

# **The Blue Afternoon: A Novel Study Guide**

**The Blue Afternoon: A Novel by William Boyd (writer)**

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## Plot Summary

In 1902 in Manila, the European-educated Dr. Salvador Carriscant practices modern medicine in a hospital dominated by outmoded practices and medical theory. Carriscant's friend and medical associate, Pantaleon Quiroga, also practices modern medicine but is very focused on building a heavier-than-air flying machine such as an airplane. Carriscant is married to Annaliese Leys but their relationship has grown strained and distant. When he accidentally meets the beautiful and forceful Delphine Seiverance, he easily falls completely under her sway. Delphine is married, however, and the social mores of the day prohibit extra-marital affairs and easy divorce. Carriscant and Delphine contrive to run away together under the cover of a complex series of events intended to mislead their social circles into concluding they have both died in separate incidents. Only Pantaleon realizes they are in fact conducting their illicit affair. Against this narrative of intrigue, a series of three blood murders serves as a backdrop. Carriscant is enlisted by the local constable, Paton Bobby, to serve as the medical examiner. On the eve of Delphine's secretive flight, Bobby arrests the innocent Carriscant for the murders and he spends the next approximately two decades imprisoned. Meanwhile, Delphine, who was legally pronounced dead, vanishes without a trace, just as planned. The pregnant Annaliese leaves Carriscant for German New Guinea and, later, Los Angeles, where she delivers her daughter, Kay, and remarries. Annaliese tells Kay an apparently fabricated story about her biological father.

In the mid-1930s Dr. Carriscant anonymously receives a news magazine photograph depicting Delphine. Carriscant searches out Kay Fischer, his daughter, who is now a successful architect in Los Angeles. With her emotional and financial support, the couple visits Paton Bobby, a retired lawman living in the United States. The father and daughter couple then travels to Lisbon, Portugal, where Carriscant locates Delphine through lucky circumstances and intuitive deductions. During their lengthy travels, Carriscant tells Delphine the fairly lengthy story of her conception and his involvement with the murders. After Delphine and Carriscant visit, the father and daughter depart as Delphine is approaching death. Kay is then left wondering who committed the murders and why they were committed. She is also left wondering which portions of Carriscant's tale are factual and which are fiction.



# Prologue, Chapters 1 - 4

## Prologue, Chapters 1 - 4 Summary

Kay Fischer, the protagonist of the novel as well as the narrator, is an architect in Los Angeles in 1936. In Chapter Two, she discloses that she lives in Long Beach, is thirty-two years old, and divorced. She is 5'6" tall and has dull brown hair and bright brown eyes. Kay's business is nearly bankrupt due to nefarious actions by her ex-partner Eric Meyersen who stole most of her money and portfolio for his own gain. Kay spends many hours with her attorney, George Fugal, trying to rebuild her business. Meanwhile in Chapter Three, Kay's ex-husband, Philip Brockman, calls her frequently to ask for small money loans. Kay then meets a man who introduces himself as Salvador Carriscant, and claims to be her biological father.

In Chapter Four, Kay travels to her mother's home, also in Long Beach, to reassure herself about her family history. Kay's mother, Annaliese Fischer nee Leys, is married to Kay's step-father Rudolf Fischer. Responding to apparently casual questions, Kay's mother reaffirms that she, Kay, was born in 1904 in the former Germany Colony of New Guinea. Her biological father had been Hugh Paget, an Englishman missionary and teacher. Annaliese had married Paget in 1903 and he had died only a few months after Kay's birth. All photographs and documents relating to Paget had been destroyed by a later fire except one grainy photograph showing a fair-haired man—photographic details are not clear. Later, Annaliese met Rudolf and they were married in 1907 and moved from New Guinea to Long Beach. Annaliese worked as a teacher; Rudolf worked as a coir and hemp importer. Together they have at least one daughter, Bruna, and through her at least two grandchildren—Amy and Greta.

In the Prologue, Kay uses a scalpel to make an incision in Carriscant's forearm. This scene becomes symbolic of events described in Chapter Tongue of Part Two of the novel.

## Prologue, Chapters 1 - 4 Analysis

Part One of the tripartite novel includes eighteen enumerated but unnamed chapters that comprise roughly twenty percent of the novel. These chapters are presented in the 'present' of the principle narrative timeline of the novel. The principle foci of the narrative arc in Part One are: Kay Fischer; her tumultuous life; and Salvador Carriscant, a man claiming to be her long-lost father. Part One begins with Chapter One.

Chapters One through Four introduce many of the major characters in the novel, including Kay Fischer, the protagonist and narrator. Kay remains a credible narrator throughout the novel but does not explain her personal decisions in very much detail. She uses a variety of techniques to relate the story including the relatively straightforward narrative found in Part One of the novel, encompassing the novel's



enumerated Chapters One through Eighteen. Chapter One, set in 1936, initiates the principle narrative timeline of the complex structure of the novel—Part One of the novel follows a fairly traditional timeline development.

The central tension of the novel is the actual relationship between Carriscent and Kay. Kay's mother has always told Kay a story about an English father; Carriscent's appearance and claims appear entirely unfounded. The validity of Carriscent's claims are not established in the novel; a clear rationale for why Annaliese would lie about her daughter's heritage is not proposed in the novel. Thus, the novel is constructed on a tenuous claim and, like nearly every other fact and event in the novel, the biological relationship between Carriscent and Kay is uncertain. At first, she dismisses him as an eccentric, but his self-assured and persistent attitude convince her that she should investigate him further. A significant part of Kay's characterization in the early portion of the novel focuses on the various aspects of her life that destabilize her and make her feel unmoored from her family, geographic location, and friends.

The Prologue demonstrates a certain amount of trust flowing from Carriscent to Kay and apparently convinces her absolutely that he is her father. The events of the Prologue occur on an ocean voyage the two characters take in Chapter 18; Chapter Tongue, in Part Two, makes a meta-fictional reference to the Prologue.



# Chapters 5 - 10

## Chapters 5 - 10 Summary

In Chapter Four, Carriscant writes a letter to Kay and tells her the address where he will be staying for some days. In Chapter Five, Key decides to investigate Carriscant. She watches his apartment until he comes out and then follows him for an hour or so while he runs odd errands. Finally he enters a restaurant. Kay reasons that she looks more like him than she looks like Hugh Paget, and decides to at least hear his story. In Chapter Six, she joins him for lunch—he does not seem very surprised to see her. As they talk he tells her he likes fish, she chatters about her life, and then he says he needs her help to find someone named Paton Bobby, once a policeman. Carriscant says Paton Bobby would be about his age—mid-60s—in Los Angeles, and he is, he says, "a killer" (p. 33). Then Kay goes home. In Chapter 8, Philip visits Kay and announces that he has secured a good-paying job. He grandly pays her back a lump sum to repay for all the small loans she has given him. Kay asks Philip how he would go about locating Paton Bobby, and Philip says he will ask around at his job where there are various security-type people. Later, Kay's lawyer George Fugal calls her to tell her he has found a buyer for her house. The house is Kay's dream house—she had intended it for her own, but must sell it to avoid complete financial collapse. It is still under construction. In Chapter 9, Kay visits the house and contemplates its architecture at considerable length. She modeled the house on the principles of Oscar Kranewitter who tried to create purity and simplicity through poverty of design.

In Chapter Ten, Philip loses his job and goes on a drinking binge. He is an alcoholic. Sickened from drinking, Philip calls Kay and gives her a sob story. She meets him and then tends to him through his sickness. Philip tells Kay that some of the people at his recent work found Paton Bobby—he is living fairly nearby. After contemplating the situation, Kay contacts Carriscant and they meet and then travel together—at Kay's expense—to meet Bobby. When they finally meet, Bobby is clearly thunderstruck to be talking to Carriscant again. Their conversation quickly turns to hushed tones and furtive glances so Kay retires to her car where she sits and waits for a long time. When Carriscant rejoins her in the car, he shows her a photograph. It is a page torn out of a news magazine, and shows a group of people at an award ceremony. Carriscant says that Bobby has identified one of the women in the photograph and Carriscant says he must find her. He asks that she accompany him to Lisbon to find the woman. She thinks he's asking for far too much.

## Chapters 5 - 10 Analysis

These chapters continue to characterize Kay as someone without many attachments. Her crooked ex-partner has destroyed not only her financial life but much of her moral core. Kay clearly is very devoted to her work but even her work life has been taken from her. The only vestige of stability left to her career is a house, currently nearly completed,



that embodies all of her passion. Yet instead of living in the house, as she once contemplated, she must sell it to keep her rocky business afloat. At least, she believes, the completed house will begin again a sort of architectural portfolio that can help her career. Beyond characterizing Kay, none of the architectural themes of Part One recur with decisive impact in the remainder of the narrative. Here, they symbolize a life of precise order, deliberately controlled to reflect simplicity. Yet Kay's life obviously is not in order—her ex-husband pursues a complicated but uncommitted relationship; her ex-partner has stolen her past work and money; and her lawyer tells her she must sell her own home to stay afloat. This is not the type of poverty that Kranewitter espouses.

Meanwhile, Kay continues to contemplate Carriscant's strange claims and requests. Although she is not fully committed to him, yet, she does agree to do some little amount of work to find Paton Bobby. Casually mentioning him to Philip will have a profound impact on the remainder of the novel; Philip's almost offhanded response of Bobby's location starts in motion the events of Part Three of the novel. Paton Bobby's role in the narrative is very minor in Part One but he plays a major role as antagonist in Part Two of the novel. His profanity and rough way of speaking is carried throughout the narrative. The news magazine photograph is a symbol of an unknown person, just as the photograph of Hugh Paget has become. These two symbols, these photographs, link the past to the future—as Kay loses interest in one, so she gains interest in another. Interestingly, apparently neither of them show her biological relatives but both theoretically represent the "long-lost love" of one of her parents. As it develops, the photograph/symbol offered by her mother loses nearly all meaning for Kay whereas the photograph/symbol offered by her putative father gains much meaning. Note the narrative pacing of Kay's attraction to Carriscant. She moves from thinking he's a nutty eccentric through supporting him and then engaging with him in his, as yet, dubious quest.



# Chapters 11-15

## Chapters 11-15 Summary

Kay thinks about her life. She had had a child with Philip, then her husband. The child was named Coleman Brockway and was born April 10, 1930, and died sixteen days later from a congenital birth defect; a hole in the heart. Kay reflects that Coleman's death started Philip on his alcoholism, sent her into a deep and prolonged depression, and effectively ended their marriage. In Chapter Twelve, Kay shows her house to the potential buyer. Kay obviously doesn't want to sell the house and the buyer seems largely uninterested but committed. Later she again visits with Carriscent. He has researched the photograph in the library and discovered that it is from a magazine article published in 1927; the photograph taken in Lisbon and he wants to go there to find the woman in the photograph. Kay challenges him about being her father—he insists that he is in fact her biological father and tells her that he was married to Annaliese Keys for two years.

