get his business together. Alex, who has not really been running from Josey but is obviously afraid of the man as he jumps everytime Tristan mentions him, is living in New York. He and Tristan, who are the only two men Josey has even put out a hit on who are still alive, are both in New York. Dorcas, who has been in fear of her life for years because of her encounter with Josey, also lives in New York. With all of these connected characters in the same city at the same time suspense is building as the reader wonders what the author is working toward.

One of the things that seems almost certain is that Eubie seems intent on destroying Weeper's credibility. He also seems to be intent on irritating Josey. The reader has to wonder if Eubie is irritating Josey intentionally or accidentally. One final thing to note is that Eubie seems to be delaying Josey. Although Josey has told him he wants to go straight to Bushwick, Eubie stops at a restaurant, the same type of restaurant he instructed Weeper not to take Josey to when they talked on the phone the night before, indicating it would be stupid to take a Jamaican to a Jamaican restaurant in America.



The reader has to wonder why Eubie is delaying Josey from getting to Bushwick, if he perhaps has something planned that needs to run on a timetable.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Dorcas gave information to Ken about her false identity so easily?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it that Tristan is able to put together the whole story of why Josey wanted Alex dead when Alex wasn't able to?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the references to literature and literary devices in the novel.

Vocabulary

encroach, patriarch, homely, dyke, explicit, boroughs, context, psychopath, parring, implicitly, irony, colostomy, vibe, ricochet, militia, obligation, municipal, levity, migrated, catharsis, fatalism



White Lines / Kids in America p. 570-603

Summary

Eubie does give Weeper credit for setting up shop in a place that everybody in New York ignores. He also points out how Weeper was smart to set up a crack house close to where his drugs were sold so purchasers didn't have to go far to get high. They reach the house but Eubie stops Josey from going in. He tells him they should wait outside. They watch a deal then Josey asks to talk to one of the boys on the street. That boy tells them he's only been working for Weeper as a runner about five hours and mentions business was awful the week prior. Josey takes a liking to the boy when he calls Eubie a pimp and refuses to talk to him. The boy does verify Eubie's story about the dealers using drugs and the area being on the verge of being taken over by the Ranking Dons.

Josey insists on being taken to the crack house. Once there he stands outside while Eubie goes around back to relieve himself. While Eubie is still gone a man comes up to him demanding money. Josey gives him money and the man shoots him with a water pistol filled with urine. Eubie and another man, Weeper, come from around the back of the house, Weeper gets to Josey first. He asks about the smell but Josey only asks both men for their guns and heads for the house.

Josey kills several people before a woman screams and alerts the others what is happening. When they panic, Josey lets loose with both guns. He fires until both guns are empty and continues trying to fire even though both guns are clicking empty. Weeper calls out his name and Josey turns to him and clicks the gun one more time. He asks for Weeper's gun and shoots more people as he heads out of the house. Weeper follows Josey outside where Josey points the gun at him again. Weeper asks what is wrong but Josey doesn't answer him, only drops the gun and walks away with Eubie.

When Ken's family arrives, they explain he has a problem with short-term memory. He never remembers what has happened to him on the previous day, meaning he'll meet Dorcas new each day. Although the family assumes she won't want the hassle, Dorcas tells them she will take the job.

Meanwhile, Weeper has arrived in his apartment to find he has a visitor. John-John K ties the man up and sits him on a stool. Weeper says he knows it was Griselda who sent John-John to kill him. He offers to pay John-John more than Griselda not to kill him. Weeper asks if there was anyone in the room when John-John came in. John-John says no. Weeper asks for a last request, a hit of cocaine. John-John K puts out a line for him but Weeper is unable to sniff it. He continues to question who might have set up the hit on him. All John-John K can tell him is that it was someone in New York who had a problem with the Ranking Dons. Weeper realizes it is Eubie that has called for his death. He knows Josey will never question who killed Weeper but will assume the Ranking Dons were responsible. Weeper asks that John-John K give him a hit before killing him and instructs John-John on how to mix up the drug. When Weeper goes into



a convulsion, John-John realizes Weeper instructed him to give him full strength cocaine.

Even the Singer's funeral is a disagreement between the Christians and the Rasta. He's given the white man's honor of the Order of Merit, which angers the Rasta further but Jennings indicates the Singer had prophesied about this false honor. He watches as Peter Nasser grows old and forgotten. He watches as Josey grows fat and rich on drug money. A group tries to mimic the Singer and fails. Others take up his songs as their personal anthems.

Analysis

Josey's temper finally gets the best of him in this section of the novel. He's been irritated by Eubie to the point that he explodes when the man shoots him in the face with the water gun filled with urine. Just as Josey's attempt to kill the Singer was intended as a message to him, this "shooting" is also sending a message to Josey. By coming to America and putting himself on another man's turf with no trusted companions, Josey has made himself very vulnerable. He has no gun and no way to protect himself. Eubie, who he really doesn't trust, has gone behind the house to urinate, a coincidence that makes the reader wonder if perhaps this incident were not set up by Eubie. Josey handles his feeling of vulnerability in the only way he can, he asks for guns from Eubie and Weeper and takes his frustration out on the people in the crack house. Josey even turns the gun on Weeper but by that time he is out of bullets. Notice in this section of text that the narration of what happens the night of the crack house shooting flows without a hitch from Josey's narration to Weeper's. This is one of the few times in the novel this happens as each new narrator generally picks up with a new topic.

When Weeper realizes he's about to be killed, he tries to die in a way that will send a message to Josey. He knows if John-John K just shoots him, it will appear as if a Ranking Don shot him in order to get his drug territory. For this reason he convinces John-John K, who seems to have too much humanity to be a hit man, to give him one final hit of cocaine. John-John doesn't know the cocaine is full strength and that it will kill Weeper. Weeper hopes Josey will realize he wouldn't intentionally take an full dose of uncut cocaine and interpret that the killing was done by his own people.

Jennings' section is interesting as it contains the point that even at the Singer's funeral the Rasta and Christians were still battling over Jamaica and the Singer. Few people knew the Singer had become Christian, as is mentioned in one of Jennings' earlier sections, so they don't understand why his funeral is Ethiopian Orthodox. Jennings' considers the new prime minister's blessing that Marley rest in the arms of the Rasta god the final word on the Rasta versus Christian controversy. He believes that Rasta, which he refers to as heresy, has won.



Discussion Question 1

Do you think that Eubie set Josey up during his visit to the Bushwick area? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Dorcas agrees so quickly to work for the Colthirst family. What is it about Ken's disease that makes caring for him work so well for her?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Weeper have John-John K give him a hit of uncut cocaine? Do you think he's trying to send a message?

Vocabulary

tribulation, reduction, debonair, improvise, heresy, bestowed, deposed



Sound Boy Killing p. 604-639

Summary

As Doctor Love walks to Josey's jail cell, he thinks of the way Josey's oldest son was killed. He believes the killing was probably well orchestrated, coordinated down to the intersection. The doctor who worked on the boy said he was more or less dead when he came in the emergency room but doctors and nurses had to make it look like they were doing something to appease the crowd. When Benjy's death was called the 3,000 members of the crowd first blamed the doctors but then changed direction and blamed the PNP. They wreaked havoc in the Eight Lanes, killing men and children, raping women and burning down houses. The violence stopped only because it got in the way of plans for Benjy's funeral. Josey was not allowed to go to the funeral as the government realized they'd never get him back. Doctor Love remembers the day in New York when Josey went to the top of the Fed's and the DEA's watch lists for the crack house shooting. Josey's daughter was shot outside a club at that time and now his son is dead. Doctor Love believes the children were killed because Josey has made so many enemies they have reached critical mass.

Millicent Segree is on a basket list of prescriptions for anxiety, depression and inability to sleep. She's in training as a nurse at Beth Israel Hospital. Two weeks ago there was a rash of Jamaican men coming in with gunshot wounds. A doctor asks what is going on and one of the men explains all the violence is because young Benjy was shot. Millicent has to go sit down when the man says Benjy was the son of Josey Wales, the don of all dons.

Alex goes home to finish an article because he writes better there if he's facing a deadline. He is writing a seven part series for The New Yorker. He wonders if anyone really cares about Jamaica or the Singer anymore. When he approaches his house, he realizes there are four black guys sitting on his stoop. One of them indicates twice to him that they want him to go inside. Eubie, who is one of the men in Alex's house, introduces Alex as the man who killed Tony Pavarotti.

Josey asks Doctor Love why he's there and accuses him of procrastinating. Doctor Love tells him that Benjy's funeral was nice. He describes a ritual at the end of the funeral where men and women lined up on both sides of the grave and passed a baby back and forth across the grave. Doctor Love asks what the ritual meant but Josey won't answer.

