

# **Being There Study Guide**

## **Being There by Jerzy Kosiński**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

|                                              |                    |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <a href="#">Being There Study Guide.....</a> | <a href="#">1</a>  |
| <a href="#">Contents.....</a>                | <a href="#">2</a>  |
| <a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>            | <a href="#">3</a>  |
| <a href="#">Chapter 1.....</a>               | <a href="#">5</a>  |
| <a href="#">Chapter 2.....</a>               | <a href="#">7</a>  |
| <a href="#">Chapter 3.....</a>               | <a href="#">11</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 4.....</a>               | <a href="#">16</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 5.....</a>               | <a href="#">25</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 6.....</a>               | <a href="#">34</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 7.....</a>               | <a href="#">38</a> |
| <a href="#">Characters.....</a>              | <a href="#">40</a> |
| <a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>          | <a href="#">47</a> |
| <a href="#">Themes.....</a>                  | <a href="#">49</a> |
| <a href="#">Style.....</a>                   | <a href="#">51</a> |
| <a href="#">Quotes.....</a>                  | <a href="#">54</a> |
| <a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>   | <a href="#">56</a> |

# Plot Summary

Being There by Jerzy Kosinski is an allegorical tale about a man named Chance whose experience of the world is limited to his work as a gardener and what he has seen on television. Over the course of seven days, Chance leaves his employer and navigates his way through high society. His encounters with businessmen, world leaders, and the media are colored by his observations of life as seen in his former garden and on television.

On Sunday, Chance waters the garden. He has never left the house where he lives with his employer, the Old Man. The maid calls to Chance from the window and asks him to come upstairs quickly. The Old Man has died in his bed. Chance looks at the Old Man, mumbles goodbye, and leaves to watch TV. Later that same day, Chance watches as men carry out the Old Man's body.

In the morning, Chance meets with Thomas Franklin, a lawyer representing the Old Man's estate. He tells Chance that there are no records showing that Chance ever worked or lived there. Franklin interrogates Chance, attempting to confirm that he worked for the Old Man. Finally, he hands a paper to Chance, asking him to read and sign the document if he agrees to it. Because he cannot read or write, Chance pretends to read the paper, then hands the sheet back to Franklin and says he cannot sign it. Franklin tells Chance that he must move out by noon the next day.

Early Tuesday morning Chance packs his things. After one last visit to the garden, he steps outside and locks the gate behind him. As he is leaving, a limousine backs into Chance and pins him against another car. Seeing Chance's leg is trapped, the driver moves the car. A woman gets out and asks Chance to allow her husband's doctors to treat his leg. She introduces herself as Mrs. Benjamin Rand, but she is called EE. Chance introduces himself as Chance the gardener, but EE hears his name as Chauncey Gardiner. They arrive at the Rand home where Mr. Rand's doctor treats Chance. Later that night, Chance has dinner with EE and Benjamin Rand. Impressed by Chance's directness, Rand tells him that he wants his feedback on a new program designed to help the economy.

On Wednesday, the President of the United States pays a visit to Rand and Chance. As Rand and the President discuss economics, the President asks Chance for his opinion. Chance says that growth has its season in a garden. The President finds Chance's feedback very optimistic, and leaves to give a speech at the Financial Institute. During his speech, he includes a metaphor on gardening and the seasons. During the post-speech questions, the President mentions his conversation with Chauncey Gardiner on the benefits of inflation. Soon after, Chance is invited to appear on the "This Evening" television program to discuss the President's speech. The show producer picks up Chance and brings him to the studio. As the show begins, Chance is introduced as Chauncey Gardiner. The host asks him about the President's comparison of the economy to a garden. Chance says that everything in the garden will grow strong in due course. The host thanks Chance for his positive message as the audience applauds.



After arriving home from a trip, EE goes to visit Chance and tells him that she loves him. On Thursday morning, Chance finds out that Rand has fallen ill again. EE comes to Chance's room and asks if he will stay at the house indefinitely. She arranges for Chance to have a personal secretary.

Chance attends a United Nations reception as EE's escort. There he meets several diplomats, including Vladimir Skrapinov, the Soviet Ambassador. Skrapinov mistakes Chance's nonchalant responses for a love of Russian fables, as well as fluency in Russian. As Chance and EE are leaving the reception, they are surrounded by newspaper reporters. Chance tells them he only watches TV.

After seeing the press reports that refer to Gardiner, it occurs to the President that he should know more about him. He asks his secretary to get the information, but all she can find is a transcript of Gardiner's remarks on "This Evening". Meanwhile, Ambassador Skrapinov prepares a secret report on Gardiner. He calls Karpotov, chief of the Special Section, and requests all information on Gardiner.

EE and Chance go to her friend Sophie's house for dinner. After dinner, Chance heads upstairs with an older man and unwittingly watches while the man masturbates. Once he and EE return home, EE attempts to seduce Chance. He keeps saying that he likes to watch her. Finally EE begins to caress herself to the point of orgasm. She confesses to Chance he makes her feel good, and asks him to accompany her to the Capitol Hill ball.

Karpotov tells Skrapinov that despite their best efforts, they are unable to get any more information on Gardiner. Annoyed by this, Skrapinov contacts Sulkin in the Foreign Department to investigate Gardiner. In a private meeting with Skrapinov, Sulkin states that despite all of the technological analysis performed by his team, Chauncey Gardiner remains a blank page. It is Sulkin's belief that Gardiner represents an elitist faction planning to overthrow the government.

On Friday afternoon, the President's secretary reports that she has not found anything else. The President asks her to contact Walter Grunmann to continue the investigation. Shortly thereafter, Grunmann calls and says his team cannot find any record of Gardiner. He adds that while it is possible that Gardiner is a foreign agent, the complete lack of information is atypical for spies.

In a hotel suite, a group of men meet to discuss potential candidates for public office. A man named O'Flaherty recommends Chauncey Gardiner, for he has no background, comes across well on television, and appears to be one of them. At the Capitol Hill ball, a bewildered Chance heads to the garden, where he finally feels at peace.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Being There by Jerzy Kosinski is an allegorical tale about a man named Chance whose experience of the world is limited to his work as a gardener and what he has seen on television. Over the course of seven days, Chance leaves his employer and navigates his way through high society. His encounters with businessmen, world leaders, and the media are colored by his observations of life as seen in his former garden and on television.

It is Sunday and Chance is watering the garden. As he works, Chance considers the similarities and differences between people and plants. Both need to be cared for in order to live, survive disease, and die peacefully. However, plants are different in that they cannot think or know themselves. Plants cannot recognize themselves in a mirror, nor can they intend to do anything. Plants cannot help growing and the growth has no meaning for the plant, since it cannot reason or dream.

The garden is separated from the street by a brick wall. Chance has never stepped outside of the house and garden, and he has no curiosity about life on the other side of the wall. The Old Man lives in the front part of the house. The maid lives on the ground floor facing the garden. Chance lives across the hall, with his own room, bathroom, and a corridor leading out to the garden.

Chance goes inside and turns on the TV. Everything on TV is mixed up and yet orderly. Changing the channel allows Chance to change himself. He can go through phases, just like the plants in the garden, and twisting the TV dial enables Chance to change as rapidly as he wishes. The motion of the dial brings others inside Chance's eyelids. His experiences with television leads Chance to believe that it is he and no one else that creates his existence. Even though he cannot read or write, Chance believes he resembles the man on his TV screen more than he differs from him.

Chance hears a window open, then the maid's voice. He turns off the TV and steps outside. The maid is leaning out of the window, waving her arms. Chance does not like the maid, who arrived some time after Black Louise, the previous maid, got sick and returned to Jamaica. The new maid has admitted that she does not understand what she sees on TV, which she watches in her room. Chance only listens to the maid when she brings him food and tells him what the Old Man has eaten or said. The maid wants Chance to come upstairs, quickly.

Chance walks up the three flights of stairs, ignoring the elevator. He has not trusted the elevator since Black Louise got trapped in it for several hours. He reaches the front of the house and sees his reflection in the hall mirror. As he walks through the rooms, full of linen-covered furniture and veiled mirrors, Chance remembers the Old Man's first words to him. The Old Man took in Chance when his mother died during childbirth,



leaving him orphaned. No one, not even the Old Man, will tell Chance who his father is. Chance will never be able to manage reading and writing, nor will he be able to understand most of what people say to him or in his presence. He has been assigned to work in the garden. His name is Chance because he was born by chance. His mother, a very pretty woman, was mentally damaged. Chance's mind is also damaged and as a result he cannot have a life outside of his quarters in the house or garden. The maid will always bring him his food, and she will be the only person to see Chance and talk to him. The Old Man is the only person that may walk and sit in the garden. Chance must do exactly as he is told or else he will be sent to a special home for the insane where he will be locked in a cell and forgotten. Chance does what he is told, as did Black Louise.

Chance hears the maid yelling as he approaches the Old Man's room. He enters and sees the maid shouting into the phone. She sees Chance and points to the bed. The Old Man is propped up against the pillows, his head hanging to one side. Staring at the Old Man's face, Chance notices that one of the man's eyes is open and his upper jaw overlaps the lower lip. The maid hangs up the phone and says the doctor is on his way. Chance looks at the Old Man again, mumbles goodbye, and walks out. He goes back to his room and turns on the TV.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

The reader is introduced to the main character, Chance, an illiterate man who tends a garden and watches television. Through Chance's recollection of his first conversation with his benefactor, the Old Man, the reader learns that Chance is a mentally disabled orphan. There is some mystery as to Chance's origins. It is unclear as to whether Chance's mother was employed by the Old Man, or if the Old Man is Chance's father. The writer does suggest that the mother was also mentally disabled. Chance does not seem concerned by this lack of clarity.

The role that television plays in Chance's life is also introduced here. For Chance, television is his only exposure to the world outside of the house and the garden. He compares what he sees on television to how he exists in the world, which plays into the theme of television versus reality.

The theme of innocence is apparent in this chapter. The reader sees Chance as a man with no hands-on experience of the world outside the garden. Furthermore, Chance is not concerned at all with what goes on outside the garden walls. This nonchalance about the world foreshadows Chance's attitude once he does leave the garden.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Later on Sunday, Chance watches TV and hears the sounds of struggle coming from upstairs. He leaves his room and discreetly watches as men carry out the Old Man's body. Now that the Old Man is gone, someone will have to decide what will happen to the house, the maid, and Chance. On TV, Chance has seen relatives, bankers, lawyers, and businessmen show up after someone dies. The day comes to an end without incident. Chance eats dinner, watches TV, and goes to sleep.

In the morning, Chance eats breakfast and goes into the garden. Everything is in order and there are new buds showing. Chance thinks about how people do not exist unless someone looks at them, just like on television. People can only stay in one's mind that way, until they are erased by new images. He supposes that he is missing a lot by merely watching people on TV and not being watched by them. Now that the Old Man is dead, Chance is glad to think that he will now be seen by people that have never seen him before.

Chance rushes inside to answer his phone. A man's voice asks him to come to the study. He changes into one of his best suits, grooms himself, and goes upstairs. In the study, there is a man and a woman sitting behind a desk covered in papers. The man gets up and introduces himself as Thomas Franklin, a lawyer from the law firm that is handling the Old Man's estate. He introduces his assistant, Miss Hayes. Chance shakes Franklin's hand and nods at Miss Hayes.

Franklin tells Chance that the maid reported a man living in the house and working as the gardener. However, there are no records to indicate any man was employed by the Old Man or lived in the house over the last forty years. Franklin asks Chance how many days he has been there. Surprised by this revelation, Chance hesitates to answer. He replies that he has lived in the house for as long as he can remember, since he was little and before the Old Man broke his hip and became bedridden. Chance adds that he has lived there before television. Franklin asks Chance for his name. Chance hesitates again, since he knows from television that a man's name has an important connection with his life. This is why people on TV have two names: their own outside of TV and the one they use each time they perform. He replies that his name is Chance. Franklin asks if his name is Mr. Chance, and he says yes.

Franklin picks up some of the papers, saying that they have a complete record of everyone that was employed by the Old Man and his estate. The will has not been found, and there are very few personal documents. Franklin consults the list of employees and Miss Hayes invites Chance to sit down. Franklin says he cannot find Chance's name anywhere on the list, and he asks Chance if he is certain about his employment. Chance responds that he has always been the gardener and has worked in the garden for as long as he can remember. He began work as a little boy, when the



trees were small and the hedges were practically nonexistent. Franklin interrupts and tells Chance that there is no indication that a gardener has been living in the house and working there. As the people assigned to handle the estate, Franklin and Miss Hayes have all the inventories, and there is no account of Chance's employment. Franklin asks if Chance is a professional gardener. Chance replies that he is a gardener and no one knows the garden better than he does. Since he was a child, Chance is the only one who has ever worked in the garden. A tall black man stayed only long enough to tell Chance what to do and show him how to do it; after that, Chance was on his own. Gesturing toward the garden, Chance reports that he planted some of the trees and flowers, cleaned the paths, and watered the plants. The Old Man used to come to the garden to sit, read, and rest, until one day he stopped. Franklin tells Chance that he wants to believe him, but there is still no record of Chance's presence in the house or of his employment. He murmurs to Miss Hayes that there were very few employees at the house, and the Old Man retired from the firm more than twenty-five years ago, when he broke his hip at the age of seventy-two. Despite his age, the Old Man was always in control of his affairs. Franklin says that there is a record of one imported maid after Louise left. Chance says he knows Louise and that she can tell Franklin that Chance has lived and worked in the house. She was in the house ever since Chance was little and brought food to his room every day, and occasionally she would sit with him in the garden. Franklin tells Chance that Louise became ill and died recently. Franklin insists that anyone ever employed by the Old Man has always been properly paid, as his firm was in charge of such matters. Chance replies that he never knew any of the other people working in the house, as he always stayed in his room and worked in the garden. Franklin repeats that he wants to believe Chance, but there is just no trace of him in the records. The current maid is not sure how long Chance has been there. Furthermore, the firm has all the deeds, checks, and insurance claims from the past fifty years.

Franklin asks Chance if he remembers signing any papers during his employment and residence in the house. Chance says no. Franklin asks how Chance was paid, and Chance replies that he has never been given any money. He was given his meals, a room and bathroom, and a door that leads out to the garden. He has a radio and television with remote control. He has been allowed to go into the attic and choose any of the Old Man's suits to wear, all of which fit him very well. The Old Man's coats, shoes, shirts, and ties are also available to him. Miss Hayes interrupts and says Chance's clothes are quite stylish. Franklin turns to Chance and asks if he has been contracted for his work in any way, and Chance replies that he doesn't think so. Franklin asks if the Old Man ever promised a salary or other payment, and Chance says no one promised him anything. He rarely saw the Old Man, as he stopped coming into the garden since the bushes on the left side were planted, and those bushes have since grown to shoulder height. Franklin asks Chance to produce some identification that shows his address, such as a checkbook, driver's license, or medical insurance card. Chance says he does not have any of those items. Miss Hayes suggests a birth certificate, and Chance replies that he doesn't have any papers. Franklin states that they need proof that Chance has lived there. Chance says that they have him; he is right there, so what additional proof do they need?