In Chapter Thirteen, Kay, emotionally off-balance, visits Philip again and they end up having sex and she sleeps over. She remembers they were married in 1929 and divorced in 1930, after the death of their infant son. They became on-again-off-again friends in late 1931 and have stayed in contact since then, ending up having sex about once a year or so. She infers that Philip had an extra-marital affair with a younger woman. He infers that she has gained a lot of weight since they were married. She recalls that her career had started when she graduated from M.I.T. in 1926. In Chapter Fourteen Kay has lunch with her mother, driving to a particular out-of-the-way restaurant. She then arranges to surreptitiously let her mother see Carriscent so she can watch her mother's reaction, figuring there will be some reaction if they really were married. She points him out to her mother, claiming he is involved in her company's legal situation. Annaliese does not react in any meaningful way. Later, Kay's lawyer calls and tells her she has sold the house for a good amount. In Chapter Fifteen, Kay oversees the last few elements of construction on the house and wishes she did not have to sell it. She contemplates her mother's reaction to seeing Carriscent—or rather, lack of reaction. Kay concludes that the lack of reaction, and the lack of interest, proves that her mother in fact did recognize Carriscent, meaning that her mother's non-response proves Carriscent is in fact her father.

## Chapters 11-15 Analysis

These chapters conclude the characterization of Kay Fischer and conclude the history of her character. Her mother, Annaliese, appears again in Part Two of the novel alongside Carriscent, but both of these characters are much younger in that narrative arc. Rudolf Fischer and his progeny do not reappear. The major thematic elements of these chapters involve Kay's life—clearly she is in a difficult phase where her personal life has suffered devastating setbacks; she is also in a difficult place professionally





where her career has been largely hijacked by Eric Meyersen, her old partner. Financially she is nearly ruined and must sell her home to stay afloat. Her attachment to the home is palpable and she dotes on every angle, every space, every detail. The fact that some stranger is going to inhabit the home and 'ruin' it by placing furniture of the wrong sort in the wrong places nearly drives Kay crazy. In this respect, the house is a symbol of Kay's entire world; she perceives balance and relationships through simplicity but that simplicity is being ruined by intrusions by others.

Kay's relationship with her mother also is examined. They seem to share an open and honest relationship but like any familial situation there is far more than meets the eye. Kay concludes that her mother's non-reaction is exactly the reaction that proves Carriscant is her father. This is tenuous, at best, and the reader is left wondering why Kay would make such a mental leap. Obviously, Kay wants to believe that Carriscant, the older, mysterious, distinguished, and self-assured gentleman is indeed her father. He is alive, present, and interested in her. Hugh Paget is dead, unknown, and simply a name. Kay Fischer even takes her step-father's surname, so complete is the erasure of Paget from her life. Paget is known only through a vague, grainy photograph—even Rudolf Fischer is described more fully (c.f., Chapter One). Again, her paternal relationship is symbolized by these two counterbalancing photographs—one represents her mother's interpretation of the past; one represents her putative father's pursuit of the future. Note that in no part of the narrative is this contradiction resolved: her mother never admits to knowing Carriscant and never retracts her tale of Paget; Carriscant never proves paternity (though he offers several facts that might support his claims), nor is he interested in the slightest in meeting Annaliese again. But they could all be fictional additions, metaphysically within the fiction of the novel. Going forward, the fiction-within-the-fiction element becomes even more pronounced, especially throughout Part Two of the novel. This uncertainty of personal past forms one of the dominant themes of the novel.



# Chapters 16-18

## Chapters 16-18 Summary

Kay drives to 2265 Micheltoreno, the location of her completed dream house, planning to visit with the new buyer and orient her to the home's design. She is horrified to see demolition equipment pulling down the house and carrying away the remains. Her attorney meets her there and explains that the buyer was in fact a straw-buyer, a hired actress. The real purchaser was Eric Meyersen, her old vindictive partner. Meyersen taunts her, telling her he doesn't want her to establish a portfolio. He plans to re-build essentially the same house on the same lot—but of course it will be 'his' design and not hers, at that point. Kay is devastated and immediately decides she will in fact leave town—the state, the country—with Carriscant on his bizarre quest to find the woman in the photograph. In Chapter Seventeen Kay and Carriscant start their voyage to Lisbon. They board an airplane and fly to New York City. Carriscant marvels at the efficiency and capability of flight. He explains that he is the son of Archibald Muir Carriscant, a Scottish engineer, who settled in the Philippines and married Juliana Ocampo. Juliana was the daughter of Don Carlos Ocampo, a Spanish man, and a Philippine woman. Carriscant is thus  $\frac{1}{2}$  Scottish,  $\frac{1}{4}$  Spanish, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  Philippine. In Chapter Eighteen Carriscant elaborates on these details of his ancestry. He was born in 1870 in the Philippine Islands. In 1893 he traveled to Europe where he completed a course of study in medicine, learning then-ultramodern techniques. He returned to the Philippines in 1897 and almost immediately met Annaliese Leys, Kay's mother. From 1898 through 1902 America colonized the Philippine Islands, giving rise to a bloody war of insurrection for independence. The American's put down the insurrection. Kay and Carriscant board the SS Herzog and begin a ten-day sea voyage to Lisbon. One precondition of the trip, set by Kay, is that Carriscant will tell her everything she wants to know. He will keep no secrets. He agrees.

## Chapters 16-18 Analysis

These chapters conclude Part One of the novel and effectively transition the narrative from the present of Part One to the past of Part Two. The primary motivating force for Kay's decision to jump into Carriscant's adventure is the destruction of her dream home at 2265 Micheltoreno (incidentally, a 'real' address in Log Angeles). Eric Meyersen arranges to have an actress pose as a buyer so he can purchase the house to destroy it. This single-minded pettiness of Meyersen, at great expense, seems particularly strained in the narrative and is one of the least credible aspects of the entire novel. The destruction of the home, however, heavily symbolizes the destruction of Kay's social and emotional life. Completely unmoored, she then easily makes the decision to leave everything. Note also from the end of Part One that none of the initial minor characters (Meyersen, Philip, Fugal) reappear in the narrative. The complex genealogies offered for both of Salvador's parents aid in characterization but do not play much overt role beyond their presentation in Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen—they do inform the



social structures of Part Two but this is not directly referred to. Annaliese Leys and Paton Bobby recur, but only as much-younger versions of themselves. Kay disappears as a character in Part Two, but still remains as the narrator. Much of Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen is devoted to the transition of the present, first-person perspective to the past, third-person perspective of Part Two: Kay explains how Part Two is derived and constructed in several meta-fictional comments. Part One of the novel also marks a sharp transition from authoritative narrative voice to a type of recreated fictional timeline of Part Two and this is perhaps the most jarring transition in the novel. In effect, Part One of the novel sets up the rationale for Kay accompanying her putative father on the journey described in Part Three; on the journey Kay learns and assembles the history presented in Part Two.



# Chapters Tongue and The First Body

## Chapters Tongue and The First Body Summary

The principle timeline of Chapter Tongue, page 83, is set in Manila in 1902. Salvador Carriscant, a British National of mixed heritage, recalls how he had returned to Manila in 1897 with a then-modern understanding of surgery obtained in a first-rate European education. He joined the San Jerónimo hospital staff as a surgeon and quickly became famous. At the hospital he develops a long-running feud with Dr. Isidro Cruz, the chief surgeon and senior practitioner at the hospital. Cruz favors old methods such as bleeding, operating without anesthetic, and using various blistering chemicals. Carriscant considers Cruz a dangerous quack; Cruz considers Carriscant a dangerous radical. Both men's professional feud quickly turns personal. Also at San Jerónimo, the brilliant physician Pantaleon Quiroga works as an anesthesiologist. Pantaleon is fully educated in modern techniques but lacks the putative 'touch' required of a great surgeon. He partners with Carriscant as a brilliant medical team—Pantaleon the anesthetist, Carriscant the surgeon. On this occasion, the two medical men operate on a Chinese youth and sever much of his tongue to remove a tumor. Later, at home, Carriscant contemplates his relationship with his wife of a few years, Annaliese Leys. The passion is gone from their marriage and they pursue separate lives with frequent arguments. Later still, Carriscant is called upon by the Chief of the Constabulary, an American named Paton Bobby. Bobby requests that Carriscant act as medical examiner on a recent murder. Carriscant notes that another physician should be consulted. Bobby, as the ranking officer, ignores protocol and selects Carriscant directly.

In Chapter The First Body, page 93, Bobby and Carriscant travel to a murder site to perform medical investigations. The body is identified as that of United States Private Ephraim Ward from Kansas. Bobby admits that usually another physician would perform the examination but decides to use Carriscant anyway. Carriscant examines the body and notes that the heart has been severely wounded. Apparently post-mortem, additional wounds have been created in the abdomen and Carriscant believes they appear surgical in nature. A later and more complete autopsy concludes the private died from a stab wound in the heart; the body was then surgically examined and the wound sewn up. The body was dumped where it would be found. The body is consigned to the hospital morgue.

## Chapters Tongue and The First Body Analysis

The events of the Prologue occur on an ocean voyage Kay and Carriscant take in Chapter 18; Chapter Tongue, in Part Two, makes a meta-fictional reference to the Prologue. This is another example of the complex, subtle, but infrequent interplay between the novel's various Parts. Chapter Tongue starts Part Two of the novel; this segment of the novel comprises approximately two-thirds of the narrative and is related by Kay Fischer as the narrator. Kay explains in Chapter Eighteen how the contents of



Part Two have been written by her, reconstructed from her notes and recollections of a series of conversations she had with Salvador Carriscant. Carriscant tells stories of his past during an ocean voyage; apparently he does not use notes or other sources of factual validation. In other words, he recalls events from three decades in the past, relates them to Kay orally and in no particular order, and she reassembles them into a cohesive narrative after the fact. Given this origin, the contents of Part Two are, fictionally, far less credible than the contents of Parts One and Three. During Part Two Carriscant becomes the dominant protagonist. Kay claims Carriscant does not spare himself in his auto-biographical history but there is hardly damning content in Part Two. For example, Carriscant presents himself as entirely innocent of a series of murders—but he served a lengthy prison sentence for complicity in those murders. The truth of any event in Part Two, if truth can be said to be contained in fiction, cannot be known within the narrative structure. This is consistent with the dominant idea of the novel that nothing (even parentage) can be known. In any event, the murder is the first of four murders, the initial two will lead to Carriscant's imprisonment. The murder of an American soldier at this point of the novel is notable and politically sensitive. The date of the murder, 1902, follows immediately a lengthy war between American forces and Philippine so-called insurrectionists. Bobby believes the murder may be politically motivated or a revenge murder for political reasons. The tongue operation is easily viewed as symbolic of enforced quieting (the Chinese boy loses the ability to speak coherently) leading to certain death.



# Chapters The Nipa Barn, Chez Dr. Isidro Cruz, and The Aero-Móvil

## Chapters The Nipa Barn, Chez Dr. Isidro Cruz, and The Aero-Móvil Summary

In Chapter The Nipa Barn, page 100, Carriscant visits Pantaleon's house. Even though the physicians have enjoyed a long professional association they appear to have little social interaction and this is Carriscant's first visit. He finds that Pantaleon has built a large nipa barn in which he is constructing a heavier-than-air aircraft, or airplane. Pantaleon calls it an Aero-Móvil. Of course, historically, powered flight has not yet been invented and thus Pantaleon's efforts are progressive and highly speculative. Carriscant, until now unaware of Pantaleon's interests beyond work, realizes where Pantaleon has been spending all his money and free time. Later, Carriscant returns home and contemplates his wife Annaliese Leys. She is the daughter of Gerhardt Leys, a German national; her mother died in 1899 one year after Carriscant and Annaliese were married. Gerhardt's brother Udo Leys also lives in the Philippines and remains there after Gerhardt returns to Germany c. 1901. Carriscant and Annaliese have not had sex since 1901 and Carriscant often thinks of visiting a prostitute. Their relationship is strained, loveless, and nearly over.