Millicent finds herself unable to stay away from a Jamaican man suffering from a gunshot wound. The man's woman questions Millicent about her husband's condition and Doctor Stephenson walks into the room just as Millicent is telling the woman the doctor would be there soon. When Millicent tries to leave, he asks her to stay. He uses Millicent to translate for him as he can't understand what the Jamaican woman is saying. It is from this woman that Millicent learns that Josey has been in jail for two



years. She says it was Josey's posse that shot up the night club where her husband, a member of the Ranking Dons, was injured.

Alex is sitting on a stool in his own kitchen. He tells the men how he killed Tony. They punch him when he smarts off to them. Alex tells the men he's tired of listening to them talk and asks the men to just get on with what they plan to do.

Analysis

Six years later, Jamaica is still a place of turmoil as gang members continue to fight each other. The newest violence is focused around the death of Benjy Wales, the boy who was slated to take over his father's spot as the don of Copenhagen City. It is believed the boy's death was a calculated hit. Violence is not limited to Jamaica but also spreads to Miami and New York. As Millicent sees the injured Jamaicans being treated at the hospital, she realizes that even in New York she can't out run the violence she witnessed in her country.

Josey Wales is in jail in Jamaica, waiting his extradition to New York. He poses a threat to the CIA, as he knows of the work that agents Louis Johnson and Mr. Clark did with the gang members in Jamaica. He can also testify that his drugs were allowed into the United States. Because of the change in power since Josey was once at the top of his power, he no longer holds power over the Jamaican government or the American government. Josey tells Doctor Love that any information anyone might want from him they could get from written files. It is here that Josey's habit of not writing things down works in his favor as there is no paper trail for many of the things he's done. Doctor Love tells Josey they don't want the written files, they want the things he has stored in his mind, information that Josey won't give him.

Examples of both Josey's power at its highest point as well as that at its lowest point are given in this section of the novel. In his height of power Josey is allowed to walk into a police station, grab a man who has taken refuge from him there, take him out in the street outside the station and shoot him without the police even looking up. It is indicated, however, that when Wales' party, the JLP went out of power that Wales' power went with it. Now, Wales doesn't even have the power to get out of jail for his own son's funeral.

With Josey in jail, Alex must have thought he was safe and was finally able to publish his articles. He learns differently when he comes home to find several black men waiting for him. Among them is Eubie. As Josey knows Eubie, one has to wonder if perhaps Josey has caught wind of the articles and ordered Alex taken care of. This is unlikely, however, since Eubie is the one who got Josey into trouble to start with. Notice also that Eubie introduces Alex as the man who killed Tony Pavarotti. Up until the time that Alex talked to Tristan in prison, not even Alex knew who he had killed so it seems that Eubie must have been talking to Tristan at some point to learn for sure that Alex was Tristan's murderer.



The theme of language is touched on again as the doctor asks Millicent to translate what the Jamaican woman is saying to him. He refers to the language as their “native tongue” even though both Millicent and the woman believe they are talking in English, just like he is.

Notice also in this section that while he’s talking to the black men, Alex makes reference in his thoughts to the writer William Faulkner. Although many characters have referenced a variety of works of literature and art throughout the novel, this particular mention could be the author’s way of paying tribute to Faulkner who wrote in a style similar to that of this novel.

Discussion Question 1

What do you think was the meaning of the crowd passing the baby back and forth over Benjy’s grave? Why do you think Josey didn’t want to talk about it?

Discussion Question 2

Why are the members of Josey’s gang coming to find Alex so long after Tony was killed? Do you think there is another reason they’ve found him? If yes, what is it?

Discussion Question 3

What fascinates Millicent so about the Jamaican man in the hospital? What connection does she feel to him?

Vocabulary

extradited, truce, facilitator, feminism, patronizing, obligated, spinster, triage, indignant, hypochondriac, beholden, monogamy, belligerent, molten, flourish, abstract, retain



Sound Boy Killing p. 640-688

Summary

As Josey paces around his cell, he tells Doctor Love there are some people who are still trying to find a way to kill him, even in prison. He's angry considering he believes the country owes him something for helping them win the election. Doctor Love reminds him the parties have changed since that time and that he messed up by shooting up the crack house. He tells Josey there is a story about the death of a pregnant girl in that shooting in The New Yorker. Josey asks again why Doctor Love is there, why he didn't wait to visit him in America. Although Josey believes he has the loyalty of everyone in Jamaica as well as in New York Doctor Love reminds him of the murder of Weeper. He hints there is someone in America who was able to deal with the Ranking Dons who were trying to overtake Griselda's business in Miami. This same man gave Weeper to Griselda, then went on to wait until Josey messed up to take over his trade. Josey realizes it is Eubie.

As Millicent visits with the Jamaican woman, she learns Josey is in prison. She almost passes out and when she recovers, she's talking to the woman in Jamaican. The woman asks Millicent why she's so interested in Josey and Millicent has a flash back to the evening the Singer was shot.

The ninth section of this part of the book begins with Part Three of Alex's series of articles in The New Yorker. This one tells the story of Monifah Thibodeaux. She was the pregnant girl shot by Josey in the crack house. The black men are reading and critiquing Alex's article. They've already roughed him up, performed the equivalent of waterboarding in the bathtub and stripped him down to just his briefs. After Alex finishes reading the third part, Eubie tells him he will be calling in and making changes to the fourth part of the series.

As Doctor Love tries to push a mattress and bedframe Josey has thrown against the jail door out of the way, Josey grabs his arm and pulls it into the cell. Josey threatens to cut off part of Doctor Love's arm until he reminds Josey that he has another son that the CIA can come after. Josey lets Doctor Love go. He mentions it is strange that no guard has come back to check on things, especially with all the noise they've been making. Josey tries to deal with Doctor Love, saying they can work something out where he can forget about the important stuff. Doctor Love reminds him that if they were still interested in making deals, they would have sent someone else. Since he has come, it means it is too late for deals. He gives Josey a handful of pills to take. He says the man who sent him said Josey should suffer, but that he is disobeying orders. Doctor Love hears him fill the glass but doesn't hear him drink or see him take the pills. They talk until Josey falls asleep. Doctor Love waits 20 minutes before he opens the jail cell.

Alex learns the gang members found out about him through Tristan. Eubie asks Alex if he thought he was safe to publish his articles because Josey was in jail. Eubie tells Alex



he wants him to leave the New York connection out of the articles. He also wants Alex to not connect the crack house shooting with Storm Posse since it was Josey alone who shot up the house. Eubie tells Alex he will not be the one who will bust him. Eubie sits down with Alex and asks him why it was that Josey wanted Alex dead in the first place. Alex's answer that Josey was the one who shot the Singer back in 1976 surprises Eubie. Eubie tells Alex that the Singer forgave one of the men and took him into his band. That man is still alive but disappeared when the singer died. He indicates this is the only man involved in the plot with the Singer who is not dead. That's a story, he says. Before he leaves, Eubie shoots Alex in the foot.

Millicent stops at the Boston Jamaica Jerk Chicken restaurant. She orders a variety of foods, suddenly wanting to have the taste of Jamaica in her mouth again. She hears the clerk cursing and watches as the news reports that Josey Wales was found burned to death in his prison cell. Millicent asks if they are sure it's him, and the clerk asks who else it could be. She makes it outside before she vomits. At home, she sits on the couch watching television and holding the phone. It rings and the operator puts her through to her sister, Kimmy.

Analysis

Notice the change in dynamics between Doctor Love and Josey in this section of the novel. Although they've worked together for years, they are both uneasy around the other. They both know what the other is capable of doing. Josey makes a very profound statement to Doctor Love when that man complains about the things Josey has been doing. Josey reminds Doctor Love that it was he who showed Josey the ropes and taught him to desire power and answer to challenges. He tells Doctor Love he shouldn't be surprised when the people he teaches to be monster turn out to be monstrous.

The two dance around each other in conversation until Josey throws his mattress at the door of his cell. While Doctor Love has been expecting Josey to come at him with a weapon, he's foolish enough to put his hand in the cell to push the mattress away letting Josey get the upper hand on him. Doctor Love has come to kill Josey, but plans to do it in a humane manner. As Josey has already tricked him once, is it possible that Josey has tricked the man again by pretending to be knocked out by the pills? It seems the author may be working toward a sequel as he leaves the reader with the very real possibility that it is Doctor Love's burned body in that is found in the jail cell and not Josey's.

Meanwhile, Millicent believes she is finally free as she calls her sister in Jamaica. The realization that she can't outrun violence and the news that Josey has gone have made Millicent realize that she really does miss Jamaica. This attempt on Millicent aka Nina's part to reconnect with her family also bodes well that there is more to the story.

Notice that even at the end of the novel, the stories told by each character continue to wind around each other and fill in the blanks from other stories. In this particular section



the woman in the hoodie who was seen by Josey and Eubie buying drugs in Bushwick is the pregnant woman upon whom Alex focuses his article about the shootings.

Even after all this time, Alex still manages to stir things up when he writes his articles. Instead of Josey, however, he angers Eubie, who is apparently the new head of the drug scene in New York since Weeper is dead and Josey is in jail. The information in Alex's article holds a direct threat to Eubie's drug business, information he does not want out in the public. He seems especially intent that it will not be a newspaper reporter who will lead to his downfall.