Franklin asks if Chance has ever been ill and gone to the doctor or the hospital, but Chance says he has never been ill. Franklin notices that Miss Hayes is looking at Chance admiringly. He asks for the name of Chance's dentist. Chance replies that he has never been to a dentist or doctor; in fact, he has never been outside of the house and no one has ever been allowed to visit him. Franklin asks if Chance paid any taxes, and Chance says no. He asks if Chance served in the army, and Chance says no, but that he has seen the army on TV. Franklin asks if Chance is related to the Old Man and Chance again says no.

Franklin inquires if Chance plans to make any claim against the Old Man's estate. Chance does not understand and replies that he is perfectly fine and the garden is good. Miss Hayes asks what Chance's plans are, if he will work for someone else. Chance considers what to say, for he does not know why he would have to leave. He states that he would like to stay and work in the garden. Franklin picks up a paper from the desk and hands it to Chance, asking him to read and sign the document if he agrees to it. Chance picks up the paper and stares at it. He tries to guess how long it would take to read a page, for on television the time it takes to read legal papers varies. Chance knows that he should not tell them that he cannot read or write. On TV, people that do not know how to read or write are mocked and ridiculed. Chance pretends to concentrate on the paper by wrinkling his brow and scowling. He hands the sheet back to Franklin and says he cannot sign it. Franklin asks if Chance is refusing to withdraw his claim. Chance responds that he merely cannot sign it. Franklin gathers the papers and tells Chance that the house will be closed at noon the next day, and both doors and the garden gate will be locked. He tells Chance that if he does live there, he will need to move out and take all of his belongings. Franklin reaches into his pocket and hands a business card to Chance, telling him that his name, the firm's address and phone number are on the card. Chance puts the card into his vest pocket and leaves the room—there is an afternoon TV program he always watches and he does not want to miss it. He throws the card away on the staircase.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Chance's encounter with Thomas Franklin and Miss Hayes marks his first meeting with anyone outside of the Old Man and the maids. Chance has the expectation that, like on television, just being seen by people makes him exist. As a result, he does not understand Franklin's battery of questions. Chance is almost childlike in his ignorance and innocence about everything related to his employment and identification. Furthermore, Franklin's skepticism and unwillingness to just accept Chance's existence as proof that he worked for the Old Man suggests that Chance does not, in fact, exist. This plays into the theme of television versus reality, as well as the theme of innocence. It is important to note that Franklin's refusal to believe in Chance's authenticity foreshadows events that will happen in Chapter 4.

Chance's willingness to take on a different name, just as people on television do, suggests that he sees himself as a performer. It also foreshadows the name he will later receive from EE Rand in Chapter 3.

Miss Hayes' response to Chance foreshadows his future interactions with women. Even though she has just met him, Miss Hayes is extremely kind and somewhat flirtatious with Chance, complimenting him on his clothes and politely asking what he will do next.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

Early Tuesday morning Chance carries a suitcase down from the attic. He packs his things and leaves his room. After considering one last visit in the garden, Chance puts down the suitcase and goes outside. It is very peaceful in the garden. He stands there for a while, looking around. He disconnects the water sprinkler and walks back to his room. He turns on the TV and flicks through the channels. Different types of buildings flash across the screen. Chance turns off the TV and a small blue dot remains in the center of the screen, then disappears. He gets up and heads for the gate, remembering along the way to pick up the gate key, which has hung untouched in the corridor next to his room. Chance walks to the gate and inserts the key. He pulls the gate open, crosses the threshold, and leaves the key in the lock. He closes the gate behind him: now he can never return to the garden.

The sunlight outside the garden dazzles Chance, who is surprised to notice that everything outside the garden resembles what he has seen on TV. In fact, the objects and people are bigger and slower. Chance begins to walk down the block, the sun beating down his back. He finds a narrow space between two parked cars and turns to leave the sidewalk when he suddenly notices a limousine backing toward him. Chance attempts to jump past the car's rear bumper, but his heavy suitcase slows him down and he jumps too late. The limousine hits Chance, leaving him jammed against the headlights of the parked car behind him. Chance manages to slightly raise one knee but cannot raise his other leg. Crying out in pain, he punches his fist on the car's trunk and it stops. Chance's right leg is raised above the bumper and his left leg is still trapped. The black uniformed chauffeur jumps out of the limousine, hat in his hand. Realizing that Chance's leg is still pinned, the driver runs back to the car and drives a few inches forward, freeing Chance's leg. Chance tries to stand on both feet but collapses onto the edge of the sidewalk.

The rear door of the limousine opens and a woman gets out. She bends over Chance and asks if he is badly hurt. Chance looks at her and thinks she looks like many women he has seen on TV. He tells her in a trembling voice that he thinks his leg was crushed a bit. The woman exclaims and asks him to raise his pant leg so she can look at it. Chance pulls up his left pant leg, exposing a swelling reddish-blue blotch on his calf. The woman apologizes and says that her chauffeur has never had an accident before this. Chance tells her that he feels somewhat better. She replies that her husband has been very sick and that his doctors are staying in their home. It would be a good idea for Chance to come with her, unless he would rather see his own physician. Chance says he does not know what to do and she asks if he would mind seeing their doctor. Chance replies that he wouldn't mind and the woman says they will go to the hospital if the doctor says it is necessary. She helps Chance into the limousine and the chauffeur puts Chance's suitcase inside the car.



The woman introduces herself as Mrs. Benjamin Rand, and that her friends call her EE, which is short for Elizabeth Eve. Chance remembers that in similar situations on television, men will introduce themselves, so he tells her he is Chance the gardener. EE repeats Chauncey Gardiner back to him, and Chance notices that EE has changed his name. He assumes that, just like on television, he must use this new name from this point forward. She asks him if he would like some whiskey or cognac. The Old Man did not drink and did not allow his servants to drink, so Chance is confused. Black Louise would sneak a drink in the kitchen occasionally, however, and sometimes insisted that Chance try some alcohol as well. He thanks EE and says he will have some cognac. EE opens the built-in bar and pours Chance a glass of cognac. She tells Chance to drink it all, as it will do him good. Chance tastes the cognac and sputters. EE smiles and tells Chance they will be home soon and he will be cared for there. Chance sips the drink and notices a small TV set concealed above the bar. He is tempted to turn it on, but continues sipping the cognac. He asks EE if the TV works and she replies that it does. He asks her to turn it on and she does, saying it will take his mind off of the pain. EE asks him if he wants to watch any particular channel or program, and he tells her that the current channel is fine. A car suddenly pulls in front of the limousine and the chauffeur brakes sharply. Chance braces himself for the lurch and feels a piercing pain in his leg. Everything begins to spin around him and he blacks out.

Chance wakes up in a room full of sunlight. EE is with him. She tells Chance that he has lost consciousness but that they are at home. A man wearing a white smock and black eyeglasses enters the room and tells Chance that he is his doctor. He jokes to EE that her victim is very handsome and says that he has to examine Chance, so she should probably leave. As EE is leaving, the doctor tells her that Mr. Rand is sleeping and should not be disturbed until late in the afternoon.

Chance's leg is tender and a purple bruise covers his calf. The doctor tells Chance that he will have to give him an injection so that he can examine the leg without making Chance faint during the process. He removes a syringe from his leather case. As he fills it, Chance thinks about all the times he has seen injections being given on TV. He expects that the injection will hurt, but he does not know how to show that he is scared. The doctor says he is just in a mild state of shock and it is possible there is some damage to the bone. He administers the injection quickly and Chance notices there is no pain. After a few minutes, the doctor reports that there is no bone injury and Chance needs to rest until the evening, at which point he can get up for dinner if he likes. Chance must not put any weight on the injured leg. The doctor says that he will inform the nurse to give Chance an injection every three hours and a pill at mealtimes. He will arrange for X-rays the next day if necessary. The doctor tells Chance to have a good rest and leaves the room.

Chance begins to fall asleep but opens his eyes when EE returns. She apologizes for disturbing Chance, but she has spoken with the doctor and he has told her that all Chance needs is rest. EE confesses that she feels very guilty and responsible for the accident and hopes it does not inconvenience him too much. Chance tells her not to worry and that he is very grateful for her help. EE asks if there anyone that Chance needs to contact, such as a wife or family. He responds that he has no wife or family. EE



asks if Chance's business associates need to be notified. She asks if he needs a secretary, as her husband's staff has very little to do because of his extended illness. Chance says he does not need anything. EE presses him for someone to call, and Chance repeats that there is no one. She tells him that if he does not have any business to attend to right away, she would like him to stay at the house until his injury has completely healed. EE says there is plenty of room and the best medical care available. Chance accepts her offer and EE thanks him. He overhears her tell the servants to unpack his suitcase.

Chance wakes up in the late afternoon, feeling dizzy and unaware of his surroundings. He recalls the accident, the car, EE, and the doctor. Next to his bed is a television. Chance turns it on and watches the images. Just as he decides to get up, EE calls to ask him how his leg feels and if he is up for tea and sandwiches and a visit. He says yes. A maid enters the room and places a tray on the bed. Chance eats the food slowly, just as he has seen on TV.

EE comes in as Chance is resting and watching television. She pulls a chair up to the bed and Chance reluctantly turns off the TV. She asks about his leg and he tells her he has some pain. EE tells Chance that Mr. Rand, her husband, is in his seventies and much older than she. He is still very involved in his business affairs. EE regrets that they do not have children, especially considering that Rand has cut all ties to his ex-wife and son. EE confesses that she feels responsible for the rift between Rand and his son, for Rand divorced the boy's mother in order to marry EE. Chance thinks he should show interest in what EE is saying, so he begins to repeat parts of her sentences, a tactic he has seen on TV. Each time he repeats EE's words, she brightens and looks more confident and at ease. She begins to touch Chance's shoulder or arm to emphasize her points. Chance watches her as if she is on television.

A knock on the door interrupts their conversation: it is the nurse with Chance's injection. EE leaves the room and asks Chance to have dinner with her and Mr. Rand, who is beginning to feel better. Chance wonders if Mr. Rand will ask him to leave the house. The thought of leaving does not bother Chance, as he assumes he will eventually have to go, but what comes next is hidden, just like on television. The actors on the new program are unknown, but Chance does not have to be afraid. Everything that happens has a sequel, and the best Chance can do is patiently wait for his next appearance. He turns on the TV at the same time a valet comes in carrying Chance's freshly cleaned and pressed clothes.

EE calls Chance and asks him to come downstairs and join her and Mr. Rand for dinner. At the bottom of the stairs, a servant escorts Chance to the drawing room, where EE and Mr. Rand are waiting. Chance notices that Mr. Rand is almost as old as the Old Man. Rand looks at Chance's leg and tells him not to put any strain on it. He says that EE told him about the accident, and that there is no excuse for it. Chance responds that it is nothing and he feels much better. It is the first time Chance has ever had an accident. A servant pours Chance some champagne and he sips a little before dinner is announced.



Chance and Rand follow EE to the dining room where the table is laid for three. Chance decides to behave based on a TV program where a young businessman frequently dines with his boss and the boss's daughter. Rand comments that Chance looks healthy but that the accident must be preventing him from attending to his business. Chance replies that he has already told Mrs. Rand that his house has been closed up and he does not have any urgent business. He was just expecting something to happen when the accident occurred. Rand looks at Chance expectantly, and Chance realizes that his answer was not enough. He says that it is not easy to obtain a suitable place, a garden, where one can work without interference and grow with the seasons. There are not many opportunities left anymore. On TV, Chance has seen forests, jungles, and sometimes trees, but never gardens. Rand compliments Chance on his words and asks if he can call him Chauncey. He continues to say that a gardener is the perfect description of what a real businessman is. Rand exclaims that a productive businessman is indeed a laborer in his own vineyard. Relieved that his words have been well received, Chance thanks Rand for the compliment. Rand tells Chance to call him Ben. Chance nods and says that he will never find another garden as wonderful as the one he has left. Everything that grew in the garden was Chance's doing. Now it is gone, and all that is left is the room upstairs, gesturing toward the ceiling. Rand misinterprets Chance's words, saying that Chance is still very young and he does not need to talk about the room upstairs. Rand admits that he will be going there soon, not Chance, as both he and EE are so young. EE protests, and Rand stops, but adds that all that is left for him is a room upstairs. Chance wonders what Rand means, for how can he move into the upstairs room while Chance is still in the house?

During dinner, Chance does not drink the wine, for on TV, wine puts people in a state they cannot control. Rand asks how Chance will care for his family if he does not find an opportunity soon. Chance says he has no family. Rand asks how could a handsome young man like Chance not have a family. Chance replies that he has not had the time. Rand shakes his head, saying Chance's work must have been very demanding. He asks if he ever wanted a family, and Chance replies that he does not know what it is to have a family. Rand says that Chance truly is alone.

The servants bring in another dinner course and Rand tells Chance that there is something about him that he likes. He can speak to Chance frankly, and Chance is very direct and grasps things quickly and states them plainly. Rand says he is the chairman of the board of the First American Financial Corporation. The corporation has begun to assist businesses ravaged by inflation, taxes, and other problems. The plan is to offer the "gardeners" of the business community a helping hand, for these businesses are the strongest defense against the conglomerates that threaten the well being of the middle class. Rand tells Chance that they need to discuss this at great length when Chance is feeling better. He suggests that perhaps Chance can meet with some of the board members in order to get further acquainted with the project and its goals. Rand says he does not want to rush Chance; however, he wants Chance to consider what he said, for Rand might not be around much longer. EE protests again, but Rand continues to say that he is sick and weary, like a tree whose roots have come to the surface. Chance stops listening and thinks instead of his garden, where none of the trees ever had their roots surface or wither. The trees in the garden were all young and healthy. He tells



Rand that he will consider what he has said. They get up from the table and go into the library.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

At the beginning of the chapter, Chance is reluctant to leave the garden, yet is resigned to it happening. The garden symbolizes innocence, one of the novel's key themes. Chance leaves his innocence behind as he ventures out into the world.