In Chapter Chez Dr. Isidro Cruz Carriscant and Bobby realize that Ward's body has been removed from the hospital morgue to Cruz's private morgue at his home. Cruz had no apparent authority to perform this action. A lengthy reiteration of the complex de facto caste system of the Philippine Islands is offered, making it clear that Cruz considers himself racially superior to everyone else in the narrative. Bobby and Carriscant travel to Cruz's house to recover the corpse. Cruz refuses to release it without an order from the Governor. While visiting, Carriscant sees various Naziesque medical experiments that Cruz is performing on dogs and monkeys, including operating on two dogs so they share a single heart. In Chapter The Aero-Móvil Carriscant again inspects Pantaleon's aircraft and realizes it is a complex work of mechanical ingenuity. He then visits a whorehouse and pays a prostitute but as he follows her upstairs he bumps into Dr. Weiland, an associate of Cruz. Socially embarrassed, Carriscant lamely claims to be making a medical call. Weiland laughs openly at this excuse. Carriscant then flees the whorehouse but ends up in a walled, private, outside compound with no exit. He climbs the wall, falls prone in thick mud, staggers around the jungle in the dark, and finally spends the night sitting in mud waiting for light and feeling like an idiot. At dawn he straggles cross-country to his home, ignorantly traversing an archery range on the way. A stray arrow nearly kills him and, covered in mud and dried slime, he bursts onto the archery range shrieking profanities and gesticulating like a wild man. He realizes that three young women—one incredibly striking—are target shooting. He accosts them and demands an apology which is proffered. Further hysterical demands



are dismissed and aware that he finds one woman very attractive, he foolishly wanders away and eventually reaches home.

## **Chapters The Nipa Barn, Chez Dr. Isidro Cruz, and The Aero-Móvil Analysis**

The complex social strata noted on page 107 are relevant to a full understanding of the novel, including Cruz's attitude of vast superiority over everyone else. The particular details are not deeply significant. While Carriscant likely would publicly refute the social strata he nevertheless holds Pantaleon as inferior by nature and in some measure defers to Cruz. Bobby, a colonizing American, exists largely beyond the social strata.

Pantaleon's obsession with his aircraft mirrors Carriscant's developing obsession with Delphine; both men become entirely irrational in their pursuits. Pantaleon's aircraft is described in considerable detail and it becomes apparent that he is something of an engineering genius. Later in the novel his plane does fly, though briefly. This disastrous but powered flight precedes the famous historic flight of the Wright Brothers by several months. Pantaleon seems to desire external validation by winning an award. Carriscant becomes caught up inadvertently in Pantaleon's obsession as the narrative develops. Chez's home includes a large laboratory and operating theater. Cruz apparently is doing research on the circulatory system; his fascination with the mammalian heart certainly implicates him in the recent murder. The fact that he has stolen the corpse does nothing to diminish his complicity. Cruz's social station, however, makes him immune from overt investigation, however. Carriscant's abortive trip to the whorehouse will come back to haunt him—he will be unable (rather, unwilling) to explain why he was wandering around the countryside and covered in mud and filth during his latter trial. The woman with whom Carriscant is so taken is Delphine Blyth Sieverance, though he does not learn her identity for several more chapters.



# Chapters Bad Blood, A Diet of Beef and Tea, On the Luneta, The House at San Teodoro, Dawn on the Pasig, and The Bridge at Santa Mesa

## Chapters Bad Blood, A Diet of Beef and Tea, On the Luneta, The House at San Teodoro, Dawn on the Pasig, and The Bridge at Santa Mesa Summary

In Chapter Bad Blood, the Chinese patient of Carriscant dies of septicemia. Carriscant muses on the nature of infection and sterile practice. On Pantaleon's urging, Carriscant visits his wife's uncle, Udo Leys, to arrange for the black market import of a special engine suitable for use on Pantaleon's aircraft. Pantaleon is afraid that if he openly imports the engine it will tip off his nebulous competition in their aircraft circles—he also will enjoy the engine duty-free. Carriscant, a fellow European, arranges this and meets a black market import/export shipper in the process. Later, he visits with Bobby ostensibly about the murder investigation—in reality he obliquely questions Bobby about the American woman from the archery lanes. Bobby misidentifies her and gives Carriscant an incorrect name. In Chapter A Diet of Beef and Tea Carriscant performs numerous operations. In Chapter On the Luneta Carriscant makes several inquiries about the woman Bobby has misidentified to him. Carriscant travels to the Luneta, a social plaza and gathering place, and does see Delphine. Approaching her, he insistently calls her by the wrong name. She entirely is put off and rejects him out of hand. He departs, feeling angry and foolish. In Chapter The House at San Teodoro Carriscant travels home to visit with his mother. He contemplates his heritage and past history.

In Chapter Dawn on the Pasig, Carriscant concludes Bobby has misidentified Delphine. Unable to forget the American woman, Carriscant frequently skulks about the archery lanes hoping to see her. He plans, if he does see her, to follow her home and thereby learn who she is. After several attempts he still has not seen her. On one occasion he starts to fantasize about her and, moving off into the woods, drops his pants and begins to masturbate. An old Philippine man, gathering wood, sees Carriscant and laughs at him—causing him to flee. In Chapter The Bridge at Santa Mesa Bobby calls on Carriscant. There has been another murder. Again, Bobby has Carriscant act as the medical examiner. The body is that of Corporal Maximilian Braun. Like Ward, Braun's body apparently has been surgically manipulated post-mortem. Also like Ward, Braun's body is found at the site of a prior military action. Bobby continues to speculate that the murders are politically motivated. Braun's heart is missing; otherwise his wounds are similar to Ward's. Bobby then takes Carriscant to visit Governor Taft.





## Chapters Bad Blood, A Diet of Beef and Tea, On the Luneta, The House at San Teodoro, Dawn on the Pasig, and The Bridge at Santa Mesa Analysis

The death of the Chinese boy is symbolic of a process of infection with a small opening leading to serious symptoms. This process is working on Pantaleon and Carriscant. Both men have an interest (airplane, Delphine) that becomes an obsession. Carriscant's action of black marketeering for Pantaleon has significance later in the narrative as Carriscant uses his black market connections to arrange for the secretive conveyance of Delphine out of the country. And as the Chinese boy is silenced, so too do the obsessions of Pantaleon and Carriscant lead to their being silenced. The Luneta (today better known as Rizal Park) is a historic locale in Manila that long has been the city's social hub. During the period of the novel society's evenings were focused on the Luneta. It is therefore easy to accept that Carriscant, sent there to find one woman, would instead find the woman he really was looking for. His approach to Delphine on the Luneta seemingly is designed to provoke rejection. The narrative significance of Carriscant's visit to his mother in San Teodoro largely is to establish the fact that his mother lives there—this destination figures later in the narrative as a sort of alibi.

Carriscant's masturbation in the woods is amusing as a scene, but his lapse in judgment comes back to haunt him later in the novel when the wood-gatherer identifies Carriscant to police. This puts Carriscant at a point in place and time, behaving oddly, that implicates involvement in a murder—at least as far as Paton Bobby is concerned. Thus, when Corporal Braun is discovered Bobby associates Carriscant's presence with the crime. And in fact, Carriscant's conviction probably stems from his presence in the woods with his pants down. Again, the location of the second victim's body is in the locale of a place significant to the recent war. Governor Taft refers to the historic person William Howard Taft, later President of the United States.



# Chapters Pitch, Yaw and Roll; Into the Body; A Simple Surgeon; and Tea With Paton Bobby

## Chapters Pitch, Yaw and Roll; Into the Body; A Simple Surgeon; and Tea With Paton Bobby Summary

Carriscant is called on the carpet by Cruz. Cruz is backed up by the alcoholic Wieland, who refers to Carriscant as a "meddling half-breed nigger" (p. 161), again demonstrating the socialized racism of the two older doctors. In response to this brutal personal remark Carriscant loses his temper and throttles the older Wieland. He then departs and muses over his political situation at the hospital—he considers leaving the hospital for a location with more modern ideas. Later, he reviews the airplane with Pantaleon and notes the graceful, strong, and complex construction. Later still he installs huge ice chests at his own home, making a personal morgue capable of holding corpses. He is then summoned by an American officer of some local prestige named Jepson Seiverance. Seiverance explains that his wife is seriously ill and that Cruz, already consulted, has prescribed various drugs. Seiverance has heard that Carriscant is the best surgeon in Manila and therefore asks him to call upon his wife as a patient. Carriscant hesitantly agrees and enters the sickroom to discover that the patient is the woman of his obsession—Delphine Blyth Seiverance. She recognizes him and a brief moment of awkwardness ensues—which then passes to a complicity of silence. Carriscant examines her, finding the process of palpating her abdomen sexual. He diagnoses her with acute appendicitis and states she must have an appendectomy. Meanwhile Cruz and Wieland have arrived and an intense argument ensues—the doctors accuse each other of quackery and bad practice. Seiverance doesn't know what to do until Delphine selects Carriscant as her personal physician, ending the argument, and sending her into an admittedly dangerous surgery. In Chapter Into the Body, page 174, Carriscant operates on Delphine. First he sends all assistants away and after she is anesthetized shaves her pubic region. He then summons the assistants and performs the surgery, finding the entire process sexual. His movements, usually so sure, are indecisive and he is confused mentally. Nevertheless the surgery is successful. In Chapter A Simple Surgeon, page 178, he repeatedly visits her during her long but sure recovery. He realizes that as her physician he can call upon her without the appearance of impropriety. Over the weeks they develop an infatuation. In Chapter Tea With Paton Bobby, page 185, Carriscant and Bobby meet. Bobby notes that Carriscant is technically a suspect and then brings forward the wood cutter who says that Carriscant was masturbating in the woods. Carriscant is embarrassed but unresponsive and Bobby sends the witness away—apparently not finding his story credible.



## Chapters Pitch, Yaw and Roll; Into the Body; A Simple Surgeon; and Tea With Paton Bobby Analysis

Chapter Pitch, Yaw and Roll derives its title from Pantaleon's explanation of the mechanics of flight controls. At this point in the novel Pantaleon is under the mistaken illusion that he will be able to control the flight of his aircraft—just as Carriscant is under the mistaken illusion that he will be able to control the path of his infatuation. A major turning point in the narrative occurs when Carriscant meets Delphine formally and she does not reject him. Instead, their mutual silence about the past leads to a complicity of conspiracy that eventually ends in Seiverance's murder and Carriscant's imprisonment. Chapter Into the Body clearly is full of sexual symbols - he touches her genitals in private; he penetrates her body; she is naked, helpless, draped; he is in a position of power and authority; he gazes upon her naked form; and he becomes aroused. The title of Chapter A Simple Surgeon is a sort of comical reference to Carriscant who self-identifies as such, noting that his role allows him unprecedented access to the married Delphine without arousing suspicions. This period plants the seed that germinates into their ruinous affair. Even as his illicit relationship begins to grow, so too does Bobby's suspicion about Carriscant grow. Carriscant probably should notice Bobby's attentions but he is far too focused on Delphine to notice anything else. Also during this segment of the novel it becomes fairly obvious that Pantaleon is assuming Carriscant's support in his flying venture—again, Carriscant is oblivious to this because his attention is elsewhere.