Notice the cyclical rotation of the gang leaders. At one point, Papa-Lo was the top don. As he began to get older, a new leader - Josey Wales - came in. He help oust Papa-Lo from his spot even though the two were on the same team. Ultimately, Josey was even the one who ordered the hit on Papa-Lo. Now, as Josey sits in prison, he learns he has been usurped by a younger leader, just as he usurped Papa-Lo. On his rise to power, Eubie has called for the death of Josey, a turn of fate that must anger Josey too much to allow him just to symbolically or physically lay down and die.

Notice that as Eubie talks to Alex, he foreshadows the writing of the novel. Eubie is surprised to learn from Alex that it was Josey who fired the actual shot at the Singer back in 1976. Notice that Eubie tells Alex the story is that every person, with the exception of one, who went after the Singer is dead. This story that Eubie describes is the story that is presented in James' book "A History of Seven Killings." Notice, however, that Alex picks up on the inconsistency of what Eubie has told him. Eubie says there is only one person involved in the shooting that is still alive. Alex, however, believes there are two: Heckle and Josey. Word has not yet gotten out that a burned body was found in Josey's jail cell. Now, on top of knowing that Josey shot the Singer, when he does learn about Josey's death, Alex will also know that Eubie was responsible for that death.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think it was really Josey who was killed in the jail cell? Why or why not? What else might have happened?

Discussion Question 2

How does Alex continue to get himself embroiled in gang secrets? How might this new information about Josey's death be dangerous to him.

Discussion Question 3

What do you think sparked off Millicent's desire to get back in touch with her family in Jamaica?

Vocabulary

tribute, impotent, ventriloquist, reprimanded, transpire, alliance, machete, bonafied, dynasty, indefinite, negotiation, taboo, hostility, surreal, rhetorical, placards



Characters

Josey Wales

Josey Wales is the major villain in the novel. In one of his sections of narration, Papa-Lo says that Josey wasn't always villainous but was shot multiple times during the destruction of Balaclava. When he recovered from his wounds, Josey was a different man, Papa-Lo said. Even though Papa-Lo is still the official don of Copenhagen City, Josey has already been working to take over Papa-Lo's spot. He's been working with agents from the CIA who have armed his men with high-powered guns and rifles and taught them how to shoot them. One of his first big projects was the arson of a tenement on Orange Street. Josey even shot and killed the firemen who came to try to extinguish the fire.

Wales' next challenge given to him by politician Peter Nasser and Doctor Love (?) is the murder of the Singer. Wales attempt to kill the Singer fails. He later comes up with the idea that if he had killed the Singer, it would only have made the Singer a martyr. Josey and his sniper go to the airport the morning the Singer plans to fly out of Jamaica but Josey decides at the last minute to let the man live. One of Josey's traits is his growing lack of respect for authority, especially since he believes that each time he completes a task as asked, he'll just be given another task. It can be inferred that Josey doesn't shoot the Singer in an effort to send a message to both the politicians and the CIA that he's done taking orders. Although he goes against the grain, Josey stays in favor because he uses his manpower to have the PNP party voted into power in Jamaica, a move wanted by the American government.

When Josey begins to spread his drug trade to America, the American government looks the other way as his drugs are smuggled into the country because of what Josey did for them. This works out for Josey until he loses his temper when he visits a crack house in New York and is shot in the face with a water pistol filled with urine. In retaliation, Josey opens fire in the house, killing numerous people. This incident signals the end of Josey's reign as political power has changed back to the JLP in Jamaica and the United States no longer has any reason to look the other way. Josey is jailed for the killings. On the same day his son, who is killed by gangs, is buried, Josey gets a visit in jail from Doctor Love. Doctor Love tells him that Josey is wanted dead. He has brought some pills that will put Josey out but does not watch Josey take the pills. Doctor Love enters Josey's cell. News reports later show a burned body found in Josey's cell. It is assumed the dead man is Josey.

Because of his ruthlessness, Josey is described by more than one character as a psychopath. He seems to have no regret for the lives he's cut short, only wants to gain power and respect. Tristan Phillips is one of the characters who refers to Josey as a psychopath as he describes the man as not really being afraid of anything. Doctor Love also tells Josey he is a psychopath and is shocked when the man begins to laugh at his diagnosis. Doctor Love believes Josey is sick because he finds it so easy to order and



talk about killing pregnant women, but can't bring himself to talk about the death of his own son.

Nina Burgess aka Kim Clarke, Dorcas Palmer, Millicent Segree, Claudette Colbert

Nina Burgess is one of the unintended victims in the murder plot against the Singer. In the past, she had an affair with the Singer from which he wrote his song Midnight Ravers. She's hoping he'll remember her and help her and her parents, who have been recently robbed and beaten, get visas so they can escape the mounting violence in the country. Nina walks into the Singer's house on Dec. 3, 1976 just after the shooting has taken place and comes face-to-face with the shooter, Josey Wales. This experience causes Nina to run in fear for her life.

When she first reappears, Nina has renamed herself Kim Clarke and is living with an American in hopes of getting passage to America through him. She is paranoid and believes her only chance of survival is going to America. This plan blows up when he tells her he won't be taking her back to America with him because he is married. The next time Nina surfaces, she is working for a sitting agency owned by Jamaicans located near the Bronx in New York. It is assumed Chuck helped her get to America but never indicated for certain. She takes a job sitting with a man who has short-term memory loss, an ideal situation as Nina doesn't want to be remembered.

The final time Nina appears in the novel, she has changed her name to Millicent Segree and is training to be a nurse at a large hospital. She is drawn to a Jamaican man who is badly injured in a gang shooting in New York. The man's girlfriend recognizes Nina's Jamaican roots and causes Nina to miss her hometown. As the two talk, Nina learns that Josey Wales, the man of whom she is afraid, is in jail. That night as she eats Jamaican food again for the first time, Nina hears a news report stating that Josey has been found dead and burned in his jail cell. When she returns home that evening, she finally calls her sister, with whom she has not spoken since she left Jamaica nearly 15 years prior.

Weeper aka William Foster

Weeper is one of Josey's Wales' main followers. He is the man who helps Josey recruit the young boys to help with the assassination of the Singer. Weeper wants to use young boys because they can be used once then killed, saving the sharp shooter Tony Pavarotti for bigger jobs. Weeper's two downfalls in Josey's eyes are his drug use and his affection for men.

As a teen, Weeper was smart and well on a track to become an architect's apprentice when he was arrested for robbery on his way to try to get a job. He was sent to jail even though there was no evidence against him. The police treated Weeper brutally while in jail. One of their forms of torture, described as the Electric Boogie, involved wrapping



one wire from an electrical cord to his penis, plugging the cord into an electric socket, then touching to other wire to different parts of his body. While in jail, the police also broke the left lens in Weeper's glasses. Even though he could afford to fix the glasses, Weeper never did because he wanted to be reminded of what the police did to him. Josey often blames Weeper's time in jail as the cause of the man's homosexual tendencies.

Josey later puts Weeper in charge of part of his drug operations in New York. Weeper doesn't keep an eye on his business in Bushwick and Eubie, a fellow member of the same gang, gets wind of the trouble. Eubie not only tells Josie about the trouble, he also calls for a hit on Weeper. It is Griselda who orders John-John K to kill Weeper at Eubie's request. Weeper is killed the same night that Josey visited the Bushwick crack house and shot several people. Weeper convinces John-John K to let him take a hit of cocaine before he is shot but does not tell John-John the cocaine is uncut. Although it seems Weeper was hoping to send a message to Josey by the way he died that his death was not a hit by the Ranking Dons or an overdose but Josey does not pick up on the message. It is not until Doctor Love visits Josey in his jail cell years later that Josey realizes his friend was killed at the order of Eubie.

Papa-Lo

Papa-Lo is the don of Copenhagen City and enforcer for the Jamaican Labor Party. He is responsible for having built up Copenhagen City to a much larger size and strength than Balaclava, the ghetto area that was bulldozed to create Copenhagen City. Papa-Lo has known the Singer from before he became a famous musician. Even though the Singer is putting on a concert funded by the PNP, the opposing political party, Papa-Lo still spends a good deal of time with the Singer. For this reason, he's lost some respect from the people in his community. Additionally, the people have noticed Papa-Lo's strange reaction to having killed a boy on his way to school. While his followers think this is evidence that Papa-Lo is getting soft, he was actually disturbed by the shooting because he realized the boy's death did not affect him. Papa-Lo begins to notice that the political leaders who once met with him now meet with Josey Wales. He realizes too late that Josey has plans to take over rulership of the ghetto. On his way to talk to Josey, Papa-Lo is arrested by police in his own neighborhood. Ironically, the arrest takes place the same day on which the attempted murder of the Singer is planned. When Papa-Lo finds out about the attempt on the Singer's life, he holds a ghetto trial in which three of the men involved in the shooting were tried, found guilty and killed. He suspected Josey was involved in the plot, but was never able to find concrete proof. Returning for a horse race one day, Papa-Lo is stopped by police and shot to death. The shooting was arranged by Josey who insists that the press be told fifty-six bullets, the same number of shots fired at the Singer's house, were used to kill Papa-Lo.