The accident outside of the Old Man's home and garden marks Chance's first adventure in the outside world. While eating dinner with the Rands, Chance even admits that he was anticipating something would happen when the accident occurred. Chance's relaxed attitude about the accident illustrates the theme of being in the moment and accepting whatever happens in life.

In Chapter 3, the reader is introduced to the Rands. EE Rand is the young wife of the ailing and aged businessman, Benjamin Rand. She is in the limousine when it hits Chance, and it is she who makes the decision to bring Chance to her home for diagnosis and treatment by her husband's doctors.

Chance's comments to Rand about gardening mark the first time that his words are interpreted as a metaphor for his business activities. Rand is the first person to take Chance's words and infuse them with even more meaning and symbolism than Chance intended. This foreshadows the impact of Chance's words on other people.

Chapter 3 features the second occasion when Chance receives a new name. When he meets EE after the accident, he says he is Chance the gardener. Rather than calling him Chance, EE repeats the name "Chauncey Gardiner". Referring back to the theme of television versus reality, Chance assumes that this will be his new name during this portion of the "program". It is interesting to note that Chance's new name is reminiscent of societies in which a man's occupation became his last name.

It should be noted that Chance's first experience outside the garden does not scare him. Even though he considers the possibility that Rand will ask him to leave his house, Chance knows from watching television that the story does not always end that easily. He likens his real-world experience to what he sees on TV, once again emphasizing the theme of television versus reality.





# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

It is Wednesday. As Chance is getting dressed, the phone rings. It is Rand, wishing Chance a good morning for himself as well as EE, for she has flown to Denver. Rand tells Chance that the President will address the annual luncheon meeting of the Financial Institute later that day. Aware of Rand's illness and his inability to preside over the meeting, the President will come visit Rand before the meeting. The President will land at Kennedy Airport and come to Manhattan via helicopter, arriving at the Rand home in an hour. Rand says he wants Chance to meet the President, as he feels they will get along. The Secret Service will be at the house soon to secure the place, and Rand's secretary will notify Chance when they arrive. Rand adds that the Secret Service will have to search Chance personally, for no one in close proximity to the President is allowed to carry any sharp objects. He jokes that Chance should not show them his mind, for it might be taken away from him. Following Rand's instructions, Chance removes his tie clip and takes his comb out of his pocket. He is not sure what Rand meant by his mind being taken away from him. Chance looks in the mirror and likes what he sees. His hair glistens, his skin is ruddy, and his freshly pressed suit fits him well. After a bit, Rand's secretary calls and tells Chance the President's men are coming upstairs. Four men enter the room and begin to go through it with various devices. Chance sits at the desk and watches TV. He changes channels and sees a large helicopter landing in a field in Central Park. The television announcer explains that the President is landing in New York City. The Secret Service men stop working and watch the TV. One man comments that the Boss has arrived and they better hurry with the other rooms. Chance is alone when Rand's secretary calls and announces the President's arrival.

Chance heads downstairs, noticing the Secret Service men moving all over the house. One agent searches Chance, apologizes for the delay, and admits him to the library. Rand walks up and says that he is glad Chance will have the opportunity to meet the Chief Executive, a fine man with a sense of justice and good judgment of the electorate. Rand adds that it is a shame that EE cannot be there, as she is a fan of the President and finds him attractive. Rand says that she will want to hear Chance's views on the President and how the afternoon went. He asks Chance to speak with EE and tell her about the meeting if Rand happens to be asleep when she calls later. Chance replies that he will be glad to talk with EE, adding that he hopes Rand feels well and that he looks better. Rand admits that he asked the nurse to fix him up so that the President wouldn't think he was going to die during their conversation. He states that no one likes a dying man because few people know what death is, they only know the terror of it. Chance is an exception, says Rand, who, along with EE, admires Chance's balance. He does not waver between fear and hope, but is instead truly a peaceful man.

Rand reaches for a pill, swallows it, and sips a glass of water. The phone rings and Rand answers, telling the caller that he and Mr. Gardiner are ready, and to show the





President into the library. Rand moves the water glass to a bookshelf behind the desk and tells Chance that the President is on his way. Chance remembers seeing the President on television recently during a military parade. Rand rises to greet the President as he enters the room, saying it is very thoughtful of him to visit a dying man. The President hugs Rand and tells him to sit down. Rand introduces Chance as Mr. Chauncey Gardiner. The President smiles and extends his hand to Chance, who remembers that the President always looks straight at the viewers during his TV press conferences. The President tells Chance that he is delighted to meet him, as he has heard a lot about him. Chance does not know how this is possible. The President leans over to Rand and says that the country needs him and as the Chief Executive, he did not authorize Rand's retirement. Rand states that he is ready to part with the world. The President lights a cigarette and asks why Rand is not addressing the Financial Institute meeting that afternoon. Rand says that he cannot attend under doctor's orders. The President concedes and adds that it is just another meeting and Rand will be there in spirit, for the Institute was Rand's creation and his stamp is on all of its activities. The two men begin to talk at length.

Chance does not understand the majority of their conversation, even though they frequently look at him as if to get him to participate. Chance thinks they are purposely speaking in another language for purposes of secrecy. The President suddenly addresses Chance, asking him what he thinks about the bad season on Wall Street. Chance stares at the carpet and finally says that growth has its season in a garden. There are spring and summer, as well as fall and winter, then it is spring and summer again. He adds that as long as the roots are not severed, all is well and will continue to be well. Chance looks up and sees Rand nodding at him and the President looking pleased. The President admits that what Chance has said is one of the most refreshing, optimistic statements he has heard in a long time. He says that many people forget that nature and society are one, and while society has tried to cut itself off from nature, it is still part of it. The economic system remains, in the long run, stable and rational, in the same way that nature does. The President stops and turns to Rand, adding that the inevitable seasons of nature are welcomed, yet the economic seasons upset people, which he finds to be rather foolish. He smiles at Chance and says he envies Mr. Gardiner's good sense, for it is lacking on Capitol Hill. The President glances at his watch. He tells Rand that when he is feeling better, he and EE must come to Washington for a visit. Turning to Chance, the President says he hopes Chance will honor his family with a visit. The President embraces Rand, shakes Chance's hand, and leaves.

Rand picks up his water glass from the shelf, downs another pill, and slumps in his chair. He says to Chance that the President is a decent fellow. Chance agrees, adding that he looks taller on television. Rand exclaims that he does, but to remember that the President is a politician who waters every plant he encounters with kindness, despite what he may really think. He asks Chance if he agrees with Rand's position on credit and tight money as he presented it to the President. Chance confesses that he is not sure he understood it, which is why he kept quiet. Rand counters that Chance said a lot, and that it is what he said and how he said it that pleased the President so much. The President hears Rand's type of analysis from many people, but it is rare that he hears



Chance's type of input. The phone rings and Rand answers it. He says the nurse is waiting with Chance's injection. Chance heads upstairs and turns on the TV in time to see the presidential motorcade along Fifth Avenue. The President's hand waves from the limousine window at the crowds lining the sidewalk. Chance is not sure if he actually shook that same hand only moments earlier.

The annual meeting of the Financial Institute opens with much expectation and tension, for it has just been announced that national unemployment rates have risen to unprecedented levels. Government officials refuse to comment on what measures the President will take regarding the economy. The President's speech at the Institute reassures the public that nothing drastic will be done. He adds that there is a time for spring and summer, but there is also the inevitable chill and storms of autumn and winter. As long as the seeds of industry remain firmly embedded in the country, the economy will certainly flourish again. During the informal question-and-answer session, the President reveals that he has consulted members of the Cabinet and Congress, as well as leaders in the business community. He pays tribute to Benjamin Rand, chairman of the Institute, and adds that he had a very fruitful discussion with Rand and Mr. Chauncey Gardiner on the benefits of inflation. The President states that inflation will prune the dead limbs of savings, thus enlivening the trunk of industry. It is within the context of this speech that Chance comes to the attention of the media.

That afternoon, Rand's secretary calls to ask Chance if he will speak on the phone with Tom Courtney from the New York Times. Chance agrees and the secretary puts Courtney through. Courtney apologizes for disturbing Chance, for he wouldn't have done so if he had been able to first talk to Rand. He says that Rand has mentioned that because of Chance's character and vision, there is a possibility he will join the board of the First American Financial Corporation. Courtney asks if Chance wishes to comment, and Chance says no. Courtney pauses, then says the Times is covering the President's speech and his New York visit. He asks if Chance wishes to comment on the discussion between the President and Rand. Chance replies that he enjoyed it very much. Courtney asks what is Chance's relationship between his business and the First American Financial Corporation. Chance replies that he should ask Rand. Courtney says that since Rand is ill, he is taking the liberty of asking Chance. Chance is silent while Courtney waits for an answer. Chance finally states that he has nothing more to say and hangs up.

In his office, Courtney leans back in his chair and frowns. He calls his staff in and tells them that he spoke to Rand, who told him that Chauncey Gardiner, the man mentioned by the President, is a businessman, financier, and a strong candidate for a vacant seat on the board of the First American Financial Corporation. Courtney adds that he also spoke with Gardiner and found him to be very concise and matter-of-fact. There is not enough time for the staffers to get all the information on Gardiner, so Courtney tells them to play up Chance's connection to Rand, his joining the board of First American Financial Corporation, and his advice to the President.

Chance watches TV in his room. The President's speech is shown on several channels, while the other channels air family games and children's programs. Chance eats lunch



in his room and is just about to fall asleep when Rand's secretary calls. She says the executives of the "This Evening" television program have just called, asking Chance to appear on the show that night. They have apologized for the late notice, but the Vice President is unavailable and Rand has suggested that Chance might be willing to go instead, as he is a financier that has made a favorable impression on the President. Chance cannot imagine what is involved in being on television. He wants to see himself reduced to the screen's size and become an image that dwells inside the TV set. Chance says he will do it. The secretary tells him the producer will pick Chance up in time for the show. Chance turns on the TV and wonders if a person changes before or after appearing on the screen. He considers whether he will be changed forever or only during the appearance, and what part of him will be left behind when the program is over. Will there be two Chances after the show—the Chance watching TV and the Chance that appeared on TV?

Later in the evening, the "This Evening" producer, a short man wearing a dark suit, comes to get Chance. The producer explains that the President's speech has increased public interest in the country's economic situation. He tells Chance that he is very grateful to have Chance tell the viewers exactly what is going on with the economy. Considering Chance's intimate relationship with the President, he is ideally suited to provide an explanation. On the show, Chance can be as direct as he would like, and the host will not interrupt Chance while he is talking. The producer adds that the host would be honored to meet Chance before the show goes on. The men get into the limousine sent by the television network and head to the studio.

The studio's interior looks like all the TV studios Chance has ever seen on television. He is taken quickly to an adjoining office and is offered a drink, which he refuses. The host of the show appears and Chance recognizes him instantly. He has seen him many times on "This Evening", even though Chance does not really care for talk shows. While the host drones on at him, Chance wonders what is going to happen next and when he will be televised. The host finally stops talking and the producer returns with the makeup man. As he applies powder to Chance's face, the makeup man asks if Chance has appeared on television a lot. Chance replies that he has not, but he watches it all the time. The producer and makeup man chuckle, and the makeup man finishes his work. He wishes Chance good luck and leaves.

Chance waits in another room and watches the beginning of the show on a TV monitor. The producer appears suddenly and signals Chance to follow him. They walk through the door and past a heavy curtain. Chance hears the host say his name. As the producer steps away, Chance finds himself in the glare of the lights and sees the audience before him. Three large cameras stand on the stage, and the host sits at a table to the right. The host smiles, gets up, and introduces Chance. The audience applauds. Chance imitates what he has often seen on TV and moves to the vacant chair at the table. He sits down, as does the host. The cameramen wheel the cameras around them, and the host leans in toward Chance.

As he faces the cameras and the audience, who are barely visible in the studio's background, Chance abandons himself to what will happen. The cameras are recording



Chance's every movement and sending his image into millions of TV screens around the world. Chance will be seen by more people than he could ever meet in his life, people that would never meet him. The people that are watching Chance do not know who is actually facing them, and how could they, if they have never met him? As he faces the cameras, Chance becomes only an image for millions of real people that will never know how real he is, since Chance's thinking cannot be televised. To Chance, the viewers only exist as images or projections of his own thoughts. He will never know how real they are, since he has never met them and does not know what they think.

The host says that everyone in the studio is honored to have Mr. Chauncey Gardiner (Chance) with them tonight, as are the forty million Americans watching the program. The host adds that they are especially grateful that Chauncey could fill in on short notice for the Vice President, who had a scheduling conflict and could not come. The host pauses, then asks Chance if he agrees with the President's view of the economy. Chance asks which view, and the host smiles. He clarifies that he means the view that the President expressed in his address to the Financial Institute of America. The host adds that before his speech, the President consulted with Chance, among other financial advisers. In the speech, the President compared the country's economy to a garden and suggested that after a period of decline, there would be a time of growth. Chance replies that he knows the garden very well, for he has worked in it all of his life. He says the trees, shrubs, and flowers in the garden are all good and healthy, as long as the plants are trimmed and watered in the right seasons. Chance adds that the garden needs a lot of care, and he agrees with the President in that everything in the garden will grow strong in due course. He concludes by saying that there is still plenty of room in the garden for new trees and flowers of all kinds. Part of the audience boos Chance, while part of them applauds. Chance looks at the TV set to his right and sees the audience members, some of whom approve of his words, while others appear angry. The host's face pops up on the screen and Chance turns to face him. The host compliments Chance's comments, adding that it was a booster for those who dislike hearing complaints or gloomy predictions.

The host asks Chance to clarify his view that the economy's slowing, the downturn in the stock market, and the increase in unemployment is all just a phase or season in the growing of a garden. Chance says that in a garden, things grow, but they must wither first. Trees must lose their leaves in order to put forth new leaves, and to grow thicker, stronger, and taller. Some trees die but are replaced by saplings. Chance states that gardens need a lot of care, but if you love your garden, you do not mind working in it and waiting, for in the proper season you will see it flourish. The audience's excited murmuring drowns out the last bit of Chance's words. Behind him, the band members tap their instruments and a few shout loud bravos. Chance turns to the set beside him and sees his own face with his eyes turned to one side. The host lifts his hand to silence the audience, but the applause continues with a few isolated boos. He gets up slowly and motions Chance to join him at the center of the stage, where he hugs Chance and the audience roars. As the applause dies down, the host takes Chance's hand and thanks him, saying that his spirit is greatly needed by the country. He thanks Chance again, calling him a financier, presidential adviser, and true statesman. The host escorts Chance back to the curtain, where the producer greets Chance, telling him that he has



never seen anything like this in the three years he has produced the show. The producer takes Chance to the rear of the studio. Several employees wave to Chance, while others turn away.