This segment of the novel also begins to conflate the narrator's personal (Kay) with that of Carriscant. Several passages in this region closely but erroneously identify Carriscant as the narrator: "we have a secret" (p. 168); "This lemonade is really not too bad" (p. 199); "My God, I'm jealous" (p. 205); "...that speaks to my mind..." (p. 207); and so forth; all have the construction of a first-person narrative perspective. The novel's careful construction through this segment, allowing Kay and Carriscant essentially to dually narrate the events simultaneously is quite remarkable.



# **Chapters The Four-Cylinder 12 HP Flanquin; 1903; Two Propellers Pushing; Rain; Scalpel; The Blue Afternoon; The Girls on the Pony; Hippotheetical; and The Sutured Heart**

## **Chapters The Four-Cylinder 12 HP Flanquin; 1903; Two Propellers Pushing; Rain; Scalpel; The Blue Afternoon; The Girls on the Pony; Hippotheetical; and The Sutured Heart Summary**

Pantaleon's specialized engine arrives through the black market. Pantaleon begins to determine how the engine should be mounted. Chapter 1903, page 195, occurs over New Years. Carriscant reflects upon his absolute dearth of feeling for his wife Annaliese. Seiverance then announces that he will be shipping out on a combat assignment. He meets with Carriscant and Delphine at his own house and offers a lengthy and effusive Christian prayer of thanks for Carriscant's ability and Delphine's recovery. Seiverance then ships out. In Chapter Two Propellers Pushing, page 200, Pantaleon informs Carriscant that he is expected to co-pilot the aircraft. Pantaleon has decided to use two reverse (pushing) propellers to drive the aircraft. Carriscant will sit in the back seat and control some of the airplane's motion while Pantaleon, forward, will pilot the craft. Carriscant is afraid and uninterested. Pantaleon is outraged and demands Carriscant comply. A brief ugly scene occurs and Carriscant agrees. In Chapter Rain, page 203, Carriscant contrives to meet Delphine alone—without her nurse. He returns a book and falls from the library ladder. She rushes to him and he gazes down at her cleavage as she leans over him. He is overcome by desire and rushes from the home—from this point on, both Carriscant and Delphine realize she is in complete control over him.

In Chapter Scalpel, page 211, another murder occurs. This time the victim is a native Philippine woman who is pregnant. Bobby summons Carriscant and at the scene shows him a scalpel that he claims was found near the body. Carriscant quickly comes to believe that he is being framed for the murders and suspects Cruz. Chapter The Blue Afternoon, page 215, is a central turning point in the eponymous novel. Carriscant stands and looks out over the blue countryside during a prolonged rainstorm. He contemplates various aspects of his life and becomes mesmerized by the beauty and power of nature. Later she visits him at his office at the end of the working day—her timing is perfect as he is the only one left there. They consummate their desire in his office beginning he physical acts of love of their affair. In Chapter The Girls on the Pony, page 224, Carriscant walks around the town after Delphine departs. He sees two girls



riding a pony. The girl in front is happy and excited; the girl in back is fearful. Carriscant fumes about the social mores and restrictions of the closed society of Manila. He knows he will only be able openly to love Delphine if they relocate. In Chapter Hippothetical, page 227, Carriscant meets Bobby. Carriscant has conducted an inventory of his operating theater and admits to Bobby that a scalpel of the same make as found by the third victim is missing. Bobby responds that the scalpel is of common make and all hospitals in the area use it and all of them reported missing examples. Carriscant becomes convinced that Bobby stole the scalpel from his operating theater and planted it near the body of the victim as some type of test.

In *The Sutured Heart*, page 231, Carriscant does his rounds and is summoned to attend on one of Cruz's patients. Carriscant finds Cruz's wards filthy and contaminated and full of dead patients. The patient he examines has a heart wound that has been repaired, apparently. Carriscant knows immediately the man will die of infection. Later, Carriscant stalks Delphine's house at night trying to figure out how he can be with her alone again.

## **Chapters The Four-Cylinder 12 HP Flanquin; 1903; Two Propellers Pushing; Rain; Scalpel; The Blue Afternoon; The Girls on the Pony; Hippothetical; and The Sutured Heart Analysis**

Throughout the remainder of the narrative Carriscant maintains that the third murder was not associated with the previous two murders—the third victim was merely a random murder victim. This is made somewhat ambiguous by the discovery of the scalpel which Carriscant suspects was planted by Bobby as a test of his (Carriscant's) fidelity. His admission of a missing scalpel apparently is a pass—perhaps. Even Bobby eventually apparently concludes the third murder to be unrelated. However, the reader must remain aware that this is all related by Carriscant and reconstructed by Kay, two engaged individuals with personal agendas in the recreation of the story. In other words, as readers we don't really know what Bobby actually thought or did. In any event the dead pregnant woman foreshadows both Annaliese and Delphine—they will both become 'dead' to Carriscant when they are pregnant by him.

Probably the central scene of the novel transpires in this segment when Carriscant has a sort of metaphysical experience with the weather and locale and then sexually culminates his affair with Delphine. She confesses that her husband Seiverance is a bad partner for her, though he wholly is devoted to her. Their affair will continue to the end of Part Two of the novel. Another obviously foreshadowing element concerns the two girls on the pony—here we see prefigured Pantaleon (in front—happy and excited) and Carriscant (fearful) on the flying machine's voyage. Hopefully the pony ride had a happier ending than the airplane ride.

The visit to Cruz's ward starts another minor theme of the novel focused on Cruz's fascination with the heart. The wounded heart clearly links Cruz to the murders—at least in Carriscant's mind. It is also a rather obvious symbol of the destructive power of

love, lust, and desire as well as a symbol of the wounds that are received through infidelity.



# Chapters An Official Entertainment; The Library; Trial Run; Brahms; and In The Nipa Barn

## Chapters An Official Entertainment; The Library; Trial Run; Brahms; and In The Nipa Barn Summary

One day in the hospital Carriscant is summoned to Cruz's operating room where Cruz shows him sutures in heart muscles to close a knife wound. Carriscant recognizes the patient as a previous patient of Cruz without such a wound; Cruz has formed the wound to fix it. Carriscant realizes the patient will die of infection but Cruz believes the procedure is groundbreaking and historic. Carriscant tells him it was done successfully some years previously. Later, Carriscant attends a social event given by Governor Taft. At the event Annaliese and Delphine inadvertently meet. Annaliese either knows about the affair or instinctively disliked Delphine and refers to her later as vulgar, American, and like a Gibson Girl. Carriscant, unexpectedly meeting Delphine, is at a loss for words and compares himself to a "Cruz semi-mute" (p. 264). In Chapter The Library, page 247, Carriscant makes a physician's call upon Delphine at her home. In Chapter Trial Run, page 249, Carriscant watches as Pantaleon does a taxi under power of his aircraft. In Chapter Brahms, page 252, Delphine again calls on Carriscant's office and they have sex. They talk about Sieverance. She confides that she does not love him—in fact, finds him limiting and small. They talk of running away together; she mentions that Sieverance, insanely jealous, would certainly follow her with determination. Then Pantaleon accidentally intrudes and realizes they are having a sexual affair. In Chapter In The Nipa Barn, page 259, Delphine takes up landscape painting to have a pretext for leaving the home alone. She paints near Pantaleon's nipa barn where she meets Carriscant for sex. She tells him that she was born in New York State, her father was named Dalson Blythe and her mother was named Emma. They both died in a typhus epidemic in 1879 whereupon she was adopted by her uncle Wallace Blythe and his wife Matilda. She was well-educated but solitary. Several trips to Europe in the 1890s opened her eyes and she married Sieverance, the first young man who proposed.

## Chapters An Official Entertainment; The Library; Trial Run; Brahms; and In The Nipa Barn Analysis

The social event finds Salvador and Annaliese Carriscant unexpectedly meeting Delphine; Carriscant makes the introductions in a stumbling manner. Annaliese either knows or suspects something because her reaction to Delphine is quite cold. The Gibson Girl was a style of feminine beauty derived from the illustrations of a popular American artist. While Americans found the Gibson Girl ideal beautiful, Delphine finds it a caricature. Carriscant's reference to being semi-mute by Cruz is a reference to Cruz's



procedure of removing tongue disorders by complete amputation of the tongue. Here again we see a reference to the Chinese boy symbol presented in Chapter Tongue. When Carriscant calls upon Delphine in Chapter The Library, he hopes to engage in sex but she declines to behave in such a way in her own home. Pantaleon's accidental discovery of the affair does have several repercussions. The most obvious of which is the subsequent use of his remote barn as a convenient meeting place for sex. After the sexual relationship becomes commonplace, Delphine tells Carriscant about her American upbringing. This segment of the novel is a sort of quiescent period. Sieverance is not present, the sexual affair proceeds pleasurably enough, and Bobby's investigations seem more or less stalled out. The remainder of Part Two of the novel sees increasing conflict.





# **Chapters The Raid; The Letter; Pragmatism; Vienna, Paris, Moscow, Rome...; A Bottle of Blood; The Toy; A Funeral; The Lost Flight of Pantaleon Quiroga; and Escape**

## **Chapters The Raid; The Letter; Pragmatism; Vienna, Paris, Moscow, Rome...; A Bottle of Blood; The Toy; A Funeral; The Lost Flight of Pantaleon Quiroga; and Escape Summary**

Later, Bobby, Carriscant, and some policemen forcibly search Cruz's personal operating theater and morgue. They do not find any incriminating evidence. Cruz is furious; Carriscant is embarrassed. In Chapter The Letter, page 267, Delphine sends Carriscant a letter that requests an urgent audience—she then tells him she is pregnant by him. He immediately decides they must flee the country and begins contacting persons in the black market to smuggle them out. Then Sieverance unexpectedly returns. Carriscant travels to Delphine's house immediately and starts a fire in a shed to get the household to turn out so he can see her. He confides in her his complex and bizarre plan and she assents to it. It will transpire over several days. In Chapter Pragmatism, page 277, Annaliese says she wants to reconcile. Carriscant acquiesces and the married couple starts to sleep together again, engaging in sexual intercourse that results in Annaliese's pregnancy with Kay Fischer. In Chapter Vienna, Paris, Moscow, Rome..., page 280, Carriscant and Delphine complete their complex plan that is intended to convince everyone that Delphine has died from miscarriage while Carriscant has died from being randomly robbed.