Alex Pierce

Alex Pierce is a 27-year-old budding reporter for the Rolling Stone magazine who has been sent to Jamaica to do a piece on Mick Jagger showing up for the peace concert. Instead, he begins looking into what he believes is a bigger story dealing with the peace concert and the Singer. He spends the next 15 years interviewing various gang members as well as one prison inmate to learn all that he can about the peace concert, the peace treaty, and the shooting of the Singer. During his final trip to Jamaica in 1979 Josey arranges a hit on Alex when Josey realizes that he's accidentally slipped to the reporter information that can tag him as the man who shot the Singer. As the sniper, Tony Pavarotti, is sitting on the writer's bed waiting for him to wake up so he can take a shot the phone rings and startles Tony. Alex is able to fatally stab the man and get away. Later, when Alex begins to publish his series of articles about Josey Wales, the connection between the Jamaica and New York drug trade and Eubie's gang, he is visited and threatened. Eubie wants the writer to take out all of the references to his gang and New York. Alex argues this will leave a hole in his story but Eubie uses a gun to make a hole in Alex's foot as a reminder what will happen if he doesn't make the requested changes.

Doctor Love aka Luis Hernan Rodrigo de las Casas

This man, who identifies himself as Doctor Love, works as a CIA consultant. Doctor Love is known for his ruthlessness. He is the one who suggested to Josey that he set fire to the tenement on Orange Street in order to impress the higher ups. Doctor Love has an affection for blowing things up. It is when Barry Diflorino learns that the Cuban Doctor Love is back in Jamaica that he gets upset and asks for information on the consultant. At the end of the novel, it is Doctor Love who is sent to the Jamaican prison to kill Josey so he can't talk about the illegal actions of which he has information. Doctor Love gives Josey pills intended to knock him out so he won't suffer when he is killed. It is important to note that Doctor Love doesn't see Josey actually take the pills. He waits 20 minutes before he goes into the jail cell. The next report is that a burned body is found in Josey's jail cell. It is assumed that body belongs to Josey but details of what might have taken in the cell after Doctor Love entered the cell are not included in the book. It is possible Doctor Love switched bodies and snuck Josey out, or that Josey was only playing as if he were asleep and attacked Doctor Love when he entered the cell, leaving Doctor Love's burned body in the cell.

The Singer

Most often called the Singer in the novel, this Jamaican reggae superstar is Bob Marley. He grew up in the Jamaican ghettos and has returned in hopes of helping bring peace to the country by presenting a concert. Unfortunately, the concert becomes associated with the People's National Party. Josey Wales, who is the want-to-be don of Copenhagen City, puts together a plot to kill the Singer. The bullet intended for the Singer's chest misses and lodges in his arm. Despite the attack, Marley still performs at



the concert a few days later. In 1981 Marley dies of cancer. The cancer starts as a malignancy between two toes on his right foot. One of the toes had always been a problem for Marley. In one of Jennings' portions of the novel he suggests the cancer could have been planted in the pair of boots given to the Singer by Mark Lansing on behalf of the camera crew that filmed the peace concert. When Marley put the boots on, Jennings says that a piece of metal, like a needle, slashed open that same bad toe where the Singer's deadly cancer was believed to have started.

Demus

Demus is one of the boys that Weeper and Josey recruit to kill the Singer. After the attack, Demus is found by the Rasta who hang him. Demus admits that if he had known Josey wanted to hurt the Singer he never would have agreed to help with the plan. Before Demus was caught up in Weeper and Josey's murder plan, he had been jailed for rape even though he had not committed the crime. One week after he was imprisoned, the woman changed her story and he was released from jail with no apology. While in jail he sustained a leg injury, the pain from which was soothed only by marijuana or the Singer's music. He is offered money to help kidnap a jockey and order him to lose his races in a horse racing scam but Demus never gets the money. He's lured into the plan to shoot the Singer because he believes it was the Singer's fault that he never got his money from the kidnapping job. After he realizes how much trouble he is in for his part in the Singer's shooting, Demus is angry with men for using him. He realizes, however, that had he not gone through with his promise to help Weeper and Josey he would have been killed.

Kenneth Colthirst

Kenneth Colthirst is the man whom Dorcas Palmer, aka Nina Burgess, is hired through the God Bless Employment Agency to care for. Kenneth had persuaded Dorcas to take him for a ride on the subway and from there they go to her apartment. He finds her book *How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found* and questions what type of person she is. Dorcas tells him she has been living under fake names for years because she is running from a man in Jamaica but will not tell him her real name or why she's running from the man. After she reveals this information to him, Kenneth locks himself in the bathroom and refuses to come out. When his family comes to get him, Dorcas learns the otherwise healthy older man has a condition where his short-term memory does not work and he tends to have blackouts. He also wakes each morning with no memory of the previous day. As this idea of a man with no memory appeals to Dorcas because she wants her past forgotten, she agrees to care for the man on a long-term basis.

Mark Lansing

Mark Lansing is the son of the former CIA director Richard Lansing. He is a filmmaker and claims to Alex he has been sent to Jamaica to film the peace concert. He seems to



have an ulterior motive, however. He gives the Singer the gift of a pair of cowboy boots. When Marley puts them on, a needle sharp piece of metal in the right one slashes his bad toe. It is suggested Marley got infected with the cancer that ultimately killed him from this cut. Lansing contacts Alex several times before the concert. They have a meeting and Alex is promised a meeting with the Singer if he will take a piece of luggage back to the United States immediately. Mark drives Alex to the Singer's house but is unable to get Alex in the gate right away. He promises to come back and let Alex in but never returns. It is indicated at one point in the novel that Mark showed up at the Singer's house one night and walked past the guards. He talked to Marley and the other men inside in a way that made them think they'd been visited by the devil.

Eubie

Eubie is the man who seems posed to take over Josey Wales' drug operations in America. He alerts Josey that Weeper is not keeping a proper eye on operations in the Bushwick area. For this reason, he asks Josey to come to New York to see for himself what is happening. From the beginning of the trip, Eubie irritates Josey, putting him on edge before he even reaches the Bushwick area. Eubie then leaves Josey in front of the crack house while he goes to urinate. While he's gone, a man shoots Josey in the face with a water pistol filled with urine. It is suspected Eubie might have set up this attack. The action of disrespect sets Josey off and he shoots up the crack house. Additionally, Eubie calls for the murder of Weeper, an action taken to get that man out of his way. Although Josey had not fully trusted Eubie from the beginning of their relationship, he did not even consider it was Eubie who called for Weeper's death until he is told about the hit by Doctor Love.

Barry Diflorio

Barry Diflorino is a CIA station chief who has been assigned to Jamaica and has been there since January 1976. He seems unaware of the work his CIA agents are doing with the gangs in the area. William Adler, a CIA agent who has gone rogue, calls Diflorino and tries to warn him about what is happening in his area but Diflorino will not heed his warning. Instead, he accuses Adler of getting people killed because of things he wrote in a book about the CIA. Later, Diflorino follows Louis Johnson, a CIA field officer, into the ghetto in an attempt to spy on him as he suspects the man is working with Doctor Love, a CIA consultant from Cuba whom Diflorino does not like. The two men show Diflorino how little he knows about the ghetto by losing him in the chase, sending out a spotter to find him, and then crashing into his car. Johnson tells Diflorino his only role with the CIA is that of a bookkeeper and account.

Sir Arthur George Jennings

Sir Arthur George Jennings is one of the narrators for the novel. He is not in any of the action of this novel as the man, who was a politician, has already been killed. Jennings



speaks from the grave of the deaths he's witnessed and those that are to come. He waits for the death of Peter Nasser, the man who called for Jennings' murder. Although many people believed Jennings died by suicide, he insists that he was pushed off a hotel balcony. Jennings acts as the omniscient narrator in the novel as he can observe what is happening without being seen. The only time he mentions one of the characters being able to see him is in the section where Demus has been captured by the Rastas and is being drug to the spot the men plan to hang him. Jennings says he can be seen by Demus because Demus is so close to death.

John-John K

John-John K is the bumbling hit man hired by Griselda to kill Weeper. John-John is given the job after he tells the wrong person about a shooting about to take place in the nightclub where they are partying. This person alerts the people who are about to be shot and ruins the hit. As a punishment for costing her so much money, Griselda makes John-John K kill Weeper. Unaware that Weeper has a boyfriend, John-John first walk in on the man in Weeper's room. When he realizes he's gotten the wrong man, John-John waits for Weeper to come home. Instead of shooting him with his gun, John-John K allows himself to be talked into giving Weeper a hit of cocaine. He doesn't realize the cocaine is full strength and Weeper doesn't tell him. Weeper dies of a drug overdose.