After dinner with his wife and children, Thomas Franklin goes into his den to work. He works until he can no longer concentrate, then heads for his bedroom. His wife is already in bed and watching TV. Franklin tosses off his trousers and sits down on the bed to watch "This Evening", which is just starting. The host introduces Chauncey Gardiner, who moves into camera range. Even before Gardiner's face completely materializes on screen, Franklin feels he has seen this man before somewhere. He tries to remember if it was on TV or in person, for there is something very familiar about him, especially Gardiner's clothes. Franklin becomes so distracted with trying to remember if he has met Gardiner that he does not hear what is said on TV, including what prompts the audience to applaud. He asks his wife what was said, and she admonishes him for missing it. She relays that Gardiner stated the economy is doing fine, that it is supposed to be like a garden, for things grow and wilt. She exclaims that Gardiner thinks things will be okay. Franklin stares at the screen again, still trying to figure out where he has seen Gardiner before. His wife says Gardiner is well groomed and manly, with a beautiful voice. He reminds her of a cross between Ted Kennedy and Cary Grant. She adds that Gardiner is not a phony idealist or a corporate technocrat. Franklin envies Gardiner's looks, success, and self-assurance. He sighs, thinking cynically about the economy being like a garden.

On the way home from the studio, Chance watches TV in the limousine. He sees the host of "This Evening" with his next guest, a voluptuous actress. Chance hears his name mentioned by both the host and the actress, who says she finds Chance attractive and very masculine. Back at the Rands' house, several servants compliment Chance on his speech. In the elevator, Chance glances at the portable TV built into a side panel. "This Evening" is still on, and the host is now speaking with a singer. Chance's name is again mentioned.

Rand's secretary meets Chance upstairs. She calls his performance remarkable, adding that she has never seen anyone more at ease or truer to themselves. She states that she is thankful there are still people like Chance in the country. The secretary tells him that Rand saw him on TV and wants Chance to visit him in his room. As Chance enters, Rand props himself up in bed and congratulates Chance on his speech, saying it was very good. He tells Chance that he has the great gift of being natural, which is a rare talent and the true mark of a leader. Rand adds that Chance was strong and brave, yet not moralistic. Everything Chance said on TV was direct and to the point. Rand says that EE is chairman of the Hospitality Committee of the United Nations and will be attending the U.N. reception the next day. Since Rand is unable to escort EE, he wants Chance to take her. Chance's televised speech will be on many people's minds and Rand surmises that many people will want to meet Chance as a result. Chance agrees to accompany EE to the reception. Rand looks at Chance and thanks him. He asks Chance to take care of EE if anything happens to him, for she needs someone like Chance in her life. The men shake hands and say goodnight.





En route from Denver to New York, EE thinks about Chance. When she first saw him after the accident, Chance did not seem surprised. He behaved as if he expected the accident, the pain, and even EE's appearance. Two days have passed and she still does not know who he is and where he has come from. The day before, while the servants were eating and Chance was asleep, EE went through all of his belongings, but did not find any documents, checks, money, or credit cards. Chance is obviously wealthy, based on his hand-tailored clothes. Several times EE has tried to question Chance about his past, but each time he has resorted to a comparison taken from one of his favorite television shows or from nature. She assumes that he is troubled by a business loss, a bankruptcy, or a lost love. EE does not know anyone that relies more on themselves than Chance. His manner suggests that he is socially confident and financially secure.

EE cannot define how Chance makes her feel. He is often in her thoughts, and she has a hard time talking to him in even tones. From the start, EE has noticed that Chance is very careful to ensure that he says nothing to reveal what he thinks about anything at all. Unlike the other men that EE has been intimate with, Chance does not restrain nor repulse her. She is excited by the thought of seducing him, and the more withdrawn Chance is, the more she wants him to look at her and acknowledge her desire. EE sees herself making love to Chance without any hesitation.

EE arrives home late that evening and calls Chance to ask if she can come to his room. She comes in looking tired, apologizing for being away and for missing his TV appearance. She adds that she missed him, too. EE sits on the edge of the bed and Chance moves to give her more room. She brushes away her hair, looks at Chance, and puts her hand on his arm. She begs him not to run away from her, and rests her head on Chance's shoulder. Chance is confused, for there is no place for him to run. He tries to remember similar situations on TV. Usually, couples on TV would get close to each other and begin to kiss and embrace. On TV, though, the next phase was always unclear, for a new image would appear on the screen and the couple was forgotten. Chance knows that there can be other gestures and closeness that follows intimacy like he has seen on TV. He remembers a maintenance man that came to the Old Man's house. On several occasions, the man would go into the garden to drink beer after finishing work. Once he showed Chance some photographs of naked men and women. While the maintenance man was explaining to Chance what was in the photos, Chance would study them carefully. The images on paper were disturbing, for on television he had never seen the hidden parts of men and women or such strange embraces. When the maintenance man left, Chance looked at his body. His organ was small and limp, without any protrusions. The man had insisted that seeds come out of a man's organ whenever he experiences pleasure. Chance had prodded and massaged his organ, but felt nothing. Even in the morning, when he would wake up to find his organ enlarged, it would refuse to stiffen, so it gave him no pleasure at all. Chance has tried to figure out the connection, if any, between a woman's private parts and childbirth. In some television shows about doctors, hospitals, and operations, Chance has seen birth depicted, but he has not seen any show which explains why some women have babies and others do not.



EE smooths Chance's shirt and touches his chin. Chance does not move. EE whispers that she wants the two of them to become very close. She suddenly begins to cry. Chance assumes that he must be responsible for EE's sadness, but is not sure how. He puts his arms around EE, who leans against him and they tumble over on the bed. EE bends over Chance's chest and kisses his neck, forehead, eyes, and ears. Chance smells her perfume and thinks of what he should do next. Her hand touches his waist and begins to explore his thighs. After a while, she removes her hand. EE stops crying and lies quietly next to Chance. She says she is grateful that he is a man of restraint. She muses that he is not really American in some ways, that he behaves more like a European man. EE explains that unlike other men she has known, Chance does not use a lot of American tricks and flirtations, such as fingering, kissing, tickling, stroking, and hugging. She adds that Chance wants to conquer the woman from within her own self, to infuse in her the need, desire, and longing for his love. Chance is confused by EE's comment about him not being American. On television he has seen the dirty, noisy men and woman who declare themselves anti-American, or have been declared so by the police, government officials, or businessmen who call themselves American. These confrontations on TV frequently end in violence and death.

EE stands up and rearranges her clothes. She tells Chance that she is in love with him and she wants him. She leaves the room. Chance gets up and pats down his hair. He sits by the desk and turns on the TV.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

The theme of innocence comes up in the meeting between Rand, the President, and Chance. The meeting with the President marks Chance's first interaction with politicians. Just like the Rands, the President is completely charmed by Chance's simplicity. In contrast with Chance's innocence about politics, economics, and other issues, Rand and the President symbolize a cynical, jaded approach toward world affairs. Being in Chance's presence serves to lighten their cynicism and leads them toward regaining their lost innocence. It is important to note that everyone that comes into contact with Chance ends up peppering their own speech with euphemisms about gardening and nature. They mistake his earnest yet naïve responses for metaphor and use his words for their benefit.

This is also Chance's first encounter with the media from the other side of the television screen. In keeping with the television versus reality theme, Chapter 4 includes a very interesting commentary on reality and existence of the individual as it relates to television. Because he experiences television as being a reflection of reality, Chance has no problem surrendering to his first on-air experience. He believes that being watched makes someone real, yet he also knows that the images are merely a creation of his thoughts. The section where Franklin watches Chance on television illustrates Chance's point about how being watched makes someone real. It is interesting to note that Chance becomes more real to Franklin during his TV appearance, providing a dramatic contrast to Franklin and Chance's interaction at the Old Man's house in Chapter 2.



Through Chance's retelling of his first exposure to pornography, the reader discovers Chance's experience, or lack thereof, with human sexuality. Based on what he has seen on TV and the maintenance man's graphic photos, Chance is aware that EE's advances are indicative of sexual attraction and potential sexual activity. For whatever reason, Chance is not aroused by blatant sexual displays. This foreshadows Chance's sexual awakening in Chapter 5.

Once again the reader sees that women have a very positive reaction to Chance. This is illustrated by Franklin's wife, the actress on "This Evening", and finally EE. All three women display varying degrees of attraction to Chance, and their attraction seems to increase the more they watch him. This is yet another example of Chance's theory about how being watched makes a person become more real, thereby making them more appealing.





# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

It is Thursday. Chance turns on the TV as soon as he awakes, then calls the kitchen for his breakfast. While bringing in the breakfast tray, the maid tells him that Rand has had a relapse. Two more doctors have been summoned and they have been at Rand's bedside since midnight. She hands Chance a pile of newspapers and a typed note. After breakfast, EE calls and asks if he received her note and the papers. Apparently Chance has been described as one of the chief architects of the President's policy speech, and his comments on "This Evening" have been quoted next to the President's. EE praises Chance, telling him he was marvelous and that he impressed the President. Chance replies that he likes the President. EE asks if Chance is still going with her to the U.N. reception that afternoon, for all her friends want to meet him. Chance replies that he is happy to go. EE says she hopes he does not get bored, and they do not have to stay too late. After the reception, they can go see some of EE's friends who are giving a dinner party. Chance repeats that he is happy to go with her. EE exclaims that she is very happy, then drops her voice and asks if she can come see Chance, for she has missed him very much. Chance says yes and EE enters the room, her face flushed. She says she wonders if Chance will consider staying with them for a while. The invitation comes from both her and Rand. She begs Chance to say yes, for Rand is very ill and he told EE that he feels more secure with Chance under the same roof. EE throws her arms around Chance and presses her body against his, pleading with him to stay. Chance agrees and EE hugs and kisses him. She says they must get him a secretary, for now that Chance is in the public eye, he will need someone to help him with his affairs. EE asks if Chance has someone in mind, possibly someone that worked for him before. Chance says there is no one, and EE replies that she will start looking for someone right away.

Chance is watching TV before lunch when EE calls. She says she would like him to meet Mrs. Aubrey, who is with EE in the library. Mrs. Aubrey wants to be considered for the post of temporary secretary until a permanent employee can be found. Upon entering the library, Chance sees a gray-haired woman sitting next to EE on the sofa. EE introduces them and Chance shakes Mrs. Aubrey's hand, then sits down. EE says that Mrs. Aubrey has been Rand's secretary at the First American Financial Corporation for years, and she does not wish to retire. Rubbing his cheek, Chance does not respond. EE pulls up her wristwatch and says that Mrs. Aubrey can make herself available immediately. Chance finally says that he hopes Mrs. Aubrey will enjoy working at the Rands', for it is a fine household. EE looks at Chance and says it is settled. She leaves to prepare for the reception.

Chance watches Mrs. Aubrey, who has turned her head to one side and looks somewhat wistful. He does not know what to say, so he waits for Mrs. Aubrey to speak. She catches his stare and says they can start work, beginning with an outline of the nature of Chance's business and social activities. Chance interrupts her, asking her to



speak with Mrs. Rand about it. He gets up, as does Mrs. Aubrey. She tells him she is at his disposal, and that her office is next to Rand's private secretary. Chance thanks her and leaves the room.

At the United Nations reception, Chance and EE are greeted by members of the U.N. Hospitality Committee and are escorted to one of the most prominent tables. The Secretary-General approaches and greets EE with a kiss on her hand. EE introduces Chance as Mr. Chauncey Gardiner, adding that he is a very dear friend of Rand. The men shake hands. The Secretary says he admired Chance's appearance on television the night before and is honored to have him at the reception. They sit down and waiters arrive with canapés and trays of champagne. Photographers hover nearby, snapping pictures. A tall man approaches the table and the Secretary-General stands and introduces EE to Vladimir Skrapinov, Ambassador of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. EE smiles and says that she and Rand met the Ambassador two years ago in Washington. The Ambassador bows, sits, and talks with EE and the Secretary-General. Chance sits silently and looks over the crowd.

After a bit, the Secretary-General rises, says goodbye, and leaves. EE catches sight of the Ambassador of Venezuela and excuses herself. Skrapinov moves his chair closer to Chance's while the cameras flash. He saw Chance on "This Evening" and listened with much interest to Chance's down-to-earth philosophy. Skrapinov is not surprised that the President quickly endorsed Chance. He draws his chair closer and asks how Rand is doing, for he hears that his illness is quite serious but he did not want to upset Mrs. Rand with a detailed discussion. Chance replies that Rand is not well at all. The Ambassador looks at Chance intently and says it is clear to him that Chance will be called upon to play a role in the administration. Although he senses some hesitation on Chance's part regarding politics, Skrapinov counters that the diplomats such as he and the businessmen such as Chance should get together more often, for they are not so far from each other. Chance says they are not, for their chairs are almost touching. The Ambassador laughs and agrees that their chairs are indeed almost touching, and they both want to remain seated on them. He adds that neither he nor Chance wants his chair snatched out from under him, because if one man goes down, so does the other, and no one wants to be down before their time. Chance smiles and Skrapinov laughs again. The Ambassador bends toward Chance and asks if he likes Krylov's fables, for Chance has a Krylovian touch. Chance looks around and notices that he and Skrapinov are being filmed. He repeats Skrapinov's words back to him, seemingly touched and surprised by the comparison. Reading Chance's response to mean that Chance knows Krylov, Skrapinov gets very excited and begins to speak in another language. Chance has never been addressed in a foreign language before, so he raises his eyebrows and laughs. Astonished, the Ambassador assumes that Chance reads Krylov in Russian. He confesses that he had suspected as much, for he knows an educated man when he meets one. Chance begins to deny it when the Ambassador winks at him and says he appreciates Chance's discretion. Again he begins speaking Russian to Chance, but this time Chance does not react.

Accompanied by two diplomats, EE returns to the table. She introduces the men as Gaufridi, a député from Paris, and His Excellency Count von Brockburg-Schulendorff of



West Germany. EE says that she and Rand have visited the Count's castle near Munich. The men sit and the photographers take more photos. Skrapinov says that he and Chance have been sharing their love of Russian fables, for as it happens, Chance is an avid reader and admirer of Russian poetry in the original. The Count pulls his chair closer to Chance and tells him that he admires Chance's naturalistic approach to politics and economics as he stated on TV. He adds that now that he knows Chance has a literary background, he feels that he understands Chance's remarks much better. The Count announces that Russian literature has inspired some of the greatest minds of the age. Skrapinov exclaims that German literature has done the same, and mentions Pushkin's lifelong admiration for German literature. The Count nods, commenting that Hauptmann, Nietzsche, and Thomas Mann read the Russian masters. Gaufridi leans over to Skrapinov and says that when they met during World War II, they were dressed as soldiers, fighting the common enemy. He states that sharing literary influences is one thing, but sharing blood is another. Skrapinov smiles slightly and says that Gaufridi speaks of a time of war, many years ago, in another era. Now those soldier uniforms are in museums and they are now soldiers of peace. The Count excuses himself and shoves his chair aside. He kisses EE's hand, shakes hands with both Skrapinov and Chance, and bows to Gaufridi before leaving. The photographers continue taking pictures.