In Chapter A Bottle of Blood, page 283, Delphine tells Sieverance she is pregnant by him. He summons Carriscant who confirms the pregnancy. They say it is much more advanced than really it is. Sieverance, nearly impotent, swells with pride. During the examination Carriscant passes a bottle of blood to Delphine. In Chapter The Toy, page 286, Pantaleon tells Carriscant that he (Pantaleon) expects him to act as his copilot. Carriscant objects and Pantaleon becomes furious. They exchange very acrimonious accusations; finally Pantaleon says that if Carriscant refuses he will expose the extramarital affair. Carriscant agrees to act as copilot. In Chapter The Funeral, page 293, Carriscant, Bobby, and a very few others bury the two American murder victims. In Chapter The Lost Flight of Pantaleon Quiroga, page 296, Carriscant arrives at the nipa barn on the appointed day and helps Pantaleon by acting as copilot. Carriscant dresses inappropriately like a physician. Many reporters are there. The plane does in fact take



off and fly some hundreds of feet about eight feet off the ground. However, it cannot be accurately controlled and as Pantaleon cries out in ecstasy Carriscant shrieks in terror. The airplane crashes and is destroyed. Pantaleon is killed immediately; Carriscant relatively is unhurt. The crash and death invalidate the airplane's attempt at the much sought after prize.

In Chapter Escape, page 307, the next day Sieverance summons Carriscant for an emergency. Delphine fakes a miscarriage and has covered herself in blood from the bottle. Carriscant transports her to his operating theater and dismisses all of his assistants. Carriscant administers powerful drugs to heavily anesthetize and sedate her. He then packs her in ice from his morgue to drop her body temperature so she is apparently dead. He shows Sieverance Delphine's 'corpse', claiming she has died. He shows Sieverance the fetus taken from the third murder victim. Sieverance is overcome with grief and leaves. Carriscant then puts the body of the third murder victim into the coffin and nails it shut. He revives Delphine and sends her on her way to the black market smuggler. He goes home and tells Annaliese he is going to travel to his mother's house. He plans to simply 'vanish' on the trip and let people assume he has been robbed and murdered. Instead, just as he leaves the house, Bobby appears and tells him that Sieverance is dead—murdered by shots to the head. Bobby, visibly shaken, arrests Carriscant for the four murders.

## **Chapters The Raid; The Letter; Pragmatism; Vienna, Paris, Moscow, Rome...; A Bottle of Blood; The Toy; A Funeral; The Lost Flight of Pantaleon Quiroga; and Escape Analysis**

This complex and conflict-filled segment of the novel concludes Part Two. The raid on Cruz's property fails to turn up any evidence, apparently eliminating Cruz as a suspect for Bobby. Bobby's next suspect appears to be Pantaleon because of family relationships—but this seems rather absurd. In fact, Bobby starts considering Carriscant as his prime suspect—but this is not particularly obvious until the end of Part Two.

Delphine's pregnancy makes the fantasy of running away something of a necessity if social upheaval is to be avoided. Sieverance is a jealous and, as Delphine says, a violent man. Sieverance's unexpected return speeds up the plan greatly. Carriscant and Delphine both believe that Sieverance must believe she is dead or he will pursue her with determination. They thus come up with the singularly cruel plan of making him believe he is an expectant father only to pull the rug out from under him. Meanwhile Carriscant pretends to reengage with Annaliese to allay any suspicion on her part—once again, these actions are quite cruel and selfish. Obviously at this point of the novel the two unfaithful spouses care nothing for anyone except their own selfish desires. For himself, Carriscant plans simply to disappear on the road and let people conclude he has been robbed and murdered. They plan to meet on board the black market smuggler's ship and travel to a new life somewhere in Europe. The plan works to a point—Delphine escapes. But Sieverance's murder causes Bobby to arrest Carriscant. Their



unsavory plot thus is foiled by another untimely murder. Sieverane is said to have been shot in the head. Bobby appears to have no suspect other than Carriscant. Perhaps the secrecy of the extra-marital affair has not been as perfect as suspected. Anyway, Bobby already finds Carriscant's routine sneaking around at night to be suspicious. Pantaleon can't be the murderer because he is dead. Cruz is no longer a suspect. The murderer is not identified in the novel.



# Part Three

## Part Three Summary

Part Three of the novel is presented as a sort of travelogue combined with a diary of notes. It covers five days in Lisbon spent in finding Delphine. The structure of this section of the novel is erratic and has a frenetic, unfinished feel.

On Sunday, May 3, Kay and Carriscant land in Lisbon. Kay muses about the story that Carriscant has told her—the story she has arranged in Part Two of the novel. Carriscant notes that he was tried for the murder of Sieverance and for being complicit in the murders of the two Americans. He was exonerated of murder but was found guilty of conspiracy in the murders of the two Americans. He spend the next eight years in Bilibid Prison and the following eight years at a labor camp in Guam. He was paroled in 1919 and moved to Capiz on Panay Island where he opened a restaurant, eventually married, and had children. He then claims he found the news magazine photograph in 1935. Before he died, Udo Leys had told him of Annaliese's pregnancy and Kay's location. Carriscant then found Kay and asked for her help. Annaliese had left the Philippines only a few days after Carriscant's conviction.

On Monday, May 4, page 336, Kay wonders about her past, ponders Carriscant's story, and asks him several specific questions about specific events. He appears to have ready and credible answers. They go to the American Consulate and inquire about the photograph. An assistant agrees to make inquiries. On Tuesday, May 5, page 342, Kay and Carriscant canvas the city's *confeiteiros*, or sweet shops, hoping to find one that sells a particular favored candy to Delphine.

On Wednesday, May 6, page 345, the embassy contacts Carriscant and tells her the woman is Senhora Lopes do Livio, living in Lisbon. Kay and Carriscant discuss the details of meeting Delphine. She asks him more questions. He tells her of witnessing a war atrocity near the end of the war—an American force deliberately murdered many civilians. He believes that, maybe, the officer in command may have been Sieverance. Perhaps the two American soldiers were murdered because they were witnesses to Sieverance's involvement. In any case, Carriscant states flatly that he believe Cruz was the murderer, but thinks the third victim was uninvolved in the greater crime. Later, Kay lists four possible suspects: Pantaleon, Cruz, Sieverance, and (after a pause) Carriscant.

On Wednesday, May 7, page 356, Kay and Carriscant travel to Delphine's home. They are greeted by her son, Nando, the son on Delphine's late second husband. He doesn't want to admit them because Delphine is near death, but they do insist. Delphine and Carriscant talk for a long period in private. Kay notes their immediate intimacy before leaving the room. Later, Kay and Carriscant chat at a café. He plans to return to his wife and children; Delphine will shortly die; the voyage has been a success. He says that Delphine admitted to murdering Sieverance. Kay immediately dismisses the claim



because it does not agree with certain facts in Carriscant's narrative. The two people sit in the late blue afternoon and chat about their relationship.

## Part Three Analysis

Part Three of the novel is presented as a sort of travelogue combined with a diary of notes. It covers five days in Lisbon spent in finding Delphine. The structure of this section of the novel is erratic and has a frenetic, unfinished feel. Snips of narrative action are interspersed with comments by Kay, random observations, and so forth. Carriscant believes his narrative must include sufficient information to discover the murderer but Bobby has not resolved it after all these years and Kay finds herself unable to understand who might have been the murderer. She rejects Carriscant's accusation of Cruz, just as she rejects Delphine's apparent confession. Again, Carriscant claims Delphine confessed—it is unclear whether he is credible (in this or in anything). Kay believes Carriscant killed Sieverance. But if this is the case, why would he go through the lengthy pantomime of her death only to murder the only person who was affected by it? Carriscant is not simply cruel. The novel is quite inconclusive of narrative fact and this leaves the audience hanging at the end of the novel.



# Characters

## Kay Fischer

Kay Fischer, putatively born Kay Carriscant, is the daughter of Annaliese Leys and the step-daughter of Rudolf Fischer. Kay was born January 9, 1904, in German New Guinea and then traveled to Long Beach when she was only a few years old. Annaliese has always told Kay her father was an Englishman named Hugh Paget who died when Kay was only two months old. Annaliese offers only the flimsiest of biographical details about Hugh: he had a sister named Merideth; he was a fair-haired missionary and teacher; they were married in 1903; she has only a single blurry and ancient photograph of him. Annaliese and Rudolf have at least one daughter together—Bruna, who in turn has two daughters Amy and Greta.

Kay has lived her entire adult life in the Los Angeles area. She is an architect, graduating from M.I.T. in 1926, and has enjoyed some early success though recent ugly business dealings with Eric Meyersen, a jealous former partner, have left her future business prospects much reduced. Her business is said to be nearly bankrupt and she is so short on money that she is forced to sell her own self-designed dream home. Kay describes herself as 5'6" tall with dull brown hair and bright brown eyes. Throughout the novel she is characterized as physically non-descript; her ex-husband says she has large breasts and her possible father tells her she is verging on obese.

Kay married Philip Brockman in 1929 and the couple had a child named Coleman. Coleman was born April 10, 1930 and died sixteen days later from a congenital birth defect. Kay and Philip divorced in 1930 but resumed a friendly relationship c. 1931. They occasionally have sex but the relationship appears primarily based around Philip's constant petty borrowing of money from Kay. Philip is an alcoholic who is incapable of holding down a job.

In 1936, just as Kay is suffering a new setback in her professional development, a man named Salvador Carriscant appears and tells her he is her real biological father. He presents a news magazine photograph from 1927 that shows a striking woman and tells her that he needs her help to locate the woman. Kay initially dismisses him as a harmless but confused eccentric but Carriscant is persistent and Kay finally comes to believe he must really be her biological father. She helps him locate a retired lawman named Paton Bobby and then travels with him to Lisbon. During their voyage he relates a lengthy and complicated tale of his own life. Arriving in Lisbon the two manage to locate the woman—Delphine—and visit her. The novel ends with Kay wondering how much of what she knows actually is true.



## Salvador Carriscant

Salvador Carriscant is the son of Archibald Muir Carriscant, from Scotland, and Juliana Ocampo, from the Philippine Islands. In turn, Juliana's mother was a Philippine woman but her father, Don Carlos Ocampo, was Spanish. Salvador is born 1870 in Manila. In 1893 he travels to Europe and receives a medical degree complete with then-modern theory and training. He returns to Manila in 1897 where he meets and marries Annaliese Leys, the Philippine-born daughter of German nationals. From 1898 through 1902 Carriscant practices medicine at San Jerónimo hospital while the occupying American army fights a vicious colonizing war against Philippine Nationals. Carriscant's modern practices of sterile procedures and sound surgical techniques put him into conflict with Dr. Isidro Cruz, the hospital's chief surgeon and an adherent to outmoded and brutal medical methodologies. As Carriscant's and Cruz's enmity increases, so Carriscant's and Annaliese's marriage falters. By 1902 Carriscant and Annaliese live in the same house but pursue entirely separate lives.

Finally, Carriscant determines to visit a prostitute but is deterred by his social pride when he stumbles upon Dr. Weiland, a medical peer, at the whorehouse. After a lengthy and disastrous trip home Carriscant is nearly shot by some women practicing archery. One of the women, the American Delphine Seiverance, captures Carriscant's imagination. Over the next months he becomes obsessed with her and after a series of false starts finally engages her socially after performing an emergency appendectomy upon her. Carriscant and Delphine then pursue an illicit love affair. Meanwhile Carriscant is called upon by the local American constable, Paton Bobby, to serve as the medical examiner in a series of three brutal murders. Carriscant is unaware that Bobby views him as a prime suspect.