Bam-Bam

Bam-Bam is a ghetto boy whose parents were killed by Funnyboy, a member of Shotta Sherrif's gang, when he was ten. He was taken in by Papa-Lo after residents of Copenhagen City found him running through their neighborhood and realized he was just a boy. Josey Wales includes Bam-Bam in the group of boys he recruits to kill the Singer when Bam-Bam was only a young teenager. After the shooting goes bad, Josey and Tony Pavoratti find Bam-Bam and bury him alive. He is one of the seven men killed during the course of the novel that were associated with the Singer's shooting.

Benjy Wales

Benjy Wales is Josey Wales' oldest son. He is the boy that Josey hoped would take over leadership from him. However, Benjy is shot to death while riding his bike to organize the Papa-Lo Memorial Commemorative Annual Cricket Match. It is believed the murder was planned by Josey Wales' enemies. Although doctors know there is no hope for the boy, they make a show of trying to resuscitate him because they are afraid the people will revolt if they don't. When Benjy is buried, his father is not allowed to attend the funeral because he is in jail for murder.



Tony Pavarotti

Tony Pavarotti is a sniper who often works for Josey. At one point in the novel Josey calls Tony the one man he can trust. He'd wanted to hire Tony to kill the Singer but Weeper convinced him to use young boys who were expendable and save Tony for bigger jobs. Josey does hire Tony to kill Alex Pierce, the journalist from Rolling Stone, but an unexpected phone call startles the sharp shooter and he drops his gun. This mistake gives Alex the chance to grab a letter opener and stab Tony in the throat, killing him.

Kim-Marie “Kimmy” Burgess

Kimmy is Nina's younger sister. She is dating Ras Trent, a Rasta and son of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Kimmy is portrayed by her sister as being selfish and self-centered. She learns Nina has slept with the Singer and uses this information to turn her parents against Nina. At the end of the novel after she learns of the death of Josey Wales, it is Kimmy that Nina finally calls when she decides to begin communicating with her family again.

Peter Nasser

Peter Nasser is an aging politician who is pulling the strings on the actions of Josey Wales and his gang. Nasser is also the one who called for the killing of Sir Arthur George Jennings, the ghost who narrates several sections of the novel. Nasser is the one who called for the killing of the Singer, which means that all the boys killed for their part in the Singer's death were more or less killed by Nasser as well. Jennings recognizes the smell of Nasser on these dead boys.

Tristan Phillips

Tristan Phillips is a Rasta upon whom Josey had a hit. However, Tristan flees Jamaica before the man sent to do away with him can find him. Tristan later helps Alex collect information about the Singer's death and activities in the ghetto from his jail cell in America. He is also the one who puts together why it was that Josey put out a hit on Alex back in 1979. Tristan makes a joke that he and Alex are the only two people Josey has ever wanted dead who have survived to talk about them.

Leggo Beast

Leggo Beast is one of the gang members recruited to help with the attempted murder of the Singer. In his attempt to make it appear he is working with Papa-Lo, Josey tells Papa-Lo that Leggo Beast has been hiding in his mother's cupboard for the past two



years. Leggo Beast is among the three men who are put on trial and killed in Papa-Lo's trial in McGregor Gully.

Heckle

Heckle is the one man involved in the shooting of the Singer still believed to be alive at the end of the novel. Heckle stayed alive by going to the Singer's house after the shooting and begging forgiveness. He was made a member of the band and even traveled with Marley. After the Singer's death, Heckle disappeared and it was believed he was living in another country.

Griselda Blanco

Griselda Blanco is a female drug lord who oversees the Miami operations for the Medellin cartel. Griselda hires John-John K to kill Weeper after Eubie gives her the order he wants Weeper gone. By the end of the novel Griselda has disappeared. It is unsure if she is dead.

Louis Johnson

Louis Johnson is the CIA agent who is also referred to as the American in several places in the novel. He is the one who arranges for the gang members to get guns and ammunition, and teaches them how to use them. Johnson also works with Doctor Love, a CIA consultant, to provide aid to gang members.

Funky Chicken

Funky Chicken is one of the gang members recruited to help with the attempted murder of the Singer. It is assumed he is one of the men put on trial and killed in Papa-Lo's ghetto justice trial in McGregor Gully.

Shotta Sherrif

Shotta Sherrif is the don of the Eight Lanes area. While Papa-Lo and Shotta Sherrif are in jail together, they agree to a peace treaty between their rival gangs. After the two are released from jail, they try to get others to embrace peace but are unsuccessful.

Funnyboy

Funnyboy is the gang member who killed Bam-Bam's parents. He was second-in-command to Shotta Sherrif and believed to be the leader in Eight Lanes at the end of the novel.

William Adler

William Adler is a former CIA agent who has gone rogue. He calls Barry Diflorino twice trying to give him information about secret actions of the CIA but Barry will not listen to him.



Symbols and Symbolism

Jamaican Labor Party

The Jamaican Labor Party or JLP is one of the major political parties in Jamaica. It is symbolized by the color green. This political party is enforced by Papa-Lo.

People's National Party

The People's National Party or PNP is one of the two major political parties in Jamaica. It is symbolized by the color orange. When the book opens in 1967, Shotta Sherrif enforced this party, which was in power at that time. The PNP remained in power after the 1967 election.

Peace Concert

Bob Marley stages the Smile Jamaica Peace Concert in December 1967. It is widely criticized as propaganda by the PNP. Although Marley was shot by Josey Wales just a few days before the concert, he still performed as planned.

Midnight Ravers

Midnight Ravers is the name of a song written by Bob Marley. The song is written about a night he spent with Nina Burgess while in Jamaica.

Electric Boogie

The Electric Boogie is the term that refers to a torture procedure carried out on Weeper while he was in jail. In this procedure, one wire of an electric cord was tied to Weeper's penis while the other was touched to other parts of his body.

Broken Left Lens of Weeper's Glasses

While Weeper is in jail for a crime he didn't commit, the police break the left lens of his glasses. Even though he can afford to get his glasses fixed, Weeper doesn't do so because the break reminds him of what the police put him through.



White Datsun

It is Josey's white Datsun that is used to transport stolen ammunition from the wharf. It is also one of the cars used to carry the men to the Singer's house for the assassination attempt.

Echo Squad

The Echo Squad is the name of the group of goons that guards the Singer's house prior to the 1976 concert.

Storm Posse

The Storm Posse is the name of the drug syndicate in America ruled by Josey Wales. They are equivalent to Copenhagen City in Jamaica.

Ranking Dons

The Ranking Dons is the name of the rival drug syndicate in American. It is the equivalent of the group one ruled by Shotta Sherrif in Jamaica.

The Timex

The Timex is a watch that Nina got from one of her ex-boyfriends. While it keeps time well, it is a symbol for Nina as one of her former schoolmates had pointed out to her the watch was cheap when she mentions the Timex was the type of watch her father had given a house servant for 15 years of service. Nina later sells this watch to help buy a fake visa to get out of Jamaica.

Letter Opener

Alex uses this complimentary letter opener next to the bed in his hotel room at the Skyline to kill Tony Pavarotti.

Fifty-Six Bullets

Fifty-six bullets is the number of bullets said to have been fired at the singer during the attempted assassination. When Papa-Lo is shot, Josey Wales asked that the police say that fifty-six bullets were used in his slaying.



God Bless Employment Agency

The God Bless Employment Agency is where Dorcas Palmer, aka Nina, meets Kenneth Colthirst.

How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found

The man whom Nina Burgess, who at that time is living under the assumed name of Dorcas Palmer, is looking after finds this book in her bathroom and questions her about it and what sort of person she is.

The White Wife

The White Wife is a slang term used to refer to the drug cocaine.

Peace Treaty

While in jail together it is believed that Papa-Lo and Shotta Sherrif, the dons of warring gangs in Jamaica, agree on a peace treaty.

Marley's Boots

This pair of snakeskin boots is given to Bob Marley as a gift from Mark Lansing's (?) camera crew. When Marley puts them on, his foot is cut by a piece of wire sticking out of the inside of the boot.

A Machete

Josey has a new machete stashed in his jail cell with which he threatens Doctor Love.



Settings

Jamaica

The events of the December 1976 sections of the novel as well as the February 1979 section take place in the island nation of Jamaica located in the Caribbean Sea.

Copenhagen City

Copenhagen City is Papa-Lo's territory. Copenhagen City is the area that grew up after the ghetto of Balaclava was bulldozed.

Havendale

Havendale is the part of Jamaica from which Nina Burgess came. She described it as neither the ghetto nor uptown, just the middle.

The Skyline

The Skyline is the hotel where Alex Pierce stayed while he was in Jamaica. It was at the Skyline that Alex was staying the day that Tony Pavarotti came to kill him.