EE exchanges seats with Gaufridi so he can sit next to Chance. Gaufridi says to Chance that he has read up on Chance and watched him on television. He lights a cigarette and says that he understands from Skrapinov that Chance is also a man of letters. Looking at Chance, Gaufridi says that only by accepting fables as reality that humanity can move forward on the path of power and peace. He adds that many French industrialists, financiers, and members of government are very interested in developments of the First American Financial Corporation. Since Rand became ill, the view of these interested parties regarding the Corporation's course has become obstructed. He stops speaking, but Chance does not say anything. Gaufridi concludes by saying that they are pleased to hear that Chance will fill Rand's place in the event that he does not recover. Chance says that Rand will get well, for the President said so. Gaufridi says he hopes this is true, and yet no one can be sure. He is interrupted by Skrapinov's departure. Everyone stands up and Skrapinov moves toward Chance, saying quietly that if he should ever visit Russia, the government would be honored to offer Chance its hospitality. He shakes Chance's hand while the photographers click away and the film cameras roll. EE says that Chance must have impressed Skrapinov, and that it is a pity Rand is not there, for he enjoys talking about politics. She leans into Chance and says she did not know that he knew Russian. Gaufridi says it is very useful to speak Russian these days, and asks if Chance speaks any other languages. EE blurts out that Chance is a modest man who does not brag about his accomplishments. Lord Beauclerk, the chairman of the British Broadcasting Company, approaches EE to pay his respects. He tells Chance that he really enjoyed his blunt statements on television, adding that one does not want to work things out too carefully, at least not for the videots.

As Chance and EE are leaving, they are surrounded by reporters. EE introduces each of them to Chance. A young reporter steps forward and asks if Chance will answer



some questions. EE says that they must agree to not keep Chance too long. A reporter asks what Chance thinks of the editorial in the New York Times on the President's speech. Chance looks at EE, puzzled, but she returns his puzzled look. He tells them he did not read it. Someone repeats the question and again Chance says he did not read it. EE looks at Chance, first with amazement, then with admiration. One reporter asks if Chance at least glanced at the editorial, and Chance repeats that he did not read the Times. Another reporter says that the Post spoke of Chance's "peculiar brand of optimism" and asks if Chance read it. Chance says he did not read that, either. The reporter asks what he thinks of the phrase "peculiar brand of optimism," and Chance says he does not know what it means. EE steps forward and says that since Rand has been ill, Chance has many responsibilities and finds out what is in the newspapers from the staff briefings. An older reporter moves forward and says that he would be interested to know which newspapers Chance "reads" via the staff briefings. Chance replies that he does not read newspapers, he watches TV. The journalists are silent. One finally asks if that means Chance finds television coverage to be more objective than that of newspapers. Chance repeats that he watches TV. The older reporter thanks Chance for what may be the most honest admission by a public figure in recent years. As EE and Chance are about to leave the building, a young female photographer runs up to them. She apologizes for pursuing them and asks for one more picture, as Chance is very photogenic. Chance smiles at her and EE recoils slightly. Chance is surprised by EE's anger, as he does not know what upset her.

The President glances at the press digest from the previous day. All the major papers have reported the text of his speech at the Financial Institute of America, including his remarks about Rand and Gardiner. It occurs to the President that he should know more about Gardiner. He asks his personal secretary to gather all available information on Gardiner. Later in the day, he summons her to his office and takes the file she hands to him. Inside is a complete dossier on Rand, a brief interview with Rand's driver describing the accident, and a transcript of Gardiner's remarks on "This Evening." The secretary says that there does not seem to be any more information. The President responds that all he wants is the usual material they get before they invite people to the White House. The secretary says she consulted the standard sources, but they do not seem to contain anything on Chauncey Gardiner. The President asks again for just the basics. The secretary apologizes and repeats that she tried all of their usual sources. The President asks if he is supposed to assume that none of the agencies know anything about a man with whom he spent half-an-hour, in person, and whose name he quoted in his speech. He suggests she try Who's Who, and if that fails, the Manhattan telephone book. The secretary laughs nervously and says she will keep trying. She leaves the room and the President reaches for his calendar and jots "Gardiner?" in the margin.

Right after leaving the U.N. reception, Ambassador Skrapinov prepares a secret report on Gardiner. He writes that Chauncey Gardiner is shrewd and highly educated. Skrapinov sees Gardiner as a spokesman of American business circles who are intent on maintaining their status quo, even if it costs political and economic concessions to the Soviets. At home in the Soviet Mission to the U.N., Skrapinov calls his embassy in Washington and speaks to the chief of the Special Section. Stressing that this is a top



priority, Skrapinov requests all information concerning Gardiner. He also wants to find out the real reason why the President of the United States has singled out Gardiner among all of his economic advisers. The chief promises to deliver a complete dossier by the following morning. Next, the Ambassador supervises the preparation of small gifts for Gardiner and Rand. Each package includes several pounds of Beluga caviar and bottles of distilled Russian vodka. In Gardiner's package, Skrapinov has enclosed a rare first edition of Krylov's Fables, with Krylov's handwritten notes on many pages.

Later while shaving, Skrapinov decides to include Gardiner's name in a speech he will deliver that evening to the International Congress of the Mercantile Association in Philadelphia. The paragraph, which is inserted after his superiors in Moscow have already approved the speech, mentions the emergence in the United States of enlightened statesmen, such as Chauncey Gardiner, who are aware that unless leaders of opposing political systems move the chairs on which they sit close to each other, all of their seats will be pulled out from under them by way of social and political changes. Skrapinov's speech is a success, with the allusion to Gardiner picked up by the media. At midnight on TV, Skrapinov hears his speech quoted and sees a close-up of Gardiner. The voiceover states that within just two days, Gardiner has been referenced by both the President of the United States and the Soviet Ambassador to the United Nations.

EE and Chance arrive at the home of EE's friends and find themselves in a room at least three stories high. The room contains many sculptures and glass cases with shiny objects. Guests are scattered around the room and the waiters circulate with drinks. The hostess, Sophie, walks toward EE and Chance, her arms outstretched. Sophie and EE embrace and kiss each other's cheek, then EE introduces Chance. The woman reaches out her hand and holds Chance's for a moment, exclaiming that at last she meets the famous Chauncey Gardiner. Sophie looks him up and down and declares that he is even more handsome than his photographs, and that Women's Wear Daily was right about him being one of the best-dressed businessmen. She goes on to mention his height, broad shoulders, narrow hips, and long legs, until EE asks her to stop. Sophie asks them to follow her, for everyone is anxious to talk to Mr. Gardiner.

Chance is introduced to many guests. Next to a sharp-edged piece of furniture, a short bald man corners him. He introduces himself as Ronald Stiegler of Eidolon Books. Stiegler says that he watched Chance's television performance, and he has just heard that the Soviet Ambassador mentioned Chance's name in Philadelphia. He tells Chance that he and his editors are wondering if Chance would consider writing a book for them on his special subject. He thinks it would be to the country's advantage to widely promote Chance's philosophy, and Eidolon Books would be happy to do this for him. He can promise a six-figure advance against royalties and an agreeable royalty and reprint clause. The contract can be drawn up and signed within two days, and Chance could have the book to them in a year or two. Chance says he cannot write. Stiegler smiles and asks rhetorically if anyone can write these days. The publisher can provide Chance with their best editors and research assistants. Stiegler admits that he cannot even write a postcard to his kids. Chance says he cannot even read, and again Stiegler agrees, asking who, in fact, has time to read. He confesses that publishing is not exactly a flowering garden these days. Interested, Chance asks what kind of garden it is. Stiegler





answers that whatever kind of garden it once was, it is not anymore. Publishing is still growing and expanding, but with the recession and unemployment rates, books are not selling anymore. He says that for a tree of Chance's height, there is still a large plot available. Stiegler says he can see Chauncey Gardiner blooming under the Eidolon imprint. He offers to send Chance a note outlining the publisher's thoughts and dollar figures.

Dinner is announced. The guests are seated at several small tables arranged throughout the dining room. There are ten people at Chance's table, with a woman on either side of him. The conversation turns to politics. An older man asks Chance when the government is going to stop calling industrial by-products poisons. The man went along with the ban on DDT because it is a poison and there is no problem finding new chemicals, but he feels that stopping the production of heating oils because people do not like how kerosene decomposes is a completely different issue. Chance stares at the man and says nothing. The man adds that there is a big difference between petroleum ash and bug powder, and any idiot knows this. Chance says he has seen ashes and powders, and knows that both are bad for growth in a garden. The woman sitting on Chance's right side agrees loudly, and tells the person on her right that Chance is marvelous. She says to the group that Chance has the ability to reduce complex issues to the simplest terms. She adds that by bringing the discussion down to earth, she can see the priority and urgency that Gardiner and other influential men, such as the President, give to the issue. A man wearing pince-nez asks Chance if he believes that the President will be able to stop the downward trend. Chance replies that Rand said the President knows what he is doing. The two men spoke in Chance's presence, and that is what Rand said after the meeting. A young woman sitting on Chance's left asks him about the war. Chance asks which war, for he has seen many wars on TV. The woman replies that in this country, when people dream of reality, television wakes them up. She supposes that to millions of people, the war is just another TV show, but on the front lines, real men are giving their lives.

After dinner, Chance sips coffee in an adjoining sitting room. A man approaches him discreetly and introduces himself. He sits next to Chance and stares at him. The man is older than Chance, with long gray hair combed back from his forehead to the nape of his neck and large eyes with heavy eyelashes. He looks like several men that Chance has seen on TV. The man speaks softly and occasionally laughs. Chance does not understand what the man is saying, or why he laughs. Every time he feels the man expects an answer from him, Chance says yes, but mainly he smiles and nods. Suddenly the man bends over and whispers a question that requires a definite answer, yet Chance is uncertain what he asked, so he does not respond. The man repeats the question, and again Chance is silent. Leaning in closer, the man asks coldly if Chance wants to go upstairs and do it now. Chance does not know what the man wants him to do, and thinks it might be something that Chance cannot do. Finally Chance says that he would like to watch. Amazed, the man asks if Chance means he wants to watch him do it alone. Chance says yes, that he likes to watch very much. The man declares that if Chance wants this, then he wants it too.



After liqueurs are served, the man whispers to Chance that it is time for them to go upstairs. The two men move through the crowd toward the rear elevator. Chance looks around but does not see EE. In the elevator, the man suddenly grabs at Chance's groin. Chance does not know what to do. The man continues to grope at Chance, a friendly look on his face. Chance decides the best thing to do is nothing. The elevator stops and the man gets out first, leading Chance by the arm. They enter a bedroom and the man opens a concealed bar and offers Chance a drink, but he refuses. He also refuses to smoke the odd-smelling pipe the man offers him. The man pours himself a large drink and downs it quickly. He approaches Chance and hugs him, pressing his thighs against Chance's. The man kisses his neck and cheeks, then sniffs and ruffles his hair. Chance wonders what he has said or done to get such affection, and tries to recall if he has seen anything like it on television. He can only remember a single scene in which a man kissed another man, but even then it was unclear what was happening. He stays still. The man slips his hands under Chance's jacket, searching for something, then pulls away. He undresses quickly. The man kicks off his shoes and lays naked on the bed. He gestures to Chance, who stands beside the bed and looks down at the man. Much to Chance's surprise, the man is holding his flesh in his hand while he groans, jerks, and trembles. Having seen people on TV having fits, Chance assumes the man is ill. He leans over and the man grabs him. Chance loses his balance, nearly falling on the man's body. Reaching for Chance's leg, the man raises and presses Chance's shoe against his hardened organ. Seeing how the erect, extended part is growing stiffer under the edge of his shoe, Chance remembers the photos the maintenance man showed him at the Old Man's house. He feels uneasy, but lets the man continue and watches him tremble and scream. The man again presses Chance's shoe against his flesh, and from under the shoe a white substance comes out in slow spurts. The man's face goes pale and he jerks from side to side. His trembling stops and the man closes his eyes. Chance moves his foot away and leaves the room.

Chance goes back downstairs and walks down a long corridor toward the sound of voices. Back among the guests, Chance searches for EE. She finds him first and says she was afraid Chance grew bored and left the party, or had been kidnapped. EE adds that there are many women at the party who would love to make off with him. He replies that he went upstairs with a man, but the man got sick. EE says that Chance is always engaged in some discussion and that he should just relax and enjoy the party. Chance repeats that the man got sick, so he stayed with him for a while. EE responds that few men are as healthy as Chance and cannot handle all the drinking and chattering.

When they return home from the dinner party, Chance gets into bed and watches TV. The door opens and EE enters in her robe. Touching his shoulder, she tells him she cannot sleep. Chance wants to turn off the TV and turn on the lights, but EE asks him not to. She sits on the bed next to him and confesses that she had to see him. She throws off her robe and slips under his blanket, moving her body next to Chance's. He feels her hand run over his bare chest and hip, stroking and squeezing him as her fingers press into his skin. Chance extends his hand and lets it slide over her neck, breasts, and stomach. He feels EE's body tremble. Not knowing what else to do, he withdraws his hand. EE presses his face to her damp skin and makes noises that sound like an animal. She kisses his body repeatedly and moves her mouth down to his flaccid



flesh. Chance wants to tell her that he prefers to look at her, for he can only possess her by watching. He does not know how to explain that he cannot touch better with his hands than he can with his eyes. EE goes limp and says that he does not feel anything for her. Chance pushes her aside gently and sits up on the edge of the bed. EE cries out that she knows she does not excite him, but Chance does not understand what she means. He turns and says he likes to watch her. She stares at him and asks if that is all he wants, to watch her. He repeats that he likes to watch her. Grabbing at his flesh, EE asks if he is excited. Chance, in turn, touches her and moves his fingers inside her. Her body jerks and she begins to pull and suck his flesh into her mouth. Chance waits until she stops. EE cries that he does not love her, that he cannot stand it when she touches him. Chance repeats that he likes to watch her. She tells him she does not understand what he means. No matter what she does, he is not aroused. Suddenly realizing what he is saying, EE asks if Chance means he likes to watch her when she is alone. Chance says yes, he likes to watch her. EE asks if she touches herself, will he get excited and make love to her? Chance does not understand and repeats that he would like to watch her. EE gets up and paces the room for a few minutes, then returns to the bed, stretching out on her back. EE runs her hand over her body and spreads her legs apart. Her hands creep toward her belly and she sways back and forth. She quickly wraps her legs and arms around Chance and shakes violently, then stops and appears to be half asleep. Chance covers her with the blanket and changes the channels on the TV, keeping the sound low. They rest together in bed and he watches TV, afraid to move.