Carriscant then hatches a complex and dark plan to convince the world that both Delphine and he have died in separate events. Using various medical tricks he convinces Delphine's husband that she has died and then spirits her out of the country. His covert machinations and secretive behavior, however, have convinced Bobby that he in fact is the murderer. On the evening that Carriscant attempts to flee from society, intending to meet Delphine, he is arrested by Bobby and spends the next nearly two decades in prison. Delphine vanishes without a trace—just as planned. Annaliese, pregnant, leaves Carriscant and eventually relocates in Long Beach. Once released from prison Carriscant eventually re-marries in 1922, has children, and works as a restaurant cook.

In 1927 Delphine sends Carriscant a photograph of herself taken from a news magazine. Carriscant makes inquiries of Annaliese's uncle and tracks down his daughter Kay in the Los Angeles area. Eventually Kay believes his wild tale about being her father and helps him locate Bobby who confirms several facts about Delphine and the murders. Kay and Carriscant then travel to Lisbon where they doggedly track down Delphine—now near death. Carriscant and Delphine enjoy a brief but intense reunion and then he departs, intending to return to his wife, children, and home.



## Delphine Blyth Sieverance

Delphine Sieverance was born about 1870 in America. Her early life is not fully described in the book, though she is orphaned at a young age and grows up in some penury. Her early life is apparently supportive but difficult and she dreams of adventure and a wider stage. She is noted as being attractive with reddish hair, very fair skin, freckled shoulders, and an English nose. She is also noted as being fairly large by comparison to most women in the Philippines. As a fairly young age Delphine meets a military officer named Sieverance and becomes infatuated with the idea of military adventure. Not having better prospects, she agrees to his marriage proposal and the two are married. Within a few years she comes to believe their marriage was a mistake; however, Sieverance remains fully devoted to her. Sometime before 1902, Sieverance is transferred to the Philippines on active duty military service; Delphine accompanies him and enters society in Manila. Delphine pursues various social activities including archery. She meets Dr. Salvador Carriscant under unfortunate circumstances and then finds his continued attempts at contact unpleasant. She becomes sick with acute appendicitis, however, and Carriscant is summoned as the local preeminent surgeon. He performs a then-radical operation, an appendectomy, to save her life. As Delphine recovers her health she falls in love with Carriscant and the two being an extramarital affair. Delphine is convinced that Sieverance will only release her if he thinks she is dead; pregnant by Carriscant, she fears that Sieverance will become violent or abusive when he finds out. Carriscant and Delphine enter into an elaborate and dark plot to convince Sieverance that she is dead. An itinerant corpse is then placed in her closed casket and Delphine flees to Singapore where she plans to reunite with Carriscant. Unfortunately, Carriscant is arrested on the eve of his own flight and Delphine is left to her own devices. She miscarries Carriscant's infant. Relatively nothing is known of the remainder of Delphine's life. She eventually re-marries and relocates to Lisbon under the surname Lopes do Livio; she has a son named Nando. In c. 1927 she appears in a news magazine photograph and, wanting again to see Carriscant, finds his address and mails him the magazine page. She then awaits his arrival as an apparent sort of test of devotion. Near death, Delphine greets Carriscant warmly and they share a pleasant few hours visiting before he plans to return to his wife and children.

## Pantaleon Quiroga

Pantaleon Quiroga is a Philippine surgeon of advanced and modern education but only moderate skill. Lacking the mystical 'touch' that makes a gifted physician, he instead works as an anesthesiologist, partnering with Salvador Carriscant at the San Jerónimo hospital. Like Carriscant, Quiroga comes into conflict with Dr. Isidro Cruz because of Cruz's outdated—nearly barbaric—medical methodology. Unlike Carriscant, however, Quiroga feels fairly subordinate to Cruz and rarely argues or disagrees with him in any public venue. Quiroga is said to have been educated in Europe. Carriscant clearly considers Quiroga to be an inferior practitioner but Quiroga does not consider Carriscant his superior—to Quiroga, they merely have different areas of expertise. During the novel, Quiroga becomes fascinated with powered flight in a heavier-than-air





machine (recall that historically the Wright Brother's first flight occurred in 1903, after Quiroga's death). Quiroga wants to win the Amberway-Richault prize, a monetary reward offered for the first heavier-than-air flight. To this end he spends his considerable income on designing and building a primitive airplane that he calls an Aero-Mobile, as well as the construction of a runway, hangar, and other facilities. Quiroga becomes as obsessed with his airplane as Carriscant becomes with Delphine. For reasons not fully developed in the novel, Quiroga also insists that Carriscant act as copilot on the inaugural flight of the airplane. The craft does indeed achieve powered flight but crash-lands, killing Quiroga, and thus becoming invalid as the prize recipient.

During the novel Quiroga also becomes a suspect for three bloody murders committed just before his death. Quiroga's uncle, a slain famous insurrectionist, is said to have indoctrinated him with anti-American sentiment. Quiroga does not particularly demonstrate such sentiment during the novel and his possible guilt is not supported by narrative evidence. In any event, Quiroga's obsession with his airplane consumes his entire focus.

## **Paton Bobby**

Paton Bobby is the American constable of Manila. During 1902 he investigates a series of four grisly murders. Bobby is blustery and often uses profanity; although his age is not given in the novel it can be assumed to be roughly equivalent to that of Salvador Carriscant's age. His attitude enjoins a typical racist outlook on the world. He develops several theories about the murders, mostly focusing on diffused political revenge against the colonizing Americans. In the end he is unable to solve any of the murders. Bobby enlists Dr. Salvador Carriscant to act as the medical examiner in three of the murders. During the initial interactions with Carriscant, Bobby steals a scalpel from Carriscant's hospital theater and plants it near the next corpse found. Bobby apparently intends to this to be a test and in fact, Carriscant inventories his operating materials, finds one scalpel missing, and so reports to Bobby. Though this tends to exonerate Carriscant it does not convince Bobby of his innocence. When the fourth murder occurs, Bobby arrests Carriscant who stands trial and is convicted of conspiracy charges but exonerated of murder charges. Little else is revealed of Bobby's life—by the 1930s he is living as a retired policeman in America. When Carriscant visits him he is quite surprised but also cordial; even at this late stage in his life he uses severe profanity. Bobby is described as physically imposing and strong, if overweight. He does not appear to have any social life extending beyond his police work.

## **Philip and Coleman Brockman**

Philip Brockman marries Kay Fischer in 1929 and the couple has a child named Coleman. Coleman is born April 10, 1930 and dies sixteen days later from a congenital birth defect. Philip and Kay divorce in 1930 but resume a friendly relationship c. 1931. They occasionally have sex from c. 1932 through 1936 but the relationship appears primarily based around Philip's constant petty borrowing of money from Kay. Philip is an



alcoholic who is incapable of holding down a job though during the novel he does secure a good-paying job that allows him to repay Kay all of the monies he recently has borrowed from her; then he loses the job because of his drinking problem. Philip appears semi-interested in rekindling his relationship with Kay though it apparently was Philip's infidelity that finally ended their marriage. Kay notes that Philip is quite good at energetic and mechanical sex but lacks any emotional touch—she compares his post-sex penis to a garden slug. Kay also notes that Philip is strongly built and attractive. Coleman does not directly appear in the narrative but does recur in Kay's thoughts on a few occasions.

## **Annaliese Leys**

Annaliese Leys is born c. 1875 in the Philippine Islands. Her father, Gerhardt Leys, is a German national who works in the Philippines with his brother and her uncle, Udo Leys. Annaliese's mother remains unnamed but is noted as a Philippine woman. Little biographical detail is offered regarding Annaliese's early life except that her father died when she was young and that her adult relationship with her uncle is somewhat strained. Annaliese meets and marries Salvador Carriscant in 1898. After a brief period of happiness the couple's relationship disintegrates. By 1901 they are living entirely separate lives and no longer have sex—Salvador sleeps in his study. During this period Annaliese apparently maintains an appearance in society but grows very isolated. While Carriscant reacts by withdrawing into his work Annaliese eventually attempts to reconcile the marriage. For a very brief period in 1902 she invites Carriscant back to the marriage bed and they engage in sex which putatively leaves Annaliese pregnant with her daughter Kay. Just days later Carriscant is arrested for murder and shortly thereafter Annaliese leaves the Philippines and travels to German New Guinea where Kay is born in 1903. Annaliese does not tell Kay about Carriscant, instead telling her an apparent fiction about one Hugh Paget, an English missionary and teacher, whom she claims to have married in German New Guinea and who subsequently died in 1904 when Annaliese was only months old. When pressed for details about her supposed father Paget, Kay receives only vague responses from Annaliese who claims that everything except one poor photograph was destroyed in a fire.

In 1907 Annaliese meets and marries Rudolf Fischer and they thereafter move to Long Beach, California. Annaliese and Rudolf have at least one daughter, Bruna, and by her two granddaughters, Amy and Greta. In 1932 Kay surreptitiously arranges for her mother to see and note Carriscant crossing a road in Los Angeles. Annaliese does not appear to recognize him, but Kay takes her non-response as positive confirmation that she knows him.

## **Dr. Isidro Cruz**

Dr. Isidro Cruz is born probably c. 1850 - 1855 though his age is not given in the novel. He is born in Spain and thereafter immigrates to the Philippine Islands where he practices medicine in Manila at the San Jerónimo hospital. He is the senior medical



practitioner at the hospital. He is extremely racist and considers himself superior to everyone not born in Spain. This attitude borders on a Naziesque view of the world and Cruz frequently performs grisly medical experiments on animals or humans that he considers expendable. For example, in one scene Cruz creates an artificial incision into a man's heart simply to suture up a living, beating heart. Cruz believes in various outmoded medical theories, including heavy bleeding, blistering, and surgery without anesthetic. He believes that sterilization is foolish and his operating gown and instruments are crusted in dried blood and pus. Cruz finds Savlador Carriscant's modern practices ridiculous and laughable, but also feels threatened by them because Carriscant's outcomes are notably better. Carriscant considers Cruz the most-likely suspect in the murder of two American soldiers—Cruz does materially interfere with the murder investigation on several occasions. However, Cruz seems imminently unlikely to resort to anonymous political murder—after all, he casually murders patients within his own hospital without risk. Just as Carriscant has a crony in Quiroga, so too does Cruz have a crony in Dr. Weiland.

## Eric Meyersen

Eric Meyersen is Kay Fischer's one-time partner. Meyersen-Fischer was an upstart architectural and building management firm in Los Angeles that enjoyed early success due Kay Fischer's architectural skill and Meyersen's business acumen. One the firm started drawing notable business Meyersen dissolved the partnership, ejecting Kay without remuneration and retaining the entire portfolio and customer base. Kay's attorney, George Fugal, informs her that Meyersen's carefully crafted partnership contract allowed him to act legally in such a manner. Meyersen then takes steps to make sure Kay does not regain her footing—he uses an actress to straw buy Kay's custom home and then tears down the structure. Meyersen's mean-spirited exploitation of Kay causes her to become distressed and depressed and in large part spurs her to join Salvador Carriscant on his adventure. Meyersen is a relatively minor character in the novel and does not appear beyond the initial chapters.