Balaclava

Balaclava is the name of the ghetto bulldozed to give birth to Copenhagen City. Papa-Lo admits that he had been in favor of the destruction of Balaclava, where people could be killed by drinking the water, but was not outspoken in his support. Tristan later tells Alex the place had no toilets and no running water but was inhabited by 5,000 people.

House by the Sea

A one-roomed house by the sea is the place where Demus and the other seven men are held captive the night before they are to shoot the Singer.

56 Hope Road

56 Hope Road is the address of the house where the Singer lived during his time in Jamaica. It is outside this house that Nina waited for the Singer to try to get him to help her family members get visas. It is also at this house that Josey Wales' men attempted to kill the Singer.



Green Bay

It is to Green Bay that a group of Wang Gang boys are trucked believing they will be given free guns. Instead, they are met by members of the Jamaican Defense Force in an ambush. Many of the boys are killed and several others wounded. The defense force indicated the boys that shot first, but all of the people Alex talked to about the incident said the boys couldn't have opened fire on the soldiers as they had no guns.

McGregor Gully

McGregor Gully is the place where Papa-Lo holds his vigilante court to convict and kill three of the men who were involved in the assassination attempt against the Singer.

Beth Israel Hospital

It is at this hospital that Nina, now going by the name Millicent Segree, is training to be a nurse.

Josey's Jail Cell

Josey is in a jail cell in Jamaica when he is approached by Doctor Love the final time. Doctor Love has been sent to kill the man. He gives him pills but does not see Josey take them. After he believes Josey is knocked out by the pills, Doctor Love enters the cell. A burned body is later found in the cell. It is believed to be the body of Josey Wales.

Boston Jamaica Jerk Chicken

Boston Jamaica Jerk Chicken is a Jamaican restaurant located in New York. It is to this restaurant that Eubie takes Josey Wales even though Josey had told the man he doesn't want Jamaican food. The two talk at the restaurant briefly before they go to visit the Bushwick crack house. Millicent, aka Nina, is eating at this same restaurant when she learns that a burned body has been found in Josey's jail cell. It is believed to be the body of the man she's been on the run from for many years.



Themes and Motifs

Fatalism

The attitude taken by many of the characters in this novel is very fatalistic, meaning they don't believe there is anything they can do to change the path their lives will take. This idea of fatalism is seen in a phrase first used by Sir Arthur George Jennings then echoed by characters throughout the novel. When talking to reporter Alex Pierce, the inmate Tristan Phillips tells Pierce quite plainly that he believes there is nothing people like him can do to change the way their lives will turn out.

Jennings opens the idea of fatalism in the novel when he first flips around the common phrase "wait and see" to "see and wait." Since Jennings is dead it makes sense that he believes he can not do anything to change the course of his life or the course of the events that he sees playing out. He can only watch what is happening and wait for what will happen next. What is disturbing is the hopelessness of the other characters who are still alive but also echo this motto of "see and wait."

It is Tristan who speaks most clearly of his opinion that his life has already been – and he has no power to change it. "People like me," he tells Alex, "our life write out before we, without asking we permission. Nothing much we can do 'bout what God decide he want to drop on you." (p. 568) Tristan's statement is sad not only in that he thinks he has no control over his life but also that he believes there are some who do have control over their lives and some who don't. He believes he is among those who don't.

Having the courage to make a choice about one's life is an aspect of fatalism touched on by gang member Demus. He has been recruited to help in the plot to shoot the Singer but is now wishing he hadn't agreed to the plan. He knows he has a choice. He can not cooperate with his head gang members and be killed or he can hurt a person he doesn't want to hurt. The way most people would see it, they aren't really being given a choice in the matter. Demus, however, sees the reality of the situation. He has been given a choice, he's just too big of a coward to choose and be killed. In fact, he says of the people who say they have no choices in life that they are just too cowardly to make the choices they are given.

The fatalistic "see and wait" phrase first used by Jennings is echoed by Bam-Bam who grew up in the ghetto. His parents were killed by gang members and he was taken into Papa-Lo's gang as a young boy. Papa-Lo also speaks of seeing and waiting in parts of the ghetto where children were sick because of the unsanitary conditions and parents sometimes delayed medical care because they knew death would be better for the child. Papa-Lo says of the boys killed at Green Bay that they were just there to see and wait. Josey Wales has a slightly more positive lift to his use of the phrase see and wait as he says that those who have a plan see and wait for the time to put their plan into action. While he's sick in Essex House, the Singer sees and waits, as he can do nothing else. Tristan speaks of having nothing to do in prison but see and wait.



Rise and Fall of Josey Wales

“Because tomorrow I going take care of a few people. The next day I goin’ take care of the world.” This quote by Josey Wales found on page 44 of the novel sums up the strength of his ambition as he builds himself up to be the new leader of Copenhagen City. Josey not only rises to fame in the course of this novel, he also falls from power by the end of it. Josey makes plans to help ensure himself he’ll gain power and respect, but fails to rein in his temper, the aspect of his personality that ultimately is his downfall.

Through information given about Josey in the novel, it is easy to see how he’s planned his life in a desire to be the head of his gang. He intends to find his niche in drug sales, believing this vocation will be what will save the country. He doesn’t do drugs or even sample the merchandise as some of his followers, namely Weeper, do. Josey has also been careful not sleep around and leave himself open to the possibility of having ignorant children. He’s carefully picked out the woman with whom he has sexual relations and is monogamous even though they are not married.

In order to make his way up the ladder, Josey is willing to do anything he’s asked. One of his first jobs was the arson of a tenement on Orange Street. Josey was so determined the job be done right that he even shot the firemen coming in to put out the fire. As Josey is given more and more challenges he becomes frustrated and finally refuses out of principal. For instance, he had been ordered by Doctor Love and the politician Peter Nasser to kill the Singer. The bullet intended for the Singer’s heart misses and lodges in his arm. Josey is ordered to go out again and kill the Singer before he leaves the country but Josey stops the sniper he has with him before he’s about to take a shot. He’s decided that he has sent a loud enough message to the Singer and thinks its better for the country that the man not be made a martyr.

Despite this failed job, Josey earns the respect of the people in his gang and eventually has Papa-Lo, the previous don, killed. Josey uses his muscle to ensure the election will go as the Americans want so they will turn a blind eye on his drug deliveries to the country. From Jamaica, Josey builds up a drug trade in both Miami and New York.

When Josey goes to New York to visit one of his crack houses, his power begins to go downhill. He’s in a strange place with an unfamiliar gang member that he doesn’t really like. When a druggie shoots him in the face with a water pistol filled with urine, Josey cannot contain himself. He releases his frustration by shooting up the New York crack house. While his crime might have been overlooked in Jamaica, charges are filed for his arrest in America.

Meanwhile, Eubie, the man who encouraged Josey to visit New York seems to be pulling the power from Josey just as Josey did to Papa-Lo. Eubie arranges to have Weeper, Josey’s head man in New York, killed. It is suspected he also calls for Josey’s death at the end of the novel.



Speech

The impression one makes with one's speech as well as the variety of differences that can be found in the English language make up an important theme in this novel. Characters discuss the difference in good and bad speech in various sections of the story. Additionally, each character speaks in his own voice in the sections he narrates, giving the reader a first hand view of each character's speech patterns.

In several places in the novel, it is pointed out that for a person to meet his goals, he has to be able to speak proper English. Nina and Josey, for example, are particularly obsessed with speech. Josey believes that a man's intelligence can be determined by the way he speaks. For instance, Peter Nasser angers Josey because he talks so badly. Another character that angers Josey because of his bad speech is the Singer. Josey believes anyone who is a politician, is rich or is white should speak with proper grammar and pronunciation. People who speak incorrectly also irritate Nina. She seems particularly frustrated by the way the police speak. When officers come to investigate the robbery at parents' house, she actually laughs at the way the man talk.

One's ability to get a job is one thing that can be affected by one's ability to speak properly. For instance, Nina is told by the lady who owns the God Bless Employment Agency, that it is her ability to speak properly that gets her the job with the Colthirst family. Before he becomes a member of a gang, Bam-Bam is given advice from the ghost of his father. The ghost tells him that if he can't speak correctly, no one will give him a job.

Differences in speech patterns are also explored in the novel. One of the major examples of this takes place in the hospital where Millicent is called to "translate" what the Jamaican woman is saying to the doctor. Also in the novel, Alex refers to the Jamaicans in service jobs speaking in what he calls "the white tone." He describes this as a way the people have been taught to speak when dealing with white people.

Religious Imagery

Although the characters in this novel are not what one would call religious by any definition of the term, there is a good deal of religious imagery used in the book. In several places, the Singer is compared to Jesus Christ while those who plan his death are compared to Judas Iscariot. Another character compared to Jesus is Alex. Also references are made to Daniel in the lion's den, Lot's wife and Moses.