Sometime later, EE tells Chance that she is so free with him. Until she met Chance, EE was barely acknowledged by men she knew. She adds that when he watches her, the passion dissolves her desire and frees her. Chance remains quiet. EE stretches and smiles. She tells him that Rand wants Chance to fly to Washington with her the next day and take her to the Capitol Hill Ball. Since she is chairman of the Fund-Raising Committee, she must go, and she hopes he will come with her. Chance says he would like to go with her. She cuddles up next to him and dozes off again. Chance watches TV until he falls asleep.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter 5 marks the beginning of the investigations into Chance's background. While the politicians and foreign dignitaries are all taken with Chance, his authenticity is still questionable. This becomes particularly important to Skrapinov and the President. Their skepticism ties in with the theme of innocence, as they represent lost innocence.

When Chance meets Skrapinov and the other diplomats at the U.N. reception, he is once again being in the moment, a key theme in the novel. Even though Chance does not know about Krylov and his Russian fables, he can see that it is important to Skrapinov. Chance's agreeable nature is mistaken by Skrapinov as understanding.

The theme of television versus reality comes up several times in this chapter. Skrapinov's love of Russian fables is similar to Chance's love of television. Gaufredi makes the point that accepting fables as being true is sometimes necessary in order to





achieve power and peace. This parallels Chance's ideas on how the act of watching television creates a kind of reality. The point is made clearer during the dinner party, when a woman comments that television wakes people up to reality. This illustrates how frequently reality and television are seen as interchangeable.

Chance's simplicity and honesty are shown in his interaction with Stiegler, the book publisher. Despite the fact that he has seen television characters mocked for being illiterate, Chance admits to Stiegler that he cannot read nor write. Just like all the other characters in the novel, Stiegler interprets Chance's words as being metaphoric.

Chance experiences a sort of sexual awakening in this chapter, even though he is not completely aware of what is happening. His experience with the man at the party parallels his experience with EE back at the house. Both the man and EE are full of desire for Chance, and yet he cannot reciprocate. However, the limited sexual affection and attention he can offer is enough for both the man and EE.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

In the morning, Mrs. Aubrey calls Chance to tell him that he is in all of the morning papers. There are photos of Chance with Ambassador Skrapinov, the Secretary-General, and a German count. She adds that several major television networks have invited Chance for exclusive TV appearances. Magazines such as Fortune, Newsweek, Life, Look, Vogue, and House & Garden want to do stories on Chance. The Irish Times, Spectator, Sunday Telegraph, and The Guardian all want press conferences. She says that Lord Beauclerk asked her to inform Chance that the BBC is ready to fly him to London for a TV special and he hopes that Chance will be his houseguest. The New York bureaus of several international publications have called for appointments. Count von Brockburg-Schulendorff has called to say that Chance will be on the cover of Stern in Germany, and that they want world rights to his remarks on television and await Chance's terms. A French program wants Chance to discuss the American depression in a round-table interview. Gaufridi has offered his hospitality during Chance's visit to France. Lastly, Mrs. Aubrey says the directors of the Tokyo Stock Exchange want Chance to inspect a data-retrieving computer. Chance interrupts Mrs. Aubrey and says that he does not want to meet them. She goes on to say that the Wall Street Journal has predicted Chance's appointment to the board of the First American Financial Corporation and they would like a statement. She recommends that Chance give them a prognosis. Chance states that he cannot give them anything. She says the Eastshore University trustees wish to give Chance an honorary doctor of law degree at commencement, but they want to find out if he will accept it. Chance says that he does not need a doctor. She asks about the newspapers, and Chance replies that he does not like newspapers. Mrs. Aubrey asks if he will see the foreign correspondents, and Chance responds that he sees them enough on television. She reminds Chance that the Rand plane will leave for Washington at four o'clock, and he will be staying at his hostess' home.

Karpatov, chief of the Special Section, arrives on Friday to see Ambassador Skrapinov. He is ushered into the Ambassador's office, where he tells Skrapinov that there is no additional information in Gardiner's file. He places a thin folder on the Ambassador's desk. Skrapinov tosses it aside and asks where the rest is. Karpatov repeats that there is no record of Gardiner anywhere, but that he has been able to determine that the White House wishes to find out what the Soviets know about Gardiner. This suggests that Gardiner has a lot of political importance. Skrapinov gets up from his desk and begins to pace. He tells Karpatov that the only thing he wants are the facts about Gardiner. Karpatov replies that they have been unable to discover even the simplest information about Gardiner; it is as if he never existed before. The Ambassador slams his hand on the desk and a small figurine falls to the floor. A trembling Karpatov bends over and picks up the statue, carefully replacing it on the desk. Skrapinov hisses at Karpatov that he cannot pass off such rot on him, for Gardiner happens to be one of the most important men in the United States, the biggest imperialist state in the world.



People such as Gardiner decide the fate of millions every day. Skrapinov pauses, leaning in toward Karpatov, then states that unlike the Special Section, he does not believe in twentieth-century "dead souls", nor does he believe in people from other planets as seen on American TV shows. He demands that Karpatov give him all the data on Chauncey Gardiner within four hours. Karpatov hunches over and leaves the room.

Four hours pass, and Skrapinov has still not heard from Karpatov. He decides to teach him a lesson. Skrapinov summons Sulkin to his office. Although he is a minor official at the Mission, Sulkin is one of the most powerful men in the Foreign Department. Skrapinov complains to Sulkin about Karpatov's ineptitude and asks him to get more information on Gardiner's past.

Sulkin arranges a private meeting with Skrapinov after lunch. The two men head to "The Cellar", a room at the Mission that is protected against listening devices. Sulkin withdraws a single blank piece of paper from a black folder and announces that the paper is the picture of Gardiner's past. Skrapinov looks at the paper, sees that it is blank, and drops it. He glares at Sulkin and says he does not understand, for the page is empty. He asks if this means that he cannot be trusted with the facts about Gardiner. Sulkin tells Skrapinov that investigating Gardiner's background has proved to be so difficult for the Special Section agents that one of them has blown his cover during the investigation. On Wednesday night, Sulkin sent a tape of Gardiner's appearance on "This Evening" to Moscow. Using the most advanced computer technology, Sulkin's team has analyzed Gardiner's vocabulary, syntax, accent, gestures, facial, and other characteristics. He says that it was impossible to determine Gardiner's ethnicity or ascribe his accent to any region of the United States. According to their research, Gardiner appears to be one of the most emotionally well-adjusted public figures in America in recent years. Despite all the analysis, Chauncey Gardiner remains a blank page, Sulkin concludes, again holding up the paper. Skrapinov repeats the phrase "blank page" and Sulkin agrees, calling it Gardiner's code name. Skrapinov tells Sulkin that when he alluded to Gardiner in his speech on Thursday night, he assumed that Gardiner was an established Wall Street financier. After all, the President of the United States mentioned Gardiner. Sulkin interrupts him, asking if Skrapinov has a reason for suggesting that Chauncey Gardiner is not the man he just described. Skrapinov says it is the lack of any facts. Sulkin again interrupts, congratulating the Ambassador on his perceptiveness. He tells Skrapinov that it is their belief that Gardiner is a member of an elitist faction that is planning to overthrow the government. Sulkin supposes that Gardiner is of such importance to the group that they have successfully masked every detail of his identity until this past Tuesday afternoon. Skrapinov is skeptical, but when Sulkin asks if Skrapinov doubts the possibility of a coup d'etat, he says he does not. Sulkin says that Skrapinov's intuition is well founded, and his initial decision to link to Gardiner is justified. He praises Skrapinov's instincts, calling it a true Marxist instinct. Sulkin gets up to leave, adding that soon Skrapinov will receive special instructions about how to treat Gardiner. After Sulkin leaves, Skrapinov thinks how billions of rubles are spent on gadgets, superspies, satellites, embassies, trade missions, cultural exchanges, bribes, and gifts, but all that matters in the end is a good Marxist instinct. Skrapinov envies Gardiner's youth, composure, and future as a leader. The phrase



"blank page" echoes through his mind, bringing back memories of World War II and the Partisans he led to many victories.

On Friday afternoon, the President's secretary reports that she has only been able to collect a few press clippings about Gardiner. The clips include the Soviet Ambassador's speech, which mentioned Gardiner, and the transcript of Gardiner's press interview at the United Nations. The President asks if she talked to Benjamin Rand about Gardiner. She replies that she has called the Rands but Mr. Rand has had a relapse and cannot talk. She did speak with EE Rand, who told her that Gardiner is very private. EE did say that she feels Mr. Gardiner intends to become much more active now that Rand is bedridden, but she did not connect Gardiner with any specific business or family situation. The President complains that this is less information than he read in the Times, and asks if their investigative resources have been contacted. The secretary says that she has talked with them, and they have not been able to find anything, even after double-checking. Gardiner's photograph and fingerprints were checked out prior to the President's visit to the Rand home and he was cleared. The President asks his secretary to contact Grunmann and to have him call the President as soon as he gets something on Gardiner.

Shortly thereafter, Walter Grunmann calls the President. He says that his team has been trying desperately, but there is nothing on Gardiner. It seems that he did not exist until he moved in with the Rands three days ago. The President is disturbed by this news and asks Grunmann to try again. He adds that there is a television program in which ordinary Americans turn out to be alien invaders, and he refuses to believe that he spoke with one of these aliens in New York. The President tells Grunmann that he expects him to come up with a large file on Gardiner, and if he does not, the President will personally authorize an immediate investigation of the people responsible for the security breach.

Grunmann calls back and tells the President that there is no record of Gardiner's birth, parents, or family. He did find out that Gardiner has never been in any legal trouble with any individual, organization, government, corporation, or agency. He has never caused an accident and, aside from the Rand accident, has never been involved as a third party in any accident. Gardiner has never been hospitalized, nor does he carry insurance or any other personal identification. He does not drive a car or fly a plane, and no licenses have ever been issued to him. Gardiner has no credit cards, checks, or calling cards. He does not own any property in the United States. Grunmann adds that they snooped on him in New York and discovered that all Gardiner does is watch television. The President yells at Grunmann that there is no excuse for such investigations. Apologizing, Grunmann explains that they had to try everything. He adds that they are growing apprehensive about Gardiner. His conversations at the United Nations reception were recorded, but he did not say very much. Grunmann says that they have thought that Gardiner might be a foreign agent, but those people usually have too much documentation and have absolutely nothing un-American about themselves. He says that they feel Gardiner is not a transplant. In addition, the Soviets have put out an alert for information on Gardiner's background, but have not come up with anything. During their investigations, the Soviets actually broke cover and lost one of their most capable



agents to the States. Eight other foreign powers have added Gardiner to their spying priority lists. Grunmann says that they will continue investigating on a round-the-clock basis.

The President heads upstairs to his apartment to rest. He considers how incredible it is that millions of dollars are allocated every year to government agencies and yet they cannot supply him with simple facts about a man that currently lives in one of the best townhouses in New York City as the guest of a very famous businessman. He wonders if the federal government is being undermined, and by whom. The President sighs, turns on the TV, and goes to sleep.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

Chapter 6 delves more into the world's reaction to Chance. The media frenzy surrounding Chance becomes evident when Mrs. Aubrey gives him a lengthy list of all the newspapers and other media outlets that have called, all wanting his attention. Rather than revel in his fame, Chance rejects it. This suggests that despite his simple outlook on life, Chance is well aware that being on television is not real, which takes the reader back to the theme of television versus reality. It also ties in with the theme of innocence, for it is Chance's lack of knowledge about how to manipulate the media to his advantage that keeps him pure.

The scene with Ambassador Skrapinov and his investigators parallels the scene between the President and his intelligence detail. Both leaders are stymied by the lack of information on Gardiner (Chance), despite all of the resources at their disposal. It is interesting to note that when they are told there is no real proof of Gardiner's existence, both men mention television shows about alien invaders. This ties in with the theme of television versus reality, for both men assume that the lack of information suggests Gardiner is not real.

It can be inferred that both Skrapinov and the President are very embarrassed to have publicly mentioned Gardiner when they actually know very little about the man. Each man perceives this to be an insult to his respective country. Again, this is indicative of their jaded approach to the world and their inability to accept the sheer truth of Gardiner's existence for what it is, which ties in to both the themes of innocence and living in the moment.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

The man sitting on the sofa faces the group assembled in his room. He states that some of the men present already know that Duncan has decided not to run with him, which leaves them without a candidate. Despite recent discoveries about Duncan's past, someone as good as he must be announced soon. Schneider says that it was not easy to come up with Duncan, and they are kidding themselves if they think they can come up with a candidate at this late date. Shellman is staying with his firm, and considering Frank is not an option based on his poor record as university president. A voice asks about George, and someone else replies that George has just had surgery, the second in three months, so he is a health risk. The room is silent.

O'Flaherty says he might have someone: Chauncey Gardiner. Everyone turns to look at the man on the sofa, who responds that their people have not been able to find out anything about Chauncey Gardiner. It does not help that Gardiner has not said anything about himself ever since he moved in with the Rands four days earlier. O'Flaherty says that these facts makes him think that Gardiner is a good bet. When asked why, O'Flaherty says that the trouble with everyone the group has considered is that they all have a past, which tends to invite scrutiny. Waving his arms, O'Flaherty says that because Gardiner has no background, he is not and cannot be objectionable to anyone. Furthermore, Gardiner is personable, well spoken, comes across well on television, and his thinking suggests that he is one of them. O'Flaherty concludes that Gardiner is their one chance. Schneider stubs out his cigar and considers aloud what has been said. A waiter enters the room with fresh coffee and the discussion continues.

Chance pushes his way through the dancers to the exit. In his eyes lingers a blurry image of the grand ballroom and the buffet. He sees EE as she greets a heavily decorated general. Chance passes through a group of photographers. The image of everything he has seen outside the garden fades.