## Sieverance

Sieverance is an officer in the United States Army, pursuing this career because of family tradition rather than any great competence or desire. He leads combat infantry and during the timeline of the novel is deployed on active duty in the Philippine Islands. Sieverance is married to Delphine Blyth Sieverance and is very emotionally attached to her even though she regards him as something of a dullard. He is noted as being sexually impotent and thus when Delphine conceives a child—in fact, Salvador Carriscant's child—Sieverance is ecstatic, believing the child to be his own. Carriscant believes that Sieverance may be guilty of wartime atrocities, though Sieverance's retiring personality does not strongly support the idea. Both of the American murder victims in the novel were at one time under Sieverance's command. Sieverance is in turn murdered toward the end of the novel, by being shot in the head while in bed. His

remains are noted as being shipped home to America for burial. Although Carriscant stands trial for the murder, he is acquitted.



## Objects/Places

### Kay's Designer House

Kay Fischer spends the early portion of the novel designing and building her personal dream home. She initially intended to live in the home but subsequently is forced to sell it for financial reasons. The home is purchased in a straw buy by an actress posing as a buyer. She actually buys the home for Kay's unscrupulous rival Eric Meyersen who tears the home down with plans to build a similar structure on the same lot—2265 Micheltoreno Street.

### The Photograph of Hugh Paget

Annaliese Fischer has an old photograph of Hugh Paget; she tells Kay Fischer the man was her biological father, who died shortly after her birth. The photograph is fuzzy and taken from a medium distance, preventing any close scrutiny of features. Annaliese claims that all of her other photographs and documents were destroyed in a fire. Until her early 30's, Kay accepted her mother's study and looked at the photograph as her only link to her biological father. As the novel progresses, Kay decides the man in the photograph was not really her father.

### The Photograph of Delphine Sieverance

Salvador Carriscant has a photograph of Delphine Sieverance that was taken at a social function in Lisbon and published in a news magazine in 1927. Carriscant enlists his supposed daughter, Kay, in his effort to track down Delphine in 1936. It is unclear exactly when Carriscant obtained the photograph but first he claims to have found it about 1934 and later admits that Delphine mailed it to him as a sort of test of devotion.

### The Philippine-American War

The Philippine-American War is viewed by most Philippine Island natives as a war of independence but is viewed by the occupying American forces as an insurrection. The war lasts from 1899 through 1902. The war featured numerous unfortunate incidents and several atrocities on both sides. The war's end forms the backdrop against which most of the middle segment of the novel is set.

### SS Herzog

SS Herzog is the ship upon which Kay Fischer and Salvador Carriscant travel from New York to Lisbon. The voyage takes ten days during which time Carriscant tells Kay his autobiographical story and convinces her that he is her biological father. Although the



ship is not fully detailed in the narrative, it forms the erased setting for much of the novel's dialogue.

## **Manila**

Manila is the large capital of the Philippines. The novel does not fully describe the city but does present it as a sprawling urban center surrounded by suburban and rural areas. The city's society is focused along a waterfront zone called the Luneta. Carriscent notes that he cannot venture into the city without being recognized. The major portion of the novel transpires in the setting of Manila.

## **The corpses of Private Ephraim Ward and Corporal Maximilian**

During the middle segment of the novel four murders occur. The first two involve the victims Private Ephraim Ward and Corporal Maximilian Braun. Both victims are American soldiers, both corpses are found at local sites with supposed historical significance, and both corpses show signs of mutilation—the hearts have been damaged or removed; the death wounds have been extended post-mortem by possible surgical procedures; the severe wounds have been partially sewed shut. Salvador Carriscent, acting as the medical examiner, autopsies both corpses. He later is convicted of conspiracy to murder the two men and serves a lengthy prison term.

## **Amberway-Richault Prize**

The Amberway-Richault Prize is a fictional financial prize extended c. 1900 to provoke innovation in powered flight of heavier-than-air machines. The prize becomes covered by Dr. Pantaleon Quiroga who spends nearly all of his money and most of his time developing and building an early airplane. The prize stipulates that the powered flight must not result in the destruction of the machine or the death of any operators—thus, Quiroga's powered flight does not qualify to win the prize. The prize is not won within the narrative.

## **The Four-Cylinder 12 HP Flanquin**

Dr. Pantaleon Quiroga's innovative airplane—he calls it an aero-mobile—is powered by a specific European engine known as a Flanquin. The engine's four cylinders generate twelve horsepower. Quiroga harnesses the engine to two pushing propellers by lengthy chains, driven by a clutch and throttle arrangement. The engine is quite light and therefore suitable for aircraft use. Quiroga goes through a complex series of black-market negotiations to get the engine imported duty-free and secretly because he fears competitors might learn of his efforts if they know about an engine of this type being imported.



## The Merck and Frankl Scalpel

Paton Bobby claims to find a Merck and Frankl Scalpel near the third murder victim. It is described as being heavy-duty with a strong two-inch beveled blade. Salvador Carriscant notes it is a particularly common type and style of scalpel. After inventorying his own operating theater's supplies, Carriscant reports to Bobby that exactly such a scalpel is missing. Bobby responds that most local hospitals also are missing one or more identical scalpels. Carriscant becomes convinced that Bobby had stolen the scalpel from his operating room and planted it on the body as a sort of test of honor. Like nearly every symbol in the novel, the scalpel's role in the murders remains at best mysterious.



# Themes

## Your Personal History is False

Many children's deepest fear is learning their putative parents are not really their parents: they were secretly adopted; they were stolen as children; they were swapped at birth by mistake; or their parents have just lied to them. Numerous well-known children's movies revolve around a variation on this theme. For Kay Fischer, this fear appears to be realized in the novel. As an adult, Kay has lived her entire life being told that her father was Hugh Paget, an Englishman missionary teacher, who died just a few months after she was born. Kay's mother, Annaliese Leys Fischer, tells Kay that all photographic and documentary evidence of her father was destroyed in a fire. All that remains is a single, grainy photograph of a nondescript fair-haired man that is taken far enough away that few details are discernable. Subsequent to Paget's death, Annaliese remarried Rudolf Fischer, had children with him, and moved to Long Beach, California. This is the personal history that Kay knows her entire life. Then Salvador Carriscant appears and claims to be Kay's biological father. Over the next weeks, Carriscant tells Kay a lengthy story of murder, marital affairs, flying machines, and distant lands. When Kay arranges for her mother to see Carriscant, Annaliese appears not to recognize him. Questioning by Kay leads Annaliese to routinely recount the story of Paget. Who should Kay believe? On one hand her father was a missionary teacher; on the other hand, her father was a brilliant surgeon, a convicted felon, and a charming person who still lives. In the end, Kay decides Carriscant is her biological father. But there really are no facts that supports her decision. The theme of false history is a recurrent and dominant theme of the novel.

## Knowing the Past through Recollection

The novel's construction propels narrative technique to the forefront as a major theme. Part One and Part Three of the novel are related in the first-person point of view. These portions of the novel occur in the novel's primary timeline as events that occur. The narrative reliability in describing these events is very high and we have no reason to believe, as readers, that Kay Fischer (the narrator) is fabricating events or falsely reporting what she sees, hears, and does. Part Two of the novel, however, is a different story. This segment of the novel still is narrated by Kay though this fact becomes less obvious as the material is presented. She explains her methodology for assembling the narrative in Part Two: Salvador Carriscant relates stories to her about a period of time. The stories are not told chronologically or even all at once. She asks follow-up questions, takes notes, and remembers what he says. Then, at some point after the stories have been told, she organizes the materials, supplements them with her own recollections, and formulates them into a complete narrative. Part Two, therefore, offers several problems of interpretation to the reader. Carriscant, the source of information, is not very reliable. He engaged in an extra-marital affair that ended his marriage, not a particularly honest behavior. He was involved somehow in a series of brutal murders for





which he was incarcerated for sixteen years, which is definitely not particularly honest behavior. And he knew he had a daughter for decades before he sought her out for financial assistance, and then only to have her help him find a long-lost love.

Carriscant's motivations are for the most part not honorable and certainly not particularly upfront. Thus, it is highly unlikely that his remembered narrative presents all the relevant facts, does not omit embarrassing moments, or is generally honest. In fact, Carriscant cannot even prove his foundational assertion that he is Kay's father. The tricky process of knowing the past through recollection thus forms a major, but subtle, theme of the novel.

## **There's Nothing Sure in This World**

Kay Fischer, the protagonist and narrator of the novel, has a life of routine disappointment. She marries but later divorces. She has a baby that quickly dies. She had a father but doesn't know him. She enjoys a relationship with her mother but does not trust her. Her step-father raises her but does not esteem her as his own children. She had a successful career that was stolen from her. She was financially successful but now teeters on bankruptcy. She builds her dream house but must sell it—to someone who tears it down to replace it. Her youthful beauty fades into overweight middle-age. Even her mentor in academia dies an early death and remains entirely unknown within his field. Kay turns toward intentional poverty of life in an attempt to reduce her life to the bare essentials where, she hopes, she will find happiness and beauty, or at least constancy and inspiration. Given this uncertainty about everything in life, it is not surprising that when a strange older gentleman appears and tells Kay he is her real biological father she is intrigued. Instead of dismissing him as a crank or eccentric, Kay listens to him, gets to know him, and then financially and morally supports him on a globe-trotting quest to find his old lover. During their voyage, Kay's putative father, Salvador Carriscant, tells her a lengthy story that in many respects mirrors Kay's own experiences. Carriscant's career was taken from him by a false (so he says) arrest. His lover was taken from him by a misadventure. His history in many ways echoes her own. She finds in him, perhaps more than anything else, simply that he is present for her and appears to earnestly want to be with her. Thus, for the few weeks of the narrative's principle timeline Kay finds a companion who accepts her for what she is. At the end of the novel, however, the reader realizes that Carriscant plans to depart for his home and that Kay will again be left exactly where she was at the narrative's opening having lost money and with more complication in her life. The theme of uncertainty, doubt, and insecurity runs throughout the novel as a major component.

# Style

## Point of View

The novel is narrated by Kay Fischer, the protagonist. She relates the story from the first-person point of view. Part One and Part Three of the novel are relatively straightforward narratives in the first-person and limited perspective. In these parts, Kay acts as a relatively traditional narrator. Part One of the novel, in particular, features traditional fiction construction and plotting. Part Three of the novel features some unusual construction methods that complicate the point of view somewhat: here, Kay presents the materials as a sort of notebook or diary. Although this is interesting and useful it does not obscure the fact that Kay is the narrator, and that she has limited insight into others. Part Two of the novel is much more subtle in point of view. Here, the novel reads like a traditional third-person and omniscient narrative with a tight focus on Salvador Carriscent. However, the narrator does reveal interior thoughts and motivations of other characters. It is important to remember, however, that Kay is still the narrator and that even Part Two is related from the first-person point of view. Kay is relating events told to her about a period of time before her birth. Kay's narrative is reconstructed from notes and her memory of a lengthy series of conversations she had with Carriscent who relied on his own memory. The point of view selected is compelling and appropriate, and materially aids the reader in understanding the narrative and complex, subtle motivation of Kay Fischer.