Probably the clearest parallel drawn in this novel between characters and religious figures is that drawn between the Singer and Jesus. In the story, the Singer is coming to perform a concert intended to bring the country together in peace. Many people seem to believe that since Marley is an example of a man who has grown up in Jamaica but has gone on to do well for himself that he represents the country's salvation. Similarly, Jesus Christ, to whom Marley is compared, came to bring salvation to the people. Meanwhile, in one of his sections of the novel, Bam-Bam describes himself and his gang members



as being like Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed Jesus and caused him to be put to death.

Another character who is compared to Jesus is Alex. When Alex first appears at the Singer's house, the goons guarding the house make the joke that Jesus is risen because Alex looks like the stereotypical Jesus with his white complexion and long brown hair. The man named Priest also jokes about the way Alex looks like Jesus, but with a tape recorder. By that time Alex has gotten used to people saying that to him. He's also noticed the young boys in Jamaica looking at him and thinks they must be wondering if Jesus were to come again if he would really wear tight jeans.

There are a variety of other characters who are compared to Biblical figures in the novel. Papa-Lo is compared to Moses as he splits the crowd like the Red Sea to get to Bam-Bam. Twice, Nina is likened as Lot's wife who looked behind her and turned into a pillar of salt. When Weeper is arrested and falsely accused of robbing a store, he is compared to Daniel, a character rescued by God from a den of hungry lions, however, Weeper's rescue never came. As Papa-Lo walks to Josey's house to talk to him about all the violence that is going on, he says he feels like the seven seals are breaking, referring to the Biblical book of Revelation where seven seals are broken on a scroll before the apocalypse begins.

Racism / Discrimination

Though Nina is the only character in this novel that really has a chip on her shoulder when it comes to discrimination, there are several character in the novel who are discriminated against. Nina's anger comes from growing up in a mid class neighborhood where she felt she was treated badly by her peers because she wasn't as rich as they were. Some of the men in the ghetto, however, know real discrimination. They've been beaten, jailed and killed simply because they were black. The novel also touches on the idea that even white people face discrimination, particularly in predominately black areas.

Nina is one of the characters who seems most affected by discrimination. She has grown up in a neighborhood where she and her family were on the lower side socioeconomic scale. She's been made fun of because her parents didn't drive the right kind of car and she didn't wear the right style of clothes. Even as an adult, Nina still carries this grudge. For instance in the beginning of the section entitled "Shadow Dancin'" is it pretty apparent that the girl in that section is Nina even though she's changed her name. As she walks to her boyfriend's house, she believes that people must be thinking that she is a prostitute or perhaps even the maid for the big nice house. She doesn't think anyone would believe she really lives there simply because she is black.

For men in the ghetto, however, racism is more of a way of life. It isn't fair, but they don't seem to think there is anything they can do about it. Bam-Bam for instance says the police give a black man two choices. He can either run from them and be shot in private



or he can stand still when the police come after him and let them beat him in public. Of the gang members who are significant in this novel Weeper and Demus are both beaten, arrested and jailed for crimes they didn't commit. It is this treatment by police that sends both of these boys to the gang lifestyle.

Meanwhile, Alex describes a sort of discrimination toward him as a white person when he's in Jamaica. He refers to the way people in the service industry will speak to him in what he calls "the white tone." He says this is the way these people have been taught to talk around whites but Alex doesn't like it as he enjoys hearing Jamaicans speak in their own dialect.



Styles

Point of View

This story is told from the first person point of view of a variety of different narrators. These narrators include gang members John-John K, Weeper, Bam-Bam and Demus; CIA station officer Barry Diflorino; Papa-Lo, the don of Copenhagen City; Josey Wales, whose plan is to take over the world; Alex Pierce, a news reporter; and Tristan Phillips, an inmate and gang member who is interviewed by Alex. All of these characters with the exception of Tristan narrate their portions of the story as a stream of consciousness. Their stories are basically recordings of their own thoughts about the things they have seen, experienced or heard about. Tristan's sections alone are spoken narratives. These sections record his responses to interview questions posed to him by Alex. Because these narrators tell only what parts they know of the particular circumstances, they are unreliable narrators. However, since the focus of the novel is for the reader to assimilate all the information given by each character to draw a conclusion about the events described, it makes sense that the narrators be unreliable. The reader can understand the story only by comparing and compiling information from each character's story to get the full picture. A final narrator in the book is Sir Arthur George Jennings. His portions of the story are also told from the first person point of view with the exception that Jennings is deceased. He speaks to the reader from the afterlife. He is the only narrator in the novel that is not involved in the action of the novel, he can only comment on what he sees and witnesses.

Language and Meaning

Language is immensely important in this novel. Not only do the characters understand the difference between good and bad language, and the impression that using good or bad language can leave on the people whom one meets. Language is additionally important in the novel because each character's sections narration are narrated in that person's voice. The sections narrated by the gang members are narrated with the bad grammar and Jamaican slang of the time. Curse words are frequent. Words are also spelled as they are pronounced like dutty for dirty; 'bout for about; and bwoi for boy. Characters like Nina, Josey and Kenneth Colthirst generally use proper grammar, spelling and pronunciation. These differences in spelling, pronunciation and grammar from character to character are significant as characters can be identified by their speech patterns with each character's pattern of speech staying true throughout the novel.

Language is also important as each character uses language that would be appropriate for their station in life. For instance, Barry Diflorino thinks like a person in law enforcement. He uses language like perpetrator and realizes that crowds can easily become mobs. Contrast the language used in his sections of the novel with that used by Alex. As a reporter, Alex tries to determine what is happening and why it is happening.



As he waits in bed for the man sitting on the side of his bed to make a move, Alex tries to make himself think with good grammar and wonders if the man is about to blow a hole in the sentence he is thinking.

Structure

In addition to having a complex storyline, this novel also has a fairly complex structure. The story covers a span of five days. These days include Dec. 2, 1976 the day the plans come together to kill the Singer; Dec. 3, the day of the Singer's shooting; Feb. 15, 1979, the day that Papa-Lo has three people involved in the shooting of the Singer killed; August 14, 1985, the day Josey Wales shoots up the crack house in New York; and March 22, 1991, the day it is believed that Josey is killed. One section of the novel is dedicated to each of these days. These sections range in length from about 85 pages for the final section to about 160 pages for the next to last section. Each of the five sections is preceded by a piece of narration by a deceased politician named Sir Arthur George Jennings that either sets up the action in the coming section or explains significant things that have happened since the previous section.

Each of the five parts of the novel is broken down into separate sections of narration by different significant characters. A heading bearing the name of the narrator separates these sections of narration. Although the story is told in a typically linear fashion, each character gives his own background as part of his thought process in his sections of narration. Because the novel is written almost in a stream of consciousness type style it is sometimes difficult to determine what is happening in real time to what a character is thinking about that has happened in the past.



Quotes

Living people wait and see because they fool themselves that they have time. Dead people see and wait.

-- Sir Arthur George Jennings (Sir Arthur George Jennings paragraph p. 3)

Importance: This quote is significant as the flip side of wait and see, see and wait is repeated several times by several different characters in the novel. Jennings indicates that dead people have no choices and only the option of seeing and waiting. However, some characters in the novel see themselves as having the ability to only see and wait, making it appear they have no control over their lives and are, for all intents and purposes, already dead.

This is a story of several killings, of boys who meant nothing to a world still spinning, but each of them as they pass me carry the sweet-stink scent of the man that killed me.

-- Sir Arthur George Jennings (Sir Arthur George Jennings paragraph p. 3)

Importance: This novel tells the story of the deaths of seven of the people associated with the attempted murder of Bob Marley. They are important to Jennings because it was Peter Nasser, the same man who ordered his own death who was also involved in the deaths of these boys.

The man say, Let them know that is not ghetto dog that live over here in Copenhagen City, then he look at me like he can talk without saying anything and I know that he see something that he can use. He say get this boy some coconut water and the woman say yes Papa-Lo.

-- Bam-Bam (Original Rockers paragraph p. 15)

Importance: Bam-Bam describes how Papa-Lo took him under his wing after Bam-Bam's parents were killed by members of an opposing gang.

Me enforce for the Jamaica Labour Party in green, and Shotta Sherrif control for the People's National Party in orange, but them new boys enforce for the party in them back pocket.

-- Papa-Lo (Original Rockers paragraph pp. 23-24)

Importance: Papa-Lo describes the changes that have taken place in the gang leadership since he became don of Copenhagen City. He says the new members are more concerned about amassing money than protecting their area or people.

And word reach that you still talk to Shotta Sherrif, the man whose deputy kill me family and me learn to hate you in a new way, even as me love Papa-Lo. You turning him, you converting him into something and everybody seeing it. Especially Josey Wales. Josey Wales watching you and I watch him watching you and he don't like the way things running and he don't say it too loud, but he say it to who will hear. And a little bird say Papa-Lo getting weak.



-- Bam-Bam (Original Rockers paragraph p. 35)

Importance: Bam-Bam lists the reasons why he hates the Singer, even though he doesn't know the man. Bam-Bam is among the boys recruited by Josey Wales to kill the Singer. Much of his reason revolves around Josey Wales, whom he believes will soon take over Papa-Lo's place in Copenhagen City.