Chance is bewildered. He reflects and sees the withered image of Chauncey Gardiner. His own image is also gone. He crosses the hall and pushes open a door leading outside. He steps into the garden, which is calm and still. Chance's mind is blank, and he feels at peace.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

While several key details about the meeting in the hotel suite are left out, the conversation about candidates seems to imply that the men are considering Chauncey Gardiner (Chance) as a highly viable candidate for public office, possibly the presidency of the United States. It is interesting to note that Chance's lack of background makes



him the ideal candidate, for as O'Flaherty mentions, a man's past tends to invite scrutiny.

The price of fame and being seen by more people has become too high for Chance. He no longer sees himself, he sees Chauncey Gardiner, the image that has been created by the media and everyone he has met in the past week. This suggests that he has lost his innocence, which appears to upset him. However, once he steps outside into the garden, Chance feels at peace. This is symbolic of his return to innocence.



# Characters

## Chance and Chauncey Gardiner

Chance lives in the Old Man's house and tends the garden. He has lived in the house for as long as he can remember, even before television was invented. The reader is never given a complete description of Chance's physical appearance; it must be pieced together based on the observations of other characters. Chance is considered to be very handsome, with broad shoulders, narrow hips, and long legs. His age is never mentioned, but if the reader takes into consideration the book's publication date of 1970 and Chance's statement that he has been in the house since before television, it can be inferred that Chance is between thirty and forty-five years of age. He wears expensive, hand-tailored hand-me-down suits, shirts, ties, and shoes that once belonged to the Old Man. Even though the clothes are somewhat out of style and do not fit him as well, they lend an air of wealth and importance to Chance.

Very little is known about Chance's past. In Chapter 1, Chance is revealed to be an orphan who was taken in by the Old Man. Chance's mother died in childbirth, and no one has ever told him who his father is. He has no family, according to what the Old Man has told him. Chance's mother was a beautiful woman, but like Chance, had a "damaged mind". This seems to imply that Chance is either mildly retarded or autistic, or has some other disability. As further evidence of Chance's possible disability, years earlier, the Old Man told Chance that he would never learn to read, write, or understand much of what people say to him. In addition, the Old Man also threatened to send Chance to a mental institution if he does not do what he is told.

As his name implies, everything that occurs in Chance's life happens by chance. When the Old Man dies, Chance is thrust out into the world. By chance, he is hit by a car that belongs to EE Rand, the wife of a wealthy businessman who has many political connections. And by chance, he meets the President of the United States and winds up on TV to discuss the economic situation. As a result of all these chance encounters and events, Chance is come to be seen as a philosopher, intellectual, financial wizard, and potential candidate for public office.

Despite any disability, Chance is still a highly observant man. His education has come by way of tending the garden and watching television. Through observing plant life, Chance is aware that plants and people both need to be taken care of in order to thrive. His television viewing habits help him learn how to handle new situations with grace and dignity. Chance foresees his meeting with Franklin, the attorney handling the Old Man's estate, because he has seen on TV what happens when someone dies. When Chance moves into the Rand residence, he relies on his gardening expertise and his knowledge of television to gain favor with the Rands. This same informal education propels Chance to fame when the President of the United States asks him for his views on the economy. Chance's simple observations on the workings of nature are quickly laden with





symbolism and meaning by everyone he meets, all of whom see Chance as a very intelligent man.

There are certain areas in which Chance remains quite innocent. He has no sexual experience, aside from seeing pornographic photographs many years ago. Television has not given him many clues as to what sexuality is about, but because he is so observant, Chance assumes that there are ways to be intimate with someone beyond what he has seen on TV. When he is accosted by both the Man and EE for sex, Chance tells them that he likes to watch. Not only does this enable Chance to avoid dealing with the issue directly, it also frees both the Man and EE to pursue their own pleasure.

## EE Rand

EE Rand is the wife of Benjamin Rand, financier and head of the Financial Institute. She goes by the nickname EE, which is short for Elizabeth Eve. In Chapter 3, she meets Chance when her driver accidentally backs her limousine into Chance, injuring his leg. Feeling guilty over what has happened, EE persuades Chance to come home with her so that her husband's private physicians and nursing staff can examine and treat Chance's leg. It is during his stay at her home that EE becomes preoccupied with Chance, even to the point of searching his belongings for some information on who he is and what he does. When she finds nothing, she decides that he must be mourning some painful loss in either his business or family.

EE could be considered a trophy wife, for she is considerably younger than her husband and was the reason he divorced his first wife. EE is skilled in dealing with diplomats, politicians, and heads of state, as shown by her behavior at the United Nations party in Chapter 5. She makes introductions graciously and efficiently.

While EE loves her husband, she is still a vivacious woman with a healthy sexual appetite and the desire for male attention. When she tells Chance about her marriage and her fears about Rand's health, EE feels Chance is closely listening to her. His attention and kindness quickly leads to a physical attraction on EE's part, which she believes is mutual.

When she finally shares an intimate moment with Chance, she is upset by his lack of physical arousal and accuses him of not loving her. Once he confesses to her that he likes to watch her, she interprets this to mean that she must find her own pleasure. After she masturbates to orgasm in front of Chance, she tells him that he has freed her.

## Vladimir Skrapinov

Vladimir Skrapinov is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Ambassador. He has met Benjamin and EE Rand two years earlier in Washington, but he meets Chance for the first time at the U.N. reception. During a lively conversation with Chance, Skrapinov suggests that diplomats and businessmen, such as he and Chance, need to connect more often. Chance agrees with him and Skrapinov becomes even more animated.



Based on Chance's meek response to his question about Krylov's fables, Skrapinov assumes that Chance is not only familiar with Krylov, but that he is also fluent in Russian. He goes so far as to speak to Chance in Russian, to which Chance smiles and nods.

Even though Skrapinov is very congenial, he has a tendency to be extremely manipulative, cruel, and sneaky. After the U.N. reception, Skrapinov assembles a secret report on Chance, known to him as Chauncey Gardiner. He writes that Gardiner speaks for American businessmen whose status quo is threatened by the country's economic problems. He arranges for gifts of Russian caviar and vodka to be sent to both Benjamin Rand and Chance, which suggests that he is attempting to build some sort of alliance with the two men. At the same time, he arranges for an in-depth investigation into Gardiner's background by top-level Soviet agents. When Karpatov's investigation falls short, Skrapinov becomes incensed. He replaces him with Sulkin, another Soviet official who is highly capable of conducting an intensive background search. Even though Sulkin arranges for a high-tech examination of Gardiner's appearance on "This Evening", he too cannot find any pertinent information. Skrapinov is stymied by the lack of information and bemoans the fact that despite all of the Soviet's technology and personnel, they cannot find out anything about Gardiner.

## **The President of the United States**

The President of the United States is described as an attractive man of average height. He is close friends with the Rands and comes to visit Benjamin Rand prior to his speech at the Financial Institute. The President meets Chance at Rand's house and talks to him about the state of the economy. He is so taken with Chance's response that he refers to Chance in his speech, even picking up on Chance's gardening references and turning them into metaphors for the economic situation.

It is the President's speech that makes Chance famous. After the speech, it occurs to the President that he does not know much about Chance, known to him as Chauncey Gardiner. His investigators are unable to find out anything about Gardiner prior to his arrival at the Rands' house, which frustrates the President. Just like the Soviets, the President is also annoyed by his own country's inability to find anything on Gardiner, even with many investigative resources at their disposal.

## **The Old Man**

The Old Man owns the home in which Chance has lived his entire life. The novel opens with the Old Man's death, so everything that the reader learns about the Old Man is through Chance and other characters. According to Franklin, the lawyer that comes to handle the dead man's affairs, the Old Man was an attorney with an eye for detail. However, the fact that the Old Man never accounted for Chance in his household records implies that he had something to hide.



Through Chance's observations, the reader learns that the Old Man took him in when Chance was a child. The Old Man refuses to tell Chance who his father is, which suggests that the Old Man is Chance's father by way of a tryst. Everything that Chance knows about himself is through what the Old Man has told him. The Old Man has limited Chance's access to the outside world. He also has told Chance that he will be sent to a home for the insane if he does not do exactly what he is told, which could be construed as abuse.

## **Benjamin Rand**

Benjamin Rand is a wealthy financier who lives in Manhattan. He has worked at the First American Financial Corporation and serves as the chairman of the Financial Institute. After his wife, EE, brings Chance home, Rand befriends Chance and finds him to be very direct and intelligent. It is at Rand's insistence that Chance meets the President, a pivotal event that leads to Chance's fame.

During the course of the novel, Rand's health deteriorates. He is making his peace with his imminent death when Chance comes into his life. Seeing how much EE enjoys Chance's company, Rand encourages the two to spend time together. He even goes so far to ask Chance to take care of EE should something happen to him.

## **Thomas Franklin**

Thomas Franklin is an attorney at the firm where the Old Man was a partner for many years. After the Old Man's death, Franklin comes to the house in Chapter 2 to assess the estate. He questions Chance at length about his employment and residence in the house, and asks for identification several times. When Chance is unable to comply, Franklin finally asks that he read and sign a document that will waive all of Chance's rights to the estate. Chance refuses and Franklin tells him that he will have to leave the house.

Although he relies on cold hard facts, Franklin proves to be just like Chance in that television dictates whether or not someone is "real". In Chapter 4, Franklin sees Chance's television appearance on "This Evening". Watching Chance on the screen, Franklin is sure he has met the man before but cannot place him. He becomes so preoccupied with figuring out how he knows Chance that he completely misses what Chance says on the show. In the context of television, Franklin finds Chance admirable and knowledgeable, which is a very different response than the one he had in Chapter 2.

## **Karpatov**

Karpatov is the Chief of the Special Section in the Soviet Union. Skrapinov assigns him to find out all the facts about Chauncey Gardiner. When he fails at his task, Skrapinov yells at him and ends up bringing in Sulkin to finish the job.



## Sulkin

Sulkin is a minor Soviet official who is actually one of the most powerful men in the Foreign Department. Skrapinov assigns him the task of finding out everything there is to know about Chauncey Gardiner. Sulkin returns with a blank piece of paper, indicating that Gardiner is a "blank page" with no background whatsoever, including no clues as to his ethnicity, hometown, or upbringing.

## Walter Grunmann

Walter Grunmann is assigned by the President to find out everything about Chauncey Gardiner. It is implied that Grunmann works for the CIA. His investigation into Gardiner turns up nothing.

## Tom Courtney

Tom Courtney is a reporter for the New York Times. After the President's speech to the Financial Institute, Courtney calls Chance to comment and get some background information. When Chance does not provide the information that Courtney wants, he decides to just print the very limited information that he does have.

## Mrs. Aubrey

Mrs. Aubrey is Chance's secretary. After Chance's appearance on "This Evening", EE suggests that he hire a secretary to help him with scheduling and other matters. She arranges for Mrs. Aubrey, a gray-haired woman who has been Rand's trusted secretary at the First American Financial Corporation, to meet with Chance regarding the position. Even though Mrs. Aubrey is close to retirement age, EE suggests that the woman is not one to retire. At his meeting with Mrs. Aubrey, Chance says very little, but decides he likes her.

## Gaufridi

Gaufridi is a Parisian diplomat. He is introduced to Chance at the U.N. reception by EE. While listening to Skrapinov and Count von Brockburg-Schulendorff exchange pleasantries about German and Russian literature, Gaufridi gets drunk. He then proceeds to alienate the Count with a very rude comment about the alliance between France and Russia against the Germans during World War II.

## Count von Brockburg-Schulendorff

Count von Brockburg-Schulendorff is a German diplomat. Chance meets him at the U. N. reception, where the Count expresses his admiration for Chance's comments on



"This Evening." The Count and Skrapinov have a pleasant conversation about German and Russian literature until Gaufridi insults the Germans. At this, the Count excuses himself. In Chapter 6, the Count leaves word with Mrs. Aubrey that Stern, a German publication, will feature Chance on its cover and wants worldwide rights on Chance's television comments.

## **Ronald Stiegler**

Ronald Stiegler is a publisher that works for Eidolon Books. At Sophie's dinner party, he approaches Chance about writing a book. When Chance admits to Stiegler that he cannot read or write, Stiegler does not take Chance's comments literally, and instead offers his company's best editors and researchers to help Chance in writing a book.

## **The Secretary-General of the United Nations**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations attends the U.N. reception hosted by the hospitality committee. He meets Chance and compliments him on his television appearance the previous night.

## **Lord Beauclerk**

Lord Beauclerk is the chairman of the board of the British Broadcasting Company. EE introduces him to Chance at the U.N. reception. He tells Chance that he found his comments on television to be very cunning and refers to TV viewers as "videots". In Chapter 6, Lord Beauclerk invites Chance to come to London to film a TV special.

## **The Man**

The Man is an unnamed guest at Sophie's party. He is described as being older, with long gray hair swept back from his forehead. He approaches Chance after dinner and attempts to seduce him. When Chance tells him that he likes to watch, the Man undresses in front of him and masturbates himself to orgasm. Thinking that the Man has taken ill, Chance leaves the Man lying on the bed.

## **Black Louise**

Black Louise is the name that Chance uses for the maid that worked for the Old Man for many years. Louise returned to Jamaica after she got sick. She is the only employee of the Old Man's that can vouch for Chance's employment and residence in the house. She brought Chance his meals and occasionally sat with him in the garden. According to Thomas Franklin, Louise died in Jamaica.



## **The Host of This Evening**

The host of "This Evening" is the first interviewer to have Chance on television. He quickly warms to Chance and finds Chance's comments on gardening to be very wise metaphorical observations on the state of the economy.

## **Miss Hayes**

Miss Hayes is Thomas Franklin's assistant. She accompanies him to the Old Man's house to assess the estate.

## **Sophie**

Sophie is the hostess of the dinner party that takes place after the U. N. reception. She flirts with Chance and embarrasses EE with her frankness.





# Objects/Places

## The Old Man's Residence

The Old Man's house is located somewhere in New York City. Based on Chance's limited descriptions, the reader can infer that the house is very large and very few rooms are currently in use. Chance lives in one section of the house and has his own bathroom and a door leading out to the garden. All of his meals are brought to him by the maid. When the Old Man dies, Chance is forced to leave the house and garden.

## The Garden

The garden is part of the Old Man's estate. Chance has worked in the garden ever since he was a small boy.

## The Television

The television plays a huge part in Chance's life, no matter where he goes. When he lived in the Old Man's house, he had his own television with remote control. After he leaves the house, Chance goes to stay with the Rands, where he also has a private room with a television.

## The Rands' Limousine

The Rands' limousine accidentally backs into Chance as he is leaving the Old Man's house. Chance ends up riding in the limousine to the Rands' house so that he can receive treatment from Benjamin Rand's private physician.