## Setting

The novel features three principle settings, one setting being strongly associated with each major portion of the novel. The first setting, from Part One, is the Los Angeles area with a minor focus on portions of Long Beach. The time period of this portion of the novel is the early 1930s. This region is noted as experiencing rapid growth of expensive housing and rapid clearing of large tracts for residential building. Most of the minor characters presented are highly self-interested if not abjectly selfish. Kay Fischer's world seems fairly sterile - partly by choice, partly by circumstances. The second setting, from Part Two, is the Manila area of the Philippines Islands. The time period of this portion of the novel is 1902, immediately following the American colonization war against Philippine nationals. The Americans have colonized the area and a divisive, complex society full of social castes is created. This region is in a state of social upheaval. Many recent battlefields are located all around the city. Technological changes are flooding society. Salvador Carriscent's world is rich in culture, heritage, and complexity. The third setting, from Part Three, is Lisbon. The time period of this portion of the novel is very compressed - just a few days in the early 1930s, immediately following the events of Part One. The region is noted as being exceptionally rich in cultural diversity. Delphine Lopes do Livio has enjoyed a complex and rich life in the area.



## Language and Meaning

The novel features a very rich language and vocabulary. Sentences and paragraphs have solid construction; the entire novel is exceptional in execution. Characters speak a variety of languages though by far the dominant—only significant—language used in the narrative is English. Spanish, Portuguese, and Scottish words are all noted though they are described immediately and pose no special barrier to understanding. The novel features a complex timeline that demands careful reading but a typical reader should be able to traverse the narrative without problems. Meaning within the novel, however, is quite ephemeral. The relationship between the principle characters is based on uncertain statements that are not, and cannot be, verified within the novel. Some major events in the novel, including a murder and the paternity of the narrator, are presented with two alternatives, neither of which can be ascertained as truthful. Most of the major events in the novel, and all events in Part Two, cannot be said to be factual with any level of confidence. While the characters in the novel derive their own meanings from the events they chose to believe or reject, the reader must navigate a similar narrative landscape. The novel's meaning through interpretation thus can vary tremendously depending upon which narrative thread the reader finds most credible.

## Structure

The 367-page novel is divided into three parts. Each part is further divided into chapters or smaller units. Part One features traditional enumerated but unnamed chapters. Part One transpires over a period of a few weeks and tightly focuses on the experiences of Kay Fischer, the narrator and protagonist. Part One features a traditional timeline and is related from the first-person, limited, perspective. Part Two features unnumbered but named chapters of unequal length. Part Two transpires over a period of several months and tightly focuses on the experiences of Salvador Carriscant. Part Two in itself features a traditional timeline but takes place about thirty years before Part One. Part Two also is related from the first-person perspective, but here the narrator (still Kay) is entirely effaced—giving this section of the novel the feel of a third-person narrative. Kay also reveals occasional inner thoughts and motivations of characters, especially Carriscant, giving Part Two the feeling of an omniscient narrative. This complex structure is compelling and enjoyable. Part Three of the novel again features a traditional timeline and is related from the first-person and limited perspective. Part Three transpires over a period of only a few days and tightly focuses on the join experience of Kay and Carriscant. The structure of Part Three is more complex, however, in that it features segments that are dated—like a travelogue or diary. The text contains narrative statements interspersed with personal anecdotes, introspections, or comments.

## Quotes

"I turned off Sunset Boulevard and drove up Micheltoreno to the site. The day was cloudy and an erratic and nervy wind rattled the leaves of the palmettos that the contractor had planted along the roadside. As I pulled into the curb at number 2265 I saw the old man" (p. 7).

"Philip looked at me. 'I was going to ask you to dinner tonight, but now that I've seen your lunch I guess you won't be hungry.'  
'Ha-ha. Call me later, you may get lucky'" (p. 37).

"This is what he told me. (I am summarizing his rambling, wistful account.) His father's name was Archibald—Archibald Muir Carriscant—an engineer, one of that worldwide diaspora of Scots professionals and in his early forties when he first arrived in the Philippines—(then a colony of Spain)—in 1863, sent by his Hong Kong firm of Melhuish & Cobb to supervise the rebuilding of the southern breakwater that formed the entrance to Manila's docks on the Pasig River" (p. 77).

"'That is no fucking gugu,' Bobby said, a frown pulling his eyebrows together and cabling his forehead. 'In fact that is just about the whitest man I've ever seen' There was a peculiar bluish, icy tone to the body's general pallor, it was true. The fat on the buttocks seemed to shine through the skin like ice cream wrapped in parchment, Carriscant thought, quite pleased with his simile" (p. 93).

"She took his money, folded it away somewhere gracefully, discreetly. 'You come me,' she said, 'we room five.' She set off immediately across the dance floor toward the stairway. A swaying couple cut directly across Carriscant's path and he had to pause and then negotiate their maladroit shuffle before he could follow his girl. His girl..." "You come me, we room five." It was all so clear-cut, a matter of plain business dealing, no fuss, no pretensions" (p. 118-119).

"In the past few days he had lived more intensely, his waking hours had been more charged with anticipation, than he could remember in years. Perhaps this was a definition of obsession? The ability both to see the manifest error of a course of action and yet to pursue it fiercely just the same...Whatever it was, it fulfilled him; it allowed him to go about his business in the hospital, to lead a normal family life with some measure of control and equanimity, for he knew that in a day or so he would be sitting damply once again in the acacia wood near the palace, the sun warming the treetops, waiting for Delphine to appear" (p. 150).

"Carriscant said something to him, something bland and consolatory, knowing that there was a double dose of truth in Sieverance's affirmation. He would never forget, that was for sure, as it was also for sure that he would never cease to regret, either" (p. 177).

"The woman's body lay face down in a small vigorous torrent, swollen by the rains, that ran into the Tatuban estero. The stream was some way to the north of the city, between



the Dagupan railroad and the Santa Cruz race-course. Carriscant looked around him: they were barely a mile from Intramuros and yet all around them was bush scrub and marshy fields under low pewtery clouds. It was a depressing scene, drear. Drear was the perfect word, he thought. Or drookit, a good Scottish word, except that it had connotations of cold and here it was warm and steamy" (p. 211).

"Cruz's operating theater was, to Carriscant's eyes, a scene from one of the circles of hell. Old cracked terra-cotta tiles on the floor and smudged plaster walls covered, for some reason, in scribbles of handwriting, ancient wooden trays and tables. Cruz stood tall in his domain, in his famous frock coat with its filthy veneer, its pustulant lichen, the cuffs unbuttoned and the sleeves of his coat and shirt folded back to reveal his powerful forearms with their pelt of dark hair" (p. 237-238).

'There's a problem,' she said quickly, her face all of a sudden showing signs of strain. 'My menses. I've missed the last two. It's over eight weeks.'  
'Oh my God...'  
He felt his indigestion replaced by nausea.  
'I wouldn't be alarmed, but'—there was a catch in her voice and he could see from her eyes how upset she was—'I'm so regular, normally. You could set your clock—' She could not continue. She turned away to compose herself, she sniffed" (p. 269).

"The maiden flight of the Aero-Movil numero uno lasted approximately seventeen seconds, and observers estimated that at the apex of its climb it had reached a height of eight feet and had traveled a distance of two thousand, eight hundred feet over a pronounced leftward curving course. Unfortunately, Carriscant learned later, according to the rules of the Amberway-Richault Prize, the destruction of the fling machine, or the injury or death of the flyer, rendered any attempt null and void" (p. 307).

'How does it go? 'At the violet hour, something something, like a taxi throbbing at the door' ...No, 'the human engine waits, like a taxi throbbing waiting.'

'What on earth are you talking about?' Carriscant rather snapped at me.

'Just a line of poetry. Came to mind. "At the violet hour, et cetera." I pointed up at the rose-flushed evening sky. 'It's nothing important. Just the conjunction of the light effect and that taxi. Ignore it.'

He was staring at me, a slow smile widening his face. 'At the violet hour," he said. "Don't you see?'

'What? No, I don't.'

'Violets"' (p. 341).

"So what makes the difference - here and now - on this terrace on this eloquent blue afternoon, as we sit caught between perpetuities of sun and rain, held in this particular moment? I look over at Salvador Carriscant, who is smiling at me, his old broad face radiant with his tremendous good fortune, and I know the answer" (p. 367).



## Topics for Discussion

Is Salvador Carriscant really Kay Fischer's biological father? What evidences does he produce? What doubts remain? Kay comes to believe he is her father. Does the reader also believe this?

Kay Fischer concludes that the two Americans were murdered by either Pantaleon Quiroga, Dr. Isidro Cruz, Jepson George Sieverance, or Salvador Carriscant. Given these four suspects, which do you conclude to be the most-likely murder suspect?

Salvador Carriscant admits that he has lied to Kay Fischer about how he obtained the news magazine photograph of Delphine Blythe Sieverance. Given that previously he had promised to tell only the truth, what impact does this have on the remainder of Carriscant's lengthy tale presented in Part Two?

Many events in Part One and Part Three of the novel are delivered with narrative authority—they are narrative fact. At the end of the novel, Kay Fischer notes that she can substantiate only a single fact from Salvador Carriscant's lengthy auto-biographical narrative—that he was intimate with Delphine. Given this complete lack of corroboration on everything Carriscant says, why does Kay still believe that she can trust him? Is Kay acting rationally? Why or why not?

Given that during the novel's principle timeline Kay Fischer spends about three weeks with a man claiming to be her father, what do you think she likely will do next? Return to Los Angeles? Remain in Lisbon? Go with Carriscant? Discuss Kay's motivation for future pursuits.

Salvador Carriscant explains that he was exonerated of murder but convicted of conspiring to murder; he seems to take exception to being characterized as a murderer. According to Carriscant, he was convicted of conspiracy as a sort of half-measure by the court. Do you think that Carriscant has told Kay Fischer everything relevant about his past?

Salvador Carriscant spends the first years of his life as a brilliant surgeon. Then after an interlude of sixteen years of incarceration, he spends the next years of his life as a restaurant operator. The novel draws several parallels between surgery and cooking (for example, the Chapter title *Chez Dr. Isidro Cruz*; Carriscant's comparison of corpses to food items; etc.). What images are presented in the novel that link other disparate pursuits? How does Pantaleon Quiroga's airplane compare with Delphine Blythe Sieverance's body? How do the two girls riding a pony compare with Carriscant's and Pantaleon's friendship?

Jepson George Sieverance is murdered in the last chapter of the novel. Salvador Carriscant notes he was found in bed, shot in the head. Delphine Blythe Sieverance claims to have murdered Sieverance more or less by accident as they struggle in the dark outside their home. Kay Fischer believes that Carriscant murdered Sieverance to



protect Delphine. None of these theories or confessions seem particularly sound. Who do you think murdered Sieverance? Why?

Kay Fischer comes to believe that her mother Annaliese has told her a fiction about her biological father being an English missionary teacher. Assume this is true. Why would Annaliese choose to tell her daughter a lie about her father and his history?

The novel is divided into three parts. Part One is set in 1930s California. Part Two is set in 1902/3 Manila. Part Three is set in 1934 Lisbon. Which part do you find the most compelling? Why?