Jamaica Labour Party rule the country in the sixties but the People's National Party tell the country that better must come and win the election in 1972. Now JLP want the country back and there's no word named can't, there's no word named no. Downtown on lockdown and police already shouting curfew.

-- Bam-Bam (Original Rockers paragraph p. 36)

Importance: Jamaica is embroiled in a coming election with police enforcing curfews in an attempt to quell violence between gangs from the opposing political parties.

I was a little surprised at how good it felt, me and the white man both being kept outside like beggars.

-- Nina Burgess (Original Rockers paragraph p. 50)

Importance: Nina, who carries a chip on shoulder because she believes blacks are treated unequally, is amused when the guards outside the Singer's house who wouldn't let her in to see the Singer, won't let the white reporter from the Rolling Stone magazine in either.

People who say they don't have a choice just too coward to choose. Because it's now six p.m. We go to the Singer house in twenty-four hours.

-- Demus (Original Rockers paragraph p. 58)

Importance: Demus knows he has a choice in whether or not to go through with his decision to participate in the murder attempt on the Singer. He also knows that if he chooses not to participate, he will be killed. Sadly, he goes through with the job and is killed anyway.

The busiest, most vital music scene in the world is about to blow up and not on the charts. The Singer, he's up to something and it's not just the peace concert.

-- Alex Pierce (Original Rockers paragraph p. 61)

Importance: Alex, a reporter from the Rolling Stone, feels there is a story bigger than just the Singer returning to his home country, but he can't quite put his finger on what it is.

So here is the Singer, along with two hoods from a political party he's supposed to not support and there they are chummy together like old school pals. The next few days, he's seen hanging out with Shotta Sherrif, the godfather of the Eight Lanes, controlled by the other party, the other side. Two top goons in one week, two men who pretty much control the fighting halves of downtown Kingston. Maybe he's just being a peacemaker.



-- Alex Pierce (Original Rockers paragraph p.61)

Importance: Because the Singer is meeting with leaders from the opposing Jamaican political parties, even though his concert is being supported by the PNP, Alex feels the Singer is up to something.

Balacava get bulldozed down so that Copenhagen City could rise, and when the politicians come in after the bulldozers with their promises they also demand that we drive all PNP man out.

-- Papa-Lo (Original Rockers paragraph p. 89)

Importance: Papa-Lo remembers how the truly slummy area of Balacava was bulldozed allowing him to build Copenhagen City. The politicians who cleared the area made the members of Papa-Lo's gang promise that they would drive PNP out of that area and keep them out.

And if he remembered the sex maybe he would pull some strings and get me and my family out of this country and hopefully pay for it too.

-- Nina Burgess (Original Rockers paragraph p. 99)

Importance: Although all those who learn that Nina is camping out outside the Singer's house believe she is there because she hopes to seduce him, she actually hopes the man will help her and her family escape from the violence that is taking over the country.

People think me lose it because it bother me that me kill the school boy by mistake, but don't realize that me losing it because it supposed to bother me but don't.

-- Papa-Lo (Ambush in the Night paragraph p.154)

Importance: Most people, including Josey Wales, believe Papa-Lo's attitude toward killing has changed because he accidentally shot a boy on his way to school. They aren't aware of the real reason that shooting affected Papa-Lo so deeply. It was this shooting that made Papa-Lo realize he'd grown numb to the grief he should feel when he killed someone.

Not even Christmas yet, barely December, and somebody is already bursting firecrackers.

-- Nina Burgess (Ambush in the Night paragraph p. 229)

Importance: When Nina walks up to the Singer's house, she surprised to hear what sounds like firecrackers. In reality, she's hearing gunshots.

Me ask how can me be sure he really don't have nothing to do with the shooting since so much man say him involve and he say, Brethren, if me was trying to kill the Singer, the pussyhole would be dead now.

-- Papa-Lo (Shadow Dancin' paragraph p. 344)



Importance: When Papa-Lo asks him, Josey claims to have had nothing to do with the shooting of the Singer saying that if he had been part of it, Marley would be dead.

The man who justice wronged is the man who must choose how we going to right it.
-- Papa-Lo (Shadow Dancin' paragraph p. 353)

Importance: In his street justice trial, Marley is called to choose how to punish three of the men who tried to kill him.

Think 'bout it good and hard. Inspector, I see you already feeling what me talking 'bout. You nuh remember when Papa-Lo open fire 'pon the police? Fire from this same .38 and the poor police them did have no choice but to fire back? / When him do that? / Right now. Fire!
-- Papa-Lo (Shadow Dancin' paragraph p. 360)

Importance: Although the police agree to make it look like they shot Papa-Lo in defense, the two police officers actually murder him, probably at Josey Wales' order.

Only four people know the Singer nearly got shot in the heart. The Singer, his manager, his surgeon and me, because I caught him on a lucky day when he didn't try to kick my ass for following him all over London.
-- Alex Pierce (Shadow Dancin' paragraph p. 391)

Importance: It is only after talking with Tristan Phillips that Alex realizes Josey Wales hired a hit man to get rid of him because Josey mentioned the Singer getting shot in the heart during an interview with Alex. Knowing that the Singer got shot in the heart not only put Josey at the crime scene, but also indicates he was the shooter.

But if I was going to add a number four, that would be him. How many bullets need to miss your heart and lodge in your arm before you reason that home is not home anymore?
-- Josey Wales (Shadow Dancin' paragraph p.396)

Importance: Josey is angry with the Singer because even though his attempt to kill him failed, he feels the Singer should take the hint that he's no longer welcome in the country of Jamaica.

What is peace? Peace is my blowing a little breeze on my daughter forehead when she sweat in her sleep. This don't name peace, this name stalemate.
-- Josey Wales (Shadow Dancin' paragraph p. 398)

Importance: Josey Wales believes the peace treaty signed between Papa-Lo and Shotta Sherrif is not a peace treaty at all, but a stalemate, a condition in which no one wins, and no one is at peace.

Some will say forty-four, some will say fifty-six bullets, the exact number of shells found at 56 Hope Road that week in December 1976.



-- Sir Arthur George Jennings (Shadow Dancin' paragraph p. 431)

Importance: When Papa-Lo is killed, it is said the police shot him with fifty-six bullets, the same number as the number of shells found at the Singer's house after the assassination attempt. The parallels drawn between Papa-Lo's death and the attempted murder of the Singer indicate the murder of Papa-Lo was intended to be connected to the Singer's.

People forget that when JLP win election in 1980, plenty man take flight to USA quick. Now they in Blood Rose, Hot Steppers but especially Ranking Dons, and they gunning for territory like everybody still in Kingston.

-- Josey Wales (White Lines / Kids in America paragraph pp. 468-469)

Importance: When political power changed in Jamaica, many gang members headed for the United States. Wales indicates that although they are now in America, the gang members continued fighting each other just as they did in Jamaica.

As I say you must know about Weeper. But you should at least check out what going on at your spot in Bushwick.

-- Eubie (White Lines / Kids in America paragraph p. 495)

Importance: Eubie alerts Josey that Weeper is not running things correctly in Bushwick. It is this visit to Bushwick that leads to Josey's arrest, imprisonment and death.

Who in a better place right now than he was before these killings? Only one man. / Josey Bombocloth Wales.

-- Tristan Phillips (White Lines / Kids in America paragraph pp. 511-512)

Importance: Tristan reasons that it makes sense that Josey was responsible for the rash of killings in Jamaica as he was the one that benefited most from the deaths.

Me don't know nothing for true, but I'd bet that even some people higher up, maybe people who control coast guard, or immigration or customs or some shit, now all turn a blind eye to certain boat and plane and ship because one man give them Jamaica on a plate in 1980.

-- Tristan Phillips (White Lines / Kids in America paragraph p. 512)

Importance: In addition to benefiting himself by the killings he perpetrated, Tristan believes that the Americans are now willing to overlook Josey's drug shipments into that country because he arranged for the Jamaican election to go the way the Americans wanted in 1980.

And you saying that some scrawny hippie-boy kill Jamaica's number one killing machine?

-- Tristan Phillip (White Lines / Kids in America paragraph p. 543)



Importance: Tristan is shocked when he learns that Alex, a journalist, was the one who killed Tony Pavarotti, Josey's top hit man.

Last week a white college boy heard my accent and asked if I ever met the Singer. And it hit me: I'm one of the few who can answer the question with a yes, but it still pissed me off.

-- Millicent Segree (Sound Boy Killing paragraph p. 615)

Importance: Although Nina, who now goes by the name Millicent, is still embarrassed by her Jamaican roots, she realizes she is one of the few people still alive who actually met Bob Marley.

You are the man who make them, boss, not me. Don't make monster then bawl how them monstrous.

-- Doctor Love (Sound Boy Killing paragraph p. 642)

Importance: Josey points out to Doctor Love that he is responsible for creating the people who have created the problems he's now having to clean up.