## The Rand Residence

The home of Benjamin and EE Rand is located in Manhattan. Similar to the Old Man's house, the Rand residence is also very large. Chance takes up residence in the house after he is injured in an accident caused by the Rands' chauffeur. He is given his own bedroom and bathroom, and just like in the Old Man's home, his meals are brought to him by a maid.

## The Television Studio

Chance visits the television studio when he is invited to appear on a talk show called "This Evening" to discuss the President's speech to the Financial Institute.



## **The United Nations Reception**

The United Nations reception marks EE's first outing with Chance as her escort.

## **Sophie's Dinner Party**

Sophie, an old friend of EE Rand, hosts a dinner party at her home. EE and Chance attend the party after the United Nations reception.

## **The Hotel Suite**

A group of several men meet in the hotel suite in an undisclosed location to discuss potential candidates for public office. It is during this discussion that Chauncey Gardiner's (Chance's) name comes up as a candidate.

## **Chance's Background**

Chance's background, or lack thereof, becomes a major issue for several characters in the novel. He has no physical evidence of his existence, which aggravates Franklin, Skrapinov, and the President of the United States. However, it is Chance's lack of a background that makes him a suitable candidate for public office by the end of the novel.



# Themes

## Television versus Reality

The theme of television versus reality is evident throughout the novel. To Chance, reality and television are interchangeable. By watching TV, he creates other worlds and actually becomes part of them. According to Chance, people are made real by the mere fact that someone is watching them. When the Old Man dies, Chance's reality is profoundly altered in many ways. Not only will he have to leave his home and deal with the world outside, he will also finally be exposed to other people, people that have never seen him before.

Chance's knowledge of the world is limited to what he has seen on television. Once he is forced to leave the only home he has ever known, Chance relies on this knowledge to determine how he will act and react to people and situations. In Chapter 3, Chance deals with EE and Benjamin Rand using what he has seen on TV as a guide. When he is invited to appear on TV, Chance again uses the knowledge he has derived from television to help him navigate the on-air interview.

Other characters are just as influenced by television as Chance is. Once he sees Chance on TV, Franklin regards Chance as more of a real figure than he did when he questioned Chance about his personal history at the Old Man's house. It is interesting to note that while many characters make negative comments about TV, they also use it as a gauge for determining someone's authenticity. Both Skrapinov and the President make nasty comments about television programs on alien invaders, and a woman at Sophie's dinner party complains that people only believe in war if they see it on television.

## Innocence

Innocence lost and regained is a prevalent theme in the book. Chance represents a truly innocent character. He has no notion of what the world is like outside of the garden he tended. Chance's first steps toward a loss of innocence are symbolized by his last visit to the garden. An old, untouched key is what he needs to unlock the gate and leave his innocence behind. As a result of leaving the garden, he experiences his first accident, meets the Rands, and begins his journey toward fame.

While he may have left the garden behind, Chance still operates from a place of true purity and innocence. This is evident in his sexual experiences with the Man and EE. Both the Man and EE represent lost innocence in that they resort to somewhat devious methods in order to seduce Chance. When Chance's lack of experience thwarts their efforts, both characters end up having a much more intimate experience with Chance. In this way, it could be suggested that both characters regain their innocence.



It is interesting to note the pervasive skepticism and cynicism expressed by the President and Skrapinov in the book. Both men symbolize a complete loss of innocence. Neither one of them can believe that there is absolutely nothing to be found in Chauncey Gardiner's (Chance's) background. It is possible that the author was making a statement about politics robbing people of their innocence.

## Living in the Moment

The concept of living in the moment is captured by the book's title, *Being There*. This title suggests that Chance is living his life as if he is truly present to everything that is happening.

In Chapter 1, Chance makes some very interesting observations about the differences between people and plants. While both are capable of growth, only people can intend to grow and change. Plants are truly "in the moment", for their growth continues despite their inability to reason or dream.

Chance's simplistic, direct approach serves to encourage other characters to behave the same way. After hearing Chance's observations on gardening, the President decides to incorporate Chance's words into his speech on the economy. He even goes so far as to build on Chance's ideas by suggesting that the economy is seasonal, much like nature. Since one cannot fight against nature and turn winter into summer on a whim, it is best to wait out the season and know that spring is coming. Chance's meeting with Skrapinov also illustrates what it means to live in the moment. When Skrapinov says that he and Chance are not so far apart from each other, Chance interprets this literally and mentions the close proximity of their chairs. This amuses Skrapinov greatly, but he can also see the truth in what Chance says, and later uses the incident in a speech.

# Style

## Point of View

The novel is told using third person point of view. The first three chapters are primarily told from Chance's perspective, giving the reader greater insight into the simplicity of his character and his views on the world. Chapters 4 through 7 include the views of several other characters, including EE Rand, Thomas Franklin, the President of the United States, and Ambassador Skrapinov. These characters' points of view are focused mainly on how they feel about and relate to Chance. This technique provides the reader with more awareness as to how Chance's personality impacts the other characters. It is interesting to note that the viewpoints of two key characters, the Old Man and Benjamin Rand, are never fully explored.

Exposition and dialogue are used interchangeably throughout the novel. Much of the exposition includes philosophical insights on television and reality as expressed by Chance and other characters. These insights add another layer of meaning to the plot and help the reader to better understand the actions and reactions of the characters.

## Setting

Being There is set mainly in New York City, with a few key scenes in Washington, DC. The story opens at the Old Man's home, which is located somewhere in New York City. Under strict orders from the Old Man, Chance is restricted to the garden and his suite inside the house. All he knows about the world outside of the garden comes by way of watching television.

It is not until the Old Man's death that Chance is forced to leave and experience the outside world. Soon after leaving the house, Chance is slightly injured by a car belonging to the Rands, a wealthy, well-connected couple that lives in Manhattan. Feeling guilty over the incident, EE Rand, the wife of famous financier Benjamin Rand, insists that Chance come home with her so that he can be treated by her husband's personal physicians. While Chance is recuperating at the Rands' house, he meets the President of the United States. As a result of his meeting with the President, Chance is quickly catapulted into fame based on his simple observations about gardening.

Chance ends up on the other side of the TV screen when he is invited to appear on a popular television program, "This Evening". During his visit to the studio, Chance is very calm and relaxed, possibly because he has seen many studios before on TV. Even though Chance's time in the studio and on the air is rather brief, his comments on the program generate even more interest in his activities.

In the last three chapters, Chance attends two events as EE's escort. The first event is a reception at the United Nations, where Chance meets the Soviet Ambassador, Vladimir Skrapinov; the Secretary-General of the U.N.; Gaufredi, a French député; and Count von



Brockburg-Schulendorff from West Germany. These introductions further establish Chance's role as a captain of industry and commerce.

After the reception, EE and Chance head to a dinner party thrown by Sophie, an old friend of EE's. As is true of the other houses that Chance has lived in or visited, Sophie's home is also quite spacious, with a large gallery full of sculptures and fine art. Chance visits an upstairs bedroom with an unnamed man who makes sexual advances toward him. After watching the man as he masturbates in front of Chance, he leaves to find EE.

The final chapter does not provide an exact location. However, based on the conversation between the men in the hotel suite regarding a suitable candidate, it can be assumed that it takes place in Washington, DC. The conclusion features Chance leaving a crowded party to rest in a garden.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the book is very simple in order to illustrate the simplicity with which Chance views the world. Chance was not taught how to read or write, so his communication skills are based on what he has learned by way of interaction with other people, but more importantly, through watching television. Chance's narrow, limited point of view is used throughout the novel; therefore, the reader is left to make many assumptions about some of the action. The limitations of Chance's knowledge is apparent in his dealings with Thomas Franklin, the attorney representing the Old Man's estate. Chance is unable to read the document that Franklin asks him to sign. Rather than admit he cannot read or write, Chance merely refuses to sign it. Another example of Chance's limited knowledge can be seen in the three sex scenes. These passages are written very simply, with vague descriptions of the body parts involved as well as the action taking place.

The book is rich in metaphor and symbolism as well as irony. Chance speaks plainly and simply about what he knows, which is gardening and television. The other characters in the novel take his words and load them with meaning, frequently misunderstanding his original intent. The first instance of Chance being misunderstood occurs in Chapter 2, when Franklin assumes that his name is Mr. Chance. As it turns out, Chance's name becomes completely misinterpreted, as shown in Chapter 3, when EE hears him say "I am Chance the gardener" and translates it to "Chauncey Gardiner." The misunderstandings never seem to bother Chance, for he considers it to be the same thing as when a television actor plays a new character with a new name. Chance also seems to assume that everyone understands what he means when he discusses life in the garden, and appears to be oblivious to all the instances in which other characters use his words as a metaphor for other aspects of life.





## Structure

The novel consists of seven chapters. Each chapter corresponds to approximately one day of the week, with several chapters beginning with a mention of what day it is. Chapters 4 and 5 are the longest chapters in the book, and yet each chapter covers a single day, just with multiple perspectives. This structure serves to illustrate the amount of activity that takes place in one day.

The plot focuses on a week in the life of Chance, also known as Chauncey Gardiner. The time frame is very relevant, for the action takes place during the first week that Chance is out on his own after a lifetime of working and living in near seclusion. As the story progresses, Chance's experiences become more complex.

While the time frame is very short, the pacing is somewhat slow at times. It is likely that the author kept the pace slower in order to illustrate the leisurely way that Chance approaches life.



## Quotes

"Everything on TV was tangled and mixed and yet smoothed out: night and day, big and small, tough and brittle, soft and rough, hot and cold, far and near. In this colored world of television, gardening was the white cane of a blind man." Chap. 1, p. 5

"As long as one didn't look at people, they did not exist. They began to exist, as on TV, when one turned one's eyes on them. Only then could they stay in one's mind before being erased by new images. The same was true of him. By looking at him, others could make him be clear, could open him up and unfold him; not to be seen was to blur and to fade out. Perhaps he was missing a lot by simply watching others on TV and not being watched by them. He was glad that now, after the Old Man had died, he was going to be seen by people he had never been seen by before." Chap. 2, p. 14

"Chance knew that he should not reveal that he could not read or write. On TV programs people who did not know how to read or write were often mocked and ridiculed." Chap. 2, p. 23

"He was surprised: the street, the cars, the buildings, the people, the faint sounds were images already burned into his memory. So far, everything outside the gate resembled what he had seen on TV; if anything, objects and people were bigger, yet slower, simpler and more cumbersome. He had the feeling that he had seen it all." Chap. 3, pp. 28-29

"Thinking that he ought to show a keen interest in what EE was saying, Chance resorted to repeating to her parts of her own sentences, a practice he had observed on TV. In this fashion he encouraged her to continue and elaborate. Each time Chance repeated EE's words, she brightened and looked more confident." Chap. 3, p. 37

"Chance looked at himself in the mirror. He liked what he saw: his hair glistened, his skin was ruddy, his freshly pressed dark suit fitted his body as bark covers a tree." Chap. 4, pp. 48-49

"Chance shrank. He felt that the roots of his thoughts had been suddenly yanked out of their wet earth and thrust, tangled, into the unfriendly air. He stared at the carpet. Finally, he spoke: 'In a garden,' he said, 'growth has its season. There are spring and summer, but there are also fall and winter. And then spring and summer again. As long as the roots are not severed, all is well and all will be well.' He raised his eyes. Rand was looking at him, nodding. The President seemed quite pleased." Chap. 4, p. 54

"Facing the cameras with their unsensing triple lenses pointed at him like snouts, Chance became only an image for millions of real people. They would never know how real he was, since his thinking could not be televised. And to him, the viewers existed only as projections of his own thought, as images. He would never know how real they were, since he had never met them and did not know what they thought." Chap. 4, p. 65



"In a garden, things grow . . . but first, they must wither; trees have to lose their leaves in order to put forth new leaves, and to grow thicker and stronger and taller. Some trees die, but fresh saplings replace them. Gardens need a lot of care. But if you love your garden, you don't mind working in it, and waiting. Then in the proper season you will surely see it flourish." Chap. 4, p. 67

"Do you know that you're very brainy, very cerebral, really, Chauncey, that you want to conquer the woman from within her very self, that you want to infuse in her the need and the desire and the longing for your love?" Chap. 4, p. 79

"The Ambassador nodded, looking intently at Chance. 'Mr. Gardiner,' he said, 'I want to be candid. Considering the gravity of your country's economic situation, it is clear that you will be called upon to play an important role in the administration. I have detected in you a certain . . . reticence regarding political issues. But, Mr. Gardiner, after all . . . shouldn't we, the diplomats, and you, the businessmen, get together more often? We are not so far from each other, not so far!'" Chap. 5, p. 89

"He wanted to tell her how much he preferred to look at her, that only by watching could he memorize her and take her and possess her. He did not know how to explain to her that he could not touch better or more fully with his hands than he could with his eyes. Seeing encompassed all at once; a touch was limited to one spot at a time." Chap. 5, p. 113

"Don't imagine,' the Ambassador hissed, 'that you can palm such rot off on me! I won't accept it! "As if he never existed"! Do you realize that Gardiner happens to be one of the most important men in this country and that this country happens to be not Soviet Georgia but the United States of America, the biggest imperialist state in the world! People like Gardiner decide the fate of millions every day!'" Chap. 6, pp. 124-125

"With the aid of our latest-model computers, our teams have analyzed Gardiner's vocabulary, syntax, accent, gestures, facial and other characteristics. The results, my dear Skrapinov, may surprise you. It proved impossible to determine in any way whatsoever his ethnic background or to ascribe his accent to any single community in the entire United States!" Chap. 6, p. 127

"A man's past cripples him: his background turns into a swamp and invites scrutiny!" Chap. 7, p. 139



## Topics for Discussion

Discuss the title of the novel. Does it accurately reflect the content of the story? What would you suggest as an alternate title?

Describe the author's viewpoint on the media using only this book as a resource.

Chance was not allowed any visitors during his life with the Old Man, but was allowed to watch television as much as he pleased. Does Chance's love of television help him relate to other people?

Compare and contrast the Old Man and Benjamin Rand. How did each man treat Chance? How did Chance respond to them?

Chance is described as being "damaged". Did it help or hinder him to be shut off from society?

Nature and gardening are used as metaphors throughout the book. Are there other metaphors that could have been used just as effectively?

Discuss the author's depiction of politics. Are the politicians in the novel presented fairly? Why or why not?

While there are few female characters in the book, the women that encounter Chance respond very positively to him. Several women even express a physical or sexual attraction to Chance. What makes Chance so appealing to the women in the novel?

Does the ending of the novel feel appropriate to you? Why or why not?